

## Morning Rundown: Complete Offense Carries Tito Back Into Boston

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Tuesday, May 21 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Saturday, May 25 2013 7:26 AM

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This lineup is good. They are not going anywhere. Figuratively of course, they will not regress or take a nose dive, or fizzle out.

They won't score 12 runs every night, but if you are sitting there thinking that the offense may not be for real, you are going to be mistaken, especially if you watched this club last night.

I can't definitively say that about the pitching. We saw Ubaldo struggle, and who knows if Zach McAllister will be brilliant all year. You still have to wonder about Masterson staying consistent and yada yada, you can make claims about the pitching, with no argument from me.

But I defy you to make an argument about this team's offense. Last year's offense had no staying power, was charged by a couple of hot streaks and a few consistent players.

This year's offense is charged by a lineup full of productive players and you saw that last night.

**INDIANS - 12 | RED SOX - 3**

**W: Zach McAllister (4-3)**

**L: Ryan Dempster (2-5)**

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**S: Scott Barnes (1)**

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

Even Boston's manager John Farrell took a moment to praise the Indians, [who beat his team into oblivion on Thursday night](#), a completely different result than when the BoSox came to Cleveland last month.

*"They've got a very good team," Red Sox manager John Farrell said. "They're in first place for a reason. They've got a very good lineup. They're balanced, they've got good pitching, a very good bullpen. They're not in first place by accident."*

Very good!

In all seriousness, this offense has found its groove and Francona has found the right combination to put out there on a daily basis. He is getting incredible production from just about every spot on the diamond and it isn't really a "one guy" show. There's guys who help out at different times, which means that individually, you can go through a rough stretch and the team will be okay. **Mark Reynolds** for instance..

Earlier this month he went through a stretch in eight games where he was 3-for-23 with only five RBI (only, hah!) and no home runs. Did the offense suffer? Well, they won five of their eight games. But they also averaged 4.25 runs per game, which is just down one run then what they normally average for the entire season.

They are MLB's second best offense to only the Tigers at this juncture, both in the statistics and in the lineup they are putting out there every night. Talk about Trout-Pujols-Hamilton all you want, but the lineup isn't getting it done right now and you have to wonder what is behind them.

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From the leadoff guy in Michael Bourn to the the nine-hitter in Drew Stubbs, this lineup is deep. So deep that they're trying to play their backup catcher even more because he's such a Yanimal.

And on Thursday night, they showed just how potent a lineup they can be, without the home run ball.

*"Homers have been known to be rally killers," Reynolds quipped. "You keep having guys on base, it keeps pressure on the pitcher and it makes him be precise. We were just able to get big knocks with guys on base out there."*

We can specifically talk about the sixth inning, which was good for six runs, a doubling of the score entirely. The previous six runs were nice, but this inning was simply a textbook version of how you want to play offensively.

Carlos Santana walked to load the bases and from there the Indians would follow with four hits, a single, a double, a triple and then another single. All of it with less than two outs. That is what is SUPPOSED to happen when you have the bases loaded. A grand slam would have been cool, but it would have been four runs and who knows then if the rest of the inning goes on to occur.

The point is, when you load the bases with no outs, you need to come away with not one or two runs, but you need to make that inning last and be damaging to the point of ending the game before it is actually over. And the Indians offense did that, something I don't think they would have done last year.

Especially considering who ended up coming up with the RBI hits. Last year it would have been Jack Hannahan instead of Mark Reynolds, Lou Marson instead of Yan Gomes, Aaron Cunningham or Johnny Damon instead of Drew Stubbs.

So, does anyone want to still argue that this offense is going to fall off the wagon like last year? Did not think so.

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Additionally, two of the other six runs all came from two-out hits, which shows the other highly improved aspect of this offense and shows that they come up with these hits at all times. It can be no outs or two outs, they make things happen. Not just two-out RBI hits, but two-out hitting period. With one down, Mike Aviles squibs one between the pitcher and third baseman, a bout of miscommunication ends up letting Aviles aboard. He steals second with two outs to get into scoring position and then comes home on a Michael Bourn two out hit.

There you have it, an offense that doesn't seem to be going anywhere anytime soon and the anatomy of their performance and potential staying power. More individual offensive notes to come, but we'd be remiss if we didn't mention the fact that **Zach McAllister** had a solid effort. It was only five innings, but he ended up throwing a lot of pitches and it seemed unnecessary for him to come out for the sixth with such a big lead and having sat for a long time. Z-Mac finished with three runs given up on five hits and three walks with five strikeouts. He made one mistake, a fastball in to David Ortiz, who whacked it out of the park for Boston's only run scoring play of the game.

Wanna know what has made McAllister so good? Not only has he only given up six home runs coming into this game, he had not allowed a home run with more than one other person on base. So he's held those homers to be one and two-runs, low damaging hits. The homer to Ortiz was the first with more than one person on base this season and just the second time in his major league career that has happened.

