

Lindor, Ramirez lead onslaught to claim series

By Casey Harrison MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- It almost seemed like Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez tried to one-up each other at Progressive Field on Sunday.

The result could only mean good things for the Indians.

Lindor and Ramirez finished a combined 5-for-7, with a pair of doubles and a home run, to help the Tribe claim the rubber match against the Royals, 11-2. The pair also scored three runs and knocked in four, helping Corey Kluber cruise to his sixth win.

"They're so talented," Indians manager Terry Francona said of Lindor and Ramirez. "When they start to feel it, man, it is fun to watch. You see what they do with the bat, but they can both run. It's not just singles, they're running around the bases, they're creating energy. It is fun to watch."

A three-run home run from Ramirez put the exclamation point on a five-run second inning, which gave the Tribe a 5-0 lead. The third baseman drove a 2-1 fastball from Royals starter Danny Duffy a projected 394 feet into the left-field bleachers, also scoring Rajai Davis and Michael Brantley.

The blast was the third baseman's 12th of the season. Ramirez also hit a double in the first inning, giving him 14 extra-base hits in his past 13 games.

"They're both obviously good players to begin with," Kluber said. "But when they do get on these streaks, I feel like they have the ability to keep them going for a long time. All of a sudden, a good week turns into a good couple of weeks, turns into a good month. And they both seem to keep it going for a while when they do get hot."

Lindor singled home Yan Gomes in the third inning to extend his hitting streak to a career-high 14 games, surpassing the 13-game hit streak he enjoyed last season (July 21-Aug. 3). The shortstop also led off the fifth with a double down the left-field line, giving him at least one extra-base hit in 11 of the past 12 games.

A three-run homer from Gomes in the fourth knocked Duffy out of the contest, giving the Indians a 9-0 lead. Gomes recorded four hits in five plate appearances, and finished a triple shy of completing the cycle.

"It's motivating for all of us to [feed off each other], especially when [some of us] get hot early," Ramirez said through a translator. "It's really motivating just amongst one another to see that ..."

Brantley also went deep, hitting his fifth homer of the season in the seventh off reliever Brian Flynn. Three-RBI days from Brantley and Ramirez put each of them at 27 for the season, which ties them for the team lead.

"Brantley had a good homestand, Ramirez was swinging the bat [well], which was good," Lindor said. "Gomes had a great game today, and when the pitching staff continues to do what they've been doing for the whole season -- and the last couple years -- that's what happens. We score a lot of runs, and it's fun."

Duffy allowed nine runs off eight hits and five walks in 3 1/3 innings. He's the third Royals starter in five days to surrender nine runs. Kluber on the other hand, improved to 6-2 after giving up two unearned runs on eight hits in seven innings while striking out four.

"I thought [Kluber] pitched to the scoreboard," Francona said. "He was efficient. He threw the ball over the plate and didn't get extended, which I thought was really good. It was nice to get him some runs. He knows what to do with it."

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

Career day: While driving in three and scoring three runs, Gomes' four-hit game tied a career-best for the catcher. The only other four-hit game for Gomes was on Aug. 31, 2014, also against the Royals.

"The best game today was Yan Gomes," Lindor said. "He had a great approach at the plate. He contributed, and he helped Kluber -- he called the right pitches, and that's what matters."

HE SAID IT

"You knew that he wasn't going to be the slow starter that he was before. You know that he's going to come back and start producing like he usually does. And he's a tremendous player. It's one of those things where he's on both sides of the field, so it's exciting to have him on our side, for sure." -- Gomes, on Lindor

SOUND SMART

Lindor and Ramirez each have 12 home runs, which makes them the fastest duo in Indians history to reach 12 homers since Manny Ramirez and Paul Sorrento did it in 34 games in 1995.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Lindor's seventh-inning single left the bat at 114.5 mph, which ties the team record for the hardest-hit ball since Statcast™ began tracking in 2015. Bradley Zimmer also hit a 114.5-mph double against the A's on May 30, 2017.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (5-1, 3.61 ERA) will take the mound on Monday night at 7:10 ET in the first game of a three-game set against the Tigers at Comerica Park. Carrasco's last outing against the Tigers was a complete-game win in which he allowed one run and struck out six. Mike Fiers (3-2, 4.73 ERA) will get the start for the Tigers. Fiers hasn't faced the Indians this season, but gave up two runs and struck out five to pick up a win in his last decision on Tuesday against the Rangers.

Revisiting Kluber's 18-K performance

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Roberto Perez did not realize at the time that history was within reach. The Indians catcher just knew that Corey Kluber had everything working against the Cardinals on that night three years ago, and that there was an unusual amount of K signs lined up along the facing of Progressive Field's third deck.

"I didn't know how many strikeouts he had," Perez said with a laugh on Sunday morning. "They put all those up there, but I lost count." Three more. That is all Kluber needed to reach a plateau that no pitcher has submitted in a nine-inning game in baseball's long, well-documented history. Four hurlers have reached 20 strikeouts in a nine-inning performance, but 21 remains a tantalizing number for even the game's best swing-and-miss artists.

On May 13, 2015, Kluber had an opportunity to be the first to register baseball's version of Blackjack, but the ace walked to the clubhouse instead of the mound for the ninth inning. Rather than pushing for history, Kluber ended with 18 strikeouts in eight innings, representing what is arguably the greatest pitching performance in Cleveland history, and one of the best outings in Major League annals.

"That was one of the more unbelievable pitching performances I've ever seen," Indians closer Cody Allen said.

Three years to the day of that showing, Kluber spun seven strong innings in an 11-2 rout of the Royals on Sunday afternoon. He allowed no earned runs -- lowering his season ERA to 2.34 this year -- and ended with four strikeouts. Armed with such a substantial lead, Kluber did not need to pile up the punchouts this time.

Inside his office three years ago, Indians manager Terry Francona could hear the Cleveland crowd reacting to the strikeouts against St. Louis before the pitches were shown on the broadcast on his TV. Francona had been ejected in the fourth inning after arguing that John Lackey hit Jason Kipnis with a pitch intentionally. The manager eventually moved to the weight room, where he listened to the remainder of the game unfold via the radio call.

Down the ramp in the adjacent hallway, bench coach Brad Mills and former Tribe pitching coach Mickey Callaway were responsible for the decision making. In the eighth inning, when Kluber's pitch count climbed to 113, they felt it was an appropriate time to pull the plug on the right-hander's start. Mills understood what was at stake -- striking out the side once more would put Kluber in the record books -- but his mind won out over his heart.

Max Scherzer (May 11, 2016), Randy Johnson (May 8, 2001), Kerry Wood (May 6, 1998) and Roger Clemens (Sept. 18, 1996, and April 29, 1986) are the only pitchers to reach 20 strikeouts in a nine-inning performance.

Before pulling Kluber from the game, Mills made sure the ace was in agreement.

"With the way he had pitched," Mills said, "I didn't want to just go over there and tell him he was out of the game. I wanted him to come to his own decision and take me out of the equation. I went over to him and I said, 'You've done an amazing job. What do you think?' And he indicated he had had enough, which was a relief.

"With the historical aspect of it, I felt like I owed it to him to weigh heavily into the decision to leave him in or take him out."

Francona -- a long-time friend of Mills -- jokingly took a jab at his bench coach three years later.

"Very poor decision making," Francona quipped on Sunday.

Allen remembers the bullpen phone ringing and not being surprised to have his name called for the final frame.

"I don't think any of us were second-guessing anything that Millsie was doing," Allen said. "He's been around the game for a while. He's got a couple [World Series] rings on his fingers to validate every decision he's made."

Kluber, who won his first American League Cy Young Award in the previous campaign, was well over the century mark with his pitch count and another inning could have pushed the total north of 130. No milestone -- no matter how rare -- was worth putting the horse of Cleveland's rotation at risk in Allen's view.

"We're going to need him not only for that game, but for the rest of the season," Allen said. "So, I think we kind of figured that he probably wasn't going back out for the ninth, but we wouldn't have been shocked if he did. I remember coming in and thinking to myself, 'Geez.' First you go, 'Let's get some guys out,' but also, 'It'd be nice to get a couple punchouts here and get to 20.'"

Allen struck out Peter Bourjos to open the ninth, but then used a popout and a groundout to put the finishing touches on Cleveland's 19-strikeout, 2-0 victory over the Cardinals. The 19 strikeouts tied an Indians franchise record for a nine-inning game, but it was Kluber's performance that generated a series of historic footnotes.

Kluber's 18 strikeouts tied Bob Feller's club record for a regulation game (set on Oct. 2, 1938, against Detroit). It just so happened that prior to Kluber's outing against St. Louis, the Bob Feller Exhibit at Progressive Field enjoyed its official opening. Anne Feller, Bob's widow, was on hand for the pregame ceremony and in the stands to watch the Indians ace match her late husband's franchise record.

Kluber joined Johnson (Sept. 28, 1992, against the Rangers) as the only pitchers in MLB history to notch 18 strikeouts in an outing consisting of no more than eight innings. While Kluber allowed one hit and ended with no runs or walks allowed, Johnson's game included two runs yielded, four walks issued, six hits and 160 pitches.

