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Mets loyalists have been down this road before

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"Ya Gotta Believe!"

Mets fans have rallied behind those three simple words for decades. And with a two-game deficit to overcome in the World Series, the phrase, fans say, still rings true and can serve to galvanize even those most beaten down by recent failures.

Ever since pitcher Tug McGraw stood up and shouted the rallying cry in 1973, "Ya Gotta Believe" has come to define the swirling mixture of anxiousness and never-say-die hopefulness that makes up the DNA of Mets fans.

Despite having to win four out of the next five games, Mets fans are pointing to past World Series victories in 1969 and 1986 as evidence that miracles can happen. They are drawing comparisons to the margin of victory that Kansas City had over the Mets — the same as it was in 1986 when Boston won the first two games. They point to online simulations that have the Mets going on a four-game tear starting tonight.

"I keep talking to people and they are bummed out, disappointed, and concerned, but there is always that switch that goes off where you say this thing is not out of our reach just yet," said Seth Bendian of Teaneck. "There is some hope, because you just never know what can happen."

After a heartbreaking 14-inning loss in Game 1 against the Kansas City Royals and a thumping in Game 2, doom-and-gloom could easily be setting in among the fan base — but there is always room for optimism, fans said, because they've seen this before.

In fact, the games are playing out exactly the same way they did when the Mets last won a World Series, in 1986.

The Red Sox beat the Mets by one run in Game 1 and by six runs in Game 2 — the same margins the Royals won by on Tuesday and Wednesday. Fans remember how that series turned out.

"I'm worried, but there is always that part of me that is full of hope," said Jerry Ghinelli of Wyckoff. "You just have to take it one game at a time. In 1986 they lost the first two. But if we win on Friday we're back in it and, who knows, a few days from now we could be tied up. You just never know."

Fans also point to Strat-O-Matic, an industry leader in sports simulation using both computer and board games, which before the series began predicted the Mets would lose the first two games and sweep the next four to capture the franchise's third World Championship.

Their simulation also predicted some of the results from Game 1: Alcides Escobar and Alex Gordon hitting home runs for the Royals, Matt Harvey allowing three runs. And from Game 2: Jacob deGrom allowing four runs and Johnny Cueto allowing only one run for the Royals.

"I'll take anything," Aaron Stein of Englewood said after reading the Strat-O-Matic prediction. "It's going to take a miracle like 1986 to win, but you know it can happen. All it takes is one win to get us going."

Clinging to past results and computer simulations may seem like grasping at straws, but fans said there are more concrete reasons the Mets can turn the series around — chief among them playing at home.

The series will shift to Citi Field for three games, where the team played to a 49-32 record during the regular season.

"Until you lose one at home, there is always a chance," said Eileen Walsh of Glen Rock. "You've got to be optimistic."

Zack Smithlin of Secaucus said he thinks the energy from the crowds at Citi Field will jolt the Mets into playing better.

"If the Mets can get the crowd into it, I think the team will feel that and it will rally them," Smithlin said. "This is the first time in a while fans have been in this position, and they'll be ready."

Chris Barton of Glen Rock also thinks coming home will ignite the Mets.

"That home crowd advantage is huge," Barton said. "They need that now more than anything."

Eric Simon, a Wyckoff resident who runs the popular Mets fan website AmazinAvenue.com, said he's seen a range of emotions from fans commenting on the website's articles – from people moping to those who are "hopelessly optimistic."

"The statistics are somewhat depressing for a team down two to nothing in the World Series, but there are things you can look to and be hopeful, like the 1986 team," he said. "It's not probable, but it's certainly possible."

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