

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Friday, October 10, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Detroit Tigers

Zach McKinstry

Pregame 5 Press Conference

Q. Hey, Zach. Just three-some hours before a Game 5. Does it -- preparation, does it feel normal, or are there some nerves right now?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: It feels normal, kind of like a normal playoff game, just get the feel, just get here early, just get your body ready, just make sure you feel loose, and yeah, just try to feel 100 percent.

Q. We talked to you all year about your attitude and mindset about just do something to help the team every game, right, regardless of what the cumulative stats are. You must feel pretty good about your contributions. The three things that you've done big have all been kind of game winners in.

Winning games. So how have you felt about your stretch?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. It's been good. I have kind of the ups and downs just like every season, but it's been a lot of fun, and there's been some angry moments.

But yeah. Just taking it all in and enjoying it and just -- yeah. It's been a lot of fun to be a part of the big wins. And yeah, it's been a fun playoff so far.

Q. One cleat at a time?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Tie one cleat at a time.

Q. In that first game here, you guys had a bunch of strikeouts, and you guys have reduced since. But how do you do that? Is it approach? Is it mindset? What?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. We haven't seen these guys in a while. Don't really know the bullpen as well as we do Cleveland or some in the past. And yeah, just trying to see what they're doing to you, trying to see how they attack you. Maybe a little aggressive, trying to play -- trying to do



a little too much.

And yeah. We cut back on that a little bit, watching other games in the playoffs, watching how pitchers are throwing and what they're trying to do. They're getting ahead and kind of going away from the zone. So yeah. Just staying focused and, yeah, just trying to have good at-bats.

Q. And one last big-picture-type question. When you guys were struggling and the wins were really tough to come by, as well as some of the times it's happened in the past where your backs are against the wall, how does A.J. help you clear your head or get you in the right mindset?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. I think it's just a whole team thought process, just keeping each other up and just knowing that you're going to go up there, you're going to get another chance, and you're going to have to be able to make the most of it and just kind of wash away what kind of happened in the past.

And A.J.'s always just calm, cool, and collected. So throughout the game you never really see any emotion come out of him. So yeah. Just staying calm, cool, and collected, and just taking every opportunity for what it is.

Q. Zach, how much, if at all, do you think the way you guys played during the season with pinch hitters, with guys hitting in different spots in the game -- how much do you think that prepares you guys for scenarios like this game, where a lot of unpredictable things can happen?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. Definitely. We do it all year. So A.J.'s going to put us in the right spot, and we've got to just rely on that.

And if I get pinch-hit for tonight, it will probably be ^Andy Ibanez, and I'm going to be the first guy on the step rooting him on. I've done it all year.

I think he's a great hitter. He hits lefties really well, and I feel like that's the same for everybody, Colt Keith with Jahmai Jones and things like that. We're going to root on



that guy, and we know that they're going to give it their all and go out there and compete and do what they can.

And exactly with the pitching staff, guys are going to come in in different situations. Finnegan's been throwing early against leverage hitters. Yeah, we're just going to trust him in those. If it's early, and hopefully it's not, but -- we've got Skub on the mound tonight, so yeah, we're just going to trust what A.J. does.

Q. And on a different note, you talked during the year about working with a travel ball team in Washington state. How did that come about? And have you had a chance to connect with that team during this series?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: I haven't had a chance. My agent kind of runs the facility. A lot of the guys that work there, I've hung out with and I've spent a lot of time with. It's a lot of fun to hang out and talk to those guys who run the organization and they're the coaches of the teams.

And yeah. They just kind of spitfire at me and ask questions, and we have a lot of fun talking baseball.

Q. To build on what you had said about the trust in each other, right, pinch hitters, guys coming in regardless of what inning it is, what gives you the trust in each other on this team?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: I feel like everybody's trying to do their best, and we see that. And the work they do before the game, the work they do after the game, and just all the in between, the way they go about their business, it's great and second to none, and that's why we are where we are.

Q. And to Jeff's question about A.J. and kind of what he does, he had mentioned if you guys clinch that you guys stayed together even during that rough stretch towards the end of the season. How did you guys stay together? How did you guys stay connected? What did that actually look like on a day-to-day basis when you guys are with each other so often?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. You see a lot of guys stand up and just be able to bring us all together. And just making sure that -- hard times make for easy times, I feel like, and you really figure out who you are as a person, as a team when you go through those hard times, and it brings you closer together. And that's the only people you can really rely on in that situation, is the other 25, 26 guys in the locker room at the time.

And yeah. Just kind of fall back on them and rely on them to kind of pick the team up and get going.

Q. You've been in a few of these elimination games now, going back to last year even. What's the trick? Or how can you play free, like just go out there and play when there's so much riding on it?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. So I think about it as -- you know, I was looking out the window today, and I see a few seagulls flying over the bus. They're just flying. They were meant to fly.

I'm a baseball player. I was meant to go out there and play baseball. So you just go out there and do what you're made to do and enjoy.

Q. The seagulls thing is kind of interesting. Do you do that often, just pick something and you're like, oh, wow?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: It's more -- it's biblical. God feeds the birds. He's going to provide for us kind of thing.

Q. So did you say you were on the bus? Or where were you when you were watching the seagulls?

ZACH MCKINSTRY: Yeah. There were a couple seagulls that flew over us on the bus. I was just looking out the window and enjoying the view of Seattle and the water and the two stadiums next to each other. It's a beautiful sight. So just enjoying it and taking it all in. Yeah. Just enjoying God's creation.

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