

Morning Rundown: Road Woes Continue; Can Carrera Compete?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Saturday, August 18 2012 7:05 AM - Last Updated Monday, August 20 2012 7:52 AM



You know you've reached the point of the season when it is completely over when you have Tom Hamilton talking about M.C. Hammer in the sixth inning. And talking about him multiple times.

August 19th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - 0

Oakland Athletics - 7

W: Jarrod Parker (8-7) L: Justin Masterson (9-11)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

And when Coco Crisp knocks in five runs and the WORST offense in baseball according to runs

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scored scores a grand total of 21 runs on you in a three game sweep. Well, they aren't really the worst team offensively in the AL anymore thanks to the Indians.

More jarring than watching the pitching continue to spiral out of control was watching the offense trying to catch up. Sunday's starter Jarrod Parker matched Bartolo Colon's eight inning effort on Saturday, but ultimately it was a position of futility for the Indians offense. Sure they mounted a comeback Saturday and held their early lead on Friday, but on Sunday it was another "what do we have to do" type of situation.

The Indians had the leadoff runner on base in the first and second innings and had more than their share of opportunities. Carrera singled on a bunt, stole second and was at third with less than two outs for the two best cleanup guys in Choo and Santana, only to be stranded.

Then, Brantley got to second with less than two outs only to see Hannahan and Marson squander those opportunities away.

Heck, even with two outs, Choo got to third on a two-out single by Santana and even Michael Brantley couldn't bring him home. And all this against a pitcher that Choo said [was not all that special](#)

"I didn't see anything special," Shin-Soo Choo said of Parker. "Our hitters tried too much today. A lot of ground balls swinging early in the count. I think he was pretty good, but I think we were too aggressive."

Acta would go on to say that the offense was too tense in the situations with the runners on. They did a good job to create the opportunities, but when it came to executing to make it count, it didn't happen. And I can see it considering some of the same guys that created opportunities, squandered them.

So without the Athletics even sniffing anything, you have three opportunities to get on the board. If I'm **Justin Masterson**, I'm demoralized by the fact that my offense can't do anything.

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Yet I still don't make that an excuse to go out and completely meltdown, which just added to the tone of the way the pitching is going, the way the series went, and the way the Indians have been playing on the road.

They've won one, count that, ONE road game this month in August. Out of 11. They've won just that one in their last 15 road contests and not since they beat the Orioles in three out of four contests in June/July have they won a road series.

So there you go, there are your Cleveland Indians. The road hasn't been kind and this west coast swing will continue on into this week with a trip to Seattle and with a upcoming battle against the guy who just threw a perfect game last week in Felix Hernandez. And he's facing the guy now named Roberto Hernandez.

So needless to say, the road losing is not over. The Indians best end this now new losing streak they've got going on or else it's going to start creeping up towards the old one and then that will not look good.

Who's going to stop the bleeding this time? Certainly it wasn't Justin Masterson this time around, which completely diverts from the string he was on but completely continues the string he's been on this season by continuing to be up and down, his good old inconsistent 2012-self. This one wasn't all that bad looking until the fifth.

"They happened to make me pay on the two pitches," Masterson said. "Two out of 101. Ninety-nine of them were the way I wanted them. That's in line with what we want. The final score may not show that, but that's part of the game of baseball."

I guess if that's the way you want to look at it. It wasn't like he gave up seven runs off two home runs that were mistake pitches. He got beat up in several spots, he gave up a three-run shot to Coco Crisp, he really just did not make all the pitches he needed to. He may have been beaten by good hitting executing on his good pitches and a few mistakes, but the fact of the matter is that he gave up seven runs. However you want to chalk it up, it was not a good performance.

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So you can own it and move forward and try and go back to the good side of the inconsistency or you can just continue to wallow around.

Maybe the team should lose five straight like that.

Random Details...

Chris Perez pitched just for the second time this past week in this finale, but it was not a save situation. Not much he can do, but it's good to keep him as sharp as possible throughout everything.

