

Kluber first in AL to 10 wins with 8-inning gem

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

DETROIT -- After the sinker zipped over the outside corner and popped into the glove of Indians catcher Roberto Perez, Nicholas Castellanos dropped his bat, removed his helmet and walked away without complaint. There was no arguing the precision of Corey Kluber's pitching.

Kluber methodically worked his way up and down Detroit's order, while the Tribe offense put up a well-rounded showing en route to a 9-2 rout of the Tigers on Sunday at Comerica Park. With the victory, Kluber became the first pitcher in the American League to reach 10 wins this season.

"He just keeps working on his game and elevating it in places wherever he can," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "I mean, to beat him, you have to beat him by stringing a bunch of hits together. That's hard to do. That's part of the reason he's so successful."

Armed with the wealth of support, Kluber continued to practice extreme efficiency as he added eight more innings to his Major League-leading total of 99 2/3 frames on the season. The two-time AL Cy Young Award winner yielded a pair of runs and finished with eight strikeouts, but more notable was the absence of a walk once again.

Sunday marked the sixth consecutive start in which Kluber did not issue a free pass, putting him into a tie with Paul Byrd (2007) and Addie Joss (1908) for the second-longest streak of that kind by an Indians starter in club history. Dick Donovan holds the franchise record with seven consecutive starts with no walks in 1963.

The MLB record for consecutive starts with no walks is 11, by Bill Fisher of the Kansas City Athletics in 1962.

Kluber has faced 168 consecutive batters without issuing a free pass, and his run of 43 1/3 innings without a walk is the longest by a Tribe pitcher since Byrd's 48-inning walk-free streak in 2007. During his six-start streak, Kluber has gone 5-0 with a 1.09 ERA and 46 strikeouts in 41 1/3 innings.

"I'm pretty sure I had a few three-ball counts today," Kluber said. "I think my focus, even when I get in those positions now or whenever, is to still try to execute a pitch. The last thing I want to do is throw a ball right down the middle just to avoid walking somebody, and then give up damage. I still want to make a quality pitch."

"For whatever reason, either guys are swinging at them or I make those pitches in the zone."

Leonys Martin accounted for both Tigers runs off Kluber, collecting an RBI with a groundout in the third and later adding a homer in the sixth. In the eighth, Kluber slipped into a full count against Martin, who was frozen by a cutter for a crucial called strikeout with runners on second and third. Castellanos followed by flying out to the warning track in left field to end the threat.

"If he throws you a pitch and it starts as a strike, it's going to be a ball," Tigers catcher John Hicks said of Kluber. "If he throws you a pitch that starts as a ball, it's probably going to be a strike. His ball, it's like a Wiffle ball, it really is. He's throwing two-seamers that are starting a foot off the plate, and end up being on the plate. It's impressive stuff."

To back Kluber, the Indians scored three runs off Tigers starter Artie Lewicki and piled on six more against the Detroit bullpen. Yonder Alonso (RBI double), Melky Cabrera (three RBIs), Erik Gonzalez (three-run double) and Yan Gomes (two-run homer) came through for Kluber, who is now 10-2 with a 1.99 ERA on the year.

"It's like facing a righty and a lefty," Gomes said of Kluber. "His two-seam will come back like a lefty slider. Or a cutter, and he gets his slider going the other way and he'll pull the string on somebody. It's one of those things. He knows how to adapt."

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

Double trouble: With Jason Kipnis out of the starting lineup on Sunday due to neck stiffness, Gonzalez came off the bench and got the nod at second base. The utility man made the most of his opportunity with the bases loaded in the sixth. The infielder drilled a 1-1 pitch from reliever Drew VerHagen deep into the right-center-field gap for a bases-clearing double that pushed the Indians ahead, 6-1.

"Obviously, the big hit, the double, that spread it out for us," Francona said. "It's nice to pad that lead, especially with Kluber pitching."

PEREZ EXITS, GOMES DELIVERS

Prior to the three-run double by Gonzalez, Perez was hit on the right hand by an inside fastball from VerHagen to load the bases. Perez initially stayed in the game and scored on Gonzalez's hit, but the catcher was replaced in the bottom of the sixth by Gomes. Perez underwent X-rays and the Indians will know more about the severity of the injury on Monday.

"It's a little ambiguous right now," Francona said. "There's a decent chance we dodged a bullet. I don't know that. We're going to have to see, one, how he shows up tomorrow. He really got hit hard. By the time I saw him, and then he got to first, it had turned purple. So, we'll hope for the best, but we'll prepare for other."

Perez started over Gomes on Sunday due to the latter catching all 12 innings of Saturday's loss to the Tigers. In the eighth inning, Gomes showed no signs of fatigue when he crushed a full-count fastball from Zac Reininger a projected 429 feet to center for a two-run home run, giving Cleveland a 9-2 advantage.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor has shown off his swim-move slide multiple times over the years and he used the technique again on a steal of second in the fourth. As Lindor slid head-first into the bag, he pulled his left arm away from the tag attempt by Tigers shortstop Jose Iglesias

while grabbing the base with his right hand. Lindor was deemed safe for his second stolen base in the game. Three batters later, Lindor sprinted home on a sacrifice fly from Cabrera.

SOUND SMART

Per Statcast™, Kluber entered Sunday's outing with a Major League-leading 36 called strikeouts. The right-hander also had the most called strikeouts via a two-seamer/sinker with 25. Against the Tigers, Kluber chalked up six more called strikeouts, including four with his sinker.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (7-4, 4.23 ERA) is scheduled to take the mound for the Tribe on Monday, when the White Sox host the Indians in an 8:10 p.m. ET clash at Guaranteed Rate Field to open a four-game set. Carrasco is 3-3 with a 3.83 ERA in seven road starts this season. Chicago will counter with Lucas Giolito (4-6, 7.08).

Perez HBP on hand, could land on disabled list

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

DETROIT -- Roberto Perez's right hand was covered in a beige wrap and secured with a soft cast in the immediate wake of Sunday's 9-2 win over the Tigers at Comerica Park. An ill-fated fastball from reliever Drew VerHagen forced the Tribe catcher out of the game and may send him to the disabled list.

"He really got hit hard," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "We'll hope for the best, but we'll prepare for other."

Perez was struck on the side of his hand -- below the pinkie finger -- by a 94-mph fastball from VerHagen in the sixth inning. The Indians' catcher initially remained in the game and came around to score, but was removed in the home half of the sixth as the swelling and bruising increased.

Perez underwent X-rays on his hand and the catcher indicated that "everything looks fine," but Francona described the results as ambiguous. The Indians are in the process of sending the images to Dr. Thomas Graham -- a hand specialist based out of the Cleveland Clinic -- in order to get a second opinion ahead of the Indians' upcoming four-game series with the White Sox in Chicago.

While Francona noted that he would discuss the situation on Sunday night with the Indians' front office, Perez expressed optimism that the issue was not serious.

