

AL Championship Series: Guardians vs Yankees

Friday, October 18, 2024

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Progressive Field

New York Yankees

Aaron Boone

Pregame 4 Press Conference

Q. Luis Gil today is your guy. I believe he was like 8-1, 9-1 before going back to the rotation. Is there any reason why he hasn't pitched before the series in Kansas or any game before today?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, because we only needed three starters for the Kansas City series. He was definitely in consideration for that. We had him out of the bullpen in the Kansas City series knowing that he would go back into the rotation if we advanced to the Championship Series.

Excited to get him the ball today, and he's had an outstanding year for us and a big reason why we're here. Hopefully he can go out and get us off to a good start tonight.

Q. We talk so much about the athletic things these guys can do. How much of it is skill to be able to move past last night and have the ability to turn the page?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I think it's a trait as an athlete that you want to have. The most successful ones do, certainly in our sport.

It's important where you're playing every day and we talk about the grind of the everyday and you've got to move on. I think it's sometimes hard for people to understand that, but it's what you live.

I think it's just kind of what we do in our sport. And some guys, some teams are better at it than others. I do feel like it's been one of our traits that these guys have done really well this year.

Q. How big of a role do you think as Aaron does in keeping that level in there?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I think it's huge. Just the tone he sets in there, the tone all our leaders set in there, just



something that we try and hammer home from day one in Spring Training.

It's just like, keep moving, keep moving. Especially in the playoffs, when I talk to these guys before the series, we're going to do some great things, there's going to be great moments, we're going to make mistakes.

It is like you can't get bogged down by it all. You've got to hopefully feed off the energy that is the postseason, but kind of take in every moment, learn from it, and then understanding the next play is so important and you've got to keep moving, and the teams that do that well have a chance to be more successful.

Q. What do you like about Jazz batting cleanup?

AARON BOONE: Well, Austin has been in there for the better part of a couple months, obviously, so considering Giancarlo there, but just wanted to try and keep as much balance as I can in the lineup, and Jazz is very capable. Hopefully he'll give us a little spark there.

Q. Austin got hit by a pitch on his hand in September. Do you feel like he's 100 percent healthy and recovered from that, and is that part of his struggles at the plate, if it's not?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I don't think so. I don't think that's part of his struggles. 100 percent catcher in October, I don't know about that, either. But he's good physically. I feel like he's in a pretty good spot for being this time of year and being a catcher.

Q. How long did it take you to process that game last night? Did it stick with you longer than usual?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, you kind of sit in the office with it a little longer, and with it being an earlier game, you get back to the hotel and you're kind of watching the end of the other game kind of, I guess, sitting in it a little bit.

Obviously a tough one, but again, part of if you're going to survive in the playoffs and go on a long run in the playoffs, every team is going to have those kind of gut-check



moments or like, oh, what a tough loss. But that's all it is; it's a loss.

Bottom line is we're still in a pretty good position. But today is a new day and a new opportunity to go out there and hopefully grab a good lead in the series.

Q. A lot of catchers have been struggling a little bit in the postseason. Do you think the work that a catcher has to do now in terms of preparation in the postseason, do you think that's a coincidence or do you think the amount of work they're doing is making it hard?

AARON BOONE: I don't know, what do the last six years say?

Q. I don't know.

AARON BOONE: I'm sure some of it is a coincidence, and just handful of guys that are struggling. But there's no question, it's the most demanding position. And you get to this time of year, it's October, guys have caught all year, like as physically demanding as it is, but also all that goes into the preparation and being prepared on the defensive side is all a factor of that position, no question.

Is it more this year? I don't necessarily think it's more this year than it has been in the last several, so there's probably a little bit of small sample in this time around.

Q. Austin was one of your best hitters for a few months, and obviously he struggled in September and now in October. Can you point to why that might be the case for him?

AARON BOONE: Yeah. Again, part of it might be just a little worn down. That's part of it. But like I was just saying in my office, too, I also have a lot of confidence in him as a hitter and who he is, just his DNA as a hitter. Moving forward, I think he has a chance to have the best at-bats in the best moments. He's that kind of hitter.

I feel like he's missed some pitches, like swung through some pitches that he's typically a guy that puts the ball in play pretty well while also controlling the strike zone. He's swung and missed at some pitches maybe that he's had a chance to do some things with maybe a little uncharacteristic or when he's going through it a little bit, maybe expanded in some areas a little bit.

So I think add it all up, you've just got a guy in a little bit of a funk, but again, a lot of confidence in who he is as a person, as a hitter that moving forward, it doesn't mean that's going to be the case.

Q. What will you look for early to be able to see if he's sharp?

AARON BOONE: I mean, strike throwing is always a big one for Luis, and then the stuff. I guess if he's in the strike zone and then how does his fastball look, what's his secondary, his change and his slider doing, is he holding his posture on his changeup, things like that.

But frankly in some of his better outings, he's struggled a little bit to navigate that first a little bit, and he kind of gets through it and gets rolling. Just kind of watching the stuff and the strike throwing.

Q. Is Stroman kind of ready to go as a long guy, keeping all the relievers (indiscernible)?

AARON BOONE: Well, he's ready to go as a long guy every day, so yeah. But not necessarily he'd be the first guy I'd go to or whatever, but he's definitely the guy down there if we need length.

Q. What do you think Carlos has learned and taken away from his last couple of starts in October as a whole?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I think he's probably the guy I point to the most of just benefiting from the experience of the postseason.

Obviously he's pitched in the league now for a long time, has had a lot of success, has been through a lot with us, struggling last year, bouncing back in the way he did this year. Pitching for the first time in a playoff game in the Bronx, coming out hot, and you could see it emotionally. Stuff was great, was great early, but probably petered out a little bit, and I think he grew from that. I think he learned from that.

I think as much as anyone, it feels to me like he's really gained a lot from the experience of pitching in the postseason with the Yankees.

Q. Tomorrow could be a clincher for him, first postseason start on the road with you guys. Do you feel like this experience will have him equipped to --

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I feel like he's ready to go. I feel great about where he's at and what he's going to bring.

Q. With a few games under his belt now, how much pain do you see Anthony Rizzo is playing through?

AARON BOONE: I mean, you've got to ask him that. I

mean, it's a real injury. I think he's managing it as well as you possibly can, and the training staff is doing a great job of keeping him going and keeping him prepared all throughout the game, but it's definitely a pretty heavy workload maintenance-wise and making sure he can get through these games. It's real, but I think once he gets in the game and they get him going, I think he's felt really good.

I think his at-bats have shown that.

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