

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

Tuesday, October 8, 2024
Kansas City, Missouri, USA
Kauffman Stadium

New York Yankees

Clarke Schmidt

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Going into Game 3, how crucial is a Game 3 win for you guys?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, obviously a very big swing game there, and I think obviously going into a hostile environment, it should be a lot of fun. I think every game is a must-win game in the playoffs. Anytime you can play the least amount of games as possible, save the bullpen, et cetera, it goes a long way. We treat every game as a must-win, but obviously going to their place, we'll be ready to play. It should be a fun environment. We'll be looking to come out right out of the gates and come away with a win.

Q. Can you take us through how Aaron told you about you getting the Game 3 start and what you thought about it?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, I mean, obviously very excited. I think there was some conversation earlier the week before the series started saying, hey, you possibly could start Game 3 if you don't get used in any certain situations in Game 1, and those situations didn't arise. After the next day we came into the field on that off-day and it was one of those things where it was like, we're going to go with you on Game 3.

Very honored, very excited. It's a great opportunity. But trying to win a ballgame, so really focused and really in control of my emotions, not trying to get too high on it, and just go out there and do my job.

Q. Back in August I believe you said as you were going through the injury and rehab, I want to start playoff games. How much was this possibility on your mind throughout the injury and the rehab and all of that, and what does it mean to you to be getting the ball?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, this is every kid's dream to be



able to start a playoff game for the New York Yankees and to be able to have this opportunity is something that I don't take lightly.

Like I said, very honored to be able to have this opportunity. I think obviously in August when we were going through the injury, I said I wanted to start playoff games, and when you're working out in the offseason and you're putting in all those extra hours and you're very disciplined in what you do and you go the extra mile on things, you have this in the back of your mind of like, opportunities like this. Very much looking forward to it and kind of trying to seize the moment.

Just want to win a ballgame really. I think that's what it comes down to.

Q. Clarke, just watching the first two games of the series what, have you taken away from this Kansas City lineup? What kind of challenge do they present for you?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, they've obviously swung the bats really well so far the first two games. I think this isn't an offense that you can underestimate in any manner. I think they're very gritty. They have guys who can slug the ball. They have guys who put the ball in play. They run bases really well. They do the small things really well. They don't strike out a lot, which kind of plays really well in a playoff format, I believe.

I think when you don't have a lot of swing-and-miss and you're able to move guys over and do the small things right, I think it can really bode well in situations like this.

It's obviously a tall task and a challenge but nothing that I don't welcome and the rest of this pitching staff doesn't welcome. I think everybody from top to bottom on our staff, we're ready for this moment, and we're looking forward to it, and I think obviously a challenge, but definitely welcoming it.

Q. I was wondering if you could reflect for us on your last postseason experience, how much more comfortable you are being a starter than I think you



were forced into a walk-off situation in Cleveland and then middle relief against Houston. How much more comfortable are you and how much of a better pitcher are you now than you were then?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, I feel like a different player and a different person than who I was back then. Obviously you don't really know what to expect when you're going into your first playoff, and then I was in some situations where obviously I wasn't typically used to when I was getting brought up. It was kind of like a perfect storm of, you know, just -- I won't say not ready for the moment, but just kind of things that caught you off guard.

I think now I just feel very comfortable with myself and who I am as a pitcher, and I think what I'm trying to do to guys and how I'm trying to get guys out, I'm a lot more comfortable with. I've found my identity a little bit as a pitcher, and I think these playoff situations, if you kind of let the emotions and the energy overwhelm you and become too much, I think it can kind of throw you off your game.

For me now I feel just very calm and very confident in what I'm trying to do out there, and I think it should show, and I think it's showed throughout the year.

I'm kind of trying to treat it like another game throughout the season. Obviously there's going to be a lot of energy in the crowd and in the two teams. I think you've just got to have the ability to try to control the energy as much as you can and try to remain yourself and be calm.

Q. How tough an at-bat is Yuli Gurriel? I know he gave Gary an 11-pitch one and you faced him in that Houston game.

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, just when I think of -- another credit to their lineup is they have a lot of veteran presence and their veterans are really, really good. Salvy, Yuli, those two guys, they're very smart and they think along with you. Tommy Pham, those guys, when you face them, they know what you did to get them out in previous ABs and they know what you're trying to do.

