

Lindor's 2 homers, doubles power win

By Casey Harrison MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Francisco Lindor sliced a pitch into left field for a double in the first inning on Saturday, and it continued an impressive hitting streak for the Indians' shortstop.

That hit proved to be the start of a huge day in the batter's box for the Tribe's leadoff man. Even a 75-minute rain delay prior to first pitch couldn't cool off Lindor.

The Indians' shortstop churned out four extra-base hits, including a pair of home runs, to help power the Tribe to a 6-2 victory over the Royals at Progressive Field. His showing, which extended his hitting streak to 13 games, backed a solid start from Mike Clevinger, and pulled Cleveland back to .500 -- and atop the American League Central standings.

"I think he's a really good hitter," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "When you spray the ball around from foul pole to foul pole, you're going to get hits that other guys don't."

After making a costly error in the Tribe's 10-9 loss in the opener against the Royals on Friday, Francona said Lindor was bound to "come back with a vengeance". The shortstop rewarded his manager's confidence in him with a big day at the plate.

"I mean he's had a couple of tough games, there's no getting around that," Francona said. "And that's baseball. Players do that. But boy he sure is talented. I mean he's come a long way. ... When he uses the whole field, he stays balanced, and he's strong enough with his hands [that] he can get rewarded when he hits the ball the other way."

Lindor's leadoff double off Royals starter Jakob Junis in the first set up an RBI single from Michael Brantley, who combined with the shortstop for seven hits on the day. In the third, Lindor sent a 2-0 sinker from Junis 345 feet to the right-field stands for his 11th home run of the season. Lindor doubled and scored again in the sixth, and belted homer No. 12 in the seventh over the 19-foot wall in left.

"I gave up with that, I don't mess with that thing," Lindor joked about Progressive Field's intimidating wall. "If it goes out, it goes out. If it doesn't go out, it's whatever. I gave up. I'm tired of trying to hit the ball over that fence, or not trying to hit it that way. I give up. That wall always wins."

It didn't on Saturday.

The blasts gave Lindor -- the reigning AL Player of the Week -- a Major League-leading eight home runs in the month of May.

After giving up the first home run to Lindor, Junis retired the next eight Indians before giving up back-to-back doubles to the hot-hitting shortstop and Brantley in the sixth. Junis' outing ended after 5 2/3 innings, and he was charged with four runs on six hits. Junis was handed the loss, and is now 4-3.

Clevinger allowed both of the Royals' runs in 7 2/3 innings, while striking out five, helping seal the win for the Tribe. Backed by Lindor's offensive outpouring -- combined with two RBIs from Brantley and run-scoring hits by Edwin Encarnacion and Yonder Alonso -- Clevinger improved to 3-0.

During Lindor's 13-game streak, he has hit .458 (27-for-59) with eight homers, 15 extra-base hits and 14 RBIs. In his latest performance, the switch-hitting shortstop used the entire field to collect his 12 total bases.

"That's all I want to do," Lindor said. "I'm not a power hitter. I want to hit the ball hard. If it goes out, it goes out. But, my job is to hit the ball all over the place. It's sad when you see a guy 5-10, 5-11, 185 [lbs.], and they shift on him. I want to hit the ball all over the place. I don't want a shift on me."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

It takes two: The Royals were trying to build a big inning against Clevinger in the third, when Jon Jay and Jorge Soler connected for consecutive doubles, putting the Indians behind, 2-1. The next batter, Mike Moustakas, lined a pitch to shallow right, where second baseman Jason Kipnis was playing in the shift. Kipnis leapt to make the catch and quickly fired to Lindor at second to double up Soler, who strayed too far off the bag. The double play halted the inning and the Indians' lineup soon overcame the deficit.

"That was a huge momentum-shifter, too," Clevinger said. "They just got done scoring a run. I had to stop them from getting a run on the board. That was huge for me."

SOUND SMART

Lindor became the first Indians leadoff hitter to have four extra-base hits in a game since July 3, 1964, when Tito Francona -- father of Tribe manager Terry Francona -- accomplished the feat against the White Sox.

"How about that? That's pretty cool," Francona said.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Lindor also became the first Indians player to record at least four hits that each had an exit velocity of 100 mph or greater in a single game over the past four seasons, according to Statcast™.

Statcast: Lindor's 2 HRs, 4 hits

Statcast: Lindor's 2 HRs, 4 hits

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May 12th, 2018

HE SAID IT

"You don't take it for granted, but it is expected with a guy like that. You know it's coming. You know, especially if he didn't go off the day before, it's like, what the [heck'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." -- Clevinger, on Lindor

UP NEXT

Right-hander Corey Kluber (5-2, 2.62 ERA) is scheduled to take the mound on Sunday in a 1:10 p.m. ET matchup against the Royals at Progressive Field. Kluber has yet to face Kansas City this season, but went 2-0 with a 0.73 ERA in two starts against them last year. The Royals will counter with southpaw Danny Duffy (1-4, 5.15 ERA), who is 2-7 with a 4.09 ERA in 16 career starts against the Tribe.

Hamstring strain sends Naquin to DL

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- The Indians' outfield has endured a series of setbacks this season, and two more arrived prior to Saturday's 6-2 win over the Royals at Progressive Field.

After placing right fielder Tyler Naquin on the 10-day disabled list with a mild left hamstring strain, the Indians scratched center fielder Bradley Zimmer from the starting lineup due to a bruised chest. The good news is that Zimmer could be back on the field as soon as Sunday. Naquin will need more time to recover from the injury he sustained during Friday's 10-9 loss to Kansas City.

"Hopefully, when the 10 days [are] up, [Naquin] feels great," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "I don't think anybody ever quite knows. He showed up today and he was a little tight."

Naquin injured his hamstring while rounding first after a two-run double in the fourth inning on Friday night. He pulled up around first and limped into second, but initially remained in the game following a brief discussion on the field with Francona and a member of the team's medical staff. Naquin thought it was a cramp at first, but an MRI following his exit revealed the mild strain.

Zimmer is still feeling the effects of a violent crash into the wall in center field at Yankee Stadium during a 5-2 loss to New York on May 5. Zimmer was in the original lineup for Saturday's game against the Royals, but was removed after still experiencing soreness while swinging a bat. With Naquin and Zimmer out, Brandon Guyer got the nod in right and Greg Allen manned center.

Naquin's injury comes during a strong stretch for the outfielder, who headed into Saturday tied for second among MLB right fielders with five Defensive Runs Saved. Through 30 games, Naquin owns a .333 average with an .820 OPS, and he's hit at a .417 clip with a 1.065 OPS over his last nine contests.

"The wins we've had," Francona said, "he's been right in the middle of them."

After placing Naquin on the 10-day DL, the Tribe activated left-hander Tyler Olson from MLB's paternity list.

Quotable

"We stay pretty true to [what] I really believe: You show up today and you try to win today. That's the best way to do anything. I've always felt that way. We are getting tested, though. But, it can be fun to try to answer the question, yes? Sometimes, when you're a little beat up or things aren't going right, you can get an immense amount of joy in trying to do things right. Sometimes, you feel like you're against the world a little bit, but then that's sometimes when teams come together and you can shine a little bit." -- Francona, on the Tribe's tough start to the season

Worth noting

- Francisco Lindor's costly throwing error in the sixth inning of Friday's 10-9 loss to the Royals marked the shortstop's fifth error in a span of eight games. Francona was asked if he ever worries about that kind of rough patch getting into a fielder's head.

"I have in the past. Not with Frankie," Francona said. "He's a tough kid. He'll be just fine. Nobody wants to make errors -- and it hurts out chances to win -- but he'll be just fine."

- Veteran outfielder Melky Cabrera, who signed a Minor League contract with the Indians, is 5-for-22 (.227) with two doubles through five games with Triple-A Columbus. Francona said Cabrera still needs to get at-bats -- similar to Spring Training -- prior to possibly joining the Indians.

"The hard thing is, he's got 20 at-bats," Francona said. "Man, you know, you look at like the guys that miss Spring Training, that's a reach. At some point, do you have to reach? I don't know, but I'd like to let him play a little bit."

Jordan Bastian has covered the Indians for MLB.com sin

Covering the Bases: Game 38

by Jordan Bastian

FIRST: Beyond the offensive boost it has provided for the Indians' lineup, there is an added benefit to having Michael Brantley batting behind Francisco Lindor at the top of the order.

When Lindor belts a home run—a common occurrence these days—he and Brantley can put “The Professional” handshake on display at home plate. Rather than a complicated series of high fives and fist bumps, Lindor and Brantley simply give a firm shake before going their separate ways.

“You’ve got to be serious with Brantley,” Lindor said with a smile.

Lindor got to shake Brantley’s hand twice on Saturday night, when the shortstop belted two homers as part of a four-hit (each for extra bases) performance. Lindor ended with four runs scored—two coming via hits from Brantley.

Overall, Lindor and Brantley went a combined 7-for-8 with five extra-base hits, four RBI and six runs scored in the victory. That came after the duo went 3-for-8 with a homer (a grand slam from Brantley), two walks and two runs scored in their first game as the new No. 1 and No. 2 combo for Cleveland.

“I think Brant’s a good hitter wherever you hit him,” Indians manager Terry Francona said. “I love when Brant hits with a runner on first anyway—like regardless of the situation—because he uses the hole so effectively. But, Brant is gonna hit wherever you put him.”

Lindor has liked the early returns of the lineup’s new look.

“He’s done a great job,” said the shortstop. “He’s doing a fantastic job. I feel like [Jason] Kipnis usually does a great job. It’s just he’s been having a rough couple weeks, you know? But, Brant’s been doing a great job behind me.

“Brant is the best hitter on the team and one of the best hitters in the league. Whenever he’s behind you, he’s going to protect you.”

SECOND: Hitters who suit up for Cleveland tend to develop a love-hate relationship with Progressive Field’s 19-foot wall in left field.

The wall can be a great source for doubles, especially for left-handed hitters who can go the other way with authority. That said, balls hit too hard in that direction can result in singles. In other stadiums, those types of hits—along with the towering flies that scrape the wall—might be homers elsewhere.

Asked about the wall, Lindor began shaking his head.

“I gave up. I gave up with that,” he said. “I don’t mess with that thing. If it goes out, it goes out. If it doesn’t go out, it’s... whatever. I gave up. I’m tired of trying to hit the ball over that fence, or not trying to hit it that way. I give up. That wall always win.”

