



# CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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### The Athletic

José Quintana delivers big-game performance the Cubs absolutely needed

By Patrick Mooney

The Cubs went 0-for-2 with Yu Darvish and Tyler Chatwood so far, investing \$164 million in two free agents who combined for six quality starts and a 5.20 ERA this season. The Cubs hit a home run when they traded for Cole Hamels, acquiring a former World Series MVP who again looks like a Game 1 playoff

starter. But so much of the final stages in this pennant race will be about Jon Lester, José Quintana and Kyle Hendricks, the three starting pitchers the Milwaukee Brewers will face during this Wrigley Field showdown.

The rotation has to be the safety net for a Cubs team that right now has too many easy outs in the lineup and no A-list closer in a bullpen filled with question marks. The defense makes compromises for the offense while working around injuries. The Brewers and St. Louis Cardinals are still breathing down their necks.

This is exactly the kind of big-game environment president of baseball operations Theo Epstein envisioned when he sent top prospects Eloy Jiménez and Dylan Cease to the White Sox last summer to get Quintana, whose durability, resiliency and professionalism should be appreciated now that the Cubs are in scramble mode.

“No, to be honest, we never look at the stuff,” Pedro Strop said of The Eloy Trade after saving Quintana’s 3-0 win over the Brewers. “We don’t waste our time.”

Quintana absolutely delivered in a big game for a group that tries to focus on the task at hand and play the same whether it’s April, August or October. But there was no downplaying or escaping the significance of this victory, pushing the division lead over the Brewers back to two games while keeping the Cardinals 3 1/2 games out in the National League Central.

“You feel the energy and the atmosphere around you,” Quintana said. “That’s huge. We got a winning team and it’s fun when you pitch for things like that. That’s why I’m really happy to be part of this team. For sure, we want to get back to the playoffs and keep rolling.”

Manager Joe Maddon called it a “different level of Q” after recent mechanical adjustments put the left-hander in a rhythm, at a better angle and on a more direct path to home plate against a thumping Milwaukee lineup.

Quintana went nine up, nine down to set the tone before Lorenzo Cain led off the fourth inning with a line-drive single and Christian Yelich walked. Quintana then got an assist when catcher Victor Caratini framed an inside fastball to strike out Jesus Aguilar looking, the beginning of another run in which he would retire nine batters in a row.

After unloading his 108th pitch, Quintana walked off the mound to a standing ovation from the crowd of 37,017 with two outs in the seventh inning and the bases loaded for lefty reliever Justin Wilson, who struck out pinch-hitter Manny Pina with three straight fastballs between 94.7 and 95.7 mph. Quintana allowed only three singles and two walks while finishing with seven strikeouts, improving his career numbers against the Brewers to 6-2 with a 1.60 ERA.

“They know the fastball’s coming and it’s still getting on them,” Maddon said. “And then when he throws the curveball, it becomes more pertinent. Nice arm speed on the changeup also. A pretty complete night for him.”

Quintana is now 13-9 with a 3.97 ERA and in position to make 30-plus starts for the sixth straight season. While some of the peripheral numbers are down and Quintana hasn’t made the giant leap into the Cy Young Award conversation, being available and unafraid of big moments is extremely valuable.

The Cubs have won five of Quintana's six starts this season against the Brewers, a team that had extensive conversations with the White Sox last year before Epstein swooped in to make a deal that would shake the team out of a championship hangover.

It's hard to ask big-game questions with a straight face to the players who experienced the 2016 World Series and came back from a 3-1 deficit to win Game 7 in the 10th inning in Cleveland.

But there are warning signs here that make Quintana even more important to this team's postseason chances. This is totally unscientific, but the Cubs and Lester didn't appear to be concerned about either: a) the lower-back pain that forced him from the sixth inning of Monday night's 3-2 loss; or b) the division lead that had shrunk to just one game up on the Brewers. Lester turned around in the clubhouse on Tuesday afternoon and noticed the reporters creeping toward his locker.

"I'll be fine," Lester said. "I'll pitch whenever they tell me to pitch."

Are you getting any treatment?

"No, I'm just going to ride it out and see how it does by itself," Lester said. "You guys don't want to interview me when I'm not feeling great."

Lester's words in print or on a screen usually come across like: "Get off my lawn!" But he's almost always a great interview — honest, insightful, self-deprecating — in a way that sounds much different in person.

"I don't feel great, but I can pitch," Lester said. "They have really good drugs."

A reporter noticed Jason Heyward — the Gold Glove outfielder on the disabled list with right hamstring tightness — at the edge of the group and said, "You got a question in the back."

"No questions, I'm just getting an update," Heyward said, pointing his phone at Lester.

Did you wake up this morning with any pain?

"I did wake up, yes," Lester said as the group started laughing. "I didn't feel great, but I got up out of the bed. I made it to my son's dentist appointment and I sat there with him. He had to get two cavities filled. Bad parenting.

"But I'm here. I'm fixing to see the trainer right now and get things worked on. I feel OK. I feel like I pitched last night, but I don't know what else to tell you guys. I don't have any information."

Heyward piped up like he was a Cubs PR guy: "Thanks, Jon, for your time."

It goes without saying how much the Cubs need Lester, a three-time World Series champion still pitching at an All-Star level in Year 4 of a \$155 million megadeal.

The Cubs elevated swingman Mike Montgomery into the rotation in late May when Darvish's right arm began to bother him. Super-utility pitcher Jesse Chavez earned a spot in Maddon's circle of trust and all kinds of late-game, high-leverage situations with injured closer Brandon Morrow sidelined since the All-Star break. The next-man-up scenarios are, uh, suboptimal, as Maddon would say, as the Cubs try to survive a stretch of 30 scheduled game days in a row, finish a three-team division race and ramp up for October.

"I understand the questions," Lester said. "If I had answers, I would (give them to you). I literally got here at 3:25, had a drug test and (went out for the annual team photo). I literally haven't even seen my pitching coach or my manager other than the picture. So like I said, we'll figure it out, but I don't imagine missing any time."

No, this didn't feel like a team in panic mode, and remember the old cliché about momentum and the next day's starting pitcher and how Hendricks is lined up for Wednesday against the Brewers. Quintana stabilized the Cubs on a night when they really needed it.

"There's a very confident look about him," Maddon said. "He's a very humble man, so it's hard, you have to really look in there. But he's very confident and feeling good about where he's at right now."

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### **The Athletic**

Unexpected heroes arise in bullpen as Cubs wait for another to emerge

By Sahadev Sharma

The Cubs won a big game on Tuesday night against the Milwaukee Brewers with lefty relievers Justin Wilson and Jorge De Le Rosa getting critical outs in the 3-0 win.

His gut-punch home run allowed to Bryce Harper over the weekend aside, Wilson has finally started to look like the strong lefty reliever the Cubs have coveted since Aroldis Chapman left town. But no one expected De La Rosa to be working high-leverage innings for this team come September. Then again, no one really saw this season unfolding the way it has for the Cubs.

"The only thing you know is the unexpected is going to happen," team president Theo Epstein said recently. "Certain things you thought were strengths are going to crater on you. Players or elements to the team will pop up out of nowhere and become strengths."

Even in-game, strange occurrences continue to pop up for this team. Manager Joe Maddon was hoping to get José Quintana through seven innings and then use Wilson for the eighth. But Quintana loaded the bases with two outs and Wilson had to come in earlier than Maddon had planned. But despite facing a right-handed Manny Piña, Wilson didn't falter in the least. He pumped two straight fastballs, getting ahead 0-2 with Piña looking all the way, then fired a third at 96 mph that Piña swung through to end the threat.

"The command and the conviction per pitch," Maddon said. "I love that he went at him with his fastball. It was the perfect spot, really hard to catch up with. That's a game-changer."

Wilson was brought in last summer because he has an elite four-seam fastball with some of the best swing-and-miss in baseball (last season, there was only one lefty reliever, Josh Hader, who threw at least 500 four-seamers and had a better whiff/swing rate than Wilson's 32.1 percent). More than a year after that trade, he's finally giving the Cubs the type of high-leverage work they had hoped for when they first acquired him.

With Wilson working that 1/3 of an inning, Maddon switched gears for the eighth and went with De La Rosa. The lefty ensured that Brewers manager Craig Counsell would likely keep his lefty pinch-hitters (Mike Moustakas, Curtis Granderson and Eric Thames) on the bench. But the veteran southpaw would

still have to face Lorenzo Cain and Christian Yelich. De La Rosa was up to the task, needing just 12 pitches to retire Tyler Saladino, Cain and Yelich in order.

“It’s funny how things work out,” Maddon said. “Justin gets out (of it) and then De La Rosa takes advantage of that and grows in that moment. De La was outstanding. Justin came in, pumped strikes confidently. We need that to morph together the seventh, eighth and ninth. Just a couple days ago we’re lamenting some things and now you’re seeing other guys that are going to permit you to put it together in other ways.”

The Cubs are piecing this together without closer Brandon Morrow, who continues to slowly work his way back from a bone bruise as he’s expected to throw off a mound before Wednesday’s game and perhaps return to game action as early as this weekend. Pedro Strop picked up another save in Morrow’s stead and Jesse Chavez, who was warming at various moments in the evening, has become another unexpected linchpin for the bullpen. The righty is leaning on his cutter more than he has in years and it’s led to a 1.55 ERA in 29 innings with Chicago as he’s posted a ridiculous 30.8 percent strikeout rate and minuscule 2.8 percent walk rate.

These are the types of unexpected aspects of a season to which Epstein was referring. But sometimes, you need the expected to arrive as well. Maddon is currently trying to cajole that out of Carl Edwards Jr. The righty came into a tie game with runners on second and third and two outs during Monday night’s loss and immediately uncorked a wild pitch that allowed the eventual game-winning run to score. Edwards then threw three straight balls to walk Orlando Arcía before getting Curtis Granderson to strike out on four pitches.

Maddon is desperate for Edwards to get right and that moment — big game, big situation, but not against a good hitter — was what he felt was the perfect time to try and get Edwards straightened out.

