

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

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

Kansas City Royals Manager Matt Quatraro Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Is the mantra let's not go back to New York or are we just taking it one day at a time?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, we just got here about an hour ago. That's what we do. You can't be thinking about Game 4 before you even get to start Game 3. You can't take anything for granted. Our guys are just going to come out here and be excited about the opportunity.

We're much happier coming back here 1-1 than being down 0-2, and I think that's a good thing for us and for our fans to know there will be two games here. We've just got to go after Game 3 the best we can.

Q. It will be important to be more efficient to kind of help the bullpen -- I know you used a lot of guys the last couple of games -- in this Game 3 that's coming up?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, we'd love that, but with the day off today, it's not the most important thing. But they're rested for the day off just like the Yankees' bullpen is. But yeah, clearly if Lugo has a good start, that's going to put us in a good position.

Q. How does it feel to be home?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, it's been a long time. It kind of dawned on us all sometime in the last couple days, it's been over two weeks since we left for that last road trip. It's almost unheard of except in this scenario to go on a four-city trip. But I'm really happy we did because otherwise we wouldn't be sitting here talking about playoff baseball.

Q. Is there anything in particular -- obviously clinching the playoffs and beating the Orioles, but anything stand out about all those days away for you?



MATT QUATRARO: Well, those two are kind of big ones. You kind of nailed it. We clearly weren't playing our best baseball when we left. That was a rough home stand. We got to D.C., we were able to sweep that series, which was a huge momentum swing for us going into the last series knowing we had a magic number of 1. Would have loved to handle it ourselves, didn't happen that way.

But the guys really appreciated the fact that we were able to celebrate that night and then set up our pitching for the rest of the way.

Q. I know everybody is fired up to play at home, but it may sound odd, do you have to temper the excitement just a little bit?

MATT QUATRARO: I don't think so. These guys are pros, man. They understand that you can't -- it's not football. You can't do it on pure emotion. You can't run out, give a speech and run out of the tunnel and you win. You've got nine innings to play, and you've got to take it one pitch at a time. That's what our guys have really embraced.

Q. Bobby obviously hasn't hit the way he's wanted to this series. I wondered if you noticed anything. But, second, how much has the fact he's gone through the whole regular season of not worrying about that sort of thing and putting it behind him and how much that practice helps him in the postseason?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, I think that would help him tremendously. I think he's also been pitched extremely tough. I was thinking about it on the plane today. He's gotten to, I don't know how many, three or four 3-2 counts. Just to expand it a little bit, if those are walks, we're talking about he's seeing the ball well, he's getting on, he's likely to have stolen a couple bases, those kinds of things.

That's the fine line in this game. It's not easy to do. Hitting is really tough, and when you're somebody like Bobby that everybody is bearing down on at all times, you're going to get their best.

Q. I'm wondering for you managing is there a different level of adrenaline? In a way in the last couple weeks,



you were almost in the playoffs, but since it's the actual playoffs, is it something that juices you in a different way?

MATT QUATRARO: I don't know. I mean, it's been exciting for sure. I can't sit here -- I have four playoff games under my belt, so it's not like I'm a seasoned vet at this. But it's been really fun. I mean, I think when you know you're in a playoff situation -- we've talked about this since August or July. We're in a playoff race, playoff race. And then things in September got kind of hairy and it was pretty much like we've got to figure this out. A lot of those games we approached that way.

Now, the difference is with the off-days built in, you can manage the games differently, but I do feel like those last couple weeks helped me and helped us get into that mentality.

Q. One other thing with September -- late August and September, some of the difficulties but also some of what you learned about the team, has that enabled you to know the team to a different degree in the postseason and what things you're working with?

MATT QUATRARO: I think it's more the same of what I did know. It's an incredibly selfless group of guys, guys that are able to put things behind them quickly, guys that are able to keep it light in there. Because it's easy to think, oh, man, it's not going well or whatever, and then your mood -- it's all of us. Human nature, your mood can snowball in the other direction.

