

Morning Rundown: It Just Stings a Little More

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, October 03 2013 7:11 AM - Last Updated Thursday, October 03 2013 8:22 AM



I know that people will congratulate this team for their great season. I'm going to do that eventually in a proper way. I've lived and died with this team all year and I know that it was a great season.

But boy is this hard to swallow. The Indians knew the rules they were playing by. They had one chance. They've been playing this type of game (perhaps without the immense pressure) the past ten that they've won. And perhaps it is the one chance that makes it tough. To be one and done. These are the rules, and yeah in year's past the Indians would have been in a position where they'd get at least two more games.

But this is the system that they have to play by now. I think it is great for baseball and the right way to do things.

But boy, is it hard to take. Because you just have one shot, one opportunity to make something happen. And the Indians didn't make it happen like most of us had wanted to believe they would.

I'm not here to sour. I know there are people that don't want to take the "don't get upset road" and I'm not. But it hurts because of that one shot deal. It hurts because it is a long seven months before we can get together and do this thing every morning. I'm not in the "happy to be here camp" because to me, that isn't what you play for. Was this team expected to make the playoffs? No, of course not. But that shouldn't matter. You play to win every game and this team isn't playing to be happy for making the playoffs, they're playing to be happy for winning in the playoffs.

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That all being said, this is the last time we're here together recapping a game, so let's do just that and recap this game. One last time my friends, let's run it down for 2013.

RAYS - 4 | INDIANS - 0

W: Alex Cobb (1-0)

L: Danny Salazar (0-1)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

It would be easy to say Alex Cobb pitched well, like the ace that the Tampa Bay Rays think that he is going to be one day and the pitcher he has been down the stretch for them. And I'm not going to sit here and take an ounce of credit away from him. He pitched well. He pitched very well. He buckled down when he had to and made his pitches.

But there are several situations where the Indians beat themselves. Yeah Cobb did his job and made his pitch and got his results, but sooner or later you need to get that hit. Leaving nine hitters on base? When the bottom of your order is coming up with hit after hit and providing the top of your order with situations to come through, you eventually need to do just that. [You need to come through](#)

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"I wish we could have got a base hit or something to put the momentum on our side," Gomes said. "But Cobb did a great job. He just pitched his way out of it."

Fourth inning, Santana and Brantley set up first and second with one out, Raburn walks to load the bases and what does Asdrubal Cabrera do?

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Fifth inning, Gomes doubles, Chiz singles and again you have first and third. What does Bourn, Swisher, and Kipnis do?

Seventh inning, Gomes and Chiz again, first and second with one out, Bourn and Swisher do what, again?

Talk about the approach, the pitch selection, the swings, whatever. It doesn't matter. I have a hard time believing that in three specific situations, the opposing pitchers completely overpowered the hitting and out-pitched those hitters on more than one occasion.

And just watching Cabrera roll into that double play, and Swisher take some bad cuts, I can tell you that while Cobb pitched well, this team let him off the hook a few times. Even Swisher admitted after the game that he was swinging to take one out of the ballpark. And usually when you take that approach, you don't get what you want.

Perhaps it was the pressure of the postseason, but aside from Kipnis, the guys that didn't come through in these situations have postseason experience. The guys that didn't? Chisenhall, Santana, and Gomes are the guys that came up with the hits and they've never been here.

"Just kind of ran into a buzzsaw today," Swisher said. "Man, in a way you kind of feel like you let the city down."

That's what makes this so much worse. You out-hit the opposing team, put yourself in position several times to get the job done and the guys you were counting on simply don't get it done. You gotta give your pitching a chance.

Because quite frankly, the pitching gave this team a chance. Danny Salazar only went four, he got buzzed in his last two innings after a fast-paced start, but [I'd hardly categorize it as a disappointing](#) or a bad start.

When you can't muster up runs, it doesn't matter.

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"It didn't look like it to me," manager Terry Francona said. "He's going to be a special pitcher."

