

MLB Winter Meetings

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Dallas, Texas, USA

Cleveland Guardians

Manager Stephen Vogt

Press Conference

Q. What's the biggest difference today versus where you were last year at this point?

STEPHEN VOGT: The fire hose is a little less pressure. There's a lot less that I'm having to get onboarded with. Having a year now, it's kind of picking up where we left off rather than trying to learn everything in a three-month time between getting the job and Spring Training.

But it's still very busy, and now it's more checking in with players and coaches rather than trying to learn systems and learn all these different things. It's a lot easier of an off-season so far. It's been really nice.

Q. When you think of what Fry went through, playing with the elbow, how much -- what does it say about him that he not only played, but kind of really stepped up and then into the postseason as well?

STEPHEN VOGT: David Fry is one of the most selfless teammates, people I've ever in my entire life. He's having a career year, makes the All-Star team, bouncing all over the field, and he hurts his arm, and he could only DH.

What he meant to our team both on the field and in the clubhouse, he stepped up and became a leader. He was one of our best hitters all year and got some big hits for us. It just says so much about who he is as a person that despite the injury and not being able to contribute in all the ways he wanted to, he remained an elite teammate and just helped any way he could.

Q. How do you replace him?

STEPHEN VOGT: I don't know. I mean, it's hard. It's hard to think about because of what he brought. Hopefully he's going to be with us the majority of the time we get him back, being able to hit early in the year. We'll just have to wait and see.

Right now we've got some right-handed hitters that could step up and really contribute in his absence, but it's definitely something we're trying to solve.



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Q. The interchange of ideas, how can you handle it?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think we have a number of guys that we saw in different parts throughout the year. Cleveland has always been built and will continue to be on our starting pitching, home-grown, and guys improving.

We've had a number of guys that we've talked to about having big winters. You look at Gavin Williams, Logan Allen, Triston McKenzie, Joey Cantillo, those four guys stepped up and started big games for us and did a nice job at times. I think we're looking for that group to really step up and come in and contribute and earn spots in the rotation, as well as some young guys that are coming up that are getting close.

We feel like we have a good group there. Again, with Chris, Mike, and Matt, we're always looking for ways to improve our roster, but our success is going to come from our home-grown guys stepping up.

Q. With those young guys (indiscernible)?

STEPHEN VOGT: We got to see him throw in that playoff between the end of the regular season and the Division Series, really liked the stuff. It's a really good slider. Fastball has got some good action and velo to it as well. He really knows how to pitch and he's really developing into a really good starter. So excited about Doug and what he could bring for us this year.

Like I said, with that group right there, we feel like we've got the right people to step up and earn spots.

Q. I know you were locked in on your playoff push, but have you had a chance to reflect on just the last baseball game in Oakland? You are absolutely beloved in that city.

STEPHEN VOGT: I was fortunate enough to -- I think we had an off-day or something weird happened where I got to watch the last game in Oakland, and it brought back a lot of memories and a lot of emotions. The city of Oakland is always going to be home, and it's a place that my family and I will cherish forever.



The people that we were fortunate enough to work with in Oakland are always going to be special to us. The thought of no baseball in Oakland, it's not a fun one. I love the Oakland Coliseum. It's one of the coolest venues to watch and play a baseball game. You can't beat a day game in Oakland. I've said that for years.

It's going to be something I miss tremendously. We'll see how the transition goes. At the end of the day, we're going to go play the A's, and hopefully we'll beat them.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, we're looking at -- we're excited about -- it's always fun when you see talented players from Japan come over. They make our game better. We're always excited.

Q. What do you think about Roki?

STEPHEN VOGT: I don't know much about him other than I've seen a lot of video. He sounds really good. It's intriguing to have a young pitcher coming over of that caliber. He's going to go and help a team. I'm excited. We're exploring and always listening and watching.

Q. What stands out to you?

STEPHEN VOGT: Just his stuff. His stuff and how well he can pitch for such a young age. You don't see people at that age as polished as he is and the experiences he's had in the World Baseball Classic and things like that.

Just pitching so well in Japan, it's a very good league and exciting to have someone like that available.

Q. Interested for your roster?

STEPHEN VOGT: It would be crazy to say you wouldn't find a fit for someone that talented. Of course we're excited.

Q. How much time do you take, if any, to kind of after the season is over dissect in your mind like what could have gone different, like, with how close you were?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think I'm still reflecting. You don't just sit down and think about it once. 3:30 last night I had something pop into my head and I had to work through that. It's just the way it works.

I'm so proud of our guys. We came up short. We didn't get where we wanted to go. I feel like we could have gone further. Our team didn't do it. We had guys who played so

well and all through the postseason, and we just came up short. We played a team that beat us.

For me the reflections were the same as they were when we ended the season. You can't go back and change anything. You just learn. Every time I did something, it was for the first time. You can only do that in your first year, I feel like, with the experiences and the conversations that I've been able to have. I don't know if we'd have done anything differently.

I wish there were different outcomes for some things, but at the end of the day, it felt like we were prepared, and we talked through all the things we needed to and made the best decision in the moment.

Q. What does Triston McKenzie need to do to get back on track? Is it mental, mechanics, experience?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think Triston, last winter was still recovering from injury and just never quite caught his stride this last season. For Triston, he's got a healthy body, healthy arm. He's having a great off-season. I know it's going to continue to go that way.

I'm expecting Triston to come in ready to rock in good year and hopefully earn a spot in our rotation. We all know how good Triston McKenzie can be, and the best version of him makes him the best version of us. So really excited for Triston.

Q. Gabriel Arias playing in winter ball now. What's the best version of Gabriel? We saw a lot of him last year at different positions?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think for Gabby there's a number of ways he can impact our roster. He's absolutely crushing it right now in winter ball, which is exciting to see.

I think for him we know how good of a player he can be, and for him it's just a matter of coming in ready to go. I think playing winter ball is going to be a very good thing for him. I'm excited to watch Gabby come in and earn a spot on our team in Spring Training. He's going to have the opportunity to do that.

Q. Think back to your first year as a player, what is that first off-season like? How is it different than any off-season you had before that when you were adjusting to the minors?

STEPHEN VOGT: You don't know what to do. You get a taste of being in the Major Leagues and you're hungry and you want more. For a lot of people, when they make it to the Big Leagues, now they have more resources to be able

to enhance their training regimen. I think for me, that was the biggest thing for me. I could finally afford to hire a personal trainer. I never had the money to do that.

So I didn't have to think about what I was going to do for my workouts. I gave my goals to someone, and they wrote me a program for the first time at 27, 28 years old.

It allows you to have that experience. You've been around Big Leaguers now, ask questions, what do you do in the winter? What works for you? You try different things. You never want to say I've got my off-season figured out. You always want to strive for more every year, and as you get older, you have to do more. So you're constantly working to adapt.

Q. When you were with the A's, who was the player or coach that you looked up to?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think Sam Fuld was probably my biggest influence with the Rays, and then we played together again with the A's. Sam is one of my closest teammates friend-wise that I have. He taught me a lot. Elliott Johnson was another one with the Rays that really poured into me.

With the A's, Coco Crisp, Jed Lowrie was one of the biggest influences as well. So many great teammates that I was fortunate to play with. I'm curious. I ask everybody questions. I want to learn. It doesn't matter what position you play, what you do, I want to learn from you. So I had a number of people that I relied on.

Q. Ideally, from the rotation, what do you want to see from the rotation where perhaps you don't have to go to the bullpen as often as you did?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think it's just that. More length. Attacking the strike zone more. I feel like we had a lot of games where we were pitching behind in counts. Pitch count would get up. You know, it's quick outs and throwing strikes. If there's anything I learned from it, strikes play. If you throw strikes, you get quick outs. That's how you get deeper into games.

For our guys, we have some work to do. We've got the right people to help in Carl Willis and our pitching team. But we have guys that are having really good winters right now, and I'm excited to see where they're at.

Q. I hate to bring up a sensitive topic, but is the Juan Soto at-bat especially hard to get over?

STEPHEN VOGT: No. Go and watch that at-bat. Hunter Gaddis executed six pitches, and he fouled them all. You

have one of the highest paid players ever in the history of sports do what he was supposed to do. He got one mistake pitch and didn't miss it.

Hunter Gaddis put his body on the line, threw 30 pitches for the 18th time in the playoffs. Like I said, he executed four or five pitches leading up to that one that Juan Soto spoiled. That's what great players do, they step up in big moments.

There's not one moment from this season that I look back and dread or get upset about because it was great baseball. We got to watch great baseball this year, and our guys played phenomenal.

Q. I think we talked about it at the very end of the season, but what was it like to watch the growth of Tanner Bibee, when you met him in Spring Training to where he ended up at the end of the year?

STEPHEN VOGT: Tanner, first thing he told me was he wants to be No. 1, he wants to be an ace. I said, okay, go show it. Started off the year a little rocky but then turned it around.

That performance he put on in Game 5 versus the Yankees on three days' rest is something special. He deserved to walk off the mound with a better outcome than he got, but two runs over 5 2/3 on three days' rest against the Yankees in the postseason, that's big time pitcher stuff. Tanner solidified himself as one of our best, if not the best pitcher he was last year. I'm excited to see what Tanner is going to accomplish.

This guy's a competitive bulldog. I'm kind of scared for my life whenever I go take him out of the game. He's the ultimate competitor.

Q. Is there anything about J-Ram's game playing against him versus becoming his manager that surprised you?

STEPHEN VOGT: He's exactly as advertised. He plays the game the right way. He's a top player in this league that no one talks about because he just goes about his business and plays the game the right way.

He's a great teammate. He's a leader. He expects his teammates to play the way he plays and backs it up by going out and doing it. He runs hard, hustle doubles. He got so much better at defense too this year. He should have won the Gold Glove.

It was just a phenomenal, phenomenal year, and I'm thankful José Ramírez is on our team.

