

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Guardians

Saturday, October 12, 2024

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Progressive Field

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Pregame 5 Press Conference

Q. Obviously Kerry is not in the starting lineup, but I know with the game time moved up, how does that change the evaluation of things?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, it just speeds up the time line. He's going to get through a full workout and see what he can do, and then we'll make a decision right before game time.

The encouraging part is he's doing some things and moving around, and he hit yesterday in the cage after our workout, which was good.

And we're all hoping for the best. He has another test that he's gotta deal with before we can definitively say that he's good to go. But he's not in the lineup either way, but I'm looking forward to hopefully good news as we get closer to the game.

Q. Can you speak to how he felt after that?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I think he's sore and I think he's dealing with some discomfort and not feeling 100 percent, but he's also feeling some adrenaline for Game 5 in the ALDS.

So that's a good counter to not feeling at your best, and hopefully that adrenaline and that excitement will override the issues that he's dealing with.

But he was happy with how he hit. I was happy with how he hit. Our hitting guys felt like he was taking full swings. And this morning when he woke up, he was on the early bus and was in great spirits. So when I saw the big smile, I got more and more optimistic that we were going to get good news.

Q. In general terms, and I guess I'm asking you to speak for some of the players, too, but like what's the impact when you find out the game is pushed up



seven hours? Like how does that change things? You guys work out yesterday at the same time. So how does it change?

A.J. HINCH: It doesn't really change much going into yesterday. We found out right about when our workout was going to start. So I started going around the field and letting everybody know. The pitchers were playing catch. The position players were about to stretch.

And changes time with our families. There were probably some college football fans that were a little bit disappointed in the room. And but that was about it. We've been playing these day games, first games of these playoffs pretty much this entire series. If anything, the 6:00 game at home felt weird compared to the 1:00 games that we've been playing.

It adjusts our bus times and our breakfast and our BP, but given that we had a full 24 hours' notice, it was business as usual, get to the workout and get ready to play.

Q. Kind of a weird one. If Carpenter can't go --

A.J. HINCH: No, no, no.

Q. I mean theoretically.

A.J. HINCH: I hate that theory.

Q. In a situation like this, I'm curious, will you play one short because there's consequences to pull him off?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. We do know what's at stake. We do need to win today. So we've gotta make a decision that helps us advance to the ALCS. And so that could include the thought of playing short. It also could include the thought of having to have a full bench and a full team, and we need to make the decision that gives us the best position to advance and play.

The toughest call would be if it's the borderline, if we can just get through today, then he'll be better tomorrow. The issue is there's no tomorrow if we don't operate at full strength today. So let's hope that's not the case, but all



options are on the table as I sit in front of this microphone.

Q. Another weird one. The winner here is going to be the payroll outlier in the final four, if you will. Obviously you guys have gotten to this point, but how much harder is it to get to this point when you have a bunch of concerns?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, I know given just the dynamic at play now and it's the three big payrolls and the two in the AL Central. And I think that's more external than internal. Our guys don't feel undermanned or that we can't play with anybody. The teams that are left, like we just beat the Yankees in a series. We beat the Dodgers right before the All-Star break in a series. We beat the Mets in a series.

So we have a lot of competitiveness in us, and I know Cleveland will, too, that it doesn't matter what we make, it doesn't matter what our age is, what our experience level is. I think our guys are proving that we can play with anybody.

Outside the building, there's obviously a lot of conversation about it. I just don't think our guys operate that we're undermanned. We take it as a challenge to play and win as many games as we can.

Q. How much do you think the benefit of having Tarik do six days' rest kind of plays out in this game, I mean, now that he's in this position?

A.J. HINCH: This time of year everybody has a little bit of fatigue. Everybody's beat up a little bit. There's always the wear and tear of the season, although when you wake up this morning you have the most energy and you're the freshest that you probably have ever been because of the excitement and adrenaline that comes with this type of game.

Tarik's pitched on five days, he's pitched on six days. We've kept his pitch count low. We've also pushed him from time to time.

We're all in. We're all in to do whatever it takes, and if it's asking more out of him or others, we'll do it. If it's asking less for whatever reason, we'll do it.

But I think the benefit is we've been playing this way with this mentality and this style for the better part of a couple months, and no one expected us to be here. And so I'm going to continue to push these guys to enjoy the opportunity, enjoy the challenge and give us whatever they can give us on any rest imaginable, and hopefully we can celebrate after the game.

Q. When this started, only Vierling had this kind of experience. It seems like a month ago that it started. How does that experience over the last seven games prepare this team, and what was the vibe in the clubhouse?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, the vibe is incredibly positive. I mean, it's fun. It's upbeat. It's sort of business as usual. I mean, I really do appreciate how our team is coming every day ready to play with the same psychology, the same mentality, the same interactions.

And we are playoff tested. I think, if anything, it's not about my team believing. It's not about my coaches. It's not about me. It's not about our players. I think everybody else is starting to believe, and belief is a powerful thing. And we're going to play nine, maybe more, innings to try to figure out if we can advance another step, which will hopefully bring more believers on the Tiger train.

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