

# MLB Winter Meetings

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Dallas, Texas, USA

**Chicago White Sox**

**Will Venable**

Press Conference



## 2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

**Q. Will, just want to kick it off. Congratulations, but we just heard from Bruce Bochy about how excited he is for you for this opportunity. What has he taught you in your two years under him that prepared you for this?**

WILL VENABLE: Yeah, it's been amazing with Bochy. Just really inclusive and with all our staff and really just brought me into the fold on everything from every part of the game, from the way he communicates with players and solving problems with them to bullpen strategy, in-game strategy.

He really did an amazing job just bringing me along and getting me ready for this opportunity.

**Q. Will, he said obviously I hate to lose him, but he was ready. It was his time. Were you certain of that? Obviously you've proven it by getting this job, but were you as certain as he was that it was time?**

WILL VENABLE: I do feel like that, and at the same time with new jobs, you are also probably never ready, you know, until you get in there and get your feet wet. But I do know with the last couple of years with him and certainly my time in Boston with Alex and especially these last couple of years with what Bochy exposed me to, I feel like he pushed me to the degree that I'm confident I'm ready for the job.

**Q. Speaking of Walker earlier today, he said that the principles you stressed were leading with kindness and extending empathy. Where did those come from for you? How did you develop that? Why is that so important for how you want to manage?**

WILL VENABLE: I think that's just who I am, number one, and kind of the values that my parents and family instilled in me. Also, you know, as I was somebody that was an athlete for most of my life, I think I responded well to that kind of leadership.

So it's just something that's important to me and kind of natural to who I am.

**Q. How does that play with a younger team that's kind of rebuilding and kind of working and starting lower but working their way towards the goal?**

WILL VENABLE: I think with the challenges that everybody faces in baseball, I think it's important to have a positive environment. And certainly with a young group like we have, that's going to be establishing themselves and trying to figure it out and going through some stuff. To have a positive environment is going to be huge for their development.

Again, that's just something, as I've experienced, that's important.

**Q. The more time on the job, what have you kind of learned more about what direction this team is going in and what it's going to take to get them to be where you want them to be?**

WILL VENABLE: I think the thing that's really stood out the last four weeks is talking to players and just their excitement for just continuing to get better and turning the page on last year and continuing to build the foundation of good baseball and things that they're motivated to do, which is certainly developed individually, but also as a group.

**Q. When you visit a player, what are you seeking to get out of that? Is it the same questionnaire for everybody, or are you trying to get specific one-on-ones with players?**

WILL VENABLE: You know, it's just connecting. I'm new to this group. I have a lot of relationships that I'm going to have to have, and I'm starting at zero with a lot of these guys. I don't have history with a lot of these players.

I know some of the staff a little bit. I don't go in there with any agenda. It's just get to know these guys.

**Q. Coming off of 120-loss season, that you could lose 100 games this year and still be a 20-game improvement, but how would you -- how do you quantify success? How will you quantify success in a**

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## **rebuilding year, in year one?**

WILL VENABLE: Obviously wins and losses matter, and we'll all be judged on that. I think also it's about our players and did we support them to get better? Did they get better and continue to develop?

Then did we do the things internally with our infrastructure and our systems and processes to set us up for success in the future too? There's a lot of work being done behind the scenes. So I think all those are fair measures of our success.

**Q. What's your philosophy about coaches? Used to be, you know, anybody could hit fungoes or throw a batting practice. What is the philosophy for you and the organization about who you hire and what you expect?**

WILL VENABLE: A lot of different things. I think, number one, nowadays you have to be able to handle information, right? You have to have an understanding of the analytics. Have to have an understanding of how to apply those. I think the most important thing is being able to connect with players and communicate with players.

I think that when you look at all the ingredients involved into great coaches, it's a lot of stuff and probably a lot to ask of individual coaches. I don't think there's an expectation for any one person to be able to do everything. It's really about how we are all complementing each other and can help move the group forward.

**Q. How do you talk to your coaching staff, and how do you think permanently about trying to develop some guys, maybe prospects who are going to be coming up to the Majors for the first time next season? How do you approach the development side of managing a Major League Baseball team?**

WILL VENABLE: That's a really big question. I think that there's a lot of things that go into that. I think certainly being able to connect with these guys and develop the relationship where we can have easier communication and honest communication, and at the same time really be thoughtful about the things that we know make players good and have an understanding of who these players are and be able to match those things up and set them up for success to be able to progress in those areas.

**Q. Will, the first part of your career, you know, started in Chicago. What does it mean for you to come back to Chicago and have this role in this city?**

WILL VENABLE: It means a lot. That was part of the

appeal and just talking to Chris about the job is our history with Chicago and how much we loved it having the kids in the city. Now that they're a little bit older, they're excited about coming back.

Certainly excited about the city. Then just what baseball means in the city too. You know, it was a great experience there in Chicago the first time around and excited about this one too.

**Q. With so much of your staff kind of predating you, do you feel like you got to put your stamp on, or do you think it's really necessary? Do you think it's just gelling together as a group?**

WILL VENABLE: I think it's about what's the best thing for the group, and that's the thing if I'm going from a blank slate, that's going to be something that's important, right, what's the best thing for this group? And it just so happened that I have the advantage of having some people in place that have already had really good relationships with our players and understand the job.

So I think of it as very much a positive. There's a lot of people in this league that I know can help, but I'm confident these are the right people for this group.

**Q. The coaching staff now in place, what's next on your to-do list this winter?**

WILL VENABLE: You know, continuing to connect with players, which is something that's been ongoing. We're still building out our infrastructure. I mean, that's something that's kind of a daily thing and making sure that we have our advanced process tightened up.

The feedback loops, the information that we're going to be presenting to players, getting ready for Spring Training. Just talking today about Spring Training stuff and talking about fundamentals and the things that we want to do in camp.

So, yeah, there's a lot, and every day there's something new.

**Q. You have talked to some players face-to-face. How many do you think you've met with so far?**

WILL VENABLE: In person there's been six guys. I did a Florida tour in Miami, Jupiter and Tampa and just did a few days there and was able to connect with a couple of guys just as they were working out just to touch base. I'm not sure if there's going to be another trip in the future, but just was able to connect with a few guys, which was great.



**Q. What it do you do when you meet with them? They know of you, obviously, but what -- is there just a casual conversation?**

WILL VENABLE: Really just casual. We have a chance to watch them work out. Some of the hitters, we got to see them work out in the cage. I was able to have lunch with a couple of them and really just touch base and connect.

Again, just really informal. I just wanted to start that relationship.

**Q. Do you see the importance of getting a veteran maybe as part of this pitching staff considering how young it is and maybe somebody who you can rely on to go out there for a certain number of innings every game?**

WILL VENABLE: Yeah, I think it is. I think you look at what we've done on the position player side with Slater and Tauchman and just having some stabilizers, some guys who have been there and have performed with consistency.

I think that's probably something that you'll see on the pitching side too with such a young group, and at the same time we're really happy about this group and the prospect of them developing.

**Q. What do you like about Tauchman?**

WILL VENABLE: Just the consistency. Can control the zone. Give you a professional at-bat, good defender, good base runner. Just one of those guys that you can depend on every day.

**Q. Being a manager, a coach in Chicago has not been the greatest thing in the world over the last years, so how do you expect your message to resonate with White Sox fans?**

WILL VENABLE: As far as what's happened in the past, I understand that these fans and this team has been here a long time. I'm looking at this as a fresh start with me. There are things we're going to go out and do that are unique with this club, and excited about building that foundation for the future of the next great team.

**Q. Will Spring Training be pretty standard, or will there be some Will Venable wrinkles, anything different about the way that you approach it?**

WILL VENABLE: No, I think mostly standard. I think the thing that we have the ability to do is be really selective about the things that we choose that are important to us

and that we go out and train every day.

I don't think that in Spring Training you can cover everything. Certainly there's going to be things that we address and want to be really focused about though those things, but we also want to continue to work on those things throughout the year.

I think that more than anything it's going to be very focused Spring Training for us.

**Q. I think the former outfielder, and you bring a Tauchman in and him having experience all-around, how do you weigh rotating outfielders in and out, potentially positions they're weaker at to maximize flexibility versus putting players in positions to succeed and where they're comfortable?**

WILL VENABLE: You have to look at the whole picture, right? What does it mean on that day to push us forward and hopefully win the game, you know. That puzzle is different every day with how players are feeling, their skill level.

So it's really a day-to-day thing.

**Q. You know when you are pushing a guy maybe too much or asking more than maybe he's comfortable with, do you adjust standards accordingly?**

WILL VENABLE: Standards in what way?

**Q. Let's say a guy that played right and moves to center to fill in, and doesn't make plays that others might. Do you say, well, he's doing what he can because we need him there and work with that?**

WILL VENABLE: You know, I think in any case we're going to have expectations for our players to go out there and give us great effort. We certainly understand if we're asking guys to play positions that they're not comfortable with, but there might be performance tied to that.

I think most importantly we're just expecting guys to go out there and play hard and do the right thing.

**Q. Are you already thinking about how playing time in right field is going to shake out with some of the new guys you brought in?**

WILL VENABLE: Not really, to be honest. I think that we're going to continue to develop this roster throughout the offseason and see where we're at, and then even in Spring Training you've got to see how things shake out.

By the end of it I hope we have a really good understanding of how we're going to utilize our guys.

**Q. A lot of teams have revised the way teams get ready for the game. In other words, is there too much downtime, is there too much clock? Should you take a few days a week of infield? What's your perception of that having played the game for a long time, been a coach now, and now manager? How do you prepare a team to have the energy ready to compete?**

WILL VENABLE: Yeah, I think it's a really challenging thing to do. Every manager is going to be challenged to do that. You have the demands of 162 games that you have to keep in mind. You also have to set up a structure where you're addressing the things that you know are important to winning. That means practicing things that maybe aren't going to show up that day, but that you need to practice.

Then there's just getting ready for that day. You mix all those things together, and I think, again, every manager will be challenged for that what that looks like on a daily basis. That's something that we're talking about with our staff even now.

**Q. Do you feel like players are different as far as nature and handling these type of situations than when you were playing?**

WILL VENABLE: Yes and no. I think that even when I was playing, you just saw guys that went about it differently. Everyone has their different approach for being ready for that night, and so that's another component that you have to keep in mind is that you might have the best pregame schedule in the world, but guys have their own thoughts on how they want to get ready. You have to honor that to a degree too.

**Q. What sort of dives have you done on guys like Colson Montgomery and Harold who haven't played in the Major Leagues yet, but might be a part of what you guys are going to do next year?**

WILL VENABLE: It's really just been about the people and connecting with those guys and just getting to know them. You know, I think as we build the roster and understand skill sets a little more and where guys show up, I'll have more thoughts on that.

**Q. What are the expectations from players on things like running out ground balls and that sort of thing? How will you manage that?**

WILL VENABLE: I think just set really clear expectations on the things that we can control and doing them with great

effort. I think there's a lot of things in this game that are going to be tough to control. There's only a few that you get to really nail, and certainly effort down the line, backing up bases, covering bases for pitchers, those are kind of things that we're going to have really high expectations for executing for sure.

**Q. Is there a way you like to hold people accountable for stuff like that? Is it mentioning if you see something unacceptable, or do you more prefer to have that be a private conversation about what the standards are?**

WILL VENABLE: I think every situation is unique, and the progression to the point where someone is getting taken out of the game, there's probably a lot of things that happened before that behind the scenes.

For me it's, one, just setting really clear expectations on what it's supposed to look like, and that's verbally and visually just showing guys what it is that they're expected to do. Then just having honest conversations about it, which in my experience is a really good place to start.

Then beyond that, if you have to take a guy out of the game, you have to, but I think that there's a lot of steps that will probably lead up to that.

**Q. Bruce Bochy is a thermostat for the guys, and he is so poised win or loss. He's just an even-keeled guy. Is there anything out of his book or maybe some others that you want to implement into your philosophy as a manager?**

WILL VENABLE: If I could bring all of it into my philosophy, I would. I think he was just so good with his ability to communicate with players. You said it. He really is a thermostat for these guys and has an understanding of the group and what their needs are on a daily basis. If nothing else, just the awareness that he has is something I want to take into my program.

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