

AL Championship Series: Guardians vs Yankees

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Yankee Stadium

New York Yankees

Aaron Boone

Pregame 2 Press Conference

Q. Aaron, you've won 4 out of 5 in the postseason, you've allowed just 14 runs. What do you like best about what your ball club is doing right now?

AARON BOONE: I guess pitching (laughter). No, I feel like we're doing a little bit of everything that allowed us to win games. Obviously the bullpen has been excellent, so they've been able to protect any lead.

For the most part, we've gotten -- whether we've gotten deep into a game or not, which we have a handful of times with our starters, they've by and large given us a real opportunity to win games. That's always important obviously.

I feel like we've made some key plays defensively at times. Then we've really, I feel like, grinded out a lot of at-bats. Again, haven't broke through with that big offensive night necessarily, but still put up five last night. We had a game where I think we scored 6. So we're scoring enough.

I feel like guys by and large are having really good at-bats and putting ourselves in position to have a big night offensively. If we can continue to do that, I'm confident we'll have one of those nights.

Q. The only Yankees with more postseason home runs than Stanton now are Bernie, Jeter, Mantle, and Ruth. How do you describe what he's been able to do in the postseason, and do you feel it's maybe even underappreciated outside of this room?

AARON BOONE: I don't know if it's underappreciated because I think we've all been talking about it. The reality is he's been great in the postseason with us, simple as that, and had some epic runs.

I think he's a great player. He's been a great player in his career. This is a guy with well over 400 home runs, an



MVP. I feel like this year, missed the month of the season with the injury, but around that, had a really consistent season for us.

I feel like I was talking all year about his just -- that consistent presence that he was in our lineup, in the middle of our order. He's carried that right into the postseason.

Obviously I think the postseason success he's had has served him well. That experience has served him well. He knows how to be ready. He knows how to prepare. He knows how to slow things down, and we're seeing that in his at-bats so far this postseason.

Q. No matter what the outcome, obviously a Soto or Judge at-bat is going to be really taxing on a pitcher. In the first five games of the playoffs so far, Gleyber has gotten on to start the game four times so far. Even though he's only scored once, how much do you think that has played a role in your being able to get to pitchers early by adding some even more pressure at those early at-bats?

AARON BOONE: Gleyber's been instrumental in the at-bats I talk about. And really it is what Gleyber has been doing the past couple months. Really, really his patience have been excellent -- has been excellent, I should say, while also being -- we've seen him go up there many times first pitch of the game and rifle a pitch for a hit.

So it's like that aggression you want, but also the ability to have a deep at-bat because he's not chasing. He's not expanding. He knows what his job is in front of those big guys. He's definitely been a tone setter for us, not just in this postseason, but really going back now a couple months.

Q. You were talking about players' ability to grind out at-bats. Just looking back at the 2022 ALCS, strikeouts were a big problem for you guys back then. When you look at the change from then till now, do you think it's a shift or change in the players that are actually doing it or a change in philosophy and approach?



AARON BOONE: 2022, we were missing some key pieces that were a huge part of -- like I remember Carp being out, D.J. went down, Benintendi out, and those are three real key ingredients in our lineup that we were missing.

I also felt like that Astros team, from starters to the eight guys they ran in the pen, were as good as we've run up against in the postseason since I've been here.

Look, I just feel like in '22 we were kind of limping into that series in a lot of ways. We're better now. We're in a better place. We have more balance. So I just think this is apples and oranges.

Not so much a shift in philosophy necessarily. Every team's new and different and you're trying to build on the strengths of individuals, but our team philosophy of taking tough at-bats hasn't really changed all that much.

Q. With the Gold Glove finalists, obviously Volpe won last year, but you have two in Verdugo and Soto who are outfield finalists, but playing here for the first time in their careers. What is that -- what is your reaction to that, first time in this outfield, they get that nod?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I'm excited for them. I think a lot of people have talked about what Dugie's done in our left field and how good he's been out there, but I think Juan has done a really good job in our right field. He's had a ton of assists. He's had a ton of big assists. Just think about the one big one he had in Game 1 of the Division Series with a great throw.

Happy for those guys. Happy that they're getting acknowledged for the work that they've put in and the pride that they take on that side of the ball. There's probably another guy or two that were probably close to being in those finalist situations. Just a deserved honor for those guys.

Q. Verdugo's had obviously an up-and-down season at the plate. You were just talking about his defense. Beyond that, what do you value in him that's kept him in the lineup for you?

AARON BOONE: I think it starts with the defense because in a lot of ways, the second half offensively was a struggle for him, but one thing that's never left him is the glove. In our stadium here in left field, that's a big deal, the defense he's played out there.

I've never lost sight of the fact that how good a hitter this guy is. We all go through struggles at different points in our careers for different reasons, but I always feel like for me, it's about moving forward and like what do I think he

can bring? I think he can bring a real presence for us, especially at the bottom of our order.

I feel like he's had good at-bats so far in the postseason. I feel like he likes the ratcheted up of the postseason. So I feel like right now he's in a really good place.

Q. Did you give any thought to making any moves in the lineup, perhaps moving Rizzo up or bumping Wells down just because of the at-bats Rizzo had last night?

AARON BOONE: No.

Q. You're okay -- we've talked about Wells' at-bats lately not having been as strong as earlier in the series. Do you still think those at-bats are in there for him?

AARON BOONE: I do. I do. Look, I'm always considering stuff, but I didn't really consider that for today. I feel like, even as Austin has gone through some struggles offensively, he still had in some really big moments over the last month and some key spots that at-bat you really need to have.

I still feel like that's in there for him, and hopefully he kind of can get hot here too for a few weeks for us, which would be outstanding.

Q. With Rizzo, is he basically in the same spot he was yesterday?

AARON BOONE: We should be good. He is going through more treatment. He was a little sore this, morning but nothing out of the ordinary. Hoping he's good to go.

I was super pleased with his at-bats yesterday. I didn't expect him to be that good. I thought -- I think I said it after, I thought he was really sharp. I thought he was recognizing pitches well, taking the right ones, got some really good swings off. I was really encouraged by how he looked for not having really faced any live pitching for, whatever, 16 days.

Q. I was going to ask about Wells too, but I'll throw Jazz in there as well. Do you think they're trying to do too much? What would you attribute these last couple days to for them?

AARON BOONE: I don't see that with Wells. I think he's for several weeks now not swung it as good as he was there for that two-month stretch where, man, he was -- but I also don't feel like he's that far off either.

A couple of these games where I feel like maybe Jazz is

trying a little different things too much, but he's also so gifted and just so fearless up there that he's one of those guys that can kind of change the games in so many different ways and hoping that he'll have one of those games here and confident he can.

Q. Last month when you guys decided to change things up with the bullpen, you used the word creative with how you could use the bullpen. Do you think you've had to be as creative as you thought you would have to be? How has this process gone over the last month?

AARON BOONE: I think it starts with we've got a number of guys down there that are throwing the ball incredibly well. So in a lot of ways, that's made it easy for me. I've got a ton of confidence in whoever we bring in as long as we can get them in there in spots where we think they can be successful. These guys are really locked in and throwing the ball really well obviously.

It's a credit to them. Again, I go back to I think they complement each other really well with some different kind of skill sets that match up well at different parts of the order and at different parts in the game.

They've all worked really hard to be in a good spot right at this point.

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