

AL Championship Series: Guardians vs Yankees

Saturday, October 19, 2024

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Progressive Field

New York Yankees

Mark Leiter Jr.

Pregame 5 Press Conference

Q. Do you remember the feeling you had when you were told that you were left off the initial playoff roster and then the roster for this series? What was that feeling like?

MARK LEITER JR: I mean, it's definitely a disappointment if you're not on the roster. But at the same time, there's nothing you can really do about it, so you've just got to stay ready. And if an opportunity presents itself, be ready for that.

I would say it's just not about one person. It's a team. However it gets put out there is how we're going to go, and whoever's chance it is is going to step up and do the job.

Q. Last night you mentioned how you were physically staying ready. How are you mentally staying ready for anything to possibly happen?

MARK LEITER JR: I mean, getting us in the dugout and feeling the atmosphere, whether you're on the field or not, kind of trying and be present in that and feel that energy, I think probably helped to kind of calm the nerves of like a playoff atmosphere and all that stuff.

It was good to be there in the dugout and to feel the energy. Even if you're sitting in the bullpen, you might not pitch in some of the games anyway. Just kind of being present in that and enjoying my teammates' success throughout.

Q. Are the emotions different at all because you were on the roster? You've been there the whole time, you've been around, but knowing that they got the call for you, was that different in the early innings of the game?

MARK LEITER JR: Yeah, absolutely. You get some adrenaline going and you're in the flow of the game, and



you've got a chance to contribute, and that's really all that matters.

Q. What have you learned about the Yankees from the time you found out you were being traded there to now pitching for them?

MARK LEITER JR: Just watching from afar, I knew how great of a team it was and how special of a group it was. Getting the opportunity to get traded here was a really cool opportunity, first-place team, really good team, and been blown away by how much of a team it actually is inside and taking care of one another, picking each other up, feeding off each other, all that stuff. It's been awesome to be a part of.

Q. During the game as things are playing out, you're in the bullpen with your fellow relievers, what's the dynamic for you guys as you're watching the game unfold?

MARK LEITER JR: I would say as a reliever, it doesn't matter what's going on in the game. Somebody is coming out of the bullpen. Somebody has got to come in. Somebody has got a job to do. It doesn't matter what the score is. It doesn't matter what's going on out there. We all have our job to do.

These guys have been through it a little bit more, so that was my first day, so it was a little bit of a -- little different for me that one game.

Just the only difference is just being ready a little earlier. All hands on deck; it's playoffs. But again, throughout the whole season, somebody has got to come in no matter what's going on out there, so trying to stay even-keel and slightly removed from the action and kind of knowing you have a job to do is probably the best way I could describe it.

Q. How quickly did you get a sense of how close this team is? You mentioned it a couple seconds ago. What is it that makes this team so close?

MARK LEITER JR: It was the first day I got here, just to



see the leadership and just the togetherness from the group. Just making everybody, no matter who you are, feel a part of group. I think that goes a long way.

I think when you're playing for one another, good things can happen.

Q. Along the same lines, with how important bullpens are, what have you gotten from Hark over the postseason, being around him, and how he's able to keep you guys ready and all on the same --

MARK LEITER JR: Yeah, I think along that same line of just being steady with your preparation and understanding of routine and just playoffs come, it's just maybe a little bit earlier.

But like not letting -- trying not to let the game be bigger than it is, just play the game the same way you played it all year. Coming in those leverage moments is the same in the regular season as it is the playoffs, there's just not a tomorrow or this or that comparatively to the regular season, but the job is the same.

So calming the nerves, staying in routine, and just riding.

Q. You hit upon blue sky obviously; is that the same vibe in these situations?

MARK LEITER JR: Yeah, it was my first night out there, so my nerves were probably a little off, like being able to give you a full description of what he was doing.

But yeah, like I said, just staying the same as much as you can as the regular season. Somebody has got a job to do.

I really like that expression because it doesn't matter what your role is in the bullpen, the game could be out of hand, somebody has got to go in. The game is close, somebody has got to go in. Grand slam happens, something changes, somebody else is going in.

For our group, when you're in the bullpen, everybody has got a job to do, and the game is going to present whose job it is.

Q. I was hoping you could reflect on the last couple years of your journey. Last night you are playing in the biggest game in the Major League baseball season. A couple years ago, you signed I think it was Somerset before. They were like a Yankees affiliate. It was like an independent team that became kind of a pickup league team. To go from that to where you are now, could you reflect on that kind of roller coaster you have ridden?

MARK LEITER JR: Yeah, it's just appreciating the journey. Everybody's journey looks a little different. Everybody's milestones look a little different. But being appreciative of the opportunity, taking the most of the opportunity, not forgetting what you've been through in the hard times. There's always a situation that could have been harder than the current one.

Using that to grow from it, to gain experience from it and just to keep evolving as a player, I really believe that to have a long successful career, you've got to keep learning, and you don't stop learning until you're done.

Allowing every opportunity, every situation to be a learning experience I think is the best way to take that all in.

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