

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Wednesday, October 9, 2024
Detroit, Michigan, USA
Comerica Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Postgame 3 Press Conference

Detroit - 3, Cleveland - 0

Q. A.J., you've used the word "chaos" to describe your plan, but was this one almost scripted, like the way everything worked? I know it could change at any moment. Did it feel like it went according to the plan you maybe put in pencil?

A.J. HINCH: Absolutely not scripted because there's just so much stuff that goes on, and from the very first part of it, Keider had no idea, first off, and responded favorably with an incredible first inning, with a ton of energy in the ballpark and in an atmosphere that was second to none. So when he gets three up, three down, we have Hurter for the beginning at Naylor.

But, yeah, the game's going to change, the ebbs and flows of things. Runners, guys getting up just in case you need them, defending against their pinch hitters. There was no order that I had in my mind. I just knew I had ten guys available, and we were going to use them.

We've been doing this for a couple months. So our guys respond favorably and did an incredible job of getting up, getting ready and getting their hitters out, almost perfectly, in terms of coming in situations and pounding the strike zone and doing their part to put pressure on them to continue innings.

Q. For Jose Ramirez to face four different pitchers, four different styles of pitchers, is that a win that you -- I mean, if you could draw it up, that's what you want?

A.J. HINCH: Including an intentional walk. I want credit to the intentional walk because I don't like doing that. He's got my respect on so many levels. And it's not easy facing him or behind him. Naylor is no easy guy. He made the All-Star team.



But, yeah, I mean obviously with this type of strategy that we have, we can give different looks to different guys. We can give -- you know, you have a 6'6" lefty all the way to some fireball right-handers to Holton throwing backdoor cutters to Brieske throwing turbo sinkers and change-ups.

Part of the way our roster is built and the reason we're maximizing strengths is we can do a lot of different things to hitters. It's not easy to face four different guys, especially I took one at-bat away from Ramirez, to your question. But you need the guys to do it, to throw strikes and pound the strike zone and go right after guys and get big outs, and we did all of that.

Q. We don't see you pull pitchers aside as they come off the field at the end of an inning very often. It looked like you had something to say with Keider?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. He didn't know what our strategy was before the game. He knew he was starting the game, and certainly after three up, three down, I kept Joey there to make sure it was translated and he understood. And I wanted him to know that he did a hell of a job getting through his three outs and I can talk to him about it later.

But the last thing on his mind at that point was coming out of the game. So I just wanted him to know exactly what we were doing and nothing get lost in the moment, because three up, three down against the top of that lineup, including a couple of All-Stars is a great accomplishment. And he's built to start and go extended. That just wasn't the route we were going to go today. I wanted to tell him why and tell him he did a great job.

Q. Matt Vierling doesn't always get the credit he might deserve. Everything from his defense today to offense to everything he brings this team?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. No, I mean, he's batting third, you know. I mean old school or new school, that's a really important spot to break up our lefties. We know that they're going to attack Carp with righties. So he's gotta be prepared to hit off both righties and lefties.

But I don't even know if he's unsung because I think



everybody around Detroit and everybody in our clubhouse and the coaching room and in my office knows what he brings to the table. He's a winning player, and I've said that for a while now how he contributes to wins on so many levels.

And he may play right field tomorrow, which is as far away from where he played today as you can get, and he'll just accept the assignment and go and do his part.

So I love Matt Vierling. And as a guy who has played in the World Series, has played on good teams, understands the little things that turn into big things, he's a real guiding light to some of our players' growth.

Q. So far on the postseason it's been tough hitting-wise for Keith and Torkelson, but today in the sixth they gave you great at-bats and an insurance run there. What does that do for those two players moving forward?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. We talked about Riley before. You have Colt. You have Tork. In October you're one swing away from having a completely different emotional reaction as a player. You come up with a big hit, you come up with a big walk, you move a runner. You do little things offensively to contribute to runs scoring, and you feel better about your day.

I mean, nobody is looking at a stat line. This isn't the time of year to be obsessed with the stat line. Productive, good at-bats, move the ball when you can. If you don't, wait till your next time up, play good defense, celebrate a win. That's all that matters.

And all of those guys, those three guys that I mentioned, have done that. None of them have said a word about, you know, their struggles or their difficulties finding hits. They're not moving in the batting order. They're playing because they're three of our best.

Q. A.J., you mentioned Beau and his turbo slider. How impressive was it that you got from him today and what you've gotten all postseason?

A.J. HINCH: Isn't it crazy how Beau closes the game, pitches the middle of the game? Holton opens Game 1 and closes Game 3. For those that have been around us and what we're doing, that's kind of how we've done it, and the guys continue to respond.

Beau comes in in a really big spot. In a perfect world, I'd love to bring these guys in, clean inning, big lead, deep breath and attack guys that they can match up with, and that never happens, especially in October. So strike

throwing is key. Being at your best from pitch one.

You see the velocity up. You see the execution of big pitches to get the first batter out, our inherited runners is really good. And our guys understand that they're put in that position because every single person wearing the English D knows they can get the job done, and they continue to respond.

Q. What kind of impact does Jake Rogers bring to this team? He steals a lot of strikes behind the plate. He runs hard, scored on that sac fly today. How important is he for you guys?

A.J. HINCH: And a little bit of levity. I mean, this guy has a knack for keeping his calm at the biggest moments. Might be at the meeting at the mound. It might be coming -- and he was standing next to me and he wouldn't go lead off, and it was because the first time he got up I told him get a hit, and he got one; and then the next time up he wasn't going to go up until I said, Get a hit. So, Jake, I publicly apologize to being late to that coaching moment.

But he's a tremendous presence, and I don't use that word lightly because it matters when you have it and you have that kind of influence on a lot of the boys around him.

Q. What's going through your mind from the other dugout when they're making such impressive pinch-hitting substitutions early in the game? And when you do get through those outs, how much better advantaged --

A.J. HINCH: I don't know that it surprised me just because it's October, and just watch these games. I've watched as many playoff games as I can in my whole life, and aggressiveness out of the manager's chair has only gotten more and more over the years.

And you kind of expect it. The big outs are huge. I mean, obviously, the reason they're doing it is because they like that matchup. We do a lot of that. So you certainly can appreciate the effort to try to get a good matchup, especially with guys on base and pinch-hitting before guys even getting an at-bat.

I understand, we're trying to move our players around and put them in good positions. So are they. And you need your guy to beat their guy in those moments. And when we did, whether it's Will Vest hitting a line drive off of Fry, who had come to pinch-hit earlier in the game, or the Noel at-bat so early in the game against Hurter, it's fun when you're on the positive side of that.

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