

ROGER CLEMENS
JOHN SMOLTZ

Q. The question that everybody wants to know, what do you two think about the Astros cheating scandal and if or if not they were punished enough?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Well, the punishment was never going to come down on the players. The commissioner had to make sure that, for the future of the game, that management would have its antennas over the situation and they would be liable.

So it will go away. You know, it's just one of those hot, inflammable topics that certainly doesn't -- it rubs people the wrong way when you figure out the end result is they won. You know, the rule that came down was I think sufficient that future clubs will not try to do anything like this again.

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, I've heard some comments from Smoltzy and they're on par. I mean, technology caught up with everybody and they took it two steps too far, and really, that's what a couple of them should have said. You have TVs in the runway, maybe to the side of the dugout to do instant replay and somebody got an idea that, hey, we can do this, this and this, and they did it and it hurt them.

Again, like John said, I think if they quit talking about it and once the season gets going, they'll have to kind of prove themselves again. I think the shenanigans and all the crazy stuff, they'll just have to really be professionals and keep their nose on the prize and stay with it.

So obviously there's other ways that over the years that guys relay signs from second base and stuff and that's why I was the most paranoid when I was young, I had two teammates, Dwight Evans and Marty Barrett when I was 21, 22 with the Red Sox and they had guys' pitches within the second inning. So when I did my bullpens and stuff, I was really, really trying to practice perfect so I didn't give my pitches up. But obviously you can't use binoculars, you can't use a live feed and everything like that.

It will be hard on them for a little bit, first time maybe around through the league, and then hopefully, like John was saying, it will die down and they'll get to play baseball.

JOHN SMOLTZ: The biggest problem has been there are some truths within this scandal, but you can't prove them, you've got to just let it go. Like if you're three-fifths guilty, the two-fifths trying to prove they're innocent doesn't work, you've just got to let it go. They were all put in a tough position as a young team. And I said it publicly that all these people, too, that are complaining, rightfully so, if they were in the same situation, I'm pretty sure the

same thing would have happened. It's very difficult to put it on one or two players and to act as if this all could have been -- technology is the reason it happened. It's an unintended consequence of technology being so good that they're going to have to find a way to remove some of that technology.

Q. So you two were elite pitchers when you played the game. Is there something in each that each of you saw in the other one that you thought, God, you know, that would be cool to add to my mix of things?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Well, I was always in awe of his mechanics. The mechanical is what we try to strive for. You want to become your own pitching coach. And every time he threw the baseball, it looked like it was in a perfect spot.

You know, my teammate, Greg Maddux, did it a different way, without velocity. He did it with velocity. So I was always striving to have the perfect mechanics. It's hard to come by because everybody genetically is different. So from an elite power pitcher, obviously it's Roger and the rest.

You know, I think we both kind of threw similar pitches and brought them along as our career went. I added a split, you added a split. And that is what took me to the next level because without it, I was average at best against left-handers and that's what left-handers, they were loading up against me.

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, I mean, again, John said it perfectly. We are power pitchers, we are not power throwers, and so if we didn't have our plus plus, we could still get outs. I learned -- I didn't have velocity when I was young in high school, probably a better defensive end than I was a pitcher, but I threw strikes.

Then I was lucky to get into the big leagues, have Tom Seaver there working with one of my favorite pitching coaches of all time, Bill Fischer, who to this day I think still holds the record for not allowing a walk in like 91 innings. I think Maddux tried to approach that at one time.

So yeah, just our mechanics are good. And like I said, even when you don't have your velocity, we still have pitches to get out.

And again, our split fingers were devastating pitches for us. I learned it early in my career, didn't use it much. I had a golf tournament with Mike Scott in Houston and Roger Craig showed up and so I learned it, but I didn't break it out until late '80s. Then when TV and SportsCenter and all that came on, hitters would see, if I struck out 10 or 12 guys, they'd see about eight of them with that split, so it was ingrained in their minds. So it was a great weapon to have.

