

Indians win big after Carrasco settles in vs. A's

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- It would have been hard to predict the course of the evening four pitches into Carlos Carrasco's outing on Friday. Dustin Fowler greeted the right-hander by depositing a pitch deep into the right-field stands, drawing gasps from the Progressive Field crowd.

When the time came for Carrasco to exit, that same audience was on its feet, offering an ovation for the starter's work in a 10-4 victory over the A's. In his return from the disabled list, following a liner off his right elbow on June 16 that proved to be more of a scare than anything of real concern, Carrasco showed that he is doing just fine.

"You don't want to go to the DL, miss a couple weeks," Carrasco said. "But at the end of the day, it's going to be worth it. From now to the last game of the season, I'm just going to go every five days, take care of myself, then we'll see [where we are] in the end."

Backed by a surplus of run support from Cleveland's usual suspects -- Jose Ramirez (two hits and three RBIs), Francisco Lindor (two hits, three runs), Michael Brantley (two doubles, one RBI) and Edwin Encarnacion (three RBIs) led the charge -- Carrasco picked up the win behind 5 1/3 solid frames. The big righty finished with seven strikeouts and no walks, allowing three runs (two on solo shots) on seven hits.

At the time of Carrasco's trip to the DL, there was some uncertainty at the back of Cleveland's rotation. During his absence, though, rookie Shane Bieber emerged as a surprising source of reliability. That was the silver lining, and now the American League Central-leading Indians (49-37) are hoping the in-season break can help Carrasco (9-5, 4.28 ERA) hit his stride for the season's stretch run.

"It's really great to have him back," Ramirez said via team translator Will Clements. "Everybody in the world knows what kind of a player Carrasco is, and what he's been doing this year. So, I'm super happy to have him back with us, and I'm glad for him that he's back."

Oakland broke through against Carrasco in the form of Fowler's long leadoff homer in the first and another leadoff shot from Matt Olson in the second. In the third, Carrasco found his rhythm, striking out the side on 11 pitches. The pitcher's only other blemish came in the fifth, when Fowler brought in another run with a bloop single to right.

"Early on, a couple fastballs got hit," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "But, [Carrasco] kept them in check, and he really found his breaking ball. There were a couple innings there where he threw six, seven, eight in a row, but they were so good and then our offense [came through]."

A's starter Paul Blackburn, who handcuffed the Tribe's offense one week ago in Oakland, did not fare as well this time around. In four-plus innings, Blackburn was charged with six runs (five earned) on seven hits. Jason Kipnis got things rolling with an RBI single in the second, and the Indians added three more in the third, and the lineup was off and running the rest of the way.

"We just faced [Blackburn]," Francona said. "And I thought our guys did a really good job on the bases tonight. We were really aggressive, but with intelligence. I thought they did a really good job."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

No help required: The A's had the makings of a rally in the fourth, when Carrasco hit Jed Lowrie, who moved to second on a single by Khris Davis and then advanced to third on a flyout by Olson. With one out and runners on the corners, Stephen Piscotty then chopped a pitch from Carrasco into the ground. The ball bounced high over the mound and up the middle, where Lindor glided to his left and gloved the ball as he stepped on second, and then he fired it on the run to first for a slick inning-ending double play.

"It was right at the bag," Lindor said. "As soon as I saw it, it was just a matter of continuing my step. I'm glad I'm able to dance."

Yes way, Jose: With runners on second and third base, fans down the right-field corner unleashed chants of "Jose! Jose-Jose-Jose!" as Ramirez stepped to the plate. First, Ramirez sent a deep foul ball rocketing into their section. Next, the Tribe slugger pulled a pitch from Blackburn off the right-field wall for a two-run, go-ahead double in the third. That plated both Lindor and Brantley, giving the Indians a 3-2 lead.

Great escape: Oakland pushed a run across in the seventh to trim the Tribe's lead to 6-4, and then loaded the bases with two outs. That set the stage for a critical battle between righty Neil Ramirez and Davis. After falling behind 2-0, Ramirez worked the count even and then enticed Davis to swing through an elevated slider for a rally-halting strikeout.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

Following Carrasco's exit, Olson sent a pitch from lefty Marc Rzepczynski down the right-field line for a double. Tribe right fielder Tyler Naquin hustled over and got a strong throw in to Lindor, who made a swift hard tag on the runner, who was initially called safe. The Indians challenged the call, which was overturned after a review. Replays showed that Olson slipped off the base, while Lindor still had the tag on the runner's back. The play resulted in the inning's second out, and Lindor clapped his glove hard and pumped his fist as the crowd roared.

"I'm just going to get the ball to him," Naquin said. "I'm just going to put it somewhere around the bag and let [Lindor] do his thing. Let him do what Frankie does in the infield. The rest, he keeps that tag on him, bang. It's a big moment, too, you know? That's a lot of fun. It's been a while since I've been able to throw someone out."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

The Indians transformed a close game into a rout with a four-run outburst in the seventh, but the highlight of the inning did not occur with the swing of the bat. With Encarnacion hitting, Ramirez broke from first base for second, drawing a throw from catcher Jonathan Lucroy. Lindor, who was on third base, then sprinted for home and beat the subsequent throw to the plate for an electrifying, run-scoring double steal.

"I'm trying to score," Lindor said. "I knew Josey was going to try to steal second. ... The ball going to second, it was going to be higher than going to third. So, I made sure I had a good lead. As soon as I saw [Lucroy] stand up and [I saw] the ball's rotation, I just took off."

SOUND SMART

Ramirez and Lindor are the first Indians teammates in franchise history to each have at least 50 extra-base hits in the first half of a season. The last pair of teammates in MLB to accomplish that feat was David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez for the 2004 Red Sox.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Corey Kluber (12-4, 2.64 ERA) is scheduled to take the mound for the Tribe on Saturday, when the Indians host the A's at 4:10 p.m. ET at Progressive Field. Kluber is 7-1 with a 1.60 ERA in nine starts at home this season. Oakland will counter with righty Edwin Jackson (1-0, 2.13 ERA).

Covering the Bases: Game 86 by Jordan Bastian

FIRST: It is not uncommon to see a ball sent into right-field and the hitter who did the deed slows up into second base with a stand-up double. Often on such a play, the right fielder will scoop it up and toss it in, conceding the extra-base hit.

A hit of that variety arrived in the sixth inning on Friday night, but right fielder Tyler Naquin was not about to concede anything. As Matt Olson rounded first base and Naquin covered the required 125 feet of grassy real estate, the right fielder considered the situation.

One out. Indians up, 6–3. This could be an important runner.

"I knew Olson was running," Naquin said. "He's just a big strong dude. I didn't know if he thought he had a guaranteed double or not, so I'm just going to come up and be as quick as I can. He had already rounded the base, so of course he's going to try to go for two."

Naquin considered gloving the roller and doing a traditional spin-and-throw to the infield. That may have actually been a tick faster. In the moment, though, as Naquin considered the variables in the situation, he opted to glove it and make a quick turn to his right to snap off a throw to second base.

Shortstop Francisco Lindor awaited the throw behind the bag and did so standing casually. Think of what Olson is seeing as he's approaching the base. He sees Lindor with his arms at his sides, looking like there is zero sense of urgency. So, Olson opts to go in standing up, rather than sliding.

The deke worked.

"Those infielders always do that junk," Naquin said with a smirk. "It's awesome. They always sit there and deke them out."

At the last possible second, Lindor takes a step toward the base and catches the ball. Olson now has to stutter step and duck a little as he tries to stop his momentum. This gives the shortstop a chance to apply a swift tag, which Lindor did and did hard, possibly contributing to Olson slipping off the bag.

Lindor held the tag on for a moment, but then pulled the glove back. Olson was clearly off the base, but the shortstop wasn't sure he held the tag on long enough. Second-base umpire Eric Cooper apparently wasn't sure either, as he called Olson safe.

Lindor let out a yell of frustration, thinking he missed his window of opportunity.

"I tagged him and I tried to be as quick as I could," Lindor said. "But then, I just took off the tag, instead of just leaving it on him. That's what they keep on telling us: 'Leave the tag on the guy. Leave the tag on the guy.' I tried to be quick and I forgot about leaving the tag on him. I saw his foot off the bag and I was like, 'Ah, I missed it.'"

"I knew I had a chance of getting him, but it was just, it would make it a lot easier on the umpire, it would make it a lot easier on me, a lot easier on everybody, if I just kept the tag on him when he's off the bag."

The Indians challenged the safe call, which turned out to be the correct decision. On replay, one angle clearly showed that Lindor did, in fact, keep the glove on just long enough to record the out. After a roughly two-minute review, the call was overturned.

Since he went in standing up and then came off the base, Olson was credited with a double, but was out advancing on the 9–6 putout. That marked the first outfield assist of the season for Naquin, who will see plenty of time in right now that Lonnie Chisenhall (left calf) is on the DL and out for the foreseeable future.

Lindor provided the highlight-reel tag, but the play doesn't happen without Naquin staying aggressive on what is often a routine play.

"I'm just going to get the ball to him," Naquin said. "I'm just going to put it somewhere around the bag and let him do his thing. Let him do what Frankie does in the infield. The rest, he keeps that tag on him, bang. It's a big moment, too, you know? That's a lot of fun. It's been a while since I've been able to throw someone out."

Naquin then cracked a smile.

"I've got all this arm strength, I can't even use it," he quipped.

SECOND: A lot of little things added up to one overwhelming night offensively for the Indians in this win.

One such moment came up in the seventh, when Cleveland had Jose Ramirez on first base and Lindor on third. The Indians had already pushed one run across the plate to increase their lead to 7–3. Now, Ramirez and Lindor were about to use their legs to continue to turn what had been a close contest into a blowout.

“I never get surprised with those two kids,” Edwin Encarnacion said. “Ramirez and Lindor, they play aggressive. That’s the way they play. I like it. I love it every time they do a thing like that. It’s good for the team.”

After Emilio Pagan did a pick-off attempt to first base, Ramirez sprinted for second on the next pitch to Encarnacion. Lindor monitored the situation closely and as soon as catcher Jonathan Lucroy popped out of the crouch and fired a throw to second, the shortstop was off and running to home.

“I’m trying to score,” Lindor said. “As soon as I become a runner, I’m trying to score. I knew Josey was going to try to steal second. When they picked off, I knew there was probably a chance of the ball going to second. It was going to be higher than going to third. So, I made sure I had a good lead. As soon as I saw him stand up and see the ball’s rotation, I just took off.”

Ramirez knew when he bolted that there was a chance that Lindor might try to take home on the play.

“I have to give a lot of credit to his instincts,” Ramirez said via team translator Will Clements. “But, if I’m being honest, when I’m stealing second base, I’m thinking that would be a great thing if he’s able to come home, because he’s the kind of guy who plays the game with a lot of energy and a lot of speed and that’s the level he plays at.”

The A’s tried to get the ball back to Lucroy in time, but Lindor used a head-first slide to hit the plate just ahead of the catcher’s tag. The result was a successful double steal and another run in during what became a four-run inning.

“He’s just a pretty special player,” Indians manager Terry Francona said. “Because that’s not just something where we tell him, ‘You’re going.’ But, if he reads it good enough, it’s just pretty special, because that’s not as easy as he made it look.”

Lindor currently leads the Majors with 78 runs scored—11 more than runner-up Mike Trout. If Lindor can score five more runs in the next nine games, he will set the Indians record for most runs in a first half. Kenny Lofton currently holds the record with 82 first-half runs during the 1994 season. There have only been two other instances with at least 78 runs scored by a Tribe player in the first half. Lofton also scored 79 before the break in ’99 and Roberto Alomar crossed the plate 78 times in ’99 as well.

Francona was not as pleased with what he perceived to be a lack of of lane for Lindor to slide into the plate. Per MLB rules, a catcher must provide a lane on such a play before receiving the ball.

Here is an overhead view of how Lucroy was positioned just before the ball arrived:

And here is a closer view at the moment the ball reached Lucroy’s glove. Lindor’s lane was between the catcher’s legs with the left hand, if he went in head-first. That said, that also puts Lindor’s neck and shoulder on a collision course, just so he can get a hand to the dish. A feet-first slide would’ve likely resulted in the shortstop taking out Lucroy’s left leg.

“I think catchers are starting to take advantage of us a little bit with this rule,” Francona said. “Because, I mean, he had no lane and that’s not the way this rule was designed. So, I’d like to see the league maybe help out a little bit.

“Or, you’ve got to tell the runners, ‘Hey, you’ve got to start taking guys out a little bit or slide,’ because that’s not why the rule was put in. You’re putting our runners in a pretty precarious spot.”