There’s truly no better moment to build Edwards’ confidence than that. Using him in a meaningless game or a meaningless moment doesn’t help him or the team going forward. Edwards needed one out against a hitter who has a 41 wRC+, the worst in baseball for players with at least 300 plate appearances. Arcía doesn’t walk, he doesn’t hit for power and he doesn’t hit for average. That’s the time to choose if you’re searching for one to straighten out Edwards. Because if he can’t get right, then the Cubs bullpen just won’t be what they need come October. Especially if Morrow isn’t back and dealing like they know he can.

“Here’s the thing,” Maddon said when asked if he’d hesitate to put Edwards in a big moment going forward. “We’re going into October and we’re looking for a positive result. I can’t even imagine doing well in October without him. So you gotta get the guy right. You don’t run away from that kind of talent.”

According to Brooks Baseball, since PITCHf/x debuted in 2007, there are only six relievers currently active who have a better career whiff/swing rate on their four-seam fastball than Edwards’ 31.6 percent. Only three have a better whiff/swing rate on their curveball than his 52.3 percent. His spin rates on both pitches are elite, meaning his four-seamer gives the illusion of rising at the plate while his curve has devastating and sudden break. When he’s on, he’s one of the best relievers in the game.

“It’s funny,” Edwards said to a group of reporters before Tuesday’s win. “It’s like if y’all was writing and you wanted to say something and you forgot what you wanted to write about. Then you’re looking around and you think, ‘I knew I had something on my mind, but I forgot.’ That’s just how I look at it. I’ve been doing something forever and then it’s like, ‘What just happened?’ But at the same time, it comes back to you and I feel like it’s going to come back to me.”

This isn't the first time Edwards has had these moments. He seems to hit rough patches every so often, keeping him from truly reaching his potential and becoming a consistently dominant force out of the bullpen. ERA isn't always the best indicator of a reliever's value, but the visual below does a solid job of showing how Edwards has had rough points in his career, only to shake them and get back to being a key part of the Cubs' bullpen.

(Chart in link)

But even now, when his ERA is low and he's keeping runs off the board, he's not doing what he does best: miss bats. He's currently in the midst of a stretch in which his swinging-strike rate, and subsequently his strikeout rate, is lower than it's ever been.

(Another chart in link!)

"Right now, I'm going through something," Edwards said. "You never know, I could go out there today and strike out three in a row and I get something going. It might give us a boost, might give us a spark. I'm just taking it as it comes. There's really nothing you can do about it. It's like a hitter going through a slump. What I'm going through right now with pitching, I'm not really going through a slump, but maybe overthinking things. Instead of just going out there and having fun and being the guy I always have been. It's happened before and I got through it. It's happening now and I'll get through it again."

Maddon pointed out that Edwards' recent blowups have been peppered with good moments, too. Think back to last Monday in Milwaukee. Edwards gave up a bloop single to Granderson, then a hard-hit single to Cain, one of the better players in the game. He then completely embarrassed a red-hot Yelich and Jesús Aguilar, before losing Ryan Braun on a 3-2 curve Edwards felt was a strike. It wasn't, but Edwards was clearly frustrated. He stepped off the mound, tried to get his head straight, then went and walked Mike Moustakas on four straight balls, allowing the Brewers to tie the game with a free pass. This past Monday had the disastrous wild pitch and subsequent walk of Arcia followed by a great strikeout of Granderson. So there are signs, but not enough to really push him to where he needs to be.

"We just gotta get him more consistently back in the zone," Maddon said. "Is that a mental concept? Is that what are you thinking in advance of that? Are you breathing properly? Are you taking your time? What are you thinking out there? More than anything, it's not a mechanical issue. It's just what are you thinking and are you in control of your emotions in that moment? That's the primary topic."

Maddon said he wants to make sure Edwards doesn't overthink the moment. That's certainly what he did the past two Mondays, but he's sprinkled some quiet and overlooked moments of brilliance in there as well. It's up to Maddon to try and make those appear on a more consistent basis.

Many would suggest that Maddon give up on trying to get Edwards right. But many said the same about Wilson just mere months ago, while wondering why the Cubs were picking up players like Chavez and De La Rosa when they're clinging to a small division lead and in desperate need of quality arms. Edwards might be struggling to find himself at the moment, but for the Cubs to get to where they want to be, they'll need him to come to an epiphany and return to the form that once made him one of the most feared relievers in baseball.

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## **The Athletic**

Greenberg: Thrill-seeking Cubs step back from abyss, keep their NL Central lead

By Jon Greenberg

If you were surprised the Cubs' NL Central lead dropped to one game Monday night, I don't blame you. I was surprised too.

If you're surprised the Cubs beat Milwaukee on Tuesday to push that lead back up to two games, well, that outcome was as obvious as 37,000 people booing Ryan Braun.

The Cubs didn't batter the Brewers into submission like I suspected they might. They won 3-0 because José Quintana was lights out for most of 6 2/3 innings, and because the Brewers committed two errors in the Cubs' two-run second inning, the same inning in which second baseman Jonathan Schoop, who made one of those errors, also let a ball go off his glove for a run-scoring hit.

But they won. They stepped back from the abyss. That's what they do.

As Anthony Rizzo said to me before the game, the Cubs have "to create those moments however we can and not think about creating them."

By now you've realized the Cubs are just a team of adrenaline junkies, a term used, both admiringly and despairingly, by people who watch the team on a daily basis.

By design or habit after three straight years of playoff appearances, this is a team that knows how to turn it on when it matters, but not necessarily keep it on when it matters a little less. They conserve their mojo, much to the chagrin of fans and front office executives who would like to see a little more urgency on a daily basis from a team as deep and talented as any in the National League.

"I think there's some guys that's more true than for others," Ben Zobrist said to me Tuesday when I brought this up. "The brighter light, the more pressure the easier it is for them to focus. I can't put a specific name to that, but there is that feeling in this clubhouse for certain people."

I can think of a few names, but they aren't the ones who came through Tuesday. Victor Caratini had two of the Cubs' three hits and their only two RBIs.

"Yeah, we like big moments, but what team doesn't?" Rizzo said to me. "I would rather have a five or six-game lead right now playing the team that's chasing us, but this is where we're at."

Throughout this season, I've written positively about the team's shared ability to move on from losses and soldier through a long season. That was what experience has taught them over the previous three seasons. But there's a downside to their consistently Zen mental state as well.

"I just had a nice discussion with Anthony in the kitchen area," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said before the game. "Keep the switch on. You've always got to keep the switch on."

Maddon was speaking specifically about this week's uncertain schedule. As of Tuesday, the Cubs didn't know whether they were still going to Washington D.C. to play a makeup game Thursday with Hurricane Florence bearing down on the Eastern seaboard. Maddon doesn't want Rizzo and the team to spend time thinking about not playing Thursday (The Cubs would love the game to be pushed back until the season ends to preserve their off day), he wants them charged up. While Maddon wouldn't admit that's been a problem this season, others might disagree.

Most of the Cubs have grown up in Maddon's laissez-faire atmosphere. It's worked as designed thus far with the Cubs having put together impressive records in August and September under his leadership. But there's a reason the front office liked adding a guy like Daniel Murphy, who, as Joe might say, vibrates on a different frequency. There's a reason they're counting on Zobrist down the stretch, maybe more than they would like to. Adults in the room, as some might say.

The Cubs don't need rah-rah guys, they do need a little "playoff atmosphere" to actually get to the playoffs.

At times, this is a team that takes after Rizzo more than Javy Báez. Now you might be saying, what's wrong with being a Rizzo? Nothing. Rizzo is a perfect Rizzo, an all-time Cub before he turns 30. In some ways, he represents exactly what you want from a ballplayer, someone who doesn't get too high or too low during a 162-game season and can mash when it counts. Rizzo doesn't grind his teeth to nubs during a slump or spend too much time in the clubhouse when he's going good or bad. He can make it look easy sometimes when it's definitely not easy.

Not everyone can flip the switch and hit a homer off Josh Hader in the eighth. Rizzo can. He's intense in his own way, but he won't sweat losing four games off a five-game lead in a week as the Cubs did before their win Tuesday. Sometimes, maybe you should sweat it.

"We can continue to get punched in the face and we'll take the blows," Rizzo said before Tuesday's win. "We'll be ready to play today. No matter what happens, we'll take it in stride. If we win, we'll be happy. If we don't win, we're not going to beat ourselves up."

Rizzo is special in that way and I've championed his line of thinking. But while fans want to anoint him the captain, this year it's clear that Báez, the team's surprise MVP candidate, is the Cub his teammates should be following by example. (Just not by running like him on the bases.)

If every Cub played like Báez, they wouldn't be sweating a two-game lead in the second week of September. It isn't just Báez's instinctual genius, which can't be emulated. I think what has surprised people about Báez in recent years is his intense focus holding over a long season. While his flair is what has made him go viral, Báez's ability to compete on every play is what has endeared him to the baseball side of the organization. He's a gamer, as they say.

I honestly think if the baseball folks could put two players on the next cover of "The Cubs Way," that dog-eared manual of how to play like a Cub, it would be Báez and David Bote, not Rizzo and Kris Bryant. It's weird to type that, let alone think it, but it's true. Both embody a certain kind of intensity the Cubs would love to see on a daily basis.

Some of the Cubs' more tangible issues (a shorthanded bullpen, touch-and-go hitting) seem poised to doom them in a playoff series. But perhaps their ability to rise to the occasion while seemingly on the brink of collapse will again benefit them when it really counts. I mean it's certainly worked before. I wouldn't count this team out next month and no, I'm not worried about them winning the division.

"Yeah, well, I mean it's a good thing for this time of year, because that's when this really matters," Zobrist said. "You don't want to rely on that in June and July. But in September and October, you kind of need more of that, so that's good for this team."

Can adrenaline, starting pitching and a deep bench take the Cubs to the promised land? We'll find out.

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## **Cubs.com**

Quintana, Caratini keep Cubs alone in 1st  
By Carrie Muskat

CHICAGO -- When the Cubs won the World Series in 2016, their mantra was "We never quit." The current team is using a similar rallying cry.

"I remember David Ross and all those guys used to say, 'One at a time, one at a time.' Now that has become part of us," Cubs reliever Pedro Strop said.

