

AL Championship Series: Mariners vs Blue Jays

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Rogers Centre

Toronto Blue Jays

John Schneider

Workout Day Press Conference



Q. Just wondering where you're at as far as setting up the roster for the LCS.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: In the thick of it. A couple question marks, I think, just to kind of take care of as today goes on, but otherwise feel good about where we are but kind of have to see how this workout goes today.

Q. Will there be room for a little more pitching length like a Max or Chris with the series being longer this time?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think so, definitely fair to say. They're both feeling good and are definitely ready and available. Different format, obviously, seven games, three in a row, all that kind of stuff. Yeah, could definitely see them being part of it.

Q. I follow your brother Kevin on Instagram. He's a wonderful mental health advocate for good reasons. It was great to see your family at the games last week. Is there something that your brother said to you to help you that you're going to bestow onto the team and to the change room, some kind of advice that he gave to you?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's funny, Kev always calls me the second-best coach in the family. He's been saying that for a number of years. Jury is still out on that, I think.

I think it's cool to have a family member -- for one, it's cool to have my whole family here, to have my boys and wife experience this.

Kev is an open book, if you do follow him, you know. I think what he always says is be you; know what I mean? It's kind of the message I gave to the team this year at Spring Training was do what you're good at; be you. I've tried to do that in this seat, in this job, and kind of let it rip.

This game and this spot comes with a lot of scrutiny and pressure and all that kind of stuff, but I think as long as you're being who you are, whether it's myself, the staff, the players, you're going to be just fine.

Q. Since we last spoke Wednesday in New York, what type of running has Bo managed to do, and is that right now where the question mark on his status for the ALCS lies?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, he's done more running the bases I think as we speak right now and hit live yesterday. A lot of swings, looked pretty good. But I think just seeing how he gets through running the bases, turning corners, things like that, and to kind of see how the rest of his days goes is kind of -- I don't want to say our last decision but one of them. Kind of just getting some feedback from him when he's done.

Q. Is today the first time running the bases?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, today is the first time on the bases. Yesterday was just kind of more running in the outfield, and we'll check in with him here shortly.

Q. In terms of availability for the round, how much availability does Bo have to have to be on the roster?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Not sure yet, to be honest with you. We're trying to weigh out -- I'm trying to weigh out is it every day? Is it off the bench? Obviously you want his bat in the lineup.

I think just kind of getting to the spot with him and getting his feedback, him being part of it, how much, if at all, he's going to be compromised, and if not, okay, and how that kind of affects everyone else that we're going to try to use and deploy.

To say everyday availability would be best-case scenario, yeah, that's pretty easy, but I think it's a weird time crunch with the series starting tomorrow and him having to check some boxes here today, too.



Q. Further to that, if, say, you determine he probably needs another couple days, can't play until Wednesday, would you run a man short for two games? Is that something that might factor in?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It might, yeah. A little bit different with a pitcher than a position player in my mind. And how you can kind of cover it.

I think you go into every game with a play-in and how you want to use people. My biggest fear would be if it is a couple days and you're playing a guy short, what is that going to do for your chances to win, right. That's all part of the equation. We'll know more tonight, just to kind of see if that is an option and if that is the best thing for the first couple games.

Q. Is there a thought to going 12 pitchers, or do you feel like you're probably going to stick with 13?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: We've had conversations with both. I think you probably think towards seven-game series, the five-out-of-six days, things like that, and you kind of want to stay with the 13 pitchers, 13 and 13.

But that's part of the equation, too, is what does it look like if Bo is available, what does it look like if he's not, and really just trying to do what's best for everyone involved.

Q. Jays haven't been here for almost a decade. It's only the eighth time the Jays have been in the ALCS. This is the hardest ticket to get right now in the city. What's your message to fans and what's it been like to play in front of all these fans?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it's been tremendous. I feel like the last -- second half of the year really -- the whole year they've come out and supported us and I feel like you can feel the buzz in the city for a few months now.

This atmosphere, I think you kind of have to be here to appreciate it in the postseason. It can be pretty deafening at times. So to the fans, I say thank you for coming and thank you for making this a place that is noticeably different to play in when you get into this kind of atmosphere.

It's fun every single night. It was fun in the DS against the Yankees. They were loud. It plays a part. It's easy for guys to get up and play here, and I think it's a tough place to come in and play as an opposing team.

