

Morning Rundown: Offense Comes Out Surging in Support of Masterson

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Friday, July 15 2011 8:52 AM - Last Updated Friday, July 15 2011 9:27 AM



All I can say is, God Bless You Baltimore!

July 14th, 2011

Cleveland Indians - **8**

Baltimore Orioles - **4**

W: Justin Masterson (8-6) L: Jeremy Guthrie (3-13)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

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It seemed like weeks ago that the Indians went limping into the All-Star Break with a loss to Toronto. It was only Sunday.

Photo - Getty Images via Yahoo! Sports

Now it seems like there is a big time energy swirling around the Indians as they come out of the break firing at those orange birds that are just fluttering around in agony.

The Orioles are in a bad way now, having lost eight straight. Even though it was a quick three day break, they haven't been playing good baseball. So it's important to jump on them in this series and the whole key in that is jumping on them right out of the gate, in the first game.

The Indians took it a step further and put up three in the first inning and that's obviously what you like to see. Asdrubal Cabrera starts off with his 15th and 20-25 is looking like a real possibility with him the way he's hitting them out of the park.

Cabrera would later plate another run in the big sixth inning when he singled to score Matt LaPorta and his partner in crime would do the same after he hit his 14th home run of the season a batter later. **Carlos Santana** took Guthrie deep for a two-run shot in the first and then doubled in the third to knock in another run.

And in the middle of it all, Travis Hafner was on base all five times. He walked twice, got two hits, and was hit by a pitch. And you plainly see what is possible [when all three of those guys are on](#)

"The heart of our order did the damage," said Indians manager Manny Acta. "That's what we need. We need a couple of guys to get hot so everything is not just on Asdrubal's and [Travis] Hafner's shoulders."

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Mass amounts of damage is possible when those three are doing their job. Then you had Brantley on twice, Sizemore on three times with a pair of walks and the five men that Orlando Cabrera left on base is no longer such a big deal.

But you can't expect that every night, so you'd still like to see others in the bottom of the lineup get it going.

I'm sure no one was happier with the offensive outburst than **Justin Masterson** though. Masty was the one getting the short-end of the straw for awhile in terms of support and now every time out the offense is making up for past instances where they short-changed him on run production.

Acta said Masterson dealt with some traffic, as he likes to put it, but still made the pitches when he needed to be. He turned it up a notch and continued to "be money."

"We're excited," Masterson said. "We don't have to play out of our shoes, but just go about our business, limiting our errors as a whole. I think we're all pretty excited about the success that we're able to have, and it'll really just be playing the game that we've been playing."

"That's been minimizing the mistakes that we make and going out there and really scoring more runs than the other team."

Masterson only went six, and since he gave up four runs it won't qualify as a quality start. But it was a quality win and as Manny said, he made pitches when he had to. Evidence that by the eight strikeouts. That is the beauty of Masterson and the way he pitches. He really can really adapt to the different styles he'll face offensively. If he needs to strike out eight hitters to win the game, he can do that. If he needs to get grounders and double plays, he can do that too.

And in this one he did strike out eight. His control was there, because he only walked one. Eight hits? Yeah, some of those were just trashy hits that fell. They happen with Masterson because he can pitch to contact and sometimes, they line out or ground out. Sometimes they single or bloop one in front of the outfielder. It happens. Masterson was on his game last night, you could

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tell by watching him.

He gave up four, but it was a very generous four. Thankfully he got the support to make this one a win and not a loss.

Random Details...

Turn it up Mafia! One walk from Joe Smith in three innings by the bullpen. Other than that, five strikeouts, two from Pestano and three from Sipp in the ninth to knock out the side. Dominance.

Lonnie Chisenhall's return to the lineup resulted in a 0-for-3 before he was replaced by Jack Hannahan in the ninth. Seemed good to get him out of there at that point. More on Chisenhall in a bit.

One thing that needs to be pointed out is that sixth inning went from being a big inning, to looking like the Orioles were going to distinguish it with just one run scored, back to being a big inning. It was all two-out magic that started with Brantley singling after Orlando Cabrera stole third base. Not only that, LaPorta got the jump to go to third and when all was said and done, Brantley too would cross the plate and it was a 8-2 lead, which was plenty for the bullpen at that point, even if Masterson gave up one or two, which he did.

