

# MLB Winter Meetings

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Dallas, Texas, USA

**New York Yankees**

**Manager Aaron Boone**

Press Conference



## 2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

**Q. You said yesterday you were excited to get into the room and talk to everyone. What's your impression of what you guys are trying to get done right now?**

AARON BOONE: There's a lot of conversations happening. Whether it's with other teams, obviously agents and the free agents that are out there. They're up there hard at work right now, and we'll see where it takes us not only today and the days that we're here, but obviously moving forward in the winter.

**Q. How disappointing was this with Soto?**

AARON BOONE: Obviously we wanted the player back. Ownership and the front office, I think, did everything we could to make it happen. It just didn't. But as I told these guys yesterday, that's sports.

Ultimately, Juan earned the right to be in the position that he's in, and he made a decision that he felt like was best. We went into this eyes wide open. It was a year ago when we were sitting here, and I remember making the deal at the Winter Meetings. We knew there was no guarantees of anything moving forward.

I think as much as it hurt to make the deal with some of the players that we lost, looking back, I feel like it was the right thing to do and served us well. He had an amazing season obviously with us.

Personally speaking, loved getting to know him and getting to be his manager and respect ultimately his decision that he made.

It kind of hurts in the moment, but when you live in the business and you live in the sport -- again, it is sports. It doesn't always go your way. It's now an opportunity for us to -- and our expectation is to still go out and build and put together a great team to go compete for a championship again next year. That doesn't stop.

**Q. Having gone through the recruitment process with Yamamoto last year, what have you learned that**

**helped you refine it?**

AARON BOONE: I don't know if there's anything specific. Every situation is different. I go into these things trying to just be who I am and authentic and present -- so just every -- and the experience of doing it, I'm sure serves you well on some level or helps shapes you the next time you're in front of the player. But every situation, every player is a little bit different.

I don't know if there's anything specific.

**Q. What would be the primary point of your message to Sasaki?**

AARON BOONE: Just the fact that many of us -- obviously we've had people scouting him and developed some familiarity with the player. I've known who he is for the last couple years. So in my own way, I have my own context of the player.

I think there's no better place to do it than in New York with the pinstripes. And I think we have a lot to offer him in not only his development, but I think it's clear we're talking about a potentially dominant Major League starting pitcher.

**Q. There's a lot of Yankee fans that are very upset that Soto went to the Mets when the money was that close. There's been a lot on social media. Do you understand their pain? I think it's the Jose Altuve treatment at Yankee Stadium. Do you understand why they feel that way?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, it's sports. We're talking about the passion of New York fans and New York Yankee fans and obviously what he meant to our team this year. Certainly understand the disappointment.

Look, it's not going to stop us from hopefully going to put together another great team. There's different ways of doing it. We don't even know which way that is this winter. You don't know how it's going to unfold, what free agents come into the mix, who you match up with, who you maybe match up with in a trade.

That's the fun part about now and trying to make good

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evaluations and good decisions ultimately to put us in a good spot moving forward. I don't get caught up in what the social media is saying about it or whatever. The reality is Juan's a great person and obviously a great player.

It's sports. It's competition. Look forward to it all.

**Q. Did that come but at all though that the money was that close. You've got Judge, the tradition. That doesn't happen that people jump the other way, especially coming off a World Series.**

AARON BOONE: Every case is different. Every person is different. There's different reasons why. You may know, you may never know.

Ultimately, he was in that position to do that. That's his prerogative.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

AARON BOONE: Not necessarily, no. Again, you never know who you get in on or miss out on or what's available. Again, there's different road maps, I think, to building a successful team. There's obviously things we need to do to fill out our team and put us in a good position when we get down to Tampa. And you never know where that road is going to take you.

Our goal is to take the right road and make the right decisions to give ourselves a chance to compete for a championship again.

