

NL Championship Series: Dodgers vs Brewers

Monday, October 15, 2018

Rich Hill

Dodgers pregame 3

Q. You faced the Brewers twice this season and then you saw two games in the series. Has your image or impression changed from the time you faced them?

RICH HILL: Well, I mean I think when you look at a team like the Brewers you have to have great respect for what they've accomplished throughout the year. They were one of the highly-touted teams in the beginning of the season, and they lived up to that throughout the season, beating a great Cubs team. And being able to win the NL Central is huge.

With that, they've stayed consistent with their approach. It looks like a good group of guys over there. They're having fun. And staying in the moment. Knowing some of the guys over there that I've played with, who are tremendous teammates, great teammates, knowing that kind of character they have over in that clubhouse is something that's always proven to get teams to this point, not just because they're good, but they also have the chemistry in the clubhouse.

So from that point, to answer your question, is that is probably something you look a little bit deeper into scouting reports as opposed to what they hit and what they don't hit. It's really about the makeup and the fight that they have, too, as well, knowing that no lead is ever safe.

Very similar to us. I think it's something that we have in our clubhouse, as well. And we've seen that over the last two games here -- or in Milwaukee, the way we've been able to fight back and keep the pressure on them.

So I think that's one thing that I've seen that has changed the characteristics over the season, if you want to compare and contrast the starts from the middle of the season to this point. Does that answer your question? All right.

Q. You started pitching playoff games. How did you avoid getting out of character, getting too excited? And what types of techniques did you use, and have you gotten better with that as the years have gone on?

RICH HILL: Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a great question. I think everybody has certain breaking



points. And I think throughout your career, throughout your journey, it's how you handle those and how you continue to get back up and keep fighting. But you also learn as you move forward from those experiences.

And in preparation for big games, it's just like the first time you get called up to the Big Leagues, the first time you walk into this room and do an interview. It's something that you look back five, ten years later and it becomes much easier. I don't want to say "much easier," but you're much more prepared in a proper way. And you understand that by trial and error sometimes you find out what the most efficient way to get ready is. I feel like I've done a very good job at that.

Q. Your teammates and Dave Roberts sort of lauded your intensity on the mound. When you're out there is that fun, being into as each pitch as you seem to be?

RICH HILL: Absolutely. It's something that I think when you talk about somebody's passion, when they're passionate about what they do, they get very intense and excited about what they're talking about, what their passion is. And I think that's something when I go out there and I think that performing or doing this art form or whatever you want to call it, playing this sport, is something that I am very passionate about. And it's something if you can't be yourself out there and you can't really let yourself go, it's very difficult to hold in a lot of the intensity that you might have.

Now, sometimes is it over the top? I don't know. But I think that you have to have a certain amount of control over that. And the more times you can control it the better off you're going to be because you can focus in on the moment. I've always been able to focus in on the moment, no matter what it is.

And then it goes back to the experience part of it where you take the time, you step off, you collect yourself and you get back on the mound and you focus in on that pitch that you're supposed to execute at that time, not about the previous play or whatever might have happened that is already over.

But really, that's the biggest thing is just having that intensity when you go out there. People want to see

the players go out there and give everything they've got. They want to see that intensity. They pay a lot of hard-earned money to come out and watch us play. So I think it's something that when we give everything we've got every time we get out there, it's appreciated.

Q. Just a couple of starts ago you were talking about having to clean up some potential pitch tipping.

RICH HILL: Uh-huh.

Q. Recently I read about Clayton's fastball or slider getting, velocity getting a little close to his fastball. These tiny little details, how detailed do you get? How much of your day or your experience going from one start to the next is spent cleaning up or looking at or breaking down like exactly who you want to be for the six or seven or however many innings it goes?

RICH HILL: That's a great question, too. I think in order to be -- if you want to call it perfectionist or you have that perfectionist mindset, in order to be as detailed as possible you're eliminating really any other factors that might be inhibiting a positive outcome.

So you want to make sure that you can make -- for me, I try to make my curveball as efficient as I can, try to make my fastball as efficient as I can. I'm a huge feel pitcher. So in saying that, as the outing is going along or even in warmups, it's just getting the proper feel that I need to go out there and execute pitches and be as efficient as I can with those pitches and not kind of have those pitches maybe too sloppy. The arm angle isn't correct. You're getting lazy with your release point.

And especially in the occasions that we're in now, the postseason. So everything is heightened, every pitch is heightened. Every outcome is important. Whatever the out is, and whatever that outcome is from that result is extremely important. So you want to make sure that your intensity -- well, you're not really coming out of your mechanics or you're not trying to do too much, overswinging, overthrowing, making sure that you're pretty calm in the situation, whether it's when runners get on, whether it's bases loaded and nobody is out, whatever the situation is. The crowd is going to get loud. It's going to be a wave of emotions for everybody throughout the game.

