

MLB Winter Meetings

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New York Mets

Carlos Mendoza

Press Conference



2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

Q. How is your offseason going?

CARLOS MENDOZA: It's going well. Spent a lot of time with my family. Really good.

Q. What's been your favorite acquisition so far?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Frankie Montas. Siri. Frankie Montas and Siri. Exciting to have both of them.

Q. What did you do last night?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I was in my room. I slept.

Q. All night? All evening?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Pretty much, yeah.

Q. What do you think -- since Juan Soto is still on the market, what do you think is the right amount of money for him to sign for?

CARLOS MENDOZA: That's way above my pay grade.

Q. Can you think of any players in baseball who are maybe worth \$765 million?

CARLOS MENDOZA: That's a good question. There's a lot of good players out there. There's one with the Dodgers. Who knows? What do you think makes a player worth \$276 million?

CARLOS MENDOZA: A lot. There's a lot when you are looking at players that are worth that much money. Not only what they do on the field, but off the field, so...

Q. The staff gave a bunch of questions about Pete. Obviously he's a free agent. Obviously he was a huge part of your team last year. What would it mean if you were able to get him back?

CARLOS MENDOZA: It means a lot. Especially a guy like Pete that everybody knows what he brings to the table.

You know, the power, the quality at-bats, but his ability to post day in and day out. As a manager that's a really good feeling. When you don't have to worry about a position because you know that guy is going to be there regardless of the situation or how he's feeling or what he's going through. He showed this year, 162 games he played, and that says a lot.

This is a home-grown kid. It was a privilege for me to be able to write his name in the lineup.

Q. In your mind how valuable is the idea of lineup protection for your best players?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, I mean, last year we were talking about protection for Pete, you know? The way I see it is who is hitting in front of him? If the guy is hitting in front of him, whoever, if they're not getting on base, there's protection. If they're getting on base, that's -- how can you protect a player.

There's a lot that goes into it when you're making out a lineup. I think a lot of people put too much into it.

Q. Can you walk through your mind again what adding a player like Soto would (indiscernible) with a lineup with (indiscernible)?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, obviously you play with a lot of different scenarios, but I don't think -- you need a deep lineup. One through nine, you need to have balance. You need to have a lot. So it's not just about one or two guys. I'm lucky to have -- you mentioned three really good hitters, and Nimmo, Lindor, Vientos, don't forget about Francisco Alvarez, those are some of the guys that are on our roster that are elite leaders, you know?

Q. Your season kind of turned around when you moved to Lindor's spot. Can you envision keeping him there for now?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I'll have to have that conversation with the player. Not only we get to Spring Training, but opening day. Who knows what's going to happen with our roster?



Then I'll make that decision, but again, it starts with having the conversation with the player and with a lot of people, and it goes from there.

Q. Where do you think Starling Marte fits with this team?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He's a big part of this team. Especially when he's healthy. We saw it in the playoffs. Even though he wasn't 100%, this is a dynamic player. He can impact the game in a lot of different ways. He can help you win baseball games by the way he runs the bases. He's going to give you quality at-bats and keeps the ball in play and has the ability to go the other way. He hits it out of the ballpark. He has a canon. His defense got better throughout the year.

So, again, he's a big part of this team.

Q. Do you think he would be a possibility to DH?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, everything is on the table. Again, because of the health, and we saw it when he got back from the IL the way we were using him. I don't think we played him more than three in a row because he's going to need help. He's going to need to rest.

Yeah, like I said, we're still a long ways to go.

Q. Where is he health-wise right now?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He's home going through his rehab process, doing exercises and things like that. So definitely feeling a lot better than the way he felt last part of the year. You know, I'm hoping that we get a healthy player by the time we go to Spring Training.

Q. What specifically is he rehabbing?

CARLOS MENDOZA: The same thing. The knee. The same thing that kept him on the IL for a couple of months, and then when he got back, he was still feeling it, but I spoke with him, I don't know, about a week ago. He's in a good place.

Q. Everything is okay with his groin and legs?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Oh, yeah.

Q. That was his problem previously in the past.

CARLOS MENDOZA: It's more of his knee. Whatever he was dealing with during the regular season.

Q. If you guys were to make a big acquisition, what

would a move like that say about where the Mets see themselves?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I don't want to get too ahead of myself. We want to win. We want to win, and we have an owner that is willing to do whatever it takes.

Q. What do you like about what Frankie Montas brings to the rotation? And the loss of Severino and making up for that?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Look, happy for Sevy. Proud of him because I know how hard he had to work. Especially I saw it firsthand, when he got hurt and then just watching him go through the whole year last year. So congrats to him, his family. I texted him. Like I said, proud of him.

For Frankie, this is a guy that I was able to spend a little bit of time when I was with the Yankees. Unfortunately, he wasn't healthy, but we were able to face him in the playoffs last year. Man, he was electric. He was hitting 96, 95. The fastball had life. We all know about the split. The cutter, slider that he's got. He's got a sweeper.

When he's healthy, he's a pretty good arm, so I'm excited to have him on our rotation, and our job is to keep him on the field.

Q. How well do you know Clay Holmes?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I know him well. He's another guy that the first thing that comes to mind is a professional. A guy that takes the baseball, and he's accountable. He went through -- he had a lot of success, and then he struggled just like every player does.

When he was going through those tough times, he was right there in front of his locker answering questions. It wasn't easy. He works really hard. Good relationship with him.

Q. Do you view Senga as your ace?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He's a big part of our team. We talk about last year him being the. We didn't see him pretty much the whole year. Our goal is to get him healthy, and right now he's going through his offseason program. And when he's healthy, he's as good as anybody out there.

