

Morning Rundown: A Bad Turn for Tribe Momentum

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Saturday, August 03 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, August 07 2013 7:55 AM



This is not about wins and losses. People keep saying this is a big series and I think people get lost in their response. Obviously, Francona and the players are going to say "every game is a big series" and "there's more games after to play as well" as your typical cliché responses.

This series is big, but it has nothing to do with the record. Yeah if the Indians lose three of four, it hurts. If they win three of four, it helps, but it's only a few games, there's still more work to do.

But that is exactly why the records, the wins and losses, do not matter when it comes to this series. This is so much more than wins and losses. This is momentum, this is confidence, this is a battle for having a mental edge from August 9th on. You win this series, you shift momentum in your favor. You win this series, you put a ton of eggs in the confidence basket moving forward. You win this series and you have that edge over the other team going forward with just one series left. You set the tone for that series too.

That all being said, this was a horrible turn for momentum's sake. But the good news is that

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there are three games left. So don't go anywhere.

TIGERS - 4 | INDIANS - 2

W: Al Alburquerque (2-2)

L: Chris Perez (4-2)

S: Joaquin Benoit (13)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

I feel like maybe I should just copy paste my Twitter feed from last night and call it a day. There's something that I need to get off my chest right here and right now.

I've been doing this Indians thing for a long time now. So long that the years have started to blend together. So long that I've really forgot. There was a time that I graduated from being naive and un-insightful to the fan that I am today. And before I go further. It has [nothing to do with this pathetic display](#) of "fans" being "fans".

I'm not saying I'm the best fan the Indians have, please don't think that. But I like to think that I'm observant, rationale, and understanding of what this game, and what this team is all about. I'm not right every time, and if I was, that would suck and leave me with no reason to watch this great game or cheer for this team.

But damnit people, am I one of the few? I know there are other people out there. I've grown cynical, at least enough to not be fooled. But I like to think that my optimism is balanced rightly

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with my smarts and experience.

I talk and interact with tons of people every day on Twitter, and I love it. It's what makes the games even more enjoyable to follow. But what irks me is the people that like to use the medium to voice their immediate displeasure with something and jump to some irrational thought. It happens, you can share your emotion, you are a fan. Get angry. That's fine. I get angry all the time and show it on Twitter.

But this is where I'm going to finally get to the point. People need to stop beating **Chris Perez** down. This guy is trying his hardest to win games. He isn't going out there, placing his hat on the mound and waiting for the other team to roll over on him.

He isn't thinking that he doesn't have it on a certain night, so he better tell Tito so he doesn't have to pitch.

He doesn't want to lose games.

He isn't a bum, nor is he a bad pitcher. Is he the best closer or pitcher in the game? Absolutely not. But here's the reality of it all, like it or not. There is no use getting all worked up about it. Chris Perez is OUR closer. And damn me if I'm referring to the team as "we" and the players as "ours." This is August, the Indians are in the playoff race, and everyone who is here right now and reading this that was reading it in April has invested too much time, money, and emotion into this for it to not matter in that way.

I'll take a bunch of brush back for what I had to say last night. That's fine, but I'm willing to take it because someone has to fight for that guy. I don't see a bum, I don't see a guy not trying. You want to tell me that he should tell Tito he should say "Nah, I'm good, I don't have it tonight, pitch someone else."

Anyone who's EVER played a competitive sport knows that that thought is completely ridiculous. Perez may not have it, but he doesn't think that. He thinks he does and until he goes out there and doesn't get the job done, he doesn't know that.

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This has gone completely away from a game recap, but that little rant had to be said. I feel like I had to defend my stance in something more than 140 characters bit by bit. I got a lot of flack for saying that Chris Perez isn't a bum and people need to stop knocking the guy down, and that's fine. I got a lot of people that supported that stance, and that too is fine. But I'm going to stand by that. Chris Perez is our Closer. Did he have it in that game? No. That does not take away from the past month of work. I know the situation was big and that in this game, you NEED him to come through. But guess what. Closer's blow games, sometimes really big ones.

Is he expected to get the job done every night? Yes, but he won't. No closer does. And you're even more in danger when you have a guy working on his third straight day. Is that an excuse? No, but you need to expect that outcome when you have a guy out there in that situation. The overall point is this. Perez can't go without giving up a hit without someone barking on Twitter about him. He has no leeway. Fair or not, can we stop it? Hate him or not for what he has done or what he's said, the guy is on our team. And until he isn't, getting bent out of shape when there is even an sniff of danger is counter productive to what we are trying to do here.

