

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

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

Kansas City Royals Manager Matt Quatraro Pregame 3 Press Conference

MATT QUATRARO: We feel really good about Fraz and the quality of his at-bats. Schmidt can be really tough on righties and lefties, but specifically righties. Frazier has faced him a decent amount, especially last year.

So really we look at -- whether it's Pham, Frazier, Renfroe, we look for really quality at-bats, professional at-bats from any of them, but we feel really good about any of them.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, again, we think they're going to put up a really good at-bat, a professional at-bat. They each have their own strengths, so depending on the game situation, we'll have both of them ready at all times.

Q. I was wondering, who are some of the biggest influences you would look to when you look a managerial job? Anyone you talked to about becoming a manager?

MATT QUATRARO: Going through the process of --

Q. Yeah, when you got the job and you knew you were going to be a manager.

MATT QUATRARO: Sure, I probably talked to everybody I knew about it whether they're in baseball or not. Just try to garner as much information from people as possible. But I relied on Kevin Cash enormously, Terry Francona, my parents -- my mom, I should say -- my wife. I mean, I talked to everybody -- because I look at it, the job is as a manager, but it's working with people and understanding how to build relationships. So it's not just baseball people that I relied on.

Q. Did anyone give you a message that really resonated or a tip?



MATT QUATRARO: Again, I think it's all of it. I think you take -- I don't think there's any one person that has a secret to how to do this job well. It's build relationships, trust the people, put good people around you, make sure you put your best foot forward every day. You've got to earn the respect of people.

You don't come into a job and say, this is how it's going to be done and this is how -- this is the only way. You've got to get everybody's opinions, understand what direction we want to go and put things into perspective and put the work in to earn the respect of everybody around you.

Q. When did you know that in Seth Lugo you didn't have just a good pitcher but you had an elite level ace guy?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, he earned that, start after start. Right out of the gate, his outings were tremendous the whole month of April, May. He showed us what he was going to be. I don't think there's one day where we said, okay, he is a Cy Young candidate or he is an ace. He just kept putting quality start after quality start together.

Q. What are some of the biggest things that make him that way?

MATT QUATRARO: Preparation, determination. The story has been written a bunch of times about the belief in himself that he wanted to be a starter and he thought he would be a good starter. He's shown that, even going back to last year. He put a bunch of quality starts together. Then you put in the pitching aspect of it with his ability to -- nine different pitches, work quickly, keep hitters off balance, throw a ton of strikes, change speeds, all those things that go into being a good pitcher. And he does them time after time after time.

Q. When you are going to use your bench like you do and mix and match and shuffle things around, how much communication goes into that and getting guys to buy in, and what specifically -- how much ahead of time do you give guys, let them know what the schedule is or just kind of what all goes into that?



MATT QUATRARO: Well, I mean, I think it starts early in Spring Training. Look, we're built to use this whole roster. It's not nine stars and that's it. We're going to use everybody, and then you have to live that day by day. There's opportunities in almost every game, whether it's pinch-hitting, defensive replacements. Now, you have to have the right people in place that can be versatile and that can pinch run or go play multiple positions.

As far as the communication, we tell everybody the day before who's playing. We tell them what position they're playing the day before. Then in game, Paul Hoover is several innings ahead, thinking about, hey, stay ready for two innings from now. Like, if they go to this guy, you'll be somebody that's considered to pinch-hit here, or be ready to run.

Now that we're into October, guys have seen this for months at a time, so they understand how things go now.

Q. Obviously after last season I don't think a lot of people expected you guys to be in the postseason here. Does it feel like you guys are playing with house money and that you guys can play a little bit more free, or do you think now you're in the postseason, that kind of postseason pressure infiltrates every clubhouse equally?

MATT QUATRARO: I can only speak to ours. I think our guys played pretty freely all year, and I think that's something that's continued. I don't think that's because of anyone on the outside's expectations. I think our expectations were high for ourselves coming into Spring Training.

Now, what does that mean as a whole full season unfolds? You don't know how many games you're going to win. But our guys expected to win, they expected to be really competitive. Regardless of what outside expectations are, ours are very high for ourselves.

Q. All year it's been about today, putting tomorrow away and all that. You mentioned yesterday to us a whole bunch of lineups you were going over. When do you land on that? Is it always the night before? Does it feel different getting those lineups together for a game that theoretically is more important than a regular season game in May?

MATT QUATRARO: No, we've stayed with the same routine all year. As soon as today's game is over, we gather around and talk about the next day's -- who's going to play. We don't talk much about the batting order that night or anything like that. Then generally the next morning, I'll sit down and use the objective information and

the subjective information and put together a batting order.

