

Walk-off stuns Tribe after Kluber's short start

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

ST. PETERSBURG -- Ji-Man Choi squatted and grimaced in pain upon reaching first base in the second inning for the Rays on Monday night. One of Corey Kluber's cutters tailed too far inside, striking him on the leg and ending a turbulent outing for the Tribe's ace.

A swift meltdown by Kluber initiated a long night for Cleveland's bullpen, which turned in a valiant effort before Choi delivered a bruise of his own. In the ninth inning, the Rays' designated hitter drilled an offering from Indians closer Brad Hand out to right for a two-run homer that dealt the Tribe a 6-5 loss in walk-off fashion.

It was a crushing conclusion to what had been a strong night for the Cleveland relief corps.

"That's a lot to ask," manager Terry Francona said. "If somebody has a hiccup, you lose."

With the loss, the American League Central-leading Indians made it highly improbable that they will be soaking the visitors' clubhouse at Tropicana Field with champagne this week. With its magic number trimmed to four -- thanks to a Twins loss Monday -- Cleveland can potentially clinch its third straight division title Wednesday, but the Tribe plays in the afternoon, while Minnesota plays a night game.

Kluber cruised through the first four batters he faced, striking out three in that stretch before the wheels came off in the second. In a span of eight batters, the two-time AL Cy Young Award winner allowed four runs on five hits, including a two-run homer to Jake Bauers. The finishing touch to that ugly run was the errant cutter that struck Choi with the bases loaded, giving the Rays a 4-1 lead.

After Kluber logged 55 pitches in 1 2/3 frames, Francona handed things over to the bullpen.

"I just wasn't able to get that last out," Kluber said.

The Indians' bullpen has endured its share of problems this season, but the group did what it could to buy the lineup time. Jose Ramirez came through with a bloop RBI double in the fifth and Brandon Guyer delivered a two-run, pinch-hit double in the sixth to pull the game into a 4-4 deadlock. Ramirez then stole two bases and scored on an infield hit to give the Indians the lead in the seventh.

Tyler Olson took over for Kluber and registered four consecutive strikeouts, including one to C.J. Cron to escape a bases-loaded jam in the second. Beginning with that punchout, the Cleveland bullpen held Tampa Bay's lineup to a 1-for-21 showing heading into the ninth inning.

"We put together a lot and battled through some good innings," said left-hander Andrew Miller, who worked a clean sixth. "It's something we're certainly capable of and it's a good thing. The idea is for all of us to go in the right direction at the right time."

Between Olson and Miller, lefty Oliver Perez and righty Dan Otero, the 'pen held the Rays in check. Neil Ramirez handled the seventh and Cody Allen dodged trouble in the eighth. In the decisive inning, Hand took over and recorded the first two outs with no issues.

Then, Hand spun a 1-2 slider to Tommy Pham that appeared to be low in the strike zone. Home-plate umpire Carlos Torres deemed the pitch a ball and Pham capitalized by sending the next offering through the hole on the right side for a two-out single.

"He made a really good pitch the pitch before and didn't get the call," Francona said.

That set the stage for Choi, who sent an 0-1 fastball towering to right field, eliciting a collective gasp from the crowd. The Rays players then poured out of the first-base dugout in celebration after the ball dropped over the wall for the game-winning blow.

One hiccup, and the Tribe lost.

"I put them in a bad spot, needless to say," Kluber said. "They came in and put up zeros, inning after inning."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

J-Ram runs wild: Rays reliever Chaz Roe opened the seventh by hitting Ramirez with a pitch, setting the stage for the Tribe third baseman to create a run with his legs. First, Ramirez stole second and third base, giving him an AL-leading 32 thefts on the year. Then, when Yonder Alonso chopped a pitch to second baseman Brandon Lowe, Ramirez bolted for the plate, using a headfirst slide to narrowly beat the throw to catcher Nick Ciuffo. That gave the Tribe a 5-4 lead that held until Hand's final pitch.

"He doesn't ever stop playing the game," Francona said. "Unbelievable. He, like, wills himself to try to help us win. That's impressive, because everybody that's been around Josey knows he's going to hit. But, when he's not swinging like he can, he still impacts the game."

Miller time: In the sixth, Francona handed the ball to Miller, who was activated from the disabled list prior to the game. Miller needed only 12 pitches (10 strikes) to face the minimum, finishing with two strikeouts and one ground out in an overpowering return to the mound.

"I finally had it all put together," Miller said. "Hopefully, it's a good building block and it's something to get better off. ... Today was a really good start, so I'm happy with it. The idea is to keep it there and try not to do too much."

SOUND SMART

This marked the Indians' 11th walk-off loss this season, the second-most in the Majors behind only Minnesota (12). Cleveland's club record for walk-off defeats in a season is 12 (2006, 2004 and 1967). The Indians are tied with the Twins for the most walk-off homers allowed this season (eight).

UP NEXT

Rookie right-hander Shane Bieber (9-3, 4.63 ERA) is scheduled to start Tuesday, when the Rays host the Indians at 7:10 p.m. ET at Tropicana Field. Third baseman Josh Donaldson is also expected to be activated from the disabled list and in the lineup at third base. Tampa Bay will send righty Tyler Glasnow (1-5, 4.64) to the mound.

Tribe to activate Josh Donaldson on Tuesday

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

ST. PETERSBURG -- The wait is nearly over. Josh Donaldson, the Indians' blockbuster addition acquired a few hours before the calendar flipped to September, is scheduled to make his debut for Cleveland on Tuesday against the Rays.

Indians manager Terry Francona announced prior to Monday's game at Tropicana Field that Donaldson will be activated from the 10-day disabled list Tuesday, following a three-month comeback from a left calf issue. Donaldson will start at third base, completing a saga that reportedly had multiple teams upset and inquiring with Major League Baseball about why the unique deal was approved.

"We didn't do anything different than any other team could've done," said Chris Antonetti, the Indians' president of baseball operations. "And, in fact, there were a lot of other teams that were negotiating with Josh at the time of the trade. Now, we can only see the one reality of what played out, because only one team can end up getting the guy.

"And there's only one thing to assess, and that's what happened in the time that we had Josh with us. But, had he been traded to another team, the very same process very well could've played out with them."

Citing multiple Major League sources, Ken Rosenthal wrote on The Athletic on Sunday that the Yankees and Red Sox "voiced displeasure" with MLB about the sequence of events before and after the trade that sent Donaldson from Toronto to Cleveland. The Astros reportedly sought clarification from the Commissioner's Office about why the deal was approved and were satisfied with the league's reply.

The source of the reported complaints is the fact that Donaldson -- activated on Sept. 1 and placed back on the DL two days later -- was deemed healthy enough by the Blue Jays and MLB to be exposed to revocable waivers prior to the Aug. 31 playoff roster deadline. After the 2015 American League MVP cleared waivers, it opened the door for Toronto to discuss a trade with any team.

Prior to acquiring Donaldson and \$2.7 million in exchange for a player to be named later (reported to potentially be pitching prospect Julian Merryweather, who is coming back from Tommy John surgery on his right elbow), Antonetti received permission from MLB to speak directly with the third baseman to discuss his comeback. They agreed to hold a medical assessment upon Donaldson's arrival to Cleveland.

"Josh was comfortable with that approach," Antonetti said. "So we went forward with the trade."

Antonetti said that, while the Blue Jays and MLB declared Donaldson healthy enough to be traded and activated, the Indians wanted to make their own evaluation via a workout at Progressive Field. Donaldson went through a series of baserunning, fielding and hitting drills on Sept. 2 and the Indians decided he still needed more time to return to full strength.