Salazar started out on fire, backed by the energy and electricity of the crowd, he struck out three in a row with the last two in the first and Longoria in the second. Then that Delmon Young solo shot. The fourth got dicey and of course they put two more on the board, but again. Get a few more hits and now we're talking about a game. The bullpen buckled down and did what they needed to do, put up zeros when called-upon.

"Like anything that happens, you have to keep your head up," Salazar said. "It's a big game. There's going to be two good teams. That's why they got to the postseason. You have to do the best you can out there."

Salazar's stuff was there. He didn't look out of place. He didn't look shell-shocked, he didn't look like a rookie who had no business being there. He made a mistake here and there and the opposing team took advantage. I'm sure there was a spot or two where Cobb made a mistake and the Indians did not take advantage of it. There's your game, as frustrating as it is, there is your game.

When you look at the numbers, the Rays actually had just as many hits in as many chances with runners in scoring position as the Indians. Both teams were 2-for-9, but the Rays just had guys in the right spot with their hits.

So that's your game. You don't come up with the hits you need, then it doesn't matter what happens elsewhere. It is unfortunate that you had the situation you wanted and couldn't get the results from it that you'd hope for. It couldn't have been set up any better, it really couldn't.

Random Notes...

That crowd. Good job guys. You brought it. You brought the red, you brought the energy, the

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passion, the enthusiasm, the excitement, the electricity. Tip of the cap to each and every person that was there last night. The fans really came out and fed those guys in the dugout everything they could want. I'm just hopeful that there is more of that to come and it isn't just because they went to a playoff game. That was great, but that support has to continue.

I mean you had people willing to get ejected just to screw up David DeJesus from catching a ball. That's a little much, but that's passion, haha.

Hate to bring it up, but the late inning defense that led to another run. I mean, Chisenhall's error to me looked like the product of a bad late hop. I wouldn't kill him for that. If anything, Nick Swisher's missed catch at first a hitter later was the mistake. There was no hop that Swisher had to deal with, he was simply judging a line-drive and it went off his glove. That is a catch to me that you have to make more than the hard bounce that Chisenhall had to deal with. Not only that, but Swisher is in a position where he's easily tapping first base for a double play to end the inning.

But again, nothing in regards to the final product because you still couldn't come up with necessary runs to even chip into the lead.

Bullpen stellar as always. It was the defense that let them down late, but Letters, Shaw, and Masto followed up Salazar very well. Allen and Smith had to tackle that ninth inning and had they not been let down defensively, would have done it.

The Indians certainly limited the opportunities, which is again the frustrating part. Yeah Cobb only walked one, Salazar two, and those were the only walks, but the Indians had just as many baserunners as the Rays did in that regard and put up for less runs.

[AND WE ARE ONCE AGAIN WAITING FOR NEXT YEAR]

And that's where we are again. We'll talk about the offseason when it is time to talk about the offseason and the time is right. We have plenty of time to do that.

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But here we are again in this state of waiting for next year. The exciting part is that this team is going somewhere. And not the somewhere the team in 2007 was going. Sadly, that team peaked and then got a few guys injured and yadda yadda. This team hasn't peaked. This team is just getting started, and that is the belief. This team, as much as I avoided talking about it in the first half of this post, [arrived a year early](#).

"We're excited," catcher Yan Gomes said. "We're excited for what we're building. I'm sure a lot of people didn't expect us to do this good. We didn't come out with the win today, but that doesn't mean we should hang our head. We need to look at the future."

You know Castrovince is right, we did say the same thing in 2007. That seemed like a different situation though. The team's idea of getting better was Jason Michaels and Andy Marte and trading Coco Crisp. I don't think that the same idea will come through this time. The guys you will be looking to trade, like Chris Perez and Asdrubal Cabrera, will probably net you something and were not big parts of what happened this year. Perez a little more than Cabrera, but both guys that will probably leave Cleveland and let the Indians bring in new faces.