The 98 Game Score Kluber posted was the highest in MLB history for any outing of eight or fewer innings. He also faced the fewest batters (26) and had the fewest opponents' at-bats (25) among the 22 games in which pitchers had 18 or more strikeouts in nine or fewer innings, dating back to 1908.

"That was an unbelievable game," Perez said. "He struck out 18. It felt like he struck out all of them -- everyone he faced. On that day, he just had everything going."

Honorary Bat Girl throws first pitch for Indians

By Casey Harrison MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Indians fan Jennifer Buckland never imagined she would become an Honorary Bat Girl for the Tribe, let alone throw out the ceremonial first pitch at Progressive Field on Mother's Day before the series finale against the Royals.

The 43-year-old mother of two from Willoughby, Ohio, also never imagined she would fight for her life after being diagnosed with breast cancer. Buckland, a physical therapist at Cleveland Clinic Euclid Hospital, was named the Indians' Honorary Bat Girl as a part of Major League Baseball's annual "Going to Bat Against Breast Cancer" initiative, in which each team recognizes fans who have been affected by breast cancer and show their commitment to fighting the disease.

"When they approached me about this I was like, 'Heck yeah!'," Buckland said, smiling. "And now we're here, and it's great."

Fortunately, she's now living cancer-free. She was diagnosed after receiving her first mammogram at age 40 in May 2015, which led to a mastectomy, reconstructive surgery and 12 weeks of chemotherapy. She said she was selected for a study that provided early-stage breast cancer patients a cooling cap during chemotherapy, which helps patients keep their hair during treatment. The study was later published and reviewed and is now approved by the FDA.

"It truly is a marathon," said Buckland, who's training for the Cleveland Half Marathon. "Just when you think you've gotten over one hump, there's another hurdle. I just think of it as pacing yourself, like you would for running."

The Honorary Bat Girl Program was introduced in 2009 to raise awareness and support for survivors of breast cancer. Honorees this year were chosen by each team. In the past, applicants for the initiative were nominated by fans.

Buckland's story, like many others, has resonated with fans and players alike. To show support for fighting breast cancer, the Indians wore special edition pink hats, along with pink batting practice shirts and hoodies.

Additionally, eight of the nine Indians starters also used pink bats, with the lone exception being outfielder Greg Allen, who was called up on May 6, and was unable to order a bat in time.

But Allen, like many other players, was grateful to celebrate such a special day.

"It's a day that we recognize to appreciate the mothers and the mother figures in our lives, but I think every day -- especially with my own mom, my grandma, and the people who have influenced me in that way -- [is a good day] to take time and appreciate them throughout your day and in life. But of all days throughout the year, this is definitely one of them."

Indians, like the Cavs before them, are a work in progress | Opinion

By **David Glasier**, *The News-Herald*

The juxtaposition of late-season Cavaliers and early season Indians continues.

On May 13, LeBron James and the visiting Cavaliers got drubbed by Boston in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals.

Earlier in the afternoon, at Progressive Field, the Indians did the drubbing in an 11-2 rout of the Kansas City Royals.

Notwithstanding the Game 1 misadventure, lessons taken from the Cavs' twisting, turning journey through this NBA regular season and postseason can be applied to an early overview of the Indians.

With the win over the Royals, the Indians improved to 20-19 and held on to first place in the American League's Central Division.

Their just-above-.500 record is an accurate reflection of the quality of their play thus far. Beyond a five-game winning streak in the middle of April, they've been one step forward, one step back. In their last 10 games, they're 5-5.

In the everyday lineup, some of the expected producers are producing (Francisco Lindor, Jose Ramirez, Michael Brantley, Yan Gomes) and some are not producing enough (Yonder Alonso, Jason Kipnis, Edwin Encarnacion, Brandon Guyer).

The starting pitching been about as good as advertised.

Two-time Cy Young Award winner Corey Kluber (6-2, 2.34 ERA) throttled the Royals through seven innings, limiting them to two runs on eight hits. The issue was all but settled when the Indians scored five runs in the bottom of the second inning. Jose Ramirez accounted for three of them with a laser shot over the left-field wall off KC starter and loser Danny Duffy.

Fifth starter Josh Tomlin, struggling and giving up home runs in bunches, will get at least one more chance to hold his spot in the rotation.

The relief pitching is a matter of concern. Going into the series finale against the Royals, Indians relievers were 14th among 15 American League teams with a 3-10 record and 5.36 ERA.

That's not what fans have come to expect from the usually reliable bullpens assembled in the five-plus seasons Terry Francona has been the manager.

This has something to do with the front office's decision not to pay the market price to retain the services of veteran reliever Bryan Shaw. He left to sign a three-year, \$27 million contract with Colorado.

Arguments will be made about the wisdom of paying that kind of money for a set-up man. Shaw is no ordinary set-up man. In the five seasons he wore a Cleveland uniform, he averaged just a shade under 78 appearances a season, the most in the big leagues, and stifled many promising rallies.

In his absence this season, Francona has mixed and matched trying to fill the vacuum created by Shaw's departure. Sometimes his choices have panned out. Sometimes they have not.

Cody Allen and Andrew Miller, two of the best relievers in the game, have failed this season in situations that formerly would have been entrusted to Shaw.

Placing too much emphasis on the Indians' current shortcomings ignores the lessons taught by the Cavs.

Twenty games deep into their 82-game regular season, the same relative juncture the Indians are at now, the Cavs were 13-7 and riding an eight-game win streak that ultimately would stretch to 13 games.

If the Cavs were feeling ill effects of the forced offseason trade of All-Star point guard Kyrie Irving to the Celtics, they weren't showing on the floor in a telling way. James was a force, as always. Kevin Love was his usual solid self. Savvy veteran Jose Calderon had taken over as starting point guard with Derrick Rose having elected to take a leave of absence to work through frustrations over lingering injuries.

Dwyane Wade, another veteran free-agent signee, was giving the Cavs a lift off the bench. Jae Crowder, who had come over from Boston in the Irving trade, was a bit of a disappointment as the starting forward, but most observers believed he'd eventually find his niche.

And, of course, there was growing anticipation for the return of All-Star point guard Isaiah Thomas, also obtained from the Celtics. Thomas was recovering from hip surgery and was supposed to return sometime in December.

We all know how that narrative played out.

The Cavs went into a tailspin that began in December and extended through January and part of February. Thomas returned and was a shadow of himself on the court. He was an irritant in the locker room, by many accounts.

Cavs general manager Koby Altman re-made his roster at the trading deadline in February. The new guys were upgrades on the traded guys. Cavs coach Tyronn Lue stepped away from the bench for a nine-game stretch in late March and early April to deal with his health issues. The Cavs won eight of those games under the guidance of assistant head coach Larry Drew.

The question marks around the Cavs lingered into the playoffs, especially when they went down 2-1 in a first-round playoff series against the Indiana Pacers.. However, with James doing his best Superman imitation, they out-last-ed the Pacers and won Game 7 at Quicken Loans Arena.

Then came the sweep of the Toronto Raptors in the second round and another tour de force by James.

The Cavs sorted through the bad stuff and got to a good place.

There is no reason to think the Indians can't do the same.

Indians 12, Clippers 7 | Five-run sixth powers Indians

Eric Wood's three-run home run in the bottom of the sixth inning gave the Indianapolis Indians the lead for good in a 12-7 win over the Clippers on Sunday afternoon before a crowd of 6,426 at Victory Field.

Trailing 2-0 after one inning, the Clippers responded with seven runs across the next three innings, highlighted by Adam Rosales' fourth-inning grand slam off Indians starter Austin Coley. It was Rosales' second homer of the season.

Down 7-2, Indianapolis scored one run in both the fourth and fifth innings before its five-run sixth gave the Indians back the lead.

Indians reliever Casey Sadler (2-2) allowed no hits and no runs in two innings for the victory. He struck out three.

Clippers reliever Cole Sulser (1-1) took the loss, giving up four hits and four earned runs in 1/3 of an inning.

Meadows and Wood had three RBI apiece. Newman was 3 for 5 with three runs scored. The Indians had 19 hits against seven pitchers.

The Clippers' Brandon Barnes and Yu Chang were both 2 for 4.

Kluber, Gomes lead Indians past Royals 11-2

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Corey Kluber was handed a big lead early in the game and the rest was simple.

Kluber became the American League's first six-game winner and the Cleveland Indians beat the Kansas City Royals 11-2 on Sunday.

The Indians led 9-0 going into the fifth, leading to a stress-free afternoon for the reigning Cy Young Award winner, who gave up two unearned runs in seven innings, scattering eight hits.

"If you have a nine run cushion, obviously you have a bigger margin for error," Kluber said. "They've always been pretty aggressive against me. It can work both ways. You can get some early contact and get some quick outs."

Kluber (6-2) was backed by four hits from Yan Gomes, including a three-run homer. Jose Ramirez also hit a three-run shot and Michael Brantley had a two-run homer as the Indians had 15 hits.

"It was nice to get him some runs," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "He knows what to do with it."

