

## Four early picks give Indians Draft flexibility

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Walking into the conference room on Draft day is nothing new for Scott Barnsby, but he will do so this year for the first time as the Indians' director of amateur scouting. The Indians have four picks on the first day of the MLB Draft today, and Barnsby's name will forever be linked to this summer's class for Cleveland.

"It's the time of year where there's some nerves, there's some stress," Barnsby said. "We want to make sure we haven't overlooked anything. So every year walking into the Draft room, it's an exciting moment, because we know we have a chance to bring in some additional talent. But this year in particular, having additional picks, it's hard not to get excited about the potential outcomes and some of the players that are out there."

The 2018 Draft will take place today through Wednesday, beginning with today's Draft preview show on MLB Network and MLB.com at 6 p.m. ET. MLB Network will broadcast the first 43 picks (Round 1 and Competitive Balance Round A), while MLB.com will stream all 78 picks on Day 1. MLB.com will also provide live pick-by-pick coverage of Rounds 3-10 on Day 2, with a preview show beginning at 12:30 p.m. ET. Then, Rounds 11-40 can be heard live on MLB.com on Day 3, beginning at noon ET.

Go to [MLB.com/draft](http://MLB.com/draft) to see the Top 200 Prospects list, projected top picks from MLB Pipeline analysts Jim Callis and Jonathan Mayo, the complete order of selection and more. And follow @MLBDraft on Twitter to see what Draft hopefuls, clubs and experts are saying.

Here's how the Draft is shaping up for the Indians, whose first selection is the 29th overall pick.

### In about 50 words

The Indians' window of contention is open at the Major League level, but it is integral to use the MLB Draft to find building blocks for sustained success. Four picks within the first 100 selections enhances the probability that Cleveland can unearth future MLB talent.

### The scoop

The past 10 Drafts were led by Brad Grant, who has assumed a different role in Cleveland's front office. Under Grant's watch, the Indians selected players like Francisco Lindor (2011, first round), Jason Kipnis (2009, second round), Cody Allen (2011, 23rd round) and Bradley Zimmer (2014, first round), among others. In Barnsby's first year in charge of the amateur scouting department, the Indians have picks No. 29, No. 35 (compensatory pick for Carlos Santana signing with the Phillies in free agency), No. 41 (Competitive Balance Round A) and No. 67 on Day 1 of the Draft.

"The good thing about us is that we've had the same people in place for a long time," said Barnsby, who was an assistant scouting director over the past three years and is in his 19th season in the organization. "Brad really hasn't gone too far. He's obviously right there whenever we need anything. So, I would say it's been very similar to what I've done the last few years."

### First-round buzz

In a recent mock Draft, Callis had the Indians taking prep catcher Noah Naylor out of St. Joan of Arc Secondary School in Mississauga, Ontario. Callis also noted that a pair of high school catchers from Georgia, Will Banfield and Anthony Seigler, have been on the Tribe's radar. The Indians have also been closely examining the wealth of prep outfielders who could start coming off the board by the middle of the first round. Names like Alek Thomas, Jordyn Adams, Connor Scott, Parker Meadows, Nick Schnell and Mike Siani fall into that category.

### Money matters

Under the Collective Bargaining Agreement, each team has an allotted bonus pool equal to the sum of the values of that club's selections in the first 10 rounds of the Draft. The more picks a team has, and the earlier it picks, the larger the pool. The signing bonuses for a team's selections in the first 10 rounds, plus any bonus greater than \$125,000 for a player taken after the 10th round, will apply toward the bonus-pool total.

Any team going up to 5 percent over its allotted pool will be taxed at a 75-percent rate on the overage. A team that overspends by 5-10 percent gets a 75-percent tax plus the loss of a first-round pick. A team that goes 10-15 percent over its pool amount will be hit with a 100-percent penalty on the overage and the loss of a first- and second-round pick. Any overage of 15 percent or more gets a 100-percent tax plus the loss of first-round picks in the next two Drafts.

This year, the Indians have a pool of \$9,145,200 (11th highest) to spend in the first 10 rounds, including \$2,332,700 to spend on their first selection.

### Shopping list

In recent years, the Indians have had success targeting high-upside position players in the Draft and finding their core pitching pieces through trades. Over the past seven Drafts, six of Cleveland's top picks have been position players. Based on the early mock Drafts, it looks like the Indians may continue that approach. That said, having four early picks gives the Tribe flexibility to go in multiple directions. The farm system could benefit from improving the depth of pitching prospects.

### Trend watch

The Indians have not shied away from high school players in recent MLB Drafts, especially in the early rounds. Dating back to 2011, when Lindor was Cleveland's top pick out of Montverde Academy, in Florida, the Indians have taken a prep star with four of their seven picks. If you

look at the club's top three picks in the past seven Drafts combined, 13 out of 21 players (62 percent) were picked out of high schools. One more, Brady Aiken (2015), was rehabbing a left elbow injury post-high school when he was drafted by the Tribe. Overall, the Indians seem to take a more balanced approach deeper into the Draft -- with a slight tilt toward collegiate athletes in the middle rounds.

#### Rising fast

In parts of three Minor League seasons, right-hander Shane Bieber has gone 15-6 with a 2.19 ERA, piling up 244 strikeouts with only 15 walks in 262 2/3 innings. Bieber, who was taken in the fourth round of the 2016 MLB Draft, has cruised from Class A Advanced Lynchburg last year to Triple-A Columbus this season and is now firmly on Cleveland's radar as a depth option for the MLB rotation. Through 10 outings in 2018, Bieber was 5-1 with a 1.10 ERA, 61 strikeouts and three walks in 65 1/3 innings between Double-A Akron and Triple-A Columbus. Bieber also made his MLB debut, getting a spot start against the Twins on Thursday, allowing four runs with six strikeouts in 5 2/3 innings of action.

#### Cinderella story

Adam Plutko was out of the spotlight that was fixed on Gerrit Cole and Trevor Bauer when they were the dynamic duo for UCLA's 2011 rotation. But it was Plutko who led the Bruins to College World Series glory, while pitching through an injury, in '13. Taken in the 11th round of the '13 Draft, Plutko had a two-game cup of coffee with Cleveland in '16 and spent time in the Majors in '17, but did not pitch due to a hip issue that required offseason surgery. Plutko has gone 3-0 with a 3.93 ERA in three starts this season with the Indians, and also threw a no-hitter at Triple-A on Saturday.

#### In the show

There are 13 players on the Indians' 40-man roster who were selected by the club in the MLB Draft and two more currently on the 60-day disabled list. Ten of those players, including two on the 10-day DL at the moment, are with the Major League team. That latter group includes: Greg Allen (2014, sixth), Lonnie Chisenhall (2008, first), Tyler Naquin (2012, first), Roberto Perez (2008, 33rd), Plutko (2013, 11th) and Josh Tomlin (2006, 19th), along with Allen, Kipnis, Lindor and Zimmer.

#### The Indians' recent top picks

2017: Quentin Holmes, OF (Extended Spring Training)

2016: Will Benson, OF (Class A Lake County)

2015: Aiken, LHP (Extended Spring Training)

2014: Zimmer, OF (Indians)

2013: Clint Frazier, OF (Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Yankees)

#### **Bullpen falters in walk-off loss against Twins**

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians tried going off the plate inside on Sunday. They tried throwing pitches below the zone. They went outside and painted the black. They tried fastballs and changeups and curveballs and cutters.

None of it mattered to Eddie Rosario. He seemingly hit everything.

"It's pretty challenging," Indians catcher Yan Gomes said after a tough 7-5 loss to the Twins at Target Field. "I can say we didn't quite figure it out. The guy is on a streak right now. Anytime he puts the bat on the ball, it's been driven somewhere."

In the finale of a four-game series in Minneapolis, Rosario belted a trio of home runs, including a two-run, walk-off shot against an elevated fastball from closer Cody Allen in the ninth inning. Yes, Cleveland's persistent bullpen problems were present once again in the defeat -- the third in a row to Minnesota -- but Rosario's offensive feast featured scratch-your-head swings.

Rosario's performance also was effective in erasing the impact of Edwin Encarnacion's two-homer, four-RBI showing for Cleveland.

