

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Thursday, October 9, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Workout Day

Q. Hey, A.J. From a travel standpoint, like in the regular season, a lot of times after a game, you guys would hop on a flight immediately afterwards. For both of the games in this series, you guys have elected to stay the night. Was there any kind of science behind that or just comfort of the players? Or what went into that?

A.J. HINCH: It was really about just the last couple of weeks. You know, we went on a pretty long run of intense games and some travel. We ended with a 14-, I think 15-day road trip counting the playoffs in the first round and then coming out here to Seattle.

So time zone change, families being everywhere, you know, not wanting to kind of split the group up, we chose to do some work at home today and then get on the plane and get out here rather than fly through the night.

So not a ton of science necessarily. I mean, I think I feel better. We're coaches and we're old, but the players can adapt to whatever, but it's just the accumulation of what goes on in these series where -- if we were at a closer place, we may change our plans. But the three-hour time change and the, what was it, four and a half hour flight, it's hard to make that up time.

Q. A.J., you've been to a couple of these winner-take-all games now the last couple of years. I know anything can happen in baseball, but does it give you a comfort level -- I mean, does it help to have been in these situations for the players and for you guys?

A.J. HINCH: I think experience always help because you can reflect back on the things you've done well, maybe some things you wish you hadn't done or the nerves that come with it.

But I actually think it's good to be nervous. It's good to be



excited.

I guess there's a small consolation prize of knowing the stress that's coming, you know, but sometimes it's kind of nice to be naive and not know and just not be able to breathe during the moment and have to deal with it in real time.

So I don't know that it helps you win as much as it helps you keep things in perspective. The 27 outs are going to be played. The game is going to come, and there's going to be a lot of peaks and a few valleys for both teams and things like that that you know are going to happen.

But everybody on both sides are going to leave it on the field. And whether you've played in these or not, every single player, coach, manager knows what's at stake and what tomorrow night can bring, both positively and the downside.

Q. And then lastly I'm just curious if you saw the interaction between Naylor on second yesterday and Mize on the mound and what you made of that.

A.J. HINCH: I didn't see any interaction. Did they talk?

Q. No. Just the motioning.

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. The motioning? That is pretty standard nowadays. I know there's been a lot of debates about what's real, what's not real, the gamesmanship that comes with the motions and things like that. Different teams are doing more outlandish things as they go -- and the paranoia is real too.

So no, I don't have much take on it because we don't pay a ton of attention to it because it's a distraction either way. If it's something that you're doing, then obviously you've got to clean up your tipping. If it's not, then it's wasteful energy to worry about it.

Q. Have you been operating under the assumption that George Kirby's going to go tomorrow, or just given the nature of a Game 5, where it could be anybody and everybody?



A.J. HINCH: Yeah. We're operating more that it's going to be all hands on deck for both sides. We're waiting to get the announcement and see who's going to be first for them.

And that guy -- you know, I've been in these games where that guy's lasted six, seven, eight innings, and I've been in games where that guy is pulled in the first. So there's no assumption past the first guy that they list on what their plan is going to be.

But we'll find out at some point, hopefully tonight, who it's going to be. And we won't really be surprised, I don't think, given that we've played these guys for four games and we know they have a couple of options or they could open, they could do a bullpen game, they could start Munoz. Who knows what they're going to do? But they'll let us know, and we'll set our order accordingly.

Q. A.J., do you subscribe to the idea that seeing a couple of those guys, like Bazardo and Speier as much as you've seen them has helped you guys pick up some stuff?

A.J. HINCH: Sometimes I think it feels better to see them and know -- it doesn't make it easier to hit, really, any of these guys.

It's funny. I hear that a lot from people. The third time through is one -- obviously that is something that statistically -- I think it's hard to deny that everybody believes that.

From a reliever standpoint, I think sometimes it helps you to see where the breaking ball is, where the fastball has to start, maybe a unique delivery and things like that.