Kansas City manager Ned Yost knew the big deficit was a bad sign against Kluber, who also won the Cy Young in 2014.

"Yes, he's that good," Yost said. "He's got a tremendous cutter, a real good curveball, and a fastball that starts at a hitter's hip and just fades right back in over the corner. He's got excellent command."

Yankees starter Luis Severino later joined Kluber with six wins.

Gomes hit a fourth-inning home run off Danny Duffy (1-5), doubled in the second and singled in the third and sixth to match his career high for hits.

Ramirez's homer capped a five-run second inning while Brantley homered in the seventh.

Francisco Lindor extended his hitting streak to a career-high 14 games with three hits, including an RBI single in the third. Lindor had two homers and two doubles Saturday. He got off to an inauspicious start Sunday, walking to home plate in the first inning wearing the wrong batting helmet.

A switch-hitter, Lindor had on the helmet he usually uses when he hits left-handed - with a protective flap on the right side. But he was facing the left-hander Duffy and was going to hit right-handed.

Lindor quickly realized the mistake, exchanged helmets with a bat boy and smiled when he returned to the batter's box. Lindor flied out. Helmets with flaps on the side facing the pitcher have been mandatory for all players making their major league debuts since 1983.

Cleveland strung together a single, a double, two walks, a hit batter, a wild pitch and RBI ground balls by Greg Allen and Brantley in the second to take a 2-0 lead. Ramirez's 12th homer of the season pushed the lead to five.

After striking out Brandon Guyer to finally end the inning, a frustrated Duffy tossed a cooler in the dugout but his day would only get worse. Lindor drove in another run in the following inning before Gomes hit his fifth homer of the season.

Duffy allowed nine runs in 3 1-3 innings. His fortunes were much different than his previous outing when the Royals scored 10 runs in the top of the first. Duffy allowed one run in 5 1-3 innings for his first win of the season.

Duffy, whose ERA jumped from 5.15 to 6.51, gave his performance a harsh critique.

"I just wasn't making pitches," he said. "There is nothing else to it. I don't know what else to say. I have not been a good pitcher this year. There are no excuses. I've been letting my team down."

PERFECT DAY?

Gomes fouled out to first baseman Lucas Duda in the seventh, ending his bid for a 5 for 5 afternoon. He admitted getting a fifth hit was on his mind.

"It's an 11-2 ballgame, so you can take in some of the moment while you're having your last at-bat," he said. "I was going to be happy no matter what, I think."

LOOK OUT

The ball boy seated in foul territory near the right field line moved quickly to avoid being hit by Rajai Davis' foul line drive in the eight. The ball boy leaned back in his chair with his legs going in the air as the ball hit off the front of the stands a couple of feet away.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Royals: RHP Justin Grimm (stiff lower back) began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Omaha. He appeared in 10 of Kansas City's first 19 games before being placed on the disabled list on April 24.

Indians: CF Bradley Zimmer (bruised chest) was out of the lineup again and a trip to the disabled list is possible if he's not ready in the next day or two. Zimmer has appeared in one game since crashing into the wall at Yankee Stadium on May 5. ... LHP Ryan Merritt (shoulder inflammation) has been shut down for three to five days on his minor league rehab assignment.

UP NEXT

Royals LHP Eric Skogland (1-2, 6.34 ERA) takes on Rays LHP Ryan Yarbrough (2-2, 4.30 ERA) in the opener of a three-game series at Kauffman Stadium. Indians RHP Carlos Carrasco (5-1, 3.61 ERA) faces Tigers RHP Mike Fiers (3-2, 4.73 ERA) as the teams begin a three-game set at Comerica Park.

Indians notebook: Francisco Lindor on stellar pace in May; Mike Clevinger focused on finishing outings

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Francisco Lindor has been somewhat of a mess defensively in May. He's also been virtually unstoppable at the plate.

Since the calendar flipped to May, the Indians' star shortstop has arguably been the best hitter in baseball. He extended his hitting streak to a career-high 14 games on Sunday. He entered the game with a 1.540 OPS in May and has raised his average 76 points, to .321 from .245. No other player has as many home runs (eight) or extra-base hits (16) in that stretch, and he has at least one extra-base hit in 11 of the last 12 games.

On Saturday, Lindor accomplished something — four extra-base hits in a single game — that no Indians leadoff hitter had done since Tito Francona, the late father of manager Terry Francona, did so in 1964. He has continued to raise his own bar, and has gotten his teammates talking every time he steps to the plate.

"I think every time he comes up, there's a new topic that comes [up] in the dugout," Yan Gomes said. "It's unbelievable. You know that he wasn't going to be the slow starter that he was before. You know that he's going to come back and start producing like he usually does, and he's a tremendous player. It's one of those things where he's on both sides of the field, so it's exciting to have him on our side, for sure."

Lindor, who has committed five errors in May, has had a knack in the past of belting a ball after making a defensive mistake. He's had a two weeks worth saved up, and while there's not necessarily a correlation there, it has happened to coincide with the best offensive stretch of his career, albeit it a short one.

Lindor has rated well defensively this season with five defensive runs saved, according to FanGraphs, but the eight errors this year will stick with a player who has often taken each mistake personally.

Even on grounders Lindor thought he should get with a dive but doesn't reach often end with him pounding the dirt. And, at times, it was only an inning or two later before he launched a home run. He says there's no difference with how he plays, miscue or not, but there's quite the pattern. The Indians have seen it before.

"Came back with a vengeance, and he did," Francona said, speaking of how Lindor has that knack. "I mean, he's had a couple of tough games, there's no getting around that and that's baseball. Players do that.

"But, boy, he sure is talented. I mean, he's come a long way. You look three weeks ago he was hitting, I don't know, whatever. And he just, I know I say it, when he uses the whole field, he stays balanced, and he's strong enough with his hands he can get rewarded when he hits the ball the other way."

Make Bob Ross proud

Mike Clevinger's goal this season was clear — pitch 200 innings. That means he has to be effective enough to last deep into games on a regular basis, which is, of course, step one.

But it also means he needs to finish strong to make those innings count in tight games. That's something he hasn't always been pleased with this season.

He pitched into the eighth inning on Saturday night in the Indians' 6-2 win over the Kansas City Royals, just as he did in his last start against the Yankees. But last week, Clevinger walked two batters in that eighth inning, was taken out, and it eventually led to a two-run double. So he was dead set on making sure that late-outing mistake didn't happen twice.

Clevinger has set a high benchmark for himself this season and has been his own biggest critic. So, he entered the eighth inning on Saturday on a mission, and he gave up a single but recorded two outs and struck out his last batter before Tyler Olson ended the inning.

"I just kind of thought about my mistakes in the past," Clevinger said. "In New York, everyone wanted to hype how good the start was, but the ending was so bad. It was like spilling your paint over a piece of art work. It's like it doesn't matter anymore. I witnessed that.

"Instead of pitching to the situation where it's like, hey, if they give up a solo, I get a handshake and a clean inning. Instead, I put him in high intensity situations, high leverage pitches when he's already thrown 100-and-something pitches. Today, I was making sure I'm not doing that same thing."

Clevinger wore pink, flower-embazoned cleats in honor of Mother's Day on Saturday night. He did so despite receiving a letter from Major League Baseball about the uniform policy, a portion of which he tweeted from his account, earlier this week.

He said if he is fined, he'll find a way to turn it into something nice.

"If they do, I'll find a good breast cancer awareness fund to do it for Mother's Day," Clevinger said.

"So if they want to do that, I'll turn it into a positive."

Double ailments

Ryan Merritt, already on the 10-day disabled list with a left knee sprain, now has something else to worry about.

Merritt dealt with a knee issue over the winter and tried to pitch through it while trying to compete for a roster spot this spring.

He had some arm fatigue as well, and his injured knee eventually forced his placement on the disabled list.

After his last rehab start for Triple-A Columbus, Merritt experienced an onset of shoulder soreness and was diagnosed with left shoulder inflammation. He'll be shut down from throwing for 3-to-5 days.

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Indians 11, Royals 2: Indians roll on Mother's Day

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The Indians delivered the mother of all beatdowns with an 11-2 win over the Kansas City Royals on Sunday.

With the Indians and Royals wearing special uniforms and Progressive Field draped in pink in honor of Mother's Day, the Indians piled on Royals starter Danny Duffy, who labored through 3⅓ innings, allowing nine runs on eight hits.

After a five-run second inning and nine runs in the first four innings, the Indians cruised with ace Corey Kluber on the mound.

Jose Ramirez, Yan Gomes and Michael Brantley all slugged home runs and each drove in three runs. Gomes finished with four hits, which tied a career high, and fell a triple short of the cycle.

Francisco Lindor compiled a three-hit game and extended his hitting streak to 14 games, a career high. He has now raised his batting average 76 points (.245 to .321) since the beginning of May.

After a slow April, the Indians' offense has picked up, scoring at least six runs in four consecutive games. Lindor, Brantley and Ramirez batting 1-2-3 in the lineup has produced all three times since Indians manager Terry Francona shuffled the lineup, pushing Jason Kipnis — who had Sunday off, with Erik Gonzalez playing second base — back to the No. 6 spot. Those three, along with Gomes on Sunday, have carried the lineup.

"It's motivating for all of us to see the other guys hitting really well, especially when they get hot early," Ramirez said through team translator Anna Bolton. "It's really motivating just amongst one another to see that with each other."

Ramirez and Lindor are now tied for the team lead with 12 home runs and have continued to be the club's top producers. They also became the second-fastest two in franchise history to reach 12 home runs, being bested only by Manny Ramirez and Paul Sorrento, who both reached that figure by game 34 in 1995.

"They're so talented," Francona said of Lindor and Ramirez. "When they start to feel it, man, it is fun to watch. You see what they do with the bat, but they can both run. It's not just singles — they're running around the bases, they're creating energy. It is fun to watch."

Kluber (6-2) allowed two runs — both unearned after a Ramirez error — in seven innings and gave up eight hits to go with four strikeouts, lowering his ERA to 2.34. Kluber, who became the American League's first six-game winner, has now allowed three or fewer runs in 21 consecutive starts dating back to last season. That's tied for the longest such streak by an Indians pitcher in the play index era (since 1908) along with Sonny Siebert, who accomplished the feat between May and September 1965.

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Indians 11, Royals 2: 11 Walk-Off Thoughts on Francisco Lindor getting the Indians dugout talking and the top of the lineup showing what happens when a few hitters get hot at the same time

By Ryan Lewis

Here are 11 Walk-Off Thoughts on the Indians' 11-2 win against the Kansas City Royals on Mother's Day.

1. The Indians this season have struggled to put it all together. That certainly goes for the lineup, which started cold and had to wait for the results to follow. Over the last week or so, that tide is turning, and the Indians are again seeing what can happen when two or three hitters all get hot at the same time.
2. Francisco Lindor, in the leadoff spot, has arguably been baseball's best hitter since the calendar flipped to May, leading the majors with eight home runs and 16 extra-base hits. His average has risen to .321 from .245 at the end of April. He has a 14-game hitting streak. He's had an extra-base hit in 11 of his last 12 games. And on and on and on. He's been getting his teammates talking, and not just when he accidentally grabs the wrong gear as he did in the first inning on Sunday, which garnered a good laugh.
3. Said Yan Gomes on Lindor: "I think every time he comes up, there's a new topic that comes in in the dugout. I think I heard today, it's something like 100 points in the last couple weeks or so. It's unbelievable. You know that he wasn't going to be the slow starter that he was before. You know that he's going to come back and start producing like he usually does, and he's a tremendous player. It's one of those things where he's on both sides of the field, so it's exciting to have him on our side, for sure."
4. Michael Brantley, now hitting in the No. 2 spot, is 6-for-14 since being moved up in the lineup and leads the club with a .336 average, the fifth-best mark in baseball. And Jose Ramirez, hitting third, has also caught fire in May with a .300 average, five home runs, six doubles and 11 RBI. Those three have carried the lineup.
5. Said Ramirez: "Yeah, this is great. It's motivating for all of us to see the other guys hitting really well, especially when they get hot early. It's really motivating just amongst one another to see that with each other."
6. Ramirez and Lindor are now tied for the team lead with 12 home runs each. They are the second-fastest duo in franchise history to reach those figures, bested only by Manny Ramirez and Paul Sorrento, who reached 12 home runs each by Game 34 in 1995.
7. Said Indians manager Terry Francona: "They're so talented. When they start to feel it, man, it is fun to watch. You see what they do with the bat, but they can both run. It's not just singles, they're running around the bases, they're creating energy. It is fun to watch."

8. In the past, Yan Gomes has just missed—he's rifled a ball down the line, or just missed a home run, or he hasn't been rewarded for a string of line drives. So many high-hit-percentage balls have found their way into gloves, and they have seemingly come in droves in tight stretches. On Sunday, he totaled four hits, slugged a home run and came a triple short of the cycle.

9. Said Gomes: "Fouling those balls off where you're just fouling the homer off, those aren't fun. It's one of those things where sometimes I let it bother me, because that pitch is like my pitch, and the at-bat kind of gets to me. You just try to stay in the moment, and like it was said, I was on his changeup. It's one of those things where you're on his hard stuff and you're on his soft stuff, you're in a good spot, so you're just trying stay right there, get your foot down and get a pitch to hit."

10. On Sunday, everything went Gomes' way. When he connected for his home run to right-center field, he took a few steps and shrugged when he saw the outfielders let up. Sometimes things can go your way, after all. Take what you can get.

11. Said Gomes: "I barreled it, but I was looking up and saw Gordon give up on it right away. It's one of those things that you don't think you got it, but it keeps carrying, it keeps carrying, and I think it goes to show when the weather warms up, balls carry a bit more."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 05.14.2018

Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers series preview, pitching matchups

By Paul Hoynes,

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Here is the preview and pitching matchups for the Indians' series against the Tigers.

Where: Comerica Park, Monday through Wednesday.

TV/radio: SportsTime Ohio will televise the series. WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry Monday and Wednesday's games. WMMS/FM 100.7 will broadcast Tuesday's game.

Pitching matchups and starting times: RHP Carlos Carrasco (5-1, 3.61) vs. RHP Mike Fiers (3-2, 4.72) Monday at 7:10 p.m.; RHP Josh Tomlin (0-4, 8.06) vs. LHP Francisco Liriano (3-1, 3.35) Tuesday at 7:10 p.m. and RHP Trevor Bauer (2-3, 3.00) vs. undetermined Wednesday at 1:10 p.m.

Series: The Indians lead the Tigers, 4-0, this season. Detroit leads, 1,118-1,088, overall.

Monday: Carrasco, 11-7 with a 3.67 ERA against the Tigers, beat them on April 11 on a three-hitter. Jose Iglesias is hitting .321 (9-for-28) against Carrasco.

Fiers, who beat Texas in his last start, is 2-1 with a 2.42 ERA against the Indians. Yonder Alonso is hitting .429 (6-for-14) against Fiers.

Tuesday: Tomlin, making his first start since May 4, threw five scoreless innings against Detroit on April 10. He's allowed nine homers in his last three starts.

Liriano, 5-7 with a 4.11 ERA against the Tribe, is coming off two straight no decisions. Rajai Davis is hitting .333 (12-for-36) against Liriano.

Wednesday: Bauer, who needed 109 pitches to get through 4 1/3 innings against the Royals on Friday, beat the Tigers on April 12 with seven strong innings. Victor Martinez is hitting .273 (9-for-33) with six RBI against Bauer.

Team updates: The Indians swept a four-game series against the Tigers in April, outscoring them, 18-5. They have won the last 10 games between the two teams. The rebuilding and injured Tigers are playing well under new manager Ron Gardenhire. They've split their last 12 games and have four walk-off wins for the season after having five all last year.

Disabled list: Indians - OF Tyler Naquin (right hamstring), RHP Nick Goody (right elbow), OF Lonnie Chisenhall (right calf), LHP Ryan Merritt (left shoulder), RHP Danny Salazar (right shoulder) and RHP Cody Anderson (right elbow) are on the disabled list. OF Bradley Zimmer (bruised chest) is day to day. Tigers - 1B Miguel Cabrera (right hamstring), CF Leonys Martin (left hamstring), LHP Daniel Norris (left groin), RHP Alex Wilson (left plantar fascia strain) and RHP Jordan Zimmerman (right shoulder) are on the disabled list. 3B Jeimer Candelario (left wrist) and RF Nicholas Castellanos (left little finger) are day to day.

Next: The Indians open a three-game series in Houston on Friday night.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.14.2018

Francisco Lindor wore the wrong batting helmet to the plate against Danny Duffy, and hilarity ensued

By Joe Noga,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Francisco Lindor could feel something was amiss when he stepped to the plate in the bottom of the first inning of the Tribe's 11-2 win over Kansas City on Sunday, but he couldn't quite put his finger on what it was.

Then, he heard a voice in his ear. His left ear, specifically.

It was Royals third baseman Mike Moustakas telling Lindor that he was wearing a left-handed hitting batting helmet for his at-bat against lefty pitcher Danny Duffy.

"Moustakas started screaming at me," Lindor said. "I looked at him. He touched his ear. I thought I had my earrings on, but I had the wrong helmet and the wrong leg guard. I had everything wrong."

Lindor quickly rectified the situation, stepping back toward the Cleveland dugout to get a helmet with a left ear flap so that he could bat right-handed against Duffy.

"Everybody noticed but me," Lindor said. "I had no idea. Once I went to the plate, I felt a little light. I come to find out I didn't have any ear flap on the left side of my helmet."

Chalk it up to one of those baseball moments that makes you smile and shake your head. Lindor had no explanation beyond that.

"I knew it was Duffy," he said. "I knew it was a left-hander pitching. I just didn't have the right gear."

Lindor, who recently shaved his head after losing a bet with his high school baseball team, went on to fly out to center field in the at-bat, but finished 3-for-4 with a double and an RBI in the Tribe's 11-2 series-clinching win.

