

AL Championship Series: Guardians vs Yankees

Sunday, October 13, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Yankee Stadium

Cleveland Guardians

Stephen Vogt

Workout Day Press Conference



STEPHEN VOGT: He's lined up for it. He's on the right rest, and what Alex has done for us has been great. So we're excited to give him the ball in Game 1.

Q. It was obviously a small sample size of him coming back after the IL, but what did you guys see and like from what you saw from him in the last series?

STEPHEN VOGT: I thought obviously not throwing a pitch in a game for 30, 40 days and coming back, and his stuff was there. The velo was there. The stuff was there. Alex has pitched in this league for a really long time, and we trust him to take the ball.

Q. In the DS, you obviously got a lot out of guys like Clase and Smith. How does that balancing act change for you guys, if at all, going into this series?

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah. We've relied on our bullpen all year long, but now in a seven game, traditional seven games in nine days, you have to do it a little bit differently. With the days off we had in the DS, it allowed us to really push the bullpen more than typically.

Obviously these are the guys that helped us get to this point. They're going to be pitching.

Q. We just spoke with Cobb, and he had glowing reviews of his time playing with you. How would you describe your relationship with him? How does it help to bridge that gap from player to manager, just knowing you have that robust relationship?

STEPHEN VOGT: Obviously Alex and I have known each other for a really long time, played together through the Minor Leagues, a little bit in the Big Leagues. It hasn't changed a whole lot. We talk to each other the same way we did when we played together. I think there's a little bit of familiarity there.

I'm myself. I don't act any different than I did as a player. I'm the same person I've been and always will be. We have a great rapport. I trust him. He trusts me. It's been a long time having them.

Q. How would you describe Andrés and Brayan's relationship?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think they do everything together. It's really fun. I've played and seen some people, middle infield combos, they're close. They know each other. They know what they're thinking. They know where they're going to be. They know what they're going to do. It's a close relationship.

And him and Rocchio are really close. They push each other to be great. It's just fun to watch them play middle infield.

Q. We've asked you about the defense a trillion times this year, but how much comfort does it bring you when you know it's those two up the middle for you?

STEPHEN VOGT: I love it. Every time you see a ground ball going towards the middle of the field, you're excited to see what they're going to do. They both made, individually and together, some unbelievable plays all year long. It will be hard to find a combo better.

Q. Staying with pitchers lined up, would Bibee be Game 2?

STEPHEN VOGT: Tanner Bibee will start Game 2.

Q. Any idea beyond that?

STEPHEN VOGT: No.

Q. Given what happened two years ago, would you expect fans here to have a rough reception for Naylor?

STEPHEN VOGT: I wasn't here two years ago, so I can't comment on that. The reception a couple months ago was pretty good. So I'm sure it will be the same.



Q. Further to the pitching staff, ahead of a game like yesterday where you had obviously really high stakes and you end up taking out Boyd earlier than might traditionally happen, what's the communication like for Boyd and also for your relievers ahead of a game like that?

STEPHEN VOGT: The communication was all hands on deck from pitch number 1. Matt, I didn't expect him to be happy with the decision or even understand it. I'm always open and honest with the players. I tell them exactly what I'm thinking, exactly why. Don't have to agree or like it, but here's how it is.

It wasn't the script. It wasn't the plan. It was just it felt like the right time to go to Cade and get into the bullpen. In a winner take all coming out of an off day and you have everybody with bullets, it just felt like it was the right time.

Q. So that's kind of a feel thing you're watching with your coaches in the moment?

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah. We talked before the game about when different situations could come up, but I don't ever want to go into a game saying we're for sure doing this. I want to watch the game and see how it's going, watch the pitchers, watch that at-bats they're having. There is no formula. You use the information to be educated, and then you have to watch the game.

Q. I know you've talked about your offense, kind of a collective effort all year. With a guy like Steven Kwan, the way he's been swinging the bat, obviously since the last series, how would you describe the feeling of what he brings to your offense getting into a series like this?

STEPHEN VOGT: The way Steven swung the bat this last series was fun to watch. He's one of the best complete hitters in our game. He's got power. He finds the barrel. He finds grass on the outfield. He's a good hitter, and he'll take what the pitcher gives you. And if you make a mistake, he's got the power to hit it out of the yard.

He's our spark plug. He gets us going. He definitely did that in the DS.

Q. Steven, the Yankees are considered pretty prohibitive favorites here. Do you embrace that role, underdog role, or are you ignoring it? What's your thought process going into the series?

STEPHEN VOGT: We worry about us. We've taken that with every series all year long. We can control what we

can, and we know the Yankees are good. They played us tough. This is a really good team we're about to go up against.

But we're confident in who we are, and that's all we can control is us. It is going to be a fun series, and we're really looking forward to it.

Q. Obviously one of your strengths this year has been the fact that it could be anyone on any given night in this offense to help you win.

To know how you guys made it through the first round but then to also know that José could lock into another level at any point, what kind of comfort does that bring you knowing that you guys accomplished what you accomplished maybe without José being at the ridiculous levels like he always is?

STEPHEN VOGT: Yeah, when José's going, there's nobody better. I think that's the beauty of José. He's one swing away at all times. There's not one set of eyes that isn't locked in on him when he's at the plate. He's electric.

He got big hits when he needed to in the series, and it helped us win a couple games. I think he's always one swing away from going off, and Naylor same way. We've got a lot of guys that are going to step up.

But like you said, the beauty of this team has been a different person every night steps up.

Q. Earlier today Boone said basically with Ramírez underappreciated is part of his first name at this point in baseball, and it shouldn't be, that everyone knows it. Are you surprised that some people still consider him somewhat under the radar?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think in circles he is, but if you ask anybody working in baseball, they don't think he's underappreciated or any of that. He's one of the elite players in this league. He's a top five player in this league every year. In the baseball circles, everyone knows about it and talks about it.

Q. Also, when the front office was first considering signing Matt, did they bounce the idea off you? What thoughts did you give them?

STEPHEN VOGT: Oh, yeah. Right when they had the thought, I got on the phone and called him. I played against Matt, watched him play for a long time. Just getting to know him and hearing what he'd been through with his rehab and the things he'd been doing to stay ready, we were 100 percent confident that he was going to



step in and do what he's done.

Q. What did you know about him from playing with him?

STEPHEN VOGT: Just he knows how to pitch. He knows how to pitch. He's a great human being. He fits in this clubhouse tremendously. He's a leader in this clubhouse.

Never liked facing him when he was pitching against our team. We wanted him.

Q. The last time you guys were here, the Yankees really showed a lot of power early in the series. How do you counteract that?

STEPHEN VOGT: Just got to make pitches. This is a really good lineup, really good team. We know. We've seen them. They've done it to us. They hit the ball to the yard against us. We just have to make pitches.

Our game planning is always really good, and we just have to execute.

Q. Time for the hard hitting question. I'm sure you've been asked this a million times, but what is just so special about this team this season?

STEPHEN VOGT: I think from the day we got to Spring Training, they bought into the belief that we could do this, and they've rallied around it. We're really good. This is a really good team we have. We believe in ourselves, and the guys believe in each other.

This is the closest group of guys I've ever seen in a clubhouse. They care for each other. They have fun. They're always laughing. Middle of the game, we're laughing. We're having a good time. We talk trash to each other constantly, myself included. They're all over me. We just have a good time.

I think these are really good players who care about each other.

Q. I'm sorry, you teed it up. What are they all over you for?

STEPHEN VOGT: Usually it's if a catcher makes a bad catch, they're like that boy Vogter. They know I couldn't catch, things like that. We're always giving each other a hard time.

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