

## Morning Rundown: Masterson Can't Buck BoSox Tough Lefty Lineup

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, April 18 2013 8:39 AM - Last Updated Thursday, April 18 2013 9:42 AM

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Well, 19 scoreless, a perfect record, all went away in one game, heck in one inning.

There's something deflating when your ace goes out and gets bombed in the first inning. Granted, the Indians weren't really ever out of this one, but it is an uphill battle when your offense can't get it going immediately and your best starter who has accounted for three of your team's five wins thus far has given up a three spot right off the get-go.

Oh gosh, if Masterson doesn't start, the Indians pretty much lose. Now we have to wait four more games for another chance to win. Great.

The Indians did have some chances in this one, but were put in too much of a hole early on to ultimately overcome. They had a specific chance that we will talk about in a second, but when you are analyzing one specific chance and saying "things could have been different if this specific chance went the other way" you are probably not in the best position to win the game.

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Now the Indians just need to focus on avoiding the sweep, if they can do that without their ace on the mound.

**RED SOX - 6 | INDIANS - 3**

**W: Alfredo Aceves (1-0)**

**L: Justin Masterson (3-1)**

**S: Andrew Bailey (1)**

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

I'm going to point something out right now and I hope you all don't hate me for it.

Ellsbury, Victorino, Nava, Carp, Drew, and Saltalamacchia were all hitting left-handed. Mike Carp, Jacoby Ellsbury, Shane Victorino, Mike Carp, and Daniel Nava all had really good games and Drew was able to coax the only walk out of **Justin Masterson** all night.

It is easy to get enamored with Justin's start, I was myself. But up until Wednesday's game against the Red Sox, Mastey didn't face a real left-handed heavy lineup like he did against Boston. I know I've made his point for years now, but Masterson's struggles against left-handed hitters is completely real. He'll have amazing games like he did against the White Sox, then he will come out and face a lefty-heavy lineup against Boston and struggle.

Not that five innings, four runs is struggling, but it isn't that good. After a game in which the starter couldn't get out of the second, you would have hoped for more from Mastey.

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Now Tampa and Toronto both boasted six left-handed hitters, just like Boston. The difference being that I don't think Tampa's lineup is all that good. Toronto's has some hitters, but Masterson seemed to wiggle out of things, must like he wiggled out of trouble against Boston. The Red Sox were able to make Mastey pay at several points early on.

And the White Sox? They had four lefties, and like Tampa, I'd consider them more on the weak side. They have that lethal middle with Dunn and Konerko, but outside of that, it was something Masterson could easily carve up, and he did. [Boston, not so much](#) .

*"They made him work really hard," manager Terry Francona said. "Their approach to him was very good. They all stayed in the middle of the field or went the opposite way. ... There's a lot of trust in him. That's what I told him when I took him out. He didn't give in and it was a hard five innings, but when he left, we had a chance to win the game."*

That is true and that is what good number ones can do. Even when they are not having their best night, they keep their team in the game. You can't really argue with that. Last year, Mastey's bad games were bad and he really let things go. If this is his bad game, I will take it.

But you just need to consider this going forward. These tough lefty-heavy lineups like the one Boston has will be the thing that challenges him the most. Especially the ones who take the approach that the Red Sox did.

The other aspect to this game was the offense, which didn't quite seem to get going against Aceves until late.

They managed to have just as much action on the bases against Aceves as the Red Sox did against Masterson, considering Aceves gave up seven hits and walked three. But the Indians couldn't cash in, given their 0-for-7 RISP number. I think part of the problem was everything that **Asdrubal Cabrera** hit right was caught by the opposing defense.

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He ended 0-for-4, but definitely could have had a much better night than that. In the fifth with two outs and the bases juiced, at the time the Indians were down 4-0, Cabrera clobbered one to right that was sinking hard and fast, but was tracked down by Shane Victorino and snagged. If Cabrera gets that, with two outs and Brantley on first and Stubbs on second, heck it might have been a 4-3 game and things look much different.

But it wasn't and even though Cabrera looks like he is struggling numbers wise, Francona is not worried.

*"I try to keep an eye on everybody," Francona said. "He looks to me like he's OK. He's been through this. He's played a lot of baseball. His outlook in the dugout, he's OK. You watch. As cold as he has been through maybe 50 at-bats, his next 50 he'll be just that hot. That's just the way it is with good players, and he's every bit of that."*

And I would agree based off some of the at-bats he had last night. The guy is hitting the ball well, it just isn't falling right now. He'll break out of it and the Indians will be better for it. This is really how Cabrera is, we just have to get used to it and accept it. When he gets hot, he will really help power the lineup.

What offense the Indians did muster though was nice to see, mainly because it was back-to-back home runs by Nick Swisher and Jason Giambi. Swish's two-run shot and Giambi's solo blast were welcomed sights and kept the team in the game, but when that's the only way you can score runs on a particular night, you are probably in trouble.