Lindor extended hitting streak to a career-high 14 games and has notched an extra-base hit in 11 of his last 12 games. He leads all major league hitters with 16 extra-base hits in May.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.14.2018

Jose Ramirez, Yan Gomes each hit 3-run homers as Cleveland Indians down Kansas City Royals, 11-2

By Joe Noga,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Jose Ramirez and Yan Gomes made their mothers proud on Sunday, delivering three-run home runs for the Cleveland Indians in an 11-2 Mother's Day win against the Kansas City Royals at Progressive Field.

The Tribe's offense came through with 15 hits, scoring five in the second inning against Royals starter Danny Duffy (1-5, 6.51 ERA). Cleveland finished the three-game weekend series outscoring the Royals by a combined 26-18.

Michael Brantley added a two-run blast for Cleveland in the seventh inning. Since moving to the No. 2 spot in manager Terry Francona's batting order, Brantley is hitting .429 with two home runs, a double, nine RBI and six runs scored.

"In the two-hole, especially when Frankie's on so much, (Brantley) uses that hole so well to his advantage," manager Terry Francona said.

Starting pitcher Corey Kluber allowed base hits in the first four innings, but pitched out of trouble, stranding Royals baserunners in each frame. Working with a nine-run lead, Kluber was able to pitch to contact and surrendered a pair of unearned runs in the sixth inning to Royals hitters that he later characterized as "aggressive."

"That's been their approach against me," Kluber said. "It can work both ways, if you execute pitches you can get some early contact and get some quick outs."

Kluber (6-2, 2.34) finished with four strikeouts and no walks in seven innings. That left him four strikeouts shy of moving past CC Sabathia (1,265) for fifth place on the Indians' all-time strikeout list.

Gomes put the game out of reach in the fourth inning with his fifth home run of the season. The three-run shot to right-center field against Royals reliever Brian Flynn was good for a 9-0 lead.

"I barreled it, but I was looking up and saw (Royals CF Alex) Gordon give up on it right away," Gomes said. "It's one of those things that you don't think you got it, but it keeps carrying, and I think it goes to show when the weather warms up, balls carry a bit more."

Ramirez put the Indians in front 5-0 in the second inning when he smashed his 12th home run of the season to the left field bleachers.

Ramirez's fifth home run in the last 12 games tied also Francisco Lindor (12) for the team lead.

Francona said when Ramirez and Lindor go on hot streaks the way they have in the last two weeks, it's impossible to overlook.

"You see what they do with the bat, but they can both run," Francona said. "It's not just singles, they're running around the bases, they're creating energy. It is fun to watch."

Cleveland broke through against Duffy in the bottom of the second inning when Gomes led off with a double, advanced to third on an Erik Gonzalez single and scored on Greg Allen's RBI fielder's choice.

Brantley later plated the Tribe's second run with an RBI fielder's choice grounder to Lucas Duda at first base.

Triples shy

Ramirez and Gomes each finished a triple short of hitting for the cycle. Gomes tied his career high with four hits in the game.

On the board

Allen snapped an 0-for-16 streak dating back to the end of 2017 with his first base hit of the season, a single to right against Flynn in the fourth inning. He added another single in the sixth.

Gone streaking

Lindor's RBI single against Duffy in the third inning extended his season-best hitting streak to 14 games, a new career high. Lindor's previous high streak of 13 games stretched from July 21 to Aug. 2 last season. His double in the fifth inning, gave him an extra-base hit in 11 of his last 12 games. He leads the majors with 16 extra-base hits in May.

Glove work

Gonzalez turned in a pair of fine defensive plays to keep Kansas City off the scoreboard in the third inning. With one out and Jon Jay at first base, Jorge Soler sent a pop fly into short right field. Brandon Guyer, Allen and Gonzalez converged on the ball before Gonzalez took charge and made a running over-the-shoulder basket catch while avoiding the sliding Guyer.

"He's a really good defender," Francona said. "Wherever, you could put him at short, third, even at first. He's not as familiar with first, but if you hit it to him, he's going to catch it."

Edwin Encarnacion could not handle Gonzalez's throw to first in an effort to double up Jay, but the 26-year-old utility man managed to retire Mike Moustakas on a nice play in short right field to end the inning.

Wrong way

Lindor stepped to the plate in the bottom of the first inning to face the left-handed Duffy wearing the wrong batting helmet. His at-bat was delayed for a moment while he retreated to the Indians dugout to get a right-handed hitting helmet.

All aboard the struggle bus, @Lindor12BC. [?] pic.twitter.com/U6YBBktELO

-- MLB (@MLB) May 13, 2018

What it means

Cleveland improved its record to 15-9 against Kansas City since the start of 2017; and 58-42 since Francona became manager in 2013.

Dating back to Aug. 18 of 2017, the Indians have held Kansas City to two or fewer runs in 12 of 16 meetings. They have a record of 12-4 in those meetings.

The Pitches

Duffy threw 87 pitches, 51 (58 percent) for strikes. Kluber threw 97 pitches, 69 (71 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Royals and Indians drew 22,105 on Sunday to Progressive Field. First pitch was at 1:11 p.m. with a temperature of 55 degrees. The three-game weekend series drew 71,100 fans.

Next

The Indians head out on an eight-game, 10-day trip to Detroit, Houston and Chicago. Carlos Carrasco (5-1, 3.61) faces the Tigers and RHP Mike Fiers (3-2, 4.37) Monday at 7:10 p.m. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM 1100 AM and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the game.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.14.2018

Ryan Merritt suffers setback while pitching a rehab assignment at Class AAA Columbus

By Joe Noga,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Left-handed starting pitcher Ryan Merritt experienced an onset of shoulder soreness in a rehab outing for Class AAA Columbus on May 4 and will be shut down from throwing for 3-5 days, the Cleveland Indians said Sunday.

Merritt, who has been on the 10-day disabled list with a sore left knee since the end of spring training, has been diagnosed with left shoulder inflammation.

"He's still 'sluggish,' I think is the right word," manager Terry Francona said. "He's done all the long toss. He did the whole ramp-up program. I think he still feels a little sluggish. I think that's probably the best word."

Merritt pitched 4 2/3 innings against Charlotte, allowing four earned runs on eight hits with two strikeouts and no walks. He threw 70 pitches, 53 for strikes.

DL still a possibility for Zimmer

Bradley Zimmer, who has played sparingly since crashing into the center field wall at Yankee Stadium on May 5, was absent from the Indians lineup again Sunday.

Zimmer suffered a bruised chest and has had trouble swinging the bat, despite playing one game on the club's road stop in Milwaukee.

Francona said Zimmer would be re-evaluated after getting warmed up prior to the series finale against Kansas City, and a decision with how to proceed would be made then.

"He seems like he's doing a little bit better every day," Francona said.

The Indians could have used Zimmer as a pinch runner during the Series against Kansas City, but tried to avoid doing so in the event they had to put him on the 10-day disabled list. Not playing Zimmer would allow the team to put Zimmer on the DL retroactive to the last game he appeared in (May 9).

"With Rajai available, we'd rather not do it, so if we do DL (Zimmer), we could back him up a couple of days," Francona said.

Andrew Miller on a schedule

Francona said reliever Andrew Miller will continue to ease his way back after returning Friday from the 10-day disabled list. Ideally, Miller will come into games at the top of an inning, rather than entering when there are runners already on base.

"That would probably be the best case," Francona said. "The other day, we didn't want him to pitch, sit and go back out. Say he came in for one hitter, that would have been it. You're trying to balance it for the first 3-4 outings."

Francona said Miller continues to report no ill effects from his first appearance back from the DL.

"He wanted to pitch (Saturday)," Francona said. "That's a really good sign."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.14.2018

Cleveland Indians' ceremonial first pitch thrown with a purpose on Mother's Day

By Marc Bona,

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The biggest pitch thrown Sunday at Progressive Field came from Jennifer Buckland, her thick, light auburn-colored hair flowing as she wound up from the mound.

The Willoughby woman who played second base in high school softball more than 20 years ago wasn't used to the mound.

No matter.

The fact Buckland was named Indians' Honorary Bat Girl as part of Major League Baseball's "Going to Bat Against Breast Cancer" initiative is a good thing. The fact she did it with a full head of hair is noble. That's because Buckland was chosen to participate in a study to wear an experimental "cooling cap" while she was undergoing chemotherapy for 12 weeks.

The cap wasn't comfortable. It might not be for everyone. But it eventually became FDA approved and leads to women retaining their hair.

And that's not a vanity thing.

"With each passing week we lose so much during the process," she said. "It's one less thing to think about. If I can ease that transition, not make it so visible to my children ..."

Making life easier for those around her - Erik, her husband, and kids Ava, 9, and Zack, 5, and anyone going through breast cancer - was as important to Buckland as is her message to women: Early detection saved my life, she said. She had her first mammogram at age 40.

"I had no symptoms, no family history," said Buckland, a physical therapist at Cleveland Clinic Euclid Hospital. "What is going to save my life is early detection. ... My platform is early detection."

It was a good message on Mother's Day, as Indians and Royals players wore pink hats and swung pink bats to help, in some way, to raise awareness of breast cancer. Buckland shook off some nerves and looked calm on the mound as she threw to Tribe pitcher Evan Marshall.