Whatever the new faces bring, I think what has been established is this winning attitude and fun-loving environment. That's what Tito Francona has brought us. Mike Aviles said it after the game. Yeah, it sucks that this season is over, but the feeling and that atmosphere of what this club created isn't going away. The goon squad may not be goons next year, but those guys are going to be around because two of them got contract extensions and the other one will be this team's starting catcher for years to come.

Nick Swisher isn't going anywhere, he's going to continue bringing that passion and energy, perhaps even more fiercely than we saw this season, because I think he now knows how thirsty we are for a winner and he saw that passion in us.

"The game's over," Swisher said, "and I've still got goose bumps thinking about it."

Jason Kipnis is a leader on this team, a guy and a presence that wasn't on that 2008 team that followed in 2007. When Trot Nixon left, there was no one to lead. Swisher is still here, and you

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can believe Jason Kipnis will be too, because he's hungry and that attitude is going to be translated to others.

"This is just going to be used as motivation," second baseman Jason Kipnis said from his team's subdued clubhouse. "You always hear about playoff baseball. You always hear guys talking about it who have been there, but you never get to know what it's actually like until you experience it. Now that I've had a little taste of it, I want nothing more than to get back there."

Kipnis was upset after the game because he finally got to play in front of this type of a crowd. A crowd that he said he knew was possible if Cleveland got to this stage. You know that this will stick in his mind, as it will for Swish, as it will for a lot of other players. Even Danny Salazar said the same thing Kipnis did. I got a taste, and now I want more.

This is a young team with a lot of pieces. They're going to have Salazar, Masterson, Gomes, Brantely, Kipnis, Swisher, Bourn, Aviles, Raburn, Santana, Kluber, McAllister, Allen, and Pestano all remembering this. All of those players are coming back most likely. That's a huge core of this team. Others might stay, others will go. But that core got a taste.

And I think that core is going to be hungry to get back here with some more ammunition and make something happen.

[EXIT STAGE LEFT?]

We will be talking more about this, because this isn't the stage to talk about it, but we need to at least acknowledge that it may have been the last time we've seen some people.

There's the obvious guys you can talk about, like Jason Giambi, Ubaldo Jimenez, and Scott Kazmir, who are all free agents without contracts next season. Then there's guys you can't really talk about in the media because they are under contract and any approach to that topic would be insulting. Joe Smith, Chris Perez, are both due raises that the Indians probably won't be paying for back-end relief arms, not with a deep pen that they have, and of course Asdrubal Cabrera's presence.

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While this isn't the time for discussing those plans, it is time to [discuss the feelings of some of those players](#). The three guys I mentioned first all seem to want to be back, and they've said it before last night, but they're just reinforcing it after that loss.

"I feel like we have a great team," Kazmir said, "but at the same time, you just have to look ahead and hopefully, I'll be back with these guys next year and we can continue and pick up where we left off."

Kazmir may come the most affordable to the Indians between him and Jimenez, but I still think some teams will want the reborn lefty bad enough to make a good offers. Hopefully his loyalty to the Indians pays off.

I can't see many people busting down the doors to make Jason Giambi a huge offer, but some could come calling again for a coaching position seeing what he did with this team this year. Having been so close to being a manager right out the gate though, not sure you'd see Giambi jump for anything other than a managerial gig. That aside though, I think Giambi is a little more amped about playing one more year.

"I'd love to play," Giambi said. "If I get an opportunity to come back here or if not, it's been fun. I would love to play, definitely."

Whatever price you pay him in my mind is worth having him around. He won a few games with his bat despite his average and he probably won a few more with his leadership and how accountable he holds other players. People scoff at me all the time about it, but you need veteran leadership on a team. You absolutely need it if you are going to not only get to this pinnacle, but exceed it. Swisher is great, and I think other players on this team established themselves as leaders, like Masterson and Aviles and Kipnis. But the dynamic that Giambi brings is unique.

And when you have a lot of the other pieces filled like the Indians do, having a guy like Giambi at your disposal makes sense. Again, I'm not getting into pieces and who fits where and what

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the Indians should do, but seeing how far this team has made it and their attitude about the game, and the amount of respect they and Francona have for that guy. I think you gotta bring him back another year.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

[There was a buzz about this team yesterday](#) . I'm in freaking Akron and I felt it. I saw people everywhere wearing Indians things. The pride and backing they received yesterday was incredible.

