

Morning Rundown: Z-Mac Beats Birds to Stop Losing Skid

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, June 28 2012 11:20 PM - Last Updated Friday, June 29 2012 8:04 AM



When you get back on the right side of the tracks with a win, things seemingly just calm down. They aren't as bad as they look and especially when you have your newest member of the rotation come up and pitch well. Suddenly, things are looking quite better. Until Friday's game of course.

June 28th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **7**

Baltimore Orioles - **2**

W: Zach McAllister (2-1) L: Wei-Yin Chen (7-4)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

Seven runs, three big hits.. That's all it really took, three hits. And the flood gates are open. It's crazy to think that seven runs is like a big offensive effort, but with the way the Indians have

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been scuffling, it sure was needed.

Things started early and thankfully, big, with Johnny Damon's three-run shot in the second inning. The tone was set and how important was that with **Zach McAllister** on the mound?

Here kid, here's three runs, show us what you can do with that...

And he did well.

The biggest thing McAllister did in my eyes was get ahead and get his outs. He got two outs before letting anyone on base in all six innings he pitched. The only damage done was a two-run shot, but when you pitch in the situations he did, you are less likely to get burned at all by those types of hits. The other team has to go on some serious rallies to get runs off you when you are starting off every single inning by getting two outs before anything else.

Ultimately, he was aggressive. Z-Mac got his pitches in, threw right at the Orioles and said, come on, hit me and they [couldn't at least until two outs](#) .

"It's exciting," the rookie said. "I knew that they lost a few coming into it. I was definitely just going to go out and try to compete and do my best to help the team get a win and get them back on track. It's definitely exciting to be back up and get off to a good start."

Manny Acta says that McAllister's arsenal of pitchers can sneak up on people, with a fastball that gets on top, and that he can regularly throw 100 pitches without a problem. That would certainly be nice if they can get it from him.

When Ubaldo was struggling, I made the point that at some point, you'd have to take a look at McAllister after the way he came up and made his spot starts. He was at least giving you consistent innings and he did just that against Baltimore. He gave you a more than great chance to win the game and went deep enough.

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And now that he knows he is going to be here, you have to wonder how [he'll actually respond to the opportunity](#)

"It is helpful [to know you have a little more job security]," McAllister said. "But at the same time, I also know that if I don't do my job I can get sent down. I definitely have that type of mind-set of knowing that I have to perform. If I don't, it's not acceptable."

He walked one, struck out six. The only blemish was a home run. As I said, he got two outs in every inning before anything happened. You can give up seven hits any time, especially if you give up one per inning and there are two outs. As long as you are throwing up zeros.

He threw up enough of them and did it with some run support as mentioned. It wasn't til he exited that the second big shot came, but an early **Johnny Damon** home run should have really boosted his confidence and helped him focus on the game plan.

More on the meeting in a second, but Damon said that meeting only underlined the point of what needed done.

"The most important thing with the meeting is to understand slumps happen in this game. This one's not going to be the last one we have all year. We need to stay strong and stay together. If we can do that, we'll keep competing."

I know I want Johnny Damon playing every game of this one though. He's played more than a half season worth of games in Baltimore and has 22 home runs and a .313 average. He loves Camden Yards and his home run really set the tone. Maybe it was all they needed to relax and let everything else come out, because after the first home run, the hits came. And ultimately, it's just great to get those hits and see this team get out of its funk.

"It feels good," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "Every win feels good, man. And every loss stings the same, regardless of how many there are. It's good to just snap out of it." Now let's just make sure this keeps up.

Random Details... In addition to his solo shot, Choo walked and scored on the night, and Asdrubal Cabrera had another hit with the home run. But the line of the night belongs to Michael

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Brantely, who scored just once, but was on base twice with a pair of hits and a pair of walks. His double really set the stage for Damon to hit the bomb.

Even Duncan was on base twice on the night, so overall. It was a nice night of offensive production. And look, it was against a left-handed pitcher. Anthony Castrovince pointed out a real eye-opening number concerning the Tribe's offense against left-handed hitters. A collective .624 OPS against left-handed starters and last night was just the sixth win over a lefty.

So win one for the lefty.

Perhaps the lefty was a reason to also get Lou Marson in there, who was 1-for-3 with a walk too. He's just so good against the lefties.

Great bullpen work. Esmil Rogers has been semi-reliable since coming over to the Indians. He struck out three in two shutout innings with no baserunners in the final two frames. He's given up two runs since coming over, but this outing was perhaps his best yet. A real solid two innings of work. If we can get more of that, Rogers will be a decent arm. More is needed to be seen though.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Castrovince's post that included the note about lefties was really all about how the Indians just seemed to be an average team. Hey, the numbers are there. Maybe he is right. Sure they're in second, but look at the division, it's very, uh, messy.

