

# MLB Winter Meetings

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Orlando, Florida, USA

**Boston Red Sox**

**Manager Alex Cora**

Press Conference



**Q. What are your thoughts on Sonny and Oviedo so far?**

ALEX CORA: I think we've got stuff, different type. One throws hard, the other spins the ball. Oviedo with the extension is intriguing. We saw him last year. He was good against us.

Just trying to get better, the more pitching the better for this organization, and I think we accomplished that the last few weeks.

**Q. You guys talked about the 1B or adding to. Do you feel like you have that guy?**

ALEX CORA: 200 strikes play in this league. He's different than others, been there done that. The feedback throughout the last two days, people that have worked with him, it's very positive. Talking to him as far as like preparation and execution, he's on point with that. So looking forward for him to compete.

**Q. Second base, there's still plenty to be added and worked around but like as the team currently stands, where do you see that position going?**

ALEX CORA: We'll see what happens in the upcoming weeks. But we've got some good players that can play the position. Kristian is back home playing. He'll play more outfield than second base. I don't know if he's going to play second base at all or first. We've just got to get him going offensively.

Hami, obviously the athlete we like. Offensively last year was a tough one for him because of the situation. It's not easy to be a utility guy. But defensively he's one of the best out there.

So we'll see where we're at starting in Fort Myers but we've got some capable guys. Getting Romy healthy is very important. He was a little banged up -- I think you guys saw it in the playoffs -- with his shoulder. He's another guy that can play the position.

And others, too. Marcelo, he can play second, short, third base, I think it's early in the offseason, but it's not, right? But by the time we get to Spring Training, we'll have a better idea.

**Q. What are your thoughts on the Kyle Schwarber signing and what that can mean?**

ALEX CORA: Good for him. He earned it. I mean, the guy -- he's really good at what he does and what he brings to the equation on the field, off the field, to the community is probably second to none. He's just one of those that I had the pleasure to manage him in '21. And in a short period of time, the way he impacted the Red Sox organization, the city, I haven't seen too many of those in our environment, in our market.

I have a pretty good idea that was going to be the route. Talking to Dave throughout the season, I don't know if it's official or not, but he knew that he was a huge part of what they were trying to accomplish and moving forward. So not surprised that if this comes true, it's with them.

**Q. How much did you try to recruit him back the last few weeks?**

ALEX CORA: I think we've been talking to a lot of people, him included. But I think that was it.

**Q. Who else?**

ALEX CORA: A lot of other people.

**Q. You just talked about the intangibles that Schwarber brought in '21. Currently, with Bregman on the free agent market, Refsnyder also a free agent, you have kind of a leadership void right now. How important is it for you to fill that either with those guys or other guys who can do the job?**

ALEX CORA: I think it's important. Throughout the years we had some great leaders in our roster. That doesn't translate into World Series rings, but it's important for the



room, from J.D. in '18, Justin Turner, Trevor, Alex, Crochet last year.

It's something that, if you look around and the teams that have been able to advance, there's always somebody there, right? And obviously, like I said before, it's early in the process.

Alex earned the right contract-wise to opt out and see what's going on. And we know he was very important last year and there's a lot of leaders out there who are good players, too. So we'll see what the future holds.

**Q. Is it particularly important, given the number of young key players you have on your roster who might need that leadership maybe more than others?**

ALEX CORA: I think it's important, but it's not a must. I think signing that extension two years ago, that's part of my job. I've got to help them to keep growing, keep getting better. It's our job as a staff to help him. But I'm a big believer that there's a line in between the clubhouse and my office.

I'm a big believer that they have to police each other. Some of those kids, they learn a lot and they grew a lot last year going through everything we went through, from Triston getting hurt, to Alex getting hurt, trading Rafi, calling up the kids, K.C. getting sent down, Roman getting hurt, Marcelo.

So they learned a lot. We still believe in J.D. J.D. has been there through everything. He was part of '21 for a little bit there. He went through the process the last few years, and then we made it to the playoffs.

So we still have some leaders there. Trevor, of course, when he's healthy, he's the guy, right? Like, you talk to the guys, and they believe in the way he goes about his business. He's a strong voice in the clubhouse, and he leads by example.

So we've got some capable guys in that clubhouse. But obviously there's a lot of leaders, like I said, in the market, so we'll see what happens.

