

# MLB Winter Meetings

Monday, December 9, 2024

Dallas, Texas, USA

**Los Angeles Angels**

**Manager Ron Washington**

Press Conference

**Q. Obviously last year you talked a lot about growth and wanting to get a lot of those younger players in a better position to be successful. How much more expectation do you feel with your team this year now that you've kind of had that growth?**

RON WASHINGTON: I think when you've been through something for the first time and you've weathered the storm, the expectations go up. But it's not the expectations that will bog them down. It's an expectation that they should envision wanting for themselves, and that's to be successful for the whole.

I think my young group last year did a tremendous job of staying in the fight and making it through the 162-game grind, and they know what it's about now. I think they're ready for that challenge. It was all good. There was a lot of positives that came out of last year.

**Q. Do you expect to be a contender this year?**

RON WASHINGTON: I think everybody's at that point in Spring Training. So we've just got to put our group together. And I think if you ask me that question when we're getting ready to break out of Spring Training, I'll be able to answer it a lot better.

But as far as being successful, I'm always ready to be successful, and the group I have is ready to be successful. We've just got to wait until we get everybody in camp and see what we have and then ask me that question.

As far as trying to predict something that's going to happen in the game of baseball, that's hard.

**Q. You guys have been pretty aggressive so far in the off-season. What do you think of the moves Perry has made?**

RON WASHINGTON: I think he's made some tremendous moves. He brought in professional baseball people. Besides being players, they're professional people.



## 2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

There isn't much that the game can offer that that group that Perry's brought in haven't experienced. We didn't have that last year.

I think this year we're looking forward to the year, we're looking forward to getting down to Spring Training, and we're looking forward to preparing and see where it goes.

**Q. How much more do you feel you guys can do this off-season? Where do you see the needs on this roster?**

RON WASHINGTON: There's needs in every area, and we're discussing every area. We're trying to lock down on every area. But to specifically come up with something right now, we're just going to keep adding to our club in a way that we think can help us be a better team in '25 than it was in '24.

**Q. How much do your young players you currently have, the core, how much can they get better from the guys you brought in?**

RON WASHINGTON: The majority of the core that you're talking about, if you take their baseball card and you turn it around, they've got one line. If that one line is their ceiling, we're in trouble. I think that one line can get better. It will get better because of the kids.

They're very special kids, and we gave them a chance to experience a Major League season. And I'm looking forward to what their growth is going to show us when we get to Spring Training.

**Q. Some of the new guys, though, that are going to be around them now, how much will that help them?**

RON WASHINGTON: The good thing that Perry's done by bringing in the new guy, each and every one of them have presence. And you need presence because there won't be performance going on all the time. And when you have presence, it shows you how to handle adversity. So he brought in presence along with character and along with some kids with some experience.

**Q. Do you have a sense of how much time**

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

**(indiscernible) Zach Neto?**

RON WASHINGTON: There's no timetable. We'll see when we get into Spring Training and he'll let us know when he's ready to go.

**Q. Any concern about his status right now?**

RON WASHINGTON: He's 22 years old? I'm not worried about that. If you know Neto, he thinks he can play right now.

**Q. When you were one of the new guys back in the day and they had guys on that team that had a presence, who was it for you? Who did you look up to when you were that new guy in baseball?**

RON WASHINGTON: When I was the new guy, Kirby Puckett came on, and I was already established. As a matter of fact, Kirby Puckett took me out of a single room, because when they brought him on, they made him become my roommate. First time I ever had a single room in the Major Leagues, so that's what Kirby did to me.

The guy that I looked up to was Tom Kelly, who was the manager, guys like Gary Ward. That was the type of guys that I had when I made it to the Big Leagues. Reggie Smith, Davey Lopes. I started with the Dodgers in 1977. So I was a special kid because I got to learn and understand what it takes to be a winner from guys like those guys on the Dodgers. Bill Russell, Steve Garvey, Ron Cey, Rick Monday. That's when I came up.

But when Puckett arrived in Minnesota, I was the big boy.

**Q. When you see the contract that Juan Soto is going to sign, do you feel like you guys -- do you want to be in a position to get guys like that?**

RON WASHINGTON: I don't think that I have the right to discuss what's going on with Soto. I don't have the right to comment on that.

**Q. Maybe just abstract, the ability to be in those types of negotiations with big time free agents, do you feel like that's important for this organization to be in the mix?**

RON WASHINGTON: I don't even want to get involved in that right there, you know what I'm saying? Then I've got to comment on another team's payroll. I'm not interested in that. You can ask me something about the Angels. I'll comment on that all day.

**Q. With Ben Joyce as a closer, what did you think of**

**him last year with his growth?**

RON WASHINGTON: I'm comfortable if we have to go into the season with Ben Joyce as the closer. We're not finished putting pieces in our bullpen, but we certainly have to watch him because he's never had to be the guy to help a club grind through 162 games. And every time it's his opportunity to take the ball, he takes it. We've got to watch it.

But if that's the route we have to go, I'm very comfortable with Joyce taking the ball.

**Q. Do you know anything about the rookie Sasaki? If you do, what do you know?**

RON WASHINGTON: All I know about him is what I've read, but I don't know anything more. If he has intentions of coming to the United States -- undoubtedly he's a good pitcher because good pitchers, when they decide to come over to the United States, they're good pitchers. That's all I got on him.

If he was coming to the Angels, I might have something to say (laughter).

**Q. How about (indiscernible) from Japan?**

RON WASHINGTON: I don't know anything about him either other than, if he's got the opportunity to come to the United States, he'll be a good pitcher.

**Q. The Japanese pitchers you know, what is the good part about Japanese pitchers?**

RON WASHINGTON: Their work ethic and what they do to be successful. They're all pig headed. They're really, really tied to what they think makes them good. It took a while to get through to Yu Darvish, but I got through to him, and the rest is history.

The pitcher that Yu Darvish has become, he didn't become that because of Ron Washington. But I did have some time with him, and I did help him understand some things that he had to do to maintain success. But Yu Darvish already had it.

It's like any other person in the game of baseball, the more reps you get and the more you're in some place, the better you become if you have the ability, and he had the ability.

**Q. With bases getting a little bit bigger, how did that change the mindset of the players with basepads and stealing?**

RON WASHINGTON: I don't think it had that much effect, it really didn't. Good base runners are going to be good base runners whether the base is bigger or whether the base was smaller. The bad base runners were going to be bad base runners whether the base was bigger or whether the base was smaller.

It may be helpful to slide away from a tag, but I didn't notice any difference myself.

**Q. So the number of pickoffs didn't change?**

RON WASHINGTON: Well, that helped the good base runners. It didn't help the bad base runners because the bad base runners don't think. The good base runners are always thinking. So the good base runners took advantage of it. The bad base runners, they didn't know how to take advantage of it before it happened, so they wasn't going to take advantage of it because the bags were bigger.

**Q. Do you think Solero is a full-time DH?**

RON WASHINGTON: That's a tough question because I don't want to put Solero in a corner by saying something that this is all he can do. He brings a lot to the situation. We'll just get to Spring Training, and he's an outfielder along with being a DH. That's all I'm going to say too that.

**Q. I know that baseball would love to see a healthy Mike Trout, and you too as well. What are your expectations in 2025?**

RON WASHINGTON: My expectations of Mike Trout are the same as Mike Trout. He want to come back healthy, and he wants to put a tremendous year together for the Los Angeles Angels, and that's what we all want. I do believe that we're going to help him accomplish that. We're going to help him accomplish that.

But I'm going to tell you, Mike Trout still today -- this is a big statement I'm making -- 80 percent of the players in the league, and you can go to both leagues, Mike Trout is still better than them.

