

MLB Winter Meetings

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Boston Red Sox

Alex Cora

Press Conference



2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

Q. Now that it's over, how would you characterize the Soto pursuit and how the organization was with that?

ALEX CORA: Man, obviously I cannot get into the details, right, but from my end it was fun. It was fun in a way, you know, to get to know people, right, and players of that status. It's amazing.

The kid, he gets it. He gets it. Let me put it that way. Obviously I always have fun with the group that represents him. You guys know how I feel about them, but it was a good experience, and I learned a lot. I learned a lot.

Q. What's the reaction like last night when you hear what happened?

ALEX CORA: I was with Sam and Eddie at a restaurant right down the street. It came out. They're looking at their phones, and then all of a sudden Scottie is coming with this army of personnel. It was kind of like the Gladiator with him walking in.

It's good for baseball. That's the way I see it. I think everybody was waiting for this to happen, and obviously it was interesting the way everybody reacted when we were in the restaurant.

Q. Where do you guys go from here? Now that this is off the table, where do you go from here?

ALEX CORA: We have plan A, plan A1, A2, A3, A4. There's a lot of ways to accomplish what we set to do. We've been talking about winning the division, right, and making it to the playoffs. There's different avenues, different ways. They're going to attack them and hopefully we can execute.

Q. You guys obviously are (indiscernible) pitching (indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: I think it's important at the end of the day. Our rotation, they did a good job the last year. The more, the better. That's the way we see it, right?

We've been talking to a lot of people, a lot of guys. Like I said, now it's up to us to execute and improve our team.

Q. When you spend a couple of weeks sort of -- I know you carried on other conversations while the Soto thing, but that requires a lot of energy and a lot of focus. Now that it's done, you have to pivot for something else. How challenging is that?

ALEX CORA: I think you have to ask that one to the front office. For me it was just being part of it. It's more for them than for me, right?

I don't have to sit on that table negotiating, talking to Scott I don't know how many times a day. I'm past that. That's more for Craig and the group.

Q. I know plan A, plan B, all the plans --

ALEX CORA: A1, A2, A3. I didn't say B.

Q. A1 was a lot of money, so that's -- now as you sit here today before anything else is announced, is it kind of exciting as a manager that this could go a number of ways? You could help yourself in a number of different ways.

ALEX CORA: I think the offseason has been exciting the whole time. We talked about it towards the end. When we sat down after the season was over that it was going to be an important offseason for the Red Sox and an exciting one. So far, so good.

I think we have done our research. We have talked to people. Like I said, we're going to improve the team. How are we going to do it? We'll see, but it's been fun so far.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about moving Rafy off third, creative stuff like that.

ALEX CORA: I don't know where that comes from. I haven't talked to Rafy about that. I have never talked to his agent about that.

Obviously people talk about his defense. Actually I thought

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last year he did an outstanding job, especially to his left. He actually struggled when he was playing in the shift. If you look at his errors, he didn't make plays at shortstop. That's something that we have to get better at, but I think if something like that happens with Rafy, with Casas, with Trevor, with Rafaela, the player will know first.

I guarantee you we haven't had those conversations.

Q. He takes so much pride in the defense in that stuff. I assume he wants to stay there and be there for as long as possible?

ALEX CORA: I think at the end of the day when you sign a contract like that, he signed as a third baseman, and he wants to be a third baseman. Right now he's a third baseman for the Boston Red Sox.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: Actually, I'm planning on going there next week to the Dominican. Everything so far -- everything has been good. He hasn't started grounders or swinging, but as far as the physical part of it, we're very pleased with that.

Q. (Indiscernible) what he has done in the past?

ALEX CORA: Not really. He'll do the same thing. He'll be in (indiscernible) until the end of December and then go to Tampa to finish his training in early January.

Q. Losing Tyler, how much urgency is there now to get at least one right-hander back?

ALEX CORA: I mean, obviously he did an outstanding job last year. We worked together to keep him on the field. The two injuries, a freak accident in left field and then what happened in Texas, right, the infection.

