

# AL Wild Card Series: Tigers vs Astros

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

Houston, Texas, USA

Minute Maid Park

## Detroit Tigers

## Matt Vierling

### Pregame Press Conference



**Q. Hey, Matt.**

MATT VIERLING: Hey.

**Q. How you doing?**

MATT VIERLING: Good. How you doing?

**Q. A.J. was just talking about keep pressing the envelope. You got thrown out on a dirt ball yesterday. He made a point saying he doesn't want you to stop. Can you talk about how that mentality is already ingrained from Joey to A.J. all year? I mean, you had no intention of being cautious at this point.**

MATT VIERLING: No. We kind of strive to play that way. We've played that way for sure the last couple months of the year, and we don't want to stop that. Feel like probably a little bit late of a read by me. And then Diaz made a great play throwing me out.

I talked to A.J. about it, and I was just like -- he was like, Look, we play the way we play, and we're not going to stop that now so don't feel bad.

I was like, Yeah, I'm not going to feel bad for making a play like that or be sorry for it. We're going, and I got thrown out.

But that's what we're trying to push the envelope like that even though we're in the postseason. It's what got us here. We want to keep that pressure.

**Q. Matt, before yesterday, you were the only guy on the active roster with any playoff experience. What did you tell your teammates about how to deal with the pressure or staying even keeled in environments like this?**

MATT VIERLING: I think I saw that stat too. That was kind of crazy. No, I mean, I was told a couple years ago when I was with Philly just to enjoy the moment. The butterflies, the anxiousness, nervousness, just to embrace it. Not everybody gets to feel that.

So, yeah, anybody -- I didn't really go around trying to pump the guys up or anything like that, so to speak. But if anyone did ask me, it was just enjoy it. I think I told Tork that. Just enjoy the moment, embrace it. You're going to be nervous, have butterflies. But even to get that feeling is pretty special. Just to change your mindset to think like that helps a lot.

**Q. Matt, to follow up on the base running mentality, how does Jake going first to third yesterday change that at-bat that you had to drive him in, and what is it like -- what kind of example does it set for a catcher to go first to third on that type of ball?**

MATT VIERLING: Same thing we just talked about, right? Just to keep that pressure, keep playing the way we've been playing the past couple months. For him to go first to third on that ball, there was two outs. So it wasn't necessarily a change in mindset for me. It was still hit the ball hard, try to get a base hit and get a good pitch to hit.

But just putting pressure, I mean, also puts pressure on the catcher, him being on third base, to block every ball that he can. Just to keep that aggressive mentality in every situation. It really evidenced itself right there. That's what we're trying to do. So it was a great move by him.

**Q. There's a spectrum of emotions going into this, embracing the butterflies, but also A.J. has preached all year about staying grounded, hitting the reset button. Have you picked up any tools along the way, whether mental or physical, that helps you stay grounded in these butterfly moments?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah. I mean, I feel like the first game of the series or anything like that, I've noticed that's when you really get those feelings. As you get into the series, you kind of get into the moment. The farther you get, the more you're in it.



But, no, I mean, kind of you have those before the game. But once you get into the game and really start to get into the process of the game, it starts to go away and you start to really get into it.

As far as tools and stuff that help me, just control my breathing, try to relax and try to really think about the game and what I can do and anticipate certain things. That kind of helps me stay grounded during the game, especially during those big moments.

**Q. Matt, do you remember the meeting A.J. alluded to in his speech after you guys clinched where he asked what sort of team do you guys want to be? Was there anything else that stood out about that?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah, that was a special moment for us. To get that speech from him was really cool. We worked super hard to get there. So I'm sure he prepared that. But, I mean, yeah. We were just excited at that point. To be a playoff team is something we strived for the whole year. To actually see it come true was huge for us.

So, yeah, I think just that moment, to have him say that at that point and to actually be a playoff team was pretty special.

**Q. Just a quick follow-up on that. And then when he sprayed the champagne and said that to you guys, how did that feel? Did it take you right back?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah, it felt great. It's kind of a culmination of a year's hard work to get to that point. Yeah, we definitely celebrated accordingly, and it was a lot of fun.

So, yeah, to get a speech like that in that moment was really special for all of us.

**Q. This might be going back a little ways, but do you remember your first experience with seeing Tarik screaming after a big strikeout to end an inning, what your reaction was? And now that he's been doing it for a while, is it something the team feeds off of?**

MATT VIERLING: I think so. I think that when he -- I don't know when the first time that I remembered him doing that. I feel like it probably happened about halfway through the year, whenever it started getting kind of the grind times of the year. Dog days a little bit. And he was still going.

At that point, you find yourself in some jams. He'd really been dominant up to about that point, and then he just kept it going. When he yells and gets loud, that's him. When he

gets like that, it definitely fires us all up, and it allows us to realize how much of a competitor he is. And it just -- he's not afraid to show some emotion when he does that.

So it definitely uplifts the team. Usually when he does that, he's getting out of a big spot or he gets a big strikeout or something like that. Those are usually huge moments for us as a team. And, yeah, it absolutely gets us going. Everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Matt, thanks for coming in.

MATT VIERLING: Thanks, guys.

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