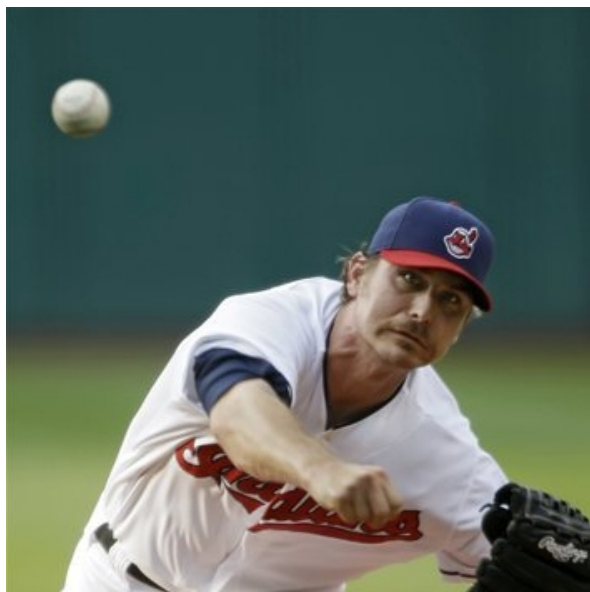


Morning Rundown: Cowboy Up! Tomlin wrangles Rays

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Friday, July 06 2012 7:24 AM - Last Updated Friday, July 06 2012 7:30 AM



We just... We just saw that correctly right? Josh Tomlin? He was the one pitching there yesterday? Okay just checking.

July 5th, 2012

Tampa Bay Rays - 1

Cleveland Indians - 3

W: Josh Tomlin (5-5) L: Jeremy Hellickson (4-5) S: Chris Perez (24)

[**BOXSCORE**](#)

We haven't really seen **Josh Tomlin** this year. In fact the last time out, I think I even said he did somewhat better than he has been. He still gave up like five runs!

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This was Josh Tomlin though last night against the Rays. As Vinnie Pestano said, the real Josh Tomlin. He allowed two measly base runners the entire game. If one of those hits wasn't a triple, the Rays don't even score against him. He [was that good and on this night](#), he needed to be.

"Tomlin did a fantastic job," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "That's the only way you can beat those guys, is out-pitching them. Their pitching is so good that, even when [Hellickson] didn't have his best command, he only allowed two runs on two homers."

I hate to bring up that stupid testing metaphor again, but that is what the Indians are dealing with in t

his four game series with the Rays. Pitching. If there's one thing the Rays do perhaps better than anyone else it is throw the baseball. Only the A's have a lower team ERA than the Rays in the American League and when you are throwing Hellickson, Moore, and Shields in a four game series and not David Price, you know you are stacked.

So to get a good one from one of the guys that has been struggling is really huge in terms of this series.

"I felt like the command was there today," Tomlin said. "It feels good. It feels good to contribute and it feels good to give your team a chance to win. If I can go that deep in the game, and give it to a bullpen like that, then we have a chance to win."

Even though the Rays haven't been "prodigious" offensively (as Joe Maddon put it) this has to be a huge confidence boost for Tomlin. Maybe that's all he needed, to go out there and see he can still do things like that. He can. I was beginning to think it was the beginning of the end for him in the rotation the way he was pitching this season but that start may help him turn things around. Tomlin has been baffled himself.

"I don't know what it is. I honest to God don't," Tomlin said. "The inconsistency this year for me has been the biggest disappointment. Last year, I felt like I could go out there every start and

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figure out a way to pitch deep into the game. That hasn't happened as much this year. Hopefully I can pick it up from here, and hopefully this continues for the rest of the season."

Must be... the mustache...

Probably not. The most Tomlin-like thing about this start though was the fact that he got through seven innings and still only threw 88 pitches. That is really when you know Josh Tomlin has it working. He was getting those quick outs on few pitches, getting the hitters to do exactly what he wanted. Josh Tomlin is one of those guys that does not care how he gets you out, just that he gets you out and does it as quickly as possible. And fittingly enough, this entire game was about the pitching. Sure there were three solo home runs, but Tomlin gave way to the best back-to-back duo going in the American League right now in Pestano and Perez and it was all-she-wrote for the 36th time this season. When the Indians lead after the seventh, those two come in and there's only been one game that they've lost, the season opener.

Jordan Bastian

[also notes](#)

that since April 8th, the Indians are 25-0 when both Pestano and Perez appear in the same game. That not only tells you that they have been downright good, but that they are coming into a lot of these situations.

Starting pitching and a bullpen. Sometimes that is all you need to win a few games, especially against a team like the Rays that have that type of arsenal. If you want to beat them, you might have to beat them at their own game and right now, the Indians may be set up to do that after a great first outing by Josh Tomlin.

Random Details...

For as much bashing as

Aaron Cunningham

takes, when he does something positive that pretty much deflates the other team's chances, you have to give him his props. With Pestano on the mound, Elliot Johnson blooped one into left field where Cunningham came on late for defense, a usual thing that happens when the Indians are leading late. The ball hit inside and Cunningham came up throwing because Johnson was going for two. A perfect throw got him and really killed whatever potential rally that may have occurred in what was a 2-1 game at the time.

