

Carrasco chased in 4th as Tribe streak ends

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- Carlos Carrasco managed to get his glove up in time, using the leather to knock down a sharp comebacker off the bat of Robbie Grossman in the fourth inning on Friday. In the process, the big right-hander fell hard on the dirt mound, as the baseball rolled away.

That was the kind of night it was for Carrasco, who struggled to finish off innings and made an early exit in a 7-4 loss to the Twins at Target Field. The six runs surrendered by the Tribe starter were effective in ending the Indians' six-game winning streak.

"He wasn't really crisp," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "Things were just a little flat. They didn't have to respect his fastball as maybe they normally would."

In Carrasco's previous trip up the hill, against the Astros, all five runs he allowed came with two outs. That theme persisted against Minnesota's lineup, which scored five of its runs off the righty via two-out rallies. That included the first inning, when Eduardo Escobar -- as part of a two-homer performance -- drilled a three-run, two-out home run to put Cleveland in a quick 3-0 hole.

Escobar's home run came on a curveball that dropped below the strike zone. When the ball left the bat, Carrasco thought he had induced an inning-ending flyout, but that was far from the case.

"That pitch was low," Carrasco said. "Escobar likes a low pitch. He got a little bit in front. I thought it was a fly ball, but no, that ball is still going. He hit it pretty good."

As for the two-out troubles, Carrasco did not have an explanation.

"I think there's something going on. I don't know," said Carrasco, who is now 6-4 with a 4.50 ERA through 12 starts. "I'm just trying to figure it out. That's what happened last outing and today. Two quick outs and I get in trouble. So, I don't know. I'm just trying to figure out what it is."

In the second inning, Carrasco had two outs and a runner on first base. He then allowed back-to-back singles to Brian Dozier and Eddie Rosario -- the latter bringing in a run. Carrasco's next setback arrived in the fourth, which began with Grossman giving the Indians a scare with his liner up the middle.

Grossman wound up with an infield single off Carrasco, who shifted to his feet, brushed the dirt off his legs and indicated to Francona that he was good to go. Ryan LaMarre followed with an RBI double and Miguel Sano later added a run-scoring double with two outs to knock Carrasco out of the game.

Carrasco departed after logging just 71 pitches in 3 2/3 innings, in which he yielded four extra-base hits and finished with more walks (three) than strikeouts (two).

Against Twins starter Jose Berrios, the Indians' offense broke through twice. Yan Gomes and Greg Allen opened the third with consecutive hits and each came around to score. In the sixth inning, Edwin Encarnacion belted a two-run shot off Berrios, marking the designated hitter's 14th blast of the season. Berrios struck out seven over six innings en route to the win.

"Encarnacion got one of his few mistake breaking balls," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "But we kept scoring for the most part, kept putting pressure on [Carrasco] and did a nice job coming out of the 'pen with three clean innings from our guys."

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

Sano chases Carrasco: With two outs in the fourth inning, the Twins had a runner on third with Rosario at the plate. Carrasco opted to intentionally walk the lefty-hitting Rosario, who connected for an RBI single in his previous at-bat, in favor of facing Sano. The slugger made the pitcher pay by pulling an 0-1 offering to left for an RBI double that sent Carrasco to the showers and gave Minnesota a 6-2 lead at the time.

"I thought I was going to get another strikeout," said Carrasco, who struck out Sano in his first two at-bats. "But, I threw that slider kind of inside and then middle. He just got that pitch right there and hit a double, and they got another run right there. It is what it is, man. I should've thrown a better pitch."

SOUND SMART

Jose Ramirez ignited a two-run outburst for the Indians in the sixth inning with a one-out double off Berrios. That marked the third baseman's 18th two-base hit of the season, giving him 66 doubles in his last 162 games, dating back to last year. For perspective, the single-season Major League record for doubles is 67, set by Earl Webb in 1931 for the Red Sox.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Trevor Bauer (4-3, 2.61 ERA) is scheduled to take the mound on Saturday, when the Twins host the Tribe in a 4:10 p.m. ET divisional clash at Target Field. In his past three starts, Bauer has a 1.69 ERA with 29 strikeouts vs. four walks in 21 1/3 innings. Minnesota will counter with righty Lance Lynn (3-4, 5.94 ERA).

Jordan Bastian has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog, Major League Bastian, follow him on Twitter @MLBastian and Facebook.

Ramirez, Lindor making strong case to start ASG

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- The days of Jose Ramirez and Francisco Lindor being an underrated duo may be over.

Last season, Ramirez started at third base for the American League All-Star team after winning the fan vote at his position and finished the year third in balloting for the AL MVP. Lindor has made the All-Star team in each of the past two years, finished in the top five in MVP voting last fall, has won a Gold Glove and Silver Slugger and is becoming one of the faces of baseball.

Fans outside of Cleveland are becoming more and more familiar with the Tribe's dynamic infield duo.

"People in Cleveland knew how good they were," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "But, when you see fans voting for them, I think it's a pretty cool reward for those guys, because we're not the biggest market. It seems like people last year really started to vote for them. Not just from Cleveland."

If fans voted both Ramirez and Lindor into the AL starting lineup this year, they would be the first third baseman and shortstop from the Indians to start since 1948 (Lou Boudreau and Ken Keltner). They represent Cleveland on this season's AL ballot, along with first baseman Yonder Alonso, second baseman Jason Kipnis, catcher Yan Gomes, left fielder Michael Brantley, center fielder Bradley Zimmer, right fielder Tyler Naquin and designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion.

Fans may cast votes for starters at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online using the 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot until Thursday, July 5, at 11:59 p.m. ET. On smartphones and tablets, fans can also access the ballot via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps. Each fan can vote up to five times in any 24-hour period, for a maximum of 35 ballots cast.

Following the announcement of this year's All-Star starters, reserves and pitchers, fans should return to MLB.com and cast their 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Final Vote for the final player on each league's roster. Then on Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans may visit MLB.com to submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 MLB All-Star Game MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, please visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

Last year, Ramirez became the first Indians player to be voted into the AL starting lineup since 2001, and the third baseman has turned in an incredible encore performance to date. With his homer on Thursday night in Minnesota, Ramirez ended May tied with Mike Trout, Bryce Harper and J.D. Martinez for the Major League lead in home runs (18).

During Thursday's win, Lindor collected two home runs and a pair of doubles, becoming the first shortstop since at least 1908 to have two games in one season with at least four extra-base hits. Both he and Ramirez had prolific showings in May, hitting a combined .356/.432/.747 with 21 homers, 25 doubles, 29 walks, 33 strikeouts, 48 RBIs and 53 runs for the month.

Beyond Ramirez (2017) and Lindor (2016-17), the position players listed for the Indians on this year's ballot include former All-Stars in Encarnacion (2013, '14 and '16), Kipnis ('13 and '15), Brantley ('14 and '17) and Alonso ('17). Last season, Cleveland sent five players to the All-Star Game, with ace Corey Kluber and reliever Andrew Miller joining Ramirez, Lindor and Brantley at the Midsummer Classic in Miami.

Given the play of Ramirez and Lindor through two months this year, Indians fans probably will not be the only ones voting for them to attend the All-Star Game again this season.

"They're some really good baseball players and fortunately they're on our team," Indians closer Cody Allen said. "It's not lost on us how good those guys are."

Mejia hits fourth homer for Clippers

By William Boor MLB.com @wboor

• No. 12 overall prospect Francisco Mejia (Indians' No. 1) provided all the offense for Triple-A Columbus in a loss to Syracuse. Mejia put the Clippers on the board with a two-run homer, his fourth, in the fourth, but he finished just 1-for-4. Mejia does have a five-game hitting streak going, but he has been having a tough season and is hitting .190 through 44 games.

