

AL Wild Card Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Monday, September 29, 2025

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Progressive Field

Detroit Tigers

Tarik Skubal

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. What do you like about pitching here? What do you not like about pitching here? What do you think of pitching in this park? What comes to mind for you?

TARIK SKUBAL: I enjoy pitching here. The environment's great. You talk about postseason baseball and the noise and kind of the chaos and then the rowdiness. I think this place kind of embodies all of that so I enjoy playing here.

Q. Three starts in a row against these guys. What are your expectations for that? It's pretty unique.

TARIK SKUBAL: I don't care. I'm just trying to win a ball game. That's really the only expectation I have is trying to win tomorrow.

Q. Are you going to look back on the last two and draw anything from those, or do you treat it as it is a brand-new game?

TARIK SKUBAL: Sure. You get a feel for hitters and what they're trying to hit. But I've said this all year, it just comes down to executing pitches. It really does. You can have great scouting report and a great plan. If you don't execute, the plan doesn't matter. You know what I mean? So we'll have a great plan and great game plan. But at the end of the day, when I'm out there, it's about competing and about executing pitches, and that's all that matters.

Q. Tarik, I really admire the fact that you went to visit David Fry in the hospital. So can you just reflect on that visit?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, yeah. First off, very thankful for Vogter to allow me to reach out and kind of understand what was going on with me mentally in that moment and allowing me to go with them and kind of -- I don't want to say impede, but I'm not on their team, you know. I know they're tight-knit group so it was special for me to be able



to go and just see him and apologize.

Obviously, I know it's part of the game, but stuff like that is scary, and that's real-life stuff. People don't think of our sport as a contact or physical sport as you might think like the NFL, but stuff like that can happen, and it can be life-changing.

Luckily, I think it's all been pretty positive for him. The only negative is he can't play right now, and that's something that I feel bad about. I obviously want him playing. But, yeah, I don't know. I think that that's just what you're supposed to do in that situation. It felt like that's what I should do, and I'm very thankful I was able to do that and see he's doing all right.

I saw a video of him on the field yesterday with the guys. That made me feel a lot better too.

Q. Is it an advantage or a detriment that the first start since that will be here against the team and that you don't have an off-season to kind of start back here?

TARIK SKUBAL: I'm not quite sure I understand the question. From that moment?

Q. Yeah. You're making a start here a week a later instead of maybe next season coming back here and it being the first start nine months later, being back in the same spot.

TARIK SKUBAL: That kind of puts me in a bad spot, knowing how to answer that. Yeah, I don't really know how to answer that question. I'm sorry.

Q. What did you talk about in the truck with Vogt? Was it an awkward truck ride over to the hospital? What are you talking about?

TARIK SKUBAL: First off, he's awesome. I have a ton of respect for him across the way. I like the way he manages the game. Feels like he doesn't take anything too serious. When their catchers don't catch the ball, he gives them the no-catch sign. I've watched it for the last two years, and it's awesome. It doesn't matter the situation. They could



be down 10, and he still does it. I'm, like, that's pretty cool.

Just kind of talked through the whole situation. And he's, like, you shouldn't feel bad at all. You can't help but feel a little responsible for the situation. He's, like, I feel just as bad because I'm the one that put on the sign, and we talked through that way too.

And we just kind of talked baseball, life, his kids, his family and kind of what's going on there, my kids, my family. Just checking in on kind of the human element of the game that goes overlooked a lot of the time when you're out there competing.

He's a really, really good dude. We've had some pretty special conversations. Even after the last playoffs, Game 2, I saw him when I was walking out to the bus, and he said some really, really cool things that you don't expect to be said to you, especially after your team loses in a game like that and we're going home to our home field.

So, yeah, I've got a lot of respect for him.

Q. It seems highly unusual to have that sort of relationship or respect for an opposing manager you've never played for before. Am I making too much of that, or is it just a unique situation all the way around?

TARIK SKUBAL: I feel like I know him. We see him so much, I feel like I know him. I've never played for him, but I feel like I know him. Word gets around throughout the league about everybody. I think it's pretty unanimous that everybody's got a lot of respect for him. That's why this team consistently wins.

Q. What is the general vibe around the team right now, compared to a year from now at the same time, going into the playoffs. Just by the way in which you got there, does it feel any different, or is the same vibe there that wasn't there a year ago?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, I don't think it -- I mean, we're in the playoffs. That's why you play the game. That's why you prepare. That's why you go to work for the last seven months. It doesn't matter how we got in. We're in. I think that's the vibe. It was the same vibe we had last year. Obviously, it's kind of like our seasons were flipped, first half, second half, but it doesn't matter now.

All that matters is tomorrow's game and this series and everybody's -- besides the teams that aren't playing in this wildcard round, everybody's in the same boat. Doesn't matter how you get there. You have to go out there and compete and win a baseball game.

Q. What's it like facing this Cleveland lineup because it seems like especially the bottom of the order has gotten hot in September.

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, I think they're a pretty tough group. They never quit. They never quit. They've got however many guys, 13 or 14 offensively that are going to be on this roster, and they never quit. I think that makes the game really fun. I think we kind of have the same group too. It should be a pretty cool series.

Q. Tarik, what have you seen from Dillon Dingler over the past year? How has your relationship grown with him, him catching most of your starts after Jake caught every single one of your starts last year?

