

AL Wild Card Series:

Tigers vs Astros

Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Houston, Texas, USA

Minute Maid Park

Detroit Tigers

Tarik Skubal

Postgame Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: Open it for Tarik Skubal.

Q. Hey, Tarik. It's your first postseason start against the Astros, maybe the best team the last ten years in postseason. How do you feel about that? It's a hard team, against the Tigers. Maybe it's your best day of your life, probably?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah. I mean, that was a great environment. Obviously, the history with this team, seven straight ALCSs, I think it speaks for itself, right, the guys they've got over there too. A ton of talent. They handle left-handed pitching really well.

It was a good challenge. It was fun. It was a ton of fun. I enjoyed it. It's probably the most nervous I've been since my debut. That was also fun to deal with.

What a game. It was fun, glad to come out with a win.

Q. Tarik, A.J. said you were dealing with cramps in the sixth. Is that right, and what allowed you to finish the inning?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, just cramp, left hamstring. I've had it before. And for whatever reason, that's where I cramp when I kind of get dehydrated. But, yeah, I mean, I feel fine. I'm not really worried about it going forward. That at-bat probably went longer than I wanted it to. Then having to get another out. It's okay. I feel good now.

Q. Tarik, A.J. Hinch said the plan after you and the series is chaos, relying on a bunch of different guys. What gives you confidence in the group of pitchers around you to be able to pull this off as a group effort, so to speak?



TARIK SKUBAL: I love it. Those guys have been doing it for the last month and a half. Just mixing and matching, coming in any situation, any scenario. Doesn't matter. Straight from Toledo right into leverage innings. Doesn't matter who's taking the ball. They come in and take pitches, and I think it makes A.J.'s job fun when we have guys in the bullpen able to do that. I think it makes the other team's job really hard too. There's no rhythm, no flow, you mix up timing. Give guys different looks, and it's to our advantage for sure.

Q. You were able to put together two five-pitch innings. When the cramping comes, how frustrating is it that you had the momentum, and I'm sure you expected to be in more before the cramping started?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, five-pitch innings, you'll take it. The first inning was five pitches, and I think the fifth was five pitches. Yeah, I'm going to take that. I'll never complain about that.

But it's frustrating. I don't know what I can do. I hydrate enough. Nutrition is fine. Probably a product of trying to throw every pitch pretty hard. I'm a heavy sweater. I come out of the game, whatever, but we ended up winning so it doesn't matter.

Q. Tarik, how were you able to add as much break to your change-up as you did this year? How much of a separator do you think that was?

TARIK SKUBAL: That pitch has been big for me. I faced a ton of right-handed hitters. The lefties you get are going to be really good left-handed hitters. That pitch has been huge for me, getting something that goes away from them. I still have spin in my back pocket too and a fastball.

But it's been big for me, and it's a credit to the pitching staff and kind of all the technology and stuff that they got and kind of get their hands on me, and I trust those guys with a lot. I ask a lot of them too, and they always respond. So I think it's a credit to what we've got going on as an organization.

Q. That was a change for you?



TARIK SKUBAL: Slightly, slightly. Kind of a cue change. Just like mental, if that makes sense.

Q. Tarik, you said you were as nervous as you'd ever been since your debut. How were you able to smooth it out, calm down, and how quickly did you feel not nervous?

TARIK SKUBAL: That's a good question. I think once you start playing catch and start getting your routine done, it kind of goes away. But definitely, leading up to it, you're nervous. And I think being nervous is good because it means you care about what's going on. So I always think it's a good thing.

But I think my debut is -- I probably handled it the wrong way. This time, you kind of learn from those things and I'm able to go out and just worry about executing pitches. That's when I'm at my best. Breathe, execute pitches. That's all you can do when you're out there. Once I got off the mound and fired my first pitch, I think all that stuff kind of goes away.

Q. One of the few times that you got in any kind of trouble, two guys on, and you punched out Pena and Caratini. Can you take us through those at-bats, especially the way you set up the change-up on Pena and the 100-mile two-seamer on Caratini that looked like it took his heart out of the fight there?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, that's Rog being Rog back there, just having trust in the catcher. That would be a good question for him, to be honest. I shook one time, and it was a 117 back up the middle. So I stopped shaking the rest of the game. It almost killed me. So, yeah, I learned my lesson. I'm not shaking. I'm just throwing whatever he throws.

Q. Tarik, what was the key to using the Astros' aggressiveness against them? Against them, knowing how they approached you early in the season?

TARIK SKUBAL: I think you got to -- in my shoes, those guys swing early and often, put the ball in play. You have to be relentless at throwing strikes and getting ahead. When you get behind, that's when the damage starts happening.

Understanding that, but executing pitches from pitch one and being relentless and continuing getting leverage and keeping pressure on them as they're trying to put pressure on me.

That's where I was at mentally with all that.

Q. After that last strikeout you had, you showed quite a bit of emotion. Would you be able to take me to that moment, what was going through your mind when you knew your day was done and you'd had a great performance?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah. I didn't know -- there's part of it that you kind of black out and that just happens. But, yeah, it was a big pitch. And later in the game, we're still up 3-0, a team like that can come back at any moment with a couple swings, especially with the dangerous guys they've got, especially at the top of the lineup.

So, yeah, it's just emotion. It's how I play the game. I feed off of it and was able to make some good pitches, especially after a long Bregman at-bat.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Tarik. Thanks for coming in.