

## **Kluber baffles Tigers with 13 K's in 1st win**

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Indians ace Corey Kluber had to squeeze the baseball a little tighter on Monday night. The cold wind off the shores of Lake Erie has been hindering pitchers' ability to find a comfortable grip over the past few days, but Kluber hardly looked bothered.

Kluber found something that worked and then put on a vintage performance, striking out 13 and notching his first win of the season in a 2-0 victory over the Tigers at Progressive Field. The pitcher's sinker zipped across the zone with late life, his curve dove away from bats and catcher Yan Gomes did all he could to corral each offering.

"That thing was moving everywhere," Gomes said. "It's pretty crazy, man. His ball was dancing. He just makes an adjustment, just to figure out how to throw more strikes."

Over eight innings, not one baserunner advanced as far as second base against Kluber, who scattered two singles in the performance. Ten of Kluber's strikeouts came within the first five frames, including striking out the side in the fifth. The reigning American League Cy Young Award winner did issue one walk in the sixth, but he quickly escaped any harm. Andrew Miller worked the ninth inning for his first save.

Kluber ended the evening with a 1.57 ERA and turned in his franchise-leading 29th game with at least 10 strikeouts and no more than one walk. That moved Kluber into a tie with Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax for ninth all-time for that kind of performance.

"It's tough," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. "You can sit there and watch on TV, and everything seems so easy to do. But, when you're up there at the plate, I'm telling you, it's so different. His ball has late movement. It's darting, and he's just got great stuff."

The Indians' lineup struggled to mount much of an attack in frigid conditions -- the first-pitch temperature has been 33 degrees on average over the past three days -- but one Bradley Zimmer home run was sufficient in supporting Kluber's gem.

Tigers lefty Francisco Liriano was also strong out of the gates, holding the Indians without a hit for 15 batters to open his outing. That dominant stretch came to a close in the fifth, when Gomes singled and Zimmer followed with a no-doubt, two-run blast to the seats in right-center field.

This night, though, belonged to Kluber.

He finished with 103 pitches, including 43 curves and 40 sinkers. The right-hander generated 12 swings and misses and got 29 called strikes (eight for strikeouts). Kluber's 90 Game Score is the highest to date this season in the Majors. Last year, only Chris Sale had a Game Score of at least 90 (on Aug. 8) in an outing lasting no more than eight innings.

Zimmer enjoyed watching Kluber's outing unfold from center field.

"It's electric," Zimmer said. "He's got some of the best stuff, if not the best stuff in the game. I think we're all happy to have him on our side. It's fun to play behind him. It's fun to see him do his thing and the action on his pitch -- because I'm right behind him and I can see every pitch location -- the action on his slider, it's pretty special."

### **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

Zimmer's barreled blast: With two out in the fifth, Zimmer sent a slider from Liriano out to right-center on a line for his game-changing home run. According to Statcast™, the blast had a 107 mph exit velocity with a 22 degree launch angle. Leading up to that homer, the Indians had gone 0-for-8 on Barrels on the homestand (parts of four games) in cold, windy conditions. For context, the MLB slugging percentage on Barrels was 2.363 this season, entering play on Monday.

"I knew I got that one," Zimmer said. "The weather has been a factor the last couple of days, so I was thankful to see it clear the fence and able to get us going there. That was a big momentum swing for us."

Machado turns two: Liriano hadn't allowed a baserunner until back-to-back walks with one out in the fourth, sputtering with command, as Jason Kipnis and Jose Ramirez reached base. Liriano's next pitch was over the middle of the plate, but Edwin Encarnacion hit a grounder at Dixon Machado, who stepped on second base and threw to first for a double play to end the threat.

### **QUOTABLE**

"It sounds simple, but it's just a matter of not making mistakes at the wrong time. Physically, I don't feel any different. It's just a matter of not making those big mistakes with multiple guys on base or allowing big innings, things like that. That's obviously the case throughout the entire year, but if I had to point to one difference, that's probably the difference early on this year." -- Kluber, on his strong start to the season  
"It's exciting. We've all seen that when he gets on a roll, he can maintain it for, sometimes, shoot, as long as you can play. And that's a really good feeling, because he'll be in here tomorrow working his tail off, doing his routine. That's why I think he's able to be so consistent." -- Indians manager Terry Francona, on Kluber's first three starts

### **SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS**

Kluber (40) ranks fifth among active players in double-digit strikeout games, trailing only Max Scherzer (66), Clayton Kershaw (58), Sale (53) and Justin Verlander (42). Only Sam McDowell (74) and Bob Feller (51) have more in franchise history.

### **MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY**

The Tigers kept their deficit at two runs in the seventh inning with help from a challenge on what was initially ruled a double steal. Replays showed Zimmer slid into Machado's foot on his way to second base and he wasn't on the bag when Machado tagged him. Instead of runners at second and third with one out, the Indians had a runner on third with two out, a threat that ended when Drew VerHagen struck out Erik Gonzalez.

"I would've been safe," Zimmer said. "But, it was kind of an awkward slide, because the guy bumped into me and swiped my leg out. Regardless, there wasn't much I could do there."

#### INJURY REPORT

Tigers reliever Buck Farmer left the game in the seventh inning with what the team called a left hip spasm after he seemingly took a misstep on the mound following through on a pitch. He's listed as day to day. More >

#### WHAT'S NEXT

Right-hander Josh Tomlin is slated to start at 6:10 p.m. ET on Tuesday against the Tigers at Progressive Field. Tomlin battled a back issue in his season debut on April 3, allowing eight runs in three innings in Anaheim.

#### Tribe allowing Tomlin extra days of rest

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- On the surface, the move to have Corey Kluber start the opener of the Indians' series against the Tigers on Monday just looked like a way to get the ace on a regular five-day routine. Manager Terry Francona said there was another piece to the equation.

The rotation change was also aimed at providing a couple extra days of recovery for right-hander Josh Tomlin, who had a back issue flare up during his season debut against the Angels on April 3 in Anaheim. As things stand, Tomlin is scheduled to start against the Tigers on Tuesday at Progressive Field.

"Tomlin's lower back was bothering him a lot," Francona said. "We just figured -- after we checked with Kluber, [Carlos] Carrasco and that group to make sure they could stay on their day -- we backed J.T. up a couple days just so he doesn't have to fight this for the next month."

Francona said that Tomlin tweaked his back during a pitch to Angels slugger Justin Upton in the third plate appearance of the pitcher's 2018 debut. In that start, Tomlin tied an unfortunate career high with eight earned runs allowed, doing so in three innings before exiting the game. The righty also allowed a career-worst four home runs, including the first of Angels rookie Shohei Ohtani's career.

For the entirety of the 77-pitch appearance, Tomlin averaged 84.4 mph with his cutter, which was a tick down from the 85.5-mph average he posted throughout the 2017 campaign. Tomlin also averaged 86.4 mph with his four-seam fastball -- down from the 87.8-mph average in '17.

"He threw a side [session] a couple days ago and everything went well," Francona said. "So hopefully the couple days bought him [time] where he can go pitch, as opposed to trying to fight it. He was having a tough time finishing his pitches the other day, so hopefully this will help him."

#### Worth noting

- With lefty Francisco Liriano on the mound for the Tigers on Monday, Francona gave left fielder Michael Brantley his first day off since being activated from the 10-day disabled list on Friday. The manager has been impressed with how Brantley has looked on the field out of the chute.

"I actually think it's pretty amazing," Francona said, "that he just steps in and seems like he picks up where he left off. Team-wide, we haven't swung the bat very well, but he looks to me like, 'Give him some at-bats and he'll be just fine.'"

- Francona noted that outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall (10-day DL, right calf strain) is still with the team and will likely remain in Cleveland to continue his rehab rather than head to Arizona during the team's upcoming road trip.

#### Did you know? Reigning Cy winners amaze

Max Scherzer and Corey Kluber were dominant on Monday, combining for 17 scoreless innings against the Braves and Tigers, respectively. But the pair of reigning Cy Young Award winners outdid themselves by combining to do something unprecedented.

Kluber and Scherzer both threw at least eight shutout innings, allowed two hits or fewer and struck out 10 or more batters. It is the only time in MLB history both reigning Cy Young Award winners have done so on the same day.

Here are more facts and figures from Monday's overpowering performances from Kluber and Scherzer:

- Kluber and Scherzer combined for 23 strikeouts and one walk over 17 innings (13 strikeouts and one walk in eight innings for Kluber, 10 strikeouts and no walks in nine innings for Scherzer). Each gave up only two hits, and no runner reached second base against them in either game.
- The last time any two pitchers threw at least eight scoreless innings with 10 or more strikeouts on the same day was on July 10, 2016. That was another pair of aces: David Price and Madison Bumgarner.
- Add in the criterion of also giving up two or fewer hits, and you have to go back another season, to Sept. 25, 2015. On that day, Rich Hill and Carlos Carrasco both tossed shutouts with double-digit K's and two hits or fewer allowed.

- In addition to dominating on the mound, Scherzer also stole the first base of his career on Monday, in the seventh inning off Braves reliever Peter Moylan. That made Scherzer and the Astros' Nolan Ryan (on May 16, 1984) the only pitchers to toss a shutout, strike out 10 or more batters and steal a base in the same game.

Most career starts with 10+ K's and 1 BB or fewer, active pitchers

1. Clayton Kershaw: 41
2. Max Scherzer: 40 (including Monday's)
3. Chris Sale: 33
4. Corey Kluber: 29 (including Monday's)
5. David Price: 26

- They're not just among the active leaders, though -- Scherzer and Kluber also rank highly on the all-time MLB leaderboard for the most such starts. Scherzer's 40 rank as sixth-most in Major League history, while Kluber's 29 place him in a tie for ninth, with Sandy Koufax. (Randy Johnson tops the all-time list with 78 games of 10-plus strikeouts with one walk or fewer.)

- Kluber has been on an incredible run of dominance since he returned from the disabled list on June 1 of last season. In his 26 regular-season starts since then, the Indians' ace has a 1.62 ERA, 251 strikeouts and just 27 walks in 189 1/3 innings pitched.

- With Monday's gem, Kluber also now has 15 double-digit strikeout games in that span since last June, which leads the Major Leagues. Guess who's in second? Yes, it's Scherzer, who now has 12 after tallying one more on Monday himself.

- Eight of Kluber's 13 strikeouts on Monday were looking. Seven of those eight were on sinkers, six of them on the outside corner to right-handed hitters. One was a cutter, also on the outside corner, to Miguel Cabrera. By contrast, seven of Scherzer's 10 strikeouts were swinging. Five of those seven strikeouts came on Scherzer's four-seam fastball, which topped out at 95.4 mph per Statcast™. The other two came on a slider and a cutter.

- Eight of Kluber's 12 swinging strikes in the game came on his signature curveball, which might be the single best pitch in the Major Leagues. Since the beginning of last season, Kluber has gotten 263 swings and misses on his curveball, more than 50 ahead of the next-closest pitcher (Zack Godley).

- In addition to dominating on the mound, Scherzer also stole the first base of his career on Monday, in the seventh inning off Braves reliever Peter Moylan. That made Scherzer the first pitcher since the Astros' Nolan Ryan on May 16, 1984, to toss a complete-game shutout, strike out 10 or more batters and steal a base in the same game.

- Take away the 10-strikeout requirement, and it's still unusual for a pitcher to both throw a shutout and steal a base. The last to do it before Scherzer was Andrew Cashner on Sept. 16, 2013, and only two others have done it this millennium (Zack Greinke on July 13, 2013 and Cole Hamels on Sept. 1, 2009). And Scherzer is just the 15th pitcher to accomplish the feat in MLB's divisional era (since 1969).