Lindor defeated the wall this time, though.

In the seventh inning, Lindor went the opposite way on a pitch from Kevin McCarthy, sending it just over Cleveland’s mini monster for his second shot of the game. Lindor’s first homer of the night was a low liner that cleared the wall down the right-field line.

Francona loved how Lindor used the entire field.

“He was kind of going from almost foul pole to foul pole,” Francona said. “And on a day where the ball wasn’t going anywhere, for him to hit an opposite-field home run, that’s incredible. I know I say it, but when guys use the whole field, they become a lot more dangerous.

“They’re gonna get more hits because they can’t defend it as much. But, he drove four balls. That was so nice to watch.”

Francisco Lindor’s career HR rate

Class A (’11-13): 137.1 PA/HR

Double-A (’13-14): 68.3 PA/HR

Triple-A (’14-15): 63.1 PA/HR

Majors (’15-16): 41.6 PA/HR

Majors (2017): 21.9 PA/HR

Majors (2018): 15.0 PA/HR

THIRD: In his young Major League career, Lindor has shown a knack for coming up big in the wake of making mistakes.

There is no greater example than opening week last season, when Lindor made a costly error against the Rangers, but then belted two home runs—including a grand slam—to propel the Indians to a dramatic win. He played angry and found an intense focus.

Well, Lindor made a costly blunder in Friday’s 10–9 loss to the Royals, and it marked his fifth error in a span of eight games. In the recent series in New York, the shortstop made three errors that loomed large in two of the three defeats to the Yankees.

Given that recent turn of events, Francona expected Lindor to...

"Come back with a vengeance, and he did," said the manager. "I mean he's had a couple of tough games, there's no getting around that and that's baseball. Players do that. But, boy, he sure is talented. I mean, he's come a long way. You look three weeks ago..."

Back on April 21, Lindor was batting .208 with a .624 OPS. After his showing on Saturday, the shortstop is now sporting a .311/.376/.615 slash line with 12 homers, 13 doubles and 33 runs scored through 38 games for the Tribe.

Lindor is riding a 13-game hitting streak that has featured a .458 average with seven doubles, eight homers, 14 RBI and 18 runs.

As for the recent defensive issues, there is always some concern that a pile of errors in a short time period can get into a player's head. "Not with Frankie," Francona said matter-of-factly.

Indians third-base coach Mike Sarbaugh, who doubles as the team's infield instructor, echoed that response.

"Sometimes it's hard to put your finger on it," Sarbaugh said. "It's been a week. It's been tough, but he's so good over there. The big thing is just make sure you don't lose focus, don't get down. He plays shortstop so well. I think when he makes an error, sometimes we're like, 'Hey, what's going on?' Just because of how special he is over there.

"It's just more about not trying to do too much. I think the easy ones, sometimes you can relax a little bit at times," he continued. "He does such a good job of continuing to work every day. He knows this is just a little bit of a rough patch that he'll get through."

HOME: Immediately after finishing up his postgame chat with reporters, Indians pitcher Mike Clevinger looked up at one of the clubhouse televisions. On the screen was Mike Clevinger, talking to reporters.

"That was a quick turnaround," Clevinger marveled.

A reporter joked that maybe it was a broadcast from a parallel earth (a reference to a recent Twitter conversation between Clevinger and some Tribe Minor Leaguers about the expanding universe).

"There it is right there!" Clevinger said with a laugh.

Clevinger is a free spirit with a love for expression. That has been very evident this season with his footwear, which has included artwork to pay tribute to his family and young daughters. For his start on Saturday, Clevinger took the mound in bright pink spikes that honored his mom and wife for Mother's Day:

MLB recently sent Clevinger a warning about some of his cleats, which did not have the amount of team color designated in the rules collectively bargained by the league and the MLB Players' Association. That didn't sit well with Clevinger, but he took the mound in his Mother's Day shoes Saturday without worrying about a possible fine.

"As long as all the ladies in my life are happy, I'm happy," Clevinger said. "If they do [fine me], I'll find a good breast cancer awareness fund to do it for Mother's Day. So, if they want to do that, I'll turn it into a positive."

Also a positive: Clevinger's outing against the Royals.

The right-hander sidestepped some trouble in the early going and limited Kansas City to two runs over 7.2 innings. Clevinger struck out five, walked none and ended the day with a 3-0 ledger and 2.70 ERA on the season.

"It's fun watching guys get better," Francona said. "You love seeing guys not just physically getting better, but understanding the game and getting better."

Clevinger also offered an early entry for quote of the year in regards to his previous start. In that Sunday outing against the Yankees, he was brilliant for seven innings, but two walks in the eighth contributed to a late tailspin for the Tribe in a loss in the Bronx.

"Everyone wanted to hype how good the start was," Clevinger said. "But, the ending was so bad. It was like spilling your paint over a piece of artwork."

The only excess pain on Saturday could be found on the pitcher's shoes.

"My mom was happy," Clevinger said. "That's all that matters."

Stay tuned for more...

Tito's pregame minutiae: May 12

by Jordan Bastian

Q: What can you tell us about Tyler Naquin's injury?

TF: "He has a mild strain. Saying that, with the 10-day DL, hopefully when the 10 days is up, he feels great. I don't think anybody ever quite knows. He showed up today and he was a little tight. The hope was that it was just a cramp, because he doesn't really [think it's too bad]. I guess when he was rounding first, he felt something. When he got on second, he felt fine, so it was kind of weird. We'll DL him, then [Tyler] Olson gets back [from MLB's paternity list]. That's the move there. [Bradley Zimmer] was in the lineup and we took him out. We're going to put [Brandon] Guyer in right and Greg [Allen] in center. Zim just, when he was swinging, he still feels [soreness due to a bruised chest]. And he wants to play through it—I give him a lot of credit for wanting to. We just told him, 'Let's just try one more day to see if we can get this out of there.' You can tell it's hurting him when he's swinging."

Q: Not that there's ever a good time for an injury, but is it frustrating to have this happen to Naquin when he's playing so well?

TF: "Oh, I know. Yeah, I know, and he's been a big part of—the wins we've had, he's been right in the middle of them."

Q: What do you think has been behind Naquin's improvement lately?

TF: "Well, one is an opportunity. Two, I think he is, for whatever reason and I don't know what it is, that second time when he came back [from Triple-A], it seemed like [he found something]. Maybe talking to Nap. I mean, things that may be as little as that. He just seems like he's more comfortable in his own skin, and he battles like crazy. Like I say, he'll fight off swings sometimes, but he'll fight off pitches, he'll get something he can handle, he'll waffle a ball to left field, he'll get a hanger and hit one out because he battles."

Q: Is this where it made sense to add Melky Cabrera on a Minor League deal? As insurance in case of setbacks to the MLB outfield?

TF: "Yeah. The hard thing is, he's got 20 at-bats. Man, you know, you look at like the guys that miss Spring Training... that's a reach. At some point, do you have to reach? I don't know, but I'd like to let him play a little bit."

Q: What have you seen within the Royals' lineup compared to early in the year?

TF: "Gordon is really swinging it. And I was telling Millsie last night. It was those two guys [Gordon and Salvador Perez]. All of a sudden, they're swinging it, and everybody else is kind of doing the same. And they're in the midst of feeling pretty good about themselves offensively."

Q: When a player has a handful of errors in a short span like Francisco Lindor over the past week, do you ever worry about it getting in the player's head a little bit?

TF: "I have in the past. Not with Frankie. He was out—in Milwaukee—he was out early doing stuff with Sarby. Like, starting off on his knees and moving in and stuff. No, I really don't. He's a tough kid. He'll be just fine. Nobody wants to make errors and it hurts out chances to win, but he'll be just fine."

Q: When a team isn't playing clean baseball, is there something you can try to do to help fix the issue?

TF: "I think it's different, depending on who the players are and why you think it's happening and things like that. Sometimes the best thing you can do is be patient and supportive. If you think it's because they're mentally not preparing, that's something. I don't feel like that. So, it's different in a lot of different ways, a lot of different situations."

Q: Was that something that took time to learn early in your managerial career? When to pick your spots?

TF: "Yeah. And again, everybody's different, which I think is part of the beauty of our game, but I don't think you can wait on the top step for somebody every time something doesn't go right. Man, you'll wear them out, you'll wear yourself out. The idea is, when you have a problem, you want to fix it—not exacerbate it. When they have emotion and you have emotion, you butt heads. That doesn't help anybody."

Q: After being available in the bullpen, does Josh Tomlin have to start prepping for his start on Tuesday now?

TF: "He threw a side today."

Q: Do you view a rough stretch like this as a test for your team?

TF: "I mean, I don't know if I've ever not looked at it as that. We stay pretty true to [what] I really believe: You show up today and you try to win today. That's the best way to do anything. I've always felt that way. We are getting tested, though—I get your point. But, it can be fun to try to answer the question, yes. Sometimes, when you're a little beat up or things aren't going right, you can get an immense amount of joy in trying to do things right. Sometimes, you feel like you're against the world a little bit, but then that's sometimes when teams come together and you can shine a little bit."

Francisco Lindor's monster game reminds us why cycles are overrated

Mark TownsendYahoo SportsMay 12, 2018, 10:34 PM

The hottest hitter in Major League Baseball right now is Cleveland Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor.

In Saturday's 6-2 win against the Kansas City Royals, Lindor extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a first-inning double. That was just the beginning of a performance that was more productive than a cycle, and we dare say much cooler too. Before the day was done, Lindor would add a second double and a pair of solo home runs. The four-hit game was the third of Lindor's career. It's the first time all four were extra-base hits, and the combination of those hits put him a category that's quite rare over the last 100 years in MLB.

Just how rare was Lindor's performance?

@SlangsOnSports

Last 100 seasons, entering today:

- 108 games by players with 2 HR and 2 2B.

- 255 cycles.

Francisco Lindor would like to push that 2-HR, 2-2B games total to 109.

Based on those numbers, you might see a two-double, two-homer game once a season.

Of course, this is baseball we speak of. So of course this feat was achieved twice in a span of two days. On Friday, the Cubs Willson Contreras had a two-double, two-homer game himself, which included a grand slam and seven RBIs. Nonetheless, it's still plenty rare.

