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[Safety](#)[Pressroom](#) (web)[CEO Hotline](#)[Metro Projects](#)[Facts at a Glance](#)  
(web)[Archives](#)[Events Calendar](#)[Research Center/  
Library](#)[Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)[Metro Classifieds](#)[Retirement  
Round-up](#)

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[Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)[Org Chart](#) (pdf)[Policies](#)[Training](#)[Help Desk](#)[Intranet Policy](#)

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Dodger legend Tommy Lasorda greets Custodian Maria Barrios and gives Operator Lamont Hopes a pat on the back following a team pep talk at Central City Division 1.



PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON

## Tommy Lasorda Goes to Bat for Central City Division 1

- Baseball legend delivers impromptu motivational talk to enthusiastic crowd of service attendants, mechanics and operators in Central City Division bus yard garage.

By Gayle Anderson

(July 26, 2005) At three in the afternoon on a Tuesday, Tommy Lasorda was giving a pep talk to the team. "What is it gonna to take for us to win? Well, if you want to win and believe that you can win, then you can do it, because self-confidence is the first step of success."

But the man considered to be one of the greatest managers in baseball wasn't talking from the Dodger dugout or from way out in centerfield. He was in the bus yard garage at Central City Division 1, July 26, talking to a Metro team of heavy hitters in the transportation field – some 30 service attendants, mechanics and a few operators on their midday break.



Lasorda gives the pitch in Central City bus yard garage.

Lasorda came to meet the Metro team at the invitation of Division Maintenance Manager Hector Rojas, who worked with the Dodger organization on community service projects in his former position as manager of fleet management at Regional Rebuild Center.

"When I left for Division 1, he offered to come here and give us a pep talk," said Rojas. "He's been supportive of what we do and the service we provide and he came to thank us for that and also to motivate us to work as a team."

Standing at a simple podium and facing a crowd of hard workers still wearing orange safety vests and the sweat of their labor, Lasorda went into the wind-up.

"You have a major responsibility. You may not realize how important you are to this city, but we all depend upon you," he said. "Why? The buses. If the buses are in good shape, a person is not gonna be afraid to get on that bus. If that bus is not taken care of properly, then we all have a problem. This is why you are very, very important. We look to you to do the job for us."

"Anyone who loves their job has never worked a day in their life. I've never said to my wife, 'I'm going to work.' I say 'I'm going to the ball park!'"

"When I walk in the clubhouse, I walk in with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of self-confidence, a lot of belief that we're gonna win – and I spread it all around," said the veteran manager.

"This is the same principle, here, at your 'clubhouse.' When you come to work, come here with all the enthusiasm, all the self-confidence, and tell yourself, 'I'm gonna be

## Here's the Wind-up Pitch and Delivery



better today than I was yesterday. I'm gonna do everything in my power to make this organization the best in the country.' If you can say that, you're a very happy person.

"Look at this vast organization,' Lasorda said. "You're the ones that make it go."



Metro gateway Cities GM Alex Clifford, Lasorda and Division Maintenance Manager Hector Rojas.

With a nod to Rojas and Metro Gateway Cities General Manager Alex Clifford, Lasorda drove his point home.

"They need you just like I needed those players. I got in the Hall of Fame but I didn't hit the ball and I never hit a home run. When I was successful with the team, it was only because of the contribution of our players. I made them play hard, I made them believe in themselves. I made them understand what it was going to take, to take the Blue to victory.



Was Tommy Lasorda the inspiration behind Operator Sam Morales win at the Metro Bus Rodeo a few days later? You be the judge. Here is the champ, Sam Morales, on the left, with Lasorda and Operator Lamont Hopes.

"That's team spirit," he said. I wanted to be the best manager in baseball. You're a team. You, too, want to be the best."

Lasorda had some parting words before the Metro team could rush the podium for handshakes, hugs and autographs.

"That's why I came here today," Lasorda concluded, "to let you know this: People depend on you – we need you. And don't ever think that you're nothing. You're the unsung heroes of this city."

Tommy Lasorda autographs  
safety vest for Mechanic Pedro



Barrios. At right, Service Attendant Jennifer Valenzuela got the real deal's signature on her mother's genuine bobble-head Tommy doll.



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