

MLB Winter Meetings

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Cleveland Guardians

Manager Stephen Vogt

Press Conference

Q. What advice would you give to like a Kurt Suzuki, someone who's in your shoes of going so quickly from playing to managing?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think Kurt -- obviously we were teammates for a month, but the impact he made on me and my career was tremendous. Just helping me learn how to catch, how to navigate a pitching staff.

So for Kurt, be yourself. It's okay to not have any answers. It's okay to say I don't know or use the resources around you. That's one of the things that I learned real early is it's okay if I don't know, but I'll ask the smart people around me to hopefully have the answer. So for Kurt, just be yourself.

Q. What is it about today's game, the player population, the style of the game, all kinds of factors that would make it palatable for teams to hire someone like yourself with no previous managerial experience and you just finished playing -- and oh, by the way, it worked. Now you're seeing -- I don't know if it's going to become a trend, but it could be.

STEPHEN VOGT: I don't know. I think the people right around my age or that era of player, we played through a very unique time where we broke into the Big Leagues, came up through the Minor Leagues with absolutely zero information. Then during our Big League career, we had every piece of information thrown at us, and we were expected to go use that on the field.

So I think we were raised in an old-school world, but then we played through the transition. So now I feel like we have a very good understanding of how to apply information while not losing sight of maybe the gut feel. So I think it's a really unique time period from that '08 to 2020 that we learned all of that.

Q. How much have you talked with Alby over the last six weeks or so? Do you tell him to reach out? Do you think there will be apprehension from a new manager wanting to lean on a mentor too much?



STEPHEN VOGT: We talked a lot through the interview process obviously, and we talked a lot the first week or so. Then we kind of had a breakup call, kind of saying good-bye to a high school sweetheart, so to speak.

I miss him. I miss talking to him. It's somebody you talk to every single year for the last two years pretty much, and all of a sudden it stops. We've talked quite a bit. He's ready to go. He doesn't need any mentoring, and I'm not that type of person anyway. He knows I'm available. I know he's available, and we've kept in good contact.

Q. We talked about this a little bit upstairs, but what do you think that experience is going to do for him next year being thrown into such an unusual debut?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think making his debut in the postseason obviously is unique. I think knowing that he can handle playing in the postseason, he's going to be able to handle playing in the regular season.

I think for Chase it was great to get his feet wet. It was great for him, okay, now I know what it smells like on the highest stage. I know what it feels like. I know what it looks like.

So for him having a full winter of wanting that and knowing what it looks like, knowing what it feels like, I think that could be a huge boost for him going into this year.

Q. Talking to a lot of the other managers so far today, it sounds like everybody is still in the formative stages in terms of thinking about protocols related to the new ball and strike system. From your perspective, what thoughts you've had on it so far, especially in terms of you being a catcher and thinking what it would be like to be back in that system?

STEPHEN VOGT: We've talked about it a little bit. We haven't really dove in yet, so probably similar to everybody else.

I don't know how much of it is going to change, right? We got to play with it during Spring Training last year. A lot of

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the players have used it in Triple-A. I know for us, a lot of our guys have experience using it because they've been in Triple-A recently.

We're going to play with it. We're going to see how it goes. I don't know if anybody's got it figured out. I don't know if there's a way to figure it out. We're going to keep playing with it and try different things.

Q. There was a lot of concern when this was all being discussed and before they settled on what the system would be about how this could impact the value of a catcher, the framing ability. And the way this has turned out, does that almost enhance their value in a way that they end up being the trigger guy on a lot of these things and when to challenge?

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah. I think the better receivers are going to know the zone, right? We'll have to see how it plays out before we determine how do we grade pitch framing now if you can just change the call?

It will be interesting to see how it goes, but I still think the art of catching is there, the call of the game. The cerebral side of catching isn't going anywhere. I'll be interested to see how it goes.

Q. How badly do you guys think you need another arm in the bullpen or a little more depth?

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah. We need a lot. We need depth in the bullpen. I think, like we talked about upstairs, we have four, maybe five guys in our bullpen, and we need eight. It's an area we're addressing for sure.