There was so much energy in that park last night that you could feel it, even not being there. I know what it feels like though and I know how awesome it is. But the buzz. I just can't get over it. I don't remember seeing it or feeling it last time. I didn't see the buzz around this team in 2007 outside the park that I was seeing yesterday.

EVERYONE was into that. I think everyone was digging postseason baseball.

Unfortunately today a lot of them are going to go back to being a football fan, and that's fine, now that baseball season is over. Go right ahead and enjoy the rest of Browns season, they seem to actually be doing something this year that people didn't expect. But I hope a lot of people didn't leave disappointed in the end result. I hope that those people are going to come back next year and bring that same buzz to Progressive Field.

That same buzz before October is even in shouting distance.

Terry Francona came out [with a roster and lineup for the Wild Card game](#) that got a few curious questions. I think the first one was, "How hard was it to keep Chris Perez on the roster?" Francona's response? Not too difficult at all.

"It wasn't a tough decision," Francona said. "You don't know how a game's going to go, whether

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it's nine, 10, 11, 12 innings. Given the right situation, he could find his way into a game. He's got 20-something saves. He's run into some tough outings lately."

Of course you aren't using him early, but if the game were to get into the 12 inning and you have your choice. Would you want a guy like Chris Perez who you know has at least the stuff and the experience, or... again, I hate to pick on him, but, Clay Rapada?

I know, there are some smart asses out there that would say Rapada because they don't trust Perez, but save it, I'd rather have Perez. So again, not a difficult decision for Tito.

And for all the flack that he's getting and has received in the past. Perez did something that a lot of people wanted him to do when he got into the situation that he did. He stepped aside. He told his manager that he wasn't getting it done when it counted and he recognized the situation the team was in. He knew someone else gave the team a better chance to win, so he stepped aside and checked his ego at the door. I think that deserves a lot of credit, because that takes guts to do. That takes some humility to admit you aren't the best.

The other decision that Tito made was to start Lonnie Chisenhall at third base over Mike Aviles. And I think I retweeted someone that made the point about Chiz starting, but if I didn't, let it be shown here that I was with that decision. If you take a look back at the numbers, Chisenhall had a good history against Cobb, and you saw that play out last night in a big way. Aviles was actually 0-for-7 going in against Cobb. Unfortunately nothing could come of it, but Tito absolutely made the right move, and still would have even if Chisenhall wouldn't have come through. He went with what made sense. He didn't over-manage, he pulled all the right buttons last night.

Unfortunately, it just didn't happen the way it was supposed to.

And nothing did last night. But that's why we are here and looking back on what happened.

Thank you for being with me every morning after a game, and probably every morning that I wasn't here. I had a few things come up this summer that were annoying and took away from

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me doing what I love to do. It is a joy to put this together and I know a lot of people found it this season and have enjoyed it. Thank you for all your kind comments.

But take note, that I don't go away just because the season is over. In fact, the rundown occurs quite frequently in the offseason, especially last year when this team was not quiet. I don't think it will be quiet this offseason either. So bookmark me, where-ever you are reading it on because it will continue to occupy the space.

This is why I do it. For seasons like this. For the hope that we can share in this moment together. To experience the joy of a winner and the passion of a community. There's something brewing here in Cleveland with this baseball team. You are crazy if you aren't feeling it. These players feel it, and even though this was a bitter post to get through, I feel it and believe it. We're going to be celebrating a World Series win. I refuse to believe any differently. And I know it is even closer than I could have imagined coming into this season.

I will see you next time in this space. Stick around with me all winter. Don't make this goodbye until spring. Don't hibernate. Enjoy football if that's what you do, I will myself to help keep me occupied. But come back regularly, because we've got ourselves a winner in Tribe Town and it is one fun journey that we are on, and that is far from over.

Go Tribe!

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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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