

## Morning Rundown: Return of the Pronk

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Monday, April 08 2013 9:55 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 09 2013 8:24 AM

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The best part about Opening Day, or at least a Home Opener, is the fun and excitement that surrounds the opening of the park. It is awesome and a lot of fun, having been a part of an Opening Day before myself. There's all sorts of pomp and circumstance, usually something special happens, as was the case on Monday when the Indians welcomed the Yankees to open up Progressive Field.

The problem that has been the case with the Indians the past few seasons? They never really win the game. So all the fun and excitement is quickly poked with a needle and popped. Or in this case, a slight slit that causes a slow leak, because that game took forever!

The Indians pulled out all the stops this year, [having five fathers throw to their sons](#). The fathers of Zach McAllister, Nick Swisher, Michael Brantley, Sandy Alomar Jr., and Terry Francona all threw the first pitches out to their sons all at once. Talk about a family affair, talk about tradition, talk about something incredibly cool for everyone watching, and those particular families.

*"It's something unusual," said Sandy Sr. "It's something that hasn't been done before. It's something special for all of the fathers here."*

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A lot of big league talent past and present were on the field in that moment, except for Zach McAllister's dad Steve, who probably had the best line.

*"I knew that a lot of the guys who were going to throw out the pitch were big leaguers," Steve McAllister said, "so I said yes before they could tell me no."*

But the former Double-A player now Major League scout got his chance to be a part of it all, with the elder Sandy Alomar, the original Tito, Steve Swisher, and Mickey Brantley.

*"Having the opportunity to do something like this, it goes way deep," Steve Swisher said. "It means an awful lot to me. I want the people to know how proud I am to have the opportunity to do that."*

Castrovince [has a great piece on Francona and his father](#) and you can see the video there as well, but while that was fun to watch, there was a game to be played, one really long game. The slow leak of a tire, or a balloon. Painfully deflating as it had just been filled up hours before and was flying sky high. Five years in a row now.

**YANKEES - 11 | INDIANS - 6**

**W: Hiroki Kuroda (1-1)**

**L: Ubaldo Jimenez (0-1)**

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

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Of all this talk of a homecoming with Nick Swisher and Terry Francona, it was stolen by one man.

One half donkey, one half project.

That Travis Hafner fellow returned to Cleveland, the place he still lives and calls his home. And he came home and let everyone know that even though Progressive Field is not his house anymore, he stills knows his way around.

Hafner, hitting cleanup in the middle of an aging and injured Yankee lineup was 2-for-3 with four RBI, three runs scored, a three run blast and two walks. Vintage Pronk numbers and performance, the only thing different was the gray uniform and white NY logo he was wearing.

Look at that ugly looking Pronky! I almost don't recognize him.

I am a little bitter seeing him with another team. It could have been any other team, did it really have to be the Yankees?

And did it have to be the Yankees who came here to Cleveland first? I guess so. And because it was the Yankees, the stage was set for our old pal to come right in and do what he used to do best. And can still do on occasion.

The game he had was reminiscent of what he used to do in his prime years with the Indians. Forcing walks, hitting a big blast, being a game-changing force right in the middle of a lineup. [And the John Cena haircut](#) is looking really spot on these days. Hafner [said it was strange to be back but on the other side](#), but expected a good reaction.

*"I think it'll be good," Hafner said. "The fans have always treated me great. At the same time, I*

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*play for the Yankees now, so we'll see. I'm looking forward to it. It'll be good to be back here playing."*

Hafner received a warm welcome in his return to Progressive Field, even though it hasn't even been that long since he was last back. Just as long ago as everyone else on the Indians that were around last season. After that warm welcome, he went out and pissed a whole lot of Indians fans off. [The cheers, predictably turned to boos.](#)

*"They're passionate fans here," said Hafner, who ended the evening with two hits, two walks and four RBIs. "When you're playing for the Yankees and you do well, you're going to get booed."*

So, hats off to Pronk. I'm not sure if he'll be in the lineup on Tuesday, considering he is still Travis Hafner and as fragile as a newborn, but he beat his old club on Monday. A new game is a new game though.

