

5 Indians make All-Star Game; Ramirez to start

Kluber, Bauer, Lindor, Brantley also named to AL squad

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Indians manager Terry Francona gathered his players together on Sunday morning for a team meeting. Rather than walk up to each guy who was named to this year's American League All-Star team, Francona wanted it to be a celebration for the entire ballclub.

One by one, the names of Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor, Michael Brantley, Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer were announced to applause from their teammates. For the second year in a row, the Indians are sending five players to the Midsummer Classic, with Ramirez voted into the AL's starting lineup by the fans once again.

"I've been part of it before in prior years," Bauer said of the moment he learned he made his first All-Star team. "Obviously, not being one of the ones announced. So, it was a different experience having my name called. It's something that I'll remember for a while."

This marks the first time since 1998-99 that the Indians have at least five All-Stars in consecutive years and the 15th time in club history to have five or more picked for the Midsummer Classic. Ramirez is the first player voted into the starting lineup for Cleveland since 1999-2000, when Roberto Alomar and Manny Ramirez were each honored. Ramirez is the first Tribe third baseman to start in back-to-back All-Star Games since Al Rosen in 1953-54.

Lindor pointed out that four of the players heading to Washington for the All-Star Game were groomed within the Indians' farm system. Lindor was a first-round pick by Cleveland in 2011, Ramirez was signed as an international free agent in '09, and both Kluber and Brantley were acquired in trades as Minor Leaguers.

"It's unique, you know?" Lindor said. "It says a lot about the system. Every guy that is going to the All-Star Game this year has come up along with us -- except Bauer. Everybody else has grown up in the system. It says a lot about the Indians."

Lindor, Brantley and Kluber were selected to the AL All-Star team by their peers, while Bauer was picked by MLB officials.

Fans can cast votes for the final player on each league's roster -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online as part of the 2018 Camping World MLB Final Vote, as well as via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps, until Wednesday at 4 p.m. ET.

Then on July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans can submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 All-Star Game MLB.com 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, visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

Baseball fans were introduced to the duo of Ramirez and Lindor nationally in 2016, when they helped lead the Indians to the World Series. For the second All-Star Game in a row, the left side of Cleveland's infield will be present alongside the game's top players, which is where Ramirez and Lindor belong. Ramirez ranks second in MLB in WAR (5.7 per Fangraphs), with Lindor (5.2) close behind.

Ramirez and Lindor are the fifth set of teammates in Major League history to each have at least 50 extra-base hits before the All-Star break. Lindor, who leads the Majors in runs scored (79), is the first shortstop in MLB history to have at least 50 extra-base hits and 75 or more runs scored in the first half of a season. Lindor is also only the second shortstop in Indians history -- alongside Lou Boudreau (1940-44) -- to be named to at least three All-Star Games in a row.

"It's cool to watch them," Kluber said, "I don't want to say compete against each other, but I think that they drive each other, which is cool. It's funny. I feel like if Frankie goes out there and hits a double, Jose is going to go out there and hit a homer and vice versa. I think they kind of feed off each other, which is good for us."

As things stand, Ramirez boasts a .292/.395/.590 slash line, while Lindor's is .298/.374/.565. Ramirez has 24 home runs, 25 doubles, 59 RBIs and 19 stolen bases. Lindor has 23 homers, 27 doubles, 56 RBIs and 12 steals. At the same time, both Lindor and Ramirez are among the best defenders in baseball at their respective positions.

"It's one of the most gratifying things to watch kids grow from kids to grown-ups," Francona said, "and see how much they improve on the field while maintaining their youthful enthusiasm while they're doing it. I actually think their better days are ahead of them, which bodes well for us."

Brantley -- an All-Star in 2014 and also last season -- returns to the Midsummer Classic after coming back from a right ankle injury that shortened his campaign to 90 games last year. Through Sunday, the Indians' veteran left fielder was batting .306/.351/.490 with 11 homers, 23 doubles and 49 RBIs for the AL Central-leading Tribe.

"For Brant, all that he's been through," Francona said, "I grabbed him and I told him, 'Take a minute and enjoy this,' because he put a lot of work in."

Kluber (three-time All-Star) and Bauer are only the third set of Indians pitchers since 1969 to make the AL squad in the same year, joining CC Sabathia and Jake Westbrook (2004) and Danny Salazar and Kluber ('16). Kluber is the first starting pitcher to be named to at least three All-Star teams in a row since Sam McDowell made four straight squads from 1968-71.

Kluber, who is the reigning AL Cy Young Award winner, leads the AL in innings pitched (126 1/3) and is 12-4 with a 2.49 ERA. Bauer has a 2.45 ERA with 156 strikeouts in 121 1/3 innings, and he leads MLB in WAR (4.5), Fielding Independent Pitching (2.17) and home run rate (0.37 per nine innings).

"We have a good rotation," Bauer said. "We know we can pitch. That's kind of the lifeblood of the team. That's how we feel as a starting staff anyway. That's how we try to take our job, and go out there and be the best that we can be and put in all the work."

As the names of the Indians' All-Stars were revealed on Sunday morning, rookie pitcher Shane Bieber sat back and soaked it all in. It would have been natural for him to daydream about hearing his own name called in a season down the road.

"I was more caught up in, 'How many more guys are we going to get?'" Bieber said with a laugh. "How many were there? Five? That's pretty impressive. The talent around this clubhouse is pretty remarkable. It's an exciting time and exciting to be around right now."

Loud sun, quiet bats hurt Tribe in loss to A's

CLEVELAND -- Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor held his glove to the sky, doing his best to block out the sun as the fly ball that shot off Mark Canha's bat flew in his direction. It was no use. The baseball found the outfield grass for an improbable first-inning single in Sunday afternoon's 6-0 loss to the A's at Progressive Field.

It was just that kind of day for the Tribe.

Indians rookie Shane Bieber was victimized by some bad luck behind him and an ill-timed home run. Compounding matters for Cleveland was a stellar showing from Oakland lefty Brett Anderson, who came off the disabled list and hardly looked worse for wear in his five-plus shutout frames.

"He's a good pitcher," Indians manager Terry Francona said of Anderson. "He's been hurt a lot, but he knows how to pitch. We had a couple real good opportunities, but didn't do anything with it. Give him some credit. I don't think we made very good adjustments today, but I think sometimes you give the pitcher some credit, for sure."

The loss helped the A's to a series win and marked the first back-to-back home defeats for the American League Central-leading Tribe since June 15-16 against the Twins.

Bieber picked up the first loss of his young big league career after being charged with four runs on eight hits in six innings for Cleveland. The right-hander ended with seven strikeouts and one walk in the 98-pitch effort.

"If he's not perfect early, he seems to pitch himself into really getting more comfortable," Francona said. "He's what, five or six starts into his Major League career? And he gave up four [runs] and it seems like he didn't pitch real well. I think he's OK. He's going to be a good one." Bieber allowed the sun-aided single to Canha in the first, and then yielded an RBI double to Khris Davis two batters later. In the second, first baseman Edwin Encarnacion made a diving attempt at a sharp two-out grounder from Dustin Fowler, but he could not corral it cleanly to get a throw to Bieber at the bag in time. That allowed another run to score to spot the A's a 2-0 lead.

In the sixth inning, Stephen Piscotty launched a two-run home run off Bieber -- the second homer in as many games for the outfielder -- to help push the A's into the win column. Following Bieber's exit, Jed Lowrie belted his 16th home run of the year off reliever Dan Otero to pad Oakland's lead.

"I've just got to get better," Bieber said. "It's something to learn from. I felt pretty good overall. I executed a lot of good pitches, but up here, if you make those mistakes, whether it's a few times or a few too many times, they're going to take advantage of it. I just need to be better."

Anderson, on the other hand, cruised against the Indians in his first start since May 18. The left-hander entered the game with a 7.63 ERA in four outings this season and was returning from a left shoulder strain. Anderson scattered three hits and walked two, navigating around the few trouble spots he encountered.

"The key was working out of trouble," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I hate to use the word 'effectively wild,' because he pitched pretty well and got big outs when he needed to."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Over and out: Down 2-0 in the second, the Indians had a great opportunity to pull things even when Encarnacion reached via error and Brandon Guyer followed with a double. With runners on second and third and no outs, Anderson induced a flyout off the bat of Rajai Davis and then struck out Roberto Perez. But Erik Gonzalez ended the threat by popping up a 3-0 fastball to first baseman Matt Olson for the third out. On the day, Cleveland was 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position.

Anderson strands a pair in 2nd

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"I thought that they were pitching around him," said Francona, referring to Gonzalez's at-bat. "And I thought the pitch that he would get would be a fastball on 3-0, so we let him swing. It wasn't exactly what we were looking for. I think that's stating the obvious."

More missed chances: Cleveland loaded the bases with two outs against Anderson in the fourth, but the lefty escaped again by getting Gonzalez to chop into an inning-ending fielder's-choice groundout.

In the sixth, the Indians opened with two singles, but reliever Yusmeiro Petit stopped them there by setting down the next three batters in order. Perez put the period on the missed opportunity by striking out looking on a low fastball, throwing his arms up in disgust at the call by home-plate umpire Eric Cooper.

SOUND SMART

With seven strikeouts in the loss, Bieber now has 36 punchouts through six big league outings. That marks the third-highest strikeout total through six career games in Indians history, trailing only Herb Score (57 in 1955) and Danny Salazar (37 in 2013). Bieber has posted a higher strikeout-to-walk ratio (6.0) than Salazar (4.1) or Score (1.7) in his first six appearances.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Mike Clevinger (7-3, 3.11 ERA) is scheduled to take the mound for the Tribe on Monday, when the Indians open a three-game Interleague set against the Reds with a 7:10 p.m. ET tilt at Progressive Field. Clevinger last pitched on July 1, but the righty is 5-1 with a 2.31 ERA in 12 career starts after six or more days of rest. Anthony DeSclafani (3-1, 5.08 ERA) will start for Cincinnati.

Clippers | Never one to seek attention, longtime executive Ken Schnacke to enter IL Hall of Fame

By Mark Znidar

Clippers employees pulled off a surprise party for Ken Schnacke last Thursday in honor of his being voted into the International League Hall of Fame, and the reaction from the team's president and general manager was what anyone who knows the man would expect.

Of course, he said the Hall of Fame would not have been possible without his staff. Of course, he said he was embarrassed by the attention, but flattered just the same.

And, of course, Schnacke couldn't resist being the boss.