Q. Who was the -- for both of you, who was the hardest hitter to get out?

JOHN SMOLTZ: For me, it was Tony Gwynn. If I could have gone back, I would have told

him everything that was coming and I would have thrown it right down the middle because he was so good at taking away your best stuff and going with where the pitch was.

We don't see that today, that's not the style of game today. So he was by far -- I mean, it's not a small sample size, either. I think he hit 444 off of me with 30-some hits. So he laughed when I threw him a knuckleball, but that was the ultimate respect. It was the first knuckleball I've ever thrown and it was going to be to him.

ROGER CLEMENS: Again, right on par, because I'll say Tony Gwynn. Obviously I didn't face him at All-Star Games, but I did get a report on the guy and that's what they said. They said actually throw like a two-seamer right down the middle. I thought they were messing with me. Like I threw one and he looked out at me because I split the middle of the plate, because John's right, if you hit through and away, he shot you that way inside. He was that good.

I just think it was fun over the 24 years facing guys of different generation of guys. John Baylors, George Bretts, Luzinski, Kingman, Fisk, guys like that. Then you go further on down the road and you run into Pujols and all these bad guys that can actually -- just they're professional hitters.

So you have to pay attention to detail. I mean, at some point I did a thing with Cal Ripken not too long ago and we had 140 at-bats against one another, so there's nothing that I'm going to throw him that he doesn't know, and I've seen his eight different batting stances, too, and wondering what he's trying to do to get the ball in the air, try to get the ball to the right side and get a run. So it's a cat-and-mouse game.

Again, it's just being a student of the game and understanding. Again, for me, when we have our three best pitches, those are the games we're supposed to win. The ones that I was satisfied but I was mentally drained was when I'm driving home after a game and we won 5-4 and I got out bases loaded twice. There's really no reason for me to win that game, but those are the most gratifying. You're gassed and you're tired mentally, but they're the best ones.

Q. Okay. We were talking a little bit before you two are sort of linked in baseball history, and I looked it up before and it said that you two faced off in the '99 World Series in that last game when you guys clinched it with the Yankees, and then in the 2005 Divisional Series you beat him, although the Astros I think eventually beat you.

Do you remember that? And it's kind of interesting because after that you had surgery in '99 after that and then you went into relief pitching. You came back for 2005 as a starter. So that was kind of interesting. And then you guys got to face each other again. Do you remember those games?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Oh, I remember it like it was yesterday because I was breaking in Brian McCann. Brian McCann was a young pitcher, rookie that year. I didn't know if I can make

my next start. I had -- I tore a muscle underneath my armpit.

And I remember that game because it's the first time I've ever told a catcher what I was going to throw in the first inning to every batter and then I basically -- I faced the Astros a hundred times and I told him we're going to throw Biggio three straight sliders, he's going to swing at all three, and we're going to throw all sliders the first inning and then fastballs the rest of the game.

He looked at me like (indicating.) First three pitches were three sliders, Biggio swung, and I could see his eyes in his mask as he was throwing around to third. He told me later he realized he was way out of his league when stuff like that happens. But to Roger's point, when you face a guy so many times, you know what they're going to do and it comes down to execution.

So that game, based -- I think I pitched six innings and I was done. He came back in relief in that epic game. I was trying to get ready if we were to play a Game 5, but there was no way I could pitch and I ended up in the offseason rehabbing.

And then '99 I remember because I was as visibly upset -- our team had the lead the first three games, we lost all three games. Then I knew going up against him in Game 4, if I give up a run, I'm in trouble. We booted a couple balls. I threw sidearm that year because of my elbow and that year I went back to over the top because I knew that was it, the season was over for me. I threw eight knuckleballs that game. I think I struck out 11 or 12, we didn't score a run, and then eventually I had Tommy John.

