

Morning Rundown: Tribe Still Searching for Perfect Game Against Tigers

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Sunday, August 04 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Thursday, August 08 2013 9:01 AM



I could not sleep Monday night and it had nothing to do with the sunburn that I'm dealing with. I'm going to reveal a behind the scenes trick right now, but I write most of the Rundown the night before it actually goes up. My job requires me to be at work early, so I get up ridiculously early to make sure everything is still good, double-check it, and add in quotes or finish up the game recap.

I had written the Chris Perez essay all before I went to bed. I even spent extra time going back and forth with a few people on Twitter about the secondary issue of him not talking to reporters, which was not a focal point of yesterday's post because that gem didn't pick up much steam until after.

So, I couldn't sleep because I had Chris Perez and the Indians on my mind, is that what I'm saying?

Well, no. I couldn't help think of what I had written. I thought maybe I had acted irrationally and

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jumped to a gut reaction, despite the fact that I had pegged many others with having done that. Even though we could fall on different sides of the fence, I surely could have been speaking from a point of passion with no chance to cool down about what I was seeing.

I woke up and had started to read what I wrote. And quite frankly, I felt ten times as strongly about it the morning after than I did as I was writing it out. I even went ahead and added in some thoughts and changed some things.

I've stuck to my guns on this. Last night wasn't exactly the bounce-back you were either hoping for or thought this team would give. There was a lot of "this team is resilient" talk and "we'll come out the next night" banter, but really, they didn't. It was your typical game in which the offense faced a good pitcher having a good game, and your pitcher did not show up.

It just happened that Cleveland's pitcher was supposed to be their best and Detroit's pitcher, is, well, their best.

TIGERS - 5 | INDIANS - 1

W: Justin Verlander (12-8)

L: Justin Masterson (13-8)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

With all due respect to what Max Scherzer is doing this season, Verlander is still the ace. And shoot, the Indians avoided him this series, so Verlander is the best the Indians will see in the four games. And as un-Verlander-like that he has looked this season, especially against the Indians, he still is pitching well enough to win games.

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He isn't pitching bad, he just seems to be a little less dominant as you are accustomed to seeing him be and that could be by design. If this is the point that he's decided to "kick it into gear" if you will say, then well, I wouldn't want to be facing the Tigers too much during this stretch run to the end of the season, or the postseason if that happens.

And really, you can't say much more than that. We will talk about Justin Masterson's performance, but when you face Verlander when he's good, you can't do much but hope you scratch a run across like they did early and hope your pitcher is perfect, which Masterson was far from, obviously.

Or you work him as best you can to get him out and take advantage of that bullpen. And of course, that didn't happen considering he went eight strong innings and it didn't take him a whole mess of pitches to do that either.

Well, just as August 5th was not and has not been kind to Perez, the number five came back against Justin Masterson last night. All things consider, six innings he pitched in where really good.

That other one, the fifth inning, was the one responsible for the five spot. And that is what did him in. You could even go as saying that the lead off hit by pitch by Ramon Santiago was a blown call and it should have never gotten to that point. And it was the slider that Masterson ended up pegging Santiago and later Victor Martinez with, the pitch that has been so deadly for him this year, and the pitch that was called the second most valuable pitch in the major leagues this year, according to statistics.

But the umpires ruled what they ruled, and [things spiraled to the point of a 2-1 Tigers lead](#) , that was until the mighty Don Kelly stepped up to the plate with two on and one out.

"He loves facing me," Masterson said. "If I was Superman, he'd be my kryptonite. Especially this year, with a couple of homers. I guess there's always a guy. He salivates when I get up there."

Wait, what? Don Kelly?

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Yeah, that's right, only the guy who is now hitting .458 against the Indians right-hander. Kelly is of course a left-handed hitter, so that explains a little about the incredible success he's had against him. It wasn't a good night for that though, obviously.

After he loaded the bases earlier in the game with nobody out, then got out of it completely untouched, he reached the fifth inning when things went south.

"We get to Kelly, and he hits the home run," Francona said. "That kind of spread the game out a little bit. Other than that, Masto was really good. But you give them an opening, that's what they can do."

What can you do? One bad inning, yet again, was the downfall. One bad inning where the pitching fell through was the determining factor in this game. Verlander was good, yes, and the offense couldn't muster more than a run, but if that inning isn't bad, this may be a different outcome. We're talking about a team having to play perfect to beat Detroit, which makes sense because of the situation the two teams are in. Yes, obviously Detroit is the better team, more talented, what have you.

For Cleveland to win, they need to play better, and they have, but they also need to play flawlessly, which they haven't so much. Until Detroit makes multiple mistakes that let's the Tribe through with winning with a few mistakes, this team is going to have to keep searching for the perfect game against the Tigs.

I mean overall, the Indians have won just three games against this team. They've won 10 straight, and are hot as can be. If they run through this with a sweep, they'll increase their lead over the Tribe to seven games, and the Indians may as well be the Royals. You can win all the "games you're supposed to" but you need to throw a few more games in against good teams, especially the one you are chasing to even have a puncher's chance.

Random Notes...

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Michael Bourn certainly did his part, having two of the four hits and stealing a base. Other than him, lot's of zeros and a few ones in the hit column.

It was an interesting sequence in the second when Cleveland scored their run. Cabrera doubled to lead off the inning, then advanced to third on Brantley's single. Almost mirroring a situation that Masterson had just escaped from with the bases loaded and no outs. Only second was empty. With the defense at double play depth, Santana grounded one on the infield and Santana broke to home. That forced the throw to home to get Cabrera in a run down.