"Staff, why aren't you inside working?" he said. "Oh, yes, the All-Star Game is a sellout."

Schnacke will be inducted before the home run derby Monday night leading to Wednesday's Triple-A All-Star Game. Children Stephanie Fox and Kevin and Keith Schnacke will be at his side. His wife of 40 years, Sandy, died of cancer on Jan. 21.

Despite the honor, one of the hardest-working, innovative and community-driven front office officials in professional baseball is more comfortable in the background. He ventures onto the field only when veterans are being honored during July 4 celebrations at Huntington Park, and occasionally will address spectators over the public address system on the status of games held up by rain.

Schnacke is so modest that assistant public relations director Anthony Slosser is forbidden to include a biography or picture of him in the media guide.

What's up with that?

"This isn't about me — I don't do this by myself," he said. "I've had people here working for the Clippers 20, 30 and even 40 years."

But make no mistake, Schnacke is comfortable carrying a powerful stick — or, in his case, bat.

Franklin County commissioner John O'Grady said Schnacke has been responsible for helping turn the county's \$25,000 investment to bring minor league baseball back to Columbus in 1977 into a franchise that is worth almost \$50 million.

It was Schnacke working closely with architects and builders who sculpted Huntington Park into one of the gems in all of baseball. The team drew 600,000 spectators or more in each of the stadium's first nine seasons.

Schnacke graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering from Ohio Northern, and his first job was head engineer in the air pollution control division of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

Baseball, though, intrigued him, and he attended the winter meetings in 1976 looking for a job. Two months later, Bobby Bragan helped him become business manager with Class A Amarillo and later president and general manager of the Rio Grande Valley White Wings.

In 1977, when Franklin County commissioner Harold Cooper brought baseball back to Columbus, Schnacke was the final hire as director of operations. He became assistant general manager under George Sisler Jr. in 1983, general manager in '89 and president and general manager in 2009.

Schnacke is a stickler to the point where empty paper towel dispensers hack him off.

"The small stuff — the details — is the difference between being a first-class organization and among the others," he said. "Mothers dictate how a family goes, and like them I believe in discipline, organization and godliness. I believe in the adage that you don't get a second chance to make a first impression."

Life for minor league baseball employees is rugged, but the true survival test is when the team is at home. Days begin at 9 a.m. and don't end until the final out.

"Ken has developed a leadership style where people want to work for him," said Clippers broadcaster Scott Leo, who has been with the team since 2006. "Ken is the best boss I've ever had, but at times he's also the toughest. He knows when to push you for motivation, but he also knows when to stand back and allow you to put a stamp on what you do."

Director of communications and team historian Joe Santry shared a story of Schnacke's loyalty and compassion.

"Fifteen years ago I had prostate cancer and had an emergency procedure," Santry said. "I was in the hospital for some time, and when I got out the bills started showing up. They were sizable. Ken said, 'Give me all of the bills. I will take care of them.' No questions were asked. If Ken hadn't done that, I would have been broken financially."

Taking a walk on the wild side for Schnacke would be wearing two of his 10 Governors' Cup championship rings or both national championship rings to the ballpark. He did, however, shake up minor league baseball by letting fans in for free for the playoffs in 2015 and '16. Huntington was packed the first season.

"That was a tribute to the fans and an incentive to get 600,000 in attendance as a reward," he said. "I don't know if it was brilliant or desperation. It did create a buzz. I was surprised no one else copied the idea. We did share revenue with teams in our league."

Indians 5, Clippers 4 | Clippers suffer sweep in Indianapolis

The Clippers couldn't bounce back after falling behind 3-0 in the first inning and were swept by the Indianapolis Indians with a 5-4 defeat on Sunday afternoon before 8,805 at Victory Field.

Kevin Newman led off the bottom of the first with a homer off Clippers starter Adam Wilk (3-7), and Wyatt Mathisen cracked a two-run homer later in the inning for the 3-0 lead.

Adam Haase, who drove in all four Columbus runs, hit a two-run double in the fourth to score Yu Chang and Adam Rosales to cut the deficit to 3-2, but the Indians had back-to-back run scoring singles in the fifth to push the lead to 5-2.

After Chang tripled in the ninth, Haase later hit a two-out, two-run homer to once again make it a one-run game. After Todd Hankins drew a walk, reliever Tanner Anderson entered the game and struck out Drew Maggi to end it, sending the Clippers home for the Triple-A All-Star Game festivities at Huntington Park on a three-game losing streak.

Wilk allowed three runs on five hits in four innings, with a walk and a strikeout. Reliever Ben Taylor gave up both Indians runs in the fifth.

Starter Jose Ramirez leads five Indians on AL All-Star team

By Jay Cohen, The Associated Press

Jose Ramirez is an All-Star starter for the second consecutive season, and he'll have plenty of company from the Indians in Washington.

Ramirez earned the starting nod at third base for the All-Star Game, which will be played July 17. Teammates joining him on the American League squad are Corey Kluber, Francisco Lindor, Michael Brantley and Trevor Bauer.

The Tribe was one of three teams with five All-Stars. Houston and Boston were the others.

Mike Trout, Aaron Judge and Mookie Betts form a dream outfield in the American League. Bryce Harper and Max Scherzer make up a not-so-gracious welcome committee for the NL.

Power in the center of power. A capital-sized All-Star Game.

Baseball unveiled the rosters for its midsummer showcase July 8, featuring an imposing American League lineup and Harper starting at his home ballpark in Washington.

Reigning AL MVP Jose Altuve led the selections from the World Series champion Astros. The New York Yankees and Atlanta Braves each had four selections, including rookie Gleyber Torres from the Bronx Bombers and fellow second baseman Ozzie Albies from the surprising Braves.

"It's fun. You're playing but you're looking around because you're playing with all those big boys out there," said Altuve, who made the AL team for the sixth time.

Torres is on the disabled list with a hip injury and unlikely to participate. But while he and Albies are just 21 years old, the list of 25 first-time All-Stars also includes thirty-something surprises like Boston first baseman Mitch Moreland, Texas Rangers slugger Shin-Soo Choo and Atlanta outfielder Nick Markakis.

"It's something that I didn't know it would ever be quite possible," Moreland said. "I'm definitely excited about the opportunity and appreciative of having that opportunity."

Trout is working on perhaps the best season of his stellar career with the Los Angeles Angels. Judge has 25 homers and 58 RBIs for the Yankees, and Betts is batting .342 with 22 homers for the major league-leading Red Sox.

But that's just the beginning for the AL. Altuve led the fan balloting with 4.8 million votes. Baltimore Orioles shortstop Manny Machado will make the short trip down to D.C. for the July 17 game with speculation increasing about his future ahead of the trade deadline.

Chicago White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu, Ramirez, Red Sox designated hitter J.D. Martinez and Tampa Bay Rays catcher Wilson Ramos round out the AL's starting lineup.

"The best part is being with all the guys. You're on the biggest stage with the best," said Trout, who was selected for the seventh straight year — tying Boston ace Chris Sale for longest active streak.

Harper was voted a starter for the fourth consecutive year. The slugger, who is eligible for free agency after this season, is batting just .218 for disappointing Washington but has 21 homers and 50 RBIs.

He was joined by ace right-hander Max Scherzer and reliever Sean Doolittle from the Nationals. Scherzer, a three-time Cy Young Award winner, could get the start in his home ballpark.

"That'd be an unbelievable experience," he said in an interview on ESPN.

Nationals shortstop Trea Turner could join Scherzer and Co. if he wins the online vote for the 32nd and final NL roster spot. Brewers first baseman Jesus Aguilar, Giants first baseman Brandon Belt, Cardinals infielder Matt Carpenter and Dodgers infielder Max Muncy also are in the mix.

"Very excited to represent the Nationals in D.C.," Harper said. "Looking forward to this week to hopefully get one of our other teammates in there as well."

The AL candidates in online balloting are Red Sox outfielder Andrew Benintendi, Twins outfielder Eddie Rosario, Mariners shortstop Jean Segura, Angels shortstop Andrelton Simmons and Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton.

"It's something I've watched for a long time. To be a part of it would be pretty cool," Benintendi said.

Markakis and Matt Kemp will join Harper in the NL outfield. Markakis has been a key performer for the Braves and made an All-Star team for the first time in his 13 major league seasons. Kemp's return to the Los Angeles Dodgers has been a smashing success.

The Chicago Cubs will have two starters after catcher Willson Contreras and second baseman Javier Baez each won a close race at their position in fan balloting. Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman, Colorado Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado and Giants shortstop Brandon Crawford round out the NL starting lineup.

"My first reaction was like, 'I have no words to say,'" Contreras said, "but I started crying when I went down to the cage because I hoped for it and I've been working hard every single game that I've played and played it like it was my last one."

As usual, there were some notable snubs — with several changes surely coming due to injuries and withdrawals.

Tampa Bay left-hander Blake Snell, who is 12-4 with a 2.09 ERA, was the most incomprehensible omission. Houston right-hander Charlie Morton and Oakland Athletics infielder Jed Lowrie were also left out despite worthy credentials. The Philadelphia Phillies, percentage points ahead of the Braves for the NL East lead, had only one All-Star in pitcher Aaron Nola.

TRIBE NOTES A's 6, Indians 0: Tribe wastes chances early, can't get to Oakland starter Brett Anderson in his return from the DL
Tom Withers | The Associated Press Published on July 8, 2018 | Updated 8:50 a. m.

CLEVELAND — Brett Anderson's first start in two months wasn't pristine. But it was productive and another positive for the ascending Athletics.

Anderson came off the disabled list and worked into the sixth inning before turning things over to Oakland's outstanding bullpen as the A's downed the Cleveland Indians 6-0 on Sunday.

The Indians didn't have an answer as they dropped the last two games of the weekend series. They failed to take advantage of some early scoring chances against Anderson.

"He's a good pitcher," Cleveland manager Terry Francona said. "He's been hurt a lot but he knows how to pitch. I don't think we made very good adjustments, but I think sometimes you give the pitcher some credit, for sure."

Making his first start against Cleveland since 2012, Anderson worked out of jams in the second and fourth innings, both times retiring Erik Gonzalez for the final out.

The Indians had runners at second and third with none out in the second before Anderson struck out Rajai Davis and Roberto Perez and got Gonzalez to reach and pop up a 3-0 pitch. Cleveland loaded the bases with two outs in the fourth but didn't score as Gonzalez bounced weakly into a force at third.

