

AL Championship Series: Mariners vs Blue Jays

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Rogers Centre

Toronto Blue Jays

John Schneider

Pregame 2 Press Conference

Q. Yesterday, Trey told us some awful news of his family getting some online hate after his performance. What advice did you give him to clear his mind or have a better mindset performing without that in his mind?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: For one, welcome to the club, Trey. But I think the fact that he was proactive with saying what he said leads me to believe that he'll go out and compete just fine today.

I don't think that a player needs to have any extra advice when you're kind of using the platform that you do have to just say how you feel. I think if he was uncomfortable saying that, he wouldn't have said it yesterday, and I don't think it's going to affect him at all today.

Q. Obviously, Shane Bieber will start on Wednesday. What's he bring to the table for the club?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Another veteran presence who's pitched in big games, who's done really well. A guy you rely on, you count on, you trust. Exactly what we thought when we were acquiring him at the deadline.

Pitching in a hostile environment, again, like did he in New York, but got all the trust in the world in him to go out and just pitch his game.

He's fit right in since we've acquired him, and he's just another one of those guys that I think can handle big moments.

Q. What did Nate have to go through this morning to let you guys know that he was ready for this game?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Woke up feeling better, which was good, and then just with stuff, talking to him, talking to the medical staff, I don't think there's any inherent risk by him playing and then just basing it off of how he's feeling.



Went through some tests earlier this morning. He's going to continue to kind of do that as we get closer to the game. But I said it yesterday, man; he's been waiting for this situation, this moment in his career, for a while. It's going to be tough to get him out of the lineup if he's able to play. So far he's checked every box.

Q. If he hadn't been available, how would you have thought through covering him between weighing sort of maybe a defense-first option, like Myles versus maybe a more offensive option like Davis?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think we had that covered. Kind of had to maneuver it a little bit in real time yesterday, but you take, I think, all things into consideration. You probably start with offense and go from there with how we are kind of built, with how we play.

Q. I was outside chatting with fans live on the radio moments ago, and they're all saying, it's just one game, it's just one game. How does it make you feel that no matter what, the fans are always behind the Blue Jays thick or thin?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's great; know what I mean? It's why we love playing here. It's why we love our fans. I think it's easy for them to say that because that's the mentality in the clubhouse right now. Again, this is not a one-game series. This is a seven-game series, and you know it's going to be tough.

I think that our fans are well-educated enough to know that, for one, but also well-educated enough to know what kind of team that is.

Q. We hear a lot during the regular season, or we ask a lot about nagging little injuries, if this were a playoff game, would he be playing. If this were Game 119, would Lucas be playing?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Probably not, just being totally transparent. Yeah, we've had those conversations to where you say -- I've probably said, I want to be careful and things like that, if this were the playoffs, we'll see.



This is the playoffs, so I think you do whatever it takes to be out there.

Q. With the Ernie-Tony switch, 7-8, what went into that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Similar to kind of what we did yesterday -- what I did yesterday with kind of contact, power, splitting up Varsh, Tony, trying to predict as best you can what Gilbert is going to do in terms of pitch deployment.

Again, not really sure. You're trying to take your best shot at it, and to kind of take also into consideration how long or short he may go and how many times each guy can kind of see him.

Been really encouraged with Tony's at-bats and just wanted to kind of take a shot there.

Q. One of the things that really stands out about your team this season is the adaptability of the lineup, scoring runs in different ways. It can be big swings, it can be smaller ball. After the Mariner pitching was so efficient yesterday getting through about 100 pitches, does it call for a different kind of approach here in Game 2?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I've been thinking about that. I think that, again, you don't want to try to do something you haven't done all year when you get to this point, and I think that yesterday was -- we come out, George homer, 20-however many pitches in the first, and you don't want to take the aggressiveness away from guys. I think there were a handful of bats that could have gone a little bit longer.

