



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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August 9, 2018

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<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-lose-royals-litmus-test-kansas-city-anthony-rizzo/>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs' Yu Darvish throws 'loose and free' during sim game, nears rehab assignment**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-yu-darvish-simulated-game-rehab-assignment-elbow-injury/>
- The Athletic, **Lukewarm showing against last-place teams leaves Cubs searching for elusive hot streak**
<https://theathletic.com/465267/2018/08/09/lukewarm-showing-against-last-place-teams-leaves-cubs-searching-for-elusive-hot-streak/>
- Cubs.com, **Cubs vexed by rookie as Quintana takes loss**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/jose-quintana-allows-5-runs-vs-royals/c-289500758>
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<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/yu-darvish-throws-simulated-game/c-289458332>

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NBC Sports Chicago

The Cubs offense continues to falter in clutch moments

By Sean Sears

The Cubs offense has lacked any true consistency all season, but with the division race beginning to tighten up and the team's track record in the second, the thought was the Cubs would start to pull away at this point. However, with Wednesday night's 9-0 stinker, the Cubs' NL Central lead will fall back to just 1.5 games over the Brewers.

Through the Cubs last four series, the team has only managed to score 47 runs, an average of 3.91 runs per game compared to the 4.95 runs per game they've been averaging on the season thus far.

Outside of Javier Baez, Anthony Rizzo, Ben Zobrist, and recently David Bote, the Cubs offense has plenty of cold bats in their lineup. And when you factor in their best player in Kris Bryant hasn't swung a bat since before heading to the disabled list on July 26th, the Cubs need to get back on track before it's too late.

But the strangest thing about the Cubs offense is they still lead the league in on-base percentage, are a top-five team in runs scored and RBI (lead the NL in both categories), are 2nd in the league batting average as well as walks, and lead the league in fWAR at 23.5. On paper, this Cubs offense should be one of the best in baseball and are currently the best in the National League but they still continue to have nights where nobody can do anything at the plate.

Fangraph's "Clutch" stat, which measures how a team performs in high-leverage situations, for example hitting with runners in scoring position with two outs. And despite the Cubs being above average in offensive win probability, the Cubs are one of the worst teams in the clutch at 3.27 points below the league average. And while there are issues with determining and quantifying what clutch exactly means, it does help provide context to the Cubs issues.

The Cubs have raised their batting average with runners in scoring position to .248 on the season, but it's still not much better than their season-low of .292. Simply, the Cubs offense will get better. The group is currently been in a funk over these last 12 games, but these Cubs are battle-tested and know what it takes to compete for a division title - winning the last two NL Central crowns.

And with the Cubs offense still among the league leaders in most statistical categories, it's safe to assume this group is only a game away from breaking out of this slump. The issue is whether they can get back on track to position themselves well-enough for a deep postseason run.

The North Siders need to take advantage of this homestand against the Nationals and Brewers, meaning the offense needs to show up, and prove it's the group that's leading the league in fWAR.

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Chicago Tribune

3 things we learned from the Cubs-Royals series

By Mark Gonzales

Here are three things we learned from the recent Cubs-Royals series, in which the Cubs won two of three games:

1. Clean it up

There's a fine line between aggressive baserunning and careless baserunning, and the Cubs continue to make outs on the basepaths and stunt promising rallies.

Willson Contreras put his head down but was thrown out at second base in the second inning of Monday's win. Ian Happ was thrown out easily trying to advance to second on an errant throw for the final out of the fifth. That prevented what could have been a promising rally with Addison Russell at the plate and Anthony Rizzo on deck.

2. Shake up the bottom of the order

Rizzo is batting .359 with a .444 on-base percentage since moving to the leadoff spot on July 13. But his run-producing opportunities have been scarce lately due to the struggles of Happ and Russell. It might be time for some tweaking at the bottom unless manager Joe Maddon elects to put Javier Baez near the top and drop Rizzo to third or fourth.

3. Design a program for Tyler Chatwood

Until 25-man rosters can be expanded on Sept. 1, Chatwood will be relegated to pitching in low-leverage situations like his role in the final two innings of Wednesday's loss. Chatwood continued to struggle, and the Cubs cannot send him to the minors without his consent.

