

AL Wild Card Series: Royals vs Orioles

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Camden Yards

Kansas City Royals

Michael Wacha

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Michael, for you, what was it like watching Cole yesterday and how excited are you to watch Lugo? I'm guessing you probably just don't want to pitch tomorrow at all, but watching him yesterday and Lugo, looking forward to watching Lugo?

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, I was very impressed with Ragans' start yesterday. First postseason start for a guy, it's not an easy task, but he absolutely dominated. He was filling up the zone and attacking guys and pretty much doing what he was doing all season for us.

That was huge in that Game 1. Yeah, to your point, it would be great to clinch tonight and just kind of get it over with, but excited to watch Lugo tonight, as well. He's got the mix of pitches and the attack, and he's been doing it all year for us. Excited to see him go to work tonight for sure.

Q. Last year you and Seth were both together with the Padres. When you guys were deciding to come to Kansas City did you both feel like this was a possibility that you guys could get the Royals back to the postseason?

MICHAEL WACHA: Absolutely. Whenever we were in contact with KC over the offseason, JJ was kind of describing his plan and kind of the team outlook on what it looked like. I saw Lugo had signed there probably about a week or two before I did, and pitching with him and knew what he brought to the table. It was a lot of fun being able to get a deal done to join back up with him and pitch in the same rotation with him again.

There was a belief. There really was, in Spring Training that we would be in this position here that we are today. It took a lot of time. Team building, just learning the players, learning the guys on the team, and it's been a lot of fun this year for sure. Excited to keep this thing rolling and see what we can do with it.



Q. You and Seth were in New York together in 2020. He was coming out of the bullpen and you were starting and you reunite in Kansas City. What was your impression of Seth as a reliever, and what was your impression of him as a starter and what do you think about the way he's gone about what he's done this season and put up the numbers he's put up?

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, meeting Seth in 2020 with the Mets, we kind of connected right away. We're kind of from the same area. He's from that Shreveport-Bossier area, and I'm from Texarkana about 40 minutes away. Had a connection right there, a lot of talk about there.

Then just kind of seeing the way he approaches the game, he approaches it different than a lot of other guys. He's got a game plan going in there. He's able to read swings. He's got great scouting reports going into it.

It's been a lot of fun with him, especially the last year when we were pitching in the same rotation. We were able to bounce ideas off of each other in the dugout, in the clubhouse, to get ready for starts. He's one of the best brains that I've been around, really, whenever it comes to that kind of stuff.

So it's always fun being able to pick his brain and see what he's thinking, finding out what he's seeing in certain batters' swings and how he wants to approach those guys.

It's been a lot of fun pitching in that same rotation with him the past couple years for sure.

Q. What do you and Seth impart to the younger guys in the rotation with regard to advice, career stuff, things of that nature? And by turn, what do you guys learn from them, and how do they keep you young in this game?

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, I've always said it. I've been in this league for 10, 11 years now, 12 years, so that comes with some experience. Experiencing some of the highest of highs and some of the lowest of lows. I can kind of relate to a lot of different players.



I'll always try to be available to the younger guys, the rookies, just with any questions that they have, just being there ready to answer questions, help them out in any situation and kind of give them their belief that they can succeed at this level.

As much as I feel like they can learn from me, I can learn just as much from them, as well. Kind of that youth side of it, keeping us young and keeping us in these games and pushing us, they're full of energy, and so they definitely motivate me coming into the field every day to get in that weight room, get in the training room, just stay on top of everything to keep us healthy.

A lot of these guys on this staff, they're great pitchers. They've got some really nasty stuff. Talking pitch grips, talking sequences and kind of what they're thinking, as well, has helped me out a lot, as well.

Q. You mentioned the discussions you guys have and meeting after starts and that bond you guys have as a rotation. Did that happen organically? How does that happen, and can you compare it to any other rotations you've been on in the past where you've had kind of that similar bond?

MICHAEL WACHA: I would kind of say with most of the staffs that I've pitched on, there's definitely been that common denominator of, yeah, communicating. I feel like it's the best time to talk, coming out after a start, first game of a series, talking to that starter, what did you see with those batters, is it what you expected with those batters, what would you kind of do differently or what were you not expecting type of stuff.

Just asking different questions and kind of getting their feel on what they saw out there on the mound and their firsthand experience has been beneficial.

Yeah, we're all rooting for each other. We're all pulling for each other. I feel like you need that communication and that -- I guess that camaraderie in a staff to be able to go out there and succeed.

Q. You've been starting playoff games at this level for more than a decade now. I'm curious how much has that job changed in terms of preparation, execution, going out there, being the starting pitcher in a postseason game in that time?

MICHAEL WACHA: It's been a little while since I've gotten a postseason start. You know, I'm definitely looking forward to the next one for sure.

But I try not to put too much emphasis on it. Whenever I was making those postseason starts, I tried to approach it just like any other game. I know that it's definitely magnified a lot more media and a lot more -- you could say distractions, just from what we're trying to accomplish out there on the field type of stuff.

Just try and approach it just like any other game and prepare the same way you've prepared all season and try not to put too much emphasis on it being in a bigger spotlight type of deal.

Q. Can you talk more about how you mentally prepare to balance wanting to pitch tomorrow and take the mound when it's all on the line, even though you try to treat it like every other game, and wanting your team to clinch tonight and not having to take the mound tomorrow? How do you balance that?

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, no, it's just prepare mentally. Like you said, getting the mind right to pitch tomorrow if that is the case. Yeah, been doing my prep work on the Orioles and getting ready to make a start against them and just treating that just like I am pitching tomorrow.

Hopefully we can clinch tonight and then that mindset will be on to whoever we're facing next.

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