

Carrasco faces Twins in finale on Facebook

By Manny Randhawa MLB.com @MannyOnMLB

MLB's digital-only national broadcasts continue this week with today's Indians-Twins contest at Target Field, which will stream live in the United States exclusively on Facebook. The American League Central Division clash is one of 25 streaming broadcasts scheduled for 2018 as part of MLB's partnership with the social media network.

Fans can catch the 1:10 p.m. ET contest at www.facebook.com/MLBLiveGames or by logging onto Facebook's MLB live page from their phones, tablets, smart TVs or other streaming devices. MLB Network will produce the game, with play-by-play announcer Scott Braun, analysts Glen Perkins and Jody Gerut, and in-game reporter Alexa Datt.

Perkins was a reliever for the Twins for his entire 12-year MLB career, from 2006-17. He posted a career 3.88 ERA with 120 saves. Gerut was a Major League outfielder for six seasons, playing for the Indians from 2003-05. In '03, he finished fourth in AL Rookie of the Year voting after hitting 22 homers and posting an .830 OPS in 127 games for the Tribe.

How to watch on mobile and desktop

Desktop

1. Search for "MLB Live" on Facebook
2. Follow the "MLB Live" show page

Mobile

1. Download the Facebook video app on your TV or streaming device and search for "MLB Live"
2. Or stream the game from your phone to a TV on the same WiFi network by tapping the TV icon.

What to know about the Indians-Twins game:

The Indians will give the ball to right-hander Carlos Carrasco, who posted a 2.59 ERA over four starts and a one-inning relief appearance in July. He'll be making his fourth start of the season against the Twins -- in his first start of the season against Minnesota back in April, he tossed seven scoreless innings, giving up three hits, walking one and striking out seven. But he's been hit hard in the other two starts, for a combined 10 runs over five innings (18.00 ERA).

It was in his last start against the Twins that he had to leave the game in the second inning with a right elbow contusion after being hit by a Joe Mauer line drive.

Today's game could also mark the Indians debut of outfielder Leonys Martin, who was acquired just prior to Tuesday's non-waiver Trade Deadline.

Adalberto Mejia is slated to take the mound for Minnesota. The 25-year-old left-hander slots in former Twins right-hander Lance Lynn's spot in the rotation, before Lynn was traded to the Yankees. In three Major League appearances (two starts) this season, Mejia has a 3.65 ERA (five earned runs in 12 1/3 innings). In 14 appearances (11 starts) at Triple-A Rochester, he had a 3.32 ERA. He's faced Cleveland three times in his career, all last season, giving up four runs in 13 1/3 innings (2.70 ERA), walking 11 and striking out 15.

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

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Tribe's dominant relief duo seals win vs. Twins

Ramirez, Encarnacion combine for five RBIs in victory

Allen shuts the door

Allen shuts the door

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By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

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MINNEAPOLIS -- The man on the mound for the Twins in the seventh inning on Tuesday may have looked familiar to Tribe fans. Then again, Cleveland has cycled through so many relievers this season that Matt Belisle's time with the Indians might seem like a distant memory.

Once upon a time, Belisle was a member of the Indians' Opening Day bullpen -- a cast of characters that started with seven and has since grown to a list 22 players long. In a 6-2 victory over the Twins at Target Field, the Tribe's lineup scored a pair of key insurance runs off the veteran right-hander, and then Cleveland's retooled relief corps finished the job.

"It's hard to root against him, because we like him so much," Indians manager Terry Francona said of Belisle. "Obviously, not tonight. But, he's one of the most standup guys I've ever met, and that doesn't change when a guy goes to a different uniform."

Back on July 19, the American League Central-leading Indians (58-48) helped jumpstart the trade season by acquiring All-Star closer Brad Hand and right-handed sidearm Adam Cimber from the Padres in exchange for catching prospect Francisco Mejia. For those scoring at home, Hand and Cimber became Nos. 21 and 22, respectively, on Cleveland's 2018 relief list.

Following 6 1/3 innings from starter Trevor Bauer, who limited the damage of the four walks he issued, Hand took over and record four outs across the seventh and eighth innings. The southpaw then gave up a double to Max Kepler, but Cody Allen entered and induced a flyout off the bat of Miguel Sano to sidestep harm.

Allen then worked around a walk and a single in the ninth, holding the Twins in check to put the period on the win and register his 21st save. In other games featuring both Hand and Allen, the latter entered first with recently acquired lefty finishing the game. Tuesday's usage was the latest example of how Francona does not assign innings, instead focusing on matchups.

"It makes a lot of sense," Allen said. "I think, first and foremost, you have to have the personnel that's able to do it, and we've been very fortunate here for a number of years to have a lot of guys down there that can handle multiple situations."

The Indians bullpen entered Tuesday with a 5.05 ERA, which ranked 27th in the Majors, but it remains heavily skewed by the 8.01 ERA turned in during an atrocious May. Back then, Belisle was a roster casualty due to the combination of poor production and being out of Minor League options. The Indians had a revolving door of relievers that has only recently stopped spinning.

"It's part of the game. We're all professionals," Allen said. "We have to go through it, but yeah, [the high rate of turnover] does make it a little difficult."

The bullpen woes have held Cleveland back from firing on all cylinders this season, but the team made that aspect of the roster a top priority during the trade season. The Tribe should also have lefty Andrew Miller back from the disabled list in the near future. Years from now, when the sting wears off, a fun exercise will be trying to recall all 22 players used in relief.

Allen will be an easy name to remember, along with the likes of Miller, Hand and bullpen regulars like Dan Otero and Zach McAllister. The tricky ones will include a position player pitching (Brandon Guyer), a starter getting a rare relief assignment (Carlos Carrasco) and the assortment of arms that came and went like Marc Rzepczynski, Oliver Drake and George Kontos, among others.

To back Bauer's outing on Tuesday night, the Indians lineup struck for three runs against Twins starter Kyle Gibson over his six innings. Jose Ramirez capped off a two-run outburst in the third with an RBI double and then added a run-scoring single in the fifth.

Belisle took over for Minnesota with Cleveland clinging to a 3-2 lead and allowed a two-run single to Edwin Encarnacion, which helped the Tribe pull away.

Cleveland is hoping it has finally dug itself out of the bullpen mess.

"Those guys have been really good since they came over," said Bauer, referring to Hand and Cimber. "It looks like adding those guys has allowed other people to fill the roles that they're here to fill and they traditionally fill. When guys get taken out of their roles and asked to do stuff that they're not normally asked to do, stuff happens. I think it's added stability."

"It's still fresh. Hopefully, we can get Andrew back healthy in the coming weeks and get a look at what our 'pen should be the rest of the year. I think that's an exciting thought -- you add him to the mix with the guys that we have down there right now."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Rare roundtripper: Not only did Bauer head into Tuesday's start with an MLB-leading home run rate (0.37 per nine innings), but no opponent had cleared the fence against his new slider. That changed in the sixth inning, when Logan Morrison deposited one up in the zone on an 0-2 count over Target Field's right-center-field wall for a solo home run.

"Their approach was just odd," Bauer said. "I could tell in the first inning that something was different. It took me a couple innings to figure out that their whole approach was just to look for offspeed stuff on two strikes and just punch the ball and not strike out. So that changes the gameplan a little bit."

"A frustrating outing, personally, but things to build on. And then, obviously, the team won. That's the ultimate goal every time I go out."

Thanks for playing: With the acquisition of center fielder Leonys Martin from the Tigers on Tuesday, Indians outfielder Greg Allen is ticketed for Triple-A Columbus again. Allen was given the start in center and slotted into the lineup's nine hole on Tuesday and he responded with three singles and three runs scored.

"He played a nice game tonight," said Francona, who noted that he met with Allen after the game. "He's certainly a kid we think so highly of. We just wanted to make sure he understood that and nothing gets in the way of his development, because he's got a chance to be an everyday center fielder for us. You don't ever want him to forget that."

SOUND SMART

Per Statcast™, Bauer entered the night with an MLB-leading 51 called strikeouts this season. All three of the right-hander's strikeouts against the Twins were of the looking variety, adding to that total. Each came via Bauer's two-seam fastball.

UP NEXT

Carrasco (12-5, 3.89 ERA) is slated to start for the Tribe on Wednesday, when the Twins host the Indians at 1:10 p.m ET at Target Field. Newly acquired center fielder Leonys Martin is expected to be in Minnesota for his first game with Cleveland, too. The Twins will counter with lefty Adalberto Mejia (1-0, 3.65). The game can be seen exclusively on Facebook.

Jordan Bastian has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog, Major League Bastian, follow him on Twitter @MLBastian and Facebook.

Indians bolster outfield with Martin from Tigers

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- It was not a blockbuster move that stole the spotlight on a hectic Tuesday around the Majors, but it was a trade that made a lot of sense for the Indians.

Prior to Tuesday's 4 p.m. ET non-waiver Trade Deadline, the Tribe reeled in center fielder Leonys Martin from the Tigers in exchange for shortstop prospect Willi Castro. Detroit also sent Double-A starter Kyle Dowdy to Cleveland as part of the deal, which was the second Major League move made by the Tribe during the trade season.

The Indians have been trying to patch together an outfield riddled with injuries, and Martin brings plus defense in center field and a bat to help against right-handed pitching. On Monday night, rumors flew that the Indians had inquired with the Nationals about the availability of superstar Bryce Harper. Washington elected to stand pat, so Cleveland's talks veered down a more realistic path.

"We explored a lot of alternatives to try to address and improve our outfield," said Chris Antonetti, the Indians' president of baseball operations. "We were really pleased to be able to acquire Leonys Martin. We think he's a great complement to our roster."

Martin is scheduled to land in Minnesota on Tuesday night and will be officially added to the active roster for Wednesday's game in the Twin Cities.

All-Star Michael Brantley has provided the only source of stability in the Indians' outfield, manning left field while center and right have lost players to injury left and right. Center fielder Bradley Zimmer (right shoulder) is out for eight to 12 months. Right fielder Lonnie Chisenhall (right calf) could be down for the year. Outfielder Tyler Naquin (stress reaction in his right hip) is on the 10-day DL and will see a specialist later this week.

Martin can take over the bulk of the innings in center, splitting time with veteran Rajai Davis, who can get starts against lefties and offer speed off the bench. In 638 1/3 innings in center this season, the 30-year-old Martin had recorded three Defensive Runs Saved. His 13.4 UZR/150 ranks second among qualified MLB center fielders, as do the 8.2 fielding runs above average logged this year.

"We lost Zimmer, we lost Chiz, we lost Naquin," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "So, when it was all said and done, you're like, 'OK, what can really impact us?' A center fielder that complements Raj. I think sometimes people lose track of like, OK, what's your roster? And what complements what?"

Offensively, Martin can slot into the lower third of the lineup and potentially provide an uptick in production for Cleveland's very top-heavy order. Martin has a .251/.321/.409 slash line with nine homers and 27 extra-base hits in 78 games this season. He has hit .275 with a .783 OPS and 113 wRC+ against right-handed pitching, meaning he has been 13 percent above league average in that regard.

Martin has dealt with a left hamstring issue on and off this season, but Antonetti said the Indians are confident that the outfielder is moving past that problem.

"We spent a lot of time on that," Antonetti said. "Also, we had the ability to see him play over the last handful of games to watch and make sure he's healthy. We think he's working his way back to full strength and top speed, but he's getting pretty close to that level."

The Indians always prefer to target players with multiple years of control in trades and Martin fits that description, as well. He is under contract this season for \$1.75 million and has one more year of arbitration eligibility remaining. That offers Cleveland a layer of protection in the outfield, given that Zimmer could miss the first half next season and Chisenhall is hitting free agency this winter.

Before landing Martin, the Indians were also linked to outfielders Adam Jones, Adam Duvall, Derek Dietrich, Joey Gallo and Cameron Maybin, among others, in various reports and rumors. Jones, specifically, had the right to block any trade due to his 10-and-5 rights (at least 10 years of MLB service and at least five years with the current club).

Antonetti said the Indians never reached a point in any talks where a player with veto rights was asked if he would approve a deal.

"We never got to the point of presenting something to a player," Antonetti said. "But there were hundreds of different concepts that we talked about over the last few weeks. We were able to get a couple of them done, but [having some deals collapse] is par for the course as you explore trades."

Dowdy, 25, was a 12th-round selection by Detroit in the 2015 Draft and offers a layer of rotation depth for the Tribe's farm system. Between Double-A Erie and Triple-A Toledo this year, the right-hander was 8-8 with a 4.74 ERA, 92 strikeouts and 32 walks in 95 innings.

The 21-year-old Castro -- ranked eighth overall on the Indians' Top 30 prospects, per MLB Pipeline -- has been heralded for his defensive play throughout the Minors. This past winter, Cleveland even added the young infielder to its 40-man roster to protect him from possible selection in the Rule 5 Draft in December. The presence of Francisco Lindor made a prospect like Castro (currently at Double-A) expendable.

The Indians also pulled off a Minor League trade with the Cardinals on Tuesday, reeling in outfield prospect Oscar Mercado for Minor League outfielders Conner Capel and Jhon Torres.