"I should be good," Perez said. "I'm a tough guy, man. I've been there before. I know what being hurt means. It drives you crazy. ... I got out of the game just to see what was going on, but I could've stayed in the game. We will have more information [Monday]."

During the 2016 season, Perez sustained a fractured thumb in the same hand, but that was in a different area than Sunday's hit-by-pitch.

Normally, Indians catcher Yan Gomes would have been behind the plate for Sunday's game with ace Corey Kluber on the mound, but a 12-inning marathon loss to the Tigers on Saturday necessitated a change in plans. After Perez helped guide Kluber through the first five of his eight dominant innings, Gomes took over for Perez and delivered a two-run home run in the eighth.

"Whenever you get ambushed and get put into a game like that," Gomes said, "you don't have time to think about getting loose or anything like that. I was ready."

Gomes has garnered the bulk of the innings at catcher this season, with Perez serving as the primary backup. Combined, they have given Cleveland one of the better defensive units in the Majors over the past few seasons. Gomes hoped Perez would not have to miss much time.

"That was actually pretty scary," Gomes said. "Right when he got hit, it sounded different. You hope for the best-case scenario, that it just hits a muscle. We're hoping for good news for him."

The Indians' 40-man roster currently includes two additional catchers: Francisco Mejia and Eric Haase. The 22-year-old Mejia is the team's No. 1 prospect per MLB Pipeline, but has been off to a slow start at Triple-A, hitting .216 with a .611 OPS through 49 games. Haase (No. 20 on the Indians' Top 30 prospect list) has also labored offensively, with a .205 average (.588 OPS) in 51 games.

"We've got some things to work through," Francona said. "We're going to have to [have] a lot of conversations tonight, I'm sure."

Ramirez emerging as reliable relief arm

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

DETROIT -- Neil Ramirez has worn a lot of hats over the past two years. He has been claimed off waivers three times and signed as a free agent at four other junctures. Seven teams have identified something in the right-hander that warranted giving him a chance, even if he didn't stick around for long.

"Everybody can see the arm," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "And we could've done the same thing. His ERA after his first four outings was 10.00. We could've easily said, 'Go to your eighth team.' I don't think we view it like that. If we see something that we think can work, we'd rather work with him than run away."

The rope that Cleveland has offered Ramirez has helped him show that maybe he can provide some reliability in the later innings. While the sample size remains small, that has certainly been the case of late for the hard-throwing reliever. As the Tribe's relief corps has slowly emerged from its rocky May, Ramirez has increasingly stepped up when offered the opportunity.

As Francona noted, Ramirez posted a 13.50 ERA in his first four appearances after being promoted from Triple-A Columbus last month. In his six appearances since that rough first impression, the right-hander has yielded no runs over 6 2/3 innings, struck out six and held opposing batters to a .439 OPS. Four times in that span, Ramirez has entered in the eighth inning.

"It feels great," Ramirez said. "I think it's probably been since 2014 when I've been in these situations, where the game is actually close or a high-leverage situation. I pride myself on being a guy who can pitch in those situations. I've put a lot of work in to be able to do that. For [Francona] to have that trust in me, it feels great, but at the same time, we know that everybody out there can do that same thing."

Ramirez, 29, had an outstanding rookie showing with the Cubs in 2014, posting a 1.44 ERA in 50 games. The righty had a 1.87 ERA in 69 appearances over the '14-15 campaigns combined, but injury issues and diminished velocity began to plague his production. Over the '16-17 seasons, in which Ramirez had big league stops with five clubs, he had a 6.67 ERA in 47 games.

This season with Cleveland, Ramirez has enjoyed increased velocity on his fastball (96.6 mph on average) and improved depth on his slider, giving Francona an intriguing setup option over the past few weeks.

"Teams keep jumping on him," Francona said, "because they're like, 'We can fix him.' Well, maybe we're the team that catches the break. Sometimes guys aren't situated at a point in their career to have success. And it's not that we're smarter than anybody else, maybe we just got him at the right time."

Tweet from @MLBastian: Neil Ramirez has averaged 96.6 mph with his fastball this season. That, combined with an improved slider, has helped him emerge recently as an option in later innings for the Indians. pic.twitter.com/uofLeSeT14

Worth noting

- Designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion remained out of the lineup on Sunday due to right ankle soreness, marking the second game in a row he sat out with the ailment. Francona noted that Encarnacion was scheduled to take batting practice Sunday with the hope of returning to the lineup Monday in Chicago.

- Second baseman Jason Kipnis was pulled during Saturday's game due to neck stiffness and remained out of the lineup on Sunday in Detroit. Kipnis is day to day with the issue and was replaced in the lineup of the weekend series finale by Erik Gonzalez.

Jordan Bastian has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog, Major Lea

The Indians hope Neil Ramírez becomes a classic case of right guy, right time

Zack Meisel Jun 10, 2018 2

DETROIT — Neil Ramírez's constant movements would make a world traveler envious.

He's not invested in the culture or culinary scene or landmarks, of course. He's just a baseball nomad, with recent stops in Chicago and Milwaukee. And Minnesota. And San Francisco. And Toronto. And New York. And Washington. And now Cleveland.

And that's all within the past 25 months.

Ramírez has been traded, claimed, signed, and claimed and signed again and again and again. His name is a staple on the league's transaction wire.

Oh, someone claimed Neil Ramírez off waivers? Must be a day that ends in y.

The Indians are the latest team to sample Ramírez's services, and they're intrigued. Did they stumble upon a valuable bullpen piece when they inked him to a minor-league contract last winter?

The sample size is small; the right-hander has logged a 3.86 ERA in 10 appearances with the Tribe. The sample size triggering the Indians' curiosity is even smaller: Ramírez has held the opposition scoreless over his past six outings.

That said, a 97-mph fastball paired with a promising slider is a strong foundation. And given the state of emergency in the Indians' bullpen, Terry Francona has turned to Ramírez in some high-leverage situations.

"Everybody sees the arm," Francona said. "Teams keep jumping on him, because they're like, 'We can fix him.' Well, maybe we're the team that catches the break. Sometimes, guys aren't situated at a point in their career to have success. It's not that we're smarter than anybody else. Maybe we just got him at the right time."

Neil Ramirez's velocity chart looks like a smiley face, and the Indians certainly aren't frowning about it. (Brooks Baseball)

The fastball velocity stands out. Ramírez's heater is averaging 96.6 mph this season, an increase of 3 mph over last year's measure. He attributed the past drop in velocity to some injuries and a dip in confidence.

"The velocity is back, and I can let it rip again," he said. "That's when I'm at my best. I've always been more of that kind of pitcher than a finesse guy."

But, as Ramírez noted, any hitter can smack the speediest fastball if he knows it's coming. So, for him, it's about the slider, the secondary pitch that proves critical to his results.

During spring training, Ramírez threw a tighter, almost cutter-like version of the pitch. Now, it has more depth, more movement, more personality.