Not talking to the media afterwards? Look, he should do the right thing in this instance and talk to the media. He's only going to honk some of his teammates off by not, and reportedly already has. But the media should probably not act so surprised that he didn't talk to them. He hasn't since the beginning of June, what makes them think he's going to start now?

A guy like Rafael Perez can go his entire career here not talking to the media. Granted, he never was the closer and speaks a different language, but he could have had an interpreter. Is it his obligation? Yes and No. Did the media hound the other players for the answers to their questions. No, and I think they're all smart enough to realize that they can't answer a Chris Perez question. I think people are making too big a deal out of that little situation. Time to move on and forget about it.

I'd be remiss if I didn't at least [mention the previous eight innings](#) , which were a joy to watch and exhilarating to get behind. Perhaps that is why the ninth was so heartbreaking and tough to swallow for a lot of people. If anything, for

Corey Kluber

more than anyone. The guy pitched one incredible game. Something that this team needed really bad in that spot to set the tone for the rotation in this series.

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And once again the guy was left without anything to show for it. That's baseball, and every year you'll have pitchers not get rewarded for what they've shown, Corey Kluber is just that guy this year for the Indians in this case. But the team win is the most important thing and he had nothing to do with the loss, so there's nothing more to really say. His performance was fantastic and he'll have more chances down the stretch to come up big. Hopefully he can do it again.

This team isn't dead by any means. They've shown bounce-back before. Let's not forget that they were the better team in that game for eight innings. They out-played, out-hit, out-pitched the Tigers for eight innings. They're going to be fine.

"That was a hard one," said Francona. "It hurt, but we'll show up tomorrow. We certainly need to be resilient and we've shown that before. If we allow it to get in the way, then we're not the team I thought we were. We'll be OK."

Random Notes...

Before we say anything else more about this team, this game, fault anyone else or shower praises upon someone.

Thank you to the 24,381 fans in attendance. That stadium sounded alive and kickin' and completely behind the team with a whole bunch of energy. That is what this team needs and the way that they are playing, deserves. Three more games, let's keep it up, keep backing, keep attending if you are able to. These are the games you want to be at.

You can go to Browns training camp any year you want. You can't schedule games against your divisional rival for August and magically make them competitive and important.

Can we say something great about the defense? As we've dogged it for the horrible play a few weeks ago, the defense was incredibly stellar last night. Everyone was on their game. They looked superior to the Tigers in that regard. The outfield defense running down everything and making incredibly plays. Brantley throwing out Torii Hunter in the first, which pretty much saved a run since Cabrera doubled a hitter later. The infield defense making some great plays,

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including Kipnis in the sixth. Even Kluber was thankful for it.

"The defense was amazing tonight," Kluber said.

Stubbs left a little be desired on that Cabrera "double" which was very much a single the way Cabrera was running last night. Then he misplayed the hop in the eighth inning. It did lead to that heads up defensive play by the infield that helped get Austin Jackson caught up too far off second.

Joe Smith came in for Kluber with one out in the eighth and a runner on. Things got a little shaky there, especially when he gave up that hit and that situation happened where Jackson rounded second and got caught. Smitty was on the brink there. If had blown the game what kind of back-lash does he get? This bad? Eh, thought so.

Jason Giambi can get one hit in 10 at-bats and it would be to score a run. I mean, he essentially does that (well, two hits in every 10, whatever). But the guy comes up with another big hit to score a run in a big game.

Pretty sure Carlos Santana doesn't get enough for credit for what he does. He's hitting .272, which is just a few points lower than Brantley, but because he has higher expectations he seems to need to do more to get approval. A big double in this one to plate that second run and hey, he did it with two outs.

Anyone notice the big bucket of bubblegum that was labeled "TITO" in the dugout? Is that his personal bucket? What do you think happens if someone takes gum from that bucket. Is there even gum in there? We need to find out more.

The Indians are probably [going to match their August win](#) total of 5 during last season. They've already got three in five games. Surely three more are possible. Right?

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[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Talked about that maligned defense, but how about the bullpen? They were taking an absolute beating a few weeks ago. Every crack was directed at them, they couldn't win any friends. Any time they gave up a single hit they were ridiculed.

