

# MLB Winter Meetings

Monday, December 8, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

**New York Yankees**

**Manager Aaron Boone**

Press Conference



**Q. How much do you guys, or how much would you like to see Cody Bellinger back in your lineup?**

AARON BOONE: Obviously what Cody brought to us last year in so many ways, just who he was in the room, his performance between the lines on both sides of the ball, his athleticism, his versatility, who wouldn't want a player like that?

He's earned the right now to get to this point of his career of free agency as still a relatively young man. So we'll see what happens. We'll see how it shakes out. As far as the player and the person, he's a good one.

**Q. Have you been an active part of the recruiting process?**

AARON BOONE: No, no, not so much with -- you know, I usually don't recruit as much with guys that we've had or whatever. They know who we are. They know what we're about.

Certainly if there comes a point where -- and this isn't just for Cody, this is with anyone. When it gets to a point where we're starting to get down the road or be in conversations, I'll certainly have those conversations with guys where I see it fit.

**Q. Have you done any of that yet?**

AARON BOONE: No.

**Q. If Bellinger comes back, how do you get Domínguez at bats? I know you say things play their way out. There's injuries last year, Stanton being hurt. If your guys are healthy, what do you do about Domínguez?**

AARON BOONE: We're back in the hypothetical game again. Right now like reality is JD is a young, talented player that got real experience at the Big League level last year. Had a lot of success, had some struggles along the way with it, but I think we all see a really talented player

there.

He went down and played winter ball to get some more at-bats, which I think is going to be very valuable for him. If a situation presents itself down the road where you end up having a lot of good players for not enough spots, you figure it out. You work it out, and then competition plays a big role too where those things got to work themselves out.

There were times in the season, early on in the first half especially, where a rotation kind of served us well. All those guys really probably thrived. And in some cases it probably helped keep guys fresher down the stretch because of that, because they kind of protected each other. There was buy-in. They were all playing regularly, and they were all contributing at a really high level.

We'll cross that bridge when we get there, if and when something like that comes up.

**Q. What reports have you gotten on Jasson out of winter ball? Just also do you think it's viable for him to keep being a switch hitter? I know you talked about him getting more reps.**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I mean, a small sample down there, but I think just going down there and playing in that environment and getting some at-bats, continuing to play. Especially since the last month of the season, even though he played a lot throughout the year and ended up with over 400 Big League at-bats, still down the stretch he didn't play as much obviously and into the playoffs. So I think it's good to go down that.

As far as the switch hitting, yes. Again, I go back -- and I hammered you guys over the head with this all year. We're talking about a very, very young player that didn't play a ton of Minor League baseball, and what suffers from that? The side you don't hit from as much. I still think he's very -- it's a natural side for him. He's a natural right-handed hitter.

I don't think it's out of the question that at some point that right-handed catches up to the left side. We'll see. I think

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he has the ability to do it.

**Q. Did you get to spend much time with Spencer? He was at Yankee Stadium.**

AARON BOONE: Not a lot. We crossed paths a couple of days there when he was there. He seems to be in a really good frame of mind, head space. Understanding -- you know, he put himself in a pretty strong position after having a strong year and after going to Spring Training for the first time where he's getting a real look. Last year he was in Spring Training, and I think that that was eye opening for him, getting that opportunity to be around Big League guys in that environment for a handful of weeks before going down.

But he handled his business at the Minor League level, and now he comes in with probably a more realistic look at -- whether it's to start the season or not, we'll see -- but a more realistic look to where he's now knocking on the door of the Big Leagues.

**Q. Are you excited to see how he handles that opportunity in the spring if there is that?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah. Look, I don't -- I mean, I'm looking forward to him being there and seeing a talented player continuing to grow and mature in his career. But at the same time, you don't want to put too much stock in how the first few weeks of Spring Training are going, good, bad, indifferent.

It's all part of the experience and growth part of your career, but certainly we're excited about where he is and the position he's put himself in.

**Q. What did you see from Jasson in the field last year?**

AARON BOONE: Overall, real improvement, but there's still a long ways to go in that improvement. I think back to the end of 2024 where we saw him out there where there's some real struggles -- obviously still getting used to left field, still now getting used to left field. It's still fairly new for him.

