

## Morning Rundown: Bullpen Breaks in Boston, But Kluber Dazzles

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, May 22 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, May 29 2013 9:11 AM

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The only thing more painful than watching the events of Sunday afternoon unfold on your smart phone is Perez's arm. Or maybe watching it unfold live on television or in person. I mean either way. Not knowing what exactly is going on, but knowing that the game is unraveling is maddening.

Look guys, I got nothing. I'm as upset as you all are at what transpired this weekend. After winning the first game, dropping the last three, especially the last two, and even more especially on Sunday, times a thousand multiplied by infinity, I'm disappointed.

Times a thousand multiplied by infinity and all I can say is I'm disappointed?

Yeah I guess so. I've had time to cool off and I also realize that it's just two games of the 162.

**INDIANS - 5 | RED SOX - 6**

**W: Craig Breslow (2-0)**

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**L: Chris Perez (2-1)**

### [BOXSCORE](#)

Instead of focusing on the toxicity that is the discussion about the Indians bullpen, I'm going to get the positive things out of the way first, in an effort to perhaps keep things in perspective. While the bullpen has not been very good in this series, there are a few things the Indians need to take away from what transpired.

They've got themselves another young pitcher who's starting to find out how to pitch at the big league level.

**Corey Kluber** is doing everything necessary to hold onto a rotation spot. It makes what Ubaldo Jimenez does on this Memorial Day super important with a certain rehabbing starter close(r) (not subliminally saying anything) to returning. In yet another statement game against a big time opponent, Kluber did EVERYTHING and more necessary to win the game. Francona even showed some confidence in him by sending him out for the seventh inning for a few more outs.

In normal circumstances, he'd have another victory notched in his favor.

An out short of seven complete frames, just three hits and a walk, and the part about him that you love...10 strikeouts. We knew that he had this type of potential with what he was doing when the Indians acquired him. He was a league strikeout leader, so he has the stuff to miss bats. You may not realize it, but Kluber hits 96 on the radar gun with his fastball.

He's very much a strikeout pitcher, something that the Indians haven't really had the past few years, at least not one that has produced. He isn't qualified, but if he were, his 6.14 strikeout to walk ratio would rank fifth in all of baseball. Just behind Felix Hernandez.

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Let me repeat that for you.

**If he were qualified, Corey Kluber's 6.14 strikeout to walk ratio would rank fifth in all of baseball.** I mean, Bartolo Colon is ranked, but he has just 39 strikeouts, so his is a matter of just not walking guys. And Adam Wainwright is just insane. So to be in that company, of someone who strikes a lot of guys out, but doesn't walk many, is something you must take notice of.

I know the Indians spent \$7 million on Brett Myers to pitch in the rotation. But what more can I say? I almost think the Indians may end up making this decision in a way that says "We know what makes the most sense to do, but we're going to do the opposite because of the investment." And you can't really blame them, but you want to.

Because of this whole bullpen fiasco, I don't think anyone really cares anyway. Oh Corey Kluber pitched an excellent game? Yeah I don't care, let's go sharpen my pitch fork for Chris Perez.

Yeah, it's a damn shame that this bullpen blew that game for Kluber and the offense, because other than that, they played an excellent contest. From Mark Reynolds's defense, to the way they built off the lead they got against Felix Doubront, the Indians played a whale of a game in other aspects than their relief pitching. It more than made up for the game they played Saturday, which was really poor and bumbling.

The offense made Felix Doubront work early. They got a pair off of him early and didn't touch him again til the fifth and sixth, but the key was making him work in those first and second innings.

While they didn't result in anything because of the strikeouts of Bourn and Kipnis, the two bats by Drew Stubbs and Mike Aviles said everything. You have your eight and nine hitters working walks. Not just working walks, but wasting pitches, making Doubront do more than necessary to get the outs. Aviles saw 7 pitches, Stubbs 8. That right there is one inning worth of pitches that they used up and he didn't even collect an out. Sure the inning didn't go anywhere runs wise, but it was really important in the long run in getting Doubront worn down and out of the game eventually.

