

Morning Rundown: Is This Real? A Winning Streak?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Monday, September 03 2012 11:31 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, September 05 2012 7:55 AM



I posed the question on Twitter. This is the Cleveland Indians team we saw in April and May, the one we've seen in the past two games. My question: Where did they go and why did it take so long for them to come back?

September 4th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **3**

Detroit Tigers - **2**

W: Justin Masterson (11-12) L: Rick Porcello (9-11) S: Chris Perez (34)

[**\[BOXSCORE\]**](#)

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I can't help but be completely baffled at what has transpired. It's as baffling as losing streaks of 11 and 9 respectively. Two in a row over the Detroit Tigers. Playing two of the most solid games they've played all season.

The Detroit Tigers, embroiled in a heated race against the Chicago White Sox for the American League's Central Division. A race that the Indians bowed out of shortly after they went toe-to-toe with these same Detroit Tigers, beat them and their ace.

Here we sit, the Tigers having lost EIGHT games out of 13 to the Tribe. I said it once and I'll say it one more time with four more left.

If the Tigs lose the division to Chicago, they'll look back to these games against Cleveland cry themselves to sleep.

The Indians meanwhile will look back and wonder... I'm going to go there, what if?

Really, [what if this team played like this for the past month and a half?](#)

They certainly win more than five games in the month of August.

"It's crazy this year. For some reason, some way, we seem to play a little bit better against Detroit," starter Justin Masterson said. "I think the guys feel it. If we could carry that over to every game it might have worked out a little bit better early in the season."

No use going over that, but it's just something to make you wonder. This team has played so well these past two games, you have to wonder how that month even happened. How could a team that has played this well in these two games play so poorly? I know there are different variables at play, but I mean offense, defense, pitching, it was all there yet again.

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Justin Masterson was simply brilliant. If not for a missed call at first in the sixth inning in which Austin Jackson was called safe diving back instead of out (he was tagged first by Kotchman), a second out is recorded and Andy Dirks grounds out to end the inning, not for the second out.

And Miguel Cabrera doesn't come up and hit a two-run shot.

The only runs of the game for Detroit. It isn't worth going over because the Indians won the game and it is no big deal, but Masterson should have very well gone through six without a single run given up. He was otherwise brilliant, six innings, four hits, two runs, just a walk. He was efficient, he was locked in, he looked as good as he usually is when he is good.

"I thought Masterson threw the ball extremely well," Acta said. "He mixed his four-seam fastball, which was pretty much all night from 94-97 [mph], with his two-seam fastball when he needed ground balls, and did a fantastic job. He made one mistake hanging that ball to Miguel [Cabrera], and that's about it."

Early on I was impressed when he fell behind Andy Dirks 3-0 and then came back with three straight fastballs to strike him out. That pretty much set the tone of what he was going to do the rest of the night.

Masterson also got the defense, making a nifty play himself at one point, but also getting a double play and a nice pick by Jack Hannahan early on. It was just another well-oiled performance that was made possible by an early lead.

And early lead that was made possible by the Indians nabbing three runs by the top of the third. They would go on to leave a lot of runners stranded (nine hits and five walks equals a lot of traffic), but you can't complain about that when you are scoring enough to win and scoring enough to support your starting pitcher.

So instead of complaining, I'll take the three runs and just move forward. A win is a win and with them coming in so few bunches lately, take them.

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Just take them.

Random Details...

Scott Barnes got a lefty-matchup audition coming in to get one out in the seventh inning before giving way to Joe Smith.

Of course the spotlight belongs on Vincent K. Pestano and Christopher 'Pure Rage' Perez as they once again lay claim to Detroit in the eighth and ninth innings. These two have been absolute stellar against the Tigs and Perez returned after the birth of his child with some absolute mustard on each and every one of his pitches. Pestano made Jackson look like a fool and then went on to strike out Miguel Cabrera to end the inning.

"Our bullpen was great. They did a tremendous job, especially Pestano and Chris going through the heart of the order without even allowing a baserunner," Acta said.

Perez would come right back out and strike out Fielder and if that isn't a huge exclamation point, I don't know what is.

A lot of good things when your three, four, and five hitters are all on base three times apiece.

It's just a shame the four guys following them had two total hits.