"Each team assesses things differently," Antonetti said. "So, I think in the end, what we were focused on was, what's our assessment? And then, once Josh was with us, how do we work with him to figure out what the best plan might be to get him back to performing at the level that he's capable of at the Major League level? And that's what we did."

Donaldson, who has not played in an MLB game since May 28 with Toronto, played for Triple-A Columbus on Sept. 3 and belted a grand slam in his first rehab game for the Tribe. In three games for Double-A Akron over the past week, he has gone 2-for-10 with one home run. With Donaldson set to take over at third base for the Indians, AL MVP candidate Jose Ramirez will slide to second. That will force veteran second baseman Jason Kipnis to shift to center field -- a move he also made in late September and in the playoffs a year ago. Indians manager Terry Francona noted that once they move to accommodate Donaldson's arrival, Ramirez and Kipnis will stay put at their new positions.

"They won't go back to where they were," Francona said. "Kip has had four really good days [working with the coaches] in center field and he's ready to go. Josey said he was ready to go last week."

After Donaldson's Indians debut Tuesday, Francona said the third baseman would be available off the bench Wednesday and then back in the lineup Friday, following the team's off-day Thursday. Francona will keep working closely with Donaldson to map out his schedule in preparation for the postseason.

"I'll probably just check with him every day," Francona said. "I told him when we get some of these longer games, I'll probably take him out early. We want to watch his volume early on, but he promised he'd communicate with me, too. We'll check with him every day."

Donaldson's communication with the Indians has been an integral part of his comeback, dating back to his talks with Antonetti shortly before the trade came to fruition.

"We didn't know exactly what our assessment would be when Josh got here," Antonetti said. "And also what Josh felt might be the best way to get him fully healthy and back to Major League games. I think what we agreed to that night was we would sit down -- if we went through with the trade and everything played out -- that we would just sit down together and come up with a plan.

"And that plan may very well have been just keep him active, but in the end, that's not what we or Josh felt was best."

Tribe activates Miller with eye toward playoffs

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- The Indians are hopeful that lefty Andrew Miller can finally advance beyond all the stops and starts of this trying season. Cleveland's goal now is to get the veteran relief ace primed for a marquee role on the October stage.

The Tribe activated Miller from the 10-day disabled list, following a left shoulder impingement, prior to Monday's game against the Rays. He worked a scoreless sixth inning in the 6-5 defeat, striking out two batters and forcing a ground out.

The American League Central-leading Indians are closing in on a third straight division title and there are roughly three weeks left before the postseason for Miller to try to regain his form and rebuild confidence in his delivery.

"He's raring to go," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "That's kind of exciting. Now, he doesn't have a Minor League game under his belt. He might not command [right away]. I hope he does. We've got 19 games [to get him ready for the playoffs]."

The latest trip to the shelf was the third DL stint of the season for Miller, who previously missed time due to a left hamstring issue and right knee injury. His return from the knee problem on Aug. 3 came after a little more than two months on the DL, leading Cleveland to treat his August schedule similar to a Spring Training regimen.

On Aug. 29, Miller landed back on the DL due to a shoulder setback and received a cortisone shot to help calm the discomfort. The 33-year-old threw off a mound in bullpen sessions Thursday and Saturday, and felt and looked strong enough to convince Cleveland to activate him ahead of the current series against the Rays.

"I would say this time is different," said Chris Antonetti, the Indians' president of baseball operations. "His mindset, his mentality is like, 'This is the best I've felt in a long time. And not only am I healthy, but I feel I'm ready to go and pitch at the level that you've seen me pitch.' So, that's exciting."

Through 27 appearances for the Indians coming into play Monday, Miller had a 3.38 ERA with 33 strikeouts against 13 walks in 24 innings. Per Statcast™, Miller has averaged 92.8 mph on his fastball this season -- down from 94.1 mph in 2017. He averaged 92.4 mph in August prior to landing back on the DL. Similarly, Miller's average slider velocity has dropped to 82.8 mph in '18, compared to 83.8 mph last year.

Worth noting

- Francona noted that right-hander Trevor Bauer (stress fracture in right fibula) is tentatively scheduled to throw off a mound in a bullpen session Wednesday. Antonetti added that it remains too early to know if Bauer -- if deemed healthy and available to pitch -- would figure into the postseason roster plans as a starter or as a multi-inning reliever.

"That's one of the things we continue to talk through," Antonetti said, "And will have to continue to talk through as we get more information over the coming days and the coming weeks. We've got a couple of meetings already planned to continue those conversations among our front office group and coaching staff to try to look at a variety of different scenarios, not only with Trevor, but with other roster considerations."

- Right-hander Triston McKenzie, ranked as the Indians' No. 1 prospect per MLB Pipeline (No. 36 in MLB overall), has been left off Double-A Akron's roster for the Eastern League Championship Series due to general fatigue, per Antonetti. McKenzie turned in a 2.68 ERA with 87 strikeouts vs. 28 walks in 90 2/3 innings for Akron this year, following an early-season right forearm issue.

"It's more fatigue than anything else," said Antonetti, who noted that the setback is not arm-related. "We just want to make sure that, if we were going to continue to have him pitch, he'd be at 100 percent. He's probably less than 100 percent right now, so we felt it made the most sense to [let him start his offseason]."

- The Indians are keeping a close eye on the workload of righty Cody Anderson (60-day DL), who only recently began throwing in games in his comeback from Tommy John surgery. Antonetti said that "based upon how his throwing has gone the last week," Anderson might be cleared to pitch for Akron during the upcoming championship series against New Hampshire.

Rays 6, Indians 5: Tampa Bay upends Cleveland with walk-off home run in ninth

Mark Didtler | The Associated PressPublished on Sept. 11, 2018 | Updated 6:38 a. m.

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — With time running short and so much ground to make up, the Tampa Bay Rays will probably miss the postseason. But they certainly look like a playoff team right now.

Ji-Man Choi hit a two-run homer off Brad Hand with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, and the Rays beat the Cleveland Indians 6-5 on Monday night to set a team record with their 12th straight victory at home.

"That was my first career walk-off homer and that was awesome," Choi said through a translator.

The Rays have won 17 of 20 overall after a rare victory (2-51) when trailing after eight innings.

Cleveland ace Corey Kluber was chased in the second, but the Indians rallied before blowing a late lead. Even with the defeat, their magic number dropped to four to clinch their third consecutive AL Central championship when second-place Minnesota lost 7-2 to the New York Yankees.

Tommy Pham grounded a single to right field before Choi went deep against Hand (0-1). Choi entered 1 for 21 in his career against left-handers.

The Indians have lost six of 10.

It appeared Jose Ramirez's nifty baserunning would help Cleveland overcome a poor start by Kluber.

Ramirez was hit by Chaz Roe's pitch to start the seventh. He stole second and third before scoring to put the Indians ahead 5-4 with a headfirst slide to beat second baseman Brandon Lowe's throw home on Yonder Alonso's grounder.

Kluber lasted just 1 2/3 innings — matching his career low — and gave up four runs and five hits. The right-hander and Tampa Bay's Blake Snell are tied for the most wins in the majors with 18.

"I just wasn't able to get that last out," Kluber said.

Jake Bauers homered for the Rays, who moved within 7½ games of Oakland for the second AL wild card with 19 games left.

Jamie Schultz (2-0) worked a scoreless ninth to get the win.

Cleveland reliever Andrew Miller, reinstated from the 10-day disabled list after being out since Aug. 27 with a left shoulder injury, struck out two during a perfect sixth inning.

