

Morning Rundown: End of a Tribe Series But Not a Season

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Sunday, August 04 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Saturday, August 10 2013 9:22 AM



Going through this, here's something that I've kind of found really funny, especially with the Browns first game on Thursday night and the preseason starting for football.

When this Indians season started, there was little care, perhaps even some disdain towards the team. Yeah they were active in the offseason and whatever, but there were a lot of fans dis-interested and still in that "prove it to me first" mentality. But now with the recent surge, a lot have come back and even the ones who were still around were getting excited. Heck, I'm excited, how could you not be the way the team has been playing?

But, a large portion of people getting excited were jumping from "well whatever, another year another losing season for the Tribe" to playoffs, to World Series. Maybe not saying World Series, but reading comments after his series ended in a total failure, there are people who were saying "The Indians can't hang with the big boys" as if they were expected to all a long.

This team was not very good last year. They were very flawed. They had talent and drive that showed at times, but largely a team that needed fixed in many areas. They got fixed in many areas, but they're still very much a work in progress. They went from a non-contender to a hopeful contender and are still there.

They need more pieces to compete with a team like Detroit, who just has more talent right now. It isn't unreasonable to expect competitiveness, which they were in each of these games except the last one, but it is a little unreasonable to expect a four game sweep and utter domination of the rest of the schedule en route to the World Series.

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Which I think a lot of fans were hanging their hats on, and that's a shame, because it feels as if this sweep has almost diminished what is happening in Cleveland with this baseball team.

TIGERS - 10 | INDIANS - 3

W: Max Scherzer (17-1)

L: Zach McAllister (4-7)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

The important thing to do is to not look at this season in a four game scope, or even in a scope of just their performance against the Tigers. This team is more than what you've seen.

This team is not the same one from 2012, we've been over that before and I think that was established. They've gone on slides and look, bounced right back. It has everything to do with the fact that they are more talented than most of the teams they face. They are not better than Detroit, which is why they got swept. One game should have been there's, but the other three? Detroit won because they just had more in the end.

There's a better manager, more leadership, better starting pitching, a deeper bench with a stronger lineup, and some of the same parts in the bullpen that are coming back together so that it is working correctly once again.

So before you go saying "oh this is the beginning of the end, the season is over, time to turn over to the Browns" just slow down and grab the nearest inhaler.

This game went wrong when **Zach McAllister** didn't look right. Not sure what was up, it could

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be an injury, it could just be a case of not having it,
[but McAllister lost it after the second inning](#)

"I just got out of sync," McAllister said. "I felt good, felt like the ball was coming out the way I wanted it to. I just wasn't able to command it. That killed me today. I wasn't able to make the adjustment that I needed to to get back into it and get outs when I needed to."

So thankfully, no injury, just a complete loss of command. Luckily McAllister isn't a guy who has anything different or unusual, so he should be able to toss a side bullpen and quickly readjust. Hopefully.

Other than that, there just was no offense that could get going early and what offense materialized was simply not enough as Detroit built their lead. And what can you expect with a 16-game winner on the mound. Not just any 16-game winner, but one who has lost just one game all year. He wasn't going to be losing this one.

"Tonight was a tough night. It was actually a tough series," said Tribe manager Terry Francona, whose players had a meeting after the game. "But I was kind of proud of our guys. They kept playing. Scherzer is on the mound, he's one of the best in the game, and we're down a bunch. It's frustrating, it's a hard way to play, but they kept playing."

Scherzer was Scherzer, and that was it. There was nothing much else to this one, the most uneventful game of the series. Leyland said that they could have lost two games, but they ended up winning and credited the Tribe. He said they aren't going away despite this series putting some distance between the Tigers and Indians in the standings.

They aren't going away, but they probably aren't catching Detroit.

Random Notes...

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A good night for Asdrubal Cabrera, which he needed given the recent discussion about how he is pretty much "miscast" as a cleanup hitter. And don't get me wrong, he is definitely in a spot he doesn't belong. But he's there because he's one of the best hitters the Indians have. They need a legit cleanup hitter and they're probably hoping that that need presents itself at some point in the near future. But right now, Cabrera is there because they have no one else. He needs to do something there though, he can't continue to hit that way, because [Tito won't go away from him](#)

"You go through runs where you get cold, you get hot," Francona said. "Cabby's got a pretty good track record. If you move Cabby too soon, say, down to sixth or seventh, he's going to get hot. It's like if you're playing 50 bucks, 50 bucks, 50 bucks, and all of a sudden you get hot and you're playing for five. He's going to get hot, and I'd like to get the most out of it and keep him where he is. "

Tito even said that if he doesn't get hot, the team as a whole might not be good enough. So really, he's hanging his hopes on this team making a run on Cabrera getting hot and helping carry this lineup. Hopefully Cabrera can make his manager look really good in that regard, because all he's done thus far is make himself look really bad. A pair of RBI doubles is something to build on though.