THIRD: Let’s not overlook the baserunning prowess of Encarnacion in this one.

“I’m really laughing a lot about it,” Ramirez said after the win.

Hey, Edwin’s running was no laughing matter. He moved up to second on a throwing error by Lucroy on a pick-off attempt to first in the second. He scored from second on a single to right later in the same inning. And in the seventh, he legged out a hustle double, advanced to third on a wild pitch and scored on a sac fly.

Speed don’t slump.

“I think the energy of the game gets a little infectious,” Francona said. “We’re certainly not going to win a ton of games with his legs. That’s not why we have him, but when he does things like that, it really gets the guys riled up and I think it’s contagious. Guys did a really good job running the bases tonight.”

The source of Ramirez’s laughter took place in the second.

On Jason Kipnis’ single to right field, Encarnacion headed around third, where third-base coach Mike Sarbaugh put up the stop sign. It was a little late for that. The slugger ran right on by and wound up scoring on the play.

“I was coming hot to the plate,” Encarnacion said with a big smile. “So, I can’t stop in that situation. I’ve got to keep going. Sorry, Sarby.”

HOME: The Indians lineup can bash homers with the best of them right now (Cleveland ranks fourth in MLB with 119 shots), but Francona loves when his lineup is generating offense with great baserunning.

In Friday’s win, Cleveland went 4-for-4 on steal attempts (Kipnis and Greg Allen joined Lindor and Ramirez in the theft column) to improve its MLB-leading success rate on steals to 83 percent. The Indians rank third in MLB with 66 steals overall and are third in Fangraphs’ team Baserunning metric (8.4).

While everyone focuses on the homers and doubles and other flashy statistics, Ramirez also leads the Majors with a 6.0 BsR right now.

Heading into Friday's action, the Indians were tied for second in the American League with a 32-percent run-scoring rate. Cleveland's 99 bases taken were the fifth-most in MLB. That includes moving up a base on fly balls, passed balls, wild pitches, balks and defensive indifference.

"It's extremely important for this team," Ramirez said of the Tribe's baserunning. "First and foremost, because it puts pressure on the other team. But also, whenever we can take an extra base, that's always going to put us at an advantage and put us in a better position to score and a better position to win."

Tito's pregame minutiae: July 6 by Jordan Bastian

Highlights from Indians manager Terry Francona's Q&A with reporters ahead of Friday night's game against the A's at Progressive Field.

Q: Did Andrew Miller throw off a mound?

TF: "He came in here [Thursday] at noon, threw 31 pitches off the mound. Carl [Willis, pitching coach] was in here with him. Went well. By Carl's account, you can really tell the difference that he's getting a little more sure of himself. For the foreseeable future, he's going to throw some bullpens. We might even get him on the [field] mound just so we can get some information, like Trackman, things like that. I don't think that'll be the next one. That's probably going to take us up to the All-Star break. Then, you've got the break. We'll see. The good news is that he really is making strides. My goodness, if we can get him back in time to get him on a roll, that's the biggest goal."

Q: Is getting Miller back before the All-Star break even an option?

TF: "I don't even think we'd try. To try to do this right, I think we need to let him throw his bullpens and then [make sure he's back to full strength]. Not with us, anyway. And just because of the All-Star break we might even wait [to send him on a rehab assignment] until it's over. We'll see."

Q: Is there an update on Bradley Zimmer?

TF: "He's in Arizona, and he's doing all his shoulder stuff. Not baseball activities yet. Just trying [to regain] range of motion, strengthening. Not hitting or anything."

Q: What will you look for out of Carlos Carrasco tonight?

TF: "I think he's fine. He went and did his rehab start just to make sure we didn't have to look for anything. His stuff was electric. Carl said in his bullpen, my goodness. Same thing happened when he pulled his hamstring a few years back. He came back and he was like rejuvenated. So, that's the hope, that he got a little bit of a break and it'll really help. It's nice to have him back, though. Think back six years ago, he had been relegated to the bullpen. And now, it's a guy who, when I saw him, my eyes lit up. He's one of our mainstays. The guys, not when he's starting, but when he's in the dugout, he's become kind of a voice in the dugout. Guys enjoy him. I do, too. I think we're really excited to have him back."

Q: With Carrasco back, Mike Clevinger gets bumped back a few days...

TF: "We've re-done our rotation a little bit. The best thing I can tell you. Clev's going Monday. And as we go, I'll explain. I can't really do it ahead of time. But as we go, I'll certainly explain it. And as we go, it'll become more obvious as we go. That's the best way I can tell you."

Q: You always raved about what Jason Giambi brought as a veteran leader. Does Rajai Davis fill that same role to a certain extent, maybe with Greg Allen?

TF: "I think it certainly could be. Maybe more one-on-one. Giambi was more like a coach almost. But, for a guy like Greg who wants to be that base-stealing type of outfielder and baserunner, Raj is, I'm sure, great for him. Part of why it works is, when you get to be a veteran, you can talk a good game, but if you can't do it still, it sort of loses some of its [impact]. And Raj, the guys see how hard he works to stay ready. I was kidding with him this trip. I was calling him 'microwave' because he heats up so fast. When you think about it, when you're 37 and your game is speed, that's not easy. Day game after a night game, or going into a game to steal a base. Raj is such a pro about that. Even a couple of days, he went in to pick up Brantley late. Those aren't easy things. And he does it with a smile. I'll look down and he goes, 'I'm fine, I'll do it.' Things that, as a manager, you appreciate."

Q: You used to heat up like that, right?

TF: (Laughing) "Oh yeah. And cool down even faster."

More injury updates...

TF: "[Tyler] Olson is pitching tonight [for Triple-A Columbus]. He's going to go maybe less than 15 pitches and then they'll bring him back tomorrow to throw maybe another 10. So he'll do a back-to-back, but not so much that if we want him we can't go get him. That's the idea behind that. We talked about Miller. Evan Marshall, he resumed playing catch, felt pretty good. There's no timetable or anything, but at least he's starting to play catch. And [Nick] Goody, he remains down. He'll get a medical re-check in two or three days to determine his next step. So, by maybe Sunday we'll have another update on him.

"Lonnie [Chisenhall] is going to be seen by [team physician Dr. Jason Genin] probably before the game. Everything we talked about on the road, it's a fairly significant strain or whatever word they used. So, we know he's going to miss considerable time. I don't think we know yet—I

don't think anybody knows—but hopefully we'll have a little more clarification as he sees Gen or [head team physician Mark Schickendantz] or the proper doctors.”

Q: Is there a plan for Melky Cabrera now that he's back at Triple-A?

TF: “He DH'd last night, had three hits. I think one, we want to let him get his legs on the ground and see. Because by his account, he was working out. If he was, the fact that he was able to get three hits in his first game is pretty phenomenal. He signed there knowing that he wouldn't stay there forever. So, at some point we'll have to make a decision.”

Q: What have you thought of the first half Michael Brantley has turned in so far?

TF: “As long as he stays healthy, he'll play every day. Give him that day off once a month and just wind him up, let him go play. He is really special. Not to be corny or anything, but it's part of what makes our job so much fun is when you get guys like that and we seem to have a pretty good number of guys that are in that category. He cares so much about doing the right thing and as he's grown, has a voice that's able to communicate with other guys on right and wrong. He's a pretty special kid.”

Q: Along those same lines, has Cody Allen become a “voice” within the pitching staff, too?

TF: “I'm not out there for obvious reasons, but I think he has a leadership role, as he should. They're going to do a little thing before the game for Cody tonight [for setting the franchise's all-time saves record] and they asked me to be there and I was really proud. And then Cody came to me and he's like, 'We don't need to do that.' I think that speaks volumes right there. I think his teammates gave him a little toast the other night and, for him, that was plenty. I think that speaks to his [character]. I told him, I talked him into doing it. I said, 'One, it gives me a way to brag about you because people will be asking.' When you see guys come from their rookie year, or just about their rookie year, to all of a sudden he has the Indians' record—we've been in existence a long time—it's hard not to be proud and happy for the guys. We pretty much live with these guys and to see where they were and where they are, it's pretty cool. And then to look and see how in some ways baseball-wise they've changed, but in respect and humility they haven't changed, I love that about it.”

Indians keeping Miller out until after All-Star break

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Andrew Miller won't help the Indians until after the All-Star break.

The excellent late-inning reliever, who pushed Cleveland through the postseason in 2016, has made progress with his right knee injury but will not be activated until later this month. Miller has been sidelined with inflammation in his knee since May 26, and his comeback recently stalled.

But he threw 31 pitches off a mound on Thursday, and the Indians were excited and encouraged by his progress. Pitching coach Carl Willis told manager Terry Francona that Miller looked better.

"Went well," Francona said Friday before the Indians opened a three-game series with Oakland. "By Carl's account, you can really tell the difference that he's getting a little more sure of himself. The good news is that he really is making strides. My goodness, if we can get him back in time to get him on a roll, that's the biggest goal."

Francona said Miller will continue throwing bullpen sessions over the next week. With the All-Star break starting on July 16, Francona said it's likely the Indians will continue to take it slow with the 32-year-old.

"To try to do this right, I think we need to let him throw his bullpens," Francona said, adding it's possible Miller will be sent on a minor-league rehab assignment before he's activated.

The left-hander has been dealing with knee issues since last year and has been limited to just 17 appearances this season. Miller was on the DL twice in 2017 with patella tendinitis.

Cleveland's bullpen isn't the same without Miller, who dominated in the '16 postseason - he struck out 30 in 19 1-3 innings - and helped the Indians get to their first World Series since 1997.

Miller opened this season with 10 scoreless innings before hurting his left hamstring and going on the disabled list. He struggled when he returned and is 1-3 with a 4.40 ERA over 14 1-3 innings.

Miller's health could impact what the Indians decide to do before the July 31 trading deadline.

Francona rules out Miller return before ASG

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- The Indians acquired Andrew Miller in a late-July trade two years ago, and the relief ace was overpowering over the final two months and into October. The circumstances are much different right now, but Cleveland is once again hoping to add Miller to the equation for the second-half stretch run.

Prior to Friday's game against the A's, Indians manager Terry Francona noted that Miller -- currently on the 10-day disabled list due to a right knee issue -- came to Progressive Field on Thursday and completed a 31-pitch bullpen session. Francona said the lefty will continue to throw off the mound, but he ruled out activating Miller before the All-Star break.

"I don't even think we'd try," Francona said. "To try to do this right, I think we need to let him throw his bullpen, and then [make sure he's back to full strength]."

At some point during the current homestand, Francona noted that Miller may throw off the regular mound in order to use TrackMan to gather more detailed information about his mechanics, pitch velocity and movement. When Miller is getting close to being ready for games, the Indians will send him out on a Minor League rehab assignment.

Miller, who has not pitched for the Indians since May 25, has a 4.40 ERA with 23 strikeouts against 10 walks in 14 1/3 innings this season.

"The good news is that [Miller] really is making strides," Francona said. "My goodness, if we can get him back in time to get him on a roll, that's the biggest goal."

Other medical updates

- Outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall (10-day DL, left calf strain) is expected to miss "considerable time," according to Francona. The manager noted that the team will have more details on Chisenhall's status after the outfielder's upcoming consultation with team physician Dr. Jason Genin.
- Center fielder Bradley Zimmer (Minor League DL, right shoulder) has moved his rehab to the Indians' complex in Goodyear, Ariz. Zimmer has not resumed baseball activities, but he continues to work through range-of-motion and strengthening exercises.
- Left-hander Tyler Olson (10-day DL, left lat strain) is scheduled to pitch for Triple-A Columbus in a Minor League rehab assignment on Friday and Saturday.
- Righty Evan Marshall (10-day DL, right elbow) has resumed playing light catch. Fellow reliever Nick Goody (60-day DL, right elbow) will be re-evaluated within the next few days.

Mejia selected to third straight Futures Game

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Indians fans have been clamoring about wanting Francisco Mejia's bat promoted to the Major League lineup. Opposing organizations are undoubtedly asking about the highly touted prospect in trade talks. One thing is clear: Mejia's future seems to be bright.

That was evident again on Friday, when Mejia was named to the World roster for the SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game for the third consecutive year. The catcher will join Minor League right-hander Kieran Lovegrove as Cleveland's representatives at the annual prospect showcase, which will take place at 4 p.m. ET on July 15 at Nationals Park on MLB Network and simulcast on MLB.com.

Being selected to three Futures Games has only been achieved a handful of times since the event's creation in 1999. In Indians history, shortstop Francisco Lindor (2012-14) and outfielder Shin-Soo Choo (2002, '04-05) were named to three rosters. Current Tribe slugger Edwin Encarnacion (2003-05) also accomplished the feat when he was a member of the Reds organization.