I went that whole offseason throwing knuckleballs to go to spring training and I threw all knuckleballs in spring training and it was nasty. Then ultimately my elbow, I was fighting something, I knew. I had a torn ligament for three years.

But I remember every pitch of that game because they were the last games of the year and we didn't go on, they went on. And that epic, what was it, 19-inning or 18-inning game in Houston. So I was in awe of what he did because I was only thinking about how in the world could I come back in Game 5 and I just couldn't.

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, I'm glad Smoltz remembers more details than I do. I do remember the 18 inning game because I just felt alone out in the bullpen. It makes you appreciate more what he did starting and relieving and how he was able to get his body ready to do both. I had a couple of relief appearances and that was one of them.

I don't know, I was on a couple days' rest, but I was walking around in a T-shirt and tennis shoes with my jacket and they said, "You need to change." I thought I was going to like pinch bunt because our relief guys don't really bunt.

Then, next thing you know -- they keep my jerseys locked up so they don't disappear and the next thing you know, they're going through a box getting my jerseys out and I'm sitting in

the bullpen by myself going, "There's nobody else to go in, I'm going to be in that game." I don't know, I was 44 or whatever. It was just crazy.

I was just wondering -- I had thrown some batting practice underneath in the cage and then I came back out and our bullpen coach, I got up to throw, he goes, "You're in, it's yours, you're the last resort." I threw like seven pitches about 85 miles an hour and said, "I'm good." He didn't realize I was already loose because I threw about 40 pitches. So he's like, "This game's going to be over."

JOHN SMOLTZ: I think the last nine innings they threw a nine-inning no-hitter against us.

ROGER CLEMENS: That's it, that's right. Again, I think it's like you said, what he did starting, relieving, it's pretty remarkable because I did just a taste of both and it was, you know, you have to certainly have a different mindset.

Q. And then real quick, switching, now you both obviously golf. You're doing this, trying to do this regularly and you're doing this week, the pro-am and the celebrity. What sort of translates for both of you, being athletes, from baseball to golf?

JOHN SMOLTZ: For me as a pitcher, the one glaring difference is we get to go when we want to go, we dictate the tempo as a pitcher. Golf is the opposite. You wait and you try to execute shots after waiting.

The one thing that I'm trying to learn and the patience of a golf tournament is how to have the thought process I had on the mound translate to the golf, because that's much more difficult under the gun. We both knew what we could do on the mound and I don't think anything unnerved us. On the golf course, you're going to get to a point where you don't have that fundamental down pat and you're hoping you hit a good shot versus you know you hit a good shot.

So that's what I'm working on. Each tournament has allowed me to learn some of that. You know, the best way I could explain it is you execute a pitch the way we know how to execute without holding back or overthrowing. In golf, it's like the opposite. Sometimes I three-quarter it. I'm learning the tempo that I need in between shots.

And these guys, they're so great. They've done it their whole life, they're not bothered by this kind of stuff, they know what they're doing. We knew our pitches were going to break. I don't really know for sure if my ball's going right to left.

ROGER CLEMENS: Yeah, I agree. For me it's a massive focus when you're trying to hit the golf ball. I love the game of golf. I've met so many cool friends through the game of golf and business opportunities through the game of golf. And you know if you want to be really good, like John is, you have to put the time in and practice.

It's a massive -- I mean, as hard as we focused on the mound, it's five times the (inaudible),

which you wouldn't think. You know, our hand-eye coordination's great and all of that, or like you said, if you want to hit a cutter, try and draw the ball, I love doing that, too.

I also love playing with the big boys in some of these events. Like fortunate to win the Bob Hope twice with a nice little amateur, but we're playing with guys that are actually earning their living, so I get to watch them.

It was fun for me because some of those events happened in January before we went to spring training, so it made me focus harder. There's a line of people down the right or left side of the fairway and you really have to bare down for us. It looks -- that's the biggest thing I have to make sure I do, even when we're out having fun in a pro-am, you still want to hit a good golf shot, but you have to focus.