- The key to Mad Max's stolen base? Jumping out to a huge lead. According to Statcast™, Scherzer's secondary lead was 33.6 feet on his steal (the MLB average secondary lead on successful steals is 21.6 feet). That's what let him swipe the bag, because Max isn't the fastest runner -- his sprint speed to second was 25.5 feet per second (MLB average is 27 ft/sec).

### **Prospect Bieber ready for next start**

By Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com @GoldenSombbrero

Pitcher to watch: Shane Bieber (Indians' No. 8), Akron at Binghamton (6:35 p.m. ET on MiLB.TV)

Bieber was brilliant in his season debut for Double-A Akron, tossing six scoreless innings of two-hit ball with nine strikeouts and -- you guessed it -- zero walks in a no-decision against Altoona. Pitching at three levels last year in his first full season, the 22-year-old right-hander issued just 10 walks in 173 1/3 innings as he led all Minor League hurlers in both walk rate (1.5 percent) and walks per nine innings (0.5 BB/9).

### **Covering the Bases: Game 10**

#### **Major League Bastian - Medium by Jordan Bastian**

FIRST: Bradley Zimmer sent a baseball tearing through Cleveland's cold air on Monday night. It looked like a no-doubter off the bat, but that classification has not applied to many fly balls here of late.

Yan Gomes—fresh off a single in the fifth inning—was on first base when Zimmer took his ferocious swing. Even as the ball rocketed by him, Gomes took off on a sprint, knowing how typically sure hits have been seemingly been encased in ice before falling back to earth and into the gloves of defenders.

"I got a good look at it," Gomes said. "You can see it on video, I was booking around the bases, because I was I was like, 'OK,' from how it's been going, I was like, 'OK, this is going to hit off the wall or something, so I've got to try to score.'"

Gomes then cracked a smile.

"But, I looked at the video," he continued. "That ball was like way gone."

Zimmer's two-run shot off Francisco Liriano flew off his bat at 107.3 mph with a 22-degree launch angle, hitting an apex of 70 feet. It was going to take that kind of frozen rope to find the seats on this night. For the third straight day, the first-pitch temperature was between 32–34 degrees, and it didn't get any warmer as the night wore on.

Cleveland's lineup was hardly hot on the road trip out west and the cold temps back home have only made matters worse. On that trip, manager Terry Francona cautioned that it was unlikely that anyone was going to "get hot" on this homestand, and his words have come to an unfortunate level of fruition.

Heading into play on Monday, the Indians were batting .159/.252/.274 as a team through nine games. That is bad—like really bad. But, the last thing the club wants to have happen is an overreaction by its hitters. Sure, going through video to find flaws in mechanics and approach is encouraged, but nine bad games does not necessitate a swing overhaul.

That is why hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo had a meeting with the hitters prior to Monday's game against the Tigers. The goal was to present some numbers that showed that things really aren't as bad as they seem. Trust the process. Don't be lied to by the results.

"Just stick to your approach," Zimmer said. "Things haven't been going our way, but we had a hitters' meeting today and VanBo was saying how guys have been hitting the ball hard. He's kind of given us percentages, and we've been swinging the bat OK. It's just the results haven't been there. That's just part of the game."

We didn't get a chance to talk with Van Burkleo after the game, so we don't know what specific numbers he cited. That said, it's not hard to find a few figures that support the message he tried to deliver.

For instance, using Statcast, the Indians ranked 30th in MLB in expected slugging percentage minus slugging percentage (-0.178), expected weighted on-base average minus weighted on-base average (-0.098) and expected batting average minus batting average (-0.078). Cleveland was also dead last in batting average on balls in play (.181).

Here were some rankings going into Monday:

.237 xBA (23rd)

.332 xwOBA (19th)

.452 xSLG (13th)

88.6 mph average exit velocity (12th)

17 Barrels (t-16th)

So, no, the metrics don't show that the Indians should be tearing the cover off the ball, but the numbers also don't paint a picture of Cleveland having the worst offense in baseball.

It's one thing for a hitting coach to say, "Hey, you're hitting the ball hard. Keep it up. Good things will happen. Don't change anything." Zimmer said it was nice to see some statistics that supported that kind of claim.

"I think it's comforting," Zimmer said. "But, everyone in this room is not panicking. It's like, 'You know what guys, we're swinging the bat well, it's just not in our favor. So keep doing what you're doing, don't try and do something else, just keep being yourself and the ball is going to fall. It will.'"

Gomes echoed that response from the young center fielder.

"It's not like we're out there getting completely outmatched," Gomes said. "We're hitting the ball well. We're not able to come up with some bigger hits in some situations, but we're hitting the ball well. But, yeah, VanBo and those guys showed us some numbers, how hard we're hitting it, and just to stick with the game plan, not try to make any mechanical adjustments that you don't need to right now."

As for that home run by Zimmer?

"It felt good. I knew I got it," Zimmer said. "It was just a matter of if it was going to carry through the wind and the freezing cold air."

From his time out in center, Zimmer knows as well as anyone how the conditions have messed with fly balls recently. On Sunday, he ran into the center-field wall while trying to chase down a Jon Jay triple that was dying in the wind.

The replay looked like each part of Zimmer's body met the wall in quick succession. Face, right knee, left knee, body.

"Everyone was saying that, 'Man, I saw it in slow-mo,'" Zimmer said with a smirk, "'and it looked like your face was just exploding, and then your knee.' And I was like, 'Yeah, it was a little of everything, it was.' Today I woke up and it felt like I got hit by a car."

"I was able to get myself back and ready to roll. I'm good to go now."

Good thing. Cleveland was 1-for-14 before that homer.

SECOND: Zimmer's blast was very much barreled. And, if you're not familiar with that particular stat from Statcast, [click here](#) to read up on it.

This is another way to show how the conditions in Cleveland have toyed with fly balls over the past four days. Prior to Zimmer's shot, the Indians were 0-for-8 on barrels on the homestand. That's a .000 slugging percentage on balls in play that had produced a 2.363 SLG in the Majors this year (through Sunday).

Heading into Monday's action, the Indians had an expected slugging percentage of 3.045 on Barrels in this season's small sample. That ranked FIRST in baseball. That should be cranking out extra-base hits. Alas, the Tribe's actual slugging on Barrels was 1.765 (26th in MLB). The -1.280 xSLG-SLG was 28th in baseball.

For those that prefer wOBA, the Indians had a 1.555 xwOBA on Barrels going into Monday, compared to a 0.888 wOBA. That's a big gap between expected and actual production, and why manager Terry Francona and the team's hitting coaches remain confident that things will turn around soon.

"I know the number's aren't looking great for anybody," Francona said. "I'm actually encouraged. I don't see anybody out there hanging their heads. It's hard to hit right now and we're not having a lot of success, but they're playing baseball. And we're making plays. And we're showing some enthusiasm.

"As a collective unit, they're going to break out of this together. It'll be fun to watch. But, in the meantime, we've got to find ways to win games."

THIRD: That is a lot easier to accomplish when some guy named Corey Kluber is on the bump.

Kluber was masterful again on Monday, piling up 10 strikeouts in his first five frames and ended with 13 in eight innings overall. He walked one, scattered two singles and never allowed a runner to reach second base. Kluber was good.

"He was terrific," Francona said.

Yes, terrific even.

While the pitchers have had a clear advantage in the colder weather of late, one challenge for them has been gripping the ball. Ian Kennedy of the Royals likened getting a new baseball to trying to hold an ice cube. Trevor Bauer said it felt like a cue ball. Kluber, too, had to search for a consistent grip.

"It definitely feels different than normal," Kluber said. "It's a different type of an adjustment, but it's just an adjustment you have to make. I probably squeezed it a little tighter than I usually do tonight."

Kluber obviously found something that worked, because he feature his curveball more often (43 times) than any other pitch. The sinker was a close second (40). Gomes said Kluber was having trouble commanding to the arm side (think: outside corner vs. a lefty batter), so they adjusted there, too.

In the early going, Kluber focused on his sinker, but the curve took over as the primary weapon by the third inning.

"That's just kind of going with the game," Kluber said. "Early on, there were some times when they gave up on two-seamers that came back. Later on, they got a little more aggressive with the fastball and we kind of adjusted to it. It wasn't anything that was pre-determined. It was just an adjustment in the game and to the hitters."

Added Gomes: "You started seeing earlier in the game, we were throwing a lot more fastballs than we normally do against these guys. At first, we were really just trying to set the table, set a game plan. But, we started seeing the hitters, they were not making much of adjustment to some of his pitches, so you just stick with it.

"But then, as the game goes on, you have to try to back them off from it. And when both of those pitches are moving as much as they were, it's kind of hard for anybody really to make an adjustment."

HOME: There are a lot of Kluber statistics that are thrown around, but one of my favorites is his knack for outings with double-digit strikeouts and one or zero walks. He's already in all-time great in this regard.

Kluber's latest outing marked his 29th career game with at least 10 strikeouts and no more than one walk. That is TWENTY games better than the pitcher ranked second in franchise history (Carlos Carrasco with nine). Bob Feller did it eight times. CC Sabathia and Sam McDowell, seven apiece.

Here's where it gets really cool, though.

Take a look at the all-time list for that type of start:

Randy Johnson, 79

Curt Schilling, 60

Pedro Martinez, 59

Roger Clemens, 52

Clayton Kershaw, 41  
Max Scherzer, 40  
Chris Sale, 33  
Johan Santana, 31  
Corey Kluber, 29  
Sandy Koufax, 29

That is some list right there.

EXTRAS: This did not factor into the game, but Rajai Davis' age-defying legs continue to astound. In the seventh inning, he flared a pitch down the right-field line and turned it into a hustle double. Davis registered a 28.4 Sprint Speed (ft/sec) on the play, representing his fastest one-second window of the 2018 season.

### **Indians report: Indians trying to warm up ice-cold bats in the frigid Cleveland weather: 'When it's cold, every single at-bat is like an event'** By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Beginning the season with a slow stretch at the plate can be tough enough to overcome, as Indians manager Terry Francona has previously detailed on numerous occasions.

It requires a level of mental fortitude to stare at a .175 or .063 batting average day after day without trying to do too much each time at the plate that night. Opening the season on a cold spell and then coming home to the actual, literal cold, as several players in the Indians' lineup have had to do, isn't exactly the most ideal situation.

Which explains why the Indians have been among the worst offenses in baseball to start the season heading into a four-game series against the Detroit Tigers that started Monday night at Progressive Field.

Francisco Lindor, Jason Kipnis, Jose Ramirez, Bradley Zimmer and Brandon Guyer have all gotten off to dreadful starts offensively during the team's season-opening road trip through Seattle and Anaheim and then the first series at home. Yonder Alonso, Edwin Encarnacion and Yan Gomes haven't been stellar either, but those three have all at least displayed some power.

Hitters have traditionally tried a number of off-the-wall tricks to try to break out of a slump. Coming home to play in freezing weather, to be sure, isn't one of them. As tough as the weather is on pitchers as they try to find a grip on the ball, it's tougher on hitters.

The lineup is fighting the slump, the urge to try to hit a grand slam in every at-bat and, now, the weather. But as the recent focus on analytics in baseball has shown, the game is as much about regression to the mean, good or bad, as much as anything.

