

Bauer + power = Tribe blowout victory

By Casey Harrison MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- After striking out Twins outfielder Max Kepler to end the sixth inning Monday, Trevor Bauer walked off the mound at Progressive Field to his second standing ovation of the night.

The first round of applause came in in the third inning, after Bobby Wilson was called out on strikes on a 96 mph fastball for the first out of the frame. It marked Bauer's fifth strikeout and 200th of the season -- becoming the 11th pitcher in Indians history to reach the feat, eclipsing the right-hander's previous career high of 196, set last season, earlier in the game.

Bauer's night was over after the Kepler strikeout. He held the Twins to three hits across six shutout innings, while walking three to go with his 11 strikeouts -- leading the charge in a 10-0 victory. The Indians (62-49) improved to 10 games above the second-place Twins (52-59) in the American League Central standings, and the win puts them 13 games above .500 for the first time all year.

"His last pitch was maybe his best fastball of the night," manager Terry Francona said.

The win marks Bauer's second straight win against Minnesota, which he contained to two runs in 6 1/3 innings last Tuesday at Target Field. Both box scores may show a favorable outcome for Bauer, but he said the results were only possible after making key adjustments to Twins hitters -- six of which entered hitting over .300 in their careers against Bauer.

"I threw more fastballs," Bauer said. "I looked at some numbers in-between, found the holes in that approach of theirs and exploited them."

Bauer (11-6) struck out every starter in Minnesota's lineup at least once and Kepler was the last to fall victim. Bauer held the Twins hitless until surrendering a soft line drive single to Jake Cave in the third. A one-out double given up to Jorge Polanco in the sixth was the only legitimate scoring threat allowed by Bauer. Polanco reached third after a flyout, followed by a walk to Miguel Sano. Kepler tried to break Bauer's groove, but couldn't deliver.

"He was good," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Got the pitch count up through six innings, but we just never got a big hit."

Cleveland's offense erupted off Twins starter Kyle Gibson (5-9) in the fourth, with home runs coming from Yonder Alonso and Brandon Guyer. Jason Kipnis went deep with a solo shot in the sixth off former Indians pitcher Matt Belisle, as did Edwin Encarnacion in the seventh with a three-run blast for the designated hitter's 25th of the season.

With the win, Bauer improves his season strikeout total to 206, placing him second in the AL, one behind Boston's Chris Sale and surpasses his self-imposed goal set before Spring Training. It also sets his season innings total to a Major League-leading 159 2/3. He also leads all pitchers with a 5.7 WAR, according to Fangraphs.

Bauer admitted the next step for him is 300 strikeouts.

"Maybe not this year," Bauer quipped. "But hopefully next year."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Guyer goes deep: Guyer punctuated the Tribe's four-run fourth off Gibson with a two-run shot for the right-hander's sixth homer of the season, capping off a 1-for-4 showing. The right fielder crushed the 1-1 offering an estimated 359 feet over the towering left-field wall. Alonso (1-for-4) opened the frame with a solo homer, then Kipnis (2-for-3) walked and was driven in on a double from Roberto Perez (1-for-3) -- who scored on Guyer's blast.

"He swung the bat good," Francona said. "That's good. And now we got a lefty tomorrow and hopefully he's got a little bit of some timing, so maybe he can get even more dangerous."

Guyer's homer marked his first hit off a right-handed pitcher since 2016. Francona said before the game the plan was to play Guyer the first two games in the series to give him extra at-bats against righties. Guyer entered Monday 5-for-13 against right-handers since July 1 and was 2-for-70 between the Major and Minor Leagues prior to that.

"I'm just happy to be out there, right-lefty," Guyer said. "Any time I'm able to be on that grass and play the game, I'm happy. We won the game, so it's good to be a part of that."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Kipnis' big play: Aside from Kipnis' two-hit day at the plate, Bauer credited the second baseman for his key defensive stop in the first to start the game.

Leadoff man Joe Mauer ripped a scorching grounder toward shallow right field. Kipnis, who began overshifted on Mauer, ranged to his left, dove and got up to throw the Twins' first baseman out by a few steps.

"Who knows how it turns out if that's a hit," Bauer said. "Because Mauer's on first, now Rosario's up. He has good numbers against me. If he doubles, hits a homer, something, the game might go differently. So, little things like that that change the game that you may not even realize how big they are, because whatever happens after, doesn't happen."

Francona agreed.

"I thought it kind of energized us a little bit," he said. "That was a nice play and it looked like it energized Kip. From there, we played a good game. It started with Trevor and we got our offense in gear and we kind of kept at them."

HE SAID IT

"I'm just hoping I get it. I mean, it took me three years to actually get my first-hit ball after some teammates lost it and I discovered it in the bottom of a drawer two years later. So, honestly, I'm just hoping I get the ball and then I'll figure it out after that." -- Bauer, on receiving his 200th strikeout ball

UP NEXT

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (13-5, 3.66 ERA) is expected to start Tuesday for another 7:10 p.m. ET bout at Progressive Field. Carrasco last pitched Aug. 1, against the Twins, fanning 10 batters in 7 1/3 shutout innings en route to a 2-0 Tribe win, and has posted a 1.99 ERA across his last six outings, spanning 31 2/3 frames. Minnesota will counter with lefty Adalberto Mejia (1-0, 2.60).

Kipnis reps Hooton Foundation for Indians

By Casey Harrison MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Improving the lives of young people has often been the focus of charitable givebacks from Indians players.

That's why it was no surprise when the Taylor Hooton Foundation announced late last month that Tribe second baseman Jason Kipnis was named to its Advisory Board of active Major League Baseball players for the third consecutive year.

The Taylor Hooton Foundation is widely acknowledged as the leading advocacy group against appearances and use of performance enhancing substances by America's youth. The Advisory Board, which formed in 2014 and is fully endorsed by the league, includes at least one player from 28 of the 30 Major League teams, and recently expanded to a record 38 members.

"Not only does it send a good message about leveling the playing field and competing with who you are and what you got," Kipnis told MLB.com. "But it also sends the right message that you want to be accountable and hold your head high for what you have and not look for the easy way out or cut corners."

Members of the Advisory Board will participate in THF's 2018 public-service campaign, It's All Me. For the campaign, a print PSA featuring each member of the Foundation's Advisory Board has been created, and will appear in the players' respective game program or magazine, among other platforms. Additionally, It's All Me-themed print PSAs will appear in the League Championship Series and World Series programs.

The foundation was formed in 2004 by friends and family of Taylor Hooton, then 17, who died following the use of anabolic steroids. Since its creation, it is dedicated to educating young people about the use of anabolic steroids and other PEDs.

"It's all about working hard for what you want to earn, instead of looking for the shortcut or anything that will give you the advantage up on someone," Kipnis said.

Alonso's BaseBOWL

Following the Indians' 4-3 win against the Angels on Sunday, Yonder Alonso hosted a celebrity bowling tournament -- dubbed BaseBOWL -- at a nearby bowling alley to benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland, in which the Indians' first baseman said over 350 people attended. Prominent athletes, sports personalities and entertainers all attended the event, and a silent auction was held in which various sports memorabilia was bid for. The event raised more than \$100,000 and was attended by the majority of the Indians' roster, including manager Terry Francona.

For Alonso, a Cuban immigrant who moved to the United States during his youth, the cause was extra special.

"I grew up with the Boys & Girls Club when I was younger, when I came to this country," Alonso said. "For me to give back anything that I can is always a good time, but for the first time, giving back to the Boys & Girls Club of Cleveland was the ultimate goal."

Worth noting

- Francona said ahead of the team's Monday bout with the Twins that catcher Yan Gomes participated in running exercises and could be back in the starting lineup as soon as Tuesday.

Gomes was lifted in the fourth inning of Friday's 7-4 loss to the Angels and was diagnosed with right hamstring tendonitis. He's been day to day since. Roberto Perez, who replaced Gomes on Friday, caught the other two games over the weekend.

Gomes exits game with injury

Gomes exits game with injury

00:30

Aug. 3rd, 2018

"The last couple days, he actually said he doesn't really feel it," Francona said. "There was a thought that he could catch tomorrow. ... It's all gonna depend on how he feels when he runs. It's a good thing that he hasn't felt it, and we're really pleased, but we need to see how he feels when he gets going a little bit.

- Veteran right-hander Josh Tomlin is expected to pitch with Double-A Akron on Wednesday as he continues a Minor League rehab assignment. Tomlin, 33, was placed on the 10-day disabled list on July 10 with a strained right hamstring, and began his assignment with Triple-A Columbus on Friday, in which he allowed three runs, two home runs and six hits in two innings.

Freeman extends hit streak to 18 games

By Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com @GoldenSombrero

- Making his full-season debut, Indians No. 10 prospect Luis Oviedo tossed five scoreless innings to help lead Class A Lake County past Great Lakes, 4-2, and earn the win. The 19-year-old righty allowed two hits while posting four walks and four strikeouts while throwing 46 of 77 pitches for strikes. Oviedo was promoted to the Midwest League after he posted a 1.88 ERA, 0.92 WHIP and a 61-to-10 strikeout-to-walk ratio over 48 innings (nine starts) with Class A Short Season Mahoning Valley.

- Indians No. 19 prospect Tyler Freeman hit a first-inning double to extend his hitting streak to 18 games for Class A Short Season Mahoning Valley. The 19-year-old old shortstop also recorded a 13-game hitting streak earlier in the season and has hit safely in 39 of 46 games overall in the New York-Penn League. He's hitting .382 with 23 extra-base hits on the season.

Who will still be with the Tribe in 2025?

By Will Leitch MLB.com @williamfleitch

How long is seven years in baseball? MLB's 2011 leaders in games played (Prince Fielder), at-bats (Ichiro Suzuki), Wins Above Replacement (Cliff Lee), hits (Adrian Gonzalez and Michael Young) and stolen bases (Michael Bourn) are all out of baseball. Your top home-run hitter was Jose Bautista; your best position player by WAR (Baseball-Reference) was Jacoby Ellsbury. It was a long time ago. Seven years is a lifetime.

MLB teams are always obsessed with team control over players, about having them wrapped up and secured on their club for as long as possible. But here's a fun factoid: Of the top 30 hitters by WAR (FanGraphs) in 2011, only eight are still with the same team now as they were then. (And two of those, Matt Kemp and Jose Reyes, played for other teams in between then and now before returning to the Dodgers and Mets, respectively.) Among the top 30 pitchers, there are only four. Continuity is, in many ways, an illusion.

Thus, this week at The Thirty, we flash forward seven years, to 2025, and attempt to predict, for each MLB team, the player most likely to still be playing for their current team in that season. Some players are simply signed for that long; the Phillies signed Scott Kingery potentially through '26 before this season even though he hadn't made his MLB debut yet. Some players are rookies or prospects who are the foundation of everything their team is trying to do over the next decade. And some are just icons who will end up with a statue by the ballpark someday. Here's a look at the players you should expect to see in the same uniform for the next seven years.

AL CENTRAL

Indians

Francisco Lindor, SS, age 24

Level: MLB

I feel a little shaky about this one, considering Lindor already turned down a massive extension offer. But if the Indians lose Lindor moving forward, who are they, exactly?

Bauer strikes out 11, Indians hit 4 HRs in 10-0 win

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Trevor Bauer reached a milestone Monday night.

Cleveland's right-hander struck out 11 in six innings - giving him 206 for the season - and the Indians routed the Minnesota Twins 10-0.

Bauer (11-6) is one strikeout behind Boston's Chris Sale for the AL lead. After striking out 196 last season - then a career high - reaching the 200-mark was a goal going into 2018.

"That's something I wanted to accomplish," he said. "Next up is 300. Maybe not this year, but hopefully next year."

Bauer, who held Minnesota to three hits, was given a standing ovation when he recorded he reached the 200-mark against Bobby Wilson in the third. He has 10 double-figure strikeout games, tying him with Sale for the league lead.

The Indians hit four home runs, led by Edwin Encarnacion, who had four RBIs, including a three-run homer in the seventh. Yonder Alonso, Brandon Guyer and Jason Kipnis also homered for Cleveland, which leads Minnesota by 10 games in the AL Central.

