

Morning Rundown: Tribe's First Half Ends the Way it Started

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Saturday, July 07 2012 12:15 AM - Last Updated Monday, July 09 2012 9:35 AM



So we had this 5-0 lead on Sunday heading into the All-Star break. I think every team wants to go into the break with a win and feeling good about where this team is. But we don't need a win to feel good about where this team is.

July 8th, 2012

Tampa Bay Rays - 7

Cleveland Indians - 6

W: Joel Peralta (1-3) L: Chris Perez (0-2) S: Fernando Rodney (25)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

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Before we do that, let's dwell over this game a little bit more though. Like I said, 5-0 lead into the sixth, I think we're feeling pretty good. You have **Zach McAllister** throwing well, the offense did their job. A nice easy-going series win, right?

People are going to come right out and point to Chris Perez's blown save, but this game was essentially lost in the sixth when the defense let the Indians down and more importantly, Zach McAllister down. Instead of probably getting through seven innings, the defense not only cost four runs, it cost McAllister his outing.

Sure he was in line for the win, but with one out, **Asdrubal Cabrera** under hands a throw to first on a Carlos Pena ground ball. The underhand was underwhelming and Pena was safe with a single. The Rays first baseman was then again safe at second on a groundball to Jason Kipnis who made a routine throw to Cabrera that he simply dropped.

You can say what you want about "picking up your defense" but McAllister got B.J. Upton to fly out, he recorded enough outs to get out of that frame. Regardless of what happened after, you can't expect McAllister to get five outs in an inning. And we wouldn't get anymore because with two in the inning and a Desmond Jennings double, Acta brought in Joe Smith.

Of course that was enough for McAllister, he deserved the win. He got through five plus with no earned runs, he left with the lead. So it should have been done there. But like I said, that is probably what ultimately lost the Indians this game. They don't let that happen, Chris Perez is probably not in position to blow that save. McAllister gets through the sixth and probably pitches into the seventh.

And James Shields maybe isn't stuck with for so long. Can we talk about that for a second? Shields got better as the game went along and threw so many pitches. Joe Maddon definitely took advantage of the extra rest he's going to get with the break by letting him throw 120 pitches and get through seven. That if anything kept the Rays in the game as well.

These are all not footnotes, but rather key points in the game. They would have been footnotes if Perez came down with the save, but I choose not to let them fall by the wayside in a game

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that ended up as a loss. Sure the Indians did a lot of good things, 13 hits, six runs, a good outing by their starter and some nifty relief work following that up until Perez. But their blunders in the sixth really cost them this game.

Not Perez.. Not the ninth. It was how they lost, but it wasn't the reason they lost.

Chris Perez's ninth was perplexing to say the least. Not only did he not get the 25th consecutive save nailed down, it gave way for Fernando Rodney to claim his 25th for sole possession of 2nd in the AL in Saves. Perez struck out the first hitter and was set up for a pretty easy ninth with the bottom of the order and Elliot Johnson as the three hitters. He got ahead of Will Rhymes, making him look foolish and was setting things up for yet another easy looking save.

Then Rhymes kind of just jolted the ball and shocked everyone, including Perez. It was just gone. His first of the year, Will Rhymes, the nine hole hitter. Of course the game wasn't blown at that point, Perez still had that one run cushion. But you could just sense a feeling of lost momentum. There was a little bit of swagger now for the Rays, Perez may have lost his focus, the fans had been taken out of it, the tide was turning.

I'd say that Brantley's dive with the one out and a runner on first as completely necessary. Pena hit a liner to center that was diving quickly and it looked catchable, but Brantley had to be on his horse and he was. I mean looking at it from his perspective coming in, I would have bet he thought he could catch it. And if he did, Johnson was going to be doubled off at first and the game would have been over.

If not, and Brantley does not dive, then Pena gets a single and Johnson probably stops at third, but Zobrist would have just knocked him in anyway. However you want to look at it, Brantley should have dove given the situation. It's the chance you take for the win.

[All things considered](#) , If all he does is blow two more in the second half, I'll take that too.

"He put together a great run," said setup man Vinnie Pestano. "Closers can't be perfect every

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time. Going 24-for-26, you'll take that every first half. He does a tremendous job, and sometimes things just don't go your way. Sometimes you're gonna have those games."

What most are essentially putting this loss on are the two All-Stars. They had the keys to the game and both were big reasons the Tribe ultimately didn't win. I remember when Asdrubal Cabrera had his lazy Sunday and I said, it's one game. Well this one is one game too, unfortunately it's two games now. However Acta is totally right, most of the time out, they're good.

"We can't get on these two guys just for one game," Indians manager Manny Acta said of Cabrera and Perez. "These guys are responsible for where we're at today. You can't expect every single one of these guys to be on top of their game every single day. They have carried us for a lot of games. So when they don't have a good one, hang with them."

I'm hanging with them... And I can't wait to see them Tuesday.

Random Details...