Though there have been no cycles so far this season, you're bound to see two or three each season. There were actually seven last season. Each one was accompanied by a great deal more fanfare than Contreras' was or Lindor's game will be, which is more fanfare than each deserved.

Why was Lindor's performance better than a cycle?

Aside from being a rarer event, the simple math tells us that a pure cycle adds up to 10 total bases, while a two-double, two-homer games, adds up to 12. Of course, some cycles come with additional hits that raise the base total. We're not ignoring those, but when putting a pure cycle and a two-double, two-homer game side-by-side, there's no comparison.

Cycles are interesting. They're fun to track when a player needs a home run, or a really slow player needs that most unlikely triple to complete it. But let's face it, more bases and home runs are way better.

Has anyone had a better offensive performance than Lindor's?

Some have, but not many. First, you have to include all 17 players who have hit four home runs in a single game. Beyond that, there are numerous players who have hit three homers in a game with additional extra-base hits.

In terms of games that included at least two doubles, only one game truly topped Lindor's over the last 105 years. On June 27, 2016, Cubs' slugger Kris Bryant became the first player since 1913 to hit three homers and two doubles in the same game. Bryant would go on to win the National League MVP that season.

How hot is Francisco Lindor?

Scorching.

During his 13-game hitting streak, Lindor's hitting .464/.491/1.036 with 14 RBIs. His eight home runs in May lead all of MLB. His 15 extra-base hits are tops too. Even though the Indians are struggling right now, Lindor is starting to build his case for American League MVP.

Lindor hits 2 HRs, 2 doubles to help Indians beat Royals 6-2

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Francisco Lindor put his defensive problems behind him Saturday.

Lindor homered twice and doubled twice for his third career four-hit game to help the Cleveland Indians beat the Kansas City Royals 6-2.

Lindor hit solo home runs in the third and seventh - raising his season total to 12 - and scored four runs. The All-Star shortstop also extended his hitting streak to 13 games.

While Lindor is putting up big numbers, his defensive problems have also made news. He's committed eight errors, including four in the last seven games, after making 10 last season.

Lindor, who started a double play to end a potential Kansas City rally in the second, admitted he's had a rough two weeks in the field.

"I wish I could go back in time and take those mistakes I made and help the team win that day, but it's in the past," he said. "I learn from those."

Lindor made two errors on one play in New York last weekend and committed a costly error in Friday night's 10-9 loss.

"I mean, he's had a couple of tough games, there's no getting around that and that's baseball," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "Players do that, but he sure is talented."

Both of Lindor's home runs came batting left-handed. He homered down the right-field line off Junis in the third, tying the score at 2-all.

Lindor homered into the bleachers in left-center off Kevin McCarthy in the seventh, extending Cleveland's lead to 5-2.

Michael Brantley had three hits, drove in two runs and broke a 2-all tie with an RBI double in the sixth. Brantley is 5 for 9 since being moved to the second spot in the order Friday.

"Brantley and Lindor are swinging the bat really well right now," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "If you make a slight deviation on your pitches, they're going to hit the ball hard."

Mike Clevinger (3-0) allowed two runs in 7 2/3 innings as the Indians won for just the second time in their last seven games.

Jon Jay and Jorge Soler each had three hits for Kansas City. Jakob Junis (4-3) allowed four runs in 5 2/3 innings.

Salvador Perez's run-scoring grounder in the first put the Royals up 1-0, but Brantley's single tied it in the bottom of the inning.

Jay and Soler had consecutive doubles with one out in the third to put Kansas City back ahead, before Lindor's first homer tied it again.

Lindor and Brantley opened the sixth with doubles, and Yonder Alonso had an RBI single with two outs to give Cleveland a 4-2 lead.

After Lindor's one-out homer in the seventh, Edwin Encarnacion had an RBI single four batters later to push the Indians' lead to 6-2.

Clevinger allowed eight hits, struck out five and didn't walk a batter.

The start of the game was delayed by rain for 75 minutes. Several seagulls descended on the ballpark in the sixth inning, but quickly left the premises.

FASHION POLICE

Clevinger said he received a letter from Major League Baseball on Friday, saying he'll face a fine if he continues to wear his custom tie-dyed cleats, which also feature a bright sunflower on the outside.

The right-hander wore pink cleats Saturday with the names of his mom and wife in honor of Mother's Day, and isn't concerned about a possible fine.

"As long as all the ladies in my life are happy, I'm happy," he said.

TOUGH INNING

Juris, the only Royals starter with a winning record, retired eight hitters in a row going into the sixth, but couldn't get out of the inning.

"I just couldn't close the door," he said "I made the pitch I wanted to Alonso, but he placed it up the middle."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Royals: RHP Justin Grimm (lower back stiffness), who has been on the 10-day disabled list since April 24, could begin a rehab assignment next week.

Indians: RF Tyler Naquin on the 10-day disabled list with a strained left hamstring. The injury occurred while he was running the bases Friday. ... CF Bradley Zimmer was scratched from the lineup because he's still dealing with a bruised chest after crashing into the wall at Yankee Stadium last weekend. Zimmer has only played in one game in the last week and is still sore when swinging the bat.

UP NEXT

Royals LHP Danny Duffy (1-4, 5.15 ERA) faces Indians RHP Corey Kluber (5-2, 2.62 ERA) in the finale of the three-game series. Kluber allowed two home runs in losing to Milwaukee in his last start, including a 433-foot shot to relief pitcher Brent Suter.

Five observations: On Francisco Lindor's vengeance, keeping spilled paint off Mike Clevinger's art, and a well-earned Drumstick

By T.J. Zuppe 2h ago

Some people might crack open a postgame beverage. Others might fire up a celebratory cigar. But Brad Mills had a different idea Saturday night.

After the Indians' 6-2 win over the Royals, the Tribe's bench coach quietly entered the far end of the clubhouse, clutching a Nestlé Drumstick in his hand. He occasionally nibbled at the top of the ice cream treat, all while checking a few things in the locker room.

Eventually, Mills retreated into the coaches room to finish off his delicious, well-earned dessert in private, removing it from sight. The rewards of victory are sweet. Literally.

But the thumping music, warm smiles and cool treats that often accompany wins haven't been as abundant in the past few weeks, a direct result of some sloppy defense, atypical bullpen contributions and a contributing list of other factors.

Surprisingly, after a few poorly timed errors proved to be crippling, even Francisco Lindor's sparkling defense hasn't been immune to the blemish of unclean baseball.

And how did Lindor respond to the recent adversity? How did he recover from another tough defensive day? By collecting four hits Saturday, including two doubles and two homers, leading the offensive charge to raise his season slash line to .311/.376/.615.

"I wish I could go back in time and take away those mistakes I made and help the team win that day," Lindor said. "But, it's in the past."

True. And there's no flux capacitor hidden in Terry Francona's office, no DeLorean parked in the players' parking lot. The path to redemption (and a few more Drumsticks) is forward.

After the win, a reporter began to ask Francona about Lindor. He couldn't even finish the thought before Francona interjected.

"Came back with a vengeance," Francona said. "And he did. I mean, he's had a couple of tough games, there's no getting around that and that's baseball. Players do that. But boy, he sure is talented."

Mike Clevinger agrees.

One of Lindor's earlier miscues this season came during Clevinger's April start in Baltimore. After that game, Clevinger dismissed any negative talk about the shortstop's defense, instead, pointing out that Lindor has done more than enough to keep the hurler in his debt forever.

On Saturday, the Tribe starter, again, felt like the beneficiary.

"You don't take it for granted," Clevinger said of Lindor. "But it is expected with a guy like that. 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."

Bang, he did.

The second of Lindor's two homers just cleared the 19-foot wall, needing a bit more lift than the screamer down the right-field line he belted in the third. The big afternoon extended the shortstop's hitting streak to 13 games and elevated his season run-creation rate to 62 percent above league average.

Lindor frequently notes that he's not a power hitter, but he's certainly trending in that direction.

@TJZuppe

Date of Lindor's 12th HR

2015: Sept 30 (Game 95)

2016: July 19 (Game 92)

2017: May 31 (Game 50)

2018: May 12 (Game 38)

After he eclipsed the 30-homer mark last September, Lindor was asked when he'd finally concede that he was a power hitter.

"When I hit 50," he said. "Then you can call me a power hitter. But it won't happen."

Shhh ... Don't look now, but Lindor is on pace for 51 homers this season.

[Eyes Emoji]

Pace numbers are hardly gospel, but things like a career-high exit velocity, hard-hit rate and barrel percentage are something to bet on. And he feels even more dangerous when he's using the entire field, much like he did Saturday.

"My job is to hit the ball all over the place," Lindor said. "It's sad when you see a guy 5-foot-10, 5-foot-11, 185 (pounds), and they shift to him. I want to hit the ball all over the place. I don't want a shift on me."

As for wanting to battle Progressive Field's daunting left-field wall? Despite clearing it Saturday, Lindor said he has little desire to actively try to beat it.

"I gave up with that," Lindor said through a grin. "I don't mess with that thing. If it goes out, it goes out. If it doesn't go out, it's whatever. I gave up. I'm tired of trying to hit the ball over that fence, or not trying to hit it that way. I give up. That wall always wins."

But that's not always true.

Since his promotion in 2015, Lindor has hit 38 homers at Progressive Field. Twelve of those bombs have cleared the 19-foot wall in left field. Here is a look at his home run spray chart before his two-homer night. By our math, that means 31.6 percent of the time, it works every time.

Before Lindor, the last Indians leadoff hitter to record at least four extra-base hits in the same game was Francona's father, Tito, who accomplished the feat on July 3, 1964, against the White Sox.

Media relations director Bart Swain relayed the news to Terry after the game.

"How about that?" Francona said. "That was pretty cool. I thought he was gonna tell me it was me. Then we would've needed to drug test him."

Clevinger didn't want a repeat of last weekend in New York. That feeling was at the front of his mind as he took the mound before the eighth inning Saturday night.

"I just kind of thought about my mistakes in the past," Clevinger said.

In his previous outing, he logged seven shutout innings before returning for the eighth. He walked two, which forced Cody Allen to enter the game earlier than preferred. Three runs would score before the third out, and the Yankees added four more in the ninth to walk off in victory.

Clevinger felt responsible.