But they've been the opposite. The mood has been great. They've been picking each other up, keeping it light, all the things they have to do to perform at their best.

Q. Vinnie is obviously working to get going. What gives you confidence that he's close with his timing? Obviously you kind of knew it would maybe take a little bit for him?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, I've seen a lot of positives from Vinnie. He squared that ball up yesterday on Rodón. I think it was 99. He's taken a couple walks. Yesterday was another example of he was just out in front of a couple things. You'd rather see the guy just out in front than late all the time. He laid off a couple tough breaking balls in the dirt, as well, this series.

And then going back to Baltimore, we threw him right in there, a couple hits, a walk, big RBI. So what he's done in this short period of time is remarkable.

Q. Big baseball city, what's it been like to see the

reaction from Kansas City?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, some of the things that have been sent to me have been pretty emotional, to be honest, when we've watched them. My wife and I were watching some of the stuff in the hotel today, whether it was the crowd last night at Arrowhead or the scene from Power and Light the other day or even got a thing from the Kansas City Symphony that played Take Me Out to the Ballgame.

Those things have all been sent to us, and I think it's awesome. Everywhere you go, driving in here today there's a lot of Royals stuff out on lawns and stuff like that.

That's what you want. You want your community behind you and you want to be behind them and give them something to cheer for.

Q. Last night Salvy, Yuli, and Tommy all came up big time to help out in the fourth inning. What kind of roles were envisioned for Yuli and Tommy when they were brought on and how have they helped Salvy with the young players given their experience?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, I can't say I knew any -- I knew Yuli from watching him on the other side of the field and always respected him as a hitter. He was an incredibly tough out. We got him at a point where he hadn't played for a couple weeks. We really didn't know what to expect, other than the fact that everything we had heard about him as a person and as a teammate was off the charts.

As he's worked himself back into better health with his hamstring. His at-bats have been phenomenal, and what it's done for us is give a really good bat to put behind Salvy. And then when you add Vinnie back in there, things get a lot longer.

Tommy, I knew for sure was going to love it here. His competitiveness, the fact that we were squarely in a playoff race and that he was going to get consistent at-bats, I had no doubt that guys were going to see the kind of competitor he is and the worker, and that he was going to fit right in.

Q. I know you've got to get through Game 3 but you know you're going to play a Game 4. Do you have a starter for Game 4?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, Wacha will go back out in Game 4.

Q. When we're watching on TV, you're at the mercy of watching the grid to see whether it's a strike or a ball. Doesn't always seem super consistent from game to



game. How do you manage through that with your pitchers? I expect the veteran guys are cool with whatever, but making sure that they just keep doing what they need to do to pitch regardless of how these things are getting called on a particular night. How much study do you do on who's going to be the home plate umpire on a certain night?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, that part of it. I know Salvy puts a lot of time into that. The umpires that have been around for a long time, you understand some of their tendencies. And they're human, they're going to broaden certain parts of the zone and shrink other parts depending on the hitters. We know the strike zone is not that box. It never has been, and it's just more of a moving target, so to speak, around the zone sometimes.

That's the same for both teams. We don't spend a whole lot of time on you need to pitch this way because of this person umpiring or whatever the case is. You have to execute your pitches and hope -- for really good teams like the ones you're playing in the playoffs, you have to be able to beat guys in the zone. We need to challenge the zone at all times and make them make as many decisions as they can.

We don't spend a lot of time on that. Now, if something in game seems to be going terribly one way or the other, we'll talk to the umpires. Salvy does a great job of it. He has a tremendous respect from them and for them. And we'll all speak up if we need to, whether that's in an individual conversation or guys will give it to them from the dugout. It's part of the game. Both sides do it all the time.

Q. You guys have held -- been able to hold Aaron Judge in check so far through a couple games. Is it a lot to expect that that's going to continue the way it has so far?