"For me, I think throwing the heater inside more and then being able to throw the slider off that same tunnel is what's helping me out," Ramírez said. "I get in trouble when I get around the slider. As long as I can rip through the top of the ball and get it to go down, it's been a good pitch for me. Just being able to dump it in there for strike one, too. I think a lot of guys expect me to come at them hard. I throw a pretty good amount of fastballs. But if I can just put it in the back of their mind that I can throw the slider for strike one, I think that sets up the whole at-bat for me."

This isn't an unprecedented stretch for Ramírez, who broke into the big leagues with the Cubs in 2014. That season, he posted a 1.44 ERA in 50 outings. He's since been on a (nationwide) search to rediscover that form.

The shuffling across North America has been most difficult for his wife, Tiffany.

"Every time she's had a chance to meet some people," Ramírez said, "it's like, 'Welp, see ya. New city.'"

By this point, Ramírez is accustomed to living out of a suitcase. But he exhaled a bit over the winter after he latched on with the Indians. He knew he'd have a chance during spring training to vie for an Opening Day roster spot. That didn't happen, but the Indians' bullpen has been a revolving door featuring a massive "Help Wanted" sign.

Now, Ramírez is one of a handful of newcomers trying to stand out among the relief wreckage. The Indians' bullpen entered Sunday's action with a league-worst 5.82 ERA.

"Teams, they hear the narrative of, 'We're struggling,' so they're even more hungry to get to that bullpen," Ramírez said, "and it's almost like they home in even more once they get past the starter. We know that. It's just, I think now that we've gotten through this month, we've seen how bad it can be and we're still here."

Ramírez has been through the wringer enough times to know not to celebrate a two-week stretch with a new club. As he conceded: "The last two years have definitely been a struggle."

It's been a few years, though, since he has been summoned to protect a close game or to pitch the eighth inning.

"There's still a long way to go," Ramirez said. "It's only a couple innings here now, so you can't get comfortable or think that you've accomplished anything. You have to keep your foot to the gas pedal."

Still, this is a guy who has migrated from team to team the last two years. And this is a bullpen desperate for any semblance of dependability. The Indians have enjoyed the fruits of Ramírez's labor the last few weeks. Maybe the seventh time will be the charm.

"His ERA after his first four outings was (13.50)," Francona said. "We could've easily said, 'Go to your eighth team.' I don't think we view it like that. If we see something that we think can work, we'd rather work with him than run away. You can't do that with everybody, but I think when you see a reward there, let's give it some time."

Ramirez's winding road:

June 7, 2007: Drafted by the Rangers (44th overall pick)

Aug. 13, 2013: Traded to the Cubs

May 31, 2016: Claimed by the Brewers

June 12, 2016: Claimed by the Twins

Nov. 21, 2016: Signed with the Giants

May 4, 2017: Claimed by the Blue Jays

May 16, 2017: Signed by the Mets

July 27, 2017: Signed by the Nationals

Nov. 30, 2017: Signed by the Indians

TRIBE NOTES Indians 9, Tigers 2: Corey Kluber continues to dominate, especially inside Central Division

Dave Hogg | The Associated PressPublished on June 10, 2018 | Updated 8:33 a. m.

DETROIT — Eventually, a team from the AL Central will figure out a way to beat Cleveland Indians ace Corey Kluber.

Kluber continued his dominance of the division Sunday, allowing two runs in eight innings as the Indians beat the Detroit Tigers 9-2.

The win improved Kluber (10-2) to 5-0 with a 0.76 ERA in five starts against division rivals this season, and he has won his last 11 decisions against teams from the AL Central.

"Division games are always huge, because those are the teams you are fighting for a playoff spot," he said. "Obviously, winning your division is the easiest way to get in, so there's a little more riding on these games."

Kluber allowed five hits and struck out eight without walking a batter. He has 46 strikeouts and zero walks in his last six starts.

"I'm pretty sure I had some three-ball counts today, but my focus in that situation is to execute a pitch," he said. "You don't want to just throw a ball down the middle, because that's when you give up damage. You still have to make a quality pitch."

John Hicks, who had two hits off Kluber, tried to give his teammates some advice.

"I told a couple guys that if he throws a pitch that looks like a strike, it is probably going to end up a ball, and if it looks like a ball, it will probably be a strike," he said. "It's like hitting a Wiffle ball."

Melky Cabrera and Erik Gonzalez each drove in three runs for Cleveland, which expanded its divisional lead to five games over the Tigers.

Artie Lewicki (0-2) took the loss, allowing three runs on six hits and a walk in five innings. He struck out four in his third major league start.

"Artie hung in there and kept us in the game, but Kluber didn't give us many chances," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said.

The Indians took the lead with two runs in the second. Francisco Lindor singled, stole second and took third when Hicks' throw sailed into center field. Yonder Alonso followed with a ground-rule double to left-center field to put the Indians ahead, and he scored on Cabrera's one-out sacrifice fly.

Martin's groundout in the third brought home Hicks to make it 2-1 and end Kluber's 20-inning scoreless streak against Detroit.

Cabrera's second sacrifice fly of the game, scoring Lindor, gave the Indians a 3-1 lead in the fourth.

The Indians loaded the bases with one out in the sixth off reliever Drew VerHagen, and Gonzalez followed with a three-run double to put the Indians ahead 6-1.

"VerHagen got a little unlucky, but that was a bad pitch with the bases loaded," Gardenhire said. "He needs to have a good breaking ball to be successful, and he couldn't find it today."

Leonys Martin homered in the bottom of the sixth to make it 6-2, but that was Detroit's last run off Kluber.

"He goes out and throws strikes," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "He works ahead, and when teams get contact, it isn't off the barrel."

Cabrera drove in his third run of the game to restore Cleveland's five-run lead in the eighth. Yan Gomes followed with his eighth homer to give the Indians a 9-2 advantage.

Martin drove in two runs for Detroit, which lost a home series for the first time since April 13. The Tigers played their 18th game in 17 days.

"I think it is safe to say that everyone in this clubhouse is going to enjoy getting away from here for a day, because we're worn out," Gardenhire said. "We went 10-8, which isn't bad, but we played so many close games that we could have been even better."

Trainer's room

INDIANS: 2B Jason Kipnis (neck) and 1B Edwin Encarnacion took Sunday off to rest minor injuries.

... C Roberto Perez left the game after being hit in the right wrist by a sixth-inning pitch. Perez had X-rays, which were sent to a specialist in Cleveland for further evaluation. "It's a little ambiguous right now," Francona said.

TIGERS: C James McCann was scheduled to get Sunday off after catching 12 innings Saturday night, but was also dealing with flulike symptoms. 2B Dixon Machado would have caught if something had happened to Hicks.

... RHP Zac Reininger was optioned to Triple-A Toledo after the game, but the Tigers did not announce a corresponding move. If McCann is still sick Tuesday, Detroit will bring up C Grayson Greiner from Toledo.

Up next

INDIANS: Cleveland travels to Chicago for a four-game series starting tonight. Lucas Giolito (4-6, 7.08) faces Cleveland's Carlos Carrasco (7-4, 4.23) in the opener.

