

AL Wild Card Series: Royals vs Orioles

Tuesday, October 1, 2024
Baltimore, Maryland, USA
Camden Yards

Baltimore Orioles

Ryan O'Hearn

Pregame Press Conference

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Q. Ryan, as much as I know you guys want to repeat as division champs, do you see any advantage or telling yourself to not have that four-day break or whatever and just have the one workout day and then jump right back in it?

RYAN O'HEARN: Yeah, I think four days off is kind of a long time, especially after you played pretty much every day. So you know, to be able to have one day yesterday, came in, got a little bit of work and I think everybody is feeling sharp and ready to go. Yeah, we'll take that as an advantage.

Q. How important do you think that last week going 5-1 was to the club?

RYAN O'HEARN: Yeah, definitely. I think that was definitely important. You know, just to have that momentum going into the postseason, and I think guys are swinging the bat well, and if you can get as many guys in the left-handed pitcher as hot as possible going into the postseason, I think that's huge for us.

Q. What emotions if any, are there for you going against your former team here in the first round?

RYAN O'HEARN: Yeah, there's no -- obviously you want to win every playoff game and every game you play.

There's really no, like, revenge in my mind. You know, even if there was, I wouldn't tell you guys (laughter).

No, they are a great team, and I've had a really good season, and I've got a lot of respect for the people over there. I have nothing but good things to say about them. But at the same time, you know, we want to win obviously. We want to win a World Series, and it's been a long year,



ups and downs, and you know, I think this team is primed and ready to make a playoff run. We're not happy to be here. We are but we are not. We want to do more. And after last year, I think it's a good reminder of how quickly this can be over. So guys are definitely motivated, ready to get after it.

Q. Kansas City is obviously starting a Cy Young contender today and a Cy Young contender tomorrow. What specific difficulties do you think those guys pose? Does it help you guys at all that you did hit Lugo well when you faced him back in April?

RYAN O'HEARN: We haven't played the Royals in so long. I think every team looks a little bit different at the end of the season than maybe they did in April. But yeah, they have great pitching. We have good pitching. We have great pitching too, sorry.

I think this time of year, it doesn't matter who you're playing. You're going to be facing good pitching and good teams and good left-handed pitchers, and so yeah, you know, we're not expecting it to be -- we're expecting it to be a challenge with both those guys, and you know, it's the playoffs. Every team is good. Every pitcher is good. You've got to find a way to scratch runs.

Q. Last year, you know how quickly it can all end, and you just finished a long season, but how long does last year's playoff run stay in your mind or is it still fresh?

RYAN O'HEARN: I wouldn't say it's fresh. I would say I'm aware of it. Guys in the clubhouse are definitely aware of it.

It just seemed so abrupt. I think for me, it's motivation. Like I don't want to experience that again. We have such a good group of guys in there. A lot of ups and downs, especially in the second half. We want to keep playing. You know, we want to do something special together.

So I wouldn't say it's fresh but there's definitely probably, you know, guys are aware of it in the back of their heads, and you know, so we're not just happy to be in the Wild



Card. We want to keep going. We want to win.

Q. How much did you enjoy being teammates with Corbin Burnes this year and how much confidence is there that you're going to win every time he takes the mound?

RYAN O'HEARN: I've absolutely enjoyed being around Burnesy. The guy is an unbelievable competitor. Obviously you watch him pitch and there's a reason why he's an ace and a bona fide guy in this league.

You know, every time he's on the mound, I definitely have confidence that we're going to get a win.

Q. You've been very honest about your own struggles the last couple months. But was there ever a time during that period with the team struggling that you ever had a doubt that you and the team would be here right now?

RYAN O'HEARN: No. Not at all. I think we kind of understood that it's a long season, and you go through ups and downs. Probably more downs than we wanted in the second half. But you know, that's how it goes. I think you can't really dwell on the negative things. When you play so many things, you have to look forward to the next day. The reality is, any day you can snap out of the funk.

You know, I think even at maybe our lowest point when we lost a few games in a row, and guys were getting hurt and all that was going on, I don't think we ever lost faith that we were going to make the playoffs. I think I just think we have too many talented guys and too much depth and guys that really wanted to compete and win together in that clubhouse to not make the playoffs.

Yeah, definitely some tough stretches but I don't think our confidence ever really wavered down the stretch as far as making the playoffs.

Q. Just a question about Jordan Westburg. You've seen him since his debut and he's taken a huge step forward this year, being an All-Star. What have you seen about his leadership role in the clubhouse changing in the last year and a half and what ways has he grown sort of personality-wise to help this team?

RYAN O'HEARN: Yeah, he's rock solid. In the clubhouse, on the field, doesn't matter. He's always had that quiet confidence demeanor to him; a guy that he's opened up a little bit. He's become a little bit more of a vocal leader this year, I would say. But he still just goes about his business and is a leader by his actions.

You know, he shows up every day. Doesn't matter. You know, we play a lot of games and it seems like he's the same guy every day. Getting Westy back has been a massive boost for us and I can't say enough about Jordan Westburg.

Q. Obviously Brandon Hyde has been through losing seasons before. So when the second half hit and there was a little bit more losing than previously last year and earlier in the year how did he show himself as a leader?

RYAN O'HEARN: Yeah, for sure. He's very steady. Just we had a few meetings every now and then that was like, hey, guys, we're not cutting it as a group. You know, we're better than the way we're playing right now.

You know, I think he said all the right things. He came in and talked to us and had words of wisdom whenever things seemed bleak in the clubhouse and we were going through a losing stretch. Hydey is a great leader, great manager and everybody in that clubhouse wants to go out and play hard for him.

Q. Is there anything in particular that Hyde said in those meetings that kind of sparked more energy or helped you guys turn it around?

RYAN O'HEARN: I don't know if there is like one specific thing. I think it was more of like a, hey, let's be honest with ourselves with how we're playing and where we're at.

And it had become more than just like a bad week stretch or something. It was kind of -- felt like it was growing into something more and that's when he kind of stepped in and was like, hey, we need to do some self-he waiting, and I don't think at this level yelling at a group of guys is really going to do anything.

But just the way he kind of said like let's be honest with our receives and let's talk about what's going on and how we can fix this, you know, was huge. I mean, he had a great timing with it, and it's not like that happened and then we rattled often in a row but definitely the morale and the attitude in the clubhouse I think shifted in the long term and eventually ended up benefitting us down the stretch.

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