

Morning Rundown: Tribe Begins Fight for First After Verlander Shutout

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, June 15 2011 5:21 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, June 15 2011 8:49 AM



The Indians 68 day run in first place has come to an end. Detroit officially knocked the Tribe into second place with a demoralizing shutout.

June 14th 2011

Cleveland Indians - **0**

Detroit Tigers - **4**

W: Justin Verlander (8-3) L: Justin Masterson (5-5)

[**BOXSCORE**](#)

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Last night, the Indians suffered their eighth shutout of the season.

By Month: April - 1, May - 3, June - 4. And we are only halfway through June? Yikes.

This one was a complete game shutout courtesy of Justin Verlander, who carried a no-hitter well into the eighth inning. If not for a close hit by pitch to Carlos Santana, he would have had a perfect game going.

In fact, Carlos Santana put up a bit of a fight that he got hit. Imagine if he got his way. That would have taken away the Tribe's one and only baserunner of the first six innings.

But alas, we've got another disappointment offensively and to add onto it, Detroit now stakes claim to first place in the AL Central and for the first time since we can't remember early in the season, the Indians are not in first place.

Orlando Cabrera's single in the eighth broke up the no-hitter. Carlos Santana would add a measly hit in the ninth, but really, this was a classic case of being over-matched. There's nothing you can really do. I mean you can complain about the offense if you want, but this is Justin Verlander. These are probably the games you are supposed to get shutout. Every team gets shutout. It happens. [There's nights you run into a buzzsaw](#) .

"We've been struggling, but I don't think too many teams could hit [Verlander] the way he was throwing the ball today," manager Manny Acta said.

Verlander can be a buzzsaw and he did just that. He overpowered the Indians lineup to the tune of 12 strikeouts. Sizemore had a third of them, which is depressing, but he really bullied everyone but Orlando Cabrera and Matt LaPorta, who were the only ones to not strikeout. Some guys, like Jack Hannahan, looked absolutely miserable up there.

Verlander was just that good. So regardless of what our pitcher could do, this one was pretty

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much Detroit's.

But our pitcher, was **Justin Masterson**, and his slide of misery continues. That isn't saying Masterson pitched bad in this one. He didn't. Other than a treacherous third inning in which he gave up three runs, only one of which was earned, he was on point.

And in that third inning, if you ask me, he ran into some bad luck that he compounded with some walks, as well as an early error by Orlando.

Masterson gave up some real garbage hits in that inning. Two of the runs scored on sac-flies (and if Cabrera didn't commit that error, one of them would have not happened) and he also likely wouldn't have walked the people he walked.

"I felt like I had a great effort level," Masterson said. "I was making pitches when I needed to, and that's really all I can control. The longer you're in this game, you realize that the starting pitcher, he'll wear the Ws and the Ls, but it's a team game when it comes down to it. I wear both of them with pride. We win and lose as a team."

So when I say "slide of misery" I'm not directly referring to Masterson's pitching performance. The guy's misery is with his offensive support and perhaps the defense behind him. You can't really argue with going into the seventh inning and giving up two earned. That's a winning effort for anyone else. He walked five, and like I said, that third inning was a lot of bad luck for him.

But it goes as a loss and it is his fifth loss, which puts him at .500 on the season. Depressing to think about after he started 4-0 in the month of April. He hasn't won since April. APRIL! Come on! Give one of your best pitchers some damn support already.

Random Details...

I'm surprised the Indians even had an opportunity to ground into a double play. But of course,

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they did.

I'm surprised the Indians even had an opportunity to leave runners on base. But of course, they did.

I will say that Shin-Soo Choo did drive one to the deepest part of the ballpark early in this one. That won't show up in the boxscore. Credit to Austin Jackson for running it down.

The Indians [have been shutout](#) more than they've won since being 15 games over five-hundred at 30-15.

Sizemore was back at DH for the second straight game, as well in the leadoff spot. Manny says [he is just trying to keep Grady fresh](#). Let's not forget about that disabled list stint.

Do I really have any material to give little random notes? Not really.

[MINOR RUNDOWN]

Bad news on the **Jason Knapp** front. The high-end prospect received in the Cliff Lee deal has been shut down before even making an official pitch for any of the affiliates. The plan was to start him off in Kinston after monitoring his workload in the early going during extended spring training. The Indians would have rather start him late and pitched him through the end of the season than start him from the beginning and shut him down early.

But of course now [those plans have gone out the window](#).

"Jason has approached his work the past year with great determination and persistence," Ross

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Atkins, vice president of player development, said in a release. "This consistent approach will only enhance his rehabilitation moving forward."