Even in Spring Training, the difference of him in February compared to April compared to June, there was really big strides. But there's still a ways to go, and just learning the nuances of the position. His athleticism is a real calling card for him, as far as his speed and arm strength and things like that. And you hope that eventually wins the day and eventually gets him to the point where, wow, he's getting really good out there. He's still got a lot of development to do in that regard.

**Q. What did you make of Trent's defense this past season because the metrics were not very good?**

AARON BOONE: I thought definitely better than that. The defensive metrics, I think, sometimes -- like in my head, I think back to a couple balls in Sacramento where the wind was kind of weird and some balls get blown a certain way. And those kill an outfielder from -- whether it's defensive runs saved or whatever it may be.

There was a month in the middle of the season or the later part where he was playing with a hamstring, so he probably didn't get to three or four balls that he normally gets to. Those things really ding you.

I think overall you still watch him play the position, and you're like, oh, that's a real center fielder. I think it's not unrealistic that he gets back to being more in line with that Gold Glove caliber guy with better health, with just having a good off-season. From a training standpoint, I think that's still very much in there for him.

**Q. Rice had a big first year for you and probably was a little bit unlucky with a lot of his hard hits. What kind of ceiling does he have? Do you think he's still growing and can really take another big step?**

AARON BOONE: I mean, I hope so. By the time we got to the end and you looked at it, like, this is a fearsome left-handed, middle of the order hitter. This is who he is.

It's his first full season, so you hope there's always that continued improvement. I mean, he's the type of guy that gets after it. Obviously we saw what he did physically last off-season and how we feel that really paid off for him. I saw him the other day at Yankee Stadium. I was in there. He was down hitting.

I had already seen some of the weight that you probably lose over the course of the season and you get beat up by the end of the year. He looks really good, really physical right now. So look, I think he's going to be one of the really good hitters in Major League Baseball for a while. Hopefully that means even another step next year.

**Q. What is your plan defensively with him?**

AARON BOONE: Right now he's our first baseman. The catching stuff is still very much in play. Then we'll see. We'll see how the off-season unfolds with where we are roster-wise going into Spring Training to how much catching that means, or is it all first base? But definitely see him as our first baseman.

**Q. He did a lot of extra catching stuff last year. Do you think he'd benefit from just focusing on first base?**

AARON BOONE: As far as defensively or --

**Q. Yeah.**

AARON BOONE: I mean, he's working really, really hard every day at his craft. He's one of those guys that's always working. I don't think he got shorted in his work at first base. Obviously the first half of the year when Giancarlo was down and Goldie was playing pretty much every single day, it was mostly DH reps. But he was mostly working at first base and doing -- when he was DH'ing, he was able to work on his catching craft and his first base.

We'll see as we go into Spring Training what makes the most sense from getting the most out of him. I think it's important and an important skill that he possesses that you don't necessarily want to just go away because he is capable back there. Even if that turns into being the two catcher or having that flexibility of having a third catcher on the roster, there's some real value in that too.

As I sit here right now, I don't want him to lose that or ignore that all together, but likely first base being a focal point.

**Q. At this point do you expect to add a right-handed hitting catcher to go along with that?**

AARON BOONE: Not necessarily. It's impossible to say where the winter takes you. You go into the Winter Meetings, sometimes -- you know the landscape or trades or free agency, what's out there, what's available, what lines up, sometimes you're hammering a strength, sometimes you're trying to plug holes, and that lines up. You just don't know what the landscape is and where it's going to take you.

So not necessarily, right. In a perfect world, you'd have a left and a right, but it's not something we feel like we have to do because we feel like, obviously in Wells and J.C., we have two really good -- I feel like the world doesn't really know yet so much about J.C. But I'm really high on him on both sides of the ball. Then obviously having Ben. We'll see. We'll see how everything unfolds over the next couple of months.

**Q. Sonny Gray caused quite a stir with what he said last week. You had him in '18. Were you surprised to hear him say that and so forcefully?**

AARON BOONE: A little bit. Any time a player comes out and says that, but that's all right. He's in Boston now. He's

not supposed to like us anyway. That being said, I've always really liked Sonny, gotten along well with him. If he'll spice up the rivalry a little, there's nothing wrong with that.

But I was a little surprised how deep he went.