Bauer struck out every batter in the starting lineup and ended his night with a flourish in the sixth. Jorge Polanco doubled with one out and was at third when Miguel Sano drew a two-out walk but Bauer struck out Max Kepler on his 112th pitch.

"That's probably my last hitter, given that I had ran my pitch count up," Bauer said. "I definitely wanted to finish my own inning. If I can't finish the game I like to finish my inning. I threw a good pitch. I was excited about both of those things."

Manager Terry Francona knew Bauer, who leads the AL with 159 2/3 innings pitched, had a lot left but went to the bullpen. Adam Cimber, Oliver Perez and Dan Otero each pitched an inning to close Cleveland's AL-leading 12th shutout.

"He could have kept pitching and he wanted to," Francona said. "That's enough. On a night like tonight that was plenty."

Bauer hasn't lost since June 29 and is 4-0 in his last seven starts.

Alonso's home run started Cleveland's four-run fourth while Guyer added a two-run shot, both coming off Kyle Gibson (5-9). Matt Belisle gave up Kipnis' leadoff homer in the sixth and Encarnacion's blast.

Gibson allowed six runs - four earned - in five innings. Belisle gave up four runs in two innings. Catcher Mitch Garver worked the eighth, allowing only Francisco Lindor's one-out single.

The Indians scored two unearned runs in the first because Polanco didn't catch a pickoff throw for an error. Jose Ramirez's sacrifice fly that was caught in foul territory by second baseman Logan Forsythe to put Cleveland ahead.

"We've had a lot of better days," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It was not pleasant to endure that beatdown. That first inning was disastrous."

Garver's first appearance on the mound in a major league game provided some levity for the Twins. He retired Guyer and Erik Gonzalez on groundouts and Rajai Davis on a fly ball to deep center.

"I wanted to strike out Lindor, so I turned the gas up," Garver said, laughing. "He lined one right back at me and I had to get out of the way pretty fast."

GOOD START

Kipnis took a hit away from Joe Mauer to begin the game. Kipnis went several steps to his left, dove on the outfield grass and made the throw to first. Mauer came into the game batting .302 (13 for 43) against Bauer, but was hitless with a strikeout in three at-bats.

ROSTER MOVE

Minnesota placed outfielder Robbie Grossman (strained right hamstring) on the 10-day disabled list and recalled outfielder Johnny Field from Triple-A Rochester. Grossman was injured running out a double Sunday. The Twins claimed Field last week after he was designated for assignment by the Indians.

DAY OFF

OF Melky Cabrera, who is 3 for 31 lifetime against Gibson, wasn't in the lineup. Cabrera had a big day in the field Sunday against the Los Angeles Angels, making two diving catches and crashing into the wall to grab Shohei Ohtani's drive.

Cabrera's day off gave Guyer a rare start against a right-hander and he responded with a home run off Gibson.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: RHP Michael Pineda pitched two scoreless innings in his first outing for the Gulf Coast Twins on Monday. He had Tommy John surgery in July of last year.

Indians: C Yan Gomes (right hamstring tendinitis) might return Tuesday. He's missed the last four games.

UP NEXT

Twins LHP Adalberto Mejia (1-0, 2.60 ERA) takes on Indians RHP Carlos Carrasco (13-5, 3.66 ERA) in the second game of the series. Carrasco is 5-0 with a 1.99 ERA over his last six outings, pitching 7 1/3 scoreless innings against Minnesota on Aug. 1.

By the Numbers: On Leonys Martín's potential to help the top of the lineup, Cody Allen's recent resurgence, and the Indians' impact on the bases

T.J. Zuppe Aug 6, 2018 6

Leonys Martín carefully grabbed a small photo between his fingers and snatched a piece of tape from a clubhouse attendant. He applied the sticky substance to the back of the picture and delicately stuck it to the cabinet above where his new Indians threads hung.

Pleased with the placement, Martín grabbed another photo and waited for a new piece of tape, repeating the process over and over.

By the time he was done, his locker probably felt a lot more like home.

While it was still full of shoes, batting gloves and various baseball equipment, it was also now decorated with photos of his family — a strong use of his Sunday morning. And after a strong weekend with his new team, the trade deadline acquisition from the Tigers has certainly earned the right to feel at home.

The left-handed hitter launched a pair of homers in his first home games as a member of the Tribe — he broke up Felix Peña's no hitter with a bomb on Saturday — slashing .364/.417/.909 over his first 12 plate appearances since being dealt to Cleveland. Each of Martín's home runs were rocket shots, leaving his bat at 104.7 mph and 107.3 mph, respectively, two of his four hardest-hit homers of the season.

"I'm really happy, man," Martín said. "I came here to help. And I want to do my best to help this team to get where we want. We've got a long way to go still."

Martín certainly doesn't command the name recognition that some of the other trade possibilities did before the deadline. That reality made his addition a bit unfulfilling for some, but even if the move came without much hype, it's difficult to say they aren't at least incrementally better with the veteran center fielder on the roster. The biggest question is the level of his offensive impact (his .637 OPS from May 18 to July 29 shouldn't be completely ignored), but there is some sense that, if used correctly, he'll fill a needed portion of the Tribe's evolving outfield puzzle.

"He's already (made an impact), in a short sample size," Terry Francona said. "He's hit a couple balls out of the ballpark, he's played really good center field, and he's got some hits. That's what he can do. Quietly, almost like when we got (Brandon) Guyer a couple years ago, I think it's quietly really going to help us."

Here are some important numbers and trends to consider this week.

509 — Francisco Lindor's MLB-leading number of plate appearances

For as much time as we devote to lineup construction, the overall shift of hitters throughout the nine spots doesn't have an impact on things as much as we sometimes believe. The most noticeable factor is the number of plate appearances each hitter receives over the course of the season.

Past research has indicated that each spot in the lineup gets 2.5 percent more plate appearances than the slot directly behind it. That's not a drastic number, but it does mean that, on average, your two-hitter would receive in the neighborhood of 15-18 more trips to the plate than your three-hitter, which is why you've seen some teams place their best overall hitter in the two-spot in recent years (and also speaks to why many were frustrated when José Ramírez was hitting fifth for a large chunk of the 2017 season).

It's probably a bit too simplistic, but if you simply stacked your lineup in the order of your best bats, it would at least ensure the most talented sticks earned the most plate appearances. That's why Lindor's MLB-leading number of trips to the plate this season is important — wouldn't you want him to earn as many chances to have an impact on the game as possible?

This year, Lindor has started in the leadoff spot in 104 of his 109 games played. He's also hit third once and cleanup three times. The only potential downside to his standing as the leadoff hitter is that almost 63 percent of his plate appearances have come with the bases empty. That means 19 of his 27 homers have been of the solo variety.

Now, even one run can greatly have an impact on any game, but wouldn't it be nice if a few more of those blasts resulted in multi-run outbursts? Perhaps that's where Martín's addition could help. This year, against right-handed pitching, the left-handed hitter owns a .351 on-base percentage and .805 OPS. That's a pretty big improvement on the production of Tribe nine-hitters this season.

Indians No. 9 hitters in 2018: .238/.280/.358

Martín against righties in 2018: .279/.351/.454

If he's hitting ninth against righties, that could equal more plate appearances for Lindor with a runner aboard, essentially making Martín a second leadoff hitter. He may not actually be their worst hitter against right-handed pitching, but from a strategy standpoint, it does make a lot of sense to keep him near the bottom of the order.

"It doesn't matter where you hit, man," Martín said. "You hit ninth in the first inning, but as long as the ballgame keeps going, you can be a leadoff guy two or three times. I just keep doing my game, try to get on base and create rallies."

Using what we know about lineup spots, you could also make a strong case for elevating José Ramírez to the two-spot, putting the club's two most dangerous hitters back-to-back. But that's a conversation for a different day ...

6 — Number of scoreless appearances for Cody Allen since his usage shifted

With Allen struggling in the middle of July, the Indians opted to start using him in more of a floating fireman role. Francona pointed to some inconsistencies in Allen's delivery, believing that some adjustments paired with more opportunities to "compete" rather than think about his mechanics would benefit him.

Since that decision, Allen has recorded six consecutive scoreless appearances, firing 6 2/3 innings, scattering four hits and two walks, striking out a pair. That's a pretty big development for a bullpen that recently acquired Brad Hand, Adam Cimber and just activated Andrew Miller from the disabled list.

Perhaps Allen's most impressive work came Sunday, when the righty entered in the midst of a one-out, bases loaded situation in the seventh inning. Allen induced a pop out and ground out to extinguish the threat, also staying on to work a scoreless eighth.

"That's really good to see," Francona said. "We've talked about it. Get him in that mode where he just comes in and competes and we got five outs. And he didn't throw a ton of pitches. That was exciting to watch."

While just one of the five outs Allen recorded came via strikeout, the most encouraging part of his most recent effort was the lack of hard contact. In fact, the average exit velocity against Allen on Sunday was among the lowest he's generated this season. Overall, Allen's velocity is still slightly down from where he was earlier this year, but Sunday also marked his best fastball average since July 15. He's also done a much better job of keeping the ball down and making more consistently competitive pitches over his past six appearances, at least when compared with his previous four appearances. In those outings, he gave up a total of nine runs in 3 2/3 innings, a stretch that coincided with a bit of a lower release point.

Allen's pitches from July 10-20

Allen's pitches from July 21-Aug 5

While Allen probably still has more to refine before getting back to his typical dominant self, the dynamic of the veteran righty working in a non-designated role is appealing, especially when considering the matchup possibilities that Hand, Miller, Cimber, Neil Ramírez, Oliver Pérez and Dan Otero provide.

That's why, even following a tough loss Friday night, there's hope that pieces of an elite bullpen are finding their way into place — particularly if Miller works his way back into form.

"There's a lot of different looks," Allen said. "Hopefully we can get to a point where we are clicking on all cylinders and we start shortening games."

1 — The Indians' rank in FanGraphs.com's base-running metric

The Indians enter the week owning baseball's fourth-best run total this year. Certainly, a lot of that is due to owning the majors' third-highest slugging percentage and homer total, but don't sleep on the value they've created on the bases.

According to FanGraphs' all-encompassing base-running metric, BsR, no team has used base-running more to their advantage this season, creating 12.4 runs above average on the bases. Just two clubs have stolen more bases than the Indians this year (85). They also own baseball's third-best successful stolen base rate (80 percent).

José Ramírez, on top of the excellent season he's having at the plate, currently owns the highest BsR total in baseball and is tied for the AL lead in stolen bases (26). That's one area where the switch-hitter has closed the gap in wins above replacement between himself and Mike Trout, who has been the game's best hitter this season.

Mike Trout: 7.6 WAR

José Ramírez: 7.5 WAR

Mookie Betts: 6.7 WAR

Francisco Lindor: 6.1 WAR

Aaron Judge: 5.0 WAR

The Tribe has been the sixth most reliant team on homers this year, according to their Guillen Number at Baseball Prospectus (the percentage of a team's runs that score on home runs), but that number has dropped since the start of the season.

It's not necessarily good or bad to be reliant on the home run — it can sometimes make a club streaky, but it's also harder to string together hits in the postseason when facing elite pitching — but it certainly doesn't hurt to create opportunities in other ways, particularly in the playoffs.

Their newest addition, Martín, should also help in that regard. He may not be the stolen base threat he once was — he's stolen more than 24 bases three times in his career — but he still creates above-average value on the bases.

"As soon as he gets on base, he's ready to go," Lindor said of his new teammate. "He wants to score. He takes hard swings when he's at the plate. When he hits the ball, he becomes a runner and he's ready to score."

Meisel's Musings: Trevor Bauer's leaderboard awareness, Jason Kipnis' chair, and the Indians' emergency catcher Zack Meisel Aug 7, 2018 1

It's clear that Trevor Bauer knows how to navigate FanGraphs' statistical leaderboards. The instant a reporter mentioned to the right-hander that he leads the majors in innings pitched, Bauer interjected.

"And WAR."

"What?" the reporter replied, caught off-guard by Bauer's comment.

"And WAR," Bauer repeated.

