

MLB Winter Meetings

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Dallas, Texas, USA

Seattle Mariners

Dan Wilson

Press Conference

Q. What's the offseason experience been like from your vantage point now that you've got five weeks on the job and looking forward to your first full season?

DAN WILSON: You know, it's been a busy offseason. I think coming out of the year, having to get a couple more coaches, I think especially starting with the hitting department, that was something that became a priority pretty quickly. With having Edgar come back, it's so huge. It's a chance to continue what he started towards the end of the year, and what he's really been working with these guys with for a long period of time with his relationships that he's built.

So a chance to get him back, and then bringing in Kevin Seitzer, Bobby Magallanes from Atlanta. To bring in some more guys that have had some experience back at that spot and also more of a continuing voice of what Edgar has been talking about. So I think both those guys will fit in very, very easily, very, very well.

Then getting Eric Young Jr. at first base, moving Kristopher Negrón to third, and having Manny come to the bench, those are all things that I'm really excited about. I think the staff -- and then getting Lou Boyd in with the departure of Carson at the Major League coordinator position. I'm really excited about this staff.

I've got some great experience on the staff. We've got some young people on the staff as well. So it's a good mix, and it's a great group. I know all of them are excited to get started.

Q. We talked to you quite a bit about Edgar's last three, four games, but you've known him forever. What did you -- did you learn anything new about him just in that role and how he's able to connect with the hitters and the guys and just kind of the magic formula he seems to have?

DAN WILSON: I don't know if it's something that I learned or if it was just something that was sort of reconfirmed. Just his passion for hitting. I knew as a player that he was



2024 BASEBALL WINTER MEETINGS DALLAS

an excellent talent of hitting, but also his ability to really study it and become a student of it and be able to pass that on to other guys and communicate it well.

The way he's able to break down complicated concepts and make them simple, you know, the way he's able to pass along sort of what your approach can be in the box and what you should be thinking as you step in the box.

So all those things I think I remember that as a player, now having had a chance to see it again. But his passion for wanting to make this organization better and especially offensively is something that's really, really inspiring in a lot of ways. It's something that we knew as a player, but seeing it again as a coach has been pretty cool.

Q. How much is he going to be around? Like I know we've said home games. He was there for home games. Is he going to be there for all of Spring Training? How do you --

DAN WILSON: I think when you understand that passion, I know he's going to be around a lot. I think that his passion for the guys, his relationships that he's built, he wants to be there as much as possible. So I expect he's going to be around there a lot. You can't build those relationships if you're not around.

I think having him there a lot, having Kevin Seitzer there as the Major League hitting coach, I think to extend the voice of Edgar when he's not there, I think is huge. But I know that Gar will be there as much as he can be, and he really enjoys that part of it. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. The offensive turnaround in September was pretty remarkable. Were there signs? What gives you the confidence that that's sustainable?

DAN WILSON: Yeah. I mean, I think in a lot of ways we had some success in the win column. That helps.

I think using the stuff that Gar brings, the idea of middle of the field, the idea of two-strike battles, doing what it takes to get runners in, you know, really became a big part of our offense late in the season and really was able to contribute to a lot of Ws. That really helps make the case.

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Also, I think the simplicity of it. Guys want to make things simple when they get in the box, and Gar is able to do that. His conversations -- I think it's not only the message that he brings, but it's the way in which he brings that message that is so important.

The guys have really responded to it well and will continue to do so.

Q. Seitzer obviously comes with an established track record with a really quality team. What really stood out to you in the interview process with him to want to bring him onto your staff?

DAN WILSON: Yeah, I think we wanted especially someone that had some experience, but also someone that would be a good extension of what Gar talks about. Just in the conversations that we had with Kevin, his idea of line-to-line hitting and using the middle of the field also is something that really resonated with us.

So it was obviously some really good candidates. Difficult decisions to make. But in the end I think having him with some playing experience as well is going to be something that the guys will be able to really lock into. Again, hearing it in a different way sometimes, but a similar message can be really, really helpful.

Q. You were thrust into the situation midseason. You have all of the player reports and stuff that I know you were a part of some of it, but now you're dealing with everyone. Do you feel like you've caught up, or are you still trying to catch up? I mean, pitchers and catchers from February 11th or 12th. It's coming fast.

DAN WILSON: I knew once we got to the winter meetings things were going to accelerate really quickly.

It feels like in some ways you get your nose above water, and then the pool gets deeper suddenly. It's just something that you kind of have to learn on the floor and experience.

I feel like we're getting to a point where we're getting things a little bit more settled, and starting now to sort of look forward to what's coming next year and getting our plans in place for Spring Training. There's a lot to do there, but we're in good shape.

