

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Friday, October 11, 2024
Cleveland, Ohio, USA
Progressive Field

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. A.J., honest question, but five times in a week. This is the 19th time of the season. Is it all cards open?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I mean, everything is on the table, obviously, and everything is on the line. When you play a team in a Game 5 or a Game 7, depending on the series, it's very obvious that everything matters, and you factor in playing each other the way we have with bullpens getting exhausted and lineups almost virtually every position player being utilized, I don't see why tomorrow would be any different.

Now, factor in it's a division opponent where we're even more familiar with them. Something unpredictable will happen tomorrow. I don't know what that is, but baseball is incredible this time of year when you have games like this and opportunities to be great.

Q. Can you give us any news on Kerry?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Kerry was seen by the doctors last night. He's going to be seen by the doctors again today. We're going to take as much time as we can to see what he can and can't handle. It's obvious what he's dealing with, and we're going to hope for the best as we move forward because he's important to our team, he's important to our lineup. I don't know right now as I sit here what that's going to be, and we'll make a game-time decision when we have to.

He's been on that extra group working out in Toledo with a few other players and some coaches, and obviously we're building some contingency plans to be under consideration in the event that Carp can't go.

We told him to come here, go through the full workout. We're going to have a live BP with either Casey or Kenta. Maybe both. Bligh will get a few swings. They've been



doing that in Toledo, but given the uncertainty, we added him to the travel group.

Q. You have to be sure. If you do shut Kerry down, you don't have him for the next series. Is that part of the reason why you're waiting?

A.J. HINCH: Well, there is no series if you don't win tomorrow. The number one goal is to win tomorrow. We'll make the right decision for us that we feel is best for us, and at the appropriate time. The rules will be that obviously there's gotta be a whole process to go through. If no move is made, there is no process, you set your lineup and go. If there is a move, it'll be tomorrow morning at some point or tomorrow afternoon.

Q. How is Kerry doing? Hamstrings can be so tricky.

A.J. HINCH: We'll see. Number one is to get a day long full of treatment and figure out where his strength is, where his flexibility is, what he can handle, can't handle. And we'll leave it up to the trainers to keep introducing more and more things and see how it goes.

And we even have into tomorrow, you know, where we can test him even at a greater level after a full day of treatment and recovery. So I'm not an expert in that stuff. I know what I'm rooting for and I know what we all are rooting for, but we need time.

Q. These kind of do-or-die games you've managed a bunch. Are they as unpredictable as you can imagine?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. These games are incredible because every time a runner gets on base, I mean, there's a heightened awareness. Every time there's a score change there's an emotional reaction in and around the building depending on what happens. Everybody is on edge. Everybody knows what's at stake. There's no secrets.

It's the best brand of baseball that you can get because everybody is all in in every moment, every pitch, every at-bat. Any one person can be the difference in the game. And it's October. So like obviously Game 1 through 4 had so many incredible moments that we will think about later,



but you get to these last games, these last elimination games, the best thing you can do is enjoy it.

I'm so proud of our team and the way we're handling this, the loud music, the vibe that we're bringing to tomorrow. It's a great opportunity to be great. Like everybody remembers these games, and it's a great opportunity. It's not a burden. There's no stress. There's no tension on our side, and we are going to enjoy every moment of this opportunity because it's where we want -- it's where we are. It's where we want to be.

Q. How do you think Skubal will handle the magnitude?

A.J. HINCH: Totally calm, no outbursts, no energy. I mean, he is -- he'll handle it great. I mean, strike one is going to be key for him, you know. Obviously, he's got a game four days ago that he can reflect back on on how he pitched guys.

I know how important every game is to him, and I know what it means to send him out to the mound for the confidence in our team. So he's going to handle it like the pro that he is and attack the strike zone, attack the hitters. He loves competition. He's into it as much as anybody that I've ever put on the mound, and nobody better to give the ball to on the mound in this game than Tarik.

Q. The matchups all series. How do you weigh that against having a pitcher who is arguably your best matchup against any of these guys?

A.J. HINCH: You're already pushing me into the late-game decisions that I'm going to think about for the next 24 hours? Yeah. No, I mean, those decision points are going to come. Sometimes they come early, sometimes they come mid, sometimes they come late. It's all hands on deck, and you try to put your guys there. And it's a competition.

I love the fact that both teams are fighting. I love the fact that there's familiarity. I love the fact that the challenge is it means so much to so many of us that have put everything -- so we're going to embrace it. And if you've faced a guy before, try to find a way to get him out. If it's a hitter and you've faced him before, put the ball in play moving forward and see where it takes you.

But there's no stress or anxiousness about being in this position because we've earned it, and now we'll see where it takes us, and we have every chance to win, not just because of the guy that we're starting on the mound but because of the collective group in there.

Q. You've seen all kinds of personalities in your years. Do you like that fire that Skubal brings?

A.J. HINCH: Of course. I love the fact that he's built for the competition. Like, he loves the challenge to get Kwan out at the top or José or assuming Fry is going to be in there, especially after his day yesterday.

He feeds off of that, and then we feed off of how he handles the competition. We'll have two teams that are locked in on trying to advance and represent now the AL Central in the ALCS. It's an incredible opportunity.

Q. Some pitchers who were arguably more hyped for hostile crowd, and is Tarik one of those guys?

A.J. HINCH: If I had like 99 to 100 in my hip pocket, I'd be hyped to face anybody at any time, any setting. But I think the guys that can handle it competitively range in emotions. There's no one way to conquer this. Guys that are cool and calm and low key, they're going to be that way. Guys that are amped up, you know, are going to be incredibly excited about the opportunity.

And we're going to be ourselves. Like you're going to see guys be themselves. Jake will pop off and have a joke. Tarik will give an outburst on a scream on a big out and anybody that does something positive is going to be pretty excited about their contribution to hopefully win.

Q. How do you see Steve Kwan?

A.J. HINCH: We have not figured him out in this game or this season, you know, because he's so talented at taking what the game gives him. He's impressive from the other side because he always has a plan. He executes it flawlessly. He's a tough guy to get swing and miss. He's a tough guy to keep off the base.

He ignites this offense because of that bat-to-ball contact skills. And then he throws in plus defense in the outfield and becomes a complete player. Can run. He's a winning player. I know I said that about Vierling, I've said that about a few guys; but from the other side, I really appreciate what Steven Kwan brings because of how he contributes to their big innings and their success this season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports