

Morning Rundown: Maddon Takes on the Mafia; Tribe Annihilate Rays in Finale

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Friday, April 05 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Monday, April 08 2013 8:10 PM



Sunday morning's have become the worst. It has become apparent to me that I need to start reading more and make Sunday morning my reading time. The fact that I was duped into thinking I had MLB Network does not help the fact that I have nothing to turn on.

I was going to turn this intro into some long thing about how I enjoy watching baseball, and that you can save some of the other drama going on right now in sports for another day and another person. But that was a rant that can't be contained in this post and it is likely not what you came for this morning. Not only did our Tribe win big on Sunday, there several other pressing matters to attend to.

Oh yeah, Sunday, right. Yeah, that's the highlight of my morning. The point to which I realize there is an Indians game coming on. That and pancakes.

INDIANS - 13 | RAYS - 0

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W: Justin Masterson (2-0)

L: David Price (0-1)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

You know what's funny? Despite getting shutout in the first two games, the Indians ended up out-scoring the Rays in the series as a whole.

Of course, it only counts for one win though, not two or three, so that stat is meaningless, but still nonetheless the cool thing about Sunday's output. Friday and Saturday? No way was that fun to watch.

But Sunday? Offense every other inning, a Masterson gem...Kind of erases the previous two games. Then when you look at the big picture, having to spot start your fifth starter, getting out of the opening season road trip on two turf surfaces with a 3-3 start. That all sounds pretty good. Their turf games are over and done with, they've probably gone through the toughest part of their roster crunch, a full bench and a regular rotation awaits come Tuesday.

Not a bad week if I say so.

Perhaps better than all that was the fact that two of those three wins the Indians collected this past week came at the expense of last year's Cy Young winners. Big Game Tribe? Both Price and Dickey have an L courtesy of Cleveland and it came in the opening of the new season. How many times has that ever happened?

Baseball, the unpredictable game.

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Who saw **Mark Reynolds** coming? The guy is off to a blistering start with the home runs. Of course he has six hits total, but five of them have gone for extra bases, four have been long balls. And now he is hitting them with people on base, which makes him far more dangerous. His shot in this one [was really the one that got the Indians jolted](#) .

"I don't know where this is coming from," said Reynolds, whose first homer in 2012 came on May 4. "It was important for me personally to come out and get off to a good start. To be able to do it this year, especially against the pitchers we've faced, is a huge confidence booster, and hopefully this will get some kind of rollover for me and I can kind of put it together a little bit."

Reynolds' blast came in the third inning when the Indians only had a one run lead. The inning started with a pair of walks to Asdrubal Cabrera and three-hitter Ryan Raburn (what?). Price had some issues with the zone in this one, not quite hitting his spots and then, as you saw, when he did, it was very hittable. So what happened? Price has been nails, completely lock down against the Indians in the past. He was 5-0 with a 1.64 ERA, the best ERA against any opponent he's started against at least five times. So, where did this come from?

Well, for one, Price is a lefty and in recent history, at least in terms of what my dumb hypothesis would say, is that the Indians finally flipped the script on him. The Indians of the past few years have been left-handed heavy. In case you are wondering, lifetime hitters are hitting .199 off Price with nine home runs in 760 at-bats. That isn't a joke. Price is nearly unbeatable against left-handed hitters.

The Indians lineup on Sunday? Brilliantly filled with right-handed hitters, seven of them. Everyone except for Nick Swisher reached based in this one. Multi-hit games from everyone except the middle three in Cabrera, Raburn, and Swisher, and three people all had three or more RBIs.

Talk about a...a...what's the word?

"The boys came out and they just bamboozled," Masterson said. "I just watched them."

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Right! Bamboozling! Thanks Justin.

Oh that's right. **Justin Masteron** was absolutely brilliant, even though he did not need to be. Masty went seven scoreless, giving up just two runs and three walks, with all of them coming real early. Masterson ended up sitting down 13 straight before exiting after the seventh frame.

