

# MLB Winter Meetings

Monday, December 9, 2024

Dallas, Texas, USA

**Los Angeles Dodgers**

**Manager Dave Roberts**

Press Conference

**Q. How does it feel to be at the Winter Meetings after a World Series championship?**

DAVE ROBERTS: It's been a whirlwind. I actually just got back from Japan Saturday and haven't had a chance to celebrate too much. But it feels good. It's nice coming here to the Winter Meetings not having to try to spin something.

**Q. How was Japan?**

DAVE ROBERTS: Japan was great. I actually had a chance to have dinner with Sadaharu Oh, which was something I'll always remember. Took my son. Got a chance to go to where I was born in Okinawa, did a commercial there. It was good, great. Ate some great food too.

**Q. Brandon said the plan is to have Mookie at shortstop next year. How did that all come together after the season? How much confidence do you have about next year given the full off-season?**

DAVE ROBERTS: Where we are right now, and just to sort of echo where Gomer is at in the sense of what Mookie took on, sort of just really spontaneous last year. There was some good things.

Right now as the roster is kind of where it's at, continues to give us a lot of flexibility. It's an easy bet to bet on him with the full off-season. Just feeling good right now where we're at. Obviously there's some things that can change, but all the confidence in Mookie.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

DAVE ROBERTS: I think that the footwork was fine. Getting to the baseball, catching it, securing it, good. It's just the adjustment from the outfield, the longer stroke to the infield, the different arm angles led to some errant throws.

Obviously Mookie is already early in his off-season work as



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far as already on the baseball diamond taking grounders and things like that with this anticipation.

**Q. Coming off the World Series championship, you guys have been one of the most aggressive teams in free agency. What do you like about the way the 2025 is shaping up for you guys?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I like it. I like the way the off-season's played out certainly. I think obviously last year there was a lot of deliberation, waiting, so I think that players, agents wanted to be a little bit more aggressive.

Certainly with what we've done so far, we've gotten better. I can't discuss too much as far as the detail and the players, but I like the direction we're going certainly.

**Q. How important was it to get somebody like Snell to kind of stabilize the rotation?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I don't know how much I can talk about him.

**Q. He's announced.**

DAVE ROBERTS: He's official? Okay, good. I can talk about Snell. Thanks.

Great. Snell's great. Obviously we've had a lot of familiarity. Great competitor, swing and miss stuff. I think he's only going to get better.

It's also one of those things where you talk about guys like Teo last year, other guys that have signed back with us or signed with us on a one-year term, they want to be here. So I think that that's something that -- I don't think you can put dollars to dollars on those desires. But just someone's desire to be in Los Angeles and be a part of what we're doing, it's easier to bet on the upside.

**Q. Teo's currently still a free agent. How difficult would it to be to replace his spot in the lineup and his presence in the clubhouse?**

DAVE ROBERTS: It would be tough. Obviously I'm a huge fan of Teo. We have a great relationship. I thought,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

his words, he loved everything about being a Dodger, and I'm always going to be a Teo fan.

There's not a whole lot of guys that can start 157, 158 ball games and post and then to be that productive. Then you layer on being in a big market, helping us win a championship. So those players don't come around very often.

But obviously Teo has put himself in a very good position as a free agent and had a very productive year. So he's got some decisions to make as well. He's going to kind of suss those out.

Yeah, I just -- it would be hard for me not to see him coming back.

**Q. With all the success you had, by necessity, was the bullpen in the postseason. Is that something you'd rather put in the rear view mirror now to disassemble it for the starting rotation?**

DAVE ROBERTS: Yeah, a bullpen game, there's a couple of determinants as far as why you do it, benefits, disadvantages. But I think in a vacuum, you'd love to have a guy or guys that you can run out there three times in the lineup. Because, to be quite honest, the tough thing about a bullpen game is you have to make more decisions. And the more decisions you make, the more chances there are for you to be wrong in betting on the person for a particular night.

Fortunately in this postseason, for the most part, it worked out.

**Q. Did you have to freelance getting the tempo of what the pitcher looked like in that situation as you were going from game to game?**

DAVE ROBERTS: It just made it more challenging, it really did. It's a lot easier to keep eyes on two or three pitchers in a night versus six or seven or eight.

**Q. A year ago today, you guys signed Ohtani. Did you ever think one year later that record would be shattered?**

DAVE ROBERTS: No, I didn't. I think it was one of those -- just getting Ohtani seemed like it was going to be just the biggest coup, which it was. I really didn't let my head go to 40-40, let alone 50-50. I thought about winning the World Series, but just kind of what he accomplished on the field.

I know you're talking about the other thing. But what he accomplished on the field, it blows my mind. Then you talk

about what just happened yesterday, I certainly didn't see that happening, period. Very surprised. I think like all of us.

**Q. What do you think of where you guys were at in the Soto sweepstakes?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I know we were in there, but I think that obviously there were some other teams that are even more motivated, but what a great player.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

DAVE ROBERTS: I think that the bigger part is it's a shortened off-season, but that's an honor that we got to play, as you said, the last team standing, so that's a good thing. Yeah, we started out last year in South Korea. To then play essentially nine months to then start back up.

To your question, there are some guys -- you know, Evan Phillips being one -- didn't finish healthy. Not exactly sure where he'll be once we start Spring Training. But if we were to start probably on a regular deal in April, he might be healthy. Again, he might be healthy in Tokyo. I don't know that.

