



If your head is still spinning from this latest Indians game, don't worry, you're not alone. There's a decent chance that four or five pitchers wind up on the DL with whiplash tomorrow as the Browns defeated the Bengals 10-9 at Progressive Field in the first game of this weekday series.

The two teams combined for 19 runs, 27 hits, and five home runs, which isn't all that surprising from the Reds who entered this series averaging 5.6 runs per game in the month of June. The Indians, however, usually do well to score 10 runs over the span of an entire series. The bats woke up in a big way tonight and they needed every single one of those runs.

It started early for both starting pitchers. In the first inning, Derek Lowe labored through the first inning, giving up a solo home run to Joey Votto that landed just above the yellow line and just above the outstretched arm of Shin-Soo Choo. Choo would get his revenge leading off the bottom of the first for the Indians as he hit a no doubter off Reds starter Mat Latos to knot the game at 1-1. Outside of the solo mistakes, both Lowe and Latos retired the other three hitters of the inning.

The second inning was ugly for both starters. The Reds greeted Lowe in the second inning with three straight hits, a couple of singles surrounding a double, to plate a run. After a flyout, Lowe gave up another single, this one to Ryan Hanigan, to score Ryan Ludwick. Lowe minimized the damage and got to the dugout down 3-1.

The Indians responded in a hurry. Michael Brantley extended his new hit streak to two games with a ground rule double to right center. Carlos Santana, dropped down the six spot in the batting order for today's game, absolutely ripped a single to center, hit on such a line past the

pitcher that Brantley couldn't score. Johnny Damon hit a Baltimore chop almost right off home plate that Brandon Phillips barehanded for an out, but Brantley scored easily. After Casey Kotchman failed to get Santana in from third with less than two outs, Lonnie Chisenhall destroyed a Mat Latos pitch deep into the Cleveland dusk for a two-run shot to put the Tribe up 4-3.

The broken record theme for starting pitchers continued. Staked to a fresh, new lead, the Derek Lowe Regression Train blew its whistle and after retiring Joey Votto to start the inning, Lowe allowed four straight Reds to reach and two of them to touch home plate. Fortunately for Lowe and the Indians, with men on the corners, Lowe got Todd Frazier to hit into an inning-ending double play to, again, minimize the damage.

The Indians scored in five of the eight innings tonight. One of them that they didn't score in was the third inning. But Lowe, the veteran that he is, battled through a game where he clearly didn't have it to keep the Indians in the ballgame by pitching a goose egg of his own in the fourth. That proved to be huge for the Indians because there was a fight at the bat rack in their half of the fourth.

Michael Brantley hit a leadoff double for the second straight at bat, but it looked like the Indians might squander the opportunity. Carlos Santana struck out, when it appeared that he took ball four on the 3-1 pitch and then flailed wildly at a changeup. Johnny Damon hit what I'll sarcastically call a "screamer" back to the pitcher for out number two. Casey Kotchman picked up his teammates, smashing a two-out, two-run home run to the roof of the Indians bullpen to put the Indians back on top 6-5. Lonnie Chisenhall picked up the hardest part of the cycle by tripling and then scoring on a Shin-Soo Choo double off the 19-foot-high wall in left to extend the lead to two.

Again, however, Lowe failed to hold a lead. Lowe gave up back-to-back doubles to lead off the fifth, including a Little League Home Run to Brandon Phillips. Votto doubled and then Brandon Phillips laced a ball down the left field line. Johnny Damon went all Crash Test Dummy into the side wall in foul territory and Phillips scrambled around the bases to score. In true, arrogant Brandon Phillips fashion, he made some sort of hand gesture upon touching home plate. To quote Bob Uecker in Major League II, "He's still a d*ck."

The Indians were blanked in the fifth and Manny Acta went to the bullpen. Lowe's five-and-fly was complete, as he allowed seven runs on 11 hits. It was the first time Lowe pitched poorly at

home, having entered today's game with a 1.37 ERA at home. Joe Smith worked a scoreless sixth inning.

