

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Monday, October 6, 2025

Detroit, Michigan, USA

Comerica Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. What's it like to be home? What do you think it will be like for the guys? It's kind of a long, strange trip?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Well, we've been home five minutes. Actually, 25 minutes it took us to get from the airport.

But it's nice to be home because we had to earn it. It took a lot to get back home. It took some wins on the road at the end of the season, it took a series win in Cleveland, and then the first two games in Seattle.

So I think our guys will enjoy being back in Detroit, put on the English D, the white unis. The crowd should be electric, and we're playing for potentially the series and the momentum in the series.

So I'm proud of our guys for enduring the last couple weeks with, you know, some good baseball to get us here.

Q. How do you -- or what can you do to get your team to hit better than it has been, especially with strikeouts?

A.J. HINCH: You know, listen, we have a good offensive club. They have an excellent pitching club. And we play the games, you know, to kind of find out about the competition.

So we're going to continue to put our work in. And you don't get to this place without being able to answer a few challenges. So our guys are going to be well rested with the day off today. We're going to get home. We're going to get settled into an environment that we're comfortable with, and we're going to face an exceptional pitcher in Logan Gilbert.

So we're going to stay in the fight and keep competing and put some runs on the board to help us win.



Q. You mentioned, you know, the appreciation in coming back here. Considering some of the environments you played in, especially Cleveland and Seattle, do you think there's an appreciation for what they can have here, you know, with a crowd supporting them as opposed to --

A.J. HINCH: Well, this group will be for us. I know that. I know the other ones weren't. I mean, if you put a microphone above the dugout, you'd hear some amazing things.

And I think it's important that our guys feel that love and feel that appreciation from a city that has embraced this team certainly over the entirety of the organization, but the last couple years with this team specifically. We've had some incredible games at home and playoff games and a rowdy atmosphere that makes this truly a home-field advantage.

So a ton of support coming home. There's going to be people stopping us everywhere and -- in your local coffee shop, your restaurants, your cities that these guys all live in are going to be sporting the English D. I've seen the Lions do it. I've seen the Pistons do it. We support one another when we're in this city. And I do think we have a city galvanized to help push us to a higher level.

Q. How important is it to get a reset day for the bullpen after some of the usage the last couple days?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I didn't use the entire bullpen yesterday, so I think we would have been fine had we had a game today. You know, I think there are -- not just the guys that are getting used, but just the intensity of the usage, like the importance of every pitch.

You're seeing everybody's velocity tick up a little bit. You're seeing the intent and just the magnitude of these pitches grow and grow with every single out.

So we all kind of needed a reset, just from the way the last 14 days have gone. And quite honestly, after two playoff games, they probably needed a reset just to get your feet under you with this -- as intense as these games have



been and how high-wire they've been for both teams in one-run games.

So we welcomed it despite having to travel for the majority of it.

Q. A.J., sorry if this has been belabored, but how much of a game changer is Javi as a tagger and, like, what stands out to you most about his -- that part of his skill set?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. So I think -- I think the things about Javi that are appreciated by those that watch him every day are the subtleties, right? It's where he lines up. It's his instincts. It's his elusive base running and sliding. It's the tags. They're all little things that contribute to wins.

And he's got the big swing in him. He's got -- he's certainly swung the bat really well this postseason. That's been important at the bottom of the order. But on the tags in itself is he lets the ball travel further than any infielder than I've ever seen. And I feel like I've had some pretty good ones in my time, but he has a great feel for the timing of the tag.

And then obviously when he commits and goes, it's as hard and fast a tag as you'll see. And you can measure that nowadays, which we measure everything. So I have a great appreciation for the small things that turn into big things.

Like, it's not a small thing that Jose Ramirez was tagged out at second base by a great tag or when -- both of our catchers have talked about when he's down there -- it's not a knock on anyone else, but when he's down there and they're throwing down, there's just so much room for error and things that he can do that's special.

So like I said, small things can turn into really big things, and you don't notice them until you get that sort of dramatic, what did I just see? And usually it's something pretty magical.

Q. A.J., what makes Logan Gilbert so challenging to prepare for, especially in the context of he has a completely different look from the first two guys that you saw in this series?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. So there's a couple things with Logan that I've watched over the years. One is it's a unique delivery. He's big, physical. He has a unique delivery. The ball doesn't necessarily get delivered in a perfect sequential order, sort of a -- it's not an Iron Mike delivery. There's a lot that goes into the arms and legs and motion, and he hides the ball.