The story of the night though? Ryan "The Pitcher" Raburn of course. He pitched a scoreless inning as the Indians simply ran out of relief pitchers, so they threw the guy who's just done it all this season into the for the Indians in there and he did his job. He topped off at 88, threw a changeup at one point, and even got pinch hitter Matt Tuiasosopo to strike out.

"The bright spot was Ryan getting in and pitching well, and getting a strikeout there," Aviles said. "When you get a situation like that, sometimes you've just got to turn the page and in that situation, we pretty much got beat in every facet of the game. It was good to see Ryan give us a little laugh."

Just, incredible. It was the first time since that night Andy Marte took the mound against the Yankees and struck out current Indian Nick Swisher in a scoreless inning. Sad Marte never took up a career revival as a reliever.

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You know, Chris Antonetti [brings up a good point. It doesn't matter if the Tigers beat the Indians more than the Indians beat the Tigers. The Indians could have](#) more wins at the end of the year and still have all those losses to Detroit. Obviously that won't happen at this juncture, but it is at this time we need to remind ourselves of the schedule. The really really tough part is over and with only one more series left against Detroit, the Indians can now get back to beating up teams that they are likely to beat up on.

[MEGA MARK MINIMIZED]

Can it be April again? **Mark Reynolds** pretty much was the Indians offense for the entire month. Now he's searching for a job or hoping a team wants to give him a shot to break out of this slump. [The Indians designated the man](#) they called Mega Mark for an entire two months for assignment.

Reynolds didn't meet the expectations he had coming into the season, he exceeding them, by the lengths of some of his home runs that he was hitting. With Chisenhall's slump, he became a huge help at third even, and through 28 games he had already hit 10 home runs. He would hit five more through his time with the Tribe.

"We knew when we got him that he wasn't a .300 hitter," Francona said. "He was hitting .300 and basically hitting everything in sight. And [explaining his slump] is probably not as easy as one sentence. The pitches he was hitting in April, he was either fouling, or sometimes you get one pitch in an at-bat, and he'd miss it or foul it and strike out."

Francona would say for weeks now that they were trying to balance getting him at-bats, because they knew he had a streak in him, and getting guys like Raburn (more in a second) time because they were actually hitting.

It has now reached a point where the Indians simply couldn't get Reynolds any time because he did get it, he wasn't producing, at all. Reynolds' downfall is that all he does is hit home runs. And when he isn't hitting home runs, he really isn't hitting or producing. Francona even said it, he isn't a .300 hitter and the Indians knew that. They knew what they were getting, unfortunately, they didn't get what they wanted. I think we all signed up for a right-handed power hitter who could hit 25+ home runs. We were all praising Mega Mark for that month there. Some, myself

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including, even broached the topic of considering extended him and it was only May!

And now, as Raburn and Giambi produce, the bullpen shows a need, and Swisher has overcome injury issues, the opportunities and need for Reynolds, have all disappeared.

"With Raburn swinging the bat the way he is, and [Mike] Aviles playing really well," Francona said, "it was becoming harder to get him to where he was going to be able to get hot. And then we needed a pitcher [due to Wednesday's 14-inning game]. And I think it was becoming harder for Mark to handle not playing. It was just time to do what we did."

Also in that light, they're giving Reynolds a chance to get some time elsewhere, where a team can get him at-bats cause they have space for him. They'll probably try and trade him, but if he ends up getting claimed, I don't think they'll mind someone taking his salary off their hands, even though the savings are really small.

Thanks for the month and a half Mega Mark. It was fun having an MVP candidate for a month. Then reality set in, then reality turned into a nightmare that Reynolds still has not woken up from.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The big news on Wednesday is kind of interesting to now look at given what has happened with Reynolds. The guy who came in with a guaranteed contract, Reynolds, is gone, and the one who came in and had to fight for his spot now has two years of security with an option for a third.

The Indians rewarded **Ryan Raburn** and solidified their bench for years to come [by agreeing on a two-year contract for 2014 and 2015](#) with a club option for 2016. The deal is worth \$4.85 million, which is a great price for a guy who is more than a bench player, but not quite a full-time starter.

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The extension was actually finalized last week the day that Raburn hit a pair of home runs against Chicago. Quite the celebration. And now it has been announced when the Indians are playing the team that let Raburn go after a down season. The Indians wanted to extend Raburn at the All-Star break and Raburn, appreciative of the Indians taking a chance on him clearly wanted to stay.

