

Carmona Out-Duels Lester as Tribe Completes Sweep

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

Thursday, April 07 2011 8:10 PM - Last Updated Friday, April 08 2011 1:50 PM



After the Indians finished off a three-game sweep of the Boston Red Sox with a 1-0 victory, Boston designated hitter David Ortiz walked over to starting pitcher Jon Lester and gave him a hug. Papi was being Papi, helping one of the younger players on the team get through what has been a miserable opening to the 2011 Red Sox season.

Lester had just baffled the Indians line-up with a variety of fastballs, sliders and curves, and prior to the game his manager talked about Lester's ability to put the team on his back and carry them to a win. Lester held up his end of the bargain, but the Boston offense, that has been among the worst in the Major Leagues thus far, could not do anything with Cleveland starter Fausto Carmona.

Carmona matched Lester pitch for pitch, and the only run of the game came when Asdrubal Cabrera laid down a perfect suicide squeeze bunt to plate Adam Everitt, who reached base via a leadoff walk from reliever Daniel Bard before stealing second and moving to third on a sacrifice bunt from Orlando Cabrera.

Asdrubal Cabrera did not square around on the first three pitches of his at-bat, but facing a 2-1 count he whirled around and dumped a bunt down the third base line with Everitt charging towards the plate. The pitch he bunted was a 96 mph fastball well off the plate, but he was able to successfully get it down to get the run home.

Carmona Out-Duels Lester as Tribe Completes Sweep

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

Thursday, April 07 2011 8:10 PM - Last Updated Friday, April 08 2011 1:50 PM

The game ended on another bizarre play. With pinch runner Darnell McDonald on first after David Ortiz walked, J.D. Drew hit a stiff line drive up the middle that hit Indians closer Chris Perez on the leg. The ball caromed to Everett, playing third for the Tribe, who did not have a play at first. McDonald rounded second base and strayed too far from the bag, slipping while struggling to get back. Everett fired the ball to Orlando Cabrera, who slapped the tag on McDonald to end the game.

"I'm not even sure, it might have been wet," McDonald said. "I lost my footing and tried to get back. I felt I might have got in there, but I guess I didn't. I was trying to make something happen and it didn't work out."

It was just another in a long line of bizarre misfortunes that have worked against the Sox this season. In Wednesday's game Youkilis appeared to have snared a bases-loaded line drive that would have probably led to a double play that would have gotten Boston starter Daisuke Matsuzaka out of trouble. Instead, the ball squirted out of his glove and rolled towards third. He picked it up and fired it home, stepping on third base to force the runner from second in the process. Boston catcher Jason Varitek, not realizing the runner had been forced at third, failed to tag John Buck, who trotted across the plate.

The next batter, Asdrubal Cabrera, blew the game open with a three-run home run to right.

"It just seems like we can't make anything happen," Ortiz said about the Red Sox' bizarre struggles. "It's crazy out there right now. This is not a situation you want to be in, but you just find a way to get things going. "

Kevin Youkilis, who was hitless in four at-bats Thursday, agrees that the Sox are on the wrong side of luck lately.

"It can't get any worse than this and there's only one way to go. That's up," he said. "It doesn't matter who's hitting, right now we're not catching any breaks. Look at the last play of the game...we're not catching any breaks. A lot of times it spirals out of control so we've got to put a halt to it, go home and luckily we'll have our fans. We have great fans on our side that will bring us out of this. We thrive on them and they thrive on us, so it's time for us to go out and play for them. We've got a good team, we've just got to get out of this little funk we're in."

Carmona Out-Duels Lester as Tribe Completes Sweep

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

Thursday, April 07 2011 8:10 PM - Last Updated Friday, April 08 2011 1:50 PM

Though the Indians were able to push the only run of the game home, without Carmona blowing through the Red Sox lineup it would not have mattered. Carmona allowed just two runs and a pair of walks in seven innings, striking out four. His sinker was electric and the outing went a long way towards letting Carmona forget about his Opening Day debacle against the White Sox, which was weighing on his mind.

"Yeah, a little bit. But I had to keep going for the next time and get ready for it," Carmona said when asked if the Opener bothered him. "I did much better keeping the ball down and throwing first pitch strikes."¶

"He was too amped up, I guess the first day and he kind of recognized that later," Tribe manager Manny Acta said. "He was up and flat. And when Fausto isn't on top of the ball, instead of the ball sinking down it moves to the side. It's easier to hit that way, especially up in the zone."¶

"Fausto was tremendous (today)," Acta continued. "He threw 18 out of 25 pitches for strikes for strikes and really attacked the strike zone. Even when left-handers at times gave him problems he dominated them. He stayed on top of the ball really well, he had good sink and mixed his pitches very well."

Lester figures his offense will come around soon enough.

"We're going to score a lot of runs, it's just a matter of time. A lot of things just aren't going our way right now," Lester said. "We're hitting a lot of balls hard that are right at guys, and when we're not hitting balls hard they're not falling in. Right now we're just not living right. Everyone that played in that game today busted their ass on the field. It's not like we're not trying to win the ballgame. We just gotta keep grinding it out."

Rafael Perez, who faced two batters in the eighth inning and retired them both, picked up his second win of the season while Bard lost for the second time this year. Indians closer Chris Perez picked up his second save in as many attempts.

Carmona Out-Duels Lester as Tribe Completes Sweep

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

Thursday, April 07 2011 8:10 PM - Last Updated Friday, April 08 2011 1:50 PM

The Indians, winners of four in a row after dropping their first two of the season, will now hit the road for the first time this year. They head to SAFECO Field for a three-game set starting Friday. RHP Carlos Carrasco (0-1, 9.45 era) will face LHP Jason Vargas (0-0, 1.35) Friday at 10:10 et. Saturday RHP Justin Masterson (1-0, 1.29) will take the mound for the Indians against RHP Doug Fister (0-1, 3.18) while RHP Josh Tomlin (1-0, 1.29) squares off against LHP Erik Bedard (0-1, 5.40) in Sunday's series finale.

The Red Sox, 0-6 for the third time in team history and for the first time since 1945, will open the home portion of their 2011 season today with a 10-game home stand, hosting the New York Yankees (4-2), who are hitting the road for the first time this year, in the first of a three-game set. RHP John Lackey (0-1, 22.09) will face RHP Phil Hughes (0-1, 11.25) at Fenway Park.

NOTES: The Indians, at 4-2, are tied with the White Sox and Royals for first place in the A.L. Central. It is the first time the Indians have had a share of first place in the division since May 17, 2008. ... The Tribe is at least two games over the .500 mark for the first time since Sept. 22, 2008. ... The Red Sox started 0-6 in 1905 and 1927 as well as 1945 and this season. ... The only time Boston has lost more than six in a row to open a season came in 1945, when the team started the season with eight consecutive losses. ... The Indians' three-game sweep over Boston was the first time Cleveland has swept a three-game set against the Red Sox since Aug. 28-30, 2001. The last time the Indians swept a three-game series at Fenway came back in 1975. ... Indians leadoff hitter Michael Brantley and designated hitter Travis Hafner were both given days off against Lester, a tough lefthander. Acta moved Orlando Cabrera to the leadoff position while Shelly Duncan was the designated hitter, batting fifth. Duncan doubled and walked in three plate appearances while Cabrera had a critical sacrifice in the bottom of the eighth inning. ... Indians right fielder Shin-Soo Choo's struggles at the plate continued as he was hitless in four at-bats, striking out once. His season average has dipped to .083, and he has now struck out nine times in 24 at-bats.