There's a little bit of a game within a game when you're facing those guys. It's a little bit like chess. I think when you're facing Gurriel, he's been in these situations so many times before in his career that he's really good at being able to think along with you.

I think obviously it's a challenge and it's going to be a fun one and something I'm looking forward to. Obviously he got me in the first one, so definitely looking forward to facing him again.

Q. Andy Pettitte said some very complimentary things about you yesterday, said he's been a big fan of yours since first seeing you in the minors and says you've developed some of the best breaking stuff now in all of the Big Leagues. Can you talk a little bit about meeting Andy and sort of what you've gotten from some of your conversations with him?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, I think -- I mean, I can't speak highly enough of Andy and what he's been able to -- the knowledge he's kind of bestowed on me and all the advice he's given me. We've kind of formed a really good relationship over the years.

He's helped me immensely as far as like mentality, pitch selection, how you're trying to get guys out, sequencing. There's so many things, it kind of goes back to the game within the game that he's obviously been in those situations so many times in playoff atmospheres, and he kind of had that pitch package where it was like, he tried to get you out in a million different ways. It wasn't like he was just trying to out-stuff you the whole time.

Somebody you can really learn from, and obviously one of my idols growing up.

I think everybody knows that kind of that look he had when playoffs were on, somebody who turned it on when it mattered the most.

I kind of want to have that same type of legacy, and I think that what better person to learn from than him. I've probably watched all of his playoff starts over the course of the season, just going back and in my downtime I'll spend a lot of time just watching playoff starts of his.

Really thankful to have him as a mentor for myself.

Q. You were just speaking about the strengths of the Royals' lineup. Has it been a surprise to you that they were able to knock out Cole and Rodón early?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, I think playoffs are unpredictable. I think anything can happen. I think we see that throughout all the series that are going on right now. I think things happen that are kind of unforeseen.

It's just a matter of, like, they have the ability to kind of grind out ABs. Like I said, they don't swing and miss a lot so they can run your pitch count up quick, and then they can piece together some runs really quick, and then obviously they have some guys who can slug.

When you have that top to bottom -- and they're very hungry, as you can see. Those ABs those guys are locked

in pitch to pitch. Anything can happen in these games. Definitely not surprised.

But it's kind of been like punch after punch, and we've been able to respond pretty well, and they've been responding well. Hopefully we'll be able to come back with another punch for sure.

Q. You just mentioned they're a contact hitting team. Does that play to your strength do you think as opposed to a lineup that looks to hit three or four home runs a game and is willing to exchange 9, 10, 11 strikeouts for that?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: Yeah, it doesn't hurt. But it goes back to saying, anything can happen in these games, but I think for me, I throw a lot of strikes, and I try to induce a lot of weak contact, so yeah, definitely can play to my hand, but sometimes those weak contacts can find a hole. I don't want to sit here and say it's going to play into my hand and they just dumping in a bunch of stuff on me tomorrow.

I think every offense in these games, in these formats can pose a test, but like I said earlier, I'm really looking forward to facing them for sure, and I think a challenge for sure, but one that I welcome.

Q. Are you nervous?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: No, not nervous. I'm really honestly excited. I trust my preparation. The trust the work that I've put in. I trust everybody around me, wells and the rest of our pitching staff and the guys who make decisions as far as pitch selections and usages and stuff like that.

Not nervous. I think if you're nervous going into atmospheres like this, you can get eaten alive. For me, I'm excited and I'm going to be aggressive and on the attack for sure.

Q. In those five starts in September or just the first four of those because of the weather in Game 162, what was it that told you that you had recaptured that true Clarke Schmidt form after such a long layoff?

CLARKE SCHMIDT: You know, obviously the stuff was really good. I think that's like an early sign. But I think really happy with the command and the locations and getting to my areas really well and being able to repeat my mechanics. I think sometimes when you take a long layoff like that, you might lose fuel a little bit of your mechanics. But was really sharp, and even in the Minor Leagues it almost felt like a really good reset for myself being able to go down there and get healthy again and kind of just tweak some small mechanical things and be able to kind of clean

up some things that I really wanted to. You don't really get that downtime in a typical year.

I tried to utilize that time to the best of my abilities, and really happy with how we came out after the injury.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports