

AL Championship Series: Mariners vs Blue Jays

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T-Mobile Park

Toronto Blue Jays

John Schneider

Pregame 5 Press Conference



Q. When you look at managing the bullpen over a seven-game series, what are the things that you've kind of picked up on the longer series versus the five-game and kind of what's the state of the Jays bullpen right now?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it's different for sure. I think based off of Game 3 and yesterday, had a chance to get a lot of guys in, save some leverage guys a little bit. Trying to -- we still got some guys with some length too. We got Chris and Eric down there as well, which is kind of the thinking when the series starts.

So we're in a good spot. Everyone's available today, which is kind of where you want to land with the off day tomorrow.

So starters play a big part, obviously, with Shane and Max doing what they did. So we're in a good spot and you can kind of pick and choose.

Q. With Kevin and the split, how unique of a pitch is it? You can talk about command, but obviously, you want the thing to move as much as possible, so how does that look to you from the manager's chair?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I feel like the split is the pitch of the postseason, it seems like. Kev's got a unique one. I think it can be almost like a changeup at times, it can be one that is more for swing-and-miss. The key is just carrying the zone. You have to keep it in the zone enough for it to be a weapon where guys can't just eliminate it for being a strike.

So it's unique, for sure. You never really know where it's going to go off the bat. We've kind of battled our positioning equation with Kev since he's been here. But you never really know where it's going to go off the bat. He can get a lot of weak contact, a lot of weird swings. So main thing is just kind of carrying the zone as much as you can with it.

Q. With Hoffman last night in the 8th, was that to get him up against the top of the order?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: He hadn't pitched in quite awhile. I think just in that spot, yeah, you know, score-dependent a little bit if it had been a little bit different. But the initial plan was to have Louis go back out with his quick 7th inning and then kind of have Hoff behind him.

But trying to vary up our looks with who sees who as best you can over a seven-game series, but at the end of the day, you want -- as much as you can, you want your best guys versus their best guys and they got to go out and execute.

Q. Talking earlier about the Barger base running thing. You said that Carlos had a conversation with him. Does that happen, like, right after that half inning or is that a wait till after the game to talk about thing?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It depends on the guy, it depends on situation, really. That one kind of happened in real time. Thankfully it didn't come back to hurt us. Base running is such a huge part of the game. You look at the throw he made to get Naylor at third to kind of squash that inning, you know, picking off the runner at first, it changes momentum. Like anything, man, whether it's me or players, you got to learn from things and you got to get better from 'em. So every situation is a little bit different.

Q. Yesavage was probably a natural choice for you for Game 6. The last start was kind of one of the first times he's faced a bit of adversity at this level. What is it about him that makes you think he's going to bounce back?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Kind of what he's done all year. We've asked a lot of him. I feel like his last three starts in the big leagues have been pretty big games, and he's responded well. You kind of lose sight of the fact that he's 22, you know, and you bring him up with 12 days left in the season, and you're not asking him to just get his feet wet. You're asking him to go win games. So he's stepped up to the challenge. I think that every time -- I've said this



before. Every time I've told him, Hey, here's when you're pitching, the reaction is exactly what you want to hear.

So confident that he'll -- I think his outing too with the three-run homer in the first on a hanging split, I thought he threw the ball fine, to be honest with you, and I thought he made some good adjustments along the way. So you kind of couple those two things together and it's a pretty easy choice.

Q. Then the Santander news yesterday. He worked so hard to get back to this point. How frustrating is that for him and for you guys that he had to go out like that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it's tough. I feel bad for him. First year of a five-year deal and didn't go the way he wanted, the way we had hoped, all that kind of stuff. Give him all the credit in the world for fighting back the way he did to try to get back and help us, and just physically it didn't happen.

He was disappointed, we're disappointed. He understands that we're at the point where we can't play a guy short. Obviously, it affects the next round if you move on. But you got to do what's right for everyone, really, and ultimately what's right for Tony, and I didn't really feel confident about putting him out there with how he was feeling.

Q. Ernie's been kind of a constant for you guys the whole season, but you look up and he's almost hitting .500 in the ALCS. Like, aside from the obvious, he makes consistent contact, what is he doing that's allowing him to be so successful right now?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think he's got a lot of confidence, for one. And this has kind of been a year where I think Ernie has not just shown himself, but he's shown the whole league that he's a damn good Major League player. And you get into these condensed series, and everyone knows how aggressive he is at the plate, so how are you going to counteract that. It's laying off some pitches, but not trying to do anything you haven't done all year. He's taken good swings. I think when you get to this point too, like, contact is important against really good pitching. I think he's kind of just putting a good approach with his skill set, which is making contact. He's part of the heart and soul of this team.

Q. Miller, in his first start, his velo was a little higher than maybe you would have expected. The stuff was moving a little more. How in your preplanning for a start do you plan for potential variations in a guy's stuff of it being maybe a little better than you would

even expect?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think you plan for that or the other. You kind of have to see what it's like. Again, I think it will be interesting to see how he approaches our lineup. He definitely deviated a little bit and went to some secondary stuff, I think, second time, third time through the order against us. You have to be aware of that, but you also have to take your normal approach against him.

