

AL Wild Card Series: Royals vs Orioles

Wednesday, October 2, 2024
Baltimore, Maryland, USA
Camden Yards

Kansas City Royals Michael Massey

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Thinking back to yesterday, how did the atmosphere and the whole game really blend with what you expected of your first playoff game?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, no, it was a crazy environment. I think there was a lot of times where I think you saw a lot of us trying to put our hand up to hear the pitch count. I don't know how Eric heard it in the ninth inning, but I couldn't hear it at all. Certainly a crazy environment and definitely a little bit of a different feel than a regular season game.

Q. You faced Zach Eflin earlier this season. What was it like facing him for the first time and what are you expecting out of him today?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, he's really tough. Similar to Burnes, he can attack you in a lot of different ways. We definitely have our work cut out for us, so hopefully we can score more than one run this time.

Just going to have to go up there with a good approach and get pitches to hit, make him work, and hopefully get into that bullpen a little bit.

Q. You hit lead-off a good portion in August but not much since then until yesterday. What have you learned about being in that position, specifically hitting in front of Bobby and now Bobby, Vinnie, and Salvy?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Get on base for the best player of the game. That is kind of honestly all I think about, is just any way that I can, whether it's working a walk, working a count, losing my thumbs on a pop-up to left field. Just anyway you can get on first base and give Bob and Sal and Vinnie a chance to hit with a guy on, that's really my job.

Yeah, just turning good at-bats and slow the game down.



Q. We are days out of your three-run homer; how do you balance in a one-run game yesterday with everything mattering on the line versus going for the homers versus just getting on base at the top of the lineup?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, like I was just saying, you just got to slow it down. You get in this environment like yesterday and the game speeds up, fastballs get on you quicker, and pitches start breaking sharper. Just trying to control yourself, control your emotions, and really just go back to the simplest terms of getting a good pitch to hit and trying to use the whole field.

Q. You guys went through that little offensive lull recently. I was wondering, is there something you guys try to fall back on when that's happening like a message, a mantra, something to get back to where you guys want to be?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, I think like I was just saying, they're simple. I think obviously when you're struggling to get hits and get guys on base and score runs, you've got to go back to the simplest things in the game, which is just getting a good pitch to hit and trying to be on time for it.

You get guys on base, and I'm a big believer when you get guys on base you get some breaks. You get the middle infield double play depth, corner has got to come in, maybe the outfield shifts a certain way, and now maybe a ground ball at 85 miles an hour turns into a hit, where if there is nobody on, they're playing deep, they get the out on that play.

I think just trying to simplify and get traffic on the bases is really the biggest focus when you're struggling.

Q. I know y'all's mantra is today, today, today, but have you caught yourself or let yourself wonder what it would be like to have postseason baseball back at the K?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, that's obviously been a goal of ours for a long time, to bring postseason baseball back to



Kansas City. I'd be lying to you if I said it wasn't on our mind. It is.

But again, that's just being a professional and being able to kind of block that out and just trying to compartmentalize the best you can and know that today is really the only thing we can take care of.

Having a good today is going to help us do that. That's kind of our focus.

Q. Your manager has talked about your resiliency as a team. What is it about this team that's allowed you to go through rough patches and handle success and handle losing on an almost even keel?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, I think it's a testament to the guys we brought in, a lot of the older veterans. Just so many guys that have such good experience that have been through it. I remember one comment in particular when we lost seven in a row and had an off-day on Monday before we headed to Washington, and Will Smith made a comment. He said, hey, you guys are looking at this the wrong way. The bright side is we can't lose tomorrow.

Just it was kind of eye opening to be like, wow, everyone is freaking out outside of our clubhouse. We've lost seven in a row. Everyone thinks we're not going to make the playoffs. We're going to blow it. Then you've got a guy like that who's making a joke about it.

It goes to show you their experience and their confidence. They've been there before. They've done it. So I think it's helped a lot of guys. It's helped us, for sure me, to be around those guys and just watch them more than anything and how they go about their business has been -- I think that's helped us stay even keel.

