

## Morning Rundown: Birthday Bash Salvages Opening Series

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Monday, April 09 2012 8:32 AM - Last Updated Monday, April 09 2012 9:49 AM

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This is it. The Grind. This is where it starts. Early April. The newness of the season is still fresh, but the frill of Opening Day is gone and the people who only come out to party and then whine and complain when the Indians don't win their first game have gone back into hibernation. This is our season now and even if you hate Eric Wedge, it's time to use his favorite term. Let's grind this season out together.

**April 7th, 2012**

Toronto Blue Jays - **7**

Cleveland Indians - **4**

W: Casey Janssen (1-0) L: Tony Sipp (0-1)

### [\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

**April 8th, 2012**

Toronto Blue Jays - **3**

Cleveland Indians - **4**

W: Derek Lowe (1-0) L: Joel Carreno (0-1) S: Chris Perez (1)

### [\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

If you would have told me that Masterson, **Ubaldo Jimenez**, and Lowe would combine to throw 22 innings and give up three combined earned runs and the Indians would have only won one game, I would have laughed at you.

And then if you would have told me that the game the Indians would have won was the one Derek Lowe started... Well I might have believed you based off the fact that he is facing a kid who hadn't made a major league start and for the simple fact that this is the Tribe we're talking about.

I guess we can start with Saturday's disappointment. While it isn't any fun dropping a few games, you need to keep things in perspective, especially when one of the [starting pitchers who tossed a gem](#) is.

*"Winning games is all about ptiching," Jimenez said. "So when you have Masterson and me having good games, that's a good sign for the team. That's when the other guys will do*

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*everything possible to try to throw the same. The offense is going to come along. One of these days, the guys are going to start hitting again. It's just the beginning of the season."*

As a wise man with crazy orange hair always says... Stay calm my babies..

It's a little cold out there, give the offense a few days here to get it going. I know the fear of their bad spring is creeping up, but you need to give it time. Yes that is completely contradictory to celebrating the awesome start from the three starters and the pitching staff (save for a few hiccups from Perez and Pestano), but pitching coming together early is always a good sign.

Jimenez's outing was going swimmingly, in fact he was tossing a perfect game and eventually carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning until the Blue Jays struck. It was only a matter of time before they did, but you just hoped that it wouldn't be for run the way the Indians were swinging the bats.

Of course a wild pitch and a few walks later, and not only was the no-hitter over, the two-run lead given by a Jason Kipnis homer disappeared.

*"I got myself in trouble, walking those two guys," Jimenez said. "Pretty much every time you start walking guys you get in the danger zone."*

Danga zoneeee....

The wild pitch is probably what hurt the most. It kind of looked like Jimenez was going to skate through the mess he made by walking two hitters and it even looked as if Santana had Lind at second when he tried to advance, but, eh.

I will take the outing Ubaldo had, giving up just the one hit and walking three. I could care less how many people he struck out because when the guy was going, he was cruising. He worked ahead, being able to throw strikes and keep his pitches limited throughout each inning. It was

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really fun to watch him out there work the way he did. He was going quick and just keeping a great pace.

Kipnis remarked that he looked a little more determined than he did in spring, which is likely a relief for everyone considering the chatter around him coming into this start. Ubaldo can now serve his suspension (in which the appeal was dropped right after the game) and make normal start on Saturday with Jeanmar Gomez stepping up and starting instead of being skipped.

Jimenez's outing was a sigh of relief for a lot people, Manny Acta probably [had the biggest](#) .

*"I asked him a couple of times and he said, 'I'm going to be fine,'" Acta said of their conversations in Spring Training. "He said, 'This is Spring Training. I'm just working on some stuff. I'm going to be OK.' No one is saying that every five days he's going to pitch like [he did Saturday], but he felt pretty confident that he was going to be OK. He gave us some peace of mind [Saturday]."*

Hopefully you didn't give up after two games because that would have just been foolish. I'm not saying the Indians are going to now break off 14 straight home wins or anything, but did you forget last season?