Only three groundouts for Masterson, which was less than the four fly-balls he got. Of course eight of his outs came via the strikeout, but not like him when he is successful to have more fly-ball outs than groundball outs.

Mark Reynolds struck out three times. The earth rotated, I yawned, and the sun went down. All normal occurrences in a day.

Orlando Cabrera stole a base. My dogs didn't bark when I got home from work yesterday, I didn't fall asleep after work, and I didn't see that silly AT&T flash-mob commercial. All unusual

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and rare occurrences in a day.

[WHAT INJURY?]

The intrigue over the break was going to be what happened with Mitch Talbot and **Jeanmar Gomez**. After Gomez was mysteriously removed from participating in the Triple-A All-Star Game, there was some curiosity in terms of what would happen.

The intrigue was upped a level when Gomez [was slated to start for Mahoning Valley](#). It would turn out that Gomez needed to pitch a little, more than he would in the All-Star game, but not quite as much as if he was making a regular start.

And the reason for that? He would in fact be taking Mitch Talbot's turn in the rotation. But not because Talbot is being waived or released. Miraculously, **Mitch Talbot** has some sort of ailment with his back. So the Indians placed the maligned starter [on the 15-day disabled list](#) and brought Gomez to Baltimore with the team, intending to activate him Sunday to start in place of Mitch.

"After his last outing, [Talbot] felt a little soreness in his back," manager Manny Acta said. "On Sunday, he was available out of the bullpen. Between innings, he tried to throw back there and felt it a little bit, so we shut him down."

I'd feel a little numb too if I kept getting pounded in consecutive starts.

I say likely story, but I can also read between the lines. Available out of the bullpen? Sure, whatever. Not that you'd use him. If the Indians were concerned with getting him back as soon as possible, they'd have DL-ed him at the first sight of trouble and let him eat up three-four of those days on the disabled list with no games being played.

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But they didn't they waited until Thursday. Meaning they want Talbot to take his time coming back and probably want him to exhaust his rehab assignment, taking advantage of that time to get him some work in the minors, letting him get outs and make some adjustments to his mechanics or whatever it is they think they have to fix with him.

Now the focus is on Jeanmar Gomez, who went four innings and gave up a run off five hits and no walks for the Scrappers on Wednesday. Gomez has gone 9-3 for the Clippers this season, with a 2.40 ERA in 14 starts. He's made a few appearances this year for the big league squad, going 0-1 with a 4.91 ERA in four games, three of them starts.

Gomez pretty much has the rotation spot now, because you can bet if he pitches well, Mitch Talbot certainly won't be getting that spot back. Gomez has proved everything he has left to prove at the Columbus level, and this is his chance now to take a rotation spot and run with it. The other times he came up, he was here to spot-start and fill-in. Even though he's taking Talbot's spot because of injury, it certainly isn't assumed that once Talbot is healthy, he'll take that spot back.

Gomez is in a position to finish out this season as a starter.

And Fausto Carmona... It looks like he'll be ready to go on Monday, to start one game of the double-header for the Twins. The Indians will still need someone else though and it would appear David Huff would be that guy as he [started for the Clippers last night](#) , but went just three innings and threw 63 pitches. Seems like he's going to be the guy.

Carmona says the quadriceps he injured crashing into first base felt good [after going through some sprints and agility drills on Thursday](#)

. He threw a simulated game, throwing 50 pitches to hitters and said he felt good on the mound as well.

"It's OK," Carmona said. "I threw on the mound like normal in a game. After that, I did some running. I feel good. I'm ready to go. Throwing on the mound, I felt very good. I was throwing strikes. My leg is strong."

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I'm interested to see what a rested and re-focused Carmona does. I really believe his issues have been between the ears and perhaps the break, not just the All-Star break, but the little break from pitching did him well. I originally proposed an off-the-wall idea about getting him a break from starting during Interleague. But perhaps him missing a possible start against one of the two AL-East slugging teams was a good thing for his psyche.

[ALL-STAR FUN]

I'll be honest, I watched a few innings of the MLB All-Star game. Until Asdrubal Cabrera was lifted and Chris Perez's inning. Then I went to bed shortly after. I had very little overall interest in the game itself. Here is the overall problem with the All-Star game. It isn't the fact that they had 80 All-Stars and it was essentially the "second class" of players playing.

Sure, it lacked some guys like Verlander and Sabathia who had to pull out because they started on Sunday. Yes there was some players missing, but by in large, the "replacements" are actually some of the more deserving players. Just look at Cabrera as a class example.

