

# AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

Wednesday, October 9, 2024  
Kansas City, Missouri, USA  
Kauffman Stadium

## Kansas City Royals

### Michael Wacha

#### Pregame 3 Press Conference

**Q. I know this is your first year here, but what have you seen and heard about the scene?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, it's very exciting. Getting to get back here in Kansas City in front of our own fan base, it's going to be huge. It's going to be a lot of fun.

I had mentioned it earlier on in the year, had seen in the past playoff baseball here in Kansas City, and it was electric. Just really excited that we were able to bring it back to these fans and excited for these next couple days.

**Q. How much does it help to face a team twice in a series for you as you prepare?**

MICHAEL WACHA: You know, it happens a couple times throughout the course of the season. It's always a little different, I would say, facing guys in back-to-back starts.

Just watching film and kind of seeing how you attacked them the previous outing and finding ways that you can execute better or make different pitches in different spots and kind of go about it that way.

**Q. You were a rookie when you pitched in the World Series. Now the shoe is on the other foot where you're a veteran and you see young guys. Can you explain from your perspective those two vantage points?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Right. My first year in 2013, it was a lot of fun. We were able to make a run all the way to the World Series. And at the time, yeah, I was the new guy. It was all new experiences to me. Had never been in those type of situations, that type of atmosphere before. Really relied on those veteran guys.

Now that I'm, like you said, on the opposite side of that, have had that experience, have been in those types of atmospheres, can help some guys if they have questions



or help these guys prepare their minds, prepare kind of what to expect whenever they get out there, and try to get them as calm and prepared as possible, I would say.

**Q. What was the vision that was presented to you by J.J. and the Royals' management that made you pick coming here? Because obviously the vision has come to fruition.**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, they stressed a lot about their young talent that they had here and that they had a full year underneath their belt and thought that they would be able to take the necessary steps into this 2024 season. He was talking about his free agent signings, as well, and those also caught my eye, the guys that they were bringing in, as well.

Whenever they were showing interest and presenting kind of their vision for the season, it was a no-brainer. We were very excited to get something done.

It's all talk. It's all on paper at the beginning of the year and Spring Training and in the offseason. It takes a full course of a season for it to finally come to where we are, and a lot of work has to go and be put into it.

But those young guys on our team have really stepped up this year, have been playing some great ball all season and into the postseason, as well. Some of their signings that they did, as well, have played really well and gotten us to where we are.

**Q. You've been at this a long time now. How are you different as a pitcher than you were when you broke in, and maybe what's similar?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, I'll start with the difference, I guess. Whenever I broke in, I was pretty much a fastball, changeup pitcher. I know that I still throw a lot of fastballs, some changeups, but have mixed in and added some pitches to the repertoire to, I guess, help different looks and get certain batters out and just become a little bit more effective on the mound.

But I've always tried to be a strike thrower, always tried to



fill up the zone and let the defense play behind me and go get the punch-out whenever I need to go get it.

But I've learned a lot over the years for sure. I've played with a lot of different teams, have been lucky enough to play with a lot of really good players and talk a lot of baseball with the players, with the staffs that I've been a part of. And so just taking little bits of things from each of those guys and applying it where I find necessary has been really helpful, as well.

**Q. What is your secret to getting Aaron Judge out?**

MICHAEL WACHA: You've just got to -- I try to make quality pitches. I really do. I mentioned that the other night. Just try to make quality pitches to a guy like that.

He's an unbelievable player. He can do damage. He hits for average and drives in a lot of guys whenever they're on base. You've just got to make quality pitches just like everyone else in that lineup.

**Q. You mentioned you've obviously pitched for a lot of different cities. Is there anything about Kansas City to you that is unique, and do you feel like the team has taken on the personality of the city anyway?**

MICHAEL WACHA: It has been great here in Kansas City. It's been a lot of fun getting to be in this community over the course of the summer. I feel like they've embraced me and my family. It's been great.

Me and my wife, we're both Midwestern people. I was born in Iowa, I grew up in Texas. But my wife is from St. Louis. This part of the country fits us well we feel like. And a lot of family close by is nice, getting to see them a lot.

But just playing in front of this fan base throughout the course of the season has been a lot of fun. They're very supportive and want the best for us and always cheering us on. That's all you can ask for as a player.