**Q. Do you have any thoughts on how you can help him accomplish that?**

RON WASHINGTON: Well, just watch his playing time, just try to make certain that we don't wear him out, try to convince him to take some days off. Notice when I say convince him.

We'll see where it goes. That's the only way we can manage it. What happened to Mike, wasn't nothing we could do about it. We're going to try to manage it this year.

We're going to need him to play a lot of ball games, but we'll help him manage it.

**Q. Can you talk about where Rendon is at right now?**

RON WASHINGTON: Like everyone else coming into camp, preparing to be the best as he can be, and we'll make decisions as we go along.

**Q. Do you feel like Rendon has to earn a job and maybe he can earn a roster spot in Spring Training?**

RON WASHINGTON: Well, everyone that comes into Spring Training is in that situation, earning a roster spot and earning a job. He's no different.

**Q. Obviously someone like Mike Trout, that's --**

RON WASHINGTON: He has to earn a roster spot and a job (laughter). No, I'm just kidding.

When we get to Spring Training, let him play this out and see where it goes.

**Q. Sal Fasano, is he going to help the pitchers or catchers or both?**

RON WASHINGTON: He's going to help Jerry out with the catchers and Barry out with the pitchers. He has expertise in both fields. We wouldn't be using him right if we didn't let him extend his arms and be in both parts of it. Because he's got a lot of knowledge and a lot of wisdom and a lot of expertise in all of that. Big addition. Big addition.

**Q. Being a catcher, how much of an impact can he have with d'Arnaud helping out?**

RON WASHINGTON: Well, d'Arnaud's growth in his older years has come with Sal. No, no, no, we got the best of both worlds. We got two great catching instructors, and we got a great game planner. We got a great catcher that has been through the wars, won championships, been in a regular league, and he could be a great tutor for O'Hoppe. So we're in a good position in that situation right there.

**Q. Did you get to instructional league at all to watch any of those guys?**

RON WASHINGTON: No, I didn't get to instructional league. I was on the highway during instructional league, and when I got home, I wasn't ready to fly anywhere. But I got reports every day, and that was that.

**Q. How impressive was it to see Luis Rengifo break out last year?**



the best we could do to manage what we had.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

RON WASHINGTON: He's a baseball player. Before he got hurt, he was actually putting one of his better years together. He brings energy. He brings work ethic. And we're certainly looking forward to him being healthy in February when he comes into Spring Training and continue that. So he's a big part of what we're planning on doing moving forward in '25.

**Q. Did you help him in terms of -- I noticed his base stealing numbers went way up. How did you impact him?**

RON WASHINGTON: Well, I didn't impact him. EY and Bo Porter, I think they're the ones that impacted his running on the base pads. Something that -- a quality that he has inside of him, they were just able to help him understand how to use it to gain more success. So those are the two guys that impacted him on the running of the base pads.

**Q. How do you value the first year back? Was it a tough one for you?**

RON WASHINGTON: Oh, it was positive. If you look at the record, yeah, it was negative. When we first started out the season, our main goal was to get our young kids through a season, ensure their abilities that they're capable of expressing. We did that.

Now, we didn't plan for all the injuries that happened because. In my opinion, if we could have kept a healthy club throughout the whole year, then the record, I truly believe, would have been different. So I'm very proud of the way my young kids hung in there. I'm very proud of the way they showed up every single day and got after it.

In the end, we are going to be rewarded for it moving forward in '25. So it was a very positive year.

There's some things we just couldn't foresee that happened, but it did stop us from going out there every day and preparing to be the best we can be every single day.

**Q. How much different was it between managing the game today as you did previously with so many years in between?**

RON WASHINGTON: Well, the only difference is now in the game you've got much more youth. When I managed previously, I had experience. You got to work harder when you have youth. You got to teach more when you have youth. And it has to be ongoing.

We made adjustments we had to make. Again, I'm very pleased with the way my young kids responded. We did

