

8 hours ago

Jose Ramirez's "monster" July
by Jordan Bastian

When the Angels fly into Cleveland this weekend, fans will have a chance to see two of baseball's best hitters—arguably the two best—go head to head. Jose Ramirez of the Tribe and Mike Trout of the Halos.

It's too bad baseball isn't like boxing, because this would be top billing. No, this is a sum-of-all-parts sport. The only place Ramirez and Trout are really trading blows is in statistical categories. Trout is the Lord of WAR, but he had a challenger in Cleveland's diminutive slugger this summer.

Heading into Thursday's off-day, Trout led the Majors with 7.6 WAR (per Fangraphs), but Ramirez was right on his heels (7.3). There was actually a point in July when the Indians third baseman overtook Trout atop that leaderboard.

Mike Trout has been Mike Trout since the day he stepped foot in the big leagues. He's in the express lane to Cooperstown. In many ways, the Jose Ramirez story is more remarkable. No one expected this from the kid who looked overwhelmed and defeated by the big leagues back in 2015 and was sent back to the Minors.

Now? Ramirez is legitimately one of the elite players in baseball.

"It's funny," Indians manager Terry Francona said last month. "You guys always ask me when guys are young, 'What are they going to turn into?' And you don't know. I mean, you'd like to think you watch him and you pay attention, but is the guy going to hit for average? Is the guy going to hit for power? Is he going to do both?"

"Or, is he going to turn into this? He's a monster."

I've told this story in this space in the past, but back in 2016 an AL Most Valuable Player voter reached out and asked who Cleveland's "MVP" was that season. I mentioned Ramirez. He hit .312 with 11 homers, 46 doubles, 76 RBI, 84 runs, 22 steals and an .825 OPS in what we thought was a breakout campaign. Spoiler alert: He hadn't even scratched the surface.

That season, Ramirez began the year in left field when Michael Brantley was out. Later in the summer, he shifted to third base. He manned second and short when needed, too. Oh, and Ramirez started in each part of the lineup throughout the season. He was arguably the most important puzzle piece to the offense and defense that year.

"I can't put Jose Ramirez on my MVP ballot," the voter replied.

Jose Ramirez wasn't a name yet. He only got one down-ballot MVP vote that season. For what it's worth, the Cleveland Chapter of the BBWAA voted him the 2016 Man of the Year, which is essentially the best player of that season (pitcher or batter). Then in 2017, Ramirez finished third in voting for the AL MVP and he's going to be in the mix for the annual accolade again this fall.

On Thursday, Ramirez was named the American League's Player of the Month for July. Let's take a look at some numbers and facts accumulated by the switch-hitting All-Star throughout last month.

In 25 games, Ramirez turned in a slash line of .322/.441/.722 with eight home runs, eight doubles, two triples, 11 stolen bases, 21 runs scored, 25 RBI and more than twice as many walks (19) as strikeouts (8). Let's have some fun with arbitrary end points...

Ramirez is the first player with at least 19 walks and no more than eight strikeouts in a month since August 2014 (Victor Martinez). He's the first to also have at least eight homers since April 2006 (Albert Pujols). Add in 11-plus steals and you only get Ramirez and Joe Morgan (August 1976). Add in 25 RBI and Ramirez is the only one to hit those marks in a single month.

If you go with 10-plus steals and 25-plus RBI in a single month, you get 34 instances in recorded MLB history. Ramirez is the first since Jose Reyes in August 2006. That's only been done twice in Cleveland history: Ramirez and Roberto Alomar (Sept/Oct 2000).

There have been nine months compiled in MLB history with at least eight homers, 10 steals, 20 runs and 25 RBIS. Prior to Ramirez in July, the most recent was Brian Roberts in March/April 2005.

Within the 34 months with at least 10 steals and 25 RBI, only eight happened in July. This is a fun list, so let's roll it out from past to present: Ty Cobb (1915), George Sisler (1927), Kiki Cuyler (1930), Ben Chapman (1931), Barry Bonds (1991), Jeff Bagwell (1999), Bobby Abreu (2004) and Ramirez (2018).

Some more notes on Jose's July...

Ramirez led MLB with 2.2 WAR (Fangraphs). He also led MLB in Base runs above average (2.8). His 202 wRC+ was tied for third in MLB, while his .471 wOBA was also third overall. Both of those led the AL.

Ramirez posted a 17.1 BB% (11th-highest in MLB) and 7.2 K% (fifth-lowest) in July.

On July 11, Ramirez made it known that he would not take part in the Home Run Derby. He hit two homers against the Reds that day and launched five homers in the six games leading up to the All-Star break. Oh, and then he homered in the Tribe's first game after the season's intermission.

Ramirez did all this while pitchers increasingly refused to throw him strikes. He had three intentional walks in July. Ramirez had six intentional walks across the 2013–17 seasons combined (and five of those came in '17). Ramirez saw 45.6% pitches in the zone in July vs. 47.5% from April-June.

Here's a look at how pitchers approached Ramirez in July vs. the rest of the year:

<https://medium.com/media/0b9d6a479813c13f8ba718402b1f6e3b/href>

And now my favorite Ramirez fun fact from July...

OK, I wrote about this multiple times. I kind of became obsessed with it for a few days, but Ramirez experienced one of the most statistically mind-boggling weeks from July 22–29. Over seven games, Ramirez went 0-for-16. In the books, it actually goes down as an 0-for-17 due to a sac fly.

During that “slump,” Ramirez turned in a .000/.414/.000 slash line. He had zero hits, but drew 11 walks, was hit by a pitch, stole three bases, scored five runs and collected two RBI. He had just one strikeout in that span.

How did Ramirez snap out of that? With two home runs, of course. In the eight games before the hit-less skid, Ramirez went 15-for-31 (.484) with a 1.787 OPS. In the three games since that drought, including Wednesday's August opener in Minneapolis, he's gone 7-for-12 (.583) with a 1.893 OPS.

Jose Ramirez is a monster.

Or, as Francisco Lindor joked last month...

“Josey's head is in a different world.”

J-Ram earns Player of Month nod

By Manny Randhawa MLB.com @MannyOnMLB

Aug. 2nd, 2018

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With scorching performances at the plate in July, Indians third baseman Jose Ramirez and Cardinals infielder Matt Carpenter were named American League and National League Players of the Month on Thursday.

Ramirez's 2nd solo HR, his 32nd

Ramirez's 2nd solo HR, his 32nd

00:32

Jul. 30th, 2018

Ramirez continued to state his case as an AL Most Valuable Player Award candidate by belting eight homers, stealing 11 bases and producing a 1.164 OPS in July for the Tribe. On July 30, he launched two homers to push his season total to 32 -- tied with the Red Sox's J.D. Martinez for tops in MLB -- and become the first Indians player to hit that many prior to Aug. 1 since newly inducted Hall of Famer Jim Thome did so in 2001. The Player of the Month honor is the first of Ramirez's career.

