

AL Championship Series: Mariners vs Blue Jays

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Rogers Centre

Toronto Blue Jays

John Schneider

Pregame 7 Press Conference

Q. All right. 30-plus years the country has been waiting for this moment. Do you not think it's absolutely incredible for us to be winning this at home? To do this at home must be absolutely special. And are you able to enjoy the game and take this all in at the same time as doing what you normally do?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I mean, I think it is -- you try to keep that close to you, right, the time it's been since we've been in this situation. I've always said you take a few seconds probably right before the game to enjoy it and to think about it, and then you kind of have to go do your job.

But again, a chance to win a game at home in front of these fans to go to the World Series, I think is everything that we play for and everything that our fans deserve.

Q. You've managed for a very long time at a lot of different levels. Have you managed a winner-take-all game before down in the minors?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Man, that's a good question. I don't think so. Thinking back to, like, Double-A, no. That year, we won six in a row. Florida State League. Maybe that was best of three. It was 1-1. I don't really remember. Good question. I know that we've been in a lot of big games this year, yesterday being one of 'em, win or go home. So Game 7 is everything every sports fan wants and I'm just excited that we're in this position.

Q. Clearly this one will make more of an impression on you if you've been in one before. But is today different for you than yesterday? Because they're both win or leave, but you get another crack at it now and somebody's season's going to end tonight.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think that makes it a little bit different. It doesn't change what we have to do. But, yeah, it's a little bit different than it was yesterday. I was talking



about that earlier with some guys.

But you have to come out and play your game. I think the team that can do that the quickest probably gets off to a good start. But, yeah, it's a little bit different for sure knowing that you have to win this game.

Q. To many people, the acquisition at the deadline of Shane Bieber was surprising. It feels now like the organization had all of this in mind at the time of that acquisition. Is that what you guys were thinking when he was acquired from Cleveland, just whether or not he might be in position to pitch to what is now the biggest game of the year?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, to be honest. We were thinking about kind of mapping out probably the -- anywhere between five to seven starts he would make in the regular season and try to take advantage of those to hopefully get us in position to be in the postseason. And then if you do, then you have a guy that is ready for the moment.

I've said it before. I think when we acquired Biebs, it wasn't a quiet move, but it was kind of an underwhelming move in the moment, like, on that deadline day because he wasn't going to be pitching in the next five days for us. So this is what we had in mind to where, you know, it's another -- it's why we went to a six-man rotation at times and kind of built that around Shane and his comeback and his timeline to get back to us.

So this is kind of what we had in mind, having another guy that can pitch in big games.

Q. A lot of former players have been here this week. They have thrown out ceremonial first pitches. You got a guy -- Rick Romero said he's flying in for the game. What does it mean to have the support of former players in the organization still in and around the ballpark?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's cool. They all have done a really good job, combined velocity of about 200, I feel like. They're all throwing the hell out of the ball. But I think it's



cool for the fans to kind of see guys that have been here most recently in this spot, in this postseason atmosphere, and I've known Rick since I played with him in the minor leagues. He loves this team.

I think it's cool that everyone is kind of grasping onto and supporting this group and understanding, you know, what it means to play in the postseason here in Toronto. It's a pretty special feeling.

Q. What kind of examples has George set in kind of the three phases he's had here, when he came here and you guys were suddenly on the come up, and then the struggles and injuries and stuff, and then this year with just getting back to what he can be and of course playing through what he's been playing through the last few days?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, it's funny, man, when we signed George, I think the draw was to help some younger guys that we already had here, a guy that had been at the highest level of the game and won, then you go through a down year last year for him and for us, and then how do you navigate that, how do you come back from that. He's done a great -- he's done a phenomenal job in terms of performance and in terms of what he's done to our clubhouse. And you want guys like him to have some experience in these situations to help guys around him.

With him -- I kind of single out him and Max because they have been there. And what he's done this year performance-wise kind of just -- he's kind of set the tone of who we are. I've said this earlier in the year. This team has an identity more so than any team I've been a part of. Not that we didn't in years past, but I think that George does a phenomenal job of leading by example, but also talking about what we stand for, and then when he does it, everyone else kind of has to fall in line.

Q. I guess similar to the point you just made there, the fact that he has that nine-pitch at-bat leading off the game yesterday, and then clearly looking physically compromised over the course of that game, but he's still out there, still grinding, and then is matter of fact about it, doesn't think -- make a big deal of it, how does that fit into what you were just saying there?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think that's kind of -- it's not just him. It's kind of everyone feeling it physically. I think when one guy kind of opens up that door to complain, everyone can, you know. I think that he's doing a very deliberate job of not complaining. Again, that's another way to set a standard. Everyone's feeling it right now. We always joke, everyone's feeling it, but no one cares. No one cares. You got to go out and you got to get it done.

