

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Sunday, October 5, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Detroit Tigers

Will Vest

Pregame 2 Press Conference

Q. Hey, Will. Can you just kind of take us through last night, those two big innings, and then did you think in the dugout there was any chance that you might go out for a third?

WILL VEST: Yeah. I knew I was pretty efficient in the first inning, so I had the opportunity to go back out for the second. And then, yeah, I think the competitor in me kind of took over, and I asked Skip if I could go back out, and -- of which he responded "No" pretty quickly.

But, you know, pass the ball to Keider, and he did a phenomenal job, and we came out with the win.

Q. When you were here as a Rule 5 guy, you got your Big League debut, how different are you as a pitcher now? And what did that experience of you being here and getting Big League innings, especially coming off of a year when you pitched in Double-A -- what did it mean to you, and how did it help you grow?

WILL VEST: Yeah. I think you learn in this game and in life a lot from failure. I had some good successes that year, and I had some failure in that year, and I learned a lot about myself, you know, out on the field and then also mentally in this game.

And I think very rarely do you see guys come up to this league and succeed. If they do, it might be for a little stint, kind of like I did, and then they'll regress to the mean a little bit once the league figures them out.

So there was just a lot of learning throughout that year for me, which I carry with me today, and I'm thankful for all those learning opportunities that I had.

Q. Will, Kyle Finnegan has been big for you guys. What have you learned about him or appreciated about being his teammate since the deadline?



WILL VEST: Oh, it's been awesome. I feel like we kind of mirror each other, just like our passion when we go out there. The guy gets out there and competes, man. And he's been doing it for a while, and predominantly been a closer and gets big outs and big moments during the day.

And so yeah, I love whenever I see him running out there. I know we've got a good chance.

Q. Will, for people who maybe haven't seen this kind of untraditional bullpen roles, right, like there's not a setup guy, there's no one closer, can you explain to the outside what it's like to be part of you that mix and know that maybe you get it in the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the end? What's that like for you?

WILL VEST: I think that's the common theme of our team. That's the makeup of our team, is anybody can come in at any different -- anytime on the offensive side and on the pitching staff. And I think that's what makes us good, is because we're unpredictable.

And Skip does a phenomenal job of reading the game. And he's said it in the past. He's like, "You can lose a game in the seventh inning," you know? So sometimes he doesn't save guys for specific pockets just to throw the ninth. If this guy matches up really well and the game is on the line in the seventh, we're going to throw him in the seventh. I think that just does a phenomenal job rather than having guys throw the seventh, eighth, and ninth. It's more about our particular matchups or where we are in that game or that moment.

Q. And these guys that you're with in the bullpen, what makes them -- what's so special about them that allows --

WILL VEST: No egos. There's not any egos on our team, which it's fun to play with. The guys are just -- we celebrate the wins because we know it took everybody, and everybody, you know, played a part in that game. And so it's just -- it's so rewarding after the games when you come in and we get to all celebrate together.



And I think that's what makes this team special, is that we're all one unit pulling in the same direction.

Q. As somebody who thrives on adrenaline, what's it like pitching in that atmosphere last night? And can you hear it? Can you feel it? Can you not hear it?

WILL VEST: I'll tell you what, this place was electric. It was fun. That's kind of what you dream of when you're growing up, is playing in front of crowds like that, and it makes the game special.

Yeah. It was a little tough hearing, but, you know, the PitchCom in the playoffs, we've got a little special tube that will make it a little louder.

But it's still the same game just with a little added extra noise. So once you get on the mound, you kind of block it out, and it's just you and the catcher back there.

Q. I'm probably risking recency bias here since you guys have been on the road for so long. But as a late-inning reliever, what's the difference between thriving off of a loud, hostile crowd on the road versus thriving on the crowd at home?

WILL VEST: I don't know if there's necessarily a difference. You know, I think it's just if you get your job done, it's still -- it's the same reward whether you're at home or on the road.

I would say they're both rewarding in just different ways. One is you've got the crowd cheering for you, which is a great feeling coming -- I'll never forget finishing an inning last year at home with a strikeout and the crowd erupted, and it was awesome. I got full-body chills.

But it's also awesome on the flip side of quieting a crowd when you know that they're all going against you. That's rewarding in itself, of having the crowd go silent.

Q. I think it's 13 straight days on the road. What have been the challenges of that for you? Did you pack enough clothes?

WILL VEST: Laundry with toddlers -- or a toddler learning how to use the bathroom. That's probably -- yeah. The first day, I came in and did the laundry.

