

MLB Winter Meetings

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St. Louis Cardinals

Manager Oliver Marmol

Press Conference

Q. Chaim said the other day this is not about patience, it's about urgency. Even if you're building, how much do you still have to have that urgency of pushing every day?

OLIVER MARMOL: He's been clear about that, and he stated it well when he said we're not conceding anything in the immediate, but we'll make decisions that impact the future more so than right now.

I love the mentality because you can't lower the standard. If anything, that's something that has to be really on point of continuing to keep it really high standard.

Having the right people in the room, not only staff but players that want to wake up and contribute to that standard culture every day. I think Chaim communicated it extremely well that there's a sense of urgency to all of this. The better we are at our jobs, the quicker we turn this thing around.

Q. How much, if at all, is your winter different than the player that Chaim was talking about in the way that you look at this in the sense of an overarching deal, what does that change in the off-season, if anything?

OLIVER MARMOL: There's a lot of different things. You look at the different process that has been put into the Minor League system and adding manpower there, adding manpower at the Big League level as well. There's things that go with that. It doesn't change a ton other than there's a lot more conversations with a lot of moving parts and what does it look like in each of those scenarios.

Again, he's done a really nice job of not only communicating with me, but with our staff and players so that there's clarity throughout.

Q. With the facility being where it is right now, how much has that been part of it?

OLIVER MARMOL: That's part of it. We'll benefit from it once it's up and running. But being able to do player plans



and have our hands-on guys at the facility and kind of create an environment where guys want to be there, we don't have that this year, but it will help future years being able to do that.

Q. Ollie, there's probably more unknowns at this point than many other years, maybe even in 20 years when you consider the number of different directions your roster could take in the next month before Spring Training. You could have an opening at every position for competition. What does that look like for you in Spring Training? What do you want to kind of go into Spring Training thinking about? I know these trades still have to happen.

OLIVER MARMOL: They still have to happen, right? There's a lot of, to your point, moving parts and how this all plays out will dictate a lot of that.

I think the most important thing you can do during this time is communicate clearly and over-communicate with the staff but also with the players. Chaim has done a nice job of reaching out to certain players and making sure there's clarity in it and understanding what we're trying to do and what some of the possibilities are. As a staff, you prepare for all of it.

As we get closer, then we start to really kind of understand what it looks like, then it will help.

Q. Do you see a scenario where there isn't an incumbent and you just kind of have competition almost all over?

OLIVER MARMOL: That's a good thing, yeah. I mean, having competition all over the place is ideal. And having the depth to be able to do that is ideal. That's when you're good, so yeah.

Q. JJ Wetherholt specifically, what can you share? What have you heard from this off-season? I know it's only December, whatever, but what can you share about JJ Wetherholt?



OLIVER MARMOL: I'll go back to our first real look at him in spring. It was extremely impressive. Obviously the skill set is there, the bat's there, what he does on the field. But the way he carries himself, his mentality and preparation, his ability to take criticism and kind of implement the things you talk about into practice and into a game is pretty high, especially for his age.

There's like a quiet confidence to him that's impressive, and he was able to slow the game down. For being up there for the first time and wanting to impress, he was able to slow the game down extremely well.

Those are the things that stand out to me even more so than his skill set. But you combine that with his skill set, and it's easy to get excited, yeah.

Q. When you look at JJ in the short term positionally, what does that look like going into spring?

OLIVER MARMOL: More so, I would think of it a little different, just having the ability to play different positions. Because it's harder to understand how this is all going to shake out.

Q. I know it's more talking about players who might leave, but how much do you need a veteran pitcher, starting pitcher to kind of anchor the staff?

OLIVER MARMOL: A couple different ways to look at that. Chaim has been clear about wanting to add another one. Who that is, what that looks like and the resume that comes with that is an unknown at the moment. But what you try to do in the immediate is have a conversation with the Liberatores and the McGreeveys and have them take that next step in their career. Not asking them to do more than they need to, but what it looks like to look at more than just outside of yourself and make sure others around you are getting better.

Both of them have the capacity to do that. So you continue to build those type of qualities and challenge guys in that direction.

Q. Going through what you went through last off-season with Nolan, does that make it easier with the people whose names are kind of being bandied about?

OLIVER MARMOL: They want to make sure they're communicated with and they're cared for. Just like anybody else, take this industry aside, that's what you want. You want to make sure that people are -- you've done life with them for several years, and they want to make sure they're cared for and communicated with, and

that's the easy thing to do.

Even talking to Donny yesterday, his head is in a really good spot. He's preparing extremely well. He feels good about where he's at. There's a ton of noise around is he going to be with us or somewhere else? He's handling it really well. He's a pro about it. Those conversations have gone really well.

Q. As you continue to grow as a leader and a manager heading into this year, you always say you plan to win the World Series because why else would you put on a uniform? Clearly there's going to be some younger players and such.

OLIVER MARMOL: Absolutely.

Q. Can you describe what you call this, the give and take, the balancing, the whole thing?

OLIVER MARMOL: It is a good balance. The one thing you can't do is get frustrated with progress as you're trying to get to where you show up every day and you know you're going to win. There's a progression to that. Our staff have all been in player dev and understand what that looks like and are passionate about that.

Yeah. There's an urgency to win, and there's a standard that we'll keep. But at the same time, you can't get frustrated if you're not getting the immediate results that you're looking for out of certain young guys. You've got to keep your head down and make sure they feel supported. They understand what this looks like as well. So there is a balance to that.

Q. One of the trades you guys have made already is Sonny Gray to the Red Sox. In your time with Sonny, what did you like about getting to know him as a person and having him as a starting pitcher in your rotation?

OLIVER MARMOL: I liked having Sonny a ton. Even in talking to him after we made the trade, this is a guy that competes really well, prepares on a completely different level. I think back to the first bullpen he threw with us in Spring Training, just the intentionality behind it. He allowed others to see what it looks like to prepare extremely well, and a lot of those young guys started to mimic it, which is what you want in some of your leaders.

I love the way he prepared and the way he competed and gave you everything he had every time out. He communicated extremely well with me. I enjoyed my time with him.

Obviously it fits what we're trying to do here in building for the future and getting some control in Fitts and Clarke with high upside there. Sad to see him go, but if that's what we're trying to go -- and again, I'll say it, Chaim's been clear on what it's going to take.

Q. You mentioned the other day that you had dinner with Victor Scott and Masyn Winn. What can you share about that?

OLIVER MARMOL: We were at Albert's event. Masyn was there, and we got to spend a little time together. Vic was there as well. It's always good to kind of be with them.

Q. Defense talk?

OLIVER MARMOL: Both of those guys do a nice job with defense. But no, it was good to talk with them and understand where they're at and how they think about those things. Both of those guys are going to be a big part of what we do moving forward. They're locked in with what this looks like and what's needed. I enjoyed my time with them for sure.

Q. Obviously Masyn is your starting shortstop. Do you feel like you can say the same thing with Victor at center field?

OLIVER MARMOL: I do want him coming in with that mentality, absolutely, man. This is a guy who has -- I can't remember who I was talking to this morning. It might have been A.J. Pierzynski, but you look at his year offensively, and it left you wanting more. But there was a ton of growth in Victor, and understanding what it takes to have success at the Big League level, what preparation truly looks like, how pitchers are game planning specifically for you and what you need to do to be able to combat that.

When you look at his year, yeah, the numbers aren't what you want them to be, but you look at the growth and his preparation and where this is headed, and it's one of the guys I'm most excited to see this upcoming year.

Q. Do you see other spots that are similar to that? When you say Jordan in right is similar to that?

OLIVER MARMOL: But different because he's already experienced not having success, going into an off-season and repeating and making adjustments at the highest level. He's in a different spot in his career compared to Vic. I'm equally as excited, though.

The conversations with him, if I were to put it in a nutshell, I think there's a level of maturity with Walker that is positive, where you're able to have a little bit more direct criticism,

and the way he's receiving that and being able to verbalize his side of what he's comfortable with, not comfortable with. And the adjustment that are needed are different than a year ago. That's heavily needed when you're trying to make the adjustment that we're trying to make.

