

AL Championship Series: Mariners vs Blue Jays

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Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Toronto Blue Jays

John Schneider

Pregame 4 Press Conference

Q. With Tony unavailable today, as you were debating between IKF or maybe Davis Schneider or some of your other options, how did you weigh offense, defense, and the different possibilities?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: A little bit of both. I think kind of looking at some history against him and looking at some contact ability and things like that, tough decision, for sure, but feel comfortable and confident with Izzy just being a baseball player and being prepared. So that's what we went with.

Q. Was Tony's unavailability tied to him running the bases yesterday? Did that aggravate something for him?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think just the game in general did. He was pretty stiff, sore after. Checked in with him this morning and still felt it, so wanted to hold off as long as we could. But just in talking to him and after getting some treatment, it still felt like it wasn't the right thing to do to put him out there.

Q. Do you anticipate a possibility of him being available for an at-bat off the bench?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: We'll see. Back is tough. You know what I mean? So we'll kind of see what he can or can't do the next couple hours and go from there.

Q. With Santander, is there any possibility that he would have to be removed from the ALCS roster?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Again, we'll see. I think getting checked out by staff, getting checked out by doctors, trying to put a time line on it, really. Is he good today, can you buy a day, things like that, all things that we have to consider. So I think we'll know more in a couple hours, really.



Q. I asked you about hitting yesterday. Today I'm going to ask you about pitching. After that first inning yesterday, your pitching was able to kind of calm that Mariner offense down. Do you take a different approach game by game, do you take a different approach pitcher by pitcher, is there a certain way you handle Max differently on that, does that go with the relievers, or is there kind of a set game plan on how pitching is going to handle the line lineup?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's individualized, and every starter being a little bit different, different stuff, relievers, obviously, different. But I think Shane executed at an extremely high level after the first inning, especially with his secondary stuff.

So Max's probably game plan, yeah, it's going to be a little bit different, just with the pitch mix and things like that. He's still going to have to locate everything. This is a really, really good lineup that can do a lot of damage and do a lot of different things, so you still have to execute it. But I think what Shane did yesterday was exactly what he was trying to do.

Q. Every time you get to a Game 4 in a series, it's a little bit like a fork in the road, somebody is tying it, somebody is getting swept, or somebody is going up 3-1. Talk about mindset game to game, is it just about tonight or do you think any farther?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You try not to. I think if anyone's thinking a little bit farther it's probably me. It's not the guys. They're so good at just focusing on today. That's what we did yesterday. That's what you have to do really every day throughout the season, and especially when you're in this kind of series.

So that's where our mind is right now. Really you can't worry about things that have happened. You don't rest your game today on what happened last night or the first two games. You got to attack Luis Castillo the best you can and you got to keep their lineup in check the best you can. It's just kind of rinse and repeat and do it again the next day.



Q. Speaking of thinking farther, do you have an update on Bo's progress?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Nothing crazy. He was running in the outfield today. Not back on the bases yet. Definitely feels good hitting, swinging. So we're kind of taking it day by day with the running part of it and trying to build up every single day.

Q. Given that the Mariners have jumped on you in the first inning now a couple of games in a row and given Max's struggles in the first inning, what are you going to be keeping your eye on there and how long or short might the leash be on Max?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think what I'll be looking at -- me and Pete, you're looking at execution. I know Max's first innings have been highlighted. I think any pitcher, you look at execution. If that's good, you kind of keep moving on down the road.

So in terms of how long, I don't know. We'll see. I'll say that about every one of our starters, or any one of our relievers, really. I think you're looking for him to come out and execute at a really high rate from the jump. I think if he does that, I think he'll be good.

When we were talking about him starting, I think him starting gives him the best chance to be prepared to go execute, having a normal routine, a normal warmup, all that kind of stuff. I think this is his 500th career start I read somewhere, so he's got a pretty good idea of what he's doing. So it really comes down to where he's putting his pitches.