One thing that the Indians really haven't done of late is manufacture innings. They have failed to string hits together and have relied on a hit or two and then a long ball. In the sixth, they manufactured a couple of runs. After Carlos Santana singled, Johnny Damon smoked (yes, smoked) a double down the right field line. Casey Kotchman worked the count to 3-0 and then hit a ground ball to second on a full count to get 'em in and get 'em over with a very productive out. Lonnie Chisenhall, building off his first two at bats, had a phenomenal at bat before reaching out and hitting a curve ball off the outside corner over the drawn-in shortstop for an RBI knock to push the Indians back ahead by two.

Acta was left in a precarious spot in the seventh. With Joey Votto and Jay Bruce due up in the inning, the conventional move would have been to go with a lefty. Anybody who has been following knows that Tony Sipp and Nick Hagadone are not to be trusted right now. Acta chose to roll with Smith. Votto walked to leadoff the inning, in what looked like an unintentional-intentional walk situation. Phillips hit one on the screws right at Kotchman who calmly made the catch on the screaming liner and stepped on second. It proved to be a huge double play as Jay Bruce hit a ball that may be orbiting Planet Earth right now to cut the Tribe's lead to 9-8.

The resilient Wahoos answered after the seventh inning stretch. Asdrubal Cabrera walked and after Jason Kipnis struck out, Jose Lopez rifled a single to right off a leaping Joey Votto's glove, sending Cabrera to third. Brantley stepped up and had a very unselfish at bat, hitting a fly ball to center, driving in Cabrera and pushing across an insurance run that the Indians would ultimately need.

Vinnie Pestano had worked more than one inning just seven times in his 100 career appearances entering Monday's game. Pestano was called on to get four outs for just the second time this season, the last being Opening Day. He was up to the task, giving up a walk and striking out a batter.

Lonnie Chisenhall felt short of his bid for a cycle, flying out to right field in his final at bat in the bottom of the eighth. The Indians got Aaron Cunningham to third, and you know it's a good night when Cunningham records a hit, but could not drive him in.

Chris Perez entered the game having to face Chris Heisey, Votto, and Phillips. Heisey, with two tremendous hitters behind him, gave Perez a gift by swinging at the first pitch and very Damon-esquely grounding out to second. Votto looked to be struck out on a perfect fastball on the inside corner but was given another pitch by home plate umpire Jim Wolf, who should be a pitcher's umpire because his brother, Randy, is a Major League pitcher, but I digress. Votto struck out looking on the next pitch anyway. Public Enemy #1 roped a single past a diving Lonnie Chisenhall and eventually scored on fielder's indifference and a Jay Bruce single up the middle. Perez buckled down and sent Ryan Ludwick back to the dugout looking and the Indians celebrated their first win in four tries against the Cincinnati Reds with a 10-9 victory.

With the win, the Indians inch back to two games above the .500 mark. The hapless Cubs hung a dozen on the White Sox tonight, so the Indians are back to just a half-game back in the AL Central Division.

Stat of the Night: If you'll allow me to toot my own horn for a second, one of my keys to the series was that the Indians needed production from the bottom of their order. They got it tonight, in part because Carlos Santana was dropped down the order. The Indians five through nine hitters were 10-for-19 with six extra base hits and eight of the 10 RBI.

Player of the Game: Lonnie Chisenhall still hasn't drawn a walk this season in his 17 games, but he upped his average 40 points tonight with a 3-for-4 effort including a home run, triple, and three RBI. SSSA (small sample size alert), but Chiz is now 11-for-28 in nine home games this season.

Tomorrow's Game: If you thought tonight looked like a slow-pitch softball game, tomorrow has the same potential. Mike Leake and his 5.05 ERA will take on Josh Tomlin and his 5.56 ERA at 7:05. It's Fill the House for the USO of Northeast Ohio night at the ballpark and, as evidenced by the crowd of less than 20k tonight, great seats still remain.

Scoring runs is fun, isn't it?