Entering the weekend the Indians as a team had a better collective exit velocity (88 mph) this year than last year (87.5). Lindor very likely won't have a batting average below .200 for very long, and Ramirez shouldn't have much of a problem raising his .061 average to its normal levels by the time fans at Progressive Field can wear short sleeves — without some help from Budweiser — instead of ski masks and parkas.

"You've just got to try to figure out a way to stay warm, because both sides are going to have to do it," Gomes said. "At the end of the day, the weather ain't going to change."

One of Francona's top mantras is that "players get to their levels." But, that doesn't mean it isn't a frustrating wait.

"You're going to have to be strong enough mentally to know that maybe you're not going to get back, because guys always get back to their level," Francona said. "I always believe that and always will, but you got to work to get [there]— it's hard to string good at-bats together. In the summer when it warms up and guys feel where they're really in a good comfort zone, you can start to get some momentum with your at-bats."

Michael Brantley, Francona noted, had his eyes start to water while standing in left field. And Gomes detailed how everyone has to stay near the heaters, use whatever lotion they can and, obviously, layer up to fight the cold and the wind. Ski masks are as common as ball caps right now almost anywhere in the Northeast.

"When it's cold, every single at-bat is like an event," Francona said. "They've got their bat handle in front of the fire, they're trying to warm up their hands and it's just really hard to get any carry-over momentum going."

Of course, some cold stretches in Cleveland in April is nothing new. But this last week of baseball has been record breaking. Saturday's first-pitch temperature was 34 degrees. Sunday's was 32, the coldest game ever played in the 25-year history of Progressive Field. Monday and Tuesday, at the very least, won't offer much relief.

And yet, this is nothing compared to some of the stretches Francona endured during his playing days in Montreal, when players had to fight the temperatures and the wet, frozen turf.

"They had the turf everywhere except for the cutouts of the bases, back how they used to do it," he said. "And I remember days where they'd chip off the ice around the bases before the game and it would be wet after that. There were some pretty tough stretches."

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### **Indians 2, Tigers 0: Corey Kluber dominates Tigers**

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Even an ice-cold offense doesn't need to do much with the reigning American League Cy Young Award winner on the mound.

Corey Kluber was dominant against a hapless Detroit Tigers lineup, and one stroke of power was enough to propel the Indians to a 2-0 win Monday night at Progressive Field.

Kluber couldn't be touched all night. He struck out at least two batters in each of the first five innings and ended with 13 in eight innings. It was his 40th career game with double-digit strikeouts and the 10th time he has logged at least 13.

The Tigers (4-5) managed only two hits against Kluber and never had a runner reach second base. Victor Martinez singled in the second inning and Nick Castellanos singled in the fourth. Both innings ended with a strikeout.

Leonys Martin walked in the sixth with one out, but that inning didn't go anywhere for the Tigers, either. Jeimer Candelario grounded into a fielder's choice and Miguel Cabrera lined out to Francisco Lindor.

Since returning to Cleveland, pitchers have discussed the ball feeling more like a cue ball or an ice cube. Kluber said he might have gripped it a little tighter than normal, but it clearly wasn't much of an issue. Kluber simply overpowered a Tigers lineup that was never able to adjust.

"That thing was moving everywhere," catcher Yan Gomes said. "I don't think the weather had much of a factor with him today. It's his ability to just make adjustments throughout the game. ... It's pretty crazy, man. His ball was dancing. He just makes an adjustment, just to figure out how to throw more strikes."

Kluber (1-1) entered Monday night's start with a 2.40 ERA — now lowered to 1.57 — and 14 strikeouts in 15 innings. Thus far, he has been every bit and then some the pitcher who won his second Cy Young Award last season — even in temperatures better suited for ice fishing.

The Indians' lineup came away with just one big break, but it was enough. Gomes, who hit a walk-off home run in Sunday's 3-1 win over the Kansas City Royals, singled to left field in the fifth and Bradley Zimmer, facing left-hander Francisco Liriano (1-1) in a less-than-ideal matchup, belted a two-run home run, his first of the season, to center field. And he got enough of it to drive it through the wind and the cold.

"The conditions aren't conducive to hitting," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "But, boy, Zim put a charge on that one."

The Indians (5-5) were otherwise quiet offensively, but it came on a night that didn't require much noise.

Andrew Miller worked the ninth to earn his first save of the season.

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## **Indians 2, Tigers 0: 11 Walk-Off Thoughts on Corey Kluber's dominance, as well as a strong start to the season, and Bradley Zimmer powering through the cold and the wind**

By Ryan Lewis

Here are 11 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 2-0 win against the Detroit Tigers Monday night, which brought their season record to 5-5.

1. If you're talking about "worth the price of admission," Corey Kluber is it. That's even true in 30-something degree weather with a steady wind, which isn't easy to do. Kluber was dominant on Monday night, pitching a masterpiece to a Tigers lineup that probably felt frozen and certainly looked it. Kluber tossed eight scoreless innings, struck out 13 and didn't allow a runner to reach second base. It was his 40th double-digit strikeout game and the 10th time he's reached 13 Ks in a game.

2. As pointed out by the club's post-game notes, the Indians in their last eight games against the Tigers, dating back to last season: 8-0 with a 0.75 staff ERA. If you're reading this, you're probably old enough to remember a time when the Indians were seemingly manhandled by the Tigers every year. If you can read this and you aren't old enough to remember that time, congratulations, those Leap Frog reading programs are really paying off.

3. On Monday night, Kluber went to the curveball, and the Tigers never were able to adjust. According to Baseball Savant, Kluber threw 43 curveballs, the most of any pitch, including his sinker (40 pitches). In his Opening Day start, he threw only 16 curveballs compared to 42 sinkers. In his second start, it was 27 curveballs to 33 sinkers. Though, everything worked on Monday night.

4. Said Yan Gomes: "That thing was moving everywhere. I don't think the weather had much of a factor with him today. It's his ability to just make adjustments throughout the game. We really didn't have much of a feel on arm side with him, in to righties, away from lefties. So, we made an adjustment there. It's pretty crazy, man. His ball was dancing. He just makes an adjustment, just to figure out how to throw more strikes."

5. Said Kluber: "You started seeing earlier in the game, we were throwing a lot more fastballs than we normally do against these guys. At first, we were really just trying to set the table, set a game plan. But, we started seeing the hitters, they were not making much of adjustment to some of his pitches, so you just stick with it. But then, as the game goes on, you have to try to back them off from it. And when both of those pitches are moving as much as they were, it's kind of hard for anybody really to make an adjustment."

6. Kluber now has a 1.57 ERA this season with 27 strikeouts in 23 innings. He's been every bit the pitcher who won the AL Cy Young last season with a dominant stretch from June 1 to the end of the year. And as daunting as it would be for the rest of the league, Kluber has been considerably better early in the year than in the past. Kluber in his career has a 3.90 ERA in March/April, the highest mark for any month. Last April, Kluber struggled through a back issue and wasn't himself. Thus far this season, he's been a better version of the two-time Cy Young winner.

7. Said Indians manager Terry Francona on Kluber's start: "It's exciting. We've all seen that when he gets on a roll, he can maintain it for, sometimes, shoot.. as long as you can play. And that's a really good feeling. Because he'll be in here tomorrow working his tail off. Doing his routine. And that's why I think he's able to be so consistent."

8. Bradley Zimmer powered the offense on Monday night, one that didn't need to do much. In the fifth, Zimmer blasted a two-run home run to center field, and got enough of it to power through the freezing air and the wind. Zimmer's last two games have acted as a microcosm of what he's able to bring—he nailed a runner at the plate with a perfect laser-beam of a throw and stole a base on Sunday and then belted a two-run home run on Monday. He still hasn't brought the kind of consistency one might want, but he's continued to flash his skill-set enough to remain an intriguing piece of the Indians' future.

9. Said Gomes on Zimmer's power: "Come early, man. Come see his BP. It's pretty impressive. It really is. I think he's starting to figure himself out. He's so strong and so fast. He's got, really, two big parts of his game that he can unlock. He's still young and he's figuring it out. How good he is in the outfield, he's going to be a special player."

10. As a secondary post-game note, Zimmer said he was OK after crashing into the wall in Sunday's game. Through, he didn't feel great when he woke up. Said Zimmer: "Everyone was saying that, 'Man, I saw it in slow-mo and it looked like your face was just exploding, and then your knee,' and I was like, 'Yeah.' It was a little of everything, it was. Today I woke up and it felt like I got hit by a car. You know, like I said, I was able to get myself back and ready to roll. I'm good to go now."

11. Another positive aspect to that home run was that it came on a softer breaking pitch from a lefty, which Zimmer struggled with last season. Said Zimmer, "Liriano, we went over him today, he's kind of a softer guy, he throws a lot of breaking stuff, tries to mix it up. The approach is, especially as a lefty, if you see something out over the plate. So I was looking for something middle-away, and he hung a slider, and I was on it."

### **Francisco Lindor, Bradley Zimmer or Yan Gomes: Who is the Cleveland Indians' best defender right now?**

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- A Platinum Glove Award winner, one of baseball's best run-stoppers and the speedy kid with a cannon for an arm in center.

Cleveland Indians manager Terry Francona has a lot to be happy about these days when it comes to his defense up the middle.

"I think our defense as a team has been very good," Francona said Saturday. "Frankie's been outstanding. He's made the really good play. He's made all the routine plays. He makes some plays look routine that aren't. He's been very good."

On Sunday, both Yan Gomes and Bradley Zimmer made plays with their arms that helped keep Kansas City off the scoreboard. Francona mentioned in his postgame remarks that it's reassuring to know teams are less likely to try stealing bases with Gomes behind the plate, and he was impressed with Zimmer's accuracy on a third-inning throw to cut down a runner at home plate.

You can run on for a long time ... sooner or later, Zim'll cut you down.#RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/v3fq3vdACf

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) April 8, 2018

The Indians committed their first error as a team on Saturday when a throw by Roberto Perez skipped into center field.

Cleveland's seven-game errorless streak to begin the season was the club's longest in the Play Index era, since 1908.

Last year, the Indians led the American League and ranked third in Major League Baseball with a .986 fielding percentage, posting just 76 errors in 5,484 total chances. The 76 errors were the second-fewest in MLB.

But the question remains: Who is the Tribe's best defensive player right now?

The credentials

Cleveland Indians vs. Kansas City Royals  
Cleveland Indians Francisco Lindor throws to first for a double play in the second inning Sunday.  
Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer

Lindor: A two-time Rawlings Gold Glove Award finalist, and the 2016 Platinum Glove Award winner as the best defensive player in the American League, Lindor posted a .984 fielding percentage with 10 errors in 2017. He talked in the offseason about focusing on his footwork and his concentration. "It's paying attention to little details the whole entire time," he said. "Not taking any pitch for granted. It's about wanting the ball being hit to me and focusing on getting that out."

Cleveland Indians vs. Kansas City Royals  
Cleveland Indians Yan Gomes has the Kansas City Royals Jon Jay dead to rights, tagging out Jay in the 3rd inning Sunday on a throw from Bradley Zimmer in center field.  
Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer

Gomes: Led the AL in with a 42 percent caught-stealing rate while also posting the best catcher ERA (3.36) among 18 players with 2,400 plate appearances caught. His value to the pitching staff manifested itself in a variety of ways, as the Indians called just one pitchout during the entire 2017 season, an indication that Terry Francona and his staff trusted Gomes to control the opposition's running attack on his own.

