

AL Division Series: Tigers vs Mariners

Friday, October 10, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

T-Mobile Park

Detroit Tigers

A.J. Hinch

Postgame 5 Press Conference

Mariners - 3, Tigers 2 (15)

Q. A.J., did you spend a couple minutes with your team in there? And if so, can you share what your message was?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah, I did.

Let me start by saying congrats to Seattle. You know, Jerry I go back a long way with, Dan I've just gotten to know. That was an incredible win for them, which means it was an incredible loss for us. But I wish them well in the next round. They earned it, and that was an epic game.

As far as my team goes, you know, yeah, I spent some time with them to thank them, you know? We had an incredible game today that -- unfortunately, somebody had to lose, and that somebody was us, and it hurts, you know?

I mean, that group is -- they gave everything they could. You had guys pitching on short rest. You had players giving everything they had because this was Game 5, and we wanted so badly to take the next step, you know, as a team. And so I wanted to thank them.

We have nothing to hang our head down on, and there's going to be plenty of time to talk about, you know, the season, this game, the peaks, the valleys. But I'm extremely proud of that group in there for what we accomplished and how we fought tonight to try to extend our season.

Q. I guess along that same vein, the effort you got out of Tarik tonight, that's about as dominant -- I mean, it's a historically dominant performance for a postseason game.

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. It's incredible. He kick-started us in such a good direction. He missed a ton at-bats. Again, if you're not a fan of the Tigers and you haven't watched



Tarik start after start after start, you're going to see why he gets the love he does, because he's incredible.

He's an emotional leader. He's someone who brings it on the field. You see it every five or six days. And we've asked a lot out of him this season, but specifically this postseason, every five days. You want the ball in his hand, and you want him to represent your club.

Q. A.J., when the Mariners went to Speier there, were you pretty resolved in letting Carpenter have that at-bat?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. I thought that Speier was going to come in at any point, as soon as we pressured Kirby, which we had a hard time with. I mean, he was pumping strikes and getting outs.

And then there was so much game yet. That was just regular game. I didn't know we were going to play, like, a second game. But I felt like that at-bat, Carpenter had seen him a couple times, and it wasn't going to be just a free pinch-hit. You know, depending on the score, the situation, a lot could have changed that.

But given where it was in the game -- and I wasn't going to let him run Carp out of the game -- he put a really good swing on a really good pitcher and obviously gave us a big boost.

Q. And just with the stress level of Skubal and just the amount he put behind those pitches, was it a pretty straightforward decision to go with --

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Easy decision. After the fifth, I checked in on him how he was doing physically and emotionally, and we both knew that he had one left. You know, he emptied his tank and obviously was emotional coming off the mound, and I think that signals exactly where we were in the game. He gave us everything he could.

You know, he's pitched on regular rest now three or four starts in a row. He empties his tank from pitch one. You know, it was an easy decision.



Q. A.J., we know games like this are all hands on deck. As that gets into extra innings, what's the challenge of managing your pitching?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. Navigating just where they were. With their order, we didn't really want to show the middle of their order the same pitcher, you know, so I went with Keider, and then I went with Jack, got Tommy there at the end.

Guys just kept battling. There were opportunities on both sides after the ninth inning. You know, it felt like it was a pretty quiet game from an opportunity standpoint until we got into extras, and then there were runners everywhere and there were double plays and they're caught stealing and there's bunts, and there's guys picking up each other on errors or misplays.

I mean, the back half of that game is like a game in itself, you know? And we dodged a few bullets, and so did they, you know? And it felt like that game -- you know, I didn't want it to end, you know, certainly the way that it did, but I wanted to just keep giving ourselves a puncher's chance, and they outlasted us.

Q. Some young kids really came up huge, a rookie pitcher, Keider, guy after guy.

A.J. HINCH: Melton. Uh-huh.

Q. What are your thoughts about how the bullpen reacted?

A.J. HINCH: You know, when we grew up as a team, I do think, you know, based on last season, being able to get some experience in the postseason, it's easy to forget how young we are and that we're still learning. We have a lot to do to get better.

But we are taking steps that way. Even in the rough September, we took steps forward. It's not all about the record when you're learning. And unfortunately, we put ourselves in harm's way a little bit, but we battled back to get the win in Cleveland, to get the win in Boston, to get the series win in the Wild Card, to take this about as far as you can take a series.

So we are growing up. We've got areas to get better, but I think these experiences are only going to help a Troy Melton or Keider or Parker, Zach, Ding, you know, catching every inning of the playoffs.

There's things to build off of this once the sting of the loss and the abrupt ending of a season, you know, subsides a little bit.

Q. A.J., at what point in that game do you realize you have to get Jack up? And what does it say about him to do what he did to get out of some really big situations?

A.J. HINCH: Yeah. We talked to Jack at home before we left about sort of the way it was going to map out over Game 5 and he needed to tailor his work to be able to be ready, and he was all in.

I told him to go down about halfway through. I'm not even sure when he went down to the pen, but it was going to be this extra inning type of game that was going to take him into the game.

So, you know, as guys are getting up, there's no room for error at the end. Keider gets into trouble, I got Jack up. When he got in trouble, I got Hurter up, got Tommy up. So we were going to piece it together as best we could.

But going into the game in a perfect world, you know, with Tarik, Will, Finnegan, Holton -- those guys were all going to pitch if needed.

On the back end of that, you're just piecing together as best you can to extend the game. Because when we were pitching, we were one run from the season ending, so we were going batter by batter.

Q. A.J., as a game like that goes on and on into extra innings, does the pressure switch all to the hitters? Because everybody looks like they're swinging to end the game, as you would think they would, and the pitchers are just mowing them down on both sides.

A.J. HINCH: I don't think it's pressure. I think the intensity goes to the moment that you're playing. There's no looking ahead. You look at the moment that you're playing, and the intensity grows, and every situation's different.

You know, we have second and third. The attention's on the at-bat. Or we had the bases loaded. The attention is on the at-bat. They had first and second with nobody out, you know, with the weird button play -- it's just about the moment, you know?

So it wasn't pressure. I mean, it was intensity. I mean, every pitch mattered. I think both sides were under a lot of duress during that time, and so I think -- obviously hitters are seeing a different pitcher a lot.

You've got -- look at all the starters that pitched today. I don't know -- I'd love for this series to go another sixth and seventh game, but I don't think any of us have pitching to



get through two more games, certainly not the way these five games were played.

So you could feel the intensity because of how badly both teams wanted it, and, you know, again, one team had to lose, unfortunately, and that was us.

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