

# AL Wild Card Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Monday, September 29, 2025

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Progressive Field

**Cleveland Guardians**

**Stephen Vogt**

Pregame Press Conference



**Q. How did you guys come to the decision to go with Gavin in Game 1, and what can you say about his work this season?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Gavin has been incredible. Obviously we've talked about him all year long, just the strides that he's made, the development that he's come along with. From the start of the year to now, he's just been incredible; incredibly fun to watch.

It's a lot of factors. Obviously the way Gavin has been pitching, but also it keeps him in turn and doesn't push or alter his routine by much.

**Q. With the taxi squad, DeLauter and Nuñez, what are the considerations for each of those guys as you figure out your roster?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, we're talking through what we're going to do. We're still trying to figure out exactly what we want the roster to look like. There's a case to be made for both of them to be active, so they're going to be here working out with us today, and we're going to finalize the roster.

**Q. Do you view it as a pro or a con to face a team you're so familiar with that you've seen six times in the past 10 or so days?**

STEPHEN VOGT: I don't know if it's a pro or a con, just it is. Of course it happened this way. We know them well, they know us well. It's three straight weeks of an early-week series, and it's going to be fun. It's always fun when we play Detroit, and we're looking forward to it.

**Q. We were talking to AJ earlier and he mentioned that he urged you to get into the coaching, managing business. What's your side of that story?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, AJ along with a number of other coaches and managers as I was playing against them would say, hey, you need to stay in the game after you're done. You should keep going. We need more players, we need more people in the game that played it.

And so AJ's was one of those that encouraged me to stay. Actually interviewed with AJ right when I finished playing for a position on his staff.

But AJ has always been great to me. It's a very friendly rivalry. We have a very high level of respect for each other. It's going to be fun.

**Q. Are you surprised there's not any bad blood between the two teams as much as you guys play each other and as close as the games have been?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, I think it's a mutual respect. We both play clean baseball. We both play solid. We have fun. We have fun when we play each other.

I think just because you're a rivalry doesn't mean it has to be ugly, it has to be angry. We both want to win. We both play hard.

But there's such a high level of respect between the teams, and that includes the players. The players have a high level of respect for each other.

They're trying just as hard as anybody. They want to win just as bad as anybody. It doesn't have to get angry and ugly.

**Q. I know you guys have had your celebration and where your focus is now, but as a manager for your guys, do you want them to lean in? Do you embrace them leaning into really the magic that the season has turned into? Can that help you guys?**

STEPHEN VOGT: I'm just so proud of them. I think anything and everything happened to them throughout this year. They've been punched and kicked and beaten down, and they've just gotten closer. So you can call it magic. You can call it whatever we want. If anybody figures it out,



let me know.

But I just couldn't be more proud of them, and I think they know what they can accomplish. However it happened, the route that it got here, they won the division. These guys went out and won the division, and they're proud of that, and that's going to carry us forward.

**Q. You guys determine a Game 2 or 3 starter?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, Tanner Bibee will start Game 2, and Slade Cecconi will start Game 3.

Again, it kind of keeps them in order and gives us the opportunity to keep them on as regular a schedule as possible, and all three of them have pitched very, very well.

**Q. Did you think the mutual respect was also built through last year's Division Series and how close all the games and competitive that was?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, I think I can only speak to the last two years, but these teams are very, very similar. We're built similarly. We match up well. We have both lefties, righties in bullpens and very good starting pitching. It's an equally matched two teams.

I think, like I said, the coaching staff, we all get along. The players, they all get along. We just want to go out and win.

**Q. You were new at this last year, so as you sit here a year later at this point in the calendar, how are you different?**

STEPHEN VOGT: A little more gray in my beard. It's just fun. You can't take any of these opportunities lightly or for granted. It is so difficult to get into the postseason.

I think now having done it once, we kind of know what to expect. You kind of know how fast it goes. You know that anything can happen at any moment and just be prepared for it, trust our preparation and go out and have fun.

**Q. Building on that, when you reflect on last year, how prepared did you feel, reflecting on it, compared to how prepared you felt in the moment?**

STEPHEN VOGT: I felt super prepared. I have great people that I work with that helped me get out in front of some things that maybe would catch other people off guard. I'm constantly talking with Carl and Al by during the game. I'm constantly talking with Chris, Mike and Matt and Sky and all of our analysts before the game to think of anything and everything that could happen.

