

Morning Rundown: Tribe Missteps Lead to Royals Series Win

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, September 19 2013 6:49 AM - Last Updated Thursday, September 19 2013 8:21 AM



Step away from the ledge. I know last night was a kick to the gut for you. From 7:00 PM on you were probably feeling pretty upset and torn up. The Browns trade away what most would consider their best offensive weapon, essentially hitting the submit button on the 2013-2014 season. And then the Indians go out an hour later, in a situation where many are hoping they finally latch onto a wild card and bring a sense of hope to a city that is reeling and..

WHO in the blue blazing hell am I kidding? Everyone was talking about Trent Richardson and raising a fuss. It's still the same group of us here watching this team, living and dying with every pitch and play. Let's go.

INDIANS - 2 | ROYALS - 7

W: Bruce Chen (8-3)

L: Danny Salazar (1-3)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

I've watched it as many times as STO has replayed it.

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I can't wrap my head around the **Yan Gomes** miscue that allowed Alcides Escobar to score on what should have been a no-doubt about it out, instead of a run scored. Escobar was at third, and Gordon was on first for what Ned Yost said was a hit and run that Emilio Bonifacio missed the sign on. So, it turned into Gordon caught in a rundown, which then turned in to Alcides Escobar caught in a rundown.

I just can't come to explain it. I mean, the easy thing to say is that Gomes just slipped. Bad luck happens, because to misplay something like that, is nearly impossible.

But uh, well, the impossible happens. Because I hate to say it, because defensively he's been such a big force, but Gomes messed up. He did not have his best game defensively last night, in fact, [it was probably his worst for the mistake alone](#) .

"It was a pretty disappointing play on my part," Gomes said. "It kind of turned out to be a pretty [big] momentum play for them, so it was kind of tough to swallow."

There is one thing that you need to absolutely remember though when watching that play. Gomes is still learning this position. He's been so awesome at handling the staff and throwing out runners and all that. But he's still green. Those little things like that play, those have a chance of happening with a young guy who's still learning the little nuances of a position that haven't yet happened to him.

That was one of those instances. People want to point out that he quickly (for some silly reason) glanced at the runner at second. And yeah, that's a mistake, but that is what caused him to break concentration of what was in front of him. The biggest error is WHERE he was. He was on the right side of the base line, which is the exact opposite side of where the runner is running. Move over and Escobar is trapped and when he falls down to the ground, Gomes actually gets to tag him, and isn't slipping and lunging to tag him as he scoots by.

That was the big mistake. It wasn't the glance, it was his placement on that play, and that is where the youth comes in. It sucks because he's been so good and for him to mess-up like this in a big situation is going to bring undue attention and disdain. But Gomes has been awesome this year and while he did mess up in that situation, don't batter him up against the wall.

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Especially since this wasn't the only miscue of the night. And that was the theme. Damn that full moon.

Start in the first. One run scores on the Salvador Perez double, okay, fine 1-0. But Billy Butler is running and they're sending him for some unknown reason. Probably because the third base coach had precognition and knew Asdrubal Cabrera was going to fumble the relay throw as bad as he did. If he hits Gomes better on that, Butler is dead to rights. He doesn't though and the throw is so low it hits Gomes in the knee and bounces up in the air. Not only does that run score, a wild pitch occurs and another run scores. You go from 1-0 to 3-0 already.

A 3-2 game after the top of the third could have been a 2-1 game for the Indians and maybe things go differently. Who knows. But that was a big momentum shift. Then you have the blunder in the fifth.

But even then, 4-2 as it turned into could have still been salvaged in the sixth. Bourn and Swish lead off the inning with a single and a walk. Call in the pen, Kipnis sac bunts the guys over and that's who you want up there in that situation with two on and one out, Carlos Santana. The guy who's going to be patient and wait for the right pitch and....hit the first pitch to third base for a groundout... not even to the first base side either so one run could score, no, third base side.

What a poor at-bat, a lack of patience that we are not accustomed to seeing from Santana. Just crippling because that would be the last opportunity the Indians would really have, because while they coughed it up yesterday, not sure the Royals bullpen is going to mess up again for the second straight night. And that was it. Royals adding on regardless, that was the shot, the chance to salvage this game. And it went by the wayside with a first-pitch groundout to third.

"We had chances," manager Terry Francona said. "We just didn't make enough plays. We had some plays that we probably need to make in a game like that, and we didn't do it."