Again, man, they run out some power arms, starters and relievers. So I don't think our approach changes. I think you have to kind of be ready to pivot as the game unfolds.

Q. I was looking at the roster last night and just the thought occurred to me that, wow, there's a lot of guys on the field for you right now that were not on this team when the season ended last year. I wonder, could you just speak to the evolution of some important signings, some trades, they were in the off-season, they were also in July, and just how this group all came together.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it's such an interesting, cool group of characters. Looking back to last year, I think it was important for guys like Joey, like Addy, guys that aren't here now that contributed this year to get some exposure to the big leagues last year and to learn -- even Ernie, Davis Schneider, you put those guys in that category a little bit, that experience was really good for them.

So you go into the off-season and you say, okay, how can we get better on paper. You sign Tony. The trade for Gimi, to me, that was huge. That happened early. I think we said, okay, we need to add baseball players. We're going to lean into contact, we're going to continue to lean into defense.

So you do that, you sign Max, and it's cool. Like, small pickups like Myles Straw too, like, I know that goes under the radar and it's around the time we're chasing Sasaki. What he's meant to this club has been huge. I think once we kind of got rolling and understood the kind of personality of this team, then it came down to, okay, who do we want to add or what do we need to add.

But I give a whole lot of credit to Ross and the group for targeting people too, like, what's going to fit into our environment, you know, a small add like Ty France, being able to pick Izzy up on waivers. You look at it, it doesn't make a ton of sense, right, from a roster construction standpoint. You got Bo, you got Ernie, you got Gimi, so where does he fit, but at that point just saying, okay, we want baseball players.

And they have all been phenomenal. Louis Varland, Seranthony, just kind of guys that kind of get it. You know what I mean? So to add to Vlad and George and Varsh and Kirky and Bo, it's been a really cool mix of people, not just players, and the guys really have taken to everyone that has come into the team.

Q. Back to the discussion about Ernie. I've heard a few of your players say that he's the best athlete on the team. He's a guy who got given up on by a couple of teams and has had to really fight. What's your idea of that assessment?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Well, if you watch him golf, you would probably say he's the best athlete we have. Scratch golfer. He's helped me take some money off some guys' hands when we're partnering together over the year.

But, yeah, he's an athlete. I think it shows when he's playing defense, for sure, when he's running the bases, when he's hitting. You can put him anywhere on the field, and he'll figure it out. I think that's very, very fair. He can play hockey, he can play golf, he can play basketball. I mean, he's very, very gifted. Even little things like the tag play at third. I think there's some third basemen that don't make a tag and get out of the way of have slide. So he's got a very savvy way of controlling his body and putting himself in positions to just help.

But he's always been that way. I think you're just kind of seeing a guy that is just kind of finding his own style at this level.

Q. With your offensive identity, it seems like the bottom of the lineup is really crucial to making things click. Has that been something that's evolved over the year with that buy-in from those guys or has that been something from the start?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's what we had hoped for, you know, when you kind of roll out a lineup and you try to put guys in spots to help us score. They have been consistent as hell all year. It's been so many guys, you know, Gimi, Ernie, Tyler Heineman, Myles, Lukes has been down there. It's kind of cool that it's helped us the last two games, because it's been like that the whole year. We talk a lot about nine on one and how can everyone do their part to try to be the starter. And everyone's job is a little bit different. So, not being afraid to bunt, work a walk, get a guy over, get the big hit, they have kind of leaned into it. I think kind of our star players or guys that are at the top of the order, I think that they really enjoy it, too. So it's been like that for most of the year.

Q. Curious to know about your decision making

process. You got to make a million decisions a day, you have to also empower your staff and your players to do so; and you're a husband and father, you got to make decisions at home with your family. How do you keep your mental toughness honed, and how do you impart that to your staff and your players?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Great question. And I think this doesn't get enough talk, because I think my job is to set a standard and to kind of set a tone in which other people can flourish. I try to be as deliberately consistent as I can every single day. Whether it's with things I do or things I say. That kind of gets pushed under the rug when you're just watching a baseball game. So I've kind of gotten to the point to where, if I know that I'm deliberately consistent, my decisions will usually be deliberately consistent, and you make 'em and you move on from 'em, good or bad.

As far as the coaching staff, I think that if they understand my expectations of them, they feel the freedom to work. And the coaching staff has been phenomenal this year in doing that. I said it before Game 3: There's not a group I trust more to deliver a message. I want them to have freedom to do that. I feel like they do have freedom to do that. You try to be as prepared as you can as a baseball guy, and then you kind of just read the room. When you make a decision, you know, it's just go, go, go, and everyone has your back. So you have to be prepared, you have to trust people around you and put your best foot forward. But I think just being deliberately consistent with my actions and words has helped everyone kind of do the same.

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