Bauer did pass Chris Sale to claim sole possession atop the sport's WAR rankings for pitchers. He leads all hurlers in innings, too, and his 2.25 ERA ranks fourth in the majors.

"I hope to lead in innings pitched per start and overall innings pitched by year's end," Bauer said.

And WAR, one would assume.

Here are a handful of thoughts and observations on the Indians.

1. Mr. 200: Bauer reached the 200-strikeout mark for the first time in his career, as he tallied 11 punchouts against the Twins on Monday. Bauer tossed the baseball from No. 200 into the dugout to save. But will he actually get his hands on the keepsake?

"I'm just hoping I get it," Bauer said. "It took me years to actually get my first-hit ball after some teammates lost it and I discovered it in the bottom of a drawer two years later."

Roberto Pérez didn't see who snagged the baseball when Bauer threw it into the dugout, but he has a sneaking suspicion about what might happen with it.

"I wasn't paying attention to those things," Pérez said. "I've got so much to care about — calling the game, blocking balls, all of Trevor's shaking (off pitches). Carrasco probably has it. (Bauer) is probably going to get it, but they're going to give him a hard time. He likes to mess with people, so they're probably going to do the same thing to him.

"That's karma."

Bauer set 200 strikeouts as a goal for this season, after finishing with 196 last year. Well, he's at 206 with nearly two months remaining on the regular-season schedule. He's the 11th Tribe pitcher to reach that milestone, and the second-fastest to do it in a season, behind Corey Kluber in 2017.

As for Bauer's propensity to shake off his catcher, Pérez joked that the battery mates should invest in some Bluetooth headsets to save time.

2. Cy Young consideration: It's cliché for a pitcher to say he wants to "give the team a chance to win," but Bauer has literally done that in each of his 24 starts this season. Consider the number of earned runs he has surrendered in those outings.

0: six times
1: five times
2: seven times
3: three times
4: three times
5+: nope

Bauer noted after his start last week in Minneapolis that the Twins were exhibiting patience at the plate, waiting to slap at a two-strike breaking ball. So, he took it upon himself to pepper the plate with fastballs Monday. The result? Three harmless hits allowed across six scoreless innings.

He also unleashed a bevy of changeups on Twins hitters.

"That's not what they're looking for," Bauer said. "The nice thing about being able to throw everything is hitters can't hit everything. So, you find out what they're looking for and you throw something else."

Bauer devoted much of his offseason to crafting his new slider, which has joined his 12-to-6 curveball as a second sterling strikeout pitch. But when he initiated that process days after the Indians were booted from the postseason, he also designed plans for a new changeup, modeled after the one Stephen Strasburg flings. He prioritized the refinement of the slider over the winter, but the changeup has quietly worked its way into his repertoire, and it proved particularly effective Monday.

"He looked like he was angered that he didn't strike us out very much last week," Twins manager Paul Molitor said.

3. In case of emergency: When Yan Gomes exited the game Friday because of right knee tendinitis, a couple of teammates approached Erik González in the dugout. Pérez replaced Gomes, but if Pérez were to suffer an injury ...

"I can do it, but I've never done it before," González told The Athletic. "I've played all positions, but never catcher. But I'd try."

Gonzalez said he wasn't sure whether the team even had equipment that would fit his lanky frame. He's likely safe from having to find out, as Gomes has been available to catch in a pinch while he heals.

The solution was much simpler when Carlos Santana played in Cleveland.

"If the team needs it and I need to do it, I will," González said.

4. The chair: The Indians revived an old celebration method Monday night after Jason Kipnis' 11th homer of the season. When Kipnis returned to the dugout, Carlos Carrasco and Mike Clevinger greeted the second baseman with open arms. They then carried him to the other end of the dugout in a routine dubbed the "bar mitzvah chair" a couple of years ago.

"Haven't seen that in a while. Don't know why; I've been raking," Kipnis quipped. "No, I came back in and I saw the two open arms. They decided to bring it back. It surprised me, even. A very good surprise."

It's been a trying season for the 31-year-old, but he hasn't struggled in the self-deprecation department.

Kipnis said that, at first, he didn't even realize who was lifting him.

"Usually, it's a blur," he said. "I black out when I get back in there. But I think it was Clev and (Carrasco). I'm going to ask them not to make our starting staff (do) that anymore."

Kipnis also completed a nice diving stop to his left to retire Joe Mauer on the game's opening play.

"When you give a great pitcher like that the confidence that his defense is ready," Kipnis said, "it gives him one less thing to worry about."

Foul tips

- The Indians have scored 10 or more runs in a game on 14 occasions this season, the most in the American League and second in the majors behind the Cubs (15). Only five of those 14 outbursts have come against AL Central competition.

- Brandon Guyer smacked his first home run of the season off a righty Monday. Francona wanted Guyer to get some more reps, and he'll be back in the lineup Tuesday night with a southpaw on the mound. Including his minor-league rehab assignment, Guyer was 2-for-70 against righties during the first three months of the season.

- The Indians are the only team with three members of the 25-homer club: José Ramírez (33), Francisco Lindor (27) and Edwin Encarnacion (25). Yonder Alonso slugged his 19th homer of the season Monday.

Starting 9: Is Corey Kluber back? José Ramírez strengthens MVP case, and the rise of Nolan Jones ...

By Travis Sawchik Aug 6, 2018 4

1: The alarms have quieted around the immediate future and performance of Corey Kluber. On the surface, he looked much more like his reigning AL Cy Young-self in his last two starts, particularly in his 98-pitch, complete game shutout effort against the Angels.

While the Indians are far behind the Red Sox and Astros in win totals in the standings, in the postseason tournament having Kluber back to his typical self — in addition to Trevor Bauer pitching at an ace-level and a healthy Carlos Carrasco — would put the Indians in their best starting pitching situation entering a postseason during this competitive window. The Indians could have a staff that will allow them to be competitive against any team in a postseason series.

2: Still, there are still some things to keep an on eye on regarding Kluber. He generated just a 7.1 percent swinging strike rate against the Angels, below the league average rate. The Angels made contact with every pitch they swung at that was in the strike zone. While his vertical release point increased closer to 2017 levels against Detroit (when he posted a 17 percent whiff rate), it dipped again against the Angels. Neither the Tigers or Angels have great lineups. Kluber might still be searching. But his release point has been in gradual decline for several seasons, so it's not clear exactly how important this trend is.

3: The most important positive development is perhaps that Kluber is regaining confidence in his breaking ball. When he struggled near the end of last season and in the ALDS against the Yankees, he at times lost some of the pitch's darting characteristics. But the offering's horizontal movement has improved, as has his usage and apparent confidence in the pitch. Against Detroit, 23.4 percent of Kluber's offerings were curveballs, and against the Angels, 23.5 percent were curveballs. There were times over the last two months in which that usage had dipped to 15 percent within a start. Last season, Kluber threw the pitch at a 30 percent rate in the second half.

The breaking ball is what fueled Kluber's remarkable second half and strikeout surge last season en route to his second Cy Young. He hasn't had the same confidence in the pitch this year. Kluber's slider usage has dipped from a career-high 27.5 percent usage rate last year to 22.1 percent this year.

Getting back to greater reliance on his breaking ball is key. When his cutter and two-seamer flattened during his struggles, batters were perhaps also less concerned with a curveball that he was throwing less often.

4: The other player of great interest is the club's bullpen ace. Andrew Miller still isn't 100 percent, as we can see in his fastball velocity (though he did touch 94 Sunday) and location. But given his extreme reliance on his sweeping, wipeout slider, Miller can perhaps still be a well-above-average pitcher with declining fastball velocity. After all, Rich Hill is a well-above-average pitcher with a fastball that often doesn't break 90 mph. If Miller can regain his 2016 form in October to go along with the addition of Brad Hand, the Indians ought to have a starting rotation and bullpen to compete with the other AL superteams.

5: While there is an argument to be made that Tommy Pham was a better fit and worth paying more for in prospect treasure — Pham was traded to Tampa Bay at the deadline — Leonys Martín is an interesting choice to solidify center field. While he's probably not going to morph into José Ramírez as an unlikely power threat, it is interesting that he has a 1.40 groundball-to-flyball ratio for his career but a 0.79 GB/FB ratio in 2018. Martín might have found a way to better lift and drive the ball in the air to his pull side, which is a positive development for about every hitter in the major leagues.

6: With his Sunday performance that included a first-inning, three-run homer, Ramírez is now just 0.1 WAR behind Mike Trout in all of baseball, according to FanGraphs. Trout sat out a third consecutive game with a wrist injury Sunday. Ramírez's MVP odds are improving by the day, especially when considering many voters place value on whether an individual performance occurs on a playoff team.

7: When the Indians drafted Nolan Jones in the second round of the 2016 draft, he was rated as one of the best pure prep hitters in the class. The question was about his power. As I wrote last week, teams ought to value hit tools over power tools when evaluating prospects in this era when launch angle and power have shown to be capable of being taught. Then-Indians director of amateur scouting Brad Grant was optimistic, saying after the 2016 draft he believed Jones would hit for power. Well, Jones has begun to do just that. A two-homer game last week pushed his total at Low-A Lake County to 16 and earned him a promotion to High A, where he promptly swatted a three-run homer.

He's posted excellent walk rates to date in his minor-league career, 16 percent, in short-season ball last summer and 16 percent in Lake County. He's improved from hitting 2.2 ground balls per fly ball in his first exposures to pro pitching in 2016 and 2017, to 1.6 this season. He's getting the ball in the air more often, and his HR/FB ratio has spiked to 25 percent this year, an elite mark for a 20-year-old. His sweet left-handed swing is one to watch. It's not a stretch to think he has the most offensive potential in the system.

8: From the power development of Ramírez and Francisco Lindor, to extracting value out of pitchers the Indians have acquired, like Carrasco and Kluber and Mike Clevinger, the Indians have done about as well as any club — perhaps only the Astros have been better — at developing players.

9: Keep an eye on 19-year-old right-handed pitching prospect Luis Oviedo, who was recently promoted to Low-A Lake County after leading the New York-Penn League in strikeout and strikeout minus walk percentage at the time of his call-up. He has mid-90s throwing velocity and precocious command. He's one of the most intriguing arms in the system.

STAT OF THE WEEK: 95

MLB-best runs scored by Lindor, a remarkable number.

STAT OF THE WEEK II: 2

Career number of 'Maddux-es,' shutouts of fewer than 100 pitches, for Kluber. His first July 30, 2014, against the Mariners required just 85 pitches. His second Saturday required 98.

HE SAID IT

"Results aside, that's where I want to feel like I can repeat my delivery. The rest of the stuff kind of falls in place and allows you to execute pitches if you're able to repeat all that stuff beforehand."

— Kluber to reporters after Saturday's start. He seems to be feeling better, and the mechanics have fallen into place. The Indians could not hope for a more positive development.

Indians 10, Twins 0: 12 Walk-Off Thoughts on Trevor Bauer's adjustments in his career year, some karma potentially denying him his 200th strikeout ball,

By Ryan Lewis

Here are 12 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 10-0 win over the Minnesota Twins Monday night.

1. Trevor Bauer, in many ways, has remained true to who he is. He's a jokester. He likes to troll people. He isn't afraid to say, really, anything. And, he's absolutely meticulous about the work he puts in to better his mechanics, delivery or approach. It's a reference to how in the offseason, instead of relaxing, he almost immediately went to work to craft a slider out of thin air, conjuring the pitch that has helped to elevate him to one of the game's pitchers with almost pure science. And it also is in reference to the film he studies to find any possible weakness. It isn't necessarily a unique trait, but it's also true that many teammates have noted his tireless work ethic.

2. As baseball is a game often driven by adjustments, Bauer went to the film before making his start Monday night, which would be the second consecutive outing against the Twins. In his previous outing on July 31, he gave up two runs on four hits in 6 1/3 but only struck out three hitters, which was tied for his longest strikeout total this season. The Twins were content trying to sit on his slider or curveball with two strikes. Fast forward to Monday night, and Bauer instead tried to pump the fastball by them. It worked. Bauer struck out 11 hitters, including all nine starters at least once.