He's been really good about communicating with me, communicating with Brownie and Casey as well. But I would say there's a different level of maturity in how he's preparing and communicating.

Q. When you talked to McGreevey and Liberatore, you mentioned that -- is it a part of like challenging them, telling them we need you to go from here to here this year?

OLIVER MARMOL: It's personality driven too. They're not the only two because you're doing the same thing on the position players side and challenging those guys to take the next step in their career. But they both have the leadership qualities and capacity to do it.

The last thing you want to do is have them focus on something that might be more than is needed. So you're careful about that. But our staff does a nice job with that. Both those guys have the capacity, though.

Q. Ollie, what do you credit to Matt Svanson from last year?

OLIVER MARMOL: Man, first word that comes to mind is just confidence. This is a kid, like he truly believes in his stuff. He's coachable, but he's also very confident in what he's bringing to the table.

He was put into some situations that were challenging, and he never wavered. Like he took the ball, the game didn't speed up on him, and it was impressive to be able to do that first time up at the Big League level.

A lot of it is just his overall demeanor, closing games in the past and being able to take the ball in high leverage and still deliver.

Q. It kind of gradually seemed he went into high leverage. Is there one thing that made you think he was moving forward?

OLIVER MARMOL: No. You just kind of monitor their overall demeanor of when you do put them in a situation, it may be a little more higher leverage than others and how they're able to handle that. When it goes well -- actually when it doesn't, you gain a lot more intel. He did a nice job with us, and you're able to trust him.

There are times in the season when high leverage guys aren't available and you're forced to do see what these guys can do in a real spot. And if they do well, then you continue to trust them. It's combination of those things.

Q. What does Gorman's off-season look like? A lot of time at third. Need to be more mobile? What does his off-season look like?

OLIVER MARMOL: Exactly that. Working on mobility and making sure his body is in a position that we are able to navigate the back a lot more than previous years. To be actually have the agility needed to play defense. But also in conversation with him, I mean, he'll tell you where he felt like he went to the extreme on being able to get the ball in the air and hit homers and finding that combination of hitability and power is important.

Q. He might be an example of this, but what you were saying about McGreevey and Liberatore and the conversation you had with them, they're both coming in as starters, and you're looking at them to grow in that rotation. With guys like Gorman, what other factors will be in play for where he plays? What are those conversations like this winter? Also, since everything now is like 12 months of the year, just 24/7 preparing for spring, not like arriving at spring and be ready. What do you say to guys who maybe there's a little bit of unknown where they fit?

OLIVER MARMOL: We've been in this position, when you look at last year with Nolan and the conversations around moving him, there was that conversation of, hey, Gorman, be ready to do a combination of things, whether that's play second, play third, and that's no different. There's a lot of moving parts, and you have to prepare yourself to be able to do any and all of it.

He fits into that bucket where a part of his preparation this off-season is ability to do that.

Q. Do you have more guys in that bucket, would you say, in this winter? A year ago, it was kind of hinged to Nolan.

OLIVER MARMOL: It's a one move. This year's a little different. We'll see. It's still early.

Q. Where's Herrera at for you in his recovery and where he fits?

OLIVER MARMOL: Yeah, doing plyos. He'll start actually throwing here in a few weeks. He's done a really nice job. So we built a curriculum for him, and I give a lot of credit to our staff, in our catcher coordinator, Poguey, Pierpont,

Dusty, all those guys came together to put a really detailed curriculum together to give him the best chance to go into this Spring Training with a lot of confidence when it comes to game calling and the why behind everything he does behind the plate.

He's working at it. He is passionate about it. He's bought in, and he'll have the best opportunity to show what he's got back there.

Q. Do you expect him to be able to be full go and throwing once spring is here?

OLIVER MARMOL: Yes.

Q. (No microphone.)

OLIVER MARMOL: Out of the boot. And still it will be a long process, but yeah, he's doing well, recovering well.

Q. Who's your closer?

OLIVER MARMOL: You're an idiot. I love it.

Q. Opening Day starter.

OLIVER MARMOL: I was expecting that, the opening day starter. You kind of beat him to it?

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