During Saturday's loss, Rosario pulled a cutter well off the plate and in on the hands from Trevor Bauer out to left field for a homer. The frustrated pitcher remarked that it was, "in his own batter's box, so whatever." In the first inning Sunday, starter Mike Clevinger fired a fastball far outside. Rosario flicked his wrists, offered a half-swing and wound up with a homer to left.

As Rosario rounded the bases, Clevinger stared out at the left-field stands in disbelief.

"It actually looked like it was a ball," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "That makes you nervous."

Nervous and a little confused, perhaps.

"That's got to be up there as one of those homers where I quite haven't seen that happen," Gomes said. "And I think he's done two of them. One with the ball over his head. The ball [from Clevinger] was a foot or so off the corner and it just looked like he threw his bat out there. That seems to be what he's doing right now with every pitch."

In the sixth inning, Francona tried to squeeze a few extra pitches out of Clevinger, given the state of the Indians' relief corps. The move backfired when the Tribe starter surrendered a leadoff home run to Brian Dozier that pulled the game into a tie at 4. With Rosario looming again, Francona then handed the ball to lefty Tyler Olson.

Olson's second pitch was a curveball that tailed inside and out of the strike zone. Once again, Rosario pulled his hands in, made good contact and watched the ball fly out to right field for his second home run of the game.

"He's on a good roll right now," said Clevinger, who walked away with a no-decision after giving up four runs on seven hits in his six-plus frames. "He's swinging a hot bat. I think we attacked him appropriately. Just some good swings and had a lot of luck in his favor." Rosario's second shot gave the Twins a 5-4 advantage that proved short-lived, given the game-tying solo blast Michael Brantley delivered in the eighth inning off Addison Reed. With the contest again in a deadlock, Francona handed the ball to his closer, but Allen was the latest in a line of Tribe pitchers unable to solve Rosario.

After issuing a leadoff walk to Dozier in the ninth, Rosario swatted Allen's fastball out to center, sinking the Tribe. That lifted Cleveland's bullpen ERA to a Major League-high 6.02 on the season. Indians relievers have also posted baseball's worst homer-to-flyball ratio (16.9) and highest Fielding Independent Pitching (5.01).

"We're just not getting people out right now," Allen said. "We're not getting people out consistently enough to give our offense a chance to win ballgames for us. ... It's hard to win games when you're constantly losing leads or not giving them a chance to get back in the game. It's been a struggle."

#### MOMENT THAT MATTERED

Edwin on Target: Twins starter Kyle Gibson was perfect through the first 12 batters he faced, but Encarnacion ended that run with a towering leadoff blast in the fifth inning that traveled a projected 434 feet, per Statcast™. One inning later, Encarnacion smoked a pitch from Ryan Pressly 110-mph off the bat for a three-run homer that reached Target Field's third deck beyond left field. The second home run pushed the Indians ahead temporarily, 4-3.

"I thought today was one of those days where he put us on his shoulders and we won," Francona said. "Well, we didn't and it kills you. But, if he starts to heat up like that, like it looks like, boy, that would be tremendous."

For his career, Encarnacion now boasts a .301/.409/.647 slash line with 38 RBIs and nearly as many walks (25) as strikeouts (26) in 37 games at Target Field. He also has 15 home runs, the most by an opposing batter in the stadium's history, which dates back to 2010.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

In the second, Ryan LaMarre drove an inside fastball from Clevinger deep into the left-center-field gap at Target Field with no outs and a runner on first base. Battling strong winds, center fielder Bradley Zimmer broke to his right and quickly closed in as the baseball appeared destined to drop in front of the wall. Zimmer left his feet and reached for the ball with a fully-extended dive, snaring it from the sky as he landed on the edge of the grass and slid into the warning track dirt.

#### MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

In the seventh inning, Gomes lifted a pitch from lefty Taylor Rogers to deep left field, where the ball bounced off the top of the cement wall behind the padding. The baseball shot back into play, but Gomes was held at second with a double. Francona discussed things over with the umpires, who consulted a replay review, which confirmed that the hit was not a home run. One play later, a bunt gone wrong led to Gomes being thrown out at second by Twins catcher Bobby Wilson.

#### SOUND SMART

Rosario was not just a thorn in the Tribe's side on Sunday. He has a long track record of tormenting Cleveland's pitchers. In 54 career games against the Indians, Rosario has hit .342 (69-for-202) with 11 home runs and 30 RBIs. He has more hits and runs scored (33) against Cleveland than any other opponent.

#### UP NEXT

Following an off-day on Monday, the Indians will send ace Corey Kluber (8-2, 2.02 ERA) to the mound on Tuesday, when the Tribe hosts the Brewers in a 7:10 p.m. ET Interleague game at Progressive Field. Kluber is riding a streak of 112 batters faced with no walks and has a 0.68 ERA in his past four turns. Righty Junior Guerra (3-3, 2.65 ERA) is slated to start for Milwaukee.

#### Zimmer goes full Superman to rob XBH, run

MINNEAPOLIS -- Spectacular catches have become a regular part of Bradley Zimmer's play in center field for the Indians. When he landed on the disabled list earlier this month, Cleveland's defensive highlight reel was lacking in the dynamic dives department.

Well, Zimmer is back and he dropped jaws again during Sunday afternoon's eventual 7-5 loss to the Twins.

#### View Full Game Coverage

In the second inning against the Twins, Ryan LaMarre drove an inside fastball from Tribe starter Mike Clevinger deep into the left-center-field gap at Target Field with no outs and a runner on first base. Battling strong winds, Zimmer broke to his right and quickly closed in on the warning track as the baseball appeared destined to drop in front of the wall.

Zimmer left his feet and reached for the ball with a fully-extended dive, snaring it from the sky as he landed on the edge of the grass and slid into the warning track's dirt. As the stadium's crowd let out a collective gasp -- followed by a groan at the realization that the catch was completed -- the center fielder scrambled to his feet and fired the ball back in, as Robbie Grossman retreated to first base.

Per Statcast™, Zimmer hit a Sprint Speed of 28.2 feet per second on the play, during which he covered 76 feet in 4.7 seconds.

That grab was Example A of why the Indians are happy to have Zimmer back from the DL. He was banged up on a catch attempt on May 5 at Yankee Stadium, where he crashed hard into the center-field wall and sustained chest bruising and shoulder soreness. Cleveland activated Zimmer from the 10-day DL on Friday during the current series against the Twins.

### **Francona impressed by Plutko's Triple-A no-no**

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians have not officially announced whether Adam Plutko will be coming back from Triple-A Columbus the next time the need for a fifth starter rolls around. Just in case Cleveland needed any further convincing, Plutko went out and spun a no-hitter for the Clippers on Saturday night.

In the wake of the Indians' 7-1 loss to the Twins on Saturday, manager Terry Francona learned of Plutko's feat against Syracuse, marking the ninth no-hitter in Clippers history. Plutko -- optioned back to Triple-A on Tuesday -- carried a perfect game into the ninth inning and ended with eight strikeouts and one walk in the near-flawless performance.

"How about that?" Francona said. "You know what? How many times do you see where a kid goes down and there's a clunker. But he handled [going back to the Minors] really well. ... On a day where the easiest thing to be was kind of grumpy -- with the way we played and everything -- when I found out about it, it was kind of like, 'Man, that's good.'"

Francona said he can "sleep a little better" knowing that the depth behind the Indians' top four starters looks more formidable between Plutko and pitching prospect Shane Bieber.

Plutko has gone 3-0 with a 3.93 ERA in three starts for Cleveland this season, following a tough 2017 campaign that ended with him undergoing offseason hip surgery. Bieber, who began last year with Class A Lake County, has flown up the organizational ladder, posting a 1.10 ERA with 61 strikeouts vs. three walks between Double-A and Triple-A this year. He made a spot start for the Indians on Thursday and made a strong first impression.

"Going into the year, Bieber was starting out in Double-A," Francona said. "Plutko was coming off probably his worst year in pro ball and he was injured. So, heck yeah, it makes you feel better. Man, that's the worst feeling, to be worrying so much about your pitching. It makes it hard."