TARIK SKUBAL: He's been great. He's been great. Outstanding behind the plate. Obviously, with the bat in his hand, he's been really good this year. He can do a lot of things. He can throw. He can back pick. He can get you out of tough situations when you're on the mound. He calls a great game. He's right there with you, battling with you every single pitch. As far as a pitcher, that's all you can really ask for behind the plate.

Q. (No microphone) grow into this role so young in his career?

TARIK SKUBAL: I think a little bit of that is confidence in himself. I think he's kind of always had that. I always say, you know, you need a little bit of success at this level to kind of help bring that confidence out of yourself, and he had that and he sustained it, which is impressive.

His season, I feel like, has been as steady as anybody on our team. I think that speaks to the guy he is, the teammate that he is, and obviously the baseball player.

Q. Tarik, your change-up, has that been the pitch that has always been your most comfortable secondary offering? How have you seen that pitch perform this year in particular?

TARIK SKUBAL: I think it's been pretty good. I think it's been pretty good. I'm pretty confident in that pitch. I face a lot of right-handed bats so I need something that goes to the left.

When I came up, it kind of only had the ball that could go to the right so I needed -- and then once you start getting platooned like I was, you need something that goes to the left. That's just a pitch that's been kind of an equalizer for me. When guys are geared up to hit fastballs and sliders, they tend to get pull happy. It's hard to pull a change-up



when it's going the wrong way, the other way. It's been a good pitch for me.

Q. Tarik, there's obviously been a lot made about it's Cleveland, it's Detroit. You've played each other a bunch, the playoff series last year. Taking that out of it, your postseason experience in general, not asking you to give away state secrets, but do you feel like you're learning from your previous postseason experience, where this can be a different go-round for you?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah. I think every opportunity, I don't care if it's regular season or postseason, I think every start is an opportunity to learn, good or bad, work on it and get better. And the game is still the same game in the postseason. You've still got to throw strikes, you've still got to get ahead of guys, and you have to get to leverage and put guys away.

The game stays the same. There's a ton to learn. Obviously, the atmospheres are a little bit different. But this is why you play. It's for these moments. This is really why you play. You prepare, and the regular season is fun, and there's Friday night crowds. But these crowds are different, and this is why you play the game. This is why you work hard. This is why I work hard is to get out there and be in these situations to even be able to be in the postseason.

I think last year something that resonated with me a ton was A.J. was like once you make one, you never want to miss another one. That's something that I'm like, yeah, that's very true. I'd never experienced postseason baseball before last year, and I don't ever want to miss it again.

Q. What did you guys see out of A.J. once the losses started piling up and the noise around you got a little bit louder?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah, I think the noise gets loud outside. The noise isn't very loud inside. We were the same group, obviously. We just weren't winning games, and I haven't really thought about why or anything like that. I'm trying to prepare for tomorrow's game and this series.

But, yeah, we just weren't winning, and I don't really know what to put the finger on that or what to blame or whatever. Nor should anyone get blamed, to be honest. But we just weren't winning. I mean, it's part of the game.

I think he's been the same guy always, and that's something I've always respected about him. Doesn't matter the situation. He's always the same guy.

Q. Building off that, how hard is it to actually ignore outside noise? We live in a world where people are constantly on social media, and everybody's got an opinion. How hard is it to block all that out?

TARIK SKUBAL: I think with social media, everyone -- I mean, first off, everyone's entitled to their own opinion, whatever those are. But, yeah, I guess social media is a blessing and a curse. You see a lot of things but also get to connect with a lot of people you probably wouldn't be able to through those ways.

At the end of the day, I don't really care what anyone else says. I care about what my teammates say. I care about what my coaching staff says. I care about what my trainers say. That's all that matters. Everyone that wears the Old English D, that's the opinions I value. I don't really value any other opinion about what anyone wants to write about.

Q. You mentioned Vogt doing a good job balancing the competitive edge and not taking it too seriously. It seems you do that during your starts in between innings with Chris Fetter. It seems like you're pretty loose. Has that always been the case for you?

TARIK SKUBAL: No.

Q. So can you talk about when you felt comfortable joking after an inning, whether it went well or not well?

TARIK SKUBAL: Yeah. I think early in my career, I took everything way too seriously, and I was the headphone on guy and didn't talk to anyone on my start day because I thought that's what you were supposed to do. Not that that's wrong. Everyone's unique, especially starters. It just wasn't me. It wasn't me.

When I got hurt in '22, I didn't really know if I was enjoying the game as much as I should be. I'm living my dream, right, and I'm not enjoying it as much as I should be. So I don't want people to think that I'm not locked in or I'm not out there competing, because I very much am. I'm a very high competitor, and I've always been that way. I think the way I was raised with my family, I've always been that way.

I just probably wasn't enjoying the game as much as I should, and that's kind of what switched when I came back. It kind of takes big life moments, surgeries, which are unfortunate. But you can learn a lot from them and learn about yourself, and I just learned that I need to enjoy the game of baseball and go play and be who I am and go out there and compete. This game is beautiful so you need to enjoy it, whether it's going your way or whether it's not.

Q. A.J. said when your kids get older, you'll still beat them.

TARIK SKUBAL: He just told me that, which is true. Which is true, yeah. I want to get my boys in golf, and that's a selfish reason because I want to play golf with them, but I will never let them beat me until they can beat me. I don't care what teams they want to play for. Doesn't matter.

But, yeah, I don't think my dad let me beat him in anything and my older brothers damn sure didn't. So, yeah, I agree with him. I don't know if that means I'm a bad dad or not, but whatever.

Thank you.

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