Zimmer's return much needed for Tribe outfield

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians started to get their outfield back in order on Friday, when the club activated center fielder Bradley Zimmer from the disabled list.

Zimmer sustained a left rib contusion while crashing into the center-field wall at Yankee Stadium on a catch attempt in a game on May 5, but he was not placed on the 10-day DL until May 15, retroactive to May 12, after he tried to come back from the issue. While Zimmer has returned, the Indians still have outfielders Lonnie Chisenhall (right calf), Brandon Guyer (neck strain) and Tyler Naquin (left hamstring) on the DL.

Indians manager Terry Francona noted on Thursday that both Chisenhall and Guyer might be ready for activation as early as Tuesday. At that point, Cleveland will need to make some decisions about its outfield, which has Michael Brantley, along with a mix of Greg Allen, Rajai Davis and Melky Cabrera being mixed into the equation.

Francona said the team will meet on Monday's off-day to weigh contract situations and players with Minor League options, along with roster fit and performance, in order to make its decisions.

"You can try to have the perfect team, say, on Tuesday," Francona said prior to Friday's game against the Twins. "But, as we've seen, all kinds of stuff happens. So, if you try to get the perfect team and you let this guy go, you designate this guy, you do this, and then you look up a week from now and you go, 'Where's our outfielders?' So, you have to keep that in mind.

"Certainly, the goal is to win every game here, but I think you have to be mindful of the organization, like the health of the organization. And [the front office leaders] are great about that. I think they've really helped me to understand probably maybe some of the bigger picture. Managers want the best team every day. That's the way it is."

Worth noting

- In order to add Zimmer to the active roster, the Indians optioned right-hander Shane Bieber to Triple-A Columbus. Bieber made his Major League debut in a spot start against the Twins on Thursday, allowing four runs on eight hits with six strikeouts and one walk in a no-decision. The Indians do not need a fifth starter again until June 12, when Bieber and Adam Plutko will be the top candidates to rejoin the rotation.

Bieber -- a fourth-round pick by the Indians in the 2016 MLB Draft -- rose from Class A Lake County to the Majors in a little more than a year. Between Double-A Akron and Triple-A Columbus this season, the righty has gone 5-1 with a 1.10 ERA and 61 strikeouts against three walks in 65 1/3 innings in 10 starts. Francona said his MLB debut was a proud moment for the player-development staffers.

"Organizationally, there's probably some people that were walking around with their chest out," Francona said. "As they should be. This kid was a fourth-round pick. He's kind of flown through and now he's at the Major League level and he's showing poise and all the things that [you look for]."

- Naquin, who is on the 10-day DL due to a left hamstring injury, worked out with Double-A Akron on Friday, according to Francona. The Indians manager noted that Naquin will likely play in his first Minor League rehab game this weekend.

- During the month of May, the Indians' offense ranked first in the Majors in weighted runs created plus (128), weighed on-base average (.363), slugging percentage (.499), average (.283) and runs scored (179), while leading the American League in WAR (8.1 per Fangraphs) and on-base percentage (.350).

Covering the Bases: Game 56

by Jordan Bastian

FIRST: Jose Ramirez strutted over to the couch in the middle of the visitors' locker room, where Edwin Encarnacion was relaxing in the hours leading up to Friday night's game at Target Field.

Ramirez reached down, grabbed Encarnacion's right leg and pushed it up and in the direction of his teammate's head. As the veteran slugger cringed, Ramirez let go with one hand—still holding the leg up and to its limit with the other—and started chopping Encarnacion's hamstring. Whether this stretch-and-massage routine was wanted is anyone's guess.

Then, Ramirez pulled one of the large couch cushions out and moved to the corner of the room, where he began playfully whacking assistant hitting coach Victor Rodriguez.

Ramirez's next victim was staff assistant and bullpen catcher Ricky Pacione, who was in the middle of a FaceTime call with his mom. Ramirez grabbed the phone, smiled wide, waved, flashed a thumbs up and then handed it back to a laughing Pacione.

"My mom loves him," Pacione said later. "She was on cloud nine."

As Ramirez left the room, he swatted clubhouse manager Tony Amato on the back of his shoulder, stared him down, rattled off some Spanish and then disappeared into the dining room.

"I'm not sure everybody always understands him," Indians manager Terry Francona said with a chuckle. "But, they all love him and I like that."

This was all in a span of about five minutes.

If Ramirez ever gets tired, he doesn't show it. He is like a walking can of Red Bull for the clubhouse and often acts like a pair of defibrillator paddles for the Indians' offense.

Against the Twins on Friday, Ramirez had an off night. He only went 1-for-4 with a double. That double? It was his 66th two-base hit in his last 162 games, going back to last season. For perspective, the single-season MLB record for doubles is 67 by Earl Webb in 1931.

Another way to frame what Ramirez has been doing is to look at his production over the last calendar year, which you can find under the splits options on Fangraphs.

Heading into Friday's action, Ramirez had 9.3 fWAR over the past calendar year, ranking first among MLB batters. Aaron Judge (8.2), Jose Altuve (7.9), Mike Trout (7.9), Mookie Betts (7.5) and Francisco Lindor (7.3) were next.

Over that time period, Ramirez had played 157 games, in which he hit .319/.385/.626 with 40 homers, 61 doubles, 98 RBI and 120 runs scored, plus nearly as many walks (64) and strikeouts (66). Only J.D. Martinez (1.046), Trout (1.039) and Judge (1.017) had a higher OPS than Ramirez (1.011) in that span.

Endless energy.

"I'd betcha he [does get tired], but I agree," Francona said. "I think because he's a little smaller in stature, his whole life, he's like, '[Screw] it, let's go.'"

SECOND: The outfielders in the Cleveland clubhouse know what's coming. Decision Day is Tuesday and there are only so many seats to be had in this game of musical chairs.

Specifically, the Indians likely have five spots on their roster with eight outfielders in the mix. As Greg Allen tore around the bases on his third inning double on Friday, and then again for a seventh-inning triple, it was hard to see how the Tribe could tell him to pack his bags for Triple-A Columbus.

Over his past seven games, Allen has gone 11-for-27 in the batter's box with three doubles, one homer and a triple.

Is the decision on the outfield alignment more difficult due to Allen's play?

"If it is, we're glad," Francona said. "He started out slow, but now he's starting to make adjustments. He's swinging at more strikes. He's keeping the ball out of the air, especially to left field, and his at-bats have been a lot better. He's swinging at more strikes.

"He's a good defender in center. You can put him in right and he's good there, too. If it makes for a hard decision, I think we're all happy about that."

Michael Brantley manning left is the only given right now. Bradley Zimmer came off the DL on Friday, so he's back for regular action in center. Come Tuesday, Lonnie Chisenhall and Brandon Guyer could be coming off the DL, too. Right now, Rajai Davis, Melky Cabrera and Allen are also in the fold. Tyler Naquin isn't too far away.

Before Friday's game, Francona said he and the front office would be weighing contract situations and players with Minor League options, along with roster fit and performance. Translation: Cleveland wants to be mindful of maintaining depth with four months left in the regular season.

It would be surprising if Zimmer or Chisenhall went anywhere. So, the decisions really seem to come down to Guyer vs. Cabrera and then Davis vs. Allen. Guyer doesn't have options. Cabrera is a switch-hitting veteran with a track record. Davis and Allen both offer speed and the ability to play all three spots.