*"I'll take this over the first two games from last year," said Indians manager Manny Acta, who pounded his fist on his desk for emphasis. "We gave up 14 runs in the first three innings [on Opening Day 2011]. We had a chance to win both of these games. You've got to like that better."*

And of course that translated well into Sunday when the Indians would salvage things and at least win one game, much like they did last season against the team invading [Progressive Field tonight, Chicago](#)

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*"Happy birthday, Carlos Santana," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "I wish it was that easy for everybody."*

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I thought he was going to say, I wish everyday was his birthday, cause that's what I say..

That's what **Chris Perez** suggested we do for **Carlos Santana**, who blasted two home runs and really was the reason the Indians were able to muster enough offense in the win. You can't credit him completely because there were three other specific reasons the Indians pulled this one out.

Perez being one of them. After blowing the game Thursday, many didn't notice he pitched a scoreless frame in the extra-inning loss on Saturday. He then came out on Sunday and redeemed himself in a big way.

What more can you say about coming back and getting Jose Bautista out with the bases loaded, especially after he had already recorded enough outs to end the game?

*"It's a funny game," Acta said. "You blow one up by three [runs on Opening Day] and then you can save one with the bases loaded and Jose Bautista at the plate. That's why we play this game. We love it."*

Yeah it's kind of like that. The guy gets out of it with a double play that Asdrubal Cabrera botches, not just for one out, but both, making it necessary for Perez to not only get the three outs he needs to end it, but an extra fourth and fifth.

And it took some time and pitches, but he did it and he did it against the last guy you want to do it against in their lineup. But everyone is human, as we learned with Perez the first time around when he blew the game on Thursday.

So the moral of the story is, layoff.

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I know what you're saying, "but you were criticizing him on Thursday with a lot of people."

Ahk.. No. Perez is the closer, I was debating if he was ready to go or not and Manny Acta leaving him in the game.

Is Perez ready? I'd say so. I was a little worried and the dip in velocity is a little concerning still, but he got three innings of work in (with more than enough pitches) this weekend. That will take the place of any sort of stint that would otherwise knock off the rust. It's all a matter of getting his work in now and getting that velocity back up to his standard, which I think he's almost there.

The other specific reasons the Indians won that game? **Derek Lowe** was outstanding. He gave up two runs, both unearned though after some defensive issues (common theme of the day?), but pitched a solid seven innings of work.

Lowe gave up five hits, only walked one and was getting ground ball outs by the bunch, 15 to be exact. You like the 61 strikes thrown out of 95 pitches. All three starters, so efficient this past weekend, brilliant to see.

*"We believed in our starting rotation all of Spring Training," said Lowe, who was acquired in a trade with the Braves over the offseason. "I think people sometimes can look at numbers in Spring Training and say, 'Hey, these guys may not be too good.' But we believe in ourselves. There's a long way to go, but it's good to finally get one."*

When Lowe says "finally get one" he's referring to the fact that he hadn't won a game since August 31st of last year. He went win-less in September of last year, going 0-5 down the stretch in the Braves late season collapse.

A little relief for him and a little relief that this 1-2-3 punch looks mighty good. Lowe wasn't really regarded as the three, more of the four behind Tomlin, but I like him fitting in right there behind what looks to be a pair of aces. Lowe is such a veteran that he's likely to feed right off the tone the first two set.

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### Random Details

Vinnie Pestano gagged on Saturday with the solo shot to Kelly Johnson that gave them the lead in the ninth. Of course without Asdrubal Cabrera, that game ends a little earlier. He, like Perez, came right back on Sunday and was probably that fourth specific reason the Indians won because he got the Indians out of a tough spot in the eighth. Striking out a pair to end the inning with the Blue Jays threatening? Huge.

Jack Hannahan leads the team in RBI, yep. And errors! Expect neither to last.

Manny Acta used the same lineup all three games and now that he's got Tomlin pitching, it will likely change (expect to see Jason Donald or Aaron Cunningham in left field for defensive purposes) on Monday. All nine regular starters have recorded a hit by this point, with Kotchman nabbing his on Sunday to ease the minds of everyone.