We love the support. It's cool that you can feel it in the building, but it's really cool you can feel it throughout the city, too.

Q. Max has basically thrown two starts over the last week, full starts. Has he just been kind of staying fresh or is there anything specific you guys have had him working on over that time?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think kind of a little bit of both. Definitely keeping himself ready in any, really, capacity. But I think what he's working on is just trying to get back to being him in terms of delivery, finishing his pitches, being able to put the ball where he wants to, which I think was compromised at times over the season.

That's it, really. You want to keep the pitch count where it is. You want to make sure that he can do certain things, not just with his fastball but his secondary stuff, too.

Q. I'm sure you stayed up watching last night. What was your experience watching that game?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I was tired, man. That was a hell of a game. There was so many moving parts. Yeah, you can see we're in the postseason when you get into extra innings without the runner at second, you can get into some really, really tricky situations.

I thought it was a hell of a baseball game from both teams and from both managers, to be honest with you, and it kept me on the edge of my seat. Went all the way through my dinner with my wife and back home at the condo.

It was entertaining for sure. But glad I wasn't part of that one (laughter). That's a big-time baseball game right there.

Q. A lot of you guys have not gone ALDS to ALCS, but there's one guy who's going to be on the mound tomorrow who has. How much was that an advantage, and what do you like about his ability to handle the next step in the big stage?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, Kev has just been so consistent since he's been here, and he's been in big games here. Just did a Game 1 last week, and I think that his demeanor continues to impress me, whether it's a game in June or whether it's in a playoff game. He kind of doesn't budge.

Having that veteran guy out there to navigate things in real time -- Kev talked about the at-bat against Judge Game 1, sixth inning, where he wasn't afraid to walk him, and did the same thing to Bellinger after that.

When you have a guy with good stuff and you have a guy that can process what's going on in real time, you feel really good about his decision-making in those spots.

I'm looking forward to him tomorrow to kind of getting the series off to a strong start hopefully. There's something about his demeanor, just kind of his presence every day where the day he's pitching everybody feels a little bit more confident going into it.

Q. Two years ago on Canadian Thanksgiving we were here under different circumstances. Was there any point along the way that you really felt you had turned a corner as a team?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, this is going to sound funny. I think we did last September, to be honest with you, when we were still playing and not where we wanted to be. I've said that before this year. I think last year gave us a chance to really dive into some ways to get better as opposed to late in the fall where the season ends not the way you want it to and then you kind of get going.

I think that's where it started. I think being aligned with front office, with staff, with players really kind of started then. Not that it wasn't before, but I think we used that as an opportunity to self-evaluate, if you will.

Going into Spring Training you could kind of feel it. I've said it before, you're confident about the group, confident about the work, the prep, the people that we added to, and you could kind of see it unfold in real time this year.

Q. What is it like going from last series, where you're playing a Yankees team where you both know each other so much throughout the year, to now a team that you haven't seen since May and really for both teams are almost completely different groups than they were at that point?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it's interesting. I think that the work doesn't change. The prep doesn't change. I think there's a lot of people that are involved in that.

As the season kind of starts winding down, you start to pay a little bit more attention to these teams, moves they've made, how they deploy, some tendencies and things like that. But it is different. It definitely is different.

You could kind of say the Yankees were a little bit different from when they were here in the summer, and that team evolved -- I think every team evolves a little bit.

But I think kind of how Seattle is playing now, yeah, way different from the last time we saw them for sure, whether it's how the bullpen is used, some guys they've added offensively, some guys that have stepped up offensively. They're a really good team. They're a good team for a lot of different reasons.

They're a team we've kind of been looking at for a while hoping we'd be in the position that we are and kind of thinking it's a pretty good likelihood that they're going to be here, too.

Q. Is the plan to keep Trey and Bieber 2-3 going into the series? How does that look?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Most likely. That's kind of where we're at right now. Nothing definitive yet.

Yeah, I think that that could be a definite possibility.

Q. How has Trey handled some of this in-between, like walking up to the bullpen the last game, this is more new stuff for him?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, he's been great, man. He's really been wise beyond his year. Stuff is stuff and kind of his performance speaks for itself, but it seems like every time we throw a new wrinkle at him, he's ready for it. Whether it was -- for the record, Trey wasn't pitching in Game 4. I don't know if I said that after the game.

