

AL Championship Series: Guardians vs Yankees

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Yankee Stadium

New York Yankees

Aaron Boone

Pregame 1 Press Conference

Q. How much deliberation was there putting Anthony Rizzo on the roster, and ultimately what was the deciding factor for you that told you he was good to go?

AARON BOONE: A lot of deliberate -- I kind of deliberated on it until last night. I think just going back, he got hit on that Saturday and really didn't want to go on the IL based on the injury.

We knew it was a long shot going into the Division Series, but didn't put him on with the caveat like you've got to be super honest with where you're at with me on this the whole time.

I actually saw him take some swings in the cage before the Division Series, and I was like, oh, that was pretty good, but we knew that wasn't quite where he needed to be. He obviously has had a lot of treatment over the next ten days from there.

Pretty adamant yesterday that he's ready to go. Trainers feel like he's in a good spot. I feel like just watching him out in the field defensively, he looks very Anthony-ish. Yeah, made the call and excited to get him in there.

Q. Your bullpen was phenomenal during the Division Series against the Royals and really came together down the stretch after you moved Luke Weaver into the closer role. What I'd like to know is how did Clay Holmes handle it for you, and what have you seen from him since then both in terms of managing the change and adjusting to the issues that put him out of that role?

AARON BOONE: I think he handled it well. I don't think he was happy about it or anything like that, but also he's the ultimate pro too. As we've talked about throughout this year as questions have come up, he handles the highs and



lows that can go with that job really, really well. He's just such a rock solid person, and at the end of the day, a really, really good pitcher.

Even through some of the bumps in the road, like we were still seeing all that. So I don't think thrilled about the change in role necessarily, but didn't flinch on like we've got a job to do and he's thrived. He's continued to -- I thought pitched well for us down the stretch and obviously was lights out in the first round.

He's a pro and a really good pitcher, and I think that's how he handles it.

Q. What were the qualities that Weaver showed you that led you to making him the closer?

AARON BOONE: Another really good person. I mean, like just kind of the way he leads his life, he's just real responsible, diligent, great worker, easy going personality, great teammate. But then look at his body of work all year, and it's been outstanding.

Really since the end of Spring Training, his last couple outings in Spring Training, he really started to look the part and went into -- I remember going into Houston, that opening series, and he is kind of our long man, maybe a sixth starter at some point. We're not really sure of the role. Really from jump, it's been excellent.

We've seen the outstanding four seam fastball, cutter, change-up. And then with that, real command. So he's got command, the uptick in stuff that we've seen in him as a reliever, but also, I think with some of the tweaks he made to his delivery over the winter that didn't show up frankly right away in Spring Training has really taken him to another level.

But I think it's the stuff of the three pitches that he uses the most with command of those.

Q. What is the biggest difference between Austin Wells now and at the beginning of the season?

AARON BOONE: Look, first full year in the Big Leagues,



invaluable experience that he's gained, now kind of help leading a staff, a division winning staff. You can't put a price or a whatever on that experience that he's gained.

That said, he showed us a real presence even when he got called up last year into Spring Training this year, a real kind of not a rookie presence that you've kind of got to have as a catcher, especially catcher for the Yankees. Like he's had a real presence to him.

Got off to a little bit of a slow start offensively although you dig a little bit and he was hitting the ball pretty well. Then really, I don't know, June or July really started to take off offensively, moved into the middle of the lineup, and has just been a staple for us.

Even as he struggled a little bit offensively down the stretch, you still see that high level at-bat in situations, but the catching has been excellent.

Q. Why did you guys pick Marcus Stroman as your extra pitcher for this round, and how do you plan to use him?

AARON BOONE: We'll see. Obviously he can give us length, but as I've said to a lot of people today, it's playoffs. You may expect to see a guy that can give you length in a certain game, but you never know, he may find himself in the biggest spot in the biggest moment of the series.

He's a big reason why we're here. The consistency of our starting rotation this year is a big reason why we're division winners. He was a big part of that. He stayed ready. I felt like his live last week when he threw was good, and I just felt like he deserved to be on there.

Q. How much consideration was given to Nestor Cortes and just where is he in his progress?

AARON BOONE: I would say a little bit, but not quite there yet. Really excited about how his throwing program is going since he started. He threw his first pen yesterday, which went well. I think he felt good today. He'll have another moderate throwing tomorrow and then probably another bullpen on Thursday. If that goes well, could have a live on the weekend.

So he's just, if everything continues to go well, he's still a few days behind being ready for this series probably, but we're definitely encouraged by how it's going so far.

Q. With Anthony in terms of rostering him, was it a sense that he kind of had to be ready to start Game 1 for him to be on the roster, or could you have put him on even if it wasn't necessarily then?

AARON BOONE: I don't know if I looked at it like that. It was more like do I think he's ready, are you ready? I don't know how to answer that really.

Q. So much of playoff baseball is about bullpens and especially you guys are going to see a lot of relievers from Cleveland. How important is it for you to get length from your starters? How much value do you get with length from your starters?

AARON BOONE: Look, any time in these games, especially now with less off days than we just experienced, any time you can get a starter deeper into the game, it's valuable. But you do whatever you got to do to win the day.

And different teams, depending on the day, have to do that in different ways, and we'll be prepared to do whatever we need to do.

Q. I realize it's blasphemy to compare anybody to Mariano Rivera, but Clase says Mariano Rivera was his role model or whatever in developing his cutter. Do you see any similarities there? Just generally what makes him so tough?

AARON BOONE: I guess the cutter makes some similarities there. I mean, he's just -- he's obviously done it now for a few years at a really high level, so there's that consistent track record. He throws strikes with really high end stuff.

When you're throwing 100 mile an hour cutters up there and you also have command to go with it, that's going to be a challenge.

And he showed some real durability, the ability to take the ball over and over again. Add that all up, and it's one of the best closers we've seen over the last several years.

Q. You obviously know the Guardians from the regular season, but as a manager ahead of a playoff series, what's your process for kind of preparing for them here in mid-October as opposed to mid-August or earlier in the season?

AARON BOONE: Obviously you're paying attention to the other series when you can, so you're watching a little bit. We go through -- we have scouts on them, and then we do a whole scouting kind of unload or dump with our coaching staff and our staff and everyone has their areas where they prepare for specific things.

So that all kind of has taken place over the last couple



days. Once we know our opponent, then it's like we zero in on everything from how we're going to pitch guys, how we're positioning, what we expect to see out of their pen. I guess you're just spending days just kind of preparing as a group, then specifically the different coaches in their specific areas.

Q. Just with being back in the ALCS, is there anything about this Yankees team that stands out among the ones you've managed?

AARON BOONE: I don't know. I've talked about us being a little whole. '22, we kind of limped down the stretch, even though we played well down the stretch, after going through some struggles in kind of that July, August, we finished pretty strong, but we lost some key people in that final month and then played a really tough series with the Guardians and a rainout that pushed us right up to -- so we were just kind of beat up and a little bit on fumes going into that '22 series.

'19 was just a great series with a great opponent that we came up a little bit short. I feel like we're in a really good spot right now. We've got a couple of injuries, but for the most part, we're pretty whole, and I feel like a lot of guys -- and a lot of key guys are at their best or close to it right now.

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