

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Saturday, October 4, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Postgame 1 Press Conference

Tigers - 3, Mariners - 2

Q. A.J., how big was it for you to come in here and steal a win in Seattle in the opener?

A.J. HINCH: Well, we didn't steal it. We earned it. I think it was important for us to play this game that was in front of us, and we did a really good job. That was an incredible game, an incredible job, Troy being able to manage his emotions getting into the game.

How about our bullpen? That was quite an effort. Used everybody down there but one, and some timely hitting, Carp with a big homer, Z-Mac with a base hit. There's a lot to like about a win on the road in the playoffs to kick-start a series, and I'm obviously thrilled.

Q. A.J., what were your emotions in the eleventh? You see Tork work the leadoff walk, then the two strikeouts, and then Z-Mac comes through?

A.J. HINCH: We took advantage of a few extra things. The walk against -- we walked earlier in the game hurt us, and then we got it right back. We walked. We get a wild pitch. Gets to second, gives you a chance, and Z-Mac with the big base hit.

And so obviously there was a lot in that game. We could sit and talk forever just about the back-and-forth and the volume of pitches thrown and used and key at-bats and pretty good defense and just things that -- in a one-run game, everything matters, and we had one extra punch at the perfect time to get the win.

Q. Did you have any thoughts of sending Vest out for a third inning? And how impressive was --

A.J. HINCH: Vest tried, and he wanted to badly. And I actually -- coming into the game, I really wanted to get one



up out of him, and then he goes out and has a single-digit inning of pitches.

So I was sending him back out. And when he went out on the second inning, he was just working on so much adrenaline, but I didn't even consider giving him a third. It matters so much to these guys. They're willing to do anything.

But we had a fresh Keider, who I have always talked highly about having good stuff and the mojo to get it done, and that's one of the first experiences I think he's had like that. And you're not going to pitch in a tougher environment with what the Seattle fans and our fans brought tonight in this ballpark, and it was a very rewarding win.

Q. Keider and McKinstry in different ways have embodied a lot about your team, used in a million different roles. How much do you value seeing players like that come through --

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. We're going to need everybody. We are not a team that's built on one guy, although any one of our guys can be the guy for that night.

And listen, we've -- we got re-Wild Carded for an incredible first half with six all-stars. You know, we've had numerous guys who have been the player of the game, so to speak, if we had one, and we're the sum of the parts team. We're going to rely on every single one of our guys. There's no free roster spots. There's no -- nobody that's not going to be leaned upon in one way or another.

And we use our players just randomly enough to keep everybody on their toes, whether it's pinch hitting or pitching out of some perceived order or starter, bullpen, you know, outside of a couple guys, they're all in. And outside of a couple guys, I'll do anything with anybody, and I love that about the character of this team.

Q. A.J., a decision you made earlier in this game kind of ultimately led to Keider being in the game in the 11th against the same pocket of hitters. Earlier, what did you like about Rafael Montero in that? Was it swing and miss? Was there something else?



A.J. HINCH: No. I love Rafe Montero in general. I think he offers something a little bit different with the sinker and the split.

The only thing I did not like about it, I didn't want him to have only three hitters. I wanted him to go a little bit deeper where we're at in the middle of the game, because I knew once the bullpen gate opened, it wasn't going to close tonight, and we were going to continue to apply pressure.

But the 0-2 to walk to Arozarena changed the whole inning. And that's when you start, in my shoes, managing for that inning, just to get out of that mess. And Holton came in and did a really good job, obviously. Javi makes the acrobatic double play and we get out of it.

But the intention was to squeeze more outs out of Rafe, more innings, maybe even multiple innings. And best-laid plans don't go that way sometimes in the playoffs, and we have to audible. And that was going to force Tommy Kahnle to have a good inning and Will Vest to go multiple innings, and at the very end Keider to come in, unexpected too many, in that spot and close it out.

Q. There was a big decision point for them in the fifth inning with Kerry at the plate, Kirby on the mound, Speier in the pen. Did you have Jahmai ready to go in that situation just in case?

A.J. HINCH: Of course. And I've pinch-hit as early as the third or fourth inning this year. So we'll always be able to counter there. And I have the second move depending on what the other side's going to do.

So one of the pressure points that this team can put on by being all in and by us willing to do everything, the game sort of unfolds with a lot of different scenarios, and in this one, you know, Carp took advantage of getting the extra at-bat, hits the ball out of the ballpark. I don't know even know if it was a strike. But it was a homer. I know that. So that shows that the threat of Jahmai is part of that sequence of events.

And so obviously, like I said, you need all your players in every scenario, and we're willing to do anything, and that gives us the second choice to be able to do whatever.

Q. Raleigh and Rodriguez were the only guys for the Mariners who had hits. Forgive me if you already addressed this earlier, but how impressive was that for your pitching staff to kind of curtail the damage to those two?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Obviously I think the first inning really did help set the tone and settle things because Troy was in a lot of stress at the very beginning, and we had the one -- what was it, the one low throw at second base where we couldn't turn a double play, and you feel like you're giving them an extra out. And this team is explosive. And then even when Julio went deep, he settled back down and continued to stay in the game.

All of our bullpen guys, including Troy, even though Troy started, it was a job well done in an environment where the fans were looking to help him get anything started. We would squash the rally every time.

So we needed them all, or nearly all of them, and a truly team -- team win.

Q. How much more difficult is it to play in an environment like this was tonight with the fans, sellout, and screaming and sirens?

A.J. HINCH: I don't know about difficult. Both teams have to deal with a communication issue, which is really what an environment like this is all about. It's just constant screaming. I mean, you can't even talk to your coaches next to each other because how loud it is.

But the communication out on the field, dialed in on the bases -- the third base, first base coach are not going to be able to talk to you about too much out there, back picks and pick-offs from the pitcher and things like that.

If anything, it's controlling how excitable you are in this environment. Home or road, I mean, this is for everything; right? We worked all season to earn our spot in this opportunity, and there's a lot of excitement and adrenaline that comes with that. And a crowd either rooting for you or rooting against you can create a little bit of a multiplier in those emotions.

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