Cleveland Indians vs. Colorado Rockies, August 8, 2017  
Bradley Zimmer makes a sliding catch against Colorado in August.  
Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer

Zimmer: Blessed with a long, lanky frame and elite speed that makes him one of the Statcast sprint speed darlings, Zimmer has developed a lethal throwing arm that also makes him one of the league's most potent defensive weapons. Since the start of 2017, he is one of three AL outfielders with at least 10 outfield assists. Last season, his eight assists tied him for the Indians' team lead with Michael Brantley.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 04.10.2018

### **From winter coat to T-shirts at the Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers games: Progressive Field forecast**

By Kelly Reardon, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - A shift toward warm, spring weather is ahead for Cleveland this week, so Tribe fans heading to one of the Detroit Tigers games through Thursday will either need that winter coat, or a T-shirt and sandals. It depends on what game you've got tickets for.

The later in the week, the warmer it'll be.

Monday, 6:10 p.m.

Clevelanders with tickets to tonight's game will want to bundle up. Temperatures will stay in the mid 30s, but wind chills will feel closer to 30 degrees. Partly cloudy skies are expected, and a flurry or two can't be ruled out.

Tuesday, 6:10 p.m.

Tuesday's game is a little warmer, but Tribe fans will still want to wear their winter gear. Temperatures will hit the low 40s to upper 30s, but at least a mix of sun and clouds may help that feel a bit warmer.

Wednesday, 6:10 p.m.

The Wednesday Tribe game will be noticeably warmer as temperatures hit the low 50s and upper 40s. Sounds balmy, but with breezy winds, wind chills will drop toward the low 40s. Right now, there's a 20 percent chance of rain, but I'm thinking the showers won't start until after midnight. So for the most part, expect a mostly cloudy game.



Thursday, 6:10 p.m.

The game Thursday will finally feel like spring. Tribe fans can ditch the winter jacket as temperatures warm to the mid 60s and upper 50s. Winds will be a bit breezy, especially toward the beginning of the game, but with temperatures that warm there won't be much of a wind chill. Again, skies are expected to be mostly cloudy, and a stray rain showers is possible.

Because of the chances of rain for some of the games this week, this post will be updated daily through Thursday for any forecast changes.

Go Tribe!

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 04.10.2018

### **Cleveland Indians pitcher Josh Tomlin's start was pushed back because of lower back soreness**

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Cleveland Indians starting pitcher Josh Tomlin experienced discomfort in his lower back during his season debut against the Los Angeles Angels last week, and the team decided to push back his next start until Tuesday against Detroit.

Tomlin surrendered a career-high four home runs at Angel Stadium in Anaheim April 3, taking the loss after allowing eight runs (all earned) over three innings of work.

Manager Terry Francona said Monday that Indians coaches checked with Corey Kluber and Carlos Carrasco to make sure they would be ok staying on their regular rest schedule between starts if they bumped Tomlin back two days. The Indians were off on Thursday.

"We backed JT up a couple days just so he doesn't have to fight this for the next month," Francona said. "I think he threw on the side a couple days ago and everything went well. So hopefully the couple days bought him where he can go pitch as opposed to trying to fight it."

Francona said Tomlin was having a tough time finishing his pitches and that the injury manifested itself on a delivery to Justin Upton, the third Angels hitter of the game.

He is scheduled to start game two of the Detroit series on Tuesday against Tigers lefty Matt Boyd.

Tito throws shade on old National League ballparks (part 2)

After Saturday's frigid contest at Progressive Field, Francona shared his thoughts on games at old Candlestick Park in San Francisco as being one of the most miserable venues from his playing days.

Monday he was asked whether the Tribe's current homestead is the coldest stretch of games he's ever been a part of.

"Unfortunately, no," Francona said. "Up in Montreal. First, Montreal is Montreal. But the stadium, it was all that concrete. And it didn't really let the sun in. So, whatever it was outside, it was always colder. And it was damp."

Francona said he remembers the Montreal Olympic Stadium grounds crew chipping ice away from the bases that were in the middle of cutouts in the turf. He spent five seasons playing with the Expos from 1981 through 1985.

"There were some pretty tough stretches," he said.

Montreal Expo Terry Francona - 1985

Cleveland Municipal Stadium wasn't much better

Francona also recalled opening the 1989 season with the Milwaukee Brewers at old Cleveland Municipal Stadium.

"Greg Swindell pitched and I remember it was bitter, bitter," he said. "It was cold."

Cleveland defeated the Brewers 2-1 in that April 3 opening day game with Swindell striking out six and allowing one run in 8 1/3 innings. Francona went 0-for-3 but drove in Milwaukee's only run with a groundout in the fifth inning.

The low temperature at Burke Lakefront Airport that day was 36 degrees, according to weatherunderground.com with gusts of wind from the south of up to 29 mph.

Detroit's Cabrera is still an elite hitter

Francona was asked whether or not Detroit veteran slugger Miguel Cabrera is considered an elite hitter after battling through injuries the last few seasons.

Cabrera has a .335 lifetime average against Cleveland including 45 home runs and 151 RBI. But last season he hit .172 against the Indians in 58 at-bats with three HR and nine RBI.

The Tribe's manager was adamant that Cabrera is still a top-flight offensive threat.

"When he hits .300, he hits .300," Francona said. "There's power and he uses the whole field. He's certainly one of the better hitters in our generation here."

Ohtani now favored to win MVP?

After hitting a pair of home runs last week against the Indians, and Sunday's 12-strikeout performance in earning a win against Oakland, Angels rookie two-way sensation Shohei Ohtani has been installed as a 3/2 favorite to win the American League Most Valuable Player award according to BetDSI Sportsbook online.

Ohtani, who drove in five runs in two appearances against the Indians last week, began the season with 100/1 odds to win the MVP, but has increased his chances +150 according to odds consultant Scott Cooley with BetDSI.

Angels teammate Mike Trout (+200) is second and defending MVP Jose Altuve of Houston is third (+500) while Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor is seventh (+1900).

## Corey Kluber strikes out 13, Bradley Zimmer homers as Cleveland Indians blank Detroit Tigers, 2-0

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Two things happened on another cold night at the ballpark Monday that made Corey Kluber a winner for the first time this season. No. 1, the Indians gave him a lead. No. 2, he held it.

Kluber struck out 13 over eight innings and Bradley Zimmer hit a two-run homer as the Indians beat Detroit, 2-0, at Progressive Field. It was 33 degrees at first pitch, one degree higher than it was Sunday and one degree lower than it was Saturday as the Indians split those two games with the Royals.

Manager Terry Francona called for Andrew Miller in the ninth for the save. Kluber and Miller combined on a two-hit shutout featuring 14 strikeouts. It was Miller's first save of the season.

"Boy did he pitch well. . . my goodness," said Francona. "He had really good late movement. It seemed like he was able to find a grip on his off-speed pitches to manipulate the ball because once again it was really cold."

In Kluber's first two starts of the season, he went 0-1 with a 2.40 ERA. He allowed a two-run homer to Nelson Cruz in the first inning of the season opener in a 2-1 loss to Seattle. In his second start, he allowed a two-run homer to Shohei Ohtani in the fifth to erase a 2-0 lead in a game that the Indians lost, 3-2, in 13 innings to the Angels.

Kluber (1-1, 1.57) kept the ball in the park on Monday night as the Indians extended their winning streak over the Tigers to eight straight games.

Left-hander Nelson Liriano (1-1, 2.13) retired 13 of 15 batters before Yan Gomes gave the Indians their first hit on a single to left with two out in the fifth. Zimmer followed with a 417-foot homer to right center for a 2-0 lead. Zimmer was 0-for-5 against lefties going into the at-bat.

Bradley Zimmer (2) off LHP Francisco Liriano (6) - 107.3 mph, 22 degrees (417 ft Home Run)

83.9 mph Slider#Tigers @ #Indians (B5) pic.twitter.com/Acq0nq11bf

-- MLBBarrelAlert (@MLBBarrelAlert) April 9, 2018

Zimmer hit a 1-1 slider from Liriano for his first homer of the season. The slider crossed the plate at 84 mph.

"The conditions aren't conducive to hitting, but Zim really put a charge into that ball," said Francona.

Said Zimmer, "I knew I got that one. Again, the weather has been a factor the last couple of days. I was happy to see its clear the fence and help us get things going. It was a big momentum swing for us."

The Indians threatened to add to the lead in the seventh after Liriano left. Buck Farmer started the inning and allowed a leadoff double to Rajai Davis. Farmer retired Gomes, but left the game with left hip spasms after walking Zimmer.

Davis and Zimmer attempted a double steal. They were originally called safe, but the Tigers challenged Zimmer's safe call at second base. After a review of 1:05 the call on the field was overturned and Zimmer was out.

The threat ended with Drew VerHagen struck out Erik Gonzalez.

The cold never bothered him anyway ...

The kid from Cali gets us on the board in the 5th!

#RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/WXi1skFoyi

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) April 9, 2018

Liriano allowed two runs on three hits in six innings. He struck out four and walked three. He is 5-7 in his career against the Tribe.

The Tigers never really threatened Kluber over eight innings. They had just three base runners, never more than one in an inning. He retired the last eight Tigers he faced to improve to 9-7 lifetime against them.

"It (the ball) definitely feels different than normal (because of the cold)," said Kluber, 18-3 against the AL Central since the start of 2016. "It's a different type of adjustment, but it's an adjustment you have to make. It probably had to squeeze the ball a little tighter than I normally do tonight just because you don't feel like you have a real good grip on it."

What it means

Kluber's 40 double-digit strikeouts games rank him fifth among active pitchers. Ten times Kluber has struck out 13 or more batters in a game.

In his first two starts, Kluber struck out 14 batters in 15 innings. He struck out 13 in eight on Monday.

Terry Francona on Bradley Zimmer's homer, Corey Kluber's win over Tigers

The pitches

Liriano threw 97 pitches, 59 (61 percent) for strikes. Kluber threw 103 pitches, 72 (70 percent) for strikes.

Mr. 500

Jose Ramirez's single in the sixth inning gave him 500 hits for his career. Francisco Lindor and Ramirez have the most hits on the Indians since 2016 at 367 and 365, respectively.

The struggling Ramirez reached base three times Monday, twice on walks.

Thanks for coming

The Tigers and Indians drew 9,843 fans to frigid Progressive Field on Monday night. First pitch was 6:11 p.m. with a temperature of 33 degrees.

Next

Josh Tomlin (0-1, 24.00) will face the Tigers and left-hander Matt Boyd (0-1, 1.50) on Tuesday at 6:10 P.M. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/100.7 FM will carry the game.

Tomlin is coming off a bad start against the Angels in his 2018 debut. He allowed eight runs on eight hits in three innings in a 13-2 loss. Eight of the hits were home runs. He is 7-6 with a 5.19 ERA in 16 games against the Tigers.

Boyd, like Tomlin, will be making his second start of the season. He lost his debut against the Royals, 1-0, throwing six strong innings. He's 1-2 with a 2.28 ERA in four starts against the Indians.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 04.10.2018

### **Chiang pitches well in Akron RubberDucks win over Binghamton**

By Cliff Pinckard, cleveland.com

BINGHAMTON, New York -- Catcher Sicnarf Loopstock hit a two-run homer and right-hander Shao-Ching Chiang pitched five scoreless innings to lead the RubberDucks to a 6-3 win over the Rumble Ponies.

Akron built a 4-0 lead with an RBI single from Sam Haggerty in the third and three straight RBI singles in the fourth from Mark Mathias, Taylor Murphy and Daniel Salters.