Jose Quintana threw 6 2/3 scoreless innings and Victor Caratini drove in two runs to help the Cubs post a 3-0 victory Tuesday night over the Brewers and regain a two-game lead in the National League Central.

"This is a battle, for sure," Chicago's Anthony Rizzo said. "It's a totally different mindset being in first than chasing, so we've got to do everything we can to stay in first."

No matter what happens in the series finale at Wrigley Field on Wednesday, the Cubs will maintain the lead in the Central. These two teams could meet again in the NL Division Series. If they do, you know Quintana will be on the mound.

He retired the first nine batters he faced, then gave up a single to Lorenzo Cain and walked Christian Yelich in the fourth before settling down and retiring the next nine in a row. Jesus Aguilar singled to lead off the seventh for the Brewers' second hit off Quintana.

"We've been unable to solve him, for sure," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "I think basically once we've solved him in maybe the nine starts he's pitched against us. He pitched good. His fastball was located quite a bit today in different parts of the zone. He slows it down with the curveball a little bit. Not enough hits. Bottom line, we just didn't get enough hits."

Quintana has tweaked his delivery after some advice from coaches Jim Hickey and Mike Borzello, and the lefty said the changes helped his fastball command.

"It's really hard when they face you most of the time," Quintana said about dealing with the Brewers. "It's part of the game. We face a lot of teams in our division and in my opinion, we try to do the best every time we go to the mound. This win is special to me. I want to keep rolling in first place now."

This was Quintana's sixth start this season against the Brewers, and the Cubs have won five of those games. The lefty improved to 4-1 with a 2.17 ERA (nine earned runs over 37 1/3 innings) against Milwaukee.

Brewers starter Jhoulys Chacin gave up one hit -- Caratini's RBI single -- over five innings and got support from Cain, who made a stellar catch in the third when he robbed Kris Bryant of an extra-base hit. However, one of the Cubs' runs was unearned because of a throwing error by Chacin.

Tuesday was Day 21 of the Cubs' extended stretch of 30 consecutive days in which they have a game scheduled, and they're 13-8.

"It's a tough stretch, one of the worst you're going to go through in baseball, but you've got to keep the switch on," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said.

Rizzo wouldn't mind a break, though.

"Potentially playing 30 days in a row is -- listen, I love all my teammates, but seeing them 30 days in a row is not what I intend to do," Rizzo said.

Is there anyone in particular he didn't want to see?

"Just the collective unit," Rizzo joked. "For a human being, if you go to the same workplace -- I know what we do is amazing. But if we do [play 30 straight], we do it. We'll get through it. It's just that one day, one pitch, one at-bat at a time mentality."

#### MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

With one out in the ninth, Ryan Braun hit a grounder to shortstop Addison Russell who threw to Rizzo at first for the out. The Brewers challenged the call but after review, it was confirmed. Rizzo did have to do the splits to catch the ball.

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Count 'em: Caratini deserved credit for the Cubs' first two runs. Ben Zobrist was at third and Javier Baez at second in the second and Caratini was ahead, 2-0, in the count. Caratini then fouled off six consecutive pitches from Chacin, who tried to pick off Baez at second but his throw sailed into center. Zobrist scored. On the 10th pitch of Caratini's at-bat, he lined a single just out of reach of Jonathan Schoop to drive in Baez.

Baez's aggressiveness was responsible for Chacin's error. The Brewers noticed he was taking a big secondary lead.

"We got our signals crossed," Counsell said. "Jhoulys saw it as a timing pick and it was supposed to be an inside move, where you pick your leg up. That's why it looked like Orlando [Arcia] was late getting there. He was calling for an inside move, which is a different timing on the play."

Was it worth the risk with a runner at third?

"We're trying to get outs. Outs are worth risks, yeah," Counsell said. "We thought we had a chance at an out there. [Baez] was being very aggressive with his secondary lead."

Wilson answers call: Reliever Justin Wilson provided a key moment in the seventh. The Brewers had runners on first and second and two outs when pinch-hitter Hernan Perez was called out after hitting a grounder to second baseman Daniel Murphy. The Brewers challenged the ruling and after a review, the call was overturned and the bases were loaded. Wilson took over for Quintana and struck out pinch-hitter Manny Pina on three pitches to end the inning.

"The command and the conviction per pitch -- I love that he went after him with his fastball," Maddon said of Wilson. "That's a game changer."

#### SOUND SMART

- In his last five starts, Quintana has compiled a 1.84 ERA, striking out 25 over 29 1/3 innings. In 10 career starts against the Brewers, he has a 1.60 ERA, fanning 63 over 67 1/3 innings.
- Nine of the 18 games between the two teams have been shutouts, and Tuesday was the Cubs' sixth. The Cubs lead the Majors with 16 shutouts.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Cain robbed Bryant of a potential extra-base hit in the third with a running catch.

Maddon has seen enough of the center fielder.

"He plays the game with a joy about him and he's very loose," Maddon said of Cain. "Him and Dexter [Fowler] have that same kind of leadoff mentality with a joy for the game and I appreciate that. I called him 'Citizen Cain' in Kansas City. I think he's one of the best leadoff hitters in the game right now, if not the best."

HE SAID IT

"That's the fun part of the game. If you don't have somebody to fight, it's not going to be fun." -- Strop, on the close race in the NL Central

"Realistically, three games back with 15 to go after [Wednesday would not be] not ideal. So we need to win the series. We know we need to win the series to have a shot at the division, and we still have that in front of us." -- Milwaukee's Travis Shaw

UP NEXT

Kyle Hendricks (11-10, 3.71 ERA) will start the Cubs' final meeting in this NL Central showdown, facing Chase Anderson (9-7, 3.95). Hendricks is 2-0 in three starts against the Brewers this year, and the Cubs have won seven of his last eight starts. Anderson has been stingy against the Cubs, giving up three earned runs over 20 innings in three starts. First pitch is scheduled for 7:05 p.m. CT at Wrigley Field.

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**Cubs.com**

Lester confident he will make next start

By Carrie Muskat

CHICAGO -- Cubs pitcher Jon Lester still felt some discomfort in his back on Tuesday but said he didn't expect to miss any time.

Lester had to leave Monday night's start against the Brewers after 5 2/3 innings because of back spasms. Asked if he woke up with any pain on Tuesday, Lester made light of the situation.

"I did wake up, yes," he said. "I didn't feel great. I got up out of the bed. I made it to my son's dentist appointment. He had to get two cavities filled. Bad parenting."

The Cubs named Mike Montgomery as the starter for Thursday's makeup game against the Nationals in Washington, and if they stay on schedule, Lester would go Saturday against the Reds.

"I don't know what the schedule is," Lester said. "Obviously, Thursday changes everything. If we play Thursday, we have to use a pitcher that day. If we don't, we'll adjust. ... I don't imagine missing any time."

The Cubs do have extra arms available with expanded rosters this month, and they could give Alec Mills, Jaime Garcia or Tyler Chatwood a start if Lester were to need more time.

"A guy like Jon, you listen to Jon and he'll tell you straight up," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said.

## Counting on Carl

How key is Carl Edwards Jr. to the Cubs' postseason success?

"Going into October, we're looking for a positive result," Maddon said about the reliever. "I can't imagine doing well in October without him. You've got to get the guy right."

On Monday night, Edwards was called on to replace Lester in the sixth. The game was tied, the Brewers had runners at second and third, and one scored on Edwards' first pitch to Orlando Arcia, which skipped away from catcher Willson Contreras for a wild pitch. That was all the Brewers needed in the 3-2 win.

"The stuff is great," Maddon said of Edwards. "We have to get him back over the plate consistently."

What happened?

"It really wasn't too tough," Edwards said. "I probably just overthought that whole hitter. He's the No. 8 hitter. That's why I say I probably overthought the whole process instead of going out there and throwing my best to get him out instead of trying to be perfect."

What's been discouraging is the amount of walks by the right-hander, who has issued five over his last 1 2/3 innings in four outings. He has been able to get out of a funk like this before.

"I just went out there and eventually told myself I'm going to have fun and don't let the roller coaster keep rolling," Edwards said of how he deals with bad stretches. "It's got to stop one day."

With Brandon Morrow sidelined because of a bone bruise on his right arm, the Cubs need someone to step up as the closer. Edwards was one of the candidates. Morrow is scheduled to throw a bullpen session on Wednesday.

Zo on the go

Ben Zobrist began Tuesday third in the National League batting race at .314, right behind the Brewers' Christian Yelich (.315) and leader Scooter Gennett (.320).

"I'm not worried about that," Zobrist said. "I'm just really happy about how I feel at the plate. If I can keep having quality at-bats and finding a way to get hits, that's what we need now. It feels like it's been a tough stretch for us to face pitchers which will allow us to drive the ball, and when that's the case, it's tough to get hits."

Jacob deGrom, Aaron Nola and Max Scherzer haven't made it easy on Zobrist and the Cubs.

"It's like the playoffs," Zobrist said. "They're good teams we're facing."

Back pain for Schwarber

Kyle Schwarber was a decoy when he was on deck to pinch-hit on Monday in the seventh. He's been sidelined with back issues and was not available on Tuesday night.

"It's there and bothering him, but I think it's not going to be elongated," Maddon said.

Smyly looks to 2019

Drew Smyly was disappointed that he won't get the chance to pitch this season for the Cubs. The lefty has spent the season rehabbing from Tommy John surgery, which he had in July 2017.

"It would've been a stretch," Smyly said. "It's disappointing, for sure. I was hopeful all year I could do it. It would've been rushed if I came back. I just ran out of time. Things were going really well. When I was on the mound, I was in no pain and it was encouraging. It was a safe move [to shut it down]. I'll be ready to go full speed next year and look forward to that."

Smyly, who signed a two-year contract with the Cubs, will be a candidate for the 2019 rotation.

"I look forward to not having anything holding me back," he said of next year.

Worth noting

The game on Sept. 29 against the Cardinals at Wrigley Field will start at 12:05 p.m. CT. The game had previously been listed as "TBD" but has been selected for a national telecast by FOX.