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I hope you aren't ready to give up on this team. Because the two things we just highlighted with the offense and the pitching are reasons they are not going anywhere. Bullpens are volatile and heck, up until this week there was no pressing issues with it. Today is a new week and once these injuries sort themselves out, we can better assess where the Indians are actually at. Don't give up yet, there's a lot of baseball left to be played.

### Random Notes...

You know for all you that love Cody Allen (I like him too), he made this game a run closer in the eighth inning when he let up a lead off triple to Stephen Drew and a sac-fly. He's not perfect either.

Michael Bourn is such a good base stealer. He got his eighth, and should have had his ninth. You can see why the guy swipes so many bags after what he did against Doubront in the first inning. He wasted no time running on the first pitch. He's aggressive and knows his speed is tough to beat. When a guy is that confident, it's tough to catch him.

Aviles also stole a base, which upped the total of bases stolen this season to 34, good enough for third in the American League and fifth in all of baseball. Most of it has come as of late though. The Indians have stolen 31 bags in the last 34 games. They've got 21 steals in May which is behind only San Diego for the most. Of course a lot of that has to do with Bourn, who has opened up the running game a little more, not just for him, but others.

Jason Kipnis' home run [was the shortest home run in baseball](#) since Ty Wigginton hit a home run three feet shorter in 2010. Inside-the-park home runs excluded of course. Wigginton's was also in Boston and curved over the right field foul pole. That was a text-book Pesky Pole home run by Kipnis, who's home run traveled a robust 319 feet.

Nick Swisher's homer was a little more of a no-doubter. Swisher showed that "Daddy Strength" he was talking about and had a pair of big RBI in this one. We [found out the name of his daughter](#), Emerson Jay Swisher, and that he is, you guessed it, excited. Swisher came back and went 0-for, but has

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been able to get back into the groove these past two games in a big way.

Carlos Santana also had a pair of big RBI with his first inning single with two outs. After Reynolds came up empty with the bases loaded, it was really Santana's hit that salvaged that situation. Without that, especially since they couldn't do anything in the second, who knows how the rest of this game shapes out. Of course it didn't turn out really good the way it transpired anyway, so that probably is a moot point that isn't worth getting into.

I know Dustin Pedroia is small and everything, but does that mean the guy's strikezone has to be the size of a peanut? It seems like nothing that the guy gets thrown to him is ever called for a strike. Perhaps that is why he's such a great hitter. Not to take anything away from him, but he seems to get a lot of calls. The at-bat where he 'worked' the walk and extended that inning by eight pitches was infuriating, especially since Kluber was PAINTING the outside of that zone and not getting anything. To me, that made his outing that much better. Kluber held Pedroia and Ortiz in check.

Michael Brantley was 0-for-4 and more importantly, did not reach base, something he's done just seven times in 46 games this year.

### [BULLPEN MAF...NOPE]

Because I did not watch this ninth inning unfold, I can't tell you if **Chris Perez** is hurt. I can't tell you if he looked off. I would guess since he's been horrific the past few outings, he might be. I'm also not a doctor, so even though

[I watch this lovely bit of footage where Perez misses his warm-up pitch mark by feet](#)

, I can't tell you he's hurt or even assume.

I mean, I guess I could assume, doesn't mean my assumption holds any merit.

If he's hurt and he knows it, should he say something? I mean of course, if it's preventing him from doing his job completely and mentally impacting him, of course. Is Chris Perez out there selfishly? Of course not. He's out there because he believes he is can get the job done and by

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being out there, he's giving it his all and the best chance for his team to win the game.

He's not out there to pad statistics or make All-Star teams. He's out there to close out games and make sure the team wins. Save that stuff.

I am completely done trying to argue or talk to the people around this team that want to bash Perez or anyone else on this team like this. I'm just going to go with my take and ignore this from here on out. It isn't worth my time and it isn't worth your time to come here and read me talk about it over and over again.

Is **Vinnie Pestano** hurt? The velocity was down (by a few miles per hour) in his last outing and it posed some concerns. But Terry Francona [maintained that Pestano is fine](#) and they're simply trying to get him back to his routine.