"Everyone wanted to hype how good the start was," Clevinger said. "But the ending was so bad. It was like spilling your paint over a piece of art work. It's like it doesn't matter anymore."

The last thing he wanted was to lose any aggressiveness against the Royals. He began the eighth inning by retiring former Indians outfielder Abraham Almonte on a ground out. After allowing a one-out single to Jon Jay, he struck out Jorge Soler swinging and exited to a standing ovation.

Overall, Clevinger lasted 7 2/3 innings, allowing eight hits, two runs, striking out five. Oh, and he didn't walk a batter, lowering his season ERA to 2.70.

"It's fun watching guys get better," Francona said. "(To see him) come out and attack late in the game, that was good to see. You love seeing guys not just physically getting better, but understanding the game and getting better."

Seconds after Clevinger finished his postgame chat with reporters, the television directly across from his corner locker began to play back the interview he'd just concluded.

"Wow, quick turnaround," he said, noting he was in two places at once.

A reporter joked that it was proof of the infinite Earths theory Clevinger had discussed on Twitter with Tribe prospect Brady Aiken. "Yeah!" he responded, agreeing enthusiastically.

Or maybe just one fast SportsTime Ohio production crew.

Either way, can't rule it out.

Indians 6, Royals 2: 13 Walk-Off Thoughts on a monster day (and week) at the plate for Francisco Lindor and Mike Clevinger trying to not spill paint all over a masterpiece

by Ryan Lewis

Here are 13 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 6-2 win against the Kansas City Royals.

1. Francisco Lindor has been somewhat of a mess defensively over the last week. He's also been unstoppable at the plate. On Saturday he looked like a shortstop possessed, belting two home runs, lining two doubles, driving in two runs and scoring four. But, sure, as he maintains, he's not a power hitter—right. Since the calendar flipped to May, he's arguably been the best hitter in the game.

2. Lindor is on a 13-game hitting streak and is hitting .458 over that span. In 11 games in May, he now has 15 extra-base hits. He has at least one extra-base hit in every game over that stretch except for one, which was Friday night, when he still reached base three times. His 12 home runs lead the team and ranks him third in the American League as of this typing. He had a 1.334 OPS in May—prior this monster game. No other player in the majors has as many extra-base hits or home runs (8) in May as Lindor. He's one of three players this season to record a four-extra-base-hit game, and the first Indians player to do so since the late Tito Francona, manager Terry Francona's father, accomplished the feat in 1964.

3. Said Mike Clevinger: "You don't take it for granted, but it is expected with a guy like that. 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."
4. Added Francona: "He was kinda going from almost foul ole to foul pole. And in a day where the ball wasn't going anywhere, for him to hit an opposite-field home run, that's incredible. I know I say it, but when guys use the whole field they become a lot more dangerous. They're gonna get more hits because they can't defend it as much, but he drove four balls. That was so nice to watch."
5. Lindor, who has committed five errors in May, has had a knack in the past of belting a ball after making a defensive mistake. He's had a weeks-worth saved up, and while there's not necessarily a correlation there, it has happened to coincide with the best offensive stretch of his career. Lindor has rated well defensively this season with 5 defensive runs saved, according to FanGraphs, but the eight errors will stick with a player who has often taken each mistake personally. Even on grounders Lindor thought he should get to but doesn't at times end with him pounding the dirt. And, at times, it was only an inning or two later before he launched a home run. He says there's no difference between how he plays, but there's quite the pattern.
6. Lindor: "I want to help my team win regardless—on defense, running, hitting—regardless. I want to help my team win that day. I haven't been able to do a great job on defense. It's been a rough two weeks, but I've still got a lot of jobs to do. If I miss the ball, I've got a job to do. That's getting on base and it just so happens I'm not playing as good of defense as I can play and I'm hitting good right now."
7. Francona: "Came back with a vengeance, and he did. I mean he's had a couple of tough games, there's no getting around that and that's baseball. Players do that. But boy he sure is talented. I mean he's come a long way. You look three weeks ago he was hitting, I don't know, whatever. And he just, I know I say it, when he uses the whole field, he stays balanced, and he's strong enough with his hands he can get rewarded when he hits the ball the other way."
8. Lindor has said in the past he enjoys the leadoff spot. He's a dynamic option at the top of the Indians order, one that in two games has paired well with Michael Brantley behind him. Said Lindor on the rhythm of the top of the lineup: "I'm letting the guys see more pitches. I'm letting the guys know that I'm on base and, by me being on base, I helped Brantley pull the ball twice. I don't help him, but the game dictates you've got to pull the ball and he gets two RBIs out of it. A double and a base hit. That's huge. Now, he's on second and Josey, the game is dictated to pull the ball. He pulls the ball and gets Brantley to third. Encarnacion doesn't come through, but Alonso comes through. That's huge. That's what a team does and hopefully we can continue to do that."
9. Mike Clevinger's goal this season: 200 innings. That means he has to be effective enough to last that long into games on a regular basis, which is of course step one. But it also means he needs to finish strong to make those innings count in tight games. That's something he hasn't always been pleased with this season.
10. He pitched into the eighth inning on Saturday night, just as he did in his last start against the Yankees. But last week, Clevinger walked two batters in that eighth inning, was taken out, and it eventually led to a two-run double. He was dead set on making sure that late-outing mistake didn't happen twice. Clevinger has set a high benchmark for himself this season and has been his own biggest critic. So, he entered the eighth inning on Saturday on a mission—he ended up giving up a single, but recorded two outs and struck out his last batter before Tyler Olson ended the inning.
11. Clevinger: "I just kind of thought about my mistakes in the past. In New York, everyone wanted to hype how good the start was, but the ending was so bad. It was like spilling your paint over a piece of art work. It's like it doesn't matter anymore. I witnessed that. Instead of pitching to the situation where it's like, hey, if they give up a solo, I get a handshake and a clean inning. Instead, I put him in high intensity situations, high leverage pitches when he's already thrown 100-and-something pitches. Today, I was making sure I'm not doing that same thing."
12. Clevinger wore pink, flower-embazoned cleats in honor of Mother's Day on Saturday night. He did so despite receiving a letter from Major League Baseball about the uniform policy earlier this week, a portion of which he Tweeted from his account. He says if they do fine him, he'll find a way to turn it into something nice.
13. Clevinger: "If they do, I'll find a good breast cancer awareness fund to do it for Mother's Day. So if they want to do that, I'll turn it into a positive."

Indians 6, Royals 2: Francisco Lindor belts two home runs, teams up with Michael Brantley to lead Indians

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Sunday was only the second day this season in which Francisco Lindor and Michael Brantley were tabbed as the 1-2 hitters in the lineup. That turned out to be all the Indians' offense needed on Saturday in a 6-2 win over the Kansas City Royals.

Lindor and Brantley powered the offense from the top of the order, accounting for all six Indians runs, and that was all starter Mike Clevinger needed.

Lindor, in particular, had a monster game, slugging two home runs and two doubles to go with two RBI and four runs scored. He now leads the team with 12 home runs and has 15 extra-base hits in 11 games this month.

Lindor also became the first Indians leadoff hitter with four extra-base hits in a game since Tito Francona, manager Terry Francona's late father, did so on July 3, 1964 against the Chicago White Sox. He's the third player in the majors to record four extra-base hits in a game this season.

"In a day where the ball wasn't going anywhere, for him to hit an opposite-field home run, that's incredible," Francona said. "I know I say it, but when guys use the whole field they become a lot more dangerous. They're gonna get more hits because they can't defend it as much, but he drove four balls. That was so nice to watch."

Brantley finished with a three-hit game, two RBI and two runs scored, raising his average to .342.

"He's done a great job," Lindor said of Brantley. "He's doing a fantastic job. I feel like [Jason] Kipnis usually does a great job. It's just he's been having a rough couple weeks, you know? But, Brant's been doing a great job behind me. Brant is the best hitter on the team and one of the best hitters in the league. Whenever he's behind you, he's going to protect you."

Clevinger (3-0, 2.70 ERA) was strong for 7⅓ innings. He allowed two runs on eight hits, did not walk a batter and struck out five.

Twice the Royals (13-26) took a one-run lead against Clevinger, and twice the Lindor-Brantley tandem tied it. In the first, Lindor led off with a double and scored on Brantley's single to right field. In the third, Lindor belted the first of his two home runs to tie it 2-2.

Those two gave the Indians (19-19) their first lead in the bottom of the sixth with back-to-back doubles to lead off the inning. Yonder Alonso later singled home Brantley to extend the advantage to 4-2.

An inning later, Lindor launched home run No. 2 for the day. Brantley followed with a single and later scored on a single off the bat of Edwin Encarnacion.

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Indians are beating, testing themselves as much as any one opponent: "We're better than this"

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The Indians aren't playing anywhere close to the level where they want to be and, on paper, probably should be at this point. In a way, they are being tested in a battle that has been as much against themselves as any single opponent.

It should always be noted that mid-May leaves 4½ of baseball to be played, and the Indians happen to be in a position where they could still cruise to the division title. But this isn't how they envisioned the first month and a half of the season would go.

They had lost five of the previous six games entering the weekend. They have been blowing leads late in games. They have been kicking the ball around, which has cost them dearly. The lineup has started to pick things up, but a time has yet to come this season in which they have clicked on all cylinders.

"We are getting tested ... but, it can be fun to try to answer the question," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "Sometimes, when you're a little beat up or things aren't going right, you can get an immense amount of joy in trying to do things right. Sometimes, you feel like you're against the world a little bit, but then that's sometimes when teams come together and you can shine a little bit."

Perhaps from a particular angle, this start almost brings good news — the Indians have remained about a .500 team without hitting their stride, meaning they've played through much of their issues and still managed to stay afloat. And sometimes, that is all teams need to do in April or even May anyway. But it won't help any frustration in the clubhouse. The New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox are surging. The Houston Astros have remained a solid unit. The Indians were meant to be in that grouping of four among the AL's top contenders, but have yet to show it.

"Ultimately, I think just as a team we're not really playing winning baseball right now," Trevor Bauer said. "We're not making winning pitches. We're not making winning defensive plays. The offense came through big [Friday] and we still weren't able to win, because we beat ourselves in two other aspects of the game. It takes a lot of attention to detail and a very high focus and intensity to win at this level no matter who you're playing. And we're not bringing that on each and every night right now."