Q. What about Stephan? Where does he figure in this? I know he's not on the 40-man.

STEPHEN VOGT: I think for Trevor -- obviously everybody's rehab is unique, and Trevor's surgery is very unique. It will be interesting to see where Trevor is when we get to Spring Training. I'm excited to see him pitch. I've never seen him pitch. He's kind of been injured the whole time I've been here.

I'm excited to see him with a full off-season, normal off-season getting back ready. And obviously if Trevor Stephan can pitch the way Trevor Stephan pitched before surgery, it will be a very welcome back.

Q. David Fry, last year was a very trying year for him with rehabbing with the face. What are your expectations for him next year, how he slots into all this?

STEPHEN VOGT: I'm just excited that David is going to be healthy. Obviously avoided a big scare there at the end of the year. That was a scary moment. So thankfully he's okay.

David healthy, him being able to catch and play the field a little bit too probably, it just adds a completely different dynamic to our team. I think it's going to alleviate a lot of the pressure he was putting on himself to only produce at the plate for really over a year. You think about the second half of '24, he could only really DH as well.

David having a full winter, healthy, completed the rehab, it's going to be really exciting to be able to use him the way his skill set is intended to.

Q. To fall back on youthful prospects and just stay with them for another year, and I guess rest the offense on them, what are the percentages of all those guys improving? It usually doesn't work like that, right? Players don't go in a straight line.

STEPHEN VOGT: We'll have to take it day by day, like we do. I know you're sick of hearing me say that, but we're working hard. We're working close with these guys.

We had great exit meetings with them. What did we learn? What did you learn? We're doing follow-ups. This is an opportunity for everybody to step up. This is an opportunity for us to get better. We're working as coaches to figure out ways we can help them get better.

For me, I love our players. I love the hitters that we have. We have a really good offense the last month of the season, and we need to build on that, and we need to hit the ground running.

Q. I know you're limited in what you can actually say about this, but just for you, what has it been like for you the experience of having to follow the cases of Clase and Ortiz and -- first it happening during the season -- but even now as you're reflecting on it and figuring out what the team is going to be in the future?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think we continue to focus on what we have here. As the investigation goes on, we'll learn more. We don't know a whole lot about it. All I know is our guys rallied and finished strong, and we're going to continue to push with the group that we have.

Q. With DeLauter, I know he's a great prospect because I love reading prospect analysis. I didn't know a lot about his story, but he was featured prominently in Jane Leavy's recent book. He's got a really interesting background. How excited are you, as

he becomes an established Big Leaguer, for people to know about his background and how off the radar he came to being a great prospect and that kind of thing?

STEPHEN VOGT: I love baseball stories, and Chase is another good one. I don't know him real well. I haven't been around him a ton. I'm really excited to get to know him better. Like I said, that's the beauty of our game. There's no create a player. There's no -- you can't build one in a lab. They come all different shapes and sizes and heights and abilities.

I have a feeling Chase is going to be a lot of fun to follow and watch, and I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. What were the conversations like with Carl when he told you guys, hey, I'm ready to come back?

STEPHEN VOGT: I was excited. It's like I told Carl, there's no one I'd rather watch baseball with than Carl Willis. I love sitting next to him. I love his humor, the teammate, the human being he is. Carl Willis is the best pitching coach in baseball, and I'm so fortunate that I get to work with him every day.

So when he shared that he was wanting to come back, heck yeah. Let's go, Carl. This is awesome.

Q. Last season was so unique -- 15 1/2 games back, July 11 games back, and September. Do you feel the expectations of that now? Does that carry over to 2026? Do you have to try -- you can't match that, but do you feel like the pressure of that?

STEPHEN VOGT: I'd prefer to not have a 15 1/2 game hole this year. I think the expectations or pressure, it's all external. We expect to go out and win every game. We're trying to win as many games as we can so that we can have a chance to win a World Series. I think when that's our expectation -- whatever expectations or pressure is coming in from the outside, it's not as much as the pressure that we put on ourselves, and we can only accomplish one game at a time.

We're going to continue to keep that the focus. And for me, I don't want to win the division, I want to win the World Series. If we win the division on the way to doing that, awesome. For me, we want that ultimate prize, and we're working every day for that.

Q. What can you do to win a third consecutive manager of the year award?

STEPHEN VOGT: I may have to win 120 games or something. I don't know. It's pretty cool. I'm very honored

and really just proud of our guys.