Carpenter's leadoff homer

Carpenter's leadoff homer

00:45

Jul. 31st, 2018

Carpenter, meanwhile, belted an MLB-best 11 homers during the month, vaulting himself to second in the NL in that category with 26 homers entering August; the Rockies' Nolan Arenado is in first place with 28. Overall, Carpenter hit .333/.447/.774 in July, raising his season OPS from .871 to .960 in the process. The Player of the Month Award is also Carpenter's first.

Manny Randhawa is a reporter for MLB.com based in Denver. Follow him on Twitter at @MannyOnMLB.

Read more: Cleveland Indians, St. Louis Cardinals, Matt Carpenter, Jose Ramirez

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How will Tribe move forward post-Deadline?

By Rhett Bollinger MLB.com @RhettBollinger

Aug. 2nd, 2018

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With the Indians out to a healthy lead in the American League Central, they were the only buyers in the division, as the other four clubs decided to sell, including the second-place Twins, who were the second-most active sellers in the Majors, trading away five players before Tuesday's non-waiver Trade Deadline.

The Indians helped shore up two of their issues with moves to address the bullpen and center field, while the Royals, Tigers, Twins and White Sox added pieces for the future. Here's a look at what all five clubs accomplished at the Deadline and what it means going forward:

INDIANS

What they did at the Deadline

Prior to Tuesday's Deadline, the Tribe landed center fielder Leonys Martin and Minor League pitcher Kyle Dowdy from the Tigers in exchange for shortstop prospect Willi Castro. Back on July 19, Cleveland shipped its former No. 1 prospect, catcher Francisco Mejia, to the Padres for All-Star closer Brad Hand and sidearmer Adam Cimber. Also on Tuesday, the Indians acquired outfield prospect Oscar Mercado from the Cardinals for Minor Leaguers Conner Capel and Jhon Torres.

Martin on joining the Indians

Martin on joining the Indians

01:09

Aug. 1st, 2018

What it tells us

The Indians' main priorities during the trade season were to strengthen the bullpen and help the injury-riddled outfield. With Hand and Cimber in the fold, and relief ace Andrew Miller due back from the DL soon, the bullpen is in a much better spot. In Martin, the Indians upgraded the outfield defense and added a bat to lengthen out the bottom third of the top-heavy lineup.

What's the goal

For many players in Cleveland's clubhouse, free agency is looming and there is a heightened sense of urgency to win the World Series now. Given that all the players acquired have at least one additional year of control, the front office showed that it is focused on keeping the window open well beyond this year.

Big questions

Can the Indians really proceed with two outfield platoons? Right now, Martin and Rajai Davis are splitting time in center, while Melky Cabrera and Brandon Guyer divvy up the innings in right. That is not an ideal setup, but the Tribe is trying to maximize the offensive and defensive production in the absence of a surefire everyday player at either spot.

ROYALS

What they did at the Deadline

Traded outfielder Jon Jay, closer Kelvin Herrera and third baseman Mike Moustakas, all with expiring contracts. Acquired Brian Goodwin as a potential starting center fielder.

What it tells us

The Royals' No. 1 priority since last fall was finding ways to restock the farm system and accelerate the rebuild. They made a nice haul with their trades, picking up outfielder Brett Phillips, who could be a long-term starter, and another Major League-ready outfielder in Goodwin. They also added prospects to their Top 30 list per MLB Pipeline: right-hander Elvis Luciano (No. 23); third baseman Kelvin Gutierrez (No. 17) and outfielder Blake Perkins (No. 15). Right-hander Jorge Lopez, also acquired for Moustakas, could be a bullpen piece by next season.

Royals' booth on Phillips, Lopez

Royals' booth on Phillips, Lopez

00:35

Jul. 28th, 2018

What's the goal

Get a long look at Phillips and Goodwin (presently on the disabled list), and other internal prospects such as first baseman Ryan O'Hearn, among others in the system (Richard Lovelady, Josh Staumont, etc.).

Big question

Wins and losses are mostly irrelevant as the Royals barrel toward a 100-plus-loss season. So, the battle for roster spots in 2019 essentially can begin now. Kansas City will need to clear space off the 40-man roster so they can activate Eric Skoglund and Jesse Hahn off the 60-day disabled list, and call up other prospects from the Minors. But will it start the service-time clock on Lovelady, Staumont and/or Nicky Lopez?

TIGERS

What they did at the Deadline

Traded Martin and Dowdy to Cleveland for Castro.

What it tells us

While the Tigers continue to stockpile prospects for their rebuilding project, the more telling statement was the lack of deals with other veterans Detroit had on the block. While general manager Al Avila admittedly tempered his expectations on returns, he opted to hold onto Mike Fiers and Francisco Liriano rather than give them away for throwaway prospects.

What's the goal

The Tigers head into the stretch run looking to keep developing their young players, a group that now includes outfielder Mike Gerber in Martin's old roster spot. They'll likely add more youngsters once rosters expand in September.

Gerber's 1st MLB hit, RBI

Gerber's 1st MLB hit, RBI

01:05

Jul. 31st, 2018

Big question

If the Tigers do not trade Nicholas Castellanos by the end of August, will they revisit the idea of a contract extension, something they threw out last offseason but quickly dismissed for lack of common ground?

TWINS

What they did at the Deadline

Traded infielder Eduardo Escobar to the D-backs for two prospects; traded right-hander Ryan Pressly to Astros for two prospects; traded lefty Zach Duke to the Mariners for two prospects; traded right-hander Lance Lynn to the Yankees for two prospects and traded second baseman Brian Dozier to the Dodgers for infielder Logan Forsythe and two prospects.

What it tells us

After making it to the AL Wild Card Game last year, the Twins planned to compete this season and signed several players to one-year deals in the offseason, but after struggling to find any consistency, the front office decided to sell. Escobar, Duke, Lynn and Dozier were impending free agents, while Pressly is under control through next season, so the Twins were trying to get value from players who were otherwise going to leave in free agency. It was a tough week for Twins fans, as Dozier and Escobar were the heart and soul of the club, but the organization feels it's now better set up to compete in the near and long-term future.

What's the goal

Despite receiving some lower-level prospects among the 11 Minor Leaguers they acquired, the Twins are still preparing to be competitive next season. They opted to hold onto right-hander Kyle Gibson, who is under team control next year, and closer Fernando Rodney, who has a \$4.5 million club option for 2019. They still see the last two months of the season as important to the development of young core players such as Jose Berrios, Eddie Rosario, Miguel Sano, Jorge Polanco and Max Kepler. Right-hander Ervin Santana, who has made just two starts this year after undergoing finger surgery in February, could also be traded in August, as he's an impending free agent.