Binghamton made it a game again with three runs in the seventh inning.

Loopstock's two-run homer in the ninth gave Akron some breathing room, and reliever Mitch Brown closed it out with a scoreless, hitless ninth inning.

Chiang (1-0) gave up three hits and struck out four in the victory. Mathias was 3-for-4 with two runs scored and an RBI.

Former NFL quarterback Tim Tebow played outfield and hit seventh for the Rumble Ponies, going 1-for-4 and striking out three times.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 04.10.2018

### **Bradley Zimmer's down-and-up month features home run smash, right arm flash and outfield crash**

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Bradley Zimmer is experiencing a little bit of everything that the game of baseball can throw at him in the first big league April of his young career.

On Monday, he homered off Detroit's Francisco Liriano to give the Cleveland Indians a 2-0 win against the visiting Tigers.

On Sunday, he cut down a potential Kansas City run at home plate with a rocket throw from center field to retire Royals baserunner Jon Jay.

And later in the same game, Zimmer crashed face-first into the Progressive Field wall in center while chasing an RBI triple by Jay.

#Royals @ #Indians

Jay's RBI triple (00:53)

MLB Gameday: <https://t.co/hhsoljuUva> pic.twitter.com/Zh2sqgkcHV

-- Ballpark Videos (@BallparkVids) April 8, 2018

The game, it seems, is trying to gauge exactly how much the 25-year-old La Jolla, Calif. native can handle all at once.

"Today I woke up and it felt like I got hit by a car," Zimmer said of his weekend encounter with the wall. "Everyone was saying, 'Man, I saw it in slow-mo and it looked like your face was just exploding, and then your knee,' and I was like, 'Yeah.' It was a little of everything."

When Zimmer crushed Liriano's 83.9 mph slider to right center field in the fifth inning Monday, catcher Yan Gomes said he made sure to be running full speed around second base, just in case the cold Cleveland air and wind put the brakes on yet another Indians barreled ball in play.

According to Statcast, Zimmer drove Liriano's third pitch of the at-bat 417 feet off a barrier in front of the Tigers bullpen. The ball left Zimmer's bat with an exit velocity of 107 mph at a 22 degree launch angle and reached a maximum height of 70 feet in 4.9 seconds.

In other words, the 25-year-old California native hit the ball so hard that even Mother Nature couldn't keep it in the park.

"Yeah, I knew I got that one," Zimmer said afterward, "The weather has been a factor the last couple of days, so I was thankful to see it clear the fence and be able to get us going there. That was a big momentum swing."

Meanwhile, Zimmer is showing signs this week of shaking off a sluggish start at the plate that has seen him strike out in 14 of his first 28 at-bats. Despite the high strikeouts, he's reached base in six of his last seven games and scored runs in three of his last six.

He's got more total hits (5) than Jose Ramirez, Jason Kipnis and Yan Gomes; more home runs (1) than Francisco Lindor and Michael Brantley; and more RBI (3) than Rajai Davis and Brandon Guyer combined.

Of course, Zimmer's .233 on base percentage is only slightly higher than his 220-pound frame. But if you look closely, the progress is evident.

In Sunday's 3-1 win against Kansas City, Zimmer led off the eighth inning with a walk, stole second base and came home on Jose Ramirez's check-swing grounder to score the Tribe's first run. He likewise manufactured a run April 3 in Anaheim when he singled, stole second base and came home on an errant throw by Martin Maldonado.

"He's so strong and so fast," Gomes said of Zimmer. "He's got, really, two big parts of his game that he can unlock. He's still young and he's figuring himself out. How good he is in the outfield, he's going to be a special player."

Zimmer said he knows that if he sticks to a consistent approach at the plate, the numbers will fall into place.

"We've been swinging the bat OK, it's just the results haven't been there," Zimmer said. "You're going to see in the next couple days or so, we're going to start being the lineup that we can be. I think we're in a good spot right now."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 04.10.2018

### **Yonder Alonso puts faith in preparation while waiting for the water levels to 'even out'**

By T.J. Zuppe 4h ago 2

Hitters often spend countless hours in the batting cages, dedicating months of the offseason to swing and mentality overhauls. Some might study zone charts and heat maps. Others might look at pitcher tendencies and scouting reports.

But when it all comes down to the game's most simple level, the goal has always been the same: Get the fat part of the bat on the ball and drive it.

Minutes into a recent interaction with The Athletic, Yonder Alonso was informed that he's done that better than anybody this season — at least when you focus on Statcast's most premium level of contact: barrels.

Alonso laughed.

"It's been like, five games," he said.

In fairness, he's played in nine games.

And even if it's early, it still counts.

That said, Alonso doesn't pay much attention to the metrics. He's not looking at his exit velocity. He's not spending his days reading FanGraphs or checking out Baseball Savant. He believes he's got a pretty good grasp on his status at the plate, even without the benefit of additional data.

"You should know when you barrel a ball," Alonso told The Athletic. "You should know when you hit a ball hard. You should know when you hit a ball off the end of the bat or you get jammed, off the label. You should know where you're at as a hitter."

That's fair.

But right now, Alonso is trapped in small sample hell.

Despite his early standing as baseball's leading barrel man, the air ball convert hasn't seen that hard contact consistently translate into his numbers. He's leading the Indians in expected weighted on-base average, a metric that measures frequency and quality of contact. As of Monday, his xwOBA was 21st-best in the majors. But that hasn't been reflected in his actual production, owning the seventh-biggest gap between his expected outcomes and actual outcomes, according to Statcast.

To put it into simpler terms, Alonso is hitting the ball as well as anyone through the first 10 games, but he's not getting rewarded for it, slashing just .182/.270/.394 with two homers.

"I'm getting good pitches to hit," he said. "I'm barreling up some balls. They're not falling. But eventually, they will."

Alonso isn't the only member of the Tribe getting penalized.

The Indians rank 19th in the majors in expected wOBA. They're 12th in average exit velocity. They rank 17th in balls classified as barrels.

Those numbers are hardly impressive, but they certainly aren't the characteristics of a last-place offensive club. However, that's exactly where they reside, claiming baseball's lowest run-creation rate (wRC+).

To remind hitters that better (and much warmer) days are on the horizon, Indians hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo held a meeting Monday afternoon. As part of the agenda, Van Burkleo showed hitters some of the underlying hard-hit and exit velocity numbers.

For some, it was nice to see tangible numbers reflect a different truth than their ugly stats. Analytics might never tell the entire story, but they often help paint a more complete picture of the areas that were once just guesswork.

Alonso, however, was already confident he was on the right track.

"I think for some people, it might (help)," Alonso said. "I think for people that are maybe still trying to find themselves at the beginning of the year, it might. People that are young, it might. Now, I think for people that know where they're at, I think for hitters that know they've gotten it done, hitters that have a confidence in themselves, they've done the work (it doesn't mean as much)."

That's not to say Alonso doesn't appreciate the coaching staff's effort. But instead of trusting the numbers, he chooses to put his faith in the process to get there.

Throughout Alonso's recent conversation with The Athletic, the left-handed slugger would occasionally glance up at the clock. He wasn't being rude. It wasn't his way of trying to shorten the interview. He was simply trying to stay on schedule. It's all part of feeling like he had a productive day.

"For me, I pay attention to my work, my preparation," he said. "Like, right now, I'm about to go get ready."

And here we were denying him of that.

To his credit, he answered every question before exiting the clubhouse. With his internal clock ticking, his answers remained thoughtful and genuine. But much like his commitment to finishing off the chat, Alonso probably didn't take any shortcuts during his pregame routine.

"I need to make sure that my preparation is perfect," Alonso said. "The game is the game. You can hit three hard balls right at people. It can happen. You look at the box score and you're like, 'Oh, this guy stunk. 0-for-4.' Well, you know, his work was good. He went home. He got the W. You went 0-for-4, but you hit three balls on the screws. So, why are you going to get upset or try to do more?"

Alonso acknowledged that a process-oriented approach is one he's developed as he's gotten older. It probably wasn't always as easy early in his career. And of course, he conceded that owning a low average and less-than-stellar scoreboard showing isn't fun.

But for every situation where he's making the unfortunate right turn at first base, Alonso can recall an at-bat that he felt proud of — even if it ended with a trip back to the dugout.

Those examples help him cope with the bad luck.

"I'd rather have grinding outs early in the season like this, making it tough for the pitcher and making good contact," Alonso said.

"Eventually, this thing will turn. My mom used to tell me all the time, 'Water levels always even out.' Eventually it will level itself out. You're going to start dropping some balls here and there. It's going to be OK."

It probably helps that Alonso's offensive adjustments aren't new. He's seen how the mentality shift — a desire to elevate with authority — can pay off. He doesn't have to feel any sense of panic when he traverses through a tough stretch. Last year proved he's capable of big things.

"But last year was last year," Alonso said. "This is a new year. I mean, yeah, no question, last year, the adjustments I made and all that, great. This is a new year. This is a year where I've got to make some adjustments as well. Guys are going to try to get me out. I've got to adjust every day, every at-bat or within the at-bat. ... For me, it's just preparation and making sure I'm hitting the ball hard, making sure I'm prepared for my team."

### **Corey Kluber demands your attention**

Zack Meisel 3h ago 6

A few seconds of silence passed as the semicircle of reporters toggled their recorders and fidgeted with their notebooks, so Yan Gomes interjected.

"So, Kluber did great. He had a phenomenal game. That's about all I've got."

Really, little else needs to be said.

Corey Kluber, typically a slow starter, isn't waiting for Mother Nature to loosen her icy grip on the Midwest before he launches another head-turning campaign on the mound. Through three starts, Kluber owns a 1.57 ERA, with 27 strikeouts in 23 innings. He has limited the poor, pitied opposition to a .143/.185/.234 slash line.

Kluber pumped the brakes for everyone scanning the list of pitchers who have merited three Cy Young Awards (it runs 10 names deep). Really, he'd react with the same, deflective manner if he had posted such jarring numbers across 30 starts.

"I try to go from start to start," Kluber said. "Things that didn't feel great today, I'll work on in between for the next one."

Sounds about right.

Prior to this season, he had logged a 4.04 ERA in 24 career outings in March/April, his worst showing for any month.

Career numbers

May: 3.66 ERA

June: 2.74 ERA

July: 2.52 ERA

August: 2.77 ERA

September/October: 3.30 ERA

(Note: Monthly stats are admittedly arbitrary, but this does illustrate that he seems to gain steam as summer arrives.)

Last year, a balky lower back hindered him in the early going and ultimately cost him a month of action. He responded by swiftly sending nearly every hitter back to the dugout in June, July, August and September, and now his mantel supports a second piece of shiny hardware. (His October didn't go exactly according to plan, of course.)

Kluber is never one to gawk at his own wizardry on the hill. The closest he'll ever come to complimenting his efforts is to say he executed certain pitches. And even that is delivered with his usual nonchalance and maybe a shrug.

It's fitting, though. He makes it appear entirely too easy.

He burst out of the dugout before the top of the eighth, the first one onto the field to embrace the arctic air. He picked up the baseball, dug at the dirt in front of the rubber and then stood in position and waited for Gomes, who hustled to the plate to catch his pitcher's warmup tosses. James McCann finally approached the plate and, after three quick strikes, retreated to the dugout. Truly, the name on the back of his uniform didn't matter. "McCann" might as well have read "Strikeout victim No. 12." Another John Doe with a soulless stick took a called third strike three minutes later. Label him No. 13.

