

NL Championship Series:

Dodgers vs Brewers

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Dodger Stadium

Los Angeles Dodgers

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Pitching Coach

Pregame 3 Press Conference

Q. We have gotten the reaction of quite a few of the players to just the performance from Blake Snell and from Yoshinobu Yamamoto. What was just your reaction to seeing their pitching performance, and what stood out to you specifically about their outings?

MARK PRIOR: I mean, I think I probably would echo what most people said. I think both outings were, for me personally, probably one of the top two that I've seen live. Obviously there's been some really good performances in playoffs in baseball in general. But watching it unfold live under the circumstances in the playoffs, how they seemed to be in control the whole time.

Snell, from the first pitch, I thought he did a really good job of establishing what he wanted to do. And he carried that through the eight innings.

With Yoshi, he gets punched in the face right on the first pitch. We've seen that before this season. It happened in Anaheim. But he settled down and got through that first inning.

And then from then on, it was just about understanding what was working for him and trying to get ahead and then maybe just try to get on the edges a little bit and try to get them to get some weak contact. And hopefully you get some miss.

They're not a team that misses a whole lot. We know who they are. They're a very good ballclub, they're a fun ballclub to watch from afar. They're not necessarily to play. But they know how to play. They know how to play and win ball games.

You kind of bake all those things in, it was pretty phenomenal to watch.

Q. How different has it been managing just the



pitching staff as a whole this year, specifically this postseason, compared to whether it was last year when it was more a bullpen-heavy group or just the regular season in which there were some of those bullpen struggles and even the injuries to the rotation?

MARK PRIOR: I think every year is different. Every year is a learning experience for us as a staff, as coaches, as players. And I think ultimately, when it comes down to it, there's no one way to win ball games. There's no one way to win a division.

But I think the one constant that, at least from my time here in LA, is we use a lot of people. We use our roster. Our front office does a really good job of providing depth from the beginning of the season and supplementing it as the season goes on. And it allows us to use guys to bring in, to get big outs, even if it's for two or three games. There's a lot of people who participate in winning ball games.

So this year, our starters, we didn't really have a full rotation for a while. Last year we didn't have a rotation either. We had a bullpen that stepped up toward the end of the season and carried us through the playoffs.

But there's a lot of guys and it provides opportunities. You look at Emmet Sheehan, coming back from Tommy John. He gets thrown right into a fire in a divisional series. Steps up, wins a big game for us there. Still kind of going through his rehab. For him, the way he finished the season, he was an integral part of what we did.

Tony Gonsolin, he got some big starts for us before he got injured. D-May had some big starts. D-May, sometimes the lines weren't great, but he was providing innings and stability.

I think the message, in a long-winded way, is every season is different. You take day-by-day. You try to go out and try to play a good ball game. Then you pick up the pieces and see where you're at for the next day.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, it's the players who eventually kind of band together, and they find ways to win. And sometimes they're very efficient, like they were the

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last couple of days, and sometimes they're not and they're a little bit ugly. But a win's a win, and that's ultimately what the point of the game is, to try to go out and win a ball game.

Q. To go back to the starting pitching injuries at the start of the year, were you getting some déjà vu to last season, just with how things were going over the first half? Or with how those guys were progressing, what their injuries were, did you have some hope that by this point of the year the rotation would look like this and be able to perform like this?

MARK PRIOR: Yeah, and unfortunately, I've seen the movie a lot. '18, we had a lot of injuries. Got 10 games behind and found our way out of it.

You never know. You go in, you feel like you're in a position of strength and that can change really fast. Again, you have to give credit to our front office, to our player development for allowing guys to come in and hopefully plug some holes through the course of the season.

I don't think anybody expected the injuries to some of our guys to happen. This year, specifically, I think we were counting on those guys. But they did. So you adjust, and you try to take it day-by-day. You try to win the ball games.

Again, I think it takes everybody to win these games. And you get big innings -- Casparius was huge for us. You talk about we don't have the rotation, but Caspy being able to take down bulk innings in a lot of the games, and really the way he pitched for the first two months, kept us afloat.

