

# MLB Winter Meetings

Monday, December 9, 2024

Dallas, Texas, USA

**Kansas City Royals**

**Manager Matt Quatraro**

Press Conference

**Q. As you look towards the biggest areas that you'd like to maybe show up for Spring Training?**

MATT QUATRARO: I would say just general depth. You never have enough pitching. You need to be able to fortify the plan for injuries or a hiccup here and there. Same on the defensive side. Losing Hansen, Frazier, those kinds of guys to free agency, somebody that can play infield, outfield, versatile. As you know, we like to use everybody.

So just creating some depth and being open to any opportunities that come, especially on the offensive side.

**Q. Diving into the depth a little bit and losing Singer in your rotation, it opens up two spots in the rotation now. How do you kind of view that going into Spring Training?**

MATT QUATRARO: I think we're going to stretch out Bubic again. He's been a starter. He adapted tremendously well in that reliever role last year. We couldn't have anticipated that. All the along the play is for him to start.

We like Marsh. We really liked him last year, and we would expect him to continue to grow.

Those are the kinds of things -- we'll also stretch out Lynch and see where that goes. You also have to fortify the bullpen too. We're lucky we have guys that can do either.

**Q. Last summer when I asked you if you were in 2023 relative to your talent level, and I said what about so far this year, are you performing at the talent level, you said you really couldn't address that during the season because you're too focused on tomorrow.**

MATT QUATRARO: Today.

**Q. Now that the season is over, how did your team perform?**

MATT QUATRARO: It's an interesting question because I



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really think at times I was disappointed that we hadn't won more. When you look back and think of where we had been to where we had finished the year, overall it was a huge positive, but I think we left some games out there.

I thought our guys -- especially with how well our starting pitching did, I thought we could have won more games, but everyone can say that, right? You actually have to go out and execute it.

But overall I would say it's very positive.

**Q. So you think you performed up to your talent level for the most part?**

MATT QUATRARO: No, I'm not saying that. I think we could have won some more games based on our talent level. There were some that I was disappointed that we didn't win a handful of games.

**Q. When J.J. went out and got India and said he wanted a lead-off hitter, was that as big of a problem for you in the manager spot having a consistent outfielder last year?**

MATT QUATRARO: I'm not as worried about having it be one person. That spot needs to be on base at a higher percentage than we were. Whether it's one person or a platoon, that doesn't matter to me. I think our guys embrace the fact it doesn't matter what spot they're hitting in in the order.

But the production of that spot needs to be better. That's why J.J. addressed it the way he did.

**Q. What do you like about India for the last few years?**

MATT QUATRARO: Watching him from the other side, the perception is this guy's a gamer. Like he just gets after it. That's what I liked as an opposing manager. Now having talked to him a couple of times, it seems like it's even better than I could have hoped for.

He's got a great attitude of whatever's going to help the team. I love the way you guys have competed. I love the way you put your team together, showing that he's been

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paying attention to what's been going on with us as well.

So his selflessness and everything we've heard about him as a teammate has been off the charts.

**Q. Bobby's base running, obviously he had this incredible season. As a base stealer, is that an area you see him getting maybe more aggressive?**

MATT QUATRARO: Absolutely, more efficient. Aggressive, I'm not sure. I think it depends on how he feels.

A lot of times people say why isn't he going? Why isn't he going? Well, he played 161 games. There's a wear and tear on your body that takes. To be playing a premium position at shortstop every day, there's some room to grow there.

Also, I think he's putting in a lot of work, I know, this off-season on his jumps, his reads, those kinds of things. I think that's where it lies. It's not in speed. It's not in aggressiveness. It's just in learning pitchers and understanding how to get those jumps.

**Q. When you see some of the prices that Soto and (indiscernible) are going for, do you worry about the trickle down effect making it harder for teams to compete?**

MATT QUATRARO: I'm not sure what you mean by the trickle down effect. We knew we weren't going to be in that market.

**Q. But future, two years from now, to keep one of your five-plus players, the price will go up.**

MATT QUATRARO: The market develops itself. That's what those guys get paid, and if that's the price of doing business, that's an issue that's far above my pay grade.

We have to be creative. We have to put the best 26 guys on a roster or the best 40 guys on a roster, not the best one or two.

I still think at the end of the day you have a chance to compete against those guys. Soto is going to hit four to five times a night. Those are impactful at-bats, but there's other ways to combat that with a full 26-man roster.

**Q. Unless you're Tampa. What are some of your most immediate short-term goals for this season?**

MATT QUATRARO: Win as many games as we possibly can. Our goals are the same as they were last year, win

the division and win the World Series.

We have a very competitive team. We have a team that can compete a lot of different ways -- pitching, defense, on the bases. But our goal is going to be to win the defense.

**Q. What about the first three months of the season? Do you have like short-term goals you want to achieve, quantitative or otherwise?**

MATT QUATRARO: We're going to try to win every night. I don't know how short term I can get past that. We're going to try to win the first game.