Q. With Shane, this will be the third time, I believe, he's pitched on regular rest since you guys got him. Is there anything that you can learn from the past times that helped him optimize physically for a start, and then anything that allows him to maybe get the slider a bit sharper, the curveball with the type of bite it had the last time out?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Thinking back to his other outings on regular rest, I thought his stuff was just as good, if not a little better. I know one was in Cincinnati, I believe, five runs in the second or third and his stuff, I thought, was better. It just -- for him it comes down to executing. I think we'll know pretty early with how he's doing with that.

Every pitch is an important pitch for him, not just slider, curveball. It's fastball, cutter, changeup too. And they all play off one another. So I think we'll know -- I think the stuff will be the same. No question about that. I just got to -- like anyone, got to kind of watch how he executes all of it.

Q. I understand that Don Mattingly was one of your favorite players when you were growing up. What does it mean to have the possibility of going to a World Series with him at your side as your bench coach?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I had the Hit Man poster in my room, the pinstripe suit, you know. It would be cool. It would be really cool. We took a picture at Yankee Stadium after we won that series, and I sent it to him, and I said, 8-year-old me is pretty pumped up right now, you know.

But I think with everything that he's done for me over the past three years, you want to share that with him. He's been rock solid steady for me, as has everyone on the staff. But I think our relationship over the past three years has really grown to where we really know one another pretty well, and not just for Donnie, but for everyone on the staff and every player, it would be really special. But, yeah, a small part of me growing up in New Jersey would think it's pretty cool to be in a World Series with Donnie.

Q. In, I think, 2021 both Kevin Gausman and Max Scherzer came out of the bullpen in that winner-take-all game against each other with the Dodgers and Giants. I know you've got everybody available, but does the fact that they did that help you sort of plan out what might be available tonight?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think the fact that they have done it is important. I think the fact that they're veteran guys is important too. Again, it's not set in stone where we



may use either one of them, but I think knowing that they are going to be mentally and physically ready if we do call on them is very comforting.

Q. And what's the process, I guess, of you guys plotting that stuff out? Obviously, the game is going to take you where it takes you, but that you have everyone available, but also knowing that they have everyone available and that you might face anybody on that Mariners roster?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, that's the beauty and the angst of Game 7. You're looking for any opportunity, really. You have to be ready for everyone. They're going to throw like they do for us. So you're trying to capitalize as much as you can in any situation that you get some traffic or any situation you can put a good swing on a mistake.

So again, I think that trying not to manage based on what they're doing, trying to stay present in the moment with what we need to do. I know pitching gets a lot of the attention in games like this. We need to score, you know. We need to be who we are offensively and hopefully set the tone to where we can do what we want pitching-wise.

Q. You've seen enough of George Kirby over the years to know how much he's in the strike zone and that can lead to him getting hit around a little bit or it can lead to just really quick outs and he can settle into a groove pretty early on in a game. How does your lineup have kind of a collective approach with that dual-edged sword that can happen when facing Kirby?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I feel like that's been kind of the way the series has gone, you know, with our offense and their pitching. They're pretty similar. They all have good stuff and they're all coming right after you. So we got to continue to be who we are. We got to understand each situation that pops up; what does it call for, does it call for moving a guy, does it call for working an at-bat, does it call for trying to do some damage. So it's interesting, for sure, because any one of their guys can punch guys out, they can get on a roll. You saw Game 1 unfold the way it did, and then every game has been a little bit different.

So we have to be ready to be aggressive, but at the same time watch what he's doing. That to me is the cat-and-mouse game a little bit. I think once you get into the bullpen you know how they're going to kind of attack you, and you got to be pretty specific with pitches you're looking for. But it's an interesting matchup between their stuff and our lineup that makes a lot of contact.

Q. I think you told the writers that Bo has made some a bit more progress in recent days. Wondering what

that progress might entail, and has he done anything defensively?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Progress is kind of just where he feels with his swing and how much more comfortable he feels kind of letting it rip. I think the base running and the defense is something hopefully we can advance and we can check those boxes in the next few days. He's done some light stuff, but hasn't been like full go at short. And he's not back on the bases yet, but the running has picked up in the outfield, just in terms of the intensity and the build-up or the length of it, to be perfectly honest. So, yeah, we'll see how he goes over the next couple days. Hopefully we can stick around long enough and he can get back to us.

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