3. Said Bauer: "Yeah, I threw more fastballs. I looked at some numbers in-between, found the holes in that approach of theirs and exploited them. If they're going to sit there and swing at the slider, then they can't be ready for fastballs. So, I had a lot of looking strikeouts on fastballs, a couple of bad swings on fastballs. I finally ended up getting a strikeout on a slider and a curveball. I think it was only one of each tonight. And then the changeup was really good—that's something that stays in the zone a lot longer and is hard. I guess it had fairly typical movement tonight, but it was utilized and located a little bit better. And again, that's not what they're looking for. I've said it a couple times now, the nice thing about being able to throw everything is hitters can't hit everything. So, you find out what they're looking for and you throw something else. And I have a lot of weapons that I can punch people out with. You just have to recognize their approach and throw what they're not looking for."

4. Bauer has also begun using his changeup more, adding another wrinkle to his repertoire. While the fastball-curveball-slider combination has been a driving force for his dynamic, Cy-Young-caliber season, Bauer has started to layer onto it. He threw his changeup 17 times in Monday night's start, according to Baseball Savant. In his previous start, he only threw it eight times. In his outing prior to that, it was only thrown twice.

5. Said Bauer: "Yeah. I have confidence in it. I just haven't needed it to this point in the year. Shoot, my strikeout rate's been a career high, and all that different stuff. Swing and miss, chase, all that. So, until someone showed me that they were going to make an adjustment, I didn't need it. And then the Twins were the first team to really make an adjustment, and I was able to adjust right back. I probably should've adjusted like four or five innings earlier, given that I recognized the approach, but I wasn't prepared mentally to know what I was going to do if that was the approach. So, I recognized it, and then I was like, 'Well, shoot, I don't know what to do,' because in-game you don't think as clearly and whatnot. After the game, it was immediately obvious what I should've done and then obviously I was able to do that tonight. Learning experience for the next time I see a team take the same approach. I'll know exactly what to go to."

6. And back to how Bauer is who he is—the troll part of Bauer might make getting his 200th strikeout ball a bit more difficult than normal. As of his presser with reporters after the game, Bauer had no idea where the ball was hiding. It isn't the first time. And if it does take time to get back to him, well, Roberto Perez thinks maybe that just shows what goes around, comes around.

7. Said Bauer: "I'm just hoping I get it. I mean, it took me three years to actually get my first-hit ball after some teammates lost it and I discovered it in the bottom of a drawer two years later. So, honestly, I'm just hoping I get the ball and then I'll figure it out after that. Maybe Bart won't hand it over to the teammates again when I do get it this time."

8. Added Perez: "I really don't know. I wasn't paying attention to those things. I've got so much to care about—calling game, blocking balls, all of Trevor's shaking [off pitches]. Probably Carrasco has it. He's probably going to get it, but they're going to give him a hard time. He likes to mess with people so they're probably going to do the same thing to him. ... That's right. That's karma."

9. Monday night was the return of the Bar Mitzvah Chair, the dugout celebration that has at times followed a Jason Kipnis home run. Kipnis blasted his 11th home run of the season on Monday night, a shot to center field that just barely cleared the wall. His overall season numbers still don't look great, but for roughly the last two months, Kipnis has somewhat quietly been a productive hitter in the lineup. He posted a .776 OPS in June and a .754 OPS in July. Though, it came after a disastrous start, and season as a whole will be clouded by it.

10. So when Kipnis got back to the dugout after his homer, Mike Clevinger and Carlos Carrasco surprised him by holding their arms out for the traditional celebration. It had been a while. And, as Kipnis has done recently, he brought some self-deprecating humor. It isn't in an act of not caring, but Kipnis knows what he's done and hasn't done this season.

11. Said Kipnis: Yeah. Haven't seen it in a while. Don't know why, I've been raking. No, I came back in. I saw the two open arms. They decided to bring it back. It surprised me even. A very good surprise. ... Usually it's a blur. I black out when I get back in there. But I think it was Clev and either Cookie or Bieber. I'm going to ask them to not make it our starting staff to be doing that anymore."

12. And, he finally got a bit of luck, which is something Bauer also pointed out after the game. Joked Kipnis: I'd say the guy does a backflip and catches it earlier in the year. ... That's just one of those ones. You see plugging away. It's nice, instead of having to wonder what if and shrug your shoulders and be mad about it, you get to have a sigh of relief and put a smile on your face."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 08.07.2018

Indians 10, Twins 0: Trevor Bauer tosses six scoreless innings, Indians blast four homers

CLEVELAND: Trevor Bauer turned in another dominant performance and the Indians blasted four home runs Monday night to easily down the Minnesota Twins 10-0 at Progressive Field.

It was pretty close to a flawless night for the Indians in a game that resembled the one-team show that is the race for the American League Central Division crown.

That trouncing extended the Indians' lead in the division to 10 games over the Twins, who became sellers at the trade deadline with little hope of contesting the race.

Bauer wasn't his most efficient self, but he was effective. He had to exit after the sixth inning and 112 pitches, but while on the mound, he had his way with the Twins (52-59), allowing only three hits and three walks to go with 11 strikeouts.

That raised Bauer's season strikeout total to 206, a career high and the first time he's ever reached the 200-strikeout plateau. Monday night's start also marked the 10th double-digit strikeout outing for Bauer this season, tying him for the American League lead with Boston Red Sox ace Chris Sale and second in the majors behind only the Washington Nationals' Max Scherzer.

The 2018 season has continued to be a career year for Bauer, who has put his name firmly in the American League Cy Young conversation. His ERA dropped to 2.25, and he now has more double-digit strikeout starts than he did in his entire career before this season.

Offensively, the Indians (62-49) teed off on the Twins one day after the Bridgestone Invitational left Akron and Firestone Country Club.

Yonder Alonso (home run No. 19 for the season), Brandon Guyer (No. 6), Jason Kipnis (No. 11) and Edwin Encarnacion (No. 25) all homered in the win.

Alonso and Guyer took Twins starter Kyle Gibson (5-9) deep in the fourth inning, which also included an RBI double by Roberto Perez.

Kipnis led off the sixth with a home run, and Encarnacion capped the scoring with a three-run shot to center field in the seventh.

Both came off former Indians reliever Matt Belisle.

The Indians gave Bauer (11-6) a lead early. Francisco Lindor led off the first inning with a walk and Michael Brantley followed with a single. Both advanced on a missed-catch error by Jorge Polanco on a pick-off attempt and Jose Ramirez popped out down the right-field line, but it was deep enough to score Lindor.

Encarnacion then grounded out to Gibson to score Brantley for a 2-0 lead.

The shutout was the Indians' 12th this season, tying them with the Pittsburgh Pirates for the major-league lead.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 08.07.2018

Indians notebook: All-Star catcher Yan Gomes could return Tuesday

CLEVELAND: The Indians were hoping to avoid a stint on the disabled list for catcher Yan Gomes, and that appears to be the case as the All-Star catcher draws closer to a potential return.

Gomes has been out of the lineup since the middle of Friday's game with right hamstring tendonitis, an issue manager Terry Francona said Gomes had been dealing with for a while. Gomes has been available, but Roberto Perez has drawn the past three starts at catcher, including Monday night's game against the Minnesota Twins. Perez would have started Monday night either way with Trevor Bauer on the mound.

It's possible Gomes could return by Tuesday's game.

"The last couple days, he actually said he doesn't really feel it," Francona said. "[Head athletic trainer James Quinlan] is going to have him go out and try to run and see how that goes. ... It's all going to depend on how he feels when he runs. It's a good thing that he hasn't felt it and we're really pleased, but we need to see how he feels when he gets going a little bit."

Francona added that Gomes can do everything needed to play the position, just that it bothered him a bit while running the bases during Friday night's game. Perez is a more-than-capable option at catcher and, likewise with a couple other injury situations, the Indians can afford to be cautious thanks to a firm grasp on the American League Central Division.

Keep the balance

Francona has often discussed the benefit of leaving certain hitters in the lineup against pitchers of the same handedness despite it not always being the best platoon option. For example, he has periodically left left-handed hitters Lonnie Chisenhall, Bradley Zimmer and others in the lineup against some left-handed starters because it keeps those hitters on balance rather than jumping out over the plate.

The same goes for right-hander Brandon Guyer, who has terrorized left-handed pitching to the tune of a .947 OPS (five home runs, six doubles, 15 RBI in 74 at-bats) but has been one of the worst hitters in the game against right-handers (.302 OPS in 52 at-bats).

Guyer was left in the lineup for Monday's game against Twins right-handed starter Kyle Gibson on the mound, which will also allow Guyer to play two games in a row, which he hasn't done lately. Guyer will be back in the starting lineup with left-hander Adalberto Mejia scheduled to start Tuesday's game for the Twins. Normally, switch-hitter Melky Cabrera would draw the start with a right-handed starter on the mound.

"That's exactly what it is," Francona said of allowing Guyer to still face some righties. "Plus, he can play [Monday] knowing if he doesn't get any hits — I hope he does, but if he doesn't — he's going to play [Tuesday], because that doesn't happen with him a lot. I think it'll be good for him."

Indians fan missed game after horrible accident, but team honors tickets 52 years later

By Marc Bona,

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Jennifer Annis had been looking forward to seeing the Indians. Having earned straight A's at St. Rose School, she was awarded two tickets to the game on Aug. 20, 1966.

It was a treat. Her mother was a widow with several children, so "going to baseball games was not in the plan," she said. Her favorite players were Rocky Colavito and Vic Davalillo.

The Indians faced the White Sox on what turned out to be a pleasant afternoon, the temperature reaching a comfortable 77 degrees. Fans in Cleveland saw a stellar pitching performance from Chicago's Tommy John, who hit one of his five home runs over 26 big-league seasons. He went the distance, allowing only three hits and one walk. The White Sox won, 4-1, in Cleveland Municipal Stadium.

Jennifer, though, didn't make the game.

A week earlier, she rode a bike to visit a friend and waited at a train crossing on the West Side. An eastbound train passed, then she crossed. She didn't see the westbound train coming.

It slammed into her, sending her 23 feet off her bike. Her friends Elizabeth Rooks and Mary Jane Torrence raced to Jennifer's home and told her younger brother Jeff what happened.

"Yeah, sure," came the response. The he realized they were serious.

She suffered a fractured skull and broke 13 bones in her arms. She spent four weeks in the hospital. The effect of the injuries would linger the rest of her life. She would lose much of her hearing and would not remember anything that happened on Aug. 13, 1966. It remains a lost day.

But she kept the tickets. And thanks to a whimsical decision, she would see a game in Cleveland because of them.

The 11-year-old - now 63-year-old Jennifer Wells living in Juno Beach, Florida - visited Cleveland for the first time in years and brought the tickets with her.

The Indians, 52 years later, honored them.

This week, Wells recalled the moments leading to the accident and how she got to Cleveland.

"It was early Saturday morning," she said. "I was on my way to see my friend Elizabeth. My mom had taken me shopping the night before. ... I had new clothes, and I was going to show my friend the new clothes.

"There were two houses on the other side of the tracks" near 112th Street and Detroit Avenue, she said. "There was this woman living in the house next to the tracks, and she saw me get hit. First she called the priest, then she called the ambulance. The priest came down and gave my last rites. The ambulance came ... and they had to pull the train apart to get to me.

"People were not very happy. They had to wait so long for the train. Nobody knew. If you were on 117th Street, the train stopped (traffic) for a long time. I'm sure they didn't know some little girl got hit."

Wells' aunt, uncle and cousins had left that day on vacation, but heard the news on the radio and turned around.

Wells spent her 12th birthday in the hospital.

"I asked my mom 'How come they didn't put casts on my arms?' "

" 'They thought you were going to die' " came the reply.

"They put blood in me. That's what saved me. All my veins were collapsed, but they cut open my ankles and put blood in there. I don't understand that, but that's what they did."

Then the day came for her to go home, and she showed a persistence that would stay with her later in life.

"They came with a wheelchair. I said 'I'm not going to ride in that wheelchair. I'm walking out of here.' And I did. My legs were not broken."

She would graduate from Lakewood High School in 1972 and Keuka College in New York, and go on to receive advanced degrees. She is an occupational therapist.

Because of the injuries she lost most of her hearing, she said. A few years ago she received a Cochlear implant in her left ear and a hearing aid in her right.

