

Morning Rundown: Stalled Offense Lacks Ubaldo Support, Drop Opener to Hot Mariners

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, July 18 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, July 24 2013 7:24 AM



Well if pitching ain't the problem. Then I don't know what is.

You certainly can't blame two solo shots as reasons to lose. So you must blame an offense that has struggled and sputtered over the course of the past week since the break ended.

INDIANS - 1 | MARINERS - 2

W: Aaron Harang (5-8)

L: Ubaldo Jimenez (7-5)

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S: Tom Wilhelmsen (22)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

I guess you could consider Seattle a hot team. They came into this winning six straight with a reverse record to the Tribe, so they aren't horrible. But you kind of expect more than one run off Aaron Harang and company.

They simply did not make Harang work enough. He was able to get through seven innings, barely breaking a sweat. Seattle's bullpen is the second worst in the American League and the Indians did not get a real good chance to dig into it. Something you have to do when you have an opposing team with a weak bullpen. Even Harang knew the Indians had to go with that game plan, [and they still couldn't stop him](#) .

"Early in the game they were trying to get my pitch count up," Harang said. "They came out the second and third time around, they started to be a little more aggressive, swinging at pitches early, knowing that I'm going to throw strikes."

Francona said that by the time it got so late, it was more about just trying to get some hits strung together to score than get him out of the game, because you know at some point you'll get their more quality relievers.

Look, that's what will happen sometimes when you are that type of team. The Indians are still very much a team that take a lot of pitches. They like to work the count and get the pitcher to throw a lot more. Their strikeouts may have gone up this year and the walks may have gone down, but this is a team that still very much employs that strategy of making the pitcher work.

When you carry a strategy like that, you are bound to run into days when a veteran pitcher counters that strategy and gets aggressive early and before you know it, the game is 2-1 and it is the seventh inning and he's still out there.

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Overall, it wasn't like the Indians didn't have chances. Both teams went 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position, but it is a more disappointing turnout for a team that has become unconscious in that very situation when it comes to knocking guys in.

After back to back singles with one out by Bourn and Swisher, a Kipnis strikeout and Cabrera ground out stifled the third inning and then an inning later with Carlos Santana on third and less than two outs, Giambi and Chisenhall both could not get the job done. From there on the only other real opportunity the Indians had to make something happen came when Bourn was hit to lead off the eighth inning and then got picked off after Swisher struck out.

In the ninth, Brantley would double with one out and Giambi would walk with two and a runner at third, but again the team just couldn't come up with that big hit.

So you have a team that is getting hits, getting good pitching, but all of a sudden can't come up with the big hit. I guess law of averages has to take place at some point and this is just an auto-correct on the Indians stellar line of hitting with runners on base, but it sure is frustrating.

"It's nice to kind of get back on track," Swisher said. "But it's frustrating not being able to score any runs. Ubaldo did a great job. The bullpen comes in and does a great job. For a team that's been hot as a firecracker over there, for us to hold them at two runs, we've got to score more runs than that."

Yeah, Bro. Wanna know the more frustrating part about it? This team has now wasted three good pitching efforts by their starting staff in the past four days. Three very winnable games went by the wayside. Three good pitching performances not rewarded with wins.

"We're not rolling," Indians manager Terry Francona said of his lineup. "Our pitching, thankfully, is keeping us in games. If our pitching keeps pitching like this, we're going to be just fine. We've just got to keep plugging away."

Oh, how you hope the pitching doesn't fizzle and the Indians can take advantage of it. It really bites when your team is not in-sync like that. The pitching is doing well and the hitting just can't

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put it together. Maybe it's the break, maybe it's not. Either way, it is better than both parts doing not well. You just hope the offense breaks out of it in time to take advantage of the good streak the starters are putting together.

The bright side to **Ubaldo Jimenez's** outing is that when he made his mistakes, it was not when he had runners on.

"It is tough," Jimenez said. "The main thing is you want to minimize the mistakes. You don't want to be making mistakes, especially with a hitter like Morales. He has a lot of power. If you make a mistake, like I did with that pitch, he's going to hit it a long way."

Usually it is bad news when you are walking four hitters and giving up two home runs, but Ubaldo was able to spread things out nicely to where that didn't become an issue. It is pretty sad that Francona can't trust Ubaldo as far as he can throw him though because despite giving up a leadoff single in the sixth and then getting two outs and having a pitch count a little over 100 pitches, Francona couldn't let Ubaldo face Mike Zunino for the third time in the game.