Come June 12, when the Indians require a fifth starter again, Plutko will be a primary candidate to return to the Tribe rotation. The right-hander has a 1.87 ERA this season in eight Triple-A starts, including four outings with no runs allowed and two with no hits surrendered. Francona, however, has not ruled bringing Bieber back for that game against the White Sox.

"We actually haven't even talked about it yet," Francona said. "One thing at a time."

Francona makes point to meet fans

In the midst of Saturday's game at Target Field, the Twins put a pair of fans on the stadium's video board and noted that they were from Aberdeen, S.D. From the Indians' bench, Francona became excited, so much so that he picked up a dugout phone and called up to the press box.

"I have to meet them," Francona told a Twins PR staffer.

Aberdeen happens to be where Francona was born and the small town where his late father, Tito, met Terry's mom, Roberta Jackson. Tito Francona played for the Aberdeen Pheasants -- a Class C Minor League affiliate of the St. Louis Browns and Baltimore Orioles in the 1950s -- and spent a handful of offseasons there before relocating to New Brighton, Pa., during his days playing for Cleveland.

The Indians' manager was born in 1959 and only lived in Aberdeen for a few years, but he still gets excited when he encounters anyone associated with the city. That is why he made a point to meet Ryan and Hailey Gunderson after Saturday's game in Minneapolis.

"When I saw it, it buckled me," Francona said. "It's funny, because the first thing I thought of was, 'I've got to tell my dad.'"

Worth noting

- The Indians signed reliever George Kontos to a Minor League contract on Sunday and assigned him to Triple-A Columbus. Kontos, 32, posted a 5.03 ERA in 21 games for the Pirates this season, but has a 3.11 ERA in 343 career games in the big leagues between stints with the Giants, Yankees and Pirates.

"It's probably unrealistic to think that we're going to go through the rest of the year without having to make a move with our bullpen," Francona said. "So, we're just trying to add some depth. And I think they felt like there was some things mechanically maybe they could do to kind of help [Kontos], too. So, we'll see."

- Francona noted that outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall (10-day disabled list, right calf) would play for Triple-A Columbus on Sunday, take the day off Monday and then will likely be activated from the DL on Tuesday. Outfielder Brandon Guyer (10-day DL, neck strain) was initially expected to come off the DL Tuesday as well, but his return might be backed up a couple days.

## **Q&A: Hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo on the Indians' sizzling top three, José Ramírez's growth and Jason Kipnis' mind games**

Zack Meisel Jun 3, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — Ty Van Burkleo sleeps better at night when the Indians' offense is buzzing.

Suffice it to say, the Tribe hitting coach developed some bags under his eyes in April. He didn't need as much coffee in May.

Consider the May performances from the top four hitters in the Indians' lineup:

Francisco Lindor: .373/.432/.737 slash line, 211 wRC+

Michael Brantley: .333/.398/.579 slash line, 164 wRC+

José Ramírez: .336/.432/.757 slash line, 214 wRC+

Edwin Encarnacion: .315/.376/.609 slash line, 165 wRC+

Lindor was named American League Player of the Month. (This voter opted for Ramírez.) The Indians led the majors with a 127 wRC+ and a .499 slugging percentage. They scored 179 runs, 35 more than any other team.

Yeah, Van Burkleo got plenty of shut-eye last month.

The hitting coach chatted Sunday morning about the Indians' lineup, Ramírez's development, Jason Kipnis' struggles and more.

The top of the lineup has really taken off since Michael Brantley joined Francisco Lindor and José Ramírez. What have you thought of that trio?

TV: I can't think of a better 1-2-3 combination. That's a pretty good gauntlet that the opposition's got to get through.

Do you marvel at how Lindor and Ramírez have developed in some fashion each season?

TV: They get better and better. It is unbelievable. Like they say, who knows how much you can improve? They just keep getting better. I was looking at (Lance) Lynn. We faced St. Louis in 2015 and José was the shortstop then. Completely different hitter. More of a slap-and-run type of approach. It's amazing how much he's developed and found himself.

What sorts of advantages does slotting Brantley between those two provide?

TV: If someone gets on, you've got the next guy. If someone doesn't get on, you've got the next guy to get on. So it's just, you've got three really good hitters in a row. If they're getting on, they can keep the line moving. But if they don't get on, they can start something up. When you get to the top of the order, you feel good about it.

How much of a difference does it make for the lineup when Edwin Encarnacion is rolling?

TV: The more guys you get in the lineup that are hot ... in May we had a lot of guys swinging the bat well. If you've got a couple guys, you have to rely on those guys to score your runs. But we had so many guys that we were able to sustain rallies and do some things. Hitting is cyclical. Guys get hot and cold. If you look at a slump, you kind of cycle around where you swing the bat real well and then it starts getting a bit more difficult because you're getting pitched tougher, you're lining out. That starts getting in your head. Then you get to the point where you're starting to search for your swing. The good hitters kind of circumvent that and just stay the same, don't change anything, keep the same approach. And they can get (down) and come right back to (even). Some guys get down here and they have to really work their way out of there to get back up to the top of the cycle.

How relieving was it for you to see the offense perform the way it did in May after a rough April?

TV: We all knew they were going to hit, because there's a lot of good hitters in there. But when you do start hitting, that confidence builds. When you get a few guys hitting, it's contagious. Guys are on base, putting pressure on the pitcher. He's trying to make a pitch and sometimes he'll make a bad pitch because he's trying so hard to make a perfect pitch. It helps everybody down the lineup when you're getting guys on and putting pressure on the pitcher.

What have you thought about Yan Gomes' first two months?

TV: He's done a much better job of not changing the swing and staying with it regardless of the results. Last year, he was really trying to change things too much. Kind of lost what felt right.

Are you running out of things to say to Jason Kipnis to keep his mind in the right place?

TV: He knows. He's gotten to where he's coming out of it, but then he'll drive a couple balls and they'll be outs and he starts pressing again and falls back into it. It's frustrating, because you look at how many balls he has hit hard or driven to the wall in a part of the ballpark or the wrong

ballpark. He doesn't pick his spots really well when he drives balls like that. In Houston, he had driven a ball into the gap for an out. Then we got back from Houston and he hit that ball down the line that would've been a homer in Houston that (Tony) Kemp caught. Mentally, he has to just stay strong and keep fighting through it.

During the series against the Astros in Cleveland, he said he found an in-game adjustment to make. What did he change?

TV: When you look at his takes, when he's taking pitches in a really strong position, he's using his lower half correctly. He gets out of his legs a little bit and his upper half wants to take over. You can see it. When he's not having success, but I can see it, I let him know: "That looks really good." And he's like, "Yeah, I feel good." As a hitter, sometimes when you're struggling, you get so many thoughts in your head that it's like you're having a conference call when you're trying to hit. It doesn't work. I think he gets there sometimes, where there's so much stuff. He was really coming around and then the last couple days here he's been talking to himself a little too much and getting too many thoughts and trying to make adjustments and thinking about them too much. The next thing you know, you're swinging at balls and taking strikes.

What have you thought of what Greg Allen has provided over the last week or so?

TV: I'm really proud of what he's done. The work he's put in, you're starting to see it coming into games. He's putting together great at-bats. If you looked early, there were a lot of strikeouts and some empty at-bats. Now it's like every at-bat is competitive.

He turned an 0-2 count into a nine-pitch flyout in his second at-bat on Saturday...

TV: He battled. And then his third at-bat, he smoked it. (Max) Kepler made a hell of a play. I'm really proud of him. He's worked hard in the cages and he has some mechanical things that he needs to fix that he's fixing. His lower half is getting much better. He's getting more sequenced.

Has he reached the point in which he can appreciate a good at-bat even when it doesn't result in a hit?

TV: I think so. It's still early, but from what I've seen — I went up to him after the game and said, "Hey, that was a hell of a game, even though you didn't get anything out of it."

### **Twins 7, Indians 5: Tribe a walk-off loser as Eddie Rosario's 3 homers eclipse Edwin Encarnacion's 2 Patrick Donnelly | The Associated Press**

**Published on June 4, 2018 | Updated 7:29 a. m.**  
MINNEAPOLIS — Indians manager Terry Francona thought it was going to be an Edwin Encarnacion-led victory Sunday afternoon at Target Field.

