

Morning Rundown: I Checked My Gut at the Door

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, July 19 2012 5:05 AM - Last Updated Thursday, July 19 2012 8:05 AM



I don't want to take any sort of credit for what Carlos Santana did last night, but I would like to think that somehow I telepathically reached him and me telling him to get himself straight did the trick.

July 18th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **10**

Tampa Bay Rays - **6**

W: Esmil Rogers (1-2) L: Kyle Farnsworth (0-2)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

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But both you and I know that is a bunch of hogwash, because if I could do that, the downs this team goes through would be as short as short can be as I would manage to get them solved before they occur.

I do like to think however though that **Carlos Santana** heard me scream when he struck out with Michael Brantley on third and nobody out in the second inning.

It was at that point that I could see how this game was going to go, so the fact that the Indians won 10-6? I would have thought it is a doctored fact and that someone hacked into the system and changed the score. Will Smith beamed down and let his little flashing pen go off and reprogrammed everyone to believe that the Indians had actually won.

That the Indians not only knocked through 14 hits, but that they were 7-for-12 with runners in scoring position. Your alien head heard me. That's well over a flip of a coin in terms of coming up with a hit and when you have 12 at-bats, you know your team scored some runs.

And they certainly did after the fourth inning. Maybe it was Justin Masterson and the fact that he was pitching because we all remember he gets no run support. So maybe that is the key. Start Masterson for two innings and let the offense go off.

Of course I'm kidding. What is no joke though is the fact that the Indians did finally break out of this runners in scoring position rut they've been in and they did it in a big way.

The Indians put up three in the fifth to fall within one, but it would be in the seventh when they would demoralize Kyle Farnsworth and Jake McGee. Neither could get outs and the frustration just seemed to build on McGee with every pitch he threw. It feels good to demoralize the other team, especially since we've sat through enough of those demoralizing situations.

You could feel the tension building though in the second. Masterson gets out of that jam he was in in the first and though it would ultimately doom him because of how many pitches he threw, you felt maybe if the Indians could get a lead, he could lock in and perhaps cruise.

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So leadoff triple by Brantley did the trick, but it would only serve as the frustration point as Santana struck out, Hafner grounded out and Damon grounded out on a close play at first that gave you a sliver of hope as he ran down to first and almost beat the ball to the bag.

You know the rest of the drill. **Justin Masterson** begins to mix in his walks and hits and the Rays simply chipped away. It only took two runs in each of the second and third innings because by the time Masterson was halfway through the fifth, he had already thrown too many pitches.

I guess everyone is allowed a junky start here and there, but this is the second one against Tampa in as many games. He's sandwiched two 4 and one-thirds inning contests between two gems against other AL East foes. It's kind of weird actually. He's pitched seven innings giving up one run, walking just one hitter against the Orioles and Jays and in the past two games against Tampa, he's surrendered 12 earned runs in over eight innings and walked 11 hitters.

Thankfully he won't have to worry about Tampa anymore. Not even counting last night he is 1-7 against the Rays lifetime with a 7.69 ERA in eight starts. Clearly just one of those weird issues where he has no answer for a particular team. You just deal with it I guess.

Especially since the [Indians managed to win this one](#). The damage was minimal and even though he couldn't get through the fifth, the Indians got great bullpen work and the bats woke up in time to make the difference.

"That's what made me happy," Acta said. "It's been a while since we got into that. Today we were just yelling in the dugout, 'Come on! Two-out rally. Comeback. Let's go. Two-out rally.' It happened. The guys just put together some tremendous at-bats."

We'll talk about Hannahan in a bit, but he started things in the fifth and Choo made it three with a single of his own. It was in the seventh though that Acta credits Jason Kipnis with the biggest hit of the game in the single off McGee to tie things up. It came off a 2-2 count and after a pitch in which everyone in the universe thought McGee had thrown a strike to end the at-bat and the inning.

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And that is when things went down hill for McGee and the Rays, because what followed Kipnis' hit was the flood gates starting to open as Maddon got ejected and the Indians started to loosen up. Hannahan may have opened things up, but Brantley and Santana may have been the muscle relaxer the Indians just needed to take.

Santana more than anyone.

"It was nice to see that," Acta said. "I know that's been weighing on him, especially the power drought that he's had. It's hard on those guys. It takes patience. We do have the patience, but we're not the one actually failing like he is. He must be feeling a lot better today."

I hope for the Indians sake he is feeling better. Santana coming alive is exhibit A in this whole thing we've been talking about in terms of adding a bat and getting production. This team has been hitting, you could see them hitting in this one too. But if they get Santana hitting, all of a sudden the production is up and the Indians are scoring more runs.

You can even make the case for Asdrubal Cabrera, who is relied upon to be one of the major table setters in the two hole. He scored twice off three hits, including a double. With all of that rolling, the Indians can score. The Indians don't need to fill their left hole gap. That top of the order, 1-6 was on fire last night. All of them had two hits, all of them scored a run, and all but Cabrera knocked one in.

Everything is going to be all right with this offense if they just get their production from their key pieces. They have six capable hitters. Six bonafied studs who can do the job. If they just get some production here and there from the other three spots and an acceptable level of consistency from their six core spots, there is no issues with this offense.