Naquin? Well, he's a little further away since he has yet to start his Minor League rehab assignment. He has options and, if Chisenhall is healthy, they offer very similar skill-sets. That's a conversation for another day.

"You're aware of these things," Allen said of the looming decisions. "But you're really just trying to take it one day at a time. Control what you can control. Be where your feet are. Try and be in the moment and do the best you can with the opportunity you're given. Whether that's today or the next week. You just try to make the most of each and every opportunity.

THIRD: After Bobby Wilson popped out against Carlos Carrasco in the second inning on Friday, marking the frame's second out, a press box wag remarked, "They've got him right where they want him now."

Two outs has been trouble for Carrasco lately and, sure enough, Brian Dozier and Eddie Rosario followed with back-to-back singles. Another run was in and the Twins' lead was up to 4-0 after two.

Over his past two turns, opposing batters have gone 10-for-18 with three homers, two doubles, four walks, one hit batsmen and 10 runs scored against Carrasco with two outs in the book.

"There's something going on," Carrasco said. "I don't know. I'm just trying to figure it out. That's what happened last outing and today. Two quick outs and I get in trouble. So, I don't know. I'm just trying to figure out what it is. I don't know if I lose my control and I get like, OK, two outs, just go ahead.

"Really, I don't know. I just came back today to the dugout and tried to think to myself about what's going on. Tomorrow's another day. I just want to figure out what's going on, so I don't do that in my next start."

Now, to be fair, this is the location of the curveball Eduardo Escobar hit for his two-out, three-run homer in the first inning: That's just good hitting.

"He got a little bit in front," Carrasco said. "I thought it was a fly ball, but no, that ball is still going. He hit it pretty good."

HOME: Given the extent of the bullpen woes for Cleveland, the team is searching for any signs of progress right now. Friday's night's silver lining was right-hander Neil Ramirez.

Ramirez logged two shutout innings across the fifth and sixth innings, doing his part to buy the Tribe offense some time to mount a comeback. It didn't happen, but his effort did not go unnoticed.

"I thought he was tremendous," Francona said. "He was pounding the strike zone with good stuff. That was really encouraging."

Ramirez averaged 95.8 mph on his four-seamer and 96.2 mph on his two-seamer, topping out at 97.3 mph on the night. Combine that with a slider and the righty will keep getting some looks as the Indians search for stability.

Josh Tomlin allowed a home run in the seventh—his 18th long ball allowed in 36.1 innings this year—but that was the only blemish over 4.1 innings from the bullpen. That lowered the season ERA for the relief corps to 6.01.

Tito's pregame minutiae: June 1 by Jordan Bastian

Q: What went into the decision to keep Greg Allen in the lineup, even with Bradley Zimmer off the DL today?

TF: "You know what? I just think Greg's doing a really good job. Certainly, Zim will get in there. We've got day games. We've got weather. I just thought tonight, he flew today, let him get his legs under him and we can put him in later in the game and hopefully he can impact the game that way. I'd just kind of hate to—Greg's done such a good job—I'd hate to just kind of bail on a guy."

Q: If Lonnie Chisenhall and Brandon Guyer come off the DL as planned on Tuesday, you'll have some moves to make for the outfield. What types of things will go into the decisions?

TF: "One, and I think it's fair, contractually, what guys' [situations are]. I think that's part of it. Guys that have options. I think that's important, because you can try to have the perfect team, say, on Tuesday, but as we've seen, all kinds of stuff happens. So, if you try to get the perfect team and you let this guy go, you designate this guy, you do this, and then you look up a week from now and you go, 'Where's our outfielders?' So, you have to keep that in mind. Certainly, the goal is to win every game here, but I think you have to be mindful of the organization, like the health of the organization. And Chris [Antonetti] and [Mike Chernoff] are great about that. I think they've really helped me to understand probably maybe some of the bigger picture. Managers want the best team every day. That's the way it is."

Q: Using Shane Bieber as an example, how nice is it to have players who come up from the Minors who fit in so well from Day 1?

TF: "I probably should've said something last night more than what I did. There was so much that happened after he left—there was a lot to talk about. But, I think organizationally, there's probably some people that were walking around with their chest out yesterday, as they should be. This kid was a fourth-round pick. He's kind of flown through and now he's at the Major League level and he's showing poise and all the things that [you look for]. So, OK, the kid deserves a [expletive]-ton of credit—I don't know how you write that in there—but there's also the coaches and the people that, shoot, man, I think our guys do a really good job. When they come here, one, they know how to act. And we don't do much babysitting, which we appreciate."

Q: Bieber's walk rate in the Minor Leagues is incredible...

TF: "And I actually think last night wasn't his best strike-throwing night. I actually think there's better command in there. You never quite know what you're going to get on a guy's opening night. As I get older, I probably forget some of the feeling. That's a lot to handle. I thought we did a good job as an organization getting him in a game and now he's in the mix to start. The next time will be easier. He's such a good kid. When I was walking out I ran into his family. You can kind of see why he's a good kid."

Q: What's the latest on Tyler Naquin (10-day DL, left hamstring)?

TF: "He did a full workout with [Double-A] Akron today. We don't have a day yet, but there's a chance over the weekend he starts to play. I think [head athletic trainer James Quinlan] is a little more comfortable with not putting a day yet. But, he's getting close."

Q: Are Chisenhall and Guyer on target for Tuesday?

TF: "That's the plan. That gives us [the day off on] Monday where we can go home—I know they've got the Draft—but we can kind of put our heads together, not just throw something against the wall, make sure we have a plan."

Q: What did you think about how Evan Marshall handled the high-leverage situation in the eighth inning on Thursday?

TF: "I don't think that part bothers him. He did that in [in the past]. His two-seam movement is pretty good, when he gets it down. When he doesn't, he can get himself in trouble. He has a breaking ball and a changeup off of it. If he gets some consistency, he can help us. It's just, we've got to get to the consistency. That's probably the hardest thing for me—how much rope. I thought we had it mapped out, but it didn't work. I told [pitching coach Carl Willis] in the eighth, I said, 'You want some good news?' He's like, 'Yeah.' [I said], 'There's a pretty good chance that not a lot of people are watching us right now.'"

Q: Lindor kind of bailed the bullpen out...

TF: "He had a pretty good day. I told Frankie, 'With a day off, you're pretty good. We might start playing you Monday, Wednesday and Friday.'"

Q: Just a little bit ago, Jose Ramirez was bouncing around the clubhouse, messing with different players, just having fun. He seems to have an endless amount of energy...

TF: "How about where he's come from. I'm not sure everybody always understands him, but they all love him and I like that. You can tell when guys come back to the dugout after doing something—you can tell. Sometimes I look in the other dugout just to watch. When Josey comes back, they're there. I'd betcha he [does get tired], but I agree. I think because he's a little smaller in stature, his whole life, he's like, '[Screw] it, let's go.'"

Twins 7, Indians 4: Carlos Carrasco has rocky outing as Cleveland's six-game win streak ends

Brian Hall | The Associated PressPublished on June 1, 2018 | Updated 2:10 a. m.

MINNEAPOLIS — Losing six of seven games had the Minnesota Twins searching for answers, with manager Paul Molitor addressing his team and second baseman Brian Dozier calling a meeting.

The two wanted to discuss the miscues that had plagued playoff-hopeful Minnesota this season. Eduardo Escobar and Jose Berrios then helped lift the Twins over the Cleveland Indians.

Escobar hit two homers and drove in four runs, Berrios pitched six effective innings and Minnesota pulled away for a 7-4 win Friday night.