But at the end of the day you just have to watch the game and keep your thoughts slow. I felt super prepared because of the people that are around me helping me learn as fast as I did last year, and now having gone through one postseason chase, I'm really looking forward to watching our guys compete again for a World Series.

**Q. To realize that Logan just threw yesterday and you kind of have your Game 1, 2, and 3 plan, is there any concept of where maybe someone who's been a starter could come out of the bullpen for you in a series like this?**

STEPHEN VOGT: We're working through all of our different options right now, yeah, with the roster, and there's nothing that's off the stable.

**Q. What made you comfortable offering Tarik Skubal a ride to see David Fry the other night?**

STEPHEN VOGT: He was asking how he could get over to see him and I was just about to leave and walk out to my car. I did what any other human being would do and that's offer someone a ride where they need to go.

**Q. Following up on that, we talked to Tarik earlier. Is that an awkward conversation in the truck? What do you guys talk about?**

STEPHEN VOGT: We didn't talk a whole lot about baseball. We kind of talked about life and I kind of asked him about himself and he asked me about me. It was just two men driving to go do the same thing. It was just small talk.

He's an awesome person. It was really cool to get to know the person that he is. Yeah, nothing crazy or groundbreaking. It was just conversation.

**Q. As far as the series, obviously you relied on the bullpen fairly heavily last year. I know it depends on how the game plays out, but do you anticipate having a short leash on starters and relying on the bullpen like last year?**

STEPHEN VOGT: We've got to watch the game. Again, last year was what it was. Still the intention is for the starters to pitch as long as they can. That's the intention of every single game that we ever play. I love the way our starters have been throwing and we have a really good bullpen. I feel very confident in this group going into tomorrow.

**Q. Do you think the shadows will come into play tomorrow later in the game?**



STEPHEN VOGT: Oh, yeah. Yeah. For both teams. These day games or afternoon games are always tough. It's always tough, and it's always going to be a factor.

But every team does it all year long, and we've got to find a way.

**Q. When you talk about playoff series going quick, but with a wildcard series is it almost hyper fast because it's a best of three.**

STEPHEN VOGT: Our goal every single series throughout the regular season is to win the series. We've just got to win the series.

**Q. During this whole run, the comeback and after winning the division yesterday, has anybody reached out to you? Have you had any reactions with friends that have given you congratulations?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, I've gotten a number of texts over the last couple days from a lot of people in my life that have supported me and from afar or even next to me.

It's felt so nice to hear from people, and how many people were watching this team do what they did. That's one of the things I'm most proud of these guys is they gave us such an entertaining summer, good and bad indifferent, in all directions. They earned every right to celebrate that, and they went out and got it. It was really fun.

**Q. Any one of those interactions stand out particularly?**

STEPHEN VOGT: A lot of them. So many people have helped me get here. So many people have helped me learn and supported me along the way. To pick one or two wouldn't be fair.

**Q. I think we've asked a lot about Carl Willis, but Brad Goldberg, can you talk about his body of work and the impact he's made on this team?**

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, our entire coaching staff has been elite this year. Brad particularly, Ohio guy, Cleveland sports fan growing up, getting to be one of the pitching coaches for the Guardians is really cool for him and his family.

What he has done with our game planning, he runs the game planning. He's talking with Bo and Hedgey and the pitchers in between every inning. He's doing deep dives on these opposing hitters, and he has just done a masterful job of helping our pitchers utilize our strengths against other teams.

**Q. You keep emphasizing fun this time of the year. How do you get players to embrace that as opposed to getting sort of wrapped up in the pressure and the intensity of what the Playoffs is and get them to see it as fun?**

STEPHEN VOGT: A lot of it starts with our preparation. Our players are prepared. Nothing catches them off guard. But we're playing baseball. Yeah, it's important, absolutely. It means a lot. And we take it very, very seriously. But for four hours a day, these guys get to go be 12 year old kids and play baseball, and that's what we talk about. We emphasize that all the time. This is a game; go have fun.

You play at your best when you're relaxed and having fun anyway. When you're tight and tense, it doesn't help anything. You move slower when you're tense, and you have to move fast in this game.

We try our best because everybody feels it. We all know what's at stake. That's why it's fun. You go embrace that and just go play baseball like you have your whole life.

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