**Q. Have you talked to Bregman much or are you just letting him go through the process?**

ALEX CORA: We've been texting a lot about his facility in Arizona and he's asking about my kids and all that.

One thing I learned last year throughout the process, less is more in certain situations. And our relationship has kept growing. It grew last year. We became closer than in the

past, and I love the kid. I love his family. He feels the same way about mine. So most of the time it's about how are the kids are doing, how soccer is going, how is workouts are going. And we leave it at that.

**Q. How are the workouts going?**

ALEX CORA: Good. I think if you follow him on Instagram he's out there. I saw Raf, he's working out with him; Chapman, he's working out with him. Seems like it's a great setup in Arizona.

Not surprising because the kid, he invests in himself. And he believes in himself and he knows that this is a big offseason for him physically. He was banged up last year. He needs to improve in that area. I've been joking with him. He looks fast now. Although he's not.

**Q. How important is it to adding power, adding power bats?**

ALEX CORA: That's a topic that everybody's brought up the last few weeks. We didn't hit for power at the end. Willy gets hurt, Roman gets hurt, Alex wasn't 100 percent. So I think power-wise, yeah, we paid the price.

Triston was our fourth hitter in Texas, right? So getting him healthy is going to help. I think there's other areas offensively that we can be better. Our ballpark is conducive to extra base hits. The wall will give you some, will take some away, right? But it will always be there for doubles. That's something we have done an outstanding job throughout the years.

And, yeah, we would love to hit the ball out of the ballpark. I think getting guys healthy is going to benefit that. And of course there's guys out there that can actually help us to accomplish that.

**Q. Your power bats, what position in a perfect world does this bat fill for you?**

ALEX CORA: In the middle of the lineup, yeah, I think if we go that route, it's somebody that is going to hit in the middle of the lineup. People talk about balance, right, the lefty/righty thing. I don't know, the way the games are managed now, it's okay to have a lot of lefties, understanding that you've got to have some good righties on the bench.

But I truly believe that this year, probably I said it before, right, with Willy and some of the lefties: We have to see if they can do it. It's about that time, especially with Abreu. And if he can hit lefties and hit for power and play defense the way he's done the last few years, he can be the guy.



There's different ways to improve the lineup. It can be trades. It can be free agency. It can be player development. So, like I said before, let's see what happens.

**Q. You have Whitlock in the eighth, obviously, and Chapman in the ninth. But would you like to see some additional bullpen adds? You've lost a few lefties through free agency.**

ALEX CORA: Yes, that's something we'll talk about. There's some intriguing guys that we added to the roster that might have a chance in Spring Training.

Righties to get lefties out is important. Lefties that can get righties out is huge. We have talked to a few guys on the market. We have talked to a few guys on the roster.

If you look at the splits, like Bernie (phonetic) last year, he faced I think it was like 65 percent righties, right, because when he comes in, they're going to flip up the lineup. That's the nature of the AL East. I think there's only one team that kind of sticks to their lineup. And it's Booney in New York. But the other teams, they mix and match. And having lefties that can get righties out is important.

Moran is a guy that is very intriguing because throughout his career he's been able to do that. He's actually pitching for Ramon down there. We asked him to do a few things to get lefties out. Hopefully we can accomplish that. And then hopefully he can be a guy that steps up and he's part of the equation.

**Q. I was wondering, the recent announcement that Roman and (indiscernible) hitting the WBC. Could you speak to that?**

ALEX CORA: No, I don't get involved with that unless there's injury stuff related. But I just talked to D-Ro about the roster. Gotta figure it out.

And obviously Whitlock is going to be part of it. Crochet, I think, workload-wise last year was a lot. So that was his decision and we respect it.

But from my end, I played in two of them. I was a GM in one of them. I love the tournament. There's some injury factor, right, and stuff happens. But it can happen in Houston. It can happen in Miami and Puerto Rico. It can happen in Fort Myers. But they have to play baseball.

**Q. Along those lines, Marcelo wants to play for Mexico. So how do you view his situation?**

ALEX CORA: Yeah, I talked to Rodrigo López today about that. There's certain rules within the tournament as far as injured players and insurance and surgeries and all that. So we'll see where we're at.