It was a real reversal of fortunes, as the Indians had won a season-high six straight.

"Everybody stay strong, that's the most important," Escobar said. "Play hard no matter what happens, it's the most important. Everybody working hard, so you see today everybody run hard, play hard."

Dozier opened the bottom of the first inning with a double off the right-field wall in a two-hit night. Escobar's three-run homer in the first started the scoring against Indians starter Carlos Carrasco (6-4).

Carrasco had his second-shortest outing of the season with 3 2/3 innings.

Miguel Sano's RBI double chased Carrasco after the right-hander tied a season high with six runs on seven hits and three walks.

"He wasn't real crisp, kind of like the game in Milwaukee where he pitched himself into it," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "I thought they also went down and got a couple good pitches. Escobar went down to get a breaking ball a couple times. Really was a difference-maker for them, and it wasn't a bad pitch."

Escobar added a solo shot, his 10th of the season, in the seventh as the Twins snapped a three-game losing streak. The 5-foot-10, 185-pound infielder has four multihomer games in his career and two this season.

"I'm not a big guy," Escobar said. "I don't go to home plate and think about a home run. I concentrate, look at the ball, swing hard."

Edwin Encarnacion homered for Cleveland.

Berrios (6-5) allowed four runs and five hits with seven strikeouts. Fernando Rodney secured his 12th save in 15 chances, which includes nine straight conversions.

"We're still trying to tighten up and watching some of the things that are maybe not as apparent to people just following the ball, things we need to do," Molitor said. "The guys were made aware of it and trying to take it to heart and apply it, and as long as it doesn't make them more nervous trying not to make a mistake."

No respect

Cleveland decided to walk Minnesota's Eddie Rosario intentionally twice to face Sano, who was hitting .226 with two home runs in 31 at-bats since being activated from the disabled list a week ago. Rosario entered the night hitting .308 with nine homers and a team-high 33 RBIs.

Carrasco reached a 2-0 count against Rosario in the fourth with a runner on third. Sano promptly lined a double to left to score one run after he struck out his first two times against Carrasco.

"I thought, 'I've got to get another strikeout,' but I threw the slider kind of inside-middle," Carrasco said. "He just got that pitch right there and hit a double and got another run right there. It is what it is. I should have thrown a better pitch instead of going inside-middle."

With another runner at third with two outs in the sixth, reliever Neil Ramirez gave Rosario the free pass before Sano flied out to right field.

Watch out

Carrasco was hit in the glove by a comebacker off the bat of Robbie Grossman in the fourth. Carrasco dropped to the ground quickly following Grossman's liner, but appeared to get his glove up in time to knock the ball down.

** Logan Morrison had his bat snap on a foul ball in the fifth and the bat shard sailed directly behind him where Escobar just managed to dive out of the way.

Indians moves

The Indians activated outfielder Bradley Zimmer from the disabled list before the game and optioned Thursday's starting pitcher, Shane Bieber, to Triple-A Columbus.

Zimmer, who wasn't in the lineup Friday, was on the DL since May 12 with a rib contusion. He's hit .224 this season with two home runs and nine RBIs in 32 games.

Trainer's room

INDIANS: OF Tyler Naquin (left hamstring strain) had a full workout at Double-A Akron on Friday and Francona said he'll likely be ready to play this weekend.

TWINS: Molitor said the team is going to "be a little bit smarter today" about 1B Joe Mauer's workouts as he tries to recover from concussion symptoms. Mauer had trouble when working out before Thursday's game, but Molitor said he was able to stay at the park and for the entirety of the game. Mauer was also in the dugout Friday.

Up next

INDIANS: RHP Trevor Bauer (4-3, 2.61) is scheduled to start today's matinee. Bauer will be making the start on extended five days rest after throwing a career-high 127 pitches Sunday against Houston.

TWINS: RHP Lance Lynn (3-4, 5.94) counters for Minnesota. Lynn has won his last two starts while allowing two runs in 12 2/3 innings.

RubberDucks report: Indians prospect Bobby Bradley hoping to stay within approach longer by Beacon Journal/Ohio.com

Like a hungry wolf being tossed a chunk of raw meat, Bobby Bradley just can't help himself when a pitcher makes a mistake.

The RubberDucks first baseman knows he needs to stay within his approach, to stay honest at the plate and put up a quality at-bat. But when a curveball hangs near the top of the zone or a fastball is tossed down the middle, he becomes no match for his instincts. He has to try to launch it for a home run.

"I just get too excited," Bradley said, smiling. "I see a nice mistake by a pitcher and just get too happy and my approach goes out the window. I'm just trying to stay locked in and stick to my approach, but then I go up there and halfway through I forget and just try to hit a homer."

That, after all, is what has made Bradley one of the Indians' top prospects — he's ranked third within the system according to both Baseball America and MLB Pipeline, behind Francisco Mejia and Triston McKenzie.

Bradley slugged 23 home runs and 25 doubles and drove in 89 runs in 131 games for the Ducks last season. This year, he's brought the power — nine home runs and eight doubles in only 176 at-bats — but his average has dipped to .179 and he's struck out 48 times.

Bradley went 0-for-3 and struck out twice in a 1-0 loss to the Erie SeaWolves Friday at Canal Park. Ducks starter Shao-Ching Chiang was the hard-luck, allowing a first-inning run and five hits in seven innings.

The Ducks have attributed some of Bradley's lower average to the Double-A level adjusting to Bradley in his second year. Hitting coach Kevin Howard said Bradley, because of the power potential with his bat, has seen about twice as many breaking balls as any other hitter on the team.

"He's doing a good job, he's just being attacked differently than most hitters," Howard said of Bradley, a sturdy 6-1 and 225 pounds. "He needs to adjust and learn how to game plan against pitchers, and he's doing a good job of learning how to make this adjustments. It's getting better every game and that's what you ask for."

The club also believes that although Bradley's average is low, some of it has been bad luck, especially lately. It's their reminder not to be seduced by results as much as the process and quality at-bats.

Bradley said he's been pleased with the start to his season despite some less-than-stellar numbers. And, recently, he's seen some of those rewards with two home runs in his past two games entering Friday, although there is still room to grow for the 22-year-old slugger.

"He's starting to take to his plan more," Ducks manager Tony Mansolino said of Bradley. "It seems like he's swinging at the pitches he wants to. The more he does that, the better he's going to be. He's a guy who has the ability to hit for a high average, but that's not what he's here for — he's here to drive the baseball."

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The post RubberDucks report: Indians prospect Bobby Bradley hoping to stay within approach longer appeared first on Ohio.com.

Cleveland Indians: Hot Jose, Cool Kluber, outfield issues -- Terry Pluto

By Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer terrypluto2003@yahoo.com

ABOUT JOSE RAMIREZ

There are some amazing notes about Jose Ramirez, who suddenly is the Tribe's super slugger.

How about this?

Ramirez ended May with 18 HR.

That's the most since...Albert Belle, who ended May of 1996 with 21.

Or how about this?

Entering the weekend, his 8 HR were tied for most in the majors with Bryce Harper, Mike Trout and J.D. Martinez.

It's astounding.

When Ramirez bounced up and down from the minors in 2014 and 2015, the question was if he'd hit enough to even be a starter. It appeared Ramirez was on track to be a utility infielder.

I remember having a few conversations with Chris Antonetti when Ramirez was struggling. The Tribe president believed Ramirez would become a good big leaguer.