The finger-numbing chill didn't torment Kluber. He said he squeezed the baseball a little tighter than normal to achieve the necessary grips.

The lineup's continued struggles didn't irk Kluber. He received a loss and a no-decision in his first two outings of the year, so he took matters into his own hands and kept Detroit off the scoreboard altogether.

The Tigers' hitters certainly didn't pester Kluber. Miguel Cabrera, who tends to feast on Kluber's offerings, went hitless in four trips to the plate. Four different hitters struck out multiple times against the Cleveland ace.

This has become so routine, so automatic. It's probably easy to take for granted, too.

It helps to have a clear visual of Kluber's arsenal. Francisco Lindor loves when the Indians shift behind the hurler, so he can watch from behind second base as Kluber's two-seamer zags back across the outside edge of the plate against a helpless right-handed hitter. Bradley Zimmer, who provided the offensive boom necessary to earn Kluber his first actual win, stared in awe as Kluber enticed Detroit's hitters to lunge at his downward spiraling breaking ball.

"That thing was moving everywhere," Gomes said. "His ball was dancing."

Kluber induced 12 swinging strikes in all on Monday night. No Tigers runner advanced past first base. He limited Detroit to two harmless hits and one walk over his eight innings. Midseason form, for sure.

"He usually tries to find his way a little bit and then he'll turn it up," Gomes said. "He was ready to go (this year) from the get-go."

Little else needs to be said.

### **Bradley Zimmer and tapping into obscured tools**

By Michael Hattery 2h ago 2

Bradley Zimmer is the man of many nicknames, most of them forgettable, be it Braddy-long-legs, Zim-Shady, the Zim Reaper or ZimBop. Zimmer is also the man of many strikeouts. Many, many strikeouts.

Since the start of 2017, Zimmer is 16th out of 290 qualifiers with more than 300 plate appearances in strikeout percentage.

Name	Team	ISO	BB%	K%	
Keon Broxton	Brewers	0.200	8.6%	37.8%	
Mike Zunino	Mariners	0.258	9.0%	36.8%	
Matt Davidson	White Sox		0.248	5.1%	36.5%
Miguel Sanó	Twins	0.255	11.5%	36.3%	
Joey Gallo	Rangers	0.317	13.6%	36.2%	
Chris Davis	Orioles	0.202	11.8%	36.1%	
Trevor Story	Rockies	0.218	8.9%	34.4%	
Cameron Rupp	Phillies	0.200	10.3%	34.4%	
Adam Engel	White Sox		0.111	6.0%	34.1%
Mike Napoli	Rangers	0.235	10.1%	33.6%	
Ian Happ	Cubs	0.250	9.3%	33.0%	
Alex Avila	---	0.174	16.7%	32.1%	
Adam Rosales	---	0.128	3.5%	32.1%	
Michael A. Taylor	Nationals	0.203	6.8%	32.0%	
Brandon Moss	Royals	0.221	9.2%	31.9%	

Bradley Zimmer	Indians	0.133	7.3%	31.2%
Kyle Schwarber	Cubs	0.260	12.4%	31.0%
Aaron Judge	Yankees	0.337	18.6%	30.5%
Randal Grichuk	---	0.226	6.1%	30.3%

A fairly inauspicious leaderboard, but as you can see a few of the players on this list are able to ride other skills to highly productive seasons. The other key skill being power. Unfortunately, Zimmer has been unable to tap into his raw power and is one of the three hitters on this list with an ISO below .200. He is certainly not selling out contact for power. Still further, he is not exactly posting impressive walk rates.

An underlying problem is that Zimmer is 27th in swinging strike percentage at 14.4 percent since his debut. While he is not particularly aggressive outside the zone, his swing and miss is a severe handicap to a tool set brimming with upside.

Zimmer has two tools that, in small samples, can make him look like an All-Star center fielder — game-breaking speed, the third-highest sprint speed in baseball in 2017 at 29.9 mph; and raw power.

Fangraphs' prospect analysts placed a 60 on Zimmer's raw power but only a 45, and future 50, on his game power, the large barrier being contact. Zimmer, to date, has not demonstrated the ability to get to his raw power.

Contact percentage is also a barrier to Zimmer's speed. Zimmer was 18 for 19 in stolen base attempts in just 101 games in 2017. A proficient speedster, he was top 10 in baserunning value and, in tight games, displayed the capacity to put pressure on the defense. Of course, when you are running a big league OBP of just .299, there simply are not enough opportunities to use impact speed.

Yet for Zimmer, strikeouts are not the only barrier to using his raw power and elite speed; his contact profile is another important barrier.

Ground Balls	Fly Balls	Line Drives
48.5%	30.40%	21.10%

Zimmer is 58th out of 291 qualifiers in ground-ball percentage, and it is important to note that ground balls do not necessarily have to be a death knell. Especially considering Zimmer's speed tool, ground balls, as an agnostic concept, are not fatal. However, pulled ground balls — those are fatal. For Zimmer, that is the reality.

This demonstrates that Zimmer predominantly pulls ground balls, which allows opposing teams to shift against him, suppressing his batting average on balls in play, and in turn on-base percentage.

Whereas when Zimmer hits the ball in the air, he does so often to the opposite field or the middle of the diamond, which can adversely impact power.

Mike Podhorzer at Fangraphs has discussed the value of pulled fly balls in elevating home run totals and ISO. Unfortunately, Zimmer elevates the baseball to the opposite field more often than pull side, which, while generally less valuable than a pulled fly ball, is even less valuable at Progressive Field, especially with a 19-foot fence.

A final component worth noting, which might splash a bit of optimism in this bleak profile of Zimmer's offensive skills, he does hit the ball in the air really hard. Of the 387 players with 100 batted ball events in 2017, Zimmer was 101st with an average exit velocity of 93.8 on fly balls and line drives, placing him roughly in the top 25 percent.

However, the picture for Zimmer, at least at the moment, remains fairly bleak.

To access raw power and baserunning value, you would want a hitter to run an average to above contact rate. Zimmer is among the 20 worst in making contact since the start of 2017. Without contact rate skills, you would at least want a player to have a solid fly-ball rate, specifically pulled fly balls. Zimmer hits the ball in the air to the opposite field more than pull side and rarely in the air in general.

Then you would want someone who at least did not hit too many pull-side ground balls in order that it would not sap his OBP and in turn baserunning value. No luck, Zimmer pulls ground balls with great frequency.

There is certainly solace in that when Zimmer does put the ball in the air, he hits it hard but too often it is not pulled and even more frequently, not in the air at all. Perhaps there is comfort in knowing that, as he displayed Sunday afternoon, Zimmer is a remarkable defender and when on base, a blazing runner. This certainly creates a floor where, with slightly below average offense, Zimmer can accrue two WAR as a useful starter on a contender.

But it is inescapable to think of Zimmer as a tease at the moment. He oozes athleticism that with better on-base skills could mean 45 steals, and his long muscular arms as well as occasional extension tantalize fans of the raw power that, if converted to game power, could mean 30 home runs. Yet until Zimmer begins to elevate the ball to the pull side more, pull ground balls less or significantly trim swing-and-miss issues, Zimmer's gaudy tools will remain relatively untouched, just below the surface.

### **Dominant Corey Kluber issues the Tigers an unwelcome reminder**

By Max Bultman 1h ago 1

CLEVELAND — The Detroit Tigers did not need to be taught a lesson about Corey Kluber — nor does anyone, really, at this point.

Kluber has torn through the American League with such regularity over the last few seasons, that, on nights when he has it all going, there's no confusion about what's in store. And yet, with Kluber having one of those nights Monday, the Tigers got that unnecessary lesson anyway.

"One bad pitch," lamented Tigers starter Francisco Liriano on a night he didn't leave much for the Indians to hit, either. "One mistake, and (it) changed the whole game."

That mistake came in the bottom of the fifth inning, when — even with Kluber having rung up 10 strikeouts already — it was Liriano who was carrying a no-hitter. He had gone about it differently than his punchout-heavy counterpart, inducing a bevy of grounders and doomed fly balls on a cold Cleveland night, but it was a burgeoning no-hitter nonetheless.

But then Indians catcher Yan Gomes laced a single to left, and then Liriano hung a slider to Bradley Zimmer. That, as Liriano said, was the one mistake that changed the game. Zimmer took it deep to right-center, and that was all Cleveland needed on Kluber Day. The Indians won, 2-0.

Tigers hitters have seen, over and over this year, how hard it can be to hit in cold weather. It is even more so when a pitcher like Kluber has his best stuff. Monday, that meant throwing 72 of his 103 pitches for strikes — including a sinker that induced seven called strike threes, according to Baseball Savant. Of his 13 total punch-outs, eight were looking.

"It's frustrating — he's really good, and he was really close tonight, right at that corner and we just couldn't get to it," said Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire. "He's great. He's got great stuff. He always has great stuff."

The Tigers saw Kluber own the plate's outer edge all night. Several of the called strike threes were right on the edge, leaving Tigers hitters dismayed as they were rung up. At a certain point, though, they had to know Kluber would be back there. They just couldn't adjust to hit it. He allowed just two hits and walked one batter over eight innings.

"You can sit there and watch on TV, and everything looks so easy to do, but when you're up there at the plate I'm telling you, it's so different," Gardenhire said. "His ball (has) late movement, it's darting, and he's just got great stuff. So when you're watching on TV it all looks a lot easier than it really is. Ball doesn't just (break), it (breaks) really fast and really hard. And he has great movement and he knows how to pitch. That's why he's so successful, and he made it tough.

"We tried to make adjustments — we tried to shoot the ball the other way — but then he comes inside and knocks you right back off the plate."

That, combined with home plate umpire Jeff Nelson's willingness to call strikes at the border, was a lethal combination for Tigers hitters.

In the first inning, Kluber got Miguel Cabrera on a cutter that looked slightly off the plate, leaving Cabrera to take off his helmet and grimace.

In the second, he caught the bottom outside corner against James McCann, who checked his swing but was left in consternation.

And on Kluber's 13th and final strikeout of the night, after Dixon Machado had fought him to a 3-2 count, Kluber rang him up on that same outside edge. Machado simply bent his back, then took off his helmet. There was nothing more to do.

It was a masterful outing by Kluber, even if he got the occasional lean call. Great pitchers exploit the zone they're given, and Kluber did.

"Really, what you've gotta do is you've gotta make your strike zone a little bit bigger, which plays right into his game," McCann said. "Because he can throw the ball exactly where he wants to, and if you start swinging at pitches off the plate, you have no chance."

Spoiled by Kluber's dominance was another solid showing from Liriano, who gave up just three hits. He walked three, which will likely remain his primary concern, but the late-spring signing has been sound in the early going.

Monday, he lost some command late but was at just 32 pitches through three innings. He ended up at 97 pitches over six innings with four strikeouts. Normally, that two-run outing, combined with a couple scoreless bullpen innings, is enough for a win.

But not against Kluber, and certainly not when he has it all working. On those nights, you don't get to make one mistake.

That's not a new lesson for the Tigers, mind you. Monday was just the latest frustrating reminder.

#### **SPORTS Indians Notes: Josh Tomlin was dealing with back issues in brutal season debut**

**Chris Assenheimer** ByChris Assenheimer | The Chronicle-TelegramPublished on April 9, 2018 | Updated 7:22 p. m.

CLEVELAND — Manager Terry Francona shed some light on what might have contributed to Josh Tomlin's poor outing in his season debut last Tuesday against the Angels in Anaheim, Calif.

Francona said Tomlin, who allowed eight runs and four home runs in three innings of a 13-2 loss, was dealing with a back issue that began with the third batter.

That's why the Indians moved Tomlin's second start from Monday to tonight, while ace Corey Kluber jumped him in the rotation to pitch on regular rest in the series opener against Detroit.



"We backed JT up a couple days just so he doesn't have to fight this for the next month," Francona said. "I think he threw a side a couple days ago and everything went well. So hopefully the couple days bought him where he can go pitch, as opposed to trying to fight it. He was having a tough time finishing his pitches the other day (in Anaheim), so hopefully this will help him."

Tomlin, who missed a month in the second half with a hamstring injury, got off to a brutal start last season, going 4-9 with a 6.17 ERA over his first 16 starts. He bounced back to post a 6-1 record and 3.11 ERA in his final 10 outings, finishing the season at 10-9 with a 4.98 ERA in 26 starts, while leading the majors with 0.89 walks per nine innings.

It was the third-lowest by a Cleveland pitcher, and Tomlin leads the franchise in the category at 1.315.

#### Brantley bit

Michael Brantley was not in the lineup Monday as the Indians ease the left fielder back into an everyday role.

Like nearly all of his teammates, Brantley has struggled at the plate — 2-for-11 over three games — but he did produce the winning hit Friday in a 3-2 win over the Royals in the home opener.

"(I) actually think it's pretty amazing that he just steps in and seems like he picks up where he left off," Francona said. "Team-wide we haven't swung the bat very well. But he looks to me like give him some at-bats and he'll be just fine."

Cleveland entered Monday batting a major league-low .159 as a team and scoring 27 runs over its first nine games.

#### Tiger town

After losing Justin Verlander, Ian Kinsler and others, Detroit is no longer a team carried by veteran stars.

"They're a lot different," Francona said of the Tigers, who are expected to endure a rebuilding year, like a number of clubs in the Central Division. "They've got the guys in the middle (Miguel Cabrera, Nicholas Castellanos and Victor Martinez) still, but before them and after them, they've gotten a lot younger. And some of those guys look like they've got a chance to be pretty good players.

"When you catch a team early, it's interesting because you watch them in a short sample and guys look good, but you don't know until later on in the year which ones take it and run with it or (if) the league finds something (and adjusts). It's always fun to watch. But they've got some good-looking young players."

Cabrera, 34, batted under .300 (.249) last year for the first time in nine seasons, producing career lows in homers (16) and RBIs (60) over 130 games.

"He's a pretty elite hitter," Francona said of the 11-time All-Star and two-time AL MVP (2012-13). "I know he battled a lot of stuff last year but when he's healthy, he's ... because you're not going to see him get a lot of infield hits. When he hits .300, he hits .300. There's power and he uses the whole field. He's certainly one of the better hitters in our generation here."

#### Roundin' third

Francisco Mejia started in left field for Triple-A Columbus on Monday, as the Indians continue to experiment with the highly touted catching prospect in the outfield. With Lonnie Chisenhall on the DL with another right calf injury, Mejia could be an option should Cleveland's outfielders continue to struggle offensively.

... Angels rookie starting pitcher and designated hitter Shohei Ohtani's fast start has propelled him to the top of the AL MVP odds — 3/2 (plus-\$150). Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor has the seventh-best odds at 19/1 (plus-\$1,900).

... The Indians entered Monday leading the AL and ranked second in the majors with 10 stolen bases.

**SPORTS Indians 2, Tigers 0: Tribe bats stay frozen in the cold, but Corey Kluber provides plenty of heat**  
**Chris Assenheimer** | **Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** | **Published on April 9, 2018** | **Updated 1:26 a. m.**  
CLEVELAND — Corey Kluber pitched well again in his third start of the season Monday at Progressive Field.

And the Indians ace was able to accomplish something he couldn't in his first two — he got a win.

With his scuffling offense doing just enough, Kluber notched his first victory in a 2-0 decision over the Tigers on another chilly night in Cleveland — 33 degrees at first pitch.

Bradley Zimmer's two-run home run in the fifth inning was the difference, as Kluber held Detroit to three hits over eight innings.

The right-hander struck out 13, 10 within the first five innings. It was the 40th double-digit-strikeout game for Kluber. Since leaving the disabled list June 1 of last year, he leads the majors with 15 games with at least 10 strikeouts — four more than Washington's Max Scherzer.

"It's electric," Zimmer said of watching Kluber pitch from center field. "He's got some of the best stuff, if not the best stuff, in the game. I think we're all happy to have him on our side.

"It's fun to play behind him. It's fun to see the action on his pitches. I'm right behind him and I can see every pitch. The location and the action on his slider. It's pretty special."

Kluber started slowly the past two seasons, but he's been locked in from the get-go this year, allowing only four earned runs over his first three outings, while striking out 27 in 23 innings.

"It's exciting," manager Terry Francona said. "We've all seen that when he gets on a roll, he can maintain it, shoot, for sometimes as long as you play. That's a really good feeling. He'll be in here (today) working his tail off, doing his routine, and that's why I think he's able to be so consistent."

"It sounds simple but I think it's just a matter of not making mistakes at the wrong time," Kluber said of the key to his fast start. "Physically, I don't feel any different. It's just a matter of not making those big mistakes with multiple guys on base, allowing big innings. That's probably the difference between early on this year to early on the last couple years."

The Indians, who entered the game with the lowest batting average (.159) in the majors, saw their offensive woes continue against veteran left-hander Francisco Liriano.

In his 21st career appearance (16th start) against Cleveland, Liriano was perfect through the first 3 1/3 innings before walking consecutive batters.

Liriano didn't allow his first hit — a Yan Gomes line-drive single to left — until he had recorded the first two outs in the fifth. Zimmer followed with his first homer of the year, an estimated 417-foot shot to center.

"I knew I got that one, but again, the weather has obviously been a factor the last couple of days," said Zimmer, who was back in the lineup a day after crashing into the wall during a 3-1 victory over the Royals. "I was thankful to see it clear the fence. It was able to get us going there. It was a big momentum swing for us.

"It's been tough. It's not easy being out there when it's 30-something degrees, as it is. But when Kluber's out there like today, it's a lot easier to kind of relax and take a breath. It was nice to kind of just watch him do his thing, and I had the big hit."

A day after setting a Jacobs/Progressive Field record for the lowest gametime temperature (32 degrees), the Indians were back in the cold, with a sparse crowd of 9,843 bundled-up fans. It is expected to be a little warmer today — high of 41 degrees — with temperatures in the 50s and 60s forecasted for the rest of the week.

Though they haven't played all of their games at Progressive Field, the cold has clearly contributed to the offensive problems.

"I know the numbers aren't looking great for anybody, but I'm actually encouraged," Francona said. "I don't see anybody out there hanging their heads. It's hard to hit right now and we're not having a lot of success, but they're playing baseball. We're making plays and we're showing some enthusiasm. As a collective unit, they're going to break out of this together. It will be fun to watch, but in the meantime, we've got to find ways to win games."

"I think (you have to) just stick to your approach," Zimmer said. "Things haven't been going our way. We've been swinging the bat OK. The results just haven't been there and that's part of the game.

"Everyone in this room is not panicking. Keep doing what you're doing. Don't try and do something else, just keep being yourself and the ball's going to fall. It will. And I think you're going to see over the next couple days we're going to start being the lineup we know we can be."

### **Kluber strikes out 13, pitches Indians over Tigers 2-0**

#### **The Associated Press**

CLEVELAND (AP) -- The reigning AL Cy Young winner looked every bit an ace.

Corey Kluber struck out 13, pitching two-hit ball for eight innings and leading the Cleveland Indians past the Detroit Tigers 2-0 in snow flurries Monday night.

The temperature at first pitch was 33 degrees, one above Progressive Field's record low set Sunday. There were flurries before the game and again in the seventh inning, resulted in a crowd of 9,843.

Kluber (1-1) gave up singles to Victor Martinez in the second and Nicholas Castellanos in the fourth. The right-hander walked one and threw 103 pitches in recording the 40th double-figure strikeout game of his career.

"We've all seen that when he gets on a roll, he can maintain it for, sometimes, shoot ... as long as you can play," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "And that's a really good feeling."

Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire hadn't seen Kluber from the opposing dugout since 2014 while he was with Minnesota when the right-hander won his first Cy Young Award.

"He had great late movement and a darting fastball," Gardenhire said. "That thing came back over the plate a lot, so we got caught looking quite a few times. When he's spot-on like that, it's tough to beat him."

Kluber downplayed his early success when asked to make a comparison to last season.

"We're three starts into it," he said. "Try to go from start to start. Things that didn't feel great today, I'll work on in-between and go like that as opposed to take a broader view of it."

Andrew Miller pitched the ninth for his first save, getting Miguel Cabrera on a game-ending double play.

Bradley Zimmer hit a two-run homer in the fifth off Francisco Liriano (1-1) as Cleveland's offense struggled again but used the long ball to win for the second straight day.

Kluber struck out the side in the fifth and fanned a batter in every inning except the sixth. Leonys Martin was the only batter who didn't strike out against Kluber.

"Kluber threw all three pitches all the time today, and he got every call in his favor," said Tigers catcher James McCann, who struck out looking in all three at-bats. "He had our number tonight."

Kluber was 18-4 with a big league-leading 2.25 ERA last season. He allowed two runs in eight innings against Seattle in his first start, but got the loss thanks to Nelson Cruz's two-run homer. Kluber gave up a two-run homer to Shohei Ohtani, the only runs he allowed in seven innings against the Los Angeles Angels in his second start.

Kluber put up his dominant numbers last season despite missing a month because of a strained back, an injury that seemed to catch up with him in the AL Division Series. He allowed nine runs, including four homers, in two starts and got the loss in Game 5 as the Indians blew a 2-0 series lead.

Liriano retired the first 10 hitters before walking Jason Kipnis and Jose Ramirez with one out in the fourth.

Yan Gomes, who hit a game-winning, two-run homer in the ninth inning Sunday against Kansas City, lined a two-out single to left for Cleveland's first hit.

Zimmer followed with his first home run of the season.

Liriano allowed three hits in six innings. The Indians, who were held to four hits, are batting .158, the worst team average in the majors.

#### CRASH ZIMMER

Cleveland's center fielder was in the lineup after running full-speed into the wall chasing Jon Jay's triple Sunday. His chest, face and legs appeared to make contact with the wall.

"I got a little banged up, but I can play," Zimmer said. "I wasn't 100 percent today. It was a little bit of everything. Today I woke up and felt like I got hit by a car."

#### IT'S BEEN AWHILE

Liriano, who hasn't beaten the Indians since July 21, 2010, when he pitched for the Twins, knew how the game got away from him.

"One bad pitch, one mistake, changed the whole game," he said.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: RHP Buck Farmer was removed with a left hip spasm after walking Zimmer in the seventh inning.

Indians: OF Michael Brantley, who played three straight days after starting the season on DL following offseason ankle surgery, wasn't in the lineup. He will get planned off-days early in the season.

#### UP NEXT

Indians RHP Josh Tomlin (0-1, 24.00) had his turn in the rotation pushed back a day after experiencing back soreness in his start against the Angels when he allowed four home runs in three innings. Tigers LHP Matthew Boyd (0-1, 1.50 ERA), who has a 1.91 ERA in five career games at Progressive Field.

