

Have you ever had so much to say, you simply cannot figure out what to say first or figure out an order to say it all? Part of me wanted to just start off this with a bunch of gibberish. Or CAPS locked yelling nonsense words in between Indians, Playoffs, Tribe, and Oh My GOD mixed around.

But simply said, this is awesome... Just awesome. And this is all I got for you.



Okay, that's it. Rundown Over, See You Wednesday....

Just Kidding!

This team has given us so much to believe in. These past few weeks have been some of the best baseball to follow. It feels like it did back in 2007 when this team just had this sort of feeling around them. Only, it feels stronger. There is an aura around them.

Today's Morning Rundown is going to be a little different. I'm not going to stray to the format, because like the Indians, there is still a job to be done, and why do anything different? But we've got a few angles to look at. The final game was an important one to win because it guaranteed a playoff game. The outcome of the Rays and Rangers playing their respective games really creates an interesting situation and it is a good situation for the Indians.

So here's some sort of a game recap, but don't expect it to last too long. Or else this post would never end.

INDIANS - 5 | TWINS - 1

W: Ubaldo Jimenez (13-9)

L: Scott Diamond (6-13)

[BOXSCORE](#)

It was pretty much over when **Nick Swisher** hit a home run to start the fun in the first. I mean, let's be honest, that shows [some incredible ownership of the situation](#)

. For that guy to come up and hit that home run to start it off. Statement made, Bro.

"After that home run, I was so excited," Swisher said, "just because I knew what we were looking forward to doing."

Yeah there was more runs scored later, Kipnis had a great game, Gomes knocked in a run, Santana did as well. Whatever man, the game came down to two things. Swisher hitting that home run in the second and the man on the mound.



Ubaldo Jimenez went out and did the job he was supposed to do. He put his team in the position to put themselves in the Wild Card game. He went out and did the job the Indians lined him up to do. He went deep into the game, pitched his tail off, made the Twins look like the Twins, and sent his team to the postseason.

"How about that?" Francona said of Jimenez. "He went out there and pitched like an ace. Last year, he was maybe the butt of jokes or whatever. This year, we end up rearranging our rotation so he can pitch games. He went out there and just pounded the strike zone."

Signed, sealed, delivered. He didn't disappoint. The Indians wanted him for this game if it came down to it. They would have played another game tomorrow if they didn't win. They didn't want that. We'll talk more of it, but they're in a good position going forward into this Wild Card game, even though they just used their best pitcher to get there.

Can we talk about this guy down the stretch? I know we did, but he just chopped these teams

up the past month. His 13 strikeouts matched a career high, but it was just more of the same. In five of the six games he pitched in this season he struck out seven hitters or more. Since the start of August he's had four double-digit strikeout games. He's walked no more than three since August 23rd. Since the start of August he's struck out 88 hitters and walked just 20.

Guys, he wasn't even doing this in Colorado. That 2010 season was his best season of his career. That first half was insane. 15-1, 2.20 ERA, 113 strikeouts in 18 starts. He gave up 31 runs in 127 innings, walked just 46. His WHIP was 1.047 and he struck out eight hitters per nine innings.

Wanna know what he did in the second half of 2013?

13 Starts: 6-5, 1.82 ERA, 100 strikeouts, 27 walks, 1.14 WHIP in 84 innings pitched.

And the kicker, 10.7 strikeouts per nine innings. The guy is carving people up right now and he's in a zone. A zone that the Indians certainly hope he stays in if they can keep playing.

He's been the Indians ace this month, but their ace all year was on the mound to end the game, in a weird sort of twist, it was **Justin Masterson** gathering the final out at first after Kip made a great play in the hole. Masterson struck out a pair in 1.2 innings of work and was the celebratory pitcher at the end of it all. The Indians best pitcher for the entire season helped close it out for the Indians best pitcher of the second half.

Masty said that God touched his side and made it possible and that he's just glad to be back out there contributing. He's going to be contributing a lot more.

Random Notes...

Jason Kipnis stole his 30th base, which makes him a 30-steal guy for the second year in a row. He was three homers short of that 20-30 mark. But hey, there's still time to hit three more home

runs, even if they won't count towards that total.

Michael Bourn came up a little limp on his steal attempt in the ninth inning. However, during the post-game celebration he said he was okay. Drew Stubbs came in to play center field in the final inning. We'll see how he is, but I can't imagine he won't play Wednesday unless he physically can't.

The Indians swept the Twins, marking the seventh time they swept a team in a four game series this season. It's the first time that has happened in baseball since 1943.

The 10 game winning streak that the Indians had to end the regular season is the first time a team has done so since 1971 and it is the sixth time it has happened period. The Orioles did it a year they did it in 1971 and it hadn't been done since. Obviously it is the first time the Indians have ever done it period.

And of course, the turnaround. After winning just 68 games last year, this team won two less games than they lost last season. a 22 game turnaround for a team that changed managers, added a few veterans, and had a huge breakout in their rotation. Yup.

You may have noticed it, but the Indians finished just a game behind the Tigers. Maybe the Tigers let off the gas pedal down the stretch, but there's something to be said about getting no-hit by a pitcher who plays on a 100-loss team. Henderson Alvarez came into the game with a 3.94 ERA in 16 starts. And he no-hit the second best offense in the American League? Ehhhhh. Have the let off the gas pedal or have they gone a little cold? One shall see in less than a week when they take on the Athletics.

It goes to show you that every game matters, even though we say early on that one game here and there, it's just early. Games like that Giambi walk-off last week and the first game of that huge series that Chris Perez blew against Detroit, came into play at the end. Both in the Indians favor and not in their favor.

[CELEBRATE]



What a celebration. Please tell me you stuck around to watch the celebration on television. Seeing those players shoot champagne all around the clubhouse, to be excited about their accomplishment. That's something that you don't get to watch very often in baseball, especially in Cleveland. So take it in if you haven't.

"It's like the culmination of everything that you've gone through, all the ups and downs," said Francona, as champagne dripped from his clothes. "You see guys from different countries, different upbringings, and they're jumping on the pile and it's just pure joy."

You could tell the team enjoyed it and getting to do it was a blast. But you could also tell by a lot of the post-game comments that they were very much enjoying the celebration with the wherewithal that they have business to take care of very soon.

It doesn't feel like it was a celebration to just be there. This team doesn't come off to me as one who is just happy to be where they are. That isn't what this streak has been about. And I know

that the guys in that clubhouse, Giambi, Swisher, Ubaldo, Raburn, Bourn, and especially their manager and bench coach, will let everyone else know that this isn't it. The ride isn't over and the hardest work has just begun.

There is an end to this journey that is beyond one game or one series. When you are dealing with one game, obviously anything can happen and the pressure to it doesn't get any greater. But this team seems to be one made up of pure guts and grit. Of course, another team could be made up of the same thing, or seem to be and you could be going home after one game.

But I don't get that feeling. I don't think this is the last time that this team will get to celebrate, [as awesome as it was.](#)

"You know what made me the happiest?" he said. "I knew how happy Chris and Mark (Shapiro, Indians president) were gonna be. That made me feel good. That was one of the things I was looking forward to the most, was being able to celebrate with those guys."

And boy is it good to watch a management and ownership group that has been doubted get to celebrate. They deserve it. The flack that they get, the coals they are raked over. This must feel sweet, and it should be.

And that reminds me. They all stepped up, they got the job done. They got us to this point. So, it's time that we step up.

[SETTING UP FOR WEDNESDAY]

The Indians have announced that Wednesday's game at Progressive Field is officially sold out.

First off, good.

Second off, if anyone has any good ideas for me to get out of work at my second job, please share. Could I call off? Sure, but I'd like to save up those bullets for later. I mean, unless you want to donate a ticket, then that bullet will be used.

Anyway, so here we go. The Indians have that game at home, something that they really needed. This team didn't lose a game down the stretch. The Rays and Rangers. They did. And that made all the difference. That's why the Indians are sitting at home for the next two days while the other two teams play it out later tonight for the right to face the Indians.

In such a high-stakes game that the Indians are going to find themselves in in just two days, you want every single advantage afforded to you. And this is a huge advantage. The Rays current "marketing" campaign on their website is #onemoregame. Well, they got one. One more game to get to the playoffs.

Tampa just used Matt Moore in their final game of the season. One of their best pitches, he won his 17th game and is now unavailable for Wednesday's game. They'll now be forced to use their other best pitcher and arguable, their ace, on Monday against Texas. That leaves likely Alex Cobb (who's actually been pitching very well for them as of late) to start a potential game against the Indians.

Texas meanwhile used their absolute best pitcher in Yu Darvish on Sunday. So while the Indians had to use Ubaldo Jimenez on Sunday, the other two teams have had to use their best pitchers as well. If Texas wins, they'd likely go with Matt Garza.

The Indians? They're going to go with **Danny Salazar**. Yes, [they're throwing the rookie in there](#). Call it risky, gutsy, whatever you want, but there is a plan going into it. In fact, I'd rather have it this way, in terms of setting it up for the possibility of not only getting to the ALDS, but for giving you the best chance to win it.

"This is awesome," Salazar said. "The team has trust in me. I'm just going to do my best there. This is just a little bit of what's going to happen. This is the beginning of a new era. This was the last game of the season and now we've got to keep going until the end."

You won't be getting the best pitcher from either Tampa or Texas, so is it really important your best pitcher goes? No, not at all. Instead, the Indians can rest their bullpen these next two days and have all hands out on deck behind Salazar. Masterson, Smith, Letters, Allen, McAllister, all available for the Indians if they want.