**Q. After years of the playoff format, and you just went through it, getting in first round, did it feel right? Did you like the playoff format as is? Anything you'd tweak?**

MATT QUATRARO: I don't give a lot of thought to the big, grand scheme of how it's laid out. I like to be in it. I've been on the other side of that too when I was with Tampa and we lost the two games in Cleveland in that Wild Card.

It's tough. In baseball, it's win or go home right out of the gate unless you win the division. So that puts a premium on winning the division. I think that's great.

But I like the fact that it's expanded.

**Q. I cover the Reds. We're getting Terry Francona. Describe the impact he makes on an organization.**

MATT QUATRARO: He's an ultimate difference maker from top to bottom. Everybody's included. I remember when he hired me, it was a feeling of -- that was the biggest decision they were going to make that winter was hiring me as an assistant hitting coach. He has the ability to welcome people, teach people. You're going to learn a lot just by watching him and listening to him.

**Q. What did you learn most from him?**

MATT QUATRARO: How to keep things light in the clubhouse, how to respect what the players go through every day, and how to include everybody. Not be a micromanager. Let your people work.

The other thing, when you watch him manage a game from February 15th to the end of October, he doesn't take a pitch off. He sees everything. He addresses everything. He wants to win every pitch, every inning.

**Q. Is there a point in your playing career when you realized I want to manage someday? When did that**



**come up?**

MATT QUATRARO: I always thought I would coach. I didn't -- even before I got into pro ball, I thought I would coach high school baseball or college baseball. So I always knew I wanted to coach, but I never had a point in my playing career where I was like, oh, I'm going to manage in the Big Leagues.

**Q. Do you think your background as a catcher influenced that at some point?**

MATT QUATRARO: Well, that's the only background I know, so that is my background. It's just asking a lot of questions and understanding you're going to learn a lot from everybody around you.

**Q. Have you talked more about playing time with Massey?**

MATT QUATRARO: Have we talked more about it? Just talking to Jonathan the few times, he tells me he gets reps at second, short, third all off-season. He said he got some reps last season in the outfield. We've talked about Massey in season last year if he could possibly go to left, if that helps his back.

All of those things are still up in the air. We have not gotten face to face with those guys?

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MATT QUATRARO: I don't want to say I've gotten to know him yet. I've had a couple of conversations. They've been great. I got a great first impression with him as a gamer. If that's old school, then yeah?

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MATT QUATRARO: Salvy is our primary catcher. The exact number, I don't really think that's important for us to go into the year. We have to take care of Salvy. He puts a lot of wear and tear on his body.

The really good thing for us is he's so good at first, and it will help him to play first. It will help him to DH. It will help to keep Vinnie off his feet a little bit.

The great part about it is Freddy could be a frontline catcher if it wasn't for Salvy. We feel really good about the tandem.

**Q. With the future in mind, have you seen much of Carter Jensen?**

MATT QUATRARO: I've seen him play in the fall league. I've seen him in Spring Training, watched some video of him swinging the bat. He's very impressive.

**Q. Does it become obvious -- Bobby Witt Jr. is from Texas, you know, covered his dad. Is it obvious when you get to know him, his dad was a Major League player, in regards to how he knows the game?**

MATT QUATRARO: I've given a lot of thought to that because I don't know if Bobby was born or he was an infant when his dad retired, so it wasn't like he grew up in clubhouses. To me, the way I've looked at it, it speaks more to the parenting of his mom and dad. He's a great person. They're really great people.

I think it speaks to his upbringing, not necessarily that his dad ever played. Because his dad doesn't walk around flaunting it. He's a humble guy just like Bobby is 1234.

**Q. Garcia having a position?**

MATT QUATRARO: He's going to play a lot at third base. We've seen his versatility. He is the shortstop if something were to happen to Bobby. He can play second. We've put him in the outfield a couple times.

I know in the spring we'll just move him around, but primarily at third base.

**Q. Do you see him more as an everyday kind of third baseman, or do you see him moving around more than he did last year?**

MATT QUATRARO: More at third, I would say, as of right now.

**Q. Kris Bubic, what do you see his role being on the staff?**

MATT QUATRARO: We're going to stretch him out. We're hoping that he starts. He's been a starter his whole career until last year coming back from injury. That's where we see him.

**Q. How about Kyle coming back from injury?**

MATT QUATRARO: That's a huge question mark for us. He's worked so hard to get back. It's a really big surgery. He's doing great. Everything's positive.

He'll have to build up, and hopefully he gets back to where he was prior. That would be a huge boost for us.

**Q. Is he on track for Opening Day? Is he pitching?**



**Will he be ready for Spring Training?**

MATT QUATRARO: He will be ready for Spring Training, yes. As far as -- there's so many variables in the spring. We've got to be careful in the buildup and all that kind of stuff. The hope is he's healthy and ready to go.

**Q. Do you view him as a starter going into Spring Training as long as that all tracks out?**

MATT QUATRARO: As far as being able to break as a starter, I would hope so. There's so much medical involved in that that I can't really say.

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