I know when we went to Monterrey, when he left Monterrey, he was, like, I want to play in the tournament. So we'll see where we're at. They're kind of, like, 50/50. Mexico, understanding that he has surgery and there's other stuff that comes up with the whole thing.

It's complicated, to be honest with you. But if he gets cleared, from our standpoint, if he wants to do it, we're okay with it.

**Q. Do you view that, like, obviously for the level of competition, we've talked a million times about that, it can be good. But he's also trying to establish himself on his team?**

ALEX CORA: Yeah, how long is the tournament, three weeks, right?

**Q. Yeah.**

ALEX CORA: We always talk about, oh, the opportunity for him to make the team, we'll be watching. And whoever is playing in the tournament, we'll be watching. It's good competition.

Having them in the clubhouse is important. There's certain teams that they're going to feel it in Spring Training because there's a lot of guys from certain teams that are going to play.

I'm not into the mode of, if he's not here, he doesn't have a chance.

**Q. With (indiscernible) being a free agent are you comfortable with Romy playing the outfield more?**

ALEX CORA: We didn't use him last year, right? He played first and second and a little bit of third. He can do it. But there's other guys. I think Nate last year, the way he played in September, that was eye opening, the athlete. Actually, the at-bats were really good. So we got some intriguing guys that can step up, very athletic guys that can help us.

But obviously Raf is a good player, he's been a good part of what we've tried to accomplish the last few years. He was a voice in the clubhouse, and I bet there's a lot of teams talking to him.

**Q. Do you think Campbell is a guy that can sort of fit**



## into the mix of guys who can hit lefties?

ALEX CORA: We'll see how it goes. He's in a great place. Talked to him on Friday. We had dinner, and he opened up about the season, which it was really, really good, from my standpoint -- the ups and downs, the expectations, the contract, Triple-A, the big leagues, the adjustments.

He's in a good place. And we're going to take care of him down there. I told him, I said, "Hey, man, you live five minutes from my house, but I'm not here to babysit you."

I've got my boys but I know Ramon is going to do a good job with him. The expectations are for him to play a lot of left field down there. Offensively, you can see the adjustments already, although, it's different competition. I know that.

But people are -- J.D. went down there and hit .180. Cedanne went down there and he hit 180. It's tough. A lot of smart catchers down there, they expose you.

I would love for him to hit .400, but if he struggles it really doesn't matter. It's a matter of executing the adjustments he made the last month and a half and we'll see.

**Q. Now that Rafael has a Gold Glove to go with his talented center, how do you view the infield option for him versus like you did last year letting him ride in center?**

ALEX CORA: We'll see what the roster is. The good thing about him, he can do it. He can play second. He can play short. But he's elite in center field. He should have won the Platinum Glove. But that's kind of like a weird thing, right, the fans vote for that. With all respect to the fans.

But offensively, I think we need more. The last two years, August, September, we know he swings. We know he chases, but he goes up. And we have challenged him physically, and he tries to gain weight. It's hard for him. I would love to eat the way he eats and not gain weight. For him, it's a challenge. Hopefully he can gain some pounds in the offseason and get stronger so he can sustain his physicality throughout the season.

You saw it. He got tired at the end offensively. It's on us, it's on him to get better in that aspect, but the player we love.

**Q. You mentioned some of Jarren leadership qualities. He's someone who has been brought up as a potential trade candidate. Have you talked with Jarren about kind of his position with the organization, and given what you describe as his clubhouse importance.**

ALEX CORA: I haven't talked to him about that. You know how I feel about trade rumors. Some people, they have their sources, others just throw it up there and if it sticks, it sticks.

However, he helped me with KC a few weeks ago, because we were in the conversations about him going to Puerto Rico. I said, J.D., please give him a call and tell him about your experience. Although, his experience was unique, right? Locked-down country, no fans, and he played the whole season and he became a guy playing down there.

But Pete was there last week. Business as usual. That's something that throughout the years, I have learned that you cannot listen to everything that is said out there as a manager. And I think my players understand that. So he's getting ready for the season as usual.

**Q. How do you view the four outfield -- it remains a talking point?**

ALEX CORA: I think we made it work last year. Although obviously with the injury, kind of like it was easier in that aspect. But moving guys around, giving them rest, it's important. And we like our players. All of them, they're very athletic. They're really good at what they do. And I think it's the best outfield unit in the big leagues.