Santana's 1st K of the season

Santana's 1st K of the season

00:23

Jul. 25th, 2018

Big question

Byron Buxton and Sano were expected to break out this season and help Minnesota build on its unexpected success last year, but it hasn't been the case. Buxton has struggled offensively and has had trouble staying healthy, as he's currently nursing a left wrist sprain at Triple-A Rochester. Sano is back with the Twins, but spent roughly six weeks in the Minor Leagues, including a stint at Class A Advanced Fort Myers to work on his conditioning and get back on track offensively. They're both still a huge part of the future, and finishing strong would be big going into next season.

WHITE SOX

What they did at the Deadline

Traded closer Joakim Soria to the Brewers for left-hander Kodi Medeiros and right-hander Wilber Perez; traded international signing bonus pool money to the Yankees for left-hander Caleb Frare and to the Rays for left-hander Hunter Schryver.

What it tells us

General manager Rick Hahn has talked about this season being more about development than talent acquisition, unlike this time last year, and the lack of frequent action at the Trade Deadline backed up that idea. The White Sox brought in needed left-handed pitching depth to their rebuild.

What's the goal

The main target for the White Sox remains setting themselves up for multiple championships. That involves developing players at the Minor League level, not rushing them to the big leagues even if there's a need, and putting together a critical mass of talent.

Big question

When will outfielder Eloy Jimenez and right-handed pitcher Michael Kopech, the organization's top two prospects, arrive with the White Sox? Will they arrive with the White Sox in 2018?

Top Prospects: Jimenez, CWS

Top Prospects: Jimenez, CWS

00:33

Jan. 17th, 2018

Hahn recently mentioned a checklist the pair needs to fulfill, even with both of them performing at a high level for Triple-A Charlotte. Again, the organization's focus is future excellence and not speeding things up now for present gratification.

What's the Cleveland Indians' biggest problem for the stretch run? Complacency

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The more a manager can avoid team meetings, the better his team is probably doing in the standings.

But sometime during this seven-game homestand, perhaps as early as Friday, Terry Francona plans to meet with the Indians. It's not like there are red lights blinking around the internal core of the team. They have a 10-game lead in the AL Central and the four other teams in the division are lost in the wilderness of rebuilding.

The Indians were favored to win the Central before the season started, but did anyone think that it would be this easy? They took over sole possession of first place on April 21 and are still there entering Friday's three-game series against the Angels at Progressive Field.

There has not been one flash point through first 107 games of the season where it was conceivable that the Indians would not win this division. It has to be unnerving for the organization, because even last year when they won 102 games they were tested.

The Indians lost five of six games on a West Coast trip coming out of the All-Star break in 2017. Their lead in the division shrunk to a half game. Meetings were held. Speeches given and the Indians responded by winning and winning and winning.

They won nine straight after that West Coast trip. They won six straight from Aug. 11-17. Then came their 22-game winning streak, the longest in over 100 years of baseball history, from Aug. 24 through Sept. 14.

The Indians' longest winning streak this season has been seven games. If this team has a fourth or fifth gear, it hasn't been seen often.

In Minneapolis, where the Indians took two out of three from the Twins, Francona was asked if he was worried about a lack of urgency with his team because of the big division lead.

"That can change in a week. ... Your record is always fluid," said Francona. "You know that. You know what? If I did, I'd say something. So, no. When we're playing a game, we try to win every game. ... So, no, I really don't (worry)."

Don't get Francona wrong. He likes a 10-game lead as much as any manager.

"If you ask me if I'd rather have a lead or not, I'd rather have a lead," he said. "And I think there's a right way and a wrong way to play. I think for the most part our guys do a pretty good job. But we may visit for a few minutes just because we've got some new guys here. ... just to talk about those things."

Live. Laugh. Lindor. #RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/bFBmCuttF5

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) August 1, 2018

The Indians added relievers Brad Hand, Adam Cimber and outfielder Leonys Martin before Tuesday's trade deadline.

Among division leaders, the Indians are tied for the NL East-leading Phillies for the worst record at 59-48. Overall, seven MLB teams have better records. That includes the AL's three top wild-card contenders - the Yankees, Seattle and Oakland.

Second baseman Jason Kipnis says the Tribe's Central cakewalk may have something to do with that.

"I think it hurts a little bit," said Kipnis. "There are a lot of positives (to having a big lead) - we can rest starters and bullpen guys. We have the luxury of giving Andrew Miller all the time he wants. We can give position players rest. There's a ton of positive stuff that comes out of that.

"But the negative is, when you're down a run or two to someone and maybe that extra urgency isn't there. Like, 'Hey, we have to come back and win this game. If we lose, oh, no, we're nine (games) up in the division.'"

Kipnis thinks that will change for the stretch run.

"I think we have enough guys in here to make sure that, down the stretch, whether it's somehow creating ways to make it seem more than it is or trying to make it a playoff atmosphere - do something to get that urgency going, get that ball rolling - I think we'll find a way to do it," said Kipnis. "But it's human nature to see that division lead and, not pull off the gas, but know it's there. There's that cushion."

The Indians have just two walk-off wins this season. They are 1-30 when trailing after six innings.

This could be the last rodeo for several core players. Michael Brantley, Lonnie Chisenhall, Cody Allen, Josh Tomlin, Zach McAllister and Miller are free agents at the end of the year. In spring training it was a topic of conversation. Players told reporters that if this was indeed their last year in Cleveland, why not return to the World Series and win it this time?

In case you forgot, the Indians lost Game 7 of the World Series to the Cubs in 2016.

That talk has faded during the grind and injuries of the season. Kipnis thinks it will come back the closer the Indians get to the postseason.

"As we're getting down the stretch, it'll come back," he said. "I think we felt it more in spring training. ... Down the stretch, though, I could see it coming up a little bit more. You don't want to go into October and be like, 'Hey, by the way, this is our last go-around. Hope everyone's been dotting the I's and crossing the T's.'"

"It's more of a process. You want to gain momentum going into October and you want to be playing your best team baseball. You can ask anybody in the clubhouse, we haven't come close to doing that yet."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.03.2018

Cleveland Indians 3B Jose Ramirez named American League Player of the Month for July

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Jose Ramirez is the American League Player of the Month for July, becoming the second Cleveland Indians player to win the monthly honor this season.

Ramirez batted .322 with eight home runs and eight doubles to go along with 25 RBI and an MLB-leading 11 stolen bases as the Tribe posted a 14-11 record in July.

His win matches the feat of teammate Francisco Lindor, who claimed the award in May. The last time Cleveland had two players of the month in the same season was 1995 when Albert Belle (August and September) and Manny Ramirez (May) earned the honor.

