

AL Championship Series: Guardians vs Yankees

Sunday, October 13, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Yankee Stadium

New York Yankees

Carlos Rodon

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Carlos, can you talk about the opportunity and the responsibility of getting the Game 1 start?

CARLOS RODON: Yeah, Game 1 just sets the tone. Looking forward to being out there again, feeling the energy, and just giving my team the best chance to win.

Q. What do you feel like you learned from the start during the ALDS just in terms of kind of managing those emotions and using it to your advantage?

CARLOS RODON: If I look back at that start, the first three innings went pretty well. I mean, my stuff was there. It was pretty electric.

Then going into the fourth, I knew I had a tough at-bat against Salvador Perez, who notoriously has done well against me and hits lefties really well. His numbers are pretty good, so I knew that at-bat was coming up. I think, if I look back, we started him -- the sequencing doesn't really matter, I guess.

If I look back at that fourth inning, I was confident with what I had and what I was doing, and we had a one-run lead and I wanted to shut down that inning, and he made a good swing and it kind of -- I mean, it kind of brought me out of focus just a tick. I didn't want to give up that run there, and I knew that at-bat was important and that game went tied.

It's kind of one of those things when I look back, just knowing to keep that focus and I guess channel that energy a little bit better so the focus stays on the field.

Q. This season you've talked a lot about the importance of expanding your pitch mix behind fastball, slider. How much of that is decided in the bullpen? How much of that is decided once you get out there and see the way batters are reacting to what



you're trying to do?

CARLOS RODON: I think you're saying in terms of the bullpen before the game, is that what you mean? Those pitches really don't hold much value because, as soon as you get on the mound, that first pitch, it seems like everything changes. I think it's kind of what's working that day.

Also, we account for hitter's strengths and what kind of flows through an at-bat, I would say.

Usage, it would be good to expand some usage throughout this next start, although I thought we did a pretty good job this last start. There was some time for some more change-ups, and we talked about that. I could have been better with being aware of the change-up instead of going to slider more often to put some guys away, but it is what it is.

Q. What are your thoughts on the challenges this Cleveland lineup presents for you?

CARLOS RODON: Very good lineup. I faced Cleveland before in the past. I didn't face them this year. As we know, José Ramírez is one of the better players in our game. So that switch hitter, that's going to be a pivotal part of their lineup. I think they have some guys -- I mean, Steven Kwan hits lefties just as well as he hits righties and puts together some good long at-bats. I've faced him before.

It's a formidable lineup. It is very good. They wouldn't be in the LCS for no reason. It's going to be a fun challenge, and a lot of respect for that Cleveland team.

Q. Some terrible things were said to your wife on social media after that game. My first question is have you guys worked past it, gotten past it?

Second of all, have you ever considered, considering there's so much garbage on social media, just deleting your account and sparing yourself and her the headache?

CARLOS RODON: Actually, I didn't look at it. I think Gary



is the one that brought it up to me the night of -- I was kind of caught off guard. I'm not sure what you're talking about, and he explained it like you did.

I was like, well, you know, it's not the first time, and not will it be the last time. I think Ashley and I spoke about it that night, and she said, and I quote, she said, I have thick skin, so I'm going to be okay. She does. She's a tough lady, my wife, very tough, probably tougher than I am.

Me, for me, on my phone, I have accounts, but I do not have social media on my phone, just so you guys know, for good reason, for reasons like that, so I don't look at it.

Zillow is fist pumping. I think that's a good way to go about it, especially as an athlete. I let my wife deal with that and let those people fight those battles for me, all the trash talk and all the fake accounts, so yeah.

Q. You have a near 50 percent swing and miss rate on your change-up. What makes that such a dangerous pitch, and are you looking to use that more often with just the analytics on that pitch being so well?

CARLOS RODON: I think you said it, 50 percent swing and miss. I think that's what makes it dangerous. I also think the usage is not as much as fastball slider, so it's kind of an element of surprise to that pitch. They're not sure when I'm going to throw it, but they know I will. They're just not sure when it will be deployed.

Yeah, there's always -- when you have a 50 percent swing and miss pitch, there's definitely more times for usage of it. I'm not sure when that's going to come about, and I'm not going to give too much information because I'm sure people are listening to this.

Q. Was there a particular moment or incident that made you stop checking your social media?

CARLOS RODON: No. It's just every athlete deals with it. It's part of the business.

Q. Looking back given how amped up you were in the first few innings last week and the velocity was way up, was it hard to sustain that velocity throughout the whole outing? And then once there was traffic in the fourth, that got to you?

CARLOS RODON: I wouldn't say sustain -- I don't know, I'd have to go look back at the velocity numbers. I'm not sure how big of a discrepancy from the first to the fourth is. Usually I start off barely tame with velo-wise and work my way up to the higher numbers in the game.

I wouldn't say that's a reason of why it kind of unravelled for me. Like I said, I think a lot of it had to do with -- yeah, there's some times for some better composure, and I think it could help some energy levels for sure, but I think just staying composed -- like I watched Gerrit the other night.

