

# MLB Winter Meetings

Monday, December 8, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

**Tampa Bay Rays**

**Manager Kevin Cash**

Press Conference



**Q. We didn't really talk to you about it, what do you think of the additions of Fraley and Cedric Mullins. Realizing it's still early December, maybe more are coming, but how does that shape or reshape your outfield?**

KEVIN CASH: Excited about both of those guys. Jake Fraley having experience with the organization, a lot of people he knows to welcome him back. When you look at Jake, when he's been able to stay healthy, he's put together some productive seasons and really gives you good at-bats.

Cedric Mullins, we've seen a lot from his Oriole days. He was not a guy we liked to see come up to the plate, the speed power combination, and the ability to play center field. I think Erik addressed it early on heading into the off-season that we needed to find some production more offensive production out of our outfield. We need to be defensively better out of our outfield. Those two guys are going to help us do that.

**Q. Erik also kind of talked about creating competition by batting all these outfielders. Do you think that could help the returning guys as well, like Josh Lowe or Johnny DeLuca?**

KEVIN CASH: I think that some years going into Spring Training your roster is pretty much set, barring injuries. That's just the reality of it. Then there's some years that there's some uncertainty and unknown, and it presents an opportunity for guys to go out and have good springs.

Those two guys you mentioned, they're very motivated to come into Spring Training. Josh Lowe has worked his butt off to date of trying to get his body in shape, his athleticism back. We know the 2023 version of Josh Lowe is an extremely talented player that would help any baseball roster, and that's what we're looking forward to.

**Q. Erik said you either have or you're going to hook up with him this week?**

KEVIN CASH: Josh?

**Q. Yeah.**

KEVIN CASH: I texted with him when I drive over here. I-4 is a treat to drive on, as you guys all know. I got rerouted like four times on the way here. I texted him and said, I've got to get back for something, but we're an hour, 30, hour 45 minutes away, and we'll get together. He pops over to Tampa quite a bit.

**Q. Anything you hope to see out of this week, expect to see out of this week for you with this team?**

KEVIN CASH: You want a real answer or you want me to be sarcastic? No. Hope to see -- I'm looking forward to tonight. We're going to have our affiliate dinner. I think it's going to be a little bit unique because we have a new ownership dinner, that I'm excited to sit down and get to talk with. I've met them all but just more interaction. I think that's going to be exciting.

So appreciative of all of our affiliates that we get to come in and host and mingle with and spend a couple hours with. So I'm excited about that.

**Q. Issues in the past with catching. How does Dominic Keegan look, and what kind of look is he going to get at Spring Training?**

KEVIN CASH: We're obviously very excited about him. We put him on the roster. He battled some injuries in Spring Training. It was unfortunate that, for all that was talked about him coming into spring last year, he had the arm injury that he just couldn't perform. But there's a lot to be excited about.

You talk to our player development people, certainly Jeff Smith, our catching coordinator, raves about Dom Keegan, the player and the person. I hear the comps. When you hear the name Jason Varitek floated around comparing to a young player, that's quite an honor. I got to play with Jason, and the leader he was -- forget the player. We all know how great of a player he was. But the leader and the

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way he carried himself in the clubhouse.

And when people talk -- like that's how Dom is and how he cares so much about a pitching staff that excites him for coming into Spring Training for -- getting him to play and perform as long as he's healthy.

**Q. The last couple years the Twins had considered making Griffin Jax a starter. What about his mix makes that a possibility?**

KEVIN CASH: The mix is pretty simple. He's got four or five quality pitches. You can dream a little bit on how does that play out over six innings as opposed to one inning? I know we've had some conversation, but we really like Jax in our bullpen. It is dominant, electric stuff.

You look at his numbers and some of the underlying stuff, he might have been one of the unluckier pitchers. You can't have that multiple years because then it turns into you're not very good. I understand that. You look at the swing and miss he creates, the strike throwing, we felt like we had a pretty good bullpen, and it just got better when we acquired him.

**Q. Adam asked you about competition in the outfield, maybe at shortstop too. Erik said you're looking to acquire someone else, depending how it shakes out with Carson's situation.**

KEVIN CASH: Between Carson and certainly Wallsy. We have Raynel Delgado that we signed that will come in and get some reps. You never know how the rest of the off-season is. I want to see Taylor Walls healthy. Watching him every day, it's game changing what he does defensively for us.

With Carson, really happy about the experiences he gained in the last six weeks of the year, did some good things, and I know he's very motivated to come in and continue to do those things.

To your point, it feels like there's going to be a little more competition than there has maybe in past springs.

**Q. At a couple spots?**

KEVIN CASH: Yes.

**Q. Junior Caminero had a breakout season.**

KEVIN CASH: He was incredible. Exceeded every expectation you could ever ask of a 22-year-old player. I have seen him this off-season. His work ethic is off the charts. His care to be a good teammate, off the charts.