Mejia's selection comes on the heels of an otherworldly June at Triple-A Columbus for the catcher, who is rated not only as the Indians' top prospect, but as the No. 1 catching prospect in baseball, per MLB Pipeline. In 24 games last month, the 22-year-old hit .455 with 18 extra-base hits, 23 RBIs, 45 hits and a 1.193 OPS. That included a streak of eight multihit games from June 23-30, during which he hit .528 (19-for-36).

Through 72 games on the season for Columbus, Mejia is hitting .279 with seven home runs, 21 doubles, 31 runs scored and 42 RBIs. Mejia has split his time between catching (38 starts) and the outfield (22 starts), as the Indians have tried to enhance his versatility in an effort to potentially get him to the big leagues faster. At the moment, Cleveland is content with its Major League catching duo of Yan Gomes and Roberto Perez.

"I'm thrilled the kid Mejia is doing what he's doing, because I think we all feel like this kid's going to help us," Indians manager Terry Francona said recently. "[But] you don't want him to come up and sit the bench. That's not developing."

Mejia is from Bani, Dominican Republic, which is the same city that Indians star Jose Ramirez calls home. Lovegrove -- a first time Futures Game selectee -- was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. Infielder Gift Ngoepe is the only player from South Africa to reach the Major Leagues.

Lovegrove, 23, is enjoying a breakout campaign as a reliever and has climbed to Double-A Akron from Class A Advanced Lynchburg already this season. After posting a 5.12 ERA in his first six professional seasons, the right-hander has turned in a 1.38 ERA through 25 appearances this year. Lovegrove (selected in the third round of the 2012 Draft) has 46 strikeouts against 18 walks in 39 innings between Lynchburg and Akron this season.

Carrasco activated, Hoyt acquired

The Indians made a handful of roster moves prior to Friday's game against the A's, bringing Carlos Carrasco back to the Major League rotation and adding an intriguing arm to their depth chart.

Cleveland activated Carrasco from the 10-day disabled list following his bout with a right elbow contusion and designated reliever George Kontos for assignment to clear a spot on the active roster. Removing Kontos from the 40-man roster also vacated a spot for righty James Hoyt, who was acquired from the Astros in exchange for Minor League pitcher Tommy DeJuneas.

Hoyt, who has been assigned to Columbus, has one option year remaining beyond 2018. The right-hander boasts a strikeout rate of 11.8 per nine innings in parts of three seasons (2016-18) with Houston. In 66 career MLB appearances, Hoyt has a 4.40 ERA with 94 strikeouts vs. 24 walks in 71 2/3 innings. He posted a 2.25 ERA with 33 strikeouts and eight walks in 28 innings for Triple-A Fresno this year.

All-Star FAQ: All you need to know on rosters

By Anthony Castrovince MLB.com @castrovince

The votes are in, and so now we wait for the official unveiling of the American League and National League rosters for the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard on Sunday night. In the meantime, a little refresher on how these squads are selected is in order.

As always, fans voted for the starting position players via the 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot. But the selection process for pitcher and reserve spots changed in the Collective Bargaining Agreement that took effect last year. Not only was the connection between the Midsummer Classic and home-field advantage in the World Series eliminated, but roster sizes were reduced. So here's a handy FAQ to guide you through the particulars of the selection process.

How many spots have to be filled?

The NL has 24 spots, while the AL has 23. The difference, of course, is that fans vote in a starting designated hitter for the AL team. There are 32 total roster spots for each league, as opposed to the previous total of 34. There will be 20 position players and 12 pitchers per side, whereas last year's 34-man rosters had a 13-pitcher minimum.

Who picks the reserves and pitchers?

In short, it's a group effort. The player ballot, the Commissioner's Office and the fans all have a say in how the rosters rounded out. The new wrinkle this year is that the NL and AL skippers (in this case, Dave Roberts and AJ Hinch) no longer have a say in the selections, so there won't be accusations of homerism.

How many player ballot selections are there?

The ballots gathered in all 30 clubhouses shortly before the roster announcements account for 16 players in the NL and 17 in the AL -- eight pitchers (five starters and three relievers), as well as one backup for each position (including DH in the AL).

What if the players selected a guy already voted into the starting lineup by the fans?

Next man up. The guy who was second on the player ballot at that particular position is selected as the backup. This doesn't change the number of player ballot selections. The player ballot is basically used as a pecking order to fill the backup slot at each position.

How many MLB selections are there?

The Commissioner's Office is responsible for selecting seven NL players (four pitchers and three position players) and five AL players (four pitchers and one position player). At this stage, MLB must ensure that every club is represented by at least one All-Star selection.

What about the fans?

You guys aren't done yet. You'll fill the 32nd and final spot on each roster via the Final Vote ballot. It will feature five position players as candidates (again, selected by MLB) from each league.

Does every team have to be represented?

Yes, and it is the job of the Commissioner's Office to ensure this stipulation is accounted for with those selections.

It should be noted, however, that if a player is selected to the roster and can't participate for a particular reason, he does not necessarily have to be replaced by a teammate.

How is the starting pitcher for each team determined?

By the league managers. See, they still have some say in this process! The announcement is made the day before the game.

Who picks the replacements for injured players or those who decline to participate?

If an elected starter is going to be unable to play, the reserve who received the most votes on the player ballot at that particular position moves into the starting lineup. The roster replacement is then chosen by the league.

If a player-elected reserve position player must be replaced, the next in line on the player ballot becomes a reserve. Once the top three finishers on the player ballot at a given position are covered, then it becomes a selection by the Commissioner's Office.

Does an injured or otherwise unavailable player have to be replaced by a player from the same position?

Not necessarily. Pitchers will be replaced by pitchers. But on the position-player front, we've seen situations like infielders replacing outfielders and vice versa.

Are starters who pitch the Sunday (July 15) before the game allowed to participate?

Initially, Sunday starters were deemed ineligible. Then, they were allowed to make the decision themselves (albeit limited to a single inning if they opted to play). Now, clubs or players are allowed to make requests for usage accommodation if there are factors (such as a DL stint, recent surgery, innings workload or other reasons) that would affect the pitcher's availability. If an accommodation is granted, then the parties will agree upon the pitcher's status and workload availability.

So how many total All-Stars are we talking about here?

Even with the reduced roster sizes that went into effect last year, we still ended up with 71 total All-Stars (after an average of 79 in the five years prior to the reduction) due to injury and scheduling replacements. So try not to get too worked up about "snubs" when the initial rosters are announced, because things will evolve in the lead-up to the game.

What if a selected player gets traded to a team in the opposite league before the All-Star Game?

This happened to Jeff Samardzija in 2014, when the Cubs dealt him to the A's. In such a scenario, the player is deemed ineligible to participate in the game but is still recognized as an All-Star for the original league. In Samardzija's case, he wore a generic NL jersey and All-Star Game cap for the pregame player introductions.

Meisel's Musings: Terry Francona's milestone, the Indians' window, their HR Derby potential and more

Zack Meisel 1h ago 4

In capital letters behind the batter's box at Kauffman Stadium, a member of the grounds crew had scribbled "VOTE ROYALS" in white chalk, with the team website printed beneath. Those poor, poor souls in the Royals' marketing and communications departments.

Well, someone will have to represent the basement-dweller in the sport's sorriest division.

The Indians' sweep of Ned Yost's wayward, starless club earlier this week knocked the Royals to 25-61. Kansas City fell to 25-62 on Friday. And yet, the Royals are about as close to second-place Minnesota as the Twins are to the first-place Indians.

The Indians hold an 11.5-game lead on the second-place Tigers. No other division leader has an advantage of more than 2.5 games.

The AL Central: The gift that keeps on giving.

Here are this week's thoughts and observations on the Indians.

1. Fortune 500: Terry Francona had no idea until a reporter informed him, but he notched his 500th victory as Indians manager Monday night. He didn't uncork a bottle of champagne or blow out the candles on a cake. Since Francona joined the Indians prior to the 2013 season, only the Dodgers own a better winning percentage.

Francona's managerial track record

Phillies, 1997-2000: 285-363 (.440)

Red Sox, 2004-2011: 744-552 (.574)

Indians, 2013-present: 502-391 (.562)

Francona ranks 23rd all-time in wins among MLB managers. Bruce Bochy and Mike Scioscia are the only active skippers with more.

"I don't ever want to be a rental manager," Francona said. "Part of why I came to Cleveland was I wanted to stay here and see if we could get good. It's fun putting something together and then trying to sustain it. We're not a large market, but in some ways there's some satisfaction that we've put together a pretty good nucleus of a team and we have a chance. That's really all you can ask."

The results haven't yet produced a championship, but it's hard to argue with the winning atmosphere Francona has fostered in Cleveland. The Indians are headed for their sixth consecutive winning season, following a string of three 90-loss campaigns in a span of four years.

For how long can Francona & Co. keep it going?

"After this year, we're really going to get tested," Francona said, "because Cody (Allen) and Andrew (Miller) are free agents. But, so far, we're remaining competitive. And we haven't torn it down to get the high draft pick and all that. That's the hope, is that we can continue to do that."

"The big thing, too, is because we have a rotation (locked up for a few more years), it certainly helps. If there's some point where we're better off getting younger, it might happen. I'm not scared of that. That's part of it."

2. Swing away: Francona gave his blessing to any of his sluggers who want to participate in the Home Run Derby on July 14 in the nation's capital. José Ramírez, Francisco Lindor and Edwin Encarnacion rank second, fifth and 13th, respectively, in the majors in home runs.

"It's for the good of the game and if the guys want to do it," Francona said, "I have no issue with it. If they enjoy it, go get 'em. More power to you."

Ramírez has made clear his stance on participating in the event. When approached by The Athletic about it last month, the third baseman declared: "I've wanted to do it. If they put me there, I would win it."

José Ramírez would like to take on his fellow sluggers in this month's derby. (Gregory Shamus/Getty Images)

3. Lefty loosey, righty tighty: Does 2-for-41 refer to ...

A. The Houston Rockets' success rate from 3-point land in Game 7 of the Western Conference finals against the Golden State Warriors

B. Brandon Guyer's success rate against right-handed pitchers this season

C. The Browns' success rate, in terms of victories, in their last 41 games

OK, so the answer is actually B and C. But enough about the Browns.

The Indians' unsettled outfield situation — and some questionable usage — has forced Guyer into the batter's box against righties more often than is desirable. And the putrid performance against people who throw with that particular arm has cast an ominous shadow over his overall numbers.

Guyer has actually fared pretty well this season when it comes to the reason the Indians pay him. Against lefties, he sports an .837 OPS.

Versus righties, 2018: 38.1 percent of plate appearances, .166 OPS

Versus righties, 2017: 33.3 percent of plate appearances, .577 OPS

Certainly, it's impossible to shield him from all righties. And if the law of averages exists, he sits atop its priority list.

4. Panic! At the ballpark: Imagine being so proficient at your job that the slightest slip-up sends shockwaves through every acquaintance or onlooker. If Corey Kluber surrenders a run or two, or struggles to survive seven innings, observers are quick to question his health. Something must be wrong! Two home runs in one outing? His arm must be throbbing or sprouting an extra elbow.

Kluber insists he's fine, even though he allowed two runs to the last-place Royals on Monday night. OK, and the Cardinals banished him to the showers after only 1 2/3 innings last week. It was understandable to wonder about his well-being after that clunker.

"I don't know if it's fair or not," Kluber said. "The way I look at it is, I wasn't happy with the first inning (on Monday), so I wanted to figure out what went wrong and try to figure out a way to correct it. Sometimes when things feel off, you might not get them to where you want them to be."

5. Grand old time: Yan Gomes smacked the Indians' eighth grand slam of the season Tuesday (and their second in as many nights at Kauffman Stadium). Only the Reds have clubbed more, and the eight matched the Indians' franchise record for a first half.

Most grand slams in a season, Indians history:

14 (2006)

12 (1999)

10 (2000)

9 (1996, 2002)

8 (1979, 2018)

Travis Hafner was responsible for six of those slams in 2006. The Indians failed to hit a grand slam in 2016, for what it's worth.

As for Gomes, don't be stunned if he finds his way onto the AL All-Star team.

"I want everybody in this room to do well, but he is one of the guys I root for the hardest," Cody Allen said. "He's the most deserving of it. He's been through quite a few injuries. He's had a tough road in his career to this point. But nobody works harder. Nobody prepares more. Nobody cares more. He's a guy who we all pull for extremely hard. I'm hoping he finds himself in the All-Star Game. He deserves it. That's something we're all definitely paying attention to."