I watched him very close and how he kind of went about it. He goes seven, gives up one in every inning. There are some big outs there probably in the fifth. I don't know there was like a first and second where he got out of a jam. It's a one-run, two-run game, and every run matters.

I think then he gives up the double to Vinnie Pasquantino, he is on second and two outs, and he gets out of that inning. I think that was the -- that's the inning where the slide from Miguel García, and it got a little chippy. You can tell, if he walks back, he gets a little pissed off, but he kind of just keeps it in frame and gets back on the mound. They do end up scoring a run, but he keeps them to one run.

The biggest thing I saw from him in the seventh, he didn't react every inning, like if you watched him come out, it's just like a robot walking to the dugout. Then at the end of the seventh, it's a big roar because he knows like I did my job. I think that's kind of one thing that resonated with me from that start.

Q. Can you tell with him from pitch to pitch and inning by inning, just from his facial expressions, how he's feeling about his outing?

CARLOS RODON: No. Gerrit is a good poker player. Me, not so much. I need to be better at poker.

Q. What are the next 24-plus hours like for you as you wait to get the ball in Game 1 and prepare for getting the ball in Game 1?

CARLOS RODON: Like a rundown of my day or mentally?

Q. Are you a guy who's going to be thinking about it nonstop? Are you able to sleep? Are you able to compartmentalize it?

CARLOS RODON: For me, it's compartmental -- can you say the word for me?

Q. Compartmentalize.

CARLOS RODON: Yes. I don't know why I'm struggling. For me, it is easy to put that away. I have three kids at home. I told Bo before I left, I said, hey, I got to go to work. He was like, aww. I said I will be back, and we will play. And he's like, okay, and that made him happy. I have a promise to hold up to. I have to hold up to my end of the

bargain and probably play some sort of games when I get home. So I won't be thinking about baseball much tonight.

Q. Carlos, you showed some emotion and did some celebrating that first inning against KC. Do you feel like almost there's a double standard that pitchers do a little celebrating on the field versus hitters, that it's not as accepted in the game? Not so much outside the game, but in the game?

CARLOS RODON: I don't know how to answer this. People say stuff, as you know. We all know that they said some things. I don't know. If you strike someone out, you strike someone out. If you want to act a certain way, go about it your way. If you hit a homer off me 400 feet or however far, you want to flip your bat, flip your bat. You did something good.

This game is hard. It's not easy. So a little celebration is fine. I got a little amped up in the first there, and I was definitely energized. Like I said, we talked about it, I think I could have a better poker face about it and just stay focused on the task at hand because it is not only one inning, it's nine innings of baseball, and it is a five-game series. We are in the LCS. Someone else isn't.

Q. When you say people, you mean the Royals were saying something?

CARLOS RODON: Yes.

Q. I don't want to misquote you at all. I remember your first start in Houston this year, your first question to analyze it, and you said something like anytime we win, I'm okay with what happened. When in the postseason, does the emotion go on a series level? Does the fact that the team won change any of your perception of your own start in that game?

CARLOS RODON: I'm sorry. One more time. I lost you at perception.

Q. Whatever reaction you might have had after the fact, whatever feelings you might have had about your own start, the fact that you guys have advanced and now you're in a new series, does that change anything about what you personally took from that start?

CARLOS RODON: It can definitely help me. Like I said, there's some things I could take away from that last start where I could be definitely more composed and figure out how to channel that energy into staying focused and continuing it throughout the outing.

But the biggest thing is we're here, we have a big series to

play, and we all have a common goal. We all want to get to the World Series and compete in the World Series and hopefully win one. That's the biggest thing that at the end of the day, it's just how do we win a baseball game.

There's a bunch of nuances throughout the game, throughout nine innings, throughout each inning, whether it's yelling or whatever it is, that really don't matter. I think it comes down to win or lose.

Q. I'm curious, you said that you watched Cole closely in his last start. I'm just curious who do you turn to for advice, whether it's in this room or elsewhere? Who serves as a mentor for you in these high-leverage moments?

CARLOS RODON: Gerrit is a guy who's definitely done it a few times. He has a very lengthy track record, especially in the postseason. He's got a lot of games started there. Andy obviously, Andy Pettitte is around quite often as well and who also has a lengthy track record of pitching in the postseason. Those are two guys that I could definitely lean on.

Q. What advice have they shared?

CARLOS RODON: It just kind of goes back to some stuff I just talked about. A lot of it is how do you keep your composure through the start? At the time, I didn't think -- you don't think you're losing focus or you don't think your mind is going any other direction. To me, it's not.

Yeah, there's definitely -- I could be better at that.

Q. Carlos, you mentioned facing Cleveland before in your time in the AL Central. This year's lineup, do they attack similar to past Cleveland lineups that you've gone against, or is their approach a little bit different than those past teams?

CARLOS RODON: I don't know. Like I said, I didn't pitch against them this year. I've watched them. Obviously I watched them yesterday against the Tigers and how they approached it.

They've got a couple more pieces than the past since I was in Chicago. Lane Thomas, Fry's shown up in that lineup, Rocchio put some good at-bats together. It's a little different from what I remember in the past. It's good, like I said.

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