"We did some pretty significant moves this winter," Francona said. "But we're not always going to be the highest bidder on guys, so we got to figure out a way to win. And having guys like Raburn and Aviles on our bench helps us win, and it's proven. We've seen them time and time again help us win games. Moving forward, I don't see that being any different."

It is also a big move for the Indians with the possibility of trading Asdrubal Cabrera in the offseason. Cause then Aviles becomes your starter and Raburn your primary guy off the bench, and best guy off the bench. So really, the Indians are just doing what they can to solidify their depth. You can't help but applaud the move.

"I don't think anything went right for me last year," Raburn said. "Of course, when I went home, of course it's in the back of my mind whether or not I still wanted to do it. I'm just glad that Cleveland gave me the opportunity to come back and show that I can still play. I've been enjoying every minute of it so far."

And his former manager, Jim Leyland, who really had a hard time seeing the Tigers get rid of Raburn, said he was really happy for his former player and knows it has worked out real well for him.

The other interesting comparison you can make in the same light is the signing of Brett Myers, a guaranteed deal that has not panned out at all, to the minor league deal of **Scott Kazmir**, a deal that has also really worked out to the Tribe's favor, like Raburn. Antonetti was asked if now

[gettin](#)

[g Kazmir locked up was next](#)

"I wouldn't want to comment on anyone in particular," Antonetti said. "What I can say about Scott is how much we appreciate what he's done for the team this year, how far he's come, the

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work he's put in. All of those are great things, and he's re-established himself as not only a Major League pitcher, but a very successful one. I know he'll have a lot of opportunities this winter. At that point, we'll probably explore it."

Antonetti is right, he'll get opportunities. He's a lefty who had a lot of success before his downfall. He's probably in the running for Comeback Player of the Year. The Indians would be wise to get something done before Kazmir hits the market if they do want him to stick around, and I would think that they do given the start of their rotation and new-found money. And you have to think, like Raburn but even probably more so because of his situation, Kazmir would be really fond of sticking around in Cleveland given the chance that they took on him to bring him back.

To replace Reynolds on the roster and get another bullpen arm, the Indians recalled Preston Guilmet for the second time and it could be more of a permanent move for the rookie reliever. Guilmet obviously had some issues and was asked to do a tough thing and pitch more than he's probably accustomed to on Thursday, but the Indians like him. He's like **Vinnie Pestano** in a lot of ways.

Which is a perfect excuse to bring up the Vin man and his progress in Columbus. The Indians [hope it isn't long before he is back because](#) right now, he's doing everything he's supposed to. From not giving up a run when he's pitched and striking out four in three-plus innings, to communicating with Tito and management about his progress. Tito said he is out sight, but certainly not out of mind.

"To his credit, he's gone down there with a really good attitude, because it's not easy," Francona said. "This guy was the guy, man, for two years ... and all of a sudden you're sending him to Triple-A. That's hard. It's not fun for me. It's not fun for him. And I think he's handling it really well."

Now I don't think the Indians are going to bring him back after three games, but I really don't think it will be long before he is back with the club. Especially if he keeps throwing up zeros or making things look easy and showing he is getting back to his routine form.

It was confirmed that **Corey Kluber** will [miss at least a month to six weeks](#) due to his strained

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finger. If McAllister's recovery time is any indication, it could be seven or eight weeks before we see Kluber, if we even do. It could get to a point where they just shut him down completely or bring him back in a limited role, because remember the chances for rehab appearances dwindle when the minor league seasons wrap up. The Indians think he'll be back though.

"I'm optimistic that Corey will pitch in September," Antonetti said. "We'll have to see how he's feeling. Different people recover at different rates. The most important thing in the first step of the process is making sure he's not feeling any symptoms, not feeling any pain, tightness."

Kluber doesn't know what to expect, but he can at least lean on McAllister having went through it and have a staff that just treated someone with the same situation, so that is the positive he can work with in his comeback from it.

With that in mind too, **Josh Tomlin** is now being thought to be stretched out "as much as possible" because of Kluber's injury. Tomlin pitched two scoreless with a hit and a strikeout on Wednesday for the Akron Aeros. The Indians will probably eye more of a September return for Tomlin and use August to build him up as much as possible. Tomlin is going to throw three more innings on Sunday.

Finally, because I didn't have the chance, how about Danny Salazar? The guy has incredible stuff. He's in special company in the Indians rookie strikeout realm. He got Cabrera three times? Even Miggy tipped his hat to him despite hitting the homer late to chase him. He said he's going to be special, and that's something coming from the game's most special hitter.

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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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