

NL Wild Card Series:

Padres vs Cubs

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

Chicago Cubs

Ian Happ

Pregame Press Conference

Q. As one who experienced the playoffs early in his career and then had some years where you didn't get back, what was that experience like yesterday to be back in that environment?

IAN HAPP: Yeah, I think just pretty awesome atmosphere out there. I think the fans were there early for intros. It was really cool running out, seeing the left field bleachers. Hearing in the first inning how excited and into it they were kind of from the jump. It was really exciting.

We've seen some great playoff atmospheres here, but I think that little bit of a hiatus, the energy is definitely there for sure.

Q. Pitcher, hitter numbers don't always tell a full story, but I'm curious what do you look at when you're facing a guy like Dylan Cease? Do you look at your previous at-bats? Do you care what your numbers are beforehand?

IAN HAPP: Yeah, I think you definitely look at previous at-bats just in general whenever you're facing anybody, whether you've had success or not. I've seen him in a couple different uniforms now, and definitely early in my career, that high heater was something I struggled with, so it was a tough matchup.

I think he's been a great pitcher in the game for a long time, so when you are going up against somebody who's had elite stuff, numbers don't always look pretty. But that's part of the game. Just continue to make adjustments and figure out how you're going to have an at-bat to help the team.

Q. Craig talked yesterday about how you guys played the Mets, who had their backs against the wall last week and how it kind of helped you for situations like this. How does that help you today where they're



playing for their lives?

IAN HAPP: Yeah, I think against the Reds and the Mets, and I think you get that experience in September playing against teams that are in it that are playoff caliber teams and are kind of doing everything they can. In that Mets series, Diaz is going two innings, stuff like that, to try to get them into the postseason.

It prepares you for this. I think we're fully aware the Padres have a good bullpen and they're going to use it. You put your best at-bats out there. I think we did a really good job yesterday of being able to push against their bullpen, but we had opportunities there, too.

We had opportunities in a couple different innings to be able push a run across, and I think it speaks to the length in the lineup, but also the discipline and the ability to score runs in a variety of ways. You had the two homers yesterday and then kind of producing through bunt, pass ball, Nico putting that ball in play and giving us a chance. We can do those things to produce, and that's what makes this lineup special.

Q. What you just addressed, how much of a difference does it make, you guys have the home run hitters, but as Craig was saying yesterday, you guys have a bunch of different guys who can do a bunch of different things to help you win a game which has to be huge this time of year?

IAN HAPP: Yeah, it's something we've done all year. It hasn't shown up every day or every month, but I definitely think early, especially in the first half, there's a lot of talk about the guys that hit homers, and we did have three guys hit 30 and that helps in run production, but the ability for guys to bunt, to steal bases, to move the baseball, Nico is one of the best examples of that in the game.

So when you have that combination of guys that are able to do the little things to produce against elite pitching, against elite bullpens, it gives you a chance.

Q. Ian, since you debuted and first experienced the postseason, can you explain how the game has



evolved, how the industry has evolved and how the Cubs have evolved to where you guys are using an opener today and it's kind of understood?

IAN HAPP: Yeah, I think the game has definitely evolved a ton, just with the amount of hard-throwing guys, the amount of reliance on the bullpen.

I think there was still in the playoffs a desire to get to those guys, but at the same time, in those early teams, you kind of had more playoff experience out of the starting staff. I think that was -- at that point, you had a starting staff that had just won the World Series and pitched in the '15 postseason as well, all together.

Those guys were completely and totally experienced in that situation, and I think we have a group right now where the bullpen is just unbelievable. Shota has been great for us for the last two years and just giving him a chance to get through those first three hitters, Kirt get through those first three hitters and Shota a chance to address the rest of the lineup, I think it's worked for us at different points during the season, and it's become a much more accepted practice because you're trying to get those matchups right.

Q. Team defense has obviously been a part of you guys' identity all year long. Does it become more important this time of year, and how much did you see that show up yesterday?

IAN HAPP: I mean, it's been -- that's the one thing that shows up every day. It's pretty special, pretty special to watch, watching Dansby make those plays, Matty Shaw with some great ones, and just the outfield running around catching all those balls. Pete makes those plays look pretty easy, but some of the spots he was playing in to go run down some of those baseballs standing up is pretty special, and dealing with the sun out there as well.

I think that's one thing that's been so impressive the whole year is just the quality of defense, the consistency of the defense, and the confidence it gives our pitchers to go out there and just throw strikes and pound the zone and know that we've got them.

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