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

Alex Cora
Red Sox pregame 2

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Alex Cora.

Q. How easy was it to put last night to bed quickly and move on to Game 2 with what’s at stake?
ALEX CORA: Well, only worked half a game so... (laughter).

The way I see it, it was a 3-2 game going into the ninth. And Chris went four. Joe did a good job. Brasier, Barnes. Our pitching staff, regardless of the walks and the hit by pitches and how weird it looked, we had a chance to win the game. Then we didn't execute pitches in the ninth inning they did what they do.

They did it to Cleveland, to their bullpen and yesterday we saw what happens against us. But going into the ninth inning 3-2, that was a good feeling. So I took that one to bed and ready to go today.

Q. Can you talk about the lineup changes tonight?
ALEX CORA: Yes, sir. Ian is a good defender. He's been putting up good at-bats in the last two days in New York. Raphi, we know the upside. And everybody saw what happened last year in the playoff series against the Astros.

There's always a chance of him getting a fastball and hitting it off the monster or getting a hanging breaking ball and hitting it out of the ballpark. He put good at-bats against Severino the last time in New York. So we went with him.

Christian, he's been good offensively with that group down there -- the seventh, eighth, ninth hitter. We can be creative and put pressure on them get, guys running and put the ball in play and hopefully it's a first and third and set the table for Mookie, Andrew and J.D.

Q. What are you expecting from Price tonight?
ALEX CORA: A good outing, honestly. A quality start. We talk about it throughout the week. We talk about making some adjustments. We talk with Christian about the way attacking these hitters. And I do feel that the pitch mix is going to be different. The separation between pitches, velocity-wise will be there. And he's going to have a good one.

Q. After the game last night, Mookie said a few times that he didn't get the job done. Are they pitching him differently than during the regular season? Do you think he's pressing at all?
ALEX CORA: No, actually he got a pitch right down the middle with the bases loaded. He just rolled over. But he didn't face Verlander this year. So he got a few fastballs that he probably missed. McCullers did what he usually does, spin the breaking ball until he gets the last out of the inning.

No, there's nothing different. I don't think he's pressing either. I think he's just not hitting the ball in the air, which is the difference. You don't see him rolling over most of the time. So hopefully he can make an adjustment today, hit a few in the air and that will be the difference between tonight and yesterday.

Q. Astros bullpen has changed pretty dramatically from when you were with them last year. What would you say about this year's relief unit compared to last years for the Astros?
ALEX CORA: Pressly, he's been good. Actually the breaking ball, it's one of the best in the game. Now, with Lance, obviously, he has another option that he can go to. And then you have all the options.

But, like I said yesterday, we were one pitch away from getting a reliever in the fifth inning or sixth inning and that's the difference of the games, when you go to your guys, you know?

For us, we know how it works. You go Barnes, you've got Brasier, you've got Kimbrel. And for them it's pretty structured too, it seems like. It's going to be Pressly, Lance and Osuna. It's about getting to the starter and hopefully start getting guys that -- although they're good because they're really good, you don't really want to go to those guys. And we were one pitch away from doing that.

But they're good. They're good. The way they spin the ball, they do it better than anybody else in the Big Leagues. And we've just got to make sure we get pitches in the zone.

I think we start expanding the zone after the fifth inning where we were very disciplined and then the strikeouts went up. And when you strike out you're not putting pressure on anybody.
Q. I know you were down 1-0 but is this a must-win situation for the Sox?
ALEX CORA: No, it's not a must-win situation for the Sox. It's a game that we know it's important, just like yesterday, just like the rest of the series. And that's the way we've been looking at it the whole season. They're all important games.

And we're going to show up today. They got the information already. They're going to use it to their advantage and then go out there and play the right way.

Q. Kind of lost in the pitching last night, you struck out nine Astros. That team doesn't strike out a lot. Is there a positive kind of when you sort all through that you guys can build on pitching-wise?
ALEX CORA: Yeah, just like in the New York series, we do feel that we get spots that we can attack, and we're going to get either swings and misses or we're going to induce them to weak contact. At the same time, if you make mistakes to what we call the red part of the heat map, they're going to take advantage of it.

Josh did it yesterday. Yuli did it last night. We're really good when we keep the ball in the ballpark. I think everybody in the Big Leagues, when they do that they have a better chance. And at the end they hit two home runs and that was the game.

Q. You might have answered this last night, but the decision to go with Workman in that situation rather than Kimbrel or Porcello or Eovaldi, what was that thinking?
ALEX CORA: Yeah, we talked about it, and we felt the breaking ball was going to be a big part of that pocket in the lineup -- Reddick, Springer and Altuve. We threw a first-pitch breaking ball to Josh. We fell behind and we decided to throw a fastball. We talk about blue and red and where we should attack. And with Work, that's his strength. That's why he's on the roster because he can spin the ball.

He didn't. He paid the price. The home run by Reddick was a fastball and the home run by Yuli was a fastball too. We talked about it. We had options. Don't get me wrong. We always talk about them, but we felt comfortable going into that situation with the matchup and the way that he can spin the ball that we were going to be able to get out of the inning and give us a chance to win the game.

Q. With the season you guys had, you built up a big cushion, so for September it wasn't what you call must-win games. Managing-wise for you, how much different are the playoffs now as far as I don't know if intensity is the right word, or do you feel a difference managing in these games than you did in the regular season?
ALEX CORA: Oh, yeah. I mean, this is what it's all about. It's actually fun. We work the whole season and to put these guys in situations to be successful, and now it's like you better be almost perfect, I guess, because the opposition is that good.

Now we're playing the world champs, and for whatever A.J. says about our team, best record, whatever, they're pretty good. And you have to be almost perfect as far as like your moves and put guys in situations that they're going to be successful.

And that's a challenge, but I love it. I do enjoy it. There's something about, like, preparation that goes on that you know you prepare and then you're with the family, having breakfast and all of a sudden there's an iPad on the table and you want to look at another video for some reason.

Mentally you have to be locked in throughout. I'm not saying that I don't have a life besides this, because I do. But it's fun. It's fun. It's what every manager dreams of, to be in this situation, to be -- your team in the spotlight and to maneuver X amount of games to try to win the World Series.

Q. In games, does it take longer to make the decisions because you're thinking it over more or talking about it more?
ALEX CORA: No, actually that's the good thing about, like, having Ron and Tony sending text messages and calling you in the morning. Like they help you out. And you start looking ahead. Like you kind of have an idea this is where we're going, boom, boom, boom, then something happens and you react right away.

I think that's the challenge but it's the fun part of it being a Big League manager at this stage.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.