But then you get in the box, and it doesn't seem easier. It just seems more familiar. And more familiarity can also bring some negative things too.

So sometimes it works. I think it makes you feel better to say that it does when you're a reliever or you're a hitter, but I don't know that you can pin it on one thing for every hitter and every pitcher other than there are no secrets. It's 96 with cut or it's a power breaking ball or a big sweepy slider.

These guys are just really good to come out of the bullpen nowadays and they're -- you know, the more you see them, it has to be better, but it doesn't make it more comfortable.

Q. A.J., I think it was a couple years ago the Rangers -- they played the last week of the season on the road, then had to go across country for a Wild Card Series, then had to start the DS on the road. So they were

obviously away from home for quite a while. You guys have gone through a similar thing this year. What do you see as the value of being away and being on the road in that kind of situation that you learn or that your team gathers from those?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, I think you have to deal with your reality. I see it maybe not as something to aspire to because home games are way better and days off are way better.

Playing, you can build some energy and you can build some momentum, and it feels like you keep playing, but you pay the price at some point with all of this, whether it's your sleep, whether it's your nutrition, whether it's the comforts of home and things like that.

But I think that it can galvanize a team. I think that's something that I've seen with our group, where we kind of took on the us-against-everybody mentality in September when everybody thought we were fading away and were we going to win the division and were we even going to make the playoffs and did we have much left when we went back to Cleveland and we're going to come out and face a team that had the second-best record in the American League. And look at us now with Tarik Skubal on the mound.

So a lot can happen on those days, but you can galvanize yourself together with being around your teammates and being on the road. But trust me, I don't think anybody wants to sign up for 15 days on the road in a row facing these guys in these environments. But you have to endure it if that's your reality. And that's what I think our team has been pretty good at these last few series.

Q. Obviously you had the home runs yesterday, but Torkelson's at-bats, and really this series, early on in the series he had a couple going the other way. What have you seen in his approach? Have you seen something different from him?

A.J. HINCH: I think something that Tork doesn't get enough credit for is he swings at the right pitches. He's disciplined enough to work counts, draw a few walks, but he swings at the right pitches.

Now, he can -- he gets in these ruts where he's maybe too much airborne or a little bit uphill or he doesn't barrel everything, but he has 30-plus homers, and he has a lot of doubles and he's driven runs in because he swings at the right pitches a lot.

Ands that's what I've seen in these series. These are really, really hard matchups for a right-handed hitter. It's



hard for lefties too, but when you look at the wipeout-type stuff coming out of their pen, that's in their rotation, it never stops and it never eases off.

So the discipline to be in the strike zone or staying with your plan is very, very important. And Tork has done a nice job this series of taking what the game gives him. He hasn't hit the ball out of the ballpark, but he has hit a couple balls out of the opposite field line. He has pulled the ball. He's worked a walk or two that get a little bit unnoticed whenever the guy behind him does something positive.

So he's pretty consistent in his approach and in his methods, and I think that, as a consistent personality, that helps him deal with the stress of hitting in the middle of the order.

Q. A.J., you mentioned the flight thing and flying differently. Did you pick any of that up when you were at Houston, having to come in here so much? And how much better is the AL Central travel compared to the AL West?

A.J. HINCH: AL Central travel is the best. I'm sure the NL Central would argue with me too. But it is a big difference.

You know, having been in the West before, we felt it in south Texas, especially coming out here, when we used to come out here three times a year. Just how far these places are, there's no way to speed through it. You can't get the plane to go any faster, and you can't change the time zones.

And so we didn't really pick anything up. We never had these type of overnight trips back and forth, but I think I learned along the way that sleep matters, nutrition matters, the consistency in your work matters, and so we have the luxury to be able to work out at either place.

We don't need to practice in Seattle at this stadium. We were just here three days ago. So it's not a new series for us. We've been here before, and all my players have played here before, so we could take advantage of being at Comerica this morning, do a little -- a few optional things that the guys needed to do and then get on a plane rather than drag the full team here after a big, long day.

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