### Random Notes...

A little curious as to why Terry Francona is messing with his lineup. He had Drew Stubbs in the leadoff spot on Tuesday and Stubbs turned in a good game. This game he switched Stubbs back to ninth and moved Brantley up to the leadoff spot. Perhaps he did that because he had Giambi and Reynolds, and because he was simply playing the lefty/righty matchup, but what happened to regularity? Doubront is a lefty, so I can understand him putting Stubbs up there for that reason and then moving him back down against Aceves. But I guess I don't agree. I'd have kept them in place since Stubbs had a good game, because he went ahead and was on base

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two more times, doubling and garnering a walk.

But hey, he's the manager, I'm not. It isn't anything big, just curious and a difference of opinion. Stubbs also stole his second base, so really, a few doubles on his part.

Chisenhall rebounded against the right hander, speaking of matchups.

I guess while we are on the subject of the lineup, Carlos Santana is in the three-hole now. I guess with Kipnis out and Brantley moved up because of Bourn's absence, you have to get someone up there. Santana seems to be taking it well, but as we've discussed, I think he's much more lethal down in the middle surrounded by Brantley and Reynolds. He takes on a different role in the three spot and while he can do it, he does the other role better.

Getting a little worried that the Indians haven't had a chance to really use Chris Perez these past two weeks. Francona managed to get Pestano in the game, but Perez hasn't really been utilized a whole lot since the Indians started this home stand.

Giambi's home run marked a home run by the third oldest player in Indians history. Hey, 42 isn't that old.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The Indians officially placed **Michael Bourn** on the [disabled list yesterday and recalled pitcher Corey Kluber](#), who pitched in the loss to Boston. The move is retroactive to Monday, so that makes him eligible to return before May starts. Terry Francona seems to think he'll be activated just about there when he's ready.

The plan seems to be to have Kluber for yesterday, today, and Friday if needed, especially after what Jimenez did to the bullpen on Tuesday. He'll probably go back down to make room for Scott Kazmir when he is activated to start on Saturday. Kluber was sent down not 10 days ago,

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but was allowed to return because the move was related to placing someone on the disabled list.

As for **Jason Kipnis**, he will return to the lineup on Friday, [getting another day off today in the series finale](#) against Boston. Word is he can play, but the Indians are taking precautions.

*"Kip wanted to play today," Francona said prior to Wednesday's game against the Red Sox. "I thought if we gave him two more [days off], he has a chance to get back in the lineup and stay in the lineup, rather than come back too early and maybe still feeling it. I don't think that's fair to him, and he didn't put up a huge fuss, so I think it's probably the right thing to do. If I'm going to err, I'd rather it be on the cautious side than the other way."*

It is what you have to do, especially when you are dealing with something like soreness. Soreness can start as soreness, but if you play and make it worse, it turns into a strain, and a strain can turn into something getting pulled or torn. So, let's let all the soreness go away, be cautious about it, and hold him out for one more game. It sucks right now, but as Francona said, it would suck to lose him for more than one or two more games. Like, two weeks, or a month, or two months.

Kipnis will also avoid the tough left-hander in Jon Lester, and give the Indians the ability to play another right handed bat, like Ryan Raburn or Mike Aviles.

And finally, Lou Marson. He was not able to play on Tuesday because of the rain in Columbus, and was not with them when they played their early double-header on Wednesday. The Indians will send him down Thursday to make his first rehab start.

We should have figured that **Ubaldo Jimenez's** leash was a little longer than we all hoped. Because Terry Francona is the manager now, he does not care about what happened last year, [he's giving everyone, including Jimenez, a clean slate](#). He wants to give Jimenez a real chance to get it together, and try to help him in the process.

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*"Last year is over," Francona said on Wednesday. "You can't pitch for last year. It doesn't work. It just makes it harder. So we need to separate that, first of all. We need to figure out, 'What did he do good? What didn't he do good?' Build on what he did well and fix what he didn't do well. If you start going back to last August, then he's got no chance. Nobody is good enough to go back and fix last year."*

That is all well and true. And you have to respect that Francona and Callaway haven't really had their chance to get Ubaldo on track, and they deserve that opportunity before you start cutting bait. But it doesn't mean any of us have to agree or think Jimenez will turn it around. We've seen Ubaldo for the better part of two years now, so we know. We know that this is just another instances of him being Ewwbaldo. If they can turn him around, I think we'll all gladly eat our words, but until that happens consistently, no one has to buy into it. We just have to hope he keeps the team in games and can get through five innings for now.

The other point that I can't really begin to argue with is the fact that Francona said you can't start getting rid of pitchers right now. If you do that, you start putting yourself in trouble come June and July if injuries mount, and they've already had an impact. Which is true. However if there is a way to hold onto Jimenez and try and work on him where he isn't hurting the team, perhaps you have to at least look into it, or at least I would hope they do.

Turns out that the 15 strikeouts the Indians bullpen racked up because of U-Bad-o on Tuesday is the [most strikeouts by a bullpen in Indians history](#) . That pen is so deadly with the strikeout artists they have back there. And that didn't even include Pestano. Perhaps they should have just started with the bullpen and brought Jimenez in at the end to pitch his one good inning. Reverse the roles...

Hopefully you didn't miss [this awesome post where I compiled](#) all the best tweets I could possibly find on Ubaldo's start.

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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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