

# AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

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

## New York Yankees

### Aaron Boone

#### Workout Day Press Conference

**Q. Long before Clarke had really been accomplishing much in the majors, you always talked about his confidence. As you've seen him progress as a big league pitcher, how has that demeanor changed? How has he used it? How has his output matched his personality in some ways?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I mean, I really go back to in my mind I can picture him when we were getting ready before starting the COVID season when we were doing our second Spring Training up here, and he flashed all the stuff, but you saw a guy that just wasn't a refined product yet. You'd see within an at-bat, you'd see, man, that was nasty, that was nasty, but then little lack of command, spray, mistake, and that's just gradually -- it's been a nice gradual progression for him of just getting a little bit better each and every year. He became an important figure in our bullpen in 2021 -- or was it 2022. Then 2023 when he got the opportunity to go into the rotation as a full time really after going through some lumps in that first month of the season, really had a strong season for us the rest of the way.

I think tired a little bit at the back end of last year, just being at a place he'd never been innings-wise, but on balance you saw the emergence of a really good starting pitcher in this league, and then obviously coming out this year, it's gone to another level.

I think the cutter has become a pitch that he's worked on over the last few years that's become a real staple for him. It's helped him now become real effective against lefties, as well.

But he's got all the weapons, the sinker, the curveball, the cutter, the slider. He's got everything that can beat you with really good stuff. The confidence has always been there. I can picture the confidence back in the bubble in 2020 when he was still very raw but flashing all the stuff.



There was that confidence to follow.

Now you're just seeing a guy that really -- I feel like he loves pitching and loves all that goes with that, so the physical preparation, in the weight room, the pitch design things that they're able to do and what you can learn, all the way to the game playing. He loves everything about pitching, and he's just super competitive.

It's been neat to see him just kind of get better and better each year.

**Q. When you guys faced Lugo last month, you said it was the best pitching performance against you guys all year. What makes him so tough and how do you use that to your advantage seeing him a few weeks later?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, hopefully that serves us well, that familiarity. We've seen him a couple times this year. We had a little bit of success with him when we were in Kansas City in June, but yeah, I thought his last outing against us here was outstanding.

He is one of those guys that he's got everything. You hear that phrase "kitchen sink," he's going to throw a little bit of everything. He can sink the ball, cut it, spin it, slow it down, change speeds really well. You might see eight different pitches at a given time.

Hopefully that serves us well, having that familiarity of just seeing him, but he certainly poses a challenge.

**Q. Berti had some results against him in the past. Is he going to be back at first base tomorrow?**

AARON BOONE: I haven't made that decision yet, so we'll see. It's kind of one I'm still deliberating on.

**Q. What was the thinking you guys decided to fly today instead of last night? Did you weigh that at all against the wanting to have a workout at Kauffman Stadium?**

AARON BOONE: A little bit. I think some of it was with



Monday night football going on, there was some hotel stuff that was a little bit of an issue. But kind of just weighing getting in at 3:00 in the morning or knowing on a playoff night it could be a late night and you go home and sleep in your bed. Marcus Stroman threw a live BP today, a chance for our guys to really take advantage of our facility here as far as just treatments and recoveries and things like that.

Just that. Just kind of decided let's sleep in our own bed and get off in the afternoon.

**Q. Is this a Taylor Swift factor then with the Chiefs game?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I don't know about that, but I know Monday night football came up with a lot of the hotel situations. But I don't know if it's as much that as things we could take advantage of here.

**Q. What have you seen from Bobby Witt, Jr.'s at-bats in the series so far, and what has allowed you guys to neutralize him?**

AARON BOONE: Well, I mean, I think we've pitched him tough, obviously, but obviously we know how good and dangerous he is. Hopefully we can continue to execute.

Ultimately pitching, when you have good pitching and you execute, usually that favors the pitcher. When they can execute at a high level, you're going to get even the best of the best out sometimes.

I think it's just that. There's a couple games where we've had success, where we've done some really good things pitching-wise to him, and hopefully we can continue to have a little bit of success.

But obviously we know how dangerous and good of a hitter -- well-rounded hitter he is.