Big blow. Just a big blow. This kid was supposed to be the center piece of the deal and thus far, he hasn't contributed much. The good news, he is still young. The bad news, he was supposed to be in Kinston this year. This really sets his progression back and it really makes you wonder yet again, "What exactly did this team get in Knapp?"

Kinston [won again last night](#) , with **Anthony Gallas** bringing his spectacular doubles show to Carolina. In his second game with the K-Tribe, Gallas knocked in two more runs and hit his second double. He hit 24 with the Captains in 57 games. J.D. Reichenbach started and threw 5.2 hitless innings. **Rob Bryson** struck out the side in his first game with Kinston. Awaiting his return to Akron.

Columbus continues to mash the daylights out of Buffalo and everyone in their path. They won their eighth straight behind home runs from Chad Huffman and Jerad Head. Scott Barnes improved to 5-1. **Luis Valbuena** may be clamoring for a call-up ahead of someone like Jason Donald the way he is hitting. He's at .312 with a .373 on-base percentage and 41 RBI. Be scared.

The Indians have [started signing some of their draft picks](#) . With Mahoning Valley's season starting on Friday, the picks that are going to be playing are starting to roll in. The highest pick to sign thus far is **Bryson Myles**, the outfielder from Stephen F. Austin who was picked in the sixth round.

Also signing, 12th round pitcher Grant Sides and 21st round outfielder Cody Elliot from Ball State. Robert Nixon, the 46th round [pick has signed](#) , along with the Indians first undrafted free agent, Jerrud Sabourin a first baseman from Indiana.

Jake Lowery [has been tweeting](#) that he's in Cleveland and scheduled for a physical today. I asked him if it was safe to assume he was signing and he said "You know it." He should be joined by 23rd round Cody Allen and 39th rounder John Barr, who is still playing in the CWS.

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You can follow Grant Sides, the 12th rounder who signed, on Twitter @ [G Sides](#) .

[CLEVELAND FAN EXTRA INNINGS]

Let's temper the doom and gloom. This is certainly no fun to watch, but let me point out the AL East leading Boston Red Sox. They were getting pounded into salt to start the season. They were getting no offensive support and it seemed like everyone was on a slump to start the season.

That's kind of what the Indians are going through right now. Everyone on the offense is going through their slump at the same time and of course, the biggest piece to the early success is missing. Look at how they've taken off when Adrian Gonzalez heated up and started mashing everything in site. Look at the stark contrast to the Indians lineup with and without Travis Hafner.

So if you are extremely worried that the Tribe we saw from April and May is gone, give it a few more weeks, even another month, before you jump off the cliff.

The fact that everyone seems to be laboring can have some silver lining. It's better to collectively suck at the same time, rather than a few people go through rough streaks at different times. And don't you be surprised if a few of them suddenly break out of these woes when Hafner returns to the lineup.

Continue to keep this run in perspective with the whole season. Philadelphia has run off four straight, thank to facing the Cubs, but they just got through a stretch that was less than stellar. They were 4-7 through 11 games against New York, Washington, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Chicago. They averaged 3 runs per game. Got some bad pitching performances, from that stupid silly rotation of superheroes.

Let's take this month of June. Detroit, New York, Minnesota, Texas, Toronto, 13 games. They've won three and put up 2.7 runs per game. But they've also got some great pitching performances within that span. Pitching performances that are worthy of wins. Of course there

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are those Carmona Cash for Clunkers thrown in, but the point is this. The pitching has kept this team afloat, and it's good enough to make you believe that when, not if, but when this offense starts to re-ignite the fire, things will get back to semi-normal and this will be a division battle.

But first, they need to get their Pronk back.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Travis Hafner made his first rehab start with Akron last night. He was 1-2 with a walk and a run scored for the Aeros. Hafner [says he'll make three or four starts](#) in Akron. If all of those are in a row, I would have to like his chances of being activated this weekend.

The **Asdrubal Cabrera** Campaign is rolling. Keep it up people. Not only has Cabrera [cut into his lead for starting shortstop](#), but Derek Jeter is now on the disabled list. Let's strike while we have the opportunity! Let's make Asdrubal Cabrera be the guy that knocks Derek Jeter off his undeserving platform and put Drubes in his rightful spot where he belongs.

Cabrera, at last checked, has tabulated 1.6M+ votes while Derek Jeter nears two million. Boiled down, 280K is all that separates Cabrera from Jeter. Get to it people!

[RAFAEL PEREZ TWEET WATCH]

I now have to go through a few extra clicks just to get to Rafael Perez's profile, just to make sure he hasn't tweeted. It's because I've followed people and they've pushed him down. Yes the extra clicks are annoying.

Days Without a Tweet: 28

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ [TheTribeDaily](#) where he tweets about sending AC2AZ. You can also read more Morning Rundown and other features at his blog, [The Tribe Daily](#)

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