

94th MLB All-Star Game

Monday, July 15, 2024

Arlington, Texas, USA

Globe Life Field

Bruce Bochy

Torey Lovullo

Paul Skenes

Press Conference



José Ramírez, playing third base, hitting sixth. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. will hit seventh and play first base. Adley Rutschman, catching, hitting eighth. And Marcus Semien hitting ninth, playing second base.

The toughest thing about the lineup is picking the last two or three.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure there will be questions in the clubhouse tomorrow. You discussed the fact that Corbin Burnes is home with his twins, just two weeks old. What was your decision to give him the starting nod?

BRUCE BOCHY: A few things, really. First of all, I think you have to look at his résumé, what he's done in baseball. He's had an incredible career. This is his fourth consecutive All-Star Game. What he's done this year in Baltimore, you know, they're leading their division. He's a big reason for that.

In my mind, it's just his time. It's his time to start an All-Star Game. That's why I chose him.

THE MODERATOR: I think that's reason enough.

To my left, the reigning NL champion manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks, Torey Lovullo. Please announce your starting lineup and why you made the decision to go with the guy to your left.

TOREY LOVULLO: Yeah, for sure. Leading off for us will be Ketel Marte. He's our starting second baseman in Arizona. Hitting second will be Shohei Ohtani as our designated hitter. Trea Turner will hit third as our shortstop, and he'll be followed by teammate Bryce Harper in the cleanup position playing first base. Catching will be William Contreras, hitting fifth. Christian Yelich will hit sixth and play right field. Alec Bohm will hit seventh and playing third base. Teoscar Hernández will be hitting eighth, in center field. And Jurickson Profar will hit ninth and play left field.

THE MODERATOR: Getting the starting nod, Paul Skenes, his rookie year. Hard to believe it was just over a

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the 94th Midsummer Classic here in Arlington, Texas, home of the world champion Texas Rangers and Globe Life Field, the site for this week's All-Star festivities.

My name is Lauren Gardner. Host and reporter for MLB Network and Apple TV Plus. It's my honor to be master of ceremonies for the press conference.

This is an All-Star Game that features 38 first-time All-Stars, including the guy to my left. And the game continues to get younger and more exciting as we have 22 All-Stars, age 26 and younger.

But we also have some experience in this game, including the guy to my right, Bruce Bochy, who will be managing in his fifth Midsummer Classic.

Bruce, welcome. It must be nice to stay home for this within.

BRUCE BOCHY: Thanks, Lauren. Oh, it is nice. Although I'm staying at the hotel. I'm not staying at home. It's always an honor. It never gets old, trust me. I'm grateful, thankful, and I look forward to meeting a lot of guys here and trying to beat Torey here.

THE MODERATOR: Oh, yeah, definitely going to be some friendly competition in tomorrow's game. Can you please announce your starting lineup and your starting pitcher?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah. Starting pitcher is Corbin Burnes. He's not here right now. He just had twins a couple weeks ago. But he'll start the game.

My lineup is Steven Kwan will be in left field. Gunnar Henderson hitting second and shortstop. Juan Soto in right field, hitting third. Aaron Judge will be in center field and hitting cleanup. Yordan Alvarez hitting DH and in fifth.



year ago that you were the No. 1 overall pick in the MLB draft and now you're starting the Midsummer Classic.

Skip, what was behind the decision to name him as starter?

TOREY LOVULLO: For me, it was consistently a no-brainer. I wanted to hit the sweet spot and hit it right. I wanted to be situationally aware of some of the other great arms that were possibilities.

Paul is everything right about this game. You mentioned youthfulness. He just got drafted. Youthfulness of the All-Star Game. Just his ability to balance what he's had to go through over the past year has been amazing. He does it with humility. He does it very, very well.

So, to me, it became more and more clear in the year, and I couldn't be more honored sitting next to him.

THE MODERATOR: Paul, first of all, congratulations and welcome. I know there was a lot of noise around whether or not you would be the starting pitcher for this game. Now that it's finally settled in, how are you feeling?

PAUL SKENES: Oh, pretty dang cool to even be in this position, to be at the All-Star Game in the first place. Just super grateful to be given the opportunity to start it. So thank you, Skip. Yeah, super excited.

THE MODERATOR: Paul Skenes, just the fifth rookie starter to start in the Midsummer Classic.

We'd like to open up questions to the media.

Q. Thank you. One for Torey and one for Paul, please.

For Torey, how did you come up with the idea to reveal your starting pitcher? Was that inadvertent or a last-minute plan, improvised? What happened here?