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### **ESPNChicago.com**

Cubs battling more than Brewers during tiring stretch run

By Jesse Rogers

CHICAGO -- They can blame the weather, an awful late-season schedule and myriad other non-baseball related factors, but if the Chicago Cubs want to return to the playoffs for a fourth consecutive year, they'll have to rise above it all and hold off a hard-charging Milwaukee Brewers team.

"This is a battle for sure," first baseman Anthony Rizzo said Tuesday before the Cubs' 3-0 win over the Brewers. "We have 19 games to right the ship. The biggest one is today."

Tuesday's victory kept Milwaukee at bay -- and in second place -- with just 18 games remaining. The teams square off for the rubber game of their series -- and the season finale between them -- on Wednesday. The series has been filled with drama and close games, including Monday's 3-2 Brewers win that drew them within a game in the standings. But Milwaukee can't leave town in first place, as Cubs manager Joe Maddon is performing some of his mental tricks on his fatigued team.

If a makeup game against the Washington Nationals in Washington is a go on Thursday, the Cubs will have reported to the ballpark an unheard-of 30 straight days by the end of the streak. That's taxing, so Maddon is preaching an easier-said-than done message, especially about Thursday.

"Keep the switch on," he said. "You have to think you're going to play. ... The trap there is to think you're not going to play, then all of a sudden you are, then you have to turn the switch on. That normally creates a bad result."

Hurricane Florence might keep the teams from playing once it makes landfall on the East Coast, and it might give the Cubs a much-needed day off. Team president Theo Epstein said as much on Monday but then stopped himself, knowing that rooting for a hurricane isn't the right thing to do.

"We don't want anyone to suffer in that hurricane, but if it's raining in D.C. on Thursday, and you get that day off, it will be nice for our guys to get a well-earned off day," Epstein said.

He reiterated that idea several times -- that baseball should take a backseat to the safety of others -- but the mental break would be nice for the Cubs, as it's apparent that they just aren't themselves, especially at the plate. According to Maddon, one sign of fatigue is chasing pitches. Since August, the Cubs have been at the top of the league in that category.

"It's a tough stretch, man," Maddon said. "Fatigue is nasty. When you get a tired mind, it's not easy to play at your top level. We all know what it's like to feel like your brain is swimming a little bit."

"I love all my teammates, but seeing them 30 days in a row is not what I intend to do on a yearly basis," Rizzo said with a smirk.

It made Tuesday's win all the more important. Survival mode isn't necessarily a bad thing when you're the team on top. Crossing off days on the calendar can be healthy.

"It's a totally different mindset being in first than chasing," Rizzo said. "We have to do everything we can to stay in first."

Another win Wednesday would help solidify things as the Cubs continue to play catch-up in the schedule. Their nine weather-related postponements are the most in the National League. Maddon even referenced missing their mental skills coach, Ken Ravizza, who passed away suddenly during the season. Ravizza was a master at helping players in situations such as the one facing the Cubs right now.

"As a tribute to Kenny, let's keep that method alive," Maddon said. "It's a tough stretch, one of the worst you're going to go through in baseball. Going into that 23 [in a row], we knew that. We handled that well. Now it's gotten even more strenuous based on what may happen."

As easy as it might be to focus on what comes Thursday, the Cubs have done their best to keep a narrow vision. That will be essential if they're going to win their division for a third straight season. The big-picture look just won't suffice for the predicament they're in.

"There are no excuses," Ben Zobrist said. "Everyone has had to deal with bad weather across the league over the course of the season. It's a tough time of the year to go to the field as many games as we've had to. But we have extra help right now. You would rather have it happen now than June or July."

"It's tough, but we keep persevering."

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### **ESPNChicago.com**

Cubs have nothing to regret as Quintana delivers on crosstown swap

By Jesse Rogers

CHICAGO -- It's one of those conversations that Chicago baseball fans will be having for years to come: Did the White Sox rip off the Cubs in stealing prospect phenom Eloy Jimenez and pitcher Dylan Cease or did the Cubs come out on the better end in grabbing steady lefty Jose Quintana?

Common thinking on sports talk radio and bars around Chicago is that the Sox will reap the benefits for years to come, as Jimenez looks like a once-in-a-generation player. But here's the thing: The Cubs are receiving the benefits right now, and their window for winning is in the present.

"These last two [starts] are a different level of Q," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said of Quintana after the team's 3-0 home win over the Milwaukee Brewers on Tuesday. "They know the fastball is coming, and it's still getting on them."

Quintana came up with the biggest win to date this season for the team he has played on since July 2017, following years of pitching for the non-contending White Sox. Quintana threw 6⅔ innings, giving up just three hits and no runs on Tuesday. It lowered his ERA to less than 4.00 for the first time since July 22 and his pitching line as a Cub to 20-12 with a 3.88 ERA and 1.24 WHIP

He's pitching his best baseball exactly when his team needs it most. The win kept the Brewers from tying the Cubs for first place in the National League Central. It was that big.

"There is a very confident look about him," Maddon said. "He's a very humble man, so you have to really look in there."

Maddon is right. There isn't a lot of flair to Quintana's game -- which could be the opposite to that of Jimenez, who hit .355 with a .597 slugging percentage at Triple-A this season. Jimenez already has penned a Player's Tribune article, and he might very well be destined for greatness at the major league level.

But when the Cubs traded for Quintana, they had a big need in their rotation. No matter what Jimenez or Cease accomplish, no one can take away what Quintana already has meant to the Cubs. He might very well contribute to two postseason appearances with his new team before those two prospects even sniff the majors. That's no small thing. In fact, that's everything.

"I don't worry about the trade," Quintana said as he put on his shoes after Tuesday's game. "If I do good or bad, I try to be focused on my job."

That doesn't mean he's not aware of the enormity of it. After all, the Cubs and White Sox pulling off a midseason blockbuster isn't exactly an annual occurrence.

"I know how huge that trade was," Quintana said. "For sure, I want to do well."

It's a topic mostly because of two things -- how good Jimenez looks and because Quintana hasn't been as consistent as he was with the White Sox. Until now at least. But the Cubs knew what they were trading away when they made the deal. And they knew getting Quintana at a cut rate -- he's making just \$8.85 million this year -- was part of the allure. Plus, his contract has team-friendly options for the next two seasons after this one.

The bottom line is that without the deal, who knows where the Cubs would be on the mound now. It's not like they were developing starting pitchers at every turn. Even with Quintana, they signed a half-dozen free-agent arms last winter.

"To be honest, we never look at that stuff," Cubs teammate Pedro Strop said of the trade. "We don't waste our time. We try to have fun and play our game."

The critics will point to several bad Quintana outings, such as his back-to-back starts in August when he gave up a total of 10 earned runs. But since then, he has given up just six runs in his past five appearances, including none on Tuesday. The trade might have paid for itself right there. The Cubs desperately needed what Quintana has provided.

"I'm trying to do the best," Quintana stated. "Like I said, I know how huge that trade was. I hope he [Jimenez] does good, but I'm happy to be here."

The next step would be pitching well in the playoffs, if the Cubs get that far. Things didn't go his way last October, as he gave up eight runs in seven innings, leading to more questions about the trade. Perhaps he will silence the naysayers once and for all this postseason.

Quintana was asked if he hears the debate about the trade, including some of the negative comments directed his way.

"I try not to read the news," he said with a smile. "I can go to bed happy that way."

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### **NBC Sports Chicago**

What's going on with Willson Contreras' offense?

By Tony Andracki

This was supposed to be the year Willson Contreras made the case as the best catcher on the planet.

Everything was lining up for it.

He was going into a season as the "bell cow" catcher, with no veteran like Miguel Montero or David Ross to cede playing time to.

He flashed his potential with an unreal stretch last season before getting hurt and still finished with 21 homers, 74 RBI and a .499 slugging percentage in only 377 at-bats.

He showed the swag, putting himself in the same category as Yadier Molina and Buster Posey during Cubs Convention in January.

He had the support of his manager, Joe Maddon, who has said several times in 2018 that he would take Contreras over any other catcher in baseball.

Yet, that's not how this season has played out.

Contreras has drawn rave reviews from Maddon and Cubs pitchers in how he blocks balls in the dirt, calls games, works the gameplan and — of course — how he can control the running game with that laser of a right arm.

It's just the offense.

He hasn't hit a homer since Aug. 1 and in those 31 games, he's slashing .177/.288/.219, good for a .507 OPS.

His only extra base hits in that five-and-a-half-week span are four doubles (including a hustle double Monday night) and he's driven in just 10 runs.

This is the same guy who collected five extra-base hits and drove in 10 runs in just two games against the White Sox in mid-May.

Is it just that he's tired?

That's entirely possible. Contreras has caught more innings than any catcher in baseball by a wide margin.

Contreras has been behind the plate for 1002.2 innings this season, 47.2 more than the next closest (Jonathan Lucroy — 955 innings) in baseball and 93.2 innings more than the next closest in the National League (Tucker Barnhart — 909)

So rest certainly is playing a factor

"Physically, I watch him run, I watch him throw, I watch him block the ball, I watch his energy," Maddon said. "It seems to be good. The difference there is the offensive side has not been [what you expect]. I promise you this — if he clicks about 3 or 4 balls in a row, he'll look exactly like he did last year in August and September.

"We just gotta get the ball on the fat part of the bat again. That's primarily it. And that could be the residue of being a little bit tired. It's hard to say with him because he always is energetic. He's strong — he's a strong human, man."

Obviously rest is not the whole story here.

Contreras didn't start heating up and really flashing that game-changing power until the middle of last season after a few months of the grind behind the plate. (It's worth noting that with Montero in the picture for the first half last year, Contreras wasn't catching as much on a consistent basis as he has been this season with Victor Caratini as his main backup all year.)

But the real issue here is Contreras' swing. Rest is surely a factor to some extent, but these are not the charts of a hitter trending in the right direction:

This is his hard contact percentage in 2017 (left) and 2018 (right). You can see the huge drop over the last couple months this season, but also note how his hard contact steadily rose all 2017:

(Chart in link)

And this is Contreras' exit velocity in relation to the MLB average over the last three seasons:

(Another chart in link!)

In 2017, Contreras barreled balls up 10.3 percent of the time (29 barrels on 282 batted balls). This year, that number is down to just 6.8 percent of the time (22 barrels on 325 batted balls).