It has also been in the way the Indians have lost games. Francisco Lindor has ranked well (albeit in a small sample size) with five defensive runs saved thus far, but he also won't be pleased with his eight errors. He committed two on one play in New York that ended up costing the Indians. He made another Friday night that helped lead to a three-run inning. The bullpen has been a revolving door of issues the past two weeks. Andrew Miller finally returned on Friday to a standing ovation but missed over the plate with a slider to Salvador Perez that was blasted for a go-ahead two-run home run. He was saddled with the loss, though the Indians collectively blew a 9-4 lead. Michael Brantley has two grand slams this month, and the Indians have lost both games.

The fact that the Indians remain in first place in a division full of rebuilding teams, and that 124 games remain after Saturday warrants a longer leash, whether it be connected to frustration or a sense of urgency. The results have been less than desired, but heads rolling in May isn't always the answer.

"Everybody's different, which I think is part of the beauty of our game, but I don't think you can wait on the top step for somebody every time something doesn't go right," Francona said. "Man, you'll wear them out, you'll wear yourself out. The idea is, when you have a problem, you want to fix it, not exacerbate it. When they have emotion and you have emotion, you butt heads. That doesn't help anybody."

A team can only have so many self-inflicted wounds before realizing it has become its own worst enemy. All of this has led to "tons" of personal frustration, according to Bauer, for a team wanting to be at the top level, but one that has had to look up at the other giants in the American League so far.

"We beat ourselves twice in New York. We beat ourselves again [Friday]," Bauer said of his last two starts. "If we want to get to where we want to go as a team, and what we're know we're capable of and win the amount of games we know we're capable of, we can't keep playing like that. And it's on all sides of the ball. It's not just the defense or just the offense or just the pitching or the bullpen or one specific guy. It's just, as a team, as a collective whole. ... We're better than this."

Indians notebook: Tyler Naquin placed on disabled list with strained left hamstring

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Injuries really never come at a good time. Sometimes, the timing is downright brutal.

Tyler Naquin's situation fits into that latter category. Naquin was placed on the 10-day disabled list on Saturday with a mildly strained hamstring after he pulled into second base on a double in Friday's game a bit slow. That extended his current hit streak to eight games, during which he has hit .417.

With an extended opportunity in Cleveland while Lonnie Chisenhall continued to rehab his strained right calf, Naquin found his swing and was playing about as well as he ever has at the major-league level. But he felt something pull at him while rounding first base Friday night, and he'll now be down at least 10 days.

Naquin's second stint in Cleveland this season seemed to include a night-and-day difference with how comfortable he looked.

"For whatever reason — and I don't know what it is — that second time when he came back, it seemed like maybe talking to [Mike Napoli], I mean things that may be as little as that, he just seems like he's more comfortable in his own skin," Indians manager Terry Francona said of Naquin. "And he battles like crazy. Like I say, he'll take a funny swing sometimes, but he'll fight off pitches, he'll get something he can handle, he'll waffle a ball to left field, he'll get a hanger and hit one out — because he battles."

Left-handed reliever Tyler Olson was also taken off the paternity list on Saturday. Olson and his wife, Shayna, welcomed a son, Maddox, on Friday in Cleveland.

Naquin's placement on the disabled list — Francona said the hope is that he'll be ready to go once the 10 days are up, but that timetable is still unknown — does open a door for the recently acquired Melky Cabrera, but it might not be time for his promotion just yet.

Cabrera was signed to a minor-league deal and placed in Triple-A as a more offensive-minded depth addition in the outfield. Entering Saturday, Cabrera had a .227 average in just 22 at-bats.

"Man, you know, you look at like the guys that miss spring training, that's a reach," Francona said of the volume of at-bats Cabrera has garnered. "At some point, do you have to reach? I don't know, but I'd like to let him play a little bit."

Furthering the health issues in the outfield, Bradley Zimmer was originally slated to play in Saturday's game but was a late scratch while still dealing with a chest contusion he sustained in New York last week. The Indians wanted to give him one more day.

"Zim just, when he was swinging, he still feels it and he wants to play through it," Francona said. "I give him a lot of credit for wanting to. We just told him, 'Let's just try one more day to see if we can get this out of there.' You can tell it's hurting him when he's swinging."

If Indians' right-hander Mike Clevinger gets fined for spikes, he'll turn it into a positive

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Right-hander Mike Clevinger, after being warned that his multi-colored baseball spikes violated MLB'S uniform code, came back with his Mother's Day special pair of spikes for Saturday's start against the Royals.

They featured splashes of pink, yellow, red and orange. They carried the names of his wife Monica Grace and daughters Piper and Penelope.

Clevinger received a letter from MLB on Friday warning him that the spikes he wore in his May 1 start against the Yankees were in violation of the dress code. It said he could be fined at a future date if he continued to violate the rules.

After the Clevinger pitched 7 2/3 innings in a 6-2 win over the Royals, he was asked if he thought he'd get fined.

"I have no idea," he said. "If they do, I'll find a good breast cancer awareness fund and donate it for Mother's Day. If they want to do that, I'll turn it into a positive."

Clevinger (3-0, 2.70) allowed a run in the first inning and another in the third, but that was it. He struck out five and allowed eight hits. He didn't walk a batter and retired 15 of the last 18 hitters he faced.

"It's fun watching guys get better," said manager Terry Francona, referring to Clevinger. "To watch him attack like he did late in the game. That was good to see. You love to see guys not only getting physically better, but understanding the game better."

On May 6 against the Yankees, Clevinger had a 4-0 lead when Francona sent him out for the eighth inning. Clevinger walked two of the three batters he faced. Cody Allen relieved and Yankees proceeded to score seven runs in a 7-4 win.

Clevinger told himself he would not repeat that same mistake on Saturday. Working with a 6-2 lead, he retired Abraham Almonte, allowed a single to Jon Jay and struck out Jorge Soler before being relieved.

"I just thought about my mistakes in New York," said Clevinger. "Everyone was so hyped about how good the start was, but the ending was so bad it was like spilling paint over a work of art."

Clevinger improved to 4-0 with a 2.17 ERA in seven appearances against the Royals. As for his spikes, Clevinger said he family loved them.

"If all the ladies in my life are happy, I'm happy," he said.

Shortstop Francisco Lindor, who drove the Tribe's offense with two doubles and two homers, gave Clevinger's spikes a thumbs up as well.

"This year he's had a great variety of cleats," said Lindor. "They're pretty cool."

When asked if he thought Clevinger would get fined, Lindor said, "I hope not. He's not making millions."

Francisco Lindor goes 4-for-4 with two homers to lead Cleveland Indians past Royals, 6-2

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Yes, Francisco Lindor has made some errors over the last several games. Like many errors, they have come at inopportune times and they have been costly.

But he has a way of atoning for those, doesn't he?

All of that penance was on display Saturday afternoon as the Indians beat the Royals, 6-2, at Progressive Field. Lindor went 4-for-4 with two doubles, two homers and four RBI. What's more, he played a clean game at shortstop as the Indians won for just the fourth time in their last 11 games.

Lindor has made eight errors this season. He made 10 all last year, but he's trying his best to balance the books with his bat.

The switch-hitter opened the game with a double to left off Jakob Junis (4-3, 3.53) to extend his hitting streak to 13 games. He has at least one extra-base hit in 10 of his last 11 games.

Lindor homered in his second at-bat, doubled in his third and homered again in his fourth. The last Indians' leadoff hitter to have four extra-base hits in one game was Tito Francona on July 3, 1964. The father of manager Terry Francona did it against the White Sox.

"It feels great," said Lindor. "I wish I could go back in time and take those mistakes I made and help the team win that day. But, it's in the past.

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

Lindor said he doesn't consciously try to make up for his mistakes.

"I haven't been able to do a great job on defense," he said. "It's been a rough two weeks, but I've still got a lot of jobs to do. If I miss the ball, I've got a job to do. That's getting on base and it just so happens I'm not playing as good of defense as I can play and I'm hitting good right now."

Lindor is hitting .458 (27-for-59) with 18 runs, seven doubles, eight homers and 14 RBI in his 13-game hitting streak.

Mike Clevinger (3-0, 2.70), risking a fine from the MLB fashion police with his pink baseball spikes in an early Mother's Day tribute, pitched 7 2/3 innings for the win. He allowed two runs on eight hits.

Clevinger, in his first win since April 21, struck out five and allowed eight hits. He worked into the eighth inning for the second straight start. In his last two games, he's thrown 116 pitches and 115 pitches, respectively.

Unlike Clevinger's start against the Yankees on May 6 where he walked two batters in the eighth to set the stage for a bullpen collapse in a 7-4 loss, he retired two of the first three batters he faced Saturday before Tyler Olsen relieved to end the inning.

"Today I just said I'm not doing the same thing I did in New York," said Clevinger.

When Lindor wasn't hitting home runs -- he has 12 for the season -- Michael Brantley was making sure his doubles didn't go to waste. Brantley, moved into the second spot in the lineup on Friday to replace struggling Jason Kipnis, singled home Lindor in the first to tie the score at 1-1. He doubled home Lindor in the sixth for a 3-2 lead that the Indians never relinquished.

It was the second time this season Lindor has hit two homers in one game and the fourth time he's done it in his career. It was the third four-hit game of his career and the first time he's had four extra-base hits in one game.

After Brantley doubled home Lindor in the sixth to break a 2-2 tie, Yonder Alonso followed with a two-out single to make it 4-2.

Lindor and Brantley went a combined 7-for-8 with six runs, three doubles, two homers and four RBI.

"I think Brantley is a good hitter no matter where we hit him," said manager Terry Francona.

Francona especially likes Brantley hitting with a runner on first base because it opens the right side of the infield. After Lindor's leadoff homer in the first, Brantley singled to right to score him. After Lindor doubled to start the sixth, Brantley doubled past first to deliver him again.

"Brantley is probably the best hitter on the team and one of the best in the league," said Lindor.

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

What it means

The Indians, despite their recent skid, are 8-3 in the AL Central this year. They are 39-11 in the division since July 1, 2017.

The pitches

Junis threw 92 pitches, 58 (63 percent) for strikes. Clevinger threw 115 pitches, 81 (70 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Royals and Indians drew 24,587 on Saturday to Progressive Field. First pitch was at 5:25 p.m. with a temperature of 48 degrees. The start of the game was delayed by 1 hour and 15 minutes by rain.

