

# Toronto Blue Jays Press Conference

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Orlando, Florida, USA

**Dylan Cease**

**Ross Atkins**

**Scott Boras**

Toronto Blue Jays Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us.

We're excited to introduce the newest Blue Jay Dylan Cease, his attorney Scott Boras, and EVP of baseball operations and general manager Ross Atkins. We're thankful to have Dylan's parents Jeff and Ann with us today.

We'll pause for opening remarks from Ross, pause for jersey presentation, some photos, and we'll get into Q&A.

ROSS ATKINS: Thanks, everyone, for being here. It's an exciting day for us in Toronto and in baseball.

Just a few thank yous obviously to Edward Rogers and Tony Staffieri and Rogers ownership for the support we've had over the years and to get to a moment like today to continue to build towards championship teams.

A big thank you to the Boras Corp. and Scott for the work in creating an opportunity like this.

Others that worked on that in Greg Pustizzi and Mike Fiore. Shout out to Mike Murov in baseball operations with leading our process on this to target and identify such an opportunity for us. That was so important.

The most significant thank you to Dylan for choosing this organization, this city to be your new home. This is a huge day for us, and we are very grateful.

The mission and our goal in Toronto is continue to bring championships back to this country, and this is another huge step towards that. So thank you very much.

With that, you have a few works.



DYLAN CEASE: I'd like to thank Mark, Ross, and Mr. Rogers for investing into me. I'm excited to go to work every day for the next seven years to help be a part of championship baseball.

I'm excited and grateful for the opportunity and look forward to giving everything I have and more to the Blue Jays organization.

I'd also like to thank Scott for making this process seamless. It was easy to sleep at night knowing he was working on my behalf.

My parents are here as well, and I feel grateful that I get to share this moment with me because I wouldn't be here without them. I know my dad probably wanted me to be a power-hitting shortstop, but this is close. This is close enough.

THE MODERATOR: We'll do the jersey presentation now.

## Q. What is it that made you choose the Blue Jays?

DYLAN CEASE: The biggest part really was being able to be a part of a championship team. Obviously with the run last year, they've proven that they have championship caliber players and obviously a good process. That was probably the number one thing.

And then from there, it was also how would they help me maximize and develop and basically reach my potential more often. That was important to me. That was probably the second biggest consideration.

It seemed from the get-go that it was going to be pretty inevitable.

## Q. Scott Boras told me you were quite impressed with the Blue Jays presentation. What was it about their presentation? Was there anything that particularly stood out to you?

DYLAN CEASE: I think the biggest thing is you could tell they built a really impressive culture. As they were

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explaining sort of what they do to get the best out of players or how they prepare, and even the little things like travel and whatnot, you can just tell that it's a buttoned up organization. They want to win, and it was obvious.

**Q. Was there anything you wanted to know, any questions you had for them that you can share with us?**

DYLAN CEASE: Questions for them?

**Q. Yeah. What did you want to know?**

DYLAN CEASE: I really wanted to know how would you help me maximize my potential and my ability. That was very important to me. Yeah, they knocked it out of the park.

**Q. For Scott actually and Ross, can you just explain a little bit how you've seen the Blue Jays sort of evolve now into a team that is investing in major contracts with Dylan and with Vladimir Guerrero and kind of taking advantage of their status as the only team in Canada?**

SCOTT BORAS: Ross, you can speak to this more, but you find over time, particularly in free agency, that there's a time for these investments where the structure is built in many areas of the franchise, and they have specific needs and a specific path that they know will enhance so much more of what they already have.

When organizations find that myopic direction, you can kind of tell they're very close to achieving something that's taken years to get to to where they know that their questions are few and their answers are many, and my answering those questions.

Certainly Dylan being an arm that can bring so much to a No. 1 type status and having that ability, and their abilities internally to have the experience and the technology and the practical experience to gravitate him to even a higher level of performance.

It takes a long time to get to where Toronto is to make these kinds of moves. I'm sure that's why they decided it was clearly in their best interests to do so.

**Q. You mentioned kind of reaching the potential more consistently. Is there anything you kind of have identified as an easy -- not an easy path, but a path to doing that?**

DYLAN CEASE: The biggest thing is trusting them. Getting to work with the staff, coming up with a plan, and

then going to work every day and executing it really.

**Q. You've been one of the most durable pitchers in baseball over the last half decade. What do you attribute to that, and what has allowed you to do that? And for Ross, how much of a value add is that to have a pitcher that's very durable? Especially having already a couple of the most durable pitchers in the league with Gausman and Berrios? \*?**

DYLAN CEASE: I think a big part of it is the off-season and getting as strong as I can, doing different things to get my body ready. There's probably a genetic factor to it as well, if I had to guess. Those are probably the two biggest things.

Other than that, during the season I try to work on my body as much as possible. And then I get to work with great staffs too. I've had really good staffs that help take care of me if I need massages or I need physical therapy or whatever. I've always been really well taken care of.

**Q. Did you watch much of the postseason? If so, watching the Blue Jays, did that change your opinion about the team or factor into your decision?**

DYLAN CEASE: I didn't watch too much of the postseason, no. I watched Game 7. I mean, at the end of the day, they made it to the World Series. There's not much else that has to be said. It shows that they have a championship caliber team.