### **'He had our number': Kluber rings up Tigers, ends win streak at 3**

Chris McCosky, The Detroit News Published 9:01 p.m. ET April 9, 2018 | Updated 5:26 a.m. ET April 10, 2018

Cleveland — Here's the dilemma the Tigers hitters were presented with on yet another chilly night (33 degrees at first pitch Monday night):

Indians right-hander Corey Kluber, the reigning American League Cy Young Award winner, was devastatingly sharp. He had all three pitches clicking and his command was near-perfect.

On top of that, home plate umpire Jeff Nelson's strike zone was generous. Balls on the upper, lower and outer boundaries of the zone were being called strikes. It's a hitter's nightmare and the result was eight innings of two-hit shutout ball and 13 strikeouts by Kluber in the Indians' 2-0 win.

"I'm not going to comment on the strike zone," said Tigers catcher James McCann, who struck out three times, twice looking. "But Kluber had his stuff today. He threw all three pitches to spots he wanted at any time. And he got every call in his favor.

"He's a great pitcher and sometimes you've got to tip your cap. He had our number tonight."

The loss snapped the Tigers' three-game win streak.

Ten of Kluber's 13 strikeouts came in the first five innings. Since last June 1, he has had 15 games of 10 or more strikeouts, more than any pitcher in baseball over that span.

Eight of his strikeouts Monday were on called third strikes. He got 15 called strikes on his slider alone (according to Baseball Savant). The Tigers hitters complained bitterly when punched out, but Nelson's strike zone, good or bad, was consistent. He never altered it and the Tigers' hitters never adjusted.

"What you have to do is make your strike zone bigger," McCann said, when asked what adjustments the Tigers could've made. "And that plays right into Kluber's game. Because he can throw the ball exactly where he wants to and if you start swinging at pitches off the plate, you have no chance."

Two hits, that was the extent of the Tigers' damage against Kluber — a one-out single by Victor Martinez in the second inning and a two-out single by Nick Castellanos in the fourth. Neither reached second base; nor did Leonys Martin who walked with one out in the sixth.

It was an overpowering performance. He threw 102 pitches and got 29 called strikes. The average exit velocity (according to Baseball Savant) on balls put in play was 75.9 mph. Miguel Cabrera produced the hardest hit ball against him — a 108.5-mph line out to shortstop.

"He was really good and he was really close, right on the corners and we couldn't get to it," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "He's great. He's always had great stuff. But our guy did pretty darn good, too."

For 4 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings, Tigers starter Francisco Liriano matched Kluber pitch for pitch. The Indians didn't get their first hit until Yan Gomes slapped a single with two outs in the fifth.

Bradley Zimmer followed with a 417-foot home run to right-center field. On a 1-1 count, Liriano threw an off-speed pitch, a slider, and it left Zimmer's bat at 107 mph.

"Just one mistake, one bad pitch and it changed the whole game," said Liriano, who allowed just three hits in six innings.

Said McCann: "He gave us a chance to win. He pitched his butt off. And the guys who came after him pitched their butts off, too. Gave up two runs; you can't really ask for much more."

Speaking of pitching their butts off, Buck Farmer replaced Liriano but lasted only three batters. He gave up a double to Rajai Davis and got a groundout, but he came up hobbling after releasing a pitch to Zimmer.

"His butt muscle tightened up," Gardenhire said. "He should be fine. It was a spasm."

Farmer left the game after walking Zimmer. Drew VerHagen was summoned and worked out of the jam.

With runners at first and second, the Indians attempted a double steal. McCann threw to second base and initially Zimmer was called safe. The Tigers challenged and the call was reversed.

VerHagen, who fanned three in 1 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings, struck out Erik Gonzalez to end the inning.

Good to keep the deficit at two, but in the end it was irrelevant. Because after being dominated by Kluber for eight innings, they got to face All-Star left-hander Andrew Miller in the ninth. No contest.

"It was a good effort by us," Gardenhire said. "We faced a really hot pitcher. We've seen it before. When he's spot on like that, it makes it really tough."

### **Detroit Tigers' can't figure out Corey Kluber in loss to Indians**

George Sipple, Detroit Free Press Published 10:38 p.m. ET April 9, 2018 | Updated 11:59 p.m. ET April 9, 2018

CLEVELAND — Francisco Liriano almost made the Detroit Tigers look like a contender on Monday.

At least until Corey Kluber reminded everyone the Cleveland Indians are still kings in the American League Central Division.

The Tigers were limited to two hits and two walks in a 2-0 loss to the Indians on Monday night at Progressive Field. The temperature was 33 degrees at game time. The Tigers snapped a three-game winning streak.

Kluber allowed two hits and one walk over eight scoreless innings for the Indians. He struck out 13 — eight called. He's won his last seven decisions against AL Central foes, dating back to June 9, 2017, and is 18-3 with a 2.36 ERA against division opponents since the start of the 2016 season.

"He had that ball coming back over the plate," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We got caught looking. It's frustrating. He's really good. And he was really close tonight, right at that corner and we couldn't get to it.

"Our guy threw pretty damn good himself."

Liriano was stellar in an early pitcher's duel, and he was another sign of promise for a Tigers squad (4-5) that is not expected to contend this season. Liriano retired the first 10 batters he faced. After giving up back-to-back walks to Jason Kipnis and Jose Ramirez in the fourth, he got Edwin Encarnacion to ground into a 4-3 double play.

Liriano gave up a two-out single to Yan Gomes, then a two-run home run to center to Bradley Zimmer in the fifth inning. Liriano allowed two runs on three hits over six innings. He walked three and struck out four.

"One bad pitch, one mistake," Liriano said. "Just changed the whole game. We went out and battled today. Kluber pitched a great game. He wasn't missing his spot at all."

Liriano, who has been a bright spot since signing a one-year, \$4 million deal in February, has a 2.13 ERA in 12.2 innings this season.

"Liriano threw the crap out of the ball and our bullpen came in there and hung in pretty good," Gardenhire said. "A good effort by us. We just faced a really hot pitcher tonight that threw the ball. When he's spot on like that, makes it really tough."

The Tigers couldn't do much against Kluber's sinker, cutter or curve. Kluber finished with double-digit strikeouts for the 40th time in his career and struck out at least 13 for the 10th time in his career.

He got Jeimer Candelario and Miguel Cabrera looking in the first inning. He struck out the side — Mikie Mahtook, James McCann and Jose Iglesias — in the fifth inning. McCann struck out three times against Kluber.

"I'm not going to comment on the strike zone," McCann said. "But Kluber had his stuff today. He threw all three pitches to the spots that he wanted at any time and he got every call in his favor. He's a great pitcher and sometimes you gotta tip your cap. He had our number tonight."

Gardenhire said Kluber's ball had late movement and was darting everywhere.

"He's just got great stuff," Gardenhire said. "When you're watching on TV, it all looks a lot easier than it really is. The ball doesn't just go boom. It goes BOOM really fast and really hard. He has great movement and he knows how to pitch. That's why he's so successful. He made it tough. We tried to make adjustments. We tried to shoot the ball the other way, but then he comes inside and knocks you right off the plate."

Kluber allowed a one-out single to Victor Martinez in the second inning. The Tigers didn't get another hit until a two-out single by Nicholas Castellanos in the fourth inning. Leonys Martin reached on a one-out walk in the sixth inning.

"What you've gotta do is make your strike zone a little bigger, which plays right into his game," McCann said of Kluber. "He can throw the ball exactly where he wants to. If you start swinging at pitches off the plate, you have no chance."

Martin was the only Tiger who did not strike out at least once against Kluber. He grounded out to short in the first, popped out to third in the third inning and the walk in the sixth.

Tigers' right-hander Buck Farmer gave up a leadoff double to ex-Tiger Rajai Davis and a one-out walk to Zimmer before leaving the game with a left hip spasm in the seventh inning. The Tigers said he's day-to-day.

Drew VerHagen replaced Farmer and struck out three in 1 2/3 innings.

"He came in and he dealt," McCann said of VerHagen. "His ball was explosive out of his hand tonight. His slider was very good. Even the at-bats where he felt behind, he found a way to get back into them and get weak contact and strikeouts."

### **Detroit Tigers' Ron Gardenhire: 'Everybody is going to play' vs. Indians**

George Sipple, Detroit Free Press Published 4:48 p.m. ET April 9, 2018

CLEVELAND — Victor Reyes and JaCoby Jones weren't in the starting lineup on Monday for the Detroit Tigers as they started a four-game series against the Indians, but should get playing time later this week.

Reyes, a Rule 5 selection, has appeared in two of the Tigers' first eight games and is 0-for-1. Jones has played in half of the games and is batting .333 with two stolen bases and one run scored. They are part of the team's four-man bench.

With the Tigers facing right-handed pitcher Corey Kluber on Monday, Gardenhire acknowledged he wants to put guys in situations to succeed. Reyes and Jones have yet to face Kluber.

Mikie Mahtook came into the game batting .160 (4-for-25) in seven games this season, and 1-for-3 lifetime against Kluber.

"I'm not afraid of it," Gardenhire said of playing Reyes or Jones against Kluber. "I think they would go in and do battle just like other guys. But these other guys have a little bit more knowledge of (Kluber).

"We're going to get them in. They are going to play in this series. Everybody is going to play in this series (with) four night games. Everybody gets a chance to play here. There's just that many great matchups against guys like this, (Kluber) is a stud. You've gotta find a way to put some people up there and have some good at bats and ambush him a little bit."

Reyes, a switch hitter, went 0-for-1 before leaving with a right forearm contusion in the second game of a split doubleheader against the Pirates on April 1. He was inserted as a pinch runner for Victor Martinez in a 6-1 win over the White Sox on Saturday.

Reyes, through team translator Bryan Loo-Almonte, said he comes to the park preparing to play. With the wintry weather the Tigers have dealt with early in the season, most of Reyes' hitting opportunities have come inside in batting cages.

There were light snow flurries coming down at Progressive Field when the Tigers arrived at the park. It's a continuation of the cold weather the Tigers dealt with on their first homestand and then in Chicago for three games against the White Sox.

Reyes said the last time he experienced weather like this was 2015, when he played a full season for Low-A Kane County in the Midwest League. Reyes hit .311 with 17 doubles, two home runs and 59 RBIs in 121 games that season.

Gardenhire said everyone was available out of the bullpen, even though that probably wasn't true. He said he doesn't want to reveal when pitchers aren't available, fearing that information would help the opposition.

Joe Jimenez probably wasn't available, considering he'd had an inning of work in three of the past four days, including appearing on back-to-back days Saturday and Sunday.

"We're going to guard our pitches as best we can," Gardenhire said. "Everybody is available tonight and we'll use our best knowledge to make sure we take care of our pitchers and get the right people in the right places."

Jimenez, 23, has a 0.00 ERA with four strikeouts over 5 1/3 innings in six appearances this season.

#### Chipping in

Right-handed pitcher Michael Fulmer confirmed the Tigers raised around \$15,000 to help aid in medical costs for minor league strength coach Matt Rosenhamer, who was diagnosed with testicular cancer in March. Fulmer said the Tigers raised money through donations by players on the major league roster, donations from minor leaguers who set up a GoFundMe account and additional funds raised through an online auction. Rosenhamer now works for the High-A Lakeland Flying Tigers.

#### Daydreaming

The Tigers are playing four night games in the series against the Indians.

"I guess you get a little time to breathe," Gardenhire said after playing a lot of day games early in the schedule. "A little more time to think about a few things and relax and get to the ballpark. I like it. I enjoy night games. I've always said I love day games, but early in the season you play so many of them, you can't wait for that night game."