So when reinforcements from the disabled list and Triple-A Iowa arrive, this would be a perfect time for a member of the coaching staff or the player development department to work exclusively with Chatwood.

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Chicago Tribune

Jose Quintana's control problems return, Cubs held to 3 hits in 9-0 loss to last-place Royals
By Mark Gonzales

Maybe it's too much to expect the Cubs to create some distance between themselves and the rest of the National League Central.

"I don't think you're going to see a lot of space created the rest of the year by anybody," manager Joe Maddon said. "I think it's going to be like what you're seeing."

The Cubs have yet to blend quality starts with productive hitting on a consistent basis. The latest example occurred Wednesday night in a 9-0 loss to the Royals that wasn't as lopsided as the score.

Jose Quintana allowed only three hits through six innings before losing effectiveness in the seventh, when Adalberto Mondesi launched a three-run home run.

Meanwhile, rookie Heath Fillmyer and two relievers limited the Cubs (66-48) to three hits as their lead was cut to 1 1/2 games over the Brewers (66-51).

"We've got to mesh it up," Maddon said. "We didn't have it going on there. It was not a really strong offensive performance by us."

After allowing an infield hit to Anthony Rizzo to start the game, Fillmyer held the Cubs hitless until David Bote's one-out single in the seventh.

The Cubs are 4-3 in their last seven games against the Padres and Royals, both in last place in their divisions.

"Do you think we should just dwell on it, especially on this team?" Rizzo said.

The next nine games against the Nationals, Brewers and Pirates — all vying for a playoff berth — could dictate how hard the Cubs will have to push during the stretch drive.

They're already looking ahead slightly by altering the rotation after this weekend's series against the Nationals.

It appears Kyle Hendricks will remain on a normal five-day schedule despite days off Thursday and Monday and will pitch the series finale against the Brewers on Wednesday.

Quintana, who is 4-1 with an 0.92 ERA in seven career starts against the Brewers, would be lined up to start the two-game series Tuesday.

The juggling also means left-hander Mike Montgomery, whose work has been monitored closely since he made the transformation from reliever to starter on May 28, could have his next start pushed back to Aug. 18 against the Pirates.

In the meantime, "we're due for a roll somewhere, so just keep staying with the process," Rizzo said.

But the lack of offense at the bottom of the order has left Rizzo with few run-producing opportunities.

Nos. 8-9 batters Ian Happ and Addison Russell continue to struggle. Happ is 2-for-26 and was easily thrown out trying to advance to second on an errant throw to end the fifth.

Happ doesn't have an extra-base hit since July 23 — also the last time Kris Bryant played before going on the 10-day disabled list with left shoulder inflammation.

Russell is 2-for-13 and has only two extra-base hits since the All-Star break. He also committed a throwing error that enabled a run to score during the Royals' four-run eighth off Tyler Chatwood.

Quintana was haunted by two walks in the second that loaded the bases and set up a two-run double by Drew Butera, a .185 hitter.

"I feel how I threw is not the same as the score," said Quintana, who said he felt uncomfortable throwing out of the stretch in the second, which led to the walks.

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Chicago Tribune

Yu Darvish, looking 'loose and free,' passes latest test — but is still far from returning to Cubs
By Mark Gonzales

Yu Darvish passed his latest test Wednesday, but don't expect the Cubs' injured pitcher to return by the end of the month.

“You got to take your time with it,” manager Joe Maddon said after watching Darvish throw 33 pitches in a live batting practice session to Tommy La Stella and Victor Caratini. “You don’t go zero to 60 mph. You always look for 75 pitches, (if) he’s capable of 75 before that first start in the minor leagues.”

Maddon added that if Darvish, who hasn’t pitched for the Cubs since May 20 because of right triceps tendinitis, can reach the 90-pitch area, “You take the wraps off.

“That’s the normal progression,” Maddon said. “Absolutely you got to treat it like spring training right now.’

Oddly, Darvish didn’t speak to beat writers or reporters from his native Japan after his outing, when he was treated with electronic stimulation around his elbow.

The Cubs’ medical staff spoke to Darvish after 15 pitches, and he threw more breaking pitches during the latter part of his session.