TIGERS: After a day off, Detroit starts a three-game home series with the Twins. Blaine Hardy (2-1, 3.66) takes on Minnesota's Jake Odorizzi (3-3, 4.24) on Tuesday.

"Maybe we just got him at the right time."

by Jordan Bastian

It very well could have been the end of the road for Neil Ramirez in Cleveland back on May 24. He took the mound at Progressive Field, immediately surrendered a three-run home run to Houston's Jake Marisnick and a close game started spiraling into a blowout loss.

The Indians' bullpen crisis had reached critical mass and Ramirez—with a 13.50 ERA after four outings—looked like another filler arm from Triple-A that was not going to cut it. A few pitchers had already been called up, thrown into the flames and designated for assignment before the smoke cleared.

No one would've been surprised if Ramirez's name was added to that list.

"If we see something that we think can work," Indians manager Terry Francona said, "we'd rather work with him than run away. You can't do that with everybody, but I think when you see a reward there, let's give it some time."

Ramirez was given some rope and his next six appearances included no runs allowed. No, that is not a large sample, but the right-hander has flashed the potential that convinced Cleveland to give him time. There is the fastball that can reach 96–97 mph, but also a slider with more run and depth than in recent years.

The Indians are not the only team to see something in Ramirez's right arm. Just take a look at his transactions since the Cubs parted ways with him in May of 2016.

May 31, 2016: Claimed by the Brewers
June 12, 2016: Claimed by the Twins
Nov. 21, 2017: Signed by the Giants
May 4, 2017: Claimed by the Blue Jays
May 16, 2017: Signed by the Mets
July 27, 2017: Signed by the Nationals
Nov. 30, 2017: Signed by the Indians

There are two ways to look at that kind of timeline. One, it shows a pitcher that has been unable to perform well enough to stick around. Two, it shows that the pitcher in question has a skill-set worthy of rolling the dice and seeing if this time he can right the recent wrongs.

Back in 2014, Ramirez looked like a rising relief star for the Cubs. He had a 1.44 ERA in 43.2 innings out of Chicago's bullpen, ranking second to just Dellin Betances among rookies (min. 50 games) in ERA, strikeouts per nine innings (10.92) and opponents' average (.184).

Ramirez had a 1.87 ERA in 69 career outings with the Cubs over the '14–15 seasons, but then injuries began to take a toll. He dealt with a triceps problem in '14 and then shoulder and abdominal issues in '15. Across the '16–17 seasons, Ramirez turned in a 6.67 ERA in 47 big league games while dealing with diminished velocity and searching for his slider.

Cleveland is the latest team to give Ramirez the same opportunity. So far, he has answered the call and given the club another intriguing option as the entire bullpen has worked to fan the flames of May.

"Everybody sees the arm," Francona said. "Teams keep jumping on him, because they're like, 'We can fix him.' Well, maybe we're the team that catches the break. Sometimes guys aren't situated at a point in their career to have success.

"And, it's not that we're smarter than anybody else. Maybe we just got him at the right time."

Last week, Ramirez locked down the eighth inning on Tuesday and Wednesday, helping finish off close wins over the Brewers. On Saturday, he entered in the eighth and logged two shutout innings in a tightly-contested, extra-inning loss to the Tigers.

Prior to Sunday's game in Detroit, MLB.com and The Athletic caught up with Ramirez outside the Comerica Park clubhouse for a Q&A.

Q: How much has the improvement on your slider factored into your success of late?

Ramirez: "Yeah, the slider is huge for me, to have that pitch. Obviously, at this level, guys can hit 100 mph fastballs if they know it's coming. For me, I think throwing the heater inside more and then being able to throw the slider off that same tunnel is what's helping me out. I get in trouble when I get around the slider. As long as I can rip through the top of the ball and get it to go down, it's been a good pitch for me. Just being able to dump it in there strike one, too. I think a lot of guys expect me to come at them hard. I throw a pretty good amount of fastballs. But, if I can just put it in the back of their mind that I can throw the slider strike one, I think that sets up the whole at-bat for me."

Q: How hard is it to balance trying to make a strong impression with a new team and knowing that sometimes it takes time to find your rhythm on the mound?

Ramirez: "The focus always has to be on executing pitches, no matter what level you're at. That's what I try to do when I come up here, is show them that I'm gonna attack guys and execute in the zone. The two-strike pitches can still probably be a little better, probably a little bit more contact than I would like to see. I feel like I'm getting ahead of a lot of guys. For me, as long as my focus is just on making my pitches, then I'll be OK. I don't try to put too much pressure on the situation or trying to throw good or anything like that. That's where you can get in trouble.

Q: When you go through getting claimed or signed so many times, does it at least show you that teams saw something in you? Is it difficult to be in that constant state of transition?

Ramirez: "The last two years have definitely been a struggle. The constant throughout the whole time is that I've always continued to work my butt off. I dealt with some injuries. Some velocity had dropped a little bit. This offseason was great for me, just to clear my head. I had a solid plan of attack coming in this season. The velo is back and I can let it rip again. That's when I'm at my best. I've always been more of that kind of pitcher than a finesse guy. As long as I can let it rip and just command my pitches in the zone, I feel like I have a good chance to get guys out."

Q: When you had such a great rookie year like you did with the Cubs, is it hard to deal with the kinds of twists and turns that your career ended up taking leading into this season?

Ramirez: "It was tough. I dealt with a little bit of some injuries. I lost some confidence, admittedly got too caught up in things I couldn't control. I just remember distinctively when I first got called up, I didn't know how long I was going to be up. My whole focus was just to attack guys. I feel like I've gotten back to that mentality."

Q: What has it been like to have Francona show enough trust in you to give you opportunities in the eighth inning and high-leverage spots?

Ramirez: "It feels great. I think it's probably been since 2014 when I've been in these situations, where the game is actually close or a high-leverage situation. I pride myself on being a guy who can pitch in those situations. I've put a lot of work in to be able to do that. For him to have that trust in me, it feels great, but at the same time, we know that everybody out there can do that same thing."

Q: All the moving around can be hard enough professionally, but what's this been like for you personally, going through so many moves or not knowing how long you'll be in one place?

Ramirez: "It's tough. When you first go through it, it's probably the hardest. Now that I've been through it a lot, it gets easier. It's probably tougher on my wife than it is on anybody. Every time she's had a chance to meet some people, it's like, 'Welp, see ya. New city.' You have to just keep focusing on the process. That's what I've done this whole time. I've always worked really hard. I believed that it was going to work itself out and there's still a long way to go. It's only a couple innings here now, so you can't get comfortable or think that you've accomplished anything. You have to keep your foot to the gas pedal, so to speak."

Q: As a bullpen, how much better has it been lately for you guys? May was what it was, but things have been improving recently...