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Greg Allen's extended stay and 5 other things we learned about the Cleveland Indians on Saturday

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Greg Allen arrived at Yankee Stadium in time to start last Sunday's game after Bradley Zimmer lost a one-on-one collision with the center field walk on Saturday. But it was only supposed to be a day trip.

When the Indians moved on to Milwaukee for a two-game series, Allen was going to be optioned to Class AAA Columbus when newly acquired Oliver Drake was activated. But Allen's name was never called.

Drake was activated and veteran right-hander Alexi Ogando was optioned. Ogando, with over six years in the big leagues, had the right to refuse the option and become a free agent. He elected to return to Columbus.

Rajai Davis started Tuesday's game in center, while Zimmer started Wednesday. It put Allen on the bubble again because left-hander Andrew Miller was scheduled to be activated before Friday's game against the Royals.

Once again, it didn't happen. Left-hander Tyler Olson was placed on the paternity list Friday when Miller was activated. On Saturday, hot-hitting right fielder Tyler Naquin was placed on the disabled list with a strained left hamstring. That certainly helped Allen's chances of sticking around for a few more days.

Manager Terry Francona's original lineup on Saturday had Allen starting in right field Saturday. Then Zimmer was scratched from the lineup for the second straight game because of a bruised chest courtesy of New York's center field wall. So Allen returned to center and Brandon Guyer played right.

"You never really know how long you'll be here," said Allen. "You've got an opportunity, no matter how big or small that window is, and you try to make the most of it."

This is Allen's second trip to the big leagues this year, but he went into Saturday's game 0-for-8 and he has failed to get down two bunts. In Friday's 10-9 loss, he had trouble with a ball hit into center field.

"You just try to do the best you can, stay in the moment, and concentrate on the task at hand - which is today's game," said Allen. "Hopefully, you find a way to help the team win."

Allen, in the first three innings Saturday, made two nice catches in center field.

No.1: What about Melky Cabrera

Naquin's injury could accelerate Cabrera's arrival in Cleveland. The veteran outfielder is currently playing for Columbus after signing a minor-league deal in April after going unsigned over the winter.

"The hard thing is he's got 20 at-bats," said Francona. "You look at guys who have missed spring training and that's a reach. At some point, do you have to reach? I don't know, but I'd like to let him play a little bit."

Cabrera, 33, is hitting .227 (5-for-22) with two doubles for Columbus. He has a June 1 out in his contract.

Tyler Naquin discusses health, adjustments at plate after Indians' win

No. 2: Tough luck for Naquin.

Francona called Naquin's injury a "mild strain" of the left hamstring. He says he's hopeful his 10-day stay on the DL will be enough to get him healthy.

"He showed up today and was a little tight," said Francona.

Naquin, injured rounding first on a double Friday, is hitting .333 (25-for-75) with three doubles, two homers and 11 RBI.

"He's been a big part of the wins we've had," said Francona. "He's been right in the middle of them."

No.3: Friend to friend

Through spring training and the first month of the regular season, Erik Gonzalez and Giovanny Urshela walked the thin line between friendship and competition.

Yes, Urshela was on a rehab assignment at Columbus, but in the eyes of many they were competing for Gonzalez's spot as the Tribe's utility player because they were out of options. Finally, the situation was settled when the Indians designated Urshela for assignment on May 4.

On Wednesday, they traded Urshela to Toronto. Gonzalez talked to Urshela on Friday.

"He was in Miami and then had to fly to New York and go to Toronto," said Gonzalez. "I'm happy for him. He's happy and he's going to get a chance to play there."

"We have some people there (Ross Atkins and Mark Shapiro) who know him. He's good right now. He's great."

Atkins is Toronto's GM and Shapiro is running the organization. The Indians signed Gonzalez and Urshela in 2008 as international free agents.

Urshela made his first start for the Blue Jays on Saturday against the Red Sox at Rogers Centre.

Indians SS Francisco Lindor: "Both games have been lost because of me"

No. 4: Clang city

Shortstop Francisco Lindor committed his eighth error in Friday's loss to the Royals. He made 10 in 159 games last year.

Lindor was a finalist for the Gold Glove last year. In 2016, he won the Gold Glove and Platinum Glove, symbolic of being the best defensive player in the American League.

"Frankie is such a good defender, that I think sometimes he just relaxes a bit on the easy plays," said Mike Sarbaugh, Indians infield coach, "and doesn't finish the plays the way he can. I think that's why he's so special on the tough plays."

"It's more about keeping your feet moving and getting through the throw. I know it bothers and he'll continue to work to figure it out and to keep trying to get better. It's just more about that mindset. ... No play is ever routine. If you get through that, good things will happen."

The Indians, as a team, committed 10 errors in their last six games prior to Saturday. They went without a miscue in the 6-2 victory.

Tyler Olson on the 2018 Season

No. 5: Congratulations

Shayna and Tyler Olson became parents for the first time on Friday afternoon when their son Maddox was born. He weighed in at 7 pounds and 2 ounces and was 18 inches long. "My wife did great," said Olson.

The Indians placed Olson on the paternity list Friday, but activated him before Saturday's game. ... Josh Tomlin, who spent last week in the bullpen, threw a side session on Saturday to get ready for Tuesday's start in Detroit. ... Lindor extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a leadoff double on Saturday. He has an extra base hit in 10 of his last 11 games. Indians players have had five hitting streaks of 12 or more games since the start of 2017. Lindor owns four of them.

This is a test: Cleveland Indians, Kansas City Royals lineups for Saturday, Game No. 38

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The Indians were supposed to dance away with the AL Central. They were going to take a victory lap at the All-Star break and start printing playoff tickets on Aug. 1.

Instead their bullpen has turned sour, the offense can't score unless it hits a home run, Francisco Lindor's glove at short has turned to stone and the disabled list keeps getting longer.

Tyler Naquin, one of the few Indians who seems to understand that it's not necessary to hit a ball 450 feet in order to score runs, went on the disabled list on Saturday morning. Bradley Zimmer, whose defense in center field is hard to duplicate, was scratched from the lineup because of a bruised chest suffered in a collision with the center field wall at Yankee Stadium on May 5.

At the end of April, the Indians were 15-12 and had a four-game lead in the division. After turning a 9-4 lead into a 10-9 loss to the Royals on Friday, they were 18-19 with a half-game lead over the Twins for first place.

Every team gets tested during the long season, but who knew the Indians would be tested so soon?

"I don't know if I've ever not looked at it (the season) as that (a test)," said manager Terry Francona. "I really believe, you show up today and you try to win today. That's the best way to do anything. I've always felt that way.

"We are getting tested, though -- I get your point. But, it can be fun to try to answer the question, yes. Sometimes, when you're a little beat up or things aren't going right, you can get an immense amount of joy in trying to do things right. Sometimes, you feel like you're against the world a little bit, but then that's sometimes when teams come together and you can shine a little bit."

It ever a team needed to shine, the Indians are it.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.13.2018

Cleveland Indians put Tyler Naquin on DL, activate Tyler Olson from paternity list

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com jnoga@cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Just as Tyler Naquin had started to heat up at the plate, the Cleveland Indians announced Saturday that the 27-year-old outfielder is heading to the disabled list with a sore left hamstring.

In a corresponding move, the Indians activated reliever Tyler Olson from the paternity list to take Naquin's spot on the 25-man roster. Olson and his wife, Shayna, welcomed a son, Maddox, in Cleveland on Friday.

Naquin delivered a go-ahead two-run double in the fourth inning Friday against Kansas City's Jason Hammel, but limped into second base and was treated by trainers before remaining in the game. He later scored on Michael Brantley's grand slam, but was removed from the contest prior to the start of the fifth inning.

Manager Terry Francona said following Friday's game that Naquin had left Progressive Field to receive an MRI imaging exam, and that the results would be available Saturday morning.

"He thought it was a cramp," Francona said. "But then as the inning progressed, he was getting tighter and tighter."

Naquin's double extended his hitting streak to eight games and upped his batting average to .417 in May. He is hitting .333 in 2018 with two home runs, three doubles and 11 RBI.

Naquin battled a back injury for parts of the 2017 season while with Class AAA Columbus, but this marks his first trip to the disabled list in the major leagues.

Olson had compiled a 6.75 earned run average in 15 appearances prior to spending one day on the paternity list. He has allowed nine earned runs and struck out 17 batters in 12 innings.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 05.13.2018

Indians feel sense of urgency despite playing in worst division | Jeff Schudel

By Jeff Schudel, The News-Herald & The Morning Journal

The argument the Indians have no sense of urgency because they play in the worst division in the major leagues is an easy one to make.

Just don't make that argument too loudly around the Indians clubhouse.

The Indians went into their game with the Kansas City Royals on May 12 in first place in the American League Central Division with a record of 18-19. They would be 4.5 games behind first place Houston if they were in the West and 7.5 behind the Red Sox and Yankees if they were in the East.

First baseman Yonder Alonso, in his first season with the Indians, seemed insulted at the suggestion the Tribe could cruise through the regular season, still win the division easily and then play with heightened determination when the playoffs start.

"I'll be very clear with this," Alonso said before the Indians lost to the Royals, 10-9, on May 11, measuring his words carefully. "We don't care one bit about anybody else but the guys in this clubhouse and the way we go about things every single day.

"It is so unfair to, as a team, to always be aware what other teams are doing. The way we look at it is every day is a must win. This is the big leagues. You're expected to win here."

Spurred by a 22-game winning streak, the Indians won 102 games last season and won the Central Division by 17 games over the Minnesota Twins. Then they lost the five-game division series to the Yankees after winning the first two games. Pitching and defense, two reasons they won 102 games, collapsed.

"The last thing on our mind is who is in second place in the wild card or who is in last place in all of baseball," Alonso said. "We take every team as seriously as they take us every single day. Every day is a grind. Every day we have to give it everything we have because it's a serious matter every night. We're not thinking about the playoffs. We're thinking about tonight, May 11. That's all we're thinking about."

Alonso put his words into action with a solo home run in the first to give the Indians a 3-0 lead.

- Manager Terry Francona doesn't want to give up on second baseman Jason Kipnis, but he doesn't want Kipnis dragging his sub-.200 batting average to the plate hitting second in the lineup, so he moved Michael Brantley from fifth to second in the batting order and dropped Kipnis to sixth. Alonso was moved from sixth to fifth in the lineup against the Royals on May 11.

