

Morning Rundown: Tribe Head Into Break On Down Note

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Monday, July 11 2011 9:30 AM - Last Updated Monday, July 11 2011 7:38 AM



After a barrage of ninth inning power coins on Thursday, we find ourselves a little disappointed on a Monday morning having lost the final three to Toronto heading into the All-Star break. All is good though in Cleveland. Believe it.

July 10th, 2011

Toronto Blue Jays - **7**

Cleveland Indians - **1**

W: Brett Cecil (2-4) L: Carlos Carrasco (8-6)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

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I'm here to reign you in. Don't go jumping off the cliff. Instead, take this next three days away from Indians baseball to gather yourself, your thoughts, and slow down. We'll talk more later, but first, let's visit the disaster that was these past three games.

To think that the emotion of that walk-off grand slam from Travis Hafner on Thursday wouldn't carry over to at least a series split is crazy. I know the crowd was hot, I was there Friday. There is no possible way that the players couldn't feel that emotion running high and not use it to carry them.

There seemed to be a little magic going on offensively in that game on Friday. But of course, Mitch Talbot happened.

At the beginning of the game, with the lineup that Manny Acta trotted out, I started thinking Mitch Talbot should be angry for drawing the short straw and getting one the most poor lineups Manny Acta could put out there. It was like he put every player's face on a magnet and put those magnets in a bowl, then chucked that bowl against the refrigerator and took the first nine that stuck.

But after watching that offense put up more runs than anyone could even hope for, that offense should probably ask Mitch Talbot collectively, "What's up with that, dude?!"

What more can be said about Saturday. Realistically not a game the Indians should have been in given the offense they were producing. If not for big hits from Sizemore and Buck, they aren't in that game. Two walks and three hits off Morrow through eight innings, that's as many base-runners as the Blue Jays had runs throughout eight.

Then they get the big Buck double in what was a most impressive at-bat by the outfielder. But hey, I argue that it should have scored the winning run, or at least put the winning run on third. Thought for sure Carlos Santana was safe on his head-first slide into first earlier in that frame. But, it was a bang-bang play and you can't really get all bent out of shape for the call.

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Either way, the game went into the tenth and it wasn't long before that guy named Bautista went deep again. Do you pitch to him? No, but that's Chris Perez. Try telling him not to. I'm not going to say I would have told him no if I was in Manny Acta's position. That's your best pitcher going against their best hitter. You just have to [trust him to not miss his location](#) , which he did horribly with that pitch.

"He's not hitting 1.000, so obviously he has weaknesses," Perez said. "He just doesn't miss his pitches. You have to stay away from him. He hits everything inside right now, and if you leave anything over the plate, he's not fouling it back. He puts a good swing on it and hits it into the stands or makes a loud out."

Which brings us to the disaster that was Sunday. And now you are set up in a perfect position as a club to win the final game of this series, notch a series tie, and head into the All-Star break and three day break with a big positive. You have one of your better pitcher's going, looking to atone from his last outing, which was a little disappointing.

Ummmm... Oof.

They certainly had their opportunities to score, but [not only did they not do just that](#) , there was a big hole that the offense had to dig out of thanks to

Carlos Carrasco

's third inning implosion.

"My last two games, I've left a couple of pitches a little bit up," said Carrasco, who dropped his second consecutive decision following a dazzling month of June. "Every time when I miss, I've paid the price."

Tim Belcher said he's not being aggressive with his fastball, and hopefully this little mini-break, which for him won't really be much of a break since he's slated to start Saturday out of the break, can get his focus right. Because the last two games, it hasn't been there. I'll keep saying it til he goes away, but that old Carrasco that just can't get his head-straight when things go bad keeps coming back.

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Point blank, Car² let this one get away from him. He cruised through the first two, even though he let up three baserunners, striking out the side in the second and Escobar to lead off the game. Even after the home run given up to Thames, he got two outs. Then Snider walked and he let it get away with Bautista on third.

Then you go opposite and look at the Jays pitcher, Brett Cecil and he did just the opposite of Carrasco. I mean, look at what he said after the game.

"I think it really shows when any pitcher walks two guys in an inning, gives up a couple of hits in an inning, and somehow you work out of it," Cecil said. "I think that's where confidence comes in. I found myself in that position a lot today."

It certainly shows. It shows that either the pitcher enjoys putting himself into strenuous situations just so he can get out of them, or that the offense is letting that pitcher off the hook.

And that's what the Indians did on offense yesterday.

I did this a few days ago with the runners left on base and how Orlando Cabrera really failed all four times he went to the plate. About to do it with the entire offense here after they combined to leave 13 runners on base.

The biggest culprit being Grady Sizemore.

Carlos Santana was the only one to not leave someone on and that's because he walked twice and had two hits. He was the guy that Grady Sizemore kept leaving out there stranded.

1st Inning: Bases Loaded with one out, Sizemore pops out weakly, infield fly rule. Kearns grounds out.