Ramirez: "The overall feel down there is when we execute pitches, we're fine. If you look at the outings that went bad in May, it was poor execution. At this level, you get beat when you don't execute well. And then teams, they hear the narrative of 'We're struggling,' so they're even more hungry to get to that bullpen and it's almost like they hone in even more once they get past the starter. We know that. It's just, I think now that we've gotten through this month, we've seen how bad it can be and we're still here, we're still fine. It's all about going out there and making pitches."

Q: Has this latest experience been a little easier on your wife?

Ramirez: "Yeah, she's back home in Nashville right now. She'll come out to Cleveland this next homestand. She's been back and forth. She feels at home. All the girls have been great."

Tito's pregame minutiae: June 10 by Jordan Bastian

Q: Is Jason Kipnis out of the lineup due to the stiff neck that came up in Saturday's game?

TF: "Yeah, because of that one play at second. We've all done it where you grab your neck, but it got stiffer as the game went and they kept loosening it up so he stayed in for a while. And then we kind of figured he was going to be stiff today, and he is. So, we let Gonzy play second. Give Edwin [Encarnacion] another day [to rest his sore right ankle]. Hopefully, tomorrow he's back in there. He's going to go out and he's going to I think maybe hit in the cage today. We'll see how that goes. So, that's why we backed Frankie [Lindor] up to cleanup, just to try to give our middle of the order what it needs."

Q: Why did you go with Roberto Perez over Yan Gomes with Corey Kluber pitching today?

TF: "Well, it ended up being such a long [game on Saturday]. That's a lot to catch. The plan was to have Gomes catch today until we go that late and that long."

Q: Did you ever check with MLB about the play at the plate in Minnesota that involved Michael Brantley? You said you thought the catcher blocked the plate...

TF: "We tried, but they just said that they didn't think it was a violation."

Q: You didn't think the catcher gave him a lane?

TF: "I know. Everybody's going to have their frustrations—I get it. I think, for the most part, one, I think the rule's working the way they intended, which is good. Nothing's going to be perfect. I didn't understand that [call], but in the grand scheme of things I get it. I'm not harping on the league. I think they've done a really good job. I just, that particular play, I didn't really understand. I thought the play was coming from the opposite side. I get it. Like, if a play's coming from third, that catcher's got to get over there. It's just not enough time. But, when it's coming from first, and it was like a swinging bunt to boot. Yeah, I thought it was the definition of what the rule was."

Q: How much has Neil Ramirez's slider played into his recent run of success?

TF: "In the spring, and I think by design, he wanted it to be kind of short and left to right, horizontal. I think Carl [Willis, pitching coach] all along kind of wanted to see some depth, but you've got a guy trying to make a team. But, as he's gotten some depth to that breaking ball, now all of a sudden he's got an explosive fastball. He rears back and he's not afraid to throw strikes, which we love. But, it's nice to have something to get off of that fastball. He's throwing 95, 96, 97. We've all seen, you don't have to have three pitches in the bullpen. If you have something off of that fastball, you can have success. The kid [Edwin] Diaz in Seattle is a good example. He throws a breaking ball and guys almost kill themselves. It doesn't matter what kind of breaking ball. It's just something off of the fastball."

Q: It's a small sample size from Ramirez, but is it nice to see one of these arms you've called up from Triple-A kind of emerge a little as someone else you can rely on?

TF: "And one of the challenges would be not to over-use. That's the biggest [temptation for] managers and I can be as guilty [as the next manager]. You don't want to over-use guys that start to throw the ball well, because then you take away what they do also. So, you want to keep the usage as balanced as you can out there. That's a hard thing to do. You always go through runs where there are one-run games. You guys see it. You're here every day. You go through a week where there's a bunch of lopsided games and then you play a week in a row where there's one-run games. So, trying to keep the bullpen balanced is important. We've also tried to give guys a little more rope. Like O.T. [Dan Otero] yesterday, we didn't go get him. Well, you know what? He got out of it. So, that'll help."

Q: Did you see positives from Otero in that outing on Saturday?

TF: "Well, he got out of that jam. I don't think he's far off. I think sometimes confidence plays a big part. I just think when you're throwing your pitches with conviction, at the end of your pitch you're going to have a little more movement. He always, he throws strikes, he keeps the ball down. It's just sometimes instead of just [throwing with conviction], maybe you're trying to get it there. I get it. It's human nature."

Q: Neil Ramirez was either claimed off waivers or signed by seven teams since the Cubs cut ties with him in 2016. Does that at least show that teams see something in him?

TF: "Oh yeah, everybody can see the arm. And we could've done the same thing. His ERA after his first four outings was 10.00. We could've easily said, 'Go to your eighth team.' I don't think we view it like that. If we see something that we think can work, we'd rather work with him than run away. You can't do that with everybody, but I think when you see a reward there, let's give it some time."

Q: This season has been a grind for the bullpen, but the front-office has shown an ability in the past to unearth guys like this on Minor League contracts. Jeff Manship comes to mind or Scott Atchison before that...

TF: "We've had success doing that, I agree. And this year we have run into problems both internal and external. I mean, I get it, though. You're not going to hit on a guy like that every year. Shoot, man, we've actually had guys where we've used them in leverage situations. Now, maybe Ramirez turns into that guy. That would be great, because everybody sees the arm. Like you said, teams keep jumping on him, because they're like, 'We can fix him.' Well, maybe we're the team that catches the break. Sometimes guys aren't situated at a point in their career to have success and it's not that we're smarter than anybody else, maybe we just got him at the right time."

Q: We discussed the missed bunt by Lonnie Chisenhall briefly after Saturday's game, but bunting has been a consistent issue this season? Is there something that can be done on that front? Is it something the hitters need to work on?

TF: "To answer that, Millsie [bench coach Brad Mills] takes those guys out at home and they bunt. And we've tried not to ask guys that can't bunt to bunt, because I don't think that's fair. There's a lot of situations where it looks like, 'OK, this could be a bunting situation,' and, if I don't think a guy really has that tool, I don't ask him to do it. The guys we've asked, I feel like can. For whatever reason, we haven't gotten it down. I think sometimes, like with Greg [Allen], young, didn't get the first one down. The second one gets harder. Now that he got one down the other day, I bet you he'll be [OK], because he should be a pretty good bunter. Lonnie, for me, is kind of borderline. He's not a typical bunter, but he actually has done a pretty good job of it in the past. He just got a high fastball and he didn't get on top of it and it hurt. Kip, a lot of times I'll let him dictate it, just depending on how he feels at the plate."

Q: Like in the seventh inning on Saturday? Kipnis could've bunted there with two on and no outs...

TF: "And I could've told him bunt and he would've. I just thought, well, if he gets it down, they're going to walk Melky [Cabrera], they're going to bring in [Louis] Coleman. Kip had just hit a ball 415 feet. Let's let him swing away. If he feels good, let him swing away."

Q: How often is it a case of a player making that decision on his own vs. you instructing them to bunt?

