



It was a game of finally.

You probably thought what I did. What does this team have to do? Sacrifice a goat? Do a rain dance? Ask a Magic 8 Ball?

It had reached a point way beyond one team being better than the other. The Tigers are good, but no matter what the Indians had done this week, even against the Braves, they couldn't catch a break. Magnify it against the Tigers, it just seemed like this was a team that had the Indians number. Even the better team loses once in a great while, even if it is once or twice, especially if they play as much as these two teams do.

So in the last game against the Tigers (for now at least?) this season, the Indians finally broke through. It was a game of finally.

INDIANS - 4 | TIGERS - 0

W: Joe Smith (6-2)

L: Joaquin Benoit (4-1)

[BOXSCORE]

Finally, the Indians won a game against the Tigers. Finally, they won a game on the road. Finally, they broke this slump they were on. Finally, Jason Kubel made his Tribe debut with a hit in his first at-bat and a walk in his last. Finally, Chris Perez got redemption (sort of) for that blown save last month. Finally, the Indians got to Joaquin Benoit. Finally, the Indians got a big hit on offense when they needed it the most.

FINALLY, THE TRIBE HAS COME BACK TO.....Wait, sorry, I got excited.

It took eight innings, but [that big hit was finally found and boy did the Indians need it](#). A 0-0 pitching duel that saw a lot of hits but not a lot of hits that knocked in runs was finally broken up when **Mik e Avile**

s sent a grand slam over the wall in the ninth inning off Benoit. The entire inning was set up by walks, two to lead off the frame and then one more with one out to Jason Kubel, intentionally walking him after Cabrera grounded into a force out at first and left the bag open.

Mistake!

"I'm hoping it was huge for the team," Aviles said. "We had a rough road trip. Definitely wasn't the way we wanted it to go. But any time you can squeak out a victory on the last day, hopefully you can take that momentum going forward."

The Tigers on the other hand punched out 11 hits on the afternoon and could not put one across. Credit the Indians pitching staff, six innings from Salazar, three more from the pen, on working their way out of several jams.

The biggest jam of the game was in the first inning with Tigers ace Justin Verlander pitching. He walked Bourn and Kipnis and labored through over 30 pitches before finally finding his way out. He'd have an easier time the rest of the way through, only giving up a few more hits a long the way and getting his team through seven. But the Indians had him on the ropes for awhile and I had a little hope they would either continue to wear him out as much as possible, or scratch a few runs across.

They really didn't do either, but thankfully the Indians staff was just as good, if not better. And it all starts with the starter, **Danny Salazar**, who was once again impressive. Jim Leyland even said that he looked different than the last time they faced him, throwing more offspeed stuff, and that he is "very talented." Tito is just excited, period.

"He was efficient," Francona said. "Pitched in enough with strikes to make them respect that and opened up the plate. When he did get into a couple baserunners, he was able to get himself out of it. His future is obviously exciting. I mean, it's exciting now."

Efficient he was, because Salazar is still very much on this pitch counts of sorts and it took him just 77 pitches to get through the six innings he pitched. A lot had to do with his quick first, which set the tone after Verlander's extended first inning in which he threw 30-some pitches. Salazar finished with no walks and five strikeouts in his six scoreless frames.

From there the bullpen put up more zeros, and the Indians were able to get the big hit that needed for a few days from Mike Aviles to put the team right back into the thick of it for the AL Wild Card.

And with one of those teams coming to Cleveland starting today, time for the heat to be turned up in September.

Random Notes...

Nick Hagadone and Cody Allen combined to work the seventh, Joe Smith was able to pick up the win after a scoreless eighth, and then despite not being the situation and needing work,

Chris Perez came in to finish the ninth.

He did give up three scattered hits though, but the results are all the same, he did his job.

Lots of running around, with Michael Bourn stealing his 21st, Michael Brantley his 15th, and the first of the year for Nick Swisher. All were off Verlander and Avila, but Drew Stubbs was picked off at first.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The one move that the Indians have made that has had time to make an impact, has actually made quite the impact. **Marc Rzepczynski** has done a great job coming out of the pen [for the Indians in the month of August](#).

He finished with just one unearned run surrendered in almost 12 innings of work.

Letters says that the trip to the minors earlier this season with St. Louis has been the key for him in turning things around personally this year, despite not enjoying going down to the minor leagues.