Ramirez stole his 25th base of the season Tuesday night, moving him into a tie with Seattle's Dee Gordon for the A.L. lead. He shares the A.L. home run lead at 32 with Boston's J.D. Martinez.

With less than two months remaining in the season, Ramirez is already the third player in Indians franchise history to hit 30 homers and steal 25 bases in a season, joining Joe Carter in 1987 (32HR, 31SB) and Grady Sizemore in 2008 (33HR, 38SB).

His 25 RBI in July tied for second in the A.L., and his 18 extra-base hits also ranked second in the league. He tied for fourth with 21 runs scored and 19 walks.

Ramirez, who finished third in voting for the American League MVP award in 2017, won A.L. Player of the Week honors after going 11-for-26 and posting a 1.598 OPS with multi-hit efforts in five of seven games from July 9-15.
Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.03.2018

MLB unveils 2018 postseason schedule

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Major League Baseball has announced the dates for 2018 postseason play following the Sept. 30 conclusion to the regular season.

Any potential tiebreaker games would take place Monday, Oct. 1 and air on ESPN.

Postseason play begins Oct. 2 with the National League Wild Card Game, followed the next day by the American League Wild Card Game. Both N.L. Division Series will begin play on Oct. 4. A full slate of division series games, including a pair of A.L. Division Series games will take place Oct. 5.

Division Series games will run through Oct. 11 with potential Game 5s taking place Oct. 10 (N.L.) and Oct. 11 (A.L.). National League games will air on FS1 and MLB Network, while American League games will air on TBS.

Currently, the Cleveland Indians (59-48) occupy the No. 3 seed in the American League and would open Division Series play on the road Friday, Oct. 5 in the home park of the No. 2 seed (currently Houston, 69-41). Home games at Progressive Field would take place Monday, Oct. 8 and (if necessary) Tuesday Oct. 9.

The National League Championship Series begins Oct. 12 on FOX or FS1. The American League Championship Series begins Oct 13 on TBS. League championship series Game 7s would take place Oct. 20 (N.L.) and Oct. 21 (A.L.).

Game One of the 2018 World Series is set for Oct. 23 in the home park of the league champion with the better overall record. Game Seven, if necessary, would take place Oct. 31.

MLB 2017 postseason schedule

Regular season tiebreaker games - Oct. 1 (ESPN)

N.L. Wild Card Game - Oct. 2 (ESPN)

A.L. Wild Card Game - Oct. 3 (TBS)

N.L. Division Series - Oct. 4-11 (FS1, MLB Network)

A.L. Division Series - Oct. 5-12 (TBS)

N.L. Championship Series - Oct. 12-20 (FOX, FS1)

A.L. Championship Series - Oct. 13-21 (TBS)

World Series - Oct. 23-31 (FOX)

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.03.2018

Cleveland Indians, Los Angeles Angels series preview, pitching matchups

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Here is the preview and pitching matchups for the Indians' series against the Angels.

Where/when: Progressive Field, Friday through Sunday.

TV/radio: SportsTime Ohio will televise Friday and Sunday's games. FOX Sports 1 will televise Saturday's game and TBS will televise Sunday's game. WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the series.

Pitching matchups and starting times: RHP Jaime Barria (6-7, 3.74) vs. RHP Mike Clevinger (7-7, 3.43) Friday at 7:10 p.m.; RHP Felix Pena (1-2, 5.23) vs. RHP Corey Kluber (13-6, 2.79) Saturday at 7:10 p.m. and LHP Tyler Skaggs (8-7, 3.34) vs. RHP Shane Bieber (5-2, 4.73) Sunday at 1:10 p.m.

Series: The Angels lead the Indians, 2-1, this season. The Angels lead, 327-315, overall.

Hot pitchers: Brad Hand, since being acquired by the Indians on July 19, has allowed one run in seven innings with two saves. Skaggs had a 1.41 ERA since June 1 in eight starts before allowing 10 runs on eight hits in 3 1/3 innings against the Rays on Tuesday.

Hot hitters: Tribe DH Edwin Encarnacion has 66 RBI since May 2, the second most in the big leagues next to Boston's J.D. Martinez. Kole Calhoun has four homers in his last seven games and nine in his last 18 for the Angels.

Team updates: The Indians, 10-11 over their last 21 games, have won eight of their last 10 games against the Angels. The Angels, 5-8 since the All-Star break, have lost 10 straight at Progressive Field. LA started the season 18-8 on the road, but has gone 7-18 since May 30.

Disabled list: Angels - 3B Zach Cozart (right shoulder), RHP Jake Jewel (right ankle), LHP John Lamb (left shoulder), RHP Alex Meyer (right shoulder), RHP Keynan Middleton (right elbow), RHP J.C. Ramirez (right elbow), RHP Garrett Richards (right elbow), C Rene Rivera (right knee), RHP Blake Wood (right elbow) and OF Chris Young (left hamstring) are on the disabled list.

Indians - CF Tyler Naquin (right hip), RHP Josh Tomlin (right hamstring), OF Lonnie Chisenhall (left calf), RHP Evan Marshall (right elbow), LHP Andrew Miller (right knee), RHP Nick Goody (right elbow), RHP Danny Salazar (right shoulder) and RHP Cody Anderson (right elbow) are on the disabled list.

Next: The Twins visit to Progressive Field for a four-game series starting Monday night.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.03.2018

Akron RubberDucks' rally falls short in loss to Bowie

By Cliff Pinckard, cleveland.com

AKRON, Ohio -- An attempted rally in the ninth inning was thwarted by an unfortunate double play as the RubberDucks fell, 4-3, to the Bowie Baysox on Thursday at Canal Park.

The RubberDucks trailed, 4-2, entering the bottom of the ninth when Tyler Krieger started things off with a single. But the next batter, Joe Sever, grounded into a double play.

Nellie Rodriguez then hit a solo shot to center field, making it 4-3.

Connor Marabell kept the inning alive with a single, but the game ended with Sam Haggerty's fly ball to right field.

Akron starter Aaron Civale (5-5, 4.16 ERA) went seven innings, allowing four runs and seven hits. Baysox left-hander Keegan Akin (11-6, 2.82 ERA) got the win, allowing two runs and three hits over seven innings and striking out nine.

Notes: First baseman Bobby Bradley and right-handed pitcher Henry Martinez were promoted to Class AAA Columbus. Bradley led the Class AA Eastern League with 24 homers. Martinez was 2-1 with a 2.76 ERA in 32 2/3 innings. ... First baseman Nellie Rodriguez, right-hander Dominic DeMasi and outfielder Connor Marabell were received from Columbus. ... Left-hander R.C. Orlan arrived from Class A Lynchburg, Va. ... Outfielder Dorssys Paulino was released.
Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.03.2018

Hot Rods speed by Captains, again; Midwest League commissioner visits

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

Richard Nussbaum was a more-than-casually interested spectator Aug. 2 at Classic Park as the Captains hosted the Bowling Green (Ky.) Hot Rods.

