

Indians Hot Play May Be More Than Just a Streak

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Friday, May 10 2013 10:05 AM - Last Updated Friday, May 10 2013 12:12 PM



Not much has changed since we last talked. The swelling in my face has gone up and come back down in the span that the Indians swept the A's and have won four straight.

And to be quite honest, I spent a large part of my three days recovering watching the Indians at night. I did a lot of day naps so passing the time was hard, until the Tribe came on. So the fact that they were winning was a good thing.

Who knows how painful that would have been.

I still have some chipmunk features and there's a little pain, but I'm getting back into the routine. I could have just waited til Monday and took the entire week, but that seems like an awfully long time to not say something about the way this team is playing. So I'm going a little throwback here and doing this a way I haven't really done in awhile. You all know the 9-2 win yesterday, blah blah sweep, 10 of the last 12 for wins, just a game and a half out of first place, yada yada.

There are just some astonishing things going on with this club right now and I'll try to get to all of them.

[NEXT MAN UP]

Where did this starting pitching come from? Seriously, this isn't just a few good fluke starts here and there, there's some consistency starting to get established. Is this a case were Jeanmar

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Gomez and Derek Lowe got good for a month?

No, this is all five guys in the rotation, going out night after night and putting up winning efforts. Right now the Indians sit at a starting ERA of 4.50 with a 14-14 record in 32 games. They've pitched 184 innings and have five shutouts.

Since Kluber's game on Sunday night in the double header against Kansas City, these are the starter's numbers: 2.50 ERA, 9-1, 70.1 innings pitched, 3 shutouts. Seven of those 11 starts have been quality starts and two of those that weren't were just an out away from being quality starts. McAllister, Kazmir, and Ubaldo have all gone 2-0 and this is probably the most incredible part.

Of the 20 earned runs surrendered in the 11 games, Masterson has surrendered eight of them. Are you kidding me! That's almost half of the runs. The Indians best pitcher is responsible for almost half of the runs the Indians have given up in 11 games.

Did the A's just not play good offensively? I mean what's the deal here? Even after the Indians held them to eight runs in four games, the A's are still the major league leaders in runs scored. They're technically the best offensive team in the game. And Kazmir strikes out 10, McAllister almost goes eight shutdown, even Ubaldo is pitching well. What is going on here?

And I'm not going to say this in regards to Ubaldo, because he needs to double it as far as I'm concerned...but when you do something once, that's cute, prove you can do it again. You do something twice, now I'm starting to pay attention.

You do something a third time, then, look out, there's something real there. The Indians have gone through the rotation twice and will begin the third turn with the Tigers tonight. And good thing because they are an offense that you can certainly test yourself against.

If they go through it a third time, especially against the Tigers and a Yankee team that scored 25 runs in two games in early April, then there's something real here. This will be a true test as to where the Indians pitching staff may actually be. Doing it against the Phillies, Twins, and

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Athletics is nice. But regardless of the A's standing as an offensively big team, they do it with less. The Tigers?

They can be lethal. They've got serious batters in there from start to the end of their lineup. Nothing against Eric Sogard, but nine times out of ten he was an easy out for that pitching staff and he wasn't even the A's worst hitter in the four games.

So point being, we'll see how this rotation continues to pitch as a whole, but individually, there's a lot to like.

Zach McAllister: What's different with Z-Mac? Looking like the sudden development of a splitter/forkball/offspeed pitch of sorts. Whatever the pitch is [that he has started throwing](#) (as recently as a few weeks ago) has worked, especially in neutralizing the left-handed hitters.

"I was openminded. It felt pretty comfortable, so I stuck with it," McAllister said. "It's just another pitch I can have at my disposal. Having too many pitches can be a bad thing, but if you use it in the right situations, it can be to your advantage."

Francona has noted that McAllister is a quick learner, point proven in that it was in spring that the pitching coaches suggested it during the spring and he only in the past few weeks started throwing it in games after developing it in some side sessions.

It's working. Along with all the other stuff. The thing that I love most about McAllister is that he throws strikes. He gets ahead early and throws strikes when he needs to so he doesn't have to worry about walking many people. He is almost never in bad situations with the count, and when he does walk people, it seems to just come really quickly. Almost as if he is doing it on purpose, pitching around a hitter, not giving them a real good pitch to hit, but hoping they foolishly get themselves out.

The point is, the guy knows how to pitch. He's a purposeful pitcher, which is why the new pitch is working so well. He's using it with a purpose and the purpose is effective.

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So does Mac have some staying power? Absolutely. This is not a Jeanmar Gomez flash in the pan. This is the development and emergence of a more than capable starting pitcher.

Scott Kazmir: And there's this guy... Is this guy really back? Remember the days when Kazmir would strike out 10 in a single game? Yeah, [he did that against the A's on Thursday](#) and um. The last time he did that it was 2009.

"I just feel comfortable, and I feel confident out there," Kazmir said. "And I feel like it's going to get better and better."

Guys, this man used to be an ace. When he was at his best, he was the best and most nastiest pitcher on a staff. He is not that same pitcher, but he looks to at least be some part of that pitcher he used to, with a more rounded approach to pitching. Kind of like McAllister, as he is pitching with a purpose. His command is there, he seems to have his velocity back, at least at times when he's hitting 94 on the gun, and his secondary stuff is just doing its job.

I can't help but get excited that he is going to continue to be a viable pitcher for this team this season. I want to buy into him being back. I want to buy into this reformation so bad. I'm cautious to not fully give in and start counting on him, because you can't do that after two starts.

But a few more and you have to start believing in what's happening here. What's happening here may be pretty special.