*"It'll be fine," Francona said on Sunday. "There's not any medical issues. We already got through that. Now, we've just got to get him back to being Vinnie. I told Vinnie, and I might've even said it to you guys," Francona said, "when he comes back [from the DL], there might be a little rust. You've got to shake it off. Like a hitter with a track record, this is a pitcher with a pretty [darn] impressive track record, the way he competes, the way he cares. So I wouldn't want to run away from him. I just want to help him."*

Tito said it is basically like Spring Training for him right now. Give him a few outings. So we'll take his word for it. I'd hate to see him have to go through a mini Spring Training right now though if Chris Perez needs to visit the disabled list.

So what do we do? We're stuck here with a bullpen that has been really good the past few seasons. There hasn't been anything wrong with this tandem of Perez and Pestano at the back end. The bullpen has been the most rock-solid piece to this team, despite the fact that the starting pitching has been horrible.

And now, with the starting pitching rolling well, the offense hitting, the one solid piece of this

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team has suddenly left the rest of the squad out to dry. After not losing a game leading after the sixth inning going into this weekend, the Indians have done it two times in a row. The two losses they took the past few days were the first two by a reliever and it was their seventh and eighth blown saves (out of 17 chances). A coin flip! That's essentially what the vaunted Bullpen Mafia has come to. Last year they blew 13 chances all season and they're already at eight.

Do the Indians make a change? If Perez is hurt to the point where he visits the disabled list, they certainly will. It isn't an automatic that someone other than Pestano gets the first crack, because Tito fully believes that Vinnie's arm is fine and the fact that he gave up more than three runs in a single outing was simply just a blip on the radar.

A lot of people are bringing up Bryan Shaw's name and Cody Allen's name. If the Indians do make a move, it could and probably should be Joe Smith based off the current way the guys are lined up. They'll need someone like Shaw for the seventh and eighth (if something is wrong with Pestano) and Allen shouldn't be put out in that situation right now with more experiences guys.

If we're going off who's had the best season thus far, Shaw should probably be the guy, but you don't want to find out if he's capable of that role just quite yet.

Point is this, love him or hate him, Chris Perez has saves us from having this agonizing and incredibly difficult conversation. The Indians have had a closer, a damn good one, for the past few seasons and the bullpen has been fine. And you want to trade him after a few bad outings? Now look where we are with the possibility of not having Perez at the Indians' disposal. Deep trouble.

With his return impending and the steady improvement of Kluber that we've already talked about, I would almost suggest that if Perez and Pestano are slated for the disabled list, the Tribe put **Brett Myers** back there for depth purposes. At least temporarily to keep the Indians afloat.

And that's based off the fact that Kluber has more of a future in the Indians rotation than Myers.

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Brett is [scheduled to start a rehab assignment today](#) for the Columbus Clippers. There's no telling if the Indians will alter their plans now with what has transpired, but I can't imagine they'd knee-jerk decision this as I'm suggesting. In fact, you can probably be they'll go along the lines that I had earlier in the "We know we're going to make a mistake, but we have to make it" way of thinking.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

This may as well be the Francona Rundown...

When **Terry Francona** came out to argue the call about Michael Bourn "getting hit" outside the batters box with a ball and thus being ruled out, the crowd cheered. How often does that happen? I mean he's the opposing manager, and they [probably cheered him more than any of the home team](#) personnel this weekend.

*"So when you're the manager here, it creates a headache sometimes. You can't have all that passion and interest without having a couple headaches. But that doesn't mean it's not a [heck] of a place. I caught probably more than my fair share of flak when I was up here, because you're the manager," Francona said. "That comes with the territory. But also you see how they've reacted now. Once you're one of them, I think you're kind of maybe always one of them.*

Tito also went on to say that he's a "normal guy that loves baseball" and that he simply got a good team and tried not to screw it up. Man there's hope for any of us that love baseball then.

In all seriousness, it is something we talked about prior to this weekend. Tito is well loved in that town and for obvious reasons. I think Boston still wishes they had him as their manager, even though they've got the right guy in there right now. Of course that is their loss and Cleveland's gain, so I'm not complaining. But it is incredible to see how that fan base has reacted to Tito in his return as an opposing manager. He could have swept them in the ALCS and he might still get cheered louder than anyone.