1. He had hit in the minors...a career .304 batting average (.766 OPS).
2. He was a switch hitter and kept improving. He was a career .300 hitter when he played parts of 2014-15 at Class AAA Columbus.
3. He was so young. He came to the big leagues at the age of 21 in 2013. When he finally stayed with the Tribe for the entire 2016 season, he was only 23...His birthday is Sept. 17, 1992.
4. He was a smart player in the minors, easily learning different positions. He stole a lot of bases for a guy with average speed. Ramirez figures things out.
That said, no one saw the power barrage coming.

Let's not fall into the PED trap. There was a strange report from the Dominican Republic that Ramirez flunked a drug test. Both the Indians and Major League Baseball immediately denied it.

MLB is not going to deny something like that unless the report was trash.

The 5-foot-9 Ramirez has become the Tribe's version of Jose Altuve, the 5-foot-6 superstar for the Astros.

Altuve arrived in the majors in 2011...at the age of 21.

He never hit more than 7 HR in a season until 2015...when he hit 15 HR.

In 2016 and 2017, he hit 24 HR each season.

Altuve is a career .318 hitter. From 2015-17, he batted .332 (.898 OPS), averaging 21 HR and 81 RBI.

Altuve and Ramirez have more than production in common. They are so much fun to watch. They love playing the game, and they strut around in a very engaging way.

In 2016, Ramirez batted .312 (.825 OPS) with 11 HR and 78 RBI.

The next spring, the Indians signed him to a contract extension that looks terrific for the team right now.

Out of the Dominican Republic, Ramirez signed for \$50,000 and never made any real money by baseball standards. They gave him a \$2 million signing bonus in 2017.

It made sense for him to grab a chance to become an instant millionaire.

Here is what he has left on his deal:

2018: \$2.4 million.

2019: \$3.7 million.

2020: \$6.2 million.

2021: \$9 million.

2022: \$11 million (team option, \$2 million buyout).

2023: \$13 million (team option).

Meanwhile, Ramirez keeps hitting and hitting.

He is batting .302 (1.030 OPS) with those 18 HR and 41 RBI.

ABOUT COREY KLUBER & STANLEY COVELESKI

I've been writing sports a long time in Northeast Ohio, but even I never saw Stanley Coveleski. I know he's in the Hall of Fame, but I haven't even thought of the old spitballer (yes, that was his pitch) for a long time.

Anyway, Kluber became the first Tribe pitcher to open the season with 12 quality starts (3 earned runs or less in at least six innings) since old Stanley did it in 1918, when he ran his streak to 16 in a row.

Coveleski is in the Hall of Fame.

In his career, he threw 223 complete games in 385 starts! I don't think they worried about pitch counts during his era (1916-1924).

Coveleski finished with a 215-142 record and a 2.89 ERA.

But even old Stanley didn't do what Kluber did in the month of May - walking only one batter!

That's right, Kluber walked one in 39-2/3 innings.

ABOUT THE INDIANS

1. Bradley Zimmer came off the disabled list. He ran into a wall and suffered several bruises. The center fielder is excellent defensively. But will he hit? Zimmer is batting .224 with 2 HR and 9 RBI. Of real concern are his 39 strikeouts in 106 plate appearances.

2. Before he was hurt, Zimmer had struck out 20 times in his last 46 at bats. I mention all this not to bury Zimmer, but it's to point out Greg Allen used the injuries to Zimmer and other outfielders to impress the Tribe.

3. A rookie center fielder, Allen is batting .286 (.753 OPS) with 1 HR and 3 RBI. He started slow, but is batting .306 (.827 OPS) in his last 15 games. Zimmer has minor league options left. Allen will probably be sent to the minors soon when Lonnie Chisenhall is activated. But it's possible Allen and Zimmer could trade places unless Zimmer begins to hit.

4. As the Indians sort through their outfield situation, Rajai Davis could be in trouble. He is batting only .217 (.520 OPS) with zero HR and 3 RBI. He is 8-of-11 in stolen bases. The Tribe may prefer veteran Melky Cabrera over Davis. Manager Terry Francona has mentioned a few times how he prefers a veteran switch hitter, which is why he is intrigued by Cabrera.

5. Edwin Encarnacion batted .158 in April. He's awful in cold weather. Since May 1, the Tribe slugger is batting .297 (.800 OPS) with 10 HR and 29 RBI. Overall, Encarnacion has 14 HR and 36 RBI - meaning he'll probably finish with his usual 35-40 HR and 100 or more RBI.

6. I was hoping the bullpen would help Josh Tomlin. But he's allowed 3 HR in 6-1/3 innings since losing his spot in the rotation. He could work in long relief, but his tendency to give up homers makes it hard to bring him into games with men on base. Tomlin has served up 18 HR in 35-1/3 innings this season.

7. I was looking at the Columbus Clippers stats and saw the Tribe had a pitcher with the last name of "Talbot" at Class AAA. I wondered, could it be Mitch Talbot? Yep. It's the same Mitch Talbot who was in the Tribe rotation for parts of 2010-11. He was 12-19 with a 5.01 ERA in that span. He hurt his arm in 2011 and has not pitched in the majors since.

8. Talbot has pitched in Korea. He pitched for the Long Island Ducks in an independent league. His last stop was the Sugarland Skeeters, where he was 3-1 with a 1.92 ERA this season. That's also an independent league team. The right-hander is 34, and the Indians just want some depth at Class AAA.

9. It took a while, but Yandy Diaz is starting to hit in Columbus. He is batting .419 in the last 10 games, raising his overall average to .292 with zero HR and 16 RBI. He is playing third base, where he has four errors in 38 games. Diaz hit .350 at Columbus last season. His lack of power is what keeps him in the minors.

10. I still think Diaz can hit in the majors if given a chance, but the Indians have All-Star Jose Ramirez at third base. I'd like to see the Indians make the 6-foot-3 Diaz into a first baseman. He could eventually platoon there with lefty-hitting Yonder Alonso.

Mitch Longo enjoys time at plate for Lynchburg Hillcats: Cleveland Indians Minors

Branson Wright

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Mitch Longo is often outnumbered but he will never hide his allegiance when it comes to his hometown.

"Everyone around here gives me a hard time because it seems everyone is either from Latin America or California, which means they're Golden State fans," said Longo, Mayfield, Ohio native and outfielder for Lynchburg Hillcats. "But I'm team LeBron no matter what ... I just hope they can [win the Finals]."

Longo has provided the Hillcats with some pop at the plate. Longo, selected by the Cleveland Indians in round 14 of the 2016 MLB Draft, has had multi-hit games in four of his last 11 games.

He was 3-for-5 and scored twice on Wednesday.

"I feel as of late that I'm sticking more to my plan because earlier in the year I would hunt [chase] pitches," Longo said. "I've been working with the hitting coordinator and our hitting coach on working with my lower half and getting more power into my zone."

But Longo's hitting has not always been on point. He was 0-for-8 prior to his 3-for-5 game and he had only one hit Thursday night.

"I've been through some highs and some lows and there has been times that I haven't hit well but I remain confident," Longo said.

Locked in: Pitcher Luis Jimenez has found his rhythm on the mound after a slow start to the season. Over 8.1 innings he has given up just one run on four hits while striking out seven, lowering his ERA from 12.10 to 6.87 (5.23). He picked up a season-high four strikeouts against the Mudcats on Wednesday, striking out the side in the seventh.

M&M: Micah Miniard pitched four scoreless innings in relief Sunday, allowing just one baserunner. He also tossed 5.1 scoreless innings in last Tuesday's game, in which he earned his first win of the season. This season in four bullpen appearances Miniard has not allowed a run in 14.1 innings of work.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.02.2018

Francisco Lindor, Jose Ramirez already making strong cases for All-Star selections

Joe Noga

MINNEAPOLIS -- Voting for the Major League Baseball All-Star Game begins today, but Cleveland Indians infielders Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez have been making their cases for spots on the American League roster for about a month already.