"Today is a really good start," Miller said. "I'm happy with it."

Six Cleveland relievers limited Tampa Bay to one hit entering the ninth. Indians pitchers finished with 16 strikeouts.

After striking out two during an 11-pitch first inning, Kluber was pulled after 44 pitches in the second with the Indians trailing 4-0.

Willy Adames hit an RBI single, Bauers had a two-run shot and Choi was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded.

"He's one of the best in the league," Bauers said about Kluber. "You've got to get simple and try and stick to an approach. We just made the adjustment."

Kluber gave up two hits over seven innings in a 3-0 win against Tampa Bay on Aug. 31.

Edwin Encarnacion had an RBI single in the first and Ramirez hit a run-scoring double in the fifth.

Cleveland tied it 4-all on pinch-hitter Brandon Guyer's two-run double in the sixth.

Pham singled in the second and has a career-high 14-game hitting streak.

The Rays became the 29th team to reach 1 million (1,006,766) in home attendance with an announced crowd of 12,724. Only the Miami Marlins (747,450) have lower attendance at home.

SETTLING THE SCORE?

Indians manager Terry Francona and Rays skipper Kevin Cash are close friends, which has led to a series of pranks. Cash stole the scooter Francona rides from his downtown apartment to the ballpark earlier this month in Cleveland. In response, Francona talked about messing with Cash's truck. Cash joked about using Uber and Lyft on Monday. "He told me sincerely not to do anything to his truck," a smiling Francona said. "He sounded so sad."

NUMBERS GAME

The Indians are 77-4 when ahead entering the ninth inning. . Bauers' homer was his 10th but first since Aug. 1. He has just two extra-base hits in his last 95 at-bats.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: 3B Josh Donaldson (left calf) will return and start Tuesday.

Rays: CF Kevin Kiermaier (illness) and 3B Matt Duffy (lower back tightness) didn't play.

UP NEXT

Indians RHP Shane Bieber (9-3) and Rays RHP Tyler Glasnow (0-3) are Tuesday night's starters.

Q&A: Antonetti on the Donaldson deal, Bauer's comeback and more by Jordan Bastian

A few days before acquiring Josh Donaldson from the Blue Jays, Chris Antonetti took a ride with the Blue Angels over Cleveland.

For 50 minutes in the air, the Indians' president of baseball operations focused on his breathing technique (as to avoid passing out) and made sure not to touch the lever near his legs that would eject him out of the cockpit and into Lake Erie.

During the bucket-list moment for Antonetti, he was not permitted to have his cell phone on him. So, no, he did not swing the Donaldson deal while withstanding G's.

Prior to Monday's game against the Rays, Antonetti withstood some Q's on the Donaldson trade, Trevor Bauer's ongoing return and other issues currently facing the Tribe. Here are the highlights.

ON THE JOSH DONALDSON DEAL

Q: There was a story by Ken Rosenthal on The Athletic that indicated that multiple teams were upset with the sequence of events before and after Donaldson was acquired. The fact that he was deemed healthy, but then you placed him back on the DL after acquiring him...

CA: "The sequence of what happened? Yeah, Toronto certified that he was healthy. Major League Baseball agreed with that assessment. Obviously, we and other teams actively tried to negotiate a trade and we obviously did that. Then, the last step in that process, I should say, was we asked Major League Baseball with permission to talk with Josh. We got that on Friday night, talked with Josh late Friday night and shared with him what our plan would be. It was like, 'Hey, listen, we need to get you into Cleveland, so we can have our medical people assess you and then we'll partner with you to figure out what the best plan might be to get you back to full health and game activity at the Major League level.' Josh was comfortable with that approach, so we went forward with the trade. And then everything played out exactly as you guys know. We brought him to Cleveland. He was active that day while we got him assessed. We went through that process and decided—with Josh—that it didn't make sense to have him active at that point, that it made sense for him to go back out on a rehab assignment. And that's what we did."

Q: A player on the DL has to be activated after being traded, but you can place him back on the DL with the same injury?

CA: "Right. And each team assesses things differently, right? So, I think in the end, what we were focused on was, what's our assessment? And then, once Josh was with us, how do we work with him to figure out what the best plan might be to get him back to performing at the level that he's capable of at the Major League level? And that's what we did."

Q: Is it an assessment of the injury itself or just his ability to handle the volume?

CA: "All of that, yeah. Kind of where he was in that process, how healthy he was, where he was physically, how his body was responding to activity and how you build up volume. And those are all things... obviously, you see with teams there's a wide variation of how quickly players come back from injuries, how long players are on rehab assignment. There's a lot of variation of that among teams based upon their own assessments. And I think that was the same case here."

Q: Isn't the bottom line here that any team could've done this, since Donaldson cleared waivers?

CA: "Yeah. We didn't do anything different than any other team could've done. And, in fact, there were a lot of other teams that were negotiating with Josh at the time of the trade. Now, we can only see the one reality of what played out, because only one team can end up getting the guy and there's only one thing to assess, and that's what happened in the time that we had Josh with us. But, had he been traded to another team, there very same process very well could've played out with them."

Q: Is it true that MLB sent a "buyer beware" warning to teams before the trade?

CA: "I'm not sure how I'd characterize it, but I think that's always the case with a trade. When you trade for a player, you bear the risk of assuming the medical [situation]. That's why there's a process in place that allowed teams to exchange medical information and work forward from there."

Q: When you talked to Josh before finalizing the deal, he was willing to go through this type of process?

CA: "We left it open-ended. Again, we didn't know exactly what our assessment would be when Josh got here and also what Josh's feels might be on the best way to get him fully healthy and back to Major League games. I think what we agreed to that night was we would sit down—if we went through with the trade and everything played out—that we would just sit down together and come up with a plan. And that plan may very well have been just keep him active, but in the end, that's not what we or Josh felt was best."

Q: Do you view teams that are upset with the way you got Donaldson as sour grapes?

CA: "I really haven't thought that much of it, really. I'm happy that we have him. We worked through the process like every other team did in assessing the medicals. Once we got him—like we would with any player—we tried to figure out a plan to get him back to full health and playing at the level he's capable of playing. We're comfortable with how that played out. I hadn't really given thought about how other teams felt about it."

ON TREVOR BAUER'S COMEBACK

Q: You won't have a firm grasp of Bauer's status for a while...

CA: "That's correct."

Q: How does that influence your discussions about the playoff rotation and playoff roster?

CA: "Yeah, that's one of the things we continue to talk through and will have to continue to talk through as we get more information over the coming days and the coming weeks. We've got a couple of meetings already planned to continue those conversations among our front office

group and coaching staff to try to look at a variety of different scenarios, not only with Trevor, but with other roster considerations for potentially the postseason.”

Q: Did you learn anything from last year’s three-man rotation approach? Will that influence your thinking at all?

CA: “It depends. I think there may be different interpretations in how that worked. I think that Game 4 was a little bit different in how it played out. We didn’t play our best defense and the line score looks ugly, but I think Trevor pitched better than what that line might indicate. So, is it a piece of information? Yes. But, I wouldn’t say that would determine necessarily what our course might be.”

Q: Will Bauer have any follow-up imaging done?

CA: “I’m not sure how much imaging at this point—how much impact that would have. I think at this point it’s more based upon his symptoms and then building up volume from here.”

Q: Where is Bauer in his throwing program?

