

# AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Friday, October 4, 2024  
Cleveland, Ohio, USA  
Progressive Field

## Cleveland Guardians

## Austin Hedges

## Lane Thomas

### Workout Day Press Conference

**Q. Guess we'll get it out of the way, Austin. Your reaction to Terry Francona taking the Cincinnati job.**

AUSTIN HEDGES: Very happy for him.

**Q. Surprise you at all? You were pretty tight with him while he was here.**

AUSTIN HEDGES: No. If you hire a Hall of Fame manager, it's probably a good decision.

**Q. What has this playoff been like? I mean, now that we're getting closer to the start of this series, how have you guys been dealing with these days off?**

AUSTIN HEDGES: I mean, it's weird. There's nobody in our clubhouse that has ever gone through something like this before. So we're figuring it out as we go.

But based off of how we've competed and prepared the last few days, I think we're more than ready. Obviously we're rested. It's fun to compete against ourselves, but we're dying to go compete against the rest of the world. And I think we're right where we need to be going into tomorrow.

**Q. Austin, how have you seen Tanner Bibee grow as a pitcher this year?**

AUSTIN HEDGES: You know, I think coming into the year he had a lot -- he wanted to prove a lot to the world, you know, that it wasn't just a good rookie year. Obviously his rookie year was outstanding, and then what he did this year. I thought he grew up so quickly. A lot of guys like him that are really fiery and competitive tend to get emotional on the mound when things don't go their way, and I think early in the year he showed some tendencies to



do that.

And, my goodness, he made an adjustment maybe 15 starts ago or so. And the calm, cool, collected guy is out there every pitch no matter what. Bad situation happens. The way he responds to adversity, looks like a ten-year vet out there.

**Q. Austin, you were on a team last year or around a team last year that caught fire at the right time and just sort of steamrolled through the postseason. Detroit obviously is riding a lot of momentum and is hot at the right time. What's it like in that environment, in that clubhouse, and what kind of challenges does that present to you guys who have been sort of waiting back and waiting to take them on.**

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yeah, I think that's one of the biggest challenges of getting that first round bye is you're playing against a team that just won a playoff series. There's no bigger momentum you can have than coming off a playoff win.

So we know the Tigers have been hot for a long time now. It's not just a playoff win. They've been the best team in baseball for a long time. And you know they've played us tough all year. So we have our hands full, but we're prepared. And the way we see it is it's not really about who we're facing because ideally we still gotta beat three more teams to do what we're trying to do, and this is just the first stop for us to just go play our ball.

**Q. Lane, what have you done to stay ready during these last four or five days?**

LANE THOMAS: Yeah, I think I got a lot of good advice from guys who have been through that situation before, and just trying to do the best to keep the body ready to go. I think it's important to keep your feet and legs fresh and kind of make it like you haven't stopped playing games. That's kind of what we've tried to keep doing.

**Q. Did you talk to guys outside the organization or your former teammates and stuff?**



LANE THOMAS: A little bit. I had gone through a couple -- I guess in 2019 in the playoffs I was hurt, and watching how they prepped, also I kind of had that in the back of my head, and some guys who have played in the playoffs recently, like Hedges, we've gotten some good advice.

**Q. This team was playing well before you even got here, and then you're joining a team that had already hit its stride. How challenging were those first few weeks for you to try to kind of fit in and just get your own rhythm?**

LANE THOMAS: Yeah, it was tough. I feel like this team has done a good job of accepting me and making me feel like I kind of belong here. So that was refreshing after the first couple weeks. So it feels like we're moving in the right path, for sure.

**Q. Just knowing that it's Skubal and then kind of everybody else, how does that impact the preparation that you guys have in terms of pitching strategy and who you're going to face against?**

AUSTIN HEDGES: In the playoffs it doesn't really matter who you're facing. Everyone is going to be good, everyone is a playoff pitcher and everyone is a playoff team.

Obviously Skubal won the Triple Crown, so he's about as good as it gets out there. The rest of the arms on the Tigers team are really good as well. They pitched us good all year.

But we have 13 games of experience against them this year. So we have a lot of information to go on, and I feel like the boys have a really good plan going into the series.

**Q. Lane, how do you adjust to playing mostly center field?**

LANE THOMAS: I came up playing a lot of center field, my first couple years in the Big Leagues. And, yeah, I've adjusted well. I feel like the reads off the bat are a little bit easier. There's a lot more ground to cover, but I think I'm starting to get my feet under me, and it feels good.

**Q. Lane, you mentioned 2019, but as you prepare to play in your first postseason, do you have any postseason memories growing up, or is there something specifically that you're most excited about in playing in this environment?**

LANE THOMAS: Yeah. I've heard this is a great place to play in the postseason. I got to watch some cool games in -- I think was in 2016.

So I've heard nothing but good things. So I'm excited to play in front of the fans that have been supporting us all year.

**Q. For both you guys, we're seeing bullpen games more and more. As a hitter how different is that to adjust to? You know, typically you would get a starter two or three times through. Now you're getting a guy potentially new guy every inning.**

LANE THOMAS: Yeah. We have a lot of information. So I think it's kind of taking what you need and whatever information you like. Some guys are different. Just knowing what kind of fastball and what secondary stuff and kind of building a plan around that is I think the most important part and not kind of changing that as the at-bat goes along. Just going up there with a plan and rolling with it.

**Q. You talked about having the experience of facing them 13 times already this year, but you haven't faced them since the end of July. It's been almost two months, and they've had some additions. A couple of new arms in the bullpen, new shortstop that really have come on over this last stretch. So is there anything different in the preparation for guys you haven't seen yet?**

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yeah, we're going over the hitters and the pitchers that we have to face. Like we have to use a lot more data instead of experience. So the arms and the hitters that we faced throughout the year, we have a lot of at-bats going off of that. And so we're going to use that more than anything.

But the other guys, it's just like a normal season where you gotta have some type of plan off of the numbers and the data that you get. But then also just relying on strengths. So it's like, you know, with our pitchers, like we're going to lean on our pitchers strengths and what makes them great. That's what we did all year.

And as hitters, I think it's the same thing. Like there's not too many different plans to have in the batter's box. And our team does a really good job of staying true to themselves and what our identity is. So like no matter really who we're facing, the plan doesn't really change off of like what you're looking for.

**Q. Austin, you guys keep talking about the data. Are you using that more this year than on past teams who have been here?**

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yes and no. Our team is really, really prepared, from our coaching staff and up top, we have a lot

of guys that work really, really hard to find ways for us to have an advantage in a game or in a series.

But I think one of the things that makes us great is we don't rely on it. We still go play baseball. When it comes to our -- I know from the catching side, you know, Bo and David and myself, you know, we're watching the game.

I think that's one thing that gives us an advantage is there's a book for everything. There's a number and data for everything, but trusting what your eyes see in the game is the real information that you want to lean on, and I think our group does a really good job of that.

**Q. Is there more data that you're being fed this year than in the past when you've been there?**

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yes and no, there's some new things, but also no. It's very similar.

**Q. Lane, since I've asked Hedges so much about the bullpen, I was going to ask you since you're as close to that door as anybody else when it opens up, what kind of comfort level does it give a team when the bullpen is this consistent and as dominant as this one has been?**

LANE THOMAS: Yeah, I think it takes some pressure off when we have those one-, two-run leads because you know those guys are coming in and shutting that door. So I think that definitely helps. But it definitely doesn't make us want to take our foot off the pedal. We still want to go out and take good at-bats and put some pressure on their guys deep in those bullpens.

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