

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Monday, October 7, 2024
Cleveland, Ohio, USA
Progressive Field

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Postgame 2 Press Conference

Detroit - 3, Cleveland - 0

Q. A nail-biter of a game. Just to have it go 0-0 so late. Kerry Bonds, as he's effectually called. How exciting it to see him step up to the plate knowing he can handle that pressure?

A.J. HINCH: I mean, what a game, it's an understatement. How about the three 2-out hits. It doesn't -- obviously Kerry, we want him up to bat as often as we can in those moments. He can change the scoreboard. He can change the game. He can -- he does it time after time.

But you gotta have guys do something in front of him in order to give him that opportunity, and we had three 2-out hits against the best closer in baseball. So really happy with how we finally found a way to scratch some across with some big hits.

Q. And you had two huge double plays today as well. The defense has been able to get that done with Skubal on the mound a bunch of times, and they all come back to the dugout fired up. How does that feel?

STEPHEN VOGT: It's led by Tarik. He's as emotional as you can get at the right time, at the right volume. He's able to reset and do his thing. And this is what October is built for. He's built for October, too. It's so rewarding to see our guys play calm, play at ease, play competitively and ultimately play like a winner.

Q. Talking about Tarik, he seemed like he had his emotions, but he was controlled for the most part, except for after the double plays, obviously. Did you see a different kind of gear, maybe a different kind of precision with him today?

A.J. HINCH: I don't think so. You know when you watch him time after time, you kind of wonder when is the big



moment, when is the big strikeout, when is the big pitch. How playful is he going to be with the crowd, especially on the road.

But generally he's really laser focused on being elite. He wants to lead this team, and he does. It's one thing to want it. It's another to go out and do it. And he demonstrated dominance today against a tough team that puts the ball in play, yet he finds them swing and miss. They create momentum, and yet he's able to squash it.

Obviously it's a big win led by Tarik and many others, but we feed off of him every five, six days when he pitches.

Q. A.J., you guys really started to heat up once Kerry Carpenter got back into the lineup in the middle of August there. What was it like, and what have you seen from him to become truly elite against right-handed pitching?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, we missed him for a long time this year, and obviously he's a center point of our offense. When we face right-hand pitching, he's usually batting second, third or fourth. When he's not, he's got his helmet on and his bat in his hand pretty much for every inning until we decide to unleash him.

Everybody knows it. It's no secret that he's a big threat and he's prepared, and he's as balanced a human as you're going to get which allows him to stay grounded in whatever we ask him to do. We missed him a ton during the year. And this is an example, it's easy to say today is why. But so many more things that he brings to the table that create an incredible influence on our team.

Q. At the time it seemed like it was going to be the play of the game, but in the eighth inning Wenceel's line drive to left?

A.J. HINCH: I saw him hit it to the wrong guy. I mean, that guy -- you know, I was looking for some blade of grass, maybe one that was grown a little higher than the other to show on the board.

They only showed us the one. There are some angles that



make it look like -- not sure if the thumb of the glove got underneath the ball. It probably means -- every time they say stands, I think whatever was called on the field is going to probably be what it was.

When he bounced up emotional, I couldn't tell if he was good at poker or if he actually really caught it. But he's a gifted player and just hit it to the wrong guy. I thought Wenceel had really good at-bats. I thought a lot of our guys had really good at-bats the entire day until we finally broke through.

Q. It wasn't a back-against-the-wall situation, but just to be able to go back to Detroit with a win in your pocket?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, you come to this environment, on the road, and it's a five-game series, and even look at the other series, you know, when you get that emotional win and go back home 1-1 and you feel like you got one on their home turf.

We now have two games at our place. We know it's going to be electric. We know Detroit has waited a really long time for a playoff game. We're going to have a couple of them and a chance to take control of this series.

Q. Did you and Tarik have a conversation at all about going from the sixth to seventh inning as Cleveland was starting to hit him a little more and maybe have some better at-bats? Was there a conversation at all?

A.J. HINCH: No. So the end of those games, Tarik and I have a great back-and-forth. He wants to know what's on my mind, and I definitely want to know what's on his mind. And he likes knowing where my sights are. So I usually give him an idea of where I'm circling the next stress point.

It gives him a chance to know sort of when to lean on the gas pedal for a long time versus kind of do his normal thing. Now, he leans on that gas pedal a lot. We just go back and forth. He can handle knowing, hey, I'm going to take you out on the fourth or fifth hitter or sixth hitter, here's what I'm expecting out of you, and I shoot him straight, and he goes out and does his part.

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