Brantley hit a grand slam to give the Indians a 9-4 lead. He was 2-for-5 on the night.

Kipnis, hitting .181 to start the May 11 game, did no better from his new slot. He hit a lazy fly to left in the first inning. An attempted sacrifice bunt in the fourth resulted in Edwin Encarnacion being thrown out at third on a fielder's choice.

Kipnis walked in his third at-bat and grounded out in his final plate appearance. He is hitting an anemic .177 and doesn't look confident with a bat in his hands.

"Kip and I talked for a while the other day," Francona said. "We kind of did it together. I thought we did a good job, because we want to get him going. And, what's the best way? Sometimes it's to maybe drop him down a little bit and let him just focus on hitting—not so much moving runners and things like that."

Kipnis has played in every game this season. Only leadoff hitter Francisco Lindor (157) has more at-bats than Kipnis (147). Kipnis has one home run and 13 RBI.

Indians 2, Clippers 1 | Early homer, strong pitching stop Clippers

Kevin Newman led off the bottom of the first inning with a home run to give the Indianapolis Indians an early lead they would not relinquish in a 2-1 victory over the visiting Clippers on Saturday before a crowd of 10,391 at Victory Field.

Newman, who went 4 for 4, cleared the left-field wall on a pitch from Adam Wilk (1-3), who allowed two earned runs on seven hits in six innings. Wilk also allowed an RBI double from Jacob Stallings in the sixth that gave the Indians a 2-0 advantage.

The Clippers were unable to score against Indians starter Joe Musgrove (1-0), who didn't allow a hit through 5 2/3 innings and struck out six. He was relieved in the sixth inning by Tanner Anderson.

Anderson gave up the only Columbus run when Eric Haase singled home Yandy Diaz in the seventh inning. It was one of three Clipper hits, none for extra bases.

Johnny Helweg worked a scoreless ninth to pick up his sixth save of the season.

RubberDucks 4, SeaWolves 3: Two-run rally in ninth ends Ducks' three-game losing streak

The RubberDucks certainly know how to break out of a funk.

Seemingly destined for their fourth consecutive loss and third in the series against the Erie SeaWolves, the Ducks walked off to a 4-3 win at Canal Park on Saturday.

A team that was 3-8 in one-run games coming in, the Ducks (21-14) did it with a little pizzazz in a two-run ninth.

"It's good to get them," RubberDucks manager Tony Mansolino said. "It's one of those deals where the guys continued to battle. These last four days, we've had no luck. Nothing has gone our way.

"It feels like the other teams have had a ton go their way. We've had a lot of hard-hit balls in Richmond and the last couple nights here and nothing fell."

The ninth started with Willi Castro sending a single up the middle. On a 3-2 count, Joe Sever sent a shot to the right-center field wall for a double that scored Castro.

John Schreiber (0-3, 4.50) walked Bobby Bradley to put runners on first and second and bring Mark Mathias to the plate.

Mathias sent a bunt to third and beat the throw from Schreiber, which was wide of the bag and allowed Sever to score easily.

"We were just talking about those one-run games today," Sever said. "We've been on the wrong end of them the last week or so. To get one in our favor feels good. You'd rather win close ones, but it means we're in every game.

"It shows the fight we have. I think we've been doing that, especially in the last two weeks where we've been hot [the Ducks came into the series against the SeaWolves winners in 12 of their past 14 games]. We can put that together one through nine and be dangerous."

Sever should know as he and Bradley have been on a tear as of late. Sever is batting .372 (16-for-43) in the past 10 games with six RBI and a home run, which he hit in the third inning on Saturday.

Bradley is hitting .314 (11-for-35) with four home runs and 11 RBI in the same span. Bradley's blast Saturday was a no-doubt-about-it shot to right in the fifth.

"We always joke about it and ask how many hits we're going to get before the game," Sever said. "We'll say, 'Let's try to get five combined.' Just stuff like that to keep it light. We know we're good hitters and started off slow. We just need to not panic and stay within ourselves. I think we feed off one another. I know I love batting in front of him because I get pitches to hit. It's just coming together at the right time. It's good to see."

Shao-Ching Chiang (3-0, 2.08) didn't pick up the win, but battled through six innings.

A right-hander, Chiang didn't have it working in the first two innings, but righted the ship through the middle of his outing.

He gave up six hits and allowed three runs (all earned), walked two and struck out six.

The earned run total was a season high, but he has only allowed nine earned runs in 39 innings this season and has a 4.1 strikeout-to walk ratio.

The Ducks will try to split the four-game series at Canal Park on Sunday at 2:05 p.m. Ducks right-hander Jake Paulson (2-0, 2.93) and SeaWolves right-hander Spencer Turnbull (0-3, 6.00) are the scheduled pitchers.

The post RubberDucks 4, SeaWolves 3: Two-run rally in ninth ends Ducks' three-game losing streak appeared first on Ohio.

Nick Cafardo / SUNDAY BASEBALL NOTES / How the Orioles became the most dysfunctional organization in baseball

By Nick Cafardo

The most dysfunctional organization in baseball should be one of the crown jewels of the sport. It resides in a strong baseball city that's rich with tradition and has an iconic ballpark and is in a climate made for summertime baseball.

So why are the Baltimore Orioles such a mess?

You won't get many varying responses when you ask people in high places around baseball. The Orioles' problem is team ownership, and perhaps it always has been during the Angelos family's run. Word is that Peter Angelos is not in the best of health and that his sons, John and Lou, have taken over running the team. They are said to be listening to vice president of baseball operations Brady Anderson, as Anderson has long been friends with the sons.

There have been reports that general manager Dan Duquette has been "thrown out of the cockpit," but no one has any idea who's flying the plane. What other organization would allow the manager (Buck Showalter) to have more power than the GM?

"I think Dan has more respect among the general managers in baseball given what he's had to contend with over there with the ownership," said one National League team's president of baseball operations. "He's had successful winning programs in spite of his bosses. All of us in the game understand the challenges he's faced and he's handled it with dignity and grace."

Everything baseball every Monday-Friday during baseball season, and weekly in the offseason.

Instead of giving Duquette the keys and giving him more authority to do his job, Orioles ownership has given him nothing. They even blocked him from becoming Blue Jays team president.

The Orioles' play has been abysmal, leading to a 10-27 record entering Friday. There's talent on the roster — Manny Machado, Jonathan Schoop, Trey Mancini, Chris Davis, and Adam Jones — and Andrew Cashner and Alex Cobb were added this past offseason to help the rotation, but the team has been second-rate on the field.

It was ownership, not Duquette, that ordered the \$161 million re-signing of Davis in January 2016, when that money should have been invested in a front-line pitcher.

In most organizations, the GM would be questioning the effectiveness of his manager — whether he's an iconic skipper like Showalter or not — when his team is off to a terrible start. There's no doubt that Showalter has been one of the best in the game for so many years. He's always gotten the best from his players, and for that he earned his stripes. But since the 2016 playoffs — when he decided not to use Zach Britton in the wild-card loss to Toronto — Showalter has been in a downturn.

Now he's in the final year of his deal, same as Duquette, Machado, Jones, and Britton. The Orioles must transition into rebuilding mode with the likelihood of losing Machado to free agency if he isn't traded beforehand.

As we sit here in May, there have not yet been serious trade talks involving Machado. Duquette opened talks last offseason and heard from a few interested parties, but decided not to pull the trigger. We're taking a wild guess that ownership put the kibosh on it.

So how the Orioles handle Machado going forward is going to be interesting, because it will be telling as to how ownership wants Duquette to proceed.

Such is Duquette's plight these days, but it wasn't all that different than when Frank Wren, Jim Beattie, and Mike Flanagan ran the Orioles before him. The people in charge often face the word "no" when trying to accomplish anything resembling a baseball operation. The Orioles have small scouting staffs and, amazingly in this day and age, no international pool money to sign foreign players.

As one former employee said, "Angelos always listens to someone other than the GM. It can be a broadcaster, a writer, someone from another team. It's always been a tough place to work for a GM."

Duquette doesn't have the normal powers that a GM and head of the baseball division should have. If Duquette wanted to fire Showalter for the team's poor start and poor season a year ago, he would have to ask the Angelos family and they would likely take forever to make the call.

Baltimore's coaching staff has also come under fire as the pitchers haven't improved under Roger McDowell and the hitters aren't excelling under Scott Coolbaugh.

Duquette has declined comment on his job situation, but his colleagues understand what he's facing. This is an organization — and we use that word loosely — that won't delve into the international market, when some of the best players in baseball are coming from outside the United States. It has one the smallest scouting staffs and administrative staffs in baseball. It has a small analytics staff.

This is the Baltimore Orioles, for goodness sake. The team of Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, Jim Palmer, Eddie Murray, Boog Powell, Paul Blair, Mark Belanger, Dave Johnson, Earl Weaver, and Cal Ripken Jr.

Get your act together.

Apropos of nothing

1. With all the new analytical stats available today, I found it fascinating that among 70 players polled by MLB.com columnist Anthony Castrovince, the majority valued traditional statistics more. Castrovince polled 35 pitchers and 35 position players on which stat they gravitate toward the most. Among position players, 10 selected OPS, six OBP, five RBIs, four runs scored, three batting average, three games played, with four single votes for other stats. Among pitchers, 10 chose innings and/or appearances, seven ERA, seven WHIP, three strikeout-to-walk ratio, two inherited runners scored percentage, two holds, with four single votes for other stats. So despite the overload of analytics, players still value traditional numbers.

2. Who sold current Yankees consultant and former Orioles manager Lee Mazzilli his first house in Greenwich, Conn.? None other than Bobby Valentine, then a realtor.

3. Here's a good first duty for former pitcher Chris Young, the Princeton grad who joined Major League Baseball as vice president of on-field operations, initiatives, and strategy: Take a look at the rule on batting out of order, and rewrite it. It's so hard to follow. It needs some serious simplification.

4. Love how the Yankees play recorded, traditional national anthems and Kate Smith's rendition of "God Bless America." Wish all ballparks would do that. Or just have the organ player play the national anthem. In many parks, the anthem has become an audition for "The Voice."

