

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

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

New York Yankees Manager Aaron Boone Pregame 2 Press Conference

Aaron, you have Jon Berti in the lineup. What did you see with him working at first base that gave you the confidence to put him in there in a playoff game considering he doesn't have any reps there?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, he's looked outstanding over there, I will say that, in his work. He's played a little bit in Spring Training over the years, but just a really natural infielder, and just the person that I have a lot of confidence in.

Look, right now with obviously Riz going down, with a day left in the season, not being ideal, we're not necessarily in that perfect situation from a first base standpoint. Going to mix and match over there, and obviously Cabby did a great job I felt like in Game 1. And I kind of have that same confidence with Jon. Not to mention that added element that he brings to the table just from being a really well-rounded player, good offensive player with speed. We feel like we can do some things at the bottom of the lineup athletically with him in there, as well.

Q. How much consideration was there given to Ben Rice --

AARON BOONE: A lot, yeah. That was as much as anything. With Ragans obviously being more of a reverse guy, I did consider Ben being the guy. But also it's a pretty tough draw for your first playoff, getting called up the last day of the season, first playoff game being against one of the toughest lefties in the game, too.

So I didn't necessarily -- ultimately that's why I decided, I think, on Jon. Just feel like he's really looked the part over there this last week, and I feel like he brings a lot to the table, too.

Q. What was the reasoning for choosing Schmidt over Gil for Game 3?



AARON BOONE: The best I can tell you is I just feel like he's the right guy for that game. I have a lot of confidence in what both bring to the table, and hopefully if we're able to move on, then Luis is obviously going to find himself back in the rotation as well if you move on in this thing.

But right now I think best that he plays a role in the pen for us, and I feel like Clarke is in a spot to where he's ready to go for Game 3.

Q. In September you talk about bullpen experience possibly being a factor, obviously Schmidt has that. And for as great a season as Gil has had, some command issues at times?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I guess a little bit of all of it. But as much as Clarke has that experience, he still hasn't been down in the pen for a couple years. He is a full-time starter just like Luis. I think he's a little bit of an unknown there.

That said, it's the playoffs now. It's postseason. There's going to be games hopefully if you get long in this where it's a little unorthodox and the starter ends up in a big moment at the back end of a game. Those things are going to come up.

I just want our guys ready for all things, but I just felt good about Clarke being a good choice for Game 3.

Q. And Gil is healthy?

AARON BOONE: Gil is healthy.

Q. With Cabrera not starting today, is it a matter of him not having much left on left experience?

AARON BOONE: A little bit, yeah. Yes, that's a lot of it. But also having a lot of confidence in Jon, too. And feeling like both guys, especially with Riz out, are going to play a meaningful role in this thing if we're going to get far.

I view Jon and Oswaldo a little bit similar. They both bring so much versatility to the table.



But yeah, Ozzie -- we've seen him obviously in certain situations this year go left on left but not a lot of experience doing that, either.

Q. With Luis, what role do you see him filling in the bullpen? Is it a bulk relief role, high leverage?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, any and all. Probably in a perfect world you try and get him a clean inning. But it could be anywhere from where you need to fill some innings or in a certain game you get up against it and he's got to pitch in a big spot in an inning. We've got to be ready for all things.

Q. You mentioned Ragans is one of the toughest lefties in the league. What is it that makes him so tough and what did you learn when you faced him earlier?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I mean, fastball command but an elite fastball, mid, upper 90s fastball. Really good changeup. He can go in and out with his fastball. I thought he did a really good job of that with Baltimore where he'd command the inside part of the plate with his fastball, elevate the fastball, really good changeup to go with it, and then a couple different breaking balls.

He's going to, I'm sure, receive some Cy Young award votes. He's been one of the best pitchers in the American League this year, and we'll have our work cut out for us.

Q. 32 playoff games, a .232 batting average, 19 RBIs for Gleyber. Why he's a confident player in the postseason?

AARON BOONE: Well, I think he's just a really good hitter. A lot of times those good hitters, those good bat to ball guys can show up in the postseason. Yeah, he's done that in his career, obviously. And obviously he walks into this October in a really good spot, playing really well, having an extended run now of really consistent offense for us. And he carried that into Game 1 certainly.

Q. Do you think he has thrived in that lead-off spot and that kind of changed things this year?

AARON BOONE: I mean, he has thrived. I don't think it. He has.