The thing is though, that was all he allowed, so it wasn't as damaging as it could have been had he not controlled things. McAllister's focus though was getting Terry Francona a win in Boston, which is exactly what they did, and something that we'll touch up on later on.

*"Everyone wanted to go out there and get a win for the team, but for him also," McAllister said. "He's been great for us this year. He's well-liked everywhere he is and this is definitely exciting to get the win."*

**Random Notes...**

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The last time the Indians scored 12 runs and didn't hit a home run in the process? Back in 2004, about nine years. That is something. To score more than 10 runs and not hit a home run, you are doing a lot right offensively. I also have to point out that while they came up empty eight times with runners in scoring position, they also had eight hits with runners in scoring position. When you're at 50 percent with more than 10 chances, you are doing something right.

Drew Stubbs was a extra-base machine, he only was missing a home run on the night. His two doubles and triple helped him to a three-RBI night, but it is good to see that he can get the power doubles as well as the leggy doubles.

Mark Reynolds knocked in three runs too, but he didn't have a single extra base hit. All his hits came as singles, showing you he doesn't need to hit a moon shot to produce runs. That's why he's as better as he's ever been before and thriving in Cleveland.

To me though, the best three-hit night of the night was Michael Bourn. I find it hard to believe he scored one run, but he came up with two solid RBI hits and even though they had the big sixth, it was Bourn who did most of his damage in the early part of the lead. He knocked in a run early and then came around in the fourth to score after he led off the inning with a double. The guy makes this lineup so much better, it's funny some people even questioned if things would die down with him back.

Quietly, Carlos Santana didn't do any RBI damage, but that's because he's back to being dangerous Carlos Santana that no one wants any part of and you need to throw strikes to. Or else he's just going to take your pitches. He was as big a key as anyone in this as he scored three times and took four walks. FOUR walks! His OBP is behind Joey Votto, Miguel Cabrera (duh), and familiar face Shin-Soo Choo. There's no catcher better than him in that regard.

The save is such a silly stat in that you can pick one up by pitching the last three innings, regardless of the lead your team has. Nevertheless, freshly promoted Scott Barnes gave the Indians three scoreless at the end of the game and earned his first Major League save. Congratulations to him, but I'm more impress with giving up just a pair of hits and striking out four in the outing. It is nice to have him back, because I think it may be permanent this time around.

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How good is Cody Allen looking? I like the way that Terry Francona is using him, seemingly easing him into more high-leverage situations, but tonight he used him after all the damage was done. Allen was as sharp as I've seen him all season and the arsenal of pitches he has to choose from makes me want to drool.

### [TITO RETURNS]

It isn't often that the Cleveland Indians are on this side of things, but it was their guy making a return to the place he used to be so good at. Usually it's former players returning with their new team and a shiny new contract.

Yesterday it was their guy, their manager, returning to the place he was almost worshiped in, with their hat on. He was returning to a land of success, and you got to see first hand just how much that success and what he helped do for them, meant to that city, franchise, and fan base. And it makes you hope that one day, we can celebrate him the same way. Also gives you some hope, more than anything.

Boston still loves **Terry Francona**, probably even more than they did when he was there, and it probably has a lot to do with how bad things got in just the year he was not there with Bobby Valentine running the club. It really is that old and tired cliché, you don't know what you have until it is gone.

The Indians certainly know what they have, and after this visit to Boston, I'm going to be the players know even more what kind of guy they have running their team. They have a guy who is treating this occasion, [one where he is being celebrated by the OPPOSING TEAM](#), as just another ordinary run of the mill series against an opposing baseball team that he's trying to beat.

*"I'm sure, knowing him, it's just another day," said Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia. "I know this place is very special to him. I'm sure he just wants to go out there and manage the game and see a baseball game."*

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From bumper stickers that say Thanks, Tito, to [David Ortiz giving him a hug](#), the slew of media reporters in the dugout surrounding him, there was a lot of fanfare and a lot of love for Francona's big return to Boston.

The big thing was the tribute video played for not just Francona, but some of the old Red Sox players and coaches (there are a few of them), played during the the inning. It was a nice touch and it didn't specifically single out Tito, but still celebrated him.

And it made him tear up, which lets you know he was touched by it.

*"It was just because you can't help it. It was so special that I couldn't help it. I tried to keep my emotions inside," Francona said. "When they did that thing after the first inning, I was honored and I was also thrilled that they showed Cashy, Mike Aviles, Matt, Rich Hill and then Millsy standing next to me. He's maybe my best friend in life. So to share that was pretty awesome."*

It was pretty awesome. And it makes me hope that we can celebrate him like that one day.

