

MLB Winter Meetings

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Dallas, Texas, USA

Washington Nationals

Manager Dave Martinez

Press Conference

Q. When you look ahead to the 2025 season, what jumps out at you as the biggest areas of the team where you need to grow?

DAVE MARTINEZ: As I talked about last year at the end of the year, the experience our young players got, I think the growth that they've had last year is definitely going to help us in 2025.

We've got a young group, a really good talented group. I'm looking forward to getting back out there with them again in Spring Training and getting ready for another season.

Q. Do you guys know the season record, you're farther ahead this year than you were a year ago with the same record?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I think we were. We got really, really young last year. For those guys to do what they did last year, it's a testament to how hard they worked and how hard they play.

We've got a good core group. I know that we're working diligently to get better, and with our young guys, we are going to get better.

Q. Knowing you guys stretched (indiscernible) a few years ago, are you surprised at where it wound up?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Knowing what I know about how the game's going? No. He's a tremendous player. Like I've already said, I love Juan. I can sit here and say that I'm the only manager that won a World Series with him. How about that?

He's going to help the Mets, as we all know. I'm proud of him. I'm glad he's able to take care of himself, the family, and many generations. That's how much money he made.

He's going to help the Mets.

Q. With where the money is now, do you worry about trying to stay competitive when big markets swoop in?



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DAVE MARTINEZ: I can't look at what other teams are doing and what they're spending. My focus is on the Washington Nationals and what they do. I think we're in a good place, I really do.

One thing about Juan, when we traded him, we got some really good young talent. We've got a couple in the Big Leagues now and a couple are still coming.

I think we're in a good place now, and like I said, we're getting better.

Q. What do you think of having to pay Juan for basically forever?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I don't know how long forever is, but how about this right here?

Hey, we always talk to our young kids about competition, right? In order to be the best, you've got to play the best. He's one of the best.

We're going to bang heads. We did a pretty good job with him with the Yankees when we faced them. They know what they're up against.

Q. When he was 19, 20, 21 years old, did you look at him then and see a guy that's going to be a generational player?

DAVE MARTINEZ: When I first saw him, people looked at me and -- like I kind of compare it to Barry, when Barry was -- right? This kid, he was different. The ball comes off his bat different. The way he approaches the hitting was way different than a lot of kids I've seen.

But the one thing that I always remember about him, the first conversation I had, the first thing that came out of his mouth when I asked him what motivates him, what drives him, and he just came out and said, I love baseball.

Truly you can see it in him. He loves playing the game.

Q. So 16 years, until he's 40 years old, is he a guy that's going to be able to hit, to do what he does, and

... when all is said, we're done.®

know a ball from a strike until he's 40 years old?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I don't know what he's going to do when he's 40, but I know what he's going to do come Opening Day.

Like I said, the Mets got a really good player and a great person. I'm really happy for him.

Q. When you think about your priorities this off-season, particularly with the lineup, what are you interested in the team maybe adding or exploring in the future?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Look, we've got a young core. We're really not going to mess around with what we have right now, and I don't want to take away anything from the kids that we've got coming up as well.

But we do need to add some veteran guys. We're exploring all kinds of options. I know we've talked to quite a few players already.

We're engaged with some things. As you know, Rizz, he's going to go out there and work diligently to get us better. Right now I've been in conversations with some players about what's coming up for Spring Training and watching them work out and watching them hit and all kinds of stuff.

My focus is on what we have right now. If we add players to help us, that would be great.

Q. (Indiscernible) does that make you guys want to add somebody at first base, get some power there?

DAVE MARTINEZ: We're definitely looking for some power bats at both corner spots, maybe a DH spot. We'll see what transpires.

Q. How would you assess the back end of the bullpen in particular?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Well, losing Finnegan was tough. I put Ferrer in some situations last year to close games. He did really well. I know he's young. We have Ferrer, we have Garcia, we have Law who pitched really well for us.

We're here. We're looking. We're searching. I know we'd like to add a couple more bullpen arms. We'll see what comes up.

