

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Detroit, Michigan, USA

Comerica Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Pregame 3 Press Conference

Q. A.J., do you have a weather report for us? And what do you think about getting this started on time?

A.J. HINCH: Right now the report is that we're going to be just fine. I mean, I think there could be a little bit of rain, but things are looking more promising than they were even 24 hours ago.

So we're going to play. We don't know exactly when we're going to start. Right now it's on time. I think I'm going to get an update as we get closer to game time, but all systems go from what I understand.

Q. Hi, A.J. When you guys were last here, there was still a lot of scenarios on the table for you. Just reflecting back on the last couple weeks, what does it mean to have gotten back here to have playoff home games?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. It's been quite a few weeks, you know, since we've been back here.

And obviously I feel good about it because we've had to earn it. There was an important series in Cleveland where we, you know, scratched out a win. We go to Boston. We get walked off, and then we clinch on Saturday.

We get back to Cleveland, win an important series in the Wild Card, and then head to Seattle. So it's been a lot of travel, but it's all been worth it because we've earned the right to be a postseason team and one of the few teams left standing.

So resilient group. Obviously we've gone through a lot to get to this point, but it's obviously nice to be home in the comfortable confines of our space and our houses and our homes and our fans, and be wearing the English D and the white unis will be really rewarding.



Q. When we talked to Spencer today, he said that he feels like -- close to a breakout offensively because of the quality of the bats, the long at-bats, the getting the walks, and only what's been lacking is the big hit.

A.J. HINCH: Yeah.

Q. Do you sense that momentum?

A.J. HINCH: We're ready for that outcome. You know, our guys are going to remain pretty resolute in our plan and in that, you know, our best is good enough.

I mean, we've had stretches this season where we've been an incredibly good offensive club. We've also had stretches where we've had to grind a ton and scratch and claw and try to find a way to push across a run.

And when you're at this point in the season, just stay mentally and physically in the competition and see where it takes you.

And we have a good mindset about this team. We have a ton of energy, you know, coming home and being right in the thick of this series. And of course it's going to take a big hit or a big walk or a big -- multiple at-bats in a row that go your way. It's playoff baseball. And so obviously it would be nice to just push the button and say today's going to be the day for it to be our turn.

And it almost was. I mean, listen, Tork had a really good at-bat to tie that game the other day in the eighth inning, and that's what playoff baseball is all about. And there's going to be more opportunities like that, and those that step up and can find the approach, and then the execution of that approach is going to pay off big in this series.

Q. A.J., what went into bumping Kerry back to the leadoff spot, and just what's the value of someone who opposing managers so often target?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. He gets circled no matter where I put him. I've put him first, second, third, I think fourth. And inevitably every manager on the other side circles him as a point of emphasis.



So putting him at the top makes that decision pretty early in the game when it comes to a third time against Gilbert.

Obviously with Gleyber behind him, there's a cost of bringing a lefty in. We always have the second-move advantage when we talk about the offensive side. So I can pinch-hit at any time, and I have pinch-hit in all times.

So Carp at the top gives him the best chance to create that stress in the nineteenth at-bat. So maybe it happens before, maybe it happens after. Maybe the alignment -- you know, it could be offensive. It could be a nonstarter, but I like having Carp get the most at-bats he can against a right-handed starter protected by Gleyber behind him, and then Colt and Riley create another bunch of lefties.

So I've watched the first two games. Both have come at Carp's at-bat, wherever that's been. And now, by putting him there with Gleyber behind him, we'll see how the next game plays out. We may do it again in Game 4. I might switch it up entirely. You guys know how we roll. So this is the approach against Gilbert and certainly the way they've deployed their pen in the first two games.

Q. A.J., you mentioned, you know, being willing to move the line around. Gleyber has remained in the two spot the whole time. His production really fell off in the second half after a big first half. What have you seen from him lately? What does it look like when he's going good, and where is he at right now?

A.J. HINCH: You know, he has gone through it a little bit, but there are hitters when they go through tough stretches where you feel like they need a day or they need less pressure or they need to be moved around. But with Gleyber, I never get that feeling because he's in control of his at-bats. They're generally pretty long.

Part of walking a lot means that you're going to bring in the strikeout a little more against a high-strikeout staff. He still finds a way to move the ball, like the other day with a base hit to right. And he's a click away from being the player of the game and getting the most at-bats.

So I love him at the top because his confidence isn't shaken by, you know, a rough patch. It also doesn't get too high when he's dominating, and that existence and presence at or near the top of our lineup is a difference maker amongst some pretty potent left-handed hitters. Him in the middle of it, whether he's hitting first, second, third is a strategy that's worked for us to get to this point.

Q. A.J., you've managed so many games in your career in October. Can you describe the differences

between managing in the playoffs and managing in the regular season?

A.J. HINCH: I think the biggest thing that stands out is just the urgency and the emotional roller coaster that you and your guys go through, you know, because of the importance of every single thing that happens.

And when I say every single thing, I don't just mean at-bat to at-bat. I mean pitch by pitch and situation by situation, a wild pitch. Ball one can make you feel more anxious in the playoffs than it does in the middle of the season.

So keeping a clear head and a calm heartbeat and a -- you know, sticking to your plan is critical, whether you're a player, a manager, coach, or whatever. So there's nothing like the urgency that comes with playoff baseball, and I see -- listen, I watch every playoff game that I can that's not played at the same time as ours, and I feel the manager's pain and their joy with what goes on game by game, because these -- it matters so much to every single person in the organization, you know, when you're in October and you're one of the special teams that's earned the right to advance.

So you feel the weight of that and also you're hungry for that opportunity to make decisions good and bad.

Q. A.J., the other night you got a big wild pitch off of Vargas. He spiked the next fastball, probably about 100 miles an hour, and Raleigh was able to block it. These relievers are all max effort. How difficult is it to block balls now when these guys are throwing with such velocity and such stuff?

A.J. HINCH: It's easier when you're Cal because he's a big, physical dude. It's harder when you're small.

But the anticipation is the most impressive thing. And I spoke earlier in this series about how the managers know their teams the best. I think within that, the catchers know their pitchers the best, and that helps that anticipation.

And, again, guys are all in. They're willing to do anything, put their body in harm's way. Sometimes I think the 100-mile an hour spike is probably blocking you more than you're blocking it.

But all credit to Cal and Ding, and if Garver and Jake get in there, they know that the 90 feet they can control either with their arm or their body can be the difference in the game. And that's why hats off to all catchers, former and current.

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