"I'm a bionic woman," she said.

It was only recently that the idea to visit Cleveland came about.

"I didn't have a plan to go to Cleveland," she said. "I only had a couple cousins and the one aunt in Ohio. My mom and brother live down here in Florida and my son. And I just never think of going up there. I'm in a running club. One of the guys in the running club who I barely know said 'I'm from Cleveland. I'm going to go up and visit and have my friends get on the Goodtime III.' I said 'That sounds like fun.' "

She brought her tickets along with that persistence she found as a 12-year-old.

"I went to the stadium," Wells said. "I wanted to go to the Saturday game (July 7, vs. Oakland). I asked a security guard - I had these old tickets and wanted to exchange them. He sneered and said 'Go to the box office.' "

She met a box-office attendant who was kind but said he didn't have authority to exchange the tickets. She found her way to the executive offices, where one person thought they were stubs. She convinced him they were genuine. Other staffers checked them out. Finally, she said, Estee Arend from Fan Services told her 'This is terrific. We're going to give you a ticket.'

The Indians actually gave her two additional tickets for her aunt and cousin. The original tickets were for upper-reserved seats and worth \$2.50 each. They came with a letter signed by Indians president Gabe Paul and Cleveland Press sports editor Regis McAuley.

"It was so terrific," she said. "It was just the most exciting day for me. And then they brought some gifts to me. They gave me a bobblehead and a Cleveland Indians bag and a rally rag.

It was just a great day. I wish they had won, though." (The Indians lost, 6-3.)

For Wells, it was a bit of closure to an empty memory more than half a century ago.

"I did everything I wanted to do," she said. "I had such a great time in Ohio and Cleveland."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.07.2018

Trevor Bauer strikes out 11, Cleveland Indians hit 4 homers in 10-0 win over Minnesota

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Trevor Bauer was not happy. He'd just beaten the Minnesota Twins at Target Field for his 10th win of the season on July 31, but his pitches weren't doing what they were supposed to do.

Bauer for the only time this season had more walks than strikeouts and threw only 58 percent of his pitches for strikes. He was happy the Indians won, but he was not pleased with his performance and his failure to adjust to the strategy of the Twins' batters.

Monday night was a return engagement for Bauer, the Twins and their starting pitcher Kyle Gibson. Bauer sets a high bar for himself, but the Tribe's 10-0 victory had to leave him in a better frame of mind than he was just a week ago.

Bauer (11-6, 2.25) threw six scoreless innings with 11 strikeouts, three hits and three walks. It was his 10th double-digit strikeout game of the season and pushed him to second in the AL with 206 strikeouts for the season.

His 10 double-digit strikeout games tie him with Boston's Chris Sale for the most in the American League.

No one enjoys strikeouts more than Bauer, so that in itself had to make him happy. When he struck out Bobby Wilson for the first out in the third, it was the first time in his career he'd struck out 200 batters in a season. His previous high was 196 last season.

"Historically, the Twins have guys with good numbers against Trevor," said manager Terry Francona, "but his stuff was electric tonight. There were three walks, and a lot of deep counts, but for goodness sake. He could have kept pitching, and he wanted to, but on a night like tonight that was enough."

Trevor Bauer on what worked against Minnesota

Bauer, who improved to 6-7 in his career against the Twins, has won his last three starts. In the last two, he's held the Twins to two runs in 12 1/3 innings.

"I looked at some numbers, found some holes in their approach (on July 31) and exploited them," said Bauer, referring to the adjustments he made between starts against the Twins. "If they're going to sit there and swing at sliders, they're not going to be ready for fastballs.

"Like I've said a couple of times before, the nice thing about being able to throw everything is that hitters can't hit everything. You find out what they're looking for and you throw something else."

The Indians, who won for the eighth time in their last 11 games, settled Monday's game relatively early. They took a 2-0 lead off Gibson (5-9, 3.60) in the first. After Francisco Lindor walked and Michael Brantley singled to start the inning, they advanced when shortstop Jorge Polanco couldn't handle Gibson's pickoff throw at second base.

Jose Ramirez delivered Lindor with a sacrifice fly in foul territory down the right field line. Brantley, who went to third on the play, scored on Edwin Encarnacion's dribbler.

The Indians did not dribble again for the rest of the night. Homers by Yonder Alonso and Brandon Guyer helped create a four-run fourth inning. Alonso started the inning with his 19th homer, while Guyer added a two-run drive to left for his sixth homer of the season and first against a right-hander.

Terry Francona on Trevor Bauer's outing vs. MIN.

Jason Kipnis, who singled and walked in his first two plate appearances, started the sixth with a homer that just made it over the center field wall. It was Kipnis' 11th of the season.

Encarnacion added the fourth homer of the night, a three-run drive to center field in the seventh. It gave Encarnacion 25 for the season along with four RBI to push his season total to 79.

Bauer and relievers Adam Cimber, Oliver Perez and Dan Otero combined on the three-hitter. It was their 12th shutout of the season.

The game was so out of hand that the Twins pitched catcher Mitch Garver in the eighth. He did not allow a run.

What it means

The Indians are only 6-7 against the Twins, but they are 33-15 against the AL Central with a 10-game division lead.

The pitches

Bauer threw 112 pitches, 69 (62 percent) for strikes. Gibson threw 95 pitches, 50 (53 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Twins and Indians drew 18,620 fans at Progressive Field on Monday night. First pitch was at 7:10 p.m. with a temperature of 85 degrees.

Next

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (13-5, 3.66) will face the Twins and lefty Adalberto Mejia (1-0, 2.60) on Tuesday night at 7:10. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM and WMMS will carry the game.

This will be Carrasco's second straight start against Mejia and the Twins. Carrasco struck out 10 and threw 7 1/3 scoreless innings on Wednesday at Target Field in a 2-0 win over the Twins. Mejia threw five scoreless innings before the bullpen was called.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.07.2018

Ready from the start: Jason Kipnis dives, then drives Cleveland Indians past Minnesota Twins

By Joe Noga,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- It didn't take long for Cleveland Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis leave his mark on Monday's 10-0 win against Minnesota. Just four pitches into the game and the veteran infielder had already answered the bell.

Twins leadoff hitter Joe Mauer sent a screaming grounder to the hole between first base and second on a 2-1 pitch from Tribe starter Trevor Bauer. Kipnis gloved the ball with a full-extension dive, recovered quickly and threw Mauer out at first.

It was a play that Bauer said likely altered the entire course of the game by keeping the inning from spiraling out of control.

"Who knows how it turns out if that's a hit," Bauer said. "Little things like that change the game. You may not even realize how big they are."

Manager Terry Francona thought the play gave the entire team a dose of early confidence.

"I thought it kind of energized us a little bit," Francona said.

For Kipnis, preparing to be tested on defense early in a game is a foundation he developed years ago. "I learned in high school and college, to be ready from the first pitch," Kipnis said.

And the message Kipnis' play sent to his teammates was clear.

"The best thing about it is telling Trevor that we're ready behind him," Kipnis said. "When you give a great pitcher like that the confidence that his defense is ready, it gives him one less thing to worry about."

Bauer went on to toss six scoreless innings and strike out 11 Twins batters. And while the outcome was pretty much decided by the time Kipnis homered to lead off the sixth inning, it didn't change the fact that the 31 year old two-time All-Star has quietly watched his luck at the plate begin to turn in the last six weeks. At least when he's hitting in his home ballpark.

"It's not how you start. It's how you finish."

With his eyes focused on helping the @Indians' down the home stretch, @TheJK_Kid had a chance to let loose in the dugout after his home run tonight. #RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/ifjWjMCMHw

-- SportsTime Ohio (@SportsTimeOhio) August 7, 2018

Kipnis sent a 381-foot drive to center off Minnesota reliever Matt Belisle that probably would have stayed in the yard had it not bounced off the glove of Twins center fielder Jake Cave and gone over the wall for his 11th home run.

There was a time this season when a slumping Kipnis would not have been surprised to see Cave make the catch.

"I'd say the guy does a backflip and catches it earlier in the year," Kipnis said.

Kipnis' second hit of the game, combined with a walk and a run scored in the fourth, brought his batting average to .324 (22-for-68) with six homers, three doubles, 13 RBI and 12 runs scored in home contests since June 16.

Nine of Kipnis' 11 homers have come at Progressive Field.

Sure, it's a different story on the road. Kipnis is batting just .213 with a homer, two doubles, seven RBI and five runs scored in 16 games away from Cleveland since June 16. But lately Cleveland's offense has come from a variety of spots in Francona's order. The addition of center fielder Leonys Martin and Brandon Guyer's recent surge have helped hitters 6-9 provide more of a presence.

"It really lengthens the lineup if you get through the bottom with guys on base and turn it over to the top where we do most of our damage," Kipnis said. "We're doing our job and it's going to be fun for us."

Cleveland Indians vs. Minnesota Twins - Aug. 6, 2018 Jason Kipnis connects for a solo home run in the sixth inning against the Minnesota Twins. Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer

Andrew Miller Talks Relief Pitching, Says Indians Gunning For World Series Andy Frye /Forbes.com

Cleveland Indians pitcher Andrew Miller delivers a pitch during the seventh inning of a game between the Los Angeles Angels and Cleveland Indians, August 5, 2018, at Progressive Field in Cleveland, Ohio. (Photo by Frank Jansky/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images)

He's back. After a few weeks on the disabled list followed by a rehab assignment, Andrew Miller is pitching again for the Cleveland Indians. Miller, arguably the best middle reliever in the game, came back into action Friday, August 3, and he also contributed two days later during Cleveland's 4-3 win over the Angels.

I was able to catch up with Miller a few weeks ago for an interview while he was gearing up to get back in the bullpen. He spoke about his mentality on the mound and what it's like to play for Cleveland and manager Terry Francona.

You're regarded as one of the best relief pitchers in the game, and someone any team would want in middle innings. What's the mentality of a middle reliever in today's game?

I don't think there are any major secrets, I think I've just gotten better at pitching with experience. For me, it's just to attack and be aggressive, and I think if you talk to every reliever they would say that and it's just a measure of how well you do that. When I come in I want to throw strikes, and I pride myself on being prepared, reading up scouting reports on certain teams and players, and what not. But I think relieving is more straightforward than what starters might go through, worrying about pitch count and working through longer innings. I've simplified everything down to two pitches, as a lot of relievers do, and then it's doing those pitches the best you can do.

The slider is one of your specialty pitches. Is this natural evolution, or do pitchers and their coaches make strategic decisions based on a pitcher's assets?

I think it's natural and that my breaking ball is natural to the way I throw. I kind of throw across my body and have a lower arm slot. I'm not sure - I wish I could tell you who showed me the grip or how I fine-tuned it, but I do know that when I was a starting pitcher I struggled at some points with pitches like the changeup. As for the slider, the mechanics of me and the way I pitch just fit that throw.

Baseball is littered with guys throwing 90-plus mile-per-hour sliders. I can't possibly throw that hard and I've never been able to. Mine's almost more of a curveball grip, and because my arm slot has more of a lateral break, everyone wants to call it a slider. The game goes through changes, but I think my pitch has seen more of a natural progression.

You logged some saves during your time in New York too. Is closing radically different than middle relief?

I closed in New York my first year there and had a blast doing it. Coming in to close a game is not an easy thing to do, and I think there are certain guys who are cut out for it. I think the best ones have a knack for being able to get it done. Whether that's just grinding through or being able to pitch to the score, there is a lot of skill that goes into it.

After playing for the Red Sox and Yankees, how is playing for the Indians, a smaller market club that has a lot going for it?

I've been really lucky to play for some organizations that have a lot of history, and that's what makes it fun. We come to the ballpark here in Cleveland and there are generations of fans that have grown up watching the Indians.

I think we have an exciting and very good team, and we have the goal of winning the World Series, and that's not unrealistic. It's a situation that's pretty hard to beat.

Terry Francona has a certain style that seems to stoke the best in his players. What's it like playing under him?

It's awesome, and it's my second go-around since I had him in Boston, though only for a half a season. The accolades he's received, it's no fluke. He's an interesting character and a great guy to be around. He's not the guy that has a 30-page rulebook on everything, and we don't have to be all buttoned-up.

