



Sorry for the run of inactivity lately, I know you missed the rundown in your mornings. But my mornings have been starting pretty early, which never really jive well when you are dealing with a team playing on the west coast. Hard to write when you sleep, eh?

That was last week, this week was a few different things, from the off day on Monday to not feeling well Tuesday, things have just been hectic around these parts. But I'm back and ready to go for this stretch run. And we've got a lot to talk about.

**INDIANS - 1 | BRAVES - 3**

**W: Kris Medlen (11-12)**

**L: Ubaldo Jimenez (9-9)**

**S: Craig Kimbrel (43)**

**[BOXSCORE](#)**

Are the Indians struggling offensively or the Braves that good of a pitching team?

I think it is a little bit of both. There is a bit of struggling going on, and when you run into a team who is the best in the major leagues in terms of pitching with their 3.17 ERA, then things like what just happened, will happen. You'll score three runs in three games.

The Indians were right there with Atlanta in all three games. No game looked impossible to win, and in none of them did the Indians look as if they did not belong with the team they were playing with on the field.

Was the offense bad? Of course, but when the opposing team is THAT good of a pitching squad, then your struggling offense is going to look bad. But the [Indians punched out seven hits on Thursday](#), were one big hit away from winning on Wednesday, and out-hit the Braves on Tuesday.

The Braves just had the big hits, all series long.

*"We're not hot right now, by any means," Francona said. "When you're not knocking the ball all over the ballpark, getting key hits are huge. And we haven't been able to."*

We'll talk about the measures the Indians took out after last night's game in an effort to get hot. But it isn't just a Braves thing. The Indians are last in offensive categories in the month of August, which has just a few more days left in it. When they can score three runs, they're good, but when they can't, 1-11 as Bastian noted in his game recap.

I don't get the sense that this team is done, or believes that they are done, and their manager certainly doesn't think so either.

*"We've got a lot of good baseball left," Francona said. "I wish we would've played better here, but my goodness, no."*

This team is just four games out of the wild card and six out of the division with a month to play. That is not out of it by any means. They've been fortunate in that while they've struggled, so have some of the other teams. But this is it, this stretch against Atlanta and Detroit, this has been their tough part in the second half. And if they get through it still in it, then you just never know what will happen.

Because while the offense has been sputtering around, there has been one thing that has kept this team afloat and has been remarkable to watch. The pitching. The pitching is doing all sorts of good things now, and you have to look at the guy who gave the team a chance last night. U-Bad-O and Ewwbaldo are distant memories at this point, because **Ubaldo Jimenez** goes out every night now and is dependable, reliable, and last night, he was incredible despite one mistake to Brian McCann.

*"Whatever the reason this late in the season, he seems to have found a little extra gear," Francona said. "He made a mistake to the wrong guy and that was their three runs. Really, the whole series was their ability to get a big hit and we didn't."*

He didn't walk a single hitter, the people that got on base ahead of McCann were hits that they earned. He struck out 10, which is something he hasn't done since Miley Cyrus was a nice young girl who didn't sing about getting high in the bathroom. No really, he struck out double digit hitters four times in 2010. Since then? Just twice. Last night was the third and he looked like old Ubaldo. He has showed that he is still a viable pitcher and while it would be nice to have a little bit of old Ubaldo around, I'll take this newer than the old new Ewwbaldo, because this one is giving the Indians a chance to win.

**Random Notes...**

Find it hard to believe Michael Bourn has stolen just 20 bases, four less than team leader Jason Kipnis.

Sombrero for Swish, who has been the one guy seemingly hitting as of late, as he goes 0-for-4 with triple strikeouts. Which hurts considering he was one of the guys who came up with runners on and didn't come through.

Pinch hit homer for Lonnie Baseball! Mike Aviles has been playing a lot lately, but Lonnie comes in and does a good job to perhaps get himself going.

Asdrubal Cabrera down to seventh? Hitting behind Yan Gomes? Two spots ahead of the pitcher? Oh boy, have I been gone that long? No? Oh well, jeeze, how the mighty have fallen.

### [HERE COMES KUBEL]

Late last night the Indians pulled off a waiver deal to bring **Jason Kubel** to the Tribe. Kubel was DFAed by the Diamondbacks earlier in the week and [the Indians were able to swing a deal](#) involving an unnamed minor league player to acquire the services of the former Twin. The Indians will also send cash Arizona's way.

While with the Twins he did a lot of DHing, but obviously in the National League he had to play the outfield. He'll probably fill the role that he did with the Twins and be a part time DH and a part time outfielder. Kubel signed a deal with the D-Backs a few years ago and is now in the final year of that contract where he's making \$7.5 million this season. Of course the Indians aren't paying much of that with the season's end only a month away ( [Roughly \\$1 million](#) ). There is a mutual option for that same price in 2014, but this is clearly just a rental at this point, even though they'll have to exercise the \$1 million buyout.

Kubel had an outstanding year in 2012, hitting 30 home runs, more than living up to the contract he signed. This year though he's hitting just .220 with five home runs and 32 RBI. Perhaps a return to the AL is what the doctor ordered and Kubel can turn it around. I mean Mark Reynolds switches teams and he figures it out.

The Indians need to hope Kubel can as they add him to the mix. They've been starving for some offensive production as of late and perhaps a left-handed look can help them against a majority of the pitchers. He's a career .275 hitter against righties with 118 of his career 139 home runs coming off right handers. So he's definitely a guy the Indians can throw in there every day against right handers. Eeen this year, all five of his homers have come against righties, all but six of his RBIs have as well and he's hitting just .162 against lefties.