**Q. How do you see Yoshida's role?**

ALEX CORA: As of now, he's healthy. He's do his work in the outfield. His arm is -- he's finally healthy, which is huge for us. I've been saying this for a while -- if you go back to his first season, that first part of the season, he was one of the best hitters in the big leagues. Towards the end, he was our best hitter -- last year. So, having a full offseason of not rehabbing, just getting stronger, is going to help us.

The outfield part of it, we'll see. We got a lot of them. We know he can hit. So we'll figure out, but no doubt about it that he's a big part of what we're trying to accomplish.

**Q. Do you need more slug from him?**

ALEX CORA: It will come. It will come. No doubt about it. The way he was hitting the ball towards the end, it was a good sign. He grinded through it last year.

Man, like obviously I'm not that open during the season because of who we're playing and match-ups and all that. But took him a while. He was in a good spot in Spring Training. Then he had a setback with the throwing part of it. And that pushed him back. And when he came back,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®



he was grinding through it. He got to the point in August that you could see the work he was putting in, that he was feeling good about it, and the results were there towards the end.

**Q. How do you look at as you expect to play in the tournament, your guys in the WBC?**

ALEX CORA: I think Whitlock, right, is in. Probably -- Jarren is in.

**Q. Chappy?**

ALEX CORA: Chappy, that's an interesting one. He has options. I think it's USA --

**Q. Great Britain.**

ALEX CORA: Great Britain, yeah, he might do that one, which is great. Moran, probably. Not talking as an ex-GM for Puerto Rico, but we need lefties. I think that's it, to be honest with you. I think Narvy at one point they were talking about him, but obviously with surgery, I don't think it's going to happen. Willy. Yeah, I think Willy -- not talking for Omar, but I think he's in the mix.

**Q. Yoshida and Ceddanne?**

ALEX CORA: Ceddanne, Netherlands. Yoshida, I'm not sure.

**Q. Sonny seemed to lean into the Yankees-Boston rivalry pretty quickly. What was your reaction to what he had to say about the Yankees?**

ALEX CORA: Look Booney said yesterday, what he's supposed to say, right? I mean, it's good for the rivalry, it's good for us. And I hope he feels the same way about the 29 other teams. But I think it's good for everybody to write about it and it's good for our rivalry.

**Q. After you went home and you able to digest the whole thing in the last three days, what were your takeaways and watching the playoffs, what was the difference you noticed, between you guys and the teams that made it toward the end?**

ALEX CORA: I think if we make two plays in Game 2, then we were going to be okay throughout. I go back to that series in Game 1, win as planned, the big boy to Chappy. Offensively we did enough.

Game 2, we didn't play well, and we were almost there. We were one pitch away in the eighth inning with Whitlock to get out of the inning and go to Chappy and take our

chances. It just didn't work out.

Game 4, that guy on the mound was outstanding. We had no chance. The way he threw the ball that day, he was going to take a perfect game for us to win it, and we weren't perfect.

Overall, the season, honestly -- and I had this conversation with Ramon two days ago -- you feel it that day, but after that, it wasn't the same feeling as '21, to be honest with you. '21 was hard. Like, we felt like we were the best team in the tournament and we blew it, to be honest with you.

In this one, we did a lot of good things throughout the season. If you look at our roster in Texas and the roster we had in Game 3 against the Yankees, it was a lot different, for different circumstances.

As an organization, we made a statement that this is what we want from our players and from the organization. These are the standards. So we made some tough decisions. But overall, at the end, we had some kids playing and they grew right in front of us.

September was a grind. And I know people -- what I said about the playoffs, it was the reality at that time. I had a feeling we were going to make it, but it wasn't for sure, you know, because we weren't playing well. A lot of teams around us were playing great.

For us to make it to October was an accomplishment, but it was three games, right? So we need more. We have to be better. The front office is working. John and Mike and Tom, they're into it. So it should be fun the next few weeks.

**Q. (Indiscernible) at the end?**

ALEX CORA: Awesome, good dude. He'll be fine. I talked to him throughout September and October. He felt like he wanted to be a starter again, and no doubt about it, he'll be fine. Strike-throwing machine, workaholic, good guy. They've got a good one, again.

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