AL Championship Series: 
Astros vs Red Sox 
Sunday, October 14, 2018

Ryan Brasier 
Joe Kelly 
Red Sox pregame 2

THE MODERATOR: Joe, how confident are you in your bullpen in this series against Houston and why?

JOE KELLY: Really confident, you know, to answer the "why" right away. We pitched good towards the end of the year in the regular season. And we threw the ball well in the ALDS against the Yankees, who has a great offense, similar to these guys. And we stayed with our game plan and attacked them.

I think if we continue the same thing with the Astros and trying to stick to the game plan as much as we can, you know, I think we'll still have a successful series against these guys.

Q. How different is the atmosphere in the bullpen in the playoffs knowing that the action could start so much sooner? You guys as a team have a great staff, so maybe you've been new to the bullpening but in the playoffs it could happen anytime. How different is it for you guys in the preparation?

JOE KELLY: Preparation compared from the regular season to the playoffs, you know, there was a little more leeway obviously during the regular season. You have time if your starter is scuffling a little bit, usually you send your long guys out early.

In the playoffs it's different, because any inning could be -- a first inning, second, third inning -- could be the same as the eighth or ninth. I think those are just as important in the playoffs.

So we have a little bit different routine. During the regular season we would go out there in the third inning. During the playoffs obviously we're going out there from pitch one because you never know what could happen. Guy gets in trouble early, you've got to be prepared mentally and physically obviously to get ready, and you go into a bases-loaded game in the first or second inning, that's just as big as being ready for, like I said, the later innings of the game.

RYAN BRASIER: For me, throughout the whole year there's really only been, since I've been here, one role that's solid every game and that's Craig. So first pitch of the game I feel like most of the bullpen is locked in. I don't want to say more than the regular season, but there's not as big a leash -- there's a tighter leash on starters in the playoffs.

So, like Joe said, we've got to be ready from pitch one for whoever they think can come in and get the job done early, late, whatever it is.

Q. On the approach with Houston, how difficult, how fine a line is it of throwing strikes, staying within the strike zone but not giving them too much to hit, especially with the lineup, the difficulty? I think you guys had 10 walks last night as a staff?

JOE KELLY: Yeah, the walks were -- 10 walks is never good. Not all of them came back to bite us in the butt. But we didn't throw as many strikes as we like, and moving forward I think we could be a little more aggressive.

But, like I said, these guys are a great offense, very similar to the Yankees who everyone knows broke all those home run records, and a walk can lead to a two-run homer just like that. These guys are very similar, might have a little more speed. And they do mix it up a little bit more.

But like I said you can't give in in a playoff game at any time, especially with how energetic that club is over there, how much momentum they get.

So you know if you walk a guy, just try to lock it back in as best you can. And these guys have some obviously some very, very good right-handed-hitting guys on their team.

And there's different stuff that we might have done throughout the year, and we might change-up the game plan here and there depending on the situation. But like I said, Fenway Park has that short monster out in left field, and you don't want a guy sitting on a breaking ball down the middle being able to hook. Don't want a guy diving out on a fastball, a good fastball down and away where he can hook for a double, especially with guys on base like that.

These guys don't swing and miss, if you look at the numbers, knowing that they're going to put the ball in play, you kind of gotta make pitches where you think
that the least amount of damage will be done. You know they'll put it in play so you try to get a single instead of a double, or try to get a weak double instead of a homer.

There's times throughout the game, different hitters in different situations where I think that, like I said, if you look at their numbers they don't strike out as a club very much and top three in the league of walks.

So we're just going to have to fight that fire. If we walk a guy, we're just going to keep trying to continue to pitch the way we can where we can create that weak damage and try not to let them barrel anything.

RYAN BRASIER: For what Joe just said, the walks for us, our bullpen has a lot of good arms. And so, like he said, we don't want to go up there and throw first pitches right down the middle just to get ahead. Those guys are sitting on. Like he said, the Yankees, they can hurt you in one pitch.

