

# AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

Detroit, Michigan, USA

Comerica Park

## Detroit Tigers

## Matt Vierling

### Workout Day Press Conference

**Q. Matt, can you at all guess what the atmosphere is going to look and sound like tomorrow night?**

MATT VIERLING: I mean, I can only imagine it's going to be pretty electric. We've heard about what a playoff atmosphere is like here in Detroit. Pretty crazy, pretty excited. And just the overall vibe of the city right now with how well the Lions are doing, and just it's been ten years since we've had a playoff baseball game back here in Detroit.

So, yeah, I feel like it's going to be a pretty special day. I think it's going to be pretty electric atmosphere.

**Q. Matt, two things, one not related to the game. But what does it say about Javy that he made the effort to come back from Puerto Rico, drive himself to Cleveland and he wants to be with you guys and be part of it? How cool was that? How did you guys respond to that?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah. No, I think I was in the training room or something like that. I saw him walk in, and, I mean, everybody in the training room kind of went nuts, just him walking in.

Everybody loves Javy. You know, he's such a good presence for us. He's a great guy. And just to have him around and for him to make the effort to drive over and come to the game, you know, that meant a lot to us.

And it really -- you know, I was thinking about it. It really is awesome having him around right now, just, for one, because of the experience he has in moments like this, but then also, you know, he just picks up the vibe of everybody, and everybody loves him.

And he's great. So just to have him around is awesome, and to see him walk in the door was like -- there already



was a good vibe, and just him walking in, it made things even better.

**Q. What does kind of the small sample size of these postseasons kind of do on a player's psyche, like in 2022 you had a couple of hits, and it's just a small period of time, but if you look at your batting average, it's low. And I'm thinking of Riley going through it a little bit, Tork going through it a little bit. Colt is looking for his first hit. It's only a couple of games, man, but how do you guys deal with that on a short sample like this?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah. Everything is amplified, right? Everything is under a microscope just with how intense the games are, how much each at-bat means. I was talking with Riley yesterday about how playoff baseball, it's different. It's different than regular season baseball.

Something about it when you go up there to the plate, you know, every at-bat matters. It's not just like a Game No. 94 and you're just getting your at-bats in and everything. It means a little more than that.

So it's definitely different. I feel like, you know, not to be worried at all. I feel like for me, back in 2022, the biggest thing is the pitching. The pitching is just so good. And there is a lot of pressure-packed at-bats.

So hitting is one of the hardest things to do in sports. And then you try to do it in the playoffs, too. It makes it even harder, with the pitching and the situations that you're put in.

So I remember in 2022 my starting and saw the lefties. I faced Jose Quintana, I faced Max Fried, I faced Blake Snell, and I faced Framber Valdez twice.

**Q. Oh, boy.**

MATT VIERLING: I was like, man. With some off days in between. So it was very tough pitching matchups. And I'm not saying that just about me. I just meant that in general of like there's going to be good pitching no matter where you go, and guys are going to have their A-plus stuff



because it just means more right now, right?

Yeah, I mean, low batting averages right now. I don't think any of us are too caught up in that. I think we'd sacrifice batting average right now for quality team at-bats. Tork had a great at-bat pushing that guy over to third base. Stuff like that matters more to us in the postseason.

**Q. With the way the first couple games of this series, the schedule has unfolded in terms of game, off day, game, off day, has it been a little bit challenging to come into -- to find a rhythm compared to the regular season, or are these off days kind of welcome at this time of year?**

MATT VIERLING: Well, on a personal note, I think it's welcome for me, it gives my body a break and just helps you have some bumps and bruises that you deal with throughout the year, and these off days help mitigate that a little bit.

But on the routine side, it is a little bit challenging trying to get into a routine as far as seeing velocity on a daily basis. We could go ten games in a row in the regular season, you get an off day, and you come back from that off day and you feel like you hadn't seen pitching in like a week.

So just getting -- we have these workouts on these off days, just trying to see some velocity off the machine or maybe give your body a break if it needs it, whatever it calls for. But I've actually found -- it's been pretty consistent with game, off day, game, off day, I felt like I've gotten in a routine of that.

So, yeah, it's just -- you just get used to it while you can and you try to -- really for a hitter, you just try to stay on top of the velocity and your timing. That's the biggest thing.