Hey, it's better than going seven innings and giving up nine runs, so whatever.

Random Notes...

Francona made his lineup switch as you may have noticed. He flip-flopped Swisher and Cabrera between the two and four spots, leaving Kipnis hitting third and putting Brantley right behind them in the fifth spot. And right on cue Swisher hit a home run in his first at-bat and was 2-for-4 on the night. That was fantastic but...

You can't judge the move after one game, but hopefully it takes a little pressure off Swisher. It shouldn't be too much of a burden on Cabrera. While he's not a prototypical cleanup hitter, neither is Swisher really. They're both vets though, so really, I think it is just about taking the pressure off Swish.

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"I checked with Swish and Cabbie and they both agreed," said Francona. "I wouldn't have made the move if I felt it was counter productive. I think Cabbie can hit anywhere."

Francona's thinking that perhaps an on-base Bourn could generate some mistake pitches for Swisher. Let's hope so.

Speaking of home runs, Ubaldo Jimenez surrendered a pair in the first five innings. The first one to Morales snapped the 88 inning streak the pitching staff was carrying having not surrendered one. Count on Ubaldo to get rid of that.

Jimenez was using all of his outfielders and the outfield space last night. Brantley ran down several balls and there was some nice sky pops to deep center too. As long as they are outs, who cares, but he's definitely a fly ball pitcher when he wants to be.

Rare scary bad game for Jason Kipnis who squandered a run scoring opportunity, was 0-for-4 and struck out. He just didn't seem to have it last night.

Progress for Rich Hill with a scoreless frame and two strikeouts.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Weirdness before the game. Former Indians and current Mariners skipper Eric Wedge [was hospitalized after he experienced some dizzy spells](#) during batting practice. All looks to be good with Wedge, but just a strange little wrinkle thrown in before the game.

[Interesting statistic pointed out](#) by Paul Hoynes. **Ryan Raburn** and Evan Gattis are the only two hitters in the game to have 10 or more homers in fewer than 200 plate appearances before the break. With all this talk about the lineup and stuff, and Reynolds's struggles. Perhaps Ryan Raburn should be playing a little more than once a week. Especially against your left handers

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who he is carrying a .397 on-base percentage and a .988 OPS against.

I mean, you might as well right? Raburn just hits. When he's in that lineup, he hits. He hits with runners on, with runners not on. He comes up with production either way.

We talked about the bullpen yesterday and potential options, with it looking like Brett Myers not being anywhere close to a position where he can contribute. Some think maybe **Danny Salazar** [could slot into that role late in the year.](#)

He is a starter, but it isn't uncommon for teams to give a taste of big league action to young starters in that way.

There is one problem with that. Salazar is not far removed from Tommy John surgery, so Tito and the Indians do not want to specifically say that putting Salazar back there in that situation is something they're readily going to do to solve their pen issues.

"How about I answer it in general?" Francona said. "There may be, down the road, ways to fortify our bullpen internally. It doesn't necessarily have to be Danny Salazar. We could maybe go a route like that. It doesn't have to be Danny. It could be somebody else. But it is something we've thought about."

There's another guy starting down in Columbus by the name of **Trevor Bauer**. And really, why not? Perhaps Bauer would prefer starting, but it would be a way for him to continue to get work in at the major league level. Plus he might take to it. Just some food for thought.

It's official, **Zach McAllister** is [ready to go for the Indians tonight](#) against the Mariners. It will be nice to have the Tribe's full rotation back in tact.

"That'll be fun," Francona said of getting McAllister back. "He's worked so hard and he's been so diligent. We're excited. He's definitely a big part of our future. The fact that he came through this so well, because this wasn't something to mess around with, he did a really good job with it."

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The Indians have made a few International signings this season and it [would appear as if they are nearing](#) a deal with

another foreign-born player. This time the Tribe is zeroing in on a right handed pitcher by the name of

Lea

ndo Linares Gonzalez

, a Cuban teenager. The deal is worth \$1 million, which is a good chunk of the \$3.6-some million they are allotted in the bonus pool.

Gonzalez is 19 and played for the Cuban National Team. Sometimes Cuban players can be signed to deals that don't take up the International pool money, but Gonzalez has not logged enough time in the professional league in Cuba.

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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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