The AL catching crop isn't overflowing with worthy candidates. There are essentially three catchers with a pulse:

Wilson Ramos: .287/.339/.463 slash line, 12 HR, 123 wRC+, 1.4 WAR

Max Stassi: .252/.340/.476 slash line, 7 HR, 128 wRC+, 1.4 WAR

Yan Gomes: .248/.311/.450 slash line, 10 HR, 104 wRC+, 1.3 WAR

Ramos leads the balloting. He's a shoo-in. Stassi has finally secured regular playing time with Brian McCann sidelined by injury, but he still trails Gomes by 82 plate appearances.

Foul tips

- When Andrew Miller threw 20 pitches Monday in Cleveland, the Indians — without a catcher to receive the lefty's tosses — turned to Nelson Perez, the assistant strength and conditioning coach. Miller tossed about 30 pitches in another bullpen session Thursday. With the team back from its three-city trip, a capable catcher was able to haul in Miller's throws.

- The Indians will have to make a decision on Ryan Merritt in the next week. The southpaw continues to make rehab starts for Class AAA Columbus. Francona said his velocity is down, but added, "I'm not sure he's ever going to light up the radar gun." Merritt has surrendered 34 hits in 21 innings in five starts for Columbus during his latest rehab assignment.

Pitchers can rehab in the minors for up to 30 days, and the Indians will likely exhaust all of that time, as Merritt is out of options. Ultimately, he'll either need to be added to the major-league roster or designated for assignment.

- Roberto Pérez vs. all pitchers this season: .146/.231/.229 slash line

All pitchers vs. all pitchers this season: .111/.143/.143 slash line

(Yes, Pérez adds plenty of defensive value and his rapport with Trevor Bauer must be mentioned when noting the right-hander's improvements this season.)

• Cody Anderson still has not resumed throwing after experiencing a bout of dead arm during his recovery from Tommy John surgery. You can probably cross him off your September bullpen wish list.

Tyler Naquin and Francisco Lindor analyze the throw, tag and 'deke' that erased a potential threat

By T.J. Zuppe 1h ago 2

The long, powerful left-handed swing of Matt Olson sent Tyler Naquin immediately sprinting toward the right-field line.

The 3-2 pitch from Marc Rzepczynski wasn't scalded, but the 78 mph well-placed looper to the left of Naquin was certainly ticketed for stand-up double territory. That said, every ball hit to that part of the park gets a right fielder's mind to drift toward the upcoming play at second base.

Naquin is no different.

"(It's a) guaranteed throw," he said before The Athletic could even finish the question. "It just builds up. The whole time running to it, it just builds up. You've got to stay under control."

The Indians' sixth-inning lead was three, but with just one down in the inning, a runner reaching second could lead to some additional tension. Zach McAllister was warming in the bullpen, but a few more hits could have Terry Francona dipping deeper into his improving relief group long before reaching the final three innings.

That's not the way any manager wants to start a long homestand.

Olson quickly hit the bag at first as Naquin was nearing the slowing ball. The lumbering slugger never slowed his pace, sensing an extra-base hit was within his grasp.

"I didn't know if he thought he had a guaranteed double or not, so I'm just going to come up and be as quick as I can," Naquin said. "He had already rounded the base, so of course he's going to try to go for two."

Typically in this situation, Naquin would go for a spin-throw, opting to pick up the ball and fire toward the infield in mid-spin, a natural motion for a right-handed thrower moving toward his left. But as he approached the ball, he quickly decided to make an on-fly adjustment.

"It was kind of kind of dying on me," Naquin said. "I kind of wasn't able to catch it at a good angle."

At that point, Francisco Lindor had reached second in anticipation of the incoming toss. Knowing Naquin has a terrific arm, he watched the play unfold from the second base bag.

"He saw that he had a chance not spinning and making a good throw to second," Lindor said. "That's exactly what he did. He made the adjustment as the play was happening. That's what good outfielders do."

Olson was just about halfway to second before Naquin successfully reached the ball, grabbed it and shifted his body into throwing position. He didn't just need a strong throw. He needed an accurate one.

"When I got to the baseball, I knew I could put enough on it," Naquin said. "Olson, he's not a blazer. He can run, but he's not a blazer. I knew if I could get it close, one of those infielders could handle the baseball."

The outfielder's strong arm made up for the extra time it took to reach the broken-bat liner. As Olson neared second base, the throw closed the gap. But as it approached Lindor, the middle-infielder didn't offer many visual cues that the toss was nearing the base. He casually stood on the far side of second, waiting until the last possible split-second to snag Naquin's throw.

As a result, Olson seemed to be unaware that the play would be approaching bang-bang territory. The Athletics' first baseman never left his feet to safely procure the double.

"Those infielders always do that junk," Naquin said with a sly smile. "It's awesome. They always sit there and deke them out." Those sorts of misdirections, however, rarely lead to anything of substance.

You will frequently see infielders maintain a tag well beyond the time necessary to apply an effective tag, forcing the runner to request time before brushing the dirt off their uniform. You will occasionally witness a fielder place a phantom tag on a runner when a ball sails into the outfield on an errant throw. You might even see them fake a catch on a stealing attempt when the ball has actually been put in play.

But this time, Lindor's efforts to trick Olson appeared to catch the hitter off guard. In the blink of an eye, the star shortstop flicked his wrist, caught Naquin's toss and slapped the tag on Olson.

"I think it surprised him a little bit because Frankie was just standing there," Naquin said. "(Bang-bang), he barely beat it. But making him rush like that is going to cause other things to happen."

And so it did.

As the glove connected with Olson's right leg, his momentum — and maybe his initial shock — began to carry him off the bag. Just as Lindor lost connection, Olson came completely off of second base. Lindor attempted to reapply his tag, but his second swipe came after the runner successfully reached back to reconnect with the elusive base.

"I tagged him and I tried to be as quick as I could," Lindor said. "But then I just took off the tag, instead of just leaving it on him. That's what they keep on telling us: 'Leave the tag on the guy. Leave the tag on the guy.' I tried to be quick and I forgot about leaving the tag on him. I saw his foot off the bag and I was like, 'Ah, I missed it.'"

Lindor's reaction told the same story.

After second base umpire Eric Cooper signaled safe, the shortstop yelled in agony and pumped his arms in despair and disappointment.

"You could tell by his reaction that maybe he missed his chance," Francona said.

Or did he?

After a slow-motion shot on replay revealed that Lindor had possibly left his first tag on long enough to catch Olson slightly off the bag, the Indians asked for a challenge, sending the umpiring crew to the headsets.

The stadium soon filled with loud cheers when a key angle revealed the truth. Still, Lindor lamented even needing the additional help.

"I knew I had a chance of getting him," he said, "but it was just, it would make it a lot easier on the umpire, it would make it a lot easier on me, a lot easier on everybody, if I just kept the tag on him when he's off the bag."

Lindor eagerly focused his eyes toward the crowd around home plate. He peered in at the huddle, nervously chomping on his gum as he awaited an answer. In the dugout, Francona spun his Dubble Bubble in his fingers while waiting for a ruling, preparing the next wad as he continued to wear out the concoction already present behind his lips.

Within moments, the replay umpires in New York concurred with the crowd's reaction. The call was overturned, and Lindor pumped his right fist and slapped his glove above his head, looking out toward Naquin in right.

The duo had successfully turned what appeared to be an easy double into the inning's second out. Francona would immediately emerge to replace Rzepczynski, the bullpen would work around a solo run the next inning, and the offense exploded for a four-spot in the bottom of the seventh to successfully put the game out of reach.

Given Friday's score would eventually resemble a blowout, it might be easy to lose sight of the Naquin-Lindor play. Maybe the Indians even win comfortably without the strong throw and surprising tag. But if Olson reaches second with incident, perhaps he changes the course of the sixth inning. Maybe the final three innings of the weekend opener might've had a different conclusion.

Regardless, Naquin was pleased to team up with the superstar infielder for his first outfield assist since his rookie campaign of 2016. And while Lindor will earn the bulk of the credit for his strong deke and quick hands, Naquin also played a vital role in erasing the scoring threat.

"That's a lot of fun," he said with a hint of relief. "It's been a while since I've been able to throw someone out. I've got all this arm strength, I can't even use it, yet."

Of course, it helps when your target is, as Naquin indicated, "probably the best shortstop in the game."

"I'm just going to get the ball to him," Naquin added. "I'm just going to put it somewhere around the bag and let him do his thing. Let him do what Frankie does in the infield. The rest, he keeps that tag on him, bang. It's a big moment, you know?"

Columbus Clippers pitcher Ryan Merritt continues rehab: Cleveland Indians Minors (video)

By Branson Wright, The Plain Dealer

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Ryan Merritt has yet to reach superstar status, but that did not stop Cleveland Indians fans from expressing their lasting affection for him.

It was Merritt who pitched a two-hit Game 5 in the ALCS to propel the Indians into the World Series two years ago. The fans were so pleased that they found the wedding registry of Merritt and his then fiancée and expressed their gratitude by buying everything on it.

The gesture remains unbelievable for Merritt and his wife Sarah nearly two years later. The couple were married in January 2017.

"To this day it's still overwhelming," Merritt said. "It doesn't seem all real, but when we get back home and see all of those gifts, it lets us know that it was real. And we're still appreciative of what the fans did."

The fans are a part of Merritt's current motivation to get back on the field. After getting shut down in his first rehab assignment (May 4 to May 7), Merritt was transferred to the 60-day DL before getting sent on a second assignment on June 13. He began his second stint on a more restricted pitch count, getting pulled after three scoreless innings at Louisville on June 14.

Merritt remains positive - "because I know I have a team to cheer on and I don't want to bring a negative vibe to them," he said. "The quickest way to get healthy is to get your work done daily and don't think about the negatives and move forward. It can beat you up at times, but there's a bright light at the end."

Merritt, who suffered shoulder soreness, gives kudos to the training staff.

"I'm getting stronger and that's because the staff is doing an awesome job," he said. "I've made three rehab starts. I've made it to five innings (80 pitches) and that's a huge step. My goal is to have the strongest second half [of the season] that I can have."

Yandy Diaz drew his league-leading 56th walk earlier this week (13 more than 2nd place) and went 1-for-3 Wednesday night to maintain his .297 batting average. Diaz has not been above .300 since April 17 and has spent the last 16 games between .291 and 298.

For the year, Diaz has reached base safely more than any other Clippers player (128), but has the second-worst runs scored rate at 26 percent.

Runs scored

Adam Rosales has scored (13) or driven in a run (19) in each of his last 12 games. Since June 7, he's been nearly as hot as Francisco Mejia, hitting .351/.443/.842 with 8 HR and 23 RBI through 18 games.

He homered in three straight games from June 20-23 and put one out in each of three from June 29-July 2, including a two-homer game vs. Indy on June 29 and a pinch-hit homer on July 1 vs. Indy.

Cleveland Indians' baserunning is infectious, contagious and effective against Oakland A's

By Joe Noga, cleveland.comjnova@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Edwin Encarnacion saw the stop sign that Cleveland Indians third base coach Mike Sarbaugh threw in the air following Jason Kipnis' one-out base hit to right field in the second inning, but he decided to keep running anyway.

"I was coming hot toward the plate, so I couldn't stop in that situation," Encarnacion said with a grin after the Tribe's 10-4 win against Oakland at Progressive Field. "I had to keep going. Sorry, Sarby."

Normally when a player ignores a sign like that it might draw a negative reaction from the manager, but Terry Francona said when a veteran like Encarnacion makes a play like that, it can light a spark in the dugout.

"I think the energy of the game gets a little infectious," Francona said. "We're certainly not going to win a ton of games with (Encarnacion's) legs, that's not why we have him, but when he does things like that it really gets the guys riled up and I think it's contagious."

Encarnacion added to his good night on the bases in the seventh when he advanced to third on a wild pitch by A's reliever Emilio Pagan and scored on Yonder Alonso's RBI sacrifice fly.

On a night that saw the Indians steal four bases, including their second steal of home this season when Francisco Lindor swiped the plate on the back end of a double-steal, Encarnacion's base running was a highlight that his teammates could rally behind.

Jose Ramirez said baserunning is extremely important for this team.

"First and foremost because it puts pressure on the other team," Ramirez said through interpreter Will Clements. "But also whenever we can take an extra base, that's always going to put us at an advantage and put us in a better position to score and a better position to win."