So clearly, that has been one big part of his struggles, but with the people the Indians have to play against lefties, that won't be an issue.

It really seems like a no-risk situation at this point with a month left. I doubt the minor league player they are giving up is of any sort of high-impact player and the money being exchanged isn't too much. The Indians clearly feel like they have a shot at at least making the postseason, and when you get there, anything can happen. This is a move that they think can help them get there. They're not far out of the wild card, and shoot, with playing a sputtering Detroit team this weekend, you could even pull a little closer in the division, which seemed unlikely a few weeks ago.

The Indians are going to be playing til the end of the season, so they might as well add the bat and see if it can work. Is Kubel a game changer? A piece that they've needed that will take them over the hump? Absolutely not, but he could turn out to be an offensive spark that the team needs to get them right back in the thick of things.

Also consider this: Some of the remaining road games take place at parks he loves to hit at in Chicago (.279, 14 HR, 49 RBI), Detroit (.288, 2 HR, 29 RBI), and Minnesota (.254, 12 HR, 70 RBI). He's a modest hitter at Progressive Field, but he's always been a White Sox killer, of which the Indians have six games against still.

So let's give this Kubel deal a chance. It could end up being a move that puts a charge into this

Indians offense, or one that just ends up being of no significance. Either way, it is a really low-cost chance they're taking on someone to help them out this season and then be done with.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The **Brett Myers** experiment is finally over. The Indians [cut ties with the veteran right-hander yesterday](#), letting the pitcher go outright. He is now free to sign with any team he wants, but will still receive the rest of the money he signed on for with the Indians.

Myers had been on the comeback trail, again and again and again, and this last time looked like it just wasn't going to work out for the Indians the way they wanted. So they let Myers go, which gives him a chance to latch on somewhere else before September. Which is a really nice thing for the Indians to do for him at this juncture.

*"This is where, to me, Chris is one of the best," Francona said. "He gave him a chance to let go now before September, where maybe he can find a spot in the big leagues as opposed to maybe waiting until after teams call people up. I think that shows a lot of class on Chris' part."*

Myers was supposed to aid the rotation, thought to be the innings eater the team so desperately needed. Then he down in April and hasn't been seen since. He made four starts, which equals out to a little less than \$2 million bucks per start. But hey, what are you going to do? That was the guy the Indians picked to sign to be in their rotation. It didn't work out. They've found other options and aren't exactly hurting in that department.

Which is a good thing, but you were hopeful the Myers move would have worked out. It didn't, you move on. It's \$7 million bucks they won't have to worry about next year, because they definitely had no intentions of picking up that 2014 option or bringing him back in some fashion.

The only contribution Myers would have made? It would have been in the bullpen and the Indians have plenty of options there. They can move a starter like Salazar there if they get Kluber back in time, they got plenty of options in terms of young relief arms, from CC Lee to

Preston Guilmet, Myers isn't exactly a priority for them, nor someone they felt like waiting for.

Which brings us to the topic of September call-ups, which is just right around the corner. The Indians [will be making moves in "waves" as they say](#), and one of those arms they'll be calling up is quite the familiar name.

*"We're going to call up guys in two different waves," Francona said. "For obvious reasons, we're not going to say it yet, because everybody doesn't know."*

You know **Vinnie Pestano** will be one of the guys they add right away, as will someone like Nick Hagadone. You will see Josh Tomlin and probably Trevor Bauer, but probably not until after the minor league season is over for the Clippers. Either way, other than the random infielder/outfielder add, this team will be going heavy on the pitching to keep that bullpen stocked, and in terms of people that will actually be used, it will be those arms.

**Corey Kluber's** return could be sooner than originally thought. Because of the lack of minor league season at this juncture, he will not be going on a rehab assignment. And with the roster expansion, [he could work his way back in different ways](#). Kluber tossed a bullpen session earlier this week and is slated to throw a simulated game tomorrow in Detroit. Mickey Callaway indicated that it could be his last hurdle before a return.

*"Both today and Monday, I was kind of surprised how well it went," Kluber said on Wednesday. "I hadn't been off the mound in three weeks before Monday. I was expecting to be a little more erratic than it was, but I was pleasantly surprised."*

With Danny Salazar's [pitch count being monitored](#), and with the ability to add guys like Tomlin and Bauer, you can work around Kluber not being ready to go full-out at first. One idea is pairing Kluber and Salazar to be able to pitch on the day and give the Indians the necessary innings between the two.

Hey, no matter how you get the 0's, as long as you get them. Right?

The Indians will definitely need a bench player or two. Especially with the recent sidelining of **Ryan Raburn**

due to the leg problems he

[has been going through the past few weeks](#)

. Raburn has played here and there, but the nagging injury finally got to a point that made the Indians sit him down and let him rest. The move is really one though that won't last long because it is retroactive to the 19th, which is more than a week ago. He'll be eligible to come back off the list on Tuesday, but by then, roster's have expanded so it really doesn't matter.

They basically couldn't continue to risk going with the shortened bench, so they called up and purchased the contract of Matt Carson temporarily. He will be released to make room for someone else, and heck, could be the victim of the Kubel addition, no harm, no foul, unless you are Matt Carson of course. Cord Phelps may not be a September call-up as he was placed on the 60 man roster to make room for Carson.

Not having Raburn has hurt, because just about any time he plays he does something. And not having that presence off the bench has really hurt. It has thinned the bench, and was especially bad for a National League series not having that extra bat to pinch hit or position player to use in case there was a double-switch. So that's why they brought Carson in and made the move when they did.

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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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