Q. With the middle of the diamond, what do you want to see from Arias and -- or will you keep Arias at short and will you keep Rocchio at second base? Is that how the season is going to -- Spring Training will open?

STEPHEN VOGT: I would imagine it would open similar to that. You're going to see Bryan play a lot of shortstop at Spring Training as well and Gabby probably play a little bit elsewhere just to be ready for it. But with the way those two played up the middle and the way they finished the season strong, it would be hard to not pencil those two guys in there playing shortstop and second base.

We also have a number of players that are going to be competing for spots. We're going to have a lot of competition in camp both position-wise and pitching. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Q. What did you see out of Manzardo that made you tell him, okay, you've got to get stronger, you've got to stay on the field more? At least that's the message it sounded like you gave him.

STEPHEN VOGT: I think any time -- you're learning, right? He just completed his first full season in the Big Leagues. Until you've done that, you don't know what that feels like, because a full season in the Big Leagues is a completely different beast than any year in your life.

For Kyle it's understanding, okay, you're getting to be 24. You've got to start really focusing on your body, getting stronger, because then you don't get as tired. You don't break down as much when you're stronger.

Kyle's learned. He's having a great winter like we talked about. I think for Kyle, if he can put on a little more strength -- and obviously our medical staff and strength and conditioning are playing a big part in this as well -- but it's going to help Kyle sustain his success a lot longer and a lot more consistently throughout the year.

Q. What would it take for him to be full-time at first base defensively? What would you like to see?

STEPHEN VOGT: Just continued improvement. I think we saw it at times. Kyle worked really hard on his throwing, just getting that more consistent. For me, it's more of keeping your body healthy. A lot of that comes with learning, as we talked about.

I talked to Kyle a couple days ago, and I said prepare your body to be ready to play first base as many days a week as



possible. If Kyle can play first base, it makes our team a lot better.

Q. What do you consider the most important part of the job of a Big League manager? Would your answer be the same before you got the role as it is now?

STEPHEN VOGT: Probably similar. Consistency. You have to be the same person every single day, whether things are going well, things are going poorly. You can't have bad days. You can't be in a bad mood. You show up every day, choose to be in a good mood, and choose to lead with a smile on your face. That consistency is what is an absolute must for a manager.

Q. Is it almost easy to take José Ramirez for granted because he puts up basically the same great season year after year after year?

STEPHEN VOGT: I don't think you take him for granted. I think it's just that Joséy does it every day. It's that consistency. He doesn't get talked about enough. You talk to people in the industry, they know, but the outside world just doesn't know how good this guy is and the teammate that he is. I know we don't take him for granted one bit, and it's just so much fun and a pleasure to watch him play every night.

Q. Do you worry that, if you don't drastically improve this team, that you're wasting another year of his career, so to speak? He's 33. He keeps churning out MVP seasons and you guys keep -- you win, but you don't get to the ultimate prize.

STEPHEN VOGT: We've just got to keep working. I think for Joséy, I wouldn't put any limits on him, his determination, his work ethic, his ability. But we need to get better. We're working. We're working right now to get this team better. We have the pieces. We just have to put in the work.

Q. Is there anything that you can take from the way that the Blue Jays, the leaps that they made as a group offensively during the season, they were really able to carry that out through the playoffs, which is hard to do. Anything from watching the way they went about it that you can take away from that?

STEPHEN VOGT: Every team is different. Our personnel is very different from their personnel. But I think just that consistency of offense, the way that they put the ball in play, I think every team can learn from that. But they also had the hitters to do it.

A lot of this comes down to us getting our individual players

better and helping them understand who they are as hitters so they can go out and be their best every night.

Q. At times outside of the power, they look like you -- they played your kind of brand of baseball. They played the same kind of baseball.

STEPHEN VOGT: I mean, it's just good fundamental baseball, and we have to play good fundamental baseball to win thing, and our guys did that more often than they didn't last year.

Q. Did you lock in on the World Series or did you detox?

STEPHEN VOGT: I watched a few games. I was not locked in. I have kids, and they have sports. I'd rather go be dad at practice than watch a World Series game, but I watched quite a bit.

Q. It was a good series.

STEPHEN VOGT: It was. It was a really good series.

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