“He threw very well, easy, not affected in any way,” said Maddon, who said Darvish’s fastball topped out at 93 mph. “He looked loose and free to me; I thought it was a good day.”

Maddon projected Darvish would throw another live batting practice session.

“You don’t want to push it too hard right now,” Maddon said. “And 33 (pitches) leads to 45 that leads to 60, whatever. So I’d imagine you’d see something similar again before you get him out there competing.”

La Stella gave the Cubs a scare when he fouled Darvish’s 17th pitch off his right foot and was on the ground in pain for a few minutes. He walked off the field and remained in the starting lineup against the Royals as the designated hitter.

In other medical news, utility player Ben Zobrist didn’t start so he could rest a stiff left hip that shouldn’t prevent him from returning to the lineup Friday against the Nationals.

“It just got sore on the extension,” said Zobrist, who hit a triple in the first inning of Tuesday’s win. “Nothing grabbed, but it was pretty sore.

“Well, do I want to press through this? Maybe make it worse. That’s why I opted to rest it and get back (Friday).”

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Chicago Tribune

Pitching coach Jim Hickey to Cubs relievers: Trust your defense

By Mark Gonzales

Trust your defense.

That’s the message from pitching coach Jim Hickey in the wake of control problems by Cubs relievers.

“That’s been the most surprising to me, personally, the fact we have these elite defenders running all over and we’re not letting them play,” Hickey said. “Let them make a play. They can hit a ball to any one of those defenders, and I’m perfectly fine with the infielders and outfielders.”

Cubs relievers have walked 196 batters in 419 2/3 innings. Their walk total is second-highest in the National League to the Marlins (215), even though they have thrown fewer innings than four NL teams.

The additions of Jesse Chavez (one walk in 12 2/3 innings) and Brandon Kintzler (no walks in his last three appearances) could set an example for others to pitch more aggressively. Steve Cishek and Pedro Strop have combined for one walk in their last 10 appearances.

“I don’t think it’s still going to be an issue overall, but certainly when you see the guy in front of you have a 10-pitch inning and the other guy have a seven-pitch inning, it might motivate you a little more,” Hickey said. “Just get in there and attack.”

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs lose 9-0 to last-place Royals ahead of nine-game litmus test
By Gordon Wittenmyer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – So much for that soft week on the schedule for the Cubs to gorge and pack on a few extra games to their lead in the National League Central.

Seven games against last-place teams resulted in a 4-3 stretch for the Cubs that ended with a 9-0 loss to the Royals at Kauffman Stadium on Wednesday night – leaving them only a half-game better in the standings than they began.

Now it gets hot as they head into the middle of August.

“You think we should just dwell on it?” said leadoff hitter Anthony Rizzo, who hasn’t scored a run since Saturday. “We have the Nationals coming into town, and they’re playing good baseball. Hopefully that elevates us. We’re due for a roll somewhere.”

After taking Thursday off, the Cubs play their next nine against the Nationals, second-place Brewers and upstart Pirates.

It could be the stretch that finally creates some separation for the Cubs at the top of the division – or sets the tone for a six-week dogfight to the end of the season.

“I don’t think you’re going to see a lot of space created the rest of the year by anybody,” Cubs manager Joe Maddon said of a tightly packed National League in which 10 teams have winning records – all within five games of playoff position.

“I think it’s going to be kind of like what you’re seeing,” Maddon said.

What the Cubs saw Wednesday night was the continuation of a trend that has bugged the manager since they came back from the All-Star break.

A lineup that has gotten away from the all-fields approach that led to an early July surge into first place disappeared again Wednesday night against some guy named Heath Fillmyer.

By the time Drew Butera delivered the Royals' first extra-base hit of the series – a two-run double off Jose Quintana in the second – the Royals had enough runs for the rookie making his fifth career start.

The right-hander pitched seven innings, allowing just three singles – only one until the seventh – for his first big-league win.

“The pitching and hitting have to get hot at the same time to create space,” Maddon said of a team that finally put together a three-game streak in which the starters lasted at least six innings each.

“We’d have to really pitch more deeply into games as starters, and we’d have to really get on the offensive gas pedal [to separate],” Maddon said. “If you don’t do those things simultaneously, then you’re hoping to play several games over .500 and do the slow stretch as opposed to anything quickly.”

Welcome to the Cubs' 2018 season in a nutshell.

They're a tepid 11-10 since the All-Star break – with a rotation ERA of 5.14 and a lineup averaging almost a run fewer per game (4.2) than before the break (5.1).

They've looked far enough into this next stretch to take advantage of two off days in the next week to manipulate the rotation.

Mike Montgomery, the sixth-starter fill-in who provided six scoreless innings in a victory Tuesday night, is on pace for a career-high workload and is expected to get pushed back a turn the next time through the rotation – keeping everybody else on close to normal schedules.

That move assures Quintana and Kyle Hendricks land in the two-game series against the Brewers. They're 3-0 with a 1.74 ERA in five combined starts against Milwaukee this season.

Quintana looked strong Wednesday until running into a trouble in the seventh as a 2-0 game quickly got away on two singles and a three-run homer.

“I feel really bad with this outing, like how I threw the ball is not [indicative] of the score,” he said. “Turn the page.”

These next nine games?

“I’m sure it will define our season, good or bad,” Rizzo cracked. “There’s so much baseball left; we’ve got to play good from here on out.”

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs' Yu Darvish throws 'loose and free' during sim game, nears rehab assignment

By Gordon Wittenmyer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – It looks like Yu Darvish will stick around just long enough to see Alex Rodriguez one more time before starting a minor-league rehab assignment.

Darvish, who hasn't pitched since May 20 because of pain near his surgically repaired elbow, threw a 33-pitch, two-inning simulated game Wednesday without any apparent pain or problem.

Barring a setback, he's expected to throw one more simulation, probably Sunday at Wrigley Field – with Rodriguez and ESPN in town for their first Cubs broadcast since Rodriguez criticized the \$126 million pitcher for causing clubhouse problems by hanging around the team during his lengthy rehab process.

Darvish has made rapid progress since the July 29 comments, reporting his first pain-free throwing session in two months two days later. After another successful session Saturday he joked that he would print and frame anything Rodriguez might want to say to him should the former Yankees star choose to reach out.

Darvish

If Sunday goes as well as Wednesday appeared to go, Darvish could be in line to start a rehab assignment by the end of next week, which could mean a return to the rotation in early September – though the Cubs still refuse to estimate a timeline.

“You’ve got to treat it like spring training now,” manager Joe Maddon said of getting Darvish stretched out again. “You don’t want to push it too hard right now.”

Maddon said Darvish on Wednesday “looked loose and free,” reaching 93 mph with his fastball and showing off his curve and cutter.

“No negatives,” Maddon said.

Zo a no go

Hot-hitting Ben Zobrist, who left Tuesday’s game because of soreness at the front of his left hip, still was sore Wednesday and was kept out of the lineup.

“It was just bugging me a little bit more than normal,” said Zobrist, who called Tuesday’s move “precautionary” and expected to return to the lineup Friday after the team’s day off.

Zobrist said the soreness developed while he stretched and warmed up before Tuesday’s game and hampered his running during the game.

“He’s fine. Under different circumstances we may have pushed it a little bit more,” Maddon said of the roster’s eldest member – who is 23-for-51 (.451) since the All-Star break

“He’s doing so well,” Maddon said. “Why push this right now to the point where it becomes a little bit more chronic or serious and nobody benefits?”

Umpteenth game and brink of history

Wednesday’s game was the 5,158th worked by home plate umpire, Joe West – who also was at second base for the first night game at Wrigley Field 30 years ago and worked right field during the Cubs’ Game 7 World Series victory in Cleveland.

In Cubs history he might be best known for fortuitous – and quick – rain delays: 17 minutes in Game 7 and 22 minutes in Monday’s victory over the Royals.

Next week, he'll pass Bruce Froemming – whose infamous ball 4 call with two out in the ninth denied Milt Pappas a perfect game in 1972 – for second place on the all-time list of regular-season games umpired.

Hall of Fame ump Bill Klem, who worked the Cubs' 1908 World Series, holds the record with 5,372 regular-season games.

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The Athletic

Lukewarm showing against last-place teams leaves Cubs searching for elusive hot streak

By Sahadev Sharma

KANSAS CITY — When the Cubs began a seven-game stretch against two last-place teams, it was viewed as an opportunity for a banged-up team in a bit of a rut to find a rhythm or at least come away with some easy wins. However, over the past week of play, nothing has been easy for this team.