**Q. Do you consider Weaver set in stone as your closer after what he did this season?**

AARON BOONE: Depends where we go this off-season. I consider him -- I think he was as dominant a reliever as there was in the game, especially in the second half with his emergence. I have a ton of confidence in Luke. Whatever role that ends up being, whether it is the traditional closer, we'll just hopefully put him in the best position to be successful. And definitely have a lot of expectation and confidence that he's going to be hopefully a part of another really strong bullpen.

**Q. With Mayza gone now and you've got a couple other guys who are free agents, how do you feel about the bullpen, and what do you think you need there?**

AARON BOONE: I have a lot of confidence in our organization of being able to build and create a good bullpen. That, again, comes in a lot of different ways. Does that mean we're signing a free agent or two? Could. Could be some internal option that we're excited about as

well that maybe aren't in the forefront right now from a name standpoint that we feel like had a chance to emerge for us.

Plus some of the holdover that's we have, we feel like are going to be significant pieces in our pen. So we'll see how it ends up getting built, but I have a lot of confidence in our group that we'll put together something.

**Q. Who are some of those internal guys you're excited about?**

AARON BOONE: Well, the holdovers obviously, you could have a Clayton Beeter, what he did at the back half of the year coming out of the bullpen in the Minor Leagues and then get a little bit of a taste in the Big Leagues. He's one guy that we're excited about that we feel like could potentially carve out a significant role.

But there's always others that emerge. There will be probably non-roster guys that you bring in that our group maybe has identified as somebody. I think we've had a pretty good track record of that. So I'm sure there will be a couple guys that show up in Spring Training that we don't even know about yet that could end up playing an important role for us.

**Q. I think you guys made a run last year at Tanner Scott. What is it about him when you've seen him pitch?**

AARON BOONE: Stuff. I think now -- he's always had the stuff and flashes of excellence, but obviously some struggles too. I think we're starting to see a finished product, though, of where the stuff and harnessing that have kind of come together.

I think this year was obviously one of the dominant relievers in the game. I think it's just with his experience and the dynamic stuff that he has coming together now with that better control has allowed him to ascend.

**Q. He showed last year he went from closer to setup role. Is that impressive that you see guys that he's an All-Star closer, goes to San Diego -- I think Zack Britton did that -- when you see guys like that?**

AARON BOONE: What stands out with Brit -- Brit had a longer track record. Brit was a dominant closer, as good as it got, and he came to us. He was able to transition more into that eighth inning role. Back then we were a little more traditional. I'd use him a little bit in the seventh.

Now we're getting more into using guys in spots we feel like they're most capable. I think that's probably where

Tanner is in his career of like, well, he's a mature finished product now that has done it for a while and knows how to do it.

Usually when you're really good, typically you're really good whatever inning they throw you in.

**Q. You mentioned development when it comes to Sasaki. How would you sell him on the Yankees pitching development?**

AARON BOONE: I don't know. That's a deeper conversation. The messaging I've sent him is just topical of like -- and then that's for a later date of when he really wants to dive into how we do things, how we evaluate things. Maybe where there's areas where we'd see if there's little things that we can do to see immediate improvement.

I think the one thing industry-wise and certainly with us is we recognize that this is a pitcher that has a chance to be an ace over here. It's that kind of talent. So we'll see.

**Q. What you guys Soto offered was significant. He enjoyed playing in New York and talked him into going with the pinstripes. What do you think made the difference in the decision with the money being so close?**

AARON BOONE: I don't know. That's ultimately a question for Juan. We can speculate on the different things. You can do that all you want, but ultimately that's a question for Juan.

It's his right to make that decision, and he made the one he felt was best for him and his family.

**Q. Aaron, you guys (indiscernible). Would you consider third base?**

AARON BOONE: No. Now, one of the things -- I think with Jazz, Jazz gives us flexibility. So if we end up importing a third baseman or plugging someone, I feel like Jazz is someone that can obviously move to second base. But if we're in the second base market or filling that internally, no. I'm more than comfortable with Jazz at third.