But he also knows how to communicate really well with people, whether you're a guy who needs to be ridden little harder or (one that) needs to be patted on the back sometimes, he always seems to know the player. I think all of us are fortunate to experience it, and it's one of the treats of my career to play for a manager like him.

TRIBE NOTES Indians notes: Catcher Yan Gomes nearing return to the lineup

Chris Assenheimer | **Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** | **Published on Aug. 6, 2018** | **Updated 6:16 a. m.**

CLEVELAND — Catcher Yan Gomes is on the verge of returning to the lineup after missing the last two games of the series against Los Angeles with right hamstring tendinitis.

Gomes did some running at Progressive Field prior to Monday's series opener against Central Division rival Minnesota.

"The last couple days, he actually said he doesn't really feel it," manager Terry Francona said of Gomes, who left Friday's 7-4 loss to the Angels with what was initially diagnosed as right knee discomfort. "There was a thought that he could catch (Monday). It's all gonna depend on how he feels when he runs. It's a good thing that he hasn't felt it and we're really pleased, but we need to see how he feels when he gets going a little bit."

Francona said Gomes, an All-Star (reserve) for the first time in his career this season, was available off the bench Monday. He wouldn't have been in the lineup anyway, with Trevor Bauer on the mound and his personal catcher Roberto Perez behind the plate.

"He can catch. He can do everything," Francona said. "Even the other night, he wanted to stay in the game. It just kind of hurt him when he was going from second to home."

Finishing touch

Francona has been pleased with the early results from splitting the closer duties between right-hander Cody Allen and lefty Brad Hand.

"You know it helps when you get pitchers that really like to pitch," he said. "The times they get aggravated is when they don't pitch, which I love. Anybody would. I think it makes us a better team."

"Everybody wants to pitch the ninth inning. I get that. I understand that. But I think they also want to win really bad. They see what can happen when we do it like this, and it gives us a better chance to win."

Hand has been in the closer role as of late. Allen, meanwhile, appears to have benefited from the break, notching scoreless appearances in six straight outings through Sunday.

Cleveland got a big boost Friday with the return of left-hander Andrew Miller, which now gives the Indians three lefties in the bullpen.

"I don't know if I've ever had that before, but it's terrific," Francona said. "It'll help us a bunch before it's all said and done."

Smooth operator

By some advance metrics, left fielder Michael Brantley is considered a below-average defender. But few play the ball off the 19-foot wall at Progressive Field better.

"He's so good at that. He throws well anyway," Francona said of Brantley, a Gold Glove finalist in 2014 who ranked fifth in the American League with 12 outfield assists. "He sees the field real well. His awareness is really good and his balance ... he can get it bare-handed and he's already in his throwing position.

"He's just so accurate. You see a lot of outfielders, they'll maybe get the ball where he (does), but then they clutch. He catches it and he's ready to go."

Asked if anyone compared to Brantley during his days in Boston, where Fenway Park has the "Green Monster" which stands 37 feet tall in left, Francona oddly enough brought up Manny Ramirez.

"You know what's weird? Manny didn't get enough credit at times," Francona said. "He could do his (Manny) thing at times. But what he could do is pick it up and throw it. Sometimes you swear he just heaved it, and it would land right on the bag. Like, unbelievably accurate. He was actually OK out there."

Jose, Jose, Jose

Third baseman Jose Ramirez hit his 33rd home run Sunday and is tied with Boston's J.D. Martinez for the most in the majors. Of the 33 homers, 12 have come in the first inning — most in the majors and a franchise record, surpassing Al Rosen's 11 in 1953.

Ramirez also has 26 stolen bases and is tied with Seattle's Dee Gordon for the AL lead.

The last player to lead the league in both categories for the season was Detroit's Ty Cobb (nine homers and 76 stolen bases in 1909).

Roundin' third

Though right-hander Kyle Gibson was on the mound for the Twins on Monday, Brandon Guyer got the start in right field over Melky Cabrera. With lefty Adalberto Mejia scheduled to start tonight, Guyer will be back in the lineup and Francona said he wanted Guyer to play in consecutive games. Plus, Cabrera is just 3-for-31 with five strikeouts lifetime against Gibson.

The Indians will unveil the official logo for the Cleveland-hosted 2019 All-Star Game during a ceremony at Progressive Field this afternoon. Former UFC heavyweight champion Stipe Miocic threw out a ceremonial first pitch.

TRIBE NOTES Indians 10, Twins 0: Tribe belts four home runs to back another dominant outing from Trevor Bauer
Chris Assenheimer | **Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** | **Published on Aug. 6, 2018** | **Updated 6:12 a. m.**

CLEVELAND — The Indians followed a tried-and-true approach Monday night at Progressive Field in the series opener against Central Division rival Minnesota.

Get right-hander Trevor Bauer an early lead and let him do the rest.

The Indians scored twice in the opening inning and Bauer strengthened his American League Cy Young candidacy with another sparkling outing as Cleveland won 10-0 in front of 18,620 fans.

It was the third straight win and fifth in the last six games for the Indians, who ended the Twins' winning streak at three games, while upping their division lead to 10 games.

"We played a good game," manager Terry Francona said. "It started with Trevor and we got our offense in gear and kind of kept at them."

Bauer didn't go the distance, but he was dominant over six innings, allowing only three hits and walking three while striking out 11.

It was the 10th double-digit strikeout game of the season for Bauer, who is tied with Boston's Chris Sale for the most in the AL — second in the majors behind Washington's Max Scherzer (12).

With 206 strikeouts over 1592/3 innings, he has already reached a career high in the department. He is the 11th pitcher in franchise history to record 200 or more strikeouts in a single season — just the fourth to do it in 24 or fewer starts.

"Historically, they've got guys that have decent numbers against him, but, boy, his stuff was electric tonight," Francona said.

"There was three walks and a lot of deep counts, but my goodness sakes, he could have kept pitching. And he wanted to, but that's enough. On a night like tonight, that was plenty.

"He throws so much. He's conditioned his arm. His last pitch was maybe his best fastball of the night."

Bauer's 112th pitch struck out Max Kepler to end the sixth with two on. He pumped his fist after the 3-2 heater got Kepler looking.

Bauer had much more success against Minnesota than he did in two previous outings. He said he made adjustments that caught Twins hitters off guard.

"I threw more fastballs," said Bauer, who hasn't allowed more than four earned runs in any of his 24 starts. "I looked at some numbers in between and found the holes in that approach of theirs and exploited them. If they're gonna sit there and swing (at) sliders, then they can't be ready for fastballs, so I had a lot of looking strikeouts on fastballs, a couple bad swings on fastballs.

"The change-up was really good. It's something that stays in the zone a lot longer and it's hard. I've said it a couple times now, the nice thing about being able to throw everything is hitters can't hit everything. You find out what they're looking for and you throw something else. I have a lot of weapons that I can punch people out with."

As he has been often this season, Bauer was in control from the start, retiring six of the first seven hitters he faced before Minnesota got its first hit — a leadoff single from Jake Cave in the third inning.

The Indians scored two unearned runs in the opening inning before breaking the game open in the fourth against Twins starter Kyle Gibson, who entered the night with a 1-1 record and 2.89 ERA in three outings against Cleveland this year.

Yonder Alonso led off with his 19th home run before Jason Kipnis drew a one-out walk and scored on a Roberto Perez double. Perez scored when Brandon Guyer followed with a towering two-run shot over the wall in left.

It was the first homer of the season off a right-hander for Guyer, whom Francona inserted into the lineup over Melky Cabrera, who was 3-for-31 in his career against Gibson.

Edwin Encarnacion added the Indians' fourth homer of the night with a three-run shot in the seventh.

Cleveland has scored 10-plus runs in a game 14 times this season, the most in the AL and second in the majors behind the Cubs (15).

The shutout was the 12th for the Indians, matching the Pirates for the most in the majors.

7 hours ago

Covering the Bases: Game 111 by Jordan Bastian

FIRST: Trevor Bauer was pleased that the Indians won in his last start of July—the pitcher made a point of saying so, just so no one got the wrong idea—but he was extremely annoyed and frustrated with how things went for him personally.

Back on July 31, the Twins ended Bauer's dozen-start streak with at least seven strikeouts, finishing with just three punchouts in his 6.1 innings. It took the right-hander a handful of innings to figure out why Minnesota was not falling prey to his swing-and-miss stuff.

"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 off-speed stuff on two strikes and just punch the ball and not strikeout."

Bauer struggled to make the in-game adjustment, but in the aftermath of that outing he quickly determined his counterattack for Monday night's meeting with Minnesota at Progressive Field.

It worked.

"He looked like he was angered that he didn't strike us out very much last week," Twins manager Paul Molitor said.

In six innings, Bauer's pitch count climbed to 112, but he chalked up 11 strikeouts along the way. Each batter in the Twins' starting lineup whiffed at least once. Bauer had four strikeouts with his four-seamer, three with his two-seamer, two with his changeup and one each for his curve and slider.

"Good combination," Molitor said. "He really didn't use the curveball early. He used the fastball-slider. The changeup was a higher usage than we've see most of the year. But, he saw that it was effective last week, particularly against our left-handed hitters, and I know he got a lot of swings and misses and ground balls on that pitch, too."

Here was Bauer's take on the adjustment he made:

"I looked at some numbers in-between, found the holes in that approach of theirs and exploited them. If they're going to sit there and swing at the slider, then they can't be ready for fastballs. So, I had a lot of looking strikeouts on fastballs, a couple of bad swings on fastballs. I finally ended up getting a strikeout on a slider and a curveball. I think it was only one of each tonight. And then the changeup was really good—that's something that stays in the zone a lot longer and is hard. I guess it had fairly typical movement tonight, but it was utilized and located a little bit better. And again, that's not what they're looking for. I've said it a couple times now, the nice thing about being able to throw everything is

hitters can't hit everything. So, you find out what they're looking for and you throw something else. And I have a lot of weapons that I can punch people out with. You just have to recognize their approach and throw what they're not looking for."

It's been covered in this space a few times already this season, but that changeup was a focus of Bauer's over the offseason. The slider developed at a faster rate, so he dedicated the bulk of his time on that revised breaking pitch in the weeks leading up to Spring Training.

The changeup, however, was also an important part of his training for 2018. In this fantastic sequence by Rob Friedman, you can see how the pitch fades away from lefties:

Bauer featured the changeup a season-high 17 times on Monday night after using it eight times in the previous start against the Twins. Bauer said he used it more specifically against Minnesota due to the way they approached him the last time out.

"Until someone showed me that they were going to make an adjustment, I didn't need it," Bauer said. "And then the Twins were the first team to really make an adjustment, and I was able to adjust right back. I probably should've adjusted like four or five innings earlier, given that I recognized the approach.

"But, I wasn't prepared mentally to know what I was going to do if that was the approach. So, I recognized it, and then I was like, 'Well, shoot, I don't know what to do,' because in-game you don't think as clearly and whatnot.

"After the game, it was immediately obvious what I should've done and then obviously I was able to do that tonight. Learning experience for the next time I see a team take the same approach. I'll know exactly what to go to."

With his performance, Bauer moved into the Major League lead in innings pitched (159.2) this season. After the win, that was mentioned by a reporter, who was swiftly cut off by Bauer.

"And WAR," noted the pitcher.

"What?"

"And WAR."

Yes, as Bauer pointed out, his outing also pushed him back into first place in MLB in Fangraphs' version of WAR (5.7)—0.1 ahead of Chris Sale. Bauer also leads MLB pitchers in home run rate (0.39 per nine innings), while ranking third in FIP (2.37), fourth in ERA (2.25), fifth in K/9 (11.61) and sixth in K% (31.3).

Within Monday's outing was also the 200th strikeout of the season for Bauer, who finished with 196 last season. Bauer became the 11th pitcher in Indians history to achieve that benchmark in a season. Reaching №200 was indeed on the pitcher's to-do list going into this campaign. "That's something I wanted to accomplish," Bauer said. "So, yeah, that's a milestone. Next up is 300. So, maybe not this year, but hopefully next year."

And what does Bauer have planned for the 200th strikeout ball?