You have to assume that if the Indians were to win, Ubaldo, Kluber, and Kazmir would line up to start the first three games. You would get two starts out of Ubaldo if it went that far. If you win Wednesday, you also get another day in between that game and the start of the ALDS.

Having to throw Ubaldo wasn't such a bad thing. Having to go with Salazar and a bevy of arms puts the Indians in a favorable position if you ask me. I like the way that it sets up for the Indians going into Sunday. That is why winning yesterday was so important, for that and for home field. Because if there is an after, it doesn't get easier. Because Boston is waiting.

[POSTSEASON ROSTER]

Every team has to set a postseason roster, so the Indians days of piecing together bullpen arms are over. Tito now has fewer arms to work with, and he'll need to make some decisions as to who will be the 25 guys to represent this team in the playoffs.

One question on my mind, although I think I know the answer... Is Chris Perez going to be in that bullpen?

Chris Perez broke his media silence after the game an celebration. [He spoke to the media](#) . He didn't have anything earth-shattering to say. He didn't address much, he did have a smile on his face. He mentioned that he told Tito to take him out of the closer's role because he knew he was costing the club games. In the end though, Perez didn't address what I think people wanted him to address, the games that he blew specifically. But whatever, he's owned up to what has been going on.

I think Chris Perez is probably going to be on the roster. It is going to be a tough call, but what other guys has Francona used with regularity that wouldn't make it if Perez was put on there? C

lay Rapada
?

I know, some people would probably want Rapada on there over Perez if it only guarantees them that he wouldn't pitch. But whatever. Here's my guess...

C: Yan Gomes, Carlos Santana

IF: Mike Aviles, Asdrubal Cabrera, Lonnie Chisenhall, Jason Kipnis, Nick Swisher, Jason Giambi

OF: Michael Bourn, Michael Brantley, Ryan Raburn, Drew Stubbs

SP: Ubaldo Jimenez, Scott Kazmir, Corey Kluber, Zach McAllister, Danny Salazar

RP: Matt Albers, Cody Allen, Justin Masterson, Chris Perez, Marc Rzepczynski, Bryan Shaw, Joe Smith

It means Matt Carson is unfortunately out, even though the team could use him, especially if Bourn is a little banged up, but Stubbs is the main defensive replacement. Why five starters? Obviously, one is going to the bullpen, but I think with Kluber and Salazar, you gotta have McAllister around. Him and Masterson in the pen should give the Indians plenty of options.

Or, they could just leave McAllister off to get Rich Hill on so they have two lefties, but make no mistake about it. Letters it the left-hander the team is going to go to. We'll see with that Francona ends up doing, but it shouldn't be too far off from what this is. I think he will have a decision to make with Perez, because ultimately, if this team wins that game on Wednesday (and they can readjust their roster after every series), they'll need every guy in that bullpen. So, he will have to use Perez in a position he trusts.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Boy, Nick Swisher sure shut up the critics of the scheduling. It was curious to see a guy like Ken Rosenthal dumping on the Indians for their schedule. Yeah it was more about the people making the schedule and the way it is set up. But by doing that, he's discrediting the Indians. Don't think that the club doesn't pay attention to what the world has to say about them. [And yeah, this is all you need to hear](#)

"Why don't I just say this as a direct quote to everybody else," Swisher said. "No one was [complaining] about the schedule when we lost [94] games last year. That's enough of that schedule stuff, man. For real. You still have to win the games. No one was talking about scheduling when we were going through playing the Yankees, Boston, Detroit back to back. Nobody said anything then. Hey, if everybody feels that way, make it an even schedule. Make everybody play everybody the same amount of times so nobody can complain about it. You would like to think that a lot of people would be excited for an organization like us. We're kind of rejuvenated. We've got ourselves a new thing. If people want to hate on us for the last scheduling part, we can't control that. We didn't do the scheduling."

Yeah, I don't think anything needs to be said. Like Swish said, they didn't make the schedule, they just played it. This team had a torturous schedule early on, it was only right they had this easier finishing line. It all evened out in the end.

Again, like Giambi, this is a discussion for when the season is over and it is actually something we've brought up before. But **Scott Kazmir** [wouldn't mind being back in Cleveland](#) again next year.

"I would love to," Kazmir said. "The staff, all the way up the organization, it's a first-class organization. The teammates that I have, it's just great chemistry. I love coming to the park. I would love to come back, for sure."

Kaz said that the team taking a chance on him goes a long way for him. Whether that translates

in contract negotiations remains to be seen, but I'd like to have him back. I think he'd be a solid fifth veteran starter for this club and just keep that depth of the rotation that much in-tact. But again, a story for later when this team has an offseason to worry about.

That offseason is hopefully a good deal of time away...

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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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