

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Detroit, Michigan, USA

Comerica Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Pregame 4 Press Conference

Q. A.J., you guys were in this position a week ago. What do you kind of do -- I know there's no speeches at this point in the season, but what do you kind of do to kind of read your room and tame the temperature a little bit? And how much of that have you had to do?

A.J. HINCH: We just prepare for the game. I think by now our players are pretty well aware of where we're at and what we're doing, and we try to focus on what we need to do to win the game, which is not too dissimilar, you know, to the entire season.

And so I think what players need right now is normalcy. I think when you -- telling them these at-bats mean more is probably not going to be productive.

And so, you know, the room's great. Our guys understand -- I mean, listen. We've been in elimination games before, and we hope to be in one tomorrow -- or Friday.

And so I think creating an environment where guys know what to expect here and there's an excitement, there is an anticipation, there's -- it's probably good that we're playing at 3 o'clock and getting out on the field and getting to the game because, you know, everybody knows what's at stake.

But as far as preparing for Bryce Miller or their bullpen or their lineup, which -- even by now, in Game 4, there aren't a ton of secrets between these two teams now. When we were in Cleveland, it's because we play them so many times. You're around the team over the course of the next four or five days, like we are against Seattle, not a lot of secrets here either.

We'll be ready to play.

Q. A.J., for Bryce Miller today, what are going to be some of the keys against him? He's had success



against you guys in the past, but that was in the past.

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. It's a different team than he's faced. We didn't face him -- we didn't have a ton of at-bats on him. He has had some success against our organization. Not all of these players have been here for that.

But it's all about his fastball. When he locates his fastball, he creates a ton of pressure on the hitter to have to deal with that, and he's got a couple of different secondary pitches.

But very similar to a lot of the pitchers we face against Seattle, there's good stuff, they pitch to certain parts of the zone, they make you respect the fastball. And it doesn't mean they throw it all the time, but once you respect it, then that gets you a little bit in between some of their pitches.

So he has had a year that has been up and down. He certainly has better stuff than his season numbers indicate, and you have to attack him by getting -- being ready to hit, specifically early in the count. And in a game like this, zone control is going to be really key.

And I know it's going to sound like a broken record, because that's been our conversation this entire season, but the team that wins the zone is the team that wins the game.

Q. A.J., there's a little bit of debate about Zach McKinstry's role in the third-inning play yesterday. As the cutoff man, did he play that correctly?

A.J. HINCH: Well, I think he should cut it, and I know he talked to you guys about letting the ball go unless the first -- the runner at first goes to second.

But the fundamental play would be to stop the play when there's no more action. So I understand where he was positioned, how it was difficult to cut it. You know, I understand that that play -- you know, he's having to look at two different places at the same time, but the way that play developed, certainly from my angle, it's like Riley get the ball to the infield, cut the ball if you can. If you can't,



Dillon's got to block it.

So there were a few breakdowns on that play. But if Zach was in position to cut it, I think he should cut it. And I think he would if he would have been a little bit closer, but that's not how it worked out.

Q. A.J., for Tarik, has he thrown his bullpen yet? And then any chance he's available today, or are you guys looking to Game 5 for him?

A.J. HINCH: No. Tarik is going to start Game 5. I know he's done his normal prep as he would to be prepared for an all-in Game 5.

Q. A.J., when Casey's on his game, what do you look for to know that he's the best version?

A.J. HINCH: You know, I think he's -- first off, he's going to be incredibly prepared, you know? He's a student of the game. He's watched all these games to get to this point. He's had a couple different sessions on the mound to get him physically ready for this outing.

And what I look for from Casey is conviction and execution of the fastball, which everything plays off of.

Now, he may see it as a slider being super important for him, or he could use the split quite a bit, but I think with Casey, everything feeds off the fastball. Not only velo, but velo is helpful to him.

He is a guy who has high standards, demands, excellent execution out of himself, and so his demeanor, his ability to execute the fastball to multiple areas of the zone are going to be important because everything feeds off of that.

When he has a powerful fastball with conviction, hitters take some pretty funny swings on his split and on his slider and the sweeping breaking ball that he has as well.

So obviously looking for a big performance out of him. Getting into the game is super important when you have all these emotions that come into the game. The guy that handles those emotions as even-keeled as any of our guys is Casey Mize, and it's nice to have the ball in his hand.

Q. A.J., I know this being a potential elimination game, you have to manage aggressively, especially with the bullpen, but in that vein, how much does having Tarik lined up for Game 5 plus that off day leading in help you manage your bullpen?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I think it helps optimism, for one. I think sometimes in these series, with momentum swings,

we win Game 1, we're going to win the series. Right? That's how it feels.

You lose a game, and all of a sudden they're back in it. You lose another game, and they're in complete control, when in reality today's game is the only game that matters.

Now, having Tarik Skubal there gives us optimism and probably gives them a little bit of concern, but there's a lot of baseball to be played before we've earned the right to give Tarik the ball again.

So as far as managing the game, it's all hands on deck, and if you watch any of these playoff games, you'll see decisions that are made fast because of the magnitude of the moment and the importance of stopping fires when they're out.

And so our entire bullpen is up and available, and so is theirs, despite them using a lot of their back-end guys a lot, and the same with us. Not just because it's win or go home. They're going to use their pen as aggressively as we are because they want to win the game.

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