**Q. And last question from me. When you first came over to the Tigers organization, what did you know about Kerry Carpenter? And in the year and a half, two years since, how have you seen him grow as a hitter during your time here?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah. When I first came over here, I remember I played him -- well, I first remember playing against him in Redding when I was with the Phillies, and I don't even know if he started any of the games in Lake Erie to open the year in 2021. I remember Riley was leading off, and I think I was hitting third or something for Redding.

But anyway, Carp was on that team. I didn't know much about him, but I remember that year he hit really, really well. Or maybe it was '22 he hit really, really well. Whatever it was.

I remember coming over here and I heard a lot about, you know, oh, man, he can hit a homer at any at point in time, just watch. And he did that. In Spring Training -- I think he had a little bit slower of a Spring Training that year in '23. But he had a great first month, I think. Then he got hurt for six weeks with his shoulder.

But then the rest of the year he was just nails and just proved that, I mean, at any point in time he could go yard. I mean, he's -- and, I mean, going into this year, I remember Spring Training he hit a ball opposite field that most right-handed hitters would have trouble hitting a ball that far to left field.

So just to see his growth as a hitter and how he's done has been really, really impressive. And I feel like the sky is the limit for him. I feel like the more and more he does this in these situations, we just have so much confidence in him.

And I think, like I said, the sky's the limit. He's such a talented hitter, has a great eye. Not only does he hit for power, he can hit for average as well. He's got great bat-to-ball skills.

He's one of the more impressive hitters I've ever seen, and it's just really cool to watch him go to work on a daily basis.

**Q. Matt, put simply, what has Jake Rogers meant to you guys as your catcher, and what do you appreciate about him as your teammate?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah. Well, first as a catcher, I mean he's incredible back there. Whether it's framing baseballs, blocking stuff, throwing guys out, you know, he's an incredible catcher in his own right. I mean, he handles the pitching staff, too, so well.

And just going into the teammate factor, I think what probably matters most is how good of a teammate he is. I feel like the way he is in the locker room, the way he is around the guys, on the field, off the field, I think that bleeds into how he is as a catcher. I feel like that's how you manage a pitching staff, is how you talk to them in the locker room, how you hang out with them off the field.

And he's close -- he's a glue guy. He's as close with everybody on the team as anyone can be, and he's a great leader for our team, too. He's very consistent. When he's on the field, he's stoic; but when he's in the locker room, he's not. He's anything but that.

So it's just awesome to have him on our team. I feel like he's such a good guy, and he handles the pitching staff so well, and he's such a good leader for our young guys. I

feel like he, more than anybody, really takes care of the leadership stuff, and whether it's getting guys together, everything like that, he's a huge part of that, and maybe the leader of that.

Without him, I really don't think we are here right now.

**Q. And for you, you know, we've joked all year about you being kind of treated as a veteran or having to answer questions like you're a ten-year vet. But behind the scenes with your younger teammates, have you felt yourself grow into that or kind of get used to being more in that role at all?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah, a little bit. I would say they've really done most of this -- they've been great on their own. There was times when guys come to me with questions about stuff and what are playoffs like or anything like that, but, I mean, these guys have just come up here and just played.

I mean, really, there hasn't been a ton of questions or a ton of, you know, uncertainties about things. It's really they've just gone out there and played. But there are times when they ask me certain things or stuff like that, maybe about the playoffs. But, really, they've gone about their business so great, and I haven't had to do much as a veteran. I've been able to kind of just play. And also, you know, I'm only three years in, and I'm learning, too. So I'm kind of with them on that as well.

But, yeah, whenever they need me, I'm here. But they've really done most of it their own. It's been really impressive to watch.

**Q. Matt, we've talked about it earlier this season, but are you getting some déjà vu feelings, the way this is all playing out? And I guess, also, what do you remember about that first playoff game in Philly back in '22?**

MATT VIERLING: Yeah, I would say a little bit. Just with the fact that with Philly we hadn't been there in 11 years, I think it was, and being able to bring a playoff game back there to that city. I know how much that city loves sports, and to be able to bring a playoff game back there and how excited they were, that was really cool.

Now, you come over to Detroit, and it's virtually the same thing. It's been a decade since a playoff game has been here. Yeah, it is a little bit of déjà vu, but, man, it's been just incredible to kind of see how excited this city is and how excited we are to kind of play in front of fans.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