Nussbaum is president of the Midwest League, the full-season Single-A circuit based in South Bend, Ind., in which the Captains, Hot Rods and 14 other franchises play.

Since succeeding the late George Spelius as MWL president two years ago, Nussbaum has been a tireless advocate of his league, in particular, and minor league baseball, in general.

"Minor league baseball is tracking for attendance of 40 million again this season, and the Midwest League will almost certainly draw 4 million fans this season," Nussbaum said. "We really proud of our league accounting for 10 percent of total minor-league attendance." Nussbaum pointed to three factors as keys to the MWL's success.

"We're in good markets, we have good facilities and our ownership and operation structures are solid," Nussbaum said.

Classic Park, opened in April 2003, is one of the MWL ballparks Nussbaum regards as an asset to the league.

"When you have a ballpark this nice, fans are going to come out for the overall experience as well as the games," Nussbaum said, looking out over the stands as the game unfolded.

The Hot Rods, owners of the league's best overall record at 71-38, breezed to an 8-1 victory over the Captains.

Nussbaum confirmed that the Captains will host the 2021 MWL All-Star Game.

By then, Nussbaum said, he hopes to have secured from the MWL's major-league parent clubs an agreement not to promote players selected as All-Stars until after the game.

"It does the league and the players a disservice to promote players shortly before the (All-Star) game," he said.

Nussbaum was asked for his opinion of the designated runner rule for extra innings implemented this year in all minor-league circuits. At the outset of each at-bat in extra innings, the player who batted last in the previous half-inning is placed at second base.

"I'm a purist, so when the change was announced, I didn't like it," Nussbaum said. "But I have to tell you, the reaction has been positive across the board. The new rule has worked out well. It's here to stay."

The Hot Rods smacked four home runs, two off the bat of designated hitter Ronaldo Hernandez. The 20-year-old native of Colombia connected off Lake County starter and eventual loser Gregori Vasquez (5-6, 3.95 ERA) for two-run home runs in the top of the first and sixth innings.

A catcher by trade, Hernandez has an MWL-high 18 home runs and 69 RBI. Also going deep for the Hot Rods were Jim Haley with a two-run shot in the top of the first inning and Devin Davis with a solo shot in the top of the eighth inning.

The top four batters in Bowling Green's line-up combined to go 10-for-18 with seven RBI, seven runs scored and three home runs.

Bowling Green has taken 12 of 15 games from the Captains this season.

In the 13-4 loss to Bowling Green on Aug. 1, Captains third baseman Nolan Jones hit two solo home runs. On Aug. 2, the 20-year-old Pennsylvania native was promoted to the advanced Single-A Lynchburg (Va.) Hillcats. Jones played 90 games for the Captains, batting .279 with 16 home runs and 49 RBI.

Promoted to Lake County on Aug. 2 from short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley were left-handed pitcher Adam Scott and right-handed pitcher Dakody Clemmer.

Scott was selected by the Indians in the fourth round of the 2018 draft out of Wofford (S.C.) College. Clemmer was taken in the 19th round of the June 2016 draft out of Central Arizona College

One current big-league player, Indians catcher Yan Gomes, and former big-league pitcher Luis Tiant took in the middle game of the three-game series.

Gomes came to the game with his family on what for the Indians was an off day. They open a three-game series against the Los Angeles Angels at Progressive Field on Aug. 3.

Tiant is in Northeast Ohio as one of the sports celebrities signing autographs at the National Sports Collectors Convention, running through Aug. 5 at the I-X Center.

RubberDucks reliever James Karinchak rising quickly through Indians minor league system by ABJ/Ohio.com correspondent

The approach is simple. The results have been above incredible.

James Karinchak's meteoric rise through the Indians organization has been lightning fast. The right-handed reliever was taken in the ninth round of the 2017 draft, played in 10 games for the Mahoning Valley Scrappers in the New-York Penn League, and has flown through the organization ever since.

"It's the one-pitch-at-a-time attitude," Karinchak said. "If I don't go out and compete against the next batter, I could be in Lynchburg or Lake County again. I try to throw strikes and try to get in the zone and get guys out every step of the way. The organization gave me confidence when I was low and built my confidence when I was high. They always believed in me."

It's hard not to put faith in the 22-year-old, who has gone from Lake County to Lynchburg to the RubberDucks in less than four months.

In Karinchak's fifth appearance with the Captains, he paired with Francisco Perez to pitch a no-hitter in a 4-0 win at the West Michigan Whitecaps in which he closed out the final two batters.

In 33 games this season, Karinchak is 4-1 with a 0.92 ERA and has 14 saves.

"You start to think of guys that have done it since I've been here and the one name that sticks out is Cody Allen, a righty with a breaking ball," Ducks manager Tony Mansolino said. "He puts himself in that category at this point just because of the progression. It's exciting to have him here."

"For us, it's to continue the teaching progression that the other affiliations have done. We'll teach him how to be a professional and what that means. We do that with every player. He'll dictate his own path. He's going to break down the doors the way he has so far. It's up to him what needs to be learned and what doesn't. We'll help him every way we can."

So far this season, Karinchak hasn't needed it.

Armed with a fastball that consistently hits 96 mph and touches 98, he uses it primarily and has a curveball to keep hitters honest.

The right-hander has given up four earned runs in 39 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings and has 66 strikeouts this season.

"It's always a dream to get promoted fast, but the only thing I envision is the next out," Karinchak said. "I'm just trying to do my job and hope for the best."

"... You have to be the same guy every day. You have to be the same guy in the clubhouse. You have to have the same routine whether you give up eight runs or throw a no-hitter. If you're the same guy the next day, people will respect you."

Karinchak's first appearance with the RubberDucks came Wednesday and lasted an inning in which he gave up a hit, walked two and struck out one against the Bowie Baysox.

It included a three-pitch walk because of a pitch-clock violation, but can be excused because he arrived at the park from Lynchburg 30 minutes before the game and was thrown into the fire.

"If I would have known, it would have been better," Karinchak said. "I was just trying to throw one more fastball. I think the time expired and I learned the hard way. ..."

"[Wednesday] night I got in at 6:30 and I had to go out and throw eight. I couldn't get into my routine. It was the first time I threw a baseball. I should have been better, but I was obviously very wild last night."

Run like a cheetah: How José Ramírez and Rajai Davis schemed to steal the Indians a run

Zack Meisel Aug 1, 2018 8

MINNEAPOLIS — As José Ramírez tossed his necklace over his head, moments before he strutted out of Target Field and onto the team bus, a reporter spotted his cheetah-print shoes.