He looked every bit as good as he has looked at this best in the past few years. Really encouraging to see, and it was just another instance of the Indians exorcising their issues with the (Devil) Rays. From winning in Tampa, to beating David Price, to Masterson pitching well against them. A good day to turn the tide and reverse things.

Random Notes...

Carlos Santana is really thriving down in the order. He's already hitting at a coin-flip rate, going 5-for-5 in this one with the big fly late in the game. He is benefiting so much from that lower spot and less pressure to carry the load and things look really fluid for him right now.

He hit that home run off his Dominican Republic teammate, Fernando Rodney, who was wielding around some magical plantain earlier during the WBC. Carlos must have taken a bite out of it.

How about Lonnie Chisenhall's blast? Can you believe Chiz Kid hit a bomb off the Cy Young winner who is a lefty? Never would have done that last year. He's going to have a good season.

Michael Bourn's first steal came in this one, but he also doubled for the third time this year. Doesn't need to steal with the doubles, unless it's third base, which was what he stole in this one. His last at-bat was a groundout, but he still almost beat the throw. Dude has serious wheels.

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It was an interesting decision to sit both Michael Brantley and Jason Kipnis in the same game. You would figure that if Kipnis sits, you could just slide Michael Brantley up into the three hole. But since both sat, Francona decided to just put Raburn there. Normally, that would be looked at with bug eyes and a lit pitchfork.

But I think it was a sound strategy, considering what was mentioned earlier about loading the lineup with right-handed hitters against Price. And hey, it worked, Raburn walked twice and had a hit, scored two runs. The lineup scored 13 runs total.

[BAUER WALKING]

There was two problems that the Indians faced by having **Trevor Bauer** make that start on Saturday for Scott Kazmir.

Let's ground-work this situation first by bringing everything up to speed. The Indians decided that Saturday would be a spot-start situation and that **Carlos Carrasco** [would start on Tuesday](#), putting him into the rotation in place of Scott Kazmir, at least until Kazmir is ready and another decision needs to be made.

Basically this tells us that there is some uncertainty around Kazmir and when he will be ready. Or else there would have been other, more easier ways to work around the time a fifth starter was needed. [Kazmir underwent an MRI in Cleveland last Thursday](#) and has been waiting around for the team return, rather than traveling. Instead, with uncertainty abound, the Indians are letting the guy who just missed out on the rotation take over that fifth spot.

But since he is still serving that suspension, it opened up a situation where they needed one start on Saturday. The decision comes down to two guys that you have on the 40 man roster in Bauer, and **Corey Kluber**.

Back to the first thing I said. There was two problems with picking Bauer.

He was either going to pitch well or pitch bad. Why is pitching well a problem? Because, the better he pitched in that game on Saturday, the more you will have people clamoring for him to stick around. There is so much hype surrounding this kid, was putting him in this position really the best thing to do? You had made it through the spring without having to put him in your rotation because he showed he still had some stuff to work on. You had an out to put him in Columbus and let him get to the point you felt comfortable with him coming up. And more importantly, a need for him to be there longer than a start.

In my mind, when you bring up Trevor Bauer, you bring him up for good. Now, there's seven walks of doubt in his mind that will haunt him and the Indians until that time Bauer does come up. Sure he may go to Columbus and light the world on fire until his next promotion, but wouldn't it have been better if he just went to Columbus without this?

Why not put Corey Kluber in this position? He has made more starts than Bauer at the major league level, has no sort of fanfare associated with his inclusion or exclusion on the team. He could have come up, made one start, and been gone like nothing ever happened.

Instead, we have to see Bauer talk about [how he didn't have his control and walked seven people](#)

"I was missing by feet, not inches," Bauer said. "Sometimes I have outings like that, where I just can't find it and then I find it, and it's kind of what happened tonight. I had a rough first and third and then, after that, kind of found it and was able to locate again."

It is one start, his first start, with the Indians. But guess what. That's all we'll have for awhile. One start. One start in which he walked seven people.

That's what's going to stick. You and me, we can keep it into perspective and not freak out. But will the majority? No. And heck, don't put it past Bauer to keep this lodged in his memory. I sincerely hope it does not impact him going forward with his time in Columbus.