CA: “He’s throwing. At this point, he’s throwing and hopefully at some point this week he progresses to bullpens and then continues to build up from there. What that means, how quickly, we’ll have to see. We don’t know exactly how it will play out from this point forward, because it’s a unique injury. Also, how Trevor has gone through the rehab process, some of the things he’s done with his arm care and arm conditioning, are a little bit different. He’s worked really hard to try to position himself to be ready as soon as reasonably possible. So, we’ll have to take [that into consideration].”

Q: Bauer mentioned that he threw off a mound already...

CA: “I think he had done it one time just to get a feel for it and see how that went. That may have been a little bit early to do that, so we’re hopeful that he’ll get back on a mound maybe with more frequency at some point in the next week.”

Q: If you decide that Trevor isn’t built up enough for a regular starting role, but he’s healthy, are you intrigued at all by using him as a durable multi-inning reliever?

CA: “I think it’s too early to say that he wouldn’t be a starter for us. Our goal and hope is that we can build him back up to assume that role, but I think the one thing we’re confident in is, if Trevor’s healthy and able to pitch, that he can impact a postseason series. Whether that’s in the rotation or bullpen is not something we’ve worked through yet. Again, literally, this is going to be one of those things with Trevor, we’re going to have to see the day to day and just how quickly he’s able to get on a mound. We’re at the point in the season where two or three days one way or the other will have a big impact, right? If he’s able to get off a mound on a certain date versus two or three days later, that could have an impact on his availability and readiness to pitch.”

Q: Does it feel like every September you guys have more and more to solve to get ready for the postseason?

CA: “We’ve definitely had things to solve the last few years. And 2016 wasn’t short on planning, either, having unexpected developments as Trevor Bauer was walking in on the morning we had to set our roster. That was one of the more surreal experiences. It happened early that morning. We couldn’t reach him and by the time Trevor was on his way to the park, I met him in the tunnel and I’m looking at his finger, going, ‘What? How are going to... we have an hour and 15 minutes to make a determination of whether or not you’re going to be on the roster.’ It’s literally just Trevor and I. Those are the only two people in the building. James [Quinlan, the Indians’ head athletic trainer] came down. He got there about a half hour later.”

Q: So, this seems a little easier?

CA: (laughs) “Hopefully we can avoid that type of drama.”

Q: Did you have to have a drone talk with Bauer this time?

CA: (laughs) “Trevor wants to be out there pitching, so I think he’ll be judicious in what activities he chooses to pursue.”

ON ANDREW MILLER

Q: How hopeful are you that Miller can return in the manner you’ve hoped he would all season?

CA: “I would say this time is different. His mindset, his mentality is like, ‘This is the best I’ve felt in a long time, and not only am I healthy, but I feel I’m ready to go and pitch at the level that you’ve seen me pitch.’ So, that’s exciting. The most recent issue was shoulder-related, whereas in the past, he was dealing with knee issues. Now, how much are they interrelated, something in your lower body affecting your upper body? It’s hard to distill out. But, the encouraging thing is that Andrew is feeling like both the knee is a non-issue and now the shoulder and arm feel as good as they’ve felt in 18 months.”

OTHER INJURY UPDATES

Q: Does Lonnie Chisenhall have any chance at returning?

CA: "I don't know. He's in Arizona rehabbing. He's building up his volume. He's responded to the buildup of volume better this time than he has at different other junctures of this rehab. That leads us to be more optimistic, but it's really hard to say. ... Where does he play? How do you go about the at-bats? That's a complicating factor."

Q: Was Cody Anderson scratched from a rehab outing with Double-A Akron recently?

CA: "What we talked about with Cody in his process was just to try to reassess things each day, because he's at that end stage of recovery. So, we want to make sure we're getting him out there pitching regularly, but also not taking it too far. So what we've asked Cody to do is be really upfront with us on how he's feeling and then let's figure out what that right schedule to pitch might be. I'm thinking, based upon how his throwing has gone the last week, that he'll be back in one of the games in Akron. That's the plan right now, but that could change based upon how Cody feels as he throws."

Q: Is the Arizona Fall League a possibility for Anderson?

CA: "It could be, but we want to be really thoughtful of giving him enough time—because he's rehabbed for so long—to have a normal offseason."

Q: Why was Triston McKenzie kept off Akron's playoff roster?

CA: "He is not currently on their roster. It's more fatigue than anything else. We just want to make sure that, if we were going to continue to have him pitch, he'd be at 100 percent. He's probably less than 100 percent right now, so we felt it made the most sense to not pitch him."

Q: What sort of fatigue? Anything specific?

CA: "Just different body parts. Thankfully, nothing arm related. He gets sore in different places. We figured, let's not [make it worse]. But, it's not arm—elbow or shoulder."

José Ramírez and the art of the flying helmet

By Zack Meisel 1h ago 1

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — On José Ramírez's head-first plunge into second base, his helmet gently slipped off onto the dirt in front of him. He stood up, tucked in his flashy chain, scooped up his helmet and placed it atop his golden locks.

On Ramírez's slide into third, his helmet nearly caromed across the green carpet, into the Indians' dugout. He strutted past the umpire to retrieve the wayward protector.

On Ramírez's mad dash to the plate, his helmet zipped past the home-plate umpire, who ruled him safe. Ramírez bounced to his feet, picked it up, slapped Melky Cabrera's fist and Jason Kipnis' hand and jogged to the dugout.

There's momentum and force and inertia and gravity — and plenty of other scientific terms Trevor Bauer could explain — in play when Ramírez's chest smacks the infield dirt. His helmet often comes jarred loose and skips away.

It happens quite often. Twenty-three times this season, to be exact.

When it happens, it usually means good things for the Indians. Once, in Houston, he somehow unintentionally kicked it up in the air, only for it to follow him to second base and strike him in the back.

In 2016, Ramírez established a personal record with 57 helmet losses (plus one in the All-Star Game and five in the postseason). Last year, that number dipped to 38, likely the result of his increased homer total. This year, that helmet total has dropped again, with his homer total approaching 40.

But Ramírez entered Monday's series opener against the Rays with a .167 average and a .535 OPS over his previous 23 games.

The cure? More helmet.

Or, less helmet, I suppose. You get the idea.

He lost the helmet three times in a span of five minutes, each a more dramatic ditching than the last.

With the game tied in the seventh, Tampa's Chaz Roe — the fifth of seven pitchers deployed by Rays skipper Kevin Cash; the Indians used eight pitchers, which, unlike Tampa's strategy, was not according to plan — struck Ramírez in the left leg with an 80 mph slider. Ramírez dropped to the ground, planting his left knee in the dirt.

On Roe's next pitch, to Edwin Encarnacion, Ramírez swiped second. His helmet landed softly in front of him and rocked back and forth.

Encarnacion struck out, but Ramírez stole third on Roe's 0-1 offering to Alonso. Rays catcher Nick Ciuffo bobbed the baseball during his transfer, so he couldn't even muster a throw to attempt to nab Ramírez. His helmet rumbled past the third-base coaching box.

Ramírez has tallied a career-high 32 stolen bases this season. Over the weekend, he became the league's first 30/30 (homers/steals) player since 2012, and the third player in franchise history to accomplish the feat (Joe Carter, Grady Sizemore). He needs seven more helmet losses to become the Indians' first 30/30/30 player.

When Alonso hit a chopper to second base, Ramírez scampered home with little hesitation. The umpire signaled safe as the helmet trickled past him onto the grass.

“I wasn’t going on contact,” Ramírez said through team translator Will Clements. “But when I saw the way that he fielded it, I knew he wouldn’t be able to make a good throw, (so) I went for home.

Ramírez manufactured the go-ahead run for the Indians with a hit-by-pitch and an abundance of hustle.

