

MLB Winter Meetings

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Milwaukee Brewers

Manager Pat Murphy

Press Conference



2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

Q. Where are you on the coaching staff?

PAT MURPHY: Where am I on the coaching staff? I'm the manager.

Q. I understand that. Two hitting coaches, or three hitting coaches, pitching coach, and I don't know if there's other pieces that are secure.

PAT MURPHY: Walker McKinven took the -- do you guys know that? He took the job with the White Sox. We're excited about that. Quintin Berry is the third base coach for the Cubs. We're excited for Quintin. That was a good way to put it, wasn't it?

We hired E.T. and Al as our hitting guys. What else?

Q. Have you filled the first base position?

PAT MURPHY: That hasn't been announced yet, but we're close. So we're close with wrapping up the whole staff.

Q. What's life going to be like without Willy?

PAT MURPHY: Don't even want to think about it. I'm just excited for him. The human being that he is, that's what makes him great. His attitude that he brings every single day, how he goes about his business, consummate professional. He was a leader in our clubhouse. He did as much for the ball club as anybody.

Played 161 games and would have played 162. This kid is special. He deserves everything he gets. I couldn't be happier.

Q. The glue?

PAT MURPHY: I don't even want to think about it. It's a new soup. We've got to get that can opener out and open up the ingredients and pour it in and stir it up. You lose a guy with that impact, it's huge for our club and how we're built. That's a big ingredient.

Q. How would you describe his playing skills at this point in his career, especially as kind of a two-way type player?

PAT MURPHY: Willy? Oh, man, the guy can play, man. You want the ball hit to him in a big situation. You want him at the plate in big situations. That's the best way I can compliment.

He plays every day, and you want him up in every big situation. He's proven it time and time again. That's who he is. He loves it. He revels in it. He wants to talk to you people. He wants to be in the spotlight. It takes a lot to get there and uphold that day in and day out.

I can't say enough about who he is. Player skills are what they are. Everybody has strengths and weaknesses. But who this guy is and how he goes about his business -- how he treats people, how he treats his teammates, how he leads. Big void.

We lost a lot. We lost Burnes. We lost Hader in the recent years. But losing this guy, whew.

Q. Any further down the road you'll know how you'll move those pieces around in the infield?

PAT MURPHY: I think as we get closer -- you obviously know there's an option either Ortiz or put Turang over. Think it's one or the other. Unless we acquire somebody that's a better fit for that because Joey played third base so well, what can you say?

You take a guy, a platinum glove winner, take him off second. If it's best for the team, we do it. So we'll see. It's one or the other.

Q. Big picture question for you. The landscape in MLB right now, big market teams versus middle and small market teams is huge. Yet the Brewers, you guys consistently are a contending team. What are the elements? I know you've lost a lot of guys over the years. What are the things that you guys do to stay a quality team?

PAT MURPHY: I think you've got to credit the front office

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right off the bat for providing that type of depth. I think the guys that are the main stays, the Yeliches of the world and the Willys up to this point, they provided such good leadership. Devin Williams, they've provided such good leadership that it's enabled us to keep it together.

But every year is a new batch. You feel like you're starting over sometimes. Not totally, but change is part of it, and we've got to keep doing it. It's not -- we don't predict. We don't expect. We just get after it day by day.

Q. What do you think will make Joel a good bench coach? What are the attributes that he has?

PAT MURPHY: Who?

Q. Is he the bench coach for the White Sox?

PAT MURPHY: Walker.

Q. Yes. What are his benefits to the White Sox as a manager?

PAT MURPHY: Great decision-maker. He's all in. It's a life work for him. It's not something that -- it's not a job. He's all in. Great decision-maker. He understands how the front office works. He understands how the baseball staff works. He'll be a great help to Will. You guys got a great manager in Will.

Q. Regarding Walker, will his job be specifically replaced in the Brewers, like his skill set? Was his position, did it evolve with his skill set in his time in Milwaukee?

PAT MURPHY: It did, it evolved with his skill set. It's very unique. We're going to have a tough time replacing it all.

Q. Francona going over to the Reds, what kind of impact can that have on this division?

PAT MURPHY: I think he's one of the greats myself. I've been lucky enough to know him since the late '80s. He was in the White Sox organization when I was at Notre Dame. I love Tito. I love him.

We both coached a young middle infielder from Sacramento area at different stages in his career, so we built a relationship through that Pedroia connection. I just talked to him. He's wonderful.

It's definitely going to help them.