Getting the staff decided was a big step in that right direction, and now we begin to plan and put together the things we want to put together for Spring Training.

Q. You know your needs. You've also been around

Jerry. Things can change. A roster can change quite a bit. What do you think your needs are, and what do you expect to happen in the weeks ahead when you get to Spring Training? What is it going to look like?

DAN WILSON: You know, you hear 1,000 different things, especially at a venue like this. It's really hard to know what's going to happen.

I think for me, Jerry, Justin do a great job in that department. For me it's really looking at the guys that we have, and I love the guys that we have, the players and the pitching staff. We talk a lot about the pitching. We talk a lot about the defense. When you see Cal with the Platinum Glove and Dylan with the Gold Glove and J.P. with the Gold Glove, the outfield that we have, defensively we stack up with one of the best in all of baseball. Really excited about that.

Then offensively the things that we did at the end of the season were impressive. That group really proved to a lot of people that they can win and win consistently. That's what we hope to continue to do as we get to Spring Training and then get right on into the end of March and the regular season.

So we'll see. We'll see who the personnel are. Right now with the guys that we got I feel very confident going forward with what we have and the players in place, and we'll just keep grinding and make adjustments as we go.

Q. Jerry really talked about the patience that you exhibited. How did that kind of help you find your voice in the clubhouse? Why is passion so important with a Major League roster and such a long season?

DAN WILSON: That's a good question. I mean, I think baseball is such an up-and-down game. I remember a conversation I had with Sparky Anderson as a young player a long time ago talking about that baseball will take you high and it will take you low, but the guys that are successful are the ones that can stay right in the middle. And I think it takes patience to stay there and it takes discipline to stay there as well.

That's what I hope one of the things I can bring to this club is the idea of not riding the waves of baseball. I think that's a very important thing. You can't get high when things are great, too high, and we can't get too low when things aren't great. Just trying to stay in the middle to stay consistent for 162. Hopefully that's a message we can continue to bring.

Q. Your roster had a lot of platoons last year at the end. It started even more at the beginning of the



season. Where are you with that? How much do you want to have platoons versus -- I know you don't get to choose your roster, but guys that are specific. Even with Luke going against lefties isn't something you want to do. How many platoons do you want to have versus guys that can go out every day?

DAN WILSON: I do think that one of the things that was nice for us towards the end of the year was we had a little bit more of a set lineup and we were able to stick to an order that was, by and large, very similar from day-to-day.

I think there were some platoons that were fairly similar from day-to-day. I do like creating that stability in the lineup. I think it kind of lends itself to guys being able to be prepared for the role that they have on offense. The more you can do to stabilize a lineup, I think the better.

But, again, I think there are opportunities when platoons can be sort of a stable thing, and it kind of worked that way for us towards the end of the year. If there are platoons again as we go forward, you know, I hope to make them as stable as possible.

Q. You talked about the foundation of the team. Cal, Logan, Julio, J.P. How much correspondence have you had with those guys in the offseason?

DAN WILSON: I've been able to make contact with a lot of guys. That's one of the things we try to do is stay connected as best we can throughout the offseason. It's not just me. Our coaching staff does a great job of that as well, you know, staying in contact. I know Gar is watching videos of guys hitting in the offseason. There's a lot going on, and Seitz and Bobby have jumped right in as well as they've taken on their new roles.

There's a lot of communication. There's a lot of talk that goes on, and I think that bodes itself well for when we get to Spring Training. It doesn't take so long to get started.

We're pretty familiar with where we are. This is a group that's been together now for a little while. It helps to really smooth that transition as we get into spring.

Q. J.P. I think was back a couple of days after the season to go over some stuff. What did you guys -- in re-evaluating, what you saw from him? What went wrong so far, because I know he was hurt, but the numbers he had versus last year, where do you find the medium? What do you think went wrong?

DAN WILSON: I think one of the things about J.P. is, you're right, he does jump right back into it, and he wants to get back to form. I know he's excited about next year.

I think when you talk about what Gar brings, we've talked about the middle of the field, I think J.P. really is at his best when he's in the middle of the field and helping him get back to that is something that we're looking to do.

I know he's anxious to get started on that. I think right now he's probably a little bit more locked in on having a baby and getting that underway. I'm excited for what he brings. To me what he brings defensively you can't match, and what he brings in the clubhouse as somewhat of an emotional leader for our club, you got to love that as well.

Getting him in tip-top form is going to be vital for us, and I'm looking forward to this season.

Q. How much have you talked with the center fielder? The progress he made with Edgar, although there were some minor adjustments to his setup and major adjustments to his approach, I mean, do you believe that that's -- he understands he wants (indiscernible) like what he saw the last five weeks with Edgar is kind of better place than where he was before?