The Martin deal helps Cleveland's need for improvement in the outfield and comes on the heels of the Tribe addressing its need for bullpen reinforcements. On July 19, the Indians shipped their former top prospect, catcher Francisco Mejia, to the Padres in order to land All-Star closer Brad Hand and sidearmer Adam Cimber.

"They did a really good job," Francona said of the front office. "I mean, it's not easy. We have some parameters, which we know are in place. We're not going to be the Dodgers or the Red Sox. But, we don't want that to get in the way of us winning. And I think they've done an unbelievable job of making us better."

Tribe could continue trade season in August

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

DETROIT -- If recent history has taught Indians fans anything, it is that Cleveland's search for roster reinforcements does not end when the calendar flips to August. Over the past few years, the Tribe has still added pieces for the stretch run after the non-waiver Trade Deadline.

The August period is a little more complicated, but quality players can still either be claimed or clear waivers to create trade opportunities. At the moment, the Indians would have the top waiver priority among the American League's projected playoff teams due to their record. "It's another opportunity for us to improve the options," Indians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said, referring to August. "That said, I feel really good about the team we have entering the second half of the season now."

That confidence stems from the series of trades pulled off by the Tribe in the weeks leading up to Tuesday's non-waiver Trade Deadline.

On July 19, Cleveland addressed its glaring bullpen need by acquiring All-Star closer Brad Hand and reliever Adam Cimber from the Padres in exchange for catching prospect Francisco Mejia. Then, the Indians netted center fielder Leonys Martin from the Tigers (along with Minor League pitcher Kyle Dowdy) on Tuesday for shortstop prospect Willi Castro.

Those deals took care of the two primary needs during this trade season. That said, Cleveland is still using platoons in center field (Martin and Rajai Davis) and right field (Melky Cabrera and Brandon Guyer), which is not ideal. The Tribe is due to get Andrew Miller back from the disabled list in the near future, but the team could also keep searching for relief help.

At the non-waiver Trade Deadline teams on the cusp of contention that may have been reluctant to trade away players might change their tune in a couple of weeks. That could provide alternatives for the Indians to consider, if the current roster alignment does not function as well as hoped.

Last year, when injuries impacted Cleveland's outfield in August, the Indians pulled off a trade with the Mets on Aug. 9 to land right fielder Jay Bruce. One year earlier, the Tribe acquired veteran outfielder Coco Crisp from the A's on Aug. 31 and he played a key role down the stretch and throughout the Tribe's run to the World Series. The Indians also made August deals in each year from '13-15.

"I'm not sure it's realistic," Antonetti said of continuing that trend this year. "But any of those guys who didn't get traded could be options for us in the August waiver period. Now, it gets a lot more complicated to be able to execute a trade during that time period."

Tribe acquires Oscar Mercado from Cards

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians pulled off one trade to help their current roster on Tuesday afternoon and then swung another with the future in mind.

After acquiring center fielder Leonys Martin from the Tigers to address the Major League's need for outfield help, Cleveland landed outfield prospect Oscar Mercado from the Cardinals. The Tribe sent outfield prospects Conner Capel and Jhon Torres to St. Louis to reel in Mercado, who will be added to the 40-man roster and report to Triple-A Columbus.

"He's a very athletic player," said Chris Antonetti, the Indians' president of baseball operations. "He transitioned from shortstop to center field a couple of years ago and has really made that transition well. We think he's an above-average defender with above-average speed that adds a very good option for us in the near-term at the Major League level in the outfield."

In order to add the 23-year-old Mercado to the roster, the Indians designated outfielder Johnny Field for assignment.

Mercado was ranked as the Cardinals' 10th-best prospect on their Top 30 list, per MLB Pipeline. Through 100 games for Triple-A Memphis this season, the young outfielder posted a .285/.351/.408 slash line with eight home runs, 21 doubles, 31 steals, 73 runs and 64 strikeouts vs. 36 walks.

Mercado has improved both his walk rate (8.4 percent at Triple-A in 2017, compared to 6.1 percent at Double-A in '17), and his strikeout rate (15 percent in '18 vs. 21.4 percent in '17) this season with the Redbirds. He was selected in the second round of the 2013 MLB Draft by the Cardinals as a shortstop, but he transitioned to center field in '16 and has played outfield full time over the past two years.

Including Capel (No. 14), the Indians have dealt away three of their Top 30 prospects (per MLB Pipeline) this month. Earlier on Tuesday, Cleveland shipped shortstop prospect Willi Castro (No. 8) to the Tigers to net Martin and Minor League pitcher Kyle Dowdy. On July 19, the Indians traded their former No.1 prospect, catcher Francisco Mejia, to the Padres to obtain All-Star closer Brad Hand and reliever Adam Cimber.

Indians manager Terry Francona said the Mercado deal -- one with the future in mind -- was an exciting one.

"Supposedly, he's an unbelievable kid to start with," Francona said. "He can run and he's a shortstop that moved to the outfield. He's athletic as all get-out. I think a little bit like Greg [Allen], he's still developing as far as hitting goes. But just because he's not here doesn't mean we're not excited. When we got him, I was excited just about as much as anybody else."

Worth noting

- Tribe relief ace Andrew Miller (60-day DL, right knee) worked one shutout inning in a rehab outing for Triple-A Columbus on Monday night. Miller logged 10 pitches (eight strikes) against three batters and ended with one strikeout. Francona noted that the lefty would pitch again for Columbus on Tuesday, marking his first back-to-back outings since going on the DL.

"When we get back home," Francona said, "we'll reconvene and see what the next step is."

- Right-hander Josh Tomlin (10-day DL, right hamstring) threw two simulated innings (15 pitches each) prior to Tuesday's game against the Twins at Target Field. Francona said Tomlin will now embark on a Minor League rehab assignment, beginning with an outing with Triple-A Columbus on Friday.

- In light of the recent trades, Francona said he plans on meeting with his team on Wednesday morning. Said Francona: "We've got some new guys here. It kind of looks like it's going to be our team the rest of the way. We might actually visit for a few minutes."

McKenzie spins a gem for Akron

By Daniel Kramer and Casey Harrison MLB.com

- No. 37 overall prospect Triston McKenzie (Indians No. 1) tossed seven innings of one-run ball, lowering his ERA with Double-A Akron to 2.77. As he's continued his climb through Cleveland's farm system, McKenzie -- a first-round pick in 2015 -- has continued to prove that he has wipeout secondary pitches to go with an impressive fastball that scouting reports say has picked up velocity. McKenzie is in his fourth season as a pro, yet he's just 20 years old.

The Indians' approach to Trade Deadline Day, what it means and what comes next

Zack Meisel Aug 1, 2018 9

MINNEAPOLIS — Despite the daunting degree of competition within the American League, the Indians refused to stray from their modus operandi.

During the mad dash to Tuesday's non-waiver trade deadline, the front office's focus remained on acquiring players with multiple years of control. There's no chapter on overpaying for a rental in the team handbook. So, none of the household names linked to the club during the chaotic trade season — Manny Machado, Adam Jones, Bryce Harper — found their way onto the back of an Indians uniform.

Instead, the team traded for an All-Star closer under control through 2021, a funky submarine-releasing reliever under control through 2023 and an outfielder under control through 2019.

Chris Antonetti and Mike Chernoff are creatures of habit. If they're to part with any prospects with palpable buzz, they're going to land a long-term solution. Brad Hand joins a list that includes Ubaldo Jimenez and Andrew Miller and could have included Jonathan Lucroy, had he not nixed his relocation to Cleveland.

The addition of Leonys Martín is no seismic splash. It's more of a gentle wave. But it's something. And the Indians needed something (and then some) for an outfield that ranks 24th in WAR, 25th in wRC+ and 21st in defensive runs saved.

The Indians like Martín's glove; he rates as an above-average center fielder. They like his ability to hit right-handers; he owns a .783 OPS and a 113 wRC+ against righties this season. That's Cooperstown-worthy output compared with what the club has received from its center fielders this year.

But how did the Indians wind up here? And what does it mean for this season and beyond? Let's start with the path that paved the way toward July 31.

1. A winter's tale: The Indians' most glaring flaws existed months ago, too. Those bullpen woes? They might have been somewhat avoidable had the club filled in some of the gaps during the offseason. And Miller's balky right knee hasn't helped. The team has cycled through every breathing human with an arm and some free time. Remember Alexi Ogando and Ben Taylor and Jeff Beliveau?

The outfield featured some question marks, too, even if they weren't in the form many imagined. The Indians exercised Michael Brantley's \$12 million option and, fortunately for the club, he has remained healthy. The same can't be said for Bradley Zimmer. Or Lonnie Chisenhall. Or Tyler Naquin. Brandon Guyer has bounced between the trainer's table and the starting lineup.

The Marlins unloaded Christian Yelich and Marcell Ozuna over the winter. The Brewers signed Lorenzo Cain to a five-year deal, and the Indians were believed to have been interested in doing the same.

Instead, a fragile outfield has hindered the lineup's potential. Tommy Pham, traded to the Rays on Tuesday, might have made more sense from a hitting standpoint. Pham finished 11th in the National League MVP balloting last season and didn't cost the Rays a top-10 prospect.

2. Familiar faces on the training table: Chisenhall and Rajai Davis are eligible for free agency this winter. Naquin and Guyer could cover right field, unless the front office finds an upgrade. Martín's presence is critical for center field, given Zimmer's prognosis. He might not be ready until the middle of next season, and even then, he had plenty of work to do with his bat.

3. Sorting through the options: Once the amateur draft wrapped up in early June, the Indians shifted their attention to trade season. Their first priority, established early on in the calendar, was to fix the bullpen. To do that, they shipped their top prospect to San Diego. Hand and Adam Cimber came with ample years of control, again fitting the company creed.

Then, it was on to the outfield. Antonetti said the team sorted through “hundreds of different concepts” over the last few weeks. They assessed every available outfielder. They considered infielders, too, with the idea of returning Jason Kipnis to center field. Antonetti and Kipnis sat down to discuss that scenario a few weeks ago, and Kipnis told the team president he had no issue moving to center.

“I think, in the end, we really did want to keep him where he was,” Terry Francona said.

They kicked the tires on Manny Machado. They searched for long-term solutions. They inquired about short-term candidates.

It didn't help that the Pirates caught fire in July. Starling Marte, Gregory Polanco and Corey Dickerson might have appealed to the Indians. The Indians never advanced deep enough in talks with the Orioles about Adam Jones to require the veteran to consider waiving his no-trade clause. Ultimately, he remained in Baltimore. The Nationals put out feelers on Harper, only to keep their core intact Tuesday.

So, the Indians flipped their No. 8 prospect (per MLB.com) in Willi Castro to Detroit. Martín's flight to Minneapolis was scheduled to land about 9 p.m. CT. He'll be added to the roster in time for Wednesday's series finale.

“I think we got kind of a sleeper,” Francona said.

So, now what? They snagged the top reliever on the market, plus a second piece skilled enough to solidify the bullpen for October and serve as insurance should Cody Allen and Miller depart this winter. But Martín's presence doesn't exactly alleviate all that ails the outfield and the lineup.

1. An active August: This might come as a surprise, but Antonetti said the team will remain active in scouring the market for upgrades in August. (Really, no executive should admit otherwise.) Many of the veteran players who weren't dealt this week should be in play on the waiver wire. It's a complicated process, of course. A team must claim the player and then work out an arrangement to acquire him. But the Indians do have the benefit of sitting ahead of their American League competition on the waiver priority list.

Andrew McCutchen seems like a guy who could be moved in August. Should the Melky Cabrera experiment not work out, perhaps the Indians would look more intently at McCutchen (or other waiver candidates). Keep in mind, the Indians added Jay Bruce on Aug. 9 last year.

The Indians did complete a second trade Tuesday afternoon, as they acquired outfielder Oscar Mercado from the Cardinals in exchange for prospects Conner Capel and Jhon Torres. Mercado, a 23-year-old center fielder, owns a .285/.351/.408 slash line with 31 stolen bases this season. He'll report to Class AAA Columbus.

“We think he's an above-average defender with above-average speed that adds a very good option for us in the near term at the major-league level in the outfield,” Antonetti said.

2. More time for Melky: Cabrera and Guyer figure to continue to split time in right field. Cabrera has hit well during his second stint with the Tribe, but it's a small sample size. Francona does value Cabrera's ability to switch-hit.

3. More questions about Yandy: It was already difficult to see how Yandy Díaz fit onto this roster. Now, it seems impossible. The one avenue was for Díaz to take over at third, with José Ramírez shifting to second and Kipnis taking over in center. That no longer seems to be on the table. Díaz has posted a .287/.414/.388 clip at Columbus. He collected seven hits in 14 at-bats in brief action with the Indians after the All-Star break.

4. More homework: The trades for Hand, Cimber and Martín reduce the front office's workload for the winter, but that sky-high stack of homework still rivals Kilimanjaro. There will be more questions about the bullpen and about Kipnis and about Danny Salazar. Brantley can become a free agent at the end of the season, leaving the outfield with another massive question mark.