**Q. You guys have been a little bit under the radar this year in town with the Chiefs winning and all that stuff and you've been gone for so long on this big road trip to get back here. Have you felt the playoff buzz over the last 24 hours back here in down yet?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, so getting in last night, able to get up here and get a workout in. But on the drive home, saw some people walking down the sidewalks, got their Royals jerseys on. It was cool seeing that. Same thing coming to the ballpark today; just a lot of fans. They're ready to see some postseason baseball here in Kansas City. Excited that we were able to bring it to them.

**Q. You guys have some weird paths you go across. You and Seth Lugo were teammates last year in San Diego. What do you think you learned from him, and what do you think of him as a competitor and getting to watch him go tonight?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, he's unbelievable. Lucky enough to link back up with him this year. We first played together in New York in 2020, and then linked back up last year in San Diego.

Yeah, just getting to see him in that starter role, how he approaches it. How he prepares, what he finds is, I guess, most beneficial for him going into a start, what he thinks is important preparing for games, I think has been the biggest thing.

Just being able to talk to him -- he throws a lot of different pitches. He can spin the crap out of the ball. That's something I've always had trouble with is spinning the ball. So talking to him, picking his brain on whatever he's thinking when he's throwing those pitches, I feel like it's helped me out throughout the past couple years.

**Q. You're either going to be pitching in an elimination or a clinching game. Do you think there's any differences there pressure-wise in an elimination game, maybe your leash is shorter? Anything about those two various scenarios?**

MICHAEL WACHA: I don't really think about the leash too much. I just want to go out there and win the ballgame. Whether, yeah, it's a clinching game or it's an elimination game, it's a must-win in my mind either way. I want to go out there and give our guys a chance to win a ballgame just like any other start throughout the season. And this one is no different. Want to get out there, hopefully go deep, and give our guys a chance to win a ballgame.

**Q. When Seth was with the Mets coming out of the bullpen, what do you remember about him wanting to be a starter and believing he could always be a starter?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, I wasn't totally filled in on their situation over there or anything like that. But I remember him always telling me in the offseasons he would prepare. He would build his arm up to throw multiple innings in Spring Training and prepare himself as a starter if that's what his organization wanted him to do.

Yeah, whenever I was able to be teammates with him in that 2020 season, which was kind of a weird season in itself, that was something that he had mentioned that he

had prepared himself. I think he had a few starts that year, as well. But yeah, just getting to see him in that full starter role last year was cool, to see how he embraced it and went out there and dominated.

**Q. When you signed with the Royals, it was just a few days after Seth. Bobby Witt, Jr. was saying with the offseason additions, he had a sense in Spring Training that this season could be special. This is of historical proportions, this turnaround. Did you foresee anything like that?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, I did. That's why I signed here. I've never played on a losing team. I'm used to winning. I'm used to being in the postseason. That's what I want to do. I want to win a ring. I do. I want to bring that back to my family, the fan base that I'm playing for, and for the guys in that clubhouse. That's what I want it for.

I don't have one yet. And so there was a belief going into that Spring Training, not just for myself but I had a sense from the rest of the club, as well, that we could do something special.

**Q. To be able to command your cut fastball to both sides of the plate, how much does that open up your changeup and other pitches against the Yankees' lineup?**

MICHAEL WACHA: Yeah, it's a tough lineup that you've got to mix your pitches. You've got to work the corners on them. You can't leave much over the plate against these guys.

Being able to work those corners, strike to ball, ball to strike, is definitely important to set up other pitches, as well.

**Q. A lot of people talk about Seth's game preparation. What stands out to you about his process? What kind of questions does he ask? What kind of information does he seek?**

MICHAEL WACHA: He likes charts, I would say. He watches video. I would say -- it's very similar to most starters, I would say, on how he prepares.

But the impressive part is just out there on the mound, you can see him, that mind is working. He's got an unbelievable eye of reading swings and knowing what to do after, and it's really impressive.

**Q. Pitching one game of the series in Yankee Stadium and then one in Kauffman Stadium, how drastic of a change is that for you?**

MICHAEL WACHA: I mean, it's great being home, that's for sure. Pitching in front of your home crowd, it's a familiar mound that you've been on a lot. That part is nice for sure. Yeah, won't be getting -- at least I don't think I will be getting ragged in the bullpen warming up or anything like that.

Yeah, there are some differences for sure. Pitching in a hostile environment on the road compared to pitching in your home park. But looking forward to getting out there.

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