Contreras has acknowledged his lack of power all season, but didn't really have an answer for it, either.

It's probably a combination of needing more rest, pressing at the plate and trying to do too much, swinging at bad pitches and how he's being pitched. The last few weeks, many of Contreras' at-bats are ending with soft groundballs to the left side as opposing pitchers are hammering him in on the hands with pitches.

With Victor Caratini playing well of late, Contreras may find himself on the bench more often.

Tuesday marked only the third time Caratini started a game where Cole Hamels wasn't pitching since the first week of August.

But with the Cubs in a pennant race, it's been hard for Maddon to turn away from Contreras and to a rookie catcher who was hitting .151 with a .414 OPS in 59 plate appearances from July 20 to Sept. 4.

Plus, Contreras has been a solid choice in run prevention categories the last few months even when he's not hitting.

"The throws he's made, the game-calling, the adherence to the game-calling has been really good," Maddon said. "The biggest difference to me is just consistent hard contact out of him. Ball in the air, ball in the gap, ball in the stands - we haven't seen that recently.

"So if he is tired, obviously, that's a definite indicator that he may be. But conversationally and watching him, I'm not getting that."

Still, some extra time off for Contreras right now could still be a good thing - to give him rest, let him recharge mentally and find a way to get his confidence back for the stretch run and into October.

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### **NBC Sports Chicago**

Joe Maddon lobbies for Ben Zobrist after controversial call

By Tony Andracki

Ben Zobrist may very well win National League Comeback Player of the Year but before that's decided, he has another battle on hand: A batting title.

The 37-year-old veteran entered play Tuesday sitting third in the NL in batting average and he finished the night the same way...

...but he actually should've finished one spot higher.

Leading off the second inning Tuesday night, Zobrist hit a sharp grounder to the right of the second-base bag. Brewers second baseman Jonathan Schoop was playing in shallow right in a shift and had to charge the ball hard on the outfield grass, failing to come up with the play:

Because the ball went under Schoop's glove, it was ruled an error and Zobrist picked up an 0-for-1 instead of a 1-for-1.

Adding just that one hit in Zobrist's favor bumps his season average up from .312 to .314, leapfrogging Milwaukee's Christian Yelich (.313 AVG) in the process on a night where the Brewers star went 0-for-3. Both players still trail Reds second baseman Scooter Gennett (.321 AVG).

The crazy thing about the play was that even if Schoop fielded the ball cleanly, he still may not have gotten Zobrist at first base given he would've had to throw on the run with his momentum moving away from first base.

Zobrist said he thought that should've been ruled a hit all the way and pointed to how far Schoop was into the outfield as the highlight popped up on a TV in the Cubs clubhouse.

His manager agrees.

Unprompted, Joe Maddon brought the scoring decision up after Tuesday's 3-0 victory and lobbied for a change inside Major League Baseball.

"I'd like to rally for one change in scoring right now," Maddon said. "I think if a second baseman's playing on the outfield grass and a ball is hit to him and he's not able to complete the play, the left-handed hitter should get a hit on that play. If you want to create some kind of fairness or standard in the game, you've already put the guy at a disadvantage by putting the fielder at such a depth situation.

"And then when he has to run that far and attempt to make a play and then [the hitter doesn't] get rewarded and to penalize the defense, I don't think that's accurate. So I'd like to really just put that out there to be talked about. Our guys have been hurt a little bit [by the scoring].

"It's tough — they go out there and they're already set up defensively. I'm not complaining because I was involved in the [inception of the] shift thing several years ago. But if the guy can't make a play and he starts on the grass and ends on the grass, you gotta give that guy a hit, 'cause that is no longer a routine play.

"Last point — when you're fielding the ball off the grass, it's totally different than fielding it off the dirt. There's a differnt everything about it."

All's well that ends well in the team sense, as Zobrist scored the Cubs' first run later in that second inning and his team wound up with a 3-0 victory and another game of distance on the Brewers in the standings.

But for a guy who's never even hit over .300 in a season or sniffed a batting title, it's still a tough pill for Zobrist to swallow.

Even if Zobrist can maintain this pace, there's another factor that may be working against him down the stretch.

In order to qualify for a batting title, a player has to notch 3.1 plate appearances per team game, or 502 trips to the dish. Zobrist is just barely averaging that at the moment and still needs 52 plate appearances in the Cubs' final 18 games (2.8 per game) to finish among the qualifiers.

With Maddon resting the 37-year-old Zobrist a couple times a week all season and the veteran dealing with the usual aches and pains of a long year, it might be hard for him to notch those 52 plate appearances.

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## **NBC Sports Chicago**

Cubs see Jose Quintana finding another level

By Jared Wyllys

Thanks to the Jose Quintana-Victor Caratini show Tuesday night, the Cubs shut out the Brewers, 3-0, and ensured that they will leave this week's series in first place.

Quintana threw 6 2/3 innings, striking out seven and scattering five Milwaukee baserunners. He was perfect through his first three innings, and this was one of the best performances he has had in a Cubs uniform, according to manager Joe Maddon.

"These last two are different level of Q," Maddon said, referring to Tuesday's start as well as his last outing, against the Brewers on September 5. "They know the fastball's coming, and it's still getting on them. And then when he throws the curveball, it becomes more pertinent. Nice arm speed on the changeup."

Quintana attacked Brewers hitters with 16 of his 21 first pitches coming in for strikes.

"I feel more strong with my fastball," Quintana said. "My command was fantastic."

The Cubs starter said that a tweak in his mechanics has helped boost the confidence in his stuff. Quintana was dropping his front shoulder toward third base, which opened the shoulder and made it hard to keep his arm and leg in rhythm. Now he is focusing on keeping his right shoulder lined up with home plate throughout, and it's making the difference.

"I feel stronger when I throw the ball, so I'm gonna keep it there," Quintana said.

He added that keeping his front shoulder lined up has given more life to his fastball, which compliments his secondary pitches and makes them more effective as well.

"Most of the time, I feel like I fight with my delivery," Quintana said "and now I find what I need to do and it's been better the last couple outings. I need to stay there and keep rolling."

Quintana's batterymate, Caratini, supplied the bulk of Tuesday's offense, much of it during a ten-pitch at bat in the 2nd inning. After Ben Zobrist reached on an error, Javy Baez walked, and both runners advanced on Tommy La Stella's ground out, Brewers starter Jhoulys Chacin attempted a pick off at second base that went into the outfield. Zobrist scored from third, and then with the infield in, Caratini popped a single in to right center that scored Baez.

"Honestly, all I had in my mind was get that run in and have a good at bat," Caratini said after the game.

Caratini hit an RBI double in the 7th to give the Cubs their third run of the night. Despite not playing often as he serves as backup to Willson Contreras, Caratini put together two very quality at bats on Tuesday. Maddon said that he spends much of his off the field time doing homework on opposing pitchers so that he can be ready for when his moments come.

And lately when they have, he has handled them like a much more seasoned hitter. Caratini hit a grand slam in Washington, and without his bat on Tuesday, the tenor of the game changes significantly. And he might just be wired to handle those moments.

"It's in my nature to be calm. I'm naturally a calm person, and I think that carries over onto the field as well," Caratini said.

Working with Quintana for the first time this season since August 3, Caratini also called a very good game, according to his pitcher.

"The whole time, we were on the same page," Quintana said.

In his last five starts since a five-run clunker against Milwaukee on August 14, Quintana has thrown three quality starts, and he has not given up more than two earned runs. In September, Quintana's ERA is 1.35.

Next-level Quintana would be a very nice carry over to the postseason, and he's feeling that energy.

"This time, it's pre-postseason. September, every game is a huge game," Quintana said. "It's really good to get W's and get back to the playoffs at this time. I'm really happy to take this huge game. Keep rolling."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Jose Quintana gives Cubs a boost as they stretch NL Central lead to 2 games

By Phil Rogers

The Cubs needed somebody to pick them up on Tuesday night, and Jose Quintana was up to the task.

Quintana, Justin Wilson, Jorge De La Rosa and Pedro Strop combined for a three-hitter in a 3-0 victory over the Brewers, evening the series at one game apiece and restoring the Cubs' two-game lead in the National League Central.

In describing the evening afterward, Quintana described the atmosphere at Wrigley Field as "pre-postseason," and that was about right. It was only 68 degrees but the sense of urgency had sweat running down the faces of players and fans alike.

"That was a big game," Quintana said. "The team we are facing are contenders. That was important."

The Brewers had won the first game of the series 3-2, and if they had won the second it would have put the teams in a virtual tie in the division. That would have added to the angst the Cubs are feeling about flying to Washington, into storms driven by Hurricane Florence, for a scheduled makeup game Thursday.

By using up an off day, it will stretch to 30 the number of consecutive days with a game scheduled if it is not postponed before the Cubs leave after Wednesday night's game.

"There are no excuses," veteran Ben Zobrist said. "Everybody has had to deal with bad weather across the league over the course of the season. ... The conditions are not always ideal to do what we're trying to do out there but there's no crying in baseball."

The Cubs are trying to win a third consecutive Central title while dealing with injury issues to closer Brandon Morrow and wildness from Carl Edwards Jr., their top setup man. Manager Joe Maddon was thrilled by the efficiency of his pitchers Tuesday.

While Victor Caratini supplied much of the offense with a run-scoring single in the second inning and a run-scoring double in the seventh, Maddon saw four different pitching performances that could elevate the Cubs' profile heading toward the postseason.

Wilson entered with two outs and the bases-loaded in the seventh inning. He pumped in three fastballs on pinch-hitter Manny Pina, who struck out on 96-mph heater in the game's biggest at-bat.

That set the stage for De La Rosa and Strop to work perfect innings, locking down the victory for Quintana (13-9).

"We needed that," Maddon said. "We need to work through what we're doing in the seventh, eighth and ninth."

Quintana has been a Brewers beater throughout his career, compiling a 1.60 ERA in 10 starts against them. He was among the Cubs' concerns until recently but this marked the fifth consecutive start in which he has allowed two runs or fewer.