Ramirez initiated Lindor's steal of home by taking off for second with one out and Encarnacion batting in the seventh. When Oakland's Jonathan Lucroy threw to second base, Lindor broke for home and dove in safely head-first around the catcher's left leg in front of the plate.

"As soon as I become a runner, I'm trying to score," Lindor said. "I knew Josey was going to try to steal second. So, I made sure I had a good lead. As soon as I saw him stand up and see the ball's rotation, I just took off."

Afterward, it was Lucroy's positioning at the plate that had Francona fired up. According to MLB rules, the catcher is supposed to give the baserunner a lane to slide into the plate, rather than risk injury to both players by blocking it. But replay shows Lucroy's left leg was firmly planted in Lindor's path.

"I think catchers are starting to take advantage of us a little bit with this rule," Francona said. "(Lindor) had no lane and that's not the way this rule was designed. So I'd like to see the league maybe help out a little bit or you gotta tell the runners, 'Hey, you gotta start taking guys out a little bit or slide' because that's not why the rule was put in. You're putting our runners in a pretty precarious spot."

Cleveland Indians: What to do with the outfield? -- Terry Pluto

By Terry Pluto, ThePlainDealerterrypluto2003@yahoo.com

ABOUT TREVOR BAUER

I knew Trevor Bauer was having a good year, then I looked closer.

Bauer is having a sensational season. When the Tribe's right-hander said he "should be an All-Star," he's right.

The surface stats have Bauer with an 8-6 record and a 2.45 ERA.

That 2.45 ERA is fifth lowest among American League starters. That is reason enough to take his case for being an All-Star very seriously.

But there's so much more, and it points to what I've always appreciated about Bauer.

Let's start with the fact the man loves to pitch.

Early in his career, he'd say things like, "I'm at war with pitch counts."

After those words were uttered, I'm sure Bob Feller was smiling down from the baseball heavens.

Bauer's determination and physical stamina mean so much to the Tribe:

1. Bauer was leading all American League starters with 121-1/3 innings pitched heading into the weekend. With the Tribe's bullpen issues, that's been a tremendous relief for manager Terry Francona.
2. Bauer has thrown an American League-high 1,967 pitches. Next is Gerrit Cole (1,869).
3. Pitch counts can rise when a starter is walking a lot of hitters. In 2015, Bauer led the American League in walks.
4. Bauer's control has dramatically improved. He is walking only 2.7 batters per nine innings, compared to 4.1 in 2015.
5. Bauer is throwing a strike on the first pitch to batters 64 percent of the time -- that's a career best.
6. His pitch count has risen because he's throwing more innings and striking out more hitters. He's third in the American League with 156 strikeouts.
7. He's never been on the disabled list. He's never missed a start except in the 2016 playoffs when he cut his finger fixing one of his drones.

Bauer has always been driven to be a great pitcher. It's why he continually looks at different training techniques and pitching strategies. A big change for him began in the middle of last season when he developed a slider and threw it more often.

You can go back to his days at UCLA. In his final season with the Bruins, he was 13-2 with a 1.25 ERA and completed 10-of-16 starts.

One of the best trades made by president Chris Antonetti and general manager Mike Chernoff was acquiring Bauer from Arizona before the 2013 season -- and then being patient with him.

At the age of 27, Bauer is showing the best is yet to come. He's under team control through the 2020 season.

ABOUT THE OUTFIELD

1. With Lonnie Chisenhall (calf) joining Bradley Zimmer (shoulder) on the disabled list with injuries, the Indians are looking at different options in the outfield.
2. Start with this: Who'd have guessed that Michael Brantley would be the Tribe outfielder to play in the most games this season as the All-Star break approaches. But that's the case.
3. Because of various injuries, Brantley played only 101 games in the last two seasons. He also had three surgeries. But heading into the weekend, Brantley has played 74 games, batting .306 (.481 OPS) with 11 HR, 48 RBI. He's had a terrific season.
4. When the Indians decided to taking catching prospect Francisco Mejia and play him in the outfield some of time this season, he played mostly left field for the Class AAA Columbus Clippers. They were preparing him in case Brantley had some injury issues.
5. This season, Mejia has started 22 games in left field -- but only three in right field. With Chisenhall hurt and probably out for a while with his chronic calf problems, the Indians will need help in right field. They will work with Mejia at that spot.
6. On June 1, Mejia was batting .190. Since then, he's hitting .417. The 22-year-old switch-hitter is batting .279 (.761 OPS) with 7 HR and 42 RBI for the season. It's not hard to imagine Mejia joining the Tribe at some point.
7. The Indians have re-signed Melky Cabrera, and he'll play in Columbus. The 33-year-old switch-hitter could be in Cleveland soon. He played 17 games for the Tribe earlier in the season, batting .207 (.536 OPS) with zero homers and 11 RBI. Cabrera is a career .285 hitter (.751 OPS). Terry Francona likes him and I can see Cabrera joining the Tribe soon.
8. If the Indians make a move in the outfield, it will be Cabrera before Mejia coming to Cleveland.
9. Right fielder Brandon Guyer has been playing some of the time and he's having a miserable season. Guyer is not terrible vs. lefties (.241, .837 OPS). But he's been helpless against righties (2-for-41). Cabrera could help in that role. As of now, the Indians have Guyer and Rajai Davis for right field with Chisenhall out.
10. Tyler Naquin is platooning with Davis in center field. The lefty Naquin is 8-for-46 (.174) since coming off the disabled list in June. He was batting .333 (25-for-75) when he was injured.
11. Brantley and Chisenhall are free agents at the end of the season. The Indians really need to figure out their outfield now and for the next few years. Zimmer's injury was a setback. They sent him to Columbus to find his swing, and he hurt his shoulder. He probably will be out at least a few more weeks.
12. The Indians don't know when Zimmer or Chisenhall will be healthy. The front office made a wise move picking up the \$12 million option for Brantley in 2018. It was a bit of gamble because of his injury history, but the Indians believed Brantley could come back strong.

13. I wanted them to re-sign Jay Bruce. He signed a 3-year, \$39 million deal with the Mets. Bruce has had some hip problems. He's batting only .212 (.613 OPS) with 3 HR and 17 RBI in 62 games. This is after he batted .254 (.832 OPS) with 36 HR and 101 RBI last season.

14. The Indians are looking for an outfielder in the trade market. If the outfield continues to have problems with injuries, etc., the Indians could even put Jason Kipnis out there. That's not in the plans right now. But they did it last season.

15. So right now, the Indians have Brantley in left. They have Naquin/Davis in center. They have Guyer/Davis in right. They have Greg Allen, who can play some center. But it adds up to holes in the outfield that need to be filled.

ABOUT THE INDIANS

1. The Indians will have to soon make a decision about Ryan Merritt. He is on an injury rehabilitation assignment in Columbus, where he has a 1-1 record and 5.68 ERA. He's allowed 46 hits and 6 HR in 26 innings. His velocity is in the middle 80s. He was bothered by a knee problem this spring. Then his shoulder bothered him. Merritt is not throwing well.

2. The Indians have to either bring Merritt to Cleveland (not likely) or put him on waivers if they want to keep him in the minors. Any team can claim Merritt if he goes on waivers. He's out of minor league options. My guess is they'll put him on waivers and hope he isn't claimed. He's not ready to help the big league team right now.

3. After Carlos Santana signed a 3-year, \$60 million contract with Philadelphia, the Indians signed Yonder Alonso (\$16 million for two years) to play first base. He's been solid, batting .257 (.768 OPS) with 12 HR and 47 RBI. He's .304 with runners in scoring position.

4. Santana is batting .223 (.795 OPS) with 14 HR and 48 RBI for the Phillies.

5. Exploratory surgery on Danny Salazar's right throwing shoulder showed no major damage. There was "a cleanout" of loose material, but nothing that indicated he had a significant arm problem. Salazar is out for the rest of the season.

6. Salazar made the 2016 All-Star team. Since then, he's 6-9 with a 5.03 ERA. He thrown only 136 innings, none this season for the Tribe.

7. He's not considered a big league prospect, but the Indians signed 34-year-old Mitch Talbot to eat up some innings at Columbus. In seven starts, he's 2-2 with a 2.57 ERA. He pitched with the Tribe in 2010-11 (12-19, 5.30). That was his last time in the majors. Since then, he's pitched in Korea, Taiwan, Mexico and some Independent Leagues.

RubberDucks loaded with All-Stars for 2018: Cleveland Indians Minors

By Elton Alexander, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Akron RubberDucks will be well represented on the Eastern League All-Star team, with five players picked to play in the July 11 game in Trenton, New Jersey. Only one of the Akron All-Stars is a pitcher, Jake Paulson.

The rest are position players: outfielders Andrew Calica and Connor Marabell, third baseman Joe Sever and shortstop Willi Castro will play for the Western Division All-Stars. Marabell was also picked to be in the Home Run Derby.

Interestingly, of the five players selected, none was a high draft pick for the Indians. The best of the bunch was Calica, an 11th round pick in 2016 out of Cal-Santa Barbara. Marabell, Sever and Paulson were all selected in the 21st round or later. Paulson, in fact, was signed as a free agent prior to the season. Castro was an undrafted free agent.

Ring the bell: To back up his all-star selection, Marabell has been on a roll the past two weeks. Over the last 10 games he is hitting .395 (17-for-43) with eight RBI, giving him 48 RBI on the season to tie for the team lead in that category. He has a hit in 10 straight games and 13 out of the last 14 overall for the Ducks. For the season he is hitting .295 with eight home runs.

The young gun: Castro continues to show why he is on the Indians' 40-man roster with his all-star selection. The 21-year-old is hitting a creditable .256 on the season, his first in AA. And his bat shows signs of better things ahead.

In his last 10 games he has had three multi-hit performances, including 3-for-5 with a homer and three RBI on the Fourth of July. The native of Puerto Rico also has an impressive .971 fielding percentage at shortstop on the season.

Nolan Jones continues solid season for Lake County Captains: Cleveland Indians Minors

By Elton Alexander, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Nolan Jones, drafted second in 2016, continues to blossom into a quality player for the Lake County Captains. He has hit .293 over his last 10 games, with four of them being multi-hit games.

The 6-4, 185-pound third baseman has lifted his average to .269 on the season, and his 10 homers have been key in the Captains leading the Midwest League in home runs with 71. His two-run blast Thursday led to a victory for the Captains.

Mound Town: The Captains pitching staff has been very strong of late. Since the all-star break, and going into the weekend, the Captains starters have strung together eight quality performances.

In the first seven of those starts Lake County hurlers posted a 1.22 ERA in 44 combined innings pitched. That included 38 strikeouts and seven walks. In the eighth start, Thursday, Francisco Perez allowed four runs on nine hits in 5.2 innings but still picked up the victory.

One pitcher who has been very strong in that run has been Juan Hillman, drafted second in 2015. He is 2-0 in his last three starts, lasting at least 5.0 innings in each. In that stretch he has allowed just three earned runs and 10 hits with a whopping 18 strikeouts, including eight in a no-decision outing against Fort Worth and six in his latest outing, a victory over Dayton.

On the season, the 21-year-old Hillman stands at 2-8 with a 5.11 ERA, but that ERA has dropped considerably since May 20, when it stood at 6.75. This is the second straight season for the 6-2, 185-pound Hillman at Lake County, and that experience is starting to show.

Just arrived: The Indians shipped the Captains a 2018 draft pick to add even more to the pitching staff. RHP Nick Sandlin, drafted second in 2018 from Southern Mississippi, joins a former college teammate, LHP Kirk McCarty, on the Captains roster. He is the first 2018 draft pick so far to land with the Captains.

Lynchburg Hillcats continue streak: Cleveland Indians Minors

By Branson Wright, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The streaking Lynchburg Hillcats have won five straight games, and the starting pitching has been the key to the consecutive wins.

Pitchers Sam Hentges, Tanner Tully, Eli Morgan, Zach Plesac, and Justin Garza all picked up victories. The pitchers combined for 33 innings and allowed just eight earned runs, good for a 2.18 ERA.

Tully picked up his first win on Sunday since May 12 against Salem.

Hentges (5-5) is 12th in the Carolina League with a 3.38 ERA, and is tied for seventh with 72 strikeouts.

Emmanuel Tapia is off to a hot start in July. Tapia's 5-for-10 (.500) at the plate. Tapia is also coming off a pair of tough months where he batted .148 in June and .149 in May, combining for 48 strikeouts in 27 games.

Tapia, a native of the Dominican Republic, signed with the Tribe as a non-drafted free agent in 2013.

Home run trot

Jodd Carter has continued his power surge. Carter, drafted by the Tribe out of high school in the 2014 draft, hit two home runs Tuesday night, and has now hit five home runs over his last 11 games. He's the team leader with eight. Carter is on pace to set career highs in every offensive category this season.