DAN WILSON: I think they really did have some great conversations. And having had some conversations with Julio here in the offseason myself, I know that he really appreciated Gar and the message that he brought.

I know that he was happy with the results. When you look at, again, the ball coming off his bat as hard as it does, the exit velos that he's got, you know, he's consistently around 110, 105 coming off his bat.

So you can go to any part of the ballpark and hit the ball out of the ballpark and pick up doubles anywhere in the ballpark if it's coming off that well.

I think he enjoys using the middle of the field and taking that kind of an approach. I think it's been a good match between he and Gar. Again, just continue to look forward to those guys continuing to work together.

Q. There's so much talk about pitching and how good it is, but also your roster building and speculation says and all that. Your conversation with Jerry and Justin, are you pounding the table to keep all five of those guys? Are you asking to be involved in some of that too? What kind of were your emotions with that?

DAN WILSON: I think those guys handle most of that. I think it's always hard when you lose a player, if that happens. You become a family. There's no question about it. You throw your arms around everybody in the club. You don't want to see people go.

Not saying that that's going to happen. I don't know what's going to happen, but I think it's always difficult to lose players. We hope we can keep the guys that we have because it's been a very, very good club, and I think we have opened some eyes towards the end of the year, and I think that we want to continue to do that.

Q. When you stepped away from it all because it was such a mad rush and you have some time to reflect, did it give you any clarity about the team that you took over, where it could be versus what it was, all that kind of stuff when you are looking at it now, when you stepped away from it? Sometimes the distance of it helps you.

DAN WILSON: Yeah, I don't know that it changed anything. I think the perspective coming in was that this was a team that had a chance to get to the postseason, and to me that is still the same. This is a team that they could get themselves to the World Series. They've got a good mix of younger players, especially you talk about the Cal Raleighs and the pitching staff. A lot of those guys are still fairly young.

Then you have some veteran guys too that have been around a little while and understand. When you get a good mixture like that, you really understand that you've got a good formula to get yourself deep and into the playoffs and into the World Series.

I don't think anything has changed in my mind about this club. I know that they can do what they need to do to get themselves to a World Series. I think this is a team that wants to get there. This is a group of guys that are hungry. It's a group of guys that are willing to really, really fight.

We talked at the end of the year about the resiliency of this team, and I think they continue to show that. To me it's -- not that it's been a perspective change. It's just been more of a verification of what we saw at the end of the year.

Q. Leading up to Spring Training, have you thought about what you want to say, how you want to run your camp? The mechanics of it are so different probably when you get to go out there and hang out with the catchers, it's a lot different. Run with Tucker every day. Probably not going to be able to do that.

DAN WILSON: Yeah, it's going to be tougher. I think that's a lot of the things we're going to do from here until we get to Spring Training as a coaching staff. Again, there's a lot of experience there. There's a lot of wisdom there. Those are the things that we start to talk about as a group now as we head forward.

There's a lot to do, no question, but we will be ready. That's the stuff to me that's exciting. You know, you start thinking about why you're doing things and the purpose behind things and the message you want to send. So I think those are the things that we're starting to tackle now as a staff.

Q. The two Mitches had really rough years for both of them. Do you talk to them about where they're at mentally? Haniger barely played towards the end. He was banged up. Mitch Garver had one of his worst seasons ever. Do you talk to them about kind of what they needed to accomplish, where they were at mentally at the end?

DAN WILSON: Yeah, we've had conversations. I think with both of those guys, you know, they've been around this game a long time. They know that, again, there are ups and downs. They know what they're going to do to get themselves prepared for this year.

I think, again, the resiliency that all these guys have shown, I'm not worried about that at all. I know these guys will be ready to go in Spring Training, and they will be prepared. I know that as we speak, these guys are really putting their time in in terms of getting their body prepared for the season and their swings. I expect both of those guys to come into Spring Training and really be ready to make impact.

Q. When Garver came in last year, it was as the DH first, maybe catch every once in a while. Will you have him catch more frequently in spring as the idea that he's going to catch and not just going to be DH only or anything?

DAN WILSON: Those are things we're going to continue to iron out as the offseason goes on. Obviously when you look at what Cal does behind the plate, he doesn't take a lot of days off. So, you know, we'll just continue to weigh what our needs are and how these guys fit.

Again, I think for right now the preparation they're putting in to get ready for this season is the important thing, and I know these guys are delivering on that.

Q. How much do you talk to Cal?

DAN WILSON: He's got a lot of people in his ear. He's had a good offseason I think. That was awesome. I was so pumped for him. That was huge.

Q. He deserved it.

DAN WILSON: 100%.

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