"Obviously, you'd like to go deeper in ballgames, but for the first time back in awhile to give us a chance to win and get the series win, I'll take it," said Anderson, who improved to 3-0 in five career starts against the Indians.

Anderson (1-2) had been sidelined with a shoulder strain, one of several injuries to plague the team's starting staff this season. But the left-hander looked fairly sharp in his first start since May 18, limiting the Indians to three hits in five-plus innings and leaving with a 4-0 lead.

"The key was working out of trouble," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He pitched pretty well and got big outs when he needed to. All in all, you've got to consider it a successful performance."

Stephen Piscotty hit a two-run homer off rookie Shane Bieber (4-1), and Jed Lowrie had a solo shot as Oakland won for the 10th time in 12 games to take two of three from the Indians.

The A's, who are 18-6 against AL Central teams, moved a season-best 10 games over .500. It's the first time they've reached that mark since the end of 2014 and they're unbeaten in their past seven series — their longest such streak since 2013.

Oakland heads to Houston for four games against the AL West leaders.

"I don't think we care who we play," Melvin said. "We know we have seven games before the break. We want to finish up strong, so it doesn't matter who we're playing."

Yusmeiro Petit tossed two innings, Ryan Buchter worked the eighth and Emilio Pagan finished the combined five-hitter without Melvin having to use closer Blake Treinen.

With five starters on the disabled list, Melvin has spent the season patching holes in his rotation. But Anderson, who was activated for the start while Paul Blackburn went on the DL, provided the A's with a quality outing.

Piscotty gave Anderson a four-run cushion in the sixth with his ninth homer. Khris Davis, who had three hits, singled leading off and Piscotty hammered Bieber's 1-2 pitch into the seats.

Lowrie made it 5-0 in the seventh with a liner that just cleared the wall, giving him 16 homers to match his career high for a season set in 2012.

Sun spot

Oakland took advantage of a ball lost in the sun to take a 1-0 lead in the first. Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor, who wasn't wearing sunglasses, couldn't see Mark Canha's one-out pop and it fell for a single. With two outs, Khris Davis extended his hitting streak to 10 games with an RBI double.

Stunning stat

Anderson has a 0.82 ERA in five career starts against the Indians. It's the lowest ERA since 1913 for any pitcher with at least five starts against Cleveland.

Trainer's room

Athletics: To open a roster spot for Anderson, Blackburn (sore elbow) was placed on the DL. Blackburn, who allowed six runs over five innings Friday, returned to Oakland and will be examined by team doctors. He began the season on the DL with a strained forearm.

Indians: LHP Andrew Miller threw another bullpen Saturday as he continues to recover from knee inflammation that has sidelined the two-time All-Star since May 26. Miller is not expected back until after the All-Star break.

Up next

Athletics: RHP Frankie Montas (4-2) starts Monday in the opener of a four-game series against the defending World Series champion Astros. Indians: RHP Mike Clevinger (7-3) will be on extended rest Monday as he starts the series opener against the Reds and Anthony DeSclafani (3-1). Clevinger made his major league debut against Cincinnati in 2016.

TRIBE NOTES Indians have 5 All-Stars for 2nd straight season, led by Jose Ramirez, again the starter at third base

The Indians are going to Washington.

A whole bunch of them.

Five Cleveland players were selected for the All-Star Game to be played July 17 at Nationals Park, tying with the Red Sox and Astros for most in the majors. It's the second straight year the Indians had five players chosen.

Third baseman Jose Ramirez will start for the American League after winning the fan selection with 2,521,120 votes. He'll be the first Indians third baseman to start two straight All-Star Games since Al Rosen in 1953-54.

He'll be joined by pitchers Corey Kluber, who could be chosen to start the game, and Trevor Bauer, shortstop Francisco Lindor and left fielder Michael Brantley. The Indians hadn't had at least five All-Stars in consecutive years since 1998-99, but they have a star-studded lineup and appear headed to the postseason for the third straight year, leading the AL Central by 9 1/2 games.

"I'm happy," Indians manager Terry Francona told reporters Sunday. "I'm thrilled for our guys and I'm also happy for the Indians. I think it shows that, whether it's fans or other players or whatever it is, respect for our players, I'm thrilled for that."

Kluber, Brantley and Lindor were picked through player voting. Bauer was added by the commissioner's office.

Ramirez became the first Indians player to be voted as an All-Star starter in consecutive seasons since Roberto Alomar and Manny Ramirez in 1999-2000. He's hitting .292 with 24 home runs, 25 doubles, 59 RBIs, 60 runs scored and 19 stolen bases.

Lindor is an All-Star for the third time. He's hitting .298 with 23 homers, 27 doubles, 56 RBIs, an MLB-best 79 runs and 12 stolen bases.

"I'm really proud of it. I'm really proud of Frankie," Ramirez said. "I'm really happy for him and for his family. Everyone who's been watching us over the past couple years knows that we came up together since A ball. And so I'm really happy for him and that God has blessed us with this opportunity to go there together."

Kluber, the reigning AL Cy Young Award winner, leads the AL in innings pitched (126 1/3) and is 12-4 with a 2.49 ERA. Bauer has a 2.45 ERA with 156 strikeouts in 121 1/3 innings. Kluber was picked for the third straight year, and Bauer for the first time.

Brantley is also a three-time All-Star, overcoming a series of injuries over the last couple of years. He's hitting .306 with 11 home runs, 23 doubles, 49 RBIs and 47 runs.

"For Brant, all that he's been through," Francona said, "I grabbed him and I told him, 'Take a minute and enjoy this,' because he put a lot of work in."

Satchel Paige baseball-history program draws crowd at League Park

By Marc Bona, cleveland.com mbona@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Satchel Paige was born 112 years ago Saturday, and for the folks at the Baseball Heritage Museum, that's a good excuse to remember the pitching great's career.

"If we were to hit all of the highlights of his career," presenter Ike Brooks said, "we would be here till his next birthday."

In his youth, Paige worked on trains, hauling luggage. With his lanky frame, a little ingenuity, some rope and a pole, he found he could sling a lot of bags. That led to two things: The more he hauled, the more he earned. And he gained a nickname.

Petty theft and truancy in his youth led to a stint in reform school in his native state of Alabama. It was then that a coach, Edward Byrd, taught him to pitch, where he developed the high leg kick, and where he learned to keep the ball hidden in his windup.

The early knowledge sparked what would become a rich baseball life. Early in his career Paige could pitch as many as three games in a day, saying he is "only comfortably warmed up after nine innings," The Plain Dealer's Gordon Cobbledick wrote. In 1945 Paige and Jackie Robinson were teammates on the Monarchs in the latter's sole year in the Negro Leagues.

A year later, he teamed with Bob Feller for a series of barnstorming exhibitions that dually served as a way to make money and, indirectly, to ingratiate fans into seeing integrated competition. Writer Larry Tye calls the 1946 games Feller's "granddaddy tour."

"Bob Feller should get some credit for helping in the re-integration efforts," Brooks said.

Paige played for more than 20 professional teams in a career that spanned 1926 to 1967, including 1948, his lone season with the Cleveland Indians.

It wasn't his first stint in Cleveland, though. In 1931 he played for the Cleveland Cubs, "a really terrible team" in the Negro Leagues, Brooks said.

He also appeared in a Negro League doubleheader at League Park on Aug. 3, 1941. "The gangly right-hander" took the mound in the second game between the Kansas City Monarchs and the St. Louis Stars, The Plain Dealer wrote. He gave up five hits and one run while striking out five and allowing no walks over four innings for Kansas City. That day, 10,000 fans came out to the ballpark, no doubt due to his appearance.

But it was his "rookie" season in 1948 that Indians fans will remember most. Biography.com says owner Bill Veeck "reportedly laid a cigarette on the ground and told Paige to think of it as home plate; the hurler then threw five fastballs, all but one sailing directly over the cigarette."

Veeck signed Paige on his 42nd birthday that year. (For trivia buffs, it was Ray Murray, a third-string catcher in his first year in the Majors, who was sent down to make room for Paige.)

He went 6-1 that season. In the World Series, the last won by an Indians team, he pitched two-thirds of an inning in Game 5 in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium. He did not figure in the loss, but the Indians won the series the next day in Boston.

He endured Jim Crow laws that kept him and other players of color out of the Major Leagues for half a century, but once he gained a chance in the Majors he wasn't about to walk away from the game. At age 59, he took the mound for one game in 1965 for the Kansas City Athletics. In three innings, he allowed one hit and no runs.

He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971. He died June 8, 1982, and is buried in Kansas City, Mo.

More info

The program, "Leroy 'Satchel' Paige - The Face of Negro League Baseball," attracted about 80 people Saturday. The Baseball Heritage Museum summer events schedule continues with Women Negro Leaguers on Saturday, July 28. The free program is at 10:30 a.m. The museum and visitors center is at League Park, 6601 Lexington Ave., Cleveland.

Covering the Bases: All-Star edition by Jordan Bastian

Notes and quotes about Sunday's All-Star announcement...

FIRST: Jose Ramirez leaned in to try to understand as much of the question as he could. Once he heard the phrase "Home Run Derby," the Indians' star cracked a slight smirk. Those words needed no translation.

Ramirez, who opted to hold the FOX Sports mic himself during the media scrum, rattled off a few words in Spanish for team translator Will Clements to relay. Clements chuckled and gave Ramirez's answer.

"We'll be revealing that information a little bit later," was Ramirez's reply.

Ramirez—one of five All-Stars heading to Washington D.C. to represent the Tribe—has blossomed into one of the more surprising power hitters in the game. Often, when the stocky but solid third baseman is asked what led to his latest blast, he will simply say, "Home run pitch."

Well, the Derby will have mucho home run pitches.

Told that, Ramirez laughed.

"Yeah, I'll try, if I get the chance," he said.

Here's a look at the MLB home run leaderboard:

27: J.D. Martinez
25: Mike Trout, Aaron Judge
24: Jose Ramirez
23: Francisco Lindor

What's that? Lindor is right behind Ramirez? Hmm, perhaps he would be interested in joining the third baseman in MLB's annual feat of strength?

"No, not me," said Lindor, who then smiled. "He's more of a power hitter than me. He's got 24. I've got 23."

OK, so Lindor isn't interested in competing against Ramirez in the Derby—should the third baseman get picked to take part. For Indians fans, they get to see the shortstop go head-to-head with Ramirez on a daily basis. No, they aren't really competing against one another, but man, it sure feels like it.

Corey Kluber said it feels that way to the players, too.