Maddon pointed to mechanical adjustments that Quintana made while working with pitching coach Jim Hickey and others on the coaching staff. He has gained both velocity and command, looking a lot like the newcomer who impressed in his Cubs debut last July in Baltimore.

He threw some 95-mph fastballs Tuesday and averaged 93. He threw his slow curveball 21 times in a 108-pitch outing, getting five swings-and-misses on it.

"He had a lot of life on his fastball, the best velocity I've seen," Maddon said. "The last two starts he has had (have been great). The first start in Baltimore was outstanding but since then, he has pitched well, but these last two have been different level of 'Q.' They know the fastball is coming and it's still getting on them. Then when he throws the curveball it becomes more pertinent."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Backup catcher Victor Caratini makes major impact for Cubs: 'He's a great student'

By Mark Gonzales

Two of the Cubs biggest July deadline deals ever were the acquisition of closer Aroldis Chapman from the Yankees two years ago and left-hander Cole Hamels from the Rangers on July 27.

But a small transaction made four years ago during the depths of their rebuild is helping them in their quest to win the National League Central: The trade to get switch-hitting catcher Victor Caratini.

Caratini contributed to the Cubs' 3-0 victory Tuesday night with a 10-pitch at-bat that resulted in an RBI single in the second inning and an opposite-field RBI double to left field in the seventh.

"He's a great student," manager Joe Maddon said. "He's always with (coach) Mike Borzello when he's not playing. He studies.

"He's definitely capable of being a everyday catcher at the big league level, and he also supplies that backup at first base that's very high end."

Caratini was a Class-A player trying to make the transition from infielder to catcher when he was dealt on July 31, 2014, from the Braves to the Cubs for infielder Emilio Bonifacio and left-hander James Russell.

The Cubs acquired Caratini was acquired to build catching depth, and general manager Jed Hoyer declared at that time that any subsequent transactions would be toward adding championship talent and not as part of a rebuild.

While the Cubs have struggled to acquire high-ceiling young pitching talent since that deal, Caratini has developed into a reliable catcher when he spells Willson Contreras, whose power has vanished recently.

"When (Caratini's) moment comes and he can play on a more consistent basis, I think you're going to see a lot of that foul line-to-foul line stuff with some pop from both sides," Maddon said.

Caratini, 25, has learned to adjust to limited playing time for the first time in his career. But Maddon has enough confidence to pair Caratini with Hamels during some of the most important games.

"I'm just trying to do my homework and be prepared to have good at-bats," said Caratini, who is 5 for his last 9 and is batting .260 with two home runs and 20 RBI this season.

"I played in the postseason in the minors in past years, and that's what we all work for — to play in October."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

Cubs aren't worried about the fatigue factor from grueling 30-day stretch: 'We'll get through it'

By Paul Sullivan

The Cubs stretch of consecutive workdays will reach 30 by the time they get an off day Sept. 20, by which time everyone will be tired of seeing each other.

"Listen, I love all my teammates but seeing them 30 days in a row is not what I intend to do on a daily basis," Anthony Rizzo said Tuesday before the Cubs-Brewers showdown at Wrigley Field.

"One day away from them goes for two weeks seeing them. But that's what it is right now.

"I mean, if you're a human being and go to the same workplace every day. ... I know what we do is amazing, but (still). If we do (go 30 days), we do. We'll get through it. It's just like anything else in life."

Sunday's rainout made the grueling stretch longer and Thursday's makeup game in Washington, which was still on as of Tuesday night despite the proximity of Hurricane Florence to Nationals Park and the possibility of more rain.

Ben Zobrist reiterated there's "no crying in baseball," but if the Cubs blow the division to the Brewers there will be plenty of whimpering in Wrigleyville if fatigue plays a part in their team's downfall.

Either way, it figures to go down to the end.

After Tuesday's 3-0 victory over the Brewers, the Cubs had a two-game lead in the National League Central with 18 games remaining.

Before the game, manager Joe Maddon said the Cubs were preparing as though the makeup will be played Thursday in Washington, even if MLB decides to postpone it on Wednesday.

Channeling the late Ken Ravizza, the sports psychologist who worked for the Cubs until his untimely death in July, Maddon asked the players to keep their engines on while MLB makes up its mind.

"Now (the schedule) has gotten even a little bit more strenuous based on what may happen, so that's the trick, man," Maddon said. "Just don't turn your switch off. If you have a dimmer switch, maybe a little bit, but if you go there man, it's really difficult to get up there up to that full wattage. ... As a tribute to Kenny, let's keep that method alive."

History seems to repeat itself, at least when it involves the Cubs and hurricanes. In 2004 they were engaged in a tight wild-card race with the Giants and Astros and had to reschedule a pair of stretch run games in Miami when Hurricane Frances wiped out a series.

That forced the Cubs to take a four-city trip, with 12 games in 11 days, including a one-day stop in Miami for a doubleheader.

They went into the final two games of the trip with an 8-2 record, taking a 1 ½-game lead over the Giants in the wild-card chase. But with a 3-0 lead over the Mets and two outs in the ninth at Shea Stadium, reliever LaTroy Hawkins served up a game-tying homer run to Victor Diaz, and the Cubs wound up losing in 11 innings.

They went on to lose seven of eight in the final week to blow the wild card, an epic choke by one of the most talented Cubs teams in decades.

The 2018 Cubs are more battle-tested than that '04 team. Most of the core players are in their fourth straight pennant race, while Cole Hamels and Daniel Murphy were October heroes with the Phillies and Mets, respectively.

So can the Cubs survive this stretch and outlast the Brew Crew?

It all may come down to the bullpens. One Cubs reliever who needs to be straightened out is Carl Edwards Jr., who admitted Tuesday he's "going through something" he really can't explain.

"It's just one of those things that happens," Edwards said. "Once the ball leaves my hands, it's out of my control."

That wasn't too reassuring, but Edwards insisted it was a mental block, which he pointed out writers also go through.

"It's funny," he said. "Not funny it's happening, but funny because it's like you all are writers, and if you all were writing and wanted to say something, and (then) you just forgot what you wanted to write about. You're looking around like 'I knew I had something on my mind but I just forgot.'"

"Kind of like writer's block?" I asked.

"It happens," he said. "You had that one good piece, and then you have that terrible piece, and then you come back with a good piece."

Before I got a chance to explain the best remedy for writer's block, Edwards had to go stretch. Hopefully he'll figure it out, because the Cubs badly need him to be the old C.J. down the stretch.

No matter what happens in the next few days, the Cubs consider themselves heavyweights who can take a licking and keep on ticking.

"We can continue to get punched in the face and we'll take the blow," Rizzo said. "We'll be able to play today and no matter what happens we'll be able to take it in stride.

"If we win we'll be happy. If we don't win we're not going to beat ourselves up."

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## **Chicago Tribune**

No change yet in plans for Cubs to play Thursday in Washington

By Phil Rogers

The Cubs still don't know if they're going to hop an airplane late Wednesday night, headed into Washington and possibly Hurricane Florence-driven storms.

Manager Joe Maddon said he's checking hurricanetracker.com for information but hasn't received any updates from his front office or Major League Baseball. He's telling his players to expect to play that game Thursday afternoon — necessitated because of Sunday's rainout against the Nationals — and then return to Wrigley Field for a 1:20 p.m. start against the Reds on Friday.

Maddon said he talked to first baseman Anthony Rizzo on Tuesday about the situation.

"The big thing now is keep the switch on," Maddon said. "You always have to keep the switch on. When you get through a rain delay, you have to think you're going to play. When you're scheduled to play in Washington on Thursday and there's a potential hurricane, you have to think you're still going to play. The trap is to think that you don't want to play or you're not going to play and all of a sudden you are, then you have to turn the switch on. That normally creates a bad result.

"It's a tough stretch. It's one of the worst you're going to go through in baseball but you have to keep the switch on."

The Cubs are on their 22nd consecutive day with a scheduled game Tuesday, with that stretch already lengthened by a trip to Atlanta for a makeup game Aug. 30. If they do play Thursday, they're looking at a game for 30 consecutive days.

"I love all my teammates, but seeing them 30 days in a row is not what I intend to do on a daily basis," Rizzo said. "The one day away from them goes for two weeks seeing them."

Ben Zobrist says ballplayers have to be flexible about their schedules.

"It's kind of more of the same," he said. "You roll with it, do the best you can. The conditions are not always ideal to do what we're trying to do out there, but there's no crying in baseball. We'll just keep going after it."

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## **Chicago Tribune**

Cubs' Jon Lester says he can pitch through lower back pain

By Phil Rogers

Jon Lester expects to make his next start for the Cubs despite still having some pain in his lower back.

"I'll be fine," Lester said. "I'll pitch whenever they tell me to pitch. ... I don't feel great but I'm going to pitch. ... We have good drugs and good doctors."

Lester left Monday's start in the sixth inning with what the Cubs called lower back tightness. He said the situation still was bothering him when he woke up Tuesday but he believes it can be handled through medication and therapy.

Lester is on track to start Saturday against the Reds but manager Joe Maddon said he may consider giving him some extra rest if Major League Baseball postpones the Thursday makeup game in Washington because of Hurricane Florence.

That would allow Maddon to pitch Mike Montgomery Friday instead of Thursday, with Cole Hamels then moving to Saturday. Maddon could push Lester's next start back until Tuesday in Arizona without disrupting the schedule of the other starters, if the Cubs don't play Thursday.

In other health updates for Cubs:

- Kyle Schwarber is battling a lower-back issue and wasn't available Tuesday night, according to Maddon. He said he sent him to bat as a pinch hitter Monday only as a decoy, hoping Craig Counsell would bring Josh Hader in to face him. He wanted Hader to throw so many pitches in that outing he would be unavailable the rest of the series but he only needed 24 pitches to strike out all six Cubs he faced. He should be available Wednesday, if not Tuesday.
- Brandon Morrow (bone bruise in his elbow) felt good after throwing Monday and could throw again Wednesday. The Cubs don't know if he will be back before season's end.
- Jason Heyward (hamstring) ran in the outfield and appears to be making progress in getting cleared for baseball activity. Maddon is eager to get him back but a setback at this point could leave Heyward out the rest of the season.
- The Cubs have said left-hander Drew Smyly, who has completed his recovery from Tommy John surgery, won't pitch this season. "If the circumstances were different, I could pitch," Smyly said. "But the team's in a real tight race now. I wasn't able to play in any minor-league games. I don't know if the risk versus the reward would have been there. I get it."

