

AL Division Series: Royals vs Yankees

Thursday, October 10, 2024
Kansas City, Missouri, USA
Kauffman Stadium

New York Yankees

Alex Verdugo

Pregame 4 Press Conference

Q. What's the feeling like in there knowing you have the ability to punch your ticket to the ALCS tonight?

ALEX VERDUGO: Yeah, we feel good. We feel confident. Yesterday was a big game for us, kind of one to make you feel a little bit more settled.

Today we understand we're in a good spot, but we're not taking it for granted. We're still preparing the right way, vibes are good, but working hard and getting ready for this -- treating this like a must-win game, too.

Q. First year working with Aaron Boone; it hasn't always been smooth sailing. How has he been as your manager?

ALEX VERDUGO: I mean, for me, Boone has been great. I like Boone a lot. He's a great manager, you can talk to him about whatever you need to talk to him about. I have no complaints out of me.

Q. When the series started, it was like left field and first base were the positions that people were like, who's going to start each game. We've seen Aaron change first basemen every game, but you've gotten a long run in left field. Did you expect that?

ALEX VERDUGO: Yeah, I expected it. Like I said, me and Boone had a conversation during the workout period time before this series started, and we kind of understood we were on the same page. And just my job is to go out there, make every play I can, and go up there and have good situational hitting, getting guys over, getting guys in.

I felt like my at-bats have been a lot better, controlling the zone a lot better, and minus a couple where -- maybe two to three at-bats where I kind of was a little too aggressive early, but I'll take that any day.



Q. You were a young player once; how have you seen Dominguez handle not playing? Anything you say to him to make sure his head is still in it?

ALEX VERDUGO: Yeah, Dominguez is great. I like him a lot. He's going to be a great player, is a great player. For us he's handling it like a pro. I think he's ready to come off the bench. Whether it's getting on the bases to run for G or getting a pinch-hit at-bat, he's ready for that moment. It's just the time will tell.

Q. Besides his career accomplishments, why is Giancarlo such a respected figure?

ALEX VERDUGO: Well, I think part of it is as baseball players, you give credit to guys that have like longevity and have success in the game. But if you just take that aside, like you said, it would just be the overall person that he is. The work ethic, just the way he goes about his business, workouts, eating-wise, recovery-wise. He just does everything like a pro. He's always involved with a lot of the guys.

For me, it's just being a great guy for people to lean on and always having some knowledge to kind of help out.

Q. What's impressed you so much about Volpe in the postseason and the at-bats he's put together?

ALEX VERDUGO: Yeah, he's having really good at-bats. Honestly, I think he might have two hits, but there was one game he had it felt like four balls hit over 103. For me he's controlling the bats really well. He's using all sides of the field, hitting balls to the right side, hitting balls to the left side and up the middle.

I think when he's doing that and he's staying low with his trajectory of the ball, usually it winds up to be pretty successful for him. I know some of it was a little bit of tough luck with hitting right at guys, but you'd take those all day.

Q. You mentioned you had a conversation with Boone making sure you guys were on the same page. What was the same page you guys needed to be on?



ALEX VERDUGO: I think we've seen it. I mean, just playing. I'm there every day to be out there. This is what we kind of formed the team around when we started the year. Like I said, when it's the moment, when it's time to really shine, really do something, I live for the stage and I love it. This is the kind of baseball that I want to be a part of.

And I think the team would agree that it's just good. It's a good fit, feels good. And for me it's just -- that was the page. I want to be out there every day for my guys, and like I said, I'm going to save every run I can and I'm going to produce at the plate, as well.

Q. You had a half season of this now. What's it like playing behind Gerrit Cole?

ALEX VERDUGO: I mean, I'd say it's fun. He's a competitor. He goes after it. You can definitely tell the days when he has it, and it's lights out. Then there's days where he's kind of getting a little bit too cornery or picky or trying to hit spots where it's like, hey, man, you've got really good stuff, you've got to let it play. Get after guys, get ahead of it.

I expect him to do that tonight. I expect him to be the ace that he is. Like I said, anytime you play behind one of the aces of a team, it's very special. You get a little extra adrenaline every one of those starts.