"They drive each other, which is cool," Kluber said. "It's funny. I feel like if Frankie goes out there and hits a double, Jose is going to go out there and hit a homer and vice versa. I think they kind of feed off each other, which is good for us."

Lindor has 27 doubles. Ramirez has 25. Ramirez has 19 steals. Lindor has 12. Ramirez has 5.7 fWAR (2nd in MLB). Lindor checks in at 5.2 (4th). Lindor has a .301/.378/.572 slash line. Ramirez? Try .293/.396/.595. Ramirez has a 164 wRC+. Lindor is at 156. They each have 50 extra-base hits. They are three RBI apart (59 for Ramirez and 56 for Lindor).

It's pretty remarkable how close they are statistically, and even more impressive when you think about the paths they have taken to stardom.

Lindor was always highly touted—having been taken in the first round of the 2011 MLB Draft. Ramirez was a virtual unknown when Cleveland signed him back in 2009 and still when he ascended to the Majors by 2013. They played next to each other through the farm system and then were jockeying for position when the time came to reach The Show.

Now, they're heading to the All-Star Game together for the second year in a row. Ramirez will start for the American League at third for the second year in a row after being voted into the lineup by the fans. With Baltimore's Manny Machado winning the fan vote for short, Lindor was named by his peers.

"I'm really proud of it. I'm really proud of Frankie," Ramirez said. "I'm really happy for him and for his family. Everyone who's been watching us over the past couple years knows that we came up together since A ball. And so, I'm really happy for him and that God has blessed us with this opportunity to go there together."

Back in 2015, Ramirez broke camp as the Indians' starting shortstop, while Lindor remained in the Minor Leagues. Through June 6 that year, Ramirez looked completely lost at the plate, batting .180 (.487 OPS) with one home run through 46 games. The Indians demoted him and Lindor walked through the clubhouse doors at Comerica Park in Detroit 10 days later.

Over his first month, Lindor hit .224 with a .565 OPS in his first 115 plate appearances, looking like he might need more time in the Minors himself. The shortstop quickly adjusted, nearly winning the AL Rookie of the Year Award with his torrid play down the stretch. Ramirez was back later that season to handle second base and soon became a lineup fixture himself.

Ramirez is the first Indians third baseman to start in consecutive All-Star Games since 1953–54 (Al Rosen) and the first Tribe player voted into the starting lineup by fans in back-to-back years since 1998–99 (Manny Ramirez and Roberto Alomar).

Lindor—the first shortstop in MLB history to have at least 50 extra-base hits and 75 runs before the break—is the second Indians shortstop in team history to make three All-Star Games in a row. Lou Boudreau made five straight from 1940–44.

“It’s one of the most gratifying things to watch kids grow from kids to grown-ups,” Indians manager Terry Francona said. “And see how much they improve on the field, while maintaining their youthful enthusiasm while they’re doing it. I actually think their better days are of them, which bodes well for us.”

SECOND: Francona wanted to make the All-Star announcement a team celebration on Sunday morning, so he opted to reveal the names with all the players present in the clubhouse.

Francona revealed not one, not two, not three, not four, but five names.

“I was more caught up in, ‘How many more guys are we going to get?’” Indians rookie Shane Bieber said. “Five? That’s pretty impressive. The talent around this clubhouse is pretty remarkable. It’s an exciting time.”

Besides Lindor and Ramirez, the Indians’ best starting pitcher this season made the American League squad. And Corey Kluber made it, too.

Yes, Trevor Bauer is an All-Star and—who could’ve seen this coming?—you could make an argument that he should be the American League’s starting pitcher (if a Sunday start doesn’t rule him out). Luis Severino (14–2, 2.12 ERA) would seem to have the upper hand there.

That said, Bauer currently leads MLB pitchers in fWAR (4.5), FIP (2.17) and HR/9 (0.37). Run support has done him no favors—playing a large role in his 8–6 record—but the right-hander has a 2.45 ERA with 156 strikeouts vs. 37 walks in 121.1 innings.

“He’s grown as a pitcher,” Kluber said. “Obviously, his work ethic isn’t in question, but I think he’s done a good job of maybe addressing things to improve on, kind of attacking those things. And I think now you’re seeing the results of it.”

Bauer said hearing his name announced as a first-time All-Star on Sunday was a moment he’ll never forget.

“I’m extremely excited for it,” Bauer said. “You watch the game growing up. I watched every year. You tune in for the Home Run Derby and see the best of the best guys. I remember watching Torii Hunter rob Barry Bonds and Pedro Martinez punch out six guys in a row, and just moments like that from growing up that are kind of iconic baseball moments for me and for a lot of other people.”

“And to be able to go and play in the same game against the best players that this game has to offer right now—that the world has to offer right now—is really fun. I’m really looking forward to it.”

Kluber is 12–4 with a 2.49 ERA and 123 strikeouts vs. 15 walks in 126.1 innings this season, but what is truly remarkable is what the ace has done since June 1 last year. You might recall, that’s when Kluber came off the DL after a bad April and a May missed thanks to a back injury.

Since June 1, 2017, Kluber leads MLB in...

Wins (27)—Runner-up Severino has 24 wins
ERA (2.00)—Runner-up Max Scherzer has a 2.40 ERA
Innings (292.2)—Runner-up Justin Verlander has 263.2 IP
OPS (.532)—Runner-up Scherzer is .567
Baserunners/9 (7.47)—Runner-up Scherzer is 8.61
K/BB (9.13)—Runner-up Chris Sale is 6.56

Kluber is the first starting pitcher to be named an All-Star in at least three straight seasons for the Indians since Sam McDowell made it in four straight years from 1968–71.

“Bauer deserves it,” Lindor said. “Kluber, you know he’s going to be there. And there’s more guys here that deserve to go as well. It was just those guys that got picked, but there are a lot of players here that deserve to go. Unfortunately they can’t, but those guys are representing the rotation very well.”

THIRD: We’ll get to the fifth and final All-Star in a moment. In the meantime, let’s take a look at a few other Indians players who might also have had a case for inclusion.

First and foremost, catcher Yan Gomes could be classified as a snub. When the AL roster was revealed and the Cleveland catcher was not included, I figured that meant Houston’s Max Stassi got the nod as the backup to Wilson Ramos of the Rays (voted in by the fans.). Nope. Kansas City’s Salvador Perez was voted in by his peers.

Going by fWAR, Stassi (1.5) leads the AL pack with Ramos and Gomes (1.3 each) close behind. Perez has 0.2 fWAR to go along with a .213/.255/.376 slash line. Gomes has hit .247/.309/.445 with a 102 wRC+, which isn't flashy, but with Gary Sanchez injured, the Indians' starting catcher has a strong case, if Stassi's playing time (just 167 PA) was going to hold him back.

Defensively, Baseball Prospectus loves Stassi, giving him 10.6 Fielding Runs Above Average. Gomes checks in at 3.6, with Ramos at -0.2 and Perez at -6.9. I could've seen going with Stassi over Gomes, but Perez? That's a stretch. But, the other issue in play here is the fact that the Royals need an All-Star and their catcher checks that box.

"Catchers go out there and pretty much bust their butts every day for us as pitchers," Kluber said when asked about Gomes. "It would be awesome if he could get some recognition for that."

Francona agreed.

"That was the one thing and I actually said it to our team," said the manager. "Things happen and maybe Gomer will still make it. You never know. They add guys and usually a third catcher is one, so I'm kind of keeping my fingers crossed there a little bit."

DH Edwin Encarnacion is fifth in the AL in RBI (62) and has 20 homers, but his case was borderline at best. Encarnacion's cold start hurt his average (.232) and on-base percentage (.311) and he only has 0.4 fWAR.

Righty Carlos Carrasco has been solid with a 9–5 record and 4.28 ERA in 96.2 innings, but his 1.8 fWAR comes in at 17th in the AL right now. There's just a lot of good pitching and his showing—hindered by the brief time lost on the DL—wasn't All-Star caliber this year.

Besides Gomes, the player with the next-best case to be on the AL All-Star team is right-hander Mike Clevinger. His 2.7 fWAR is eighth in the AL and just 0.1 behind Kluber. Clevinger is 7–3 with a 3.11 ERA and 3.19 FIP in 110 innings (17 starts).

"Mike Clevinger, I think, is very deserving," said Bauer, who was happy to represent the rotation, alongside Kluber. "We know we can pitch. That's kind of the lifeblood of the team. That's how we feel as a starting staff anyway. That's how we try to take our job."

HOME: The last name revealed as an All-Star for the Indians was veteran left fielder Michael Brantley.

Brantley sustained a serious ankle injury last season, leading to surgery and putting his status for this year in doubt. It was the latest in a series of health issues that limited him to 101 games over the 2016–17 campaigns and kept him from taking part in the World Series run two years ago.

When the Indians opted to pick up Brantley's \$12 million option over the winter, there were plenty of critics who questioned the thinking of a team with known financial limitations for the winter. Everyone knows what Brantley can do when healthy, but could he stay on the field? That was—once again—the big question.

"Brant, all that he's been through," Francona said. "I grabbed him and I told him, 'Take a minute and enjoy this,' because he put a lot of work in. So, it's pretty cool."

Brantley is batting .306/.351/.490 with 11 home runs, 23 doubles, 49 RBI and nearly as many walks (22) as strikeouts (30). And, even with all the time lost over the past few seasons, including severe shoulder issues, he hasn't lost his elite bat-to-ball skills. Brantley leads MLB in contact rate (90.1%) and contact rate in the zone (96.9%).

"It's kind of the same story as last year," Kluber said. "He stayed here all winter to rehab and worked really hard and put himself in a position to go out there and be the type of player we all know he can be. To have that recognized is pretty cool, all the stuff that he does behind the scenes."

The Indians have at least five All-Stars for the 15th time in franchise history. The other occurrences were 2017 (5), 2004 (5), 1999 (6), 1998 (6), 1996 (5), 1995 (6), 1961 (5), 1955 (6), 1954 (5), 1952 (7), 1949 (5), 1948 (5), 1943 (6) and 1940 (6).

That makes this the fifth time—first since 1998–99—that the team has sent at least five to the Midsummer Classic in consecutive seasons.

"Very [proud]. I'm happy," Francona said. "I'm thrilled for our guys and I'm also happy for the Indians. I think it shows that—whether it's fans or other players or whatever it is—respect for our players. I'm thrilled for that."

Indians report: Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor, Corey Kluber, Trevor Bauer, Michael Brantley named to AL All-Star team

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: For the second consecutive year, the Indians will have at least five representatives on the American League All-Star team.

Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor, Corey Kluber, Trevor Bauer and Michael Brantley were all named to the AL squad, which was officially announced Sunday night. Ramirez was voted in by the fans as the starting third baseman for the second consecutive season and Lindor, Kluber and Brantley made it via the players' vote. Bauer was selected by the commissioner's office.

The Indians, who also sent five representatives last season, had not had that many players selected in back-to-back years since 1998-1999.

"Very [proud]. I'm happy," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "I'm thrilled for our guys and I'm also happy for the Indians. I think it shows that, whether it's fans or other players or whatever it is, respect for our players, I'm thrilled for that."

Ramirez became the first Indians player to be voted as an All-Star starter in consecutive seasons since Roberto Alomar and Manny Ramirez each did it in 1999-2000. Ramirez is second in baseball among position players with 5.7 fWAR this season, trailing only Los Angeles Angels outfielder Mike Trout.

Ramirez is slashing .292/.395/.630 with 24 home runs, 25 doubles, 59 RBI, 60 runs scored and 19 stolen bases.

Lindor, who made his third consecutive All-Star team, is fourth in baseball among position players with 5.1 fWAR. He's slashed .298/.374/.565 with 23 home runs, 27 doubles, 56 RBI, an MLB-best 79 runs scored and 12 stolen bases.

Ramirez and Lindor this season became just the fifth two teammates in baseball history with at least 50 extra-base hits each before the All-Star break.

"I'm really proud of it. I'm really proud of Frankie," Ramirez said. "I'm really happy for him and for his family. Everyone who's been watching us over the past couple years knows that we came up together since A ball. And so I'm really happy for him and that God has blessed us with this opportunity to go there together."

Kluber became the first Indians pitcher to earn three consecutive All-Star selections since Doug Jones in 1988-1990 and the first starter to do so since Sam McDowell made four consecutive All-Star teams between 1968 and 1971. Kluber is 12-4 with a 2.49 ERA and 123 strikeouts in 126⅓ innings.

Bauer, who earned his first All-Star selection with a breakout season, has joined Kluber in the early Cy Young conversation. As of Sunday afternoon, Bauer's 4.5 fWAR led all qualified starting pitchers. He is 8-6 with a 2.45 ERA, a 2.17 FIP (the best mark in baseball among qualified starters) and an 11.57 K/9 rate.

"I'm extremely excited for it," Bauer said. "You watch the game growing up. I watched every year. You tune in for the Home Run Derby and see the best of the best guys.

"I remember watching Torii Hunter rob Barry Bonds and Pedro Martinez punch out six guys in a row, and just moments like that from growing up that are kind of iconic baseball moments for me and for a lot of other people. And to be able to go and play in the same game against the best players that this game has to offer right now — that the world has to offer right now — is really fun."

Brantley has become one of baseball's success stories after he missed essentially the entire 2016 season and much of 2017 with injuries. His selection was his third overall and second in a row.

Brantley is hitting .306 with 11 home runs, 23 doubles, 49 RBI and 47 runs scored, and his insertion into the No. 2 spot in the Indians lineup behind Lindor and in front of Ramirez has created arguably the best 1-2-3 punch in baseball.

The game will be played July 17 in Washington, D.C.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 07.09.2018

Athletics 6, Indians 0: Indians offense absent in loss to A's

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Oakland Athletics starting pitcher Brett Anderson has had a tough season, but he's also always had the Indians' number. Sunday's game was no different, and the Indians lost 6-0 to also drop the weekend series at Progressive Field.

Anderson (1-2) entered with a 7.63 ERA this year, but he also carried a career 0.96 ERA in four previous starts against the Indians. The latter trend was followed, and he tossed five scoreless innings, allowed only three hits and two walks and struck out three.

Even after his departure, the Indians' offense never woke up on a sleepy Sunday. The Indians totaled only four hits and wasted a couple of scoring opportunities along the way.

Erik Gonzalez, who started the game in place of Jason Kipnis, who has a slight hamstring issue, was put on the spot twice in the first four innings but came up empty both times. In the second, the Indians had two runners in scoring position with two outs, but Gonzalez popped out to first baseman Matt Olson on a 3-0 count. Two innings later, Gonzalez was up with two outs and the bases loaded but grounded out to third base.

"I thought that they were pitching around him, and I thought the pitch that he would get would be a fastball on 3-0 so we let him swing and it wasn't exactly what we were looking for," said Indians manager Terry Francona. "I think that's stating the obvious."

The Indians (49-39) again threatened in the sixth. Singles by Jose Ramirez and Edwin Encarnacion had the makings of a rally, but the Indians never hit anything past home plate. Brandon Guyer struck out, Rajai Davis fouled out behind the plate and Roberto Perez always became a strikeout victim.

Indians starting pitcher Shane Bieber (4-1) allowed four runs on eight hits and a walk and struck out seven in six innings. The A's (50-40) took a 1-0 lead in the top of the first partially aided by a missed pop-up by Francisco Lindor, who couldn't see a fly ball off the bat of Mark Canha. Two batters later, Canha scored on a double by Khris Davis. From there, the A's cruised, later adding to their lead with a two-run home run by Stephen Piscotty in the sixth and a Jed Lowrie solo home run in the seventh.

"You know, he gave up two early and then he kind of found it a little bit, kind of like last start and then he gave up a two-run homer in the sixth that skewed his line," Francona said of Bieber. "But he seems to — even for a young guy which is kind of good — if he's not perfect early, he seems to pitch himself into really getting more comfortable and he's what, five or six starts into his major league career and he gave up four and it seems like he didn't pitch real well and I think he's OK. He's going to be a good one."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 07.09.2018

Indians notebook: Josh Tomlin still searching for answers on mound; Jason Kipnis out of lineup due to 'trepidation' with potential hamstring issue

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Josh Tomlin's nightmare of a 2018 season has only seemed to worsen.

Tomlin gave up the go-ahead home run in Saturday night's extra inning loss, raising his season ERA to 6.89. He has now given up 20 home runs in only 48 innings this season.

He was relegated to the bullpen after a disastrous start to the year left him exposed on the mound. The trip to the bullpen hasn't helped, though he also hasn't used it as an excuse.

"I've gone on a little bit of a run and then have a bad outing," Tomlin said. "Go on a little bit of a run and then have a bad outing. So, I stay fresh in the bullpen. I throw bullpens before the game, things like that just to stay fresh off the mound. So yeah, it's not an excuse whatsoever. I just came in and didn't execute pitches and it cost us the game."

The Indians are among the list of contenders likely to seek help within their bullpen prior to the non-waiver trade deadline. Should they acquire a reliever, it's possible Tomlin could be the odd man out. He's been unable to find the answer for which he's been searching this season.

"You know, I think mentally he handles it about as good as anybody I've ever seen," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "And his stuff, I think that's what's kind of frustrating for him because he feels like his stuff has been better than certainly the numbers show."

"I do think if anybody can handle that, especially emotionally or mentally — even [bullpen coach Scott Atchison] has said since he's been down in the bullpen, it's been like a calming or settling [effect] because he's such a good teammate. We knew that would happen. That's not why you send a guy to the bullpen, but that was one of the positives when we actually talked about it when he did actually go out to the bullpen."

Being careful

Looking to be cautious with their second baseman, the Indians gave Jason Kipnis a day off on Sunday to try to avoid turning a slight issue into a larger one.

Kipnis exited the previous two games after feeling his hamstring a bit Friday night after stealing a base. Both times it was said to be a cautionary move rather than a forced exit. Last season, Kipnis landed on the disabled list twice with a strained hamstring, so the goal is to avoid such a situation this year. The Indians were also facing Oakland Athletics left-hander Brett Anderson, giving them another reason to not push things.

Francona said Kipnis had some "trepidation" with how his hamstring currently feels.

"I think it will do him some good," Francona said. "He's come out of two games in a row and I just think rather than push it, let's get this out of the way and OK."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 07.09.2018

Athletics score early, often on way to 6-0 win over Indians

By Paul Hoynes

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Indians are fortunate that the A's don't play in the AL Central or they may not be as comfortable as they appeared Sunday.

Oakland scored early and continued to score in the later innings on the way to a 6-0 victory over rookie Shane Bieber and the Indians at Progressive Field. The A's won the season series, 4-2. In fact, they've won the season series from the Indians for the last three years.

Manager Terry Francona was asked about the A's before the game. He said they were similar to the Indians with the Indians enjoying an edge in the starting rotation and the A's in the bullpen.

The big difference would be the divisions they play in. The Indians are 49-39 in the AL Central and began the day with a 10 1/2-game lead over second-place Minnesota. The A's, meanwhile, are 50-40 and started the day trailing first-place Houston in the AL West by 10 games.

Like real estate, the big leagues are all about location, location, location.

The A's also have made a habit out of finding pitchers that give the Indians a headache. Veteran Edwin Jackson didn't beat them Saturday as he did on June 30 at the Coliseum - Jackson has won 10 straight decisions against the Tribe - but he didn't sell the farm either. He allowed two earned runs in 5 2/3 innings in a game the A's eventually won, 6-3, in 11 innings.

On Sunday, the Indians brought lefty Brett Anderson off the disabled to start against the Tribe. Anderson is 3-0 with a 0.82 ERA in five career starts against the Indians. He hadn't faced them since Aug. 27, 2012, but not much changed in the interim.

Anderson, who threw only 57 percent of his pitches for strikes, held the Indians scoreless for five innings. He walked, two, struck out three and allowed three hits. The impatient Indians spent their time chasing Anderson's two-seam fastball and slider out of the strike zone.

"I don't think it's ever been a question where he can't pitch," said manager Terry Francona. "It's like we were talking about before the game, he knows how to pitch. He's been hurt a lot."

"We had a real good opportunity in the second, runners on second and third and nobody out. But we didn't do anything with it."

"I don't think we made real good adjustments today, but sometimes you have to give the pitcher credit for sure."

Edwin Encarnacion started the second by reaching on an error. He went to third on a double by Brandon Guyer. But Anderson retired Rajai Davis on a fly ball to right, struck out Roberto Perez and popped up Erik Gonzalez.

Anderson had a 3-0 count on Gonzalez, but he swung away and popped it up to first.

"I thought they were going to pitch around him and I thought the pitch he'd get would be a fastball," said Francona, "so we let him swing. It wasn't exactly what we were looking for, which is kind of stating the obvious."