Francona was in the park last year when they celebrated the 100th anniversary of Fenway Park, but this was his return as a manager. He said he was "grumpy" because of the late night they had with the game and the early arrival and the fact that he didn't get a whole lot of sleep. But I think regardless of how he felt before the game, the thing that sums up Tito the best is the fact that he's going to be one of two ways after a game. Happy to have won, or upset to have lost.

*"I think [the year off] helped," Francona said. "Saying that, I kept talking about getting perspective. I have no perspective. When we lose, it kills you. When we win, I'm happy. And I don't think that's ever going to change."*

It better not change, because quite frankly, I think that is the exact thing that makes him great. That coupled with the fact that he keeps it with that day. The next day he moves on to focusing on winning the next one. He even said it himself, he doesn't think too much ahead and with that, he doesn't seem to focus too much on what has happened. The focus on the now is incredible and I have to say I truly believe he does that. It isn't just lip service. The guy is seriously focused

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and I think his players appreciate that.

And it really is what helped them win two titles and put an entire city in his back pocket. They'll always be there to support him, even when he's in the opposing dugout. I'm sure they are less-than-pleased he came back to beat them though, at least in the first game, but I don't doubt they are not surprised.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Mentioned **Scott Barnes**'s save and that opportunity was opened up by the decision to designate **David Huff** for assignment, marking the second time the Indians [&nbsp;have removed the left-handed pitcher from their roster](#) in the last year. And it really seems like this was his last chance to do something and that in 10 days, he won't be around anymore, not even in Columbus.

*"When Huff came up, it was a chance to get a look at him and keep him in the organization," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "It let Nick [Hagadone] go down [to Triple-A] and pitch. You say it all the time in Spring Training, that you need more than your 11 or 12, and we meant that. So even though there's roster changes, it's not as in flux as it looks. It keeps guys in their roles."*

It was a chance to get a look at him and keep him in the organization? Annnnd then... gone... See ya later. It's time though. David Huff is a fun guy, had plenty of chances, had some good moments, but ultimately this isn't working. Not as a starter, not as a reliever, not with the Indians. He just isn't going to cut it, and it makes more sense to have Scott Barnes up here anyway. He throws harder and just simply has better stuff. Nick Hagadone will be back at some point, and I think he and Barnes are the two lefties the Indians need for now and into the future.

Speaking of Indians left-handers, how ironic, but as the Indians arrived in Boston, so did a former-mate. **Rafael Perez** signed with the Red Sox [with a minor league deal yesterday](#). He was released by the Twins after starting the year with them and going down to Triple-A to begin the season.

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The Indians are going to see how the **Carlos Carrasco** appeal works out before they lay out a plan of attack for getting Carrasco back to the big leagues. Remember when we thought it would be awhile before we saw him? Well, he's [making that a little bit difficult the way he's pitching in Columbus](#)

*"He's done everything we could've possibly asked of him in Triple-A," Antonetti said. "He's gone out and he's really dominated almost every start out there and he's done it efficiently, where he's been able to get hitters out and he's accumulated a lot of strikeouts and hasn't used a lot of pitches doing it. That's a challenging thing to do. He's using all his pitches. He's been very aggressive in attacking the strike zone. We've all seen it. He has above-average Major League stuff. When he puts it all together, he has a chance to really help our team."*

He's 2-0 right now with a 1.36 ERA over nearly 40 innings. He's struck out 41 and walked just nine. The thing is the Indians are doing what I thought they should just do from the outset, limit his innings in Columbus, knowing full-well that it is easier to do it earlier in the season in Columbus, than later in the season in Cleveland if you are trying to win games. He's still in that "bounce-back" period from elbow surgery and it won't be until next year that they don't have to worry about his innings.

That being said, Carrasco's numbers make it hard to keep him in Columbus. One idea bandied about is to promote him before the All-Star break, have him make a start, drop the appeal, and then with the extra rest, little configuration would need to be done in having to adjust the rest of your rotation, as you'd simply skip him after the break.

Whatever the Indians do, the pressure now is on Kluber and Kazmir, and for that matter, Ubaldo, as Myers is set to return soon, and Carrasco is pitching more than well, he's dominating. The way the Indians are playing, starting pitching performances are even more important and if necessary, they'll have to make the changes that give them the best opportunity to win.

**Brett Myers** will need one more outing of rehab before the club gets him back on the big league roster and into the rotation. Chris Antonetti noted he had a rough first inning, giving us the indication that he's healthy and ready to go in that regard, but simply not sharp enough.

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Finally, **Nick Swisher** [will be back with the team today](#) for the rest of the weekend series with Boston. Swisher worked out in Cleveland on Thursday and the club will certainly be glad to have him back. The crowd will be as ever hostile towards him though, being a former Yankee and other-team antagonize as he bros it up.

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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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