5. Whoa, Johnny Damon got a quick hook on "Dancing with the Stars."

6. The National League was 30-17 in interleague play entering Friday.

7. Loved the reunion between 92-year-old Braves scout Tom Giordano and Tony La Russa in the press box at Yankee Stadium. "When I was 21 years old in the Kansas City A's organization, Tom's the one that told me I should start thinking about a managerial career," La Russa said. Giordano was a front office exec at the time and Giordano didn't think La Russa would hit enough to be a big leaguer. "I ignored his advice and played for 16 years [in minors and majors] described as a 'weak-hitting infielder.'" But Giordano recognized La Russa's sharp mind. "Years later he told me you were relentless and stubborn, which are good qualities for a manager," La Russa said.

8. I'm amazed Jim Kaat is not in the Hall of Fame, and not only because of his 283 wins and 3.45 ERA. There isn't much Kaat hasn't done in baseball. There's a contributor category for the Hall of Fame, as voted by the Veterans Committee, but it's usually for non-uniformed personnel. But there should be a category for a guy such as Kaat, who not only played the game at a high level but also contributed to the game after retirement with a long broadcasting career.

9. Making out the lineup card isn't as simple as it looks. Mets manager Mickey Callaway learned a valuable lesson last week: Check it twice or three times. If you make out more than one card, rip up the ones you're not going to use and throw them away. Nowadays, the bench coach usually makes out the lineup card. They're inputted on a laptop and printed out. One ex-AL manager told me, "The first thing I did was make sure the lineup that we brought out to home plate before the game matched with the one we hung in the dugout. It's the first thing we did. You always had to make sure you have the DH in the right spot and then you took it from there."

10. If you missed it, Evan Longoria said what many of us have thought for years. The Giants third baseman, who spent his first 10 seasons with the Rays, told the Tampa Bay Times, "Honestly, and this is maybe not something I should say, but my gut tells me that the best decision might be to move the team. I say that only because I look at the example of the Miami Marlins, and [a new stadium] didn't really solve their attendance issues. So from purely an attendance standpoint, somewhere else might be better." People in Charlotte, N.C., Las Vegas, Portland, Ore., and Montreal immediately perked up.

Updates on nine

1. Addison Reed, RHP, Twins — Some Red Sox fans lamented that the team didn't re-sign Reed in the offseason. The reliever has already allowed two walkoff homers this season. Careful what you wish for.
2. Nick Krall, general manager, Reds — Dick Williams will continue as president of baseball operations, but the well-respected Krall takes over as GM. Look for former GM Walt Jocketty, now an executive adviser with the team, to become more involved in baseball decisions. Jocketty was a mentor to Krall. The Reds are likely sticking with manager Jim Riggleman for the remainder of the season, but John Farrell and Barry Larkin are favorites for the job in the future.
3. Jerry Dipoto, general manager, Mariners — Seattle is off to a good start, and a playoff appearance would be good for Dipoto's future with the team. Dipoto's first full season with the Mariners was 2016 and they haven't made the playoffs yet. Dipoto was hired late in the 2015 season after serving as a farm system evaluator for the Red Sox.
4. Adrian Gonzalez, 1B, Mets — Gonzalez has hit all five of his home runs this season on the road. During his career, he's hit 59.18 percent of his home runs in road games, the second-highest percentage among the 146 players with at least 300 career homers, behind Joe Adcock (59.23 percent).
5. Juan Soto, OF, Nationals — The Nationals are very excited about the 19-year-old Soto, a lefthanded hitter who hits for power to all fields. In 16 games with Single A Hagerstown, he hit .373 with five homers and 24 RBIs. In 15 games with high Single A Potomac, he hit .371 with seven homers and 18 RBIs. Upon being promoted to Double A Harrisburg, he went 2 for 4 with four RBIs in his first game. It won't be long before we see Soto in Washington.
6. Chris Tillman, RHP, Orioles — It's been sad to watch Tillman's downfall. After allowing five earned runs in 1½ innings Thursday against the Royals, Tillman's ERA rose to 10.46. And on Friday he was placed on the 10-day disabled list with a lower-back strain.
7. Matt Kemp, OF, Dodgers — Kemp's return is one of the few positive stories for the Dodgers this season. Among players who changed teams this offseason, Kemp (Atlanta to LA) has the second-highest batting average — an NL-best .343 entering Friday. The Red Sox' J.D. Martinez was at .351, and the Mariners' Dee Gordon was at .340.
8. Bobby Dalbec, 3B, Red Sox — The many scouts watching high Single A Salem are coming to the consensus that Dalbec might be better off returning to pitching. At the time he was drafted out of the University of Arizona, the righthanded Dalbec was a third baseman, first baseman, and relief pitcher with 94-96-mile-per-hour stuff. He suffered a wrist injury last season. This season, he's hitting .189 with six homers, 20 RBIs, and 45 strikeouts in 111 at-bats.
9. Rafael Palmeiro, 1B/DH, Cleburne Railroaders — The author of 3,020 major league hits and 569 homers is playing again at age 53. Palmeiro, who was caught in a steroids scandal as his career ended in 2005, wants to hook on with a big league team. Palmeiro is one of six players in baseball history with more than 500 homers and 3,000 hits. He knocked in 1,835 runs (17th all time) and drove in more than 100 runs in nine straight seasons. He also won three Gold Gloves.

Royals pitchers can't contain Francisco Lindor in loss to Indians

BY MARIA TORRES

As they tried to continue gaining ground on the Indians in the American League Central division, the Royals on Saturday turned the ball over to Jakob Junis, the sophomore pitcher who's been their most reliable starter this season.

After cruising through five innings having only allowed two runs, the stone-faced Junis began to show some cracks.

And Francisco Lindor, one of the most dynamic players in the league, took advantage of them.

The Indians shortstop was perfect at the plate and provided two spirit-crushing blows in the Royals' 6-2 loss at Progressive Field.

"You gotta really execute pitches," manager Ned Yost said. "You make just a slight little variation off of what you're trying to accomplish, they're gonna hit it hard somewhere."

Lindor opened the floodgates in the sixth inning. He led off the frame with a double into left field. He scored moments later, when Michael Brantley scooped Junis' vaunted slider to right field for a tie-breaking double, and gave the Indians a 3-2 lead.

In the next inning, Lindor hit a solo home run off Royals reliever Kevin McCarthy to extend the Indians' lead to 5-2.

In all, Lindor hit two doubles and two homers. He became the first Indians player to record four extra-base hits in a game since Tito Francona, the late father of Indians manager Terry Francona, did so on July 3, 1964.

And Junis, who entered with a rotation-best 3.18 ERA, exited after having allowed four runs on six hits in 5 2/3 innings.

"I had good stuff today," Junis said. "I think the key was a couple of those innings. Lindor led off with some doubles. It's always tough to have a guy on second with no outs and keep him off the scoreboard. He had a great game today, taking it to all fields, and did a good job."

The Royals, only able to muster two runs on eight hits off Indians starter Mike Clevinger, fell to 13-26 on the season.

The Kansas City Star LOADED: 05.13.2018

Royals Rundown: KC's youth movement beginning in bullpen

By Commentary by Todd Fertig

Fans eager for a rebuild of the Kansas City Royals have questioned why management filled the lineup with veterans. With each signing of a stopgap — Alcides Escobar, Lucas Duda, Mike Moustakas and Jon Jay — observers wondered why the Royals would delay the anticipated youth movement. The team was expected to be bad anyway, so why not give the prospects on-the-job training.

Those fans may still wonder what's going on, but a youth movement is taking place in an area they may not have noticed.

While the veterans take the field each night, take a peek into the bullpen and you'll see plenty of fresh faces — guys cutting their teeth one inning at a time, without fanfare or even much notice by the casual fan.

A few years ago, the Royals employed a unique combination of average starting pitching and historically dominant relief pitching to reach two World Series, winning one. The tactic was revolutionary.

Aside from current closer Kelvin Herrera, that crew has since moved on. But perhaps the pieces are coming together to form another effective bullpen for the Royals to build upon.

Left-hander Tim Hill is leading the rebuild, slinging biting darts from a three-quarters angle that are nearly unhittable by left-handed hitters.

At 28, Hill is somewhat old by rookie standards. Three years ago, Hill's path to the big leagues was slowed by a life-threatening bout with colon cancer. But having been drafted out of college at age 24, he didn't spend much time in the minors. Hill has been designated a reliever from Day 1 and advanced quickly through the farm system.

Still, Hill didn't have a lot of assurance he would break spring camp with the Royals in March. The Royals added veterans to the bullpen mix over the winter, and it looked like Hill would start the season in Triple A at Omaha. But Hill so impressed manager Ned Yost during spring training, not only did Yost promote him to the big league roster, but called on him in pressure situations from the get-go.

"It was pretty special finding out that I was going to be on the opening day roster," said the product of Bacone College in Muskogee, Okla. "It was something you've been working for years, basically your whole life, to get to have that moment."

Hill started out red hot. He didn't allow a hit in his first six appearances, and at that point his ERA was a dazzling 1.35. He has since cooled off, but remains one of Yost's trusted assets.

The Royals broke camp with veterans Brandon Maurer, Justin Grimm and Blaine Boyer looking to set the table for Herrera. But quickly that formula was scrapped as Yost turned more and more to a collection of rookies in the bullpen, including Burch Smith and Brad Keller.

Those two combined for four shutout innings Friday night in the Royals' 10-9 come-from-behind win at Cleveland. Keller was especially effective, throwing three scoreless innings and allowing only two hits while earning his first major league win and lowering his ERA to 2.20.

Also making their debuts out of the bullpen have been Scott Barlow, Eric Stout and Overland Park native Jason Adam.

"Timing has a lot to do with it," Hill said of the opportunity the rookies are being given. "You have to be pitching well, obviously, and then there has to be that opportunity. Those two things don't always go hand in hand.

"There are lot of guys out there, in different organizations, who have the ability but just aren't getting the opportunity. Or the opening is there, but they aren't pitching well at the right time."

Yost has yet to solidify a seventh- and eighth-inning tandem to set up Herrera, but Hill said time will sort out the roles in the bullpen.

"Everybody's out there just cheering each other on," Hill said. "As the season goes on, roles kind of get established. But that kind of takes care of itself. I don't think we (the relievers) should worry about what our role is. We should just focus on going out there when they give you a job to do, and just do that job that day. If everybody can just do their job well, we'll be pretty good."

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