But that's the long view. The short view says the Indians have a cakewalk to the postseason, thanks in large part to the noncompetitive AL Central. The Red Sox, Yankees and Astros, however, have greatly outplayed the Tribe through the first four months of the season. Variance certainly reigns supreme in October, but the more talent a team has, the more it can minimize the influence of the baseball gods.

A front office member typically accompanies the Indians on each road trip. Eric Binder, the director of player development, traveled to Detroit over the weekend while Antonetti attended the Hall of Fame festivities in Cooperstown, New York. Binder returned to Cleveland instead of continuing on to Minneapolis, though, as the Indians' executives gathered to gear up for the trade deadline.

After the deadline passed Tuesday, Antonetti joked that he can finally get some sleep.

“It's been an eventful few days,” he said.

Indians add stability to center field by acquiring Leonys Martin from Tigers

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The Indians made a needed secondary move ahead of Tuesday's nonwaiver trade deadline, acquiring center fielder Leonys Martin, along with pitching prospect Kyle Dowdy, from the Detroit Tigers in exchange for shortstop prospect Willi Castro.

Martin adds some stability to center field in the wake of Bradley Zimmer's season-ending surgery, which has come after a flurry of injuries and inconsistency for the Indians in the outfield with the exception of Michael Brantley in left field.

Following the July 19 deal to acquire relievers Brad Hand and Adam Cimber from the San Diego Padres in exchange for Francisco Mejia, the club's top prospect, the Indians were able to turn their full attention to their outfield situation. Bolstering the bullpen was priority No. 1, and the club went on to explore a number of options to address their outfield, with the search eventually landing Martin a few hours before the deadline.

"We think he's a great complement to our roster," said Chris Antonetti, president of baseball operations. "He provides us with a very good defender in center field who's a good base-runner, capable of playing both center and right and is also a very good offensive player against right-handed pitching."

Martin, 30, has been having a quality season with the Tigers, especially defensively. He's hitting .251 with a .731 OPS, nine home runs, 15 doubles, three triples, 29 RBI and seven stolen bases. In center field, his nine outfield assists in 2018 is tied for second in baseball, and his 13.4 UZR/150 is seventh in the game, according to FanGraphs.

His three defensive runs saved are 28th among qualified outfielders. It should be noted that half a season isn't an ideal sample size for the advanced defensive metrics, but Martin has played well by most metrics in his career with 49 DRS in 5,087 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings in center field and a career 10.0 UZR/150.

With Zimmer done for the season and Tyler Naquin (hip) now on the disabled list, center field duties were down to Greg Allen and Rajai Davis. Martin has been placed on the 10-day DL twice this year with a left hamstring injury, but Antonetti and the front office believe they did their due diligence.

"We spent a lot of time on that, working through that, talking it through both with the Tigers' medical personnel, and we had the ability to see him play over the last handful of games to make sure he's healthy," Antonetti said. "We think he's working his way back to full strength and top speed, but he's getting pretty close to that level."

And, an important element in any deal the Indians make, Martin is under club control through next season as he goes through the arbitration process.

The Indians did explore options to acquire an infielder, which would have resulted in Jason Kipnis shifting to center field as he did toward the end of last season.

Antonetti said he spoke with Kipnis a couple of weeks ago about the possibility, and the veteran second baseman assured him that he'd do whatever was needed.

In the end, though, the Indians were able to address their outfield directly, leaving the infield untouched.

"To Kip's credit, he was incredible with it," Antonetti said. "He said, 'Hey, I care most about being part of a winning team that wins the World Series and whatever I can do to help that, whether that's playing second base or playing the outfield, I'd be willing to go do it. So if you can get a player that helps us, I'll play wherever I can to contribute to help the team.' And that allowed us to explore a lot of options."

Castro was the No. 8 prospect in the Indians' system according to MLB Pipeline, a young, switch-hitting middle infielder. This season, he's hit .245 with a .653 OPS for the Double-A RubberDucks.

Dowdy has posted a 4.74 ERA in 95 innings (24 appearances, 14 starts) between Triple-A and Double-A this season.

The Indians also made a secondary deal on Tuesday, acquiring minor-league outfielder Oscar Mercado from the St. Louis Cardinals in exchange for minor-leaguers Conner Capel and Jhon Torres. Johnny Field was also designated for assignment.

Mercado was ranked as the No. 10 prospect in the Cardinals' system according to MLB Pipeline. Capel was ranked No. 15 in the Indians' organization. This season, Mercado has hit .285 with a .759 OPS in Triple-A to go with 31 stolen bases.

Did Cleveland Indians' Jose Ramirez have a good or bad game Monday night? You make the call

By Paul Hoynes

MINNEAPOLIS - Sometimes it's just hard to know about baseball. Every inning, every at-bat, every pitch has a different outcome.

Who's to say what's good and what's bad? The final score determines which team won or lost, but does that mean every player on the losing side had a bad game and everyone on the winning side performed well?

Look at what Indians third baseman Jose Ramirez did Monday night in a 5-4 loss to the Twins at Target Field.

In the first inning Ramirez hit a 3-2 pitch over the right field wall for a 1-0 lead. It ended an 0-for-17 slump and gave him 31 homers for the season.

In his second at-bat, Ramirez hit another 3-2 pitch over the right field wall to tie the score, 2-2. The second homer, which came at the expense of Ervin Santana, the same pitcher who allowed the first one, was Ramirez's 32nd of the season and tied him with Boston's J.D. Martinez for the MLB lead.

The last player to do something like this for the Indians was Jim Thome, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame on Sunday. Thome in 2002 had 33 homers before August.

Ramirez made an out in his next at-bat, but in the seventh, with Francisco Lindor on third and two out, the Twins intentionally walked him to face Edwin Encarnacion with the score tied, 4-4. Encarnacion is the only player in the big leagues to hit 30 or more homers in the last six years and the Twins preferred to face him instead of Ramirez. That's how dangerous Ramirez has been this year.

The strategy worked as Encarnacion struck out, but not before Ramirez stole his 24th base of the season. Ramirez is not only tied for the MLB lead in homers, but he's third in the big leagues and second in the AL in stolen bases. Six more steals and he'll be the Tribe's first 30-30 man since Grady Sizemore in 2008.

So what's not to like about a game like that? Two homers, two runs, two RBI, a walk and a stolen base. The intentional walk marked the eighth straight game in which Ramirez has walked at least once. Yes, that 0-for-17 slump took a piece out of his batting average, but he's still been getting on base, a direct reflection of Ramirez's control of the strike zone.

Ramirez has 69 walks and 51 strikeouts in 463 plate appearances. Last year he had 52 walks and 69 strikeouts in 645 plate appearances. In the launch angle age, he is a power hitter who still respects boundaries.

In the ninth inning, the game turned for Ramirez and the Indians. Twins closer Fernando Rodney, the rare right-hander who wears his cap crooked - left-handers usually have the copyright on that - walked Lindor to start the inning with the score tied, 4-4. Lindor stole second and took third on a ground out by Michael Brantley to bring Ramirez to the plate.

How do you choose between hitting a HR in your first AB vs. your second AB?

Porque no los dos? [?] [?] #RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/hFKFXUgoik

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) July 31, 2018

The Indians were going to take the lead, right? Ramirez leads the team with 76 RBI and is hitting .300 (27-for-90) with runners in scoring position. Plus, Rodney looked shaky. During the walk to Lindor, he caught a cleat on the mound and threw a pitch to the backstop.

"We have Josie up in the ninth," said manager Terry Francona. "He's the guy you want up there."

When Rodney fell behind Ramirez, 3-1, the Indians chances looked even better. But Ramirez fouled off an 84 mph changeup and a 97 mph fastball to run the count full. Rodney came back with the another 97 mph fastball, this one on the outside part of the plate, and Ramirez swung and missed. He froze at the plate for a moment or two, almost like he couldn't believe he'd missed it.

"You could tell be his reaction," said Francona. "It was like, 'What happened?' That's kind of rare."

Rodney pitched around Encarnacion, walking him on four pitches, and struck out Yonder Alonso on another 3-2 fastball to end the inning. The Twins won it in the ninth on a double by Mitch Garvey

After the game, Ramirez was asked if he felt he had a good game or a bad game.

"That's a weird question," said Ramirez through interpreter Will Clements. "I don't have an answer."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.01.2018

Cleveland Indians acquire center fielder Leonys Martin from Detroit Tigers

By Paul Hoynes

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians have acquired center fielder Leonys Martin from the Detroit Tigers. They've been trying to fill a need in center field and Martin will help them do that.

The Tribe also acquired right-hander Klye Dowdy and sent shortstop Willi Castro to the Tigers. Castro was in big league camp with the Indians this spring.

Martin, 30, is a veteran left-handed hitter who has played well for the Tigers this season. People who have watched him on a daily basis said he's been Detroit's spark plug.

He's hitting .251 (76-for-303) with nine homers and 29 RBI. Martin has 20 doubles, three triples and has scored 45 runs. The Cuban native played with Texas, Seattle and the Cubs before signing with the Tigers as a free agent in December.

By acquiring Martin, the Indians will attempt to fill a seemingly bottomless hole in center field. So far this year, they've lost center fielders Bradley Zimmer and Tyler Naquin to injuries.

It will also give manager Terry Francona a chance to platoon in center field with veteran Rajai Davis or rookie Greg Allen. Martin is hitting .275 (63-for-229) with seven homers and 20 RBI against right-handers.

The Indians have seen plenty of Martin this year and he made an impression. He hit .300 (15-for-50) with two homers and three RBI against the Tribe. He also stole four bases and scored seven runs in 13 games.

Martin, who spent time on the disabled list with a left hamstring injury this year, has a good arm. He leads the AL with nine outfield assists and his 228 outfield putouts are second in the league. He has 59 outfield assists since the start of the 2013 season, second most in the big leagues.

During his stay with the Rangers, Martin was a stolen base threat. This year he has just seven steals in 10 attempts. But his hamstring injury probably has something to do with that.

Martin is making \$1.75 million this year and is not eligible for free agency until 2020. He's definitely an option for next year as well. The Indians are going to need outfielders because Michael Brantley, Lonnie Chisenhall, Davis and Melky Cabrera can all be free agents at the end of the season.

Dowdy, 25, has gone 8-8 with a 4.74 ERA between Class AA Erie and Class AAA Toledo this year. He was Detroit's 12th round pick in 2015.

Castro, a switch-hitter, was hitting .245 (91-for-371) with 20 doubles, five homers and 39 RBI at Class AA Akron. He scored 55 runs and stole 13 bases in 17 attempts.

He had a big year last season at Class A Lynchburg, hitting .290 with 11 homers and 56 RBI.

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Cleveland Indians Scribbles: Small trade could help -- Terry Pluto

By Terry Pluto

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Scribbles in my notebook after the Indians traded for Leonys Martin:

1. Do the Indians need more offense from their outfielders not named Michael Brantley? Of course. But their outfield defense also has been a problem. Picking up Leonys Martin from Detroit should help that. Fangraphs is not the ultimate authority on defense, but its rating system

usually passes the eye test. While watching Martin with the Tigers, it was easy to see how he was superb in center. Fangraphs rates him as the best center fielder in the American League.

2. Martin is batting .275 (.782 OPS) vs. right-handers this season. Against lefties, the 30-year-old is batting .176 (.566 OPS). The Indians can platoon Martin with veteran Rajai Davis, who is batting exactly .256 against lefties and righties this season.

3. Fangraphs rates Davis as the No. 5 defensive center fielder in the American League. When Davis wasn't playing, the Indians had Tyler Naquin in center, and he struggled. Greg Allen also played some center, but Allen is batting only .210 (.532 OPS) with one HR and five RBI in 154 plate appearances.

4. With Bradley Zimmer out for 8-12 months with shoulder surgery, the Indians also need a center fielder for next season. Martin is making \$1.75 million. He can't be a free agent until 2020. So the Indians can keep him for another year.

5. Naquin has sustained a significant hip injury. He could be out a long time. Lonnie Chisenhall is on the 60-day disabled list with a calf injury. It's possible Naquin and Chisenhall are done for the season, joining Zimmer.

6. The Indians found Melky Cabrera early in the season. Cabrera has helped, batting .273 (.692 OPS) with one HR and 12 RBI in 88 plate appearances. He is a switch-hitter. He is a poor outfielder, but they will live with that because they don't have many other options.

7. The Indians do have Brandon Guyer for right field. But he should never...and I mean NEVER...face right-handed pitching. This season, he is 5-for-50 (.100) vs. righties. He is batting .274 (.952 OPS) vs. lefties. They can platoon Guyer and Cabrera in right field.

8. With the 30-year-old Martin, the Indians decided they can go for an elite glove because the price for a big-time bat was too high. They didn't want to trade a top prospect such as Triston McKenzie. The right-hander will turn 21 on Thursday. He is 5-2 with a 2.96 ERA at Class AA Akron. Opposing batters are hitting only .192 against him.