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### **Chicago Tribune**

A Category 4 hurricane is heading toward Washington. So are the Cubs. Here are 5 things to know about Thursday's makeup game.

By Paul Sullivan

Thursday's afternoon makeup game between the Cubs and Nationals is still on schedule in Washington in spite of Hurricane Florence's approach.

Here are five things to know about why the decision was made and where it stands.

#### 1. Rain men

After a weekend series in Washington that included nearly 11 hours of rain delays, MLB postponed Sunday's Cubs-Nationals game and rescheduled it for Thursday — the only common off day for both teams until the end of the season. The Cubs would have preferred to have it scheduled for Oct. 1, the day after the regular season, with the understanding that it wouldn't be played if it had no implications on any National League races or for the league's best record. MLB preferred the game to be played before, because Oct. 1 is the day reserved for playoff tiebreakers. The NL wild-card game is scheduled for Oct. 2, and if the Cubs and Nationals were to play on Oct. 1, the wild-card game likely would have to be pushed back a day to allow for travel.

## 2. “Extremely dangerous”

Hurricane Florence is on path to hit the East Coast as a Category 4 storm on Thursday and projected to land in North or South Carolina. The National Hurricane Center has called the storm “extremely dangerous,” and more than 1.5 million people have been ordered to evacuate coastal areas. The Cubs-Nationals game is scheduled for 4:05 p.m. ET. The game was not scheduled earlier because both teams play night games on the road Wednesday. There currently is a 40 percent chance of scattered thunderstorms for the Washington area Thursday. The possibility of the Cubs and Nationals waiting out more rain delays exists, though in a best-case scenario they’d get the game in and get out of town before the hurricane moves north. Still, the optics of shoehorning a baseball game in while a hurricane approaches is not good for MLB.

## 3. MLB’s call

The Cubs and Nationals have no say in whether the game will be played. Cubs President Theo Epstein said “our voices have certainly been heard, but we don’t have any control.”

Thursday was supposed to be Cubs’ first day off after a 23-day stretch, but now the stretch will be extended to 30 days thanks to the makeup game. The decision is in the hands of MLB, which already made one big mistake Friday by allowing the Cubs-Nationals game to begin during a brief lull in the rain. The game was delayed in the second inning and eventually postponed, meaning both teams’ starters were lost. After pitching one inning Friday, Cubs ace Jon Lester came back Monday night against the Brewers on two days of rest and was removed with back tightness in the sixth inning.

## 4. No Plan B

There have been no discussions yet on moving the game to another venue, as has been done in the past, including twice last year with the Marlins and Astros because of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey, respectively. The Nationals don’t want to lose a home gate, and MLB doesn’t want the Cubs to gain any home-field advantage, which would be unfair to the other contenders in the NL Central race (Brewers and Cardinals), the wild-card race (Brewers, Cardinals, Braves, Dodgers, Diamondbacks, Phillies and Rockies) or the race for best record in the league. The Cubs lead the Brewers by one game in the NL Central and for the best record in the league. The team with the best record gets home-field advantage in the five-game NL Division Series and seven-game NL Championship Series.

## 5. City ordinance

Epstein said “common sense will prevail,” which suggests the makeup game will be canceled or postponed until Oct. 1. But if the game is played Thursday, the Cubs will fly home that night and play a 1:20 p.m. game Friday against the Reds. The team could ask MLB for permission to change that game to a later start time, as they did last year when switching a Friday afternoon game against the Brewers to Friday night. If it were changed to a night game, the Cubs would also need the city’s permission because of the ordinance prohibiting Friday night games at Wrigley Field. The Cubs received what was called a “one-time exemption” to the ordinance by Mayor Rahm Emanuel last Sept. 8. The Cubs played the night before in Pittsburgh and Emanuel agreed they needed more rest. So he and Ald. Tom Tunney would have to agree to a time change, along with MLB. Crane Kenney told the Score on Tuesday that the team has talked to city officials about changing the time of Friday’s game, but it would be a moot point if Thursday’s game in Washington is not played.

## Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs shake off pitching concerns, tightening race to beat Brewers 3-0

By Gordon Wittenmyer

“Just one question?” a reporter asked Cubs center fielder Albert Almora Jr. as he leaned into his locker to pick up his practice shoes before Tuesday’s game against the Brewers.

“No, I’m not panicking,” Almora said on cue, without so much as lifting his eyes.

And then the Cubs played their most pivotal game of the season to date and beat the second-place Brewers 3-0 thanks to a surging Jose Quintana and a sloppy second inning by the Brewers.

What, these guys panic?

“We can continue to get punched in the face and we’ll take the blows,” first baseman Anthony Rizzo said. “And then we’ll be ready to play [the next day], no matter what happens.”

They’ll need all of that fight and a good cut man in their corner to survive just the next week — never mind the Brewers and Cardinals over the final 18 games of the season. The red-hot Brewers aren’t going anywhere, even after the Cubs play them for the final time this season Wednesday.

It was only Monday that the Brewers cut the Cubs’ division lead to one, and the Cubs’ ace, Jon Lester, left that game with tightness in his back that still bothered him Tuesday.

“Conditions are not always ideal,” Cubs veteran utilityman Ben Zobrist said. “But there’s no crying in baseball.”

The Cubs are in the midst of a final stretch like they haven’t seen in four years of contention. In 2015? No pressure as they rolled to a wild-card berth. And no pressure by September 2016 in their wire-to-wire jaunt that season. Even last year, after they caught the Brewers in the second half, their lead was never less than two games in September, and then for only three days before a 15-4 finish.

If this is a problem, “it’s a good problem to have,” said Almora, who welcomed the playoff feel.

That includes road-weary legs as the Cubs near the end of a 23-games-in-23-days stretch, with the likelihood of 30 in 30 if their makeup game in Washington is played Thursday, as planned.

“There shouldn’t be panic,” said reliever Pedro Strop, who converted his 13th save in 17 chances, “because we were behind and we caught up and took the [division] lead. We know it’s going to be a battle because [the Brewers] have a really good team. Even the Cardinals are really good. That’s what makes it fun. If you don’t have somebody to fight, it’s not going to be fun.”

The Cardinals remain only 3½ games out.

And Lester’s status for his next start is uncertain — potentially throwing a sizeable wrench into the next week or more.

“They have really good drugs and good doctors, and I’ll be fine,” Lester said, joking with reporters while talking about a back issue that still needed treatment and resolution. “The way I feel today, it’s not great, but I wouldn’t imagine missing any time.”

If the Cubs play Thursday, Lester's spot comes up again Saturday. If Hurricane Florence pushes that game to Oct. 1, they can manipulate Lester's schedule to push him back as far as Sept. 19 before needing to consider an alternative.

"That would be something to consider," manager Joe Maddon said. "But once we pass that moment, we'll sit down and consider it. Let's just wait a little bit longer."

One bright spot for the rotation is that Quintana is pitching his best at the ideal time. He improved to 3-0 with a 1.84 ERA in his last five starts and says he feels invigorated by the pennant race.

"You feel energy and an atmosphere around you," he said. "That's huge."

At the very least, the Cubs face the kind of final-stretch sprint they have not experienced in the Maddon-Theo Epstein era.

"There's no question the character in the clubhouse and the mettle of certain people here is what we need," Zobrist said. "We've seen it happen the last few years, and we rose to the occasion before, so I think we're in a good spot."

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### **Chicago Sun-Times**

Fixing Cubs' bullpen all about Carl Edwards Jr. finding 'write' stuff

By Gordon Wittenmyer

Getting the Cubs' bullpen out of its slump could be as simple as finding Carl Edwards Jr. a muse.

Or a thesaurus.

"It's funny," Edwards said. "It's like if you were writing, and all of a sudden you wanted to say something and you just forgot what you wanted to write about, and then you're just looking around like, 'I know I had something on my mind, but I just forgot.'"

So the reason the most important pitcher in the Cubs' bullpen is having trouble throwing strikes this month is . . . writer's block?

Maddon won't hesitate to use Edwards in the next late-inning hot spot the Cubs seek a critical out.

"That's just how I feel," Edwards said. "I've been doing something forever, and it's just like, 'What just happened?' But at the same time, it comes back to you. I just feel it's going to come back to me soon."

He'd better hope so, for his and the team's sake.

"We need to get Carl straightened out; the symmetry of the bullpen's different without him," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said of Edwards, the hard-throwing right-hander with closer ability but occasional command problems.

That "symmetry" is especially fragile with closer Brandon Morrow out indefinitely. Even if he's back by the playoffs, his workload is a handle-with-care proposition.

That's why Edwards was called in with two on and two out in a tie game in the sixth inning Monday night against the Brewers. It's also why Maddon won't hesitate to put him right back out in another critical spot even after Edwards allowed the winning run to score on a first-pitch wild pitch, then walked the first batter he faced.

"Here's the thing: Going into October, we're looking for a positive result," Maddon said. "I cannot even imagine doing well in October without him. So you've got to get the guy right. You don't run away from that kind of talent."

The success of the Cubs' top-five bullpen, which has struggled lately, just might depend on it. Over the Cubs' previous 12 games through Monday, the bullpen had a 5.16 ERA with 4.1 walks per nine innings. It was even worse over the 2-5 slide the Cubs rode into Tuesday night: 6.26 with 6.6 walks per nine innings, spanning 27,, innings.

Edwards, the Cubs' top strikeout pitcher (12 per nine innings), has at least one walk in five consecutive appearances, working just 1%o innings this month in those five outings. He also struck out Christian Yelich, Jesus Aguilar and Curtis Granderson in high-leverage spots among his four strikeouts in that stretch.

"When he's actually throwing the ball over the plate, the results have been good," Maddon said. "We've just got to get him more consistently back in the zone."

Maddon said it's more mindset than mechanics. Edwards said he feels strong physically but that he might be overthinking at times. He knows what Maddon means when he talks about his significance to the Cubs' bullpen vision for October.

