

Aces Up, Tribe Remains Perfect in the Desert

Written by {ga=riverburns}

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It took us a while to get here, but it looks like we finally saw the guy Terry Francona is going to give the ball to when the games start counting in Toronto in a little over a month. The thing is, we still don't know just which one of the Tribe's potential Aces it's going to be. Both Justin Masterson and Ubaldo Jimenez were in good spirits after their scoreless outings at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Monday.

Masterson was perfect today. The fastball was doing what it does, and the sinker was doing what you hope it does; that's something that Masterson knows is a tall order in this thin Arizona air. Yet, there it was for him all afternoon. The former Boston phenom gave his old manager everything he could have asked for in his Cactus League debut, forcing three ground balls to the right side of the infield to take the A's down 1-2-3 in the first. In the second inning, it was more of the same, with Yoenis Cespedes and Brandon Moss hitting it harmlessly into the ground for the first two outs of Masterson's second frame.

For good measure, he got Hiroyuki Nakajima swinging to end his perfect day. Masterson spoke of the outing as trying not to do too much, and putting the 7 or 8 rough starts from a year ago behind him. Meanwhile, the Indians bats gave him a bit of run support; first by manufacturing a run by way of a Michael Bourn lead-off walk, an error, and a run-scoring double play off the bat of Michael Brantley and then in the third, with an RBI single from the impossibly hot-hitting Ryan Raburn and Brantley's RBI double. Brantley was thrown out at third on the play, and there are some concerns it may have been his shoulder, Jeremy Hermida replaced him in left field when Jimenez took the ball to start the third. Francona said after the game that he'd be day-to-day.

If Masterson had #1 stuff today, it's fair to say Ubaldo had "1a" stuff. After getting John Jaso to fly out to Hermida, he set Josh Donaldson and Michael Taylor down on strikes. Things got a bit shaky for the former Colorado Rockie in the fourth, after getting Coco Crisp to line out to center.

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His defense bailed him out when Jed Lowrie was gunned trying to stretch out a single. Josh Reddick followed that up with a hit, then the A's appeared to be cooking when Yoenis Cespedes walked, but Brandon Moss popped out to give Jimenez a scoreless outing.

On the offensive side, Yan Gomes was the man of the hour, going 2-2 with a HR and a double, bringing home 5 of the Indians 14 runs on the day with his bat. Ryan Raburn continued to dazzle, despite keeping the ball in the yard and going 2-3 with a couple of pedestrian singles, to bring his average down to .750 on the spring. Mike McDade faded two hit for the tribe later in the game and they held on for the 14-10 win, bringing them to 5-0 in the Cactus League.

Vinnie Pestano gave up a hit and struck out a batter in a scoreless inning of work after the Tribe's Big 2 starters hit the showers, but then the flood gates opened a bit when Matt Capps allowed Oakland to get on the board in the sixth. A Shane Peterson HR off Capps made it 5-2 in the sixth, but the Indians bats never allowed anything Oakland did to stick. Even when Frank Hermann had a rough outing, allowing 4 runs on 5 hits, including a HR, in the seventh, the high numbered Indians put up a 6-spot in the away half of the eighth to make it 14-6, and the Oakland bats just didn't have any more than ten runs in them today.

The Tribe returns to action, tomorrow in Goodyear, when they take on the Kansas City Royals. First pitch is at 3:05 ET; Matt Albers will be on the hill first for the Indians.