One walk in this one by Brent Lillibridge and one on Friday. None given up by Bartolo Colon on Saturday which brings the number of walks on the weekend to, two? This is definitely not the same team that was competing earlier in the season. That aspect of the game is missing and it was something that was working for them earlier on. It's what made them successful, now they're not even coming close to it.

Despite a two-run pinch hit shot on Saturday, Lillibridge is back to hitting under .200. Yup.

You're daily look at RISP numbers: 0-for-7, which just amplifies what I was saying earlier with the opportunities the Indians had.

On Saturday, Corey Kluber gave up four runs, all unearned on Saturday in his five innings of work. Here's the problem. It was one error to start the inning. A bunt got one out, the second out was a groundout. Sure the Reddick double and Cespedes homer that followed wouldn't have happened, but Kluber didn't have to walk Coco Crisp and he could have buckled down. It isn't all on him, but he and the rest of these pitchers need to get it together with these errors.

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Sure they shouldn't have happened, but as we've discussed in the past with these issues, these pitchers can't continue to let thing spiral as they do. Sure Kluber shouldn't have given up a few of those runs, but he still gave up more than he should have. He gets out of that with a groundout scoring one run and that should be it. These pitchers are doing nothing but compounding the error issues.

[CONSIDERING CARRERA?]

It's time to start taking into consideration some things being done. The start of that discussion goes with **Ezequiel Carrera** and the job he's doing with his bat. Do you consider him for the left field opening? In an cost-saving model for a team that is probably not worth adding onto in a big way, perhaps.

The Houston Astros or San Diego Padres, teams just looking to get by and rebuild also might.

Normal circumstances call for the Indians to not even bother with Ezequiel Carrera as their starting left fielder, but these are not normal circumstances. And right now, he's taking full advantage of the opportunity given to him and will have a month and a half [to continue to state his case](#)

"He's got the ability to do that," Acta said. "It's going to be up to him. He's going to get a chance. He's going to play a lot before the year is over."

Ideally? Well, ideally Carrera would be an excellent fourth outfielder. Someone who can play the spots for you when you need it and make it unnecessary to hold another outfielder on your roster because he can do that defensively and he can run. And being able to run is an excellent late-game asset, especially when you had to pinch-run your backup catcher at times because he was your fastest option.

One thing is for sure, you will see a really different looking Cleveland Indians team next year with a lot of different faces and this is one face you may see as a starting option.

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And if this is a version of Carrera we are getting, you might be able to stomach it for two reasons. One: Carrera can actually play left field, despite his miscues and lapses of judging a fly ball. Two: He's a much different hitter than he was last season. Carrera knows what he's about and can utilize his speed to give him hits, but now he's starting to take that to the next level in not swinging just to make contact. He's being more selective and patient at the plate and it's leading to him making some waves offensively.

He sure did drop down a drag bunt for a single on Sunday, but through the games he's been in this season, he's definitely being more selective when it comes to just sitting in and hitting. He's seeing 4.48 pitches per plate appearance which is up nearly an entire pitch from his stint in 226 plate appearances last year.

Carrera is playing his way into contention for something next year and if the Indians can find a left field option, I certainly wouldn't mind seeing Zeke as the fourth outfielder. He fits the mold perfectly at what I like to see there.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Could the Indians consider **Jason Donald**? He received [his first big league start](#) in the outfield on Friday and he did fine in left field.

"I felt like I've been able to make the adjustment from infield to outfield," Donald said on Saturday, a day after his first start in left field. "The biggest thing is just to react, instead of thinking so much about making sure I do this or that."

I'm not sure they legitimately consider him for the opening but I think it'd be smart to do so. The outfield versatility is more for him being a super utility player than it is for them to fill that left field void. That is and always has been Donald's ticket to playing on this team as the two spots he's played most, short and second, are currently occupied and the one they tried him at, third, is one that he almost had a year ago, but is now being reserved for the future.