But I think when we kind of brought that to him, the fact that he didn't shy away from it was pretty cool. So he's been impressive, and I think that he's handled the in-between stuff really well. Kind of understands what we're most likely going to ask out of him, and give him credit for being able to adjust, too. He did it the entire year in the Minor Leagues and he's doing it now on a really big stage.

Q. A few days removed after that stressful Wednesday at Yankee Stadium, how do you reflect on how you and Pete kind of handled the game and just the decision-making process?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You know, I think I said it after the game -- I don't really remember that clearly -- but you take a lot of pride in it. It's a tough needle to thread. It wasn't just me and Pete; it's a lot of people involved in there.

It was a little bit more than usual. We usually meet before every game, probably hour, hour and a half before, you talk through possible scenarios. I was really proud of the way that myself, Pete, Graham, Sam, Luke Hoey, who doesn't get a lot of recognition in the field but in the office with the pitching side, how we were ready for it.

I texted that group and said, "This is an opportunity to have some fun," and they all responded. You have the plan, and then ultimately I'm the one watching in real time, okay, do we need to deviate. It wasn't one plan; there were



probably about five plans.

I've said it before, everyone thinks of a bullpen day as a bullpen day but you have to score and you have to play your game, too, and the guys did that as well.

It was nice, and to see everyone be ready for any situation was really cool. That comes with Graham being on top of the messaging, on top of the way they're getting ready, not getting hot if they don't need to get hot, coming in in the third inning if you're Seranthony Dominguez. There's a lot of moving parts.

So something that we'll look back on. We have looked back. We have talked about it a couple times since and just how fulfilling it was that everyone was on the same page, and the players was out and executed it.

Q. How much confidence does that give you going into the next series after executing something like that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think the more you do it, the easier it gets. It's fun to watch -- I've always said this group is awesome at going on to the next thing. It could have been -- you ask Louis Varland to go out and start the game where he gives up a couple homers the night before, and he could have went about it totally different.

He could have been a little gun-shy, and it was the exact opposite.

I think you feel good about that and how they responded, and you feel good about the fact that they're pretty adjustable down there, too.

It was a fun but stressful game to maneuver through.

Q. I think when you talked about Scherzer and Bassitt staying behind and throwing here, Max threw like 90 something, I believe, and Bassitt was more like 45 or 50, if I'm not mistaken. Where is Bassitt at physically in terms of being stretched out, like what kind of a role could he have if he's on the roster?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Probably, at the very least, he could probably give you that, probably three, four innings. He feels a lot better than he did end of the regular season, even last week. So I think he's recovered physically well, which is what we wanted him to feel.

But he could pitch one inning, I think he could pitch four or five. I've said it before, Chris does weird well, and he understands that this time of year, whatever we need from him, he's going to go out and give.

Purposely tried to keep some length there with him, and wanted to keep Max stretched out, too.

Q. Didn't see after the game, but just to clarify what you said now, Yesavage was not going to pitch, that was all for smoke and mirrors --

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Pretty much. I talked to Ken about it in the third. He was asking when it was a good time to come in. I kind of had a fly on the fly there, Kenny. Sorry. But yeah, he was not pitching.

Q. Dramatic walks out to the bullpen?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, he's got to cross that off his list, yeah. (Laughter).

Q. Bullpen games, the Dodgers used two of them in the NLCS last year, even in Game 5 of the NLDS with Milwaukee and the Cubs there, getting creative. I'm wondering, how do you see that being a consistent part of how you guys might roll out in a series in the postseason, and then are there -- how different are the challenges in a seven-game versus a five-game and employing a bullpen game?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, a little bit different with just the number of games, right? Probably harder to pull off what we did in Game 4 without the off-day after that.

Are we going to look to -- I think we're going to look to just take the best chance we can to win every night. If it's a short start, if it's a long start, you've got to kind of read it in real time and then kind of see where you are in terms of availability, performance, and schedule.

I think that the fact that we've done it I think gives us a lot of confidence in preparing for it if we need to. If we don't need to, I think we have enough guys that are available to do that kind of traditionally, as well.

I do think the way rosters are set up and bullpens are set up, it's a real thing. It's a real way to go about trying to win; know what I mean? Can you do it every day in a regular season? No, because people are human and they're going to get tired.

But I think when you can match it up accordingly, when you're trying to win a select number of games and you're trying to win four out of seven, that's the best way to go about it, we'll definitely do whatever we can.

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