

## Morning Rundown: The Fall To End Them All?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Sunday, July 22 2012 10:00 AM - Last Updated Monday, July 23 2012 8:20 AM

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It's like this... You win a few and it doesn't look like doomsday outside. But when you lose four straight, to a team that was struggling none-the-less, then the sky is falling.

**July 22nd, 2012**

Baltimore Orioles - **4**

Cleveland Indians - **3**

W: Zach Britton (1-0) L: Josh Tomlin (5-7) S: Jim Johnson (30)

[\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

Now the sky is certainly falling as the Tribe not only drop their fourth straight, but get swept by Baltimore in the process. Sure they are in second place, but that's after they just pulled off five straight. They had been a team that was on the down trend, but now they are heading up after the momentum they built off the Indians.

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I'll give you the first game. I'll give it to them and their offense because Derek Lowe was bad.

But games two and three?

I look at this team and I see no reason for them to not be contenders in this division. Even with Detroit finally playing well, this team can hang with them.

It's a damn shame that the Indians lost all three of these games this weekend because it completely ruined what good things came out of the series.

**Carlos Santana** is finally starting to hit. He was 3-for-4 with the big two-run shot in the ninth to bring the Indians within two. He doubled and walked in the game before and had two walks in the first game. That gives him five straight games now that he's been on base at least twice.

And the Indians have lost four of them.

Josh Tomlin pitched well, like the Tomlin we have become accustomed to. A lot of hits, but no walks and six strong innings. If anything giving us what we need out of that five spot in the rotation.

And Zach McAllister put in another A+ effort that gave the Indians more than an opportunity to win the game.

By my count, the Indians have a lot going for them. With Santana that gives them a lineup that is more than capable to produce from the top all the way through the first six spots in the order.

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With McAllister, the Indians should have an ace in Justin Masterson, and some complimenting pieces that are at least capable of keeping the Indians in the game and with an opportunity. Heck, they did it twice in this series, won two games against Tampa.

The most frustrating part of all of this is the fact that even though the Tigers have suddenly caught fire and risen to the top, they just did most of their damage to Chicago, meaning that had the Indians just won two games, [things wouldn't look so grim](#) .

But with the Tigers visit to Progressive Field for a crucial series looming, things couldn't look more bleak.

*"It seems like we're playing like we're tanked, like we're gassed right now, but we're not," said Indians outfielder Shelley Duncan. "We just can't get anything going to get some excitement and some momentum on the team. We're missing that, we're missing that game where we score a lot of runs and have a lot of fun."*

Well you better start having fun. We're going to talk about a quote that some other people have said and that Vinnie Pestano repeated later on about playing your best baseball. It's about time the Indians start thinking about playing a complete game. The pieces are starting to come together offensively. This offense can score runs. They don't need an addition to score runs. An addition would help, but the pieces they have in place are certainly capable of scoring more than three runs a game.

Yeah they could use a starter, but that looks to be remedied, if the Indians could just stay afloat until August 11th. More in a second.

You really don't know what you are going to get from Ubaldo Jimenez these days. Sometimes he seems to be good, sometimes he'll go out and give you an absolute clunker. There seems to be no real pattern with him these days, a true enigma. But you have a guy that more times than not goes out and pitches for a victory (only to get no runs in return), and a few pieces like McAllister, Tomlin, and Lowe who are all capable of pitching well. It's gut-check time for Derek Lowe. With Roberto Hernandez coming back, he better find himself. Tomlin right now is the one who will lose his job and be headed to the bullpen, but if Lowe keeps pitching bad, he will be out of a job. This team has the pieces in place. There's no reason to not act upon the idea of playing their best baseball.

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*"There are times when it doesn't matter who you see. If you're scuffling, you're scuffling, and we're scuffling right now."* How many times do you scuffle before you say, enough? Or maybe we aren't scuffling, but maybe this is our team?