9. They gave up Will Castro, a 21-year-old shortstop who was batting .245 (.653 OPS) with five HR and 39 RBI for Akron. He is rated as a top 10 Tribe prospect. The Indians are loaded with young middle infielders: Francisco Lindor, Jose Ramirez and Erik Gonzalez. Castro is projected as a big leaguer at some point, but there was little room for him with the Tribe in the next few years.

10. Baseball America on Castro: "Castro ranked as the Indians No. 9 prospect largely because of his tools and youth rather than his numbers...the switch-hitting Castro shows promising traits. He doesn't strike out much. He is an above-average runner who steals bases efficiently (13-for-17) and has the hands to remain at shortstop...few think Castro will hit enough to be an everyday player. Opposing evaluators still like him as a potential utilityman with his speed and middle infield defense."

11. The Indians also received 25-year-old Kyle Dowdy in the deal. He is 8-8 with a 4.74 ERA between Class AA and Class AAA this season. Baseball America wrote his fastball "sits 92-93 mph and touches 95 mph. An upper 80s cutter is his best secondary (pitch). His change-up and curveball are below average."

12. Dowdy could end up being moved to the bullpen at some point in his career. The Indians are looking for strong arms to help out in relief.

13. Of concern with Martin is his recent history of hamstring injuries. He has been on the disabled list twice with them this season. He is healthy now. The Indians are desperate for outfielders. Martin's defense can be a major plus. Castro was not a premier prospect. It's a deal that should help the Tribe this season -- assuming Martin remains healthy.

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Cleveland Indians acquire OF Oscar Mercado from St. Louis for outfielders Conner Capel, Jhon Torres

By Paul Hoynes

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians, with an eye toward rebuilding their outfield, have acquired outfielder Oscar Mercado from St. Louis and sent him to Class AAA Columbus. Johnny Field was designated for assignment to make room for him on the 40-man roster.

The Tribe sent outfield prospects Conner Capel and Jhon Torres to St. Louis for the Mercado.

"Oscar is a right-handed hitting outfielder who was on the (St. Louis) roster and currently at Triple-A," said Chris Antonetti, Indians president of baseball operations. "He's a very athletic player who transitioned from shortstop to center field a couple of years ago and has really made that transition well."

"We think he's an above average defender with above average speed that adds a very good option for us in the near term as a major league option."

Mercado, 23, was hitting .285 (109-for-389) with eight homers and 42 RBI at Class AAA Memphis. He scored 73 runs and stole 31 bases in 39 attempts, while posting a .759 OPS.

The Cardinals drafted Mercado in the second round in 2013.

Capel, 21, was the Tribe's fifth round pick in 2016. He's hitting .261 (84-for-322) with six homers and 44 RBI at Class A Lynchburg.

Torres, 18, was hitting .273 (27-for-99) with four homers and 16 RBI for the Tribe's Arizona Rookie League team. Torres, a native of Colombia, is 6-4 and 188 pounds.

The Indians are going to need to rebuild their outfield after this season because Michael Brantley, Lonnie Chisenhall, Melky Cabrera and Rajai Davis are free agents. It's also unknown if and when outfielders Bradley Zimmer (right shoulder) and Tyler Naquin (right hip) will be able to play. Zimmer needed surgery on his right shoulder and Naquin is going to New York on Thursday to get his hip examined by a specialist.

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Cleveland Indians finally find a way to beat the disappearing Minnesota Twins, 6-2

By Paul Hoynes

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Twins' fire sale continued Tuesday, and they have finally sent enough talent out of town to allow the Indians to win a game.

Trevor Bauer grinded through 6 1/3 innings and Edwin Encarnacion drove in three runs in the late going as the Indians beat the Twins, 6-2, at Target Field. It was just the fourth time in 11 games that the AL Central-leading Indians have beaten the Twins this season.

On Monday, the rebuilding Twins traded Zach Duke and Lance Lynn. On Tuesday, just before the 4 p.m. trading deadline, they sent Brian Dozier to the Dodgers. They are disappearing right in front of the Indians, but it doesn't matter.

When the Indians play the Twins, nothing is easy.

Bauer (10-6, 2.34) reached double figures in wins for the fourth straight year. He improved to 5-7 lifetime against the Twins and he was not happy with himself after the game.

"I'm happy we won, but I'm not proud of myself for being (expletive)," said Bauer. "I struggled with throwing strikes. I couldn't command my off speed stuff and I was spraying fastballs everywhere.

"That's fairly typical when my velo jumps like it did. So that was encouraging that my velo is coming back, but my command of it was terrible."

When Bauer left with one out in the seventh, manager Terry Francona went with his two-headed closer to finish the game. Brad Hand, a Minneapolis native, retired four of the five batters he faced. After Max Kepler doubled with two out in the eighth, Cody Allen relieved and ended the inning.

Terry Francona on Trevor Bauer and Greg Allen

Allen worked the ninth for his 21st save. Hand and Allen have saved a combined 46 games this season.

Francona has two closers who are willing to work without being restricted a certain inning. When Andrew Miller returns he'll have three like-minded closers.

"To me it helps a ton," said Francona. "If you have a good pitcher, and he's not going real deep in the count, they've got a chance to face five or six hitters like Brad did tonight as opposed to pitching one inning because it's that inning.

"I don't think it makes a lot of sense. I do appreciate our guys willingness to do it."

Encarnacion gave the Indians a 5-2 lead with a two-out single in the seventh off Matt Belisle, who opened the season in the Tribe's pen. He added another RBI in the ninth on an infield grounder that scored Francisco Lindor from third. Encarnacion has 76 RBI.

"Some guys are just better at it," said Francona, referring to driving in runs. "He has a knack for it that's for sure."

The Twins took a 1-0 lead against Bauer in the second. Miguel Sano opened with a double, took third on a sacrifice bunt and scored on Jake Cave's sacrifice fly.

The Indians pushed back to take a 2-1 lead in the third against Twins starter Kyle Gibson (5-8, 3.47). Roberto Perez started the inning with a double off the wall in left center field. It was Perez's first extra-base hit of any kind since he hit two doubles on June 18 against the White Sox.

Greg Allen bunted Perez to third. The rookie center fielder's speed turned it into a single that withstood a challenge by the Twins. After Lindor walked to load the bases, Perez scored on Michael Brantley's 6-4-3 double-play grounder.

It looked like the Indians were going to let another opportunity slip away -- they went 0-for-11 with runners in scoring position in Monday's 5-4 loss -- when Jose Ramirez doubled for a 2-1 lead.

Ramirez put the Tribe ahead 3-1 with another two-out RBI in the fifth off Gibson. Perez walked to start the inning, and Allen followed with his second hit of the night. Lindor sent a bouncer back to the mound and Gibson threw to third to force Perez. Brantley forced Lindor at second, but Ramirez singled to right for his 78th RBI.

He entered the game ranked third in the AL in RBI behind Boston's J.D. Martinez and Oakland's Khris Davis.

Bauer allowed a leadoff homer to Logan Morris in the sixth to make it 3-2. It was only the seventh homer Bauer has allowed this season.

Allen, who led the Indians with three hits, was sent down after the game. His spot on the roster will be filled by Leonys Martin, acquired from the Tigers on Tuesday. He'll be activated before Wednesday's game.

What it means

The Indians ended July with a 14-11 record. They have had a winning record in every month this season except March, when they went 1-1.

The pitches

Gibson threw 98 pitches, 57 (58 percent) for strikes. Bauer threw 102 pitches, 60 (59 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Twins drew 25,482 to Target Field on Tuesday night. First pitch was at 8:10 p.m. with a temperature of 83 degrees.

Next

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (12-5, 3.89) will face the Twins and lefty Adalberto Mejia (1-0, 3.65) on Wednesday at 1:10 p.m. The game can be seen only on Facebook Watch. WTAM and WMMS will carry the game on radio as well.

Carrasco has won his last four decisions dating back to July 6. This will be his third start against the Twins this season, and he'll be trying to end his two-game skid against them.

Mejia replaced scheduled starter Lance Lynn, who was traded to the Yankees on Monday. He is 1-2 with a 2.70 ERA in three starts against the Tribe.

Q&A: Jason Kipnis opens up about his trying season, his future, the Indians' future and his talks with the front office

Zack Meisel 42m ago 2

MINNEAPOLIS — In past years, Jason Kipnis has assessed the state of the Indians as one of its core members, a building block and leader who had the pulse of the clubhouse.

As he sat on the corner of a couch in the center of the visitor's clubhouse at Target Field on Tuesday afternoon, minutes after the non-waiver trade deadline had passed, Kipnis shared his perspective on a handful of topics. But the conversation carried a different tone. No longer is he an anchor of the lineup or a player locked up for the long haul. Kipnis has been on a season-long hunt for solutions at the plate, as evidenced by his .221/.304/.358 slash line and 80 wRC+. (It's worth noting that his OPS in the past two months is better than .800.)

So when Chris Antonetti approached him a few weeks ago and mentioned the potential of a trade forcing Kipnis to the outfield, the 31-year-old assured the team president that he'd gladly accept any sort of assignment (especially if the transaction included Manny Machado).

"That allowed us to explore a lot of options," Antonetti said.

Ultimately, the addition of Leonys Martín solidified Kipnis' standing at second base.

"I think, in the end, we really did want to keep him where he was," Terry Francona said. "I also think part of Kip's willingness is Chris' honesty with him. I don't know if you see too many front office guys that are willing to sit down in the food room and talk to a guy. And I think that goes a long way in guys' willingness, because it's kind of hard not to when you've got a guy telling you the truth."

Kipnis has no trouble being candid, either. He knows he's struggling at the plate. He knows he hasn't wielded the smoothest glove. He knows his days in Cleveland are likely limited to 2018 and '19, at most. (He's owed \$14.7 million for next year, plus a \$2.5 million buyout or a \$16.5 million club option for 2020.) That's why he joked that he wanted to see the front office strip the farm system of his talent and acquire the headline-grabbing names on the trade market.

"I don't care how they are in four years," he joked. "I won't be here!"

In reality, Kipnis believes the Indians are poised to contend for years to come. He believes the Indians have yet to play to their potential in 2018. He believes he has better days ahead, too.

He spoke about those topics and more with a couple of reporters, including The Athletic, on Tuesday afternoon.

Antonetti said he spoke to you a couple of weeks ago and you expressed a willingness to go to center field, if necessary. What was your mindset over these last couple of weeks, with the uncertainty about what they were going to do or where you were going to play?

When you've been here for a while and you know your so-called window and you know you have a playoff team, you want to be part of it in any way possible. And you want the best team they can get, so if the front office is going out and getting the best players to help us, be it a second baseman, be it a bullpen guy, whatever, we'll accommodate. We've seen a lot of guys move around, whether it's Cody and Miller, all those guys, or I did it last year. I would do it again if I thought that a guy was coming in to make us a better team.

Did you pay particularly close attention to rumors because you might be affected?

A little bit. I've heard them. It's hard not to see it. And before people think that I'm searching my name on Twitter or anything like that, you come into a big-league clubhouse with MLB Network on all day, or when we follow you guys on Twitter — even without looking for it, it's in our face. So, I've seen 'em. I knew, whether it was Dozier, Cabby, all of these. I saw them all come up. We didn't talk about those. (Laughs) But at the same time, I didn't think Chris had to ask me. I think he knew that I've always been about wanting to win here. We'll make it work any way we can.

Did he come to you?

He came to me earlier, when I think Machado was still in play. And he said, 'We have no tires spinning yet, but I just wanted to run it by you, if that were to happen, maybe moving back to center.' I said, 'If you get Machado, yeah, I'll fuckin' play center.' That's been the culture here in a while, guys doing anything that it takes to win.

You've been known to look at social media, but earlier this season, did you avoid it?

Oh, God, yeah. I had to get away from that. I think I just tweeted about how I've been here for seven years and I've learned how to deal from adversity and I've learned how to deal with whiny adults on social media. They're fans. They're passionate. They want what's best for the team. They want their team to win. If you're not helping their team win, they'll let you know. And if you are, they'll also let you know and make you feel better about it. You have to give 'em a reason to cheer. There's not much good for athletes to be on social media anymore, really, from the standpoint of, there's no way for us to win any argument or anything like that without stepping on some toes. It's just not even worth the energy to go through it or try to respond.

When the front office makes a splash, it's for a guy signed for a while.

They're very conscientious of being a small-market team. They do their due diligence. You can tell that they're a smart bunch up there. You see guys in the front office with the Indians go on to be front office people at higher positions with other organizations. They do good work here. They might not always bring in the sexy move or anything like that that the fans can rejoice about, but they're going to bring in a good move. I think fans need to realize it's not fantasy baseball they're playing. There are actually constrictions and money and everything else that's involved. They can't just go ahead and make their superstar lineup like everybody wants.

For younger guys who will be here for a while, it seems like they can feel comfortable about this team winning for the foreseeable future.