Good kid. Good player. Good at-bats, especially against lefties. We lose one. Now we have to make sure we do our job to balance the lineup. We've been talking about that the whole time, right? We'll see where we're at.

Q. How do you envision using (indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: I think we cannot talk about that, so yeah. You believe me? It's a good arm. That stuff on the left side, so we'll see.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: We want good pitchers. We want good pitchers, lefties, righties. If you throw with both hands, go

ahead. We just want to be better.

One thing for sure, and I can guarantee this, Bails and the group have done an amazing job throughout the offseason connecting with guys, making sure they're on point. He actually went to the Dominican last week to see Bello. He was in Fort Myers two weeks ago.

I think I always talk about MVP in the offseason, right? My MVP is Bails. He's our MVP right now.

Q. You aren't negotiating, but you are in the middle of in terms of watching the TV. Bails just had a big offer to a big guy. Does this offseason feel different for you than other offseasons?

ALEX CORA: Yeah. Yeah.

Q. I mean, like you said --

ALEX CORA: I mean, yeah.

Q. That's the thing. You said you were staying after the season.

ALEX CORA: The conversations with the players are a lot different than the last two years. I can guarantee you that. It's more about what we are trying to accomplish at the Big League level, understanding where we're at, you know, as far as player development.

It's not only four good players, by the way. There's more. I think people forget about that. You cannot sell player development and a great organization only with four players, right? There's more.

I think we're in a better place going into next year as far as like the comfort level. If something big happens like last year in Anaheim, we're going to be okay, right? We're not going to make excuse. I think certain guys stepped up last year, and they're actually ready to contribute, and there's others that as far as developing they're getting close to being Big Leaguers.

Q. Did you get the perception of players like Soto, for instance, the perception from him was, like, oh, you have a good team?

ALEX CORA: And they know -- they actually know a lot about who we have and what we're trying to accomplish.

It's been refreshing to say the least.

Q. Just trying to get the defense to play better.



ALEX CORA: I think we've been having this conversation four years in a row, right?

Q. Yeah, so if you keep Devers at third and Casas at first, really only you have second base. Do you think that's enough to -- in what you might do internally to help --

ALEX CORA: Our job is to keep trying to make them better. Obviously it's a different coaching staff. Flo is with us now. Are we going to do things differently? Yeah, we have to. We keep trying and trying, and we haven't been able to be successful.

I think the outfield, we did an amazing job, and in the infield we started pushing to be better. Hopefully we can do that.

Q. You guys haven't made it official yet, but adding (indiscernible) to the mix...

ALEX CORA: Yeah, I mean, Chris asked me about it. I said I'm not supposed to talk about it, but yeah, tough place.

Q. If he is hypothetically on your team, how do you look at the ninth inning with him, Slaten and Hendriks?

ALEX CORA: I think right now it's too early to be talking about the ninth inning, to be honest with you.

The offseason is halfway, and there's a lot of ways that we can improve the team. So let's see where we're at when we get to Fort Myers. Let's see where we're at after the Mexico series and when we get to Texas, somebody hopefully -- hopefully somebody closes that game and we win it. We have to wait.

Q. With Whitlock, how do you see --

ALEX CORA: He's progressing. He's doing well. I think the conversations now are not about developing him. Is he a starter or reliever? We'll use him the way we see it, and he was a very successful reliever in '21. He's been an okay starter for us.

Obviously injuries have been part of his path, but I think, to be honest with you, we'll use him the right way and the right way will be kind of like high-leverage innings. If it's early or late, we don't know yet.

Q. How about (indiscernible) progress?

ALEX CORA: He's doing well. He's actually in Fort Myers. Bells was happy with the way he's going about his business. Obviously the group down there, you got Kutter

and you have Winck and Bernie is down there too. So far so good.

Q. Given that that wasn't a full-fledged Tommy John procedure, would you expect him --

ALEX CORA: As far as time? To be honest with you, I'm not sure, but I think the progress is good, and everybody is pleased.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: Ohtani?

Q. This time did you see the difference? (Indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: My bad. I can't hear you.

Q. She's asking about Sasaki?

ALEX CORA: Good pitcher, yeah. Young. Throws hard. We'll see.