**Q. Could you tell he hated it here when he was here?**

AARON BOONE: I don't know about hated. I don't know if I would have characterized it like that. I know it wasn't certainly the best stop for him, but one of those probably important steps along what's been a really good career for him.

**Q. Can you put a finger on why McMahon strikes out so often? Is it something that's fixable in your mind?**

AARON BOONE: I do. I think there's a lot more in there offensively than we saw from Mac. And feel like he and our hitting guys have really had some good conversations as he's starting into his hitting program now this winter. I feel like there's a real two-way player in there, and hopefully we can help him make little adjustments here that unlock all that. Because he's a tremendous athlete, real power, feel like knows the strike zone pretty well.

There's some things he does in his swings that get him in trouble a little bit, but it would not surprise me at all to see him go to a different level offensively, and hopefully he does that to really line up with obviously what he is as a defender.

**Q. How is Anthony doing?**

AARON BOONE: Good. He's been at Yankee Stadium pretty much every day up until last week when he went down to Tampa now. So he'll be there the rest of the way. Rehab's going well. He's making the right kind of progress. Still in that kind of rehab phase of it all.

**Q. How's Gerrit Cole?**

AARON BOONE: Gerrit's doing well. I think he ended up throwing six to eight bullpens before kind of the shutdown and where he deloads a little bit. I think he's starting up his throwing program about now again to ramp back up. It's gone well. He's doing well. Looking forward to him being back obviously.

**Q. Is he going to be ready for the start of the season?**

AARON BOONE: No. I don't expect him for the start of the season, but we'll see when that is, whether it's a month or two in. It's obviously not something we'll rush. We want

to make sure he's in a good spot, and when he enters the rotation ready to roll. But I don't anticipate it being at the start, no.

**Q. How is Giancarlo doing? Are you optimistic maybe you can get a full season out of him? I know it seems like it's something every year, but he's played the last couple of years and been pretty good.**

AARON BOONE: I hope so. I think he went into the winter in a pretty good spot, a little bit beat up like everyone, but not rehabbing something, so to speak, which is good.

Obviously he's been through a lot physically with his body and the different things that he's had to deal with. I think that experience has served him well as far as just knowing what to do and how to do it. Hopefully that means him being out there for the bulk of the season and not having stints where he's down, but we'll see.

**Q. When you look at your current roster, what's missing or what needs fortifying in your mind?**

AARON BOONE: Again, you're always looking to get better, and that looks different every year. We went and got Juan Soto a couple years ago to kind of hit, really hammer his strength. And this year we were able to go plug more holes. It just depends what -- we can always use more fortification and better players in certain areas, but I don't know where the winter takes us.

I know Cash talked about us being left-handed. That's one thing that we are focused on a little bit is trying to get some balance, whether that's from creating an everyday player or where your bench becomes more of -- you know, like when we brought in Slater, we brought in Rosario last year to kind of give us some balance and some options within a game. We'll see how that goes.

But we're also counting on a lot of our young players -- you know, Warren taking another step, Schlittler taking another step, the Rices and Wells and these guys, and JD kind of going to another level, their development as Big League players.

**Q. Have you decided if Preston or Desi will be the bullpen coach?**

AARON BOONE: Preston will be in the bullpen.

**Q. What did you think of Wells offensively last year?**

AARON BOONE: I thought he got off to a really good start and kind of hit a lull in the middle of the season. I think there was a month in there where he really struggled, to

the point where he was losing a little bit of playing time. That's when Ben started catching a little bit more.

But I also thought he kind of righted the ship a little bit at the end of the season, was giving some of his better at-bats of the season down the stretch. Again, like with Austin -- and I've said this to you guys a lot -- I think he's really good offensively. I think he can be a really good Major League hitter. Again, you get a catcher that hits 20 homers, and I think was probably over 700 probably with his OPS.

I think, as a credit to him, like I expect more out of him. For what he brings, though, behind the plate and I think how good he's become defensively, you kind of sign up for that level of production from your catcher. But because of what I believe he can be offensively, I'm hoping and expecting more in there.

**Q. As confident as you were in the makeup of the team at the end of last year, can it be as simple for you guys to bring back Bellinger and expect Cole to be Gerrit Cole again, as far as big changes?**

AARON BOONE: Look, obviously the end of our season this year was, frankly, as hard a one for me -- because, like you said, I felt like we were really good and really good and healthy and peaking at the right time and got beat in a series against a team that we obviously struggled with last year with the Blue Jays. So it was hard.