TOREY LOVULLO: A combination of both. It was a last-minute plan that was certainly improvised. I'd been in contact with Michael Hill, let him know what my decision was the day before the announcement. As I watched him throw seven no-hit innings, it became something I couldn't wait to tell the world.

Michael said, Hey, let's do this. He's going to be on "The Dan Patrick Show." Why don't you just butt in on their time and we'll just make it as fun and playful as possible. Dan Patrick, I was a big fan of his. I was shocked he knew my name. I had my two minutes with him and Paul. Worked out perfect.

Q. Paul, wonder if you have a memory or two of your days at El Toro, things you guys did for fun and whether you thought you'd ever be sitting here given that you didn't pitch a whole lot there till your last year?

PAUL SKENES: I played baseball for fun there. It was just being able to be in high school and play baseball is fun, play with the teammates and guys that I grew up with since I was four or five years old.

But, yeah, I caught most of the time in El Toro and started pitching in my senior year, junior and senior year. Just had fun with it.

Q. Paul, a year ago, when you were drafted 1st overall, what was your sort of expectation for where you would be a year from then?

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, it was pretty broad in general. The goal is to be in the Major Leagues and to be hopefully an effective Big League starter by this time, which is -- whether that was going to happen or not, at the time I had to make some adjustments and get better. That was the big focus of the offseason.

Obviously, being here now, I think it's just a product of doing it one day at a time and having good coaches and good people around me.

But, yeah, I didn't necessarily think I would be here.

Q. You'll be throwing the splinker tomorrow. Tell us about how you learned that pitch and what makes it a good weapon for you.

PAUL SKENES: I had a sinker grip I was throwing last year at LSU. Kind of started fooling around with it between when the college season wrapped up and when I was going to report to the complex for the draft. Figured out a different cue for it. Started throwing it and got command over it. The last part was throwing it to hitters and see how they react to it.

THE MODERATOR: Seems like the arsenal continues to evolve.

Q. Hi, Paul. Your strength is throwing fastball. So how many miles an hour do you throw in the All-Star Game?

PAUL SKENES: I don't know. At least a hundred, hopefully.

THE MODERATOR: That was a great question. Gotta hit

triple digits, right?

Q. So you're bringing a lot of new, young fans to the game that maybe didn't have interest before. It's awesome to see. You're getting comparisons to being the Wemby of the NBA. Thoughts? Comments? Do you agree, disagree?

PAUL SKENES: I don't know that I agree or disagree with that. I don't watch the NBA at all. I know who he is, but I don't know a whole lot about him.

Q. They say he's going to be a generational talent.

PAUL SKENES: It's an honor, but I'm 11 starts in. And here we are now. Hopefully, there's a lot more time that I can play this game.

Q. Torey, how much of the history did you know about MLB passing on Strasburg in 2010 and not putting him on the All-Star team, and then the matter of you starting Paul?

TOREY LOVULLO: I love the history of baseball. I want to give a shout out to my 92-year-old mom who is watching right now. Love you, Mom. Thank you for teaching me the game the way you did.

But I enjoy the history of this game. And, for me, it's what makes it great, what makes it so special. And I was aware of some of the situation with Strasburg. The fact that he was named an All-Star and placed on this team made so much sense to me from the beginning.

And then when I had a chance to make this decision, it was -- he was the early target. I wanted to just make sure that the world got a chance to see him. We're going to be on the biggest stage tomorrow, and I am here to support and promote Major League Baseball the best way I know how.

Back to the question a few seconds ago, he is potentially a generational talent. I want to give him every opportunity to go out on this stage and show what he can do.

Q. Paul, you know the history, perhaps, of Strasburg, and a lot of pitchers included, such high impact. You got one guy on your team now, Jared Jones, who's on the IL. What are you doing to protect yourself? What are the Pirates doing to keep you healthy and doing what you do?

PAUL SKENES: Our trainer is at the All-Star Game too so he's pretty dang good. I think it's just a matter of learning the game and learning what works for you. There's going to be growing pains as you grow up in this game, not just

now, but since I started pitching in high school and college too.

I think just a matter of building a good base, being strong and doing everything you know is right. And then just letting it fall where it may.

Q. Paul, given the fact that you didn't throw early, you weren't (indiscernible), and what advice do you have for a lot of pitchers who throw a lot of innings early to get where you are?

PAUL SKENES: The way I kind of look at it is building volume as a whole. Whether that's on your arm, your body, because you need it all throughout the course of the season.