"I'm just hoping I get it," Bauer quipped. "I mean, it took me three years to actually get my first-hit ball after some teammates lost it and I discovered it in the bottom of a drawer two years later. So, honestly, I'm just hoping I get the ball and then I'll figure it out after that."

Indians catcher Roberto Perez cracked a smile when told about Bauer's concerns over the baseball's whereabouts.

"Probably [Carlos] Carrasco has it," Perez said. "He's probably going to get it, but they're going to give him a hard time. He likes to mess with people. so they're probably going to do the same thing to him."

SECOND: Brandon Guyer turned and took a moment to watch the baseball he just lifted down the left-field line. He backpedaled for a couple steps, casually dropped his bat and then did a little hop-and-turn to start his trot.

As the baseball fell among the fans gathered on the Home Run Porch in the fourth inning, anyone who questioned manager Terry Francona's lineup decision-making pregame probably had this reaction: "Oh. OK."

For Monday's game, when the Twins had right-hander Kyle Gibson on the bump, Francona went with the right-handed-hitting Guyer as his right fielder out of the lineup's nine hole. Melky Cabrera has typically filled the versus-righties side of the right-field platoon, but Francona had his reasons.

Small sample size alert, but Cabrera was only 3-for-31 in his career against Gibson. You can toss out Guyer's 1-for-4 career showing off the righty. History that thin borders on irrelevant.

More important in Francona's eyes is the fact that the Twins will be starting left-hander Adalberto Mejia on Tuesday night. That means Guyer will be in the starting lineup. What does that have to do with Monday?

"It seemed like a good time to let Guyer get seven or eight at-bats in a row," Francona explained. "He can play tonight knowing if he doesn't get any hits—I hope he does, but if he doesn't—he's going to play [Tuesday]. 'Cause that doesn't happen with him a lot. I think it'll be good for him."

Both Francona and Guyer have noted in the past, as well, that getting him at-bats against right-handed pitching can help with his rhythm and timing at the plate.

"It can help just timing, just seeing pitches," Guyer said. "That's why when I'm not playing, I try to go stand in [when pitchers are throwing] bullpens and do that just to track pitches and try to get my timing in there."

Francona's strategy paid off in the fourth inning, when Guyer capped off a four-run outburst with a two-run homer off Gibson. It was Guyer's first homer off a righty this season.

Guyer finished the night 1-for-4, but there should be an asterisk on there. In the eighth, he appeared to reach on an infield single, but first-base ump Tripp Gibson called him out on the play. With Cleveland holding a 10-0 lead, Francona opted against challenging the ruling.

That said, Monday's showing improved Guyer's production against right-handed pitchers to 6-for-17 going back to July 1. Pre-July, the outfielder went 2-for-70 vs. righties between the Minors and Majors. Guyer is better against left-handers, but even that showing off right-handers was far below his norm.

"Some of those guys that have gotten beaten up a little bit mentally early in the season," Bauer said, "getting to play a little bit more now, are finding their groove. So, it's great to see Guyer get a home run off a righty—first time this year.

"He's been beaten up plenty for not being able to hit righties. Probably should've had another hit there in the eighth."

THIRD: Jason Kipnis sent the first pitch he saw in the sixth inning to deep center field, where Twins outfielder Jake Cave made a leaping attempt at the wall. The baseball nicked his glove and went over the fence. Home run.

Bauer said it was nice to see a little bit of good fortune go Kipnis' way.

"How about Kip getting some luck to go his way, huh?" Bauer said. "That's probably an out early in the season. A guy robs a homer or whatever."

Told of Bauer's remarks, Kipnis laughed.

"I'd say the guy does a backflip and catches it earlier in the year," he replied. "I still can't tell if it would have gone out or not. Did he kind of set it up?"

Yeah, a little.

"A little bit? Even better for me," Kipnis said. "It's nice, instead of having to wonder, 'What if?' and shrug your shoulders and be mad about it, you get to have a sigh of relief and put a smile on your face."

After the homer, Kipnis had a surprise waiting for him when he walked back down the dugout steps. Carrasco and Mike Clevinger hoisted him up by the legs and the second baseman's bar mitzvah chair home run celebration finally made its comeback.

Dating back to June 16 (the last time Kipnis' average was below .200), the Tribe second baseman has hit .270/.366/.492 (.858 OPS) with seven homers, five doubles, one triple, 17 walks, 17 runs and 22 strikeouts in 37 games.

And, hey, Kipnis has taken some heat for his defense this season, so let's take a moment to appreciate this nice play he turned in on the first batter of the game:

<https://medium.com/media/002c8312236309b46cb80cca6df7a9bb/href>
Francona loved it.

"You know what?" said the manager. "You talk so much about being ready for the first play, but I thought it kind of energized us a little bit. That was a nice play and it looked like it energized Kip. From there, we played a good game."

Kipnis said a play like that out of the chute can be important in helping set the tone for the pitcher.

"I learned in high school and college to be ready from the first pitch," Kipnis said. "The best thing about it is telling Trevor that we're ready behind him. When you give a great pitcher like that the confidence that his defense is ready, it gives him one less thing to worry about."

HOME: There is a chance that All-Star catcher Yan Gomes is back in the lineup as early as Tuesday. Gomes has been out with a right hamstring issue, but reported feeling better Monday afternoon and did some running on the field pregame.

The good thing about Cleveland's setup is that the pitching staff does not miss a beat when Roberto Perez fills in. In fact, in this recent spell with Gomes out of the lineup, the Indians' staff has spun a 1.97 ERA with 32 strikeouts and 23 hits allowed in 32 innings with Perez.

Offensively, Perez has drawn two walks and collected a pair of hits in Gomes' absence. In Monday's win, Perez contributed an RBI double that had a 108.2 mph exit velocity—the catcher's hardest-hit hit since April 12.

"It's nice," Perez said. "I would love to play every day, but I understand. I've got to keep working at it and try to get better every day. Whenever I get a chance to play, I want to get the most out of it. It's nice to get a couple of at-bats and get a chance to play a couple of days in a row. It felt pretty good."

Rosenthal: Managers on the move?; Mets need to make a decision; mystery man for Red Sox; more notes

By Ken Rosenthal 27m ago 2

And you thought we had action on the managerial merry-go-round last off-season, when three postseason qualifiers were among the six teams to make changes.

This off-season might be just as lively and perhaps downright hairy, considering the large number of teams likely to ponder changes and the potential for one or more October surprises.

The Toronto Blue Jays seem destined to move on from John Gibbons. The Los Angeles Angels likely will need to replace Mike Scioscia, who — as I reported on Saturday — is expected to step down.

The Cincinnati Reds and St. Louis Cardinals face decisions on their respective interims, Jim Riggleman and Mike Shildt. The Baltimore Orioles must determine whether to offer Buck Showalter another contract. Ditto for the Los Angeles Dodgers with Dave Roberts, though such a move would appear fait accompli.

The strong post-All Star performances of several of the Rangers' younger players would appear to enhance the chances of Jeff Banister returning for at least the remaining year on his contract. Mickey Callaway is expected to stay with the New York Mets, according to Newsday. Dave Martinez, another embattled first-year manager, might be less secure if the Washington Nationals fail to make the postseason.

The wild card for every club pondering a change is the possibility of hiring an established manager who is out of work. Joe Girardi, John Farrell, Mike Matheny and Dusty Baker all are available. Showalter, Gibbons and Scioscia might join them, though USA Today reported that Scioscia plans to retire.

Teams rarely hesitate to change players, coaches and managers when intriguing options emerge; the Chicago Cubs dumped Rick Renteria, now with the White Sox, for Joe Maddon. Teams also created a new layer of uncertainty last off-season by demonstrating a postseason berth does not guarantee job security.

If the Cubs flop in the playoffs, would they consider a move to Girardi — a former Cub, Northwestern graduate and Illinois native — when Maddon still has one year and \$5 million left on his contract?

Maddon helped the Cubs end their 108-year championship drought with a victory in the 2016 World Series and has led the team to three straight appearances in the NLCS. But only one principle seems to apply as the managerial merry-go-round starts to spin again.

Anything goes.

The postseason format: time for change?

Powerful teams that end up in the wild-card game often hear the familiar refrain: If you don't like it, win your division. One team executive, though, points out the flaw in that argument, saying all divisions are not created equal.

No, the executive is not from the Yankees, who are on a 101-win pace yet seem destined for the wild-card game. His point is simply that the Cleveland Indians hold an advantage over teams from the AL East and West largely due to geography. The Indians play in the AL Central, where every other club is retooling at some level.

The Indians face the easiest schedule in the AL, according to Elias. The contenders in the West, meanwhile, actually have it tougher than those in the East. The Red Sox face the fourth easiest schedule, the Yankees the fifth easiest. The Seattle Mariners, Houston Astros and Oakland Athletics face the fifth, seventh and eighth most difficult, respectively.

One solution to the imbalance, the exec says, would be to seed the postseason qualifiers by record regardless of where they finish in their divisions. The adjustment would force the Indians to try to win as many games as possible rather than coast to the AL Central title. It also would prevent a repeat of what happened in the NL in 2015, when the Pittsburgh Pirates and Chicago Cubs played in the wild-card game after winning 98 and 97 games, respectively. The Cubs won that game, then got swept in the NLCS by the New York Mets, who won seven fewer games during the regular season yet had home-field advantage for the series.

The exec had another idea that would offer incentive to out-of-contention teams to stay intact at the deadline and keep pushing in August and September: Award a draft pick to any team that fails to reach the postseason yet finishes over .500 for the season. The draft pick would provide compensation to teams that declined to trade veterans for prospects at the non-waiver deadline.

Message to Mets: make a decision

During the off-season, I wrote Mets fans should reserve judgment before accusing their team of not spending money. The Mets then invested \$88 million in Jay Bruce, Todd Frazier, Anthony Swarzak and Jason Vargas, bringing their two-year total in free agency to \$224.7 million, second only to the Cubs.

No matter — the Mets did not spend particularly well.

The non-waiver deadline offered another test for the club, an opportunity to retool quickly by trading right-hander Jacob deGrom and/or Noah Syndergaard in a market starved for quality starting pitching. The Mets passed, moving only potential free-agent reliever Jeurys Familia and

infielder Asdrúbal Cabrera. And while the club showed a certain logic by holding off on more dramatic moves until a new general manager is in place, it will be out of excuses this off-season.

If the Mets want to build around deGrom, Syndergaard and Co., then they will need to reinforce their bullpen and upgrade at catcher, center field and possibly first base, while determining whether Amed Rosario and Jeff McNeil are the answers at short and second, respectively. Such a plan would require a significant plunge into the free-agent market, not the patchwork job the club attempted last off-season.

If the Mets are disinclined to take on such risk — a position that would not be unreasonable — then they will need to commit to rebuilding by trading some combination of deGrom, Syndergaard and righty Zack Wheeler, among others. Such a plan would require a strong, forward-thinking GM operating with minimal interference from ownership — a departure from how sources describe the team's current style.

The choices are clear. The Mets need to pick one or the other, and stop going halfway.

Hidden motive for Pirates?

A rival executive had a theory on why the Pirates were uncharacteristically aggressive at the deadline: The team, facing declining attendance at PNC Park, had to spark their fan base.

The Pirates' average home attendance has been in free fall, dropping from 30,847 in 2015 to 18,550 this season, according to baseball-reference.com. The current average would be the team's lowest since 1996, the year after the last players' strike ended.

If the Pirates added right-hander Chris Archer and reliever Keone Kela for business as well as baseball reasons, it would demonstrate the power of a disgruntled fan base to effect change. Team president Frank Coonelly, however, said the team's eroding attendance was not a factor in its decision-making.

"Our trades at the deadline reflect our strong belief in our core group of players and desire to improve the club for this 2018 stretch run and for the next several years," Coonelly told The Athletic. "The increased depth of talent that we have accumulated without our system made this direction possible at this time.

"As always, (owner) Bob Nutting was actively engaged in our process and has been driven by a strong desire to bring a World Series champion back to Pittsburgh."

