

Morning Rundown: Tribe 2-For-2 Against Verlander...Say What?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Wednesday, July 25 2012 10:16 AM - Last Updated Friday, July 27 2012 8:44 AM



Ahhhhhhh!!! AHHHHH!!!! AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!! Are you serious!? It's like freaking Christmas man! And my birthday! And Easter! And any day where I get picnic food! All rolled into one!

July 26th, 2012

Detroit Tigers - **3**

Cleveland Indians - **5**

W: Joe Smith (7-2) L: Justin Verlander (11-6) S: Chris Perez (29)

[BOXSCORE](#)

There's only one thing I enjoy more in baseball than beating the Tigers, especially in the midst of a pennant race. And that's beating the Detroit Tigers when Justin Verlander is pitching. And not only that, beating Justin Verlander.

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BEATING JUSTIN VERLANDER! Only three other teams can say that this season because four of his losses have come to two teams, the Tampa Bay Rays and... The Cleveland FREAKING Indians. You may even hear Justin Verlander humming along.

Indian fever... It's catching fire with everyone... Indian fever... You can be part of the fun!

And you can believe it. 0-2 versus the Indians. If the Indians have done one thing this year, it's been getting up to play against Verlander. It might have been late in this one, and heck, it took them out-dueling him the last time as he went eight with two runs earned, but it ultimately speaks to the character.

The character of the team to face Verlander twice this season and beat him when he was good. Beat him when he gave you some of his best effort. It speaks to your pitcher for doing what he can to keep it close, to your offense for finding the ways to score against him, enough for you to win, the bullpen in Joe Smith's case in holding and in Vinnie and Chris' case in sealing it.

You'll hear Manny Acta talk about a team game later, but I'll talk about it now. To [beat Justin Verlander, you need to beat him as a team](#)

. You aren't going to win by simply getting a good pitching performance from your starter or falling into a few balls offensively. If he has a bad night (which he really hasn't all year, then okay, that is like a full moon. It happens every so often.

"You've got to give it to the guys," manager Manny Acta said. "Being able to come back against a guy like Verlander in the seventh inning was just tremendous."

But if you can beat him twice in one season, you can say you came to play and you gave it your best.

So if the Indians were waiting to play their best baseball and truly believed it was on its way, let's hope this is the start. Sure they have seemed to really play well against Detroit, especially at Progressive, but if that can spring board them into the rest of their season. All the better.

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"We were talking about it when Detroit came in," reliever Joe Smith said. "We're confident against the Tigers when they come in. We've played well against the Tigers and, for the past two years, we've played well against the Tigers at our park. We really came together, whatever it was."

Because now is the time that the Indians need their best baseball. Yeah there are two months left, but now is when the stretch run comes into play.

Manny Acta talked about his two guys the other day. How he needs **Carlos Santana** and **Travis Hafner**

. Well he got them both in a big way.

"That was so exciting," Santana said. "I couldn't believe the first two pitches, me and Hafner, we got home runs. I'm so excited with the team's comeback. That feels good."

It better feel good. Santana and Hafner were both quiet up until that point. Santana later doubled in the eighth inning to almost start off another rally for an insurance run, but both hitting those home runs, it just felt special.

Speaking of special, you can't say much more about **Zach McAllister**. The Jose Lopez error early on hurt, but the Indians came right on back and made that not an issue. If anything, Z-Mac [was toe-to-toe with](#)

[Verlander all night](#). He got beat by Delmon Young, but that's one batter and because he throws strikes and doesn't put runners on unnecessarily, that one batter only hurts as one and not two or three or four.

You can give up nine hits, but with someone who throws strikes, they'll either be hits or outs. And when you get two outs, then the strikes that turn into outs get you out of your jams. The walks create more problems.

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"McAllister was great again," Acta said. "He went toe-to-toe with Verlander and held Detroit to three runs. Every five days, he continues to give us an opportunity to win."

It sounds simple to say, but it's the truth. McAllister knows how to pitch and right now, he's as good as the Indians have and while he didn't get the win, if anything getting him off the hook was something he most definitely deserved. Especially facing Verlander.

Random Details...

Of all the home runs of Verlander, the comeback, the starting pitching, the excellent of the two guys at the end against Detroit, the unsung hero of this one was **Joe Smith**. Smitty made the biggest pitch of this game, and really through this point, of the season, when he got Miguel Cabrera to ground into a double play in the seventh inning after he replaced Z-Mac.

The next two hitters homered, and the next two hitters played for the Indians.

Smith not only saved McAllister and kept the game close, the fact that he got Miguel Cabrera of all people, to ground into a double play and kill a great opportunity with two runners on and one out, in that intense situation... It just had to light a fire under the team. Perhaps it was the catalyst to the bottom of the seventh and if it was, even more credit to Smith.

"The most important play of the game, defense-wise," Acta said.

You know it's funny because even though Cabrera hit that two run shot off Smith the other night, the Tigers grounded into four double plays in this series.

Cabrera grounded into three of them and had one in every single game! He definitely goes through his issues. There's times of the year when he rolls through and you flat out can't pitch to him. So for him to come into this series and even though he was somewhat effective, he killed three Tiger opportunities in all three games.

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Chris Perez and Vinnie Pestano now a combined 14 innings pitched against the Tigs this year, with just one run given up. Perez has saved all seven games he's been in against them.