So I think I grew up catching, and that's a lot of volume on your body. It's a lot of throws you're making too. I don't know what --

Q. Is the torque different? You're not doing all that as a catcher. You clearly have a (indiscernible) now.

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, I mean, moving right is, I think, the first part of that as a pitcher, just moving efficiently, moving healthy. And then figuring out how your body is and getting strong and mobility. Everything matters.

So I don't know. I haven't thought too much about kind of the amount that I've been pitching over the last, you know, six or seven years just because that's kind of when -- and before that, also, because I've kind of just started pitching during the last six or seven years, really.

But I think building volume on your body is important. I might not be the best guy to ask for this. Yeah, that's kind of how I look at it.

Q. Paul, when you go seven innings without giving up a hit, what were your feelings about coming out?

PAUL SKENES: You want to finish the game. You want to be able to finish what you started. Not just in that inning, but every game that you pitch.

So, obviously, I am a 22-year-old where I am and the whole story, I think, has been about workload management, managing my volume this year.

And then, you know, frankly, Shelty said that I looked tired when he was talking to me in the dugout and as he was watching me. That's kind of how I felt a little bit too. I was laboring. It was 60-plus pitches in the first three innings. There are going to be those outings, and kind of sucks that

it landed on an outing like that.

But I'm all for it if it means that I get to pitch all year.

Q. Paul, what was the one moment in your mind that convinced you to switch from catching to pitching?

PAUL SKENES: They stopped putting me in BP groups. Yeah, I don't know. I went to LSU, and I stopped catching, but I was hitting still. And I wanted to keep hitting as long as I could, but the up side on the mound, I think, was a lot better than up side hitting.

So kind of gave it up, and I wasn't too broken up about it because we had the opportunity to win the national championship, and we ended up doing it. So I think it was worth it.

Q. Getting back to the splinker, did you just play with the grips on your own? Did one of the coaches help you? How did that process help?

PAUL SKENES: It was a grip that I was -- how I was holding the ball did not change, but the way I was releasing it and what I was feeling as I released it changed a little bit, and I just kind of discovered it on one random throw, and then I just kept doing it. Just playing around.

Q. You were just playing around on your own in the bullpen at school or...

PAUL SKENES: Just playing catch.

Q. Who is going to replace Carlos Correa and Luis Arraez?

BRUCE BOCHY: Corey Seager. Pick Corey right now.

Q. And Luis Arraez?

TOREY LOVULLO: We're neutral. Last night when I talked to Michael Hill, we weren't sure if he was or was not playing. So we haven't made that decision yet.

Q. Bruce, we haven't left you out of this conference much. I wanted to ask you and Torey, do you get to manage much in this, or are you like a Little League manager and you have to make sure each kid gets to play? What are your thoughts on this and dealing with egos and everybody who wants to get in the game?

BRUCE BOCHY: To be honest, it's a little bit of both. You're trying to get everybody involved. You want them to get some time in the game. But at the same time, you still want to go out there and try to win the ball game.

It's not dealing with egos. These guys will do whatever you want for the most part. I'm lucky to be -- this is my fifth time. I've never had anybody tell me I only want to do that or do that, "Just tell me what you need."

So, you know, it's a fun game to manage, but it is managed in a different way. There's no getting around it. You got to, you know, be concerned about the pitchers, their pitch count, and one important role that we have is to send a guy back healthy to his club. So we have to think about that too.

TOREY LOVULLO: I echo all those answers. First of all, I'm actually honored to be up here. Boch is the managerial GOAT for sure. So the fact that I get a chance to manage against him again in this stage is an honor for me. And I'm honored to be the manager for the National League All-Star team.

My biggest responsibility is to make sure everybody plays. They're here to play. They earned that honor, and it probably gives me the most stress as to how to get everybody in there. I know there potentially could be a ninth inning pitch here doesn't get that inning. I'm dreading having to figure out who that is. There are a few things that give me stress.

I want to give everybody a chance to play, and I'm going to do my best.

Q. Paul, do you miss that there's a DH now? Would you want to get your rakes in?

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, that would be cool. I had a couple bats over the last few days, and I used a couple batting gloves too. There's no helmet in my locker, so that's not happening.

TOREY LOVULLO: Ben Cherington and Shely, that ain't gonna happen, I promise.

Q. Paul, how would you say you use your splinker with your forcing fastball? Do you see it as another fastball option, or do you use it more for velocity separation the way you've maybe used a changeup but just sort of at a higher velocity?

PAUL SKENES: I call it a sinker. Everybody else calls it a splinker. That's how I view it, having a different fastball, different shape and forces hitters to choose between one or the other.

So, yeah, and it's fluid. I'll use it differently every single outing.

Q. Bruce, growing up on Army bases during your whole life with your dad in the Army, what does it mean to you to have Paul pitch in this game, having served two years in the Air Force Academy?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty cool when you have a guy that went to the Air Force Academy. I've been there. I mean, what a beautiful place. I'm sure he learned a lot from there. He could answer a lot better than me. I'm sure on the discipline part and all that.

But being an Army brat, I have so much respect for anybody that's done anything with the service and their sacrifices they had to make for this country. It's pretty cool that he did spend some time there.

Q. Paul, for you, can you tell how excited the cadets are in the Air Force Academy? Are you going to try to help recruit kids to the academies?

PAUL SKENES: I think it's important to bring as many eyes as possible to the academies, because I think looking at my team, I was -- in my recruiting class at the Air Force Academy, I think I might have been the only one that sought out the Air Force Academy. Everybody else got recruited and kind of had to be convinced or, you know, explained to them what the Air Force Academy is and what it's all about, which tells me that people don't know about it as much as they should.

So I have a couple folks that are in my class from the Air Force Academy who just graduated that live around here that are coming to the game tomorrow, which will be cool.

My coach is coming to the game tomorrow. And, yeah, so it's exciting to be kind of labeled as an Air Force guy because that is such a big part of my background, I think. Obviously, there's Griffin Jax of the Twins who actually graduated from the academy. And then there are guys from other service academies also that are in the Big Leagues right now.

So I think it's important to bring as many eyes as possible to that just so that as many people know about it and know about the opportunities as possible.

Q. Bruce, what might be your plans for your relief corps, including Mason Miller, and what are your thoughts about him, and could he end up being your closer, or do you have any other idea?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah. Mike Maddux will be here later today, and we'll talk about the pitching plan.

You have to have it mapped out. You have to have guys getting up to help guys who might be going through a stressful inning there.

As far as closing the game, could be, of course, Clase. Kotsay is here so he'll be in my ear, trust me, on that one. Really, it's nine innings that we have to be prepared to go through. So it's not like I can use a lot of guys that need to save somebody in the 8th and 9th. You can figure on him and Clase, depending on the score.

Q. Paul, do you like pitching in indoor stadiums? Also, looking at the American lineup, who are you looking forward to facing?

PAUL SKENES: I think I've only pitched in one indoor stadium, and I enjoyed it. That was my last outing. I don't know a whole lot about it. I don't know what the differences are. Maybe it's a little more humid or something like that. I'll feel it out today and tomorrow, just kind of see where we're at. I don't mind being out of the 100-degree heat right now. Yeah, we'll see. I don't know that I have a preference yet.

Looking at the lineup, yeah, there are no breaks there. There's no free outs. I mean, it is the All-Star Game. But, yeah, looking forward to attacking them each head-on. It's going to be cool.

THE MODERATOR: Should be very entertaining.

Q. Boch, I know there have been a couple of times this year when we walked into your office after games or before games, and Paul has been on TV pitching. You stood up to watch those. I'm curious what you think of seeing Paul on TV so far. Then I have a follow-up.

BRUCE BOCHY: What I think? He's a beast. I mean, it's incredible stuff that he has. I look forward to seeing him tomorrow. I'll say this, you look at our lineup, it's as good as it gets. I go back to '99 in Boston. I said the same thing when Pedro went out there and struck out 5 out of 6. I hope that's not going to happen. It's going to be good match-ups early in the game with who he's going to be facing. I look forward to the incredible stuff that he has.

Q. One other thing is how do you have a conversation with a guy that has hit leadoff for you the last 250 games and say you're going to hit ninth?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yeah. I'm really avoiding him right now. Seriously, I sat on the plane with him a little bit and told him he'll hit ninth. He'll probably get one at-bat tomorrow. Split that up at second base. Of course, Marcus will do whatever. He said, Well, if you look at numbers, that's

where I should be hitting.

THE MODERATOR: Very, very humble by Marcus.

Q. Torey, if Paul happens to have a quick first inning tomorrow, is there a chance that we could see him out there for the second inning?

TOREY LOVULLO: Most likely, no. We have 11, 12 pitchers to get through. Going back to what I just said, I want to make sure that we're fair to everybody and give them a chance to go out there and compete. So Brent Strom is working on that right now downstairs. That's probably the hardest part of being the manager, in my early opinion, is trying to get every pitcher in the game.

So I would love to. I'd love to watch him for two. Actually, I'd love to tire him out enough so he can't make one of his next starts because it will be against the Diamondbacks. I don't think that's going to happen.