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Bauer is not exaggerating when he said he was missing by feet. And when he did miss by inches, he wouldn't get the calls because he had been missing by much more with more regularity. Terrible umpiring aside, Bauer did not deserve any call the way he was pitching and most of the time, wasn't even coming close to needing a call.

The most remarkable thing about his outing though, is the fact that you really do see how good he can be, and it is something Marson talked about. He was one inning away from having a quality start, despite walking seven hitters. He did get some major help from his defense, of course, but aside from two hits that led to the two other runs he gave up that didn't come from walks, he found a way to navigate through that mess he put himself into. Find some control, he'll find a lot of success.

For now though this is what we're left with. Five innings, with not so much disastrous results, but some really painful to watch pitching.

[MADDON VS THE MAFIA]

I'm a little dismayed at what Joe Maddon had to say in regards to Cody Allen pegging Evan Longoria on the rump on Saturday. Maddon had the audacity to absolve Terry Francona of any wrong-doing and [placed the blame squarely on the bullpen ordering Allen to do it](#).

"I actually was cleaning my glasses at the time, so I didn't see it first hand. So when I heard about it, and it's pretty much a consensus opinion that he did it intentionally. However, I'll say one thing, I know it did not come from Tito (Francona). He would not do that. I know that it was a clean baseball play that did not deserve that kind of retaliation. The concern that they should have over there is that that's how you get players hurt on your team. For me, it had to come from one of the players, and I would absolutely point to their bullpen."

Excuse me sir, but how do you know that Francona didn't say anything? You believe he wouldn't, but that doesn't mean he didn't. Obviously, that probably is not something Francona would do, especially in that situation, but was Maddon in the dugout? No, he was CLEANING HIS GLASSES!

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And then call out the bullpen? Saying someone there told Allen to do it? So what? Maybe one of them did. If that's the case, who cares. If you really think this was a retaliatory pitch for Desmond Jennings knocking down Marson at the plate, then retaliate back. Stop talking about it and stop calling people out. I'm not even going to bother going into telling you that Cody Allen and Joe Smith both said that was not the intent, because if you know baseball by now, you know neither guy is going to admit to that scenario, because that would be foolish.

The only thing we can do is judge intent and even though I'm on the Wahoo side, I can't see that being intentional. Some may think it is, and if they do, that's cool. But I can't see the bullpen retaliating for a play like that, it was a baseball play. Marson ended up out of the game, I can buy that reasoning and that outlook, but I do not think it was something that would make the bullpen want to retaliate. And if that is the case, it wouldn't have come innings later after the guys back there would have time to settle down and get a cool head.

Perhaps it was a matter of the game getting to the point where it was no longer going to be a win, and them asking the youngster to earn his stripes. But I'll stick to the "no intent" side of the argument knowing that we'll never know for sure.

Francona did go on to say that while he respects Joe Maddon, he doesn't see it.

"Joe got a little ahead of me on that one," said Francona before Sunday's series finale against the Rays. "He lost me on that one. I'm not sure how to answer it because he got a little ahead of me."

So there ya go, he said-he said banter. As for Lou Marson, he left the game with a strain in the neck despite having finished off the inning, [and was not available on Sunday](#). The good news is that there is no concussion, so he should be fine, but probably not available for a few days.

"Neck's a little sore. He got me pretty good. It was clean, absolutely. He had nowhere to go," Marson said. "I had the plate blocked pretty good. But just my neck's a little sore. No concussions."

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And we're kind of seeing how it would have been beneficial to have Yan Gomes on the team, as Santana starting at DH runs the risk of you having to lose the DH position if something like that occurs. It also makes these few days a bit dangerous with having to use Ryan Raburn as your "emergency catcher" in case of, well, emergency. Not to mention, even though it is early on, having to use Santana in day game after night game situations.