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One of the reasons for all that? The way he treats his players. **Mike Aviles**, who says it was an honor to get traded for a manger (when Boston sent him to Toronto for John Farrell), because he knew how much the Red Sox wanted their guy, [was very quick to praise Tito](#)

*"Absolutely," Aviles said. "The thing with Tito [Francona] is he always lets me know when I'm going to play. He always gives me the opportunity to be prepared for what I need to do. And I think the little bit that I learned over there, and to bring it over here and help the team, it's like everybody understands that the only way we're going to win is going to be together."*

Aviles talked about being on the same page, rather, Tito's page. Everyone's going to be on his page, because he's going to tell you. He keeps that focus and he keeps the line of communication open. I feel like other managers have said that, about making their players aware of where they are, but I think that goes with normalcy. They try to establish it so you know what to expect. I think Francona does it different, by evidence of what you see with what Aviles is saying. Maybe Aviles does expect to play on Sunday knowing Cabrera needs a rest and the left-hander on the mound.

But Francona assures him of that by going a step further and confirming it, and that's huge for players. One thing Tito said following the game on Sunday in regards to the blowup was that it won't be an issue. You know it is something he'll address with the team and get out of the way. It won't be in their minds. Last year? Well just look at the losing streak that never ended. Does it mean the Indians will come out tonight against the Reds and turn it right back around? No not necessarily because you can't really control what shape your pitcher (especially the guy on the mound tonight) will be in, or what the other team is capable of.

But make no mistake about it, they'll be prepared to play the game and what happened on Sunday won't be a factor in the way they play. They came out Sunday after a sloppy outing on Saturday and played one of their more sharper games defensively. Tito will make them separate situations.

It was nice of **Chris Antonetti** to [make the trip to Boston with his manager](#) . Especially around draft time. Francona didn't ask, but Antonetti came and offered a moment of support before Thursday's game.

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*"He grabbed me before I went out," Francona said. "I think he knew I was kind of pacing a little bit. He actually kind of grabbed me and said, 'Hey, enjoy the moment. Take a minute and enjoy it.' And I started to kind of give him a look, and he said, 'No, seriously. Take a minute to enjoy it.'"*

I know we've joked around with Francona saying he came because of his relationship with Antonetti and Shapiro. I think he'll end up staying for different reasons, but that kind of reaffirms everything we heard in the offseason when Tito joined.

We might as well go from the manager to the player-coach **Jason Giambi**, who's status with the team has come under a little bit of question

[as of late because of his slump](#)

... Come on, really people? Luckily the only people's opinion that matters is that of the Indians, and they aren't worried.

*"Before he steps in the batter's box, he's already valuable," Francona said. "I know he's not happy with where his batting average is, I get that, but he's smart enough to know what he can do. He's not going to sulk around here."*

*"You watch. He'll get some hits and he'll help us win a game. He just has to put up with the aggravation of looking at his batting average right now, which he's strong enough to do."*

The beauty is he isn't taking up a roster spot right now. There's no one in Columbus you are going to call up that is going to do anything more meaningful or better. There is no one breaking down the door to come up and contribute. Aviles and Raburn are all the Indians need defensively as backups. Cord Phelps came up when Nick Swisher went on the paternity list and it was as if he wasn't even around. This isn't a situation where they need to make a change, so why suggest making a change? He's a guy who'll play against your occasional lefty and get some pinch hits. He played a lot during that stretch when Bourn was out because of need, but he isn't any everyday player, so cool the jets.

The bunt that **Carlos Santana** put down on Thursday? Mark Reynolds [says that he's been working on it in practice a lot](#)

. With hitting down in the order like he is, and team's walking him the way he does, the bunt can

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be effective for Santana if they're going to pitch him like that and play him like they are defensively. I say, have it to at least keep them honest. It could open up more opportunities to actually hit. Obviously it isn't going to be a big part of his game, but if he can do it, it will at least mess with the opposing team in that they have to account for that.

And finally, **David Huff** was claimed by the New York Yankees late last week. In a bit of irony, to make room for him on the roster, the Yankees designated Ben Francisco for assignment. Best of luck to David, but I must say, he's New York's issue to deal with now.

Just as an aside, if you missed some of the "lighter" notes about the Indians as well as some things that you may have expected me to touch up on, there's a new feature on the blog called Sunday Grazing. You should check it out, because it has Terry Francona beating people up, a Mini-Drubes, and Mega Mark destroying a fan.

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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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