

Morning Rundown: June Boom; Red Hot Tribe Win Again

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Tuesday, June 25 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, July 03 2013 7:24 AM



It was brought to [my attention by a follower on Twitter](#) that the Indians started June in a rough way. After winning their first game, they dropped eight straight. Then the series against the Rangers turned around, and so did the month. After starting 1-8, they ended 14-5. Overall it looks average with a 15-13 record. But it's slightly above .500, and where the Indians sit right now is more than slightly over .500.

But guess what? They're also sharing first place as the calendar flips over to July. Three months down, three more to go. Halfway through and the Indians are in this thing. Not just in it, but in it. June Swoon? How about a June Boom.

INDIANS - 4 | WHITE SOX - 0

W: Justin Masterson (4-0)

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L: Chris Sale (5-7)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

[SALE!](#)

Don't mind me.

Friends, **Justin Masterson** was pure brilliance. But don't let him tell you that. [He'll just credit his defense.](#)

"The defense, that's what was working great for me -- those guys were working hard," Masterson said. "They took a real aggressive approach, swinging early. It's all going to come back to those guys out there doing their thing. They made a lot of double plays, and they were pretty double plays."

Don't get me wrong, they were working hard, but Masterson was totally himself in this one. Four double plays? I mean seriously man. He had 10 groundouts to just three flyouts, added into his eight strikeouts. He got all 27 of them in this game, with another out coming from the arm of Yan Gomes, who picked off Alejandro De Aza at first with a snap throw. Masterson was the player of the game, but that was the play of the game.

"I know when the game is over, people might forget about that play," Francona said. "But De Aza is a guy on the bases who can create something. Gomer picking him up settled that inning down. He called a good game, he ran the game and then he contributed with his bat."

That was a big play. Because it was early in the game, the Indians had just put some runs on the board and it had led off the inning. And that fell right in line with the theme Masterson pitched to all day long. He only walked one hitter, and that came in the seventh and sure enough was the toughest spot he faced all day.

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Every time he would give up a hit, he'd get the out right back with a double play. He faced the minimum up through the sixth inning. It wasn't until the seventh that he faced one over when he let De Aza walk and Alexei Ramirez single to open up the inning. He erased all of that with yet another double play and a strikeout of Dunn to end the inning, but he stayed ahead of any sort of momentum the White Sox tried to build.

And shoot, until he had one out let in the game, he had only faced one over the minimum. Then he gave up another single to De Aza (what a thorn in the side he's been) and hit Ramirez with a pitch.

I'm just in awe. Watching him pitch when he's going good is a joy. He's fun to watch. He just is so masterful when he's on and he's been on like this three times before. It was his second shutout of the Sox and third overall, which puts him in sole possession of that stat in the majors. He also leads the American League in innings pitched and complete games.

That's a horse. I know we've talked about if he's a true ace or not, and I have a hard time anointing him that. But I can say he's the Indians horse and he's helping carry this staff in a big way.

And shoot. He didn't need to win this game. The Indians had taken the first three, and that was good enough given the amount of games they've played and the situation they've gone through, arriving early Friday morning, playing a double header, and all of that.

But they swept this series, and now get a well-deserved off day, and head into that off day sharing first place.

Do you believe yet?

Random Notes...

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The Indians had to sit a few guys and still came away with enough runs and stellar defense to win the game and finish off the sweep.

It was a day off for Jason Kipnis, who probably deserved it the way he's been hitting. You would have loved to see how he was going to finish off the month of June, but the off day on Monday gives him a two-day break, which I'm sure he can appreciate, even in the middle of a hot streak.

By now, you know what is up with Kip. He's reached base in 32 straight games, which matches the longest streak since Ryan Garko went 32 straight back when he was awesome. He also has a 12-game hit streak and his June was incredibly awesome. He hit .419 with a .517 OBP (whaaat!) and a .699 slugging percentage. His OPS was at 1.216, which is insane. He hit more home runs in May, but knocked in more runs this month. He stole nine bases, was caught once, hit 12 doubles, and walked 20 times. Amazing.