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2nd Inning: What the hell was Luis Valbuena doing? You hit like, ten home runs in Triple-A. Stop bunting with one out and nobody on.

3rd Inning: Two out single by Santana.

4th Inning: Marson double and Baby Louie single sets up 2nd & 3rd with one out. Hannahan strikes out, Brantley lines out.

6th Inning: Grady reaches on error, Kearns singles, two on and nobody out. Marson and Valbuena go down, and if not for a two-out hit by Jack Hannahan, the Indians are shutout, but a chance for more than one run goes by the wayside.

7th Inning: Two out walk and a single by Grady Sizemore lets Austin Kearns groundout with two more runners on. He didn't ask for that!

8th Inning: Jack Hannahan hits into a double play to end the inning. This is the bottom of the order at it's finest.

9th Inning: Brantley singles to lead off inning, two outs recorded, another Santana walk and Sizemore grounds out again.

So there ya go, three really good and legit chances to score some runs in the first, fourth, and sixth innings. And you come away with one run off a two-out hit? Downright scary how they let Brett Cecil off the hook on this one.

But it'll go down as a loss that we'll have to stomach. I'm not sure if the Indians were looking forward to the three day break a little early, but it's here now, so they better recharge their batteries and be ready Thursday against Baltimore.

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Random Details...

Laugh all you want at Austin Kearns replacing Travis Hafner as a pinch-runner on Saturday, but... Okay, laugh all you want, that's pretty damn funny.

Why did Justin Masterson pitch in relief on Saturday? Simply put, [the Indians are keeping him active](#) with a three day break and [him going on Thursday](#) as if he never took a break. Good move. He was available on Sunday too and with Carrasco going out as early as he did, surprised Acta didn't go to him for an inning.

He did go to Frank Herrmann for another two innings and The Professor delivered again. Since June 1st, Herrmann has given up just two earned runs over the course of 18+ innings.

In fact, Acta pretty much emptied his bullpen, using everyone but Durbin and Chris Perez.

Asdrubal Cabrera got his first day off of the season Sunday. It was by design and he really needed it, especially after the scare with the ankle earlier this week. He's going to be playing on Tuesday, so giving him two days in a row is really important. He now gets just as many days off as everyone else, but he'll have to play a few innings in a game during his.

Travis Hafner was 3-for-5 in the first game of the series. In the final three he was 1-for-13 with just one walk. Maybe that's why they lost those games.

This all being said, the Indians are not in first place at the All-Star break. They stand a half game out of Detroit and their 49-43 record. Looks like the Indians will continue to go on not having been in first at the break for another year. Man, 1999 was a long time ago.

[ALRIGHT TALBOT]

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According to [Scott Leo of the Clippers broadcast crew](#) , **Jeanmar Gomez** will not be participating in the Triple-A All-Star game on Wednesday.

Now try this on for size. Gomez pitched on Friday for the Clippers. If he were to start in regular turn for the Clippers, he'd be starting on Saturday as the Clippers return to action. For him to not take part and at least throw one inning doesn't make any sense. He'd have plenty of rest either way.

Could a call-up be in the works for Gomez? Perhaps. The only real reason to hold him out of the All-Star game is to prevent injury because he's in the plans of the big league club.

So let's assume Gomez is coming up. The next question is... For who?

Is it for Mitch Talbot on Sunday? Are the Indians ready to make a move by dumping Talbot?

Or more realistically, is Fausto Carmona not going to be quite ready for his next start, which would have to come on Monday. Perhaps it's just a precaution for that, in case Carmona can't go and they do need Gomez. It would be kind of hard to tell if Carmona will be ready a whole week out.

Carmona will be eligible to come off the disabled list by the time for that start next Monday. So the question becomes, will he be ready?

Or is this really all about **Mitch Talbot**, and the Indians are ready to make the switch?

Terry Pluto [called for Talbot's head](#) in his latest piece and puts together some pretty damning evidence. Not that it was hard to do.

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1. Mitch Talbot has a 6.33 ERA, Fausto Carmona is at 5.78. Those are the two highest ERAs among American League starters, according to ESPN's stats. The two highest. The Indians are in a playoff race with a team that is based on pitching, and they can't have two guys who have been so ineffective.

What a great question that is. How exactly are the Indians staying afloat with two starters who have the worst ERAs among AL starters? Then again, at least they have five or so consistent starters. Some teams are laboring to the point that they don't have starters to even qualify for that statistic. So it kind of makes sense.

But that isn't going to continue to fly. I'm about ready to give up on Talbot myself. I've been as patient as anyone, telling you all to not go chopping off Talbot's legs. But the time has come to see what the youngsters got. On one condition of course.

Fausto Carmona has to be healthy. I know I know. Carmona has sucked a whole lot lately. But I'm not interested in seeing the Indians destroy the depth they've built up. You do have three legit players, McAllister, Gomez, and Huff, that are all waiting for their long term opportunities. But you have Alex White on the way back and Fausto Carmona dealing with whatever he has going on.