It's not ideal. Never is. We'd love to have, you know, five guys throw out 30 starts. But unfortunately I don't think that's where we're at in today's game. So you've got to be able to adapt and be nimble with what you have.

A lot of it, again, is about the players stepping up and being able to do their job.

Q. With Roki, Dave said you guys were kind of monitoring the slight velo drop in the Milwaukee outing. Is that more usage, mechanical? What would you guys kind of --

MARK PRIOR: I'm sure a combination of both. Is it 50/50? Is it 70/30? It's hard to say. I do think there's a lot asked right now of all our relievers, specifically him. His outing against Philadelphia, well documented.

To be able to turn around in two days, three days and ask him to be as effective or as dominant is probably unrealistic for anybody, really. Even if you take Trevor Megill, who is

an outstanding closer or any of those guys and you run them out there for three innings, there's probably going to be a cost at the end of the day. Is it worth it? Yeah, you move on, you win your ball game.

I don't think he threw bad by any means. He was just off. He wasn't completely spraying some of the balls.

Again, I think you also have to look at the lineup he's facing. This is a team that controls the strike zone extremely well. They're very well prepared. They know what Roki does. They know what happens if he's just off.

So some of that I think was on them, too. You have to give credit to them for taking some really close pitches and making him work to try to get through that.

So, definitely monitoring, absolutely. I don't want to discount that. But I do think some of that's from the effects of the game against Philadelphia and the fact that he's only been putting -- he's been relieving for two weeks, two and a half weeks. So he's still trying to figure out what that lifestyle is like down there.

Q. Tyler, he's a very mechanical guy. He's a deep thinker. How important is it for him to go out and trust his stuff and just kind of go out there and attack?

MARK PRIOR: With Glas, he definitely wants to feel in a good spot with his delivery. I think that's a primary objective of his every single day is to feel like his delivery is in a good spot.

But he is 6-foot-7, and sometimes lining those pieces up takes some time. Whether that's warming up in the bullpen or maybe trying to get in the second or third inning. We've seen him come out lights out, and we've seen him have to navigate. San Francisco was one of those games where it took him two, three innings and all of a sudden things click in.

But I think where his growth has been this year is understanding what the common objective is, is trying to get outs and really trying to just find a way if it's not perfectly lined up.

And that's where it's been fun to watch him this year is even when he doesn't feel 100 percent perfect with his delivery, he knows that it could flip in one second. He can get one curveball in there or one fastball and he'll lock in. And that's where he's been.

That Philadelphia game was a great example of that. He wasn't quite synced up the way he expects to be. But by the second inning, third inning he starting really getting in a



groove and finding himself.

He's a special talent. Everybody's said it. But his raw stuff is -- he's top five in baseball. And when it's lined up, it's fun to watch. He can do a lot of things and he can make really good hitters look not as good of hitters that they are.

Every day is different with him. And that's what makes him also challenging to prepare for. You don't know if he's going to lean on one pitch or another pitch. And a lot of that is him really understanding where he's at that day and going with it.

Q. You've talked a lot about usage already. But when you look at the guys that have been dominant for you -- Snell, Sasaki and Glas, pretty good -- those are guys that missed a lot of the season and are coming fresh now. The other teams, their guys, they're gassed, they're on fumes. Do you think there might be a way that perhaps people are starting to look at how usage happens during the regular season? I remember one year, the Cardinals got, like, five pitchers back in September and just dominated the postseason because they were fresh.

MARK PRIOR: Yeah, I mean, it's a very fair question. I don't know the answer to that. I don't even know how you would go about planning or preparing for that.

You've got to win the regular season. You've got to win in the regular season. That's not an easy task. So to try to workload management your way through 162 in a very competitive league, a very balanced and competitive league, probably not the most ideal circumstances. You might find yourself on the outside looking in.

I do think there's probably something to our guys missed three, four months, some of them. Yama, though, made 30 starts, he's up to 33 starts. He's been doing it the whole season.