What can ya do? The Indians lost one game, won another, and gave this one away. It was highly winnable, should have been a game the Indians won, but simply gave away with poor execution of the little things. That situation right there with the hitting and the defensive miscues.

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I know the opportunities were few and far between, with five hits and one walk, but sometimes when you get a hit or two when it counts, things happen. They failed in that situation and they shouldn't have. That's a must-score run situation.

All that considered, can't fault the Danny Salazar start on this night, not in anyway. He gave up four earned, but as we rehashed, three of those runs very well could have been non existent. Salazar pitched well, really well. He got a little bit of a let on his leash and was able to throw more pitches and didn't even need it, because he was being a little more efficient than we are accustomed to with fewer strikeouts.

Like the way Salazar pitched last night. Struggled a bit with two outs, couldn't seem to put things away like he should have the way he was getting outs, but he did a good job to minimize damage, but didn't get his defensive to play into that. If there was one problem, as he noted in the post game, it was his heavy reliance on his fastball early on in the game.

"I think I tried to do a little bit too much," said Salazar, who ended with three strikeouts, one walk and six hits allowed. "I was using my fastball the first inning. Then, after that, I started just mixing my pitches."

Danny was not the reason the Indians lost this game though, so even though he was a little amped early on and it led to that situation in the first, the entire team needs to play much much better. The wild pitches also hurt, but again, there were many other things at play that forced this game to end up the way it did.

Random Notes...

It's the little things as we talked about. There was more than just the big defensive miscues that hurt. Ryan Raburn dropped a ball in the eighth inning, a simple pop up that should have been caught. Just to add to the frustration.

And as you saw in that eighth, it just compounded things into a situation where the Royals would score again and the Indians burned through relievers just trying to get outs through

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matchups. Messy.

Terry Francona has taken to calling Yan Gomes "Gomer". Okay.

Just, screw Bruce Chen, already, okay? Whatever dude.

I know I said I didn't have much of a problem with the way Tito has maneuvered this year, so it only makes sense that he comes back the next night and does something that is kind of curious. Michael Brantley hitting eighth? Kinda strange. It's matchup based, so I understand, but one of your most clutch hitters should be a little higher in my opinion.

Something good to throw in because we need it damnit. It was Marc Rzepczynski getting the final out and figuring a way out of that jam. And it seems like the guy is always getting the job done. That's cause he has. Aside from two runs given up against the Orioles at the start of the month, the guy has been untouchable since the start of August. He started out as that guy going a few innings and now Francona has been able to use him more exclusively as a matchup guy lately with the deeper pen. That small, yet incredibly significant trade pulled off is paying dividends.

[RACE FOR THE WILD CARD]

Well, Tampa Bay won again, creating the same situation that we went into Tuesday's game with, only the Indians have a different opponent. If they win, and the Rays win, they'll be in the second wild card spot. If they win and the Rangers win, they'll remain a half game back and in the position they entered the week in and were at going into Wednesday's series finale.

The Orioles found a way to win in extra just like the Rays did, beating Boston yet again to move within a game of a spot. The Yankees came back and also picked up a win over Toronto, meaning everyone except Cleveland and Texas won last night, and that's cause they faced teams that won.

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So now, it's even crazier with 10/11 games left. Everyone's sitting at 80 wins and within less than three games of a spot. The Orioles are finishing up with Boston and New York finishes off with Toronto. The Indians and Royals are the only teams switching off, but the Royals are idle as they prepare for Texas, so they'll actually gain a half game tomorrow because Texas and Tampa are playing.

Cannot let this Houston series be anything less than a series win. That is unacceptable. They've pretty much turned in for the year and while they'll play hard and you cannot expect the team to roll over, these types of games can be dangerous. An [excellent look at the final schedule was given by Bastian](#) over on his blog, where he actually has the winning percentage of the teams each WC contender faces in September. Yes the teams left have a bad winning percentage, but it is even worse in September, so by the looks of things, the teams the Indians are going to play are struggling like they should, so, no excuses. Beat these teams.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Huge news on the **Justin Masterson** front. He's progressing mighty fast [and at a pace that could have him on track to be a factor](#) in the final week of the season. It may not come as a start, but having that arm to rely on at some point in some situation? That's nice. And If you make the playoffs, if he's back there and ready to go, that's nicer.

Justin Masterson tossed at the full 120 feet and felt so good he decided to work out on flat ground and throw all his pitches. He'll now toss a bullpen session tomorrow. All of a sudden, he's not that far out from possibly pitching for this team.