"The park is so big, it takes your breath away," she said.

Erik remains proud of his wife.

"'Amazed' is probably a better word," he said. "What she went through and what she overcame."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.14.2018

Starting 9: Remain calm, the Indians still are strongest in very weak AL Central

By Travis Sawchik 1m ago

1: We know the American League Central is a lousy division, but it's also on track to be historically poor. The Indians' neighborhood is on pace to be the worst division since the game split from two to three divisions per league in 1994, according to research by Jeff Sullivan for FanGraphs. The AL Central entered the weekend with a combined .397 winning percentage. The record for futility in a season was the 1994 AL West, which produced a .437 winning mark. At the time of the 1994 players' strike, the Rangers were leading the AL West with a 52-62 mark.

This is not the first time the AL Central has been relatively awful as it accounts for four of the worst 10 finishes in the three-division era: 1998 (.465), 1999 (.457), 2002 (.453) and 2003 (.457). I wrote about how the AL Central was a key tactical advantage for the Indians on April 16.

The Indians can take advantage of this luxury as they did in '98 in winning division with 89 victories. While the Indians have scuffled to date, and Trevor Bauer rightly pointed out that just about every facet of the team has a role in a sloppy start to 2018, one of the benefits about their geographical position is there is no need to panic. Not for a while, anyway.

2: Consider the Indians still have 90.1 percent odds of winning the division entering play Monday, despite owning a 20-19 record, according to FanGraphs. The Indians should improve. Andrew Miller is off the DL. Jason Kipnis is not going to hit less than .200 for the season. Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Bauer and Mike Clevinger match up with any rotation in the game save perhaps the Astros.

Without any external improvements, FanGraphs projects the Indians to win 92 games. The Indians simply aren't playing up to their true talent level and haven't been completely healthy. There's no need to overact to a slow start. The Indians can probably hold off the Twins without doing anything dramatic in the trade market. If the Indians are to part with top young assets such as Shane Bieber (recently promoted to Triple-A), Tristan McKenzie and Francisco Mejia, it ought to be for an impact piece they can control for multiple seasons (or perhaps a superstar rental).

3: Despite the Indians still being in an excellent position to make the postseason, there has been much hand-wringing about how the Indians compare to the dominant Astros and white-hot Yankees.

For starters, it's early. It's also important to remember that baseball warps in the postseason like few other professional sports. The nature of the game does not change in the NBA, NFL or NHL playoffs. It does in major league baseball. Due to the extra off days and urgency, the last starter is shed from rotations (sometimes the last two starters). The best pitchers absorb more innings. In addition, the talent levels are closer between the worst and best baseball teams compared to the aforementioned sports. The small-sample nature of the postseason further contributes to parity and uncertainty.

That's a long way of saying that there's plenty of reason to be optimistic about the Indians and that any external improvement ought to be made with a consideration of the postseason roster.

4: The window isn't closing. If Kluber is Kluber in the postseason, if Carrasco is at the top of his game — as he was Wednesday in Milwaukee in striking out 14 Brewers — if Bauer continues his improvement, no one is going to want to face the Indians in a short series.

So relax, stay calm, and remember the Indians play in the AL Central.

5: If there is something to be concerned about, it is the bullpen, which entered Sunday ranked 28th in bullpen ERA (5.38) and having lost one of its top five options last week in Nick Goody. As mentioned in the previous note, and in looking ahead to the Indians' long-term goals, the game warps in the playoffs. Bullpens keep absorbing more and more innings.

For instance, bullpens accounted for a major-league record 38.1 percent of total innings thrown last season, up three percentage points (35.1 percent) from 10 years earlier. And in the postseason, that ballooned to 46.4 percent last season. Postseason play pushed the games to the extremes and that means more bullpening. It's an area where the Indians do need external help.

6: Terry Francona moved Kipnis down the lineup Friday, and while lineup positions and decisions are often overrated in value, perhaps the move will allow Kipnis to take some pressure off himself which might come with top-of-the-order status. We cannot measure everything in baseball.

Moreover, it makes sense to get the Indians' three top bats — Michael Brantley, Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez — near the top of the order together.

7: In a world without Mike Trout (and now Mookie Betts), Lindor and Ramirez might be battling themselves for MVP honors. They entered the weekend with 2.2 WAR, tied for third in the AL behind Trout and Betts. Lindor's 4-for-4 day with two doubles and two homers on Saturday vaulted him to third in baseball with 2.7 WAR, trailing only Trout and Betts. The top six WAR positional players all reside in the AL.

8: The news of Danny Salazar receiving a PRP injection to promote healing related his right shoulder (tendonitis) is not encouraging.

Salazar has always dealt with health issues, but he's been able to pitch at least 103 inning in each of the four seasons and now there's a question of how much he will pitch, or pitch at all, in 2018. He's a wild card as he could help in the rotation or bullpen but at this point the club almost has to plan as if he will not be part of 2018 plans.

9: The Indians are being cautious with Tristian McKenzie (forearm) and rightfully so as he struck out a minor-league high 186 batters in 143 innings at High-A last season. Any potential trade for, say, Christian Yelich in the offseason would have begun with McKenzie or Mejia (or both). If the Indians are interested in playing in the Manny Machado trade sweepstakes this summer, the ask might begin McKenzie or Mejia.

STAT OF THE WEEK: 20

Number of times the Indians starters have reached or exceeded 100 pitches in a start this season, trailing only the Nationals and Astros, who have each done it 22 times.

SeaWolves 2, RubberDucks 0: Ducks end disappointing homestand with shutout loss
by ABJ/Ohio.com correspondent

It was a disappointing Sunday loss, and a weekend series and homestand to mostly forget for the RubberDucks.

Gray skies provided the backdrop as a Mother's Day crowd of 3,763 watched the Ducks suffer a 2-0 loss to the visiting Erie SeaWolves at Canal Park, their third loss in the four-game series.

And for the moment, the early-season hitting woes have returned for the Ducks who have scored just eight runs while losing four of their past five, including two shutouts.

That follows a torrid stretch of 11 wins in 12 games that propelled the Ducks from third place to first in the Eastern League Western Division.

Only a comeback 4-3 victory Saturday, in which they scored two runs in the bottom of the ninth, saved them from being swept by the SeaWolves (14-21).

"Not a big deal," Ducks manager Tony Mansolino said. "Been through this a million times. Just got to keep playing clean baseball. Pitching did a great job keeping us in it. Three of those four losses we were in the games. Plenty of opportunities, just didn't get the big hits with runners on base."

On the bright side, the Ducks (21-15) are still in first place, 1½ games ahead of the second-place Altoona Curve, who are percentage points ahead of the Richmond Flying Squirrels.

The Ducks start a three-game series at the Eastern Division-leading Trenton Thunder at 7 p.m. Monday.

And their pitchers still rank first in the EL in ERA (2.53), and were treated to another stellar effort from starter Jake Paulson (2-1, 2.79) Sunday. He allowed two runs on five hits in seven innings.

Will Castro had two of the Ducks' six hits. Recently promoted Kieran Colegrove pitched two scoreless innings of relief.

Right-hander Spencer Turnbull (2-3), the first of four SeaWolves pitchers, allowed three hits in five innings. He walked two and struck out six.

Paulson, 26, was released by the Cincinnati Reds in March and signed by the Indians as a free agent on April 2. This is his first time pitching at the Double-A level.

A 6-foot-7 right-hander, he throws a hard sinker that induces ground balls for outs. The SeaWolves did so 10 times against him.

He also struck out six. Paulson allowed both runs in the sixth on three hits — only one of them well-struck — and the lone walk he gave up.

"He's interesting," Mansolino said. "He's really interesting. His three outings have all been similar to that. Even the couple runs they scored, he didn't get much help defensively in that inning."

"Ground balls, sinkers and ground balls. He's in a very elite category of ground-ball pitchers."

A native of suburban Detroit, Paulson played three years at Oakland (Mich.) University and was drafted by the Reds in the 27th round in 2014. In four pro seasons, he was 20-18 with a 3.81 ERA. Along with the sinker, he throws a slider and change-up.

"I just try to keep it low," Paulson said. "And keep my off-speed low, just have them hit it on the ground. Just trusting my defense. The defense is great so I just let them work."

As for his release by the Reds, he said, "it happens, it's a business. I'm just excited to get an opportunity with the Indians and see what happens."

Paulson said he stayed in Arizona during the spring, waiting for that next chance.

"I was ready to play," he said. "I didn't even go home. I was hoping a team was going to sign me. They [Indians] wanted a starter. That was the plan going in."

Only 25 of his 101 appearances were as a starter before this season, just three of 40 in 2017.

"In 2015 I was a starter for more than half the season," he said. "In 2016, I was kind of hurt all year. In 2017, I still threw like 90 innings as a long relief guy."

"Whatever they need, it doesn't matter to me. I prefer starting but if I have a role, I'll do it."

TRIBE NOTES Indians Notes: April sours brought May power for streaking Francisco Lindor

Chris Assenheimer ByChris Assenheimer | The Chronicle-TelegramPublished on May 13, 2018 | Updated 6:54 a. m.