Chu power

Catcher Li-Jen Chu had a multi-homer game in last Sunday's win against Frederick. That's the second time he's homered twice in a game in his career (last May with Single-A Lake County). Chu has six multi-hit games over his last 13 games, and has four homers and 12 RBI over that span.

Indians 10, A's 4: 12 Walk-Off Thoughts on a double-steal, a blown stop sign and Cookie's return

By Ryan Lewis

Here are 12 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 10-4 win over the Oakland A's Friday night.

1. The top four in the Indians' lineup at the plate bludgeoned the A's pitching staff, but the play of the night was all on the bases. With Jose Ramirez on first base and Francisco Lindor on third, Ramirez took off for second base. As the throw left catcher Jonathan Lucroy's hand, Lindor took off for home and beat the throw back to the plate, a successful double-steal and a robbery of home.
2. Said Lindor: "I'm trying to score. I'm trying to score. As soon as I become a runner, I'm trying to score. I knew Josey was going to try to steal second. When they picked off, I knew there was probably a chance of the ball going to second, it was going to be higher than going to third. So, I made sure I had a good lead. As soon as I saw him stand up and see the ball's rotation, I just took off."
3. The play hinged on Lindor's instincts. Ramirez took off for second with that goal alone in mind, only the thought that if Lindor has a chance, then it's all for the better. It's all on Lindor to ensure he has a large enough secondary lead, to read the throw and then either take off or stay put.
4. Said Ramirez: "I really don't focus on that in the moment when it's happening. I have to give a lot of credit to his instincts because those are his instincts that he's able to take that base. But if I'm being honest, when I'm stealing second base, I'm thinking that would be a great thing if he's able to come home because he's the kind of guy who plays the game with a lot of energy and a lot of speed and that's the level he plays at."
5. Indians manager Terry Francona also wasn't thrilled that Lucroy had the plate partially blocked, forcing Lindor to slide head-first essentially into his leg guard.
6. Said Francona: "He's just a pretty special player because that's not just something where we tell him, 'You're going.' But if he reads it good enough, it's just pretty special because that's not as easy as he made it look and I think catchers are starting to take advantage of us a little bit with this rule. Because I mean he had no lane and that's not the way this rule was designed. So I'd like to see the league maybe help out a little bit or you gotta tell the runners, 'Hey, you gotta start taking guys out a little bit or slide' because that's not why the rule was put in. You're putting our runners in a pretty precarious spot."
7. The Indians had a fortunate piece of base running earlier in the game, but, it likely wasn't how they drew it up. With Edwin Encarnacion on second base, Jason Kipnis ripped a ball to right field. Encarnacion rounded third and blew through Mike Sarbaugh's stop sign. Encarnacion was safe, making it more of a funny moment than a missed sign. But, really, it was about a player who more-so resembles a tank than a Corvette just having too much steam to slow down.
8. Said Encarnacion with a smile: "I was coming hot to the plate, and I can't stop in that situation, so I have to keep going. Sorry, Sarbie."
9. The top four hitters in the Indians' lineup combined to go 8-for-13 with seven RBI and eight runs scored. All four collected two hits. Ramirez and Encarnacion drove in three. Lindor scored, giving him 78 this season, which leads the majors. And according to STATS LLC, Lindor on Fri-

day night became the first shortstop in major-league history to score at least 75 runs and collect at least 50 extra-base hits prior to the All-Star break.

10. Friday night marked the return of Carlos Carrasco, who gave up two prodigious home runs but finished with a respectable line of three earned runs on seven hits and seven strikeouts in 5 1/3 innings. His issue was with his fastball command, which was never quite right. He pitched through it, lasting long enough to hand it over to the bullpen—before the four-run seventh for the Indians put the game out of reach.

11. Said Carrasco: “The only thing that felt different today was just fastball command. I threw more of my curveball, then slider, changeup, work-ing more. I just tried commanding my fastball the whole game, but I couldn’t. I don’t really feel I hit one spot with the fastball, but at the end, we won, that’s what we need.”

12. Added Francona: “Yeah, I was going to say, early on a couple fastballs got hit but he kept them in check and he really found his breaking ball. There were a couple innings there where he threw six, seven, eight in a row but they were so good and then our offense. The first couple of innings, it didn’t look like it with them, but it was kind of hard to see, especially spin or anything off-speed. But then when we got around the second time through, guys had a little better ... you could see the ball and we did a good job offensively.”

Indians 10, Athletics 4: Top of lineup helps Carlos Carrasco get win in return from disabled list

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The top of the Indians’ lineup is filled with All-Star candidates, and they did well to bolster their respective cases in a 10-4 win over the Oakland Athletics in front of a sellout crowd of 34,633 at Progressive Field on Friday night.

Francisco Lindor, Michael Brantley and Jose Ramirez, locked into the 1-2-3 spots in the Indians’ lineup, all have built All-Star resumes this season. Lindor and Ramirez should surely be selected, and Brantley is on the bubble. Along with Edwin Encarnacion, in the cleanup spot, those four did most of the damage Friday night.

They combined to go 7-for-13 with seven RBI and eight runs scored, bludgeoning the Athletics’ pitching staff.

Lindor finished 2-for-3 with a walk and three runs scored, the last of which came on a double steal with Ramirez when the two were on the corners in the seventh inning. Brantley went 2-for-4 with two doubles, an RBI and three runs scored. Ramirez added a 2-for-4 night with three RBI and two runs scored. Encarnacion went 2-for-2 with three RBI, a run scored and two sacrifice flies.

Jason Kipnis also singled home a run in the second inning and Yonder Alonso capped the scoring with a sacrifice fly in the seventh.

Friday’s game also featured the return of Carlos Carrasco, who had been on the 10-day disabled list since June 17 after he was hit on his throw-ing elbow by a line drive. Carrasco’s outing got off to a rough start, but he went on to put together a respective start, allowing three runs on seven hits in 5½ innings. He struck out seven.

It didn’t look great for Carrasco in the beginning. The leadoff hitter for the A’s, Dustin Fowler, belted a mammoth 467-foot home run to right field to put the A’s on top 1-0. Matt Olson then led off the second inning with a home run of his own, this one 438 feet to center field.

Before the Indians’ four-run seventh inning that put the game away, the A’s challenged the lead in the top half of the inning. With the Indians lead-ing 6-3 and Zach McAllister on the mound, Matt Chapman and Marcus Semien both singled to open the inning. With two outs and Neil Ramirez on the mound, Mark Canha grounded an RBI double down the left-field line to put the tying run in scoring position.

Jed Lowrie then walked to load the bases, setting up the biggest matchup of the night between Ramirez and A’s slugger Khris Davis. Ramirez eventually got the better of the battle, striking Davis out swinging and pounding his glove as he walked off the mound. After escaping the inning with the lead, the Indians’ lineup left no doubt.

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Indians notebook: Reliever Andrew Miller ‘making strides’ but won’t return by the All-Star break

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The Indians have been pleased with Andrew Miller’s progress as he rehabs from right knee inflammation, but he won’t be pushed much before the All-Star break, which begins July 16.

Miller was placed on the 10-day disabled list May 26, and the Indians have been cautious with their valuable lefty ever since.

“I don’t even think we’d try [to have him return before the All-Star break],” Indians manager Terry Francona said. “To try to do this right, I think we need to let him throw his bullpens ... And just because of the All-Star break, we might even wait until it’s over. We’ll see.”

Miller hit the disabled list on April 26 with a strained left hamstring and returned May 11, but he wasn’t his normal self. He was hit hard for seven earned runs on seven hits in 4½ innings before again being placed on the disabled list, this time with a knee injury that might never have fully healed from last season.

With the American League Central Division well in hand and a relief pitcher’s most valuable contributions able to come in October, the goal is to be cautious, mainly wanting to ensure that Miller is ready to go and has had enough time to regain his form by the time the postseason rolls around.

“The good news is that he really is making strides,” Francona said. “My goodness, if we can get him back in time to get him on a roll, that’s the biggest goal.”

Record holder

Cody Allen on Wednesday night set the franchise record with his 140th save, passing Bob Wickman on the Indians’ all-time list.

Before Friday night’s game against the Oakland Athletics, the Indians put on a little tribute in Allen’s honor. But as he has previously indicated when speaking about his saves totals, he’s viewed it as a team contribution as much as anything else. Even to the point that he didn’t think any special recognition was necessary.

“Cody came to me and he’s like, ‘We don’t need to do that,’” Francona said. “I think that speaks volumes right there. I think his teammates gave him a little toast the other night and for him, that was plenty. I think that speaks to his — I told him, I talked him into doing it. I said, ‘One, it gives me a way to brag about you because people will be asking.’ When you see guys come from their rookie year or just about their rookie year to all of a sudden he has the Indians record. We’ve been in existence a long time. It’s hard not to be proud and happy for the guys.”

Return of Carrasco

The Indians activated starting pitcher Carlos Carrasco off the 10-day disabled list to start Friday night. He had been sidelined since June 16 with a right elbow contusion after he was hit by a line drive by Minnesota Twins batter Joe Mauer.

“[Carrasco] went and did his rehab start just to make sure we didn’t have to look for anything. His stuff was electric,” Francona said. “[Pitching coach Carl Willis] said in his bullpen, ‘My goodness.’ Same thing happened when he pulled his hamstring a few years back. Came back and he was like, rejuvenated. So, that’s the hope, that he got a little bit of a break and it’ll really help.”

Right-hander George Kontos was designated for assignment to make room for Carrasco on the 25-man roster. The Indians will also have to shuffle their rotation bit. Mike Clevinger will be pushed back to Monday's game, with Carrasco, Corey Kluber and Shane Bieber slated to throw the weekend series against the A's. Beyond that, Francona said the club will announce it as they go.

Cleveland Indians activate Carlos Carrasco from DL, designate George Kontos for assignment

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Cleveland Indians pitcher Carlos Carrasco has been activated from the 10-day disabled list in order to start Friday's game against the Oakland Athletics at Progressive Field.

In a related move, the club designated right-handed reliever George Kontos for assignment to make room on the 25-man roster.

The club also announced the acquisition of minor-league reliever James Hoyt in a trade with Houston. Cleveland sent righty Tommy DeJoneas to the Astros in exchange for Hoyt, who has spent most of the season at Class-AAA Fresno.

Carrasco was placed on the DL June 17 after taking a line drive to the right elbow off the bat of Minnesota's Joe Mauer.

He threw 58 pitches (38 strikes) in a rehab start for Class-AA Akron on Saturday and threw a bullpen session under the watchful eye of pitching coach Carl Willis earlier this week.

"His stuff was electric," manager Terry Francona said.

The Indians are hoping Carrasco's return produces similar results to his comeback from a 2016 hamstring injury that saw him miss the month of May, but return to post a 12-9 record with a 3.47 ERA in his final 21 starts before a season-ending hand injury in mid September.

"That's the hope, that he got a little bit of a break and it'll really help," Francona said. "He came back and he was like, rejuvenated."

Carrasco is 8-5 with a 4.24 earned run average in 91 1/3 innings. He has recorded 96 strikeouts and allowed 11 home runs in 15 starts.

Francona said it's nice to have Carrasco back with the team.

"Think back six years ago, he had been relegated to the bullpen, and now ... he's one of our mainstays," Francona said. "He's become kind of a voice in the dugout. The guys enjoy him. I do, too. We're really excited to have him back."

Kontos was signed to a minor-league deal June 3 and added to the major-league roster June 19. He appeared in six games for the Indians, post-ing a 3.38 ERA with four strikeouts and two walks in 5 1/3 innings.

Hoyt collected five saves and a 2.25 ERA in 25 relief appearances for Fresno. In 28 innings he allowed 19 hits and seven earned runs with 33 strikeouts and eight walks with an opponent batting average of .192.

Hoyt has been assigned to the Class-AAA Columbus roster. He has one option remaining beyond 2018.

DeJoneas, a 26th-round draft pick in 2017 out of North Carolina State, spent the season at Class-A Lake County where he was 2-2 with a 3.38 ERA.

Jose Ramirez, Edwin Encarnacion lead Cleveland Indians past Oakland Athletics, 10-4

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

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Carlos Carrasco returned to the mound and the Cleveland Indians offense got back in the groove at home Friday with a 10-4 victory against the Oakland Athletics at Progressive Field.

The top four hitters in the Tribe's lineup went 8-for-13 with four doubles and seven RBI, scoring eight runs to lead the way for Cleveland.

