

## Another Weekend Washout

Written by {ga=mikeperry}

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Seattle Mariners manager Eric Wedge is no stranger to Progressive Field, where he spent seven seasons as the manager of the Cleveland Indians. He knows the weather patterns, the drainage capabilities, what you can learn from looking at the local radar and how things can quickly change when unexpected weather fronts pop up off of Lake Erie.

Saturday the Indians and Mariners played until the bottom of the first inning of a 1:05 start. With two on and two out, with Travis Hafner standing at the plate facing an 0-1 count, the skies opened up above Progressive Field, and did not stop dumping water on the playing surface until well into the evening. It did not take long for the umpires to postpone the game until a later date.

Sunday's game, also scheduled to start at 1:05, had a lengthy delay as well. This time, however, things were a lot different. After a noon meeting between the umpire crew, Indians skipper Manny Acta and Wedge, the start of the game was initially moved to 1:50. At 1:50 the Indians took the field and starting pitcher Josh Tomlin threw about five warm-up pitches before the skies opened up and the umpires called for the tarp.

The day after both managers wasted a starting pitcher, the same situation was playing out again. However, this time both managers played it with caution and both starters, Michael Pineda for Seattle and Josh Tomlin for Cleveland.

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"Ultimately what you try to do is keep him heated up, have him play some catch," Wedge said of a starting pitcher in a delay situation. "But after a while you just have to shut him down. But I don't think there's a pure timeframe.

"(Bedard) was already hot (Saturday), so instead of him sitting around you might as well pitch him. If you don't pitch him he's still going to be toast the next day or the day after."

At the modern stadiums like Cleveland's Progressive Field, it is difficult to know whether to get the starter cranked up or not. The playing surface drains quickly and can be rendered playable in less than an hour if the rain stops.

"(The drainage) is okay, it's pretty good. You saw all that standing water out there yesterday, but I guess it's in pretty good shape today," Wedge said. "It didn't stop raining yesterday and I don't think it's going to be pretty today. Today it was a matter if we were going to play one game today and it was going to take us nine hours, or would it take us three hours. If it is going to take us nine hours I don't think it makes much sense."

The radar looked promising for a while Sunday, but, as Wedge explained, things can change in a hurry off the shore of Lake Erie.

"They have to track the weather here, that lake effect. You just don't know what's going to pop up," he said. "(Saturday) was a great example because there was nothing there. Everything was going west of us, then all the sudden a huge front popped up and just crushed us. That's a matter of, literally, 15 minutes or 10 minutes between getting your starter ready to go or not. Once your starter is ready to go you might as well try to play."

It's always difficult for a manager to judge how to handle a starting pitcher during a rain delay, both before the game starts and after a few innings have been completed. A lot depends on the particular pitcher.

"We've had situations, when we were in the hunt, to where we would literally have a pitcher throw innings in the cage to try and buy a few more innings for him when (the game) is started

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back up," Wedge said. "If we were sitting around for an hour and a half or two hours we'd have him throw two or three, or three or four innings spread out a little bit. Then maybe we can get another two or three innings out of him."

It was not until 3:15 that the game Sunday was finally postponed.

"They were going to wait. We were going to play the game and, obviously, when the umpires got out there and saw the conditions I think they made a wise choice. They said that we can't get started in this, so that's what happened."

A big reason for this long delay in making a final decision was that the Mariners do not come back to Cleveland until August for a scheduled three-game set Aug. 22-24. Making up the pair of rainouts will be a difficult task, with a likely scenario seeing the teams play five games in four days (both have off days Aug. 25, the day after the series is scheduled to end).

"There are some mutual off days, too, that we could look at. I've only looked at it a little bit," Wedge said. "You don't want two doubleheaders so it's kind of a Catch-22. But you still always have to keep common sense in mind. You don't want to try to push something through because you don't want to play five games in four days and you don't want to lose an off day. It's just part of being a pro. You do what you gotta do, but you always want to keep common sense in the forefront."