Oakland got to Bieber (4-1, 3.47) early. After Francisco Lindor lost Mark Canha's one-out pop up in the sun, Khris Davis turned it into a 1-0 lead with a double to the wall in right center in the first. The lead grew to 2-0 in the second when Matt Chapman doubled and scored from third on an infield hit to first baseman Edwin Encarnacion.

Stephen Piscotty made it a 4-0 game with a two-run homer in the sixth. Bieber allowed four runs on eight hits in six innings. He struck out seven and walked one.

When the bullpens took over, the A's won phase as well. Dan Otero, Zach McAllister.

"Looking at it objectively, and not putting a lot of emotion into it, I think I made a lot of good pitches," said Bieber. "On the pitches I didn't execute, they beat me. It's something to learn from. I've just got to get better."

The pitches

Anderson threw 96 pitches, 55 (57 percent) for strikes. Bieber threw 98 pitches, 71 (72 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The A's and Indians drew 27, 125 to Progressive Field on Sunday afternoon. First pitch was at 1:11 p.m. with a temperature of 79 degrees.

Next

The Reds arrive at Progressive Field on Monday for a three-game interleague series. Mike Clevinger, Trevor Bauer and Carlos Carrasco are scheduled to face Cincinnati's Anthony DeSciapani, Sal Romano and Tyler Mahle. All three games are scheduled for 7:10 p.m. starts with SportsTime Ohio, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 carrying the series.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.09.2018

Cleveland Indians, Cincinnati Reds series preview, pitching matchups

By Paul Hoynes,

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

Where/when: Progressive Field, Monday through Wednesday.

TV/radio: SportsTime Ohio, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the series.

Pitching matchups and starting times: RHP Anthony DeSciapani (3-1, 5.08) vs. RHP Mike Clevinger (7-3, 3.11) Monday at 7:10 p.m.; RHP Sal Romano (5-8, 4.50) vs. RHP Trevor Bauer (8-6, 2.45) Tuesday at 7:10 p.m. and RHP Tyler Mahle (7-6, 3.66) vs. RHP Carlos Carrasco (8-6, 2.45) Wednesday at 7:10 p.m.

Series: The Indians and Reds split four games last year. The Indians lead, 56-47, overall.

Hot pitchers: Cody Allen has converted 13 straight save opportunities, 18-for-19 overall, since May 19. Reds closer Raisel Iglesias has a 2.92 ERA and eight saves over his last 11 games.

Hot hitters: Edwin Encarnacion is hitting .400 (12-for-30) with 12 RBI in seven of his last eight home games for the Tribe. Scott Gennett is trying to become the first Reds player to win a NL batting title since Pete Rose in 1973.

Team updates: The Indians, following a 5-4 trip, opened this 10-game homestand by losing two out of three to the A's. They are 7-4 against the National League. The Reds are 36-36 since Jim Riggleman replaced former Reds manager Bryan Price on April 19. They are on a nine-game, 10-day trip headed into the All-Star break.

Disabled list: Reds - RHP Homer Bailey (right knee) and RHP Rookie Davis (right hip) are on the disabled list. Indians - OF Lonnie Chisenhall (left calf), RHP Evan Marshall (right elbow), LHP Tyler Olsen (left lat), LHP Andrew Miller (right knee), RHP Nick Goody (right elbow), LHP Ryan Merritt (left shoulder), RHP Danny Salazar (right shoulder) and RHP Cody Anderson (right elbow) are on the disabled list. 2B Jason Kipnis (left hamstring) is day to day.

Next: Yankees visit for a four-game series starting Thursday night.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.09.2018

Cleveland Indians sending five players to the All-Star Game on July 17th at Nationals Park

By Paul Hoynes,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Indians third baseman Jose Ramirez is an All-Star starter for the second year. And he won't be lonely.

He'll be joined at the MidSummer Classic by four of his teammates -- outfielder Michael Brantley, shortstop Francisco Lindor and right-handers Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer. This is the second straight year the Indians will be sending five players to the All-Star Game.

Ramirez was voted to the AL's starting lineup for the second straight year. He won the third balloting with 2,531,120 votes.

The last Indians players voted into the starting lineup for two straight All-Star Games were outfielder Manny Ramirez and second baseman Roberto Alomar in 1999 and 2000.

This year's game will be played at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C.

Ramirez entered Sunday's game against Oakland hitting .293 (96-for-328) with 25 doubles, 24 homers and 59 RBI. He's scored 60 runs and stole 19 bases in 21 attempts.

The switch-hitting Ramirez entered Sunday's game hitting .298 (28-for-94) against left and .291 (68-for-234) against righties. Ramirez ranks fourth in the AL in homers. Lindor and he are the first two teammates to have 50 extra base hits before the All-Star break in club history.

"Really, just to enjoy the experience," said Ramirez about his second trip to the All-Star Game. "It's a great life experience to be able to be there with your family. Everything that they put on there, all the events and the interactions with the fans and everything like that, it's a great event. So, I give thanks to God that I'm able to be there again."

The last Indians third baseman to go to consecutive All-Star Games was Al Rosen in 1953 and 1954.

This will be Brantley's third All-Star Game and second straight. He is hitting .306 with 23 doubles, 11 homers and 49 RBI. In a first half which has seen the Indians go through numerous outfield combinations because of injuries, Brantley has been a consistent force, appearing in his 77th game on Sunday.

Brantley, over the 2016 and 2017 seasons, played just 101 games because of injuries. Brantley was selected by his peers.

In July, Brantley is hitting .346 (9-for-26) with five RBI in six games.

Lindor will be attending his second straight AL All-Star Game. The switch-hitter entered Sunday hitting .301 (107-for-355) with 27 doubles, 23 homers and 56 RBI. Through 86 games, he leads the big leagues with 79 runs.

He leads AL shortstops in homers and is tied with Ramirez for the league lead with 50 extra base hits. He's also tied for the league lead with 37 multi-hit games. Lindor was selected by his peers.

Over Lindor's last eight games, he's hitting .438 (14-for-32) with 12 RBI. He was AL Player of the Month in May when he hit .373 with 10 homers and 23 RBI.

Kluber is headed to his third straight All-Star Game. He was elected by his peers.

The two-time Cy Young winner is having another strong season, going 12-4 with a 2.49 ERA in 19 starts. Kluber leads the AL in innings pitched with 126 1/3 and is tied for second in wins. He ranks first in day-time ERA at 1.71 and second in home ERA at 1.43.

Opponents are batting just .207 against him, eighth lowest batting average against in the league.

Kluber did not pitch in last year's All-Star Game in Miami, but he was the winning pitcher for the AL in 2016 when the game was held in San Diego.

Bauer will be going to his first All-Star Game. He was selected by the Commissioner's office to replace Justin Verlander, who will not pitch in the All-Star Game.

He's 8-6 with a 2.45 ERA in 18 starts. He ranks third in the AL with 156 strikeouts, fifth in ERA and fifth in innings pitched at 121 1/3. The opposition is hitting .211 against him.

Bauer ranks third in the big leagues with 1,967 pitches behind Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander. Bauer has thrown more than 100 pitches in every one of his starts, but he's walked only 37 batters. The American League named Bauer to the All-Star team because Verlander is not going to pitch.

"I'm extremely excited for it," said Bauer. "You watch the game growing up. I watched every year. You tune in for the Home Run Derby and see the best of the best guys. I remember watching Torii Hunter rob Barry Bonds and Pedro Martinez punchout out six guys in a row. Moments like that, from growing up, are kind of iconic baseball moments for me and a lot of other people."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.09.2018

However you spin it, Trevor Bauer's first All-Star selection is unquestionably deserved

T.J. Zuppe Jul 9, 2018 5

Four years ago, a concert spoiled Trevor Bauer's All-Star break.

While other players took advantage of the well-deserved downtime, a stage setup at Progressive Field kept the right-hander and his unique between-start routine from throwing on the field. With nowhere to go and a throwing program to maintain, Bauer told reporters of how he journeyed to a local park with a handful of baseballs, seeking a chain-link fence capable of withstanding his mid-90s heaters.

This year, Bauer won't have to contend with country music or a local park fence. His only potential issue? Working his long-toss and shoulder tube regimen around his expanded interview schedule in Washington, D.C.

The confident hurler, one who proclaimed himself All-Star worthy this past week, saw his impressive first half validated, earning one of the Indians' five selections for the 2018 All-Star Game. And if we're being honest, it's not as if his candidacy should've ever been in question.

"It was a different experience having my name called," Bauer said. "It's something that I'll remember for a while."

Depending on your metric of choice, Bauer has certainly been one of the top starters in baseball this season. If you go by FanGraphs' version of wins above replacement — their formula puts a lot of weight in the three true outcomes (strikeouts, walks and homers) — Bauer has been the majors' most valuable pitcher. He also holds baseball's lowest FIP (fielding independent pitching). If traditional methods are more your flavor, the righty also holds the 10th-lowest earned run average and ranks fourth in strikeouts.

Owning one of the league's best All-Star resumes, Bauer swears he didn't feel any anxiety about it just before Terry Francona announced the selections. That said, he did concede there was a hint of hope just before hearing his name, a feeling that briefly transported him back to his youth.

"You watch the game growing up," Bauer said. "I watched every year. You tune in for the Home Run Derby and see the best of the best guys. I remember watching Torii Hunter rob Barry Bonds and Pedro Martinez punch out six guys in a row, and just moments like that from growing up that are kind of iconic baseball moments for me and for a lot of other people. And to be able to go and play in the same game against the best players that this game has to offer right now — that the world has to offer right now — is really fun. I'm really looking forward to it."

His only wish was that the American League squad could hold more than the five Indians selections: Bauer, Corey Kluber, Francisco Lindor, Michael Brantley and José Ramírez.

“I wish we were bringing more of our guys along with us,” he said.

How he got to this point is a familiar story to frequent readers of The Athletic.

The former third overall pick of the 2011 MLB Draft always carried the ceiling of a front-of-the-rotation starter, but through the early portion of last season, the results continued to be mixed at best. The Diamondbacks moved on rather quickly, but Bauer’s first four years with the Indians still didn’t offer many hints as to whether he would ever progress past serving as a slightly above-average starter.

Of course, a completely revamped delivery took some time to get used to, and Bauer was also still working his way through the complexities of understanding spin rates, tunneling and what makes some of the best pitches in baseball tick — a study that continues to this day.

Using data, Bauer entered this past offseason riding a solid finish to the 2017 campaign, but he wasn’t happy with the modified slider he developed on the fly last year. He wanted to build a slider and changeup that would successfully give him lateral offerings to attack all sides and corners of the plate.

