

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

Monday, October 7, 2024
New York, New York, USA
Yankee Stadium

Kansas City Royals Manager Matt Quatraro Pregame 2 Press Conference

Q. Q, can you take us through the decision to bring Garcia up to lead off and how your lineup kind of shuffles a bit facing a lefty today?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, a lot of things went into consideration there. Maikel has been swinging the bat better. We feel like he raises his level of competition a little bit in these atmospheres, and we're hopeful that he can get on and create some havoc on the bases.

Q. It's kind of a crazy day for Kansas City folks. They have the Chiefs and the Royals playing at the same time, probably electric back home in Kansas City. Can you talk about how neat it is and the shared respect and support you guys are showing each other?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, I can say from my perspective, once we moved to Kansas City, I've never seen anything like it. The support for the Chiefs last year, phenomenal. You're in your neighborhood and they score a touchdown, you hear cannons going off, parties every weekend when they're playing.

They've been extremely welcoming to me and my family and the coaching staff, and the relationships we're building with those guys has been great.

I went out to practice once last year, and Mahomes came right over to ask about the bullpen. Everybody is interested.

I think the setup we have there is very unique with both stadiums side by side. I'm excited for them. It's a great time to be there, and the community supports both teams. You can feel it. Just walking down the street, you can see more Royals flags out in front of people's houses. It is a lot of fun. It's very exciting.

Q. With Ragans this year, his fastball has been



extremely effective. What makes it special and does it remind you of any other fastball you've seen in the game?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, the thing that stands out to me is it's a four-seamer with a lot of horizontal movement, so it kind of disappears on you as a right-handed hitter. You think -- it's got good carry as well, but it's got unique characteristics and it's in the mid to upper 90s. He throws it from usually the far third base side of the rubber, so it just continues to get away from right-handed bats.

If it reminds me of anybody else? That'll be a one tough for me off the top of my head. I haven't thought about that. I don't want to say something that's not accurate for you.

Q. When you took over as manager, Salvy had been here for so long. What did you need to communicate to him about yourself or about your plans when you first got the job?

MATT QUATRARO: I wanted to listen to what he wanted to say, not what I had to say. I have the utmost respect for him watching him play for all those years on the other side of the field, heard a lot about him as a competitor. Just the fact that he was a catcher that played basically every single day was so unique.

My first phone call was to him to just let him know that I wanted to hear what he had to say, and we were going to have the best line of communication we could possibly have.

As a manager, I wasn't going to be able to convince him or anyone of anything on day one. You have to earn that respect. You have to be in there and communicate and show them that you're a genuine person and you back up your word and all those kinds of things. And that's what my goal was not just with him but with everybody.

Q. What was important to him at the start and what have you seen the last two years about what makes him great?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, the most important thing to



Salvy is competing and winning. He cares more about the community at Kansas City and the Royals than anybody. He's been here his entire adult life. This is his family. The community is where he feels -- he's got a tremendous amount of passion for the community.

But as far as baseball goes, he wants to win more than anybody. That was -- a huge goal of ours was to return him back to where we feel like he rightfully belongs in the game.

Q. Momentum is everything in the playoffs, especially in a short series. How do you feel is the vibe of your team going into Game 2?

MATT QUATRARO: Great. Our guys -- I've said it a bunch of times, our guys are absolutely incredible about turning the page from one day to the next, regardless of whether it was a win or a loss.

If we had won Game 1, the Yankees aren't going to care about that today. We're going to come out and try to get after each other tonight. Our guys turn the page better than any group I've been around.

Q. Salvy was here a little earlier, and he spoke about, quote-unquote, he's still working on his position behind the plate, down on one knee, handling those low balls being a big guy. What do you think it says about him that at his age he's a Gold Glove winner, a superstar, still making adjustments and wants to improve at age 34?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, it makes me smile, to be honest, because that's the passion you need to continue to be good at this game. He could easily have said, I'm good, and retired or whatever, or just said, I got this.

But he understands that he's got a lot left in the tank. He's got a lot left to offer as a player himself but as a leader. And when other guys see him working as hard as he does, whether it's on his catching, in the weight room, on his hitting -- nobody works harder than him in that clubhouse. And that's something he's obviously taken pride in for his whole career, and it's not going to stop now.

Q. When J.J. got Yuli Gurriel, what was the communication about either they were going to pick him up, and at 40 years old, were you curious how he would look, how he might fit in?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, we did talk about it. It came together quickly because we knew -- you can get the dates exactly, but it was right near the end of August. So we knew we had to get him in prior to whatever that date was,

31st or 1st, to have him be eligible for the playoffs.

So it came together quickly. We were in Houston the day after Vinnie got hurt. We did as much homework as we could through people we knew with the Braves and elsewhere to find out about him, his character and work ethic. And it was all off the charts, and that's what we've seen.

What our expectations were, we didn't know. He had been injured, hamstring, but he came in and it's been a very linear improvement health-wise, the way he's been moving. But his comfort level I think with us and with the team and being in the playoff race, I think, was very motivating to him.

Q. Is there something to facing Carlos Rodón for a third time, and is there anything you can take from the first two starts against him and use in this game?

MATT QUATRARO: I think like with any elite pitcher like he is, it really comes down to your discipline. Because if you expand the zone with him, he's got plenty of weapons to get you out, and if he gets you chasing pitches out of the zone, you might have a long day.

But if you can be disciplined and get what you're looking for, you have a chance because we can game plan for strikes and understanding what he might do. And our guys can game plan for their strengths.

Q. What has impressed you the most about Michael Massey, and how good can he be if he stays healthy all year?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, what's impressed me, number one, is his fortitude to fight through the injuries. He's had a tough year when it comes to his back.

But he's competing his butt off out there, probably not at 100 percent. He's a really good hitter. We know that. He's got power. Last year he showed tremendous improvement in his defense, and that's continued this year.

So we're really comfortable with him as a stalwart in our lineup, and what's impressive is that he's got the mental attitude to keep fighting through this.

Q. With the off-day yesterday, I'm assuming that helps you use your bullpen the way that you like or that the game dictates it? Do you foresee everyone being available today?

MATT QUATRARO: I do, yeah. I think no one was overused the other day, and with the off-day, I think we'll

be all set.

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