Also out were Nick Swisher and Michael Bourn, as he was placed on the paternity list prior to the game. So the Indians had a very much different lineup than the one they had been using all series. It was still potent enough to knock in four runs and bang out 10 hits. Stubbs took on the leadoff role and was 2-for-5 (although he struggled with Chris Sale), and Ryan Raburn and Carlos Santana did the heaviest of lifting. [It is pretty amazing that you can sit the two guys](#) in Swisher and Kipnis that pretty much won the first three games for you with their at-bats and still win the fourth.

The team didn't have the success they did in the series in hitting with runners in scoring position, but they still came through three times, which was more than enough the way Masterson pitched.

I don't think many pitchers want to face this lineup right now. It doesn't matter who seems to be in there, they're hitting.

It wasn't a drubbing but it was another loss Sale took at the hands of the Indians. It certainly beats his 4.1 inning, eight earned run performance back in April, but the Indians are now 2-0

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against him this year. He just gave up a few key hits to some hot hitters and ran into an opposing pitcher who was brilliant. Overall he's having a rough year in the run-support column to go along with more than solid pitching.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Bourn's stint on the paternity list should only last one more game, with the off day nuzzled right into the situation, he'll miss Tuesday's game and be back for the second game against the Royals. Bourn went home to Houston to be with his wife for the birth of their child.

To take his spot on the roster, the Indians called up left hander **Nick Hagadone** to once again [assume a spot on the roster](#). What is weird is that they are now carrying a nine man bullpen, something that is rather unheard of, even in the American League. Given the weekend they just had though, you could understand why they felt another arm was needed. Luckily they didn't need any of those guys on Sunday, which is just great considering the off day can get everything back in order for the next week.

The off day is also letting the Indians [shuffle their rotation a bit and re-align it](#) so that **Scott Kazmir** gets an extra day of rest due to the back spasms he's been suffering. Kazmir was great against Baltimore, going seven strong with just a hit surrendered, but exited with just 78 pitches thrown due to the spasms. It doesn't seem serious though and obviously doesn't look like it will prevent him from making his next start.

Corey Kluber will pitch Tuesday, while Kazmir goes Wednesday, followed by Ubaldo Jimenez and a returning **Carlos Carrasco** on Friday. I'm not sure how the Indians are able to continue to call up Carrasco and send him back down, as this next 26th man rule complicates things. I'm guessing that since [he was designated as the "26th man"](#) the Indians can call him up without needing 10 days or an injury and then call him back up on Friday because of the same reasoning.

Now if they were to try and recall Trevor Bauer, who was sent down after his start on Friday, that would not be allowed unless they placed someone on the disabled list.

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Joe Martinez was [recalled from Triple-A on Saturday](#) and thrown right into the fire. He had a whirlwind travel situation that landed him in Chicago in the morning. He managed to handle it well though and returned to the major leagues with two scoreless innings and a win to his credit. The Indians wanted more of a long-man with all the innings the bullpen pitched, and Martinez fit that bill. But with that nine man bullpen, don't expect him to be sticking around for long. The 40-man status may even be jeopardized with Brett Myers on the way back.

We definitely saw all the available relievers this team has, from Langwell to Martinez to Hagadone. Scotty Barnes was the only guy the Indians didn't bring back into the fold. With this situation over though and Perez back, things should start settling down and the Indians should begin to re-align their bullpen and get it back into some sort of order.

Minor leaguer **Dillon Howard** was [suspended 50 games for testing positive](#) for amphetamines this past weekend. Howard was a second rough pick signed to a hefty bonus a few years ago and had yet to make an appearance at one of the affiliates this year.

I wanted to talk about Friday's awesome doubleheader, but what is left to say? That was simply awesome. Baseball that started at 5 and lasted til 2 in the morning? That's like a dream. I almost turned in after Langwell gave up the two insurance runs to the Sox, but something told me that the day wasn't quite over and that the Indians were not going to go quietly.

Boy was I right. What a weekend for the Indians. What a series. If you want more awesome stats from Friday's double header, check out [this blog entry from MLB.com's Jordan Bastian](#) . Some incredible stats.

The most interesting stat that is floating around though?

A lot of people are noting that this was the first time that the Indians swept a four game series from Chicago since 1948. And what happened in 1948? Yeah, let's not get ahead of ourselves. It is just a coincidence. For now....

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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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