Bottom line, hopefully Marson is ready to go rather quickly and that Gomes isn't needed right now.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

That play was incredible. Marson to stand in there, the throw from Chisenhall was right on. Jennings is fast, but the only way he was getting to home safely is by knocking the ball out of Marson's glove, and he knew that.

So the former football player lowered his shoulder and did what he could to make that happen. So far, the play of the year for the Indians, and they've already had a few good ones. Rivalled by that one from earlier in the game in which Marson caught the throw on a rope by Raburn to get Bauer out of that jam in the first inning.

Matt Albers [was ejected on Saturday for arguing a call at second](#) . Of course it was after the inning when Albers got ejected as he said something to umpire CB Bucknor, who no one likes. Albers said he's going to go back to ignoring the umps, but felt that Bucknor was wrong enough on the play where Yunel Escobar was called safe stretching a double.

Seriously, does anyone other than his family like Bucknor? Hamilton did nothing but dog him on the radio and he seems to be the worst human being ever. I mean, I wouldn't go that far. He's a terrible umpire and all.

He wasn't the Indians friend on Saturday though. He have several blown calls, but it is further more reason to get replay for certain situations. You avoid the instance where Jennings stole second, but was really out because Cabrera did an excellent job blocking his hand and slapping

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the tag on Jennings' foot.

Bucknor can't possibly see that, especially from where he has to stand, so let's get replay so those umpires are not put in a situation where they can't win. It's the toughest call to make in my opinion because you almost never see it called correctly unless it is obvious.

Not only will Carlos Carrasco be back on Tuesday, **Jason Giambi** is expected to be activated off the disabled list. Which is why the Indians haven't really made a move on calling up another reliever for a few days with Bauer being sent back down.

Jason Kipnis announced that he [has tabled extension talks with the Indians](#) until the season is over.

"Neither side wanted it to be a distraction," Kipnis said Saturday. "We both agreed that we'd put up 'til April 2. Deal gets done, it gets done. If not, it doesn't. It's not the end of the world, either way. I think both sides felt comfortable putting the deadline there."

That isn't to say that there will not be an extension and Kipnis said that they can revisit the possibility after the 2013 season wraps up. Michael Brantley was also reportedly working on a new deal with the Indians prior to the start of the season, but there's no telling if that's continued or if he too has stopped negotiating with the Indians.

Ready for Opening Day, Part II? I am, but I'll be preoccupied. As much as I like the tradition of it being on Monday and all that stuff, the starting later in the week thing actually is selfishly easier. That's okay though. It should be fun for everyone who is there as it is a legit sellout. And it will be an interesting batch of reunions.

Travis Hafner [returns to Progressive Field already](#) . **Nick Swisher** faces his old team for the first time. Intrigue!

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"Oh, man, that's going to be the jam," Swisher said. "How much fun is that going to be? I mean, Opening Day sold out in six minutes? I think it's great, man. This city is so excited for us this year. There's a buzz in the 216 [Cleveland area code], man, and we're super excited to get back there."

"That's going to be the jam"? I tel you, this guy... This guy is hopped up on something and whatever it is, I want some of it. Positivity juice or something? Whatever it is, give me some Swish.

Anyway, Hafner gets to sleep in his own bed, as he still lives in Cleveland and said the only thing that won't be familiar about the experience is being in the opposite clubhouse.

"I think it'll be fun to go back there and see everybody," Hafner said. "I've known the front office for a long time, teammates, clubhouse workers, guys who work at the stadium who I've gotten to be good friends with. Really, just a bunch of people would be good to see."

It will be nice to see Pronky, even if he is wearing a fake different number and wearing those ugly pin stripes.

Perhaps the best part of this Opening Day though? The Indians have a really cool first pitch ceremony scheduled as the fathers of Francona,, Brantley, Swisher, Sandy Alomar Jr., and Zach McAllister will all throw the first pitches to their sons.

How freakin' cool is that?

Enjoy the home opener, whether you are there in person or watching on the tube. Or if you are like me and too busy to even watch it live and will attempt to watch a taped version when he gets home... I doubt that will end up happening though. I know I'll end up checking the score. I have no will power in this regard.

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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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