

# NL Wild Card Series: Braves vs Padres

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

San Diego, California, USA

Petco Park

## San Diego Padres

## Kyle Higashioka

### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Can you compare and contrast your two postseason home runs or the last one you had here and just the moments and the way everything is obviously so different?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: Yeah, I mean, the last one here was with nobody in the stands and we weren't even playing the Padres. It was kind of a strange scenario.

But, yeah, it was incredible to see the fans out there last night. They brought such a phenomenal atmosphere. We're really grateful for that.

**Q. What do you make of the way this bullpen -- you had a good bullpen before the deadline, then you add three pieces to it -- the way it's kind of come together and the way it might be built for this time of year?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: Yeah, I mean, we added obviously a couple of elite guys at the deadline. And I mean, when you add guys like that -- and we were already pretty solid, maybe not as deep as we want to be -- but we were already pretty solid, and you add two guys like that, I mean, it's going to be tough to beat.

**Q. Just wondering, since Joe came back, what have you seen back there that's allowed him to be this dominant and effective?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I mean, he's just a competitor. And the stuff's always been top-level stuff, amongst the best in the league.

But I think with him, the best thing about him is his competitiveness. Every time he steps on the mound, he's ready to go out there and dominate, no matter whether he's feeling good or bad or no matter the circumstances.

**Q. For you, obviously I'm sure the Yankees**



**organization meant a lot to you, drafted out of high school. But being close to home, back on the West Coast, how has that experience been?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: It's been great. The weather has definitely been really nice, sunny and 72 every day.

But, I mean, it's been awesome. California is super familiar for me. There's definitely that sense of comfort being on the West Coast.

**Q. The introductions yesterday, the camera showed Joe. He looked like he was ready to fight yesterday. I'm just curious his aura, like, what do you see from him the last couple of days coming into today?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I'm sure he'll be ready to fight today, too. It's just the kind of competitor he is. He's intense. He wants to get the job done every time.

**Q. Personally, for you, you played so many years in the minor leagues, you were a number two catcher in New York. You started this year as a number two. How satisfying is it for you to be at this point carrying the load, producing?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I'm just happy that I can contribute to the team having success. And in part you have to play well to be able to do that.

But I think that's the biggest thing for me is being on a winning team. I think, as a catcher, that's one of the biggest reflections of whether or not you're doing a decent job is if the team's winning. We're just hoping to keep that up.

**Q. A career high in home runs during the regular season. Then you have a home run in the postseason opener last night. For you, offensively, what steps forward do you feel you've taken in this season in particular?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I think it's more just learning how to become a little better hitter, having added some adjustability to my swing. And just working with these



hitting coaches here, it's been awesome and they've really helped me a lot, and they've helped keep me sharp all year.

I think it's a big thanks to them and a lot of credit to them for getting the best out of me.

**Q. You mentioned the hitting coaches, Victor Rodriguez, a lot of players have talked highly about him all year. He got a big ovation here at the ballpark last night during introductions. What kind of impact has Victor had, in particular, on your season?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: He's just a calming, like, steady presence. He understands that hitters are going to go through ups and downs. He never panics, ever. And he's just always there to keep you moving forward.

And he's one of my favorite guys in the clubhouse, I think with everybody. That helps.

**Q. Talk about the offense you've added this year. Your job is there you're there for the pitchers to be the guy behind the plate. How do you transition being at the plate and then being behind it? And how long did it take to you find that balance?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I try not to, good or bad, I try not to let any sort of emotions carry over from offense to defense or the other way around. Obviously happy to hit the home run last night, but it was like as soon as I got back, settled in the dugout, you've got to turn the page, and you've got Suarez coming in, he's got to close the game out. So that's got to be my focus.

**Q. Last night after the game, Michael King talked about your relationship dating back to the Yankees and whatnot and how that played into the success you two had last night. From your perspective, how did your longstanding relationship help with the success you both had last night?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I mean, we've always been pretty close ever since he came up to Scranton. I think, in '18 we played together. And, I mean, I was always impressed by his level of preparation. He was one of the only pitchers that would write stuff in a notebook preparing for his start.

And I think just having that little bit of understanding that we've continued to grow over the years, I think, just helps get the best out of each of us. There's times every game where he calls a pitch from the mound that I wouldn't have thought of and it ends up working out.

Then there's times where I'll call a pitch that he wasn't -- or

he'll claim he wasn't thinking of and it will end up working out. I think it's a very complementary relationship where we add things to each other's game.

**Q. As a guy who hits towards the bottom of a very productive and lengthy lineup and game plans for other lineups, what does the length of this lineup mean to what you guys are able to accomplish offensively? What does it do for you, too, when you come up to the plate after the other eight guys have done what they've done?**

KYLE HIGASHIOKA: I mean, I think as far as other teams go, it's always tough when you have to worry about the bottom of the lineup in any way, shape or form. But I mean, with most playoff teams, it's going to be like that. But in terms of for us hitting at the bottom of the lineup, you can always count on the rest of the guys; they're wearing the guy down on the mound every single at-bat.

I think especially when we get deeper in the games, we've had good at-bats and we typically are pretty good at wearing people down, and usually somebody ends up doing some damage.

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