"They look fast," he told the All-Star third baseman.

"Expensive, too," Ramírez said, through team interpreter Will Clements.

Ramírez is tied for the American League lead with 25 stolen bases. He rarely devotes time to getting to know first base. He's either rounding it with a casual trot after slugging a pitch over the outfield fence, or he's ditching it for a better view from scoring position.

"Every time José gets on first base," Carlos Carrasco said, "I'm pretty sure it's, like, 99 percent that he's going to take second base."

So, when the Indians were scuffling at the plate on Wednesday afternoon, Ramírez and Rajai Davis, the team's top base-stealers, generated the club's first run with their legs. Ramírez stood on first and Davis lingered off third with one out in the sixth inning of a scoreless game.

Ramírez bolted for second, leaving Davis to complete a split-second reaction.

"I'm just reading," Davis said. "I'm waiting for the catcher to make the first move. Catcher made his move, so I made mine."

Twins catcher Mitch Garver opted to throw down to second base. The ball veered away from the bag, but wound up near Ramírez's left foot as he slid into the bag. Ehire Adrianza applied the tag, spun around and quickly fired a tardy throw to Garver. Ramírez fell short in his bid to swipe second, but since he drew a throw, Davis dashed toward the plate.

When could Davis feel comfortable about fully committing to racing home?

"As soon as the ball's in the air," he said. "For me. You could go when he cocks back, you know? But, that's risky. Vegas."

Ah, but what if Garver had faked a throw to second and peered toward third?

"Well," Davis said, "then I make my fake. I had a way of escaping. It would've been a tough angle for him to throw down to third."

That's because Edwin Encarnacion occupied the batter's box, blocking the catcher's throwing lane. The play works best with a righty at the plate.

José Ramírez has stolen 25 bases but only lost his helmet 13 times this season. (Hannah Foslien/Getty Images)

It's a lot to process for the lead runner, and he can't hesitate or everything can unravel. Davis plunged into home plate, his helmet bouncing off the dirt and skipping toward the on-deck circle.

"With José getting thrown out there, that had a chance to be not good," Terry Francona said. "So I thought Raj did a terrific job on going on that ball. If we come up empty there, that's not good."

It's less involved for Ramírez, whose sole intention is to sprint to second. He can't control how his running mate or the catcher react.

"I didn't think the catcher was going to make the throw," Ramírez said, "because everybody knows that Davis is really quick at third base. But he did make that throw and Davis was able to score the run."

Well, then, why did the Twins opt to throw down to second?

"We were going to throw through with one out," manager Paul Molitor said. "Understanding they had speed over at third base at that stage of the game, I wasn't going to give him a free base. You're not sure how it is going to work out but if we do that and Encarnacion hits a double then it is a couple of runs there. So we were taking a shot there. The reaction is based on the throw and the opportunity to get the guy. We got the out but we missed the guy at home."

It's not just the guy with the cheetah-print shoes who has demonstrated a knack for speed on the bases this season. The Indians lead the league with 84 stolen bases as a team. They've swiped those bases at an 83 percent clip, which ranks third in baseball.

"Rajai's ready to go," Francisco Lindor said. "I'm ready to go. Ramírez is ready to go. Everybody that gets on base is ready to go. If they leak something, we're gone. We're not going to stay on the base. It's all about winning. That's part of our game. We're not going to hit home runs like that all the time, so we have to make things happen."

Mike Trout out of Angels lineup with a sore wrist, hopes to play on Friday

By JEFF FLETCHER

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — For the first time all season, an injury kept Mike Trout out of the lineup.

Trout jammed his right wrist on a slide into third on Wednesday night, an injury that left him "pretty sore," he said, on Thursday morning. He said he underwent X-rays and an MRI exam that showed just inflammation.

Trout did not even touch a bat during Thursday's game, which was the first one all season he'd missed entirely. He said he's hoping to be able to play on Friday in Cleveland.

"Going to keep treating it," he said. "Wake up tomorrow and hope it feels better. ... It's definitely better than it was."

Earlier this season, Trout hurt his right index finger, but he could still hit. He was limited to DH duty for nine straight games. He also had one day off, but he came in late in that game.

In the first inning on Wednesday night, Trout took off to steal third. Pitcher Tyler Glasnow threw to third and the ball was there well before Trout, so he tried to slide, feet first, around the tag.

He ended up sliding awkwardly, jamming his right wrist.

"I got my hand stuck under me," he said. "It was kind of weird."

Trout said he told Angels trainer Adam Nevala that it was sore. They taped it up and he stayed in the game. He went hitless in his last three at-bats.

"I was definitely thinking about it," Trout said. "I didn't feel it at the plate, but on deck when I was warming up, I was feeling it with the weight on my bat."

Last year Trout missed about seven weeks after tearing a ligament in his left thumb on a head-first slide. He now wears a protective glove on his left hand, but this time he hurt the other hand.

"They are joking that now I have to wear two," Trout said.

ALSO

Shohei Ohtani was not in the lineup for a second straight day on Thursday. On Wednesday, the Angels wanted Trout to DH, and on Thursday, the Angels were expecting the Rays to use a lefty for the bulk of the innings, after their right-handed "opener." Manager Mike Scioscia added that they are seeing all right-handers this weekend in Cleveland, so Ohtani will "get plenty of playing time." ...

The Angels, who play this weekend in Cleveland, have lost 10 straight games at Progressive Field, dating to 2014. The Angels had lost 12 games in a row overall to the Indians before taking two of three from them in the first home series of the season. ...

The Angels have lost 20 of their last 27 road games, after starting the season with an 18-8 road record. Since the middle of June, they've won one road series, against the Baltimore Orioles. ...

Felix Peña was throwing in the bullpen late in Thursday's game. The Angels relievers have been worked so much lately that Peña didn't throw his normal between-starts bullpen session before the game. Instead, he waited until later so he would have been available to pitch in the game. Scioscia said he would have pitched the 10th or 11th inning. ...

Kole Calhoun did not win American League Player of the Month for July, despite hitting .322 with an 1.136 OPS and a league-leading 10 homers in July. Cleveland's Jose Ramirez won, instead. Ramirez hit .322 with an 1.164 OPS and eight homers.

UP NEXT

Angels (RHP Jaime Barria, 6-7, 3.74) at Indians (Mike Clevinger, 7-7, 3.43), Friday, 4 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

Orange County Register LOADED: 08.03.2018

One bad inning costs Andrew Heaney and Angels in loss to Rays

By JEFF FLETCHER

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Andrew Heaney pitched very well in five innings. Unfortunately for him and the Angels, he pitched six innings.

A four-run fourth inning was too much to overcome for an Angels team playing without Mike Trout, and they lost 4-2 to the Tampa Bay Rays on Thursday afternoon, as the Angels got swept in the three-game series.

