

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

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

Cleveland Guardians

Austin Hedges

Workout Day Press Conference

AUSTIN HEDGES: One good swing, so it wasn't like guys are whacking him around where he's like walking guys or giving up a bunch of slug. Even yesterday I thought Malloy took a really good swing on a good pitch. But then other than that, I thought he got back to doing exactly what he's doing.

Q. Seem so calm out there. Is that how you pick up from him too?

AUSTIN HEDGES: He always is. He throws close pitches that don't get called strikes. He's always laughing out there. The game is in slow motion for him. It's one of the reasons he's the best in the world.

Q. What does Kwan mean to you guys?

AUSTIN HEDGES: I mean, when he goes, we go, that's for sure. The things our offense was doing early in the year, specifically when he was hitting, like, .800, he's the catalyst to get on base for José and Nays.

What he's doing right now is special. What he did this year making more of a name for himself, and you really make a name for yourself in the playoffs, and I'm pumped to see him doing that.

Q. As much as you are allowed, I guess, can you take us through like the magic touch Carl Willis has during a mound meeting?

AUSTIN HEDGES: You know, he's been there so many times. He comes out with just an attack plan, which is something I've learned from him. And when I do my mound visits without him, it's just to have a plan. Usually when you're doing a mound visit, either, A, your pitcher is struggling or, B, you just need to break up some momentum.



And you gotta assume that that pitcher is out there on a lonely island by himself overthinking things, trying to figure out what to do or maybe thinking about the wrong things. And in any situation in the Big Leagues, you just have to have a plan, an attack plan, whether you're on offense or defense.

And what Carl does, he goes out there and says exactly like a little recipe for how to get that hitter out in this moment or maybe this hitter and the next hitter out in this given moment. And it just takes away a lot of pressure from all the other overthinking.

So every time he comes out there, I feel like the guys get more relaxed and more confident in their attack plan.

Q. Fitting that this is coming to a Game 5 considering you guys have gone back and forth?

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yeah, of course. That's a really good team over there. My God, these games have been so much fun. We didn't expect anything less. We knew we were going to get their best ball, and I feel like they were doing the same. It's going to be a dogfight tomorrow. That's for sure.

Q. After Game 3, a lot of the conversation was about aggressive managing and pinch-hitting early, and questioning I think was a lot of -- what do you say after a Game 4 where it seemed like Stephen Vogt pushed all the right buttons and everything sort of hit and you guys came through in the big at-bats?

AUSTIN HEDGES: I mean, I think wins and losses answer all the questions. I think if we lost that game, you're going to say he made terrible decisions. If we won the game, you're going to say he made brilliant decisions. That's all it seems to come down to. If we win, you're smart. If we lose, you're dumb. That's kind of how sports work.

Q. The way right now with the connection you have in the clubhouse and everything, have you thought about managing some day?

AUSTIN HEDGES: I mean, I just want to stay in the game



as long as I can. I love the game. I love the day to day. I love the clubhouse. I love the boys. So I'd like to keep playing as long as I can. I'm going to play until someone taps me on the shoulder and says I'm not good enough anymore. And then after that we'll see what happens.

Q. Like Stephen Vogt was a catcher two years ago, and here he is managing.

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yeah, absolutely. I'd love to have any role. I haven't really thought too much about it because I know I still got ideally seven, eight years of play in me. But when that time comes, yeah, I'd love to do that at some point.

Q. It's Game 5 of the series. You know this team so well. You've seen them recently so much. How much does your prep for hitters change, or is it kind of like kind of going along the same notes and same things and same sequences and same pitches to guys? Is there differentiation from game to game in that for you?

AUSTIN HEDGES: Yeah, there is, but I think one of the things that makes us really good, Bo specifically, is watching the game. We go in with a game plan, but most importantly we go in knowing our pitchers' strengths and how they attack guys when they're at their best.

But then we're letting the hitter tell us what they're looking for. There's so much information you can take from every single pitch, whether it's a swing, foul ball, a take, a statue take, a flinch take. Is he early, is he late. What did we throw him in the at-bat before. There's so many things in the game that matter more than, I guess, the game plan.

And I think I try and do a good job of that, but Bo has done such an amazing job with that this year. I think that's one of the advantages we have in the series is that we don't necessarily like predetermine anything. We let the game tell us exactly what to do, and that's what we're going to go out and do tomorrow.

Q. Following up on that, obviously you have technology available to you in the dugouts. Over the course of the game, how do you keep it all straight? If you have a guy that's a ten pitch at-bat, remembering exactly what sequence you threw, what pitches, how do you process all of that?

AUSTIN HEDGES: I mean, it comes with experience, but it just comes with just like that's our position, that's our job. If you're going to be a catcher in the Big Leagues in the playoffs, it's a nonnegotiable. You have to be able to do that. That's just like one of the things. If you can't do that,

you're in trouble.

I feel like I've said this a lot, we've practiced it all year. We had 162 games of practicing that formula, breaking down and going back and revisiting at-bats to remember how we attacked guys and then having constant dialogue in the dugout so we can remember what has happened and what we need to do moving forward. But it's just part of our process of practicing it all year.

Q. You can read pitchers as well as you read hitters. What separates Skubal from the rest of the pack?

AUSTIN HEDGES: He's just got it all. I mean, he's a unit on the mound. He's got crazy deception. He throws 100. He's got two different fastballs. He's got wipeout off-speed. He's the ultimate competitor. I mean, he's every team's dream to have as your ace. I mean, that guy is -- that's as good as it gets in our league.

Q. You're so focused and you're even keel. Have you heard from friends or family who are just living and dying with every pitch?

AUSTIN HEDGES: I mean, we are. We are, too. Even if we don't show it, we're living and dying with every pitch. Yesterday was as stressful as any game could ever be, and I anticipate the same thing tomorrow.

But that's also the beauty of the playoffs. We are living and dying with every pitch. Whether we show it or not, it is every single pitch is -- means the world to us.

But it's also the greatest thing ever because you know the risk-reward is so powerful. You know you lose, it's going to be so heartbreaking; but when you win and you do it right, there is no better feeling in the world.

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