But there's probably something to have guys fresh. But you also have guys you don't want them too fresh where they're still trying to get synced up.

We saw last year, too, we had some starters out last year. They came back. We had some relievers out last year. They came back. Again, the one thing I feel like I've come to, kind of come to grips with or kind of just rely on is there's no right way to do it.

I think you ultimately, I think Doc said it, you have the roster you have at this moment in time and you play it. And you hope you still -- every team that's here, whether they have injuries, whether the guys are tired, these rosters

are really talented. And we're watching some of the best players in the world go at it.

And you are what you are right now and you just have to -- I don't think you can plan in advance of what you want to be because at the end of the day you are what you are. You just play and you hope that you get the right breaks and you play good fundamental baseball.

Q. When Atlanta had that 14-year run of Smoltz, Maddux Glavine, they kept talking about feeding off each other. Do you get the sense of your guys right now that nobody wants to be the weak link, that they kind of go off each other?

MARK PRIOR: Yeah, I mean, it's always there amongst that little fraternity or that group of starters. Snell does it, Yama turns around and does it. But I think ultimately they want to perform for the collective group all of 26 guys in the organization.

It doesn't hurt. There's definitely the -- we're all competitors and you want to go out there and you want to -- it's not a one-up, but you want to maintain that standard.

There's a standard that's been here for decades. Look, pitching is at the heart of the Los Angeles Dodgers. It's talked about year in, year out. And it was something that Honeycutt mentored me about, is like this is the heart of -- yeah, we hit home runs, we've got a lot of talented position players -- but at the heart of it you go back to all the great pitchers that have been here.

Guys want to go out there and they want to perform for the team and for the organization. And right now, we're on a good little run.

But we've got to play -- we're playing a lot of good teams. We've seen a lot of really good starters against us. We've been the beneficiary of some luck, of some key hits. Things can flip, too. We've been on the other side of that as well.

Our goal right now is to just go out and play a solid nine innings today and get a good quality start out of Glas. And then hopefully we're on the positive side again today.

Q. You guys didn't have a complete game during the regular season. And innings counts and pitch counts, while very well intentioned, haven't really stopped the wave of injuries that I think everybody hoped they would. In watching Snell and Yamamoto, how do we get back to, have your best pitchers throw as many pitches as they can?

MARK PRIOR: Again, another really fair question. I think, one, we look at those two games -- if you isolate them -- one, their pitches per inning were pretty low. So, you're looking at the end of the game these guys are still hovering around 100.

The stress -- I think more than the eight innings, the nine innings and stuff like that is to not see them stressed pretty much for those nine innings. That's more unique than, I think, going eight, nine innings. The first homer, but after that, I don't even know if there were runners on second base. So that's really unusual.

I think that's ultimately what you're evaluating -- you talk about guys get stressed once, they get stressed twice; that third stress point is really where you don't want a guy to break. That's ultimately where the evolution and the weaponizing of bullpens has really come in, is they don't want guys to get stressed.

But when you look at these guys and their ability to run, they have deep arsenals to where they can show hitters different looks, first time, second time, third time through, I think ultimately that's where you get guys going deep into games.

It's not big a one- or two-pitch pitcher. It's when, all of a sudden you have three or four pitches working for you, or you have a double-plus pitch and Snell's change-up to where you can just throw it even though they know it's coming.

And their execution at an A-plus level is not to be -- I think that can't be discounted too. Again, these guys were executing at their highest level those two nights.

But to get back to your other question, you probably need guys with three to four pitches. You've got to be able to give the hitters in today's day multiple looks of your stuff and be able to to set guys up differently and attack guys differently. And that's how you get deeper into ball games.

But, again, with expanded rosters, your ability to deploy different types of relievers, it makes sense in today's ball game.

Whether we get back to that -- I don't think it's a pitch-count thing necessarily, though. I think it's more about who is a better match-up at the end of the day. Right now, those two guys were a better match-up in the moment. I'm not saying that's all the time, but in the moment, that moment right there, I think those guys were the best guys on the mound -- given that they weren't particularly stressed or fatigued in those moments.