The foreseeable future, absolutely. Early on, it wasn't a problem, just because we weren't winning that much in '11 and '12. When it came to it to see if the front office was on our side and if they would be all in, when the time is right, they've done nothing but prove they're all in. They've wanted to capitalize on this window. The Indians are going to be winning for a while. They have a lot of guys still signed. That's why I want them to trade the farm. I'm not going to be here for much longer, so I don't know how they're going to do it in years to come. That's why I want them to give up the whole house to give up everybody. I want to win now. I don't care how they are in four years. I won't be here!

So were you tweeting from your burner account last night begging them to get Harper?

Yeah! Why do we not have Harper and Machado? We don't need this prospect. Let's go! It won't affect me!
Is there relief that you get to stay at second?

A little bit, yeah. Yeah, it's what I've been doing all year, so it's comfortable. Oddly enough, we're getting closer to finally getting my legs underneath me. They haven't been there all year. There's been a bunch of scar tissue hanging around in my hamstrings and I haven't had a high gear. So I think I finally had to buckle down once that center-field idea came up again. I was like, 'Oh, crap, I better get a head start on some of this other stuff.' Even though there are times — there have been some bumps in the road so far at second, I'll put it that way. But I think I have some good baseball that will be coming up.

That's the first time you've mentioned that. Is that a 'no excuse' thing?

Not an excuse for the past. I think it's more excitement for me for the future. Athletes are very in tune to their bodies. They can tell when stuff's coming around. So I'm more excited. Not an excuse at all.

If you had to make the move to center field, how long would that have taken you?

I was on the DL last time and they gave me three days of batting practice to take live and through me in there, so... I wasn't even at full sprints in my DL rehab yet, but they threw me out there. It wouldn't take too long. A couple days.

You did it at Arizona State. Same thing.

Yeah, you did it eight years ago, why can't you do it right now? I can, just give me a second. It's like riding a bike. Well, this bike needs to be oiled up and re-chained.

Ty (Van Burkleeo) was showing you results over the last five or six weeks to show you you've been more productive. Is it hard when you look up at the board and it still shows the overall numbers?

Sure. I have been doing better, but then I look up and you're not going to like the line you see no matter what, until maybe the end of the year, when it gets, hopefully, toward .250 or .260. Then, I'm like, 'OK, I've fought my way back from the big hole I put myself in at the beginning of the year.' But to me, it's that I've been getting better and I still haven't found it. I still haven't gotten hot. I still haven't gotten comfortable. You still haven't seen me going the other way. It's a constant battle each day to find it and also to go with what has been working. So as much as I want to try to find that old swing each day, if I'm going OK, do I want to take that into the game, trying to do the old swing, or do I want to go with what's working? So, it's trying to find a happy medium each day.

Why do you think it has been such a struggle?

I don't know. We just haven't found what the adjustment that we need to make yet. We've been looking. We've watched a ton of video and have been working hard to find it, but for some reason, it just hasn't clicked. Usually, it does. My goal, whether it's clicked or not, is to always be competitive at the plate and still get some stuff down. Until it does, we keep looking. There's no answer right now.

You mentioned the 'so-called window.' There are a lot of guys who might be in their final year here. Do you feel that increasing sense of it being the last chance for that group?

As we're getting down the stretch, it'll come back. I think we felt it more in spring training when it was talked about and we knew about it. I think it was more of a topic then than it has been — once the season got under way, guys forgot about it as they went through the motions. Down the stretch, though, I could see it coming up a little bit more. You don't want to get into October and be like, 'Hey, by the way, this is our last go-around. Hope everyone's been dotting the Is and crossing the Ts.' It's more of a process. You want to gain momentum going into October and you want to be playing your best team baseball. You could ask anybody in the clubhouse, we haven't come close to doing that yet.

When the division is the way it is, can that factor into a team's play or motivation?

I think it hurts a little bit. There are a lot of positives — we can rest starters and bullpen guys. We have the luxury of giving Miller all the time he wants. We can give position players rest. There's a ton of positive that comes from it. But the negative is, when you're down a run or two to someone and maybe that extra urgency isn't there. Like, 'Hey, we have to come back to win this game. If we lose this game, oh no, we're up nine (games) in the division.' That's just the way it is. I think we have enough guys in here to make sure that, down the stretch, whether it's somehow creating ways to make it seem more than it is or trying to make it a playoff atmosphere, do something to get that urgency going, get that ball rolling, I think we'll find a way to do it. But it's human nature to see that division lead and, not pull off the gas, but know it's there. There's that cushion.

Captains' Will Benson tantalizes with power potential, remains work in progress

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

This season has produced tantalizing glimpses of Captains right fielder Will Benson's potential as a power hitter.

A couple of them came July 31 at Classic Park as the Captains were beaten by the Great Lakes (Mich.) Loons, 3-2, in the finale of a four-game series.

Benson strode to the plate in the bottom of the second inning to face Great Lakes starter Gerardo Carrillo. There was one out. The Loons had a 2-0 lead, courtesy of Deacon Liput's two-run home run in the top of the first inning off Lake County starter Kirk McCarty.

On the first offering from Carrillo, Benson, batting from the left side, took a mighty cut and missed.

On the second pitch, Benson got out ahead of the ball and launched a majestic shot to right field that soared over the picnic pavilion. The sound the ball made coming off the bat was distinctive, as were the velocity and arc.

Even though it was clearly a foul ball from the outset, there was a buzz in the stands at the charge put into the prodigious fly ball by the 6-foot-5, 225-pound Georgia native.

Benson connected again, emphatically, on Carrillo's 0-2 pitch. This time, the ball soared high, stayed fair and easily cleared the fence in right-center field to shave the Loons' lead to 2-1.

It was the team-high 16th home run of the season for Benson, selected by the Indians with the 14th overall pick in the first round of the June 2016 draft out of high school. The round-tripper puled Benson into a tie for the Midwest League lead in home runs with Ryan Costello of the Clinton (Iowa) LumberKings and Ronaldo Hernandez of the Bowling Green (Ky.) Hot Rods.

The respectable home run count notwithstanding, this season has been a struggle for Benson at the plate.

He came into the series finale against Great Lakes batting .163. When he left the diamond at game's end, the average was up slightly to .164.

After 93 games and 311 at-bats, he had 38 RBI, 51 hits and 113 strikeouts. That latter total is by far the highest on the team and is only partially offset by Benson having drawn a team-high 65 walks.

With 33 games remaining on the Captains' second-half schedule, there will be opportunities for Benson to raise his batting average and pad the home run total.

Still, there is no getting around the fact one of the highest-profile prospects in the Indians' farm system is in his third pro season and not making consistent contact.

Contact has been an issue for Benson throughout his pro career. He batted .209 in 2016 with the rookie-league Arizona Indians. Last season, at short-season Single-A Mahoning Valley, he batted .239.

Captains manager Luke Carlin managed Benson last season at Mahoning Valley and has him again this season in Lake County.

"There have been a lot of learning moments for Will," Carlin said. "He's had to go through some obstacles, obviously. Some of those obstacles have been mental, others have been physical."

Carlin said he's encouraged at how Benson has reacted to the adversity he's facing.

"He's still confident and continues to go out there every day and compete," Carlin said.

Despite this season's trials and tribulations, Carlin said the organization still believes in Benson's ability to ultimately turn his potential into performance.

"We're looking three, four, five years from now," Carlin said. "It is difficult for a player to have that perspective. Our job is to help Will look past those four at-bats today and keep his eye on the bigger picture."

Leonys Martin trade bolsters Indians' limping outfield | Jeff Schudel

By Jeff Schudel, The News-Herald & The Morning Journal

The 4 p.m. trade deadline passed quietly July 31 without the Indians making a blockbuster deal.

And that's OK. Don't blame Indians president Chris Antonetti.

Adam Jones of the Orioles didn't want to leave Baltimore, so he exercised his no-trade clause.

Nationals general manager Mike Rizzo announced he wouldn't trade slugger Bryce Harper a few hours after Harper's name began to circulate in trade rumors July 30 — one of them involving the Indians.

The Indians did get better, though, even if it wasn't a headline-grabbing deal. The Tribe sent shortstop Willi Castro from the Double-A Akron RubberDucks to the Tigers for center fielder Leonys Martin and right-handed pitcher Kyle Dowdy from the Tigers' Double-A team, the Erie SeaWolves.

The Indians also acquired outfielder Oscar Mercado from the Cardinals in exchange for Jhon Torres and Conner Capel in a trade of minor-league players. Mercado will report to Triple-A Columbus, Antonetti announced on a conference call.

Martin makes the Indians better defensively. He has three defensive runs saved (DSR) in 638 1/3 innings this season, according to FanGraphs, and a 13.4 UZR/150, which is second among center fielders. UZR (Ultimate Zone Rating) is a complex grade that measures how well a fielder plays his position.

"(Martin) is a good baserunner capable of playing center or right," Antonetti said on the conference call. "He's also a very good offensive player against right-handed pitching. His skill set complements our roster really well. That's why we made the move to get him."

Indians manager Terry Francona can use Martin against right-handed pitchers (.275 batting average against righties) and Rajai Davis against lefties (a .256 batting average) in center field.

Martin also gives the Indians some insurance for 2019 because Bradley Zimmer is expected to be out eight to 12 months recovering from shoulder surgery.

"It was an important element for us," Antonetti said. "Leonys is under team control next year, so that gives another option for our outfield as we seek to build our team for 2019 as well."

Zimmer isn't the only Indians outfielder dealing with injuries. Lonnie Chisenhall is down with his chronic calf injuries and Tyler Naquin is on the disabled list with a hip injury. The Indians had to make the deal for Martin, even if Martin (nine home runs) doesn't have thunder in his bat.

Antonetti did not go into specific details of any discussions with teams such as the Nationals or Orioles or other teams for trades that did not work out. Nor did he rule out making a deal in August as he did last year with the Mets for Jay Bruce, but that gets much more complicated because players have to get through waivers first.

"We'll always (explore) that," Antonetti said. "That said, I feel really good about the team we have."

Acquiring Martin means Jason Kipnis will stay at second base. Kipnis played center field last year when Zimmer was out with a hand injury. He was willing to make the same move.

"A couple weeks ago I had a chance to talk with Kip about things that might develop as we approach the trade deadline," Antonetti said. "To Kip's credit, he was incredible with it."

"He said, 'Hey, I care most about being part of a winning team that wins the World Series. Whatever I can do to be a part of that, whether that's play second base or play the outfield, I'd be willing to do. If you can get a player that helps us, I'll play wherever I can to help the team.' That allowed us to explore a lot of options."

The Indians believe they are poised to make another run at the World Series. Earlier in July they traded catcher prospect Francisco Mejia to the Padres for closer Brad Hand and reliever Adam Cimber.

Antonetti might not be done. But for now, this is the Indians team that likely will have to get past the Astros, Yankees or Red Sox to return to the World Series.

Schudel can be reached at JSchudel@News-Herald.com; @jsproinsider on Twitter.

Pregame minutiae: Tito & Antonetti by Jordan Bastian

Prior to Tuesday's 4 p.m. ET non-waiver Trade Deadline, the Indians acquired outfielder Leonys Martin (along with Minor League pitcher Kyle Dowdy) from the Tigers in exchange for shortstop prospect Willi Castro.

Cleveland also reeled in outfield prospect Oscar Mercado from the Cardinals for prospects Conner Capel and Jhon Torres. Back on July 19, the Indians also shipped top prospect Francisco Mejia to the Padres to add All-Star closer Brad Hand and righty Adam Cimber to the MLB bullpen.

Both Indians manager Terry Francona and president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti discussed the moves, among other topics, with reporters. Here are the highlights of those media sessions.

Q&A with Indians manager Terry Francona

Q: When is Leonys Martin expected to join the team?

Francona: "Late tonight. His flight gets in like nine. He'll be activated for tomorrow's game."

Q: What do you think Martin can add to this roster?

Francona: "You know what? Obviously, there's a lot of things that are going on by the Trade Deadline. But, we lost Zimmer, we lost Chiz, we lost Naquin. So, when it was all said and done, you're like, 'OK, what can really impact us?' A center fielder that complements Raj. I think sometimes people lose track of like, OK, what's your roster? And what complements what? Kind of like I've been saying lately with Guyer. Because Melky's here, we're able to use Guyer against the guys we want to. [Martin has] been really good against right-hand pitching and he's a good center fielder. He's supposed to be a great kid. So, again, I want to talk to him before I start proclaiming who he's playing against and who he isn't, because I think that's respectful to him. But, I think we got kind of a sleeper. I think his OPS against righties is .780 or something and he can go play center field, so we're pretty excited about that."

Q: If you can't go out and get a sure-fire, everyday player, how important is it to find a way to maximize the production of your roster with multiple players?

Francona: "Well, again, this guy can play everyday, because he has. I do think maximizing our roster helps us, especially in Raj's case. Like, Guyer is a good example. There's not a lot of guys that can be so impactful when they're playing maybe against lefties. Guyer and Raj are two of them. And I'll tell the guys, it's not an indictment on the guys—that they can't do something. It's just, when guys complement each other, we're a better team."