If June looks anything like the month of May for Cleveland's dynamic duo, you can expect to see both of them on the American League roster in Washington D.C. when the game is played July 17.

Lindor and Ramirez each just wrapped up an unprecedented May that included becoming the first Indians teammates since Jim Thome (10) and Karim Garcia (10) in 2002 to hit 10 or more home runs in a single calendar month.

Lindor's third multi-homer game of the year Thursday was also the fifth of his career and marked the second time he's collected four extra-base hits in a game this season.

In his last 15 games, Lindor is batting .286 (18-for-63) with four doubles and two home runs. He now has a hit in each of his last four games.

Indians closer Cody Allen said Lindor and Ramirez's teammates recognize how much hard work the two put in.

"They're some really good baseball players and fortunately they're on our team," Allen said. "Those guys are all stacked right there together, that's got to be a big challenge for opposing pitchers."

Lindor's 44 hits this month are the most in baseball. He's hit two doubles and two home runs in a game on two occasions this year, including May 12 against Kansas City, becoming the first player since Adrian Beltre in 2008 and fourth player since 1908 to do so.

Ramirez, an All-Star for the first time last year, hit .336 (36-for-107) with 11 homers and 25 RBI in May. His 18 home runs are the second-most through the end of the month in franchise history (Albert Belle, 21 in 1996).

Rookie pitcher Shane Bieber, who was able to work with an eight-run cushion for much of his major league debut on Thursday thanks to Lindor and Ramirez's production at the plate, said it's exciting to be part of an organization that can produce lineups with such dynamic hitters.

"Those are two of the best guys in the league," Bieber said. "The clutch hitting, the early hitting, everything. It's really exciting to be a part of and to have those guys in my lineup and not facing them."

Lindor ranks among major-league leaders in runs scored, extra-base hits, doubles, total hits, OPS and home runs. He's collected 22 multi-hit games and has five hits in his last two games, including the go-ahead home run in Thursday's win against Minnesota.

Ramirez is tied for the major league lead with 18 home runs and also ranks among the league's best in extra-base hits, RBI, OPS, slugging percentage, total bases, doubles and walks. Ramirez has been among baseball's toughest hitters to strike out, averaging 10 plate appearances per whiff this season.

Lindor said watching Ramirez's approach at the plate is unreal.

"You can tell, pitch after pitch, what he's trying to do and he accomplishes it," Lindor said. "It's fun to watch him. I'm glad he's on my team and I'm glad I had a chance to grow up with him."

But the two-time All-Star shortstop downplayed any sort of rivalry or one-upmanship between the two teammates.

"I can't compete against him, I refuse," Lindor laughed. "I wish him nothing but the best. I want him to do as well as he can do."

Manager Terry Francona said a little healthy competition among teammates isn't necessarily a bad thing, as long as the two are both pulling the rope in the same direction.

"They're a pretty amazing combination," Francona said. "Seems like they just keep getting better. And we're going to need it."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.02.2018

Cleveland Indians activate Bradley Zimmer, send Shane Bieber to Class AAA Columbus

Joe Noga

MINNEAPOLIS -- As expected, the Cleveland Indians activated outfielder Bradley Zimmer from the 10-day disabled list Friday and shipped rookie pitcher Shane Bieber back to Class AAA Columbus one day after making his major-league debut.

Zimmer rejoins the team after missing the last three weeks with a bruised left chest. He suffered the injury May 5 while crashing into the center field wall at Yankee Stadium.

Zimmer was hitting .224 with two home runs and nine RBI before being placed on the disabled list May 15. He made two appearances each for Class AA Akron and Class AAA Columbus on rehab assignments in the last week, hitting .250 (3-for-12) with two walks, two strikeouts and two stolen bases.

Bieber tossed 5 2/3 innings, allowing four runs on eight hits in his debut Thursday against Minnesota.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.02.2018

Yandy Diaz streaks in right direction for Columbus Clippers: Cleveland Indians minors

Branson Wright

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Look who's back.

After suffering through a drought without a multi-hit game, Columbus Clippers third baseman Yandy Diaz is riding a nine game on-base streak (.500 OBP) that saw his season OBP rise to the top of the International League.

Diaz has been so solid at the plate that he hit in the fourth spot Wednesday night for the first time this season. Diaz had two hits on Wednesday and two more on Thursday.

The Clippers hope Diaz can fill a void that has been a problem area for the team this season (3 homers, 20 RBIs and 119 LOB in 49 games).

Double trouble: Yu Chang had his second game with three doubles earlier this week, marking the 31st time such a feat has been turned in franchise history (third time this year).

Chang is now tied for fifth in the league with 14 doubles on the season (on pace for 40), five behind Brandon Barnes for the lead. Barnes is on pace for 54 doubles, a number that would shatter the franchise record (42, Kurt Bierek, 1999).

Ice Ice Baby: Since going 3-for-3 with a double, homer and 4 RBIs on May 4 vs. Charlotte, Francisco Mejia is hitting just .164 (9-for-55) with three RBIs and 29 LOB in 17 games.

His average has dipped to .186 and is third worst in the International League. From the left side he is hitting 145 points lower than from the right (-50 points in career).

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.02.2018

Cleveland Indians win streak snapped as Eduardo Escobar's two home runs power Minnesota Twins to victory, 7-4

Joe Noga

MINNEAPOLIS -- Carlos Carrasco struggled to finish innings after getting to two outs, and the Cleveland Indians lost for the first time in a week, falling 7-4 to the Minnesota Twins on Friday at Target Field.

Eduardo Escobar launched a three-run homer with two out in the first inning and added a solo shot in the seventh to lead Minnesota's offense. Eddie Rosario, Ryan LaMarre and Miguel Sano added RBI for the Twins.

Carrasco (6-4, 4.50), threw strikes, but allowed a lot of traffic on the bases. He surrendered seven hits and walked three, striking out only two. He lasted just 3 2/3 innings, his second-shortest outing of the season.

Manager Terry Francona said Minnesota's hitters adjusted to Carrasco and hit a couple of good pitches.

"Things were just a little flat," Francona of Carrasco's outing. "They didn't have to respect his fastball as maybe they normally would."

Escobar's first home run came on a two-strike pitch that Carrasco threw down in the zone.

"That's what happened in my last outing and today," Carrasco said. "Two quick outs and I get in trouble. So, I don't know. I'm just trying to figure out what it is."

The Indians are now 12-15 on the road this season and 8-13 when their opponent scores first.

Jose Berrios (6-5, 3.86 ERA) pitched six innings for the win, striking out seven and allowing four earned runs, including a two-run homer to Edwin Encarnacion, his 14th of the season, in the sixth.

It was Encarnacion's 13th career home run at Target Field, the fourth-most in the ballpark's history behind Jose Bautista, Salvador Perez and Carlos Santana, who each have 14.

The home run also extended Encarnacion's hitting streak to eight games. He is hitting .438 (14-for-32) during that stretch. Encarnacion added a single in the eighth inning for his 13th multi-hit game of the season.

Greg Allen collected a double and a triple and scored a run on Michael Brantley's RBI sacrifice fly in the third. He is riding a seven-game hitting streak, and raised his extra-base hit total to seven. It was also Allen's sixth multi-hit game of the year.

In just his 46th career game, Allen appears to be settling into a groove at the plate.