TF: "Kip's probably the only one [entirely on his own], just because we've been together now and I know him and he knows me. So, he'll look over his shoulder a lot before he goes up to hit, just because we've got that communication. And I trust him a lot. I think in that situation, he's one of the best I've ever seen of knowing what he can do. Now, yesterday he struck out. OK, it didn't work. But, if the guy's giving him a bunt, he can take it. If he thinks he gets a pitch he can drive... he's really good at that. That's why I had him hitting second. When he was swinging the bat, it was so comforting."

Cleveland Indians, catcher Roberto Perez waiting for results of X-rays on his right hand

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

DETROIT - Catcher Roberto Perez had his right hand encased in a soft cast Sunday evening after getting hit by a 94 mph fastball from Detroit right-hander Drew VerHagen in the sixth inning.

"I should be good," Perez said after the Indians' 9-2 victory over the Tigers at Comerica Park. "Everything is well. Monday will be a big day for me. I'll get to the park early and they're going to have more information."

While Perez sounded optimistic about his chances of avoiding a trip to the disabled list, manager Terry Francona was guarded.

"It's a little ambiguous right now," said Francona. "There's a decent chance we dodged a bullet. . .we're going to see how he shows up Monday. He really got hit hard. By the time I saw him, and when he got to first base, it had turned purple. So we'll hope for the best, but we'll prepare for the other."

Terry Francona on catcher Roberto Perez: "He really got hit hard"

If Perez has to go on the DL, the Indians have catchers Francisco Mejia and Eric Haase at Class AAA Columbus.

Francona wasn't the only one who didn't like the look of Perez's right hand after VerHagen hit him.

When Perez got to first base, Tiger first baseman Miguel Cabrera told him, "Your hand is turning green."

Green or purple. Take your pick. Either one is not good.

"It turned purple right away," said Perez, who was in the early stages of his swing when he got hit. "I'm a tough guy, man. I've been there before. I know what being hurt means. It drives you crazy."

"So I'm on first base and I wasn't looking at it. Cabrera told me, 'Hey, man, it's turning green.' I got out of the game just to see what was going on."

Before Perez left, however, he had to sprint around the bases when Erik Gonzalez followed him with a three-run double. Running full tilt and sliding across the plate probably didn't feel all the great, but Perez did it.

Perez had his hand X-rayed after he left the game. The X-rays were sent to hand specialist Thomas Graham.

In 2016 Perez suffered a broken right thumb while making a play at the plate against the Phillies. Dr. Graham performed the surgery.

Perez wasn't supposed to catch Corey Kluber on Sunday. Yan Gomes usually catches Kluber, but because Gomes caught all 12 innings in Saturday night's 4-2 loss to the Tigers, Perez got the call on Sunday.

Gomes replaced Perez and hit a three-run homer in the eighth.

"That was actually pretty scary," said Gomes. "Right when he got hit, it sounded different. You hope for the best-case scenario, that it just hits a muscle. We're hoping for good news for him."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.11.2018

Corey Kluber wins 10th game as Cleveland Indians beat Tigers, 9-2, behind 14 hits

By Paul Hoynes, cleveand.com phoynes@cleveand.com

DETROIT -- So many streaks for Corey Kluber, so little time to do them justice.

Kluber pitched the Indians to a stress-free 9-2 victory Sunday afternoon over the Tigers at Comerica Park. It was his fourth win in the last five starts and the 10th win for the Indians in their last 14 games.

Not only does Kluber lead the AL with 10 wins, he also leads the league with 99 2/3 innings pitched.

Kluber (10-2, 1.99) has started the season with 14 quality starts, the most by an Indians pitcher since Stanley Coveleski started the 1918 season with 16 quality starts. In 1920, Coveleski won three games for the Tribe in the World Series.

But that's not all.

Kluber made his 26th straight start in which he's allowed three or fewer runs. The streak started on Aug. 3, 2017. It is the longest by an Indian since 1908, according to the Player Index at Baseball-reference.com.

One more for the road.

Kluber has not walked a batter in 43 1/3 innings. The last batter he walked was Milwaukee's Domingo Santana on May 8 in the fourth inning. It's the longest stretch of consecutive walk-less innings by an Indians pitcher since Paul Byrd went 45 innings in 2007.

"Corey goes out and throws strikes and he works ahead," said manager Terry Francona. "When he gets early contact it (not) off the barrel of the bat. No walks. He was really Kluber-esque."

Corey Kluber on not walking batters

In two starts against Detroit this year, Kluber is 2-0 with a 1.13 ERA (two earned runs in 16 innings). He's struck out 21 and walked one.

One more thing Kluber did, he gave the bullpen a break. Manager Terry Francona used five relievers in Saturday's 12-inning loss to the Tigers. On Sunday, Kluber went eight innings, allowing two runs on five hits with eight strikeouts.

"I'm not trying to get guys to not swing the bats," said Kluber. "I'm not trying to freeze guys somebody on a fastball inside or whatever. Again I'm trying to make a quality pitch in a certain spot."

"A lot of times when you're ahead in the count you want to miss on something that's not over the heart of the plate. I don't ever have the approach that I want to freeze guys. I'm always expecting them to swing."

The Indians, held to two runs in Saturday's 4-2 loss, rediscovered their offense on a cool overcast day in the Motor City. Jason Kipnis and Edwin Encarnacion were out with injuries, but it didn't matter as the Indians collected 14 hits against starter Artie Lewicki (1-1, 4.18) and the Tiger bullpen.

Here's what kind of game it was for the Tribe: Catcher Roberto Perez was hit the right hand in the sixth inning and replaced by Yan Gomes. In his first at-bat, Gomes hit a long three-run homer to left center field in the eighth.

Yan Gomes (11) off RHP Zac Reininger (2) - 105.1 mph, 30 degrees (429 ft Home Run)

"I've never hit one out there before," said Gomes. "I've tried in batting practice. I've seen plenty of their guys do it -- Miguel Cabrera, Jhonny Peralta and J.D. Martinez."

Perez had X-rays on the hand and it was wrapped in a soft cast after the game. The X-rays were sent to Dr. Thomas Graham, noted hand specialist.

"We'll know more on Monday," he said.

Terry Francona on catcher Roberto Perez: "He really got hit hard"

Shortstop Francisco Lindor, moving into the cleanup spot in Encarnacion's absence, finished with three hits, stole two bases and scored two runs.

Tribe outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall had three hits and scored two runs. Melky Cabrera had two hits and two sacrifice flies. Erik Gonzalez, filling in at second for Kipnis, had two doubles. In the sixth, with the bases loaded, he cleared the bases with a long double to deep center for a 6-1 lead.

What it means

The Indians improved to 16-9 in the AL Central with a big assist from Kluber. The Tribe's ace is 5-0 against AL Central foes this year. In fact, he's won his last 11 decisions in the Central dating back to last year.

In taking two out of three games this weekend, the Indians stretched their lead over the Tigers to five games and the third place Twins to six games.