And then it comes out, and it's explosive when it's the fastball, and it's pretty hard to pick up the spin, from what our guys have said, on the off-speed.

So he pitches around the margins. He usually thinks tunnel as a strike until they're not a strike. And that's really hard to distinguish sometimes and things pile up a little bit. He gets a ton of swing and miss. He usually has high pitch counts because of that swing and miss and because of the live-on-the-edge style in which he pitches.

But when he has command of the fastball and the split, you know, he's -- you've got to pick one or the other. It's hard to cover the entire strike zone and the entire arsenal with what he can do.

We have a couple guys that are familiar with him. We haven't seen him a ton. We have a couple of bats across our lineup.

But for me the key is going to be locking in on our approach and conceding something. Maybe it's the big monster swing. Maybe it's strike one to get a better view of him. Or maybe we ambush him. I think that's what tomorrow night is all about?

Q. A.J., just to circle back to the offense really quick, this time of year obviously it always seems like the pitching is really, really good. But from your perspective, how much of the struggles lately -- has it been pitching? Has it been approach? And how much time this time of year do you seriously spend thinking about making this tweak or that tweak or any tweaks at all?

A.J. HINCH: A tweak to what? Just general offense?

Q. I'm not saying anything specific.

A.J. HINCH: It is always hard this time of year because I do think there's a ton of attention on the things that you're not doing.

We can credit the other side a little bit on their approach. We can also -- if you look across the board in -- you know, maybe take Toronto out. The offensive explosions are hard to come by this time of year because you're playing the best teams with the best pitching oftentimes.

For us, we've got to pick better pitches to hit. That's hard sometimes when it's 100 and a little bit of cut and a little bit of sink and then the split and then the changeup. And when you say don't swing out of the strike zone, remember Carp hit a ball out of the strike zone for a big-time homer.

So there's no box to draw like we get to watch on TV. When you watch the game and you see the strike zone and you see it outside the box, oh, swinging strikes, like that's a pretty small margin to deal with. It's the nature of why these guys are the best in the world at what they do.

So, you know, I think when you -- you definitely spend time on your game plan. You definitely spend time on a few sort of mechanical things that will put you in a good position to make decisions.

And then what you should really judge yourself by is did you stick by that game plan, and did you swing at the right pitches? When we do, we're a pretty dynamic offense. When we don't, you'll see some swing and miss and some innings that end a little bit quicker than any of us want.

But welcome to Major League baseball. When you advance to the Division Series, which we've done a couple times now in a couple years, you're just going to face the good guys. You're not going to face the ones that struggle and then throw you a middle, middle 92, 94. Those guys don't exist at this time of the year. So you've got to lock in your approach to make sure you're swinging at the right pitches.

Q. How important has Kerry Carpenter's defense in right field been for making this lineup with Colt Keith, a DH, work? Especially for pinch-hitting reasons, he didn't get a ton of time in the field down the stretch.

A.J. HINCH: No doubt. One of the things that was hard about the end of the season, the way it went for us, we felt like we were playing playoff baseball because we felt like we were playing for our playoff lives.

So there was a lot at stake down the stretch, and I started to stay with Parker in center, Wenceel in right, Riley in left, and never Kerry never really touched the field late in the season. Not that he couldn't do it, but if you're going to throw out your defense that is probably the best alignment, that's what we did.

So what happens in the playoffs is things change and all of a sudden Carp is finding himself in right field, makes a nice running catch, makes a nice sliding catch.

And his improvement on defense is one of the main reasons that we can even do this with Colt, and putting Wenceel on the bench to have two players on one, you know, in one body, on the bench to be able to hit right-handed or left-handed and go in for defense.

So it's been a step-by-step process for him. I think George

Lombard has done an incredible job with him and has always advocated for the improvements that he's made and the trust that we can have with him where I don't have to defend for him. I don't have to worry about him being in the wrong place. He's going to be under control and make the plays.

Even the play the other day, which won't get talked about, there's a ball down the line, he goes and gets it and quickly gets it to second base, he wasn't out, but it's a fundamental play that allows me to have a ton of trust in him in right field.

So likely to be the same configuration tomorrow with Parker in center and Kerry in right. But the work has been done over the span of the last 24 months to get him prepared to play at this level.

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