Q. Have you been in contact with Yelich at all recently? Where is he at with his back?

PAT MURPHY: He just had his birthday. You know I'm big on birthdays.

Q. Huge, huge.

PAT MURPHY: That's not true. I think it's silly. Celebrating birthdays, and you're like 50 years old. You're celebrating a birthday. Like today's my birthday. Come on. It's got to be one of the days.

Q. You want an excuse to have a party, right?

PAT MURPHY: Exactly. I don't see that. I don't see the psychology behind it. Maybe that's where I'm demented. So what was the question?

Q. Yelich. How's his back doing?

PAT MURPHY: He's doing well. He's on track. Not doing baseball yet, but he's on track.

Q. Do you know what that means, does that mean coming to Spring Training?

PAT MURPHY: He'll be ready, yes.

Q. A question about last year. Relative to the team's true talent level, do you think that you underperformed, overperformed, or basically did what your team should have done? Is that answerable?

PAT MURPHY: I don't look at it that way, I'm sorry. That's for other people. For me, I'm just proud of the guys the way they competed. We didn't have a prolonged -- it was almost uncanny. We didn't have a prolonged losing streak, and they came to compete.

I don't know what people thought in the beginning, but it sounds like nobody thought we could win the division and we did. Could we have done better? Yeah, everybody can do better in anything. There's ways to get better. And we plan on that.

But what happened in 2024 serves as a reference to how we can learn from some things and try to move on and get better. That's it. Predicting or analyzing and how good did we do, it's over with.

Q. As a follow-up to that, I was actually in Pittsburgh in the last week of the season when you played there and didn't get a chance to ask you this question, which is why is your team so good? That was a question people were asking me. They said, you should ask him, how do you keep winning? Because you don't

have a lot of big name players.

PAT MURPHY: It's about hungry players, man. Hungry players make us all look good. They're hungry. They're committed to each other. We had great leadership in the locker room. Yeah, I think that was that.

Q. (Indiscernible) announced yesterday he's about to start playing winter ball. Where do you stand on your players going down there to play?

PAT MURPHY: I love it. They're itching to go. He's a young man. He wants to get that bat in his hands, you know what I mean? That's great.

Q. Is there something that you might want him to try or adjust while he's down there?

PAT MURPHY: Right now I just want him to stay healthy and scratch his itch, you know what I mean? He wants to go and play. I'm happy for him. I think winter ball is awesome.

Q. What's the next step for Mitchell? Do you see him getting more everyday at-bats?

PAT MURPHY: He hasn't been healthy. He's been behind the eight ball, but that kid's been facing that his whole life. I'm really excited about what's next. If he can stay healthy and get off to a type of healthy start, the sky's the limit. That kid can be really special.

Q. Going back to Willy, the metrics for him the last couple years were pretty varied. What did you see last year?

PAT MURPHY: He's a good player, man. You can break down a lot of things. There's a lot of situations year to year.

Everybody, as they get older, it looks like their defensive metrics change. Willy knows how to play. His confidence is at an all time high. He puts pressure on himself. He's his own worst critic, but he's a total ballplayer. But he has weaknesses like everyone else.

But because his attitude is what it is, the kid's going to -- he's going to rise above. With the club the Giants have and the kid he's got to his right, whew. He's under rated, Willy's underrated. They're both going to be there a while. They've got a nice deal over there.

Q. (Indiscernible) -- what role in enforcing consistent standards?

PAT MURPHY: Walker coached our framing, our catching framing, and that's a big part of the game. You can really break it down like the difference between a 1-1 count and a 1-2 count might be because of what the catcher does. Not always, but it might be. It's turned out over time it can be a very big part of the game, and he coached our framing. And he did a great job. Built his reputation that way.

Q. Is he one of the guys who gets better upon arrival?

PAT MURPHY: Exactly right.

Q. It's getting to the time where the pitchers are going to start to go. What are you going to instruct Ashby, Hall, Misorowski in terms of -- do you want them to build up to their game?

PAT MURPHY: I think for sure Ashby and Hall need to build up because there's a possibility they're both starters.

I think in Misorowski's case, teaching him how to do things at the Big League level is essential. He's a big part of it, yeah. So I don't think we push it right now that way. We can always get there, but there's no rush. Let's make sure he's healthy and make sure the program he is developing out is something we've really got our eyes on.

Q. How about Abner? Where is he?

PAT MURPHY: Getting healthy. Yeah, we're counting on him. We're counting on him.