Q: This is the trade we get to see and hear about at the finish line. You obviously saw a lot more trade dialogue behind the scenes. What did you think of how the front office approached this Deadline?

Francona: "I'm always proud to work here, because I love it here and I love the people here. But, I was proud as can be of their efforts. And I think they know that. I mean, they afford me my opinion, probably to a point some time today where they're like, 'We shouldn't have called him.' And I told them that, too. But, they did a really good job. I mean, it's not easy. We have some parameters, which we know are in place. We're not going to be the Dodgers or the Red Sox. But, we don't want that to get in the way of us winning. And I think they've done an unbelievable job of making us better."

Q: A couple weeks back, Chris spoke with Jason Kipnis about the possibility of moving to the outfield, because it wasn't known at that point how the Trade Deadline would impact the roster. What'd you think of Kipnis' willingness and are you happy to be able to keep him at second?

Francona: "I think in the end we really did want to keep him where he was. There's obviously a lot of ways to go, but I think we felt like we're a better team keeping him where he is. And I also think part of maybe Kip's willingness is Chris' honesty with him. I don't know if you see too many front office's guys that are willing to sit down in the food room and talk to a guy. And I think that goes a long way in guys' willingness, because it's kind of hard not to when you've got a guy telling you the truth."

Q: What was the feedback on Andrew Miller's rehab appearance with Triple-A Columbus on Monday?

Francona: "Very good. And he's going to pitch again tonight. And then when we get back home, we'll reconvene and see what the next step is."

Q: And how did Josh Tomlin's simulated game go today?

Francona: "Good. He had two 15-pitch innings, and he's going to go out and pitch Friday at Columbus. He'll throw two innings in Columbus."

Q: You guys are kind of in a unique situation with how the AL Central has played out this year. When you have such a large division lead, do you ever worry about a lack of urgency among the players, given the cushion you have to play with?

Francona: "You know what, though? One, that can change in a week. It's very fluid. You're record's always fluid. You know that. You know what? If I did, I'd say something. So, no. When we're playing a game, we try to win every game. Like, I know how much last night hurt. So, no, I really don't. If you ask me if I'd rather have a lead or not, I'd rather have a lead. And I think there's a right way to play and a wrong way to play. I think, for the most part, our guys do a pretty good job. And we may visit tomorrow for a few minutes, just because we've got some new guys here. When it kind of looks like it's going to be our team the rest of the way. We might actually visit for a few minutes just to talk about those things."

Q: Has the large division lead impacted your managing?

Francona: "I really believe that, maybe that's one good thing about experience, is I'd like to think you'd do what you think is the right thing regardless. Like, I've never told a player this year, 'If we win tonight, you've got tomorrow off.' If I think they need tomorrow off, they're going to have it off. I think you can make mistakes like that."

Q: In Monday's loss, you went to Neil Ramirez in the ninth. Why'd you go that route instead of using Hand or Cimber?

Francona: "We were going to try to get outs, then go to Hand at the top of the order, because I thought that gave us a chance for him to go an inning-plus. If we go to Hand for right, left, right, and if he gets them out, then coming through the heart of the order—where a lot of them are left-handed—we had already used Oliver."

Q: Do you know much about the Mercado kid you guys got from the Cardinals?

Francona: "I know enough to think we should be pretty excited. Supposedly, he's an unbelievable kid to start with. He can run and he's a shortstop that moved to the outfield. He's athletic as all get-out. I think a little bit like Greg [Allen], he's still developing as far as hitting goes. But, just because he's not here doesn't mean we're not excited. When we got him, I was excited just about as much as anybody else."

Q: Does that type of move show how the front office is not only focused on winning now, but planning for the future?

Francona: "Always. Always. That's why, again, I thought getting the two relievers was so big, because everybody wants to win now. Nobody more than me. But, for the health of our organization, having some relievers that you think you can count on for years to come, going into the winter, that's going to make the winter a lot better. Because, we're going to have some big decisions to make and holes to fill. We know that. But, having two guys that you think are going to pitch at the back-end is big."

Q&A with Chris Antonetti, Indians president of baseball operations

[Opening remarks on conference call]

Antonetti: "I think maybe just starting more generally, after the trade with the Padres and acquiring Hand and Cimber, we really focused our attention on trying to improve our outfield situation. It's been a position that's been a little bit in flux for us for the balance of this season, so we explored a lot of alternatives to try to address and improve our outfield options. And we were really pleased to be able to acquire Leonys Martin. We think he's a great complement to our roster. He provides us with a very good defender in center field who's a good baserunner. Capable of playing both center and right and he's also a very good offensive player against right-handed pitching. So, his skill-set complements our current roster really well and that's why we made the move to get him."

"We also ... acquired a right-handed hitter, Oscar Mercado from the St. Louis Cardinals for Conner Capel and Jhon Torres. Oscar's a right-handed hitting outfielder that is on the roster. He's currently at Triple-A. He's a very athletic player. He transitioned from shortstop to center field a couple of years ago and has really made that transition well. We think he's an above-average defender with above-average speed that adds a very good option for us in the near-term at the Major League level in the outfield."

Q: Martin has dealt with hamstring issues this season. How confident are you that it won't be much of an issue going forward, given the background work you did on him before the trade?

Antonetti: "We spent a lot of time on that, working through that, and talking through both with the Tigers medical personnel and then also we had the ability to see him play over the last handful of games to watch and make sure he's healthy. We think he's working his way back to full strength and top speed, but he's getting pretty close to that level."

Q: With Bradley Zimmer potentially out part of next season, how important was the fact that Martin is under control through next year, too?

Antonetti: "That was an important element for us. With Leonys, he is under team control next year, so that gives us another option for our outfield as we seek to build our team for 2019 as well."

Q: What do you think of Martin as a hitter?

Antonetti: "He's made a lot of strides this year, especially against right-handed pitching. I think we had a chance to see that first-hand, that he can put together quality at-bats and contribute offensively, while at the same time providing very good defense in center field as well as very good baserunning."

Q: There were a lot of names linked to you guys over the past few weeks. There was even a report that you inquired about Bryce Harper. Can you shed some light on how exhaustive your search was for outfield help?

Antonetti: "Over the last month-plus, we spent a lot of time examining alternatives to improve the team. While our initial focus was improving our bullpen options, we were focused on trying to improve our outfield situation. That market took a little bit longer of a time to develop and really came together here over the last few days. Throughout that process, we examined a lot of different alternatives and are really pleased that we ended up with Leonys."

Q: Were there any deals that were close that broke down, like a player blocking the trade or a team backing out at the last second?

Antonetti: "That happens every Deadline, so yes, that certainly happened over the last couple weeks. Nothing on a player level. We never got to the point of presenting something to a player that he didn't approve. But, there were hundreds of different concepts that we talked about over the last few weeks. We were able to get a couple of them done, but that's par for the course as you explore trades."

Q: How much will you continue to look to add during the August waiver period?

Antonetti: "I think we'll always do that. It's another opportunity for us to improve the options. That said, I feel really good about the team we have entering the second half of the season now."

Q: How seriously were you guys considering a scenario where Kipnis would move to the outfield like last season?

Antonetti: "A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to talk with Kip and talk through alternatives and options and different things that might develop over the next few weeks as we approach the Trade Deadline. To Kip's credit, he was incredible with it. He said, 'Hey, I care most about being part of a winning team that wins the World Series. And whatever I can do to help that, whether that's play second base or play the outfield, I'd be willing to do. So, if you can get a player who helps us, I'll play wherever I can contribute and help the team.' That allowed us to explore a lot of options. In the end, none of those options came to fruition, so Kip is going to continue to play second base for us and we're really happy about that."

Q: Can you tell us a little about the pitcher you got from the Tigers?

Antonetti: "Kyle Dowdy, a right-handed starter who spent some time in Double-A and Triple-A this year. He has a four-pitch mix and he'll go in and slide into our Akron rotation."

Q: Could an August trade be realistic for you guys?

Antonetti: "I'm not sure it's realistic, but any of those guys who didn't get traded could be options for us in the August waiver period. Now, it gets a lot more complicated to be able to execute a trade during that time period."

Q: Will you be able to get some sleep now?

Antonetti: "I can get some sleep. It's been an eventful few days. After a weekend in Cooperstown and driving back and a late night last night."

Q: How was the cell reception in Cooperstown?

Antonetti: (laughing) "At times, the reception was OK, but I've learned when 53,000 people are trying to connect to the same cell tower, you don't get great reception or connectivity."

RubberDucks report: A step back could be a step forward for reliever Cole Sulser by ABJ/Ohio.com correspondent

A step back could be a step forward if all goes as planned for RubberDucks right-hander relief pitcher Cole Sulser.

A 25th-round draft pick in the 2013 draft out of Dartmouth, Sulser spent the bulk of his time last season with the Class AAA Columbus Clippers.

This season, Sulser played more than three months for the Clippers before being sent back to Akron to fine-tune his slider and curveball.

"We have a lot of guys in the big leagues and free agents, so this was an opportunity to work on my secondary pitches," Sulser said. "It seemed to be a good move, hopefully for me personally and for the organization."

"It's one of those things where what good [is being mad] really going to do? Obviously, every one of us here, whether we spent time in Triple A or not, wants to be up there or at the level higher in the big leagues. Obviously, I wasn't super excited about being moved down, but you have two choices, either be ticked off about it and let it influence how you do [things] and start a downhill spiral or you can use it as a chance to try and get better and move up higher and get to the big leagues."

That attitude was refreshing to pitching coach Rigo Beltran, but his transfer was a welcome addition to an already-impressive staff.

In six appearances, Sulser has a 0.00 ERA in nine innings.

What's more, Sulser has allowed three hits and has struck out 17 against one walk and opponents are batting .103 against him.

"It's very refreshing," Beltran said. "I was with the Reds before and when that would happen kids would come down with a negative attitude and not a growth mindset. Here with the Indians, guys understand that's just the way the game goes. They come with the mindset that this is a place to come to develop another pitch. Right now we're focusing on improving that slider and it's definitely turning the right direction. I'm really happy for him because it's going to better prepare him for the big leagues."

Sulser has seen the dividends almost immediately.

"I've firmed it up more to a hard slider," he said. "I'm not trying to get so much speed differential. For me, it's been easier for me to be more aggressive with it towards the hitter. I can make it look more like my fastball and it's made a big difference. It makes my fastball more deceptive and at the same time, mentally it helps be more aggressive with the pitch instead of feeling like I have to place the pitch."

"The more aggressive you can be and put the hitter on the defensive, the better position you're in. That's been the biggest difference."

Beltran also sees veteran leadership out of Sulser, which is almost as important as the RubberDucks try to wrap up their second Eastern League Western Division title in the past three seasons.

"It's amazing to have a guy who has been there and done that," Beltran said. "He has a good mindset and more importantly, the way he is attacking hitters is rubbing off on the rest of the guys. Guys are coming here and are working hard and trying to get better. It's just a great atmosphere. We're lucky to have him not only for his performance, but the example he sets."

Baseball | Clippers 10, Indians 9, 12 innings: Clippers in playoff hunt, but roster is shifting

It can be said that the Clippers' fate is in their hands when it comes to winning the International League West, getting the wild card for the Governors' Cup playoffs or competing for the league championship in that they are a workable 2½ games out of first place in the division with 33 games remaining in the season.

But controlling one's destiny isn't entirely possible in the minor leagues, especially with the red letter date of Sept. 1 looming. That's when major league teams are permitted to expand their rosters from 25 to 40 players.

Who will Cleveland, which very well could have the American League Central Division championship all but locked up by then, promote from Columbus?

The Clippers defeated Indianapolis 10-9 in 12 innings when Brandon Barnes beat a throw to first base to avoid a double play and Eric Stamets scored from third base before 7,222 on Tuesday night at Huntington Park.

The game lasted 4 hours, 23 minutes.

In 2017 on Sept. 1, the Clippers lost outfielder Abraham Almonte and pitchers Adam Plutko, Kyle Crockett and Shawn Morimando. That was not a problem with the team being eight games out of first place and out of the IL playoffs.

This season, Columbus could lose catcher Eric Haase, shortstop Yu Chang, first baseman/third baseman Yandy Diaz and, if he's on the roster at the time, outfielder Greg Allen.

Diaz impressed Cleveland by going 7 for 14 in his last big league stint. Allen has been riding the shuttle from Columbus up I-71 since early May when Bradley Zimmer was injured for the first time.

When Columbus was an affiliate of the Yankees in the mid- to late 1980s and early '90s, owner George Steinbrenner's philosophy was to keep his team's hands off the Clippers on Sept. 1 so they could have a chance to win championships. At that time, New York used Columbus primarily as a stockpile for trades.

That changed when Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera and Jorge Posada were farmhands.

This has been a crazy season with regard to roster moves for the Clippers. There was more change when Cleveland traded for St. Louis minor league outfielder Oscar Mercado and assigned him to Columbus.

Right-handed pitcher Kyle Dowdy also is likely to become a Clipper. He was pitching for Toledo when Detroit traded him to Cleveland with outfielder Leonys Martin before Tuesday's deadline.