Now, I will say that in the postseason, I've run it by more people than normal and get opinions. Ultimately I make the final decision, but I try to get as much input as I can.

Q. What does it show, because going into the season, the Central Division wasn't really being talked about as being a powerhouse division. Right now three of the four teams remaining in the AL are from the central. Have you kind of been playing playoff games already?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, I feel like regardless of what division we are, we've been playing playoff games since August, really. You're in a race, you start -- you start thinking about positioning and trying to figure out how you can make a push to get in the playoffs because you want to play meaningful games.

Now, to have three teams still left, that says a lot about the central. I think going into the year -- the Tigers have had an unbelievable last couple months. But going into the year, they had made big strides last year. So had it not been for some injuries they had, I think they would have been a much more talked-about team throughout the summer, but they're playing to a really high level right now.

Cleveland has been good all year. Minnesota was really talented last year and they've had a tough finish to the year. But we knew all along those teams were going to be really quality but we felt like we had the ability to compete with them.

Q. With regard to the bench, how much do you think what you've been able to do -- the flexibility you have, the guys you have -- reflects growth in your relationship with J.J. to be able to kind of contour it more and more to the way you want to manage a game?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, tremendously. But I think he was on board with that from the interview process. They tested me pretty tough on those decisions, how are we going to use a roster. Because a lot of it's finance, but a lot of it is philosophy, too. Because my belief is you've got 26 guys in there, they're all major league players, and I don't view it very much as they should just sit there and never play.

I think that's not smart for clubhouse chemistry in our case. And I'm not saying everybody needs to do it that way, but it's also not smart for physical health going through the course of a full season that way.

Q. The Wild Card teams have had a lot of success,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

especially against the division winners who have had a week off. Can you pinpoint anything that would give Wild Card teams an advantage in this new format scenario?

MATT QUATRARO: I mean, you come out of a pressure situation -- I can only speak to ourselves and Baltimore. Two one-run games, the guys are fired up the whole time, they get to celebrate. Then you get a little decompression with the two days off, but you're right back at it in another really cool environment in New York.

It's just fun. It's that time of year. You're amped up all the time. You see the crowd. I know the guys will be fired up because the place will be rocking tonight.

I think you're just kind of riding that wave of emotion.

Q. Whether it's Bobby or Salvy, it seems like you have guys on this team that are always smiling. Does that have a tangible impact in October?

MATT QUATRARO: I think it probably has more of an impact in May or June when you're playing in -- maybe it's not the big environment, those kinds of things. Will Smith is another one. Those kinds of guys, that's a personality trait that's genuine. They're not doing that just because there's more people here today. I think that's how they live their life, and I think every team needs those kinds of guys.

Q. Mike Massey has had a really solid start to the postseason. What have you seen from him and how important has he been to what you guys have accomplished thus far against New York?

MATT QUATRARO: Yeah, he's an important part of everything we do, and when we've lost him in the past health-wise, it's been a battle for us. I'd love to see how much he's been able to manage that and continue to swing the bat really well. Because when he goes well, that's a huge boost to our lineup. He's playing exceptionally well defensively. That play in Baltimore probably saved that game.

I feel really good for him as a person, and he's a big part of the chemistry in that locker room, as well.

Q. There are guys in this league who throw six or seven pitches and do it with moderate success. For Lugo to throw nine and have that success, what does that say about him and why is he able to do it so effectively?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, he puts a lot of work into it. You have to if you're going to have that many pitch grips,

thought processes and stuff like that. The diligence he works with and the planning and understanding, game planning, I think that has a lot to do with it. I think his understanding of the opposing swings is a big part of it, as well. He's been around the league now so he has a really good feel for not only what he does but for what the opposing hitters do, too.

Q. How significant is it to have someone like Salvador Perez that has been through these home game moments where he can kind of help with the emotions of how the environment might feel early in the game and settle you guys down?

MATT QUATRARO: Well, I think it's awesome. We wouldn't want anybody else out there behind the plate than Salvy. Why would you? He's a future Hall of Famer and somebody that these guys can look up to.

But at the same time, they all have to manage their own emotions. No one can tell anybody in any walk of life, you need to feel this way because that's not your emotions, that's not how you handle it.

He can share his experiences, but you want these guys to go out there and experience it themselves and understand what they feel. They've been in spots before, whether it's in a postseason or other points of their career, where they've had to deal with emotions and stresses, so they have to be able to rely on those things themselves.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

