

Morning Rundown: A Special Kind of Something, Indians Do It Again

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Sunday, July 28 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Saturday, August 10 2013 6:43 PM



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Cleveland sports at [BangTheBook](#)

There's that word again. It's being thrown around a lot on Twitter and everywhere else even. It's a cool word, especially when you are talking about a baseball team. But it scares the bajesus out of me.

I'm afraid though, I'm going to have to agree with the masses. Not that I don't believe in these Indians, I most certainly do. But, I really don't like using the word "special."

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to not use it in regards to this team because of what they're doing. They're not just winning, they're showing some unbelievable grit and determination in the way they're winning. They probably could have or should have lost at least

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one of these past three games against Chicago

But they didn't. They won, all three of them and have a chance to pull off a sweep. And things really are starting to look really special.

WHITE SOX - 5 | INDIANS - 6

W: Chris Perez (4-1)

L: Dylan Axelrod (3-7)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

I now take you to a paragraph I composed in the ninth inning after **Corey Kluber** was just removed from the ball game..

I'm writing this right now because I feel like it is going to come back to bite the Indians. Terry Francona should have stuck with Corey Kluber in that ninth. The single wasn't hit hard, it was just a normal base hit. Kluber wasn't looking like he was in any danger of giving up anything.

Result...

Argh... I really did write that paragraph right before Cody Allen went on to face Dayan Viciedo in the ninth inning with a runner on and two out. Yes, a runner on and two out. The game was tied. After Cody Allen was done, there was no lead, in fact, it was a two-run lead in the opposite direction.

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In defense of **Cody Allen**, the Indians and the White Sox had some more issues with the ridiculous strike zone of umpire DJ Reyburn, and those issues reared their ugly head in that ninth when Allen was getting completely squeezed on any tight pitch on the edge of the zone. Lots of heaters that looked like strikes were called balls, and thus Allen ended up battling more than the White Sox.

Luckily, despite giving up the lead, the Indians [would come back in the bottom of the frame](#) with a rally of their own to tie it up.

And then of course, a good old Ayeeee Vamanos from **Carlos Santana**. You know the rest. This time it was Carlos Santana providing the Indians magic and this team is riding one heck of an emotional high. Forget the seven game winning streak, this team is on a confidence streak.

"It's that never-say-die mentality," Allen said. "They picked me up. They picked me up big time tonight, and we pulled out a crazy win."

Francona's rationale was that he thought Kluber was getting a bit tired and that the team had seen him three times. You can't really argue with him. At least until things get out of control, you eventually have to make that decision unless your pitcher is going to go the distance. You were dealing with a tie game in the ninth, so I can understand wanting to go to another pitcher.

But I'm just going to say I disagreed with his rationale and idea. Kluber looked very much in control as he had looked all game. I'd have given him one more hitter before considering bringing in Allen. But that's just me, that's why I'm not the manager, which is a good thing.

It doesn't matter in the end, because the team was able to bring up an incredible comeback.

Thank the baseball Gods for that too because Cory Kluber didn't deserve the fate he was looking like he was going to be dealt. Since he let up the first runner on in the ninth, and that runner came around to score, he was on the hook for the loss despite pitching so incredibly well.

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Thankfully, that wrong corrected and Kluber would at least exit with a no-decision, but how good does this guy continue to pitch at home? Probably the most complete game he's pitched all year. The sixth inning seemed to just be a hiccup in the whole thing because every other inning was perfect.

"He was so good," the skipper said of the starter. "He just had the one inning where they bunched together a couple hits, and they weren't all hard hit. Just, they bunched them together. I thought that was maybe the one inning he didn't come in enough, but still, it's easy to nitpick. He was very efficient."

Not one single walk, and went to 0-2 to 10 different batters in the game. He only made 95 pitches and 69 of them went for strikes, which is about 72 percent.

Kluber's strikeout per nine ratio is 8.63, slightly behind Justin Verlander and Madison Bumgarner in the top 20 in all of baseball. Walk per nine ratio is 1.96, also in the top 20 in baseball. And his strikeout to walk ratio, 4.40, good enough for 12th in MLB. The guy is good. Time to start believing in him.

Random Notes...

Your walk-off notes.. 9 of them this year for the Indians, just adding to their home dominance. They're also 7-1 in the good old extra-inning category, and that includes games not played at home, so they're coming up clutch when it counts too.