After losing 9-0 to the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday night, the Cubs missed an opportunity to sweep the lowly Royals. It wouldn't have looked as bad if they weren't coming off a series split with the San Diego Padres, owners of the worst record in the National League. The Cubs finished the stretch 4-3 and were outscored 34-25 against two teams at the bottom of their respective leagues and are a combined 70 games below .500.

"Do you think we should just dwell on it?" Anthony Rizzo asked reporters when posed the question of whether a so-so run against bad teams gave them all the more reason to move past these games. "Especially on this team. We have an off day. We have the Nationals coming into town and they're playing good baseball. Hopefully, that elevates us. We're due for a roll somewhere. Just keep staying with the process."

The Cubs are just 11-10 since the All-Star break, searching for that hot streak that's eluded them for a few weeks now. They remain 18 games above .500 and cling to a 1 1/2 game lead in the NL Central, but they continue to look like a team that's not quite playing as well as their record indicates. That this has been the case for much of the season is what brings concern. Early on it was the starting pitching. Now the inconsistent offense has once again become an issue. The group is averaging just 4.24 runs per game since the break and pretty much everyone not named Rizzo, Javier Báez, Ben Zobrist and David Bote is in the midst of a slump. Sometimes four guys are all you need to win games, and that's probably why the Cubs are still on top of the league, but there's no doubt the way this looks right now gives off the feeling that it could easily go in the wrong direction.

José Quintana's line on the night won't bring out many plaudits as the lefty gave up five runs on six hits in 6 1/3 innings. However, through six innings, he'd allowed just three hits and two runs while walking two. The two free passes were costly as he got wild in the second frame, loading the bases with two straight walks then allowing a two-out double. He quickly righted the ship and retired 12 straight and 13 of the next 14 to look strong through six.

However, the seventh started with three straight hits, finished off by a three-run homer by Adalberto Mondesi to effectively put the game out of reach. Quintana would strike out the next batter before walking off the mound in favor of Tyler Chatwood with his team staring down a five-run deficit.

Quintana's start won't be treated as a step forward, but overall it seemed similar to Kyle Hendricks' 5 2/3-inning, four-run outing Saturday. It wasn't an utter disaster and it was hardly brilliant, but there were signs that progress was being made while concerns remained in other areas.

Despite the two walks in the second, Quintana found his command and his walk rate dipped slightly to 10.5 percent. That's still too high, especially for Quintana, who relies on strong command to succeed, but it's another indication that he's not far off. The southpaw thought that outside of the second frame, he was strong on the night, but it suddenly got away from him in that final inning. Manager Joe Maddon essentially agreed and pointed out that his offense was once again stymied by the opposition.

"You'd like to believe you were going to score more than zero runs and we didn't," Maddon said. "Game got out of hand late, but Q actually threw the ball pretty good up until that point. It was just one of those nights where their guy outdid us."

"Their guy" was Heath Fillmyer, who tossed seven shutout frames, allowing just three hits while walking two and striking out three. The righty entered the day with a 3.86 ERA but peripherals that suggested he was due for some regression. That will have to come against another opponent as the Cubs failed to muster much of an attack on the evening.

Maddon has been waiting for his team to click on all cylinders, saying "you gotta mesh them up" when asked about how his starting pitchers have seemed to finally have found some sort of a rhythm while the offense remains in neutral. The starters may not be dominating, but they're eating innings at a better rate lately and often are giving the team a chance to win. But in the end, nothing is lining up as it's supposed to.

And after a lukewarm showing against a pair of last-place teams, the Cubs now head home to see a Washington Nationals team that is going through some similar struggles, though playing slightly better of late. After that, the Cubs get two against the second-place Milwaukee Brewers.

"I'm sure after those five games, it will define our season, good or bad," Rizzo said sarcastically. "There's so much baseball left, we gotta play good here on out. If we have a good series against the Nationals and Brewers, it doesn't mean we're going where we want to go. And if we lose it, it doesn't mean we're not going where we want to go. It's just a matter of staying focused, playing one game at a time and staying in the moment."