Unfortunately for the Tribe, a different Eddie stole the show.

Eddie Rosario hit his third homer of the game, launching a two-run shot in the bottom of the ninth inning to lift the Minnesota Twins over the Indians 7-5.

Encarnacion hit two long home runs, and Michael Brantley's solo shot off Addison Reed in the eighth tied it at 5, but the struggling bullpen couldn't bring home the victory as the Indians dropped their third straight after a six-game winning streak.

"I thought today was one of those days where he'd put us on his shoulders and we won," Francona said of Encarnacion. "Well, we didn't. And it kills you. But if he starts to heat up like that, boy, that'll be tremendous."

Encarnacion's second homer was a three-run shot in the sixth that put Cleveland on top 4-3. Reliever Ryan Pressly came on with a runner on second and two out, but he walked Jose Ramirez before Encarnacion hit the first pitch for his 16th homer of the season.

It wasn't enough for the Indians, and after suffering through a historic streak of walk-off losses, the Twins were only too happy to reverse the trend.

On Tuesday, the Twins tied the 1968 Pirates and 2010 Mariners with their eighth walk-off loss in their first 50 games.

"As many as we've experienced, we haven't had a lot of those chances to see the home plate celebrations," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "The right guy did it. I didn't see exactly what happened at home plate, but I'm sure it was pretty festive."

Rosario became the first Twins player to have a pair of three-homer games. He also hit three home runs last June 13 at home against the Mariners. Harmon Killebrew and Tony Oliva are among the Twins who did it once.

Cleveland closer Cody Allen (2-2) walked Brian Dozier to lead off the ninth. Then he fell behind Rosario 2-1.

With the heart of the Twins' order coming up, Rosario knew Allen couldn't afford to put another runner on, and he was ready for what came next.

"After he threw me a second ball, I knew he was going to throw me a fastball," said Rosario, who popped up a 2-0 pitch against Allen when they faced each other Thursday. "It was up, and he throws 95, but I stayed through the ball. I didn't know where the ball was going, but I wanted to try to finish the game."

Rosario, who began the day with 10 homers, hit a solo homer in the first inning and another solo homer in the seventh. Dozier also homered for the Twins, whose struggling offense erupted for 29 runs in the four-game series.

Dozier led off the seventh against Indians starter Mike Clevenger with his ninth homer of the season to tie it at 4. Rosario then greeted reliever Tyler Olson with his second homer of the game.

Fernando Rodney (2-2) pitched a scoreless ninth to pick up the victory.

Twins starter Kyle Gibson was perfect through the first four innings, striking out six batters. Encarnacion led off the fifth with a 434-foot drive to the second deck in left field.

The Twins are 4-2 against the Indians this year.

"I think we're going to be a team that's going to win a lot of close ballgames," Gibson said. "I think that's going to be our team identity, and coming through like that with a walk-off was a big win in this series."

#### Glove love

The game wouldn't have reached the bottom of the ninth if not for some outstanding defense by the Indians. First, center fielder Bradley Zimmer saved at least one run with a spectacular diving grab on Ryan LaMarre's drive to left-center in the second. Then Francisco Lindor's perfect relay throw to the plate nailed Ehire Adrianza, who was trying to score the go-ahead run on LaMarre's double in the eighth.

#### Homer hype

Encarnacion has 15 homers in 37 career games at Target Field, more than any other opposing player. Meanwhile, Dozier's ninth homer of the year was his 76th career long ball at Target Field, but only his first of the season.

#### Trainer's room

INDIANS: Francona said the team expects to activate OF Lonnie Chisenhall on Tuesday. Chisenhall has been on the DL since April 8 due to a strained right calf.

... OF Brandon Guyer (neck) remains on track to rejoin the team this week as well.

#### Up next

INDIANS: RHP Corey Kluber (8-2, 2.02 ERA) will face the Brewers on Tuesday night in Cleveland. Kluber has opened the season with 12 consecutive quality starts, the longest such streak for an Indians pitcher in 100 years.

#### **Clippers 5, Chiefs 1 | Adam Wilk has solid start to earn win**

Clippers starter Adam Wilk allowed one run in five innings and Brandon Barnes doubled home Lonnie Chisenhall with the go-ahead run in the fifth in a 5-1 victory over host Syracuse on Sunday afternoon before 3,580 in NBT Stadium.

Wilk (2-5) gave up six hits with a walk and two strikeouts. Five Columbus relievers then combined for four scoreless innings.

Barnes' 20th double of the season broke a 1-1 tie, and he stole third and scored when Yu Chang reached on a throwing error by Chiefs shortstop Bengie Gonzalez.

The Clippers iced the game with two runs in the eighth. Francisco Mejia doubled, Eric Haase walked and Nellie Rodriguez doubled them both home for a 5-1 margin.

Barnes finished 2 for 3 with an RBI and two runs scored. Barnes singled, stole second and scored on Mejia's single in the second for a 1-0 lead.

Syracuse starter Phillips Valdez (2-1) gave up three runs, two earned, on seven hits over five innings. He struck out five and walked two.

The Clippers have won two straight after dropping seven of nine. They have Monday off before opening a six-game homestand at 7:05 p.m. Tuesday against Norfolk.

**"We all knew they were going to hit."**

**by Jordan Bastian**

The ball left Edwin Encarnacion's bat and then disappeared.

Rumor has it that it landed in the third deck beyond the left-field wall at Target Field in the sixth inning, but I can't confirm that claim. After multiple reviews of the replay, it looks like some people in the third deck scattered, but if there was a white orb that dropped among them, I didn't see it.

If you told me it disintegrated somewhere over left field, it would be hard to argue.

That was the second home run of the day on Sunday for Encarnacion, who loves him some Target Field. He is now the Opposing Home Run King here with 15 shots at the ballpark. His two trips around the bases with his parrot gave him 16 shots on the season and four RBI on the afternoon.

But, as you surely know by now, Cleveland still lost. This time, 7–5. And, if you've been following along this season, you probably can surmise the manner in which the defeat unfolded.

"We can call it whatever it is, we're just not getting people out right now," Indians closer Cody Allen said. "We're not getting people out consistently enough to give our offense a chance to win ballgames for us. Our offense was the best in baseball in the month of May. But, the month of May was tough, if you think about how many runs we scored and how many games we lost.

"It's hard to win games when you're constantly losing leads or not giving them a chance to get back in the game. It's been a struggle."

Yes, as you may have guessed, the Cleveland bullpen was on the wrong end of things again. Specifically, Tyler Olson allowed a homer in the seventh and Allen yielded a two-run walk-off shot in the ninth. Both blasts were part of a three-homer game by Eddie Rosario.

As Allen alluded, the Indians were in fact the best offensive team in baseball for the month of May.

They ranked first in MLB in runs (179), average (.283), slugging (.499), OPS (.848), wOBA (.363), wRC+ (127), hits (287), doubles (68) and swinging-strike rate (9.2 percent). They led the American League in fWAR (8.1), OBP (.350), contact rate (80.3 percent) and contact rate in the zone (89.2 percent).

The Indians also went 15–13, largely due to the 8.01 ERA posted by the bullpen. Including Sunday's loss—the third in a row for the Tribe—Cleveland boasts a +65 run differential in Innings 1–6, but has a -44 run differential from the seventh inning on.

Given the extent of the relief troubles, Indians manager Terry Francona has tried to squeeze a little extra juice out of his rotation during this rough patch. Consider that in March/April, the Tribe's starters averaged 96.3 pitches per outing. From May on, it's been 102.2 pitches.

That may not seem like much, but it's a batter or two more, and it's cost Cleveland at times. That came up again on Sunday, when Mike Clevinger was sent out for the seventh to try to get Brian Dozier. His 106th pitch was swatted over the wall in left for a game-tying homer. Then came Olson, who surrendered the blast to Rosario.

"Those guys are carrying the load right now," Allen said of the starting pitchers. "We're trying to ease the burden on them a little bit. Some nights we do the job and some nights we don't. We've just got to get some consistency going."

Asked if he has been trying to get a few more pitches out of his starters over the past month due to the bullpen woes, Francona said it was "fair" to draw that conclusion.

"I don't think we've ever left somebody in longer than [they could handle]," Francona said. "Like, where it's [risking] health or they're tired. But, yeah, I think that's fair."

When Michael Brantley launched a game-tying home run in the eighth inning—a blast that went for naught—it made Cleveland the first and only team this season to have five players with 10-plus shots.

Encarnacion's big day continued his offensive tear since the calendar flipped to May. The slugger ended April in an 0-for-14 funk, dropping his slash line to .160/.243/.350 at the time. Since May 1, he's hit .330/.389/.680 in 26 games, falling right in line with his career trend of heating up with the weather.

"I thought today was one of those days where he put us on his shoulders and we won," Francona said. "Well, we didn't and it kills you. But, if he starts to heat up like that, like it looks like, boy, that would be tremendous."

Most of the lineup has been heating up since its abysmal start, when the club posted a .227/.297/.391 slash as a team with an 84 wRC+, 2.2 fWAR and 102 runs (26th in MLB) over March/April. On April 12, hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo said things would get better, and they have.

Prior to Sunday's loss, reporters caught up with Van Burkleo to discuss some of the more recent trends with the Indians' offense.

Q: Since Brantley moved between Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez at the top of the lineup, the offense has really clicked. What have you thought of that combination?



TVB: "I can't think of a better 1–2–3 combination. That's a pretty good gauntlet that the opposition's got to get through."

Q: It seems like Lindor and Ramirez add something to their offensive game each season. How much have you enjoyed witnessing their progression and development as hitters?

TVB: "They get better and better. It is unbelievable. Like they say, who knows how much you can improve? They just keep getting better. I was looking at [Lance] Lynn. We faced St. Louis in 2015 and Jose was the shortstop then. Completely different hitter. More of a slap-and-run type of approach. It's amazing how much he's developed and found himself."

Q: Why do you think it works so well with Brantley between them in the order?

TVB: "If someone gets on, you've got the next guy. If someone doesn't get on, you've got the next guy to get on. So it's just, you've got three really good hitters in a row. If they're getting on, they can keep the line moving. But, if they don't get on, they can start something up. When you get to the top of the order, you feel good about it."

Q: Every year, it seems like Encarnacion gets better once the season flips to May. How good is it to see him follow that pattern again after a tough April

TVB: "The more guys you get in the lineup that are hot, the better. In May, we had a lot of guys swinging the bat well. If you've got a couple guys, you've got to rely on those guys to score your runs. But, we had so many guys that we were able to sustain rallies and do some things. Hitting is cyclical. Guys get hot and cold. If you look at a slump, you kind of cycle around where you swing the bat real good and then it starts getting a bit more difficult, because you're getting pitched tougher, you're lining out. That starts getting in your head. Then you get to the point where you're starting to search for your swing. The good hitters kind of circumvent that and just stay the same, don't change anything, keep the same approach. And they can get here and come right back. Some guys get down, and they've got to really work their way out of there to get back up to the top of the cycle."

Q: Back in April, we talked a lot about how the expected numbers didn't align with the results. How nice was it to see May support your belief that things would turn around?

TVB: "I know when we talked about it, we all knew they were going to hit, because there's a lot of good hitters in there. But, when you do start hitting, that confidence builds. When you get a few guys hitting, it's contagious. Guys are on base, putting pressure on the pitcher. He's trying to make a pitch and sometimes he'll make a bad pitch, because he's trying so hard to make a perfect pitch. It helps everybody down the lineup when you're getting guys on and putting pressure on the pitcher."

Q: What have you thought of Yan Gomes' consistency two months in?

TVB: "He's done a much better job of not changing the swing and staying with it regardless of the results. Last year, he was really trying to change things too much. Kind of lost what felt right."

Q: Are you running out of things to tell Jason Kipnis as he battles his way out of this slump? You guys know what's going on and he's been around long enough to know, too. So, how do you approach something like this with a veteran?

TVB: "He knows. He's gotten to where he's coming out of it, but then he'll drive a couple balls and they'll be outs and he starts pressing again and falls back into it. It's frustrating, because you look at how many balls he has hit hard or driven to the wall in a part of the ballpark or the wrong ballpark. He doesn't pick his spots really well when he drives balls like that. In Houston, he had driven a ball into the gap for an out. Then we got back from Houston and he hit that ball down the line that would've been a homer in Houston that Kemp caught. Mentally, he has to just stay strong and keep fighting through it."

Q: During the home series against the Astros, Kipnis said he made an in-game adjustment that worked, and then you saw better results over the next week or so. What was the fix?

TVB: "When you look at his takes, when he's taking pitches in a really strong position, he's using his lower half correctly. He gets out of his legs a little bit and his upper half wants to take over. You can see it when he's not having success. But, I can see it, I let him know: 'That looks really good.' And he's like, 'Yeah, I feel good.' As a hitter, sometimes when you're struggling, you get so many thoughts in your head that it's like you're having a conference call when you're trying to hit. It doesn't work. I think he gets there sometimes, where there's so much stuff. He was really coming around and then the last couple days here he's been talking to himself a little too much and getting too many thoughts and trying to make adjustments and thinking about them too much. The next thing you know, you're swinging at balls and taking strikes."

Q: What have you thought of Greg Allen's progress of late?

TVB: "I'm really proud of what he's done. The work he's put in, you're starting to see it coming into games. He's putting together great at-bats. If you looked early, there were a lot of strikeouts and some empty at-bats. Now it's like every at-bat is competitive."

Q: During Saturday's game, Allen fell behind, 0–2, but then wound up having a nine-pitch at-bat. Even though he flew out to left, is that an example of what you're talking about?

TVB: "Yeah, he battled. And then his third at-bat, he smoked it. Kepler made a hell of a play. I'm really proud of him. He's worked hard in the cages and he has some mechanical things that he needs to fix that he's fixing. His lower half is getting much better. He's getting more sequenced."

Q: Is Allen smart enough to know that, even if they wound up being outs, those were two great at-bats? As a young player, is he focusing on the right things after a game like that?

TVB: "I think so. It's still early, but from what I've seen, yeah. I went up to him after the game and said, 'Hey, that was a hell of a game, even though you didn't get anything out of it.'"

**Tito's pregame minutiae: June 3  
by Jordan Bastian**

Q: So, Adam Plutko pitched OK last night... (Plutko threw a no-hitter for Triple-A Columbus).

TF: "How about that? You know what? How many times do you see where a kid goes down and there's a clunker. But, he handled [going back to the Minors] really well. I think we even talked about it the other day. He really handled it well, but that was kind of cool. On a day where the easiest thing to be was kind of grumpy—with the way we played and everything—when I found out about it, it was kind of like, 'Man, that's good.' [Shane] Bieber's kind of in the fold now, or in the mix. Plutko, I mean, man, having some depth with pitching helps you sleep a little bit better. I thought that was pretty cool."

Q: Do you feel better about the depth behind the rotation right now? Going into the year, Bieber wasn't really on the map and Plutko was coming back from hip surgery...

TF: "Going into the year, Bieber was starting out in Double-A. Plutko was coming off probably his worst year in pro ball and he was injured. So, heck yeah, it makes you feel better. Man, that's the worst feeling, to be worrying so much about your pitching. It makes it hard, so yeah, that was kind of an uplifting piece of information."

Q: When you need a fifth starter again on June 12, do you know if it will be Plutko or Bieber?

TF: "We actually haven't even talked about it yet. We've had so much conversation about the outfielders and stuff. And they've got the Draft going, so I've been trying to do one thing at a time."

Q: What's behind Yonder Alonso and Melky Cabrera being out of the lineup for today's game?

TF: "The only reason we did that is because we wanted Josey [Jose Ramirez] to DH today, just to give him a day [off] from throwing. And we told Yonder. He's not in the dog house. We just really wanted Josey to DH and not to play third, so that's why. Melky just had some tough numbers and we'd like to kind of see our younger guys play."

Q: You guys signed George Kontos and sent him to Triple-A. What can you tell us about that signing?