Q. Is it a priority to kind of get to know him better and not maybe be as in the dark as you might have been last season with him?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I got to know him, the ball, behind the scenes. I want to get to know him when he wants to go



out there for a seventh inning, when he wants to continue to go out there. I want to have those conversations with him. I think that's the next step, and hopefully we get there because, I mean, he's going to be healthy.

Q. He really hasn't been in a starter. What makes you think he can succeed in that role?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Look, we're still -- it's hard for me to sit here and comment on it because it's not official. Again, this is a guy that physically we feel like he's capable of, and this is a guy that takes the baseball, and he works really hard.

Q. With Severino and Manaea last year, how confident are you you're able to get the most out of -- when healthy, they're good, the most innings out of them?

CARLOS MENDOZA: We have a really good system here. Obviously we have leading the pitching program. You have to give credit to our medical staff and everything they do to keep these guys on the field. Whether it was Sevy, whether it was Manaea. I mean, there's been a ton of hours working with them and using all the resources that we have. So pretty confident that our group will do the same thing with a lot of the players that will come on board this year.

Q. How does Desi fit into that?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I don't know that we announced Desi yet, but I'll announce it. Yeah, look, Desi is a guy that I was able to work with for a couple of years. His attention to details, I know he's going to complement Hef and Rosy and all our group. Whether it's pitch design, playing around with different grips, reading numbers and technology and just the feel for the game. This is a guy that's been in the dugout for the past three years. It's a really good acquisition for us.

Q. When it comes to Montas, he's really good in the clubhouse and a really good leader. Did you get to see any of that in your time with him?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yes, and even when he wasn't on the field, 2023 he spent a lot of time rehabbing, and the reports we were getting from the Minor League guys were off the charts. The way he was -- a lot of these young kids just starting their careers, and just my interactions with him in the clubhouse, like I said, for a couple of months that we had him. Great guy, humble, smart. He wants to compete. He's a competitor, so...

Q. What are your thoughts on (indiscernible) do you think there's still a lane for him to return?

CARLOS MENDOZA: He was unbelievable for us. We started really turning around our season, and he was a big part of it. Just not only his presence in the clubhouse, but what he did on the field, you know?

Elite defender, quality at-bat. His ability to put the ball in play. He was crushed with runners in scoring position. I would love to have him back, but again, we'll see how everything plays out because he put himself in a really good position.

Q. We just talked to (indiscernible) and he said that you guys view Vientos as a third baseman right now. What was it about the step that he took forward defensively that has you guys comfortable that he can handle the position full-time?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, you have to give him credit and credit to player development, you know, because they work really hard with him. Talk about Lindor and Iglesias and the way they impacted his game. Especially on the defensive side of things.

We felt really good every time he got to the baseball, the play was made. Good arm. Really good hands. Just his internal clock got better as the game -- as the year went on.

Pretty confident that he could play third base. Same thing with Baty. The fact that Baty added some versatility when he went down and showed that he can play second base, third base, maybe a little bit in the outfield, you know, that's a plus because when I'm writing that lineup, somebody that can play multiple positions, left-handed hitter, you know, is in a good place.

Q. What do you think of Vientos's bleached blond hair?

CARLOS MENDOZA: I haven't seen much of him, so...

Q. How much of (indiscernible) depends on going out there and playing every day versus the development? Sometimes (indiscernible) you said his internal clock got better.

CARLOS MENDOZA: Yeah, that comes just with reps. Knowing the situation, who is at the plate, the speed of the ball, speed of the runner, playing with the scoreboard. There's a lot to learn by just playing the game instead of just getting pregame reps, you know? That's the only way they're going to get better.

I feel like the conversations that he was having with Sarby,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

our infield coach, Lindor, Iglesias helped him throughout the year, and that's why we were comfortable with him playing every day.

Q. How do you balance getting guys reps versus sometimes there might be a better fielder at the moment that you want to --

CARLOS MENDOZA: That's part of the balance because at the Big League level you want to win games. He put himself in a position where we were able to trust him, and like I say, credit to him, credit to Sarby and all the coaches in player development.

Q. What do you make of the addition of Jose Siri, and what does it mean for your defense and the outfield?

CARLOS MENDOZA: You just said it. Elite defender. He's a guy that I have seen him play for quite a few years now. He goes and gets it.

He's got pop, and he's excited to join the organization. I'm excited to have him too. He's a guy that not only can play center field at an elite level. He can play left field. He can play right field. He's playing winter ball right now. I saw a highlight the other day where he was making a play in right field. So he adds to that depth.

It's ain't secret how much we prioritize defense here.

Q. Did you ask him/his winter team to move him around a little bit?

CARLOS MENDOZA: No. I didn't.

Q. Speaking of the winter ball, what do you think of what Acuna has done in his time in Venezuela?

CARLOS MENDOZA: Really good. I saw him last week during the Home Run Derby. He's playing really well. The feedback that we're getting, I feel like every day I'm getting a call from the GM to let him play.

The defense, the way he's running the bases, and I think just the whole experience itself. The fact that he's getting at-bats in meaningful games in front of 15,000, 20,000 people, the whole experience for him is going to be huge, and he's playing really well too.

Q. What are the terms under which he is allowed to play and the GM has to ask if he can keep playing beyond a certain date, or how does that work?

CARLOS MENDOZA: There's recommendations from us to the player because he's a guy that got, I don't know, 700

plate appearances. He's going to come to a time where he is going to have to decide and get ready for 2025. That's pretty much -- they know it's coming, so that's why the GM is, hey, what do you guys think? It's up to the player at this time because it's a 40-man roster. That's up to them. We can just -- all we can do is make recommendations.

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