I mean, I thought he was excellent over there, going there for the first time, and I think showed you what he could probably be over there. I think his versatility, his talent gives you a little bit of flexibility to hopefully expand your search a little bit, and then you can plug Jazz accordingly.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

AARON BOONE: We'll see. That's the thing about the winners. Everyone assumes just you see an open spot, you never know where the winter takes you.

**Q. But as manager, where do you see him?**

AARON BOONE: You guys can all speculate on that. Because there's always internal candidates for certain spots. The winter sometimes is about plugging holes or filling positions that are viewed as open, but it's also sometimes you line up with places that it's about addressing a strength because that's where you line up and that's what you're able to do.

It's never perfect. But you do the best you can to really put yourself in a position to go compete for something important.

**Q. Replacing a guy like Soto, it's hard to find that exact function from one guy. You have to spread it out. What are you missing without him?**

AARON BOONE: There's more than one way to build a team or skin a cat. Maybe it allows you to be more defensive. Maybe it allows you to play in the pitching market more often. Again, it's where you line up. It's like there's a lot of ways to become a great team.

Last year we had an outstanding offense, obviously anchored by Juan and Aaron hitting back to back. That's not the only way to be a great team, though, you know what I mean?

We'll see. We're going to try our best to and are confident that when we get to Spring Training, we'll be in a position that we'll be one of those teams that has a chance to go compete for it all.

**Q. Do you feel what you showed in October can translate through the season?**

AARON BOONE: Yes. Obviously we talked a lot about Anthony all year. We talked about some of the mechanical adjustments he made going into the season that worked, then he struggled, had his ups-and-downs offensively. I think I maintained all along thought that I think it's just not a finished offensive product yet.

I think the different adjustments and things he's done are going to serve him well in the end, and we are going to look up in several seasons and we're going to see a really good offensive player. I'm really confident that what I saw from him in the final weeks of the season and then certainly into the postseason is absolutely something that will hopefully carry over to where he becomes more and

more of a consistent offensive player.

I am confident he will be able to do that.

**Q. Not knowing where the off-season will take you with that in mind, would there ever be consideration to moving Volpe to second?**

AARON BOONE: No, I can't imagine that. No, he's as good as it gets as short. It's a very small list of players that I don't see us having the ability to import that would bump him over to second base.

**Q. Do you see him being a guy that can be a .300 hitter, .800 OPS. When you look at him in his prime, where do you think he's going to be average-wise?**

AARON BOONE: I don't know, but I think he's going to be a good offensive player. Where that ends up, does it manifest itself more in average? Is there more power? I don't know, but I think we're going to see a very good offensive player when it's all said and done.

**Q. You have access to bat tracking data now. In October Anthony was swinging the bat much harder than he was in the regular season.**

AARON BOONE: It's a mechanical thing. Look, I had this conversation with you, and I've had it with Anthony. Like the week off leading into the postseason, the little adjustments I saw, it was like, boom, it leapt off the screen. That's it. That's it right there.

Then obviously he carried it into the games into the postseason. So I haven't seen the bat tracking, but I'm not surprised because I know what I was watching every single day, and that's what we want, yes. When you see it, yes.

**Q. On the other side of that, Austin Wells' bat tracking data slowed down over the end of the season. Do you think there was wear and tear from catching for as long as he did the first time, and how do you help him moving forward?**

AARON BOONE: I think that's possible. I think he was in a good spot for the most part physically being a catcher in October. That's a given you're probably going to be worn down a little bit, and especially for Austin who hasn't done it in September, in October, especially with the load he was holding.

Then you get beat up a little bit at different points. September you get beat up a little bit. Yeah, I think that being a catcher in October was a contributor to that, and I think going through it now will certainly serve him well

moving forward in his career.

Austin's another guy that I feel like is going to be a very good offensive player, especially for the position he plays.

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