MATT QUATRARO: Sure. I mean, he's one of, if not the, best hitter in the game, one of the most elite hitters in the last decade. We've pitched him tough. We have to continue to do that. You can't take for granted, oh, we've got him. Like there's none of that.

You have to execute every pitch every time he's up there. Same with Soto. We've seen already their lineup is plenty deep. Chisholm has done damage, Verdugo has done damage, Volpe has swung the bat. So Judge is clearly one of the two guys that everyone focuses on, but you need to execute pitches regardless of who you're facing.

Q. How much do you feel like being in such a tight race in September helped you solidify the bullpen roles that you're using now?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, I think a lot. Yeah, especially it's been a huge addition when Zerpa came back up and really was throwing the ball well, developed a breaking ball, built his confidence back to where it seemed like it was early in the year if not more.

Sam Long has been really good almost the whole time he's been with us. Unfortunately some of those roles evolved because of guys getting hurt. McArthur got hurt, Stratton, Will. So all those things play a role in it. But definitely those guys pitched in a lot of high leverage down the stretch.

Q. Back up against a righty starter tomorrow, and you had Massey at lead-off, but given the way Maikel has swung, do you think about keeping him up there against a righty?

MATT QUATRARO: I will think about it. I have not come up with a batting order for tomorrow yet, so I'll -- like I kind of did yesterday, write up probably 10 to 20 different lineups and just see where they go.

Q. How do you strike the balance between what the numbers may say facing a lineup a third time for a starting pitcher versus how they feel in the moment and then how they're pitching in a game?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, we try to balance it out the best we can. These first two games have been kind of unique. Wacha's game, I felt like that was pretty high leverage right from the get-go, having second and third, nobody out and working pretty hard through those first couple innings.

Yesterday's game was a little easier decision because Cole was gassed. That was almost 90 pitches in four innings, and he was working hard.

Those off-days certainly helped to be able to go to the pen. Now, we might not be able to do that both of these games, nor do we want to, so we will have to strike that balance.

Q. How shortly after last night's game did your guys become aware of Jazz Chisholm's "they got lucky" comments?

MATT QUATRARO: I don't know when for sure they heard it. I know when I was leaving the ballpark, I heard that that had been said.

Q. Did your guys have any reaction to it?

MATT QUATRARO: Not really. It wasn't something that they -- I mean, they heard it. I can't speak for every single

one of them if they reacted to it, but it wasn't something that was like a, oh, everybody has got to hear this kind of thing.

Q. You've been gone for so long; did you pack knowing you were going to come back on October 8? Was your confidence level there? What did you miss about Kansas City while you were gone?

MATT QUATRARO: I did. I packed for every possible day we could have been gone. That was my confidence level and hope that that was what was going to happen. I was ready for that. I know my wife's suitcase was heavy, too, so I know she was ready for that.

No, it's fun to be back. We clearly -- a huge goal of ours was to get back here and play a home playoff game, and now to have two of them guaranteed is even better.

You miss sleeping in your own bed, the comforts of having your own fridge and all that stuff. It was great, though, for me personally because my family came for this whole week. And that was awesome because so many times in the past when my kids were really young, they'd stay back. And then you'd be gone -- even that COVID year, 50-something straight days without seeing them, being in the bubble.

And then to have them be part of this and understand a little bit more what's going on has been tremendous.

Q. I know Salvy is rested and gets the off-days and everything, but with Freddy, do you think about putting him in somewhere given how good he's been behind the plate for you guys and come through in some big spots offensively?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, we have talked about it a lot, and we wouldn't be here without what Freddy has contributed to the season. But at the same point now, the way Yuli is swinging the bat, we have Vinnie back, we're not going to put someone out of position to force something. But if the need is there or there's a pinch-hit situation, we would definitely consider Freddy. Or if we run for Yuli and Salvy goes to first, there are ways that Freddy could play a big role in this.

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