Shin-Soo Choo's solo shot in the eighth was certainly a big run at the time, giving the Indians another run of insurance for the ninth inning. Of course it didn't matter in the end with the Rays scoring three but it was certainly nice. I'd just like to take this opportunity to share the numbers Justin Albers dug up.

I myself have been wondering what Choo is actually doing in terms of the leadoff spot and leading the game off. It seems he's always on. Albers [has Choo with a hit or walk](#) in 22 of 48 starts (50 including the past two games). With 11 extra base hits and 11 singles/walks. That's... Impressive.

Casey Kotchman couldn't come through in the ninth but who would expect him to with a 3-for-5 day with half of the Indians runs batted in? In addition to his fourth inning solo home run, Kotchman knocked in the first run in the second and yet another in the fifth inning to make it 5-0. Since June 5th, Kotchman is 29-for-98 with five homers and 17 RBI. That's just below .300 in

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over a months time, 30 games. Save your Matt LaPorta.

Johnny Damon was 2-for-3 with a triple and a stolen base, showing some wheels. Damon is hitting .290 in his past 17 games. Respect what is going on right now with Damon going into the break at least.

Michael Brantley keeps creeping closer and closer to .300 and with Cabrera's struggles as of late, he's actually now passed him for the second best average on the team behind Choo. Brantley is now up to 10 games in his latest hit streak, which gives him his second double-digit streak in just one half of play. I can't help but be incredibly impressed with him and what he's done this season.

The last seven outs the Indians recorded were all strikeouts. Tony Sipp struck out Carlos Pena to end the seventh and then Vinnie Pestano struck out the first two in the eighth, gave up a double and a walk, then struck out Desmond Jennings. All three hitters Perez retired in the ninth were via the strikeout as well. Too bad that doesn't win you games.

Other weekend notes for you...

Aaron Cunningham is earning his stripes. We battered the guy around for a good amount of time, but with some playing time lately, he's actually contributing. So credit where credit is due please, especially if you are going to bash him. I've hit him around myself, but I'm the first to come up and give him praise when needed. Heck, I even gave props to #DopeyTime.

Took in two games the past week, both turned out to be blowouts. Of course the Fourth of July fun against the Angels and the rough outing against the Rays. The weather was much more unbearable for the game against the Angels, but the pitching trumped the hot weather on Friday. Throw strikes please. Masterson was ultimately hurt by the amount of pitches he threw between the walks (four) and the strikeouts (7) and the ones that were right over the plate for hitting.

That game as a whole was tough to watch. Even though it was 10-3, the Indians had numerous

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chances with their offense and just seemed to be continuously foiled. Choo getting picked off (ugh), Hafner hitting into double plays, it just wasn't working. They put the leadoff guy on four of the last five innings and came up with just a single run.

[HAGADONE DISQUALIFIED]

Part of that tough game on Friday was **Nick Hagadone** and the continuation of his struggles. If you ask me, [Hagadone's situation was quite the story line](#) this past weekend. Things unfolded Friday after Hagadone's shaky relief appearance with Nick getting sent down. Okay, basically the Indians were sending a message that things needed to change. Manny Acta noted that he had lost command and his confidence. So no big deal right?

Things were a little confusing in that the Indians were planning on calling up Scott Barnes, but they couldn't exactly do that since Hagadone was not injured and Barnes had not reached his 10 days since last demotion. So why not wait until Sunday when you can call him up to demote Hagadone? It really doesn't matter because regardless, Hagadone isn't pitching Saturday.

The perplexing part of it all was that reports surfaced on Saturday that Hagadone was injured, why wouldn't you place him on the disabled list? Probably because the Indians were planning on placing him on the disqualified list in minor league baseball because of a "self-inflicted injury". In other words, as it was found out, Hagadone punched something in the dugout and hurt himself.

The injury is going to keep him out too. For how long, who knows, but as long as he is on the disqualified list, he won't get paid. Talk about insult to injury.

"We're certainly disappointed with the reaction to it," Antonetti said. "He was certainly very frustrated coming out of the game. We certainly would have wished he would have handled it a little differently."

I know many will want to give up on Hagadone after this. But really you have to keep with him.

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He has so much upside for the back end of that bullpen as a lefty reliever who can routinely hit mid-90s. It was a foolish thing for him to do but I have to think that this will be one of those teachable moments the Indians can use if Hagadone is willing to learn from it.

I just hope he wasn't dumb enough to [punch an electric fan](#) .

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Something that can make this Nick Hagadone thing better [is the continued turn around](#) of **Tony Sipp**

, who's taking baby steps towards getting back into the good graces of his manager. Not that he was in bad graces, but he couldn't exactly be trusted in big spots. Acta trusted him on Sunday to get one out and he got it and he's overall happy to see Sipp coming around.

"It's good to see," manager Manny Acta said. "We need him big, especially since [Rafael Perez] isn't back yet. The main thing is, [opponents have] been pinch-hitting and stuff, and he's been getting some right-handers."