[THEY 'MIGHT' DO IT]

Out of nowhere, Ken Rosenthal threw this nice little nugget out towards the end of [his column](#)

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[on why the Boston Red Sox should re-hire Terry Francona](#)

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The [Cleveland Indians](#) might fire Manny Acta; Francona was a special assistant with the Indians in 2001, and remains close with team president Mark Shapiro and GM Chris Antonetti. Better positions could open, too — Atlanta? Detroit? The [Los Angeles Angels](#) ? — depending upon which teams' seasons end in disappointment.

First of, I like how Detroit, Atlanta, and the Angels are all better positions that might open. Jeeze.

Second, it's incredible. There's been no scuttlebutt on the idea of Acta getting canned. All of the talk thus far has been fan generated pitch-fork wielding. There hasn't been a solid report from anyone like a Ken Rosenthal mentioning the possibility of the Indians axing **Manny Acta**, until now.

And all of it because the potential of Terry Francona being available?

That is interesting.

There's two factors you have to evaluate here. The first is, are the Indians really better off firing a Manny Acta? I'm sure this will be debated at length at some point between, oh, probably right now, and the end of the season or until he's officially safe/out. I've had some people tell me that the Indians have quit on him and that there's no effort, therefore he's lost the team and should be canned.

While I've seen others say that the collapse is simply a lack of talent and not a lack of motivation and that if anyone is to be blamed, it is not Acta.

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I personally fall on the second side, so I of course would not be in favor of dismissing Acta as the Tribe's skipper.

The other factor you need to look at is, what could a replacement bring to the table that's any different and what replacement are you looking for? If you make a move thinking you are getting Terry Francona, well, then you're just being dumb. Because as Rosenthal mentioned, another job can come open, you could get rid of a good guy and be end up with nothing when Francona doesn't go for the job.

That is to say if there is an interest in Francona. I like Terry Francona, I think he'd be a great manager for Cleveland, or any team for that matter. But I like Manny Acta and want him to continue to get this opportunity with talent that is good enough to win. He deserves that much.

And if you were to pull the trigger, you'd almost undoubtedly be losing Sandy Alomar Jr. in some fashion. Because if he doesn't get the Indians job, he's not coming back, perhaps ever. My thought is, that if Manny Acta isn't there answer (and this year has not told us if he is or isn't in my opinion) then Sandy Alomar Jr. needs to be the next man up.

You go for Francona, you lose both guys.

And there's no telling if you get Francona.

I think this is just a small paragraph that really has no weight to anything. I mean, the entire article is based around the idea of Francona going BACK to the team that just fired him not even a full-year ago.

It's simply a talking point right now. A loaded talking point, but a talking point no less.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

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Manny Acta says that "as soon as he's done" with his rehab in Akron, **Lonnie Chisenhall** will rejoin the team. Of course

[when that exactly is would be the question](#)

. I think you could expect Chisenhall to have to play back-to-back games before anything happens, but with the playoffs that could be tricky. The Aeros start their series in Bowie tonight and will be in Akron on Friday.

First things first, he needs to play a full game in the field, something he has not done yet only starting and getting replaced after several at-bats. Either way, it is looking good for Chisenhall to make his return and get some significant at-bats in this lost season.

It will be interesting to see how Chisenhall's playing time comes into play, as you have to imagine he'll start regularly at third, or as regularly as possible given he's coming off an injury. One more guy the Indians will have to account for in that infield mix is **Cord Phelps**, who can play a variety of position. Acta will have some juggling to do, but

[says not everyone will get a whole lot of time](#)

in September.

"Obviously, not every single one is going to get a look equally," Acta said. "Some of the guys are here to be taken a look at, like [Russ] Canzler, and some of the arms we called up like Maine. ... A lot of the other guys are just going to be used as we see fit."

Seems like he's talking about guys like Vinny Rottino, as well as **David Huff**. In fact, Acta said Huff will be a pen guy, but not in the mode you'd expect. He's more-less an extra arm if things go bad and will be extreme long relief. Acta also noted Phelps will get his time at second if anything, but with Kipnis entrenched as the starter and unlikely to get many breaks, I'd expect more of his starts to come as the DH.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a visit at [The Tribe Daily](#), because his fridge is covered in plenty of quotes about the Cleveland Indians.

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