"That's really exciting," manager Terry Francona said. "Just the fact that he's feeling better so fast is good for everybody's peace of mind. And the fact that he might be able to come back and pitch, and help us win, is even better."

Sounds like he's even pushing the envelope and doing whatever it is necessary to get back into this. If he's not getting push-back from his body, then shoot. This guy has been as durable as they come. He has a big body and frame and probably can handle the normal wear and tear that some pitchers simply cannot. He's also well-conditioned and you can look for yourself, he hasn't missed much time at all over the course of his major league career.

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In a situation where the Indians are going to need to play a one game playoff against the other wild card if they make it, having a guy like Masterson is much needed, because you're already going to be starting a possible ALDS series matchup at a disadvantage pitching-wise. Not to think too ahead, but it is really the whole reasoning for trying to get Masty back.

Jason Giambi pulled the team together before the road trip [to tell everyone that personal stats are hogwash](#) and that each player should just be concerned about winning it all. And as this team has demonstrated time and time again, those guys listen to the man. I don't know if it was just window washing, but Giambi would go on to say that because there is no one individual that the lineup or the team relies on so heavily, that this is the best team he's ever played on.

"We don't have that Chris Davis. We don't have that Miguel Cabrera," Giambi said. "This is probably the ultimate team that I've ever played for, where there wasn't one guy more important than another."

Now, don't mistake what he is saying. He isn't saying this is the best team he's played for, meaning that this Indians team is better than any of the playoff A's teams he was on or any of those Yankee teams. He's simply saying that the assembling of them as a cohesive unit and their collectiveness can't be duplicated by any of those teams. You can buy that at whatever price you want to. I'm just explaining his rationale. I think guys say a lot of things in the moment that they might have said differently in another moment. It's fun to talk about this team and their gritty attitude, and I get his point, but I think he's looking for ways to motivate. Which is awesome. As long as the dudes he's with buy in and don't think he's blowing smoke up the tailpipe.

We talked a little bit about **Mickey Callaway** yesterday, specifically in regards to Ubaldo and his turnaround and that Kazmir/Big U discussion. I think Callaway [deserves a whole heck of a lot of credit](#)

for the job he's done. I get a little nervous in giving coaches a lot of the due in something though. A coach can offer up suggestions all he wants, but unless a player actually adapts to those changes and makes them, then really, what does it matter in terms of the coach. Did he do anything wrong? No, he did what he needed to, the player just didn't follow through, for whatever reason.

So while Callaway deserves credit, let's not get carried away. It'd be the same situation if the

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rotation was gawd awful. You don't roast him over the fire, because there's only so much a guy can do. Give him talent though and he'll probably do what he should.

Here's where Callaway deserves to get the praise though. The way he communicates and the rapport he has with his staff is phenomenal.

"That's exceptionally important," Antonetti said. "You can have the best information or the best coaching thoughts in the world, but if you can't establish a connection with players and build that trust, you won't make an impact. Mickey has done a very good job of doing that."

And as we discussed yesterday, part of that was with Ubaldo and gaining his confidence and trust. The entire read is worth it, because it has a lot of great stuff on the insides of what Callaway and Ubaldo have worked on and also gives us a good idea of what people think of Mickey. But I'll highlight this quote here and be done.

"God gave us two ears and one mouth," Masterson said. "It's more listening, and then working from there."

I'll go back to the time when Carl Willis had to work with Cliff Lee and try and get him back to being a pitcher that the Indians could use. Lee went on to turn himself into one of the game's best hurlers. What did Willis do? He went to Lee, much like Callaway did to Ubaldo, and just listened. And that's what you need in a pitching coach if you ask me. You gotta have a guy that the pitcher trust and believe in. They got one in Mickey.

One of the reasons they have Mickey is because of how they've been able to develop coaches. And part of their development process is something that was started a few years ago that helps their minor league coaches develop a necessary skill needed for moving up the ranks. [Interview wing](#).

The Indians mock interview their coaches.

"I thought it helped a lot," Sarbaugh said. "Before I got this job, I hadn't gone through an interview in about 15 years. You knew it was practice, so you didn't feel the pressure of, 'Did I

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really knock it dead?' When I went through it back then, I thought it helped when I interviewed with Terry. It helped you get your thoughts in order."

First of all. How unselfish is this? Antonetti said it is for the coaches and coordinators as a way to prepare them before they go in to talk about a major league job. It could be with another organization and it could help them land that job and take them away from the Indians. That's totally awesome from a coaches perspective and a pretty unselfish thing for this franchise to do.

Makes me wonder why there's so much angst towards it.

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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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