*"We've really got to pull together as a team," Duncan said. "This is the time for everyone to be positive with each other and not look at the negatives. This is the time we should put the foot on the gas and not freak out."*

That's the test... That is now the test, especially for this series. Are the Indians up to the task? They don't need to sweep Detroit, but they need to at least knock them off their feet. A momentum killer would be coming to Cleveland and being knocked for a loop and losing two games. It could stop the Tigs dead in their tracks and really prevent them from running away from anything.

Because if the Tigers come into town and leave with three more wins and an eight game winning streak. There may be no stopping them.

### Random Details...

**Josh Tomlin** did pitch well in this one, certainly not deserving of a loss. His lone blemish came on a pitch to J.J. Hardy, who deposited the offering into the stands in the first inning. From there, Tomlin, didn't really cruise, but he was Tomlin-like in his approach to the next five innings, pitching shutout baseball in the Tomlin-way. Hits and groundballs.

I'd now consider him to have pitched three decent outings in a row now in July. Something that this team really needs from him, even if he does eventually move to the bullpen.

The Indians had their opportunity in the ninth. I don't want to say that if Accardo and Rogers were more solid in the previous innings that the Indians would have won, because the situation would have been totally different and Jim Johnson would have been in to start the ninth inning.

But that is when the Indians mounted their comeback and started to chip away. It was too late and a dollar short, but the Indians fight has to be commended. Santana's blast was the big shot and the rally continued with a Shelley Duncan double and Hafner's pinch-hit RBI. Unfortunately Jim Johnson opted to pitch around red-hot Shin-Soo Choo and to the up-and-down Cabrera, who promptly capped off his 0-for-5 afternoon.

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**Lopey Time** back in the cleanup spot. Now that Santana is hitting, can we please end this ridiculousness? He doesn't need to be there anymore even when the Indians sit Hafner.

The Indians went 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position, so they had plenty of opportunities prior to that in the ninth inning. They weren't the best, but they were opportunities. Lopez probably had fouled up the most, having a shot with two outs to bring Kipnis home (something a cleanup hitter should do, regardless of outs) early on, and then in the sixth he grounded into a force out with runners on first and second and one out. Again, a situation in which a cleanup hitter should come through at some point.

### [ROBERTO ARRIVAL]

Over the weekend the Indians acquired a starting pitcher.

He's never pitched for the Indians before, but the Indians are familiar with his work.

You know by now that **Roberto Hernandez** was granted his visa and he made his much anticipated yet much unknown return to Cleveland on Sunday. If you do not know that, [then you can read this to catch up](#)

Now that you are caught up on the specifics, we can now map out the timeline in regards to Hernandez's debut for the Indians. Hernandez has begun his suspension that will last three weeks and he'll be eligible to return on August 11th. With a minor league rehab assignment, the suspension is essentially meaningless as he'll likely need 3-4 rehab starts to get not just in game shape, but sharp and used to professional hitters once again.

So that's where we stand. All-in-all, pretty simple. It would seem as if the restructured contract helped, but it was not likely he would completely avoid punishment. Now we look forward and hope that we can remember to not call him Fausto Carmona and [that he pitches just as good](#) ,

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if not better than the Carmona we knew as a reliable member of the Indians rotation.

*"I'm not going to use that as an excuse," he said. "I had that on my shoulders and it was a little bit of pressure, but I'm not going to use that as a reason for my performance last season. I want to forget what has happened. It's a new day. I just want to help my team going forward."*

Hernandez issues an apology to his teammates, fans and the team as a whole. Manny Acta said he was in great shape physically and we'll see how great baseball shape he is in after his bullpen session today. Following that, he won't even go to Goodyear, but immediately out to an affiliate to begin the process of working towards that August 11th date or shortly thereafter.

Essentially what it does is negate the need for the Indians to go out and get a starting pitcher via the trade market. Sure they'll have to wait til after the deadline to do so, but you could make an argument that after getting swept by Baltimore and the further fall from first they have suffered, buying may not be the best idea.

So take what you have, hope you can stay afloat until Hernandez arrives and the rest of the staff turns it around.