So you want to take stock in that. Again, you're always trying to improve your club and improve your team, but also pause and say, hey, we're pretty good here. And we've got a lot of really good players and a lot of really good young core players that emerged on different levels last year that we need to continue to grow in their Big League kind of journey.

**Q. Hal mentioned the base running not being good enough a few weeks ago and bringing Fiorito help there.**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, so Fio and Ryan Hunt -- Ryan Hunt in kind of an advisory role if you will. We think that combination where -- kind of overseeing, obviously, the infield and the base running. I just want our base running to continue to go to another level. I felt like last year we made some real strides in the base running department, especially second half of the year.

Finally I feel like our athleticism started to pay dividends for us and show up in games and even help us win games with our speed and athleticism and stuff. We just want that. We need to continue to get better at that, though.





It's an area that's obviously been talked about a lot over the last couple of years, but we need to continue to move the needle and get better and try and make those gains on the margins. And base running is one of the areas we can do that.

Fio has been in our organization now for a long time. We interviewed a number of really good candidates, a lot internal that we're really excited about, like guys with, I think, really bright futures, whether it's continuing in player development, whether it's becoming Major League coaches. Fio's earned that opportunity, earned that right, and he's ready for this.

I feel like knows our players well, has experience with a lot of our players and has done really good work in player development and earned this opportunity. So I'm excited about him. I'm excited about Ryan Hunt and what he's going to bring and kind of overseeing it all. And then just hopefully we continue to move the needle on the bases where we're taking advantage rightly of our athleticism and striking that right balance between risk/reward, where you push the envelope.

**Q. You added a couple coaches to the staff that had experience with some of your younger players when they were in the Minor Leagues. Did you feel that was important to have guys that were with some of the younger hitters when they were having success in the Minor Leagues?**

AARON BOONE: I mean, that's one piece of it, but probably frankly a smaller one. Like, we're trying to get the best and brightest. So whether that's guys that have worked with some of our players or not, we're trying to get the most impactful people in obviously important, prominent positions.

We feel like Jake has noticeably done an excellent job in player development over the last several years. He has been in and around us in Spring Training on the Big League side and helping out. Like Fio, he's kind of earned the opportunity and excited for him to step in and become an important part of our hitting group. Which obviously with J. Ro and Casey back, losing six, I feel like that hitting group has done a really good job for us over the last couple years in creating the right kind of culture in our hitting room.

**Q. You said losing six. Are you guys no longer exploring other roles for Russell?**

AARON BOONE: We'll see. We'll see what potentially comes up or not. Again, as the off-season continues to

unfold, nothing right now, but we'll see.

**Q. Aaron, you mentioned struggling against the Blue Jays all year. Just how do you close that gap against them?**

AARON BOONE: Well, I mean, playing better against them is the real simple answer. At the end of the day, we ended up knotted with them. But in the head to head, they kicked our butt, and especially in those summer months. In that stretch where we were scuffling a little bit, they beat us up, including a four-game sweep up there, and that obviously ended up really hurting us.

We got them 2 out of 3 at home late in the year when we were in a better place, and obviously they were on fire against us in the playoffs. Look, it comes down to against other good teams, execution, performance, game plan, all that, because the margin's thin against other great teams.

**Q. Getting beat up by them like that, do you think that can compound in the psyche over the course of the year?**

AARON BOONE: No, no. As far as this year -- like we played them September, beat them 2 out of 3 in a meaningful time of the year where we were closing in on and trying to win the division. But to their credit, they beat our butts in the postseason.

That's sports sometimes. Obviously them being in our division -- and obviously feel like they're going to be really good again going into next year as is the rest of the division, I feel like -- you've got to play well, especially in our division, if you're going to have a chance to win the division and do something great.

**Q. Do you think that could happen smaller than a lot of people think?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah.

**Q. What tells you that?**

AARON BOONE: I mean, we ended with identical records last year. I don't want to discount that they kicked our ass last year. Don't take it out of context. I would say the gap is small. We have the exact same record. But they obviously were a great team last year, an eyelash away from winning the world championship.

They certainly proved to be the better team this year, and hopefully we can close that gap and pass them and others this year.