You can just look at a division like the AL East, where everyone is playing well above .500 and know that even though a team like Tampa is in third, they're pretty good.

There's the hitting left-handed pitching issue, which was not an issue last night. But perhaps the thing that Castro pointed out that registered with me, but never registered enough to bring up in the past was that the Indians seem to be rotating their starters. We had Derek Lowe and Jeanmar Gomez pitching well early. Now it's Ubaldo and Masterson pitching well with everyone

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else struggling.

At all times, the Indians haven't had more than two starters pitching well. Just imagine if they could get just four starters pitching well at the same time. A team that is just right there, not having lost many games in a row, could probably thrive. Offensive support be damned, a little more consistency and we're talking.

It's also bad when Aaron Cunningham, although a backup, has a lower OPS than a starting pitcher in the National League (Cliff Lee).

There's a point in the year when every team, whether they are average or not, has that moment that the media likes to make a big deal about. If things tick upwards after it, then it's attributed as having made a difference for the the better. Manny Acta [held a 'closed-door' meeting](#) with his team prior to the game. It wasn't sending a message, but rather of the "morale boost" type of get-together.

"It was just basically to talk to the guys," Acta said, "and make sure they know it's a very long season, a roller coaster where you go up and down -- how just a week ago when we left Cleveland we were sitting pretty in first place and then a week later you go through a struggle and you're where you're at. It's about staying positive, sticking together and just making sure you do what you're supposed to do and not panic and try to do too much."

Of course after the out-break offensively, as I said, a lot of people will credit the meeting, but we all know it is really not anything of the kind. This ballpark is one to hit at, you know how it all goes. It's nice that Acta was proactive about this, but not dramatic. He did it at a point that the team probably needed a little pep talk with them having their longest losing streak of the season and a considerably rough stretch offensively. Let's just not go making a big deal about it though.

Carlos Santana's absence [from the lineup has more to do with the convenience](#) of just giving him a night off than it does from his "rib-cage strain" or whatever it was reasoned for taking him out on Wednesday. Santana said it was nice to take a day and relax. He tested well following the removal, but it was just a decision to give him a full day and see how he is progressing tomorrow.

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"We feel that if he has to play, he could play, but we just want to give him the day off."

It's probably more of one of those "let's just play it safe, you're struggling anyway, so just take a day" types of days off. I'd expect him to be right back there on Friday and with the offense taking off a bit, who knows, maybe he'll catch the fever. Castrovince also pointed out that Santana's numbers have been rather lackluster and that "his continual decline is jarring and unacceptable" and he couldn't be more correct. Santana's .177 road average is disgusting.

We could also see **Travis Hafner** return to the lineup very soon. As the Indians return from their road trip to Cleveland on Monday, [they could be joined by Pronk](#) as he finishes up a quick rehab stint. Acta says that him doing that is realistic if he feels alright. Reports from the first start were good, but Hafner was not in the lineup on Thursday, so you have to imagine he'll be starting tonight at least.

Meanwhile, there is still some uncertainty as to when **Rafael Perez** will [actually return from his injury](#). Acta says in regards to Perez that you don't know how much you miss someone until they are not there. Of course with the struggles of Tony Sipp and Nick Hagadone's latest inconsistency, it is kind of a big link that is missing right now.

"He's a very durable guy who has done a very good job for us," Acta said of Perez. "I think we have been able to notice missing him more because of the struggles Tony has had. He was a guy that when he was here, and either one of them were struggling, we could lean on the other guy up until the other guy came out of it."

So, yeah... There's no update though on the status of Perez's program and where he is on coming back to pitch. So we continue to wait.

With the College World Series done, **Nick Hamilton** is free to think about the future and he decided to [start the future with the Cleveland Indians](#) after he

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signed on. Father Tom now gets to follow his son through the system of the team he works for. Awesome.

[TIGER WATCH]

It was a successful night in the AL Central overall as the top three in the Central matched up against the top three in the AL East. The first place teams battled in New York, second place in Baltimore, and third place in Tampa.

Of course the Indians won, but unfortunately their division-mates also won both of their games. The Tigers jumped out early and didn't look back as they got the good Max Scherzer, who struck out seven rays. The White Sox were dead in the water, down 3-1 heading into the ninth and David Robertson coughed one up. Rios and Escobar reached base and Dayan Viciedo clubbed a three-run shot that stunned the Bombers in New York... Ouch.

The standings remain the same.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a vist at [The Tribe Daily](#) , because he's more Italian than Vinny Rottino. Pizza Pie!

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