But that's the chaos of it, and, you know, you kind of just embrace it, and that's what's fun. My wife, after we won to Cleveland, she was just like, All right. On to Seattle.

I said, It could be another month of this. You've got to strap it up.

And they're used to it, and we are too. It's just kind of the lifestyle of this game, and that's what's kind of fun about it. You get to travel and see the whole country.

Q. To go back to the Rule 5 question, I mean, obviously when the Mariners returned you to the Tigers, I think it was July of 2021, would you have ever anticipated that you would have thrown 60 innings to the next year, and fast-forward to now when you're pitching in huge playoff games against the Mariners? Would you have ever thought that when they returned you?

WILL VEST: Yeah. I remember that year Jarred Kelenic had come up, and, you know, he was a big prospect and struggled when he first came up, and he got sent down.

And I remember Kyle Seager talking to him, and he had mentioned, you know -- listed out a few of the greats in the game and said, Hey, this guy has been sent down. This guy has been sent down. And those guys turned out to be Hall of Famers. And that kind of stuck with me, that even the best of the best struggle.

So even though that was a low of my career, of being sent back after being Rule 5, I didn't lose any faith in myself or where I think I can go in this game. I've always thought that I could contribute at this level. So no, it didn't really alter me. I think guys -- it's just the stigma of the Rule 5 was a little bit different. I had to get DFA'd. Guys get optioned all the time.

Q. To follow up on that, even when you came back, you got optioned. That was something that was still a part of your journey. I guess what was that like, and when did you finally feel established in the big leagues?

WILL VEST: You know, last year was actually a big year for me. 2024 was the first year in my professional career that I had never been demoted, dating back to 20 -- I got drafted in 2017. I didn't get demoted that year, but I played a half season, so I don't really count that one.

But from 2018 to 2023, I had been demoted every single year, which sucks at the time, but what I was alluding to earlier, you learn from that and you learn how to deal with adversity, and it honestly makes you resilient and strengthens your drive a little bit.

Probably the toughest one -- you know, each one was the toughest one at that time. The toughest one was probably in '23, you know, after coming a full season in the big leagues. Technically -- I got optioned that year for one



day. Somebody got hurt, so I got to come back up, but I still count that as, like, I was demoted.

So coming off of almost a full year of service time, just had a kid, and find out, hey, you're going to Triple-A, so I'm living in a hotel room with a newborn and my wife, and we were living out of a truck, and it was tough.

But I'm thankful for it because it really teaches you and makes you humble in this game. This game will humble you. And then whenever you do have success, you enjoy it that much more, because of everything that you've been through.

You know, very rarely do guys have that straight line to the big leagues and succeed. There's a lot of failure in this game and in life, and I'm thankful for it because I think it shapes who you are.

Q. You mentioned becoming a dad at that time. Does it make it that much sweeter when you are on the road for this long stretch and you've got a toddler to worry about with laundry? Does it make it a little bit different?

WILL VEST: Yeah. I think it adds perspective. I go back to a few weeks ago when -- as a team and myself probably the lowest point of the season. You know, we go through a losing streak. I blow a game against Atlanta. And right after the game, you know, my son has no idea what happened.

I'm still his hero after the game, runs up to me, big smile, gives me a hug, and in an instant it was like, hey, it's just a game. At the end of the day, I get to go be a dad and a husband. And, you know, at the end of the day, that's what I'm thankful for the most.

Q. Will, I think your Seager story is probably nicer than Kyle actually delivered it to Jarred. But when you got -- when they brought you in, they talked about having a pitching plan for you. They analyzed your stuff. The pitching lab is pretty notorious for really getting guys to stress certain thing. What did they tell you about what you would play? And I know your repertoire has evolved as well.

WILL VEST: You're talking about Seattle?

Q. Yes, Seattle.

WILL VEST: That year was kind of a wild year for me. I had just completely revamped my mechanics during that COVID year, and then -- and I think that's what later got me Rule 5'd, is I changed my mechanics to become a little bit

more consistent. My velo during that instructs was way up, which was great.

The biggest thing that stuck out with them was they loved my changeup and wanted me to throw it more, and I think dealing with trying to get Big League hitters out and then also throwing a -- at that time was probably, like, my third pitch, trying to make that like my first pitch, was like a difficult transition for me, and I think that's what messed with me a little bit. Not to their fault. I didn't execute.

But they wanted me to rely on a changeup -- or that was kind of like the big thing that stuck out to them that they really liked and why they had Rule 5'd me.

And then, you know, it just didn't help that my velo was the lowest of my career that year, and when that goes down, everything else doesn't play as good. So yeah.

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