



There was a chicken, a 4-0 lead, the return of a super utility player, and some YANIMAL running around like a chicken with his head cut....errr, probably shouldn't make that joke.

The Indians are just a few games back from the wild card and have now surpassed one AL East team in the Wild Card chase. They're just on game behind another and three and a half away from the AL East team that is currently the leader.

Is this team getting it together just in time? Is this the beginning of a a run? Things are starting to feel really good around here. Do you feel really good?

Bawk bawk?!

ORIOLES - 4 | INDIANS - 6

W: Bryan Shaw (3-3)

L: Kevin Gausman (2-4)

S: Chris Perez (22)

[BOXSCORE]

We will talk more about the chicken that [spurred the Indians on to victory later](#) . But it has to be said first and foremost. It is good to see the team having fun. It is better than having to hear about dead offense and losing streaks and come in and talk to the media about who knows what.

"I actually love it," Cleveland manager Terry Francona said of the chicken, which was brought in by a pair of mystery players. "They're trying to have fun, and that's the best way to be a good team. It doesn't mean we're not taking what we're doing seriously, because we really do. But yeah, I think it's a good way to come to the ballpark laughing. It's a good atmosphere."

So was the chicken actually the reason for the win? Of course not, but it helped set the stage, because it relaxed the ball club and even though they may have said in the past that they aren't pressing and all that jazz, just because you say something, doesn't mean it is actually the truth.

What actually happened in this one was a great performance by the bullpen and an offense that finally seemed to start looking like it did a few months ago when the Indians were rolling good.

Two reasons for that offensive performance. **Ryan Raburn** was one of them, finally back after his Achilles issue, but still not quite all the way healthy.

"To have that long of a layoff, and to be able to come out and get it done, it was great," said Raburn, who still is not at 100 percent, according to Francona.

Can't wait til he's fully healthy, because he did something no one else has been able to do hurt than other players can't do healthy. He got a big hit. In the first, Raburn came up with a huge double that plated a pair of runs to give the Indians a three-run lead. Mike Aviles would follow with a hit of his own to score the fourth to give the Indians the big inning and set their first lead of the game.

Zach McAllister looked to be pitching pretty well. He went through the first three innings with no issues really, only giving up a double in the third as the biggest threat to his performance. Then something happened in the fourth. He let up a slider to Adam Jones who absolutely obliterated the ball to let the Orioles get on the board. He managed to set the next two down without further scare, giving the impression that it was just a mistake and that he had re-locked himself in.

Wrong, because in the fifth, the wheels fell off. He sandwiched a double between two outs, but then couldn't find it. He walked Brian Roberts, gave up the home run to Manny Machado to tie the game up and then gave up a single to Chis Davis.

He was effectively done. Long before he should have been. Suddenly, a mess of an outing. He went from possibly winning the game, to not being a factor. The Indians went from possibly having a starter get through six innings for them and give an easier night to the bullpen, to having to rely on the bullpen to chuck up five zeros.

And that's just what they did.

And they did it with the lead, because immediately after that inning, the Indians responded, and it was the guy that has suddenly become one of the Indians most reliable players on offense. The guy who needs to be starting every day as the Indians catcher, and when he's not, DHing. His bat needs to be in the lineup because he is slowly turning this offense around with his clutch hitting.

Yan Gomes steps up with two on and one out. And there it is again, a double that scores a run and gives the Indians their second lead. I did not mention that it was Gomes' hit in the first that started the scoring, before Raburn even doubled. It was Gomes who gave the Indians their first lead and he had now given them their second.

The man is on a complete tear right now and he deserves to be hitting in the fifth or sixth hole. Maybe it will send a certain message to a certain player that track record won't put you where you should be when there are other players earning and producing like they should. Gomes is almost a regular at this point and he's almost hitting .300. He knocked in his 32nd and 33rd runs of the year. He hit his 14th double of the season.

Is there any question that Yan Gomes is the starting catcher both the rest of this season, and next season as well? Is there any question that it is time to move Carlos Santana from behind the dish full-time?

There may be, but there shouldn't be. Gomes is the guy, and it is time for the Yanimal to shine and Santana is a better hitter when he's not catching anyway.

As a Catcher: .246/.367/.455 w/11 HR, 36 RBI in 80 Games

As 1B/DH: .284/.369/.441 w/6 HR, 25 RBI in 53 Games

It would also be worth noting that the entire Goon Squad in Gomes, Raburn, and Aviles knocked in all the runs except for the one that scored on a wild pitch.

Not so much bench players after all, eh?

Random Notes...

Joe Smith, Cody Allen, and Chris Perez were as lock-down you can get after Perez's shaky ninth the day before. Perez came out much sharper and more effective in his 22nd save. The trio did not allow a hit or a walk and struck out four of the 10 hitters they faced.

Bryan Shaw did an excellent job coming on for McAllister and he earned himself a win. He too was nearly flawless in his inning of relief.

Jason Kipnis played the role of supporting cast with his at-bats. He scored a pair of runs and had two hits and a walk. But it was the way he got his hits that really helped. He singled in the fifth when the Indians needed it, but early on when they were just trying to get things going, he bunt-singled to load the bases in the first. He'd eventually score at some point in the inning, but that bunt really put the pressure up and I think let the Indians offense settle in.

Asdrubal Cabrera is getting brutal to listen to, so watching is, well un-watchable. I was on my way home when he was up in the third inning with two on and one out and he was called out on strikes. I could sense that coming and I could also feel the annoyance. That isn't even taking account him grounding into that force out between Gomes's single and Raburn's double in the first.