**Q. This could be for Scott and for Ross, if you don't mind. Just wondering in the last sort of year what kind of a shift you've noticed, Scott, with your players and, Ross, with free agents about maybe Toronto growing as more of a destination just given what's taken place over this last 12 months?**

ROSS ATKINS: He's kicking it to me.

I think over time -- Toronto, I think, from the start from -- 2015 was such a remarkable year. I wasn't there at the time. I was there in 2016 to see that energy come into the city again back from the '92 and '93 seasons, just highlighting what a remarkable market it is.

And then over time as we went through some down years in the time that Mark and I were there, we poured into the resources that help players improve. As that started to bubble up into wins, we then poured more money into resources around free agency and investing in players more long term in a significant way.

And that, as it turns into more wins, and we do everything

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in our power to make sure we're helping players feel comfortable and transition smoothly beyond just them as performers but as people, has turned into what we show as an attractive destination.

SCOTT BORAS: I think for me when Edward came to L.A. last year and we had meetings regarding Juan Soto, we got to spend a significant amount of time with Edward Rogers. Listening was a very important part to the ascension of his franchise because they listened to what players wanted in amenities, what players wanted in technology to help them improve, what players needed and wanted in the routines medically. And the staffing for that was provided. The facilities are certainly in the player community held as best in class.

They've set an example in the game about both Minor League and Major League facilities and care for players. I know our company goes to sports science meetings, and when we go there, we always find the Toronto Blue Jays staff there to aid players in their durability and what they do.

All this, of course, is communicated to the players, but also having ownership support and understanding that -- the best there is available to make sure the players can achieve their goals and do what they do. I've always teased Ross over the years that I've always felt that Toronto should be clearly one of the top five standards in Major League Baseball. I think that they are now reaching that pinnacle, and certainly their performance on the field shows that.

**Q. Dylan, can you describe a little bit about your process of background work on the Blue Jays, talking to players, what you may have wanted to know from some of your fellow player community, questions you had about the city, things of that nature?**

DYLAN CEASE: I had Kevin Gausman's phone number from previous encounters and I had asked him about it. Honestly, as I asked around, no one had any negatives to say about it. The consensus has been you're going to love the city, you're going to love the organization. It's as simple as that. There wasn't a negative.

It was pretty simple, pretty easy, pretty straightforward.

**Q. Ross, can you describe a little bit about how you project durability. Obviously you can look at the past, but you're worried about the future. How do you guys determine a player is going to be able to continue to be durable for a duration of a contract?**

ROSS ATKINS: Really durability, there are a couple of

things that are there. One is it speaks to athleticism, and our view is they're doing things in a way that is efficient and that makes sense for their body to be able to repeat. Then the second factor is that it speaks to the potential to get better.

This has always been attractive to us. It's exceptionally attractive about Dylan. He by no means needs to get better, but because of that athleticism and durability, the potential is there for him to continue on an incredible trajectory.

**Q. Dylan, just wondering what your initial impressions were of pitching coach Pete Walker, and you kind of mentioned confidence in the Jays' ability to get the most out of you. I'm wondering if there's any specific areas they pointed to that have you excited about how you guys can grow together?**

DYLAN CEASE: Yeah. It's kind of a similar thing where I asked around on him, and it's nothing but great things. My initial thoughts were he's straightforward. He seemed humble. Humble with the information and how he's planning on giving it to me.

Ultimately, I think our personalities are going to mesh well. Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. It's not just him. They have an entire staff from game planning to pitch design to all of that.

That's honestly one of the things I'm most excited about is I really do feel like they're going to help me maximize my abilities.

**Q. I just want to say congrats on the deal first off. I also want to ask, have you spoken to Vladyslav Springer just about how the season's going to go and for or Gausman pitching-wise?**

DYLAN CEASE: Springer reached out to me a little bit. Honestly, I'm still in the early phases of getting to know everybody and following guys on Instagram and all of that stuff. There haven't been too many introductions yet. I'm sure the majority of that is going to be at Spring Training.

I think everyone is going to go into Spring Training with the same expectations. Obviously last year they were, like I said, a high caliber team with or without me. So I'm coming in to just try to assimilate into the team and be a part of it and really just give everything I have.

**Q. Scott, getting a deal of this magnitude done this quickly in the off-season, is that reflective of the Blue Jays' aggressiveness or Dylan's preference -- Dylan, you can speak on this too -- to get through this**

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**process maybe not as fast as possible, but earlier, maybe not having it linger into the winter?**

SCOTT BORAS: In free agency, I tell people we're in a boat and the current is how teams work. So as we get near the waterfall is really a function of how quickly the current works.

There was a real push in this market by a number of teams for the strikeout, durable pitcher. Everybody identified they wanted that, and there was a very quick and readied organizations to advance on this.

I think what we did in our process was Dylan interviewed everyone and really made a decision to go to Toronto and see if we could work on a deal. And we were able to get that done.

**Q. Dylan, was there any concern on your part accepting deferred money for 20 years knowing decisions by politicians could cause inflation and it could lower the value by the time you get it?**

DYLAN CEASE: No, not really. I think inflation is just a reality. In general it's going to happen. I mostly just -- I trust Scott, I trust the business side of it. When he says, hey, this is a good, fair deal, and explains why and is objective about it, it makes sense.

I think it's a fair deal, and I'm really not worried about it. If I can't make that last, we've got problems.

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