Q. When you see the differences when Ohtani was and now Sasaki --

ALEX CORA: I don't remember Ohtani. Was I -- I wasn't here, right?

Q. '17 going into '18.

ALEX CORA: It was '17 or '18? '18, yeah, yeah, yeah. I was here, but I think it's different. I think this guy -- like with Ohtani, he is just unique, right? The hitter, the pitcher. You know?

This guy he's a good pitcher too. He's pitching, I mean, like, at the highest of games, right? Being part of Team Japan and being successful. We'll see what he shows.

Q. Who are you looking for a backup catcher?

ALEX CORA: That's something that we've been talking about it. I think obviously -- I don't know if it's left-handed. It has to be a left-handed hitter. Last year we went both ways, right, with Reese and then with Danny. Just thinking about Danny pulling the ball and hitting homers at Fenway. We're talking about it.

I think the defensive part of it is something important. It's something that we're not hiding from. We have to be better. I think Connor is putting in the work to clean a few things up, and we feel good about him.

Obviously having somebody that can help him would be very important. Especially in the defensive part of it.

Q. You obviously spent a year with Bregman. What impact does he have on the player?

ALEX CORA: Alex is a good player, man. He's a complete player. He's a player that's been on winning teams, right, his whole career. Good defender. Offensively he's really good. He's a guy that a lot of people are talking about, and I do believe he can impact a Big League team, a championship-caliber team. He's that type of player.

Q. You talked about a willingness to move to second. How do you think he would kind of work there?

ALEX CORA: He should be okay, yeah. We actually had that conversation in '17 when I was with the Astros. We made some adjustments at third base, kind of like where he was playing, he was feeling uncomfortable.

At the end it paid off for him. He's a Gold Glove defender at third. I always envision him playing in the middle of the diamond, and those were conversations in '17. He can adjust, and he has a baseball IQ to do that. People might think the double play might be an issue. I don't believe so, but I think he can do whatever.

Q. How much do you like getting that position solidified? It seems like you've been kind of --

ALEX CORA: Was it when Pedroia went down or I didn't sign back in '08?

Q. One of those.

ALEX CORA: It's important. It's important. We had tried, right, and obviously in '18 we have two guys that were pretty solid, right, with Holt and Ian, right? They did an outstanding job.

We'll see. We'll see. One thing for sure, and this is something that I'm looking forward to, Juan is having an excellent offseason. He's gained some weight. He's putting in work trying to be more explosive. It will be interesting.

I think last year we talk about it, right, his offseason wasn't great. He went to Puerto Rico. He got hurt. He got hurt again. Then he got sick, right? Let's give him a mulligan and give him an opportunity to go to Spring Training and battle for a job and see what happens.

Q. You have a pretty young team. Other than Trevor, I

think every position player starter is under 30. What could a guy who has had the kind of experience that Bregman has had -- what could that mean from a leadership standpoint?

ALEX CORA: Obviously I cannot go deep into the player, right, but it's important. I think leadership means something, right, in the clubhouse? We've seen it before.

If you look at the two teams that were successful since I've been here, there were some voices in that clubhouse, right? They were loud, and they were very clear, and people actually listen to them.

We'll see what the future holds, but I think veterans -- you saw it in the playoffs, man. That team in L.A., they can talk about talent and their payroll and their Hall of Fame players, but something happened before Game 4 I think with the Padres, right? Freddy didn't play. Kiko plays, hit a homer, and they took off, right?

Experience matters, right? I think that's something that we are talking about, and hopefully we can add somebody that can help in that department and be a good player.

Q. Specific players aside, do you need more voices in your room, do you think?

ALEX CORA: I think we need guys to step up and be outspoken. Talk a little more. They can do it.

I'm a big believer that you don't have to have 15 years in the Big Leagues to be a leader in the clubhouse, and we give them the platform to do it. I'm very open about that.

If you have something to say that can benefit the team, go ahead and do it.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ALEX CORA: He's in Boston, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. He's over there. He's doing well. He's doing well. Working with Kiyoshi three times a week as far as the rehab. So far so good.

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