**Q. Does the fact that Clarke hasn't seen the Royals this year or better yet the Royals haven't seen Clarke this year, did that weigh into the decision to start him today?**

AARON BOONE: No.

**Q. Also, you said that you were weighing your decision at first base. What goes into it?**

AARON BOONE: I don't know. I obviously didn't have to make that decision last night or this morning, but obviously just let the day come to us a little bit and we'll talk to a few coaches and things like that and let who I want to weigh in

on that weigh in and try and make the best decision. It's not always necessarily just who starts the game but how it sets you up on the bench and things like that.

Yeah, I mean, I feel like I have a good decision in front of me. It was really good to see Jon out there last night handle first base so well in his first go around at that and really give quality at-bats. His at-bats last night from jump were really good, and it was really good to see.

**Q. You were just talking about how confident Clarke is, but you've also seen Cole and Rodón both get knocked out and suddenly now the weight of the franchise is on Clarke's shoulders. A start like this obviously requires more than talent and ordinary regular season confidence. Can you talk about the responsibility he has now to this team and getting past the Royals? It may come down to just this game.**

AARON BOONE: Well, I mean, one of us has to win two more. Look, obviously every game you walk into in the playoffs is crucial and it's huge and all that. Clarke is fully cut out to handle that. Like whatever he goes out and does, it doesn't mean he's going to go dominate, doesn't mean he won't struggle, whatever. Whatever he does, I know he will be prepared. He will walk out there with confidence and with an expectation to deliver, and he's got the equipment to deliver.

I'm excited to go see him do his thing. I don't worry about him and all the noise that comes with a best-of-five series and it's Game 3 and we're tied on the road. I know he's fully equipped to deal with all that.

**Q. In all the scenarios that you thought through on this series, I'm sure you didn't think of the possibility of your two best starters getting knocked out. Have the Royals surprised you in any way?**

AARON BOONE: They've done a great job, no question. I feel like they've put a lot of really good at-bats against us, especially last night with Carlos getting off to such a good start. He was kind of dominant those first three innings. Stuff was great. Then to their credit, they took advantage of some of the mistakes he made in the strike zone last night and did some really good things, especially with two strikes. They were able to do some good things and made that inning stand up against us.

Clearly they're tough and they are putting together some tough at-bats against us.

**Q. Your team had the best road record in the bigs this year. What do you think allowed you guys to have so much success away from home against good teams?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I mean, not so sure. Every year is a little bit different. Sometimes it's place and time. You get hot on a couple road trips -- we had a lot of success on the West Coast this year, which isn't always an easy thing to do. Our two West Coast trips were really successful for us.

I don't know that it helps, that a veteran group is a reason why we've won that many games because I think it can be just as easy some years where it's the other way around.

I think it's just we've put together some of our best baseball in some stretches where we've been on the road. We certainly enjoy playing on the road. It's a confident group. They know that wherever we are, we know what we're capable of.

I think it's just that.

**Q. Royals fans haven't had a home playoff game in almost a decade since the 2015 World Series. What kind of atmosphere do you think it's going to be like these next couple days?**

AARON BOONE: Yeah, it should be awesome. Obviously Kauffman Stadium is one of those great historic places that's kind of stood the test of time. It's a beautiful ballpark, rich in history. I would imagine that they are going to be excited to see their Royals at home coming on the heels of what's been an outstanding regular season after some lean years for them. But it's a proud baseball city and town. I know they love their Royals, and I would imagine the atmosphere will show that.

**Q. I assume you saw what Jazz said after the game last night about the Royals just getting lucky. Your reaction to that and any concern about that being bulletin board material for the Royals?**

AARON BOONE: Not really. I would disagree. I don't think they got lucky. I think they did a lot of really good things and came in here and beat us last night.

But I also looked at the line of question as it went. I think what he was referring to more was probably we did hit into some tough luck. There were some hard-hit balls. So that line of questioning continued to where Jazz can be colorful sometimes, and in his head, because of the confidence he has in himself and our group, like hey, they got lucky.

But I don't think that was the case. They obviously played really well. I think they played two really good games against us and earned themselves a victory last night.