

Ramirez's 13th HR ties MLB lead, but Tribe falls

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

DETROIT -- Jose Ramirez has been solving a lot of pitchers lately. On Monday night, the problem for the Indians was that their hot-hitting third baseman was the only batter to break through against Tigers starter Mike Fiers.

In a 6-3 loss to Detroit, which capitalized late on the Tribe's struggling bullpen, Ramirez sent a fastball from Fiers towering over right field, where it sailed into the front row of the Comerica Park stands. The blast was the 13th of the season for Ramirez, moving him into a tie with four others for the Major League lead.

"Jose is going to hit anybody," Indians manager Terry Francona said.

The home run was also the only answer Cleveland had for Fiers in the defeat, which included two homers from Tigers outfielder Niko Goodrum. The second blast was a three-run shot in the eighth off reliever Zach McAllister, who took over after righty Evan Marshall walked a pair of batters to open the frame.

That increased the Indians' bullpen ERA this season to 5.45, which ranks 28th in the Majors.

"We've got to figure it out," Francona said. "There's no getting around it, we've got to figure it out. And we will. I always believe that. It hasn't been the prettiest at times, but we'll figure it out."

Against an Indians lineup that headed into the game with an MLB-leading 60 homers on the year, Fiers logged six strong innings with only three hits scattered. The Tribe's only other opportunistic chance against the righty arrived in the third, when Ramirez flied out to strand runners on the corners.

That low offensive output magnified the mistakes of Tribe starter Carlos Carrasco, who turned in 6 2/3 innings and allowed three runs in a 112-pitch effort. Carrasco allowed one run to score via a groundout in the third and then surrendered a two-run homer to Goodrum to put the Indians behind for good in the fourth.

"It was a bad pitch right there -- the homer," Carrasco said. "I tried to throw inside, and it just kind of came back to the middle. First-pitch fastball. And actually those guys were aggressive on the first pitch. Whenever I threw a fastball, slider, changeup, whatever, they'd swing. And he got it. He hit it pretty good."

That steered the spotlight away from Ramirez, who is tied with Mookie Betts, Manny Machado, Bryce Harper and Ozzie Albies for the MLB lead in homers.

While Ramirez's teammate, shortstop Francisco Lindor, has won the last two American League Player of the Week Awards, the powerful third baseman has been right behind him in terms of production. Over the same two-week span in which Lindor excelled, Ramirez posted a .370/.452/.815 slash line with 14 extra-base hits in 13 games.

Since his average dropped to .061 on April 8, Ramirez has hit at a .350 clip with a 1.173 OPS in 30 games, including Monday's showing. Ramirez's blast on an elevated, 2-1 four-seamer from Fiers also represented the third baseman's second homer in as many days and his sixth in the past 10 contests.

Against the rest of Cleveland's lineup, Fiers' high fastballs gave the hitters fits.

"He had a fastball up, borderline out of the zone," Francona said. "We had a heck of time either getting to it or laying off of it. And then off of that, he'd spin a little breaking ball, but it was the fastball up that just kind of got under our bats."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Lindor extends streak: With two outs in the ninth inning, Greg Allen came through with a triple to the right-center gap and Brandon Guyer followed with a walk against Tigers closer Shane Greene. After going hitless in his first four plate appearances, Lindor then roped a pitch into center for an RBI single, extending his career-best hitting streak to 15 games. During the streak, Lindor has hit .456 (31-for-68) with eight homers and 16 RBIs.

Comeback stalls in eighth: The Tigers gifted the Tribe with a scoring chance in the eighth inning, when second baseman Dixon Machado's fielding error allowed Ramirez to reach with two outs. That set the table for slugger Edwin Encarnacion, who drilled a pitch from reliever Joe Jimenez to deep right-center field for an RBI double, cutting Detroit's lead to 3-2. The Tigers then handed the ball to lefty Daniel Stumpf, who escaped further harm by inducing a first-pitch popout off the bat of Yonder Alonso.

SOUND SMART

Lindor's streak is the 10th consisting of at least 15 games over the past 10 seasons (2009-18) by an Indians batter. Michael Brantley's 22-game run from May 20-June 15, 2012, is the longest streak in that time period. Lindor's 16 extra-base hits in the current streak are the most within a run of at least 15 games by a Tribe batter since Jim Thome also had 16 in a 16-game streak from May 25-June 10, 1998.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Josh Tomlin (0-4, 8.06 ERA) is scheduled to take the mound for the Indians on Tuesday, when the Tribe takes on the Tigers at 7:10 p.m. ET at Comerica Park. Tomlin is 7-6 with a 4.87 ERA in 17 career games (13 starts) against the Tigers and 4-3 with a 3.88 ERA in 10 career games (eight starts) in Detroit. The Tigers will counter with lefty Francisco Liriano (3-1, 3.35).

Covering the Bases: Game 40

by Jordan Bastian

FIRST: In front offices around baseball, this is generally considered the phase of the season when real evaluations can begin to take place.

Certain statistics have started to stabilize and the sample sizes have begun to graduate from small to substantial. A lot can still change over the next few months, but 40 games provides a good snapshot for decision-makers to begin plotting the course of the roster for the remainder of the season.

On Monday night, the Indians offered a microcosm of their 2018 season to date in a span of nine innings at Comerica Park.

Jose Ramirez and Francisco Lindor did the heavy lifting for the offense, the starter (Carlos Carrasco) shouldered a heavy load (112 pitches in 6.2 innings) and the bullpen turned a close game into a tough loss. That kind of formula is what has led to Cleveland being 20–20.

This is the time for the front office to start asking some internal questions, such as...

How much longer will the leash be for Jason Kipnis, whose 0-for-3 showing Monday dropped his season slash line to .170/.256/.248?

Is Edwin Encarnacion's ongoing slump really just more of the same given his slow starts in past years, or should there be more concern?

Can Josh Tomlin (starting Tuesday) really find his footing, or would the team be better served giving someone else (Adam Plutko, for example) a chance as the fifth starter?

What can be done to fix a bullpen that has plummeted from one of baseball's best (MLB-low 2.89 ERA in 2017) to one of the game's worst units at the moment?

The last question there feels like the most pressing of the problems right now.

The Indians might be able to weather this relief storm in the regular-season, especially given the landscape of the American League Central, but reinforcements look critical for an October run.

In the eighth inning Monday night, Indians manager Terry Francona stuck with Evan Marshall, and the team definitely needs to keep testing the righty to see if he can provide an answer. Trying to keep the Tigers from building on their 3–2 lead, Marshall walked James McCann and John Hicks on 11 pitches.

At that juncture, Francona handed the ball to Zach McAllister, who retired seven in a row to end Friday's game against the Royals. That was encouraging, as was the strikeout to JaCoby Jones to begin his outing in Detroit. Then, McAllister fell behind, 3–1, to Niko Goodrum, who fouled off a pitch before getting this full-count offering:

Goodrum deposited that pitch over the right-field wall and a 3–2 game spiraled into a four-run Tigers lead with the Nos. 6–8 hitters due up in the ninth for the Tribe.

As of this writing, here are the ranks of the Indians' bullpen:

5.45 ERA (14th AL/28th MLB)

4.72 FIP (13th/28th)

-0.3 fWAR (13th/29th)

1.53 HR/9 (15th/30th)

122 ERA- (14th/28th)

37.9 Hard% (12th/26th)

-0.70 WPA (11th/25th)

"We've got to figure it out," Francona said. "There's no getting around it. We've got to figure it out. And we will. I always believe that. It hasn't been the prettiest at times, but we'll figure it out."

SECOND: Tigers starter Mike Fiers lived up in the zone—and often just above it—with his fastballs on Monday night.

It was a strategy that worked, especially given the way he balanced it with his changeup lower in the zone, plus curves and sliders mixed throughout. Fiers stayed in for six innings, scattering three hits and yielding only one run to a Cleveland lineup that has been productive of late.

Using this detailed zone map via Statcast (below), we look a little into why Fiers' approach worked.

There is a fine line when dealing with the Indians' offense as a whole this season.

Fastballs in Zones 1–3 had resulted in a .679 slugging percentage for the Tribe going into Monday. That ranked fourth in baseball and was well above the .532 league average. Fastballs in Zones 11–13, however, have resulted in a .307 SLG (16th in MLB).

Here's a look at where Fiers placed his fastballs in Monday's start:

"He had a fastball up, borderline out of the zone," Francona said. "We had a heck of time either getting to it or laying off of it. And then off of that, he'd spin a little breaking ball, but it was the fastball up that just kind of got under our bats."

Except for Jose Ramirez.

In the first inning, Ramirez smacked this pitch out to right field for a two-out home run:

"Jose is going to hit anybody," Francona said.

THIRD: That blast moved Ramirez into a tie with Mookie Betts, Manny Machado, Bryce Harper and Ozzie Albies for the Major League lead in home runs with 13. The Indians third baseman has six homers in his last 10 games.

Lindor has been garnering most of the attention per usual—the shortstop has won back-to-back AL Player of the Week awards—but Ramirez has been right there with him.

Over his past 10 games, Ramirez has posted a .359/.444/.949 slash line with six homers, five doubles and more walks (six) than strikeouts (four). Over his past 30 games, dating back to when Ramirez had a .061 batting average, he's hit .350/.431/.742 with 12 homers, 11 doubles, 26 runs and more walks (16) than strikeouts (14).