But they're as responsible for what is going on as any other part of the team. The bullpen has been just as good as the rotation pitching-wise in the past month.

"The deeper the starters get, the less stress on a bullpen," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "The other thing is, Rich Hill has been really good lately. When you have that situational lefty, a lot of times you bring him in when the game's on the line."

Of course a lot of it has had to do with the fact that they haven't been overworked and the starters are able to get deeper into games for them to pitch less, and as Tito noted, you can use guys like Hill when they are meant to be used. But they've really fallen in line since Perez's return, which has just as much to do with it as anything. I already talked about Chris earlier, but this just goes more to my point. You can tell that is the truth because the guys leading up to him even know it. They know that guy is back there, so they know their role. They know when they're going to be used and they are comfortable with that.

"We've been getting a little rhythm out there and getting some confidence," Allen said. "Having C.P. back pitching as well as he has been has really allowed us to have some confidence in just getting the ball to him."

Bullpen is as much talent as anything, but it is also roles. That's why this talented bunch was able to be as good as it has been the past few years. The roles got a little hazy for awhile and the talent was getting re-adjusted and realigned after the offseason shakeup and injuries. But they're hitting a groove now and if they can get Vinnie Pestano back at some point, it will only get better. I know last night hurt, but look past it if you can and just put your faith in them for what is going on.

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Shoot, it may even get an infusion of youth and electricity with **Danny Salazar** at some point. For now, Salazar is

[going to make a spot start](#)

, and only a spot start on Wednesday. The gutsy move by the Indians to start their young rookie in his second major league start instead of Ubaldo Jimenez. Could Salazar put himself into the rotation? Unlikely, he's coming off Tommy John surgery and hasn't really been tested deep into games, and is surely on a strict pitch count.

Despite that, the Indians feel Salazar is in a good spot right now with his workload and they feel he's ready for the challenge.

"We thought it was a good time," Francona said. "We're trying to balance Danny's innings, competitiveness, things like that, and we wanted to get to a point where we didn't have to bring Danny [up] and mess his innings up. Our player development staff has done such a good job, where now we can bring him up, he doesn't have to pitch three or four innings and we don't have to go to the bullpen."

You won't find any of the Biogenesis stuff from me here. I'm not interested in talking about Alex Rodriguez, who is not a member of the Indians. Yeah it's a big baseball topic, but right now, a bigger baseball topic to me are the games being played, especially the four in Cleveland this week. As I've mentioned already, it is an important series for reasons other than wins and losses. We don't need to be concerned with players who are not on this team and are not playing.

I will say though it is a bit of an intriguing dynamic how this season for Detroit will be augmented by the absence of Jhonny Peralta for the next 50 games. Having played 110 games, that is essentially the rest of the year before they'll get him back. If they're in the playoffs, then yeah, they'll get him back for the part they need him for.

But what if they're in trouble before that? What if they need him sooner? Obviously he isn't really missed defensively, but he was a guy hitting in that bottom half of the lineup that most teams do not have. You talk about a deep lineup, Peralta hitting in the Indians lineup back when he was here in the 4th or 5th spot is bad news. Him hitting the 6th and 7th spot behind guys like Victor Martinez and Prince Fielder? His numbers not only look better, they get better because of the hitters pitchers have to avoid.

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So while largely, this Biogenesis stuff doesn't really matter for the Indians, the Peralta aspect for the Tigers is going to be an interesting thing to keep track of considering they are in direct competition with the Tribe.

Some rehabbing news. **Lou Marson** was with the Clippers on Sunday and had three at-bats. He struck out twice but made the start, which is good news for him as he is finally back in action after the long layoff.

Josh Tomlin will be with the Captains again soon, but is currently with the team at home for these big games against Detroit. He [said he hopes to get up to two innings soon](#) .

And finally, **Brett Myers** is still just floating around. He [received a second opinion on his throwing elbow](#) and still, no surgery is needed, but it's still going to take time. I'm not sure how much time because he's had a lot. Myers threw five pitches off the mound on Sunday and started feeling something. How could this man possibly be okay to not need surgery? Myers said that the flex tendon is injured and that "it's tough to come back from."

So, if surgery isn't needed, does the team just shut the guy down at this point? If you aren't getting any better after months, then, something is fishy.

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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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