"That was huge," Pestano said. "When it lands on the line like that, you're kinda deflated. For A.C. to come up huge, just staying with it and not giving up on it — it's easy to watch that ball go foul and pick it up, and kind of nonchalantly hose it in — to come up firing and doing that, it was

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a great play." People continue to ask me on Twitter why he's still around. Not for specifically plays like that, but because of defense. He's still the only guy that can play all the outfield positions on the roster and when it is late, do you really want someone like Johnny Damon or Shelley Duncan in left field? I don't know what will happen when Duncan returns from paternity leave, but Cunningham has kind of played his way away from the brink of elimination if you ask me.

The home run by Travis Hafner in the eighth was huge, because it followed up that Cunningham play and gave Chris Perez another safety run. But make no mistake, the two shots in the first and the 2nd set the tone. Choo led off the game with yet another extra base hit and Brantley followed him in the second with his second in two games. Choo was on base three times as his average creeps closer to .300 and his OBP skies up to .384.

It was also nice to see Hafner absolutely unload on one. A few hits early on in his return, a walk, so far so good with big Pronk.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN] Overall part of the thing that makes **Travis Hafner** a good hitter is the fact that he is a great two-strike hitter. He could very well go into a 0-2 hole and draw a walk. A lot of pitchers do that. When he was struggling, those turned into bad strikeouts. But now that he's back to his old-self with his timing and his batting eye, he's not budging.

And that approach with two strikes is something that has really turned the offense as a whole around on. Last year it was dismal in terms of striking out and hitting with two strikes. So Acta and his staff went to work and

[the results have been one of the best teams](#) in terms of drawing walks and getting on base.

Using the quick massacring of Ervin Santana as an example, the Indians just worked whatever he gave them. Hafner even had one of those at-bats, fouling off pitches, not giving into the two strikes and eventually drawing what he needed, a walk to set up Michael Brantley to rip one down into the right field stands.

"Santana made mistakes, we took advantage of them," Acta said, "and whoever came in, if they couldn't throw the ball over the plate, we made 'em work. You just can't stop. You gotta keep preaching and teaching the whole time. It's a long season, and if you take a step back, the guys might take a step back. It's what we try to stress. It's not, 'Get a hit,' because we know it's not that easy. It's having the quality at-bats."

No one has walked more than the Indians this season. They'll claim their 300th walk on Friday if they can draw one. Right behind them are the Tampa Bay Rays of course. With two strikes the Indians are hitting .193, which looks bad but in terms of the league, they are third behind the Rangers and Angels. It's tough to get a hit with two strikes, so don't let the .193 fool you. They also have the most walks with two strikes.

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All of this has Acta

[pleased, but not exactly satisfied](#)

with the output at the midpart.

"The offensive situation, it's on its way," Acta said. "I think just having [Travis] Hafner back, and we all know [Carlos] Santana, he's going to get better. That doesn't mean that we've got it made with that. We could probably use a little help."

A little help from **Lou Marson**?

Well not really, but Marson has been on fire at the plate. The time to have started him regularly has passed with Travis Hafner out, but as long as Santana is struggling, expect to see #LouMar [a little more often](#) than he had been playing earlier this season but don't expect him to take a lot of playing time away.

"We can't forget that Santana's our everyday guy," Acta said. "When Lou's doing that well, it improves his chances of being out there. But it's not something that's going to change what we're doing here on an everyday basis."

Acta says the plan with Marson is coming together and if anything it gives him more confidence to rest Hafner if anything. It will be easier to DH Santana most days and let Marson catch if he is going to hit. Hafner needs those breaks to make sure he isn't overworked and breaks again. So if anything, Marson's production can help in that regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen, [Vinnie Pestano](#) . Ladies and Gentlemen, [Jason Kipnis](#) . Con
gratulations to

[Shelley Duncan and his wife](#)

on the birth of their twins yesterday. I was taking suggestions for baby names even with the knowledge of them being named Walker and William. I mean, this is a great opportunity to name the

Duncan Twins

anything we want. We're talking about Shelley Duncan here, so something gritty, tough, awesome, Hawk-like. You know what I mean.

Duncan is on the paternity list, which enabled Hafner to return without a corresponding roster

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move. But Duncan needs to be reactivated tomorrow, so a move will have to be made. I'm not so sure on Cunningham being the guy anymore, but we'll see.

[TIGER WATCH] Bah, does anyone really care anymore? The Tigers won 7-3, but got out-hit 15-9. Rick Porcello got hit around the yard to the tune of 12 hits, in less than four innings. He gave up three runs and was yanked, so it doesn't look that bad, but what that does is kill a bullpen for the next game, so I'd look at the effects today. The Tigers were able to add five runs in the eighth inning off a pair of homers and a Miguel Cabrera single. T
his team still does not strike me as one that is going to get hot and run away from anyone anytime soon though. They're still very much flawed and very much in the race, but still very much flawed.

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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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