Lindor was 0-for-4 leading up to his at-bat in the ninth inning, when he singled to center to extend his hitting streak to 15 games. Over that run, the shortstop has hit .456 with eight homers and 16 RBI. His 16 extra-base hits are the most in a hitting streak of at least 15 games by an Indians hitter since 1998, when Jim Thome had 16 over a 16-game run.

HOME: After the game, Francona and Chris Antonetti, the Indians president of baseball operations, planned on sitting down with Bradley Zimmer.

The center fielder made his way to the office with a large ice pack over his chest, which remains bruised from his crash into the wall at Yankee Stadium back on May 5. Zimmer was out of the lineup Monday for the sixth time in seven games and a decision on whether he will land on the DL is expected to come Tuesday.

With Zimmer out again, that put Brandon Guyer (.157 average in 70 at-bats this season) in the lineup against the right-handed Fiers. While Francona has noted that facing righties can be beneficial for platoon specialists like Guyer (and the outfielder agrees), it led to a game-changing at-bat in the seventh.

With two outs, reliever Warwick Saupold fired a wild pitch that put runners at second and third base for Guyer. Saupold fed Guyer a steady stream of sliders—the last one tailing out of the zone at 88 mph. The outfielder swung and missed for a rally-ending strikeout.

The circled pitch was the strike-three offering:

With that strikeout, Guyer slipped to 1-for-27 against right-handed pitching this season.

Tito's pregame minutiae: May 14

by Jordan Bastian

Highlights from Indians manager Terry Francona's Q&A with reporters prior to Monday night's game against the Tigers.

Q: What's the latest on Bradley Zimmer?

TF: "He's in there getting heated up and everything. He's going to go out and see what he can do and how he feels. Today's probably a day where we're getting where we'll make a decision. Is he getting to a point where he can play, or do we need to DL him? I'd say today's a pretty important day for him."

Q: How many days can you back-date a DL stint, three?

TF: "Three. Right. So, the farther we go, we still can only go three. So, we kind of talked through it with Chris [Antonetti, Indians president of baseball operations]. Today's—I don't want to say it's like do or die—but it probably seems to make some sense."

Q: Will Zimmer go through a full pregame workout?

TF: "Well, it depends on what he can do. He's going to do as much as he can and see how it feels. If it's bothering him, I don't think we want him to continue. But, if he's doing good, yeah, we'll let him."

Q: Has Zimmer pushed to try to play?

TF: "Yes. He's a pretty tough kid. He doesn't want to go on the DL and I don't think anybody's pushing him to it, but we're coming up on maybe almost a week. It just gets to a point where it probably makes some sense."

Q: Lonnie Chisenhall is on the road trip?

TF: "Because he can start doing on-the-field stuff and everything with us. So, that's why he's traveling with us. He's doing more and more. And, when you see him with us, that's a good sign. That means he's doing stuff on the field, taking BP. I don't think there's any timetable yet for when he can go out [on a rehab assignment], but he is making progress."

Q: What's your relationship like with Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire?

TF: "I like Gardy. I enjoy Gardy, always. I always felt like his teams, when they had the talent, they played. His teams always play right. I've always enjoyed him."

Q: Are you happy to see a veteran manager like him get a second chance?

TF: "Yes. He should be in the game. I know he had some stuff going on and everything, but yeah, he's really good at what he does. And he has been for a while."

Q: What was your first impression of Oliver Drake after his first appearance for you guys?

TF: "It was a quick look. I think we've seen why he can get lefties, or how he can get lefties with that split. Obviously, we've got to get to know him a little bit more. But, I mean, he's got some size to him. He's got a little bit of velocity to him. So, we'll see where it goes."

Q: Is it more challenging to manage a right-hander who has better splits against lefties?

TF: "Well, the thing that's hard is in his past, he's been able to get lefties. So far this year, it's not been [as good]. So, we want to, one, try to let him pitch where, OK, we get to know him, so now you can kind of see, OK, do we let Carl [Willis, pitching coach] do this or that. That's the biggest thing, I think, is letting a guy get comfortable and pitch before you start reinventing the wheel or something."

Q: What's the story behind the old glove on the ground here?

TF: "That's actually, [Tigers radio color man] Jim Price gave it to me. That's my dad's name in it, so he gave it to me. That was pretty cool. I actually don't know [where he got it]. Somebody gave it to him. I've actually accumulated about five or six of them along the way—it's pretty cool. I think it was S&H green stamps. I'm pretty sure. Most of you guys are probably too young to know what that was. Don't laugh, Hoynsie, because I know you [bleepin'] know."

Hoynsie: My mom used to paste them on the pages.

TF: "Hell yeah. I did, too."

Q: During the Yankees series, you mentioned there had been some issues getting certain camera angles quickly enough to make a decision on challenging via replay. Has there been improvement?

TF: "Actually, the next day, [MLB] had somebody [meet with us]. They're good about, they don't want to have problems with it. There was [someone] there working with Barney [replay coordinator Mike Barnett] and the next day they promised that they'd have at least two looks at the slow motion, and we did."

Q: I know Sunday was just a day off for Jason Kipnis, but have you considered giving Erik Gonzalez more starts at second base against left-handed pitchers?

TF: "I like to think I think about a lot of stuff. But, we also have to get Kip going. This is a guy that we've got to get going. I always come back to it, but rather than run from somebody, we'd like to [try to get him going]. It was good he took the day and he was up in the cage and he hit a bunch. That was good for him. I just think, I mean, you might see Erik play some against some of these guys, but Kip's a guy that, when we're a good team, he's playing every day. And that's what we need to get to."

Q: Do you think missing so much time last season has had a negative carryover for Kipnis?

TF: "I don't know, because his Spring Training was so good. I just think this game is so much of confidence. Even for veterans, sometimes you fall into ruts and, man, it just beats you up a little bit. I mean, nobody's really exempt. Or, very few."

OF crash still bothering Zimmer; DL possible

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

DETROIT -- Bradley Zimmer took the field for the Indians' pregame workout at Comerica Park prior to Monday's game against the Tigers, but the center fielder remained out of the starting lineup for the sixth time in the past seven games. Cleveland is now weighing whether a trip to the disabled list is in order.

Zimmer, who continues to feel the effects of a violent crash into the center-field wall at Yankee Stadium on May 5, has still experienced discomfort while swinging a bat in recent days. Indians manager Terry Francona has noted that the primary issue has been bruising of Zimmer's chest.

"He's going to go out and see what he can do and how he feels," Francona said before Monday's game. "Today's probably a day where we're getting to where we'll make a decision. Is he getting to a point where he can play, or do we need to DL him? I'd say today's a pretty important day for him."

Zimmer last played on Wednesday in Milwaukee, but the Indians only have the ability under Major League Baseball rules to make a DL stint retroactive by three days. That means, if Zimmer is placed on the 10-day DL, he will need to be deactivated for a minimum of seven days before rejoining the roster.

Francona said Zimmer would do as much activity as he could tolerate on Monday.

"If it's bothering him, I don't think we want him to continue. But, if he's doing good, yeah, we'll let him," Francona said. "He's a pretty tough kid. He doesn't want to go on the DL and I don't think anybody's pushing him to it, but we're coming up on maybe almost a week. It just gets to a point where it probably makes some sense."

Worth noting

- Utility man Erik Gonzalez went 1-for-4 in a start at second base against the Royals on Sunday and is now batting .357 (10-for-28) through his 19 games for Cleveland this year. Francona was asked if he has considered giving Gonzalez more starts against left-handed pitchers in place of the struggling Jason Kipnis (.173 average and .509 OPS through 38 games).

"I think about a lot of stuff, but we also have to get Kip going," Francona said. "It was good he took the day [off Sunday], and he was up in the cage and he hit a bunch. That was good for him. I just think, I mean, you might see Erik play some against some of these guys, but Kip's a guy that, when we're a good team, he's playing every day. And that's what we need to get to."

- Outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall (10-day DL, right calf) traveled with the Indians to Detroit for the three-game road set against the Tigers. Francona said Chisenhall has been cleared to resume regular batting practice and continues to make progress in a running program.

"He's doing more and more," Francona said. "And, when you see him with us, that's a good sign. That means he's doing stuff on the field, taking BP. I don't think there's any timetable yet for when he can go out [on a Minor League rehab assignment], but he is making progress."

- Shortstop Francisco Lindor was named the co-American League Player of the Week (along with Seattle pitcher James Paxton) on Monday. Lindor is the first Cleveland player to win the honor in consecutive weeks since the award's creation in 1974. Over the two weeks combined, Lindor has hit .483/.516/1.017 with eight homers, eight doubles, 15 RBIs and 19 runs scored, plus a .635 weighted on-base average and 308 weighted Runs Created Plus.

Lindor wins share of AL Player of the Week

No-hitter. Dominant hit streak. Four homers in four days.

As we approach the quarter-mark of the season, three players remind us that they're only heating up.

Major League Baseball recognized last week's top performers on Monday by announcing Mariners left-hander James Paxton and Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor as the American League co-Players of the Week and the Reds' Scooter Gennett as the National League Player of the Week, presented by W.B. Mason.

Paxton threw a no-hitter on just 99 pitches while striking out seven Blue Jays, accomplishing the feat in his homeland. Showing no signs of fatigue, he threw as hard as 100 mph in the ninth inning. "The Big Maple" became the first Canadian to pitch a no-hitter in his home country, joining Dick Fowler of the 1945 Phillies as the only Canadians to do it. Coming weeks after a bald eagle famously landed on him during a pregame ceremony in Minneapolis, it is the third time Paxton has earned the weekly honor.

"It doesn't get much cooler than that," Paxton said. "When you can get your name put next to a guy like Randy Johnson, at any time, it's pretty cool. I'm honored to have gotten my third one and be right next to him with three of those awards."

This was one of the few times a no-hitter performance didn't receive sole possession for Player of the Week honors, simply because another AL athlete put up video-game numbers in the same span.

Lindor went on a massive tear this past week, slashing .600/.652/1.400 with four homers, eight runs, five RBIs and four doubles to win back-to-back AL Player of the Week honors -- and his second overall. The Indians shortstop extended his hit streak to a career-high 14 games, surpassing last year's 13. With numbers like that, Paxton is in good company.

While most of the buzz was around his new teammate Matt Harvey, Gennett quietly put together an incredible week. The Reds second baseman homered for the fourth time in as many days on Friday, going 4-for-5 with two runs and three RBIs against the Dodgers. It was the first time in his career that he homered in more than two consecutive games. In five games last week, Gennett slashed .591/.591/1.227, with 10 RBIs, seven runs and two doubles.

The 28-year-old's performance helped lead the Reds to a season-high six-game winning streak, while earning him his second career NL Player of the Week honor.

"It's just baseball, man," Gennett. "So I just try to stay level and realize that I'm not always doing to do good. And when you're slumping or doing bad, you just realize you're going to come out of it. Keep it simple."

Deesha Thosar is a report

A Trip Around the Farm: Eli Morgan develops a third pitch; Bobby Bradley heats up

By Michael Hattery 2h ago

Eli Morgan has been, quite simply, the best pitcher in the Indians system from a production standpoint in 2018. Morgan has dominated Midwest League hitters in his seven starts and 38 innings. To date, he has posted an earned-run average of 1.88, striking out 11.7 per nine innings and walking just 1.6 per nine innings. In terms of his development, the limited walk rate has been the most exciting component so far.

"I feel like I am throwing a lot of strikes," Morgan said. "I have been focusing on minimizing walks and free passes."

Like most pitchers in A-ball, Morgan is working on broadening his arsenal and establishing a three-pitch mix he can trust in tight situations. Morgan features a four-seam fastball, changeup and slider.

Morgan's four-seam fastball is generally 89-92 but plays a key role in his arsenal inducing ground balls (44 percent) and eating up the hands of right-handed hitters. "I have noticed that I am getting some arm-side run with it, so it is kinda moving like a two-seam but with a four-seam grip," he said.

Being able to run the four-seam fastball in on the hands of right-handed hitters like a traditional two-seam grip would be key because it allows his two secondaries to play well off the primary.

Further, Morgan sees additional improvement for the fastball coming with future velocity growth, which is one of his developmental goals in 2018. In terms of adding velocity, Morgan sees it as a function of continuing to strengthen his body and long toss. "I am huge proponent of long toss and so are a lot of the guys in the organizations," Morgan said. "Focusing on having good quality catch instead of just going through the motions."

Morgan's second pitch is his most notable, and well-covered: a changeup that FanGraphs prospect staff have dubbed a "plus-plus" offering. The pitch is very deceptive in terms of Morgan's ability to maintain similar arm speed but create significant velocity differentiation and with nice late downward movement.

Improving the slider during the 2017-18 offseason has been key to Morgan's leap.

"That (altering the slider) has been a huge thing; last year in college and Mahoning Valley I really did not have that pitch," he said. "(The slider) was a big point of emphasis this offseason; just not having to always rely on fastball-changeup."

The slider does not have any one consistent shape as Morgan manipulates it based on counts. "Right now it is inconsistent, almost in a good way. Later in the count I try to throw it a little harder and tighter; whereas earlier in the count it shapes like a curveball, almost a slurve."

While the shape is varying, the pitch is one he can trust. "(The slider) is inconsistent in shape but I feel like I can throw it for a strike in all counts, which is huge," Morgan said.

Morgan is so advanced in terms of his changeup and game management that he will likely be pushed up the ladder to Lynchburg in the very near future. In terms of his long-term outlook, continuing to improve his feel and command of the slider will be central to his ability to succeed as a starter against more advanced hitters.

Heating up: Bradley warms with the weather

A consensus top-five prospect in the Indians system and included in FanGraphs' top-100 prospects in all of baseball, Bobby Bradley stumbled out of the gate posting the following line in April: 89 plate appearances, .114 batting average, .430 OPS, and two home runs.

For Bradley and the Indians, May has brought an improved environment and an improved line: 38 plate appearances, .353 batting average, 1.300 OPS, and four home runs.

As for the improved success in May, Bradley credits the weather.

"It is tough playing in 30-degree weather, but it is something you have to get used to," he said.

More than fly balls die in the cold winds of Northeast Ohio; it is more the continual physical toll, Bradley said: "Being cold and not moving around in the dugout, just sitting down freezing."

Whether Bradley's struggles can simply be chalked up to the weather is tough to discern but tracking him for the next few months as the weather stabilizes is worthwhile because he might not be as far from forcing his way into an Indians lineup as many think.

Blue chip production

(updates on former first-/second-round picks and major international signees)

Nolan Jones: Jones posted his best 10-game stretch of the season through May 14, hitting .316 with one home run and 10 walks in 48 plate appearances. As noted in last week's column, Jones merely needed some better fortune on batted balls in the field of play and he got it. The walk rate remains impressive, and his power is slowly starting to claw its way to the surface.

Will Benson: Benson is in the same position Jones was last week with his batting average being sapped by bad fortune on balls in play. Beyond that, Benson has shown everything you could ask for including continued power gains which have him tied for the lead in the Midwest League in home runs and seventh in the league in walks as well as his best minor-league strikeout rate by a sizable amount. If you look past batting average, you can see why the Indians are so excited about the tools outfielder.

Quentin Holmes: The 2017 second-round pick remains stationed in Arizona and will likely spend some time in Mahoning Valley this summer.

Brady Aiken: The Indians' risk-heavy 2015 first-round pick has been assigned to Mahoning Valley, the Indians' short-season team whose first game is June 15. As The Athletic's Zack Meisel has noted, Aiken remained in Arizona for extended spring training. He has yet to be assigned to a full-season team.

Hot three hitters

Name	Level	AVG	OBP	ISO	K%		
Conner Capel	Lynchburg (A+)	.311	.392	.136	17.60%		
Jorma Rodriguez	Lake County (A)	.354	.379	.094	19.70%		
Sicnarf Loopstok	Akron (AA)	.247	.404	.202	19.10%		

Hot three pitchers

Name	Level	IP	ERA	K/9	BB/9		
Shao-Ching Chiang	Akron (AA)	39	2.08	7.60	1.80		
James Karinchak*	Lynchburg (A+)	4.1	0.00	18.70	6.20		
Kieran Lovegrove**	Lynchburg (A+)	17.1	1.56	13.00	2.10		

* Karinchak was similarly dominant in Lake County before his promotion with a 0.79 ERA and 15.9 K/9 in 11 innings.

** Lovegrove was promoted to Akron just last week and has logged only two innings so far.

20-20 vision: The smiles and soggy shower shoes of the Indians through 40 games

Zack Meisel 1h ago 2

DETROIT — Only the shower shoes, squeaking their way along the carpet the Indians once soaked with champagne, disrupted the silence after the Indians' loss on Monday night at Comerica Park.

Yan Gomes sat and faced his locker as he gorged on his postgame meal. Dan Otero scarfed down a slice of pizza as he walked toward the showers. Evan Marshall, his right arm wrapped, sat in his black leather chair. A clubhouse attendant collected wet towels and other laundry in a blue bin.

About every other day, the postgame scene has featured less chatter than a library after closing.

The postgame victory scenes, on the other hand, involve thumping bass and maybe even a few smiles. Those sights have happened just as frequently, but that's not the team's aim.

The Indians have registered 40 results. When he presided over the operation in Cleveland, Mark Shapiro subscribed to Sparky Anderson's old mantra of withholding concrete judgments about teams until the 40-game mark. Well, we're here.

There have been some incredible feats. There have been some incredible failures. Really, watching the Indians has been like eating a greasy burger. It's filling and tasty, but when you're done, you're left feeling like you need to shower.

Maybe I'm eating burgers wrong.

Anyway, the manner in which the first 40 games have unfolded has provided us with enough of a detailed snapshot to evaluate the Indians. We have learned plenty, but there's even more that remains unanswered.

Here's what we know ...

Leading the AL Central is like setting the curve in a remedial math class

The Indians' .500 winning percentage is good for a two-game lead on the upstart Tigers. Can you identify the actual players from this list who appeared in Detroit's (winning) lineup Monday?

Anibel Guerrero
Pete Kozma
Roger Feldman
John Hicks
Mikie Mahtook
Ramón Santiago
James McCann
Nelson Sánchez
Niko Goodrum
Dixon Machado
JaCoby Jones
Bobby Higginson

Answers: Kozma, Hicks, Mahtook, McCann, Goodrum, Machado, Jones

The division can be a gift and a curse. It can provide extra time to heal, but also offer a false sense of security.

There are a couple of things to compartmentalize:

— winning the division remains the first (read: not “only”) goal, because a team must punch its ticket and then ride the waves of October randomness

— at the same time, you want to make sure that you don’t have glaring holes on your roster and that you feel confident about your formula to win in October, and cruising to a division crown (against greatly inferior competition) might not create the necessary spotlight to reveal those flaws

It sure seemed as though the Indians were in the right place entering the postseason last year. Obviously, it didn’t pan out that way, though that also was a case of star-power fading (Corey Kluber, Francisco Lindor, José Ramírez) at the worst possible time.

What we don’t know: How aggressive the Twins (the primary challenger for the AL Central crown) will act in chasing down the Tribe.

Twins head honcho Derek Falvey is cut from the Cleveland cloth. When the Indians were in a position to strike in 2011 and in 2016, they swung significant trades before the deadline. The Indians didn’t capitalize on Minnesota’s brutal start to this season. Maybe they’ll have a dogfight on their hands through the summer.

Lindor and Ramírez are the Great Lakes Bash Brothers

No team has ever had both its starting shortstop and third baseman club 35 or more home runs. Ramírez and Lindor might make some history this season (well, if Ramírez remains at the hot corner). Ramírez joined the major-league leaders with his 13th homer on Monday night. Lindor sits right behind, with 12. The two rank third and fourth, respectively, in baseball in WAR.

Remarkably, the two rank sixth and seventh in the majors in slugging percentage.

Ramírez, HR per at-bat throughout his career:

Minor leagues: 1 HR every 106.4 AB

2013-15 in majors: 1 HR every 70.5 AB

2016 in majors: 1 HR every 51.4 AB

2017 in majors: 1 HR every 20.2 AB

2018 in majors: 1 HR every 11.8 AB

The two have carried the offense, and Michael Brantley now batting between them creates as imposing a top-three as any in baseball. (We’ll get to the rest of the lineup in a bit.)

What we don’t know: How they’ll perform if the club plays in October

That goes for everyone, of course. But last year, the duo offered next to nothing in the ALDS, aside from Lindor’s Game 2-saving grand slam. Odds are, they’ll fare better the next time around. Clearly, the Indians would need that to be the case, given how the rest of the batting order has floundered.

The bullpen needs a shot in the arm (or just to give a shot to some better arms)

For all of you new sports gamblers, take this bet to the bank: The Indians will trade for a reliever at some point between now and the end of August. (Hot take alert!) There's so much to sort out, so much dead weight through which to parse. Andrew Miller is rusty. Evan Marshall and Oliver Drake are unfamiliar. Nick Goody is injured.

Zach McAllister is a malfunctioning vending machine that uncoils three candy bars every time someone inserts a penny. Dan Otero and Tyler Olson are inconsistent. Matt Belisle, Jeff Beliveau, Alexi Ogando and Ben Taylor have come and gone.

The group can't protect leads (see: The Yankee Stadium Weekend From Hell). The group can't maintain small deficits to allow the offense a chance at a comeback (see: Monday's Motor City Meltdown).

What we don't know: Essentially everything, other than Miller and Cody Allen representing the two sturdy pillars in an otherwise crumbling structure. Oh, and both of those guys are headed for free agency this winter, though that's a discussion for another day. There's a blazing fire surrounding them right now.

Trevor Bauer and Mike Clevinger give the Indians their Four Horsemen
Bauer and Clevinger have joined Kluber and Carrasco in the "no longer go into their starts having zero idea whether to expect a no-hitter or a no-outer." All four hurlers rank in the top 11 in the American League in WAR, and — take a swig of your drink for this impending spit-take — Clevinger and Bauer actually rank ahead of their two big brothers. All but Carrasco rank in the top 10 in the AL in ERA.

What we don't know: A few things, really.

1. Can the unit compete with Houston's stable?

Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole and Charlie Morton rank 1-2-3 in ERA in the AL. Spin that how you want, but it's a remarkable feat through the first quarter of the season. That doesn't include Lance McCullers (3.63 ERA, 3.05 FIP) or Dallas Keuchel (3.10 ERA, 4.16 FIP).

2. Will the group be burnt out by August?

The lack of bullpen reliability has resulted in increased pitch counts for the Tribe starters.

Carrasco's past three starts: 113, 117, 112 pitches

Clevinger's past three starts: 105, 116, 115 pitches

Bauer's past five starts: 116, 111, 122, 102, 109 pitches (Note: He would prefer that read "216, 211, 222, 202, 209 pitches")

3. How much longer will Josh Tomlin own the fifth spot in the rotation?

The Indians have now observed Adam Plutko in a major-league setting. Shane Bieber is knocking on the door. Michael Martinez should be completing his rehab from a torn Achilles tendon in the next few months. (His 0.00 ERA ranks tied for first in big-league history.)

Teams don't need five starting pitchers in the postseason, but they also don't need a starting pitcher with an 8.06 ERA in May, June, July, August or September. Tomlin has served up 13 homers in 25 2/3 innings, which might earn him some calls come Derby time. The Indians know that sort of performance can't persist. Tomlin knows it, too.

The roster is composed of Monstars and non-stars

With Bradley Zimmer and Tyler Naquin unavailable Monday night, Brandon Guyer was left to face a right-handed pitcher with two runners in scoring position in the late innings. Guyer owns a .157/.234/.314 slash line this season. He hasn't really hit lefties. He's 1-for-27 with 12 strikeouts against righties.

Jason Kipnis and Edwin Encarnacion haven't carried their weight. Rajai Davis and Roberto Perez haven't produced at the plate. The fifth spot in the rotation and the bullpen have been as effective as a Band-Aid on a severed limb.

What we don't know: How to fix everything.

Chris Antonetti is paid the sort of salary requisite with repairing every leak on the roster. He sat in Terry Francona's office after the club's loss Monday. The two chatted while the manager finished his postgame meal.

There's no clear path for Yandy Díaz and Francisco Mejía to join the roster, barring other seismic changes. The reliever well is all but dry at Class AAA.

There are transactions to make, at some point. The first 40 games have made that readily apparent. This top-heavy roster has morphed into a two-class system, with haves and have-nots. There's still time for some of the struggling, wayward participants to try to navigate their way to safety, to secure their spot on this summer ride.

But the Indians' sluggish start has prompted some cause for concern and questioning. This roster could undergo a face lift over the next few months. Maybe then, there will be fewer nights of silence, solemn stares and squeaky shoes.

Captains, Cubs split doubleheader

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

You don't see a lot of six-game series, but they can happen when Mother Nature gums up the works on carefully crafted minor-league schedules.

The Captains and Cubs were rained out of games at Classic Park on April 14 and 15. It was a miserable weather weekend in most of the upper Midwest. Games in large numbers were postponed in the minor leagues and major leagues.

With the Cubs now back in Eastlake for a four-game series, the two rained-out games were folded in to make it a six-pack. The series ensued May 14 with a doubleheader of seven-inning games.

Lake County won the opener, 3-2.

South Bend raced to an 11-0 victory in the nightcap.

In between single games May 15 and May 17 is another doubleheader May 16.

That's a lot of baseball in four days time, even for young guys with tons of energy.

The opening game of the series was well-played and well-pitched.

Eli Morgan got the start for Lake County and was solid.

The 22-year-old left-hander from Southern California gave up two runs on six hits in six innings. He struck out six, walked one and surrendered a two-run home run to Cubs first baseman Jared Young in the top of the third inning.

With a three-pitch mix that includes a extremely effective change-up, Morgan 56 strikeouts against seven walks in eight starts covering 44 1/3 innings. He is 2-0 with a 1.83 ERA.

South Bend starter Cory Abbott was dealing, too. The Cubs' second-round pick in the June 2017 draft out of Loyola Marymount limited the Captains to two runs on two hits with seven strikeouts in five innings. Captains right-fielder Will Benson accounted for one of those runs with a solo home run in the bottom of the second inning. He has a Midwest League-leading eight home runs.

The win went to Lake County reliever Manuel Alvarez (1-0, 2.25 ERA). He retired the side in order in the top of the seventh. That set the stage for Oscar Gonzalez to slug a two-out, walkoff home run over the wall in straightaway center field.

The third round-tripper of the season for Gonzalez earned him a ritualistic pounding by teammates at home plate.

In the nightcap, the Cubs jumped on Lake County starter and eventual loser Nick Gallagher (0-1, 4.40 ERA) for two runs in the top of the second inning and three more in the top of the third.

Those runs came courtesy of a two-run home run by Brandon Hughes and a three-run shot by Austin Filiere. The Cubs did late damage against Lake County relievers Dakody Clemmer and Jonathan Teaney.

The Captains are 17-19 after the split. South Bend is 15-19.

Tigers 6, Indians 3: Tribe falls back to .500

By Noah Trister, The Associated Press

DETROIT — The injury-plagued Detroit Tigers battled gamely against another top pitcher.

Niko Goodrum homered twice and drove in five runs, and Detroit beat Carlos Carrasco and the Cleveland Indians 6-3 on Monday night. It was the second straight day the Tigers won despite fielding a patchwork lineup. Detroit faced James Paxton and Seattle on Sunday and won that game in the bottom of the ninth. Then the Tigers made Carrasco's outing difficult.

"Everyone comes out here and competes. Whoever's on the mound has to throw the ball over the plate," Goodrum said. "We've just got to try to put our best swing on it."

