

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

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

New York Yankees

Austin Wells

Pregame 2 Press Conference

Q. Austin, batting cleanup for the Yankees in your first-ever postseason, do you ever think about that in terms of the responsibility or about it being an honor?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, it's exciting. It's an honor. I try not to think too much about it, though. Just feel like I'm in a spot to do a job. It's a fun game.

Q. What is it like being in the center of that lineup?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, it's a great lineup to be in and have the guys around me that have had so much success in the game. I feel like it's helped me throughout the whole year grow and learn from them.

Q. Saturday night after the win after heading home, what was the adrenaline like after your first playoff game, first playoff win? Was it different than you expected? Was it similar to what you expected?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, I think just the way that the game went, I was pretty exhausted after that one. The back and forth was pretty tiring. But I think, yeah, left it out there that night knowing we had the off-day.

It was pretty cool, and it was a good feeling to come out with the win.

Q. Salvador Perez has been catching in the Big Leagues since you were, I think, 12 years old. As a young catcher, what does a guy like Perez symbolize to you or what impresses you or what do you admire about him?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, like you said, since I was young, he's been catching in the league and doing great things and he was definitely one of the guys I watched as a kid coming into the league.



For him to be out there on the other side doing what he's doing and having a great year, it's pretty cool to be going against him.

Just to have a guy like that who's caught for so long in the league, I feel like it's becoming more and more rare as the game gets progressing. It's really cool to see him over there.

Q. When Salvador was in here a couple of hours ago, he was complimentary of you on the defensive side, in particular in talking about your framing. Based on what you said about Salvy, what does it mean to you to have a guy like that say those things about you?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, it's amazing. Like I was saying, he was one of the guys that I watched growing up. He's a pretty electric catcher and has done a lot of great things in the game. To hear that, it's pretty cool. He's a great guy. Always has been. That's great.

Q. You had a tough September after a really good summer. How much were you feeling the length of the season this year, and how much did the week off help you recover?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, I don't think it was the length. Obviously I haven't done it, so it could have been, but I don't think it was. I just think getting towards the end, trying to do too much at the plate.

I feel like the week off helped me mentally more than it did physically.

Q. Understanding he's your opponent in this series, have you gotten to know Salvador Perez over the years at all?

AUSTIN WELLS: Not a ton. I mean, first time I met him was last year when I got called up when we played the Royals. Not a ton of time, but I'd love to.

Q. How do you approach someone like Cole Ragans who has five-plus pitches that he can throw for strikes?



AUSTIN WELLS: For me personally? Well, I guess we'll see after the game how it goes.

I'm looking forward to the matchup. He's a great pitcher. He's been great for the whole year. Definitely done a lot of prep, watching video, and trying to give myself the best advantage I can against him.

Q. Clarke is going to start Game 3; what's the most dangerous thing about him as a pitcher?

AUSTIN WELLS: I think it's just how versatile he is. He's got some great breaking stuff. He's got two great fastballs technically with the sinker and the cutter. I think just how he's been able to handle this year starting off great, getting hurt, and then coming back and doing really well for us. I think he's primed for that spot. And he's so versatile, he's going to have a great start for us.

Q. This series has Aaron Judge and Bobby Witt, Jr., going head to head, a couple MVP candidates. What do you think when you watch them play against each other here?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, I think you get to the playoffs and it's some of the best players on the field at all times going head to head, which I think is really special.

Even, like, at the end of the game watching close up with Weaver versus Bobby there at the end, I hope that's how every matchup could be, just because of how high-profile Bobby is and in a high-profile situation, down one run. Those guys can make a difference in one game with one swing. It's a lot of fun to be watching those games.

Q. How tough is it to game plan for Bobby Witt, Jr.?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, he's a great hitter. He's the batting leader, I think, in the league. He does a lot of things really well, and it's just trying to not feed into too many of those.

Q. We often talk about innings limits for pitchers, and when guys go past their previous highs, it's usually a story. You're about 300 innings past your career high in innings behind the plate. I'm curious what that experience has been like over the full season to keep your body where it needs to be to have that kind of load?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun. My goal this year was to catch as much as possible, and so I think still catching in October is a good thing and being out there in the lineup is awesome.

Just going in there, making sure I'm communicating with the trainers on what I need to do, cold tub, all that stuff.

But no, I feel great, and I'm excited to be here.

Q. How has your relationship with Carlos Rodón developed over the course of the season, and what makes him unique?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, Carlos has been great for us this year. Getting to work with him through a lot of his starts this year, I just love how competitive he is out there. He wants to do the best he can every single time he goes out there, and his intent behind every pitch is one of the best there is in the game.

I think just having a competitor like that on the mound in the middle of our rotation, he gives us a good chance to win every time he grabs the ball.

Q. What kind of weapon can Gil be out of the bullpen now that we know he's not starting this series?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, I'm excited to see. I think he have more in the tank being the reliever, and a fastball might be an extra couple miles an hour, which it's already a great fastball. I'm looking forward to that when the time comes, and we'll see what happens.

Q. You talked about the competitiveness when it comes to Carlos Rodón. He often pitches with a lot of emotion, as well. He had said how much he's looking forward to and wants to get the ball here at home to pitch for the first time for the Yankees in the postseason. What type of emotions do you think are going to be out there for him tonight and how do you make sure he keeps them in check?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, I think he's going to be really excited. I know he already is. I was just talking to him before coming up here and talking about hitters and he's pretty fired up. For him to be out here for us Game 2 ALDS at home, I think those emotions are going to be pretty high regardless. Just trying to temper that a little bit and keep him focused on the goal, which is just one pitch at a time, and go from there.

Q. Is that more so different than normal?

AUSTIN WELLS: No, he surprises me some days with when he wants to talk about the hitters and what he's feeling that day. I enjoy it, and he's a competitor, and yeah, he's going to have a lot of fun today, regardless of what emotions come out.

Q. Personally how has your relationship with Luke Weaver developed, especially as he's been used more often and in higher leverage situations?

AUSTIN WELLS: Yeah, Luke is an awesome guy, awesome teammate. He's a small comedian, I'd say. You can see some of his stuff online. He's like that for the most part throughout the clubhouse, as well. No, he's been great.

Just having him there, embracing whatever role we've thrown at him this year has been really special to watch and be a part of.

Q. Do you think having that sense of humor can help you in situations like the one he's been thrown into?

AUSTIN WELLS: Absolutely. I think it just gives him a kind of a calm, cool, collected attitude going into whatever it has. And as we've seen coming into his closer era, he's let that emotion out a little bit at the end of some of these games, which has been pretty cool to see.

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