But he also started the year in the lead-off spot. When we broke camp, he was my lead-off hitter. He struggled a little bit, I had to get him out, but once he got it going back, he was right back in there.

I just feel like he's been in a really good frame of mind. We're just seeing a really good hitter find his level here in

the second half of the season and carry it into Game 1 and hopefully beyond now.

Q. How did Nestor come through after yesterday?

AARON BOONE: I'm not sure today if he's throwing again. Yesterday went really well. His catch play, everyone including Nestor were really encouraged. So we'll see now what we have in the days moving forward, but yesterday was a good step.

Q. Are you more encouraged that he could be a player this month?

AARON BOONE: I don't know how he's doing today or what he's doing yet today, but I know yesterday was encouraging enough to know that at some point, it could be a possibility.

Q. What did you think of Volpe's playoff debut the other night. Hit a few balls hard but made the uncharacteristic throwing error?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, it was really good. I was really encouraged by the at-bats. Big walk in that situation off Schreiber, who's tough, being able to lay off some pitches. Like you said, I feel like he's had some really good work this week offensively. Made a really good play to his backhand where Cabby picked the ball -- I mean, those things happen from time to time, the error.

Everyone says he rushed. I'm like, have you ever seen him play? That's how he plays. That's what makes him so unique and special is he plays so fast and always under control. Misfired on a throw a little bit; it happens. But I was really encouraged, too, by the at-bats.

Q. Have you seen anything in his mentality change. Obviously this is something that he's wanted to do forever, play in the playoffs for the Yankees. I know he's been here for two years now, but this is a little bit different, this kind of atmosphere.

AARON BOONE: Yeah, he seems the exact same to me, honestly, just watching him and in my interactions with him. Feel like he's ready for it.

But I feel like he had a good week of work leading up that I thought showed itself from an at-bat standpoint, which is encouraging.

Q. Luke Weaver did pretty well in his first playoff performance. When you look at him and his personality, what about him do you think allows him to be so adaptable, whether it's changing the pitch grip,

changing his role, and now doing well in the postseason?

AARON BOONE: Well, I think it starts with he has really good command, okay, of his pitches, first off. So from his talent as a pitcher, command he's got.

I think going to the bullpen, making some mechanical tweaks, we've seen his stuff pick up from when he was a starter. So now you've got an elite characteristic fastball, good cutter, really good changeup with command that's ramped up stuff-wise, coupled with just a solid makeup person.

You see him, he doesn't take himself too seriously, he's got a real dry, funny sense of humor. But you watch him on the mound and he's super competitive, too, and he likes the action and likes the fire. But when you have command and you walk out there with three really good pitches, you've got a shot.

Q. For you guys to get almost a week off, first game of the playoffs, and then to work the at-bats they did, to draw eight walks, including a lot of the young guys in the lineup. What does that say to you moving forward through the rest of this thing?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, that was a game where we could have scored double digits runs if we get the right big hit. But to score six runs where we didn't necessarily get that big hit all the time is a credit to the at-bat quality that we have.

I think some people think, well, they just walked -- well, crappy hitters don't walk eight times. That's a mindset, a talent, a skill, and I thought just a really good job of guys over and over taking really tough at-bats.

We talk about that all the time. It's like, no matter what happens on a given night. Because on a given night a pitcher might be on -- we want to make it difficult on you. We want you to feel it. We want you to feel like, man, these guys aren't chasing, they're tough at-bats, whatever. And I felt like up and down the lineup, we gave tough at-bats.

On a night where we didn't necessarily get a ton of that -- or that back-breaking hit, whatever, were able to throw up six runs because the at-bat quality.

Q. Carlos has been a lot better this year than he was a year ago, but the home run ball has still been an Achilles heel for him, tied for second most in the league this year. In your mind what's the key for him to keep the ball in the yard tonight?

AARON BOONE: Like everyone, execution, getting it to where he wants. I feel like this year, he got off to a really good start, obviously, then had a stretch of games where he struggled. Rebounded really nicely, and I feel like in the month of September is throwing the ball really well. I feel like his changeup has become a really good pitch for him to go with his fastball slider.

But as long as he's -- he pitches up in the zone. And when you have a really good fastball and you pitch up in the zone, guys are going to sell out to that different times. That probably leads to a higher home run total. But if he's executing and throwing strikes, we'll take our chances.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.