Q. It's a really tight clubhouse in some part because you guys have come up through the minors together, but you and Vinnie, same draft class, same path through the Minor Leagues. What's it been like watching him go through what he's gone through and supporting him on his way back and what do you appreciate about the way he's gone about doing what he's done?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, I think everybody in that clubhouse just appreciates what he's done. He had surgery less than a month ago or about a month ago and he's out there fighting through the pain and competing for us. That kind of stuff doesn't go unnoticed to teammates.

Even beyond that, he's got such a good character and he's been kind of, as you know, the life of our clubhouse for a

long time. Not just this year but as you mentioned all the way through the Minor Leagues. Just a great guy to be around. Really cool to be teammates with him and even better to be friends.

Q. When did you first realize the energy that he brought to a clubhouse?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Oh, man, probably going all the way back to Burlington in 2019, which was rookie ball for us. He's just kind of got that infectious personality, always smiling, always cracking jokes at somebody. Just a great teammate.

Q. You hear a lot about momentum at this time of the year, and it matters, but it can also change very quickly. We see hot teams get cold and teams that seem like they're going nowhere catch fire out of nowhere. Do you feel like yesterday was sort of a continuation of the end of your regular season, or did you feel like there was a clean break and everything was starting over at the start of the postseason?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, I feel like it's more of a start-over. Personally the way I think is everything is one. There's no streaks. You're never in a slump. You're never on a hot streak. Kind of going back to Q's mantra of today, everything is one. You miss a play it's one play. Has nothing to do with the next game. You have a tough game. It has nothing to do with the next game.

I think in baseball, that's easier said than done.

But as I alluded to with those veterans before, I think being around those guys and being able to watch them do that in action has been really good for the rest of our team.

I feel like as a teammate as a whole we do a really good job of that.

Q. Michael, you mentioned the veteran presence. Bobby was joking last night about Tommy saying you've got a 99.99 chance to win if they don't score. What's he brought to the room since he got here?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, I mean, I still don't understand that comment because I haven't figured out how we lose if we give up 0 runs. But yeah, he fits in with the rest of us and the rest of those veterans, as well, just guys that have had unbelievable careers and a lot of experience.

And one thing that I've realized just from being here for the last two, two and a half years is anybody in this game that's been able to acquire service time as long as some of those guys in there, it's an incredible feat. To be able to not only

physically be able to play at this level but to manage everything that comes with it, and to do it for as long as Tommy has done it, there's a pedigree that comes with that, and he's really cool to watch and just be around and watch what he does in the cage. What he does on the field. What how he handles himself when he's going through a slump or whatnot. We're lucky to have a bunch of those guys.

Q. When did Will say that about we can't lose tomorrow? Did he say that after a loss?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, it was the Sunday -- we got swept by the Giants maybe. Yeah, back-to-back sweeps. We got swept by Detroit and then the Giants, and we were just walking out. He was like, you guys are looking at this the wrong way. Like there's no way we can lose tomorrow. Someone didn't laugh and then Hoov was like, come on, laugh. It's funny.

But again, it was a little bit different than how we were last year. We lost a game last year and it was a bunch of young guys in there thinking the end of the world happened. Again, just a totally different perspective.

Q. You've played behind Lugo quite a bit this year. How would you face him when he's got all of those pitches to throw at hitters?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, I mean, that's a great question. I think the answer is when someone figures it out to let everyone know because he can come at you nine different ways. Got the pitch comm on and he's got a call, you know, slider, slider, slider for a different pitch. It's not even a slider but he has so many pitches that the pitch count can't call all of them.

He can make the ball do what he wants, and he's been unbelievable all year. I know as a team anytime Seth takes the mound I feel like we've got a really good chance to win.

Q. You alluded to last year saying that when you went through those tough times, it was like the end of the world. How did you guys, the young guys, break through out of that mentality, and how did those veterans help guide you through that?

MICHAEL MASSEY: Yeah, like I said, I think the veterans have been a huge part of that, but I also think just the persistence and just the continuing to show up every day. I feel like that's honestly my best advice for any player coming up is just continue to show up.

There's going to be days where you're terrified to do it.

There's will be days where you're nervous. There are days where you feel like you're never going to get a hit again. There's days where you feel like you're never going to get out again.

So being able to show up every day and keep going no matter what you're feeling. And in baseball it's always going to turn at some point. Nothing lasts forever. Again, that's something I've learned from being around those guys.

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