Q. With the way the left side of the infield is a little bit in flux, do you see Tyler Black being in the equation at third base at all? Is that something that you've considered?

PAT MURPHY: It's on the board. Sal Frelick is on the board. Hard to take a Gold Glove winner -- that would be like the stupidest managerial decision ever, take the Gold Glove winner from right field and put him in third.

But maybe, because we worked him all spring there, maybe we'll take another random guy and work him somewhere, and he'll win a Gold Glove at his original position.

Q. Perkins?

PAT MURPHY: He was our third catcher. Did you ask me that before?

Q. Yeah, you never answered.

PAT MURPHY: Sorry.



Q. Do you think Sal will kind of split in the spring between two --

PAT MURPHY: We'll see. It just depends on what happens here in the coming months. Yeah, we've got an uphill battle, man. We're right in the same spot. We've got stuff going on, and we're going to have to battle for everything we get.

Q. What about Woody? Where is he at? Does it feel like he's going to be in a good spot?

PAT MURPHY: I think he is. I think we have to be smart about how everything goes. It's a shoulder surgery. We can't expect him to come back the way he was, but I think that we're obviously dealing with a guy that knows how to do things and he's going to want to push himself. I think we've got to be very smart in how we handle it.

Q. Will he be going in Spring Training?

PAT MURPHY: Yes, absolutely.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT MURPHY: I don't know enough about it. I haven't had enough experience. I've heard a lot, have inquired a lot, but I haven't had enough experience to make any comments at all.

I'd just say this, Major League Baseball isn't trying to screw up the deal, you know what I mean? So they're not going to do anything that isn't -- we can question a lot of moves they made in the past, but they've all worked out. Who doesn't like the 15-second clock? They make good adjustments.

I trust that there's good people behind it, so why talk about it until there's some experience talking about it.

Q. What did you think when you saw 765 million?

PAT MURPHY: I was kind of happy because they can't sign too many more guys (laughter).

I just love to see guys -- like they're playing to win, right? They're going after it. And it just kind of reminds you that that's what we're in. This is a deal where there's 30 clubs and they're all trying to win. They're all trying to do whatever it takes legally to do it.

So when it gets to that kind of stuff, I can't relate, but it just reminds you like this is the greatest league in the world. I'm privileged to be part of it.

Q. Do you remember when you first started to want to coach, want to be manager? When did you first know that you wanted to do that?

PAT MURPHY: When did I want to coach? I think I was playing Minor League ball. I gave up a long homer to Fred McGriff, and I went like, huh, maybe I ought to think about that Division III football job I got offered.

Q. Very few managers were pitchers. Almost half of them now are catchers. What do you make of that?

PAT MURPHY: I caught my junior year in college, and the Giants wanted to make me a catcher when I signed with them. Irrelevant. It's like what color car are we driving?

The guys that played 15 years in the Big Leagues and got the perspective behind the plate, Stephen Vogt or some of those guys, but that doesn't matter.

Q. It's all random?

PAT MURPHY: How I ended up wanting to coach is I couldn't play anymore, you know what I mean? I guess I could have still, but I started coaching so young. I was a Division III football, baseball coach while I was still playing in the Minor Leagues, and I kept doing that for a while. I realized that -- then I got offered the Notre Dame job, and I was like I've got to do this. So that was it.

Q. What advice would you give to first year managers?

PAT MURPHY: Buckle your chinstrap, you know what I mean? It's a long season. Don't make it about you. I think that's number one. Don't make it about you.

If you can maintain that and check that every day, then I think you've got a shot to at least understand it. As I've said openly -- I'm not trying to be super humble or anything -- I'm a long way from where I want to be as a coach, even at my age. You want to keep growing. You want to keep getting better. You want to keep learning. You want to handle this all right because you want to help those people you're around grow.

You'll never be able to measure it, but you want to help them. That's our job. Impact players, impact people that you're around. That's it. If you want to just keep that perspective and keep doing it -- that's why when I answer the question about why we're good, I can't even wrap my head around that. We do certain things that are sound baseball things and try to keep stirring as much as we can to make it taste good.

Q. What's the biggest difference between Contreras when you first met him and where he is now?

PAT MURPHY: He's maturing. He's got a ways to go, that's the beautiful thing. This kid puts it all together, whew. He'll be signing a Willy deal.

He's special. He's a better player than he was when we first got him. He's more confident. But at the same time, he puts a lot of pressure on himself. We've got to get him in the best possible space so his head space is as long as it's ever been. The sky's the limit.

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