Q. Alex, looking back on that time when Dominguez got here, the Yankees were saying, if he comes here, he's coming to play. You were in the lineup most of the time, out some games. When you were watching him out there, was it going through your mind, am I going to lose my starting job? Does it fuel you at all? Were you worried? Do you think that helped you? When you look back at that time, what were you thinking?

ALEX VERDUGO: I mean, I don't think you worry about losing your job. Like it kind of already happened, right? It's a trial for him, I felt like. So it was one of those things you wanted to give him playing time. I kind of knew I was losing some time.

Yeah, I was upset about it, but at the same time, I felt like I needed to correct some things in my body, physically-wise, and obviously eating a little bit better, too. I just started kind of doing that, using those off-days to kind of benefit myself as like work days, right? Just getting some treatment, hitting, feeling certain moves and certain things that I had kind of got away from.

I got motivated, right, and sometimes you need to get kicked in the teeth to kind of get that fire lit back under you.

Q. Aaron Judge is not usually quiet for more than a couple of days, and it's been three now. Is there a sense in there that one of these days he's going to break out?

ALEX VERDUGO: Yeah. I mean, he is who he is, man. He's a really good player. Everybody wants to dwell on the last couple games, last this, last that. The way I see it is he's had really good at-bats his last six at-bats. I don't know how many at-bats he has in three games, but his last six have been really good, as in getting off a swing that he wanted. Maybe it was a little bit off the barrel, but for him it doesn't take much. That's a big boost.

Like I said, I think he's seeing the ball better, working the counts better, laying off some stuff and swinging at pitches he wants to do damage with. That's the last person I'm worried about. He's going to come out.

Q. You played against him for several years in the Red Sox. What have you learned about him that you didn't know before?

ALEX VERDUGO: I think for me, it's just the overall person that he is, the clubhouse presence, the Captain. Also the -- kind of the fight or the dog in him, as well. He wants it. It's not like he got his money, he got paid, he's the face of baseball, and he's just kind of going through it. He's hungry. He still feels like he hasn't done what he wants to do, which is become a champion.

That kind of hunger, that's needed. This is crucial baseball, and you kind of feed off that energy. I think that's the biggest thing.

Q. When you had that conversation with Aaron and you guys were on the same page and he's telling you you're going to play every day in the Playoffs, did you expect that at that point, just given how things played out with Jasson at the end of the season?

ALEX VERDUGO: I don't know. Like I said, it's kind of weird to still be talking about this, right, for me. Because just like I said, I like Jasson a lot. I don't want to say anything negative to him or about him in that sense. But he got his playing time. He was able to showcase, get a little bit more experience, and sometimes it clicks right away, and sometimes you have some growing pains.

I think for him, he's going to be very talented, very good, but I wasn't -- like I said, I have an actual career, as in I've had a track record, I've played several years in the Big

Leagues, kind of done this before. And never been to the World Series, but I lean off some of my past memories and things like that.

Like I said, I understand who I am as a player, and I know when we need to get going, it doesn't matter how I feel. You've got to go out there, compete, give it 100 percent. That was the biggest thing. It's not to say, hey, his performance was mine, this and that. I don't care about that stuff.

Q. Did you expect Aaron to say that, for that to be --

ALEX VERDUGO: Yeah, just because, like I said, I felt like I ended the season on a lot better note, playing a lot better, and just getting a couple timely hits. And just felt like my personal opinion, it was the right move for me.

Q. The one year you played with Wacha in Boston, what sticks out about him as both a competitor and pitcher?

ALEX VERDUGO: I think, one, as a person, great guy, great all-around guy. And as a competitor, the guy wants it. I said the same thing about being hungry and wanting to go out there and wanting the ball. For me, he wants it. He has a World Series with the Cardinals in '11 and kind of saw what he was about there. If you look at his career numbers, his whole career he's been really, really good.

I think for me, that shows a guy that wants the ball, wants that opportunity, wants the big moment, and it's our job to kind of get the better half of him.

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