To make room on the 40-man roster for Mercado, outfielder Johnny Field was designated for assignment. What's extraordinary about the move was that Field, 26, was claimed on waivers from Tampa Bay and sent to Columbus not even a week ago.

This doesn't mean Field is out, but that Cleveland must trade him or put him through waivers in the next 10 days.

Cleveland has been desperately searching for answers to its depleted outfield for most of the season. Zimmer has been lost for the season after surgery for a torn labrum, Lonnie Chisenhall is on the 60-day disabled list with yet another calf injury and Tyler Naquin is getting a second opinion on a hip injury that could end his season.

Three minor leaguers who won't be wearing Clippers uniforms anytime soon are shortstop Willi Castro and outfielders Conner Capel and Jhon Torres. Castro was traded to Detroit for Martin and Capel and Torres went to St. Louis for Mercado.

Capel and Torres were playing for Lynchburg and Torres in the Arizona Rookie League.

Encarnacion, Ramirez lead Indians past Twins, 6-2

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) -- Trevor Bauer is his own toughest critic - even when victorious.

The Cleveland right-hander had some choice words to describe his performance Tuesday against Minnesota. Though Bauer struggled by his standards, he pitched deep enough to help the Indians beat the Twins by a 6-2 final.

"A frustrating outing personally, but things to build on," Bauer said. "Obviously the team won, so that's the ultimate goal every time I go out there and pitch."

Cleveland extended its lead in the American League Central to nine games over the Twins, who traded second baseman Brian Dozier to the Dodgers on Tuesday in the latest move that signaled another lost season for Minnesota.

It was an uncharacteristic outing for Bauer, who walked more batters (4) than he struck out (3) for the first time all season. The three strikeouts matched a season low and snapped a streak of 12 straight outings with at least seven strikeouts.

Bauer managed to pitch into the seventh inning but eventually gave way to reliever Brad Hand after allowing two runs on four hits in 6 1/3 innings.

"You look up in the fifth inning and he had one hit, but he had been out of the stretch every inning because he just wasn't commanding," said Indians manager Terry Francona. "He fights and claws and doesn't give in and got himself a win, and we got a win out of it."

One day after hitting a pair of homers against the Twins, Ramirez's bat stayed hot at Target Field. He drove in a run with a double in the third inning and added an RBI single in the fifth as part of a three-hit night.

Twins right-hander Kyle Gibson gave up three runs on five hits in six innings to earn his second loss in his last three starts.

"A couple of breaks here and there, a couple tough pitches that they put in play and put them in the right spots," Gibson said. "Guys battled and hopefully we'll come out and get the series tomorrow."

Miguel Sano doubled in the second inning and eventually scored the game's first run on a sacrifice fly by Jake Cave. The Twins didn't get another hit until Logan Morrison's solo homer off Bauer in the sixth cut Cleveland's lead to 3-2.

Greg Allen had a three-hit game and scored three of Cleveland's runs as the No. 9 hitter. It was Allen's second game back since being recalled from Triple-A Columbus.

Encarnacion's two-out bloop to right scored a pair in the seventh to give the Indians a 5-2 cushion. He added an RBI on a fielder's choice in the ninth inning. Encarnacion now has 76 RBI on the year, two behind Ramirez for the team lead.

"Our offensive numbers this year are pretty ridiculous across the board," Bauer said. "Especially Edwin. He loves hitting here."

MAY RETURNS TO THE TWINS

Minnesota right-hander Trevor May is back in the major leagues for the first time since 2016. He missed all of 2017 following Tommy John surgery on his right elbow and pitched for Triple-A Rochester this year before officially being recalled Tuesday by the Twins.

May was both a starter and a reliever for Minnesota in 2014 and 2015 but pitched exclusively out of the bullpen in 2016. He made four starts and nine relief appearances this season for Rochester before getting recalled.

"I think we all know that I have that versatility, and we talk about that quite a bit," May said Tuesday. "At the moment, I like just getting the ball and letting it rip. I think that I have the mentality to take the ball at the end of the game and close the door."

May made his season debut in the ninth inning, allowing one run on two hits.

TRAINERS ROOM

Indians: RHP Josh Tomlin (right hamstring) threw two 15-pitch innings in a simulated game Tuesday and will pitch Friday for Triple-A Columbus in a rehab start, manager Terry Francona said Tuesday. Tomlin will throw two innings in his rehab outing.

Twins: CF Byron Buxton, currently playing for Triple-A Rochester, reaggravated his injured wrist Monday and will be evaluated further. Twins manager Paul Molitor said it's likely Buxton will land on the minor league disabled list.

UP NEXT

Indians: RHP Carlos Carrasco starts the series finale for Cleveland, having won four of his last five starts.

Twins: LHP Adalberto Mejia is making just his third start of the year for the Twins, all of which have been since June 30.

Indians bolster outfield, acquire Leonys Martin from Tigers

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Nothing splashy, just sensible.

The Cleveland Indians stabilized their shaky outfield without making a blockbuster trade.

Riddled by injuries to outfielders all season, Cleveland acquired center fielder Leonys Martin from the Detroit Tigers before Tuesday's deadline for 21-year-old infield prospect Willi Castro.

The AL Central-leading Indians also received right-hander Kyle Dowdy.

Although they had been linked to talks involving more high-profile outfielders like superstar Bryce Harper, Adam Jones and others, the Indians opted to make a deal that wouldn't be too damaging to their future. Manager Terry Francona had high praise for his front office.

"They did a really good job. It's not easy," Francona said. "We have some parameters which we know are in place. We're not going to be the Dodgers or the Red Sox. But we don't want that to get in the way of us winning, and I think they've done an unbelievable job of making us better."

The 30-year-old Martin is a steady hitter and strong fielder who will take away runs for Cleveland's pitching staff. He leads the league with nine assists.

He also gives Francona another option in center field with Bradley Zimmer done for the season following shoulder surgery and Tyler Naquin on the disabled list with a hip injury.

"It's been a position that's been a little bit in flux for us for a balance of the season, so we explored a lot of alternatives to try and address and improve our outfield options," team president Chris Antonetti said. "And we were really pleased to be able to acquire Leonys Martin. We think he's a great complement to our roster. He provides us a very good defender in center field who's a good baserunner, capable of playing both center and right, and is also a very good offensive player against right-handed pitching."

The Indians made a second move before the deadline, acquiring outfielder Oscar Mercado from St. Louis for outfielders Conner Capel and Jhon Torres.

Because of injuries, Cleveland was down to Greg Allen and 37-year-old Rajai Davis as their center fielders. Also, right fielder Lonnie Chisenhall is out with a nagging calf injury.

"When it was all said and done, you're like, 'OK, what can really impact us?' A center fielder that compliments Raj," Francona said. "I think sometimes people lose track of, OK, what's your roster and what compliments what?"

Martin has twice been on the disabled list this season with a left hamstring injury, but Antonetti is confident he's healthy and ready to help the Indians immediately.

The trade for Martin followed Cleveland fixing its worrisome bullpen. On July 19, the club sent top prospect Francisco Mejia, a switch-hitting catcher/outfielder, to the San Diego Padres for All-Star closer Brad Hand and searmer Adam Cimber.

That major move may have impacted the Indians' willingness to get into a bidding war for Harper, who remains with Washington.

Martin batted .251 with nine homers and 29 RBIs in 336 plate appearances this season for the Tigers, who were 18+ games behind Cleveland at the deadline. Martin has scored 78 runs in his first season with Detroit.

The Cuba native has a .248 average with 47 homers and 205 RBIs in 699 games with Texas, Seattle, the Chicago Cubs and the Tigers.

The Tigers began rebuilding in earnest last season, when they traded J.D. Martinez, Justin Upton and Justin Verlander. Their trade candidates this year were a little less prominent, but they were able to move Martin.

"It came about from their need in center field. I had a couple other inquiries on Martin. Cleveland was the most aggressive. They obviously had, probably the biggest need at this point," Detroit general manager Al Avila said. "We had identified Castro as the guy that would be the main guy in the deal, and quite frankly, we held off to the end there to be able to get him."

Martin has a \$1.75 million salary, of which the Indians are responsible for \$573,925. He has earned \$600,000 in bonuses based on plate appearances, and would earn \$100,000 each for 350 and each additional 25 through 475 plus \$50,000 for 500.

More importantly, he is under club control through next season through arbitration.

Dowdy, 25, is 8-8 with a 4.74 ERA between Double-A Erie and Triple-A Toledo this season.

Castro batted .245 at Double-A Akron with five homers and 39 RBIs.

Rosenthal: Inside a tumultuous trade deadline: surprise moves by Pirates, Brewers; O's remake roster; more notes

By Ken Rosenthal 6h ago 7

On Saturday, three days before the non-waiver deadline, The Athletic's Jim Bowden and I reported that the New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres were among the teams pursuing Tampa Bays right-hander Chris Archer.

The Pittsburgh Pirates?

I inquired about them with Rays officials but heard the same refrain I often have heard from rival executives about the Pirates' negotiating strategy under general manager Neal Huntington: They're always in, but never totally in.

This time, though, proved different.

On Monday afternoon, according to major-league sources, the Rays sent proposals to the Pirates and a handful of other clubs that appeared serious on Archer, deciding internally to trade him to the first team that met their price.

On Tuesday morning, the Pirates stunned the Rays by essentially agreeing to their request for right-hander Tyler Glasnow, outfielder Austin Meadows and a third piece — a "significant" player to be named, according to what a Pittsburgh official told The Athletic's Rob Biertempfel.

The initial reaction among some Rays officials was, "Damn, we didn't ask for enough!" But the Rays, knowing they finally had an acceptable deal for Archer after years of entertaining offers for him, did not dare tell the Pirates they wanted more.

The Archer sweepstakes were over.

The Pirates, a team that began the day at 55-52, four games out in the race for the second wild card, went on to complete their second significant trade in two days, acting more aggressively at the deadline than they did during their three-year postseason run from 2013 to '15.

Neither the Archer nor the Keone Kela trade qualified solely as a win-now move — Archer is under control for three seasons after this one, Kela for two. But for the Pirates, the role of bold buyer was a departure. When a club official had warned me Sunday not to count out the Pirates on Archer, I thought to myself, “Yeah, whatever.”

The Pirates, remember, went in the opposite direction last off-season, trading right-hander Gerrit Cole and outfielder Andrew McCutchen and creating further exasperation among many of their fans with the ownership of Bob Nutting.

In February, the players’ union filed a grievance with Major League Baseball, claiming the Rays, Pirates, Miami Marlins and Oakland Athletics were not spending their revenue-sharing money in the manner intended by the collective-bargaining agreement.

Huntington, though, frequently makes winning moves while operating under financial restrictions. Consider how he turned potential free-agent Mark Melancon into future All-Star Felipe Vazquez and Taylor Hearn at the 2016 deadline, then Hearn and a player to be named into Kela late Monday night.

Archer, owed \$27.5 million over the next three seasons, including two club options, fits neatly into the Pirates’ pay structure. The Rays received the package they did in part because his below-market contract appealed to both low-revenue and high-revenue clubs. Still, Pittsburgh appeared such a longshot for Archer that I thought it appropriate to ask Rays GM Erik Neander how he would have reacted if I had told him a week ago the Pirates would be his trading partner.

“I would have said, ‘Good for them for making some decisions that were really difficult for their fan base, but proved to put them in the right direction over time,’” Neander said. “There is a lot about their situation and the heat they took this winter that is similar to our own. Good for them for having success, for stepping up with the opportunities they had and putting themselves in position to take a guy like this and potentially have a special summer there.”

A longstanding admiration society

Even Archer was surprised when he heard the Pirates were interested in him. When Huntington called him after the trade, the pitcher learned something even more surprising about his new GM.

“He’s liked me for a looooong time,” Archer said in a text message. “Ask him about it.”

Huntington’s fascination with Archer, it turns out, dates to the 2007-08 off-season, his first as Pirates GM. Archer then was a 19-year-old prospect in the Cleveland Indians’ system, preparing to enter his third year of pro ball.

As Huntington recalls, Pirates assistant GM Kyle Stark — then the team’s farm director — “strongly recommended” that the front office request Archer in a trade. The Pirates did not get Archer then, and he instead went to the Chicago Cubs with two other minor-leaguers for Mark DeRosa the following off-season; the Rays obtained Archer in the Matt Garza trade on Jan. 8, 2011.

“We obviously were not able to acquire him (in ‘07-‘08), but we have continued to track and monitor his development into a terrific major-league pitcher and person,” Huntington said. “We have also had dialogue over the years with the Rays, but it took until today until something worked for both clubs.

“We believe his intelligence, character, pitch arsenal, advanced analytics and a move to our league and ballpark project really good results for him and us over the next three-plus years.”

Did I call it, or what?

After the deadline passed, The Athletic’s Sung Min Kim sent out the following tweet, which made me look far more prescient about the Archer trade than I actually was.