Q. Paul would you like to face Aaron Judge?

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, it will be cool.

TOREY LOVULLO: Thanks. I appreciate that.

BRUCE BOCHY: I hope he does. It means one guy got on.

THE MODERATOR: Stirring the pot.

Q. Paul, you have quite a unique warmup routine between throwing the football and using the water bags. How did you develop that routine?

PAUL SKENES: Just over time, figuring out what works for my body and what I need to do to get prepared. Everything has a purpose for what I do in warmups. That includes what I do under the stadium too before I head up. It's kind of a routine I've developed over the past couple years. It could change. Might not be the same thing tomorrow as what people have seen. Might add some stuff. Might take some stuff out. It's just what I do to get ready to pitch.

Q. There is a question for all three. I know you said there were 37 first-time All-Stars. Factoring in a lot of injuries this year, it's nice to see players, especially Profar. I know there's a lot of young All-Stars that are new. Profar has had a long journey.

For all of you guys, is there one player you're looking forward to manage or play against or play with?

BRUCE BOCHY: Guys I'm looking forward to being --

THE MODERATOR: First-time All-Stars you're looking forward to managing.

BRUCE BOCHY: Gosh, you know, I hate to pick one guy. I'd be leaving some guys out. I said it earlier, I'm just looking forward to getting to know all of them, getting to meet them, watch them, and that's what's cool about this. Watch them on TV or play against them, but you haven't met them. I'll say all of them. I'm just looking forward to getting to know them.

TOREY LOVULLO: I'll second that, but I'll say the guy I'm sitting next to, he's very intriguing to me and I'm honored to sit next to him and I'm honored today to have him as our starting pitcher.

PAUL SKENES: Thanks. I don't know. I think the thing I'm looking forward to most is getting to spend time with other pitchers here, pick their brains, see what they're willing to share on what -- on what it takes to be a Big Leaguer for however long they've been here and how they have success and all that.

Q. Torey, I'm curious, when did it occur to you that you wanted to be a Big League manager? Kind of looking back on that, what does it mean to be here today?

TOREY LOVULLO: Yeah, this is an absolute honor to be sitting up here. As I mentioned earlier, with this group beside me, I get a chance to sit among the biggest stars in the game. It's going to be one of the absolute baseball highlights of my life.

I knew I wanted to manage probably in the middle of my career. I was that player who was sitting on the bench, paying attention to what the manager was doing. You hear this story a lot from guys who were in my situation, right? A grind-it-out career, backup role, paying attention to every little aspect of the game. I'd probably say I was in my late 20s when I began to see the game differently and think through it as a manager.

Then I had a gentleman by the name of Mark Shapiro, president of baseball operations for the Toronto Blue Jays, who came to me and said, You have a chance to be somebody special in this game. I hope you consider staying in it when you're done playing.

That solidified it for me. That was somewhere in the late '90s that I made that decision.

THE MODERATOR: What a pivotal moment.



Q. Paul, growing up, when you watched baseball on TV, at what age did you start to think of when I get older, this is how I would get these guys out?

PAUL SKENES: Probably last year, if anything. Yeah, I never really thought about it that way as I was growing up watching the game. But I would say probably around last year is when my identity as a pitcher kind of really solidified and how I attack guys and that kind of thing.

But when I was 10, 11 years old, I don't know that I ever really thought about the game that way. That's been a fairly recent thing for me.

Q. For you and Boch, back in the old days, it was a lot more loosey-goosey about how you guys picked your starting pitchers and your staff. Now there's a complete process for it. How much, these days, did you get on players that were on your pitching staff? Or did you get any at all?

BRUCE BOCHY: I'll start. No, the staff was picked. Are you talking about the pitching staff? It was all chosen. As you said earlier, yeah, we had some say in some picks on the extras and some pitchers, but it's all done by MLB now. And the players vote.

Q. In '99, was it still a process where you got to pick some pitchers?

BRUCE BOCHY: Yes.

Q. How many did you pick?

BRUCE BOCHY: Oh, jeez. I can't remember that. I'm guessing, you know. If I had to guess, three or four maybe, if that.

TOREY LOVULLO: He answered it. I had nothing to do with it. Major League Baseball and the fans. The fans picked the original starting lineup, and then Major League Baseball picked it out the rest of the way.

Q. It was your choice to start Paul, right?

TOREY LOVULLO: That's correct, yes.

THE MODERATOR: That concludes your press conference. A big thanks to Paul, Torey, and Bruce. Thank you, everyone.

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