

Kluber and Allen Excellent in 5-1 Loss to Bums

Written by {ga=riverburns}

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If your interest in Sunday's game between the Dodgers and Indians at Camelback Ranch in Glendale, Arizona was seeing Corey Kluber, Cody Allen, and Nick Hagadone combine for five scoreless innings, then you came to the right place. If you were interested in the box score and good things for the Indians, who had Fernando Nieve on the bump with the game on the line, then you just don't understand the concept of what Spring Training is all about.

With the game tied at 1, coming out of the 7th inning stretch, it looked as though Nieve was going to survive the bunt single to Wilkin Castillo to lead-off the home half of the inning, but with two outs, he became a victim of his own throwing error, trying to pick Castillo off first. Alex Castellanos singled up the middle to bring Castillo around to score, giving the Dodgers a 2-1 lead and that was all they'd need on this day.

After issuing a walk to Omar Luna, Dodgers skipper Don Mattingly went to his bench, sending Yasiel Puig to hit for Matt Kemp. Puig served up an Earl Weaver special over the left fence to bring it to 5-1, which stuck as the final score. For Nieve, in his fourth outing of the spring, it was more struggle; he allowed four runs (all earned) on four hits, walked one batter and struck out another, and saw his ERA (which no one truly cares about) jump to 12.46 in Cactus League play.

Adrian Gonzalez led off the second inning with another strikeout, but the Dodgers started hitting the native of Birmingham, Alabama with two out. Luis Crz, AJ Ellis, and Nick Punto went back-to-back-to-back with singles, but a nice throw from Ezekiel Carrera in right field was in time for Yan Gomes to apply the tag on Cruz, trying to score from 2nd base, at the plate.

Kluber and Josh Beckett, L.A.'s starting pitcher, threw well early; both left after throwing three scoreless innings. Kluber started his day with a swinging strikeout to Skip Schumaker, then got Mark Ellis and Matt Kemp to ground out for a scoreless, hitless first inning. Kluber allowed only a single to Skip Schumaker in the third, but the last pitch he threw, to Matt

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Kemp, was hit a long way, but Michael Bourn made a great over the shoulder catch at the wall to end the inning without the Dodgers getting on the board.

Francona spoke after the game about Kluber's third outing and Bourn's defensive play, noting that the fielding coaches were working with the outfielders on that over-the-shoulder play, which paid off for Bourn on the fly ball off Kemp's bat. He liked Kluber's performance.

"Swing and miss with the fastball," the Tribe skipper noted, "good tempo, he was aggressive. That's what you want to see; you get the first two out of the way, get your legs under a little bit, and that's what it looked like today."

Mark Lowe replaced Josh Beckett in the fourth inning. The only blemish on Beckett's 3-inning line today was a lead-off double by Yan Gomes, who is hitting .417 thru 7 games after going 1-for-2 with a walk today, but after that, he was flawless.

The Indians luck at the plate didn't change much with Lowe, who allowed only a two-out walk to Gomes, while holding the Indians hitless in the fourth.

He can thank Jerry Hairston for a nice over the shoulder catch of his own that robbed Mike McDade of extra bases in the shadows of the left field fair-pole to end the inning.

The going was not as easy for Tribe setup man/interim closer Vinnie Pestano in the bottom half of the inning. After Adrian Gonzales singled to right field to lead off the inning, he got Jerry Hairston out on strikes, then took advantage when Luis Cruz couldn't make contact on hit & run and caught Gonzalez in no-man's land between 1st and 2nd base. However, with two out, Cruz redeemed himself in the form of a 2-out, bases empty single.

Pestano gave him 2nd base on a wild pitch to AJ Ellis, then Ellis made the third-year reliever pay by singling up the middle, which scored Cruz ahead of Bourn's throw to the plate, giving L.A. a 1-0 lead.

This was Pestano's final appearance with the Indians, before parting to represent the United States in the World Baseball Classic. His manager was not worried about the output he got from his setup man, and stated, after the game Sunday, that Vinnie is not in mid-season form.

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The visiting Indians scored their only run of the game when Gomes reached on the Dodgers only error of the game, a fielding error by shortstop Justin Sellers. Tony Wolters ran for Gomes, and went from 1st to 3rd on a long McDade single.

It looked as though he could have scored when the Dodgers bobbled the relay, but Wolters retreated back to third base anyway.

It became a moot point when Juan Diaz hit one deep enough to left field that Nick Evans didn't make a throw to the plate, and the game was tied at 1.

Cody Allen and Nick Hagadone were both impressive in their inning of work, confirming what we already know; you can use a sharpie, not a pencil, and put both of these guys on the Opening Day roster right now. Allen didn't allow a hit and struck out a batter Sunday, extending his scoreless spring to three innings.

Francona raved about the Indians 2011 23rd Round pick, "You stay out of his way; he's what you want. He's quick to the plate. He pounds the strike zone; he's got great stuff."

Hagadone did allow a hit, but his scoreless streak is the same as Allen's after 3 innings of work this spring. When asked about the injuries (to Frank Hermann and Chris Perez) helping their chances, Francona acknowledged that it's early, but a guy like Allen might not need help.

"You pat him on the back," Francona finished his thought on Allen, "say 'Way to go, kid'."

The Indians are back in action tomorrow, as they travel to Mesa to take on the Cubs. The first pitch is at 3:05 ET/1:05 AZ.

Carlos Carrasco will get the ball to start for Francona; Dale Sveum will counter with Albert Cabrera.