So those are also details that you have to be mindful of in understanding that when you already put yourself in those situations, it's a lot easier to deal with it when those situations come around. And what I mean by that is visualizing and making sure that you've done the homework to put yourself in there before it actually happens.

Now, understanding that it's experience, as well. You can draw from those experiences to be in a better position when those big situations come around. But it is very important to be detailed. It's very important to be detail oriented because those little details are huge in big moments.

Q. You won all five of your September starts, and the last two were the best of those five starts. What was working so well for you in September? How difficult is it for a pitcher to make sure that he is pitching as well as you are at this time of the season?

RICH HILL: I'm going to kind of answer it backwards. I think the most difficult thing at this time of the year is the schedule that's so jumbled. Like last night's game with the Red Sox and Houston, you saw Rick Porcello come out of the bullpen. And you might run into a situation like that here. I went down to the bullpen the other day in the eighth inning just as emergency backup if we ran into that situation.

Mentally this part of the year you have to be ready to pitch every single day, no matter what. It doesn't matter. Because at the end of the day, everybody wants the Championship. And that's the only thing that everybody should be thinking about, not when am I going to get in. You have to be completely selfless and buy into the fact that you are really just a pitcher; not a starting pitcher, not a reliever, not a closer, not a setup guy. You are a pitcher, and you are here to serve the 25 guys in there to fulfill the purpose as a team.

And with that, you just continue to make sure that you stay with your workout regimen. Make sure that you stay in tune with your throwing. And again, this part of the season we've built up so much to get here so sometimes less is more. Because you don't know if you're going to be pitching on that day. So you have to be prepared every single day to be ready to execute.

The other part of it, with September, I think just being as consistent as possible with that routine, again, to peak every fifth day. So to be prepared every fifth day and make sure that I was ready to go out there and stay in the moment and perform to the best of my ability.

And I think those are the things that when you're detail oriented, when you're routine oriented, when you have the experience, those things all come into play this part of the year and also throughout September.

Q. The first couple of games your fellow teammates did a pretty good job pitching to Christian Yelich. What do you take from those at-bats? And how

much of your game plan is going to be focused on keeping him in check?

RICH HILL: Obviously he's had a tremendous year. He's an unbelievable talent. And I have a huge amount of respect for Christian and what he's been able to accomplish, especially going to Milwaukee. So it's been a catalyst for the team. He's been somebody that they look to to provide the old adage: Keep the line moving.

And understanding that, I think, I have multiple weapons that I can use against him. Now, the thing it comes down to is executing those and understanding that it's going to be a very competitive at-bat because you have two guys that are extremely competitive and obviously want the positive outcome for the team, for each guys' team.

But the way that the guys were able to keep him at bay, I think, we can look at the numbers throughout the year. You can look at past seasons and find issues or actually -- I shouldn't say "issues" -- but places of success where you can go to as a pitcher.

I think he's 1-for-8 in the last two games. Now, it doesn't matter because it's still Christian Yelich. I think J.T. goes 0 for 5 and comes through the next day and wins the game for us. But that's something that you have to look at, as well. Everything is so hyper focused. Everything is so -- and you hear that theme over and over again, no matter which person comes here to talk, they're going to say the same thing: It's very, very heightened focused situation.

But you can also use that to your advantage, depending upon what the situation is, runners in scoring position, nobody on, what is the crowd kind of provoking in the situation. There are a lot of things that you can look into in that moment. But, again, we don't know until we get in that situation. But there's a lot of different options to go to.

Q. So back to your being ready to pitch every day. What's your opinion of this bullpening thing? Started Liam Hendriks in the Wild Card game. He was an opener, and you faced Milwaukee from one of the these games in the series already. And really, it kind of started last year in the second game of the World Series when you were pulled out after four. Do you think this is something that's going to move forward or is it the product of teams that don't have enough starting pitchers?

RICH HILL: I'm not a hundred percent sure it's a product of teams that don't have enough starting pitching, because everybody has to have a starter every fifth day or every day to go through the season, right? I just don't think this is something that's

sustainable throughout a season. Yes, I do think it's something you can implement in the postseason, because as we look at it right now, we could potentially have seven more games until everything comes to hopefully success for us. And I can see that working for a postseason.

But during the season, I've pitched in the bullpen, I pitched in the bullpen for five years. And in saying that, I know that it's completely unrealistic, because you'd ask the guys to come out of the bullpen and their workload would increase, maybe not double, but it would increase a significant amount.

And I can tell you that pitching three days in a row is a lot more strenuous on your body than pitching every fifth day, especially when you -- the other thing is the intensity of these pitches in the postseason. This isn't something where we're in the regular season -- I'm not saying that the regular season isn't as intense, but there is another element of just the environment, knowing that it is the postseason and really understanding that that adrenaline is going to already naturally produce a higher amount of stress on your body and a higher amount of intensity on the swings, on the throws. And you see it. You see it every single postseason game.

So doing that, coming out of the bullpen for guys, you're not just talking about multiple days, you're talking about the environment that is producing everything that you've got coming out of your hand.