

AL Wild Card Series: Tigers vs Astros

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Houston, Texas, USA

Minute Maid Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Pregame Press Conference



A.J. HINCH: Don't be shy.

Q. Hello, A.J.

A.J. HINCH: Hello.

Q. Can you talk about I know you've been back to the stadium, but what it's like being back for the postseason in this building just in your career?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. We'll see how the environment is in the postseason. This building will be alive. I have a lot of games in this stadium at this time of year, and I'm really proud of our team. I think our guys, half of them haven't been in this stadium before, they haven't played the Astros, given the late callups. So we spent a lot of time yesterday without the noise, getting them acclimated to the game.

It just takes me back to a lot of different memories, a lot of different games. But I quickly switch into manager mode where I've got to worry about the Tigers and not about my reaction to coming back and the family, the friends, the memories. Those are all going to stay with me forever. But I'm going to bury it for a couple days while I focus on trying to help this team win a series.

Q. Kind of in the same vein, have you thought about the reception you'll receive when you walk out there?

A.J. HINCH: No. I've been back here a couple times. And every single time, the fans have been great to me. They've always been great to me. Obviously, they lived through a lot of different things with me and saw me grow as a manager and also saw me at my lowest moment as a manager.

So I think whatever it's going to be, it's going to be. I know my friends and family will be the loudest, just being back where I live and in a place that I called home for a long

time.

Q. You briefly mentioned yesterday you want to see Joe in person when that happens. Who knows. What do you intend to say to him and what do you think it will be like?

A.J. HINCH: First off, I'm really proud of him and I congratulate him. These are hard jobs. And I think the general public -- you guys get to see a part of it, but I have a great appreciation for what he's accomplished. And I just want to say congratulations, and I will.

We're both huge competitors so we don't really want to tip our hands emotionally or maybe give each other too much love. But a lot of guys around the league -- I was texting with Snit last night. I was texting with Mendy after that crazy day yesterday and getting into the playoffs.

I've heard from a lot of managers around. I think the 30 of us that are in this position know how hard a job it is and how gratifying it is when your team accomplishes something like getting to the playoffs.

Q. A.J., you addressed a little bit yesterday about your young team experiencing this for the very first time. Similarly, you took the Astros in 2015. Do you tell the guys? Do you talk to the guy at all on what to experience, especially with Game 1 where the adrenaline is probably at an all-time high?

A.J. HINCH: A little bit. I don't think they want to hear too many old stories. This game is about players. It's about their experiences. I think, like I said yesterday, the environment we played in San Diego and Kansas City and Baltimore, three really hard road series in September, the last weekend when the anticipation of us clinching and when we did clinch in front of a sold-out crowd at Comerica, those are the environments that this is going to be like.

We know people are wondering how we're going to respond to this, but it's only outside of our clubhouse. We know how we're going to respond. We're going to show up. We're going to have a lot of fun. We're going to be



pretty young. We're going to be pretty energized. And our guys are going to be doing things for the first time with no pressure.

I know everybody wants to put pressure on us, but we are the -- we have the least pressure on us. We get to go and play with freedom and play with the same style that we've played trying to get into these playoffs, will be the same style of play that will help us get through the series.

I stumped you all with that last answer, didn't I?

Q. Obviously, you talk about the guys who couldn't make it, the roster, and Kenta, if you had a conversation with him?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, specifically, Kenta, I spoke with him after the workout yesterday and let him know that he wasn't going to be active for this series. But I wanted to connect what we asked out of him on Sunday to today. Getting us ready. His contribution for this first series came in a bunch of pitches that we left him out there for on Sunday to allow us to give rest to the bigger group of relievers that we have.

So, you know, obviously, we've got to get him ready. Every series is different. Every roster is different. You make different decisions based on opponent. But Kenta's effort on Sunday is tied to today.

Had we had to use a multitude of pitchers going into today, we just would be a little bit more depleted. Instead, we're fully rested.

A.J. HINCH: Like Jared Goff says, go Tigers.

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