It has often felt like a broken record, listening to Maddon and various players talk about how they'll eventually find a hot streak. Their 13-4 run before the break had some wondering if it was just a taste of their normal post-All-Star ascension. But with their closer Brandon Morrow going down, Kris Bryant returning to the disabled list and Yu Darvish remaining there, they've struggled to find any continued momentum.

In the end, this recent stretch of play has to leave onlookers feeling similarly to how they have all season long. As good as the record and standings look, nothing is coming together quite as expected and the play on the field is a bit underwhelming more often than anyone would like. No, the sky isn't falling. The Cubs control their destiny and considering they hold the biggest division lead in the NL, every other team in the league would love to be in their position.

As Rizzo said, this past week won't define their season and perhaps this next one won't either. However, if they find themselves on the outside looking in come October, it may be one of the moments to point to to explain how it all happened. The goal remains the same: get to the postseason. They'd prefer to find stride as quickly as possible, though, rather than stumble down the stretch and end up falling short.

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Cubs.com

Cubs vexed by rookie as Quintana takes loss

By Carrie Muskat

KANSAS CITY -- Anthony Rizzo lined a leadoff single off the leg of Royals rookie starter Heath Fillmyer and the Cubs' Jose Quintana needed six pitches to get through the first inning. All positives for the Cubs, right? Then everything flipped.

Quintana served up a two-run double to .182-hitting Drew Butera in the second and a three-run homer to Adalberto Mondesi in the seventh in the Royals' 9-0 win Wednesday night. That's all Fillmyer needed. The right-hander, making his fifth big league start, stymied the Cubs, walking two and serving up three hits over seven innings for his first win.

Quintana zipped through the first inning but threw 31 pitches in the second, facing seven batters, including Butera with the bases loaded. Wednesday was the first loss by a Cubs starting pitcher this month. They had entered the game 5-0 with a 2.77 ERA in seven August games.

The Cubs haven't been able to get their offense and pitching in sync.

"We've got to mesh it up," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. "We hit a couple balls well but overall, not a really strong offensive performance by us."

The Royals do know Quintana well. He's now 3-10 in 25 career starts against them, his most losses against any team.

The left-hander felt good, but seemed to struggle with his command when he had to pitch out of the stretch.

"That was a frustrating inning for me," Quintana said of the Royals' second. "Two straight walks and I lost my command. After that, I felt really good. I gave up that huge homer in the seventh and I was frustrated with that."

Rizzo's single was No. 999 of his career and came on his 29th birthday. Some of the Cubs fans in the crowd at Kauffman Stadium serenaded the first baseman with "Happy Birthday" in the first.

Fortunately, Fillmyer was OK. According to Statcast™, Rizzo's ball had an exit velocity of 107.3 mph.

"I don't want him to be hurt -- it looked like it got him good," Rizzo said. "Maybe if it didn't hit him, he wouldn't have been as locked in as he was today."

The ball apparently hit Fillmyer on the heel, and the padding in his shoe protected him from serious injury.

"Give the kid credit," Maddon said. "He had to feel that for a bit. I'm sure there will be ice on it tonight. He pitched well. Not a strikeout guy but it looked like he was locating well. The balls in play were not hit hard. He had command of his pitches."

"I felt it," Fillmyer said. "It felt like a hockey puck off the boot. Coming up I played a lot of hockey, and that's exactly what it felt like. So I knew I had to keep my [composure] -- I had to walk it off a little bit. You probably saw me do a couple paces out there. Other than that, it just shook right off and felt pretty good after that."

Despite the loss, the Cubs are 10-5 against American League teams this season.

After an off-day, the Cubs have a tough stretch of games against the Nationals, Brewers and Pirates coming up.

"There's so much baseball left," Rizzo said. "We have to play good from here on out. We have a great series versus the Nationals and the Brewers, it doesn't mean we're going where we want to go, and if we lose, it doesn't mean we're not going where we want to go. It's a matter of staying focused, playing one game at a time and staying in that moment."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Doubling up: The Royals got out of a possible mess in the Cubs' fifth despite themselves. With one out, Kyle Schwarber walked and Ian Happ hit a grounder to Mondesi, who was shifted toward second base. Mondesi stepped on the bag for the force but his throw skipped past first baseman Lucas Duda. Happ tried to advance to second but was thrown out to end the inning.