Jose Ramirez belted a two-run double off the wall in right field in the third inning that scored Francisco Lindor and Michael Brantley and gave the Indians a 3-2 lead they never surrendered.

Cleveland's third baseman, who leads American League vote-getters on the All-Star ballot at the hot corner, added an RBI single in the seventh as the Tribe scored four times off A's reliever Emilio Pagan to seal the win.

With nine games remaining before the All-Star break, Ramirez and Lindor became the first pair of Indians teammates to each have 50 extra-base hits in the first half of the season.

Athletics pitcher Paul Blackburn stymied Cleveland hitters when he faced them June 29 in Oakland, striking out five and allowing just three hits in 6 1/3 innings as the Athletics picked up the win. But the second-year righty could not keep a lid on the Tribe's offense this time around.

Lindor, who tied Boston's J.D. Martinez and Seattle's Jean Segura with his American League-leading 36th multi-hit game, said Friday's success was mostly about being patient and getting a good pitch to hit.

"Last time, we had to take our hats off to him," Lindor said. "This time, we made the adjustments."

Jason Kipnis got the Indians on the board in the bottom of the second with an RBI single to right that scored Edwin Encarnacion. Encarnacion scored despite running through a stop sign from third base coach Mike Sarbaugh.

Manager Terry Francona said Encarnacion gets caught up in the "energy of the game" and it spreads to his teammates, who were aggressive on the bases throughout the night.

"We're certainly not going to win a ton of games with his legs," Francona said. "That's not why we have him, but when he does things like that it really gets the guys riled up and I think it's contagious."

Brantley chased Blackburn (2-3, 7.16) from the game with an RBI double in the bottom of the fifth. He later scored on Encarnacion's second RBI sacrifice fly of the game to put the Tribe ahead 6-3.

Carrasco (9-5, 4.28) returned to the mound after missing 16 games with a bruised right elbow and pitched 5 1/3 innings. He allowed three runs on seven hits and struck out seven.

Home runs by Oakland's Dustin Fowler in the first and Matt Olson in the second put the Indians in a 2-0 hole, but Carrasco settled in, striking out the side in the third inning before allowing a run on a soft liner by Fowler in the fifth.

Francona said Carrasco was able to hang in the game because his curveball was very effective.

"He kept them in check and he really found his breaking ball," Francona said. "There were a couple innings there where he threw six, seven, eight in a row but they were so good."

Six Indians relievers finished things off for Carrasco, allowing a run on three hits in 3 2/3 innings. Neil Ramirez gave up an RBI double to Oakland's Mark Canha in the seventh, but came back to strike out Chris Davis with the bases loaded to end a scoring threat.

Special K

Carrasco's seven strikeouts bring his career total to 999. He needs one more in order to become the 12th player in Indians history and the 17th active pitcher in the major leagues with 1,000 punchouts.

Stealing home

Lindor stole home in the seventh inning on the back end of a double-steal with Ramirez. It was the second steal of home this season for the Indians. Greg Allen swiped home against Minnesota on June 2 as part of a double-steal with Kipnis. Ramirez, through interpreter Will Clements, credited Lindor's instincts for allowing him to score when he saw an opportunity. "When I'm stealing second, I'm thinking that would be a great thing if he's able to come home because he's the kind of guy who plays the game with a lot of energy and a lot of speed and that's the level he plays at," Ramirez said.

Slap you very much

Reliever Marc Rzepczynski had an interesting outing in the sixth that lasted six pitches and included a putout at second base on what should have been a double to right field by Oakland's Olson.

Olson cruised into second base just as Tyler Naquin's throw arrived, and Lindor quickly slapped a tag to the Oakland first baseman's side. Second base umpire Eric Cooper ruled Olson safe, but the Indians challenged the call.

Replay showed that Olson had overrun the bag as Lindor's slap tag was being applied. The call was reversed and Rzepczynski was lifted after facing one batter. It was Naquin's first outfield assist of the season.

Light 'em up

Brantley's RBI double in the fifth inning was memorable as much for the run that scored as it was for what happened next. The 396-foot drive to the center field warning track got over the head of Oakland's Fowler and was followed by a fireworks blast, ignited by the crew atop the Gateway East parking garage.

The scene was reminiscent of a Sept. 15, 2015 game against Kansas City when the Indians fireworks crew set off a volley of pyrotechnics following a home run by Royals outfielder Alex Rios. Typically, fireworks salutes are reserved for Indians home runs at Progressive Field.

Perhaps the crew was feeling antsy. Or maybe it was a residual itchy trigger finger after Wednesday's Fourth of July celebrations. Either way, it caused more than a few heads to be scratched at the ballpark.

What it means

Cleveland won its eighth consecutive home game and 15th in its last 17. The club's 28-13 record at Progressive Field ranks third in the majors behind the New York Yankees and Boston. The Indians evened the season series against Oakland at 2-2 and have won seven of their last eight against the Athletics at home. The Tribe improved to 10-14 against the American League West Division.

The pitches

Carrasco threw 96 pitches, 65 (68 percent) for strikes. Blackburn threw 72 pitches, 46 (64 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Athletics drew a sellout crowd of 34,633 fans to Progressive Field on Friday night. It was the third announced sellout of the season (April 6 vs. Kansas City, June 23 vs. Detroit). First pitch was at 7:10 p.m. with a temperature of 72 degrees.

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A's homer twice, aren't sharp otherwise in 10-4 loss at Cleveland

By Susan Slusser Updated 10:30 pm PDT, Friday, July 6, 2018

CLEVELAND — Homers kept coming for the A's away from home. Sharp work in other areas was in shorter supply against the Indians on Friday.

As well as Oakland has played against the AL Central, the Indians aren't a team to make mistakes against, and a few lapses in the field and on the bases helped Cleveland get rolling in a 10-4 victory, just the second loss for the A's in the past 10 games.

"You can't give them any slack. If you do, they'll take it and run with it," said catcher Jonathan Lucroy, who made an error and had a tough time against the Indians' running game.

The A's took an early lead. Dustin Fowler cracked his first career leadoff homer, sending a fastball from Carlos Carrasco all the way to the back row of the lower level in right. Matt Olson opened the second inning by going deep, his 19th homer of the season. Oakland has belted 74 homers on the road, the most in the majors.

Cleveland's run in the second inning came courtesy of an error by Lucroy, whose throw to first, trying to catch DH Edwin Encarnacion off the bag, went down the line. Encarnacion, who moved to second on the misplay, scored on a one-out single by Jason Kipnis. Lucroy's seven errors lead all AL catchers.

In the third inning, with Francisco Lindor on after a soft single over shortstop, Michael Brantley hit a sinking liner to center. Fowler tried to make a diving play, but the ball skipped by him, putting men at second and third.

"He'll learn his range, and sometimes that's the only way you can learn," manager Bob Melvin said of Fowler's decision not to play the ball on the hop.

Both runners scored easily on Jose Ramirez's double to right and Encarnacion drove Ramirez in with a sacrifice fly.

A's starter Paul Blackburn allowed two more runs in the fifth. He gave up a single to Lindor and an RBI double to Brantley — this one over Fowler's head — before departing. Encarnacion sent in Brantley with another sacrifice fly.

Fowler said the first double by Brantley tailed away from him, but the one that rankled him was the second, which got caught up in the wind. "The one in front of me, I hustled a little too much, tried to make too good a play, but the second one, there's no excuse," he said. "I need to make that play."

Blackburn made his sixth start since coming off the disabled list earlier than expected to help the A's injury-depleted rotation. He gave up seven hits and six runs, five earned, continuing his good-bad cycle. Blackburn's earned runs allowed in each outing: one, eight, two, six, zero, five.

"You have to be really, really sharp when you face a team like this," Lucroy said. "He made some mistakes and we didn't help him out on defense."

With Brett Anderson, Trevor Cahill and Daniel Mengden lined up to start returning to the rotation, Blackburn's inconsistency makes him vulnerable, despite his willingness to come back early to help the team out after just one rehab start.

Oakland tried to climb back into it, adding single runs in the fifth and seventh — the second on a two-out double by Mark Canha, who had three hits in all and is 16 for his past 44.

The A's left the bases loaded in the seventh when Khris Davis struck out, and the team went 2-for-8 with runners in scoring position.

"We battled offensively," manager Bob Melvin said. "We just didn't look so great in other areas tonight."

Oakland also ran into outs Friday: Canha was thrown out trying to advance on a ball in the dirt in the first and Olson slipped after reaching second on a double in the sixth and was tagged out in the nanosecond he was off the bag.

Reliever Emilio Pagan's career-best streak of 131/3 scoreless innings ended in the seventh when he gave up three hits, a walk and four runs. The Indians pulled off a double steal in the inning, with Lindor taking home when Lucroy threw a little too high to second for Jed Lowrie to have any shot at a play at the plate. Cleveland stole four bases.

"I didn't make a good throw and Jed was off balance; that was on me," Lucroy said.

Davis extended his hitting streak to eight games, during which he is batting .355.

The A's are 16-6 against the AL Central this year and have won 30 of their past 40 overall against the division, but they've dropped seven of their past eight in Cleveland.

San Francisco Chronicle LOADED: 07.07.2018

A's pitching roughed up in blowout loss to Indians

CLEVELAND — The A's have become notorious for late-inning comebacks over the past two weeks, but this deficit was much too large.

After keeping it close for most of the night, one bad inning by Emilio Pagan allowed things to get out of hand as the A's fell in a 10-4 blowout to the Indians Friday night.

On what was fireworks night at Progressive Field, the A's (48-40) were the ones who started things off with a bang as Dustin Fowler led the game off with a solo home run well up the right field bleachers off Carlos Carrasco. The home run traveled a projected 467 feet, tied for seventh-longest in baseball in baseball this season. It was Fowler's sixth homer of the season and first of his career to lead off a game.

With Matt Olson leading off the second by blasting a home run to center, the A's jumped out to an early 2-0 lead. But the Indians offense, which entered the night fourth in the league in runs scored, showed why it's one of the best in baseball.

Paul Blackburn, who has had a Jekyll and Hyde-type return from the disabled list last month, struggled Friday night. Though he was the victim of some bad defense behind him, Blackburn did himself no favors as he fell behind in the count often. The right-hander failed to record an out in the fifth, allowing six runs, five earned, on seven hits and one walk with three strikeouts over just four innings of work.

"Early on he looked really good and then just got some balls in the middle of the plate," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Had trouble pitching in and that's a pretty hot-hitting team. When they get on a roll, they get a lot of momentum and string a lot of hits together."

It's been a struggle to find consistency for Blackburn, who has couple one good start with a bad one through his first six back from the forearm injury that kept him out since the end of spring training. His previous start also came against the Indians (48-37) back in Oakland last week, when he held Cleveland scoreless over 6 1/3 innings.

"He's scuffling here and there. His last start was really good. This start wasn't," A's catcher Jonathan Lucroy said. "But this is a good team and a good lineup, you have to be really sharp. He made some mistakes and we didn't help him out with our defense."

Fowler contributed to the bad defense on the night. He first tried to dive for a low blooper hit by Michael Brantley that turned into a double in the third, and then misread a fly ball hit to center by Brantley in the fifth as he got a bad jump, turned to his left when the ball went to his right, and allowed it to fall behind him for another double, this time bringing home Francisco Lindor all the way from first base to push the Indians lead to two runs.

"That's a ball that I gotta catch. The one in front I just hustled too much. No excuse. I need to make that play."

The loss puts Blackburn at 2-3 on the season with his ERA now at 7.16.

The A's had a big moment to do damage in the seventh with the bases loaded and a run already in to bring the deficit to 6-4, but Khris Davis struck out against Neil Ramirez to end what was their biggest threat of the night.

Pagan was tagged for four runs in the eighth, including a run scored on a double steal that saw Lindor steal home, giving the Indians a comfortable six-run cushion as they eventually snapped the A's two-game win streak. It was Pagan's first run allowed since June 13, breaking a stretch of nine consecutive outings without giving up a run.

"He was going through a great stretch. They just put some pressure on him with the first couple of hitters and now you're pitching out of the stretch and have to be quick to the plate with these guys," Melvin said. "That's why they're as good as they are. Not only can they hit, they put pressure on the base paths and get you a little out of sync."

Oakland Tribune LOADED: 07.07.2018

Todd Isaacs looks to augment baseball with volunteering

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

Todd Isaacs is a proud native of the Bahamas and a professional baseball player.

Selected by the Indians in the 19th round of the June 2015 draft out of Palm Beach State College in Florida, Issacs these days is patrolling center field for the Captains.

