

Morning Rundown: Pitching, Defense and Playing the Astros

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Sunday, April 21 2013 9:00 AM - Last Updated Monday, April 22 2013 8:11 AM



The three best biggest elements to winning a baseball game. The Indians somehow got the first one, had a good amount of the second, and of course, the third was a given.

Especially after Friday's game, it became really necessary for the Indians to find whatever it was that was bugging them (especially offensively) and win this series.

Well, they did that on Saturday in a huge way, as you probably saw. But you can score 50 runs in one game, and it still only counts for one win. So the task was simple. Come back on Sunday and win the game, win the series, and hold back the pitch-fork wielding mob that would be charging forward.

One man did that in particular, at least for four days.

INDIANS - 5 | ASTROS - 4

W: Cody Allen (1-0)

L: Hector Ambriz (0-1)

S: Chris Perez (2)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

If I said to you that at one point, Ubaldo Jimenez retired 13 straight hitters, you would of thought he pitched a pretty good game.

Now if I said to you that at one point, **Ubaldo Jimenez** gave up a two-run shot in the first inning and was chased from the game after 65 pitches after giving up a single and a triple, you would of thought he pitched poorly once again.

The reality of it? It was somewhere in between. Jimenez started off rocky, somehow found a groove, all until he was chased having not been able to record an out in the sixth. He only threw 65 pitches, but just as smoothly he was sailing through that Astros lineup, [he was quickly yanked when trouble was afoot](#) in the sixth.

"You know I wouldn't be happy," he said of coming out of the game. "Starting pitchers want to keep going. I did [feel strong]. But it's not my call. I threw everything -- four-season fastball, two-seam fastball, split, slider."

That's no way for a starting pitcher to have to be used. But that is the short leash that manager Terry Francona has his starter on. Sure he retired 13 straight, had only thrown 65 pitches, but trouble was brewing and Tito probably felt lucky having gotten to that point in the game with Ubaldo to begin with.

Why ruin any sort of confidence that he garnered in this start. Not to say it will go a long way in trying to fix this headcase, but you're still in the game, you're offense is playing well, you have a strong bullpen that is pretty rested with an off day on Thursday. Might as well make the move.

Runs crossed, Ubaldo was factored out of the decision, but the Indians found a way to win the game in the end, so all in all, Francona made the right moves. Jimenez finished with a five

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inning, four hit, four run, four strikeout, and one walk line. He pitched considerably better than his last outing and didn't seem to be all over the place. But he also seemed to be facing a lineup that simply is not very good.

So keep that all in perspective moving forward. It was a good step, but it was the tiniest of baby steps if there ever was one.

I guess the other story in this one was the bullpen that kept things even after Jimenez's exit in the sixth. Despite Hagadone letting up the last runner Jimenez had put on, the big three in the back managed to slam the door shut for the series win. Not without drama though, as Perez was a little shaky, giving up a hit, a walk and hitting a batter in the ninth. It all started when Ankiel doubled to lead off the inning, welcome to the game Chris.

"With a three-run lead you can come in, sort of feel out the strike zone a little bit," Perez said. "Ankiel, I made a good pitch but it caught too much of the fat part of the plate and he did a good job getting on it. I wasn't going to let Dominguez get a hit. My ball was going all over the place today. First and second, nobody out, I don't feel comfortable throwing strikes yet. You can't simulate the intensity, the at-bats the hitters are taking on the other side, laying off close pitches. You can't replicate that."

Not to mention, Perez has barely been pitching and even more rarer is the save opportunity for him thus far. As Chris said, it is difficult to replicate the intensity of that situation. But Perez managed to follow suit behind Pestano and Smith and he nabbed his second save of the season.

But not without help, because that's where the defense came into play. Mark Reynolds, who is making an early bid for not just team MVP, but league MVP with the heroic performance he is putting on. Not just [hitting big home runs](#) (another go-ahead shot in the 7th after the 'Stros tied it, but the [huge defensive play that ended the game](#) . What a dive, what a stop, what a play by Marky Mark and the Bash Bunch (ehhh!?).

Seriously, is this guy going to keep this up? If so, he's going to be in the MVP discussion. I mean, I know he probably won't, but why not? He's not hitting smack dab in the middle, more towards lower end of the middle, but he's still up there so he'll get some pitches to hit. But if he

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keeps this up.

Part of me wonders if the Indians may need to consider locking this guy up for three years. He's only going to be 30 by the time the season ends, still with some good years ahead of him, right in the middle of his prime years. We know he can hit 30 home runs if he tries.

"It's a good day, a good series," he said. "I'm not going to take too much from it."

Hey man, if this continues. I don't see why not. A good day? Series? How about month?

Random Notes...

Let's not forget that Drew Stubbs really saved Ubaldo in a big way in the first. He was able to hit the cutoff man on a fly out to center when he doubled off Jason Castro. That was an out that Jimenez may or may have not been able to get, you just never know. He tends to let things "spiral" if you haven't noticed.

Drew Stubbs also had the highlight of Sunday [when his home run caused a fan to lose their popcorn](#). Seriously. At first I thought someone threw confetti on Rick Ankiel as a joke. And then when Ankiel banged his glove, I thought he was furious about that. Turns out he was just disappointed the ball wasn't close enough to grab, and that it was simply lost popcorn. Either way, it is funny.