Travis Hafner, three walks on Sunday.

Anyone have Jason Donald stealing the Indians first base? No me either. Michael Brantley's attempt earlier in the game on Sunday was horrific. Really dude, you are supposed to nab the base with as good of a jump as you had.

How painful was it watching Tony Sipp on Saturday? Normally if I'm at home watching, I can distract myself in some other way by, doing something else! At the game there is nothing you can do but stare at the ground or find something in the crowd (like the Daniel Bryan ['Yes! Yes! Yes!'](#)

chants that strangely broke out at the game, what?!) to distract you. Sipp was painful to watch not only in that he was slowly making it more impossible for the Indians to mount another comeback in the bottom of the frame, but also slowly sucking the life out of the crowd.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

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There was some rusty (crusty) umpiring in that series overall. A few calls were questionable and if anything, Tim Welke was [being a mega jerk to the Indians](#) the entire time. First he had a real crap game behind the plate for the game on Thursday and then went ahead and made some enemies in the Indians dugout on Saturday when he was at third base.

*"It was a fair ball," Indians third-base coach Steve Smith said. "That changed the game. Instead of having runners on second and third base with no outs, we went back to a runner on first with one out. That was a fair ball."*

*"There was a mark there where the ball hit," Acta said. "It looked like it was right off the right side of the line. Our argument wasn't so much where the ball landed, but we felt that it was almost impossible for the ball to land there and not go over the bag. Tim just told us that the ball was pretty straight coming off of Hafner's bat."*

Whatevs....

Thanks Terry Pluto, why don't people listen to you? A lot of people [want to get on](#); [Case y Kotchman](#)

for his awful start and not having hit a ball past the infield. Whatever people. Give the guy some time. The Indians have scored how many runs these first few games? 12? And that's with extra innings thrown in there (granted they didn't score that many in extra innings). Kotchman has saved at least a couple runs with his glove so far. The guy is still contributing even if he isn't hitting in THREE games.

Pluto also gave more than a few reasons for Acta removing Justin Masterson on Thursday. Let's not re-hash this because I think everyone reading understands the logic in taking him out. You may not agree with it, but the reasoning is there and you can't really fault Acta, even though it didn't work out.

Very successful weekend for the clubs in the minor leagues... **Scotty Barnes** [tossed six solid innings](#) and struck out seven in the process of Columbus' 7-4 win on Sunday. The Clippers won three of four



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off the Bats after losing the opener.

### **Matt LaPorta**

has hit two home runs and knocked in four runs total, settle down. Chisenhall has also homered and Kevin Slowey pitched seven good innings to pick up a win.

And lookout for the Mudcats in this early season as they have a club worth watching. Ready to roll in their first season as an Indians affiliate, they took two of three against Winston-Salem. Jesus Aguilar has started out 5-for-13 with three RBI and he isn't even leading the team. Tyler Holt, Jake Lowery, and Jeremie Tice all have four.

### **[TIGER WATCH]**

The Tigs swept the Boston Red Sox this weekend, and they did so with a lot of drama. We already saw their thrilling walk-off win on Thursday and they used more magic on Sunday in an intense slug fest. The Tigers are the best offense after three games as they put up a 10-spot on Saturday and then scored 13 in Sunday's 11-inning battle.

After posting a four spot early, Max Scherzer imploded and the war was on. The Red Sox went ahead and took a lead until the bottom of the ninth when Miguel Cabrera knocked in his third, fourth and fifth run of the game, yeah. He and Prince went back-to-back on Saturday and they both hit two solo home runs.

The Tigs are going to play a lot of games like those on Sunday. The Red Sox actually put up a two spot in the 11th but an Alex Avila homer won it in the end. With that pitching (which lost Doug Fister on Saturday and then had to go to the bullpen early on Sunday), they're bound to have 10-0 games and 13-12 games as well. They may not win all those 13-12 games though.

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*Nino has a blog and it's so entertaining it should be nominated for most entertaining blog competitions. Give it a vist at [The Tribe Daily](#).*

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