In other news, because Travis Hafner is not on the Indians anymore, **Ubaldo Jimenez** was painful.

*"It was kind of evident from the beginning that it was a struggle," Francona said. "That's probably the hardest thing for me, is the balance there, because I saw how he was throwing. But if you go to your bullpen too early, losing a game is bad, but losing a game and ruining your bullpen is worse."*

Of course it was a struggle from the beginning.

Jimenez, coming off that good game against the Blue Jays last week, struggled mightily from the beginning, surrendering three runs before the Tribe even had a chance to take some cuts. In typical Jimenez fashion, he walked three hitters, gave up a boat load of runs and couldn't make it through the fifth inning.

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Sigh...

Jimenez went on to say that "nothing was working". Really, nothing. You think? I mean, he was walking. That was about the only thing. He was able to get onto the field.

Had he been able to do anything else, perhaps the Indians may have stood a chance, because they came right back in the bottom of the first and put up a three spot themselves. But it was on the back of sac-flies and singles. But after the second, the Yankees scored in every inning until the eighth. Yeah, it wasn't just an Uh-Bad-O problem, it was a pitching problem. But the dude started it.

The Indians would add another three spot in that eighth with a Mike Aviles two-run shot and a run scored off a pitch in the dirt, but it was all over by then. So yeah, the offense didn't have much against Kuroda after he settled down in the second inning, but you can't help but wonder how different the game looks if Jimenez settles down himself and doesn't get himself in deep trouble.

### Random Notes...

The Indians garnered a lot of walks, but ultimately could not do much with them. Those 2-for-11 with runners in scoring position and 10 men left on base type numbers can grow frustrating.

Nick Swisher walked a pair of times and had a hit with a run scored. Just part of that walk-fest the Indians had. Santana walked twice too, but more on that in a second.

Matt Albers, Rich Hill, both struggled in relief of Jimenez. Cody Allen had a clean inning though and looked to be getting himself back on track with just 11 pitches, seven of them for strikes.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

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Of course the biggest news from this one is the fact that **Carlos Santana** [excited with a thumb injury](#) . Lou Marson, fresh off his walloping was his replacement for the rest of the game, and if either one is going to be banged up to the point where they are unusable for a few days, we may be seeing Yan Gomes sooner than later.

Santana had X-rays after the game and the report was the he suffered a thumb contusion.

Obviously, losing Santana would be rough for more than one reasons. But it would also be incredibly frustrating because of the start Carlos has been off to. Even in the loss, Santana was 1-for-2 with a pair of walks, virtually hitting anything that he wants and spitting on everything else.

The media in New York love to talk about New York. And they did that with **Nick Swisher** on Monday, asking him about his time with the Yankees and letting him reminisce about his time with the club. Swisher answered there questions, but when asked if he paid attention to the Yankees offseason, [Swisher made sure they knew where HIS focus was](#)

*"Let me answer this the correct way," said Swisher, who then paused to collect his thoughts for seven seconds. "I'm not part of that team anymore, and I've got to worry about this squad. This is my team now, and I've got to do the best that I can to bring my 'A' game every single day. We've got enough stuff to worry about over there."*

I'm glad this is the last visit the Yankees will make to Cleveland this year, them and their media. Turf games done, Yankee visitations done in the first three series. How nice. Swisher's answer was excellent and I'm definitely fully 100% on board with this guy after that. So much respect was earned in my eyes with that answer.

Finally, as he mentioned earlier in spring, Francona's close commute to the ballpark resulted in him walking to the park on Monday morning. [He ended up getting lost](#) . Yup, he got lost. But he

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finally found his way with the help of some fans.

*"But the people in Cleveland are officially the nicest people I've ever met. Everybody I walked past said hello. That was a little different than I was used to."*

Dude, you haven't even won anything yet. Win a title and you'll have Cleveland physically carry you to the ballpark every morning.

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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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