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The remaining spot on the infield that I didn't mention... Well, if you could go back, I'm sure you consider re-signing Victor Martinez to play first base and continue forward with the idea of **Carlo s Santana**

catching. Especially when you now fast-forward to 2012 and come to a point where the Indians could realistically consider moving Santana to first base in an effort to plug their need there, that is if Lou Marson can actually be a regular full-time starter.

Right now, the Indians [look at him as their catcher though](#) and are not considering that avenue, at least not yet.

"He's our catcher right now," Acta said on Friday. "I'm not going to speculate about what he can become in the future. That's not even discussed. He's our catcher right now."

And it isn't something they should consider right now because it just makes more sense to find a first baseman than it does to try and rely on **Lou Marson**, as much as I love him. Santana can produce big time numbers at catcher and him starting at first is simply a flexibility luxury and nothing more.

Speaking of catchers, Manny Acta made a bold statement, saying that [he has the two best "throwing catchers" in the league](#)

Of course that isn't a statement most teams that are dead last in steals allowed can make, but he may actually be right, as crazy as it sounds.

"We have two of the best throwing catchers in the league," manager Manny Acta said, "but the past two years, we are not doing a very good job of holding runners."

Why is he right? Well for one their stolen base percentage against last year was .684 compared to the .798 it is this year. That's a huge jump and right now, both Marson and Santana have allowed 50 steals apiece and their SB percentage against sits at .725 (Santana) and .893 (Marson). The number for Marson is insane especially since last year it was at .615 and

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Santana's was actually higher at .757. The one thing that is for sure is that Santana has improved greatly.

He's visually a much better thrower behind the plate. Marson's caught stealing percentage went from a robust 38% of runners thrown out to a poor 11%. And even Santana's 28% isn't much better. The problem lies within the pitching.

"It's about offsetting [the runner's] timing by sometimes holding the ball longer or by changing the look," Acta said. "There are different things you can do. It's not just speeding up."

It's no coincidence that Zach McAllister has been on the mound for 11 of 11 successful attempts this season. The pitching has not done their job. Rookie Corey Kluber is no better with seven out of eight successful attempts against him, but the kind on this team has been Ubaldo Jimenez, who's allowed 26 successful steals in 30 attempts.

This staff has to get better in that regard. Especially since they've walked an AL high 421 hitters and are second most in the AL in the amount of hits they've given up.

So long story short, don't blame Marson and Santana, especially Marson who is much better than the numbers indicate. And applaud Santana for his progress. But simply put, they're not being given good opportunities.

Currently **Josh Tomlin** resides on the 15-day disabled list, but as the Indians prepare for the additions to their roster once September hits, you may see him shut down, especially after [he visits a specialist on Tuesday](#), Dr. Lewis Yocum, one of the guys you don't want to see a pitcher visit for a second opinion in regards to elbow injuries.

Jason Kipnis has hit .183 since the All-Star break and he received the day off on Sunday after going 0-for-8 in the first two games against the A's. The [second half has not been kind](#) to Kipper as he's also battled some injury issues.

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"It's part of the game," said Kipnis, who had a day off on Sunday. "It's not an easy game. I'm learning that the hard way. The normal adjustments in the past aren't working this time. It's not like guys are throwing pitches I haven't seen before. They aren't making huge adjustments. They are still throwing the ball over the plate. I just have to find a way to make better contact. I'm trying to find any way to first base, and it's not happening right now."

It's almost as if the entire offense has dived with Kipnis. But Acta has remained confident in Kipnis and says that he's shown great effort through the whole slump. He's still young and I think we have to remember that he's only in his first full-season. He hasn't struggled yet and everyone has to struggle. This will make him better in the long run and right now, he just has to wear it like the entire team is wearing it these past few months.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a visit at [The Tribe Daily](#), because his caught stealing percentage is higher than 12 percent.

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