Why Billy remains in Cincy

ESPN's Buster Olney and MLB.com's Mike Petriello were among the media members who suggested the Cincinnati Reds trade center fielder Billy Hamilton before the deadline, saying his speed could make him an asset for a contender both as a defender and base-runner.

Valid points, except for one thing:

In January 2017, Reds owner Bob Castellini said, "I hope Billy Hamilton is with us forever." According to sources, Castellini's affection for Hamilton remains a factor for the Reds in trade discussions, though a deal before the deadline was not out of the question.

The Reds had other reasons for keeping Hamilton — they did not want to part with another outfielder after trading Adam DuVall and losing Scott Schebler to a shoulder injury and Jesse Winker to season-ending shoulder surgery. Team officials say Castellini would approve the trade of Hamilton for an appropriate return. But considering that Castellini seems to over-value Hamilton, who is batting just .226 with a .601 OPS this season, it's fair to ask what type of return would satisfy the owner.

In any case, the window to move Hamilton likely is gone. The Reds will need to decide this off-season whether they want to keep him for his final year of arbitration and give him a raise from his current \$4.6 million, or make him a free agent by declining to tender him a contract.

Mystery man emerges for Red Sox

Right-hander Ryan Brasier made his debut for the Red Sox on July 9, nearly five years after his last major-league appearance for the Los Angeles Angels.

Turning to his players in the dugout, Sox manager Alex Cora cracked, "I know you don't know who this guy is. He was our closer in spring training. You were gone at that time."

Cora was referring to the tendency of established major-leaguers to leave the park once they are removed from spring training exhibitions, rather than wait until the games are over. But quickly, the Sox players saw what Cora had told them: This guy is good.

Brasier, who turns 31 on Aug. 26, threw a scoreless ninth in a 5-0 victory over Texas in his debut, then stunned his teammates by touching 100 mph the next night. In 11 appearances, Brasier has held opponents to a .483 OPS, averaging 97.2 mph with his fastball while also throwing an effective slider. While he appears to be benefiting from some batted-ball luck, Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said Brasier was almost like a deadline acquisition for his bullpen.

So, how did the Sox find him?

Brasier, the Angels' sixth-round pick in 2007, made seven major-league appearances in '13, but otherwise kicked around the minors before spending last season with Hiroshima in Japan. He still was without work in January when he visited Arizona to attend a friend's bachelor party and used the occasion to throw a bullpen session for about a half-dozen interested clubs.

Special assignment scout Steve Peck represented the Sox, liked what he saw and recommended Brasier to vice-president of pro scouting Gus Quattlebaum, who signed the pitcher to a minor-league contract. The Sox were the only team to show serious interest, Brasier said, and still they did not complete the deal until March 11.

As Brasier waited — "sitting on my couch," as he put it — he pondered retirement, not wanting to join an independent league. He is married with two young children and considered pitching in Mexico, but the Sox offered him a lifeline. Brasier quickly graduated from the minor-league side to major-league games in spring training and has not stopped impressing the team since.

Around the horn

*The San Diego Padres saved more than \$750,000 by allowing right-handers Tyson Ross and Jordan Lyles to leave on waiver claims on Sunday, not to mention the \$200,000 Ross will earn for each start between 20 and 29 (he currently is at 22).

The departures of Ross and Lyles will create opportunities for younger pitchers, with manager Andy Green saying the team was "one big step closer to the future." Still, the Pads have now parted with four major-league pitchers of varying qualities, including lefty reliever Brad Hand and righty Adam Cimber, and received only catching prospect Francisco Mejía in return.

Mejía might not remain at catcher, but the Padres are banking on his offensive potential. Ross and Lyles had only limited trade value, so perhaps the team did well simply to move their salaries. The Pads, though, had the worst record in the NL even with the four pitchers who are now gone. Without them, their season might turn even uglier.

*The Athletics did not exactly take a financial plunge with their recent acquisitions, but their trades for relievers Jeurys Familia and Shawn Kelley and right-handed starter Mike Fiers amounted to approximately \$5 million in additional salary for 2018, according to a source.

The A's opened the season with a major-league low \$65.9 million payroll. The players' union filed a grievance to MLB in February, claiming the A's, Pirates, Miami Marlins were not spending their revenue-sharing money in the fashion mandated by the collective-bargaining agreement.

*Sitting in the visitor's dugout before Friday night's game at Fenway Park, Yankees first basemen Greg Bird and Luke Voit wondered aloud, "How many Hall of Famers have played here?"

It was a fascinating question, considering Fenway opened in 1912. And according to research by STATS LLC, the number of Hall of Famers to play at Fenway — 145 — is as impressive as you might think.

When I relayed the answer to Bird the next day, he asked the next logical question, "How many Hall of Famers are there total?" The answer, according to the Hall's website: 323 people have been elected to the Hall, including 226 former major-leaguers, 35 Negro league baseball players and executives, 22 managers, 10 umpires, and 30 pioneers, executives, and organizers.

Twins blanked by Tribe in series opener

By Rhett Bollinger MLB.com @RhettBollinger

CLEVELAND -- One of the reasons why Kyle Gibson has taken a major step forward over the last season has been his ability to limit homers.

Gibson had surrendered two homers in a game just one time over his 13 starts, but matched that on Monday in a rare subpar outing against the Indians in a 10-0 loss in the series opener at Progressive Field. Gibson went five innings, allowing six runs (four earned) on seven hits and three walks with three strikeouts to fall to 5-9 with a 3.60 ERA.

"It's frustrating for me when I give up homers because I have the ability to keep the ball in the park and I have the ability to make teams put three and four hits together to have a big inning," Gibson said. "When you put guys on and don't execute pitches and allow them to have a big inning, that's the frustrating part."

Gibson wasn't helped by his defense in a rocky first inning that saw him walk Francisco Lindor and give up a single to Michael Brantley to open the frame. They both advanced on an error by shortstop Jorge Polanco, who couldn't handle Gibson's throw on a pick-off attempt. Gibson then induced a popup from Jose Ramirez, but Logan Forsythe and Max Kepler collided as Forsythe made the catch, allowing Lindor to tag up. Edwin Encarnacion followed with an RBI groundout with both runs coming home unearned.

"We've had a lot better days," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It was not pleasant to endure that beatdown. Not entirely on Kyle. First inning was disastrous, just the way it unfolded. Leadoff walks can always be problematic. We had a shot at the ball up the middle and couldn't quite get there. An errant pickoff throw and then the lack of communication on the ball to right field was disappointing, given the situation. A little unfortunate on the checked swing that got the second run in."

But Gibson was hurt by two long balls as part of a four-run fourth inning that broke the game open for Cleveland. Yonder Alonso led off the inning with a solo blast on a 1-1 fastball that caught too much of the plate. After walking Jason Kipnis, Gibson surrendered an RBI double to Roberto Perez before serving up a two-run homer to Brandon Guyer on a 1-1 slider down the middle.

"Bad location," Gibson said. "Alonso likes the ball up and over. I was trying to go to a hole up and in and it just ran over, up-and-armside miss. Guyer, I just left a slider right down the middle."

It was just the third time this season Gibson gave up multiple homers in a game and the first time since June 9. The last time Gibson gave up two homers in an inning was Aug. 2, 2016, which also came against the Indians (Mike Napoli and Carlos Santana).

Right-hander Matt Belisle struggled in relief of Gibson, surrendering a solo shot to Kipnis in the sixth and a three-run blast to Encarnacion in the seventh. It raised his ERA to 7.71 on the season.

Offensively, the Twins couldn't get anything going against right-hander Trevor Bauer, who struck out 11 over six scoreless innings with three hits and three walks allowed. Their best scoring chance came in the sixth when Polanco doubled and Miguel Sano drew his second walk of the game, but Kepler struck out looking to end the inning.

"He looked like he was angered that he didn't strike us out very much last week," Molitor said. "Early on, it seemed like two every inning just about. He was good. Got the pitch count up through six innings, but we just never got a big hit."

GARVER PITCHES THE EIGHTH

Catcher Mitch Garver, pitching for the first time in his career, threw a scoreless eighth inning, retiring three of the four batters he faced. He allowed a single to Lindor, but also induced a swing and a miss on Lindor on the first pitch that was classified as a 68.2 mph curveball. He threw 14 pitches, ranging from 61 mph to 81 mph, with his hardest pitch a two-strike fastball to Lindor that just missed low.

"I didn't throw any offspeed pitches," said Garver, who last pitched in high school. "Just changing speeds. I really wanted to strike out Lindor. Got to two strikes, and I said, 'This is my opportunity to do it.' I decided to gas one up a little bit."

SOUND SMART

It was the Twins' worst shutout loss since losing 10-0 to the Royals on Aug. 20, 2016. It was the 35th time in franchise history the club was held scoreless while allowing at least 10 runs.

HE SAID IT

"Really a couple of better pitches in the fourth inning and it's still a close game. I don't see it as being a game that defines this series. Hopefully the guys will come back and pick me up tomorrow and even the series and we'll be right back in it. Coming in here and taking three out of four, we'll see how it goes. Hopefully that's what we're looking at Thursday." -- Gibson

UP NEXT

Left-hander Adalberto Mejia (1-0, 2.60 ERA) is set to take the mound for the Twins in the second game of the series on Tuesday at 6:10 p.m. CT. Mejia threw five scoreless innings against Cleveland last time out, allowing only one hit, but came out after 74 pitches because his previous appearance came in relief. He'll be fully stretched out to start this time. The Indians will counter with right-hander Carlos Carrasco (13-5, 3.66), who is 1-2 with a 4.66 ERA in four starts against Minnesota this year.

Field called up, Grossman (hamstring) to DL

CLEVELAND -- After outfielder Robbie Grossman was placed on the 10-day disabled list with a right hamstring strain suffered in Sunday's game, outfielder Johnny Field was recalled from Triple-A Rochester before Monday's game against the Indians.

The Twins claimed Field off waivers from the Indians on Friday and he played two games with Rochester, going 2-for-8. The Red Wings had just finished a series in Pawtucket, R.I., when Field heard the news he was getting recalled and flew from Providence, R.I. to Cleveland on Sunday night.

"I'm the type of guy who's going to try and make something happen every day, whether it's with the bat or making a play on defense or pinch-running and scoring a run," Field said. "Be well-versed and try to help this team win some games."

It's Field's second stint in the Majors this season, after he hit .213/.253/.373 with six homers, nine doubles, 14 RBIs and four stolen bases in 62 games with the Rays. He was designated for assignment by Tampa Bay on July 20 and was claimed by the Indians on July 24, but was designated assignment for a second time on July 31 after the Indians traded for fellow outfielder Leonys Martin.

"It has been crazy," Field said. "This whole year, finally getting to the big leagues with the Rays and being with them for two to three months and going through the DFA process. I got DFA'd by them, kind of blindsided me. Then the Indians claimed me and I'm doing pretty well with them for about a week, and at the Deadline they made a move and DFA'd me again. Then the Twins claimed me and here I am now. Can't complain too much because I'm back here and it's a good opportunity."

Field, who hits and throws right-handed, has played all three outfield spots in his career, but manager Paul Molitor said his best positions, in order, are left field, right field and center field. The 5-foot-10, 180-pounder is hitting .333/.412/.467 in 17 games in Triple-A this year and is a career .272/.332/.445 hitter with 53 homers and 269 RBIs in 540 games in the Minors. Field is a solid runner, as his average sprint speed of 28.1 feet per second ranks in the 78th percentile among Major Leaguers, per Statcast™, and is above the league average of 27 feet per second.

"He's got a little power," Molitor said. "Hasn't done a great job as far as getting to the point of considering him a really good hitter, but he's a good mistake hitter. Obviously, better numbers against left-handed pitching. He runs probably a tick better than average."

Pineda makes rehab outing

Right-hander Michael Pineda, who is coming off Tommy John surgery last July, made his first rehab appearance with the Gulf Coast League Twins on Sunday, throwing two scoreless innings. He allowed one hit and walked one, while striking out three. His fastball velocity was at 94 mph and he'll continue to move his way up the Minor League system during his rehab assignment, which lasts 30 days. The Twins remain hopeful he'll be able to contribute in September out of the bullpen.

"I think that would be fantastic," Molitor said. "We'll see how he does, but today was another box to check."