Walks are unfortunate, but with a team like these guys they swing the bat a lot and you're always one pitch away from getting out of an inning. So I think just attacking every hitter and even if you walk a guy, just keep trying to throw your best pitches to each guy and try to maybe get a double play or try to let them get their selves out.

And I think some of the walks we had last night were like smart pitching, we had first base open a few times and tried to guys on their team get their selves out and walking them that way. But I think if we just keep pounding the zone like we have been it will be all right.

Q. I'm curious, the way Alex has used starters in the bullpen and what that -- how that might change the dynamic among relievers who have been out there in the bullpen all season long and how you guys talk about it, how you guys handle it?

RYAN BRASIER: For us, we want to win. So we don't care who gets the ball, at least for myself I don't -- if they want Nate or Ricky to get the ball whenever it is, I'm 100 percent in. Both those guys have good stuff and they've been doing it all year. So I think no one really cares who gets the ball, whoever is in there gets the job done.

JOE KELLY: Yeah, it doesn't change much. Like I said, playoffs change the way you play a baseball game. It sounds weird to say but it does. Like I said, with the way the bullpens are used and you're seeing these games with seven pitchers on each side go. So it's different. So to have starters come down there, that's not different because you know it's going to take anything to win that game.

The only thing that is different is starters gotta come down there and stand in front of the guys who have been there all year and take some sunflower seeds to the face. That's the only thing that's different. For the starters coming down there. A little welcoming into the bullpen and there you go.

Q. Ryan, just given the long road that you had to get here, what does it mean to you to be here. How are you able to stay comfortable and confident? And also where were you this time last year?

RYAN BRASIER: This time last year I was probably sitting in a hotel room in Japan. Yeah, as far as being here being comfortable, a lot of the guys here, I met some of them in spring training and just talked kind of to them a little bit. But since I've been here it's been real easy to -- in the clubhouse and stuff no one really gets on you much, except Joe sometimes.

But no, you know it's been a crazy year. You ask me this in the end of March before I even had a job if I would be sitting here talking to you guys, I would have said no. But I never doubted that I still could pitch here in the Big Leagues, and I threw well enough in the year early to be here.

Q. Alex Cora talked about how important it is to keep these guys off the plate, from hitting out over the plate. Were you surprised about how much exception that Bregman took when you hit him last night?

JOE KELLY: Surprised? It's playoff baseball. First of all, after battling back in the beginning, we're both competitors. There's no intent there, especially that guy -- he came in and scored eventually the go-ahead run. With our offense working Verlander like that, to come back and tie the game, it's the most foolish thing if you do that on purpose.

But he's a competitor. I'm a competitor. I don't think anybody likes getting hit with a baseball. I don't like getting hit with a baseball. So there was no surprise. No intent, other than just you guys saw what happened. There's nothing else besides that.

Q. Ryan, you're going on four months being out in the bullpen with Joe. Do you have a good Joe Kelly story? What have you learned from hanging around with Joe?

RYAN BRASIER: No, not really. Not for in here. (Laughter).

JOE KELLY: That a boy.

Q. Some of your teammates have talked about the trust that Alex has cultivated with you guys and having trust in every single player. Just curious
you were going to go into New York and play the way that you did. But now that you're coming off a loss, did that experience help you and how confident are you that you'll respond again?

JOE KELLY: We're very confident. Every time you lose a game it stinks. It's not going to say that losing a game in the regular season feels like this. But it's the playoffs. You know how many games you need to win the World Series. We need eight more. And every win and every loss decides how you're feeling.

But, you know, we kind of just have to flush it and we did that last night. And coming up to the ballpark today and we had BP going and we're very excited about that. We have to take it inning by inning, pitch by pitch, the old cliché. But it's not like anyone's worried, like it's not an elimination game. We've got to win it, but it's not an elimination game.

So we won in New York. It's obviously a rowdy environment. Those guys bring it over there. We all performed well going into New York and I don't think it's going to be any different.