The pitches

Lewicki threw 78 pitches, 53 (68 percent) for strikes. Kluber threw 106 pitches, 76 (72 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Tigers drew 22,861 fans to Comerica Park on Sunday. First pitched was at 1:11 p.m. with a temperature of 65 degrees.

The Tribe will start Adam Plutko, Trevor Bauer and Mike Clevinger in the other three games of the series.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.11.2018

Roberto Perez exits Cleveland Indians game vs. Detroit Tigers after getting hit by pitch

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com jnoga@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Cleveland Indians catcher Roberto Perez exited Sunday's game against the Detroit Tigers after he was hit on the right hand by a pitch.

Tigers reliever Drew VerHagen threw a 93.9 mph two-seam fastball up and in to Perez with one out in the top of the sixth inning. The pitch hit Perez on the right hand as he checked his swing. The Tigers challenged the play, but Perez was awarded first base.

Perez was able to shake it off long enough to stay in the game after being checked out by manager Terry Francona and Indians trainers. He scored on an RBI double by Erik Gonzalez, but was replaced defensively in the bottom of the sixth by Yan Gomes.

Cleveland's Jason Kipnis (neck) and Edwin Encarnacion (ankle) were already absent from the starting lineup due to nagging injuries.

Perez entered Sunday's game hitting .133 with a home run and four RBI in 23 games.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.11.2018

Nicks and bruises: Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers starting lineups for Sunday, Game No. 63

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

DETROIT -- Nagging injuries and Saturday night's 12-inning game caused manager Terry Francona to make changes in his starting lineup for Sunday's game at Comerica Park.

Second baseman Jason Kipnis (neck) and DH Edwin Encarnacion were not in the lineup. Kipnis left Saturday's game with a stiff neck in the 12th inning. Encarnacion missed his second start after jamming his right ankle scoring from first base on Friday night on Yonder Alonso's double.

"Kip did it on a play at second base and it kept getting tighter during the game," said Francona. "We just want to give Edwin a second day off. Hopefully, he'll be in there on Monday.

"He's going to go hit in the cage today."

The Indians open a four-game series against the White Sox on Monday at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Francona dropped Francisco Lindor into the cleanup spot to replace Encarnacion and moved Greg Allen into Lindor's leadoff spot. Erik Gonzalez started at second for Kipnis and catcher Roberto Perez replaced Yan Gomes.

Gomes usually catches Sunday's starter Corey Kluber, but after catching 12 innings Saturday night, Francona decided to give Gomes the day off.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.11.2018

Cleveland Indians, Chicago White Sox series preview, pitching matchups

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

DETROIT - Here is the preview and pitching matchups for the Indians' series against the White Sox.

Where/when: Guaranteed Rate Field, Monday through Thursday.

TV/radio: SportsTime Ohio, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the series. MLB Network will televise Thursday's game.

Pitching matchups and starting times: RHP Carlos Carrasco (7-4, 3.36) vs. Lucas Giolito (4-6, 7.08) Monday at 8:10 p.m.; RHP Adam Plutko (3-0, 3.93) vs. RHP James Shields (1-7, 4.92) Tuesday at 8:10 p.m.; RHP Trevor Bauer (5-4, 2.62) vs. RHP Dylan Covey (2-1, 2.22) Wednesday at 8:10 p.m. and RHP Mike Clevinger (4-2, 3.31) vs. LHP Carlos Rodon (0-1, 3.60) 2:10 p.m.

Series: The Indians lead the White Sox, 3-0, this season. The White Sox lead, 1,081-1,063, overall.

Hot pitchers: Neil Ramirez has not allowed a run in his last six appearances for the Tribe. He's struck out six and walked two in that stretch. Chicago's Luis Avilan has not allowed a run in his last 10 games, covering 6 1/3 innings.

Hot hitters: Edwin Encarnacion and Michael Brantley are each hitting .455 (5-for-11) against the White Sox this season. Encarnacion has two homers and six RBI. Chicago third baseman Yolmer Sanchez is hitting .297 (51-for-172) at home and leads the big leagues with seven triples.

Team updates: The Indians have won nine of their last 10 games against the White Sox, including a three-game sweep at Progressive Field in May. The White Sox, 8-19 in May, are coming off a seven-game trip in which they went 4-3.

Disabled list: Indians - LHP Andrew Miller (right knee), OF Brandon Guyer (neck), OF Tyler Naquin (right hamstring), RHP Nick Goody (right elbow), LHP Ryan Merritt (left shoulder), RHP Danny Salazar (right shoulder) and RHP Cody Anderson (right elbow) are on the disabled list. 2B Jason Kipnis (neck) and DH Encarnacion (right ankle) are day to day.

White Sox - OF Nicky Delmonico (right hand), OF Adam Engel (right hamstring), RHP Danny Farquhar (brain hemorrhage), OF Leury Garcia (left knee) and RHP Miguel Gonzalez (right rotator cuff) are on the disabled list.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.11.2018

Joe Sever's 4 RBI lead Akron RubberDucks past Portland Sea Dogs

PORTLAND, Maine -- Joe Sever had a two-run homer on his way to four hits and four RBI Sunday and Ka'ai Tom also had a two-run shot as the Akron RubberDucks topped the Sea Dogs, 7-2.

Sever's homer gave the RubberDucks a 2-0 lead in the third inning. Tom increased the lead to 4-0 with his homer in the fifth.

In the seventh, Sever expanded the lead to 6-1 with a two-run double.

Sever finished 4-for-5 with four RBI while Tom was 2-for-4 with two RBI and three runs scored.

Akron left-hander Sean Brady (3-3, 3.92 ERA) had a strong outing, giving up just one run and five hits in 6 2/3 innings. He struck out seven.

The RubberDucks are 36-27 in the Class AA Eastern League and lead the Western Division by 3 1/2 games.

Column: White Sox starter Reynaldo Lopez shuts down Red Sox in 5-2 win

Paul Sullivan/Chicago Tribune

White Sox players held a postgame meeting May 30 in Cleveland, basically calling for a do-over.

They had just been swept by the Indians. They had the worst record in baseball after enduring two miserable months. But with a day off before opening a three-game series against the Brewers on June 1, they had a chance to hit the refresh button.

"We knew we had a bunch of good teams coming up and we had a game plan to refresh ourselves and start out new," outfielder Daniel Palka said. "And that's exactly what's going on this first (10 days of June)."

Their renewed confidence was on full display Sunday at Fenway Park as the White Sox beat the Red Sox 5-2 to take the series from the American League East power.

The White Sox are 2-0-1 in their three series since the meeting. Is it a residual effect?

"Yeah, a little bit," Palka said. "And just all-around recognizing ourselves, too, individually."

Reynaldo Lopez threw 6 1/3 strong innings to notch his second win, and Palka chipped in with a pair of doubles, including a two-run shot off the Green Monster in the ninth.

"When you as a team can do the little things and can work as a team with all the parts integrated, you will have good results," Lopez said. "And that's what we've been doing the last couple of weeks."

