

# AL Wild Card Series: Royals vs Orioles

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

## Kansas City Royals Vinnie Pasquantino Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Vinnie, what does it mean to be back and were you kind of always targeting this series once you guys got there to return?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: First part of your question, it feels awesome. We put in a lot of work for this. You know, it's kind of a special personal day just because we finally got the green light.

I had my eyes set on a little bit earlier than this but despite all arguing, that was not realistic.

So we did everything we could, and we're here now, and the rehab is not over but the games can start.

So we're excited about it.

**Q. When do you first kind of start to get back to hitting and really attack this and when did it go off in your mind that, you know what, this is where I want to be right now?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: As far as like actual hitting, I had been doing one-handed swings probably, I don't know, as soon as I got my cast off just to keep my body rotating. It was always -- I said it when we spoke in Kansas City, I did not believe my season was over, so we treated it as such.

I got in the cage, I would run, still playing catch, not physically catching the ball but throwing the ball, like a quarterback where they couldn't throw it back to me but I could throw it. Doing one-handed stuff with my top hand, which is kind of a new thing for me because I don't normally do a lot of one-handed stuff anyway. So it was a new challenge to go and do, which was sort of fun, other than not being able to play.

And then I think we got into two-hand swinging, what day is it, Tuesday, probably about, I don't know, eight, ten days



ago, and then every day it was just dependent on how I was feeling and every day that I felt good, we were able to progress it a little bit more with the doctor and the surgeon's clearance to keep pushing.

And then we got on the field in D.C. last week, which I believe you guys were there for. Hit off the machine on the field and did some lives this weekend, and we were hoping to do some yesterday. That wasn't able to happen. Which speaking of -- is it ever sunny here? I grew up close to here. I don't think I've seen the sun in Baltimore. (Laughter).

Yeah, just really happy about it.

**Q. When you take swings now, are there differences in your swing because of how the thumb is healing or continuing to rehab? I saw some tape differences on there the other day.**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, there are some different things that we are doing. That will probably be some stuff I'll talk about after the season, not that -- there's no competitive for what it is. But it's just something I don't really want to talk about.

We are using a different bat. I'm using a light bat for the first time in my career. I've always swung a black bat or dark barrel bat. So I'm going to have to get used to that, which is way weirder than it seems like it should be.

But seeing a lighter bat go through the zone, I hope check swings they are not more says give with because you can see the whole bat a little bit more. Yeah, there are some differences.

But you know, the swing is the swing, right. Like the swing is the science piece of it. Like I can see data on the swing. But the part that I'm really looking forward to is the art aspect of it, the hitting. The hitting is the art to me, and the swinging is the science. We've passed the science test now. I have to see if I can past the art test so to speak.

**Q. By "lighter," you mean in terms of color, not weight?**



VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, there's differences color-wise. The weight's the same.

**Q. So what was it like throughout the process, trying to strike a balance between accelerating the recovery but not overdoing it at the same time?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I think there was just a lot of risk/reward talk of what happens if it goes bad because that's just as important as what happens if it goes perfect.

So we weigh, okay, here are the pros; here are the cons; here is what it could look like. I think the most important step is that the bone was healing. We are getting scans. I think the biggest thing I had done, and I guess I'm allowed to talk about my own medical stuff, right?

**Q. Yes.**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Thank you. I got a scan last week, and it showed what we wanted it to show. And yeah, we're here now. And we got a scan done Friday, as well. It showed what we wanted it to show, same thing. We know the risks, though, because there are risks to it.

But in my mind, there's some rewards, too. So we're just really excited about it, and I couldn't be more thankful for our medical team all the way around, Jeff Blum, who is our physical therapist. He pushed me hard and I pushed him just as hard right back. Yeah. Yeah.

**Q. The team hit some rough spots after your injury and like you said, you wanted to be back earlier, and any fan would say, "When is Vinnie back?" What was it like balancing the pressure, wanting to be back on the field and making sure you were good in the immediate and long term?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I think -- it was tough. Got out of the lineup. And was it a direct correlation to us having a little bit of a skid? Absolutely not. A skid is a skid. You run through those during the season and we have so many really good ballplayers in the clubhouse and things just happened, and it was just a weird time for that to happen.

I was just so much looking forward to seeing the guys get into the playoffs. There was always that want of me to get back but more importantly I wanted to see Kansas City Royals get into the playoffs.