“He doesn’t ever stop playing the game,” Terry Francona said. “I mean, unbelievable. He, like, wills himself to try to help us win. That’s impressive, because everybody that’s been around José knows he’s going to hit. But, when he’s not swinging like he can, he still impacts the game.”

By the end of the three-part act, Ramírez’s chest, midsection and both legs were covered in dirt. His gray uniform will need some extra detergent. His helmet might need a wash, too.

“Not many people are scoring on that ball,” Brandon Guyer said, “but not many people are getting to third, too. But, that’s what he’s done all year. That’s heart and hustle. It doesn’t surprise any of us.”

Q&A: Chris Antonetti on the Josh Donaldson trade, Trevor Bauer and the Indians’ playoff roster decisions

Zack Meisel 1h ago

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Two days before he struck a deal with the Blue Jays for Josh Donaldson, Chris Antonetti soared through the Cleveland skies with the Blue Angels.

He referred to the 50-minute airplane adventure as one of the more gratifying experiences of his life, and he successfully avoided passing out or losing his lunch. He also avoided touching the throttle, which sat below his left arm, and — and this is important — the ejector.

Antonetti’s guide cautioned that the ejector wouldn’t require much force to send the Indians’ president of baseball operations plunging toward Lake Erie. So, while a lot of fun, it was a little stressful.

But stress is normal for Antonetti and the Indians’ brain trust this time of year, as the club begins to assemble its postseason roster. Donaldson will make his Indians debut Tuesday, with Jose Ramírez sliding over to second base and Jason Kipnis shifting to center field. Andrew Miller rejoined the active roster for Monday’s series opener. Trevor Bauer is tentatively scheduled to throw a bullpen session Wednesday and, if all goes well, another one over the weekend.

Antonetti is no stranger to late-season drama, though. Last year, the Indians had a host of players returning from injury in September. They shrunk their playoff rotation to three starters and booted Mike Clevinger, Josh Tomlin and Danny Salazar to the bullpen and Dan Otero, Nick Goody and Zach McAllister to the sideline.

The year before, the Indians dealt with September injuries to Salazar and Carlos Carrasco. And then on the morning of Game 1 of the ALCS, Antonetti and Bauer met in a tunnel at Progressive Field, the pitcher’s pinkie a mangled mess. With 75 minutes remaining until the roster deadline, Antonetti had to make a decision on the 9.5-fingered drone victim.

So, a little late-season stress is nothing new. Antonetti stood outside of the visitors dugout at Tropicana Field on Monday afternoon and chatted with The Athletic, MLB.com and cleveland.com about that, the postseason roster, accusations that the Indians bent some rules in their acquisition of Donaldson and more.

What’s your reaction to the report by The Athletic that other teams have gripes with how you acquired Josh Donaldson and then placed him on the DL?

Toronto certified that he was healthy. Major League Baseball agreed with that assessment. Obviously, we and other teams actively tried to negotiate a trade and we obviously did that. Then, the last step in that process, I should say, was we asked Major League Baseball for permission to talk with Josh. We got that on Friday night, talked with Josh late Friday night and shared with him what our plan would be. It was like, “Hey, listen, we need to get you into Cleveland, so we can have our medical people assess you and then we’ll partner with you to figure out what the best plan might be to get you back to full health and game activity at the major-league level.” Josh was comfortable with that approach, so we went forward with the trade. And then everything played out exactly as you guys know. We brought him to Cleveland. He was active that day while we got him assessed. We went through that process and decided — with Josh — that it didn’t make sense to have him active at that point, that it made sense for him to go back out on a rehab assignment. And that’s what we did.

So, he has to be active after a trade, but there’s nothing that hinders putting a player back on the DL with the same injury?

Right. And each team assesses things differently, right? So, I think in the end, what we were focused on was, what’s our assessment? And then, once Josh was with us, how do we work with him to figure out what the best plan might be to get him back to performing at the level that he’s capable of at the major-league level? And that’s what we did.

Is it an assessment of the injury itself or just his ability to handle the volume?

All of that, yeah. Kind of where he was in that process, how healthy he was, where he was physically, how his body was responding to activity and how you build up volume. And those are all things ... obviously, you see with teams (that) there’s a wide variation of how quickly players

come back from injuries, how long players are on rehab assignment. There's a lot of variation of that among teams based upon their own assessments. And I think that was the same case here.

So, any team could've done this.

Yeah. We didn't do anything different than any other team could've done. And, in fact, there were a lot of other teams that were negotiating with Josh at the time of the trade. Now, we can only see the one reality of what played out, because only one team can end up getting the guy and there's only one thing to assess, and that's what happened in the time that we have Josh with us. But, had he been traded to another team, the very same process very well could've played out with them.

When you talked to Josh before finalizing the deal, he was willing to go through this process. What if he said no?

We left it open-ended. Again, we didn't know exactly what our assessment would be when Josh got here and also what Josh felt might be the best way to get him fully healthy and back to Major League games. I think what we agreed to that night was we would sit down — if we went through with the trade and everything played out — that we would just sit down together and come up with a plan. And that plan may very well have been just keep him active, but in the end, that's not what we or Josh felt was best.

If he had said no, would you have nixed the trade?

No, that would've just been a different piece of information. We would've had to assess how we move forward from there, but that's an alternate reality that we didn't have to deal with. That's a hypothetical.

You won't know for a while exactly what Trevor Bauer can offer you in the postseason, right?

That's correct. Yep.

How does that influence your discussions on the potential playoff rotation and playoff roster?

Yeah, that's one of the things we continue to talk through and will have to continue to talk through as we get more information over the coming days and the coming weeks. We've got a couple of meetings already planned to continue those conversations among our front office group and coaching staff to try to look at a variety of different scenarios, not only with Trevor, but with other roster considerations for potentially the postseason.

Did you learn anything from last year's three-man rotation approach? Does that influence your thinking at all?

It depends. I think there may be different interpretations in how that worked. I think that Game 4 was a little bit different in how it played out. We didn't play our best defense and the line score looks ugly, but I think Trevor pitched better than what that line might indicate. So, is it a piece of information? Yes. But, I wouldn't say that would determine necessarily what our course might be.

If Trevor isn't built up enough for the rotation, are you intrigued at all by using him as a durable multi-inning reliever?

I think it's too early to say that he wouldn't be a starter for us. Our goal and hope is that we can build him back up to assume that role, but I think the one thing we're confident in is, if Trevor's healthy and able to pitch, that he can impact a postseason series. Whether that's in the rotation or bullpen is not something we've worked through yet. Again, literally, this is going to be one of those with Trevor, we're going to have to see the day to day and just how quickly he's able to get on a mound. We're at the point in the season where two or three days one way or the other will have a big impact, right? If he's able to get off a mound on a certain date versus two or three days later, that could have an impact on his availability and readiness to pitch.

Does it feel like every September you guys have more and more to solve to get ready for the postseason?

We've definitely had things to solve the last few years. 2016 wasn't short on planning, either, having unexpected developments as Trevor Bauer was walking in on the morning we had to set our roster. That was one of the more surreal experiences. It happened early that morning. We couldn't reach him and by the time Trevor was on his way to the park, I met him in the tunnel and I'm looking at his finger, going, "What? How are going to — we have an hour and 15 minutes to make a determination of whether or not you're going to be on the roster." It's literally just Trevor and I. Those are the only two people in the building. James (Quinlan) came down, he got there about a half-hour later. So this is easy.

Hopefully we can avoid that type of drama.

Did you have a drone talk when he went on the DL this time?

Trevor wants to be out there pitching, so I think he'll be judicious in what activities he chooses to pursue.