Michael Bourn, excellent play to the end the game. Kudos.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

I remember back to last year when I had the MLB Network and they showed promos for what was, in my opinion at least, the greatest morning show ever, Quick Pitch. The show was simply baseball highlights, narrated by a MLB Network anchor. That's it, and it was glorious. Anyway, in the promo it showed several pitchers, all of whom were hard throwers, and then a "radar gun" of what they threw. Verlander was hitting the 100s, I think CC Sabathia might have been in there somewhere, and so was **Ubaldo Jimenez**. You heard me.

Ubaldo was in there throwing like 97 according to them. It was just a fun little thing, but it gave off the impression that Ubaldo Jimenez still had a deadly fastball. He could still throw hard, but 97 hasn't been seen since he was in Colorado. [Until lately.](#)

"It was all about being 100 percent, basically, with my mechanics," said Jimenez, who was acquired from the Rockies in a deal prior to the July 31 Trade Deadline in 2011. "I've been working harder the last two years, trying to get back to who I was before. I've been getting there. I feel really good. I feel strong right now."

Ubaldo is getting back to sticking around the mid 90's and hitting that 97 on the gun when he can. The velocity is up and that is attributing to his ability to get guys out, especially in those situations when he's needing to get swings and misses, like he did on Tuesday in several instances.

He's also getting it and spotting it and throwing less pitches because he isn't throwing as many obvious balls. And that tick up on the fastball is causing some pitches that were fouled off to be missed.

"This has been now the third start in a row where it looks like he's kind of got a second wind," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "His fastball has got life to it. He's throwing in, especially to left-handers. And that creates the separation in his offspeed. Man, that's exciting to see."

So it's not all just magical mystery as to what Ubaldo is doing or what is happening. The guy is getting his velocity back, he's re-finding himself with some consistency and steady mechanics.

Speaking of consistency... You know who all of a sudden is the most consistent pitcher ever? **Joe Smith**

[The guy has become the man of the bullpen](#)

. He's now the eighth inning guy and Mr. Reliable. Look at his numbers this year, heck, look at them the past three seasons. He's one of the more reliable arms in the game. ERAs under 3.00 the past three seasons. He'll hit 70 games this season and probably 60 innings again. He has a chance to top last year's career year for strikeouts.

He's way advanced than what we thought he was years ago. He's way more than just a matchup right-hander.

"Because of his arm angle, I think people sometimes take for granted that he's a situational guy, and he's not," Francona said. "He's learned to take the sting out of a lot of left-handers' bats. He's always going to be tougher vs. righties because of his style. But he's learned how to elevate a fastball, throw a breaking ball to a lefty, to kind of neutralize them enough [to] where he can pitch full innings when the game is on the line."

The Indians may just get rid of Chris Perez this offseason. He's making a good penny. Joe Smith is making half that but is due another raise. Do you keep paying him to not close? Heck, do you have him close? Some big questions in the offseason regarding the bullpen and Smitty will be at the center of the discussions.

Justin Masterson [will rest for six days](#) and then be re-evaluated as to if he can resume throwing.

His injury didn't stop him from [bringing a chicken to the ballpark yesterday](#) . Yup, you heard me. Masterson brought a chicken to batting practice. Not a rotisserie chicken for his teammates to eat, but rather a live one that was walking around and at one point, was on a leash.

There seems to be a shred of mystery as to what the chicken's purpose is. But it appears to revolve around Cody Allen and his nickname, or the fact that they regard him as a chicken? Either the chicken is named Chicken Al (len) or Cody, both after the Indians reliever.

He also had a "cape" on at one point that had the block C logo on it, of course with the leash as well. Masterson said that a "conglomerate of the bullpen guys" was the reason he brought the chicken. It would [appear that the leader of this conglomerate](#) is none other than Frank Herrmann, which should be no surprise to anyone. I have two thoughts here.

The first is, of course Masty would use a word like conglomerate.

Second, of course it is Masty as the one who is able to get a chicken.

I have to wonder where this chicken is at now. Who is tending to it? Was it a gift to Cody? Does he now have to tend to it? Or is it just in the bullpen now all the time hanging out? Raburn [said that he was in the clubhouse after the game](#), that they had to "give him high-fives" and he's going to get his own locker. I wonder how those high-fives worked. Tito [said he doesn't want PETA](#) chasing him down, so the chicken will be returned. He's like a father telling his kids to "put that back where they found it."

Lord only knows. The media asked Cody about it after the game, and honestly, it might have been the first time they've ever talked to Cody and he looked incredibly baffled as to why he was getting asked chicken questions.

I would be too. Now though, the chicken is here and the Indians are 1-0, so, there's definitely a correlation there. We've had squirrels and seagulls, it only makes sense we added a chicken. Rally time. Raburn said that if the Indians "keep rolling" the chicken has to stay.

Finally, I'm not going to touch [the attendance issue](#). 9,000-some on Tuesday, 11,000 some last night. Some teams that aren't in as good of a position the Indians are in the standings can pull that in with one game and it took the Indians two to get 20,000 fans. Whatever. It is what it is. This is Cleveland, times are tough, the Browns are number one in the town, and even though the Indians are in contention, they aren't lighting the world on fire.

This isn't a topic I'd like to continue to waste my breath on, because I'm gasping for air and about to suffocate. Maybe fans will come to see the chicken now anyway.

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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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