

MLB Winter Meetings

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Texas Rangers

Bruce Bochy

Press Conference



2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

Q. I'm just going to ask you an overall question. You've been in this game a long time. Did you ever expect to see a contract like Juan Soto had?

BRUCE BOCHY: No, I didn't, but you know what, we've said that before. I mean, going back to A-Rod and some of these deals, even Ohtani's. I think we'll keep breaking barriers. It's obvious there's some money being made out there, but hey, good for Juan. He had a tremendous year, and it's good for these players.

Q. What do you know about Kyle Higashioka? Do you have any talks with him since --

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah, we've spoken a couple of times. No, excited to have him. He's a winner. You know, talking to him, he takes so much pride in trying to make the pitcher better. That's what he is so good at, framing and game-calling. He does a tremendous job behind the plate. He obviously -- catching the postseason last year and how much confidence they had in him.

He's going to complement Jonah so well I think. I think it's going to enable us to rest Jonah a little bit more. We have a great tandem behind the plate. Then he provides power too. I mean, he's got some big power. You know, the guy is going to hit for a lot of average, but he will do some damage. Great teammate. I'm looking forward to working with him.

Q. C.Y. has said a couple of times that maybe the best way to get better next year is for the guys that you already have to be bouncing back. How do you see in terms of the offense guys, like Jonah, just kind of getting back to who they were last year kind of going into 2025?

BRUCE BOCHY: I agree with that. I mean, you can't go out and just start getting everybody or new guys every position. We have a very good core. We won a World Championship with these guys. Some of them had down years. You know, silver lining is that's hopefully motivating them even more.

I think we've seen it early go here. I mean, with Leo staying here -- Taveras I'm talking about -- and working on his game. He didn't go back home. García has been working hard. Jonah is going into the ballpark. These guys are determined to show that last year was a fluke and having a down year. To me that's the only way we're going to get better is individually we get better as a team.

Q. Is it fair to say or not that the extended season in '23 had an effect on Jonah the following year?

BRUCE BOCHY: I can't say that. I really can't. Only because there's been a lot of teams that won World Championships and have to bounce back. So whether that did -- he did carry a heavy load, no question about it. So that's why getting Higgy here to help out, you know, to lighten the load for him, hopefully we keep him fresher.

I don't want to say anybody got complacent. I know Jonah didn't, but at the same time I think it's just a reminder that you can't let up. You can't stop trying to become a better player. Not that he didn't, but this is a wake-up call that we have work to do. We have a lot of work to do this spring.

I got the staff coming in tomorrow. We already talked about these things.

Q. How did you recharge yourself once it was over to reflect on this year and looking ahead to next year?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah. No, I went down to Florida to fish. I had to cancel that trip because of the hurricane, so I had to stop in Georgia, had a lake there, Lake Oconee. I hung out there for a week and did some reflecting, some fishing, all those things just to decompress.

As a manager, that's what we do, I think. We're always thinking about what we could have done different or what we need to do better, lineups and things like that.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

BRUCE BOCHY: Not really. It's something that's somewhat concrete out there. Jonah will do a little bit more of the catching. I think that's fair to say, but how we



end up doing it, there's going to be variables involved, who is pitching for us, who is pitching for them, who needs a day, maybe who is hot, things like that.

Q. How much contact have you had with your players in the offseason?

BRUCE BOCHY: You know what, I don't a lot anymore. I give them their time. I have talked to some of them. Not all of them. I am going to the ballpark here, and that's where I'll see a lot of the guys working out. Of course, we have the Fan Fest, but I have to touch base with Marcus and Corey and Josh Jung, some of those guys.

But I give them their time.

Q. We've talked about the new rule changes over the last couple of years. There was one that's been floated around, and obviously it's not going to happen, this Golden At-Bat thing. Have you heard about that? What's your reaction when you hear of something gimmicky like that?

BRUCE BOCHY: I don't know if we need to even talk about it. I don't see it happening. I don't want to see it happen, but I don't see it happening.

I guess you always try and make the game better, but I don't see where that does that.

Q. Let me ask you this: We can talk about old school, new school, but obviously there's politics with the new rules. How have you adjusted to them, and how much of the years back have you come to appreciate liking or disliking these rules, the pitch clock or the bigger bases?

BRUCE BOCHY: I've said this. I think that's one of the best rules we did put in, which is pitch clock. I think the pace of the game, the action, everything about it. I think it's worked.

It reminds me when I broke in back in the late '70s. The pace of the game was faster. So, no, I think that's been good.

I've talked about this. I think it's been good for the players. It keeps them fresher. The game is a little shorter. They're not on their legs so much.

Some of them, not as fond of. The three batter minimum, things like that. Guys have gotten used to it. Man on second, I know players seem to like that. It shortened up some games. Stays away from those 17, 18, 19 inning games. That wears them down.

No, I'm good with that. I think it's a better game now. There's no doubt in my mind it's a better game, and I think the attendance is showing that.

Q. Do you think baseball needs to be aggressive and continue tinkering with the game product to reach fans, whether they're younger or older, middle age, whatever? Do you think they need to keep doing that?