"I think the more experience you're able to get, the better," Allen said. "At the end of the day, though, it's all about finding a way to help the team win. Unfortunately, we came up just a little bit short today, but hopefully, we'll look to get back on top of things tomorrow."

SKOL night

The Twins celebrated SKOL night at Target Field on Friday, welcoming members of the Minnesota Vikings to take batting practice before the game. Everson Griffen, Stephon Diggs, Kirk Cousins, Harrison Smith and Adam Thielen were among the Vikings to take their hacks.

Griffen hit a home run to left field while wearing jean shorts. Scoreboard graphics at the park featured the Vikings' familiar purple and gold colors, and fans could pick up a co-branded purple Twins "SKOL" baseball cap. The "SKOL" chant that has become familiar at Vikings games was also heard several times throughout the night at the park.

What it means

Minnesota snaps Cleveland's winning streak after six games and evened the season series at 2-2. Cleveland is 14-6 against American League Central Division opponents in 2018.

The pitches

Carrasco threw 71 pitches, 48 (68 percent) for strikes. Berrios threw 99 pitches, 69 (70 percent) for strikes.

See ya there

The Twins and Indians drew 30,171 fans to Target Field on Friday. First pitch was at 8:11 p.m. with a temperature of 79 degrees.

Next

The series continues Saturday with an 4:10 p.m. start as Trevor Bauer (4-3, 2.61) takes the mound for Cleveland and Lance Lynn (3-4, 5.94) goes for Minnesota. Fox Sports1, WTAM/AM 1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the game.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.02.2018

Greg Allen is making Cleveland Indians' outfield decision difficult, and that's fine with Terry Francona

Joe Noga

MINNEAPOLIS -- Bradley Zimmer returned to the Cleveland Indians roster on Friday, but it was Greg Allen who got the start in center field, his 11th straight and 13th in the Tribe's last 15 games.

Manager Terry Francona said before the ballgame that Zimmer would ease his way back into the lineup, but Francona did not want to overlook the progress that Allen had made in the last several weeks.

"Greg's done such a good job, I'd hate to just kind of bail on a guy," Francona said.

Allen entered Friday's game against Minnesota hitting .333 with a pair of doubles, a home run and two RBI in the last week. He doubled and scored in his first at-bat against Twins starter Jose Berrios.

He said preparation has been the key to his recent success at the plate.

"Being confident in what you're doing and in your ability," Allen said. "Then over time, hopefully, allowing that to show."

Francona sees the work that Allen has put into his game, and recognizes the adjustments he's made since early May. Francona said he can't be unhappy if Allen's play makes next week's looming roster decisions more difficult.

"How often do you see a young kid come up and tear the house up and then the league starts making adjustments?" Francona said. "It's nice to see a kid, he started out slow, but now he's starting to make adjustments. He's swinging at more strikes. He's keeping the ball out of the air, especially to left field. And his at-bats have been a lot better."

Allen was the 26th player added to the Tribe's roster for its Puerto Rico series against Minnesota in mid-April. He was recalled from Class AAA Columbus on May 6 after Zimmer injured himself crashing into the center field wall at Yankee Stadium.

When Zimmer went on the disabled list the following week, Allen started seeing regular playing time in center and right field.

"I'm really just trying to make the most of that," Allen said. "Trying to find ways to help the team win. At the end of the day, that's the bottom line."

On Sunday, he ended Cleveland's dramatic come-from-behind win against Houston with a walk-off solo home run in the 14th inning. On Wednesday, with Francisco Lindor getting a day off to rest, Allen batted leadoff for the first time this season and went 2-for-5 with a run scored.

With Lonnie Chisenhall and Brandon Guyer set to return from the disabled list some time around next Tuesday, Francona said there are several steps in the process of deciding who stays on the 25-man roster.

Contracts are a factor, he admitted. So are players like Allen who have minor league options remaining. A manager wants to always have the best team possible in the clubhouse, Francona said, but it's the front office's responsibility to look at the big picture.

"Chris (Antonetti) and (GM Mike Chernoff) are great about that," Francona said. "If you try to get the perfect team and you let this guy go, you designate this guy, you do this, and then you look up a week from now and you go, 'where's our outfielders?'"

Allen, meanwhile, knows there is a place for him, whether it's on the 25-man roster or waiting in Columbus for another opportunity with the Indians. When the decision is made, that's where his focus will be.

"That stuff will work itself out the way it needs to," Allen said. "My job is to play each and every day and find ways to contribute. However that stuff works out, it works out. I want to make the most of my opportunity wherever that may be."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 06.02.2018

Eduardo Escobar's two homers power Twins past Indians, 7-4

By JOHN SHIPLEY | jshipley@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press

Francisco Liriano was 4-7 with a 5.30 earned-run average, and an impending unrestricted free agent, when the Twins finally cut the cord on their former left-handed phenom and sent him to the Chicago White Sox at the 2012 trade deadline.

The return package was a small one, a utility infielder named Eduardo Escobar purported to be 5-foot-10. He's not, but he hasn't exactly been a utility infielder, either. Yes, he plays a good middle infield and third base, but he's become much more than a fill-in.

"He's proved his value around here," said Twins manager Paul Molitor, a roving instructor at the time of the trade who first saw Escobar as a member of the Triple-A Rochester Red Wings.

Liriano has been solid since leaving the Twins — 52-47 with a 3.87 ERA with Pittsburgh, Toronto, Houston and now Detroit — but the trade has been a good one for Minnesota, with whom Escobar has become a late-blooming, and unlikely, power hitter.

Escobar homered twice and drove in four runs on Friday as the Twins ended a three-game losing streak with a 7-4 victory over first-place Cleveland in front of a paid crowd of 30,171 on Friday night at Target Field.

His first-inning homer off Carlos Carrasco (6-4) gave the Twins a 3-0 lead; his second traveled 443 feet into the upper deck in right field for an important insurance run in the seventh — the longest homer of the season for any Twins player.

"The first one was timely," Molitor said. "The second one was impressive."

Jose Berrios (6-5) scattered five hits and fanned seven as the Twins pulled within 5.5 games of the Indians in the American League Central and evened an important four-game series 1-1.

In the teams' previous eight games, Cleveland was 6-2, the Twins 1-7 — despite scoring eight runs three times. Escobar is hitting .275 with three home runs and nine RBIs in his past seven games and now has a team-high 10 home runs and 30 RBIs, second on the Twins roster to only Eddie Rosario's 34.

"I'm just seeing the ball; it looks bigger than usual," Escobar said. "The team tells you to relax and see the ball well and make good contact, you know?"

In Escobar's first six major league seasons, he hit 27 home runs and drove in 151 runs in 490 games; since last season, he has 31 homers and 103 RBIs in 178 games. That's an impressive transformation for any hitter, but for one who stands about 5-8 and weighs 185 pounds, it's somewhat uncanny.

"There's just something about his bat-to-ball skills that are pretty impressive given the package that he's coming in," Molitor said. "That translates to some pretty amazing power."

Edwin Encarnacion hit his 14th home run with a man aboard in the sixth inning to pull the Indians within 6-4, but Berrios got the next two batters, Yonder Alonso and Melky Cabrera, to ground out to second to retain the Twins' lead. But Escobar answered with his mammoth blast in the seventh, and relievers Trevor Hildenberger, Zach Duke and Fernando Rodney each pitched a scoreless inning to nail down the victory.

Rodney earned his 12th save with a perfect ninth.