"I was able to work on more stuff down there," Rzepczynski said. "When you're in the big leagues, you can't work on stuff. I was going multiple innings, so I was able to throw my changeup, throw my breaking ball, and work out of my own jams, too."

He's filled a variety of roles, from left-handed specialist, like on Friday, to multiple inning depth guy earlier in games when needed. That has been the big part of his acquisition, the flexibility in the role he has been asked to fill.

The Indians are hoping some other additions, such as Jason Kubel, can pay off. There is one that they've made that isn't really big, but will help them fill some much needed roles on their team. One is the pickup of **Kelly Shoppach** [to be the third catcher](#). The Shop Vac has been

well-traveled since leaving the Indians, stopping in places like Boston, Seattle, Tampa, New York, and Pittsburgh.

The nice thing is, the Indians know what they are getting in Shoppach .Someone who is not only strong defensively, but has been doing the job at the big league level for some time. He's been a starter and a backup, and they know they can count on him to do that job behind the dish. It allows them to play with Gomes and Santana and not worry about not having a backup catcher because one is DHing or what not.

"If we get into the eighth or ninth, the last thing you want to do is bring in a catcher without any experience to catch maybe [closer Chris] Perez with the game on the line," manager Terry Francona said. "That's not fair to a young catcher. So Shoppach is a veteran guy that certainly can handle that."

Always loved Kelly, and he's been through this whole thing before, so he knows what is up. He's also good for some nice pop off the bench if it ever comes to it when he needs to hit. So we know that. He's not a slouch or easy out.

The Indians made a bunch of moves yesterday with roster expansion and are expected to make more in the coming days. One move that will surely find everyone as interesting is [the decision to promote](#) shortstop

Jose Ramirez

from Double-A Akron. Of course, they bypass Juan Diaz and even removed him from the 40-man roster to make room for players like Ramirez, who needed 40-man status.

Ramirez may not be a familiar name to you, especially if you aren't hip to the minor league scene. It isn't everyday a team promotes a player, especially a 20-year-old from Double-A when they are in the middle of a playoff race. But the Indians plan to use Ramirez because of the element he brings to the game and they believe he's mature for his age.

"The way he handled himself [in Spring Training], his at-bats were always quality," Francona said. "Just the way he carried himself on the field, the game didn't look like it was going too fast. There are a lot of things to admire about a young kid like that."

Francona says that he'll play, and we saw him run in Sunday's game. He's a speedy guy with 38 steals to lead the Eastern League. He's got a good eye, with just as many walks as strikeouts, and he can play not only short, but third and second.

To me, this says a lot more than a team calling upon a young kid who can give them some different elements and will help the team. To me, this is an audition to see what they have at shortstop. This team loves Mike Aviles, but I think they like him more as a bench player. Or they like having a bench player like Aviles. So if Jose Ramirez turns out to be more, it would make trading Asdrubal Cabrera a no-brainer, right?

The Indians want to see what they got in Ramirez, because he's had quite the rise through the system. He skipped High-A for Double-A and now Triple-A for the Majors. He hasn't batted an eye-lash so far and the Indians have shown a lot of faith in him at such a young age. It wouldn't surprise me if they are doing this to see if they can be totally comfortable jettisoning Asdrubal at season's end.

The Indians also designated Tim Fedroff for assignment along with Diaz. Both could clear and because it has been the first time they've been designated, they would have to accept the assignment and remain property of the Indians. We'll see there. With teams making moves and roster spots coming up, this is a prime time for someone else's players to get claimed and taken away.

In addition to Shoppach and Ramirez, [the Indians added](#) Nick Hagadone (pitched yesterday), Preston Guilmet, and Blake Wood to their bullpen. Wood is coming off Tommy John surgery and had some rehab work at different levels thus far but has been on the 40-man. They will add Clay Rapada today, CC Lee, Josh Tomlin, Vinnie Pestano, and Carlos Carrasco on Tuesday. Carrasco was sent down because he was unavailable a few days this weekend and they needed to make a move to get Kubel on the roster.

Speaking of Jason Kubel, [the Indians completed the trade for him](#) by sending **Matt Langwell** to Arizona. Langwell was a fringe bullpen arm that the Indians most definitely will not miss with all the other guys they have to try out and change in.

Speaking of names that look like Kubel, **Corey Kluber** will be back in Cleveland with the team as they take on Baltimore. He will throw a simulated game today and could be activated later this week if things go as planned.

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