Now you could say, if Cabrera stayed, it would have been a double play as Santana and Brantley would have been out at second and first. But because Cabrera broke for home, he forced a throw over and then stayed in the run down long enough for Santana to get to second, Brantley to get to third, and only Cabrera would be out. It was kind of heady in the situation and hey, Ryan Raburn's groundout a batter later scored Brantley, not ended the inning, so it obviously was a good outcome.

Of course a three-run home run from Santana or Raburn would have been a better outcome, but.

The only other real opportunity that the Tribe seemed to have was in the sixth when Gomes was hit by a pitch and Bourn got a hit to lead off the inning. With no outs, Swisher would hit one deep to right, but it was just a loud out that moved Gomes to third. Bourn would even steal second in that situation giving the Indians two in scoring position and one out, but Kipnis and Cabrera couldn't come through. It was a 5-1 game at that point, and it would have really taken a Verlander meltdown for that to turn the Tribe's favor, but it was still a game.

Notice I say, it still was a game, because after that, Verlander cruised the next two innings, almost kicking it into a higher gear.

[WORST NEWS EVER]

You couldn't have timed this any worse. No really, I'm serious, there is no other time that this

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could have happened that would have been any worse than right now.

Corey Kluber has been placed on the 15-day disabled list [with a strain in his middle finger on this throwing hand](#). The exact same injury that sidelines Zach McAllister for nearly two months. So by my calculations, a week into August, the Indians may not even get Kluber back in time for him to pitch in a meaningful game.

Seriously, this couldn't have been more poorly timed, have I mentioned that?

Obviously, the short term plan is that Danny Salazar likely slots into the rotation for the time being. So his spot start today now becomes the first of more for him. It also keeps Ubaldo Jimenez from sweating through his baseball jersey.

There is also little known or said right now about it. But there is an understanding that the Indians found this out shortly before the game against Detroit and made the roster move to get another arm in the pen up because of all the unavailable arms.

Mickey Callaway also seemed to indicate to Katie Witham of Sportstime Ohio that Kluber did it in the eighth inning, close to when he was removed from the game for Smitty.

This is just no good, and unfortunately there is nothing much left to even say at this point. A rough break for him, an incredibly rough break for this team, especially because of the way he's been pitching, and an incredibly frustrating piece of news for this team moving forward this season.

It almost wants to put you in a fit of rage and knock something over.

[TALK TO ME, NO DON'T]

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A lot of was made last night of Chris Perez not speaking with reporters. I'm in the camp that it really didn't matter considering he hadn't been talking to them since he returned from the disabled list. While others believe that either A) Perez owes it to his teammates so that they don't get the questions or B) Feel he is somehow showing a lack of respect to his team.

I don't really buy B, but I can see a lot of point in A. Here's the thing though. These are all grown-up people, for the most part. They can handle a question "What did you think of the way of the game ended," because guess what? That question is asked to EVERYONE! If some teammates are upset, fine, then they need to settle that behind closed doors. The media does not need to get further involved. Them hounding him TMZ style too is also not going to work, so just stop this ridiculousness.

Perez went on to say yesterday that he is not talking the rest of the year, and told reporters to stop asking him questions. How about we respect that? This wasn't a "I'm leaving, I'm avoiding the media" situation because a guy didn't want to face the music. This is something he has been doing much longer than right at this game, so perhaps we should acknowledge that.

Francona also noted that Perez, nor is anyone else in the lockerroom, required or forced to talk to the media. Obviously, if you don't that upsets some people, but in this instance. You know, I even seem to remember last year Perez saying a bunch of things that people didn't enjoy. Perhaps he is just learning from past experiences and being smart.

Yet, we feel the need to kill him. As for his teammates being upset? Tito also said that Perez came to see him in his office after the game. So that takes anyway any rumor that may have been floating around and bolting. If being a bad teammate is me not answer questions then, let's get real. Again, you can answer the same question Perez is going to get. He didn't get dressed and bolt, leaving what was left to fend off the vultures.

"It's his personal choice," he said. "I think we try to foster an environment where -- good, bad, in between -- guys are accountable. Some guys choose to not talk. Like I said, it's not always a perfect world."

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If there's an issue, again, teammates need to handle it and let him know, and I'm sure they will. Some were mad at him last night? What for? They, along with the media knew he wasn't talking and hadn't been talking.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Mentioned it yesterday but, man is **Michael Brantley** really taking to left field. His arm plays up way better there, getting to get to more balls, and [getting to challenge more people at second base](#). I'd even venture to believe that it is 90 percent

"I can't tell you how many rallies he seems to have averted," manager Terry Francona said. "He goes in the corner, he makes that throw and, if I'm a baserunner, I'm going, too, because it looks like a double. And then he throws it right on the money, and it's a one-hopper and it's like, boom, boom, you're out."

I think in left he gets more opportunities than he would in center because the ball tends to be further out. And I really honestly believe he got a little strong in the arm strength department. The biggest thing though with that is accuracy. He has been on point with most of his throws, challenged much of the time by baserunners, and come away with victories in those situations.

Who would have thought Brantley of all people would be leading the AL in assists. He's also right in the thick of it with the Leader of the entire Major Leagues, Carlos Gonzalez. He's saving runs though. In that situation with Hunter on Monday, he threw him out and Miguel Cabrera doubled a hitter later. That would have been a run on the board for Detroit. He took that run off. That's true defensive value.

Josh Tomlin will [indeed throw two innings](#), or at least attempt to (35 pitches) today. He'll be with Double-A Akron for this appearance, so you can check him out if you are in the Akron area.

Attendance in Cleveland may still not be up as much as you'd like, but ratings certainly are. The

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Indians game on Monday was the highest rated game in six years. So, you mean to tell me the most Indians fans that have ever watched a game in six years watched that whole Chris Perez thing? No wonder there was so much ridiculous backlash. We had a bunch of band-wagoners moaning and complaining.

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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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