

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Detroit, Michigan, USA

Comerica Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Postgame 4 Press Conference

Tigers - 9, Mariners - 3

A.J. HINCH: Not much to cover.

Q. Yeah, we talked about Riley, you know? How big of a break-of-a-seal moment was that, just for him to get that blast?

A.J. HINCH: First off, he's incredible. And I know it's been some tough times or some -- you know, a few games or -- but he never concedes, you know?

And he is a tough kid. He's had to endure a lot. I play him every day. He's in the middle of the order. He gets managed against, and he comes up big right when you need it. So that was a big swing.

But that was many parts of this game and many parts of our roster who contributed to a big win and the biggest win of the year.

So I'm proud of our guys because today's game was symbolic of how we roll, you know? It's a lot of different guys doing something positive, multiple guys, you know, getting on base, leadoff batter on base five innings in a row, an entire bullpen, Troy Melton on three days' rest, Will coming in in a big game. I could go on the entire time because of how many guys did something positive.

Q. A.J., it was kind of the tale, as you mentioned, of two games. When you guys were down 3-0, that crowd was getting a little irate, and for you guys to be able to put the offensive explosion up and to win them back, can you talk about?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Obviously this is an emotional game for everybody, fans included, and everybody is living on every pitch. But in the dugout you try not to ride that emotion because you know that 27 outs are going to be



played, regardless, and you've got to keep fighting.

And it's hard. We knew our season was on the line. This is not the first elimination game that we've played this postseason, and our guys stayed loose and stayed in the game and came up with some really big pitches and some big swings.

And you need all of it, and obviously I know how much this matters to our fan base, to our city, to our season. And, you know, we've -- we're one more win away from bringing baseball back to Comerica again.

Q. Yeah. Before the floodgates opened up, Jahmai Jones, that big pinch hit. Talk about what he has meant to this team.

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. He's been a big part. He patiently waits every day for his opportunity. And it's pushed a little closer to the middle of the game now with the urgency of the playoffs, but generally it's against back-end left-handed relievers in a critical moment of the game. And he knows the strike zone, he knows where the barrel is, he's not afraid, and he is fully prepared.

As that inning was building, it was a lot. It was Dinger's base hit. We needed to chip away, it felt like. And Jahmai comes up big with another pinch hit.

It's his role. He's really good at it. There's a reason why we stay consistent with giving him those opportunities, is because of his impact, and obviously was a big part of this win.

Q. A.J., when you took Casey out of the game, what was your sort of message to him? And at that point I think you still had 18 outs to go. Did you know that Troy Melton was going to have to take down a bulk of those outs at that point?

A.J. HINCH: For sure. The last part is we knew we were trying to get the ball to Melton, and we didn't know when it was going to be.

When I talked to Casey, I took him in the tunnel. Those



cameras are a funny thing; they follow me everywhere. I just wanted to tell him that the best chance for us to not only keep this game close but win this game was to continue to throw different pitchers at them.

It's been a successful strategy for us. Casey definitely could have gone out, but when the game dropped us off at Naylor and we have our full allotment in the pen, including Troy, Tyler, I knew Finnegan, Vest was going to throw career-high pitches if we needed, we were all hands on deck.

And so the aggressive move to the pen was to try to give them a lot of different looks.

Naylor, I watched the first at-bat, where it was a lot of pitches. He gets the double. Canzone is another tough hitter. They have him in the seven hole to connect those two where they can pinch-hit.

So if I was going to take him out at the Canzone at-bat, I wasn't going to send him out there to get in trouble when we had a couple matchups that we like. So it didn't work out to start until Finnegan came in and saved the day with the double play, despite it contributing to a run.

Q. A.J., your hitters have been saying it's coming, they feel it's coming, they've been close, close. Did you think this much was coming? And is the whole hitting contagious thing, is that legit now?

A.J. HINCH: You know, I think recent memory can lead you to think that this is how it's been all season, and it hasn't been. Like, we have been a good offensive club for a large majority of the season, but because of how we finished and some of the dry spells in September, it just tricks you into believing that we're not an offensive club, and we really are.

You know, we don't put those numbers up on the board by accident. So you need some confidence, you need a nice little boost. You need to connect at-bats. We talked about it before the game where you need one and two and three good things to happen in a row, and we did that.

And it wasn't just the big swings. I love the big swings. But there's also some singles in there. There was the Dinger at-bat where we finally get on the scoreboard. It's McKinsty not only moving the runner, but hitting the ball to right field after Tork who had gotten on base. It's Wenceel coming off the base and finally feeling good about end of an at-bat.

Those things all contribute and they matter. And I think it shows that there's still a good offensive club in this

clubhouse, and we need another effort like that, and results like that come Friday.

Q. Could you comment on Javi's approach and composure?

A.J. HINCH: He did everything perfectly today. I mean, it was amazing. He just rises to the moment, you know, and the near-miss homer is always that feeling of what was barely missed. But Javi loves these big games, these big crowds, these opportunities to do something great.

And he is a steady force in the middle of our field. Every time I go out on the mound to change a pitcher, which seems to be a lot, Javi's always there with some sort of calmness, even more so in the postseason than in the regular season.

And I really appreciate that out of him because he's been there. He's done it. It matters a lot to him, and the big swings, whether it's a base hit to right, whether it's the pull-side homer, and everything in between is pretty magical to see.

Q. A.J., off that, I mean, you've been through so much with Javi. What's it like for you to see the best version of him to emerge in the playoffs?

A.J. HINCH: It's very rewarding to watch him play with some joy. He's had to endure a lot, whether it's the frustration at the beginning of his Tiger tenure, to the injury and missing out on what was an incredible season last year, to this year the ups and downs, the All-Star nod, to scuffling a little bit in the second half, to even out of the lineup and getting pinch hit for, to now being a huge part of the bottom half of our order to roll the lineup forward.

So our best team has him, you know, doing some pretty impactful things, and I know the work that goes into it. I know how much it matters, and that makes it even more rewarding.

Q. A.J., were you surprised they went to Speier with Meadows? And it looked like you guys were super aggressive against Speier based on some early swings.

A.J. HINCH: Going into the game, we talked about it being an elimination game for us, and we also knew that it was going to be a very aggressive game for them.

And obviously we had a very comfortable lead where they weren't going to get too many of their back-end guys. But no, it didn't surprise us because Game 5 elimination games are something to avoid when you're on the lead side, too,



when it comes to going into Game 4.

So we knew Speier was going to be a part of it. Had it been closer, Brash or Munoz would have been a part of it. There are no secrets when you get this deep into a series.

Q. A.J., Tarik's about to be in the same spot he was a year ago. Can you speak to what that means, for him to get that chance so quickly, and then maybe what he gained from that experience last year?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I mean, I think, you know, sitting in my chair, one of the easiest things to do and one of the most exciting things to do is hand the ball to the best pitcher in baseball. I mean, this guy should have more hardware on his mantel.

And he's going to be recognized because of the work that he's done during the season, but I -- he's so prepared for this moment. He obviously is somebody deeply trusted in our clubhouse to bring intensity, to bring high-end pitching, and bring results.

And we win together, we lose together, but he leads us, you know? He's a big presence going into Game 5. As we get on this plane to go across the country, we've got a lot of optimism, you know, heading that way because of the presence of Tarik Skubal.

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