So me coming back is just kind of a bonus for me personally, because it was more important for me to see this thing through and see this team -- the last thing we want is to have such a great start and finish without making

it. To get here now, and the cherry on top is that I get to play.

So it's super cool and it's just really exciting to be here.

**Q. More on the excitement of being here, can you take us through your emotional journey of when your thumb got injured until today knowing that you're going to be in the lineup?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, my goal going in was to be available for 162. I pretty much told me who asked me, you ask me what my goal was play 162 or be available for 162. Once again, that did not happen.

So it was tough. Because like I knew it was broke right when it happened. I took myself off the field. Walked up to the training room and you know, we got it scanned in Houston. That was kind of it.

So it was a rough few days, the first few days. But my wife, she's been through it all with me from school to, you know, lower level of professional baseball to the highest level of professional baseball, so she's seen it all. She was awesome.

Got the surgery. Once I had the surgery, I was had in so much pain that I was like, this is definitely not going to happen.

As the days went, it's like, I'm getting better. And they took it off and I saw the scar, and I was like absolutely not. This is definitely not going to happen. Looked like there was a worm on my hand. It was disgusting.

But then when we got the stitches out, it was like, Oh, my God, it looks like a hand again, maybe we do have a shot. And as we've been progressing, things have been going well, and well enough that the team, you know, we decided that it was time.

So the emotions are pretty good today.

**Q. When did you exactly get the news that you were going to be in the lineup for today's game, and also, who is the first person, player, teammate, to approach you when you got the news that you're coming back or have you even seen your teammates since the news broke?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: I guess I didn't know for sure until this morning. That was up to me at that point. It was, "Does your hand feel good?" I was supposed to talk to him at 9:00 this morning. I think sent a text at 6:55. (Laughter).

But he was awake. He was awake. It's okay.

So you know, I knew if I woke up this morning feeling good that we would be a good. I found out I would be in the lineup yesterday, and I kind of had, I thought, I had a really good shot to be on the roster probably after I hit in D.C. on the field. That's when I was kind of like, okay, this is real.

After the live BP, I think my first two at-bats, I don't think I touched a ball and I was like, oh, maybe not. And then I hit one on the barrel. It was like, okay, I still got something.

So yeah, so I guess last week is when I had the first idea that it would happen.

**Q. Have you talked to your teammates? Excitement in the clubhouse?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Yeah, seems to be. But it's a tough time to come talk to me here. Everybody is a little bit busy. So we've all got our jobs to do and mine is just, you know, mine is just to go have good at-bats. Guys are excited about that. I'm excited about that.

As far as anybody coming up to me, hey, congrats, whatever, that hasn't really happened because guys are so locked in on what we're doing.

**Q. Just overall, getting to this point as a team, what does it mean after the season you guys had last year, the good start that you mentioned earlier that you guys had, just to finally get to October for the first time since 2015?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: It's really special. I wore this just for fun because it's fun (tugging on postseason sweatshirt). I used to watch this on TV all the time, see all the sweatshirts. I got one now. It's pretty cool.

This is why we play the game. 162 is great. All the stats you put up are great, all the wins, losses, whatever. This is where the real season starts. And we have a shot. We're one of 12 teams that have a shot, and not every team can say that. We're one of them.

So it's really exciting. I think the easy thing to say would be, nobody expected us to be here. I don't care what anybody thought. We expected ourselves to be here, and we're here.

So we have a really good opportunity from us and we're really excited to, you know, see what happens.

**Q. Did you come to a lot of games here as a kid? I know you group up about an hour and a half away, but**

**is Camden Yards something that you did a lot?**

VINNIE PASQUANTINO: Camden Yards is probably the most places I watched a big league game at. Most of the time were just going to Richmond v. Braves games or Flying Squirrels games in Richmond. I've probably been here about 10, 15 times. It was the -- yeah, so it's probably the most, you know, kind of special stadium for me just because I've been here the most as a fan.

The left field wall still blows my mind, even though I've played here a few times, just because I've always seen it. Like I've sat where there is no longer seating. So that's still funny to see. Like I was sitting right there and now it's the field.

Yeah, it's super cool. I think after we found out we were coming to Baltimore, my phone blue up from people back home. And no, I don't have any extra tickets (laughter).

Yeah, it's pretty special for me.

THE MODERATOR: It's great to have you as part of this, good luck.

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