Does Lonnie Chisenhall have any chance at returning?

I don't know. He's in Arizona rehabbing. He's building up his volume. He's responded to the buildup of volume better this time than he has at different other junctures of this rehab. That leads us to be more optimistic, but it's really hard to say.

It's been a long, arduous recovery from Tommy John surgery for Cody Anderson. (Frank Jansky/Getty Images)
Was Cody Anderson recently scratched from an outing with Class AA Akron?

What we talked about with Cody in his process was just to try to reassess things each day, because he's at that end stage of recovery, so we want to make sure we're getting him out there pitching regularly, but also not taking it too far. So what we've asked Cody to do is be really upfront with us on how he's feeling and then let's figure out what that right schedule to pitch might be. I'm thinking, based upon how his throwing has gone the last week that he'll be back in one of the games in Akron. That's the plan right now, but that could change based upon how Cody feels as he throws.

Would the Arizona Fall League be an option for him?

It could be, but we want to be really thoughtful of giving him enough time — because he's rehabbed for so long — to have a normal offseason. Why was Triston McKenzie kept off Akron's playoff roster?

He is not currently on their roster. It's more fatigue than anything else. We just want to make sure that, if we were going to continue to have him pitch, he'd be at 100 percent. He's probably less than 100 percent right now, so we felt it made the most sense to not pitch him.

What sort of fatigue?

Just different body parts. Thankfully, nothing arm related. He gets sore in different places. We figured, let's not (make it worse). But it's not arm, elbow or shoulder.

How hopeful are you that, this time, Andrew Miller is Andrew Miller?

I would say this time is different. His mindset, his mentality is like, "This is the best I've felt in a long time, and not only am I healthy, but I feel I'm ready to go and pitch at the level that you've seen me pitch." So, that's exciting.

He likened all of that time down to a makeshift spring training. Did you view it similarly?

The most recent issue was shoulder related, whereas in the past, he was dealing with knee issues. Now, how much are they interrelated, something in your lower body affecting your upper body? It's hard to distill out. But the encouraging thing is that Andrew is feeling like both the knee is a nonissue and now the shoulder and arm feel as good as they've felt in 18 months.

Do you view teams that are upset with the way you got Donaldson as sour grapes?

I really haven't thought that much of it, really. I'm happy that we have him. We worked through the process like every other team did in assessing the medicals. Once we got him, like we would with any player, we tried to figure out a plan to get him back to full health and playing at the level he's capable of playing. We're comfortable with how that played out. I hadn't really given thought about how other teams felt about it.

Have other teams contacted you about the way it went down?

No. At least, not that I'm aware of. Have they been calling you to complain about it?

RubberDucks loose, confident on eve of Eastern League Championship Series against heavily favored Fisher Cats by ABJ/Ohio.com correspondent

When the odds are stacked against you, the pressure of playing in the Eastern League Championship Series all but goes out the window.

The RubberDucks open their best-of-five series with the New Hampshire Fisher Cats on Tuesday at Canal Park and feel as cool as the temperatures that have graced Ohio the last few days.

That's what happens when you're playing the team picked to win everything.

The Fisher Cats come in with the EL Manager of the Year (John Schneider) as well as the MVP and Rookie of the Year (Cavan Biggio).

In fact, the top two vote getters for rookie of the year are still with the team in Biggio and Bo Bichette, and it would be the top three if Baseball America Minor Leaguer of the Year Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hadn't been promoted to Triple-A Buffalo.

"We're going to give it everything we got and see what happens," RubberDucks manager Tony Mansolino said. "I do agree in terms of pressure — at this point we're playing with house money — as well as in terms of the turnover with our roster and where we're at in the season."

The Fisher Cats are at the height of their game after sweeping the Thunder, who came in with the best pitching staff in the league and were promptly put away when the Fisher Cats batted a collective .287 and scored 22 runs.

New Hampshire's prize is the second-best pitching staff in the league in the Ducks.

"I haven't seen them yet, but I faced a lot of them last year at Dunedin [in Single-A]," RubberDucks starting pitcher Kyle Dowdy said. "The majority of it is going out and pitching your game. You pitch to your strengths. You command the ball where you want it. We'll go out and give it everything you have and hopefully win it in three games."

"They may feel the pressure. I know we don't. It's one of those where we know we're just hitting our stride right now, whereas the week leading up to the playoffs we weren't. But we've turned it on by beating Altoona pretty handedly. We feel like we have it going on. We aren't worried about our side of the game."

That attitude is likely shared throughout the clubhouse after the Ducks dispatched the Curve in four games.

Led by Jodd Carter (.429) and Andrew Calica (.250, 5 RBI), the RubberDucks hit a collective .248 and scored 21 runs.

Sean Brady (1-0, 0.00), Jordan Milbrath (1.0, 0.00) and Dowdy (1.0, 2.70) dominated the reigning league champions.

"I definitely think it'll be a pitchers' battle," Calica said. "It'll be important for us to make the most of our situational hitting and take advantage of our opportunities and take advantage of the small parts of the game."

If the Ducks can win their sixth league crown — adding to titles in 2003, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2016 — Games 1 and 2 could be a vital part of the process.

In every ELCS except 2005, the Akron franchise won both of the first two games en route to the crown. Against the Curve in the Western Division Series, the RubberDucks took care of home before bouncing the Curve in Game 4 at Peoples Natural Gas Field.

"Games 1 and 2 are huge," said Brady, who clinched the series against the Curve. "You try to take both and then only have to win at one place. I think it's a bigger advantage than having three games at home to be honest with you."

After that, it's just putting the bat on the ball on offense and hitting the mitt on defense.

"For us it's fun," Ducks reliever Nick Pasquale said. "It's win-win. The playoffs are the most fun part for us. You don't worry about anything else. You play to win the game."

Chris Antonetti says Cleveland Indians innocent of any wrongdoing in Josh Donaldson trade

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

ST. PETERSBURG, Florida - Chris Antonetti, president of baseball operations for the Indians, said the team did nothing to violate MLB rules in trading for third baseman Josh Donaldson just before the Aug. 31 waiver deadline.

"We didn't do anything different than any other team would have done," said Antonetti before Monday night's game against the Rays at Tropicana Field. "In fact, there were a lot of other teams that were negotiating with Josh at the time for the trade.

"Now, we can only see one reality of what played out, because only one team can end up getting the guy and there's only one thing to assess, and that's what happened in the time we had Josh with us. But, had he been traded to another team, that very same process could have played out with them."

Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic reported that the Yankees, Boston and Houston checked with the commissioner's office on the legality of the trade and to voice their displeasure. The story said Houston was satisfied with MLB's explanation, but that the Red Sox and Yankees were still upset.

The crux of the complaint was the health of Donaldson. He has not played a big-league game since May 28 because of a strained left calf - he will be activated and start at third base Tuesday night - but the Blue Jays put him on revocable waivers on Aug. 29. MLB rules say a player must be healthy when he's placed on revocable waivers. After the Indians completed the trade, they placed him on the 10-day disabled list on Sept. 2, citing his strained left calf.

Rosenthal reported that teams interested in trading for Donaldson were contacted by MLB and received what amounted to a 'buyer beware' warning when he was on waivers.

"I'm not sure how I'd characterize it," said Antonetti when asked MLB's message, "but I think that's always the case with a trade. When you trade for a player, you bear the risk of assuming the medical (condition of that player). That's why there's a process in place that allowed teams to exchange medical information and work forward from there."

Of course, if any team really wanted Donaldson, and wanted to keep the Indians from getting him, they could have claimed him on waivers. No one did, including the Indians, because of his health concerns and the estimated \$4 million left on his contract.

