

AL Wild Card Series: Red Sox vs Yankees

Tuesday, September 29, 2026

New York, New York, USA

Yankee Stadium

New York Yankees

Manager Aaron Boone

Postgame Press Conference

Yankees - 9, Red Sox - 0

Q. Aaron, what did you think of the tone that Cam Schlitler set for this team to start the night?

AARON BOONE: Awesome. He was great. I mean, the only thing was obviously a higher pitch count. They made him work a little bit there in the first. Rutschman has a really long at-bat against him.

So they took some tough at-bats against him, I thought, throughout the night that made it hard for him to get super deep. But he was terrific. Probably his best curveball of the year to go with obviously, I thought, really good command and in control of his heaters.

Q. He wound up throwing a career-high 117 pitches. You generally don't push guys that far. Just how much of a debate was there to send him back out there for the seventh and how much did he campaign to stay on the mound?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, no debate to send him out. I was gonna have him go face Contreras no matter what. Probably should have taken him out at that point, but I got a little greedy.

Part of the calculus was, coming into the series, was the tune-up start into the five-day with the thought of I'm gonna lean on him a lot today. So probably a little higher than I'd like to go, and maybe I should have gotten him out of there for the Abreu at-bat because I had Headrick set up there.

But he was just obviously so good, and felt like if we could squeeze another out or two, potentially, preserve a lot of guys there that you may have to use the next couple days.

Q. Obviously Schlitler and Rice are the headlines here, but all the guys you had, the Yankees-developed



guys all had a pretty big day -- Wells, Volpe, Lombard -- how special is it to watch some of that stuff happen on this stage like that?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I thought we had great at-bats tonight. I mean that team can really pitch. And starting with Tolle tonight, you know we didn't completely get to Tolle, but I thought we made him work, and we had good at-bats against him.

And it was just up and down. I was just really, really pleased with the level of at-bats that the guys put together.

Of course, the homegrown guys were really good tonight. So one of those really special nights at Yankee Stadium. And there was a buzz, then obviously when it got broken up late, turned into a pretty cool night.

Q. You mentioned the curveball. Was that a strategy going into the game to use that pitch a little more because they've seen him so much, or did he just have great feel and command of it and he went for it?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, we felt like there were certainly spots for that tonight. And I thought him and Wellsy did a really good job of using it because you get the sense guys are selling out and kind of in their mind cheating to, like, I know I've got to cheat, this heater's better than I think.

So I thought they did a really nice job of using that off of some guys selling out to whether it was the four-seamer or what.

But the execution of it allowed him to keep -- he was filling up the strike zone with it, too. So he was able to get strikes with it if he needed to, obviously chase. And then the fastball was great.

Q. You talked before the game about the intangible impact of Aaron Judge outside the lines. But to have that kind of performance without the tangible impact of your best player, what does that say about the state of your team right now?



AARON BOONE: Look, it's a more confident group. But it's one game. So as much as tonight was a special night here in the Bronx and you could feel that energy, it was electric and so many guys played so well, you enjoy it for a minute. But it's getting right back after it tomorrow knowing that we'll have a chance to close it out.

But it's one win. So we've got the blinders on. But it's a confident group in knowing that we can, if we play our game we can beat anyone.

Q. I think for two years I've been asking about Ben Rice's kind of game-wrecking ability. For him to kind of step up and do what he did tonight on this stage (indiscernible) the next step for him?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, I mean, he pummeled pitches all night. They went after him a little bit and he made them pay. I mean, some great left-on-left at-bats, the double to right-center smoke, the homer out the front door in Monument Park. And an exclamation point there at the end. Just a big-time night by a great hitter.

Q. As much as the grand slam kind of blew things open, they bring in a lefty to face him for the home run there. What was that? You guys only had a 1-0 lead at that point.

AARON BOONE: Yeah, it was really big. You know, Miller's a really tough left-on-left guy and you get it, him coming into that lane. So for Benny to get into a ball like that and ride it out the front door, to kind of give Cam another run to kind of work with felt really big at that time.

Q. Just to expand on that, all your lefty hitters seemed to have a big night against their lefty pitchers. How do you account for that?

AARON BOONE: Yeah, they've had experience facing a lot of lefties this year. We've had to do that. It was starting with Austin. A great at-bat right out of the chute to give us the lead there. He put a lot of good swings on the ball all night. Down at the bottom of the order, Spencer with a couple of good at-bats to start rallies, or to keep one going with the walk there late. Great to see. Again, that team can pitch. And obviously they're going to run some tough lefties at you. So really a great job by all of them.

Q. With Rice, just how important was he to this team all year? Obviously not just the production, but the fact kind of everybody else, the top of the order missed some time here and there, what did he mean to this team?

AARON BOONE: Count on one hand, one of the best hitters in the league. You score over 100 runs, hit over 40 homers, close to 100 ribbies, sitting at the top of the lineup, it was a great offensive season. And obviously we needed it. And there were times this year where we were really offensively challenged to score some runs. There's that two-month stretch where it was rough. And Benny went through his stretch too.

That's the thing you love to see. For as great a year as he had, he had a stretch there for a month where it was a grind and a struggle, but he kind of got himself out of it. Really finished the last month with a flurry, and obviously carried it in here the first game of the postseason.

Q. What do you make of the fact the night kind of belonged to the two boys from Boston, as this rivalry writes its next chapter?

AARON BOONE: Yeah. Pretty remarkable. I mean, not too top draft pick guys. Obviously with strong Massachusetts ties. Obviously that's been a storyline for a couple of years now.

For them to go out and have that kind of night together to start this postseason, pretty amazing and kind of hard to grasp a little bit, frankly, but I'm certainly glad we have those two.

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