BRUCE BOCHY: Well, I'll say this. Just like us, me as a manager, or players, we're always looking to get better. So you always are looking for ways you can make the game better. Tinkering a little bit is fine, but you have to draw a line somewhere. There's Golden rule. I think that's a good place to draw one, but there's nothing wrong with it. I think some good things will come out of it.

Like I said, the clock, the pitch clock.

Q. What is your bigger need, back into the rotation or back into the bullpen?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah, both. I think you look at how many guys we have to replace down in that bullpen. That's a lot. Three high-leverage guys. Sborzy, he won't be pitching until probably late June after getting his shoulder cleaned out.

Yeah, that's --

Q. They're equal?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah. Well, the bullpen I think we need more than one piece. Starters I think maybe one more would be nice to have, but we need some guys to finish some games. It doesn't work if your starters are getting out five, six innings, somewhere in there. You better have some guys to finish that game for you.

You look at what Yates did and Robertson did, we got where we wanted to go, but I hate to think where we would have been without those two. That's not going to be easy to replace. Hopefully we're in the mix there.

Q. You mentioned Yates and Robertson. Those are pretty low-cost deals that turned into valuable back-end pieces. Does that give you hope that it can be replicated and done again in some format?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah, yeah. I can tell you now up in the room, we're going through every team, every free agent. We're turning over every stone to find guys that we think are going to be winning-type relievers or even starters.

Q. What was your reaction when you heard how much money Soto got?

BRUCE BOCHY: Probably like everybody. Stunned, but I think any time you break a barrier, you go, Whoa, where is it going to stop? Man, he's a tremendous player. He had a lot of leverage. I'm happy for him. That's great.

Like I said here -- we just talked about it, Gary, but obviously there's a lot of money being made out there.

Q. What can you as an older manager take from the younger people on your staff? (Indiscernible) what can you learn from -- what can you get out of that?

BRUCE BOCHY: I think anytime you have another set of eyes and ears, a voice, it gives you maybe a fresh idea or thought. You know, I listen to everybody. We talk about analytics. We use that. I listen to them.

You're never as good as all the people around you, I think, that can help you make you better. I've always said that none of us are as smart as all of us, and he's part of us, and he's going to help in the decision-making.

Q. Terry Francona came back this year, and you were kind of in a similar situation. What did that time away from the game -- what did you learn, and how did that help make you a better manager, and how do you think that can work with Terry?

BRUCE BOCHY: Well, I think more than anything I learned how much I missed the game. I said the first year I was fine, the COVID year, but after that I missed being in the dugout, missed being around the guys, the coaches, the players, the competition. Probably just a reminder of how hard the game can be.

So when I came back, I think I'm even more patient than I was the first time because I didn't want to beat myself up again. That's what we do as managers and how we take losses or decisions that don't work. You know, you do the best you can and enjoy it. That's the biggest thing I'll tell you, just enjoy it.

When you have been away -- I've said this -- and come back, the gratitude meter shoots way up on what you are doing, what you have, and being around everything that baseball provides.

Q. In the last couple of years we've seen more experienced managers coming back -- yourself, Dusty -- and win championships. What does the more experienced manager bring to the table at this point?

BRUCE BOCHY: Well, exactly what that is, experience hopefully. You know, knowledge to help out. Again, your coaching staff, the work that they do, they're yeoman's work. Hopefully the older you get, you get a little better at what you're doing and being able to make the right type of decisions.

I'll use the scout, for example. You get those scouts that have been doing it a long time. They have a reference on everything. They just -- things just click to them, and so I think, sure, experience should help.

Q. What about -- with Will Venable, how well prepared do you think he is to be a manager? And in that sense you have a new bench coach. Talk about that.

BRUCE BOCHY: Will is more than ready. I'm happy for him. I'm really happy that he is doing this. I told him, be careful what you ask for, but he did such a great job with me. I enjoyed my two years with him. He provided so much for me as far as information, helping out with scheduling, things like that.

He's going to be missed. I'm excited about working with Luis. I just think he knew he was ready. The year before there was some interest out there, but I think he wanted to keep going until he thought he was ready.

Only you know when you think you're ready. He felt it, so good for him.

Q. What gives you hope that the offense will rebound to '23 levels?

BRUCE BOCHY: I've seen this offense be an elite offense. Hope is not the strategy here. I know these guys will bounce back and be the players that we know they are. Three, four, guys, sure, they had down years, but hey, that happens.

That '23 season was a grind for them, and I think it was a learning experience for them as they come into this year. As we talked about earlier, you know, how important it is to keep getting after it and try to become the best player you can be.

Q. What kind of skill set did Will Venable bring to the organization that he can carry on to his new team?

BRUCE BOCHY: I didn't hear that still, but I'll try to answer it. I think I heard.

Will has a great way about him. He's got a good feel for the game. He's got a good feel for people. I think being a really good communicator, being honest and up front is

going to be so good, and it's going to so well with him and the team that he has.

There's going to be a trust factor with Will. He is going to shoot you straight, and that's what they're going to love.

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