Antonetti didn't think the Indians had a shot at Donaldson until the afternoon of Aug. 31. When negotiations with the Blue Jays grew serious, he contacted MLB for permission to talk to Donaldson. MLB said OK.

"Toronto certified that he was healthy," said Antonetti. "Major League Baseball agreed with that assessment. Obviously, we and other teams actively tried to negotiate a trade and we obviously did that.

"Then, the last step in that process was we asked Major League Baseball for permission to talk with Josh. We got that on Friday night, talked with Josh late Friday night and shared with him what our plan would be. It was like, 'Hey, listen, we need to get you into Cleveland, so we can have our medical people assess you and then we'll partner with you to figure out what the best plan might be to get you back to full health and game activity at the Major League level.'"

Donaldson agreed and the Indians made the trade with Toronto for a player to be named. The player is right-hander Julian Merryweather, who is currently on the disabled list recovering from Tommy John surgery. The Indians also received a reported \$2.7 million to help pay for the remainder of Donaldson's contract.

"Josh was comfortable with that approach, so we went forward with the trade," said Antonetti. "And then everything played out exactly as you guys know. We brought him to Cleveland. He was active that day while we got him assessed. We went through that process and decided -- with Josh -- that it didn't make sense to have him active at that point, that it made sense for him to go back out on a rehab assignment. And that's what we did."

Antonetti said there was nothing stopping the Indians from putting Donaldson back on the disabled list after they completed the trade.

"Each team assesses things differently, right?" he said. "I think in the end, what we were focused on was our assessment (on Josh). And then once Josh was with us, how do we work with him to figure out what the best plan might be to get him back to performing at the level that he's capable of at the Major League level? And that's what we did."

Cleveland Indians lose on walk-off HR, but magic number shrinks to 4 as Yankees down Minnesota

By Joe Noga, cleveland.comjnoga@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Ji-Man Choi's two-run walk-off home run handed Cleveland its second straight loss on Monday, but the Indians' magic number to clinch a third straight American League Central Division title dropped to 4 as the New York Yankees downed Minnesota, 7-2.

The Yankees scored six times in the top of the seventh, including RBI doubles by Miguel Andujar, Giancarlo Stanton and Didi Gregorius. The Twins have lost seven of their last 10 games.

Cleveland's lead over the Twins in the A.L. Central is at 15 1/2 games with 18 games to play.

Any combination of Indians wins or losses by the second-place Twins that is greater than or equal to 4 will clinch a third consecutive division title and postseason appearance for Cleveland.

The Indians (81-63) continue their series against the Rays on Tuesday at 7:10 as Shane Bieber faces Tyler Glasnow. Minnesota continues its series at home against the Yankees at 8:10 p.m.

You can calculate the first-place Tribe's magic number by starting with 162 (games in a season) and adding one, then subtracting the number of Indians wins and subtracting the number of losses by the second-place team.

Tampa Bay Rays beat Cleveland Indians, 6-5, on two-run walk-off homer by Ji-Man Choi

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

ST. PETERSBURG, Florida -- The Rays have put together an impressive season by their liberal use of pitchers. They'll often start a reliever, called an "opener," and then bring in a starter after the opener has gone one or two innings at max effort.

The Indians, unintentionally, used that formula Monday and it almost worked. . . almost.

Brad Hand, the seventh Indians reliever to pitch Monday night, had two out in the ninth and a 5-4 lead before allowing a two-run walk-off homer to Ji-Man Choi at Tropicana Field as the Rays beat the Indians, 6-5. It was the 11th walk-off loss the Indians have suffered this season, second most in the big leagues.

Corey Kluber started for the Indians, but lasted just 1 2/3 innings. It was his shortest start since he went 1 2/3 innings against the Cardinals on June 26. Manager Terry Francona had no choice but to go to the bullpen, and until the ninth inning the relievers did the job.

Tyler Olsen (four strikeouts), Oliver Perez (three strikeouts), Dan Otero (one strikeout), Andrew Miller (two strikeouts), Neil Ramirez (one strikeout) and Cody Allen combined to throw 6 1/3 scoreless innings before Hand started the ninth for the save.

Hand was 8-for-8 in save situations with the Indians before Choi burned him. They acquired him on July 19 from San Diego.

"Oh my goodness," said Francona when asked about the pen. "You start with Olson. Olson came in in a tough spot and pitched great, and everybody followed along. I mean, that's a lot to ask. And if somebody has a hiccup, you lose.

"Man, I thought Brad, he made a really good pitch the pitch before and didn't get the call. And then he didn't get the fastball where he wanted it."

Olson relieved Kluber in the second inning with two out and the bases loaded. He struck out C.J. Cron, a right-handed hitter, to end the inning.

Jose Ramirez gave the Indians a 5-4 lead with his feet in the seventh inning. On Sunday he became just the third Indians player to produce a 30-30 season -- 30 homers and 30 stolen bases. Ramirez's historic stolen base came in the first inning.

Monday night, he went to work in the seventh with the score tied, 4-4. Ramirez was hit by a pitch to start the inning. He stole second with Edwin Encarnacion at the plate and stole third with Yonder Alonso batting.

The Rays pulled the infield in as Alonso sent a chopper to second baseman Brandon Lowe. He made a nice spinning stop on the ball, but his throw home was late as Ramirez slid across the plate headfirst for a 5-4 lead.

In Saturday's 9-8 win over the Blue Jays at Rogers Centre, Ramirez scored the winning run from third on a wild pitch that barely got past catcher Danny Jansen. Ramirez's two steals on Monday gave him an American League-leading 32.

"I wasn't going on contact," said Ramirez, through interpreter Will Clements. "But when I saw the way that he fielded it, I knew he wouldn't be able to make a good throw (so) I went for home."

Kluber allowed four runs on five hits. He struck out four, walked one and threw just 56 percent of his pitches for strikes.

Miller, who was activated before the game, looked good in his return. He retired the Rays in order in the sixth, striking out the last two batters he faced.

The Indians took a 1-0 lead in the first on Encarnacion's single. The Rays, who have won 12 straight games at home, scored four in the second against Kluber for a 4-1 lead. A two-run homer by Jake Bauers was the big hit of the innings.

Francona said there was nothing wrong with Kluber, but when he got over 50 pitches it was time to go to the bullpen.

"I wasn't able to get that last out," said Kluber. "I got ahead of Bauers. He did a good job of battling to get back in the count. 3-2, I was trying to be aggressive and not walk him, but I caught too much of the plate. . . From that point on, they had a couple soft base hits and a walk. I just wasn't able to get that last out.

The Indians slowly worked their way back into the game. Ramirez doubled home a run in the fifth to make it 4-2. Brandon Guyer tied it in the sixth with a two-run, pinch-hit double.

What it means

The Indians, despite the loss, saw their magic number drop to four as the Yankees beat the Twins. The Indians could clinch the AL Central at Tropicana Field if they can beat the Rays in the next two games, while the Yankees beat the Twins in two straight.

The pitches

Kluber threw 55 pitches, 31 (56 percent) for strikes. Castillo threw 33 pitches, 20 (61 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Rays drew 12,724 fans to Tropicana Field on Monday night. First pitch was at 7:10 p.m. with a temperature of 72 degrees inside and 85 degrees outside. Next

Indians rookie Shane Bieber (9-3, 4.63) will face the Rays and Tyler Glasgou (1-5, 4.64) on Tuesday at 7:10 p.m. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM and WMMS will carry the game.