"At the same time, I can only do so much," said Edwards, who has been through it before and knows how he got through it then. "I just went out and basically told myself I'm going to continue to have fun and don't let the roller coaster keep rolling. It's got to stop one day."

One step closer

Morrow (bone bruise, elbow) is expected to throw from a mound again Wednesday, his first bullpen session since a light 25-pitch effort Sunday. The Cubs remain hopeful he has enough time to return strong enough to contribute before the playoffs.

Schwarber watch

Kyle Schwarber still is considered a day-to-day lineup decision and was not available off the bench Tuesday. He has started only once since aggravating his back on a slide Sept. 5 at Milwaukee.

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## **Daily Herald**

Quintana, Chicago Cubs turn back Brewers 3-0

By Bruce Miles

The eyelids may be getting heavy on the Chicago Cubs' players, so maybe keeping the light switch in the "ON" position will help.

"Keep the switch on," manager Joe Maddon said Tuesday before his team went out and beat the Milwaukee Brewers 3-0 at Wrigley Field behind a strong pitching performance from Jose Quintana.

"You've always got to keep the switch on. When you get through a rain delay, you have to think that you're going to play. When you're scheduled to play in Washington on Thursday and there's a potential hurricane, you've still got to think that you're going to play.

"The trap there is to think that you don't want to play or we're not going to play, and all of a sudden you are. And you have to turn the switch on. That normally creates a bad result. It's a tough stretch. It's one of the worst you're going to go through in baseball. But you've got to keep the switch on."

With the victory, the Cubs (84-60) avoided falling into a tie for first place with the Brewers (83-63) in the National League Central. The Cubs regained a 2-game lead with one more to play in this series.

As he has been through most of his career against the Brewers, Quintana was on. He worked 6⅔ scoreless innings, giving up 3 hits. He did need help from reliever Justin Wilson, who struck out pinch hitter Manny Pina on 3 pitches to leave the bases loaded in the top of the seventh.

Quintana lowered his lifetime ERA against the Brewers from 1.78 to 1.60 while improving to 6-2 against them.

"A couple persons asked me about that," said Quintana, who is 13-9 overall this season with a 3.97 ERA. "No, I feel good. I just try to do my job. I remember the last time they hit me so hard here in Wrigley. I'm so focused today to do my job because it's so important, this game. I went out there and threw the ball where I wanted and gave us a really good chance to win the game."

The Cubs have to play a much-discussed makeup game Thursday in Washington despite the possibility of a hurricane hitting the East Coast. They already were supposed to play 23 games in 23 days, but with the makeup game that will make a stretch of 30 straight days of going to the ballpark through Sept. 19.

"I think we've really handled that well," Maddon said. "Overall that was a nice stretch for us based on the degree of difficulty. But now it's gotten even a little bit more strenuous based on what may happen.

"That's the trick, man. Don't turn your switch off. If you have a dimmer switch, maybe a little bit. If you go there, it's really difficult to get back up to that full wattage. That's what I'm asking the guys to do. It's not easy."

The Cubs took a 2-0 lead against Jhoulys Chacin in the second, with help of 2 Brewers errors.

Quintana gave up a hit and a walk in the fourth before recovering and allowing nothing until a leadoff single to Jesus Aguilar in the seventh. Two outs later, Quintana walked Travis Shaw and gave up an infield single to pinch hitter Hernan Perez before Maddon turned to Wilson, who reached 95 mph on the radar gun.

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### **Daily Herald**

Cubs still planning on D.C. makeup game despite hurricane

By Bruce Miles

Until further notice, the Chicago Cubs will pack their bags and head to Washington after Wednesday night's game against the Milwaukee Brewers at Wrigley Field.

Despite Hurricane Florence being forecast to hit the East Coast in the coming days, the Cubs and the Washington Nationals are scheduled to go ahead with their makeup of Sunday's rainout at Nationals Park, Thursday at 3 p.m. CDT. From there, they will come right back home for a 1:20 p.m. start Friday, unless they can get Major League Baseball to move the game to later in the afternoon.

"There's nothing new," said Cubs manager Joe Maddon on Tuesday. "I've been following [hurricanetracker.com](#). For me, we're playing. That's where I'm at. We're playing. Probably the most scary thing about it might be the plane ride itself. When you get sent into bad weather, it's never fun from that perspective."

The Cubs aren't happy about playing Thursday, especially since they haven't had a day away from a ballpark since Aug. 20.

"With respect to the league, I just play first base for the Cubs," Anthony Rizzo said.

Veteran infielder-outfielder Ben Zobrist said there are no excuses being made.

"Everybody has had to deal with bad weather across the league over the course of the seasons, scheduling difficulties," he said. "It's a tough time of the year to have to play or go to the field as many games as we've had to at this part of the year."

Expecting to pitch:

Pitcher Jon Lester, who left Monday night's start after 5 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings with low-back tightness, said he expects to make his next scheduled start.

He did so Tuesday with a sense of humor.

"I did wake up," he said. "I didn't feel great, but I got up out of the bed. I made it to my son's dentist appointment. He had to get two cavities filled. Bad parenting."

"We've got really good trainers. I'll be fine. I'll be ready to go. I don't imagine missing any time."

Sticking with Edwards:

Reliever Carl Edwards Jr. has a 5.40 ERA and 5 walks in 1 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings in September. His wild pitch allowed the winning run to score Monday as the Brewers beat the Cubs 3-2. Edwards said he is fine.

"I didn't lose confidence," he said. "Health-wise, I feel good. I feel good about everything. There's a time to go through stuff, and right now, I'm going through something. You never know. I could go out there today and strike out three in a row, and that might start something."

"It's funny; not funny that it's happening. It's like if you all are writing and all of a sudden you wanted to say something and you just forgot what you wanted to write about. And you're looking around like, 'I knew I had something on my mind, but I just forgot.' "

Joe Maddon said he cannot imagine going into October without Edwards.

Wait 'til next year:

Left-handed pitcher Drew Smyly appears to have come to terms with not pitching this season.

The Cubs have shut Smyly down as he continues his rehab from Tommy John surgery in June 2017. Smyly signed a two-year deal with the Cubs last off-season with a realistic target of 2019 for being able to pitch.

"I knew all along it would have been a weird season for me; I basically wouldn't play until the very end," he said. "I was hopeful that I could make it back by August or September.

"I maybe should have if the circumstances were different, but the team's in a really tight race right now. I don't know if the risk vs. reward would have been there.

"I get it. It makes sense. It's disappointing that I've got to go through another year without playing. But it will make next year that much sweeter, I guess."

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### **Daily Herald**

Rozner: Chicago Cubs win on night to remember at Wrigley  
By Barry Rozner

Everything about it felt like playoff baseball Tuesday night.

The crowd at Wrigley Field was way into it. The temps were October cool. The winds off the lake shouted postseason baseball.

And the Cubs and Brewers were playing for first place in the Central.

There hasn't been a bigger game this season for either club, just the way it's supposed to be in September with so much on the line in a divisional game.

Ask the players and they'll tell you they would have signed up for this opportunity before the season, to be in this spot at this time with a chance to control their destiny, notwithstanding the Cubs having given up a fairly comfortable lead in the division of late.

Big game, big night, big crowd.

It was ideal, the kind of event Cubs fans have come to expect in recent years.

Yet, there was something nagging all day, something asking a question and begging for an answer.

It was Sept. 11, now 17 years after the terrorist attacks in New York and D.C., and it was a mere afterthought for most along the way, if even a thought at all.

At the store, at the coffee counter, on the highways and at the ballpark.

There was barely a mention of it anywhere.

Maybe that's the way it's supposed to be, a people unafraid to move on with their lives, the ability to avoid the bog and march forward.

Sports, especially, provide a great opportunity. Much as it's discussed as life and death, it's really not. It's entertainment, the ecstasy and agony of winning and losing offering the perfect opportunity to escape that which plagues us.

Still, it hit with force Tuesday afternoon on the drive to Wrigley, watching the planes lined up above the Kennedy, one after another landing on two runways from the east, the roar of the engines, so stark the sound of flaps engaged.

It brought back to memory a drive to Wrigleyville on Sept. 13, 2001, as the Cubs held a closed workout in an attempt to stay sharp amid a week of canceled games.

There were no planes landing at O'Hare, not many cars on the streets, the ballpark empty, save the players going through the motions.

It all seemed so pointless.

In the car and listening to the news that day, the CEO of Cantor Fitzgerald -- which occupied the top five floors of the North Tower -- spoke of the 700 employees who did not make it out of the building.

There were the many stories of parents waiting for the phone to ring, already knowing in their hearts that they would never speak to their children again.

The moment that has never gone missing -- the one that haunts -- is that of the widow who spoke of her husband on one of the ill-fated jets, his final words to her from an airplane phone a whispered goodbye and, "I hope you have a good life."

That one never goes away.

It was impossible to consider baseball or sport of any kind that week, but it began again the following week and was, of course, a tonic.

For those unaffected personally, the tendency is to move on quickly, back to the daily grind. It seems like a very long time ago now, and with each year there are fewer memorials and less consideration given to what occurred on that horrible day.

At Wrigley on Tuesday, there was a brief mention of the anniversary and a moment of silence, though not all on hand were willing to observe or do so quietly.

And then thoughts turned immediately to starter Jose Quintana, who's been superb against the Brewers in his career, but decidedly mediocre in general since arriving on the North Side.

Quintana was terrific Tuesday night, working out of a jam in the fourth and nearly finishing 7 scoreless before leaving with the bases loaded and two outs for Justin Wilson and clinging to a 2-0 lead.

Wilson struck out pinch hitter Manny Pina on 3 pitches and the Cubs finished off a 3-0 victory in style, bumping their first-place lead back to 2 games.

It was a great night at the ballyard.

So what was the question, exactly, the one that preoccupied so much of the day? Was it having something to do with how quickly we forget, or was it that we must forget quickly in order to survive?

The answer was not forthcoming, no more than was the question. What's certain is there was a baseball game Tuesday night, and a very good one at that.

Maybe there doesn't have to be an answer or even the correct question.

Maybe it's just what we do.

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