Q. I guess for an official announcement, is it Gausman tomorrow?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, Gausman tomorrow.

Q. And given that it's either going to be 2-2 or 3-1, either way it's a huge game, it's his turn, but what is it about Gausman that makes him the guy for that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: That's why I lined him up in Game 1. You like his composure, you like the way he's throwing the ball, you like his stuff, you like his heartbeat in big situations. There's a lot to like about Kevin Gausman. He's pitched in huge games for us. He's been, arguably, one of our, if not our best, pitchers throughout the year in the second half. But I think he's just a guy that if you need a big outing from, he's shown that he can rise to the occasion.

Q. Further on Max, given that it's been three and a half weeks since his last start and it's only been interteam stuff that he's faced, how does that complicate your assessment of how he's executing and how much runway he gets during an outing?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It really doesn't. I think that, again, if we weren't comfortable with him being normal, he wouldn't have been on the roster. I've said it before, he's probably the most transparent, honest player I've ever been around, good, bad or indifferent. So I think knowing how he's feeling physically gives you some confidence in that part of it too, and probably feeling a little bit better than he had, you know, a month ago.

If it were probably a younger pitcher with a little bit less experience, maybe, I think, you know, you look into that a little bit. I think that Max lives for these moments. He tries to get himself excited for bullpens, he tries to get himself excited for intrasquad games. I think that will kind of take care of itself tonight. I think physically he's in a really good spot.

Q. Is there anything physically that's changed that may allow him to execute more effectively, particularly against lefties who have done a fair bit of the damage against him this year?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think just feeling a little bit better to finish his pitches. His neck was bothering him a little bit, I think getting some time to calm that down. Then watching him throw. Watching him throw and getting feedback from him and saying, Okay, what are you feeling differently, and hearing him articulate it. So, again, everyone understands splits, numbers, all that kind of stuff. If he's putting the ball where he wants, he's going to be all right.

Q. We had Kirk in here earlier and he said --

JOHN SCHNEIDER: A man of many words.

Q. Yes, indeed. He said that, speaking of that, Max does not like to be spoken to during his starts, which is weird to hear a catcher say because usually if everybody else can't talk to him, the catcher can. How does that work for you and Pete?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think more people talk to Max than what the public probably believes. There is a certain point of time in the day -- we're probably getting close to it -- to where you want to let him kind of get in his element. But there's some pretty good back-and-forth. You guys may not always see it, it may be in the tunnel, but there's always a little bit of back-and-forth between Pete, Max, Kirky. If



Kirky's hitting, Pete can deliver it.

But I think the reason why he prepares the way he does is so when you're in the moment you have really kind of covered all your bases. And if you need to deviate, you need to deviate. But he does, he likes to kind of not worry about what's going on, other than himself. I think that's the biggest thing is he doesn't want to change the way he pitches based on the score or get caught up in any kind of emotion that he's not trying to harness himself. I think that's what the general thing is with not talking to him. But there's plenty of conversations that happen in between.

Q. With the way you used the bullpen yesterday after Shane gave you six, no Bassitt, no Lauer and none of the high, high leverage guys. Does that set you up well for both today and tomorrow, given no off day?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think so, yeah. We got everyone available today, obviously. You got guys that can go multiple innings that are available, and you got high leverage guys that you can use today and tomorrow with an off day coming after that. So, yeah, I think Shane's outing not only was it really good, but it put us in a position that is good for us today.

Q. With the Max start today and all that surrounds it, have you been able to zoom out a little bit and maybe allow the baseball fan inside you to appreciate that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I've been looking forward to a postseason Max start since we signed him. I know he has too through ups and downs of this year and injuries and good outings and bad. This is literally why he's playing still. It's not to pitch in April, May, June, July, it's to pitch in the postseason. There's one thing on his mind at this point in his career.

So, yeah, I mean as a baseball fan, sure. I'll enjoy it when he comes into the dugout and does his thing, but from pitch one you kind of go into manager mode.

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