In the video, which appeared on FoxSports.com, I said eight teams had farm systems strong enough to land Archer, then added the following:

“IF YOU’RE CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD TAKE, CONSIDER THAT THE RAYS, ACCORDING TO SOURCES, WOULD WANT TYLER GLASNOW AND AUSTIN MEADOWS FROM THE PIRATES. NOW THAT’S A LOT — GLASNOW COULD BE A FUTURE ACE, MEADOWS THE LONG-TERM REPLACEMENT FOR ANDREW MCCUTCHEN. BUT ARCHER’S CONTRACT IS INCREDIBLY CLUB-FRIENDLY — FIVE YEARS, \$38.5 MILLION AFTER THIS SEASON, AND THAT INCLUDES TWO CLUB OPTIONS.”

What is interesting about this is the reason the exchange still made sense two years later; all three players are valued less highly now than they were then. Archer is in the middle of his third straight season with an ERA of 4.00 or above. Meadows’ development stalled due to a series of oblique and hamstring injuries. Glasnow, too, has yet to fulfill his potential.

The trade amounted to something of a buy-low for both clubs, and perhaps a needed change for Archer and Glasnow, in particular.

Yes, the Brewers shocked me, too

This is my 18th year as a national baseball writer, but on Tuesday I experienced a first: Never before had I received information that seemed so unrealistic, I was hesitant to even go with it.

On Friday, I had reported on Twitter that the Milwaukee Brewers were in serious discussions with the Baltimore Orioles, but I did not know who the Brewers were targeting — second baseman Jonathan Schoop, right-hander Kevin Gausman or both.

When the Brewers landed third baseman Mike Moustakas that night and announced they intended to move Travis Shaw to second, it seemed reasonable to rule out Schoop for Milwaukee. But about 25 minutes before the deadline, I received information that the Brewers were targeting Schoop, then confirmed it with a second source.

The idea made no sense to me, but I had followed my normal reporting process, and at that moment who was I to judge? My job is to report, not play general manager. So I reported the Schoop discussions between the Orioles and Brewers on Twitter, then talked about them cautiously on MLB Network, openly admitting I did not know what was going on.

Well, the deal actually happened, leaving even Orioles officials to guess about the Brewers' plans. At first the O's thought the Brewers perhaps wanted Schoop at shortstop, a position he had played for 1,929 1/3 innings in the minors, though only 22 innings in the majors. But no, the Brewers plan to stick with Orlando Arcia at short and use Schoop, Moustakas and Shaw in some combination at second and third, with one occasionally the odd man out.

Why make this trade then?

The Brewers simply liked the player and liked the price, which was significantly lower than the Orioles had requested Friday, sources said. The Orioles' return — infielder Jonathan Villar, Double A right-hander Luis Ortiz and Single A infielder Jean Carmona — indeed seemed light for Schoop, a 2017 All-Star who is under control through next season.

Naturally, the Orioles saw it differently. Villar, in their view, had the same fWAR as Schoop this season for less than one-third of Schoop's \$8.5 million salary. Ortiz, coming off an appearance in the Futures Game, was the Brewers' No. 5 prospect according to MLB Pipeline.com. Carmona, 18, showed promise as a switch-hitting shortstop with average power and a plus arm.

From the outside, the Brewers seemed intent on trading Ortiz and outfielder Brett Phillips, two prospects whose stock had fallen. They offered both players to the Orioles for Manny Machado; Phillips ultimately went for Moustakas, Ortiz for Schoop. The team discussed more highly valued prospects in other deals, sources said, but evidently was comfortable moving them only for an elite pitcher such as New York Mets right-hander Jacob deGrom, as opposed to a lesser one such as Archer.

As for collecting a seeming excess of infielders after adding a seeming excess of outfielders during the off-season, general manager David Stearns said: "We talked about a whole bunch of deals that were perhaps a little bit more conventional. For one reason or another, those deals did not come to pass over the past couple of weeks.

"The deals we did were a little unexpected, but we think it makes us better, makes our roster stronger. We think we're set up very well from a position-player perspective to handle the next two months and whatever unforeseen events might occur."

Demolition derby in Baltimore

Dan Duquette, the Orioles' executive vice president of baseball operations, had the quote of the day when I asked him about his stunning deconstruction of the team's roster, from Machado, Schoop and Gausman to relievers Zach Britton, Brad Brach and Darren O'Day. (The Orioles also would have traded center fielder Adam Jones, but Jones exercised the veto power he earned through 10 years of major-league service, five consecutively with the same team.)

"I hear it's easier to demolish the entire house and rebuild from the ground up rather than renovating one room at a time," Duquette said.

The Great Baltimore Demolition of 2018 saved the Orioles approximately \$35 million in present and future salaries and also left them with \$8.25 million in international signing bonus slot money. The redeployment of those resources will help determine the success of the Orioles' deadline moves — and Duquette, in the final year of his contract, might not be the executive who oversees the team's massive rebuilding project.

While the returns for Machado and Britton generally received favorable reviews, the Schoop deal seemed curious, as discussed in the previous item, and the trade involving Gausman and O'Day was partly driven by finances.

The Atlanta Braves, by taking on O'Day's entire \$9 million salary for next season, parted with lesser players than they might have in a deal that included only Gausman. The Orioles, as a result, failed to acquire a legitimate starting-pitching prospect from the Braves' pitching system, instead landing one highly regarded long-term project, Class A infielder Jean Carlos Encarnacion; a switch-hitting catcher at Double A, Brett Cumberland; and two pitchers who did not crack their revised top 30 according to MLB Pipeline.com, Evan Phillips and Bruce Zimmerman.

The Kipnis solution

The Cleveland Indians might never have acquired center fielder Leonys Martin from the Detroit Tigers if they had succeeded in their attempt to obtain second baseman Ian Kinsler from the Los Angeles Angels.

The Boston Red Sox landed the four-time All-Star instead, but the Indians' plan if they had acquired Kinsler, Manny Machado or any other infielder was to move second baseman Jason Kipnis to the outfield, sources said.

Kipnis, who has played only 16 career games in the outfield — 11 in center last regular season and five more during the postseason — was fully aware of the possibility. The Indians had talked to him about it several weeks ago in advance of their pursuit of Machado, sources said.

"I'll do whatever helps the team most," Kipnis said, according to one club official. "All I care about is winning the World Series. Whatever helps us do that, I'm all for."

Dozier a Dodger? Here's why

Brian Dozier did not appear to be an obvious fit for the Dodgers, who already had a variety of options at second base, including Logan Forsythe, the player whom they acquired instead of Dozier before the 2017 season.

The Dodgers, though, wanted to improve against left-handed pitching. They entered Tuesday ranked 19th in the majors with a .699 OPS against lefties, as opposed to second with a .778 OPS against righties.

Players such as Alex Verdugo and Anthony Toles give the Dodgers plenty of left-handed hitting depth, but the team was much thinner from the right side. Enter Dozier, who has a .939 OPS against lefties since the start of a 2016 season and a .797 OPS against righties. His splits are more even this season (.722-.702), but the Dodgers still view him as a significant upgrade against lefties.

Another key aspect in the acquisition of Dozier from the Minnesota Twins: the inclusion of Forsythe to make the deal a financial wash and help the Dodgers stay under the \$197 million luxury tax threshold. Both Dozier and Forsythe are earning \$9 million this season.

Mixed message in Miami

The Washington Nationals were indeed willing to part with outfielder Victor Robles for All-Star catcher J.T. Realmuto, but the Miami Marlins would not agree to a trade that did not also include shortstop Carter Kieboom, major-league sources said.

A package centered on Robles and Kieboom would have been steep for Realmuto, who is under control for only two additional seasons. But Michael Hill, the Marlins' president of baseball operations, insists the days of the team reflexively dumping higher-salaried players are over, telling The Athletic last week, "The biggest message I want to emphasize is that things have changed in Miami. There is a plan and a commitment to building something sustainable."

One rival executive, however, countered by asking, "Then why did the Marlins trade Christian Yelich?"

The desire of the Marlins' new ownership to part with outfielders Giancarlo Stanton and Marcell Ozuna was easily understood — Stanton was owed \$295 million, and Ozuna was under control for only two more seasons.

Yelich, on the other hand, was under control for five more seasons and \$58.5 million, decidedly club-friendly terms. He had requested to be traded, but so had Realmuto. If the Marlins had kept Yelich, he would have had no choice but to show up and play, just as Realmuto has.

Instead, the Marlins flipped Yelich for outfielders Lewis Brinson and Monte Harrison plus infielder Isan Diaz and right-hander Jordan Yamamoto. Brinson has struggled in the majors, but Harrison is the team's No. 1 prospect, according to MLB Pipeline.com. Diaz recently was promoted to Triple A, and Yamamoto, after starting the season on the disabled list, has a 1.92 ERA in nine starts at High A and Double A.

Hey, aren't these guys already good?

The Arizona Diamondbacks' bullpen entered Tuesday ranked third in baserunners allowed per nine innings and fifth in opponents' OPS. So why did the team deem it necessary to add two potential free-agent relievers, right-hander Brad Ziegler from the Marlins and lefty Jake Diekman from the Texas Rangers, after earlier acquiring righty Matt Andriese from the Rays?

Like other teams, the D-Backs found the market for starters to be exceedingly thin. The large supply of available bullpen arms afforded them the chance to be opportunistic, and Ziegler and Diekman will provide different looks while easing the burden on the team's current relievers. In addition, the strong performance of the Arizona 'pen was somewhat deceptive.

The D-Backs' relievers ranked next to last in the majors in strikeouts per nine innings while their opponents' batting average on balls in play was the game's lowest, reflecting a measure of luck. In opponents' expected weighted on-base average — a Statcast metric derived from the quality and amount of contact allowed — the D-Backs' bullpen ranked only 16th.

Ziegler, who has a 0.64 ERA in his previous 28 outings, albeit with good fortune on batted balls, should help. Diekman arrives with reverse splits; he has been much better against righties (.584 OPS) than lefties (.792). But like Ziegler, he has recovered from a rough start to perform better over the past two months.

Twins hold onto Fernando Rodney at non-waiver trade deadline

By MIKE BERARDINO | July 31, 2018 at

In a surprise move, the Twins opted not to trade 41-year-old closer Fernando Rodney before Tuesday's non-waiver trade deadline.

A market glutted with late-inning relievers led to Rodney, who has worn nine different major league uniforms in his 16-year career, staying put.

"I'm not surprised," Rodney said. "They tried to find a way to build the team. That's why they made those moves, I think. And with the pieces we have here, we're going to continue to play hard and have fun."

Now 22 for 28 in save chances, Rodney reached the first \$300,000 threshold of his bonuses with his 35th game finished on Monday night, but there are four more of those at five-game increments, totaling \$1.2 million in additional bonuses.

"It's something you don't have control over," Rodney said of the trade deadline. "If something happens, you have to keep going and keep playing baseball."

The Twins hold a \$4.25 million option on Rodney for 2019 that carries a \$250,000 buyout. Rodney's 2018 contract also has \$1.39 million remaining, a figure that will decrease each day during the August waiver trading period.

"I'd love to stay here," Rodney said. "I think it's a good young team with a lot of talent. At any moment, any hour, one season this can be the surprise team that wins the division."

Rodney said he definitely plans to pitch next season.

"I feel like I can pitch one more year as strong as I feel right now," he said after hitting 97 mph with his fastball multiple times in a scoreless inning on Monday night.

Over the weekend in Boston, Rodney passed former teammate Jose Mesa for second-most saves by a Dominican-born closer. He needs eight more saves to pass Francisco Cordero for the top spot.

Rodney could still be moved in August, but unless he clears waivers the Twins could only talk trade with the team awarded his claim.

BUXTON HURT

Byron Buxton's left wrist barked at him again Monday night at Triple-A Rochester, causing him to be removed from the game after three at-bats. He appeared headed back to the disabled list for the second time in July.

"That wrist that we thought was healed has resurfaced," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It wasn't until he took a couple of awkward swings in the game where it started to flare up."

Buxton was likely to undergo further testing. Because Buxton is on option, he is not accruing major-league service time while at Triple-A. If he isn't recalled this season, he would fall 13 days shy of reaching three full years' worth of service time. That could delay his free agency until after the 2022 season.

MAY RECALLED

To take the roster spot of Lance Lynn, traded to the Yankees on Monday, the Twins recalled right-hander Trevor May from Rochester.

May, who underwent Tommy John surgery in March 2017, posted a 3.60 earned-run average in 30 minor-league innings this season. Now 28, he made five starts among his 14 outings, including serving as the opener on July 22.

May, who will be out of minor-league options next spring, has made one start in the majors since July 1, 2015. That came in mid-August of that same season, when he did strong work out of the Twins' bullpen, which is where he will reside for now.

Molitor said May would likely see multiple-inning stints out of the bullpen but added his role is somewhat undefined for now.

BRIEFLY

Right-hander Aaron Slegers, on the disabled list since July 10 with shoulder inflammation, will throw his second simulated bullpen on Wednesday before likely heading out on a rehab assignment. Slegers threw two sets of 20 pitches in the bullpen on Monday and will increase that to three sets of 15 pitches on Wednesday.