Sipp is really needed because if you add in another guy there with Smith to handle 7th innings, it will really save the pen. The Indians could also use a healthy **Rafael Perez**, but they're going to have to continue to wait for that for at least a few more weeks as

[he "could" begin a rehab assignment](#)

soon. If it's unclear, it's unclear, so who knows at this point.

As we go into the second half, there will be two things that you look at. Schedules and Moves.

We'll talk about moves, but in terms of schedules, Buster Olney says the Indians [have the most favorable](#)

out of any contender.

He notes that they have 33 games against teams with records over .500 and they have plenty of in-division games left compared to seven against the Red Sox and Yankees. They'll also finish up with Toronto, Tampa Bay, and Baltimore all right after the break, so there's that.

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In terms of moves, the Indians won't make a move to improve their bullpen, just hope the likes of Sipp, Perez, Rogers, Barnes, whoever can just help shore up the weak spots. However a bat and another starter are going to continue to be points of discussion as the Indians head into the second half well in the mix for not just their division, but a wild card spot in the American League.

Shelley Duncan [will have none of it.](#)

"We have the talent," Duncan said. "A lot of people out there always talk about bringing in new people, getting a bat and all that stuff. But the guys we have on this team, we honestly feel from the bottom of our hearts, we don't need that. We don't need that at all. I just hope every time we get a shot like that [on Saturday], that it shows we don't need it."

Now Duncan would probably be the first guy to welcome in a new player to the clubhouse if the Indians do make an addition. But This just speaks to him supporting his current team and also to the fact that maybe, he thinks he should still get a shot at being more of a regular. He's contributing lately with regular playing time, even mentioning that he's relaxed a little more and getting back to what he was doing early on in the season prior to the signing of Johnny Damon.

Oh but could this team use a bat. It would make them so much better. I'd be willing to part with a big prospect for a big bat that you could hold onto for a few years. I don't think that's possible though. If the Indians were to make a small move for an outfielder for the rest of this year, I think it would be in their best interests, but if Sizemore is close, I think you owe it to not giving up anything to at least find out what he's got.

What I would do is get another arm though. I think that's the one move that needs to be made because you can't go forward not knowing what you are going to get out of 3/5ths of your rotation on a daily basis. I think the offense can survive (provided one certain catcher gets it going), but the pitching? The Indians need someone, especially with Detroit and Chicago having decent enough offenses to put up runs.

Of course with that talk, you are going to have to bring up the names of prospects that would go

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the other way. It depends on what the Indians go after of course in terms of caliber of prospect they give up, but two of their prospects were on hand for the MLB All-Star Futures Game yesterday. □ **Jesus Aguilar**, currently in High-A Carolina as a first baseman and last year's first round pick in shortstop □ **Francisco Lindor**, who's currently in Low-A Lake County.

They fared well, a lot better than [their World team in the loss](#) . Jesus Aguilar was 1-for-3 with a first inning walk and also a run scored and Francisco Lindor got a single in his first at-bat.

Tuesday is when the big boys play and that should be fun to see our guys again. Asdrubal Cabrera figures to play being a backup to Jeter, but we'll have to wait to see if Perez is used in the contest. Whether he is or not, he will [have a rep from his agency](#) present to watch him and his media exploits. I'm sure with the heat between him and KC, there's no telling what kind of talk will go on.

Finally, Terry Pluto notes that he was told Boston [wanted Josh Tomlin in a Kevin Youkilis deal](#) . That's interesting. If that's a straight up deal, it's rather enticing, but as Pluto notes, difficult given the depth.

[TIGER WATCH]

Don't look now but the Tigers are over .500 by two or more games for the first time since earlier in the year when they were 10-8. They just completed a sweep of the Royals, scoring 19 runs in the three games and getting some good efforts from Scherzer and Smyly. They now sit a half game back of second place with having just one more loss than the Indians.

Just to kind of give you an idea of what the schedules have looked like thus far.

Chicago: 24-22 at Home

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Detroit: 22-20 at Home

Chicago: 23-16 on the Road (Yikes)

Detroit: 22-22 on the Road

Detroit is 11-9 against the East, 5-12 against the West. with 17 games left against the East, 13 against the West.

Cleveland has 18 games against the East with currently a 7-11 record and 20 games left against the West with a 12-5 record currently.

And Chicago? They have 19 more against the East with their 10-11 record and 15 against the West with a 11-6 record.

So that's where we're at schedule wise. I know Buster says the Indians have the fairest schedule left in terms of contenders, but I think when you boil it down, it's all the same. They'll need to win the games they're supposed to win and have some more success in their division. All three teams have 17 wins within the Central with no real big different in losses. Clearly it's been even for the most part and they've used Minnesota and Kansas City to beat up on. The team who has success within the division could very well be the team that separates themselves from the pack.

Happy All-Star Break.

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

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Rottino. Pizza Pie!

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