Q. With DH, do you prefer a 1-2 type or a guy (indiscernible)?

DAVE MARTINEZ: A 40 home run guy. Hey, if we have to

platoon, we'll platoon. But like I said, we'll see what's available and we'll see what we come up with.

Q. You used to have more left-handed hitters. This year is more balanced. Is there something you prefer?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I'd like to get a right-handed batter. I really would. Or maybe a left-handed bat that could DH or play first base.

Like I said, we're up. We're working diligently. We're looking at the free agent market. We're actually looking at some trade opportunities as well. We'll see what we can come up with.

Q. When you started playing (indiscernible) in the DR, is there anything specific you guys want him to do?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Really just to keep him developing. He came up to the Big Leagues really young. Last year I think he had a breakout year. I really did. I think he understands a little bit more what he can do.

We want him to play, keep going, and keep himself in shape and get himself ready for Spring Training.

Q. The philosophy over the years about winter ball, against it, for it, what's your philosophy, and what's the organization's philosophy?

DAVE MARTINEZ: For me, it's all about whether they want to play or not. That's the key. A lot of these guys want to play and represent their country, their team, their cities. For him, he wants to stay in shape.

We talked about it, and I told him just take some time off. He played really well. When you're ready to get back into it, go ahead and play. I know he's going to start playing and get ready for Spring Training.

Q. On that line, the same applies to Chaparro, for example?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Exactly. It's unfortunate what happened to him and his family, but I'm glad he was able to take some time off. Now he's getting ready to get back. I love what I saw from him when we called him up. He's such a great, great human being. I hope he comes ready for Spring Training.

Q. You guys bring back four young arms in the rotation. What do you make of the state of those four, and what are you hoping to see out of the rotation?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Yeah, we've seen a lot of growth out of



those guys. Especially the young guys like B.J., he did really well for himself towards the end there. Jake Irvin improved again. MacKenzie, everyone knows he's going to be a horse.

We just want them to continue to develop, get better. We pushed them last year to finish some innings.

For me it's like, when you've got four young starters like that that can give you 30 starts, it's pretty impressive. That's a testament to how hard they work, Hickey, Doolittle, training staff, medical staff, getting these guys ready to compete every five days.

Like I said, they learned a lot, and I'm looking forward to going out there and seeing them compete.

Q. Would you like to get a veteran in that spot?

DAVE MARTINEZ: We could get a veteran, find somebody. But we've got some depth. Cade is coming back. We've got another guy, Lord, that we kind of like. Lara, he's getting an opportunity to come to Spring Training.

Like I said, we're going to look to see how we can get better. We really are. If a starting pitcher comes up across us and we like him, then we can do something like that as well.

Q. (Indiscernible) at the beginning of next year or see how he is in Spring Training?

DAVE MARTINEZ: He's missed some time. We're going to give him time to develop a little bit. Who knows? He could come ready to go. You saw him last year at times where he looked really good, but we had to slow him down a little bit.

This year, we'll see how he comes to Spring Training.

Q. Ildemaro was your guy. How do you replicate that?

DAVE MARTINEZ: It's going to be hard. It really is. He was kind of that leader in that corner of the clubhouse over there. He brought a lot of energy to us.

We're going to have to look and stretch and see if we can find another guy that can do that or an internal guy that can do that.

We've got a lot of characters, as you know. One of those guys will step up. Right now I'm going to miss Ildemaro. I wish him all the best. He did an incredible job of keeping that clubhouse together.

Q. Speaking of veterans, even though it's a one-year deal, how important is it to have a veteran on staff?

DAVE MARTINEZ: It would be awesome. I really would. I can't sugar coat it. Like I said, we're in a position right now where we've got so many young guys, we want to continue to develop. We don't want to hold any of our younger guys back because we've got guys that are coming.

Just to have a veteran presence in that clubhouse, one or two guys, even if it's for a year or two, it will definitely help.

Q. Where do you project Tena fitting in?

DAVE MARTINEZ: Tena could do a lot of good things. Last year he played at third base. When I put him at second base, he handled it really well. We've had him at shortstop.