CLEVELAND — It took him awhile, but shortstop Francisco Lindor has found his groove.

The two-time All-Star shortstop was batting only .215 on April 25, but has his average up to .321 after the series finale with Kansas City on Sunday.

Lindor extended his hitting streak to a career-high 14 games Sunday and is batting .473 (26-for-55) with eight home runs, eight doubles and 14 RBIs in May.

"I don't think it's one element, I think it's a lot of different elements," manager Terry Francona said of Lindor's offensive surge.

One factor has been Lindor's use of the entire field. It was on display Saturday when he went 4-for-4 with two homers and two doubles in a 6-2 win over the Royals.

"That's what I want to do. That's all I want to do," Lindor said. "I'm not a power hitter. I want to hit the ball hard. If it goes out, it goes out. But my job is to hit the ball all over the place."

Lindor may not consider himself a power hitter, but he's increased his homer count on a yearly basis, hitting 33 last year after only 15 in 2016. He hit his 12th homer in 38 games Saturday after failing to reach the total until May 31 (50 games) in 2017 and July 19 (92 games) two years ago.

"You don't take it for granted, but it is expected with a guy like that," right-hander Mike Clevinger said. "You know it's coming, especially if he didn't go off the day before, it's like, 'What the hell's going to happen tonight? He didn't get two home runs last night. He's about to bang tonight.'"

Lindor has recently benefitted from Francona's decision to replace Jason Kipnis with Michael Brantley as the second hitter in the order.

"Brant's been doing a great job behind me," he said. "Brant is the best hitter on the team and one of the best hitters in the league. Whenever he's behind you, he's going to protect you."

Surprisingly enough, Lindor hasn't done everything well this season. The 2016 Gold Glove award winner already has eight errors after committing 10 over 159 games last year.

"I learn from those," Lindor said. "The guys have been doing a great job of picking me up. Every single guy here has picked me up, whether it's pitchers or position players, coaches, everybody."

On the shelf

Left-hander Ryan Merritt's minor league rehab assignment has been put on hold after he was diagnosed with left shoulder inflammation.

Merritt, who is on the 10-day disabled list with a left knee sprain, made one rehab appearance for Triple-A Columbus, allowing four runs (three homers) over 4¹/₃ innings.

He is expected to be shut down for the next 3-5 days.

Next up

The Indians kick off an eight-game road trip with a three-game series at Detroit's Comerica Park that begins tonight at 7:10.

Carlos Carrasco (5-1, 3.61 ERA) opens the set, opposing RHP Mike Fiers (3-2, 4.73), while Josh Tomlin (0-4, 8.06) starts Tuesday (7:10 p.m.) against LHP Francisco Liriano (3-1, 3.35).

Trevor Bauer (2-3, 3.00) is slated to start the series finale Wednesday (1:10 p.m.) with the Tigers yet to name a starter.

The Indians wrap the trip with a three-game series against defending champion Houston and a two-game interleague series against the Cubs at Wrigley Field.

Yesterday

Sunday was the third anniversary of Corey Kluber matching Hall of Famer Bob Feller's franchise record with 18 strikeouts in a nine-inning game during a 2-0 win over the Cardinals at Progressive Field.

Kluber allowed only a hit over eight innings, becoming the second pitcher in MLB history — Hall of Famer Randy Johnson in 1992 — to strike out 18 batters in eight innings.

Minor details

Columbus' Yandy Diaz is showing a lack of power again, failing to homer in 25 games through Saturday — .264 with 10 RBIs. Diaz failed to go deep in 49 games for the Indians last year.

Double-A Akron's Bobby Bradley hit his sixth homer Saturday in a 4-3 win over Erie, but one of Cleveland's top prospects is off to a slow start, batting just .182 (four doubles and 15 RBIs) over 30 games through Saturday.

Roundin' third

Center fielder Greg Allen recorded his first two hits and RBI of the season in six games.

Indians pitchers are in the midst of a dominant stretch against Central Division opponents, posting a 1.84 ERA over the last 35 divisional games and allowing two runs or fewer in 27 of the games.

Players from both teams wore pink caps in recognition of Mother's Day, with a select few wearing pink cleats and using pink bats.

TRIBE NOTES Indians 11, Royals 2: Tribe breaks out the bats to help Corey Kluber to AL-leading 6th win
Chris Assenheimer | **The Chronicle-Telegram** Published on May 13, 2018 | Updated 6:52 a. m.

CLEVELAND — The Indians scored runs and Corey Kluber was on the mound. That's nearly always a recipe for a win.

Kluber continued his sparkling start to the season and Cleveland backed him with plenty of offense, as the Indians rolled past the Royals 11-2, taking the rubber match of a three-game series Sunday afternoon at Progressive Field.

Kluber wasn't as dominant as he has been for much of the year — two unearned runs on eight hits, with four strikeouts over seven innings — but a masterpiece wasn't required.

He allowed a hit in each of the first five innings, but no runs until an error on third baseman Jose Ramirez opened the door for Kansas City to score its only runs of the game in the sixth.

"I thought he pitched to the scoreboard," manager Terry Francona said after Kluber became the first American League pitcher to reach six wins. "He was efficient. He threw the ball over the plate and didn't get extended, which I thought was really good. It was nice to get him some runs. He knows what to do with it.

"I know he went out and threw a major league game, but it wasn't like stressful, bases-loaded innings, 1-0 game, because I do think that wears on guys."

Indians hitters went to work early in support of Kluber, scoring five times in the second off KC starter Danny Duffy and leading 9-0 through four innings.

Cleveland got production from nearly every player in the lineup, including — not surprisingly — Ramirez and shortstop Francisco Lindor.

The All-Star duo stayed red-hot, combining to go 5-for-7 with four RBIs. Lindor extended his hitting streak to a career-high 14 games — longest active streak in the majors — with a double in the fifth inning, giving him at least one extra-base hit in 11 of his last 12 games.

He's hitting .473 (26-for-55) with eight doubles, eight homers and 14 RBIs over 12 games in May.

Ramirez capped the big second inning with his 12th homer — a three-run shot into the left-field bleachers — and recorded his 12th multihit game.

He and Lindor are the second-fastest duo in Cleveland history to each reach 12 homers (Game 39), behind Manny Ramirez and Paul Sorrento (34 games in 1995).

"They're so talented," Francona said. "When they start to feel it, man, it is fun to watch. You see what they do with the bat, but they can both run. It's not just singles. They're running around the bases, they're creating energy. It is fun to watch."

"They're both obviously good players to begin with," Kluber said of Cleveland's dynamic duo. "But when they do get on these streaks, I feel like they have the ability to keep them going for a long time. All of a sudden, a good week turns into a good couple of weeks, turns into a good month. And they both seem to keep it going for a while when they do get hot.

"I think they're both consistent and the energy they bring on a day-to-day, game-to-game basis doesn't change whether they're going good or going bad. I think they're the same guys from a personality standpoint day in and day out. That goes a long way, too, because it's such a long year. They're consistent. The way they act. The work they do. Things like that. On a day-to-day basis, that's what allows them to get on these streaks."

New No. 2 hitter Michael Brantley entered the day batting a team-leading .342 and stayed steady, driving in three runs and hitting his fifth homer.

And the Indians got a huge game from catcher Yan Gomes. He matched a career high with four hits, including his fifth homer, falling a triple shy of the cycle.

Gomes had the opportunity to notch his fifth hit, but popped out in the seventh inning. He said he approached the plate with the milestone in mind.

"In that situation, kind of. You're really just trying to keep riding the wave that you're on right now," Gomes said. "I mean, it's an 11-2 ballgame, so you can kind of take in some of the moment while you're having your last at-bat, but I was going to be happy no matter what."

"The best game today was (by) Yan Gomes," Lindor said. "He had a great approach at the plate. He contributed and he helped Kluber. He called the right pitches, and that's what matters."

Kluber has allowed three or fewer runs in each of his last 21 regular-season starts dating to Aug. 1. It ties Sonny Siebert for the longest streak in club history.

Short-handed Tigers win anyway — on Jose Iglesias' walk-off single

Chris McCosky, The Detroit News Published 4:16 p.m. ET May 13, 2018 | Updated 5:44 p.m. ET May 13, 2018

Detroit — Water off a duck's back.

The Tigers were without four of their top hitters against nasty left-hander James Paxton, who was coming off a no-hitter five days ago. No big deal.

The Tigers, with completely self-inflicted wounds, blew a two-run lead in the top of the eighth inning. No big deal.

"We do a really good job here of putting our heads down and just moving forward," left fielder Mikie Mahtook said after the Tigers' walk-off, 5-4 win over the Mariners Sunday. "Just play. Just get it back. Once something happens, you can't get it back. So just focus back in."

In the span of an inning, the Tigers went from kicking themselves to hugging it out in the middle of the diamond after Jose Iglesias' game-winning single in the bottom of the ninth.

"You do the best you can with the people you have," said manager Ron Gardenhire, whose lineup Sunday was devoid of Miguel Cabrera, Nick Castellanos, Leonys Martin and Jeimer Candelario. "They're all big-league players and we expect them to go out and try to find a way to win. That's the only way we know how to go about the game."