TF: "I think the majority of his good years were with the Giants, and then Pittsburgh recently. You know what? He's a guy that has had some pretty good years. He's fallen on a little bit of tougher year this year. We're just trying to add depth, because as we've seen, we've had moves. It's probably unrealistic to think that we're going to go through the rest of the year without having to make a move with our bullpen, so we're just trying to add some depth. And I think they felt like there was some things mechanically maybe they could do to kind of help, too. So, we'll see."

Q: What have the reports been on Francisco Mejia? He's been struggling offensively with the Clippers.

TF: "Yeah, he's had a tough time so far. By all accounts, he's handling it really well, but he's just kind of had a tough time. I mean, we're talking about human beings. It's funny, because with him, it was almost a lock. I don't think anybody's thinking that this kid's not going to hit. He's just having a hard time."

Q: How's his work in the outfield going?

TF: "OK. He's working at it, which is good. I think he's plenty athletic. I think going back on the ball is still kind of a challenge to him, which that makes sense."

Q: What's the latest on Lonnie Chisenhall?

TF: "He's going to play again today [at Triple-A] and then he'll be off tomorrow and then he'll join us on Tuesday."

Q: And Brandon Guyer?TF: "Guyer, we're still working through. They had two righties going, so I think Chris [Antonetti] was actually going to talk with him more today about maybe [backing him up beyond Tuesday]."

Q: After Saturday's game, you made a point to meet two fans from Aberdeen, South Dakota. Were you born there due to your dad playing there in the Minors?

TF: "It's a smallish town. I don't know what the population is now. I think it used to be 15-20,000. I don't know if it's gotten bigger or smaller. My guess is it probably got smaller. They were the Aberdeen Pheasants. So, it was Class [C]of the ... Northern League. It was either the St. Louis Browns or the Orioles, because the Browns went to [Baltimore]. And the manager was a guy named Zeke Strange, who was married to my mom's sister. So, my dad met my mom there when he was playing there. I ended up being born there and he went back there for the first two winters and then they moved. They went back to South Dakota in '59 and '60 and then they moved to New Brighton, Pennsylvania, in '61. So, I remember... I mean, I used to have a good memory, but I was two, you know? But, I mean, so those people came down. When I saw [them on the video board with Aberdeen listed], it buckled me. The guy, they went to the same high school as my mom. The same college. I don't know, it was kind of funny."

Q: Did they get a kick out of you wanting to meet them?

TF: "I kind of did, too. They said they'd been following since... because it's not that big a place. They were laughing. Like when I said, 'Your high school is the Golden Eagles.' ... It's funny, because the first thing I thought of was, 'I've got to tell my dad.' You ever do that? Man. But, on a day when the easiest thing to be was grumpy, it kind of was fun."

### **Indians prepare for 2018 MLB Amateur draft with stockpile of picks**

The Indians are entering the 2018 Major League Baseball Amateur draft with a new face heading their process and in a much better position than a year ago.

The MLB draft begins at 7 p.m. Monday with the first round through the second-round compensatory picks. It will be aired on MLB Network and [MLB.com](http://MLB.com). Rounds 3-10 are on Tuesday and the fast-and-furious third day of the draft will feature rounds 11-40 on Wednesday. The second and third days of the draft can be seen live on [MLB.com](http://MLB.com).

This is the first year in which Scott Barnsby, who was promoted this past winter to director of amateur scouting after spending three years as assistant scouting director under Brad Grant, will be running the show for the Indians. Grant spearheaded the last 10 Indians' amateur drafts and was promoted to vice president of baseball operations, strategy & administration.

The Indians watched last year as 63 names were taken off the board before their first selection, which was forfeited because of the signing of Edwin Encarnacion. This year is a different story — the Indians have three picks in the top 41 and four selections in the top 67.

After their first-round pick at No. 29, the Indians were awarded the No. 35 selection because they are a revenue-sharing team and Carlos Santana, who declined the Indians' qualifying offer, signed for more than \$50 million with the Philadelphia Phillies. The Indians also have Nos. 41 and 67 as competitive balance selections to round out a four-pick night on Monday.

### **SeaWolves 4, RubberDucks 3: Slumping Ducks lose for fourth time in past five games**

The recent high-scoring ways of the RubberDucks seem to have hit a temporary lull.

The Ducks lost for the fourth time in their past five games as the visiting Erie SeaWolves held on for a 4-3 victory Sunday in a rain-delayed finish to a short homestand.

The game started one hour, 25 minutes late as showers pounded the Canal Park field. But that gave way to mostly sunny conditions the rest of the way.

The SeaWolves (21-34), despite resting in last place among the six-teams in the Eastern League's Western Division, have thus far given the first-place Ducks (32-25) fits. They won two of three in the weekend series and enjoy a 5-2 advantage this season.

"That's just kind of baseball," Ducks hitting coach Kevin Howard said. "You go through hot streaks and you go through cold streaks. Their pitchers did a good job this series game-planning us, and we didn't make adjustments quick enough."

The Ducks put together a two-out, two-run rally in the bottom of the ninth inning to finally give 5,314 fans something to cheer about.

After Conner Marabell greeted reliever Jon Schreiber with a two-run single to left, cutting the deficit to 4-3, they had runners on first and third. But Willi Castro grounded out to second to end it.

And the Ducks failed to take advantage of early wildness from starter Anthony Castro, who walked seven in four-plus innings in his Double-A debut, and the SeaWolves walked 10 total.

The Ducks scored just one unearned run in the first eight innings, and a fifth-inning single by Ka'ai Tom was their lone hit until the eighth.

"Sometimes that can be the case where they're just effectively wild and you're chasing pitches," Howard said. "It's hard to game plan if guys aren't hitting their spots."

Their 5-4, 10-inning walk-off win Saturday is the only time they have scored more than three runs the past six games.

With two outs in the ninth, Andrew Celica walked, advanced to second on fielder's indifference, and went to third on Joe Sever's infield hit. Bobby Bradley walked on a full count to load the bases, setting up Marabell's two-run hit.

"I was just trying to extend the inning for the next guy behind me," said the left-handed hitting Marabell. "They brought in a pitcher, a sidearm guy. Just trying to see it deep and drive it the other way."

Marabell, who is hitting .298, now leads the team with 30 RBI and continues to be a consistent force in the middle of the Ducks' lineup.

"I worked hard this offseason and it's starting to pay off," he said. "Just keep it going. We've still got a lot of games left."

Ducks' right-hander Zach Plesac (2-1), the first of four pitchers, allowed four earned runs on eight hits in 4½ innings.

The Ducks, who lead the division by 1½ games over the second-place Richmond Flying Squirrels, start a six-game road trip with the first of three games at the New Hampshire Fisher Cats at 6:35 p.m. Tuesday.

#### **Naquin rehab update**

Indians outfielder Tyler Naquin began an injury rehabilitation assignment with the Ducks Sunday. He batted second as designated hitter and went 0-2 with a first-inning walk.

He has been on the disabled list since May 12 with a strained left hamstring. He is hitting .333 with five home runs and 11 RBI for the Indians this year.

"I feel great," he said afterward. "The main goal is just getting healthy so I can get back up there and help the team any way I can. Just getting the timing back at the plate, getting on the basepaths is nice."

He said he is hoping to play at least one more game in the minors, and play the outfield, either with the Ducks or with Triple-A Columbus. And he isn't sure when he will return to the Indians.

"I don't have that timetable," Naquin said. "I think if everything goes smoothly, soon. Just as long as I stay healthy. That's the main goal here."

The

#### **Cleveland Indians add veteran reliever George Kontos on minor-league deal**

By Joe Noga, [cleveland.com](http://cleveland.com) [jnoga@cleveland.com](mailto:jnoga@cleveland.com)

MINNEAPOLIS -- Veteran right-handed reliever George Kontos has agreed to a minor-league contract with the Cleveland Indians. He has been assigned to Class AAA Columbus.

Kontos, 32, has a career major league record of 18-18 with two saves and a 3.11 earned run average in 343 relief appearances with New York (AL), San Francisco and Pittsburgh.

