

AL Wild Card Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Progressive Field

Cleveland Guardians

Slade Cecconi

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Slade, what were your thoughts on José Ramírez, what he means to the clubhouse and how cool is it to see him get a field in his honor in the city?

SLADE CECCONI: Yeah, that guy should have a lot in his honor in this city. He's the heart and soul of the city. He's probably the most famous person in Cleveland since LeBron, right? He's incredible. He can make anything happen on the field. He's a true five-tool player and he's the heart and soul of this team.

Q. Slade, when you find out you're going game 3, you kind of know it's a win-or-go-home situation. How do you mentally prepare for that, knowing that if you have to get in, it's one of those types of games?

SLADE CECCONI: It's the beauty of treating every game like a playoff game, you don't have to do anything different when a playoff game shows up. I treat every game with 100 percent focus, intensity, preparation. I've given everything I've had every time I've taken the mound. That's not going to change tomorrow.

Q. Have you ever pitched in an elimination game in any level before?

SLADE CECCONI: In college, yeah. I threw regional finals against Mississippi State when I was at Miami. Started that game on one day rest. That was fun.

Q. Slade, what are your emotions about a first MLB playoff start? I know you have a couple games on your résumé in the playoffs. For it to be the first start, how are you processing it?

SLADE CECCONI: The same way I process any game. Every routine I've done throughout the year is going to stay the same. Talk to Kluber a little bit. He has playoff experience, obviously. And when a guy like that tells you



not to change anything, you probably shouldn't change anything.

Q. Slade, I think it was July 4th, it was a game against the Tigers. You pitched that game. It was the eighth loss in a row. I distinctly remember after that game, you saying that we're going to look back at this stretch in September and say we're here and this has made us stronger. So where did that come from? How did you see this happening the way it did?

SLADE CECCONI: It came from watching how everyone in the clubhouse showed up after each one of those losses. Nobody dragged an at-bat to the next day. Nobody dragged a bat out into the next one. Every day, we showed up, ready to work, ready to win, no matter what happened the day before. Whether we smoked a team or got smoked. Whether it was the eighth, ninth, tenth in a row we lost, we showed up with energy, with intensity, with focus. And that process that we committed to is what got us here. Not anything else.

Q. Just going back to those conversations with Kluber, how involved did you get or do you get with that? Why is his opinion or his advice so valuable to you?

SLADE CECCONI: He was really frickin' good at what he did. That's why it's so valuable. That guy was incredible. And to have a mind like that around to bounce ideas and questions off of is incredible. A lot of times, it's nothing profound. It's just reassuring what you believe to be true and him with as much experience as he's having say yeah, what you've done to get here is what's going to get you through tomorrow or the next game or whatever.

Having that reassurance from a guy like that and being able to pick his brain on other stuff all the time. A baseball mind like that is something you should take advantage of whenever you can.

Q. Gavin mentioned getting that game 1 start. He was star struck to know he was going to be in that position. When you find out they're trusting you to be a win-or-go-home pitcher, how do you feel about



something like that?

SLADE CECCONI: No different. It's just a game.

Q. Slade, how have you changed since you've come to this organization as a pitcher?

SLADE CECCONI: There's nothing that's the same. I mean, everything, to be honest with you, is different. My delivery has become much more consistent and I move in ways that complement my movement patterns and my ranges of motion and my strength patterns.

I've developed two new pitches. I've sharpened up pretty much every other pitch that I have. We've tweaked my usages to righties and lefties throughout the years to complement what the game is telling me. I'm in a better mental state. I've never been able to process the game the way I process it now. All these things come together to create the product that's on the field right now.

Q. Slade, the fact that you have the experience of appearing in a couple NLCS games -- obviously this is a different spot and situation -- but does that give you any more confidence about your readiness for the big moment?

SLADE CECCONI: To be honest, not really. I take my confidence from the work that I do and the preparation that I put in every day. And past experiences are great to look back on and draw some confidence from, but what I did two years ago in a game that we were losing by six runs in the 8th is not going to have any effect on what I do tomorrow.

What I do tomorrow is going to be determined by all the work that I've put in through the months and months and days and today and yesterday and tomorrow. All the process work that I've done, that's what I'm drawing confidence from more than anything else.

Q. When you answered Paul's question about how you're a different pitcher, is that kind of the pitching staff, or does that --

SLADE CECCONI: Everyone. I went into the off-season with ideas of what I wanted to work on. The nice thing about failing as much as I did last year is the game tells you a lot of different places where you can grow and get better. If you don't learn from failure, then what are you doing?

So we took all the areas I failed last year and we dissected them and figured out where can I get better? How can I be better here? How can I be better here? We kind of

merged that into a plan.

The nice thing about our staff is everybody has their specialty. It's not just one person I've leaned on. I've leaned on the analytics department. I've leaned on Joe Torres for his biomechanical assessment. I've leaned on BG for work he does in the scouting reports. I've leaned on Carl because he's watched baseball from a bird's eye view for 40 years.

There's so many places to lean on in this organization.

Q. When you were talking earlier about when you guys were behind in the standings, coming to the ballpark with the energy and determination like, obviously, the clubhouse there's a lot of credit for it. What would you say Stephen Vogt's role in helping you guys keep it going the way you did? What would you say his role was?

SLADE CECCONI: He's an incredible leader. It's hard to put it into words because it's more actions and timing of when he does things. He knows how to treat you like a person, rather than just a commodity or a shortstop or a pitcher. He treats you like a human being.

And that alone goes so far when you're showing up every day and you're taking right hooks off the chin and you're down and you need help getting back up. He knows when to have those conversations with you, with the team, with everybody. The timing of what he does and when he does it as a leader is incredible.

Q. Slade, I know you said you don't want to change too much. You've seen the Tigers with a lot of games against them recently. Are there tweaks or things you hold in your back pocket you might try to surprise them with?

SLADE CECCONI: No. To be honest with you, no. I'm going to trust whatever report that the coaches and the catchers give me. I have my own ideas of watching my at-bats against these guys.

We're going to come up with a plan, and I'm going to go execute it. And that's how it's going to go. It's going to be the same process we've stuck to all year. We've played them a lot. I've pitched against them twice. They know me. I know them. Let's see who's better tomorrow. They got a great lineup. I trust myself. I trust this staff. It's going to be fun. It's going to be a great game.

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