RYAN BRASIER: For me, I think a lot of people probably picked the Yankees to beat us. When they beat us Game 2 here and we went there, we know, as our team, we know our hitters are going to have days where we're not swinging the bat well or leaving runners on base. But we can roll out there any day and put up ten runs, I feel like, on any pitcher in baseball.

Verlander got us yesterday a little bit, but just like the third game at Yankee Stadium, we came out and put it on them probably better than any I've seen all year as far as guys swinging the bats.

But I don't look at it, like he said, it stings to lose, but win it tonight take it 1-1 win a couple games before we bring it back here which is totally possible with our lineup and our staff. We've just got to keep it close enough for our lineup to have a chance.

Q. Joe, four years ago, when you were traded here I think it's fair to say that you were kind of caught off guard by the trade. How would you describe, how would you describe the Boston baseball experience that you've had? And you've been mindful at different times this year of taking stock of where you are given the free agency that's pending. What are your -- how much have you thought about that entire history?

JOE KELLY: The free agency, I've thought a lot about, obviously. It would be dumb to say I haven't because no one would believe that.

And as far as trusting us, you can tell who he has in there and the guys on the team, he trusts everyone. Everyone's throwing in different situations or hitting in big situations.

So I think it comes -- we look at him and see how calm and collected he is most of the time, and I think it just goes down the chain of the players and we kind of just feed off of it.

JOE KELLY: Yeah, I think the trust is huge. Personally you asked about a story. Coming out of spring training, you know, I was throwing the ball well and first game of the year, Chris Sale started obviously, and I ended up blowing that game, giving up four earned and getting one out. So, easily from there, opening day, everyone's prepared for this mentally, physically. It would have been real easy for Alex to just toss me aside and be like, hey, next man up. But Craig pitched the next day, threw too many pitches. They didn't want him going back to back or throw two days in a row.

And I had 999 ERA, and Alex came to me right before the game, hey, you're going to close today if there's a save. And two days before, the day before, blew the biggest game obviously, it was opening day. And it wasn't even close, (indiscernible) a homer. Wasn't throwing strikes but came up to me in the locker room and looked me in the eye and said, hey, you're going to get a save.

So that was cool because the game ended up playing out that way I got my first career save. And just when a manager like that or anybody as a parent, if you can instill confidence in someone even though they messed up, give them another chance I think it only builds their psyche, but it shows they're going to go down there, fight for you in the trenches when you're not doing good and come back and be by your side.

Very loyal guy. And I said, I think players play better when you don't have to look over your shoulder wondering if you're going to have this job or if you're going to be here. So I think it's key. It's a good way to live life. And I think if you have confidence in your players they can perform a lot better.

Q. A week ago when you lost to the Yankees, I don't think there were a lot of people that thought...
So that takes care of that. But I haven't sat back and thought about that trade. Obviously, I was surprised because I was coming off an injury and didn't have too many outings before I did. And coming here, you know, after that trade and the year after that coming in last place in the division, obviously was enough motivation for the guys who endured that. We got guys still in this club that came in last place two years in a row.

For us to grow as a team and we've got still a core group of guys from there and grow the team, to be able to win the division three times in a row and win 108 games. Now we're here in the ALCS. I think it's something we should enjoy as a group.

And personally for myself I've struggled numerous times here. I've had some success numerous times here. So there hasn't been a solid consistency. It's either been some highs and some lows, and that's what you take with baseball. We have a great fan base who will let you know when you're doing great and will let you know when you're doing bad. That's the nature of the beast.

And I've enjoyed my time here and I love being a part of this organization. They're the guys that believed in me and gave me a chance. Like I said, take it back to Alex, he was a guy that gave me a chance when I had an infinity ERA from outing one. And I feel like I'm at home here and I love my teammates and we have a great group of guys.

But, you know, I'll be able to sit back and reminisce whenever the season is over. But we've had an awesome time and I love the city.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.