But there are some guys that we certainly don't feel as comfortable ramping up earlier, but you're still playing a couple games in Tokyo that matter.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

DAVE ROBERTS: I don't think the shoulder -- the left shoulder is going to have much of an impact on Shohei's pitching. I think his innings -- his right elbow is the biggest factor. I just think the question is when he starts pitching in Major League games and how we build him up prior to.

I don't see it as a Minor League rehab situation, but I don't know. I think it's a conversation that once we sort of get closer, we'll figure out. That's going to be -- we've got to kind of be nimble with that one.

**Q. With the World Series and any of that postseason, what have you learned from those guys with the severity of his injuries and having to have surgery?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I think it's one of those things where there's a lot of players that play a Major League season, and at the end of the season they have surgeries. But with our guys, what they went through, what they were going through, I just think it speaks to how special playing in a postseason -- and certainly in both those guys' cases, the World Series -- how hard it is to get there.

For those guys to play through the severity of injuries that they did is pretty miraculous. It's really not surprising because they wouldn't have had it any other way.

You're looking at Shohei, what he was going through in the World Series, what Freddie was going through for, call it six weeks. It took a lot of will and desire.

That's my mentor right there, Bud Black, Rockies manager.

**Q. Do you expect Shohei to be ready in Japan?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I expect Shohei to be ready to hit in Japan.

**Q. You do. So you think he'll be active, labrum surgery --**

DAVE ROBERTS: I don't think he'd have it any other way. That's our expectation.

**Q. He played with one arm in the World Series.**

DAVE ROBERTS: It's not cemented. If something doesn't look right, feel right, obviously we've got to pivot. Maybe a lot of disappointed fans. We're going to do what's best for Shohei. But where we stand right now, I expect him to play.

**Q. Another pitcher (indiscernible) from Japan, what do you know about him?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I can't say anything about him. I hear he did get posted, but very talented.

**Q. What do you think the likelihood of Shohei pitching in Japan?**

DAVE ROBERTS: Very unlikely. I just don't see us starting the clock in March to then think that we would keep that continuously going through October. Then that would call for a break or reprieve in the middle of the season, so I don't know. I still think unlikely.

**Q. Obviously he's done it before, but how much more challenging do you think it is just managing on a day-to-day basis when he is doing both things full-time again, especially coming back from a second major surgery? What do you think about what you might have to do differently or how does that whole process work?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I haven't thought a lot about that right now, but it's going to be interesting. Because the continued, not necessarily rehab with the left shoulder. But

keeping it strong, maintaining it, maintaining it within the overall body stuff. And then the pitching regimen, the side sessions of pitching, to then be a part of hitters' meetings and get ready, get ramped up to take at-bats as a DH.

I guess if anyone can manage it, it's Shohei. He doesn't waste much time when he's at the ballpark. But it's certainly going to look a lot different.

**Q. What makes the Dodgers a good landing place for players from Japan? What's the pitch?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I think the infrastructure of Japanese speakers on the staff, Minor League staff, training staff, front office, baseball operations side of things. We really have that covered.

I think our relationship with the country itself. We've built a lot of relationships with Japanese players in the last 30 years. Obviously, you talk about Los Angeles, which is -- there's little Tokyo. There's a very good Asian, specifically Japanese, community. I think the weather is very conducive to sort of -- not necessarily Hokkaido and northern Japan, but Tokyo and down south, closer to on the West Coast being closer to Japan.

Again, the fan base. I think that players that come over want to win. I think we're built to win now and for a long time.

**Q. Did going to Japan add more context on Shohei being gone but not forgotten?**

DAVE ROBERTS: Yes, it's the first time I've been back in about 20 years. There's a lot of Dodger support. It did give me a lot of context because Shohei texted me and said, get ready because you're going to see a lot of pictures of him all over and he was right.

**Q. Did you get recognized?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I did. More than in Los Angeles. It's pretty bananas.

**Q. What that a personal trip or MLB sponsored?**

DAVE ROBERTS: It was a personal businessy type thing and also a personal family vacation.

**Q. What did you think was the coolest part of the experience?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I think honestly having a conversation with Sadaharu Oh was absolutely insane. Being at a hotel in Okinawa, seeing my family there was pretty amazing.

Yeah, I did a lot of cool stuff.

**Q. Isn't he about 80 now?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I want to say he's 90, yeah. But he's very -- in great shape. Obviously we were talking hitting. Obviously he's a huge fan of Shohei. It was just -- I told him, I always thought he was a figment of my imagination. I never really believed that Sadaharu Oh existed until I saw him and put eyes on him.

**Q. How long were you there?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I was there for seven days.

**Q. Have you talked to Shohei after you got back?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I have not.

**Q. Or exchanged texts?**

DAVE ROBERTS: No. I texted with him before I left, and then I had a meeting with Kuriyama, his old manager. We had a sitdown. So I sent him a picture and told him I heard some stories about him and made a joke. Not true, but I just sent a picture to Shohei of me and his old manager.

**Q. When you were coming to the airport, people were like hanging above --**

DAVE ROBERTS: That was at the city council.

**Q. Can you talk about your impression of Roki?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I'm not.

**Q. You're not supposed to talk about that?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I'm not.

**Q. Are you excited to see the stadium renovations?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I am. We're going to have a couple cages. The locker room, the weight room is going to be kind of more current. Logistically it will make more sense.

It's going to be close, our home opener to when they get everything all buttoned up. I hear they're working tirelessly, so we'll see. I'm excited, yeah.

My office is going to get a little bit bigger, which would be nice.

**Q. Just a little bit nicer than it was when you were**

**playing there?**

DAVE ROBERTS: I hope so. Yeah, they're working on that. Maybe they can change the carpet too. We'll see.

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