What I like is he swings the bat really well. It's just a matter of time before the power comes out. He's a guy that stays in the middle of the field. He has good baseball instincts. He's going to get an opportunity to play.

Like I said, he's one of the guys we're going to count on next year. For what position, I don't know yet, but he's going to get a chance to play.

Q. Are there other position changes you guys are considering this off-season?

DAVE MARTINEZ: At this moment, no. We'll see how we fill out our roster.

Q. C.J., how he's doing?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I called him a few times. He's hard to get a hold of. I saw him workouts. He's doing well. Like I said, I love C.J. We have an unbelievable relationship. So I'm looking forward to getting him back.

As you know, he's going to be our everyday shortstop. He had a great first half, struggled a little bit the second half, but he's going to be just fine.

Like I said, he's working. He's working on his swing. He's been working out. He's getting ready to go.

Q. Do you have any other details of what you've seen in the workouts?

DAVE MARTINEZ: He just has his routine, what he's always done. He's trying to get shorter in his swing, more consistent. We talked about his agility, make sure he



maintains that, but he's working out.

Q. How are Josiah and Mason coming along?

DAVE MARTINEZ: They're coming along. It's been a process, as you know, but they're doing well. Mason is doing really well. He started throwing a little bit. Josiah still has a little ways, but he's going to be fine.

Q. What did you task Keibert with this season?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I said just to continue to work on his footwork behind the plate. I thought he did a nice job towards the end of the year catching, calling games. His hitting got better. We talked a lot about his positioning when it comes to hitting. Giving himself a chance. Getting ready early. Getting shorter to the baseball. He's working on that.

One thing I know about Keibert, the guy is a gamer. He wants to play every day. He doesn't want any time off. He'll be ready to go in Spring Training.

Q. (Indiscernible) How do you think that experience will help in the off-season?

DAVE MARTINEZ: We saw a little bit from Dylan at the end of the season. He started gaming, hitting the ball really well. Hope he carries that over to the '25 season.

I thought James Wood handled himself really well. He played a new position in left field. He was out there every day with Parra working, got better towards the end. But his at-bats were really good. He's only going to get better.

The little bit of experience they got last year is definitely going to carry over to next year.

Q. The young guys last year, when there's a balance of wanting to get their experience in the Minor Leagues but wanting to get the opportunity in the Major Leagues, what's the balance of having them playing in the Major Leagues versus playing every day?

DAVE MARTINEZ: This year hopefully we have an opportunity to get a little bit more veteran oriented for the bench. Give our young guys a chance to go play. We'll see how that works out. Some of those guys did really well with the roles that they played. We'll see what happens going forward in Spring Training.

Q. When you talk about the veterans that could potentially come in, what sort of soft skills are you looking for?

DAVE MARTINEZ: One, I'm very -- as you know, I believe in chemistry and culture. We want to bring the right guy in. We've got a lot of young guys. We want a guy that's going to help our young guys.

We're definitely looking for corner guys, we really are. We need to fill that first base void. Even though Yepez did a nice job, I see Yepez doing multiple things, maybe DH as well.

Like I said, we've got our feelers out. We're talking to a lot of different guys. We'll see what transpires.

Q. All of a sudden (indiscernible) is the most tenured player. What kind of leadership do you want to see from Luis?

DAVE MARTINEZ: I want Luis to continue what he did last year. There's a lot of tough love when you think about him. I think he finally realized what he could be, and there's still more in there.

I just want him to lead by example. Last year I saw a lot of maturity. He went out there and was ready to play every day. He did the little things we asked him to do. I want him to continue to grow in that aspect, and guys will follow him.

He had a tremendous year, he really has. He got better all the way around. As you know, he could steal bases. He did that really well. He's definitely gotten better.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE MARTINEZ: It definitely won't be the golden bat. I like where the game is at right now, I really do. First with all the new rule changes, it took a minute, but definitely baseball is heading in the right direction.

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