

NL Wild Card Series: Reds vs Dodgers

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Dodger Stadium

Cincinnati Reds

Zack Littell

Pregame Press Conference

Q. What's the anticipation level for your start tomorrow? And thinking back to when you arrived to the Reds right at the trade deadline, how much of an exciting period has this been in your career?

ZACK LITTELL: Yeah, it's exciting. Obviously this is a moment that you dream of as a kid just to get to a playoff baseball game. To come over here, help these guys, make this push and get here, hopefully continue to help them moving forward, it's been awesome. I can't ask for anything else.

Q. What do you think of this rotation? You're a part of it as well, and what that does for you guys this series.

ZACK LITTELL: It's definitely the strength of this team. You've got Hunter, Lodolo, Abbott -- Brady is throwing the seams off the ball the last month and a half. It's been awesome.

When you can go out there and just be a piece that is already a part of a really, really good group, it kind of takes pressure off yourself to just go out there and pitch.

You learn a lot from these guys. I know some of them are a little bit younger. They've done some pretty cool things. It's just been fun to talk baseball with them.

Q. A lot of guys on this team don't have playoff experience. You're one of the guys that do. How much is that, number one, for yourself, when you're on the mound, when you tap into that for a game like tomorrow? And how much of it do you spread around to the clubhouse and talk to the other guys?

ZACK LITTELL: I do have a few games. I wouldn't call it a ton. But you go into it like any other game. You try your best to go into it like any other game.



The moment is different, whether we want to admit it or not. It's a different game. And learning how to deal with those emotion was an adjustment the first couple of times. In that regard, I think I'm definitely better suited than I was four, five years ago, when I first got into it.

Just go out there and compete. I've had the opportunity to play the Dodgers in the playoffs. It will be fun to go out there and see some of those same guys. But this group, it's got a really nice mix of guys who have been around and done this before as well, with Nick Martinez and Emilio Pagan and some guys that have had some experience in the postseason.

The young guys have been awesome. They ask the questions you want them to ask. And I think everybody's really ready for the moment.

Q. You and Nick Martinez have both come out of the bullpen before but are used to being starters. Either of you guys did you say anything to Nick Lodolo? I know he got his feet wet the other day, but then possibly coming out of the bullpen in this series?

ZACK LITTELL: We talked about it a little bit before the win in Milwaukee the other day. As a starter, as a lifelong starter, it's really just about making sure your body is ready to go. Once you step on that mound you'll go into compete mode. We're not going to worry about what you're going to do once you're out there.

But starters, I think starters -- and this could be a downfall I guess sometimes -- we get married to our routine so much that it feels like we can't go out there and compete.

But we all grew up as baseball players. Be an athlete, go out there, especially when you get in these games, I don't think it matters what your role is. I think he's ready to go out there and pitch. And Smiles has probably talked to him a lot more. He's a lot better than going back and forth than I have. And he's done it a lot more.

So, Lodolo will go out there and he's going to throw the heck out of ball. As long as he's physically ready to go, which I have no doubt that he will be, I don't think



anybody's worried.

Q. These two teams have drastically different payrolls. How much of an impact do you think the payroll is in determining the pieces of the puzzle to get to the postseason?

ZACK LITTELL: To be honest with you, I don't know a ton about it, as far as -- obviously I know the Dodgers have a high payroll, and I know the Reds are generally in the bottom half of the league, if I were to guess.

But I think once you get here, it's not really about -- it just doesn't matter. I think everybody out here is a big leaguer. And on any given day in our sport, anybody can be anybody.

Throughout the season, I think guys are going out there and grinding to get to this moment. And you find a way to get it done. Obviously to lose and to clinch is not exactly how you envision it. But to get in here be in here that's all we're thinking about.

Q. Especially when you look at the Dodgers have some good left-handed hitters. How is your splitter feeling? And what does that picture just on paper do for you against lefties?

ZACK LITTELL: It's a pitch I added a few years ago. I had it in the bullpen, didn't use it nearly as much as I probably should have. Comfort levels continue to grow. And it's been an equalizer with left-handed hitters specifically. Back when I had just the fastball cutter, I was definitely -- I don't want to say I was a righty specialist -- but that was definitely my strength.

To add that, that's been really nice to neutralize. With that being said, I've now thrown it for three, four years, and everybody knows the cat's out of the bag and that's what I'm going to go to.

I just look forward to going out there and competing with each hitter. Every guy is different. Every at-bat is different and we'll take it one pitch at a time.

Q. Because the Reds were here at Dodger Stadium relatively recently, I'm wondering what the balance is of pulling the good from those games and trying to apply that to this series versus not let being, I guess, discouraged by the results themselves?

ZACK LITTELL: Sure. I think -- I know it was very recent that we were here. But I think it's such a different -- especially in August/September, you go through these waves of how you're playing or where you're at mentally as

a team. And you can definitely fall on this roller coaster of ups and downs.

I'm not sure that where we were at when we were here, what, three weeks ago, four weeks ago is even remotely close to the team that we are right now.

The mental side of it, what we went through the last ten days to really make that final push, I think, is what you ride going into the playoffs. You take that mindset of, let's win every game, let's win the game today, and you go from there. I don't think anyone's thinking much about the series we had a couple weeks ago.

Q. I was going to ask you: Tito and some of the other people talked about just, for lack of a better word, the culture in this clubhouse and how you guys have been able to stay steady. As someone who came in in the middle, how did you experience that firsthand and what have you seen in that kind of regard?

ZACK LITTELL: I get asked a lot about how my time in Cincinnati has been, people in of baseball, people out of baseball. One thing that I refer back to is, it's such a wholesome, the word I use, clubhouse, a group of guys that pulls from the same end all the time.

There's the cliché, but there's no cliques on the team. And I've been around a little bit now on different teams and gotten to see some real winning cultures and some cultures that probably needed to change.

I don't think there's one way to do it but this team is unlike any team in the sense of it truly never feels like we're out of it. And that's on an inning-to-inning basis. That's on a grander scale of making the playoff push like we did these last three weeks.

I have no doubt that regardless of the result of the series, this team is going to go out there and compete their ass off. And however it falls is how it falls, but this group is going to go as hard as they possibly can.

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