These guys can pitch and they're going to come right after you early. There's ways to combat that. Again, you don't want guys to sit there and wait a guy out and say he's pitching on short rest. You've got to trust guys to make good swing decisions, good swings.

I think when you look at it as a whole, yesterday, whether you want to call it bad luck, bad aim, bad exit velo, whatever you want to call it, I think it just kind of didn't work out to our favor to where, yeah, there were some quick outs. That's kind of how some of our guys are built and didn't really grasp the positioning part of it or the contact quality part of it yesterday.

Q. With Tony, it's obviously been an up-and-down year, starts and stops. How have you seen him navigate that journey?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Pretty well for a guy coming into his first year of a contract, wanting to perform better than he did before he got hurt and understanding what he needed to do to get better. It's hard when you're trying to get your body right to play. Within that time, you're trying to make some adjustments, too, to perform better.

I think that he did everything that he could to get to this point, and it's going to continue to be a grind for him, I think, physically. But he's another guy that he understands where we are right now, so he's going to do whatever it takes to help in some capacity.

Been a frustrating year for him. I think that it is nice that he's back helping us right now.

Q. It's been about six months since Vlady signed that contract extension. How important do you think it was to get that over with and allow you guys to --

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think it was big, not just for Vlad. I think he did a really good job of saying this isn't affecting me from day one of Spring Training. I think that kind of eased the tension a little bit in the room. I think it kind of showed our fan base and the league kind of what we're trying to do here short- and long-term, and it just kind of clears a little bit of a cloud around a really good player and allows the team to say, okay, this is our guy, this is what we're going to do.

Yeah, I think it kind of freed everyone up, to be honest with you.

Q. How do you feel this group is equipped to handle the ups and downs of a postseason compared to the '22 and '23 teams?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I like our chances; know what I mean? When you get to this point -- players are players, and people are people. These guys don't want the season to end; you know what I mean? I think whatever the outcome is, I feel like these guys all want to get an Airbnb somewhere and hang out for the winter. (Laughter.)

I think that that means a lot. They have shown they're really good at moving on to the next thing, which is hard to do.

But I think they're very well-equipped to just say, okay, what's important now. I've been saying it all year: What do I need to do now to help us win?

You go out and you play your game, you compete your ass off, and you see what happens. They're going to continue

to do it. I've got all the faith in the world in them. I'm really excited to see kind of how they come out today.

Q. Just to follow on that topic of cohesiveness in the clubhouse, Myles Straw was speaking the other day about how it helped when he come here that he knew a lot of guys from the Cleveland organization and, obviously, with Shane, you've added another guy from the Cleveland organization. How much does that help when you have players who have a preexisting relationship?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, in this game, it's big. We were kind of joking it was a prerequisite to be in Cleveland at some point to be over here. It helps because this game is hard, and everyone makes sacrifices. They're away from their family, they're here all day; you know what I mean?

I think just being comfortable with the guys around you is huge, whether it's players, whether it's staff, talking to you guys every day. Yeah, the more comfortable you are, the better you're going to perform for sure.

It is nice, and I think that when you have that, then you kind of build an environment and you build a culture where when new guys do come in, they're very welcome, whether guys from a Minor League system or guys coming in from other organizations.

Q. It's interesting to me to see the number of switch hitters in this series and, obviously, Tony has got to probably get the left-handed swing going as best he can. But when you look at Raleigh, look at Polanco, what have been your observations over the years about how switch hitters keep their swings going?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, that's always been one of the game's biggest questions to me because when you're -- it's tough to maintain one swing with the pitching you're facing these days. To do two swings that are probably a little bit different in some way, shape, or form is really impressive.

I think to do it when you're playing every day, to do it when you're catching every day, is pretty much unheard of, too, what Cal is doing.

I give those guys so much credit. Their routine has to be different. Their maintenance is different. There's times where one feels better than the other. But that, to me -- it's a luxury to have when you know you can kind of be platoon-neutral. But to maintain it, I think, is really impressive.

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