

## **Clevinger's 11 K's not enough in loss to Reds**

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- In one respect, Indians starter Mike Clevinger was enjoying one of the best outings of his young career on Monday night. The right-hander was piling up the strikeouts, overpowering Cincinnati's lineup in powerful bursts.

The problem was that when Clevinger did not miss the Reds' bats, damage ensued. Each mistake made by the right-hander was magnified as the Indians struggled to solve Cincinnati pitcher Anthony DeSclafani. The Tribe struck for four runs in the ninth, but could not complete the comeback in a 7-5 loss at Progressive Field.

"They are really hot right now. I don't want to downplay what they're doing over there," Clevinger said. "But, it was almost like I was leading them to their barrel. ... I made good pitches, but it seemed like every single one was under a magnifying glass, every miss. That inconsistency can't happen."

Over six-plus innings of work, Clevinger equaled a career high with 11 strikeouts, which gave him 110 punchouts on the season. That made Clevinger only the 15th pitcher in club history (35 times overall) to reach at least 110 strikeouts in a first half. Fellow starters Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer also reached that plateau this year.

That's where the silver lining ended.

"He made some mistakes with his fastball, and he paid for that," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "But, he had a lot of swing-and-miss, too, especially with his breaking ball. It's just, we're going to have to slow them down a little bit, because they're so ultra-aggressive."

The Reds, who boast one of the hotter offenses in baseball right now, went 7-for-13 in the at-bats that did not end in a strikeout against Clevinger. The starter put the leadoff hitter aboard in each of the first four innings. In the second and fourth, Clevinger did so with a walk, and both eventually came around to score.

Tucker Barnhart knocked in one run with a double in the second and brought another in with a single in the fourth. Jesse Winker contributed an RBI double off Clevinger in the fourth inning, and Joey Votto drilled an opposite-field home run in the fifth. After Clevinger left the game in the seventh, one more run was tacked on to his line courtesy of an RBI single by Scott Schebler.

The Reds put the game away in the ninth, when Schebler, who went 4-for-5 with three RBIs, launched a two-run homer off Indians reliever Josh Tomlin.

"It's frustrating," said Tomlin, who has yielded 21 home runs in 49 innings this season. "I'll come back tomorrow and try to find a way to get better. That's the only thing I can do, just try to figure out what I'm doing -- either mentally, physically, whatever the case may be -- and try to get it figured out as quickly as I can."

Complicating matters for the Tribe was the lack of situational hitting against the Reds.

DeSclafani logged seven innings, in which his lone setback was a solo home run to right off the bat of Yonder Alonso, his 13th of the season. The righty sidestepped trouble throughout the rest of his outing. Cleveland went 0-for-9 with runners on base against DeSclafani in the loss.

In the ninth inning, Jason Kipnis snapped an 0-for-17 skid with runners on base for the Indians -- going back to the sixth inning on Sunday -- by yanking a pitch from Reds reliever Amir Garrett out to right for a two-run homer. Francisco Lindor (sacrifice fly) and Michael Brantley (RBI double) kept the rally going, but closer Raisel Iglesias struck out Jose Ramirez to end the game.

"If you can get the tying run to the plate, especially with Jose hitting, you give yourself a chance," Francona said. "You want to win. If you don't win, you want to certainly make them use their closer. Maybe it helps us win tomorrow or the next day."

### **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

The right stuff: With two outs and a runner on first in the first inning, Scooter Gennett ripped a fastball from Clevinger to deep right field with an exit velocity of 101.9 mph, per Statcast™. What looked like an RBI extra-base hit turned into a highlight-reel defensive play. Tribe right fielder Tyler Naquin sprinted to his left and used an all-out dive to snare the ball before it reached the ground. When Naquin rose to his feet to cheers from the home crowd, he had dirt from the warning track caked across his uniform.

"You're going to see one to three of those a year like that," Clevinger said. "I'm just grateful it's always when I'm on the mound, it seems like. I don't want that to get overlooked. They play so hard behind me it seems like, every time I'm out there, and I always appreciate that. Without them, with whatever punchouts, I would've had six or seven earned runs if they weren't going all out for me."

Billy runs wild: Clevinger exited after allowing a leadoff single to Billy Hamilton, who slashed a pitch into left field to end the starter's night. While lefty Marc Rzepczynski faced Schebler, the fleet-footed Hamilton bolted for second, and catcher Yan Gomes' throw sailed into center, allowing the runner to sprint to third. Schebler followed with a single into right-center field, plating Hamilton to put the Indians behind, 5-1.

### **MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY**

Ramirez pulled a pitch from DeSclafani sharply to the right side of the infield, where the ball deflected off the glove of Votto at first. Gennett was ranging to his left to back Votto up, but stopped and lunged against his momentum, grabbing the baseball with his bare hand. From a knee, the second baseman fired the ball back to Votto for an impressive inning-ending out. The Indians challenged that Ramirez beat the throw, but the initial call stood following a replay review.

## SOUND SMART

Votto's home run gave him 14 career blasts against the Indians, marking the fourth most in Interleague Play history for a batter against a single opponent. Paul Konerko holds the record with 20 against the Cubs, followed by Barry Bonds (18 vs. A's) and Albert Pujols (16 vs. Royals). Votto is tied on that list with Aramis Ramirez (14 vs. White Sox).

## UP NEXT

All-Star Trevor Bauer is scheduled to take the mound for the Indians on Tuesday, when the Tribe hosts the Reds in a 7:10 p.m. ET Interleague clash at Progressive Field. The righty has a 2.05 ERA with 99 strikeouts vs. 16 walks in 70 1/3 innings in his last 10 turns for Cleveland. Cincinnati will counter with righty Sal Romano (5-8, 5.40 ERA).

## Naquin robs Reds with sensational catch

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Tyler Naquin rose to his feet, dirt from the warning track in right field caked across his pants and jersey. On the mound, moments after the Progressive Field crowd let out a collective gasp that quickly morphed into an eruption of cheers, Tribe pitcher Mike Clevinger grinned and held his arms skyward.

Naquin had just finished authoring an incredible diving catch, robbing Scooter Gennett of what looked like a surefire run-scoring hit in the first inning of Monday's game against the Reds, which the Indians lost 7-5.

With two outs and a runner on first base, Clevinger fired a 95.6-mph fastball that caught too much of the plate. Gennett -- named to the National League All-Star team on Sunday -- ripped the pitch to deep right field with an exit velocity of 101.9 mph, per Statcast™. Scott Schebler was off and running from first and would likely have scored had the ball eluded Naquin's reach.

Naquin quickly sprinted to his left and was closing fast on the wall as the baseball headed toward the warning track. At the last moment, the Indians' right fielder left his feet, snaring the ball in the air with a sprawling dive and sliding to a stop on the track after completing the catch.

"You're going to see one to three of those a year like that," Clevinger said of Naquin's catch. "I'm just grateful it's always when I'm on the mound, it seems like. I don't want that to get overlooked. They play so hard behind me it seems like, every time I'm out there, and I always appreciate that. Without them, with whatever punchouts, I would've had six or seven earned runs if they weren't going all out for me."

Per Statcast™, