

MLB World Series: Dodgers vs Blue Jays

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Rogers Centre

Los Angeles Dodgers

Kiké Hernández

Pregame 7 Press Conference



Q. Just to be in this position, you guys forced a Game 7 last night, just when you think about the emotions, the feelings going into this one, how would you put it into words?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: There was a lot of emotions last night. Today everybody's really excited. I don't think there's one person in either locker room that didn't dream as a kid playing in Game 7 of the World Series, and it's here in front of us. So it's been a great World Series, and the World Series now it's going to get decided on who plays best during the game.

Q. You've been in a Game 7 before. What have you learned from these games and how have they prepared you for a game like today?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I played in two Game 7s in the NLCS and then one in the World Series. The one I played in the World Series was a little bit of a different story for me because I got to pinch hit in the second inning. I got hit by a pitch, and the next pitch we lined out into a double play and that was it for my game. I got to watch for seven innings and it felt pretty helpless.

Tonight I get to play, which is exciting. I think, you know, experience is -- it is what it is. You can't really think of, oh, I already have the experience of Game 7 because these guys are coming off a Game 7 against Seattle. We just got to take it as any other game. But we know what's at stake and we need to have that urgency, but at the same time be patient and not try to win the game in one specific inning. We just got to play our game, play sound fundamental baseball, and hopefully we come out on top.

Q. Your sample size of postseason games is pretty large, over 80 games. What do you attribute all the success?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: It's been over a hundred.

Q. Sorry, over a hundred. That's a pretty big chunk. What do you put your success on for that, in those games?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I don't know. I feel like I've had to answer this question too many times. Man, what else? When else would you rather do it than in the postseason. Everything is heightened, the focus is heightened, the intensity is heightened, the electricity in the stadium, you know, everything's just different. You can't compare a playoff game to a game in the 162 because the reality is it's not the same, not even close.

I don't know, the chaos brings out the best in me. That's the best way I can put it into words.

Q. That's what I was getting at, is it something about your personality, you think, that lends yourself to these kind of games?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: Personality? Yeah. The fire, the desire, the heart, my brain -- my brain's all over the place, man. I got really bad ADHD, and I think these are like -- you know, it's almost like when you're in school and you have a project for a two months, and then you leave it for the last day. Like, the way my brain works is, like, I'm not going to do anything until the last day, and that's -- I'm going to prepare everything on that day, and that's kind of a similar way. Like, I'm able to stay in the moment and, like, stay really, really focused for nine innings or 18 innings. So, I don't know. I don't know, bro. I don't know.

Q. All the Blue Jays relievers yesterday wrote 51 on their hats as a tribute to your teammate Alex Vesia. What's that mean to you given the stakes of the World Series, but they are realizing that there's things bigger than base ball?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: Yeah, I didn't notice until Bassitt -- actually, after Bassitt struck me out, and then I was looking up at the board to see the replay, and that's when I saw that he had 51, and instead of being mad that I struck out, I was kind of going back to the dugout thinking, Did Bassitt play with Vesia at some point? And then after the game, I

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saw that everybody had them.

For those guys to do that, it's incredible. They're trying to win a World Series, but they understand that this is -- life is bigger than baseball, and baseball's just a game. For them to do that with the stakes -- where we were at with the stakes, hat's off to them, and I want them to know that we appreciate 'em. Regardless of what happens tonight, we appreciate what they did.

Q. The managers are trying to figure out pockets and usage and all that kind of stuff. As player in a game like this, is it just a matter of follow where the game takes you and know that the only time you really have any control is when you have the bat in your hands?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: Yeah, I mean, when you get drafted, when you sign and, like, you're younger in your career, the thing that you hear the most is, you need to learn how to control what you can control, and you need to let go of what you can't. We've been hearing it our whole careers, and here we are now in Game 7. The only thing we can do is play the game, right?

When we're offensively -- if we're in the dugout, there's nothing you can do but cheer for your teammates. When you're in the box, the only thing you can do is swing at the right pitch or not, try to get on base, do whatever you can. Then you move onto the bases, and then run the bases. That's all you can do. And then when you're on defense, you're just hoping the ball gets hit to you and you make a play.

So you just got to play the game, man. You got to play the game and let the game come to you.

Q. Both Miggy and Teo were in here yesterday talking about offensively just wanting guys to not worry about failure as much, kind of be more freed up at the plate. Obviously, you guys came out pretty aggressive last night and were able to build a big inning. Do you feel like as an offense, just the approach last night, some of the results you guys had, just kind of put you in a better space going into tonight, especially after the games back in L.A.?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I mean, yeah. We won. So if we didn't win, we wouldn't be here today. At the end of the day, we had one good inning and it seems like that's been the theme throughout this World Series. Yeah, definitely. I mean, we got to come out aggressive. If he's struggling with command, then we take a step back. But I'm sure he's going to come in pounding the strike zone, so we got to stay aggressive and then let the game dictate what the approach should be.

But we were able to score three in one inning and what I take from that is that we were able to get two big hits with runners in scoring position, which has been a struggle for us to come in and get base hits with runners in scoring position. So hopefully tonight we can do the same thing.

Q. Last couple games Dave has had to tweak his lineup and his defense because of that and, obviously, you're a key part of that with your versatility. The question is: How much pride do you take in that -- in facilitating that for Dave?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I take an enormous pride in that. Even though I've only played two positions this World Series, the reality of things is that my versatility is what's kept me in the big leagues all these years. And the best thing that baseball has is we play on both sides of the ball. We don't only play on one side of the ball. Some people do. Some people do other things. Like Sho, they get to pitch and hit, you know.

For me, it's finding a way to impact the game one way or the other. My bat hasn't really been there that much this series, but I still -- like, every great defender in the league, I'm sure every great defender wants every single pitch, they want the ball hit to them, and that's what I take pride on.

Q. That play last night was obviously so important. Take me through that. Like, from where you're positioned, are you looking at your card, do you just know that that's where he's likely to hit it, and then when you come up throwing, are you seeing Barger as you're making that catch or is it instinctual? Just take me through that.

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: I was, like -- I don't know how to say it -- side to side, like whatever. I was where I was needed to be. But I was 7 feet shallower than the card wanted me to be because I was expecting -- or anticipating Giménez hitting a ball in the 6 hole, and given the fact that Barger is pretty fast at second base, I wanted to put -- position myself in a position where I was shallow enough to charge in -- on a ground ball base hit, I was able to charge in and not have to force a throw to home plate where I had to throw it over the cutoff man.

So I wanted to be shallow enough to where I could keep the runner at third, but also the batter runner at first base and keep the double play alive because there was only one out. And then, obviously, once that ball got hit -- I mentioned last night that every time, it doesn't matter where we are, what stadium it is, the human element of the crowd, they're cheering, they can be as loud as they want,



but, like, for a split second as soon as the pitcher's about to deliver the ball, every time doesn't fail, the quiet -- the stadium goes quiet for, like, a split second at release all the way to contact or swing-and-miss, whatever it is, and that little amount of quietness was the one that allowed me to hear the broken bat, and I was able to get a really good jump on the ball, come in.

And as far as, like, looking at Barger, I guess it's instinctual. But, like, when I'm playing, like, especially left field, when I'm coming in, I have the whole field in front of me, you're looking at the ball, but you can still -- like, by looking at the ball, you can still feel where the runners are. And I felt like he had extended his lead or -- I don't know, whatever it was. I felt that he was far away from the bag. But I couldn't look at him because I didn't even know where the ball was because the ball was in the lights the whole time. So I just went to where I thought the ball was going to land and sure enough at the very end, the ball got out of the lights and for, like, a quick glance I, like -- I wanted to get him out at second. I knew I needed to be quick and perfect, so I gave it a slight look at third base to see if he was going to tag because I don't want him to be safe and then also allow the runner to score if I could keep him at third base.

And when I saw that he wasn't tagging, that's when I, like, decided to throw to second base, and I didn't even have enough time to adjust my hips to make a good, strong throw, so I thought I needed to be careful with the throw. I wanted to long-hop it, but I was coming in full speed in a different direction, and my arm angle didn't allow me too long-hop it, and Miggy made an unbelievable pick.

Q. We've all heard plenty about how much money the Dodgers spend on players' salaries. But I'm wondering, as a guy who's been around the league and played for a number of organizations, what do the Dodgers do that help you guys be successful that goes beyond just spending money on players?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: Communication between the players and front office, players and coaching staff. When they're going to do something like, in terms of like whatever it is, like travel or whatever, they always ask us. And I'm sure you guys heard last year, we met, a few players met with front office to talk about traveling in the postseason. We gave them our point of view, which was very different to the sleep doctor, what the sleep doctor thought we should do. And we changed the traveling plans and we kept it going this year. But it's just they have our best interests for everything and they want to make sure that not only do we have what we need, but we're also happy with what's going on.

So I think to where, other organizations, they're like, maybe we're going to do things our way, and you're just a player, you work for us. But I think these guys just want us to be, like make sure that we're on top of our game at all times. So if you need a guy to be on top of their game, why not ask that person, What do you need to be on top of your game. And I think that that's something that they do different that maybe other organizations don't do.

Q. A fun one for you. Your headband, of course, it says, believe. How much is it being a Ted Lasso fan, and how much is it just the reminder of it's plain and simple, you have to believe tonight?

KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ: Both. I got it because I'm a Ted Lasso fan, and the timing is right. I mean, didn't bring it out until the last two games, so, yeah.

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