I know it seems like madness to want to keep Talbot, but you need to have depth. Until you can definitely say Carmona is healthy enough to progress, or get Alex White back, or both. I'd rather hold onto Talbot to continue to keep the spot warm. The next thing you know, someone else goes down with an injury, Talbot is long gone, and you are down to having to call Joe Martinez up to make some spot-starts.

Is THAT something you really want?

I didn't think so.

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So yes, I'm ready to move on from Talbot. I think we've seen all that we've need to see from him to know what kind of pitcher he is. However, you have to wait until the timing is right and you aren't put in a position where you'd have to settle for worse. Because trust me, you can do a whole lot worse than Mitch Talbot. As crazy as that may sound.

[FOCUS ON THE FUTURE]

The U.S. team defeated the World in this year's MLB All-Star Future's Game on Sunday. [Taking part for the Indians](#)

were

Jason Kipnis

and

Drew Pomeranz

. A good day for Kipnis, while Pomeranz may want to forget his performance.

"It's just stupid the things that they have," Kipnis said in admiration. "Seeing this is another reason for motivation to get to the big leagues as if you need any more."

For Jason Kipnis, it was a bit of a homecoming as he got to play in the state he played his college ball in. The former Sun Devil even flashed the horns as he crossed home plate [from his solo shot in the first inning](#) to lead off the first for the U.S. team.

Kipnis led off and that was his only hit. But he did make an early impact. He only got two at-bats before being lifted for a pinch-hitter in the fifth.

An inning later, Drew Pomeranz came in to pitch an inning, but he couldn't exactly finish it. Pomeranz let up a hit (which probably should have been ruled an error) then surrendered a two-run shot. The pain wasn't over as Pomeranz let up a few more and was eventually pulled with two outs. In the end, all four runs that the World scored would be charged to Pomeranz.

From here, Pomeranz gets to leave behind the Carolina League and head up to Ohio where

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he'll join Double-A Akron after they resume from their All-Star break. He sets up perfectly to face his teammate from yesterday, Bryce Harper as he goes to Double-A Harrisburg.

Kipnis meanwhile has one more stop, the Triple-A All-Star Game before he gets to Cleveland Columbus.

Zach McAllister will be returning to Columbus, but before that, he too heads to the Triple-A All-Star game and [will start for the International League](#) .

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

[Some injury notes before we head into the break](#) . Starter **Alex White** will be tossing a bullpen on Wednesday. His first time on a mound since his injury. From there, who really knows.

Shin-Soo Choo

meanwhile got his cast off yesterday and we'll get a look at by the surgeon who performed surgery, Dr. Tim Graham.

I've seen enough of Luis Valbuena already. I know I said I was going to give him a second chance and all that. But after watching Jason Kipnis, I'm ready to go. Get the boy up here, start him at second and let him work through whatever defensive growth he has to work through with the coaches at the highest level. Cord Phelps' defense was the reason he was sent down, I do know this. But if you give Kipnis consistent enough playing time, his bat will be more than worth whatever labors you may have to go through defensively.

If there are any labors to go through.

Is this a panic move? Is wanting to bring in Gomez over Talbot another one? Perhaps. Let's all settle down though. This club is in a good position heading into the All-Star break and even more of a better position than you could have thought of at the start of the season.

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No, I'm not taking that "Just happy to be here" approach at this point and willingly submitting to whatever fate the Indians have. I want them to win this division and go to the playoffs as much as the next guy. But this is what the division battle is going to be like from here on out. It's going to be much of a dogfight, because neither team has showed, nor will show the consistency to just run away and hide from everyone else.

But like this, the Indians have a nice schedule ahead of them. Let's look at a few things.

Just eight games remaining with the American League East, and four them are right out of the shoot against Baltimore, the weakling of the division. A perfect opportunity to get off to a fast start, and a nice breather having to only face the Red Sox four times throughout the rest of the year.

If the Indians are going to do it, they have no better shot than taking the fight right to Detroit, who they face 12 more times before the season is over and they end with a three gamer in Detroit.

Of their remaining 72 games, the Indians play 47 games against teams that currently have a record below .500. That means that they've been able to remain five games above .500 against a decently tough schedule that has been front-loaded.

The Indians have 46 games left against their division. They've played just 25 thus far and have gone 13-12. That's one thing they'll need to keep up as they've not been able to play well in division like they need to if they want to win it. Detroit is 18-8 and the freakin' Twins are 16-11.

They do have a defining road stretch to start off August where they travel to Boston for four and then to Texas for three. Two first place caliber teams right there.

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[The Tribe Daily](#) [Mike "Bullpen Mafia" Stutz with Jay from 25k.com on the 30-man Wall Road](#) [The Tribe Daily](#) [Mike "Bullpen Mafia" Stutz with Jay from 25k.com on the 30-man Wall Road](#)