Kontos appeared in 21 games for the Pirates this season before he was designated for assignment on May 25 and released May 30.

On Saturday, the Indians added veteran left-handed reliever Oliver Perez on a major league deal. Perez joined the club in Minnesota where he pitched 1 1/3 scoreless innings, allowing a hit and a wild pitch while striking out three.

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#### **Does Adam Plutko's no-hitter for Triple-A Columbus make him the pick for Cleveland Indians No. 5 starter?**

By Joe Noga, [cleveland.com](http://cleveland.com) [jnoga@cleveland.com](mailto:jnoga@cleveland.com)

MINNEAPOLIS -- Adam Plutko is doing everything in his power to make sure his most recent trip to Class AAA Columbus is a very brief one.

Plutko, who made three big-league starts with the Indians in May, pitched a no-hitter Saturday, leading the Columbus Clippers to a 6-0 win in Syracuse.

The good news served as a pick-me-up for Indians manager Terry Francona after the Tribe dropped their second straight game in Minnesota on Saturday afternoon.

"On a day where the easiest thing to be was kind of grumpy -- with the way we played and everything -- when I found out about it, it was kind of like, 'Man, that's good,'" Francona said.

Plutko (5-3 with Columbus) struck out eight and was perfect through 8 1/3 innings before walking a batter.

The no-hitter was the second the last two weeks for the Clippers. Righty Shane Bieber pitched a rain-shortened no-no against Gwinnett on May 25.

It's also the second time this season Plutko has flirted with a perfect game. On April 28 he retired 23 straight Indianapolis batters before he was removed from the game after hitting his pitch count (95). Neil Ramirez entered and gave up a double on his first pitch.

And Plutko's success this season has translated to his two separate stints with Indians. He took a no-hitter into the seventh against the Cubs on May 23 at Wrigley Field. He is 3-0 with a 3.93 ERA and 12 strikeouts in 18 1/3 innings with the Indians.

Plutko's success, and the continued emergence of Bieber, who was impressive early on in his spot start against Minnesota on May 31, has helped reestablish starting pitching depth for the Indians, and that's a relief for Francona and the front office.

"Heck yeah, it makes you feel better," Francona said. "Man, that's the worst feeling, to be worrying so much about your pitching. It makes it hard, so yeah, that was kind of an uplifting piece of information."

Now that Plutko and Bieber each have a no-hitter under their belts, does one of them need to toss a perfect game in order to claim the Tribe's No. 5 starter spot? Francona wouldn't let on as to which way the club is leaning regarding who will start the next time the fifth spot comes up in the rotation (June 12).

"We actually haven't even talked about it yet," Francona said. "We've had so much conversation about the outfielders and stuff. And (the front office) has the draft going, so I've been trying to do one thing at a time."

### **Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.04.2018**

#### **Edwin Encarnacion surging on offense just when the Cleveland Indians need him most**

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

MINNEAPOLIS -- As the calendar turns to June, Cleveland Indians slugger Edwin Encarnacion is getting locked in at the plate.

His batting average on balls in play (.368) is second only to Greg Allen (.388) among Indians hitters who appeared in 20 more games since May 1, and he's struck out just once in his last 18 plate appearances.

Encarnacion extended his current hitting streak to nine games with a single in the eighth inning Saturday. He's hitting .429 (15-for-35) during the streak including four home runs, three doubles, 11 RBI and 12 runs.

On Friday, Encarnacion belted his 14th home run of the season, tying him for second on the club with Francisco Lindor and putting him four homers ahead of his pace from last season when he finished with 38. On the season, he has yet to register a three-strikeout game.

Hitting at Target Field the last three days has also helped. Encarnacion thrives in Minnesota, where he is a lifetime .295 hitter with a .612 slugging percentage and a 1.016 OPS.

Encarnacion is second all-time at Target Field among visiting players with 13 home runs, behind Jose Bautista, Salvador Perez and Carlos Santana who each have 14.

"I don't know if he likes this ballpark, but I'm guessing he does," Indians manager Terry Francona said Saturday. "This is a good place to hit. The ball seems to really carry. It even sounds good."

Bullpen session for Miller: Lefty Andrew Miller is set to throw a bullpen session prior to Sunday's game against the Twins as he continues to work his way back from right knee inflammation that put him on the disabled list May 26 for the second time this season.

"The good thing about that is he's kind of champing at the bit," Francona said. "When guys start getting like that, you know they're starting to feel better. He seems to be excited about how he's feeling."

Last week Miller traveled to New York to consult with orthopedic specialist Dr. David Altchek, who confirmed the diagnosis. The meeting gave Miller peace of mind, Francona said. And team trainers continue to work with Miller to figure out the best approach to fortifying the knee in order to prevent a repeat of the injury.

"It's more a matter of me going out there and being stronger and being able to kind of go through my mechanics in the way I want to," Miller said.

As for a timetable for his return, Miller said Sunday's bullpen session is one of his goals in the process of coming up with a plan. And that plan is likely to include a minor league rehab assignment, unlike his previous return from the DL in May.

"I don't think I'm going to be talking them out of it this time," he said. "I'll have to jump through those hoops and hopefully they'll go really well. The expectation is that they will. As far as when we get there, I don't know. But, hopefully sooner than later."

Elsewhere in the bullpen: Josh Tomlin's move to the bullpen has given Francona some flexibility, especially in games that end up looking like they could go into extra innings.

On Friday, Tomlin pitched the seventh and eighth innings, allowing a solo home run to Eduardo Escobar. The homer was the 18th Tomlin has allowed in 36 1/3 innings this season.

"He made one pitch and he paid for it," Francona said of Tomlin. "The last couple times out, though I think he's been pretty good. He's so professional and he throws strikes and he also protects us in case something happens where we have length."

Francona said in games where he has already used multiple relievers, it's reassuring to have Tomlin waiting in the bullpen if the game gets extended.

"If you get where we use 3-4 pitchers, you can go to Cody (Allen) because we have a guy sitting back there that's stretched out," he said.

Rehab assignment: Francona said outfielder Tyler Naquin, who has been on the disabled list with a hamstring injury since May 12, will begin a minor league rehab assignment with Class AA Akron on Sunday as the RubberDucks' designated hitter. In 10 games prior to going on the DL, Naquin was hitting .417 with a homer and six RBI, including a seven-game hitting streak.

Jumping up: Outfielder Greg Allen batted sixth on Saturday with Melky Cabrera getting a day off after playing in 11 straight games. Francona said he liked the idea of keeping a switch hitter between left-handed batters Yonder Alonso and Jason Kipnis, and Allen had been swinging a hot bat.

"It's just confidence," Francona said of Allen. "He's laying off pitches way better than he was earlier. He's hit some balls to left field on a line as opposed to just a little fly ball to left. He's getting some playing time that's consistent and he's starting to feel a little better about himself. It's fun to watch young guys get better."

He's No. 2: Francona admitted Saturday that he really likes Michael Brantley hitting second in the batting order between Lindor and Jose Ramirez.

"The game doesn't speed up on him," Francona said. "I've told him, when guys are running, I don't want him to take. If it costs us a stolen base, in the long run we're going to make out way better."

#### **Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.04.2018**

#### **MLB draft night: Cleveland Indians excited to have four of the first 67 picks Monday night**

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CLEVELAND, Ohio -- If you can steer your way past the inferno that is the Indians' bullpen for a moment, it's time for MLB's draft. It starts at 7 p.m. Monday and the Indians are going to be busy.

They'll make four choices tonight with the 29th, 35th, 41st and 67th picks. They'll pick 29th in the first round after winning 102 games in the regular season last year. The 35th pick comes their way as compensation for losing free agent Carlos Santana to the Phillies after last year. They received the 41st pick from the Competitive Balance Round A and the 67th pick is their second-round choice.

Last year the Indians did not have a first round pick. They lost it as compensation for signing free agent Edwin Encarnacion to a three-year \$60 million deal.

They had two selections in the second round and drafted high school outfielder Quentin Holmes and high school shortstop Tyler Freeman. Holmes received a \$988,870 signing bonus. The Indians signed Freeman for \$816,500.

Holmes and Freeman started this season in extended spring training.