And last night's 10 run, 14 hit outburst is a prime example of that.

Random Details... It is easy to forget that Esmil Rogers earned that win, his first as an Indian. He pitched the rest of the fifth for Masterson and then another scoreless frame. He struck out three and overall continues to look like a solid piece. He can do the middle relief, the short relief, give you a few innings here, face one better there. It is good to be versatile.

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Of course Esmils' highlight came in the fifth when he relieved Masterson with one out and the bases were loaded. Rogers got one of his strikeouts against Elliot Johnson and then got Bossman Jr. to groundout.

"I don't feel like I've got the bases loaded," Rogers said. "I just come into the game to get the outs. That's what Manny told me: 'Just get the outs.' That's what I did. I said to myself, 'I have to give the team the opportunity to win the game.'"

Jack Hannahan probably had the biggest hit of the night other than Santana's blast. It was his two out, two-run double that put the first runs on the board for the Indians and really got the momentum started. Maybe he even broke through the little cloud that was following this team around with runners in scoring position. And who better to do it than the guy who had the knack for hitting the two-out RBI hit earlier in the season.

"We were looking a little dead," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "The two-run double by Jack got us all pumped up."

On Super Jack, it was just his third and fourth RBI this month and his first two-RBI game since May 10th. He went all of June without a RBI and while part of that had to do with the injury, he's really scuffled to provide much production. It isn't Carlos Santana scuffling, but it was scuffling.

The umping was a point of contention a lot last night and maybe Masterson had some issues with it, but Joe Maddon definitely had some issues late and right before the Indians took the lead made it apparent. Perhaps he was trying to fire his team up because you have to know when you argue balls and strikes, you will get run.

And that is what happened. Kipnis gets a call, sends a ground ball up the middle in the same at-bat and that is hardly something that pleases Maddon. Perhaps it had an adverse effect because from there, the Indians rolled.

How bad did the Indians need this one? David Price is waiting on the other side, that's how bad. And Ubaldo is coming off a disaster of a start. Enough said.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

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I brought this up when I was going over numbers the other day, but there's some interesting quotes inside of how **Michael Brantley** is [finding his way on base even more](#), in addition to his hitting.

"You never want to expand your zone," Brantley said prior to Wednesday's game at Tropicana Field. "I'm kind of getting some pitches that are borderline and, basically, I'm staying off of them right now. If I can continue to do that, hopefully I'll get some more pitches in the strike zone."

Acta was saying things along the same line and that it is not a case of pitching around Brantley. You can tell the way he is continuing to hit too is that he is just locked in. If he isn't hitting it, he's spitting on it and waiting for the right pitch. The 92 percent contact rate is the best in the AL, which is saying one whole heck of a lot.

Love that Sabathia trade right? He's really saved it and made it worthwhile for not letting Sabathia walk and gain draft picks. Which is exactly what the Indians [earned on Wednesday](#) when the MLB had their first "Competitive Balance Lottery" and the Indians were awarded an additional second round pick. That will follow the second round and be anywhere from 70-75 overall. The second round pick was the second pick of the "Round B", so it will be towards the front of that pool. Six teams got a first round-second round sandwich pick and another six got the second-third round sandwich picks. At least the Indians were not left out like the Rays or Cardinals (not that they needed it).

I like this idea. I think it is a neat way to award compensation picks. It can make teams more aggressive in the trade market when they are dealing their players. Instead of having the debate of holding on for the draft pick, they know they'll already be getting a few higher picks to play with.

Rafael Perez struck out one and gave up a hit in a shutout eighth inning for the Clippers on Wednesday night. He threw just eight pitches in the inning and he is [ever so close to making a return](#)

. He will have to get through a bullpen session on Friday and Manny Acta said that he also needs to pitch in back-to-back games early next week.

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I figured back-to-back would be a requirement, especially the way he is used and how much time he has missed. We could realistically see Perez back in action by the end of next week, which is great news for this bullpen's depth. Especially after Tony Sipp's continued inconsistency after his little dance last night.

ESPN's Jim Bowden [says the Royals are trying to convince](#) the Indians or the Reds to trade for Jeff Francoeur. Are you serious right now? I'm not really a believer in much Jim Bowden says, but how did he get that type of intel?

"Hey yeah, Jim, guess what? We're trying to get the Indians or Reds to take Jeff Francoeur"

Why just the Indians and the Reds? Why not anyone that would potentially want the guy?

I like the fact that the Royals have to convince someone to take Francoeur. If you have to convince someone, you probably are not dealing from a point of strength, so with that in mind, I'd convince the Royals to fork Frenchy over for a stellar package of Matt Lawson and the best player to ever acquire, Mr. PTBNL.

[TIGER WATCH]

Well the Indians certainly know how to keep pace with the Tigers, as they too won over the Angels. Chicago's loss though brings both teams within another game of first place. It was Doug Fister for the Tigers though that struck out 10 in a eight inning masterpiece. He got some big hits early from his offense and settled in.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a vist at [The Tribe Daily](#) , or else Will Smith will drop down and erase your alien face memory.

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