

Tribe Survives Kazmir, But Nats Beat Bullpen

Written by {ga=riverburns}

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You have to think that something might be wrong with your baseball team when a first inning home run, let alone two back-to-back, spells doom for your club like no other 1-0 or 2-0 lead in baseball history.^^ Once upon a time, Scott Kazmir was supposed to be what David Price ended up being, a top-of-rotation southpaw that shys away from the word "crafty".^^ These days, the former Sugarland Skeeter is just trying to hang on to his job in a Major League rotation, and serving up two 1st inning home runs to the Nationals on Saturday did nothing to help his cause.^^ However, Kazmir was spared his fifth loss of the 2013 season when the bats bailed him out in the middle innings of Saturday's 7-6 loss to the visiting Washington Nationals.

Looking into the visitors' dugout, seeing a starter that's having as spectacular of a season as Jordan Zimmerman, a 2-0 deficit before your first at-bat wasn't exactly ideal.^^ When the Nationals added another one in the scoring column on Ian Desmond's home run to left with one out in the top of the 2nd inning, the 3-spot the Nationals had might have had you doubting anything good coming out of a Saturday in front of the Indians second national television audience this week.^^ Kazmir kept Washington in the ballpark, but walks and a wild pitch were gasoline on the already towering inferno.

Francona had to give him the hook at 5-0, because this Indians team is built with a belief that they can win games, even when they trail by a lot early.^^ Matt Albers threw an inning and two-thirds of scoreless ball.^^ Bryan Shaw and Cody Allen followed suit, and in fact, Shaw was in line for the win when Allen took the ball in the 7th.^^ Joe Smith took over in the eight, but the solid backend of the Tribe's relief corps couldn't get it done, clinging to a 1-run lead after the stretch.^^

Michael Brantley's ninth double of the year, an opposite field blast, plated Jason Kipnis and Nick Swisher for the Tribe's 5th and 6th runs, giving them their first lead of the day at 6-5 in the fifth

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inning. However, just as the long ball destroyed the Indians early, it was more of the same late, starting with Chad Tracy's shot off Smith on a 2-out, 0-2 sinker that left the deepest part of the ballpark to tie it at 6-6 in the 8th. Vinnie Pestano, the interim closer in the present tense, didn't fare much better, surrendering Anthony Rendon's first career home run, Washington's fifth of the day, the final nail in the coffin of a 7-6 defeat in an overall abysmal showing from Mickey Callaway's pitching staff.

It only took the Indians an inning or two to get right back into this one. Down 5-0 after 2 and a half, the bats made good on a Mike Aviles 1-out double, when Jason Kipnis brought him in with an RBI single. That one run got the goose egg of the board and loosened the Tribe up, with the exception of Nick Swisher, who appears to be playing noticeably hurt. The former Ohio State Buckeye hurt his team, giving Rendon a chance to swing at that game-winning bomb, letting an easy out harmlessly land in foul territory two pitches earlier. These things happen, it was third error of the night, but certainly the most costly.



It isn't so much that Swisher is a bum as it is that he's playing with a bum shoulder. Playing through the pain, he did join the hit parade and drove in a run that got them within striking distance at 5-3 in the 5th inning. He went on to hustle to score all the way from first on Brantley's double, scoring the go-ahead and potential game-winning run. An inning earlier, back-to-back home runs from Carlos Santana and Mark Reynolds cut the Nationals lead to 5-3.

Rafael Soriano pitched the ninth for the Nationals. After getting Jason Giambi and Ryan Raburn on strikes, Mike Aviles made things interesting with a double to left field. However, Michael Bourn lined out to Adam LaRoche to end the game, setting up the rubber match in the series on Sunday. The 1:05 affair at Progressive Field will mark the return of Stephen Strasburg, who hasn't pitched since May 31st, for the Nationals, facing off with the suddenly-hot Corey Kluber for the home team. The Tigers dropped their contest in Minnesota, keeping them 4.5 games ahead of the 2nd place, but under .500, Indians in the American League

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Central Division.