This will be the first draft orchestrated by Scott Barnsby, who replaced Brad Grant as director of amateur scouting in the offseason. Grant held the position for 10 years and helped revitalize the farm system. Barnsby, in his 19th year with the Indians, served as Grant' assistant scouting director for the last three years.

"You guys know how we operate," said Barnsby, when asked if he was feeling pressure in his new position. "One, I'm fortunate to be with the organization for a long time. The same group of people are in place starting with Chris Antonetti (president of baseball operations), Mike Chernoff, (general manager), Matt Foreman (assistant general manager) and Carter Hawkins (assistant general manager).

"The support system is really helpful. Brad, who did a great job for 10 years, the longest tenured scouting direction in the history of the Indians, hasn't gone very far. He's still sitting right there. He's still in our meetings.

"For me it always has been about making sure we lead a really effective scouting process and make sure that there's nothing overlooked with the players and that we make a decision as a group."

Barnsby said there is a challenge picking 29th in the first round, but there is also excitement because the Indians have four picks in the first two rounds after not having a first round pick last year.

"This draft isn't different in terms of preparation, but it's different because it's more exciting to think about how many picks we have - 29, 35, 41, 67."

As for the challenge of picking so low in the first round, Barnsby said, "It's a good thing. It means our major league team is doing well. But it's so unpredictable just to know who is going to be there at 29.

"There are so many variables that it is challenging so we prepare the best we can. The draft is fluid and that's why we're hoping we're so prepared that as we get closer to 29 we'll have a pretty good idea who we're getting and hopefully make a real good decision on draft day."

The first five picks in the draft belong to Detroit, San Francisco, Philadelphia, the White Sox and Cincinnati. The Tigers and Giants had the same record last season (64-98), but the Tigers will draft first because they had the lower winning percentage in 2016.

Detroit, according to [mlb.com](http://mlb.com), is considering three players for the first pick - college right-handers Casey Mize from Auburn or Florida's Brady Singer. George Tech catcher Joey Bart is also reportedly on their short list.

Over the last seven years, the Indians have had seven No.1 picks, including two in 2014. They've taken high school players with five of those picks including Francisco Lindor in 2011, Clint Frazier in 2013, Justus Sheffield in 2014, Brady Aiken in 2015 and Will Benson in 2016.

Barnsby says the 2018 draft is deep in college and high school talent.

"The way we're set up is to be successful no matter if we draft a college or high school player," he said. "Whoever ends up being there, as long as we know everything about them, and can help develop them, that's all that matters. We're not really focused on one or the other right now."

The Indians have a signing bonus pool of \$9,145,200 million. That's what they have to spend on the first 10 rounds of the draft. If they exceed that, they can be penalized.

Here are the slot prices for their first four picks: 29th \$2,332,700; 35th \$2,016,400; 41st \$1,744,800 and 67th \$939,700. Teams can pay the players taken in the first 10 rounds above or below their slot value as long as the total doesn't exceed their bonus pool.

The draft lasts 40 rounds. Any players drafted after the 10th round who are signed for more than \$125,000 will count against that team's bonus pool. The Royals, Rays and Tigers have the largest bonus pools at \$12,781,900, \$12,416,600 and \$12,414,800, respectively.

### **Edwin Encarnacion's two home runs not enough as Cleveland Indians fall to Minnesota Twins, 7-5**

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

MINNEAPOLIS -- Edwin Encarnacion might not want to leave Minnesota any time soon, but the rest of the Cleveland Indians can't get out of town fast enough.

Encarnacion continued to crush Twins pitching at Target Field on Sunday, belting a pair of home runs to power the Tribe offense. But Minnesota rallied with back-to-back homers in the seventh inning, and Eddie Rosario's walk-off home run in the ninth lifted the Twins to a 7-5 victory.

The Indians pulled even in the eighth as Michael Brantley snapped an 0-for-16 skid with a home run to right field that tied the score at 5-5. But Tribe closer Cody Allen (2-2, 3.75) walked Brian Dozier to lead off the ninth and Rosario launched his third home run of the game to right center to end it.

"We can call it whatever it is, we're just not getting people out consistently enough to give our offense a chance to win ballgames," Allen said of the Tribe's embattled bullpen.

"It's hard to win games when you're constantly losing leads or not giving them a chance to get back in the game. It's been a struggle."

Catcher Yan Gomes said facing a hitter as hot as Rosario can be a challenge. In addition to his three home runs Sunday, Rosario hit a two-run shot on Saturday.

"I can say we didn't quite figure it out," Gomes said. "The guy is on a streak right now and anytime he puts the bat on the ball, it's been driven somewhere. I think we all know he's a tremendous player."

Mike Clevinger took the mound for Cleveland in the seventh with a 4-3 lead after throwing 103 pitches. His 106th delivery of the day was deposited in the left field seats by Dozier.

It was Dozier's first home run at Target Field this year, tying the score at 4-4. Rosario then greeted reliever Tyler Olson with a solo shot to right to put the Twins in front 5-4.

Clevinger (4-2, 3.36), allowed four runs on seven hits and walked three in six innings. He did not factor in the decision, striking out three batters and allowing two home runs. Clevinger settled in over his final four innings before giving up the tying homer to Dozier.

"I'm growing and learning and I just need to find better balance on and off the field," Clevinger said. "I think it's just finding my mentality and it just came a little late today."

The Indians trailed 3-0 before rallying for four runs on a pair of Encarnacion upper-deck blasts in the fifth and sixth innings. Encarnacion's solo shot in the fifth ended Minnesota starter Kyle Gibson's bid for a perfect game and extended his hitting streak to 10 games. During the streak, the 35-year-old slugger is batting .436 with six home runs, 15 RBI and 14 runs.

"I thought today was one of those days where he put us on his shoulders and we win," Francona said. "Well, we didn't and it kills you. But, if he starts to heat up like that, like it looks like, boy, that would be tremendous."

Encarnacion hit three home runs during the four-game weekend series and now has four this season against the Twins. He's hit 16 home runs on the season and has 15 career homers at Target Field, the most by any visiting player.

Eduardo Escobar collected his sixth RBI of the series on a double in the first inning to put Minnesota in front 2-0. And Dozier's RBI single in the third made it 3-0, but the damage could have been worse were it not for a fine defensive effort by Bradley Zimmer in center field.

With Robbie Grossman aboard via a leadoff walk, Ryan LaMarre sent a drive to center field that seemed destined for extra bases. But Zimmer raced back and made a leaping catch at full extension for the first out of the inning, chasing Grossman back to first.

Meanwhile, Gibson dominated the Indians lineup through four innings, striking out six of the first 12 batters he faced. He pitched 5 2/3 innings, allowing a run on two hits and a pair of walks while striking out seven.

Gibson (2-3, 3.41) earned a no-decision for his efforts. He entered the game having lost four straight decisions against Cleveland. Gibson last defeated the Indians in September of 2015.

Five for 10

Brantley's 10th home run came off Twins reliever Addison Reed in the eighth inning. It made Cleveland the first team in baseball this season to have five players reach double-digit home runs (Lindor, Ramirez, Encarnacion, Alonso).

Indians catcher Yan Gomes hit a ball to left field in the seventh inning that appeared to clear the wall and bounce back into play. Umpires initially ruled the play a double and after an official's review, the call was confirmed.

"I was talking to some of their guys and they said when there's a replay like that, they call it a homer every time," Gomes said. "But they must have seen something else. It's one of those where the play just stands, whatever is called on the field."

Gomes was eventually erased on a fielder's choice as Greg Allen tried to bunt him to third base, but catcher Bobby Wilson made a nice play in front of the plate and threw to Escobar for the tag at second.

The Indians were unable to salvage a split of the four-game weekend series in Minnesota and drop to 2-4 on the season against the Twins. Cleveland is now 12-17 on the road and to 10-4 in its last 14 games at Target Field.

Clevinger threw 106 pitches, 66 (62 percent) for strikes. Gibson threw 99 pitches, 63 (64 percent) for strikes.

The Twins and Indians drew 26,096 fans to Target Field on Sunday. First pitch was at 2:12 p.m. with a temperature of 60 degrees.