

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Friday, October 10, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Pregame 5 Press Conference

Q. A.J., how much the way you guys played all year -- you always talk about the randomness of Game 5s, Game 7s. How much did you playing all year like this help?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Well, I think we're used to a little bit of chaos. I think we're -- you want us -- if you want to pinch-hit early in the game, we've done it. If you want -- you know, using your whole roster, we've done it. If you want a bullpen game, we've done it. If you want your starting pitcher to pitch a complete game, we've done it.

I think we've played every style of game that you can play, and so when you get to these unpredictable games of elimination and the opportunity to move on, it really doesn't change a ton.

You may see the back end of our pen in the middle of the game. You might not see them until our standard roles, and our guys will be fine either way.

I know we're going to lean heavily on Tarik today, but we're going to need a lot of guys to do well, to do this right and to put ourselves in a position to win the game in advance, and we're equipped to do that.

Q. A.J., what do you do in the couple hours leading up to game time? Are you still doing preparation? Or are you having conversations? Do you want to just get it going?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. That's one of the hardest things during the playoffs in my career has been my mind is always going, I'm always looking at different things, there's always video to watch and situations to study.

But you get into the playoffs, and everything is center-focused about now. I don't even want to think about the possibility of the next series because that series isn't



guaranteed. So all attention goes to this matchup.

Now you go to Game 5, and we've played different games, but yet a lot of similarities within that game. There's only so much you can look at.

So I was up early this morning, doing my normal routine, head to a local coffee shop, and set up shop and start watching our games that we played so far this series. And now it's just checking in on the guys. I went for a walk throughout the stadium to get a little bit of a vibe feel. And just get the clock moving fast so that we can start the game.

The anticipation's real, so you just stay with your normal routine the best you can. A little harder in the playoffs.

Q. Have you gotten a chance to see Tarik yet today? And what's his demeanor like? And what are your expectations for him in this one?

A.J. HINCH: It's no surprise to anyone who knows Tarik to know he's ready. He's the same guy every start, and I appreciate that about him. He's a man of routine, but he's also a very approachable pitcher on the day that he pitches, and the Game 5 of the ALDS is no different.

So obviously the bus times have been similar, how they would be on a normal game time. The pregame routines have been the same. He'll go out and get his warm-up in, and he'll be ready to go.

So he's as competitive as they get, but for a pitcher who's as dominant as he's been throughout the last couple of seasons specifically, he's remarkably consistent in his demeanor, and I love that it's the same today.

Q. A.J., you mentioned your morning routine and going to the coffee shop. I wonder whether it's here or anywhere else, you're a pretty recognizable guy, so I'm guessing there were some fans either of the Tigers or other teams that might stop by and offer you some insight, suggestions, or suggestions?

A.J. HINCH: Well, the Tiger fans offer me coffee. The



opposing teams do not.

But yeah. I have a lot of banter throughout my time at these places, and always good. I think it's always fun.

And it's funny, you know, in Detroit, I do it every day almost, and there's so many fans that are invested in what we're doing. So I get a good feel for, you know, the fan base and what kind of attention we're bringing to that group and what they want. I mean, they want so badly to win and continue this season and this run in the playoffs.

So, you know, there's been a couple complimentary coffees. There's also been a couple of free suggestions on who to use and how to use them. But it's all in good fun, and I love that so many of our fans are invested in the game.

Q. I have just one baseball question. On Gleyber and his at-bats, what have you noticed in this postseason where it's an even higher level of focus?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. He's so good at knowing the strike zone. He's one of the players that when he complains about balls and strikes with the umpire, I believe him because he's so good at pitch recognition and knowing what's a strike and what's a ball.

And I love that the backside homer was awesome. The backside base hit was awesome. He lets the ball travel.

He has a plan. And I think something that young hitters can learn from somebody like Gleyber is to trust your plan and execute your plan. If that means taking a strike that you know you can't hit, cool. If that means being super aggressive, that's great too.

But I've noticed a calmness to him which comes with experience in the postseason, experience in the World Series, experience playing in tough markets and tough environments, and he's remarkably consistent, and it starts with knowing the strike zone.

Q. A.J., we talked with Zach a little bit about team chemistry and how, toward the end of the year when things were tough, the guys pulled together rather than separated. How special is that? That doesn't seem like something you can coach into a player.

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. First off, we've experienced a lot of highs together, and that certainly builds a strength and a bond together. And so when times are tough, a team that stays together is super dangerous because it means you're going to come out of it and it means you have the resolve and the backing of one another.

And whether it's early in the season we don't hit but we pitch, the pitchers don't turn on the hitters. Or vice versa, the pitchers had a little bit of a rough spell, and the hitters were hitting, and hitters don't get mad at the pitchers.

So that bond is real, and it has to be earned. You can't bestow it on it from my desk or from the coaching staff, but you can support it by letting the guys be themselves, and then it naturally matures.

But I think the experience that this club has had this season -- you know, oftentimes we look at maybe the downside, the last month-plus of this season or the grind in not winning the division but make the playoffs. There are some good times mixed in there too that strengthen that bond, and we rely on those as much as we do the times that struggle.

Q. A.J., you spoke very eloquently before the series about Raleigh and what you've seen from him. In series, any other subtleties that you've picked about his game and just what's made him such a great player?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I'm glad this is the last game I have to deal with Cal because he's a real threat from both sides of the plate.

But I think his ability to stay in the moment is different than others around the league. His ability to separate offense and defense is elite. He is getting, you know, beat up by these balls in the dirt, and he just asks for more.

He obviously hits in the first inning, so when we were at home, I was watching his routine as to when he leaves the starting pitcher to get ready for his at-bat, which is the official changeover from the defensive mindset to the offensive mindset. I watch everything this guy does because he's put together a historic season even amongst the expectations rising.

Obviously we'd love for him to have a quiet night. I'll congratulate him on his season after the game. I respect the way he goes about it, not just what he does. The homers, the durability, constantly in the lineup speaks for itself. But the way he does it I think garners the respect he deserves.

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