Spiked: The Royals had runners at first and second with nobody out in the eighth when Jorge Bonifacio lined a double into the gap in left-center. Happ relayed the ball to shortstop Addison Russell, who spiked the ball in the grass. Two more runs scored. Brett Phillips then made it 8-0 with an RBI triple.

"The one error we made tonight, Addison was trying to hold up and the ball becomes an error," Maddon said.

HE SAID IT

"[The starters] are pitching well right now. We're doing a better job. I feel really bad with this outing. I feel how I threw the ball today is not the same as the score. If you see the numbers, it's not a good outing. Homers change the game, especially with runners on base. That was a huge moment for me and a bad moment today. I just have to keep going. We throw six innings, all three guys, and I think we're doing way better." -- Quintana

UP NEXT

After an off-day Thursday, Kyle Hendricks (8-9, 4.07 ERA) will open the weekend series against the Nationals on Friday. Hendricks has struck out at least seven batters in each of his last three outings. He picked up the win in his last start against the Padres and felt good about his curveball, which catcher Willson Contreras keeps encouraging him to use. Hendricks is 4-6 with a 3.75 ERA at Wrigley Field. First pitch is scheduled for 1:20 p.m. CT.

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Cubs.com

Darvish ramps up rehab, throws sim game
By Carrie Muskat

KANSAS CITY -- The Cubs' Yu Darvish faced batters for the first time since a Minor League rehab start in late June, throwing 33 pitches over two "innings" in a simulated game Wednesday. The right-hander

most likely will do the same type of workout again before the Cubs consider another Minor League outing.

Darvish, who has not pitched since May 20 because of right triceps tendinitis and last faced batters June 25 with Class A South Bend, faced batters Victor Caratini and Tommy La Stella at Kauffman Stadium. Manager Joe Maddon, pitching coach Jim Hickey, the Cubs medical staff and even teammate Cole Hamels came out to watch.

"I thought he threw really well, easy, not affected in any way," Maddon said. "I think he hit 93 [mph]. Good curveballs and cutter. He looked loose and free to me. I thought it was a really good day."

The only negative came when La Stella fouled a ball off his right ankle and fell to the ground at the beginning of the second "inning" and had to be helped out of the cage. He was able to walk off the field under his own power and was in the lineup as the designated hitter Wednesday.

This rehab process is similar to what pitchers go through in Spring Training to build up endurance and strength, which means it will be a slow process.

"You don't want to to push it too hard now," Maddon said. "I would imagine he'd do something similar again before you get him out there competing.

"You've got to take your time with it -- you don't go zero to 60. Absolutely, you have to treat it like Spring Training now."

Playing it safe: Ben Zobrist, lifted from Tuesday night's game because of soreness in his left hip, did not start Wednesday but it was more precautionary.

"I wasn't running real fast from first to second on that hit and run," Zobrist said of the third inning Tuesday. "It was bugging me a little more than normal. We'll do some treatment and I'll be ready to pinch-hit [Wednesday] and see how it feels."

The problem isn't a chronic injury, Zobrist said.

"It just got sore on extension," he said. "Nothing grabbed but it was pretty sore. I said, 'Well, do I want to push through this and maybe make it worse or not?'"

He actually felt some tightness before Tuesday's game, which may have been caused by how hard he ran Monday when he hit a triple and single.

"Under different circumstances, we may have pushed him more," Maddon said. "We decided there's no reason to push it now. ... Why push it now to the point where it becomes chronic or serious and nobody benefits?"

Reunion on tap: This weekend will be the first time Maddon will see Nationals manager Dave Martinez, who was Maddon's bench coach with the Rays beginning in 2008 and continued that job with the Cubs until last season. Isn't Maddon worried about Martinez knowing all of his tendencies?

"I'm an open book," Maddon said. "It's easy to read me. There's nothing -- I've emptied the playbook out. West Coast offense, East Coast offense, single wing, we've done the fullback field, we've done the shift when you come up to the line and the linemen get up and get down."

So Maddon won't change the Cubs' signs?

"He'll know my signs," Maddon said.

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