The fourth inning was a 30-pitch nightmare for Heaney, ironically just after a breezy nine-pitch third. Heaney gave up four hits and hit two batters.

"I just didn't make some good pitches," Heaney said. "Hit a couple of guys, which didn't help. I tried to force some balls in there and was maybe a little too aggressive."

Former Angel C.J. Cron came up with the bases loaded and no outs. Heaney got ahead of him 0-and-2, but then he threw a fastball well above the zone. His next one was lower, close enough it could have been called strike three, but he didn't get the call. The next was right over the middle, and Cron banded it up the middle for a two-run single.

All the while, the Angels bullpen — which has been overworked lately — was silent. They needed Heaney to get deeper in the game, and he accommodated them by retiring six of the seven in the next two innings.

He also retired nine of 10 in the first three innings, making the fourth-inning all the more puzzling.

"They bunched their hits, bunched their offense in one inning and got four runs," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "I thought Andrew threw the ball really well."

One bad inning was enough to beat an Angels team playing with a short-handed lineup. The Angels managed just three hits, two by Justin Upton.

Trout was out with a jammed right wrist, and Shohei Ohtani didn't start because the Rays were expected to use a lefty for most of the game.

The Angels have been one of the worst teams in the majors against lefties this year, and those numbers were mostly accumulated with right-handers Trout, Ian Kinsler and Martín Maldonado in the lineup.

The Angels didn't even threaten until the seventh inning, when Upton led off with a single and went to third on an Albert Pujols double. They scored on back-to-back groundouts.

"We just didn't have the continuity on the offensive side," Scioscia said. "Justin and Albert got us going with a single and a double in the seventh, but those guys bent but didn't break. They gave up a couple of runs but got out of the jam, and we weren't able to keep pressing the action."

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Stark: Ten things we learned at the trade deadline

By Jayson Stark Aug 1, 2018 65

What. A. Deadline.

Once, there was a time when the trading deadline felt like an auction. Now, for many teams, it just feels more like a gigantic shopping opportunity.

So what did those teams do? They grabbed their shopping carts and sprinted down the aisles till the deadline curtain dropped — to the tune of 15 trades Tuesday, 22 trades in the final two days, 36 deals in the final week and nearly 50 if you stretch this shop-athon span back to the Kelvin Herrera trade in mid-June.

So what big-picture lessons should we be taking away from that overloaded Transactions column? Glad you asked, because here come 10 Things We Learned from the Trading Deadline.

THE INDIANS ARE POISED TO CONTROL AUGUST

The Indians spent July shoring up their bullpen with Brad Hand and Adam Cimber. Then they scooped up Leonys Martín on Deadline Day to deepen their outfield. But we've heard from several teams that they might have been the team that came closest to shocking the world this week.

Multiple sources told The Athletic that the Indians were in deep conversations with Washington about Bryce Harper before the Nationals pulled back the FOR SALE sign. And while there's almost no scenario where the Indians can revisit that option as a waiver deal, they'll still be shopping for another bat. Luckily for them, they're better positioned to make an impact move in August than any club in their league.

So why is that? Because they're the American League's waiver-deal gatekeepers. Of all the AL contenders, they'll get first dibs on every AL player who passes through waivers this month – because they don't just have a worse record than the Red Sox, Yankees and Astros. They also have a worse record than even the Mariners or A's. And claiming priority goes in reverse order of the standings.

"There's so much strategy to (making deals in) August," said one AL executive. "And they're in position where their strategy is going to govern how August goes for the rest of the American League."

NO TEAM IN BASEBALL THINKS LIKE THE RAYS

Were they buyers? Were they sellers? Were they both? Were they neither? If you're even asking those questions about the Rays, you're missing the point. They defy every traditional label we like to toss around in July.

Out their door went Chris Archer, Nathan Eovaldi, Jonny Venters and Wilson Ramos. In came Tommy Pham and an intriguing package from Pittsburgh for Archer (Tyler Glasnow, Austin Meadows and a third "significant" prospect to be named later).

On one hand, it left the Rays with, incredibly, zero starting pitchers on their active roster – at least until Blake Snell returns. On the other hand, do you really think they care? While we encountered divided opinions on every one of their deals, they still seem better positioned for sustained success today than they were a week ago – at least by their unique definition of "sustained."

"The Rays don't do the binary buyer/seller thing," said one rival executive. "They just look for opportunity. And I think they're now super-interesting going forward. One thing to remember is, they now have almost no money committed to anyone beyond this year. The only guy they owe any money to is Kevin Kiermaier" – and he's owed just \$44.18 million over the next four years.

BRIAN CASHMAN IS THE GOLD STANDARD FOR MODERN GMS

It's always eye-opening when rival front offices go out of their way to heap praise on the general managers and front offices they compete with. So when the compliments kept coming for the work of Yankees GM Brian Cashman, we should all be paying attention.

And we don't just mean that Cashman checked every box on his shopping list. (Zach Britton added to his insane late-inning bullpen crew – check... J.A. Happ and Lance Lynn for the experienced October rotation-depth bin – check.) It's also about all the multi-tasking Cashman did on the edges.

The Yankees gave up none of their most valued prospects...cleaned out the back end of their 40-man roster, which would have become a major challenge next winter... and accumulated \$3.75 million in extra international bonus-pool money, which they'll be using to sign "two or three major international prospects" they've targeted, according to one rival front office.

"They're so deep, they're going to be good forever," said one AL exec. "Brian Cashman is just so good at his job. You know how guys like Pop (Greg Popovich) and (Bill) Belichick are never going to win coach of the year in their sports because they're always expected to be good? I feel the same way about Cash. He could be the executive of the year every year."

THE AL SUPER-TEAMS ARE ALREADY PLAYING THE OCTOBER MATCH GAME

The Red Sox are on pace to win 111 games. The Yankees are on pace to win 105. The Astros are on pace to win 101. So there was a definite pattern to the trades they just pulled off:

They're not worried about now. They're worried about October – and how they match up with each other. And since the Indians might clinch their division by Labor Day, they're in the same mode.

"Just look at what every one of those teams did," said an exec with one contender. "I guarantee those teams looked at every guy they got and asked, 'What does that guy do to beat the other two teams?' – not, 'What does that guy do to get us into the playoffs?'"

OK, we looked. J.A. Happ has a career ERA in Fenway of 2.91... Zach Britton has faced the Red Sox 32 times and has a 0.00 career ERA against Houston... The Yankees have hit .127 and slugged .176 against Roberto Osuna... Etc., etc. Can we agree that none of that is coincidence?

"These trades are October trades," said another longtime exec. "They're not trades made to get you to October. They're in. They're trades designed to make sure you've got enough once you get there. And when have you ever seen that before from this many teams?"

