

MLB Winter Meetings

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Philadelphia Phillies

Manager Rob Thomson

Press Conference

Q. How do you measure your excitement about Andrew Painter knowing that he might not be somebody who's available to you to begin the year later on? How are you balancing that as the manager?

ROB THOMSON: It's pretty tough because he's got great stuff. I saw him in the Arizona fall league. I only saw three innings, but it was really high level stuff.

You're always a little bit worried about a setback, but so far, so good. He's throwing the ball great. His command was really good. I'm really excited. I really am.

Q. What do you think it might look like in Spring Training for him? Do you think he'll be in a few games?

ROB THOMSON: We haven't really discussed that, but I would think so. We're going to ramp him up pretty slowly because he's only got so many innings that we can deal with over the course of the summer. We want to make sure that we're getting the bulk of it.

He's got to be healthy and pitching well, but hopefully he's at that point, whenever that is, and we get him and we just roll.

Q. Is there any favorite for that No. 5 spot right now as of today? You might sign -- I expect you'll probably sign somebody at some point, but internal options, is there somebody who's a leg up?

ROB THOMSON: It's really up in the air, but I'm hoping that the program that Taijuan is on works, and he gains that velocity, he gains the extra stuff that he needs to miss bats and get soft contact.

I know he's working on it. I know the program is a good program and it's worked in the past. Hopefully it happens.

Q. Have you heard anything about -- you mentioned in October.



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ROB THOMSON: I thought of a couple different things, but really until we solidify it or really come up with solid ideas, we got to know what the ball club looks like. Because there could be some changes, you never know. We're looking to improve on the edges, and that could change.

Q. The Dodgers had Ohtani hit leadoff and Mets had Lindor. Would you ever have Bryce hit leadoff? He's done it in the past.

ROB THOMSON: I've thought about that too. That's something that would be a long conversation, I think. I'm not sure Bryce would be willing to go there.

I think the more at-bats you get for the best hitters, the better chances you have. That's the idea behind it. He gets more at-bats to get into the Hall of Fame.

Q. Do you think he'd be open to 2?

ROB THOMSON: Possibly. I haven't really discussed any of it with him. I'm just waiting to see what the final roster looks like, and we can sort of start breaking it down.

Q. Last year at this time we were talking about left field and center field and the names are the same as they are now, Marsh and Rojas. This year we're talking about left field and center field. In your mind, is the situation similar to what it was a year ago, or are you looking at it and saying those two guys might be good for one of the spots and you'll have to fill the other. How do you view how different it is this year?

ROB THOMSON: I think it's very similar to the way it was last year, I really do. I know some of you were in the room yesterday. As Dave said, you look at our offense, you look at those last four games and certain games throughout the season, it really looks bad because you're chasing, you're swinging and missing.

But over the course of the year, we were top five in a lot of offensive categories. I really like our offense. I really like our club. We're still a good club.

We did not play well in the playoffs, but we're a really good club.

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Q. You mentioned at the end of the season that you might have to convince Realmuto to take some time off next year. Have those conversations already started?

ROB THOMSON: No, I'll do those face to face, in person. Right now he's working out. He's down in Clearwater. He's working out every day. He's in great shape, feels good. We'll just have to cross that bridge when we get there.

Q. Do you think he'll be receptive to that idea?

ROB THOMSON: I don't know how he's going to react, but I think still you're going to play out the season how you see it, how you feel it, how he's feeling, the conversations you have with him, the communication he has. Is he fresh? Does he feel fresh? He's usually fairly honest.

Q. Dave made a point yesterday to mention J.T. and say, oh, he feels great down there, he's working out hard. Was he not 100 -- I know he had the knee surgery, but was he not 100 percent through the end? Do you feel he was lacking something that Dave made a point to mention that?

ROB THOMSON: I don't think so. I think it was more just fatigue through the course of the year and the injury and the whole thing, but he's 100 percent.

Q. How do you view the backup catcher situation going in the spring?

ROB THOMSON: I think it's between Stubby and Marchán. Marchán doesn't have any options left, but at this point they'll battle it out.

Q. Have you talked to Rojas this off-season? What's he working on?

ROB THOMSON: It's the same thing we worked on during the season last year. I texted with him a few days ago. He's down playing in the Dominican.

I think there's some slight improvement, but it's really just cutting down the swing, eliminating some smothering the ground ball, try to get the ball in the air a little bit, and use the entire field, have good at-bats, improve the bunting, short game. If he can do that, he's going to help the club.

Q. Have you spoken with Alec Bohm? There's so much out there about him?

ROB THOMSON: We've texted, but I talked to him on the phone yesterday. He's in Houston right now. He's working

out. He's got a workout place that he goes to every year. So he's been there for, I think, about a month. He's going to go to Clearwater for Christmas and then back to Houston and then back to Clearwater for Spring Training.

He's in good shape. He's working hard lifting, and he's actually hitting all right. I just wanted to let him know we're not -- this guy is a really good player. We're not shopping him. But because he's a good player, there's a whole lot of interest in him from other teams.

Obviously you have to do your homework and talk to people and listen.

Q. Just because so much is out there?

ROB THOMSON: I think this is probably the first time he's gone through something like this, so I just want to ease his mind. It's part of the business that you've got to get through. Because it's the first time, I thought it was important to reach out.

Q. What do you think his mindset is in regards to -- there's a lot being talked about the benching in Game 2 or he's immature or he needs to grow up.

ROB THOMSON: I don't know where that comes from, but he is an emotional guy. He cares a great deal. So he shows his emotion. Believe me, he's not the only one on the club that shows their emotion and slams a helmet or a bat every once in a while. But that just shows me he cares.

Q. Were you involved last year -- when you guys met with Yamamoto last year, were you part of that contingent?

ROB THOMSON: Yes.

Q. Did you get a sense, because Phillies have never signed a player from Japan, like whether that was a factor at all in these things? Like a player who comes over from Japan and like maybe had questions about Philly that he might not have about cities where guys he knows have played?

ROB THOMSON: No, I didn't get a sense of that. I didn't. But I do know that the West Coast is a lot shorter trip to Japan, so it makes it easier on the player, but I did not get a sense that it was the city or the East Coast or anything like that.

Q. Is K-Long working with anybody in Phoenix, any hitters coming down to make trips, any special visits or anything?

ROB THOMSON: Marsh is there. Cal Stevenson is there. We're going to go see Trea in January because I have to go to Florida for something. I said, why don't you come along. We'll go see Trea and watch him work a little bit.

He's in constant contact, and Rafi Peña down with Rojas right now in the Dominican.

Q. How do you anticipate using Romano?

ROB THOMSON: It's Romano. That's how we pronounce it in Canada. I spoke to him yesterday. I met him at CBP one time. It was a getaway day, and I met him on the elevator. He happened to be on there.

I think he's really excited, and we're excited as well. Because when he's healthy, it's a really good arm, big arm. He's pitched in high, high leverage, which we like, and we'll treat him the same here.

Like I said yesterday to our local group, we haven't promised him a closing role. We'll probably run our bullpen like we have the last couple years. We've had a lot of success with it. I think everybody's pretty happy with that.

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