It is nice to have that "addition", even if it is something we'll have to wait for.

The question of course is how effective will he be, and what kind of pitcher are the Indians getting? The Indians have watched video of him working out in the Dominican and have reportedly been happy. But of course it all changes when you step on that major league mound and face major league hitting.

As for what we can call him? Teammates asked and he said whatever they want. If that includes me I'm calling him Fauberto and Robbie.

Robbie sounds hip. And cool.

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I've always liked the former Carmona. It will be hard to call him by his real name, because Fausto Carmona is cool to say, as Roberto Hernandez is boring (and just makes me think of the old fart reliever). But I'm glad he's back in the fold and hope he can really make this a big story when all is said and done.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The Indians will get another key member of their team back, likely this week as **Rafael Perez** is slated to

[throw two innings or 30 pitches](#)

for the Akron Aeros today. Following that, it will be decision time so I imagine that if all goes well, we'll see Perez by the end of the week. Perez's velocity is not all the way back, but that is not a concern for Acta.

*"He throws a lot of sliders and changeups, and relies a lot on movement," Acta said. "It's not like he's going out there throwing four-seamers to see how hard he can throw. The main thing for him is being healthy and getting people out. As long as he feels good, we're good with it."*

We're approaching three months without Raffy Left, so to get him back will be huge. The full compliment of relievers would be nice for a little run here, if the rest of the squad would like to cooperate.

The Indians did add another arm to their bullpen options when they inked reliever **J.C. Romero** to a minor league deal. He reported to Columbus and

[will have to bide his time down there](#)

and have to really impress. The Cardinals released him earlier this year and the Orioles did the same in June after Romero requested his release. He has the same "opt out if not in the major leagues" clause with the Indians, only for August 15th. Whatever dude.

I can understand the hesitation in not wanting to go get a bat for left field. Not only with the Grady Sizemore factor, but the fact that currently, **Johnny Damon** is quietly producing, perhaps just as good as any player on the team. He's not knocking in runs or hitting the ball out

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of the park, but the main thing he is doing is getting on and just simply hitting.

He's also [a great leader and his toughness/work-ethic just paces](#) the team.

*"Johnny's been a great example for all these kids," said Indians manager Manny Acta. "Even when he struggled earlier in the season, he's been the same guy and always played as hard as he can."*

After a dismal May in which he hit .171, he hit .254 in June and has been great in 12 July games, hitting .317 with five runs scored. If only he was getting knocked in or getting the opportunity to knock a few guys in. The offense is just struggling, so you simply don't notice the fact that Damon has turned his year around and has started hitting.

So for that reason and the possible return for Grady Sizemore, I do not think the Indians are going to really make a major move in any aspect, especially considering Hernandez is their starting pitching add.

The front office [can continue to look for pieces](#) , but they will be selective in the deals they make, that is for sure.

Either way, I'm sick of the "We haven't played our best baseball line" that the players keep talking about. Now would be the time to get that best baseball out there because quickly, the season is getting away with Detroit coming into town.

*"We keep leaning back on the 'We haven't played our best baseball yet' line, and we haven't," Pestano said. "But we've been very inconsistent this year, and I don't know if adding a piece is going to bring that consistency or not. It's gotta be the right piece."*

The current pieces need to find their consistency, point blank.

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### [TIGER WATCH]

I don't need to tell you how the Detroit Tigers just finished off a sweep of the Chicago White Sox, just that they did. Making this looming matchup with the Tigs all the more important. You also don't need me to tell you that it is important.

In fact this is probably gut check time. Sure the Indians looked to be in danger at other points in the season, but now is the time. They won't get "eliminated" from any sort of playoff discussion in this series, but they suffer a severe blow if things do not go well in these next three upcoming games.

This is the gut-check time for the Indians. They need to handle their business. They need to rise to the occasion and not let things slip away. If they do so right here in these next three games, the climb becomes much steeper. It doesn't knock them off the mountain, but it certainly puts them in an uncomfortable position with a steeper climb ahead.

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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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