Ubaldo Jimenez: I'm just going to keep quiet. Keep doing it Ubaldo...

I do need to say one thing. Is this guy's velocity coming back? He's not hitting 99 or 100, but the dude is at 97 at times. Which is a far cry from the 90-91 he was sitting with his fastball at times. He's getting it back up there. Obviously he's also not walking everyone in sight, but a somewhat consistent Jimenez is a more effective Jimenez than the one that was walking six guys a game

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and exiting after two incomplete innings.

Next man up people, next man up.

[WHERE ARE ALL THE PEOPLE AT?]

The big question that has been raised, especially after this last home stand with the Indians playing really well is a simple one, and one that seems to be asked all the time. Where are the fans?

In the past, I've stomped my feet and breathed fire to everyone. But I'm done.

I get it. The Indians can say that this is a "Tribe Town" all they want. It very well may be a Tribe Town, but it is more of a Brown Town than a Tribe Town or a Cavs Town. It is all three of those things, but first and foremost, it is a Browns Town and that is something I've resigned myself to.

So I'm not going to fight it. This fan base can be very loyal, they used to be when the Indians were virtually the only show in town. But this town loves football and that's where they are going to spend the bulk of their free money.

[Why is the attendance down](#) ? I'm not sure why it is slightly down. But I know why it is not very good. Yes they made signings, yes they paid money, yes they are playing well. Virtually no reason to not be attending, especially this week with good weather. Why are less than 10,000 fans attending these games?

Its just how it is here in Cleveland. Get used to it. April and May are not very good months for attendance regardless of weather, team, performance, etc. This has been the trend the past few years, so we might as well just adhere to it and stop wondering.

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So yeah, Jon Heyman is asking what's the deal and says there's no good reason for the lack of fan attendance.

And yes, he's right, in a way. But this is Cleveland. This is how it goes. When summer returns for real and kids are out of school, and people have nothing better to do, they'll go to games.

I haven't been to a game myself, so I'm in no position to judge. Granted, I have financial and time reasons as to why I haven't attended a game (one of the two have gotten in the way at any opportunity for me to go). But this is Cleveland and as much as the Indians want to tell us about how it is a Tribe Town, it really is not. At least not as much as it is other towns.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Peter Gammons suggested that Angel Hernandez simply "ignored" instant replay and went with what he originally saw and believed to be the correct call. Or that he didn't use it at all because he doesn't want replay to be a part of the game.

The thing that is annoying to me is that the suggestions floating around that the MLB should force the teams to resume the game at 4-4 and play it out. I don't want to say "you can't do that" because you can do that. It has been set before as a possible thing to do if something is so egregiously decided that a call was completely blown.

But how does that prevent these instances from happening in the future? I was joking around on Twitter when I said you need to threaten these umpires by lighting them on fire. But I'm also not really joking. Seriously, you need to start holding them accountable for things. Until you do that. Angel Hernandez is going to continue to ignore replay and act like he cannot be overruled.

This is Indians, all Indians, all the time. Very rarely will I go onto rant about MLB-related issues, until the Indians are involved. But this isn't a total Indians issue, so I'm not going to dig really deep into it. I think that is where we are at with these umpires in baseball. It isn't a replay issue, it isn't a technology issue, it is a personal and personnel issue. Time to start clamping down on these umpires, or this will continue. Not all of them are ridiculous, but a lot of them are

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showmen, or else they wouldn't have animated strike calls or anything like that.

The number one rule for any sort of official is to not attract attention away from the game. MLB umpires do it with regularity and sometimes intentionally.

Michael Bourn [is returning today](#) . How's this going to impact the team? It certainly is a good thing, but it will be interesting to see how this lineup now changes with the potent leadoff capabilities Bourn brings to the table. You get to shift Brantley back to the middle of the lineup, push everyone else down, give it more length.

It means a decrease in playing time for Ryan Raburn, who's simply been rakin', but that's a good thing. It was nice to ride a hot Raburn, but he's not a regular all year, he's a bench player. A really good bench player, but an okay starter. He'll still be in there though, at least early on with a double header next week and Bourn only having a few rehab outings.

Bourn's back, and that's really really really good for the Indians.

Vinnie Pestano should be back rather soon, [not long after he had to be placed on the disabled list](#) for elbow soreness. Shriek at elbow soreness, you always should. But the good news is that it was a retroactive placing and he's eligible to return by Thursday and it doesn't seem like it will take very long for him to return as he could have pitched Monday.

But, better safe than sorry. And with the way the bullpen is going, you can afford to see someone like Pestano get fully healthy then having to push him out there. Nick Hagadone came up and got it done in a big spot, the starters are going deep enough that Joe Smith can safely take care of the eighth inning, and the other guys like Allen and Shaw are doing a good job.

I'm not sure Manny Acta would have tolerated [someone throwing sunflower seeds](#) on him during an interview. He might have laughed, but then he might have smuggled the person behind the scenes. Very nice guy and very "lively" when he's on camera, but I got the feeling he rubbed guys the wrong way behind the scenes. And I think that is why

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Terry Francona

is so effective.

He's the same guy in front of the camera, away from the camera, on the field, in the clubhouse, off the field, whatever.

So when someone throws sunflower seeds on him, he knows it's all in good fun and Mike Aviles knows he'll have fun with it.

That's what's making this team look so good and so fun to watch.

Finally, someone needs to get me a GIF of **Nick Swisher** saying "WOW" after the Mark Reynolds home run against Jarrod Parker earlier this week. Because as good as it is to watch him do the Fresh Prince dance in the dugout, I feel like I could use the WOW more effectively.

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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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