

Morning Rundown: A Whole New U?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, April 04 2013 7:29 AM - Last Updated Thursday, April 04 2013 8:23 AM



As the great Conan O'Brien would say. Whoaaaaa, my babies. Settle down!

I know you want to get excited about a 2-0 start and a pitching staff that so far does not look as bad as everyone thought. But it is two games. The rotation has not even gone through once and we still don't even know if the fifth starter is going to be okay.

I'm excited too. But just enjoy what you are watching and let that hope and optimism build instead of rushing to save money for a playoff ticket. I mean, save money for a playoff ticket, but pay your rent, that's more likely to happen right now.

INDIANS - 3 | BLUE JAYS - 2

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

W: Matt Albers (1-0)

L: Sergio Santos (0-1)

S: Joe Smith (1)

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A series win is certainly a good thing though, and the overcoming of a blown save is even better. And oh yeah, that Ubaldo character.

This win could be credited to a few people, but you have to first and foremost thank **Mark Reynolds**

for the monster blast he hit in extra innings that gave the Indians their final lead.

[And even Reynolds knows that this is just two of 162](#)

"We came into camp with a lot of optimism," Reynolds said. "Obviously, every team has optimism in Spring Training. Everybody is 0-0 and everybody has a chance. It's only two games, but it feels good to be 2-0, rather than 0-2. At the same time, we've got to keep it in perspective. We've got 160 games to go and a lot can happen."

Francona said that Reynolds is going to miss sometimes, and he missed two times prior to that at-bat, but when he doesn't miss, it changes things. And he certainly changed the complexion of that one.

It changed because the Indians were looking for a second straight win, and had their stud duo at the end of the game going out for their second consecutive day of work. Only this time the margin for error was a little bit smaller as it was just a one run lead.

It's funny, after the game on Tuesday night, it was thought as redemption for **Chris Perez** after he came out last year and gacked it up for Justin Masterson. Of course, he couldn't victimize Mastey two years in a row, so he decided that Jimenez would be his victim this year.

Kidding, of course. What's funny is that Perez had last year in his mind, noting it was the same score, same situation, and that the batting order was really the only thing different, and the location too. He said of the game on Tuesday [that he knew he was ready](#), unlike last year.

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"I didn't know if I was 100 percent game ready with adrenaline and all that stuff. This year, I knew I was ready. No worries."

Wonder what it was on Wednesday night after giving up the lead in the bottom of the ninth?

Honestly, it was a good hitter making a good pitcher pay for a poor pitch. Why Perez threw what he threw? He didn't intend to throw a fastball where Bautista could even sniff it (especially after he whacked like crazy at the first pitch CP threw), but he did. And Bautista did what he is supposed to do, because he's a really good hitter.

And that's baseball. And that happens. If it was a 4-2 game or a 4-1 game like Tuesday, that home run does not hurt anyone, only Perez's ERA and the game ends there. But it didn't and it carried on into extra innings and that is when his teammates picked him up.

"We were talking about that on the bench: 'We've got to pick him up,'" said Reynolds, referring to Perez. "He's out there doing his thing and he gave up a homer to one of the best home run hitters in the league. It happens."

They picked him up, and then, after Reynolds hit that bomb, did you see the reaction? Did you see that bench when he arrived in the dugout? They were insane! This club's enthusiasm is infectious, you can't help but be proud and happy to watch them, even after just two games. There is some sort of swagger that is there that was not last year. Last year's squad loses that game (as they did Opening Day), not win like they did.

Big reason they were even in that position?

I mean, what can you say about **Ubaldo Jimenez**? Well, before you go screaming from the mountain tops that he is back, or claim him on your fantasy team, you might wanna look at the outing as a whole. It was good, yes, he went six strong innings giving up just the solo home run to Macier Izturis. There was good though and there was some bad. He was good, but keep it in perspective.

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"I thought he was outstanding," Francona said. "His secondary stuff, his direction to the plate, down, everything. He left the ball over the plate to Izturis. Other than that, his offspeed -- his changeup and breaking ball, especially his changeup -- was really good."

The bad was not much, but the pitch to Izturis was questionable. He continues to still not have total command of his pitches, as evidenced by the location on that home run pitch. But there is certainly a lot of good, including his breaking pitch. The velocity is gone and never coming back, but if Jimenez is going to have success over the long haul, he needs to find that command and not walk people, or else that solo shot will turn into three run shots and the pitches will pile up, putting us in the same position we were last year with him.

MLB.com has this great new site called Sports On Earth and [contributor Jorge Arangure Jr. had a good piece on Ubaldo](#) and how he was "lost".

My question is simple. If he's been lost for a year and a half, roaming around Cleveland, why the hell hasn't anyone seen him and pointed him to the pitchers mound?

If you think that joke was poor, you haven't seen anything yet, the season just started. Seriousness now...

"It was like I had the ball in my hand but I didn't know what to do with it," Jimenez said. "It was like I had never put a ball in my hand."

Jimenez's problem wasn't so drastic that he threw pitches to the backstop. But he couldn't remember how to throw strikes. Each pitch felt foreign. His problem had grown so severe that he didn't enjoy going on the mound. Pitching became a chore. Each time he stepped on the field he thought about his mechanics, he thought about whether he could throw strikes, he thought about what everyone at home would be thinking if he failed.

The words "identity crisis" come up in the next paragraph. I'm guessing not in the Fauxberto Hernandez sense though.