The process took time, but with use of extreme slow-motion cameras, the slider emerged first from his lab, ready for game use. He fired it throughout spring training, eventually battling the growing pains of any new pitch in April to finally gain a better understanding of how it works.

Dividends were almost instantly paid. Not only has the pitch performed like one of the best offerings in baseball this year — FanGraphs rates it as one of the majors’ best sliders — but it has also improved the performance of his other pitches by giving hitters more to ponder as the ball escapes Bauer’s hand.

Pitches don’t exist in a vacuum, so how they work in tandem with others is important. By adding the slider, right-handed hitters now have to wonder whether the approaching pitch is going to move away from them (slider, cutter), dart toward them (two-seam) or appear to rise (four-seam). It gave him another out-pitch to pair with his plus curveball.

In the meantime, the changeup he hoped to develop over the winter has quietly progressed as well — this one a little more under the radar — giving him another plus pitch worthy of befuddling opposing bats (even if he remains a little unhappy with its current movement profile).

On top of that, his continued training has helped kick his fastball up a notch.

For someone who hasn’t always seen his methods widely accepted — and let’s face it, his self-confidence and propensity to create a few sticky situations has made him a polarizing figure — it would be understandable if the first-half success led to a certain amount of personal vindication.

He insisted that’s not how he views it.

“I don’t know if there’s any vindication to be felt,” Bauer said.

“I think it’s a testament to the work I’ve done my entire career to get to this point. It just so happens that my work this offseason paid off a little bit better than some of my other offseasons. But, I’ve done a lot of work on staying healthy and I’ve stayed healthy my whole career. I’ve done a lot of work on developing velocity and my mechanics and command and all that different stuff, so it’s just a culmination of many years of hard work.”

Still, he’s hardly reached the finish line. He’s already made his personal goals clear, demanding multiple Cy Youngs of himself before he’s 45 years old. He sets the bar high, rarely if ever settling for OK. And while some might have been skeptical of the methods he’s used, few if any will ever question the clear desire he has to continuously improve.

“I think development is a good word,” fellow All-Star Corey Kluber said. “He’s grown as a pitcher. I think, obviously, his work ethic isn’t in question, but I think he’s done a good job of maybe addressing things to improve on, kind of attacking those things. And I think now you’re seeing the results of it.”

Those certainly can’t be argued. His standing as one of the game’s best hurlers in 2018 is unquestionably deserved.

In fact, at this rate, he will probably never need to visit that park fence in mid-July again.

“He wants to be the best, and he’s working his way toward that,” Francona said. “He’s established himself as one of the best pitchers in the last year.”

What being an All-Star means for each of the five Indians selected

By Jimmy Watkins Jul 9, 2018

The Indians used to be a team with manufactured All-Star selections by MLB rule. In Terry Francona’s first three years as manager, they earned five combined All-Star selections. Now, for the second consecutive season, the Indians will send five players to the same summer classic. A lot has changed during Francona’s tenure.

"I'm thrilled for our guys and I'm also happy for the Indians," Francona said. "I think it shows that, whether it's fans or other players or whatever it is, respect for our players. I'm thrilled for that."

The All-Star Game itself may be meaningless again, but being selected to play in it isn't. The Indians are among the most talented teams in baseball in 2018, and the American League All-Star roster reflects as much. But what do these individual accomplishments mean for the players themselves?

José Ramírez: Second consecutive selection, second overall
.292/.395/.590, 24 HR, 19 SB, 5.7 fWAR

Ramírez will take the field as the starting AL third baseman for the second consecutive season, signifying his well-earned superstar status, both as a player and a personality. (Some would argue that another Cleveland infielder on the left side deserves the same treatment.) Ramírez is a legit Most Valuable Player candidate this year. He hasn't officially confirmed he'll participate in the Home Run Derby yet, but we have a pretty good idea of his thoughts on the matter.

"I'll try, if I get the chance," he said through the club translator.

"(The All-Star Game) is a great life experience to be able to be there with your family. Everything that they put on there, all the events and the interactions with the fans and everything like that, it's a great event. So, I give thanks to God that I'm able to be there again."

Trevor Bauer: First selection
8-6, 2.45 ERA, 2.17 FIP, 4.5 fWAR

The mad scientist of the pitcher's mound is being recognized among the league's elite for the first time. He has, quite literally, built himself into an All-Star. And he's happy to see the work paying off.

"I think we have a couple other ones that are very deserving as well," Bauer said. "Obviously, not everyone can make it. I'm happy for the guys that did. I'm happy to be going with them — a lot of great guys, great players."

Francisco Lindor: Third consecutive selection, third overall
.298/.374/.565, 23 HR, 12 SB, 5.1 fWAR

Lindor should probably be starting next to Ramírez, but he'll probably have plenty of other chances. He didn't even mention his omission from the starting lineup after learning he was selected. He turned the attention onto his organization and his teammates.

"(Having five players selected) says a lot about the system," Lindor said. "Every guy that is going to the All-Star Game this year has come up along with (Ramírez and me), except Bauer. Everybody else has grown up in the system. It says a lot about the Indians."

Those comments sound like a maturing star who understands his value as a leader as well as a player.

Michael Brantley: Second consecutive selection, third overall
.306/.351/.490, 11 HR, 5 SB, 1.2 fWAR

Michael Brantley was supposed to be a yearly selection along with Lindor and Corey Kluber. Injuries made that difficult for him. And now that — find a wooden surface — he's back to full health, he's proved his status as one of the league's best players. His teammates know how much he struggled to get to this point, so they went out of their way to praise him for making it back.

From Lindor: "Brant is like a dad. He's like a big brother. When I'm struggling, I go to him. Or even when I'm going good, I just go up to him and say, 'Hey, give me some knowledge today.' Seeing how successful he has been even though he's had a lot of ups and downs, he never backs down from anything. He goes out there day in and day out, and I'm very proud of him."

From Corey Kluber: "It's kind of the same story as last year. He stayed here all winter to rehab and worked really hard and put himself in a position to go out there and be the type of player we all know he can be. To have that recognized is pretty cool, all the stuff that he does behind the scenes to get ready and stuff."

Corey Kluber: Third consecutive selection, third overall
12-4, 2.49 ERA, 3.30 FIP, 2.8 fWAR

No one is surprised to see Kluber's name on the roster. The more intriguing question is whether he'll capture a third Cy Young Award this season. Kluber actually said that All-Star selections aren't the only good way to measure consistent success in the majors, though he did make a small sales pitch for his catcher to be added to the roster.

"Catchers go out there and pretty much bust their butts every day for us as pitchers," Kluber said. "It would be awesome if (Yan Gomes) could get some recognition for that."

Joey Votto, Eugenio Suárez, Scooter Gennett to represent Cincinnati Reds as MLB All-Stars

Bobby Nightengale, Cincinnati Enquirer Published 7:38 p.m. ET July 8, 2018 | Updated 9:52 p.m. ET July 8, 2018

CHICAGO – Before Sunday's game against the Chicago Cubs, Reds third baseman Eugenio Suárez walked into the visiting manager's office to meet Interim Manager Jim Riggleman and President of Baseball Operations Dick Williams.

When Suárez left the office, he couldn't stop smiling.

For the first time, he was a Major League All-Star.

Suárez and first baseman Joey Votto were voted to the team from the players' ballot while second baseman Scooter Gennett was one of the seven players chosen by the commissioner's office.

Reactions: Reds get three All-Stars

For the first time since 2014, the Reds will have three players in the Major League Baseball All-Star Game.

"Right now, I feel so, so happy," Suárez said. "I know my dream came true. I've always dreamed about the All-Star team, the All-Star Game, the All-Star players. Now I can say I'm an All-Star player. I feel so happy."

Joey Votto talks about making the All-Star Game for the sixth time in his career and what it means to make it through the players' vote. Bobby Nightengale/The Enquirer

Suárez missed 16 games on the disabled list in April with a fractured right thumb. He entered Sunday leading the National League in RBI (66) and on-base plus slugging percentage (.982).

He knew he had the numbers to be included in the All-Star Game, but his heart started racing when he heard the good news.

It was the first time Suárez and Gennett were picked for the All-Star team. Votto will be returning for the sixth time.

"I know my wife, my family and everybody in my hometown will be happy for me," said Suárez, who signed a seven-year contract extension during Spring Training. "That makes me feel more happy. Now I get to tell my daughter I'm part of the All-Star team."

All three of the Reds' All-Stars learned of their selection when they separately met with Riggleman and Williams.

"Joey was really excited, really honored," Riggleman said. "It was really great to see him with a big smile on his face. He's so low-key, but he was really proud and excited. When we told him Suárez and Gennett were on there, man, he just broke out in a huge smile."

Suárez and Gennett both arrived from outside of the organization. Suárez was included in the Alfredo Simon trade with the Detroit Tigers in 2014.

The Reds claimed Gennett on waivers prior to the start of the 2017 season. In a little more than 15 months, Gennett transformed himself from a left-handed bat off the bench into an All-Star.

"I give a lot of credit to our scouts for identifying those guys," Williams said of Suárez and Gennett. "But really most of the credit goes to the players themselves for continuing to improve their craft, and the coaches for all of the hours of work that's put in."

Gennett entered Sunday with a league-leading .329 batting average, smacking 14 homers and 58 RBI.

"I think that was the biggest thing was just getting the opportunity, and I would say I earned that opportunity," Gennett said. "I fought my way into the lineup last year. Once I've been in there every day, the rest is kind of history in a sense. I think the true player in me came out and that's been a lot of fun."

Speaking to reporters a few minutes after learning of his All-Star Game selection, Votto admitted he was "a little bit shocked."

Votto entered Sunday leading the National League with a .428 on-base percentage, ranking second with 68 walks. He's hit eight homers and 44 RBI, adding 49 runs scored.

"It's just exciting putting that uniform on and standing in line and representing the city and the team," Votto said. "I'm very proud of that."

With three players on the initial 34-man All-Star roster, Riggleman joked to Williams, "Why am I not winning more games with an infield like this?"

The three All-Stars are certainly a major reason why the Reds are playing their best stretch of baseball this season.

"It's really good to see that their accomplishments are appreciated, not just in Cincinnati, but throughout baseball," Riggleman said. "As you talk to other coaches and managers, you hear comments from players, they really realize how good these guys are."