[And it does kind of look like the guy is trying to catch the ball with his bucket of popcorn.](#)

But

[this picture, rocks](#)

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Yan! How about Yan Gomes in his short stint as backup catcher? He hit a solo shot in the second and would later triple. Lou Marson may have to start sweating a bit and maybe the Indians have found themselves a reason to move Carlos Santana.

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Speaking of, the Indians catcher was at first, which let the Indians keep him in the lineup, give him a break behind the plate, give Swisher a break from fielding, and give Chisenhall a break against the left-hander while keeping Reynolds [in the lineup...pew](#). Santana also homered, an absolute smash of a shot off Brett Oberholtzer, who was facing his first major league batter, ouch. Man is that guy locked in right now.

You know for a team that scored five runs and won the game, it sure didn't look like they were 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position, but when you waste Gomes' leadoff triple, that type of number can happen. At least they weren't 0-for-7 like the Astros, and that one is the difference.

Erik Bedard struck out eight Indians in four innings of work. That's perhaps another reason the Indians were 1-for-10. They made Bedard work, but they couldn't really knock him out like they did to Phil Humber on Saturday.

Hector Ambriz is the Astros' setup guy. Or at least one of their more "reliable" arms. That tells you just about everything you need to know about Houston this year. Poor guys. Jason Castro and Brandon Laird are in the middle of their order, and former Indians Jose Veras and Hector Ambriz are the top arms in the pen. Sounds like a winner.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Terry Francona said that **Brett Myers** wouldn't be making his next start, so placing him on the disabled list was pretty much a given. Myers is officially bothered by inflammation in his elbow, or a strain, or forearm tendinitis. Depending on who you ask.

Corey Kluber

[is going to take his place in the rotation](#)

the next time or two around, but it isn't figured that Myers will be out very long.

Myers went ahead back to Cleveland for tests and from what Francona was telling Tom Hamilton on the pregame show today, if this is just inflammation, he could be back sooner rather than later. I think I'll welcome the opportunity to see Corey Kluber though. He pitched well in his four inning stint on Saturday after Scott Kazmir had exited. He was throwing strikes and looked like had some good movement on his pitches, especially to the right-handers.

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And hey, Kluber can be auditioning for a spot in this rotation if other guys, like Ubaldo and Myers continue to struggle.

So could Carlos Carrasco, [who struck out 10 in six innings the other night for the Clippers](#) . He gave up just two hits and walked one. That's the dominant Carrasco.

Taking Myers spot on the roster was Fernando Nieve, who was added to the 40 man and flown in from Columbus. He'll probably be jettisoned as Matt Albers is slated to return from the restricted list any day now.

Asdrubal Cabrera should be fine, [but a bit of a scary moment after he tripped coming up the steps](#) in the dugout. At least he didn't trip going down. Cabrera fell on his wrist and although he was okay to start the game on Saturday, the wrist bothered him enough to be removed and not start on Sunday. He's simply sore, with Tito even saying he could be back Monday.

And I feel like [if his teammates are making taped outlines](#) of where Cabrera fell, that he's going to be okay.

Unfortunately, Cabrera missed out on the fun that was had on Saturday with the offense. That was one heck of a performance, and by one gentlemen in particular. Nick Swisher was huge, Reynolds hit a bomb, everyone really was good. But **Jason Giambi** was just incredible. And it was probably Giambi who was behind [the players meeting that was held before the game on Saturday](#) . And hey, you have to assume that it worked.

"We're pressing a little bit, trying to get that big hit," he said. "Everybody's trying to do a little too much. We have guys on base, and sometimes we just need a single instead of a homer. It's about doing the little things, moving guys over. Trying to keep adding on. We'll score some runs, but we don't do that in multiple innings. With two Wild Cards, every game matters now. You look back and say, 'We should have won this game.' It adds up. That could be the difference in going to the playoffs or not. That second Wild Card makes it interesting because

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you're never really out of the hunt -- if you can play some good baseball."

I'm not going to lie. I admit it. I laughed when the Rockies were thinking of hiring Giambi right out of the gate as their manger. But shoot, as Francona said, Walt Weiss must be really good (and you can't argue with the start the Rockies are off to). Giambi is an extra coach in that dugout right now. And one who can come off the bench and hit a home run, like he did on Saturday. Heck, he almost had two, had he not hooked two balls foul in one of his later at-bats.

And what's nice is that now that he's in the American League, he can start more regularly with that DH spot. He'll get more at-bats. He'll get more than one at-bat in a game. And stuff like what happens on Saturday will happen. He gets more work, he's less rusty and more in-tune. He played back-to-back games on Friday and Saturday, it isn't a coincidence.

I would like to point out that while the players meeting probably helped the guys get loose, [if the newest #PositiveSwish craze didn't provide good karma](#), I feel like I should punch you in the face for telling a lie like that.

We got this!

And finally, from the "bet you didn't see this one coming" department. Pretty funny how things work. Current third base coach Brad Mills has a son. You may have heard of him. The Indians picked him as their first round pick a few years ago. Beau Mills never made it past Columbus, was traded last year to the Reds, and is now retired. [Yeah, now he's raising young bulls](#). One of them being named 'Tuve (like Jose Altuve). You can see that awesome picture right here. Unfortunately, Beau is not the one in the yellow, [but he is present in this picture with his dad](#), Altuve and 'Tuve.

What a world we live in.

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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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