Hey the team was still 2-for-9 with runners in scoring position. But when you hit back-to-back home runs off Verlander to start a rally that gets you those two hits with RISP later on.. Ehhhhh I'll overlook the other seven.

Credit to Jason Kipnis who had a great night. He was 2-for-2 with a pair of RBI and a walk. He hit the sac-fly in the first inning to give the Indians their first run and had the last one when he singled to short. Debate to as if it was actually a "single" or an error, but the scorer gave him credit, so take it.

Brent Lillibridge's first at bat last night ended in a three pitch strikeout in which he got three heavy heaters from Brayan Villarreal. It's almost not fair for someone hitting .163. In fact, it isn't fair. They should let him hit softballs instead.

Oh and the win did one other thing, it put the Chicago White Sox in the lead by a half game, mostly due to their inactivity. You're welcome Tigs.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Oh good, I was wondering when we were going to get to talk about this **Nick Hagadone** situation again....

The Indians declined to comment on the [grievance that was filed by the Major League Baseball Players Association](#) on Thursday. You probably won't hear about this again for awhile, but that's okay because it matches the length of time that Hagadone will probably be sidelined with the injury he gave himself for his dumb mistake.

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The case makes it specific that he was placed on the minor league disqualified list instead of the major league disabled list. Essentially the argument that you think he and the MLBPA is making isn't changing, it just looks tricky in wording. And when I say he, I really have no clue how involved Hagadone is in this process. For all we know he may just be along for the ride with the MLBPA simply deciding to swing the mallet they possess as a powerful entity to "right" something they perceive to be "wrong". Who really knows and quite honestly, who really cares?

All I care about is pitching and the postseason right now and we're going to talk about both. Manny Acta says he has no care for the other teams in the race for either the Central or the Wild Card. He maintains the Indians [need to worry about themselves](#) .

"We still have two months of baseball to play," he said. "We're going to play [the Tigers and White Sox], and they're going to play each other, too. We just have to try to take care of ourselves and win some games. We consider ourselves fortunate to be just four games out while playing .500 baseball at the end of July."

After last night you can make that 3.5 games. And that was the goal of this series. Now the focus shifts to winning and not worrying. You win, you don't worry. You need to handle your business against teams like the Twins, because so far this year, that has not been a separator. The Indians, White Sox, and Tigers all have fairly modest records against those two teams, so the Tribe must keep up that pace and not let those games kill them in the standings.

Acta is right, it doesn't matter how many people are in front of you, it matters how many games you are back of the team you are chasing. You handle your business here on out and things will fall into place. The Wild Card is at the Indians advantage right now. I didn't think it would matter with the AL East and the two teams in the West, but there's some muddled messes around the other divisions, including the AL Central, so there is an opportunity to claim that if not the division.

I will continue to tout the fact that the team needs pitching to do so. They have offense as we saw last night and when it comes to play, it can do its damage. You get Zach McAllister up there going toe-to-toe with Justin Verlander? That just shows you that if the Indians have their pitching, they can get the job done. □ **Derek Lowe** [is not just the only problem though](#) and that isn't to say he's a problem either.

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"It's not just one guy. It's a team," Acta said. "We win and lose as a team. Our starting pitching has been inconsistent, for the most part. It'd be unfair just to point out one guy."

Remember back when Lowe was good earlier in the year? Remember who was struggling? Remember it was Jeanmar Gomez and Lowe that was carrying the rotation and Masterson and Jimenez were laboring. Now Gomez is in Columbus and Lowe looks like, you know what.

So as bad as Lowe has been, you have to kind of stay with it until a better opportunity presents itself or Lowe turns it around.

But you need pitching, so I continue to sit here and hope something happens. I really don't care what it is that happens, just that it happens. If it happens through trade, here are some notes that are of note to pass along. That's why they're notes.

Jayson Stark says that the Indians and the Cardinals [talked to the Rays about James Shields](#) . The word talk means one thing, "What will it take?" Anyone can talk to the Rays about James Shields. That means nothing significant what so ever. Sure it is nice that the Indians are doing their due diligence and asking around, but Shields is most definitely out of the Indians price range, unless they're looking to trade some of their better prospects, which they probably are not.

And if you want to believe Buster Olney, the Indians will be looking for trade candidates that are under control for more than 2012, so they get a little value for what they give up presumably. Same approach to grabbing Ubaldo Jimenez like they did. So unless the stars align, don't expect a huge deal, which is something I've continually brought up anytime we talk about these "trade rumors".

Cody Allen is the first player selected after the 20th round [to make his debut the following year](#) he was drafted since Gerald Alexander for the Rangers in 1990. That's pretty darn cool and shows you just how important those late picks can be if you do your homework and sign the right guys.

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Rafael Perez will get a chance to do something, the Indians haven't decided what yet, but he'll simulate a situation he would be needed for in the big leagues in his next rehab outing. But that's tonight and last night, the focus was on someone up in Lake County.

Mr. **Roberto Hernandez** [picked up a win in his five inning debut](#) for the Captains last night. Fausto gave up three runs, with only one earned off six hits and four strikeouts. He did give up a two-run shot, but the best part of his outing? No walks. I fully expected that to be an issue with rust and all that, so to see a big fat zero up in that column is so encouraging and so great. Go Fausto Go!

Travis Hafner made [an excellent face](#) on Wednesday night. He should just stand up there and make this face very time he bats. He'd scare a lot of people.

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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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