THE DODGERS ARE NOW YOUR NL WORLD SERIES FAVORITES

From 10 games under .500 to the World Series? It doesn't happen much. In fact, if it happens to the 2018 Dodgers, they would be joining just Juan Pierre's 2003 Marlins and Rusty Staub's 1973 Mets as the only teams to pull that off in the division-play era (now 50 seasons old).

But when the deadline dust settled, no National League team was better constructed to get to the World Series than the retooled Andrew Friedman/Farhan Zaidi Dodgers.

Manny Machado was "the best pickup of the entire deadline – by anybody," said one NL exec. Brian Dozier is a second-half player, owns an .886 career OPS in August, and his "time in Minnesota had expired," said another exec. John Axford is the perfect "dog-days reliever," said yet

another exec. And the Dodgers are now so stacked and versatile that officials from other clubs were joking that it feels like they have a 50-man roster.

“They’re so deep now,” said the exec quoted earlier about the Yankees. “They can go with a defensive lineup. They can go with an offensive lineup. They can sub guys in or out, depending on the match-ups. And let me ask you: Who on their team doesn’t play multiple positions? They’re just really good, and very Yankee-ish. They’ve just made so many smart decisions.”

THE NATIONALS PUT THE X IN X FACTOR

When Deadline Day arrived and the Nationals mostly stood pat, GM Mike Rizzo told the world, seemingly unequivocally: “I believe in this team.” But let’s just say that multiple clubs that had been talking with Washington hadn’t gotten that impression earlier in the week.

“If someone writes a book about the 2018 Washington Nationals,” said one rival exec Wednesday, “the last 48 hours should be four chapters.”

Hmmm. By that, he means that the Nationals weren’t as dug in on standing pat as they made themselves out to be. They clearly made a run at trading for Marlins catcher J.T. Realmuto. But several teams say they also got involved in serious conversations about selling multiple players – a group headlined by Kelvin Herrera, Ryan Madson and (yep) Bryce Harper.

“I think they got far down the road on a few guys,” the same exec said. “And then, all of a sudden, the road was closed.”

But by closing that road, the Nationals at least gave this group a little more time to make a charge. If they start scoring 25 runs a game, they can ride it out. If they’re still wallowing around .500 in three weeks, they can sell off their bullpen arms if nothing else. So the Nationals might not simply have a say in how the NL East turns out. If they sell, they could impact a bunch of races.

THE SHIFT WAS ON – AT THE BARGAINING TABLE

The Phillies traded for Asdrúbal Cabrera, even though he probably hurts their infield defense at every position he might play. The Brewers traded for Mike Moustakas and Jonathan Schoop, even though it meant one of their most productive bats, Travis Shaw, will have to play out of position at second base if he plays at all.

And those are just the two most obvious examples of another subtle trend in this year’s trade market – how the rampant use of the shift is causing more and more teams to say: “He’s playing out of position? So what?”

“Shifting has changed the way players are evaluated defensively,” said one longtime exec. “You’re seeing clubs that are more willing to overlook the defensive part of game for offensive production at what used to be considered premium defensive positions.”

That was especially true of the Phillies, who decided they just needed more offense, period – and dealt for Cabrera and Wilson Ramos. And it was true of the Brewers, who couldn’t resist the chance to trade for Schoop, even though it meant their infield pieces no longer fit into any conventional puzzle.

“I have no problem with any of that,” said one of the execs quoted earlier. “My thinking is always: Go get a really good player – and figure it out later.”

THE BEST DEALS WEREN’T FOR THE MOST FAMOUS NAMES

Imagine you’d been sitting in a hermetically sealed booth for the last six months. And then we asked: “Which starting pitcher would you trade for – Cole Hamels or Nathan Eovaldi?”

Of course you would have said Hamels, based on name, track record and October credentials alone. But an exec of one team that was bearing down on the starting-pitcher market says that would be the wrong answer – at least in the August, 2018 world we live in.

“Mark this down,” he said. “The best starting-pitcher pickup in the month of July will end up being Nathan Eovaldi, by the Red Sox. He’s always been a stubborn son of a gun because he’s got to throw fastball, fastball, fastball. But now he’s a different guy. He’s mixing everything. He’s got five pitches. He’s not afraid to use any pitch at any time. And he’s still got that upper-90s fastball when he needs it.”

Meanwhile, the same exec said of Hamels: “I love the guy, but that arrow is pointing the wrong way. He always had so much life on his fastball, and so much finish on his change and his breaking ball, that he’d grade out higher than he should. He was always a step above where he’d ordinarily be. But he doesn’t have that now. I’ll be interested to see if the Cubs can get him fixed.”

HAVE THE CARDINALS LOST THEIR WAY?

Of all the sellers who unloaded last week, none of them seemed to inspire more mass fascination (and confusion) than the Cardinals.

“The strangest thing that happened all week,” said one NL exec, “was the Tommy Pham deal.”

Obviously, there were baseball reasons for the Cardinals to move Pham and open up outfield playing time for Harrison Bader and Tyler O’Neill. But it’s just as clear that there were other reasons – that the rift that had developed between Pham and the club was just one more blow to their franchise culture, and repairing that damage was at the top of their agenda.

“What’s happened to the Cardinals’ culture?” one AL exec asked pointedly. “When you see Tommy Pham bitching about his contract and service time, you think: How did it come to this? Things that didn’t seem to happen to the Cardinals five years ago are happening now.”

To one of the baseball men quoted earlier, it feels even larger than that, however – almost as if they no longer have “a real understanding of where they are within their process.”

“If Tommy Pham was that much of a problem in their clubhouse...then why not trade him this winter, at the very top of his value,” he asked, “instead of (at the deadline), at the very bottom of his value?”

LET THE AUGUST DEALS BEGIN; PAGING MATT HARVEY

Finally, the deadline may have passed, but here’s one last important reminder: Justin Verlander got traded last August. So there is more to come.

When we asked these execs for nominations of players who could get traded this month, we heard names like Josh Donaldson, Andrew McCutchen, Kelvin Herrera, Adrian Beltre and even José Bautista. But there was total consensus on the No. 1 name on that list.

Matt Harvey.

It was actually one of the biggest head-scratchers of Deadline Day that 4 p.m. EDT arrived and the Reds still owned Harvey, a guy they’d acquired in the first place with an eye toward trading him in July. But an official of one team that talked to them said it felt as though Harvey was every team’s backup plan on the starting-pitching market – and nobody’s Plan A.

“I would have thought that would be their No. 1 thing, to get the Dark Knight moved,” the exec said. “But they never got the heat button hot enough. It got to simmer and low and medium. But you’ve got to get it to high if you’re going to cook. So you can bet they’ll be back at the stove in August.”