Five times it has come from a home run and all five home runs have come from different players.

Some of the elements to the Indians ninth inning rally may go unnoticed, so we might as well mention them. Drew Stubbs not only getting a good bunt down but being able to hustle it out into a baserunner. That really made that whole inning possible because it put an enormous

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amount of pressure on the White Sox, which is exactly what you wanted to do.

Asdrubal Cabrera's at-bat in the ninth with the runner on third and two outs in a tie game was not really what you do in an at-bat with the runner on third and two outs in a tie game. Was he trying to poke the ball into the dugout or something? Why was he flailing around up there? And at all three swings and misses he looked like a fool. Unacceptable. Luckily, the two sac-flies got the job done until Vamanos time.

Santana had two big at-bats, none bigger than the walk-off shot, but he also doubled home a run earlier in the game. He really needed to come through with that one as he's kind of fallen off in the run-producing situations. Good to see him getting that going again. Quietly he's up to .272 with his average and .835 with his OPS.

Also three hits and a pair of doubles for Michael Brantley, who just keeps hitting. Nick Swisher is closing in on the .250 mark with two more hits, two more walks. He seems to be figuring things out now.

How about Jason Kipnis? Has a rough night at the plate, but still finds a way to knock in two runs in his at-bats and walk once. He grounded into a double play and struck out, so he was probably frustrated at one point. But when he got up in the ninth with that runner on third, he knew he had one job and he got it done.

There was a good crowd last night. Attendance said 22,258, but this was one of those rain game exchanges and boy the fans who chose this game to exchange their tickets for sure did get themselves a good show. If you are waiting to be told that you can go to a game and be supportive, well, go to the game and be supportive.

Mike Aviles threw water at Carlos Santana as he was coming to home plate. I didn't know you could do that now. It's awesome. But, I didn't know.

Chris Perez picks up another win, right place, right time, and a good show from him in the 10th inning. He's getting better and better.

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Chicago's bullpen is bad. Cleveland is slightly above them in ERA. But any time you can get into the Sox pen is a good time, regardless of how the starter is pitching. Or the Indians have single-handedly made the Sox bullpen look worse than it actually is. Either way, when Sox relievers come in, the Indians start hitting.

[VINNIE DOWN WITH THE FISHES]

Everyone was wondering what the move would be in getting newly acquired Marc Rzepczynski on the roster and into the Indians bullpen. You could rule out anyone in danger of being designated for assignment, like Rich Hill, because they would have just done that when they DFAed Joe Martinez.

Take out Joe Smith and Chris Perez, because that isn't happening. You're down to guys like Bryan Shaw, Matt Albers, and Cody Allen.

The one name I didn't mention is actually the guy who [suffered the unfortunate fate of being optioned down](#) to Columbus, and if you weren't surprised by the move, you're either a liar, a Pestano-hater, or just really good at reading Francona and Antonetti's minds.

Vinnie Pestano ended up being the victim of the trade and it should come as a shock to just everyone because of where he started this season. There was a large opinion of fans, analysts, baseball people that thought trading Chris Perez and placing Pestano in the closer's role was something that should have been done in the offseason.

Pestano was given the role when Perez went down with an injury. The guy established himself as one of the best setup men in the league. He was an eighth inning lock-down pitcher. And now he's in Columbus. Not the easiest of moves to make for the Indians.

"We tried in a lot of ways to work through it and help Vinnie get on a path to being the guy we're

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all accustomed to seeing," Antonetti said. "But, it was challenge to do that, and it got to the point where he wasn't getting regular work. We still feel like he's going to impact our team in the second half. We were left with, 'What's the best way to accomplish that?'"

Here's where the move makes sense though. And even though you may think that what Antonetti is saying is that Shapiroese language, he's speaking the truth. The very best way to get Vinnie being back to Vinnie is for him to be down in Columbus. You're probably saying "but he has nothing to prove there" and you're right, but it has nothing to do with proving anything.

It has to do with repetition and settling into a groove. Vinnie has been avoided like a big muddy patch in the middle of the walkway. Francona has used him very sparingly and in situations that are not very meaningful. And lately with the team winning, and the rotation pitching well, those situations have been far and few between.