Goodrum hit a two-run shot in the fourth inning and a three-run homer in the eighth, highlighting an impressive performance from a Detroit team missing some key regulars. Miguel Cabrera is on the disabled list, and the Tigers have also been without outfielder Nicholas Castellanos and third baseman Jeimer Candelario.

Jose Ramirez hit his 13th homer of the season for Cleveland, but the AL Central-leading Indians fell back to .500 and are only two games ahead of Detroit. The Tigers had lost 11 straight against Cleveland, including a four-game sweep in Ohio last month.

Carrasco (5-2) had won his previous 12 decisions against the AL Central, but he allowed three runs and six hits in 6 2/3 innings Monday and received little run support.

"Teams have been very aggressive against me in my last two starts, but especially tonight," Carrasco said. "I've almost never seen Victor Martinez swing at a first pitch, but he did it every time tonight, and a lot of their young guys were doing it, too. It's not something I was expecting, and my stuff wasn't good enough to get me out of trouble."

Mike Fiers (4-2) allowed a run and three hits for Detroit in six innings. He walked one and struck out five. The Indians scored an unearned run in the eighth, but with the tying run on second, left-hander Daniel Stumpf came on and retired Yonder Alonso on a first-pitch popup for the third out.

Then Goodrum gave Detroit a 6-2 lead with his homer in the bottom of the inning. It was his third homer in two games.

"We made two really bad mistakes to Goodrum, and that was the game," Cleveland manager Terry Francona said.

Cleveland's Francisco Lindor hit an RBI single in the ninth, extending his hitting streak to 15 games. The Indians brought the tying run to the plate against Shane Greene, but Michael Brantley grounded out to end it.

Ramirez opened the scoring with a homer to right in the first, but Detroit tied it in the third on an RBI groundout by Pete Kozma. In the fourth, Carrasco allowed a leadoff double by John Hicks. One out later, Goodrum connected to put the Tigers up 3-1.

"Really good pitchers — I mean, we're seeing some good ones — but our guys are just going out there and competing," Detroit manager Ron Gardenhire said.

Tigers 6, Indians 3: 10 Walk-Off Thoughts on Carlos Carrasco seeing something new and the problems in the bullpen persisting

By Ryan Lewis

Here are 10 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 6-3 loss to the Detroit Tigers.

1. Carlos Carrasco had never seen Victor Martinez swing at the first pitch until Monday night. That, if anything, anecdotally illustrates how aggressive the Tigers have been. The Indians were burned by two Niko Goodrum home runs which did most of the damage, both on pitches left right over the middle of the plate. The first was a case of the wrong location at the wrong time against a team looking to swing early.
2. Carrasco faced Goodrum in the fourth inning of a 1-1 game. Carrasco wanted to open the at-bat with an inside fastball and establish the inner half of the plate. But, the 94 mph fastball trailed back to the middle, and it was hammered for a go-ahead two-run home run.
3. Said Carrasco: "It was a bad pitch right there—the homer. I tried to throw inside and it just kind of came back to the middle. First-pitch fastball. And actually those guys were aggressive on the first pitch. Whenever I threw a fastball, slider, changeup, whatever, they'd swing. And he got it. He hit it pretty good. But, I think my pitches were all right today."
4. The Tigers were dead set on being aggressive, and Carrasco made the early mistake for which Goodrum was looking. Overall, he still delivered a quality start—6 2/3 innings, three runs on six hits, four strikeouts. Though, the Indians failed to score at least six runs, snapping a four-game streak, and the more-aggressive Tigers got the best of the Indians.
5. Said Carrasco: "Yes, that's what I've been [seeing] for the last couple games. Today, they were aggressive, too. I've never seen in my life Victor Martinez swing at the first pitch. He did today in the whole game. Actually, for the last two games. He did it, too, against Seattle. They're aggressive, man. I'm pretty sure they're aggressive. Next time, I'm just going to take care of that part of the game."
6. The Indians still have a significant problem in the bullpen. A tight, 3-2 game was turned into a 6-2 affair when Zach McAllister left a 95-mph fastball down the middle to Goodrum in the eighth. It wasn't on the first pitch, but with that location, it doesn't really matter when it's thrown—it's probably going to be hammered. Obviously, what was a one-swing game now warranted a rally in the ninth. The Indians did well enough to bring the tying run to the plate in the form of Michael Brantley, but one run was all they could muster—an RBI single by Francisco Lindor, which extended his career-best hitting streak to 15 games.
7. The depth in the bullpen has vanished. McAllister sports a 7.47 ERA and 6.59 FIP, and has struggled to even lower those gaudy figures too much over the last week. Dan Otero has 5.87 ERA and 4.45 FIP. Evan Marshall has only thrown 2 2/3 innings but likely wasn't brought in to single-handedly save the bullpen. Same for Oliver Drake, who was recently acquired. Tyler Olson has a 6.57 ERA, though he also owns a 3.23 FIP. The Indians have already used 12 relievers this season, but the answers have been few and far between.
8. A bullpen can be a fickle group, one that might be more difficult to gauge when entering the season in terms of performance vs. expected performance. Either way, any group is likely to go through some rough stretches. It has seemingly happened all at once for the Indians. Barring a turnaround, the bullpen certainly might be identified as their biggest target at the trade deadline.
9. Said Indians manager Terry Francona: "We gotta figure it out. There's no getting around it, we gotta figure it out. And we will. I always believe that. It hasn't been the prettiest at times, but we'll figure it out."
10. Jose Ramirez hit his 13th home run of the season, which leads the team and is tied for the major-league lead. Over his last 14 games, he's hitting .368 with six home runs, nine doubles, 16 RBI and 16 runs scored. He and Lindor have carried the Indians' offense the two weeks now. On Monday night, the Indians struggled to hit Mike Fiers' high fastball, which Francona noted after the game. Ramirez, though, went up and hit one out. Francona simply said afterward, "Yeah, Jose is going to hit anybody."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 05.15.2018

Tigers 6, Indians 3: Tigers' Mike Fiers cools off Indians hitters

By Ryan Lewis

DETROIT: One offensive streak came to an end and one was extended at the last second, but the Indians nonetheless fell to the Detroit Tigers 6-3 Monday night at Comerica Park.

The loss snapped a four-game streak in which the Indians — finally operating at a higher level after six weeks of inconsistency — had scored at least six runs. It also brought the Tigers (18-22) to within two games of the Indians (20-20) in the American League Central.

The Indians did strike first on Monday night but then fell mostly silent against Tigers starting pitcher Mike Fiers.

In the top of the first inning, Jose Ramirez slugged a solo home run, his 13th of the season, to right field. That was good enough for the team lead and tied him for the major-league lead with the Baltimore Orioles' Manny Machado and the Boston Red Sox's Mookie Betts.

Fiers (4-2) cruised from there, allowing just that single run on three hits in six innings. The Indians threatened to score against Tigers reliever Warwick Saupold in the seventh, when a walk, a single and a wild pitch put two runners in scoring position with two outs for Brandon Guyer. But Saupold got the best of him and struck him out swinging.

An inning later, the deficit was halved. Ramirez reached on an error on Dixon Machado and Edwin Encarnacion followed by ripping a double to right-center field to make it 3-2.

But that was all the offense the Indians could muster. The Tigers turned to left-handed Daniel Stumpf to face Yonder Alonso, who popped out harmlessly to shortstop.

Indians starting pitcher Carlos Carrasco (5-2) allowed three runs on six hits and two walks and struck out four to notch a quality start, but he lacked the needed offensive support. Two singles and a fielder's choice led to a third-inning run on Pete Kozma's ground ball to third base.

In the fourth, John Hicks doubled and Niko Goodrum delivered the biggest blow of the night, a two-run home run to right-center field.

Facing Indians reliever Zach McAllister in the eighth, Goodrum then delivered the haymaker, crushing a three-run home run to right field to extend the lead to 6-2 and notch his first career multi-homer game.

Francisco Lindor, who was named American League co-player or player of the week for the second week in a row, extended his career-best hitting streak at the last possible moment when he rifled an RBI single to center field with two outs in the ninth off Shane Greene.

That brought Michael Brantley to the plate as the tying run, but Greene induced a groundout to first base to end the game.

And with that, the Tigers inched closer to the Indians in the Central.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 05.15.2018

Indians notebook: Francisco Lindor named AL co-player of the week; Bradley Zimmer still in limbo, but not for long

By Ryan Lewis

DETROIT: The Indians' star shortstop continues to accomplish things no player in franchise history has in the last half decade — or, ever, for that matter.

Francisco Lindor on Monday became the first Indians player to be named American League Player or Co-Player of the Week in back-to-back weeks since the award's inception in 1974. Lindor was named AL Player of the Week for the period ending on May 6 outright. This past week, he shared the award with Seattle Mariners pitcher James Paxton, who tossed a no-hitter.

Lindor entered Monday's game with a .473 batting average and 1.563 OPS in May, leading the league with eight home runs, eight doubles and 16 extra-base hits in that time. He's also raised his season batting average 76 points in 13 days, to .321, collecting at least one hit in 14 consecutive games heading into a three-game series with the Detroit Tigers.

At the end of April, Lindor was 56th in baseball with 0.8 WAR, according to FanGraphs. Not even midway through May, Lindor has rocketed up the charts and now is in a tie for third, along with Jose Ramirez, with 2.7 WAR.

"You don't take it for granted, but it is expected with a guy like that," Mike Clevinger said last weekend after Lindor's four-extra-base-hit game, which no Indians leadoff hitter had accomplished since Tito Francona in 1964. "You know it's coming. You know, especially if he didn't go off the day before, it's like, 'What the hell's going to happen tonight? He didn't get two home runs last night. He's about to bang tonight.' That's just awesome to have that in the lineup."

Now or never

The Indians need to make a decision with center fielder Bradley Zimmer — they've reached the point that giving him some time is no longer bringing a high return.

Zimmer has played only one game in the past week after sustaining a chest contusion in New York. He was originally in the lineup on Saturday but was taken out as a late scratch. According to Indians manager Terry Francona, Zimmer has especially been bothered by the chest injury when swinging a bat.

The Indians have wanted to give him an extra few days to make a decision on his status. A placement on the disabled list could be backtracked three days, meaning he'd only have to be on the DL for an additional week. At this point, though, they aren't gaining anything by waiting another day.

With that in mind, the time for a decision has come.

"He's going to go out and see what he can do and how he feels," Francona said. "[Monday is] probably a day where we're getting where we'll make a decision [soon]. Is he getting to a point where he can play, or do we need to DL him? I'd say today's a pretty important day for him. ... I don't want to say it's like do or die, but it probably seems to make some sense."

Francona added that Zimmer has been pushing the club to play. But, it depends on what he's able to do on the field.

"He's a pretty tough kid," Francona said. "He doesn't want to go on the DL and I don't think anybody's pushing him to it, but we're coming up on maybe almost a week. It just gets to a point where it probably makes some sense."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 05.15.2018

On the road again: Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers lineups for Monday, Game No. 40

By Paul Hoynes,

DETROIT -- Lonnie Chisenhall is on the road with the Indians and that's a good thing.

He hasn't been activated, but it appears he's getting close.

"It's good to be on the road," said Chisenhall on Monday before the Indians opened a three-game series against the Tigers. "That way they can see you."

Chisenhall has been on the disabled list since April 8 with a strained right calf. It's the same injury that sidelined him for much of the second half last year.

"I feel good," said Chisenhall. "I can run outside and I've been doing turns in the outfield."

If things keep progressing, Chisenhall will run the bases sometime during this three-city, 10-day trip. When a player can do that, he's usually ready to go on a rehab assignment.

"When you see him with us, that's a good sign," said manager Terry Francona. "It means he can do stuff on the field, take batting practice. I don't think there's any time table for when he can go out on a rehab, but he is making progress."

Tyler Naquin replaced Chisenhall in right field and was hitting .333 (25-for-75) with two homers and 11 RBI, but he strained his left hamstring running out a double on Friday night against the Royals. He was placed on the disabled list Saturday.

Jose Ramirez is tied for the major league lead in home runs with 13, and yes, you're reading that right

By Joe Noga,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Jose Ramirez's dominance of the Detroit Tigers continued Tuesday when he smacked his 13th home run of the season to right field in the bottom of the first inning.

Ramirez took Detroit's Mike Fiers deep on a 2-1 fastball that was up in the strike zone to give Cleveland a 1-0 lead.

The [?] resides in Cleveland.

Jose Ramirez just blasted his 13th home run of the season.

STREAM @Indians [?]: <https://t.co/r7ab8PEB0W> pic.twitter.com/xY4pgW9JU2

-- SportsTime Ohio (@SportsTimeOhio) May 14, 2018

Ramirez, who has 12 home runs in 23 games against Detroit since the start of the 2017 season, jumped into a tie for the major league lead with Washington's Bryce Harper, Atlanta's Ozzie Albies, Mookie Betts of Boston and Baltimore's Manny Machado.

The home run gives Ramirez and teammate Francisco Lindor (12) more combined home runs (25) than New York Yankees teammates Giancarlo Stanton and Aaron Judge (21).

Ramirez joined a who's who of Indians power hitters in a tie for the third most home runs through the team's first 40 games. Among those who hit 13 homers through 40 contests were Travis Hafner (2006), Manny Ramirez (2000), Matt Williams (1997), Albert Belle (1993 & 1994), Rocky Colavito (1959), Al Rosen (1954) and Hal Trosky (1940).

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.15.2018

D-day for Zimmer and 4 other things we learned about the Cleveland Indians on Monday

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

DETROIT - Manager Terry Francona said the Indians would probably make a decision on whether Bradley Zimmer went on the disabled list based on what he was able to do in practice before Monday night's game against the Tigers at Comerica Park.

Zimmer took on the center field wall at Yankee Stadium in the seventh inning on May 5 and lost. He had to leave that game with a variety of bruises and has played just one game since. His main problem is a bruised chest that restricts his swing.

"He's going to go out there and see what he can do," said Francona on Monday. "Today is probably a day where we're going to make a decision. Is he getting closer to where he can play or do we need to DL him?"

"I'd say today is a pretty important day."

Zimmer is hitting .224 (22-for-98) with two homers and nine RBI. He's scored 14 runs with four steals in five attempts.

"He'll do as much as he can and see how he feels," said Francona. "If it's bothering him, I don't think we'd want him to continue. If he's doing good, we'll let him continue (working his way back to the lineup)."

If the Indians do put Zimmer on the DL, they could back date him three days, meaning he'd only be required to spend seven days on the 10-day DL.

Cleveland Indians vs. Kansas City Royals Indians manager Terry Francona and the rest of the team bow their heads during a moment of silence for Terry's father, Tito, before the home opener April 6 against Kansas City at Progressive Field. Tito Francona, a former big-league outfielder, died on Feb. 13. Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer

No. 1: Memories

At the foot of Francona's locker in the visiting manager's office at Comerica Park was an old baseball glove. Francona was asked if it was his. He said no that it was a Tito Francona model glove for kids. Tito Francona, father of the Indians manager, died on Feb. 13 at the age of 84.

Francona said Jim Price, one of Detroit's broadcasters, gave it to him.

"It's got my dad's name on it. It's pretty cool," said Francona. "I've got about five or six of them along the way. I think (you could get a glove) with S&H Green stamps. Some of you guys are too young to know what that was."

Francisco Lindor on Michael Brantley and hitting the ball to all fields

No. 2: Rolling with Francisco Lindor

Lindor has won a piece of the last two AL Player of the Week awards. He shared the award on Monday with Seattle's James Paxton, who threw a no-hitter against Toronto. The week before he won it outright.

It would seem that May is Lindor's new favorite month. He's hitting .473 (26-for-55) with eight doubles, eight homers and 14 RBI this month. In 12 games, he's scored 17 runs and posted a 1.563 OPS.

Lindor started the season by hitting .245 (27-for-110) with four homers and 11 RBI from March 29 through April 30. The switch-hitter went into Monday's game with a 14-game hitting streak. It's the longest in his career and the longest current streak in the big leagues.

Kipnis turns nifty double play

No. 3: Waiting on Jason Kipnis

The Indians dropped Jason Kipnis from second to sixth in the lineup on Friday to open a three-game series against the Royals. In those three games, with Michael Brantley hitting second, the Indians scored 26 runs in winning two of three games.

On Monday, Francona was asked if second baseman Erik Gonzalez could see more playing time against left-handers. Gonzalez started Sunday against Kansas City lefty Danny Duffy when Kipnis got a day off.

Francona said he's thought about it, but added, "We've also got to get Kip going. . . He had the day off Sunday and hit a lot and that was good for him."

Kipnis is hitting .173 (26-for-150) with nine doubles, one homer and 13 RBI. He's in an 0-for-10 skid and is hitting .197 (12-for-61) with runners in scoring position.

"When we're a good team, Kip is playing every day and that's what we need to get to," said Francona.

Kipnis played only 90 games last year because of right shoulder and hamstring issues. Asked if that could be bothering him this year, Francona said, "I don't know. His spring training was so good. This game is so much about confidence, even for veterans. You fall into ruts and it just eats you up.

"Nobody is really exempt. . . or very few."

Take heed -- it's a bad idea to poke the [?] , folks.#RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/coFTPT8Z34

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) May 14, 2018

No. 4: In closing

The Indians received their first look at right-hander Oliver Drake on Sunday when he pitched 1 1/3 scoreless innings against the Royals. .

.Brantley, since moving into the No.2 spot on Friday, is hitting .429 (6-for-14) with six runs, two homers and nine RBI. . The Indians entered Monday's game leading the big leagues with 60 homers. Jose Ramirez and Lindor were tied for the team lead with 12 each. They are just third duo in franchise history to have 12 or more homers at this point of the season. Matt Williams and David Justice did it in 1997 and Manny Ramirez and Paul Sorrento did it in 1995. Ramirez, by the way, homered in the first inning Monday night for a 1-0 lead.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.15.2018

Detroit Tigers end 11-game losing streak against Cleveland Indians with 6-3 victory

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

DETROIT -- The Tigers didn't have Miguel Cabrera, Jeimer Candelario, Leonys Martin and Nicholas Castellanos in the lineup Monday night against the Indians because of injuries. It turned out they didn't need them.

Mike Fiers turned a hot offense cold for six innings as the Tigers ended an 11-game losing streak against the Indians with a 6-3 victory at Comerica Park.

Jose Ramirez gave the Indians a 1-0 lead in the first inning with his 13th homer of the season. It tied Ramirez for the MLB lead in homers and it was the only run the Indians scored off Fiers.

The Indians, who scored 26 runs in three games against the Royals over the weekend, didn't score again until the eighth. Edwin Encarnacion doubled home Ramirez, who reached on a two-out error by second baseman Dixon Machado to cut Detroit's lead to 3-2.

Yonder Alonso, with the tying run at second, popped out to short against Daniel Stumpf to end the inning.

Fiers (4-2, 4.23) has done this before to the Indians when he pitched for Houston. Monday's win gave him a 3-1 record against the Tribe and a 13-5 record in the AL Central.

"He threw that fastball up, borderline out of the zone, and we had a heckuva time either getting to it or laying off of it," said manager Terry Francona. "Then he'd spin a little breaking ball off of it, but it was the fastball that got under our bats."

Fiers did his part to end Lindor's hitting streak, holding him hitless in three at-bats, but the bullpen couldn't close the deal. Lindor went down on a fly ball to left field in the eighth, but singled in the ninth to cut Detroit's lead to 6-3 and extend his hitting streak to 15 games.

It's the longest active streak in the big leagues. When asked if he was thinking about the streak in his last at-bat, Lindor said, "What streak?"

Take heed -- it's a bad idea to poke the [?] , folks.#RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/coFTPT8Z34

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) May 14, 2018

The Indians' Carlos Carrasco (5-2, 3.66) didn't pitch poorly, but he just didn't get the support he needed. Niko Goodrum hit a two-run homer in the fourth for a 3-1 lead. The score was still 3-1 when Carrasco's night ended on Mikie Mahtook's two-out single in the seventh.

"I think what I did the whole game was good," said Carrasco. "It was a bad pitch for the homer. I was trying to throw it inside and it came back over the middle -- a first pitch fastball.

"Actually, those guys were aggressive on the first pitch. Whatever I threw -- fastball, slider, change up, whatever, they were swinging. He got it and hit it pretty good."

Carrasco, who allowed three runs in 6 2/3 innings, threw 112 pitches. In his last three starts, he's thrown 113, 117 and 112 pitches. Monday night, he struck out four and walked two.

In his previous start, Carrasco struck out 14 against Milwaukee in a complete-game five-hitter. He said he felt no fatigue on Monday following his extended start against the Brewers.

Goodrum ended the Detroit scoring with a three-run homer off Zach McAllister in the eighth for a 6-2 lead. He hit a 3-2 fastball, clocked at 95 mph, into the right field seats for the first two-homer game of his career.

Terry Francona on bullpen woes, "We've got to figure it out."

McAllister relieved Evan Marshall, who started the eighth with two straight walks with the score, 3-2. He struck out JaCoby Jones, but was burned Goodrum.

"We made two bad mistakes to Goodrum," said Francona.

Goodrum's homer hurt the chances of the Tribe rallying in the ninth, but with two out Greg Allen tripled and Lindor singled him home. Michael Brantley ended it with a ground ball to first against Shane Greene.

The Indians missed a scoring chance in the seventh. After Jason Kipnis walked and Greg Allen reached on a bunt single, Brandon Guyer struck out to end the inning.

What it means

The Indians, despite Monday's loss, are 31-11 against Detroit since the start of the 2016 season.

The pitches

Carrasco threw 112 pitches, 73 (65 percent) for strikes. Fiers threw 92 pitches, 57 (62 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Tigers drew 17,775 to Comerica Park on Monday night. First pitch was at 7:10 with a temperature of 75 degrees

Next

Indians right-hander Josh Tomlin (0-4, 8.06) will face the Tigers and lefty Francisco Liriano (3-1, 3.35) on Tuesday night at 7:10. SporTime Ohio and WMMS will carry the game.

This will be Tomlin's first start and first appearance since going seven innings against the Yankees on May 4. He threw five scoreless innings against the Tigers on April 10 at Progressive Field. In his career, Tomlin is 7-6 with a 4.87 ERA against Detroit.

Liriano will be facing the Indians for the 22nd time in his career. He's 5-7 with a 5.11 ERA against them. Liriano threw a quality start against the Indians on April 9, but lost to Corey Kluber, 2-0.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.15.2018

Thunder 3, RubberDucks 2 (10)

Chris Gittens delivered a walk-off sacrifice fly to right field to lift the league-leading Trenton Thunder over the visiting RubberDucks Monday for their third consecutive win.

Ducks outfielder Tyler Krieger evened the score at 2-2 in the top of the ninth with a single to right field to brought in pinch runner Andrew Calica and sent the game to extra innings.

The only other run for the Ducks came in the seventh when Todd Hankins doubled to left field to score Daniel Salters.

After starting the bottom of the 10th with Trey Amburgey on second base, Billy McKinney sacrificed him to third to set up Gittens' sacrifice fly.

David Speer was tagged with the loss after coming on in relief to start the 10th.

After starter Matt Whitehouse gave up two runs in 3½ innings, the next four relievers combined to put up 5½ innings of shutout ball before Speer gave up the game-winner.

The Ducks (21-16) have lost five of their last six.

Detroit Tigers injuries piling up: Jeimer Candelario on DL

Anthony Fenech, May 14, 2018

Ron Gardenhire arrived at Comerica Park on Monday afternoon ready to talk some baseball.

The Tigers, winners of a weekend series against the Mariners — their first series win over a team with a winning record all season — were welcoming the first-place Indians. A sweep would give the Tigers a chance to climb into the top spot in the AL Central this week.

Instead, Gardenhire was informed that third baseman Jeimer Candelario's left wrist issues would require a trip to the 10-day disabled list and spent the entirety of his pregame media session with reporters offering injury updates.

Candelario, who received an MRI scan on Sunday, is out with left wrist tendonitis, Gardenhire said. The move was necessary for two reasons: To give Candelario more time to rest and to refresh the roster in the days ahead.

"This thing has been bothering him pretty good lately and he got it a little worse this time than he did the last couple of times," Gardenhire said. "So this is the right thing to do. Give him a break here, let him get this thing healthy and let the doctors do what they have to do and we'll move forward."

Candelario, 24, has been the Tigers' most promising young player this season. In 37 games, he is hitting .272 with five home runs and 16 RBI. The team acquired Candelario from the Cubs at last season's trade deadline. Early on, the deal looks like a coup.

Infielder Dawel Lugo — acquired from the Diamondbacks in last summer's trade of outfielder J.D. Martinez — was called up to take Candelario's spot.

Lugo, 23, is hitting .284 with Triple-A Toledo this season. He has one home run, seven doubles, 20 strikeouts and one walk.

Gardenhire expressed no concern with Candelario's MRI results after Sunday's victory. The team sent the results to another doctor to help determine the best course of action.

"Exactly what they thought," Gardenhire said. "Exactly what they're feeling, so it's a tendonitis-type thing and they feel like they can treat that now that they know exactly where it is.

"We needed that picture to be able to tell us exactly what's going on."

Gardenhire said Candelario might receive a pain-alleviating injection in the left wrist, which has bothered him throughout the first six weeks of the season.

"He wasn't happy going on the DL," Gardenhire said. "I didn't think he would be. But this also lets us protect not only him but the rest of the ballclub with backup support."

Candelario's DL stint can be retroactively dated to Sunday.

"It's not fun," he said. "But I also know that if we continue this and if he goes up there and swings in a couple of days, we can be back to square one. So let's just try to get him past this good. It may be with him the rest of the summer, I don't know, but right now, we gotta let this calm down."

Candelario's injury left the Tigers short-handed in the series opener against the Indians, who have beaten the Tigers in 11 straight games dating back to last season.

The lineup is missing first baseman Miguel Cabrera and center fielder Leonys Martin, both on the DL with hamstring issues. Cabrera was eligible to return from the DL on Monday.

Talkin' Tigers: Leadership of past vs. present

Gardenhire talked about Cabrera: "Just going day to day. All the things he's been fighting there, doing his work. He came in today feeling way better than he did yesterday so that's a good step in the right direction."

Martin returned to the team after dealing with a family issue and said he is confident he will return when eligible, Friday against the Mariners.

Starting pitcher Jordan Zimmermann, who is on the DL with a right shoulder impingement, threw off flat ground for a short while.

"Felt good today," Gardenhire said. "Everything came back good. Felt a lot better than he did the last time out there, so we can move forward with him."

Gardenhire said the Tigers have plotted Zimmermann's next spot in the starting rotation, two turns from now.

"Whether he can make his spot in the rotation where we've got him slotted in, we're not sure yet, but that's a step in the right direction and now, maybe look forward to throwing a bullpen," Gardenhire said. "That will probably be the next (step) and see how he does there and then go on from there."

Nicholas Castellanos, who was hit in the left pinky by a pitch on Saturday, was out of the starting lineup for a second consecutive game.

"Nick is OK," Gardenhire said. "He's not ready to go yet. He's taken some swings and his hand feels better. He should hopefully be ready by tomorrow to get back in the lineup. We'll see late in the game if his hand feels good enough where he can pinch hit or something like that. He's definitely not starting the game."

With that, Gardenhire was finished with his lengthy injury updates.

"I think that's it," he said.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 05.15.2018

Niko Goodrum stars in Detroit Tigers streak-snapping win over Indians

Anthony Fenech, Detroit Free Press Published 12:25 a.m. ET May 15, 2018

Niko Goodrum has been through a lot in his baseball life.

He has been a second-round pick, an up-and-coming prospect, a struggling minor leaguer, finally a big leaguer and outrighted to the minor leagues. He has been a free agent, a minor-league signing, a spring training depth player and a bench player.

But in nine seasons spent in professional baseball, Goodrum has never been where he was on Monday night, standing in front of his locker with television cameras pointed his way as the star of the game.

"Everybody has that dream, everyone has that confidence that they can do it," Goodrum said. "Nobody goes in there with that doubt. If you have that doubt in you, you're not going to succeed at all."

Through all the trials and tribulations came a two-home run game, the first of his Major League career, which propelled the Detroit Tigers to as big of a win that can come in mid-May: 6-3 over the Cleveland Indians, snapping an 11-game losing streak against their American League Central division nemesis and pulling them within two games of first place.

Asked if that doubt ever crept into his mind, Goodrum said, "No. My family made me aware that no matter how hard, you just keep going and eventually, you break that wall down."

Goodrum is determined to break that wall down. On Saturday, he homered off Mariners left-hander James Paxton. On Sunday, he singled in an eight-pitch at-bat in the bottom of the ninth inning which set up the Tigers' winning run. And on Monday, two home runs, the second of which put the game out of reach.

"I mean, I'm a pretty big guy," Goodrum said. "So I feel like if I can get to it, if I can get that barrel to it, it can kind of jump off the bat."

In the fourth inning, he cranked a two-run shot off Indians right-hander Carlos Carrasco to break a tie. In the eighth inning, a three-run, no-doubt shot that traveled an estimated 401 feet.

Woooooof, that ball was destroyed. pic.twitter.com/m0BzQMT6k9

— Detroit Tigers (@tigers) May 15, 2018

"I think you guys saw it in spring training," manager Ron Gardenhire, who was familiar with Goodrum as a young player in the Minnesota Twins' system, said. "He's getting some more at-bats right now, not sitting for three or four days, getting some more consistent at-bats with the other guys out. That helps. That always helps."

"You know what, you get in that groove — I had it once in my career where I actually saw the ball really well — but it was a good night for him and the ballclub."

It was another team effort from the Tigers. Righty Mike Fiers pitched his best game of the season, allowing one run on three hits over six innings. Set-up man Joe Jimenez, pitching for a third consecutive day, showed big-time stuff in the eighth inning and shook off two bad defensive plays — one by Goodrum in right — to hold the lead. In the ninth, Shane Greene worked out of trouble with the tying run at the plate.

But the star on this night was Goodrum, who turned in a career-best performance and after dealing with a hip injury that forced him to sit for a few games, showed the sweet lefty stroke Gardenhire heard about in Minnesota.

"He's always been one of those talented guys," Gardenhire said. "It's all about consistency at every level and it's one of those things that's gotten away from him, but you know what, you never know what's going to happen when a guy gets an opportunity. He's getting one now in the big leagues and hopefully he'll grab it now and run with it."

But Goodrum has never had the lights on him like this.

"This is the first time," he said, looking around. "Maybe when I debuted last year. But no, this is my first time with all of this."

Asked how he thought he did with the spotlight on, he said, "I think I handled it pretty good. I think I did alright."

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 05.15.2018

Boom, boom: Niko Goodrum blasts 2 HRs in Tigers' victory

Chris McCosky, May 15, 2018

Detroit — Ron Gardenhire had only been here for four of them, but still, his baseball team came into the game Monday having lost 11 straight games to Central Division-rival Cleveland.

And with four starters still out of the lineup, facing the Indians' dominating right-hander Carlos Carrasco, odds were long against stopping the skid on this night.

"This is a great baseball team, we know that," Gardenhire said before the game. "But we don't worry about the name on the front of their jersey. We just play baseball. Yes, they're a good team. But they still have to put their uniforms on the same way we do.

"I think. I'm pretty sure."

They must. Because look-it here: The Tigers, behind a masterful pitching performance by right-hander Mike Fiers and some offensive fireworks from Niko Goodrum, the Tigers beat the Indians 6-3. Losing streak over.

BOX SCORE: Tigers 6, Indians 3

"We believe in ourselves," said Fiers, who allowed a run and three hits over six innings. "That's the main. People are going to watch and have their own opinion. But we realize how good we are and how good we can be if we put it all out there and play our game.

"Tonight was a good example."

And not for nothing, the Tigers are two games behind the first-place Indians in the Central Division.

"We're just going out and competing," Gardenhire said. "You can't think about it like that. We're just going out and playing. We've had some good stretches and we've had some rough stretches. You can't start thinking in those terms, just go day by day and try to win tomorrow.

"We need to just keep doing what we're doing — going out, getting our work in, grinding it out and having some fun doing it."

Speaking of having fun. Goodrum, getting another start in right field for an injured Nick Castellanos (left pinky finger) broke a 1-1 tie in the fourth inning with a monster two-run home run over the cut-out in right-center field.

The ball left his bat at 107.4 mph and traveled on a line, 391 feet.

Then in the bottom of the eighth, in a 3-2 game, he buggy-whipped a 96-mph fastball from Zach McAllister with two runners on and sent it to the same spot — only deeper. This one left the bat at 106 mph and traveled 401 feet.

He's hit three home runs over two games — one off Mariners' James Paxton, one off Carrasco and one off McAllister. With the two homers and five RBIs, he doubled his season totals in both categories.

"Everyone can come out and compete," he said. "Whoever is on the mound has to throw the ball over the plate. I just try to put my best swing on it."

Goodrum, a switch-hitter, hit both his bombs Monday left-handed. Earlier in the year, he struggled mightily from the left side.

"Goodness gracious," Gardenhire said. "He's coming back from where he couldn't swing left-handed. And now I don't think I'm even letting him bat right-handed again. You guys saw him hit a few balls out in spring training. He can do that.

"He's just not sitting for three and four days in a row. He's getting consistent at-bats and that always helps. You get in that groove as a hitter. I had that once in my career (laughter). It was big night for him and for our ball club."

Fiers left after six innings with the Tigers up 3-1. Warwick Saupold worked a scoreless seventh, striking out Brandon Guyer with runners on second and third.

Things got tense in the top of the eighth.

It looked like a breezy 1-2-3 inning for reliever Joe Jimenez. He got Francisco Lindor to fly to left and he struck out Michael Brantley with a 97-mph fastball. Jose Ramirez then hit a soft bouncer to second base. Dixon Machado, though, rushed and booted the play.

Edwin Encarnacion followed with an RBI double to right-center field, a ball that Goodrum seemed to short-arm on the warning track.

Left-hander Daniel Stumpf was summoned to face lefty Yonder Alonso. In the past couple of weeks, lefties had gone 6 for 9 off Stumpf. Not this time. Stumpf ended the inning with one pitch — a pop out to shortstop.

"That's a start," Stumpf said. "Now I have to come out and do it again tomorrow."

After Goodrum's second blast provided a four-run cushion, Shane Greene gave up a run and had to get Michael Brantley out with two runners on in the ninth to lock it down.

"It got a little hairy at the end," Gardenhire said. "But there is a little belief in that clubhouse that we can do some things. Those guys are getting after it."

Early on, though, this was about Fiers. Coming into the game, left-handed hitters were clubbing him at a .310 clip with a .954 OPS. Five of the seven home runs he'd allowed were hit by lefties. And the Indians crowded their batting order with six left-handed hitters.

That ended up being inconsequential data. Indians' lefties went 3 for 15 against him. The only damage done against Fiers was a first-inning, solo home run by Ramirez – who now has hit 12 homers in 23 games against Tigers pitching since the start of 2017.

"Command was the biggest thing," Fiers said. "Going into a game, you're not going to have certain pitches, but command is the biggest thing. Keep them off-balance. Slow them down, speed them up."

Once again, he seemed to use his change-up, curve ball and slider to set up his four-seam fastball – which he threw with a velocity range of 85-91 mph. He wound up getting 10 swings and misses and 16 called strikes – six whiffs and seven called strikes were with his four-seamer.

The Indians average exit velocity on balls put in play against Fiers was just 83.6. Anything hit at 95 mph or faster is considered hard contact.

"I'm getting better every start," he said. "I wasn't 100 percent to start the season, but I definitely felt like I could give this team a chance to win every time out. Now I'm getting more flexible and my strength is coming back.

"I feel healthy. It's a world of difference, really."

Detroit News LOADED: 05.15.2018

Miguel Cabrera better, but not ready to return yet

Chris McCosky, May 14, 2018

Detroit — Monday was the day Miguel Cabrera could have come off the disabled list. His 10 days were up.

But he has yet to do any running on the field or any baseball activity, still limited to indoor treatment, treadmills and physical therapy.

"He's doing everything they're asking and he's doing great," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "He's had some stiffness from all the treadmill work. Other than that, he's fine."

But with Cabrera's recent history, the two bulging discs in his back that derailed his season last year, any mention of back stiffness and hip stiffness causes serious concern. At this point, it appears that the back and hip stiffness is bothering Cabrera more than the hamstring strain, which put him on the DL in the first place.

"I'm hearing people talk about back pain," Gardenhire said. "He's going to have that all the time when you are going through exercises and doing all this stuff. He's getting stretched like you can't believe. But he feels good and he's working his way to getting back on the field."

Asked if the hamstring has healed, Gardenhire said, "The best it can be. We've not seen him going out and doing a lot of running. That's the next step. We're hoping to get him out and running in the next couple of days."

Conservative guess, Cabrera could be at least another week away from getting back into the Tigers lineup.

Detroit News LOADED: 05.15.2018