"I feel like the team's really coming around," said Ryan LaMarre, playing center in place of injured Byron Buxton (toe). LaMarre's fourth-inning double was his first major league extra-base hit and scored Robbie Grossman from first for a 5-2 lead. The Twins have scored 32 runs in their past five games (2-3).

"The offense is swinging better top to bottom, and our pitching's been there for a while now, so I feel like we're on the right track," LaMarre said.

Berrios does enough to get the win

By Chris Hine JUNE 1, 2018 — 11:26PM

Berrios does enough: Jose Berrios stopped the recent run of woeful starting pitching and managed to get the win while compiling six innings with seven strikeouts and allowing four runs. Berrios threw 99 pitches – his third outing with that pitch count – with 69 strikes.

According to Statcast, he threw 28 curveballs and 63 fastballs. Berrios said he had what amounted to four "missed" pitches. One was a curveball he hung to Edwin Encarnacion, who clubbed a two-run home run to make it 6-4 in the sixth.

But Berrios was able to settle after the home run and get two more out to exit the inning before exiting the game.

"I had 100 pitches so (manager Paul Molitor) was taking me out after the sixth," Berrios said. "But that's baseball. That's how many I throw in almost eight innings and they score two runs and we lose, but (Friday) they score four and we win. So that's what we want. We want to win, no matter what."

Getting Lindor out: It may have seemed like an easy Twins victory, but there was a nervous moment in the seventh when Francisco Lindor came up as the tying run for the Indians. Greg Allen had just tripled off the wall in right-centerfield and Lindor, he of the two doubles and two home runs the night prior, sent a bit of fear through the Target Field crowd.

But reliever Tyler Hildenberger was able to induce a harmless ground out from Lindor. Edwin Encarnacion would give the Twins insurance with a home run in the bottom half of the inning.

Skol night: Friday was "Skol night" at Target Field, with five Vikings, -- Kirk Cousins, Harrison Smith, Stefon Diggs, Adam Thielen and Everson Griffen -- taking batting practice before the game. The Twins accentuated every home run and strikeout with a Viking horn call and featured purple lighting in the upper deck.

Star Tribune LOADED: 06.02.2018

Eduardo Escobar homers twice, drives in four as Twins top Cleveland 7-4

By Chris Hine Star Tribune JUNE 2, 2018 — 12:54AM

There was a refrain ringing through Target Field on Friday night and, for once in an arduous season, it was pleasing to the ears of Twins fans.

The crowd would erupt into regular chants of "Eddie, Eddie," typically starting in left field.

They were mainly for Eddie Rosario, who provided enough of a reason for them with an RBI single and two difficult catches in left field in his part of a much-needed 7-4 victory over the Cleveland Indians.

"We have a cult following going on out there in the bleachers," manager Paul Molitor said.

But some chants were saved for Eduardo Escobar, who sneaked one home run over the hedges of the hanging right-field garden in the first inning for a three-run shot, then clobbered another blast — the longest homer of the Twins' season — in the seventh.

Twins 7, Cleveland 4 Saturday: vs. Cleveland, 3:10 p.m. (FS1)

It was all part of a night that finally went right for the Twins.

Some games, the Twins have the pitching but the hitting goes absent. More recently, the bats have come alive but the pitching decides to take a few days off. Friday, the Twins got enough of both.

Escobar provided the pop, Rosario the fizz with his glove while Jose Berrios kept the Indians calm enough to earn the victory, giving up four runs in six innings while striking out seven.

"This is the night you want to see — everybody pulling together," Berrios said after improving to 6-5 on the season. "We got the win."

A win that was only the Twins' second in their past nine games, and one that was needed to restore some faith to a club that has seen its share of tribulations through the first two months of the season. There was a meeting Thursday that Molitor called, then another one Friday from second baseman Brian Dozier to keep the team focused despite its struggles. Friday's performance was the response the Twins wanted to see.

"Everybody stay strong, play hard no matter what happens, that's what's most important, that was the message," Escobar said. "So, you saw today, everybody ran hard, played hard. That's what's most important."

Nobody got better results at the plate than Escobar, whose three-run shot in the first settled an on-edge crowd and earned a smattering of "Eddie, Eddie" chants for himself.

Then Rosario made a slick running catch of a Melky Cabrera fly ball in the second, knocked in a run in the bottom half, then again came up big with his glove in the fifth when he got a hand on a Greg Allen line drive and caught the ball on the bobble.

Cue more "Eddie, Eddie."

"To get a glove on it with extension and maintain after the bobble, that takes some athleticism," Molitor said.

It took some serious power off the bat of Escobar to help give the Twins an important insurance run after the Indians had pulled within 6-4. He connected on a sinker from Josh Tomlin and sent it flying 443 feet into the upper deck of right-center field.

"I'm just seeing the ball; it looks bigger than usual," Escobar said. "The team tells you to relax and see the ball well and make good contact, you know?"

Curiously, there was no "Eddie, Eddie" chorus after Escobar's home run.

Perhaps the crowd was tired of saying it.

Twins notes: Pregame meeting at second base gets team's attention

By Chris Hine Star Tribune JUNE 2, 2018 — 12:37AM

Was it a meeting? A congregation. A conference? Twins manager Paul Molitor said he wasn't sure how to categorize the assembly he had with his team at second base before Thursday's game against the Indians.

But it was the kind of move Molitor felt he needed to make to remind the Twins about a few facets of their performance they needed to tighten as they entered this four-game series with the Cleveland Indians.

"There were some things I wanted to generally address but I also wanted to get specific about one thing that was lacking," Molitor said, without divulging what that "thing" was. "It was a combination of teaching and maybe just checking in with where we're at."

Some of the meeting focused on improving the baserunning. Molitor said he had the meeting not to dress down the team but to provide some constructive reinforcement.

"Most of my meetings over the last three years have been relatively positive," Molitor said. "I try to find something to build on instead of tear down. ... To me, it's not always about getting walked off, it's about something that happened in the third inning we screwed up that gave us a chance to score a run."

Second baseman Brian Dozier took another opportunity to build on the meeting Thursday, writing "5:30 clubhouse" on a whiteboard outside the clubhouse before Friday's game. Dozier said he did not like the connotation of the term "meeting."

"At this level, meetings are always considered a negative, but it also can be very positive," Dozier said. "You don't ever want to over 'meet,' so to speak. This has nothing to do with performance by any means. That's what gets blown out of proportion. It's little things behind the scenes to clean up."

Dozier wanted to make sure the team wasn't trying to do too much after its recent struggles. Molitor said sometimes the message coming from both players and coaches can drive home important points to younger players.

"It plays well when there are a lot of leadership guys in here who call people out when they need to get called out, picking guys up when they need to get picked up," Molitor said. "There are a lot of things players respond to from other players maybe as well, if not better, than a coach or a manager. Both can be fruitful."

Twins shortstop Jorge Polanco, serving an 80-game suspension for performance-enhancing drugs, is playing in a couple extended spring training games a week while working out on the other days.

Since Polanco is in Fort Myers, Fla., for a while — he can return to the Twins lineup July 2, barring rainouts — he is making the best of the situation.

The Twins designed a plan for him to improve his throwing. They hope his arm is a little stronger and more accurate once he returns to the lineup.

Shortstop Francisco Lindor carried the Indians on Thursday with two home runs and two doubles. It was his second game with that boxscore this year, making him only the fourth player ever to hit two doubles and two home runs twice in one season.

Twins starter Jake Odorizzi saw Lindor crush three different pitches of his — a four-seam fastball and splitter on the doubles and a slider on the home run.

"I tried doing something different the third at bat than I did the first two," Odorizzi said. "But it ended up being worse than the first two."

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