"With success, comes a lot of innings," Francona said. "I'm not blaming anybody. I've done the same thing. The guys that are pitching well, you run them out there. But, sometimes you get to a point where when you've thrown that much, sometimes you have to alter your throwing program or, as you mature into your career, make some changes."

Pitchers are creatures of habit. They like a routine, they like to be able to do the same thing over and over again. Pestano may have the muscle memory to pitch, but he hasn't been able to fall into a groove because he's been so idle from game action from appearance to appearance. This move will allow him to pitch often and more in a expected way. He'll be able to get his rhythm back in Columbus.

He's been going three days between games he's pitched in, the most amount of days of rest he's come into a game with than any other amount. He can't fall into a groove. This move will help him. This is not unheard of. Yes he's been a regular member of this team and someone that is a bonafied major leaguer. But Asdrubal Cabrera had to go down before and it can help a player out. Hopefully, before you know it, Vinnie will be back not just with the club, but back in the eighth inning and doing what he does best.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

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We've been mentioning **Josh Tomlin** here for the past few days with him being around the club and getting back to pitching. But did anyone think [Josh](#)

[Tomlin was this ahead of schedule](#)

?

"Aug. 22 is the day I had surgery, and Aug. 22 is the day I want to pitch again," Tomlin said. "That was just a personal goal for me, because I know the process takes a full year. So, I set my sights the day I had surgery. I wanted to be back on the same date, pitching and helping the team as much as I can."

That's, exactly three weeks away. And judging by the progress he's making thus far, that isn't really that crazy. Especially since it doesn't appear as if Tomlin would be brought back as a starter, but more as of a reliever. Tomlin is going to be with the Captains tonight throwing an inning of relief. Chris Antonetti has even gone out on the limb and said that barring a setback, Tomlin could realistically make it back and be a part of this team.

"If he doesn't have any setbacks," Antonetti said, "it's a pretty strong likely that he can contribute in either the end of August or early September."

I mean, we'll see. I'm always skeptical when it comes to these guys coming back from elbow surgery within a full year. But if Tomlin thinks he can do it, especially since he's not going to be starting and having to build his arm strength up to that point, then that would be an interesting boost to this team.

No move was made for the Indians obviously, other than acquiring Marc Rzepczynski. But Chris Antonetti thinks that [more opportunities could be out there](#) in August before the waiver deadline passes because some teams are still in the thick of their individual races for the division or a wild card spot. Antonetti even thinks that because of this, the non-waiver deadline should be moved back from the end of July.

But that's a different discussion for a different day of course. Antonetti said that the team could have made a trade, but it would have been a bad one, and [he's not interested in making any](#)

bad trades

"Yeah, we could have made a bad one," said manager Terry Francona, with a chuckle. "Chris (Antonetti) called me and told me about it and I said, "Oh, my goodness." As a manager you want to win every game, but when you're sitting where I'm sitting and you don't think it's a very good deal, you can imagine what Chris is thinking."

Francona said that the asking prices for some players were "unreasonable". One rumor floating out there is that the Giants and Rockies were asking for Danny Salazar in exchange for Javier Lopez (Giants) or Josh Outman (Rockies). Again, that's a rumor, so take it for what it is, a rumor, but if that's the type of trade those teams were trying to pull off, there's no wonder those players didn't really get moved.

Bud Norris went to Baltimore, but I have no idea of how to compare what the Orioles gave up and how that matches to the prospects that the Indians may have given up in a trade for the former Houston starter. Either way, the Indians are probably better off not getting into this really really poor trade market at the risk of getting fleeced.

Speaking of the new Indian, he got to talk to the media since he's now with the team. We've [learned that his nickname is Zep](#) and that's all you need to call him, but that his original last name was once 10 letters longer than it is now. He also is a long time friend of Vinnie Pestano, having played with him in Little League. Perhaps they can eventually be in the same bullpen.

Go ahead and check out Indians first round draft pick, **Clint Frazier**, [absolutely destroy a pitch in an Arizona Summer League game](#) against the Dodgers. What's comical is the fact that the first pitch in the video was making a b-line right for his head, then two pitches later the ball is making a b-line for center field.

Nino is in full baseball mode here and on [The Tribe Daily](#), his own Indians blog. Don't miss all

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the fun, photoshopped Indians players, and LOLTribe ridiculousness.

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