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Jimenez turned down an a WBC invite for the Dominican (they wanted him?) this offseason in an effort to fix his mechanics. New pitching coach Mickey Callaway went down to the Dominican (with Francona) and worked with him. The story also touches up on a relationship Ubaldo struck up with Scott Kazmir (more on that in a second) and the advice Kazmir has given Jimenez, having gone through the same sort of situation.

The story also touches up on how Ubaldo never wanted to pitch and that he "hated it" growing up. He wanted to be an outfielder, but he was not good in any of the aspects (other than throwing out runners), and only pitched because he was forced to if he wanted to play.

On Wednesday night, Jimenez looked good. He only walked a pair, he struck out five, but more importantly he did not struggle to get through six innings. He looked better than he did last year, but this is one game. There are still issues he needs to work on and overcome, and if you read the Arangure story in full, you will see he is still trying to find his confidence.

Let's hope Wednesday was a big confidence builder for The Big U.

Random Notes...

Turns out Perez's [save on Tuesday was his 100th as an Indian](#) and he's closing in on Jose Mesa's 104. Coulda been closer, but, yeah....

Jimenez and Reynolds will get a lot of the praise, but can we acknowledge the fact that Michael Brantley had four hits and was a big part of the original lead the Indians had? What an incredible start Dr. Smooth is off to. I've never been a huge fan of the nickname, but it seems to be catching on just as quickly as Brantley is at the plate.

Nick Swisher got his first hit and is the man who is taking over for Travis Hafner in the unbuttoned shirt department.

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Speaking of, Hafner hit his first home run for the Yankees on Wednesday night. One might say it doesn't count because he's wearing pinstripes, but I simply say it does not count because he's wearing 33 instead of 48.

Speaking of former Indians as well, Mark DeRosa sighting in this one. He walked for Izturis in the 10th inning.

More on Ubaldo: He threw 64 of his 103 pitches for strikes with six ground ball outs to just 2 fly ball outs. He struck out six more hitters and even though he walked two, he gave up just the three hits in his six frames. So overall, a real good outing, a quality start, and definitely something that was worth a victory. Also impressive was the fact that he got Jose Bautista to ground into two double plays.

Other than Chris Perez, the bullpen was stellar. You got your first real look at what the Indians new-look pen could do as it was Bryan Shaw who came in on the seventh instead of Smith, which really was needed at the tail end as they had no one else to close. Shaw was good and if the Indians have multiple guys who can pitch a seventh inning in a close game, it will make days like today easier. Considering all three of Smith, Perez, and Pestano went the past two nights, if there's a close game, you will need those guys.

Matt Albers picked up the win, but he and Rich Hill combined to go an inning. And you have to congratulate Joe Smith on his first career save. Smitty!

First steal of the year goes to...Drew Stubbs, who had another hit. Michael Bourn also collected a hit and walked, also scored a run.

Kip still hitless to start the year, that's okay. Swish is not though as he had his first hit, but also walked twice. Carlos with two hits very quietly. The 0-for-5 for Chisenhall was quite surprising the way he hit a few balls, but that happens.

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Really, out-hitting the Jays 10-5 the Indians needed to win that one, so it's good that they did. Morrow was good, but largely the Indians out-pitched the Jays and out-hit them as well.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

So about that that **Scott Kazmir**. The Indians fifth starter [will most definitely miss his first start](#) on Saturday. However, they are still in the "play it cautious" stage and have not placed him on the 15-day disabled list, yet.

"It was pretty important," Kazmir said of his mound session. "As soon as I felt a little something, it was very minor to begin with. To be able to throw this bullpen pain-free, it felt good."

He did throw his bullpen pain-free on Wednesday, so that is a good sign in terms of him possibly not having to make a trip to the DL or miss any more than one start. It sucks, but it's better safe than sorry. Francona even said that they could pitch him and how he threw the 30 pitch session was encouraging.

So, hopefully he and the Indians have dodged a bullet here with this one. If Kazmir is ready to go after that, the start on Saturday will simply be a spot start for someone, whoever it is.

The Indians may have clued us in as to who that would be [as they announced the Clippers starting rotation](#) and Bauer's name was not included. Curious. Joe Martinez will start the season opener with Kluber, Matsuzaka, Huff, and Fernando Nieve following.

The Indians claimed this dude off waivers on Wednesday. His name is **Robert Whitenack**. That last name is just weird man. I can't get behind it. Anyway, Whitenack (weird) comes from the Cubs

[and has been assigned to Double-A Akron](#)

. He is coming off a season where he was coming off a Tommy John surgery and simply adjusting to pitching again. The season before he pitched really well between Daytona and Double-A and seemingly has high upside considering he won't turn 25 until late this year. He

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was even ranked 23rd in the Cubs organization among prospects this season.

So, a guy who is still younger, had success before a Tommy John surgery sidelined him. Why not? The Indians added Frank Herrmann to the 60 day disabled list in order to make room for Whitenack (weird). Who knows if they'll try and sneak Whitenack (weird) through waivers at some point later in the season themselves. But he should get some time in the Aeros rotation, if he doesn't start there in the bullpen that is.

Also, can we call him Bob?

We'll call him Bob.

Finally, some good news if you are outside the Ohio area and do not have MLB.TV or SporstimeOhio. ESPN2 [will be picking up next Wednesday's game against the Yankees](#) , so you can watch it. Unless you don't have ESPN2, then you're in the same boat.

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Nino is in full baseball mode here and on [The Tribe Daily](#) , his own Indians blog. Don't miss all the fun, photoshopped Indians players, and LOLTribe ridiculousness.

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