In the opener of a four-game series against the West Michigan Whitecaps on July 6 at Classic Park, Isaacs was 0-for-4 in West Michigan's 6-2 victory.

Away from the ballpark, the 22-year-old Isaacs is an extremely personable young man of deep religious faith and a keen sense of humor. You can find examples of all those qualities in the posts on his Twitter account, @_TIsaacs10.

Isaacs also is possessed of a genuine social conscience, as witnessed by this tweet made at 10:25 a.m. July 5: "Anyone or any group in the East Lake, Euclid, Willoughby or Willowick area in Ohio that has volunteer opportunities please shoot me a DM! I would love to lend a hand!! @newsheraldinoh @LCCaptains"

When that tweet was made, Isaacs was in Dayton, in the team hotel, preparing to go to Fifth Third Field for the game between the Captains and Dragons.

This was more than idle chatter.

"Volunteer work is something I take pride in. It's something I like to do when I'm back home in the Bahamas," Isaacs said before the series opener against the Whitecaps.

When he's at home during the offseason, Isaacs said, he'll carve out blocks of time to visit schools near his home in New Providence and spend time with students. He'll help teachers and administrators in whatever ways he can.

"I don't have a lot of free time during the season, but I want to use my mornings a little more efficiently," Isaacs said.

Hence the shoutout on Twitter.

"Volunteering is something I've wanted to do here though the course of the season," Isaacs said. "I've been asking around this year, and I really haven't found much to do. I put it out there on social media to see what feedback I'd get."

As of July 7, Isaacs' post had produced replies from United Way Lake County and My Inner Warrior, a non-profit that coordinates baseball programs for young people in the inner city.

Nothing has yet come of those initial replies, and Issacs is anxious to make something happen.

"Giving back to the community is something that makes me feel good about what I do. I want to use my platform to brighten someone else's day," Isaacs said.

Although he's extroverted now, it wasn't always that way.

"I was shy growing up," Isaacs said. "Being comfortable with people was something I had to grow into. Now, it's a lot easier for me to go into a room, sit down and talk with anyone about anything. I'm that type of teammate and friend. If there is anything I can do, I want to help."

Isaacs said he's at ease with people of all types and ages.

"Older folks, kids, whoever I can be with and put a smile on their face, I'm definitely open," he said. "It can be anything from a food drive to playing a game or just having a conversation.

"Whoever has something out there I can help to do, let me know," Isaacs added.

Commentary: Trevor Bauer's a pitching machine -- and he's laughing all the way to the All-Star Game

Jim Ingraham | The Chronicle-Telegram Published on July 1, 2018

Trevor Bauer, Pitching Savant.

Don't look now, but the mad professor is getting the last guffaw on everyone, and he's going to be laughing all the way to the All-Star Game.

Who knew?

He knew.

That's who.

He who chortled at chumps like us, who thought the Drone Ranger was bloody bonkers in Game 3 of the ALCS two years ago, when he left about a quart of hemoglobin on the mound before chief paramedic Terry Francona, having watched Bauer fling 21 blood-splattered pitches in the first inning, called for a reliever, and a tourniquet.

Ok, so that was the low point.

Since then, however, Bauer has been Einstein, with a fastball — and about five other pitches he can throw for strikes, on demand. He's an opponent's worst nightmare — arrogant excellence — and a manager's best friend — Bauer can throw forever.

The Pitching Savant never saw a pitch count he couldn't ignore. Most managers get a reliever up when the starter approaches 90 pitches. That's when Bauer is just starting to perspire. The fewest pitches Bauer has thrown in a start this year is 100. He's gone over 115 four times, with a high of 127.

Carlos Carrasco averages 94 pitches per start. Corey Kluber 96, Mike Clevinger 104.

Bauer has averaged 109 pitches in his 17 starts, and he'd probably tell you he got lifted early in all of them.

The Pitching Savant is a pitching machine. He can throw until the cows come home, and still be throwing when they leave again the next morning.

He's indestructible.

Despite having the muscle definition of a clam, Bauer, in his major league career, has thrown 14,230 pitches — not counting spring training or the postseason — and never spent a single day on the disabled list.

Say what you will — and who among us hasn't? — about his seemingly wacky warm-up routines, out-of-the-box training regime, overstuffed repertoire and at times overheated opinions and views of himself and his profession in general, but it's all working.

The dude never gets hurt, he always answers the bell and he produces.

What else is there?

Ignore his won-loss record this year of 7-6. In his six losses, the Indians scored a total of seven runs: 0, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1. I mean, really, guys?

In 31 starts since July 21 of last year, Bauer is 17-7, with a 2.52 ERA. Had the Indians scored three or more runs in six of those losses he theoretically, if not realistically, could be 23-1.

In actuality he finished last year 10-1, and that same train is rolling through the first half of this season.

Bauer this year leads all American League pitchers in innings pitched, fewest home runs allowed per nine innings, FIP and batters faced. He's in the top five in ERA, pitcher's WAR, strikeouts, strikeouts per nine innings and ERA+.

The argument could even be made that Bauer is actually having a better year than Kluber. FanGraphs' version of WAR has Bauer at 4.2 and Kluber at 2.5, although Baseball-Reference has Kluber at 4.0 and Bauer at 3.4.

(A respectful plea to all analytics power brokers: Can we please standardize the computation of WAR?).

What's indisputable is that Bauer has become one of the top pitchers in the American League, and for that Bauer and the Indians' front office both deserve credit. They've both been remarkably tolerant towards one another, as though both sides realized there could be a happy ending to this relationship, patience pending.

If Bauer's career has proven anything, it's that he is an acquired taste. Some do, some don't. In college, at UCLA, on a powerhouse team with a loaded pitching staff that included Gerrit Cole and, waiting in the wings, Adam Plutko, Bauer was reportedly not exactly Mr. Congeniality.

He was, however, one of the most decorated players in the storied history of the UCLA program, winning, for example, the 2011 Golden Spikes Award as the National Collegiate Player of the Year.

Bauer studied engineering and computer math at UCLA, and his reputation for independent thinking wasted little time in revealing itself. In his major league debut, with Arizona in 2012, Bauer famously shook off the catcher's sign prior to making his first major league pitch.

Apparently, the Diamondbacks quickly realized they weren't going to acquire a taste for Bauer, because only 18 months after they drafted him, they traded him to the Indians.

Indians officials, believing there was an all-star pitcher in there trying to get out, went above and beyond the patience curve, hoping to find some common ground that would allow both parties to get there.

It's now 2018 and, hats off to both parties, they are there.

Bauer has harnessed his electric stuff. The Indians have given him ample leeway to refine and deploy it.

And the rest is — or should be — All-Star history.

INDIANS EXTRA Indians expected to wheel and deal, but Manny Machado might not be in the cards

Chris Assenheimer By **Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** Published on July 6, 2018 | Updated 4:11 p. m.

With a double-digit lead in the Central Division, the Indians can already begin to focus on ways to improve for a postseason run. Cleveland is expected to be active prior to the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline.

Though the bullpen has been much better, the Indians still have needs in the department, where left-hander Andrew Miller remains sidelined with a knee injury. Miller is expected to return, but even when he does, adding another top-notch reliever is a likely move -- if not required.

Visit [signup/IndiansExtra](#) to receive our weekly roundup of Cleveland Indians baseball news and analysis, free in your email every Saturday. With Lonnie Chisenhall on the disabled list dealing with more calf issues and a question mark for the remainder of the season, the outfield talent pool is a shallow one.

For now, Tyler Naquin, Brandon Guyer, Rajai Davis and Greg Allen are alongside All-Star candidate Michael Brantley. That's not a group you want to take into a playoff series and it's likely not the one the Indians will employ in October.

Cleveland and Arizona have been mentioned as the main candidates to land Baltimore Orioles star shortstop Manny Machado, but as good as he is, the needs in the bullpen and outfield outweigh the benefit of Machado's bat in the lineup. Plus, he has told reporters he will not consider moving back to third base. That's where Indians star Francisco Lindor plays, so that would need to be addressed before any deal is struck.

The Indians have never been high on rental players and that is exactly what Machado, who is expected to command a hefty salary on the free agent market this offseason, would be. Cleveland kicks off a 10-game homestand Friday prior to the All-Star break.

The Indians are expected to be represented well at the All-Star Game in Washington, D.C., where third baseman Jose Ramirez is in line to make his second straight start. Starting pitchers Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer are strong candidates to get the All-Star nod, as is Lindor.

Brantley is fourth in voting at his position, but could still get selected, and catcher Yan Gomes has a shot, too.

Carlos Carrasco returns from DL as Indians make it five straight wins

Associated Press

CLEVELAND -- Carlos Carrasco glanced briefly at his right elbow, which no longer shows any signs of bruising.

He's healthy and the Cleveland Indians seem to be getting better and better.

Carrasco returned from the disabled list -- and returned to the win column -- as Jose Ramirez and Edwin Encarnacion drove in three runs apiece, leading the Indians to their fifth straight victory, 10-4 over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night.

Making his first start since getting smacked with a line drive hit by Minnesota's Joe Mauer on June 16, Carrasco (9-5) shook off two homers measuring over 900 combined feet in the first two innings. The right-hander struck out seven in 5 1/3 innings and showed minimal rust despite the layoff.

"He gave up a couple of home runs," said shortstop Francisco Lindor, who stole home and scored three times. "But, he settled down. He started making pitches. He started attacking guys. Throwing that curveball for a strike. He's one of the best. He's very successful when he's doing those things. I'm glad he's back."

The AL Central-leading Indians have won eight straight home games. They improved to an MLB-best 56-21 at Progressive Field since the All-Star break last season.

Matt Olson and Dustin Fowler connected against Carrasco, but A's couldn't match Cleveland's firepower and lost for just the second time in 10 games since June 25.

"They're a hot-hitting team and when they get on a roll, a lot of good things happen," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Not only do they hit, they put pressure on you on the bases, as well. That's why they're as good as they are."

Carrasco's comeback didn't start ideally as he was quickly in a 2-0 hole.

Fowler connected on his fourth pitch, driving it 467 feet into the lower seats in right for his sixth homer this season and first of his career leading off a game.

Olson opened the second inning with a 438-foot homer into the shrubs in center field, giving him 19 this season and 43 in 157 career games -- the fifth-fastest pace in MLB history. Only Rudy York (51), Mark McGwire (49), Gary Sanchez (48) and Ryan Braun (47) have been more prodigious out of the gate than Olson.

But while he struggled to locate his fastball, Carrasco used his curve to keep the A's off-balance.

Carrasco admitted being a little jittery on a ball hit toward him, but he's now convinced the time off could help him in the long run.

"You don't want to go to the DL, miss a couple weeks in there, but at the end of the day, it's going to be worth it," he said. "From now to the last game of the season, I'm just going to go every five days, take care of myself, then we'll see in the end."

Oakland closed to 6-4 in the seventh and had the bases loaded with two out. But Neil Ramirez struck out A's cleanup hitter Khris Davis to end the threat.

The Indians then put it away with four runs in the bottom half, highlighted by Lindor swiping home on the back end of a double steal. With one out, Ramirez broke for second and Lindor waited for catcher Jonathan's Lucroy's throw to go through before taking off and scoring with a headfirst slide.

"As soon as I become a runner, I'm trying to score," Lindor said. "As soon as I saw him (Lucroy) stand up and see the ball's rotation, I just took off."

Carrasco's season nearly took a dramatic turn for the worst when he was struck by Mauer's wicked comebacker. Luckily, he escaped with just a bad bruise and manager Terry Francona felt fortunate to have his No. 2 starter back.

"When I saw him, my eyes lit up," Francona said before the game. "He's one of our mainstays."

RUN, EDWIN, RUN

Encarnacion ignored third-base coach Mike Sarbaugh's signal to stop and scored on Jason Kipnis' RBI single in the second.

It was his only option.

"I was coming hot," the slugger said with a smile. "Too late, I couldn't stop."

BIG O

The Indians have scored 10 or more runs an AL-high 11 times this season.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Athletics: LHP Brett Anderson (strained shoulder) threw a pregame bullpen session and could be activated this weekend. The 30-year-old has been on the disabled list since May 19.

Indians: Francona said OF Lonnie Chisenhall will miss "considerable time" with his strained left calf. He was placed on the disabled list Tuesday in Kansas City. Francona said the club should have a better sense of how long Chisenhall will be out once he is seen by team doctors.

UP NEXT

Corey Kluber, who is 7-1 with a 1.60 ERA at home, tries to become the first Cleveland pitcher to win 13 games before the All-Star break since Gaylord Perry (15) in 1974. Oakland's Edwin Jackson pitched into the seventh and beat the Indians on June 30.