And he can really hit.

What we don't talk about enough is coming out of Spring Training there was legitimate concern about his defense -- from me. I was not confident, and I give him so much credit after about a month in for really working on his defense with Brady Williams and Rodney Linares. And Taylor Walls and that group helping him along, he became a very good defensive player to where when the game as on the line and there was a ground ball hit down the third base, we felt really good about it.

**Q. Have you had the opportunity to go through the Trop at all?**

KEVIN CASH: I have not. I have not been over there since the season ended.

**Q. Have you had a chance to start formulating a protocol for how you're going to deal with the new ball and strike system?**

KEVIN CASH: We have not yet. I'm sure we will spend a lot of conversation talking about that, though. I'm avoiding that intentionally because I know that's going to lock me in for hours talking about the challenge system, the ABS.

By all accounts, what I've heard from Morgan in Triple-A or anybody that experienced it in Triple-A, they really liked it. The players seemed to like it after a little bit. The coaching staff said it took a lot of the arguing out and they seemed to get really, really good -- the umpires got really good because of it.

**Q. A lot of catchers who were able to build up value for their framing ability were concerned about what kind of system was going to be put in place. With the way that they've structured this, do you almost think that enhances the value of those guys because they might be relied upon on when to issue a challenge?**

KEVIN CASH: Yeah. Yes. I think that's fair. I think you could make the case -- we don't know, but you'd like to think your elite framing catchers have a very good sense and awareness of what that borderline ball-strike looks like. I think that makes sense. I don't know if it will actually play out that way.

**Q. In terms of the Trop, how important is it to you or the team where you play? Is it a distraction at all about where you may or may not play beyond the extension of that contract?**

KEVIN CASH: Yeah. I mean, I've done this -- I think I'm going on year 12, and that question is asked every single

year. Mark's done it for 30 years, and he's talked about it. It's not a distraction. I think the guys are excited to get back in the Trop. I know I am. So appreciative of the Yankees and Steinbrenner family and Steinbrenner Field, but we're excited to get back home.

**Q. What do you think the biggest benefit will be? Are there specific benefits of getting back there, just a comfort factor?**

KEVIN CASH: Comfort. Sometimes that uncertainty of weather and heat and rain, is it coming or is it not? I know a lot of other ballparks -- you play in Boston, you play in Camden Yards -- at certain points of the year, you're always dealing with a mist, this and that. We got spoiled being in the Trop, knowing it's 72 degrees, we're playing -- unless the lights go out, and that only happened one time.

So knowing the consistency of the schedule and that nothing generally is going to affect the start of the game or interfere with it.

**Q. Is there anything to, like, your team is built more for that?**

KEVIN CASH: Our pitchers are, I think. They would definitely -- they're probably the happiest to get back there. The hitters are probably going to miss playing at Steinbrenner a little bit, but the pitchers are going to benefit a little bit from those long fly ball outs.

**Q. Can you give us an update on McClanahan at all?**

KEVIN CASH: Other than he's having a really good off-season, there's no update. He's a huge part of our team, and we need him healthy. He's working to be healthy. There's no real update other than that he feels really good.

**Q. He'll be ready to go for Spring Training?**

KEVIN CASH: That's what I'm being told.

**Q. How do you see the bullpen shaking out post Fairbanks functioning as a traditional closer?**

KEVIN CASH: I think try to keep it as fluid as possible. We've got guys that have certainly closer stuff, closer mentality and have closed games between, you said it, Cleav, Jax, Manny Rodriguez. I don't want to leave anybody out. But there are guys that pitch with a lot of confidence at the back end of games. We were fortunate to have Pete in that role, kind of stability for so many seasons there.

Now it opens up opportunities for us to maybe find different matchups earlier in the game to get a different one later.

**Q. With the group you have in the outfield, you've got a lot of lefties. Cedric's numbers are actually better against lefties than righties last year.**

KEVIN CASH: Last year, yeah (laughter).

**Q. I did say last year. Do you think you'll have a lot of tuning or you'll want to see --**

KEVIN CASH: It all kind of shakes out how the roster looks when you're coming out of spring. We've had seasons in the past where because of injuries, we had righty sinker-ballers and we had seven righties in the lineup. That was not by design. That's by what our personnel was because of injuries.

I do agree we have left-handed hitters, between Jake being switch and then Chandler, J. Lowe, Fraley, Cedric, a lot of lefties in there, so it might present some opportunities for lefties to play. But then you have Ryan Vilade and Jonny DeLuca as righties to kind of counterbalance that.

I don't think there's a scenario where we can have seven, eight outfielders on the roster. That's where there's Spring Training, come in, compete, show well, will define how our lineups are early on.

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