Bieber is coming off a win against Toronto in his last start. On Sept 1, he lost to Blake Snell and the Rays at Progressive Field. Glasgou lost against the Indians on Aug. 31 despite allowing one run on two hits in seven innings.

Can Trevor Bauer 'beat the clock' and rejoin Cleveland Indians' rotation in time for postseason?

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

ST. PETERSBURG, Florida - It's September and the Indians once again are trying to get their roster back to full strength before plunging into the postseason.

They activated lefty Andrew Miller on Monday. Josh Donaldson will join him on Tuesday, but what of Trevor Bauer?

Bauer was about to hit the stretch drive in a career season when he was hit in the right leg by a line drive off the bat of Chicago's Jose Abreu on Aug. 11. He's been out with a stress fracture in the leg since, but that doesn't mean he's lost for the season.

"Trevor is tentatively scheduled for a bullpen (session) Wednesday, which is really good news," said manager Terry Francona. "Now that's a little bit tentative, but he's had a good last couple of days so that's really good."

Francona added that if Bauer's bullpen session goes well Wednesday, he could throw again on Friday or Saturday.

"I think with Trev, the trainers are trying to go every day just to make sure he feels OK," said Francona. "If he can tolerate something, move on."

The Indians are hopeful Bauer can rejoin the rotation before the end of the season.

"He's throwing," said Chris Antonetti, Indians president of baseball operations. "At this point, he's throwing and hopefully at some point this week he progresses to bullpens and continues to build from there."

But Bauer's injury has definitely put a lot of options on the table regarding the postseason rotation.

"What that means, we'll have to see," said Antonetti. "We don't know exactly how it will play out from this point forward because it's a unique injury. Also how Trevor has gone through this rehab process, some of the things he's done with his arm care and arm conditioning are a little bit different. He's worked really hard to try to position himself to be ready as soon as reasonably possible. So we'll have to take (that into consideration)."

If he can't start, Bauer could open the postseason in the bullpen, but Antonetti wasn't ready to discuss that.

"It think it's too early to say that he wouldn't be a starter for us," said Antonetti. "Our goal and hope is that we can build him back up to assume that role. But I think the one thing we're confident in is, if Trevor's healthy and able to pitch, that he can impact a postseason series for us. Whether that's in the rotation or bullpen is not something we've worked through yet."

Antonetti said timing will be critical in determining Bauer's role.

"We're going to have to see day to day just how quickly he's able to get on the mound," said Antonetti. "We're at the point of the season where two or three days one way or the other will have a big impact, right? If he's able to get off a mound on a certain date versus two or three days later, that could have an impact on his availability and readiness to pitch."

Finally: Antonetti said the plan is for Cody Anderson to pitch a game for Class AA Akron in the Eastern League championship. Anderson underwent Tommy John surgery in March of 2017. Antonetti added that top prospect Triston McKenzie has been shut down for the season and will not pitch for Akron in the postseason. McKenzie opened the year on the disabled list with a forearm injury and it sounds like the Indians want to make sure he has a full off-season to recover. "It's more fatigue than anything else," said Antonetti. "Thankfully, it's not arm-related."

Cleveland Indians will activate Josh Donaldson Tuesday and start him at third base against the Rays

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- It was left-hander Andrew Miller's turn Monday to come off the disabled list and join the Indians stretch drive.

On Tuesday it will be Josh Donaldson's turn.

There was no surprise about Miller's activation. The Indians confirmed it Sunday in Toronto before they completed a four-game series against the Blue Jays.

But there was a bit of mystery about Donaldson. Yes, he was joining the Indians at Tropicana Field, but no one would say exactly when the three-time All-Star would be activated. After all, he hasn't played in a big league game since May 28 because of strained left calf.

"We'll activate Josh on Tuesday and start him at third base," said manager Terry Francona before Monday night's game. "Jose Ramirez will move to second base and Jason Kipnis will go to center field."

The Indians acquired Donaldson on Aug. 30 from Toronto. They put him on the disabled list right after the deal and sent him on a rehab because of the calf injury. He played four games, one with Class AAA Columbus and three with Class AA Akron, and went 3-for-12 with two homers.

"I feel great physically," said Donaldson, before going out to take batting practice with his new team. "I feel really good. I passed everything I wanted to accomplish and they wanted me to accomplish."

As for what he needed to prove to himself in his four-game rehab assignment, Donaldson said, "I wanted to go out there and go back to back and see how well I was recovering after games. Being able to sprint without something happening. So far everything has went really well."

The Indians, who entered Monday's game with a magic number of five, have 19 regular season games left to play. Will it be enough to get Miller and Donaldson close to peak form for the postseason?

Regarding Miller, Francona said, "He's raring to go. So that's exciting. He doesn't have a minor league game under his belt. He might not command, I hope he does, but if he doesn't we've got 19 games. As much as he feels he wants to pitch - almost - he's going to. We're excited about that."

Miller, who has made three trips to the disabled list this season, has made only 27 appearances.

After Donaldson makes his Tribe debut on Tuesday night, he'll be available off the bench on Wednesday.

"We've got Thursday off and he'll play Friday," said Francona. "I'll probably just check with him every day. I told him when we get some of these longer games I'll probably take him out early. We want to watch his volume early on. But he promised he'd communicate with me too. We'll check with him every day."

Asked what his expectations are for the next 19 games, Donaldson said, "My expectations are to go out there and help this team win. Whether it's offensively, defensively, whatever it may be. I feel like I'm in a good position right now. Anytime my body is able to do the things I want it to do, I'm going to have success. If I have success, this team will have success."

Report: Red Sox, Yankees among clubs upset about Josh Donaldson trade to Cleveland Indians

By Joe Noga, cleveland.comjnoga@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Rival playoff contenders including the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees are upset about the August waiver trade that sent Josh Donaldson from Toronto to the Cleveland Indians, according to a report from Ken Rosenthal of MLB Network.

Appearing on MLB Network's The Rundown on Monday Afternoon, Rosenthal said the Red Sox, Yankees and Houston Astros -- all in line for the MLB playoffs -- checked in with the league office regarding whether or not Donaldson was healthy enough to be placed on revocable waivers prior to the Aug. 31 deal.

According to the report, Houston was satisfied with the league's response, however Boston and New York are still upset that the trade was approved. Donaldson is set to join the Indians in Tampa Bay tomorrow after completing his third stint on the 10-day disabled list this season.

Donaldson has not played in a major league game since May 28 with the Blue Jays. A free agent at the end of the season, he was acquired in the wee hours of Aug. 31 after clearing revocable waivers while on a rehab assignment with the Blue Jays' minor league affiliate in Dunedin, Fla.

Donaldson played one rehab game for Dunedin on Aug. 28 and then said that he would sit out the scheduled game on Aug. 29 with "leg soreness," but that game was postponed due to rain. He played for Dunedin on Aug. 31 before the trade to Cleveland went through.

After arriving in Cleveland on Sept. 1, Donaldson was placed on the 10-day disabled list in order for him to continue playing minor-league games. In his first appearance for the Triple-A Columbus Clippers on Sept. 4, Donaldson hit a grand slam. Two days later he homered for Double-A Akron in the Rubberducks' Eastern League playoff opener.

According to Rosenthal, the league warned teams that were interested in claiming Donaldson while he was on waivers that he may not be fully healthy. Players must be certified as healthy in order to be placed on revocable waivers, per MLB rules.

Donaldson was on Cleveland's 40-man roster by the Sept. 1 deadline, making him eligible to appear in the playoffs. Whether or not a formal complaint from the other playoff teams could prevent him from playing for the Tribe come October is uncertain.