Cincinnati Enquirer LOADED: 07.09.2018

Cincinnati Reds' Riggleman on loss to Cubs: 'We're beyond the point of moral victories'

Bobby Nightengale, Cincinnati Enquirer Published 6:02 p.m. ET July 8, 2018 | Updated 8:05 p.m. ET July 8, 2018

CHICAGO – When Cincinnati Reds reliever Jackson Stephens saw his final pitch fly above the strike zone, he turned and appeared to shout at himself.

With the bases loaded in the 10th inning Sunday, Chicago Cubs third baseman David Bote drew a walk-off walk to hand the Reds a 6-5 loss at Wrigley Field in front of 38,655 fans.

As Cubs players ran to Bote and poured a cooler of sunflower seeds over his head, the Reds walked off the field with their second loss in the three-game series.

In both games, the Reds held leads in the sixth inning but couldn't hold off the Cubs' powerful lineup.

"We came up short," Reds Interim Manager Jim Riggleman said. "We're beyond the point of moral victories. We feel like we had to win these ballgames."

Stephens issued a leadoff walk to Cubs catcher Willson Contreras. Usually, those walks invite trouble.

Following an out and intentional walk, a tough situation became worse when Joey Votto committed an error. The ball popped out of his glove as he tried to step on first to complete an unassisted groundout.

The Reds used a five-man infield with the bases loaded before Stephens walked Bote to send Wrigley Field fans into their customary, "Go Cubs Go" victory song.

"You can't have a leadoff walk there in that situation," Stephens said. "You try to compete and fight through it, but I didn't execute."

The Reds had already escaped one bases-loaded jam in the ninth inning. Catcher Curt Casali scooped a throw from second baseman Scooter Gennett out of the dirt for a key force out.

"That was incredible," Gennett said.

Against the Cubs, there isn't much room for error.

In the seventh inning, the Cubs scored two runs on a two-out rally against three Reds relievers. With runners on the corners, Javier Baez hit a two-run single on an 0-2 pitch, a ground ball that snuck past Reds shortstop Jose Peraza. Reds center fielder Billy Hamilton made a soft throw back into the infield and Cubs outfielder Jason Heyward, the runner who was on first base, took full advantage by sprinting to the plate and beating the relay throw home to give the Cubs a 5-4 lead. Heyward was attempting to steal second on the pitch, which helped him speed around the base paths. He slowed down when he rounded third until he saw the soft throw into the infield. "I put that all on myself," Hamilton said. "Heads up baserunning by him. You have to give credit to him, especially in that situation with the game tied, you don't expect him to run like that." The Reds, who lost two games in a row for the first time in more than a week, took a lead through the Cubs' own fielding miscues. With two outs in the fifth inning against Cubs lefty Jon Lester, Hamilton drew a five-pitch walk. He promptly stole second, advanced to third when the ball bounced into center field and scored when the throw to the plate was off target. The power of Hamilton's speed: He scored from first without a swing of the bat. "I love being aggressive," Hamilton said. "Got to third. I just saw the ball laying on the ground so I was just thinking, 'If he has to bend down, pick the ball up and then make a perfect throw, I'm going to take that chance.'" Reds left fielder Adam Duvall hit a solo home run to open the ninth inning, tying the game at 5, against Cubs closer Brandon Morrow. It was the second home run Morrow has given up in the last two seasons. But for the second straight day, the Reds couldn't hold onto their lead. "That game had a little bit of everything," Rigglesman said. "It had big hitting, it had good defense. It had unearned runs. It just came down to they got the last at-bat and walks played a big part." The Reds will travel to Cleveland for a three-game series, beginning the 21st-annual Ohio Cup series on Monday. The Indians lost two of three games to the Oakland A's in a weekend series. Cincinnati Enquirer LOADED: 07.09.2018

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Cincinnati Reds pitcher Homer Bailey pitches out of bullpen in rehab outing

Bobby Nightengale, Cincinnati Enquirer Published 2:36 p.m. ET July 8, 2018 | Updated 5:02 p.m. ET July 8, 2018

CHICAGO – After making four rehab starts at Triple-A Louisville, Homer Bailey pitched out of the bullpen for the first time Sunday. Bailey threw two scoreless innings, allowing two hits and two walks while striking out one. Before Bailey was placed on the 10-day disabled list on June 2 with right knee inflammation, Reds interim manager Jim Rigglesman announced Bailey would move to the bullpen, at the time allowing Anthony DeSclafani to return to the rotation. "We've talked to him about at least exploring the option of seeing how he pitches out of the pen and how he responds to it," said Dick Williams, the Reds' President of Baseball Operations. "It's obviously a much different routine than he's been through his entire career. We've also got the extended injury history that will complicate it. It's not a transition that can be taken for granted. We'll see how he responds to it." Before Sunday's appearance out of the bullpen, Bailey showed improvement in his last two rehab starts. He allowed four earned runs in 13 2/3 innings with zero walks and 11 strikeouts. At the Major League level, Bailey had a 1-7 record and 6.68 ERA through 12 starts this year. "I will say this, we're very encouraged by his last couple of starts," Williams said, "but I think it's important now while we have the opportunity in the minor league setting to find out how he responds to appearing out of the bullpen." Bailey is eligible to remain on the disabled list for about two more weeks. Whether he continues as a starter or reliever, Williams said, will be determined later. "He's just a little concerned about how the adjustment will happen and how his body will respond," Williams said. "He's going to go out there and we're going to find out together." HARVEY HEALTHY: Matt Harvey didn't have strong command of all his pitches during Saturday's outing against the Chicago Cubs, but his fastball reached 96 mph and his slider topped out at 90 mph. Raising his velocity in his time with the Reds, Harvey said that's his new normal. "I'm definitely healthy – it's not feeling healthy, it's I am," Harvey said. "I'm two years out now from surgery, so there's been a lot of work in-between to get to where I'm at now, but it feels good." Harvey underwent surgery in 2016 to repair thoracic outlet syndrome, a disorder that caused numbness in his throwing arm. "That was kind of uncharted waters a little bit," Reds interim manager Jim Rigglesman said. "Not many people had gone through that. I think he's just day-by-day, in terms of start-by-start, it's just getting more healthy, more healthy and more healthy. You're seeing the results of that." SCHEBLER IN THE SUN: Reds right fielder Scott Schebler lost a pair of fly balls in the sun during Saturday's 8-7 loss to the Cubs. In the sixth inning, Addison Russell hit a fly ball toward the right-field line, which dropped between Schebler and second baseman Scooter Gennett. Russell scored on the next pitch. Later in the same inning, Ben Zobrist hit a fly ball to right field but Billy Hamilton sprinted from center field to make the catch as Schebler lost track of it in the sun. "I pretty much told Billy, 'Hey, if it's at the right height, I have no chance,' " Schebler said. "That's why he came over and caught that one. Thank goodness he got over there in time. It's a pretty helpless feeling." Cincinnati Enquirer LOADED: 07.09.2018

1136935 Cincinnati Reds

McCoy: Bizarre ending in Reds loss to Cubs

By Hal McCoy

It was inevitable that Sunday afternoon's baseball game between the Chicago Cubs and the Cincinnati Reds would end in a bizarre way.

And it did. Reds relief pitcher Jackson Stephens walked David Bote on a full count with the bases loaded in the 10th inning, a walk-off walk that gave the Cubs a 6-5 victory in Wrigley Field.

The finish was set-up on a strange error by Reds first baseman Joey Votto. With one out and runners on third and second, Addison Russell grounded to first.

Votto fielded and looked to third to hold the runner and trotted toward first, trying to extract the baseball for a possible throw. He bobbled the ball, but Russell was called out at first for what appeared to be the second out.

But an umpire review revealed that Votto bobbled the ball as he stepped on first and Russell was ruled safe, filling the bases. Bote, a late-inning double switch insertion, then drew the game-ending walk.

Stephens tempted his fate by walking the first batter of the 10th, Willson Contreras, on five pitches. Then he threw a wild pitch to put Contreras on second.

He struck out Victor Caratini and Ian Happ was walked intentionally. Then came Votto's bobble and then came the loss.

The Reds escaped an identical situation in the ninth when the Cubs had runners on second and third with one out. Manager Jim Riggleman employed a six-man infield, placing outfielder Adam Duvall behind second base and it worked.

Javier Baez grounded to second and Scooter Gennett's throw home was in the dirt but catcher Curt Casali scooped it. The Cubs asked for a review to see if Casali bobbled the ball or didn't have his foot on home plate. The out call was confirmed. Anthony Rizzo lined to center to end the inning at 5-5.

Riggleman again employed with six-man infield in the 10th but he could have used an eight-man infield and it wouldn't have worked because of the walk.

It was a wild, wild, wild one all day. The Cubs led, 2-0. The Reds led 3-2. It was tied 3-3. The Reds led, 4-3. The Cubs led 5-4.

With the Cubs leading, 5-4, in the ninth, Adam Duvall tied it with a leadoff home run off Cubs closer Brandon Morrow, who was 20 for 21 in safe situations. Scott Schebler singled with one out and stole second, but Jose Peraza struck out to end the inning.

Reds starter Luis Castillo put up a dull performance — four innings, three runs, six hits, two walks, three strikeouts, 83 pitches in four innings.

With the Cubs leading, 2-1, in the fourth, Eugenio Suarez picked on a 3-and-0 pitch from Cubs starter Jon Lester and drove a two-run home run into the left field bleachers. It was Suarez's first career hit on a 3-and-0 count.

And on this day, Billy Hamilton taketh and Billy Hamilton giveth away.

With the score 3-3 in the fifth with two outs and nobody on, Hamilton walked. He then scored from first base on a stolen base. He stole second, too third on catcher Willson Contreras' throwing error and continued home when center fielder Albert Almora Jr. bobbled the ball while retrieving the catcher's throw.

That gave the Reds a 4-3 lead but Hamilton gave it back in the seventh. There were two outs and nobody on but Almora singled against Michael Lorenzen. Riggleman brought in lefty specialist Kyle Crockett to face lefty Jason Heyward. He singled to put runners on second and first.

Riggleman brought in David Hernandez and Javier Baez singled to center, scoring Almora. But Hamilton lobbed a throw into second base and Heyward never stopped, scoring from first — a two-run gaffe that put the Cubs ahead, 5-4.

Then came Duvall's home run and then came the walk-off walk.

Amazingly, the Reds had won nine straight final games of a series until Sunday and they lost the series, two games to one and all three games were decided by one run.

And after winning five straight from the Cubs, the Reds dropped the last two.

Dayton Daily News LOADED: 07.09.2018

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