Palka said the key has been the pitching, which appears rejuvenated since the emergence of Dylan Covey. They got solid starts from Covey, Carlos Rodon and Lopez, respectively, against the Red Sox, offsetting a lack of scoring.

The White Sox scored twice Sunday without a hit. Tim Anderson forced home a run in the third with a bases-loaded walk to break a 1-1 tie and used his head to bring home another in the sixth.

Trayce Thompson hit a grounder to the right side, but pitcher Rick Porcello stumbled and fell after getting the throw from first baseman Mitch Moreland, bumping into first-base umpire Quinn Wolcott. Anderson kept running from second and scored easily.

"I figured (the ball) was way away from first, and I knew he had a long run," Anderson said. "I saw (Porcello) go down. I was busting it."

It was just one moment on one series, but it showed what the White Sox can do when they're aggressive, focused and smart.

"A great play by Timmy, keeping his head up and watching the play develop," manager Rick Renteria said. "He's an explosive young runner. When he's on the bases he can do some things that are pretty special."

Renteria allowed Lopez to get out of a bases-loaded jam in the sixth and was rewarded for his faith when Lopez induced Blake Swihart to hit a weak pop-up.

"It meant a lot to me," Lopez said. "That was a really tough situation, but in spring training I was working to be ready for those situations. Today I was able to ... slow the game down and be effective in that situation."

After Lopez was removed in the seventh, a two-out, bases-loaded error by Yoan Moncada allowed the Red Sox to creep to within 3-2. But Jace Fry escaped the jam, Palka added some insurance runs in the ninth and Joakim Soria pitched a scoreless inning for his eighth save.

The Sox are too far behind to make up for the first two months, but after talking things out in Cleveland they've seemingly turned the page on the disastrous start.

"We had our meeting, but it was private stuff," Soria said. "Whatever is working, we're going to keep doing it. The chemistry of the team is a little bit better."

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 06.11.2018

White Sox tip Red Sox, claim series win at Fenway

Daryl Van Schouwen @CST_soxvan | email

BOSTON — The White Sox' starting pitching is rounding into form.

Right-hander Reynaldo Lopez's 6 1/3 strong innings Sunday was the latest contribution to an improved stretch from Sox starters. Lopez (2-4, 3.26 ERA) allowed one earned run and struck out six in the Sox' 5-2 victory against the Red Sox. It was the sixth time this season he yielded one or no earned runs in an outing.

Sox starters have a 2.87 ERA in their last nine games. Lopez allowed one hit in seven scoreless innings in a no-decision against the Twins in his previous start.

The Sox (22-41) took two of three from the Red Sox (44-22), who were without injured outfielder Mookie Betts, to complete a 4-3 road trip. They are 2-0-1 in their last three series, including a series victory at home last weekend against the Brewers.

"I knew that I was facing a really good team, one of the best in the league, and that's a challenge and a motivation, too," Lopez said. "I didn't lose my focus today."

Daniel Palka's two-out double in the ninth — his second double of the game — extended a 3-2 lead to 5-2, and Joakim Soria pitched the ninth for his fourth save of the trip. Soria struck out J.D. Martinez and Eduardo Nunez to end the game.

A day for Anderson

Shortstop Tim Anderson walked twice — once with the bases loaded for his 26th RBI — and alertly scored from second on Trayce Thompson's grounder to first baseman Mitch Moreland in the sixth. Red Sox pitcher Rick Porcello made the putout at first but stumbled, fell and threw home from his knees.

Anderson has 20 walks after walking only 13 times last season. He also made a tough play on a grounder to his right to retire Xander Bogaerts with two outs and a runner at third in the fifth, saving a run.

Closing time

Manager Rick Renteria wouldn't go so far as to give Soria an official "closer" title, but Soria — who has 212 career saves, including eight this season and five in his last five chances — looks to be settling into that role.

"He's not the only one we have to close, but he is doing a nice job," Renteria said. "He could come in in the seventh and eighth, as well, if I see a matchup that suits him better. I wouldn't be opposed to using him in those situations."

Nate Jones, the guy the Sox had in mind in spring training to be the closer, has four saves. Jones walked a batter and hit another in a third of an inning.

Jace Fry, who is emerging as the top lefty in the bullpen, got four outs for a relief crew that has a 2.48 ERA in the last 27 games.

This and that

Jose Abreu hit his 25th double off the wall in left-center to score Yolmer Sanchez in the first.

- Renteria said he expects center fielder Adam Engel to play Monday, when the Sox open a four-game home series against the Indians. Engel has missed the last four games with a strained hamstring.

White Sox pitching shaping up

By Daryl Van Schouwen

Chicago Sun-Times

BOSTON -- The White Sox's starting pitching is rounding into form.

So is their bullpen.

Right-hander Reynaldo Lopez's 6½ strong innings Sunday was the latest contribution to an improved stretch from Sox starters. Lopez (2-4, 3.26 ERA) allowed one earned run while striking out six in the Sox's 5-2 win against the Red Sox Sunday. He allowed one or no earned runs for the sixth time.

The Sox (22-41) took two of three from the Red Sox (44-23), who were without injured outfielder Mookie Betts, in their weekend series at Fenway Park to complete a 4-3 road trip, and they are 2-0-1 in their last three series, including a series win at home against the Brewers last weekend.

"I knew that I was facing a really good team, one of the best in the league, and that's a challenge and a motivation too," Lopez said. "I didn't lose my focus today."

A day for Anderson:

Shortstop Tim Anderson walked twice, once with the bases loaded for his 26th RBI, and alertly scored from second on Trayce Thompson's ground ball to first baseman Mitch Moreland in the sixth when Red Sox pitcher Rick Porcello made the putout at first but stumbled, fell and threw home from his knees.

Anderson has 20 walks after walking 13 times last season. He also made a tough play to his right on a ground ball to retire Xander Bogaerts with two outs and a runner at third, saving a run.

Sox starters own a 2.87 ERA over their last nine games. Lopez pitched seven scoreless innings of one-hit ball in a no-decision against the Twins in his previous start.

Closing time:

Renteria wouldn't go so far as to give Soria an official "closer" title, but the veteran right-hander who has 212 career saves including eighty with the Sox this season and five in his last five chances, looks to be settling in to that role.

"He's not the only one we have to close, but he is doing a nice job," Renteria said. "He could come in in the seventh and eighth as well if I see a matchup that suits him better. I wouldn't opposed to using him in those situations."

Nate Jones, who during spring training was the guy the Sox had in mind to eventually be the closer, has four saves. Jones opened the seventh Sunday, walked and hit a batter, and was charged with an unearned

Jace Fry, emerging as the bullpen's top lefty, got four outs for a bullpen that owns a 2.48 ERA over the last 27 games.

This and that:

Jose Abreu hit his 25th double, clanking a drive against Porcello off the wall in left center field and to score Yolmer Sanchez from first in the first inning.

*Renteria said he expects center fielder Adam Engel to play Monday when the Sox open a four-game series at home against the Indians. Engel has missed four games with a strained hamstring.

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