"We have some people beat up, but that's when you have to pick each other up."

Niko Goodrum picked them up, banging out three hits including an opposite-field home run off Paxton. Mahtook picked them up with a single, double and two RBIs. Blaine Hardy, making a spot start in place of injured Jordan Zimmermann, picked them up with a solid 4.1 innings to keep the Tigers close early.

"It was a really good baseball game, all the way through," Gardenhire said. "Our starter gave us everything he had. For him to hang in the way he did was great. Our bullpen came in and pretty much everybody did their job."

"We missed a little play and that always hurts you."

Ugh. That eighth inning. The Tigers were up 4-2 with Joe Jimenez on the mound. With one on and two out, he had a 1-2 count on pinch-hitter Ben Gamel — and hit him in the foot. The next hitter, speedy Dee Gordon, hit a routine ground ball to first base. John Hicks flipped a low, but catch-able throw that Jimenez dropped.

Bases loaded.

Jimenez got two quick strikes on Jean Segura but threw a 90-mph pitch (slider, possibly) that caught too much of the plate and Segura slapped it to center, scoring two runs and tying the game.

"You can't fret on something that went wrong," Gardenhire said. "We've been playing wild, crazy baseball games and you're always going to have something that didn't work out too well. Something that maybe didn't look right and you say, 'Why'd they do that?'"

"But in the end, people are going to have to worry about us because we put some pressure out there. That's how we want to play."

Niko Goodrum of the Detroit Tigers dives into home

JaCoby Jones started the ninth inning, against reliever Juan Nicasio, with a chopper to the left side of the infield. Third baseman Kyle Seager and shortstop Segura converged and the ball got by them both, rolling into shallow left field.

Jones, head down and sprinting, didn't see the ball roll past them. Nor did he see first base coach Ramon Santiago telling him to round the base and look to second. He could have walked there. Instead, he sped through the base and down the first-base line.

"I was just trying to get down the line as fast as I could," Jones said. "I felt bad. I was telling Niko he would've got the game-winning RBI."

Goodrum, who had missed the last few games with a hip impingement, had the at-bat of the game. After fouling off five straight pitches, four with two strikes, he rifled a single to right field, sending Jones to third base.

"That was a great at-bat," Gardenhire said. "He had great at-bats all day. That's just about coming ready to play. He wants to play."

Iglesias then knocked a 1-1 pitch through the drawn-in infield and the party ensued. It was the second straight winning home series for the Tigers.

"We didn't connect on that play at first base (in the eighth inning)," Gardenhire said. "But this ball club came right back in the dugout and just go after it. Everybody had a quality at-bat. Niko had a great at-bat and Iggy got the big base hit."

Water off a duck's back.

The loss was a double-whammy for the Mariners. Perennial All-Star Robinson Cano was hit on the right hand in the third inning by a pitch from Hardy. It was revealed he had a fracture of the fifth metacarpal bone. He will see a hand specialist on Tuesday and is out indefinitely.

Detroit News LOADED: 05.14.2018

Buck Farmer becoming bigger weapon for Tigers bullpen

Chris McCosky, Published 6:27 p.m. ET May 13, 2018 | Updated 5:20 a.m. ET May 14, 2018

Detroit — Buck Farmer worked another clean inning Sunday, retiring left-handed hitters Andrew Romine and Kyle Seager in a 1-2-3 seventh inning as the Tigers beat the Mariners, 5-4, on a ninth-inning walk-off.

Farmer now has worked eight consecutive innings without allowing an earned run. In his last 19 appearances, he's allowed three runs in 18.1 innings.

"He's starting to feel it," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "I think he believes in himself a lot right now, confident in all his pitches. And we starting to put him in some bigger situations.

"That's the way it works."

Left-handed hitters are 6-for-28 against him, a tribute to his change-up.

"Once you see a guy getting a real good feel for something, you start moving him into more impact situations," Gardenhire said. "And he's handled all of them. He's got the pitches to get both righties and lefties out.

"It's what we talked about in spring training. He's actually a guy with a power arm that can do some things. Hope he keeps it going."

The sound wasn't good.

Blaine Hardy's 2-2 pitch kind of went 'splat' on Robinson Cano's right hand in the third inning and he went down in a heap of pain. X-rays showed the Mariners second baseman fractured the fifth metacarpal bone in the hand and will be out indefinitely.

"I knew right away," Cano said. "It was the same feeling when I broke my toe in Japan. It is definitely frustrating the way we've been playing, but it could have been worse. This will be tough, because I've never dealt with anything like this."

He will see a specialist Tuesday.

"They didn't say anything about how long I might be out, but it is broken bad, so there might be surgery," he said. "All I can do is do whatever it takes to get 100 percent and get back as soon as I can."

The Mariners have an interesting decision to make. Dee Gordon, a Gold Glove-winning second baseman, moved to center field when he joined the Mariners. He could move back to second.

"Nobody (has mentioned that) at this point, but I understand why you are asking," Gordon said. "Once we have a better idea of how long Robby is going to be out, we'll discuss our options beyond the next day or two."

Around the horn

So what's next for Hardy? Probably back to the bullpen. He allowed two runs over 4.1 innings in his spot start Sunday.

"Being up here, it doesn't matter what I do," he said. "Bullpen, start, hit — not saying I can do that, but ... Team-wise, it doesn't matter what they want from me. I will do it."

... Jordan Zimmermann (shoulder impingement) will test his arm again off flat ground Monday. He plans to do light tossing from 60-70 feet. He's not expected to throw off the mound until Wednesday at the earliest. The Tigers will call up another starter to pitch on Wednesday against the Indians. Gardenhire said they've decided on the pitcher, they just aren't ready to announce it.

... James McCann had his hitting streak stopped at 10 games.

Detroit News LOADED: 05.14.2018

Detroit Tigers monitoring, weighing options for Jeimer Candelario's wrist

George Sipple, Detroit Free Press Published 12:26 p.m. ET May 13, 2018 | Updated 8:06 p.m. ET May 13, 2018

Listen to the latest episode of the Talkin' Tigers podcast, above.

Surgery isn't currently being considered, but Detroit Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said third baseman Jeimer Candelario will have an MRI of his sore left wrist on Sunday.

The Tigers want to compare a new MRI with one Candelario had when he played for the Chicago Cubs.

The wrist occasionally flares up on Candelario, as it did Saturday. Candelario wasn't in the starting lineup for Sunday's 5-4 win against the Seattle Mariners.

"Most of it is batting right-handed," Gardenhire said of when Candelario's wrist flares up. "Gets a little bite in there. Most of the time he says he's fine. He plays through it. Today, he's pretty sore."

After the game, Gardenhire said the Tigers received the results of Candelario's MRI scan and sent the results to another doctor.

"Everything's going to be fine," Gardenhire said. "He's actually feeling really good right now. He'll be back on the tee tomorrow."

Tigers prospect mailbag: Promotion for Burrows?

Doug Teter, the Tigers' head athletic trainer, said surgery isn't a quick fix.

"There's no guarantees," Teter said. "It's easy to say we'll get surgery and it'll never happen again. But it's not like the game Operation where you just open him up and the problem is right there on top and you pick it out. You gotta cut through tissue and other fascia, other muscles, to get where you're going and then those have to be repaired on the way out, once you fix what you fix.

"No, it's not an easy (surgery). Hamate (a carpal bone) is probably the easiest surgery we have associated with baseball, where you literally open him up, take it out and three or four weeks later they're playing. It's not that kind of surgery. This is deep in the wrist. It's a ligament we're dealing with. It's the Triangle Fibrocartilage (Complex). It's called the TFCC ligament and it's what helps stabilize these two bones (in the wrist) together."

Teter added that "numerous people" have played with a sore TFCC ligament, including former Tiger Carlos Guillen.

Seidel: Chad Bell pursues major league dream, but his wife is the All-Star

According to houstonmethodist.org, "The triangular fibrocartilage complex (TFCC) suspends the ends of the radius and ulna bones over the wrist. It is triangular in shape and made up of several ligaments and cartilage. The TFCC makes it possible for the wrist to move in six different directions (bending, straightening, twisting, side-to-side)."

Teter said it's not a career-threatening injury. But it's also not an easy one to rehab.

"Best case scenario, if you get through the year with it and be productive, sure, you'd want to do (surgery) in the winter," Teter said. "But there's no guarantees it'd be ready by spring training."

Teter said wrist strengthening is part of the Tigers' base strength and conditioning program that Candelario has already been doing.

"You manage symptoms," Teter said of how they'll deal with the Candelario's injury going forward. "You try to maintain strength so it doesn't get weak. Right now, it's pain control and motion. Try to keep him loose.

"The body always wants to cut motion down to protect itself if something gets hurt."

Candelario, 24, is batting .272 with 12 doubles, three triples, five home runs and 16 RBIs in 37 games.

The Tigers acquired Candelario and minor league infielder Isaac Paredes for catcher Alex Avila and left-handed reliever Justin Wilson on July 31, 2017.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 05.14.2018