The whole problem, for me at least, is that they make this All-Star game out to be more than it is. They hype it up for being this big thing because it "matters" and simply put, it doesn't. No one gives a hoot anymore. If anything, everyone has stopped fighting the fight about it being stupid to count as the deciding factor as to which team gets home field advantage in the All-Star game.

I'd take more of a genuine interest in watching the actual game if they just brought the best players and had some fun with it. The whole atmosphere of "this game counts!" just ruins it and I think it forces players to buy into something that is simply put, silly.

However, it was nice to just turn it on and see Chris Perez and Asdrubal Cabrera out there. It was nice to see the tweets from Chris Perez about how much fun he was having at his first All-Star game, meeting legends like Reggie Jackson. And also seeing downright adorable pictures of [him and his son](#) , and [Cabrera and his little one](#) as well.

That really is what it is all about. Having fun and I think that whole tight and rigid idea of

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imposing onto the players that the game counts, ruins a lot of the fun come game-time. And you end up with a clunker like the game on Tuesday. Cause let's be honest, it was a clunker.

The derby was fun to watch. At least the first round. Especially getting the surprise of seeing Manny Acta out there [throwing to Adrian Gonzalez](#) .

"He didn't have anybody to throw," explained Acta, who was on the AL's All-Star coaching staff. "I was just sitting at my locker eating and reading. I heard him telling his dad or somebody that was with him that he didn't have anybody to throw to him."

"It was only like 20 minutes until that whole thing started. I turned around and told him if he wanted, I could throw to him. It was a great experience -- a hurtful one."

It's funny, because I thought there was some sort of connection there with Acta and Gonzalez. But it was simply a last minute thing. And heck, not bad for a last-minute pairing. They went to the finals and put on a lovely show. It also gave some of us in Cleveland a rooting interesting. Even though he plays for the big-bad Boston Red Sox, who many around these parts consider just as evil as the Evil Empire, he had Acta on his side.

And he was taking on a Yankee, so who would you rather side with?

I got behind Gonzalez in the derby. That was until mid-way through the second round. Man that thing gets boring after awhile. They suck the fun out of it by making it more than two rounds. I'd just go with one and invite a bunch of people. Invite some of the more prolific batting practice home run hitters, the league leaders, a ton of people. Give them ten outs, and have a legit home run derby. Whoever hits the most wins.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Really reassuring to see **Lonnie Chisenhall** back in the lineup, but still a little worried about

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him. He looks like he was in a fight, that's for sure, but he's [wearing that extension to his helmet](#), just in case a ball were to venture near his face again.

"You have to be thankful that the ball got the helmet," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "I don't think that if it would've got him square in the face he was going to be able to come back this fast. He went through all those tests and took batting practice."

He went 0-for-3, but personally, I will not feel better until he starts showing some signs at the plate. Not exactly numbers or anything but, more so, no fear. No tentativeness. That type of experience can really screw with a player. Sure he's probably been hit by a pitch before, but not like that. That type of hit can really make you think a little bit more at the plate. And as you could probably figure out. Thinking at the plate can be a bad thing, because hitting a baseball is more reactionary more than anything.

Chisenhall will be wearing that helmet extension for the next six weeks to protect his healing sinus fracture.

Alex White is with the team in Baltimore and [will throw a bullpen session](#) tomorrow. Rehab assignment could be just a few weeks away at this point. Great news on that front.

Of course, the Indians placed Talbot on the disabled list and recalled a position player temporarily to have an extra guy before recalling Gomez. That extra man is speedy **Ezequiel Carrera**, who is up for his second stint. This will be a rather short one, but it's nice to have a legit pinch-runner on the bench for the next few games.



[STAT OF THE DAY]

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For your amusement the "Bullpen Mafia, Stat of the Day."

In the second half, the collective Bullpen Mafia has not surrendered a hit. Yeah, that's right. Not a single hit!

[RAFAEL PEREZ TWEET WATCH]

Nino's TV Reference of the Day: "[I'm not Grilling You a Cheese!](#)" - *Archer*

In honor of Rafael Perez no tweeting, and the Twitter tradition of "Follow Friday," here is one person you should absolutely be following if you have Twitter.

Follow Friday: [Tripping Olney](#)

If you can put up with all the tweets being in caps-lock.

Days Without a Tweet: 52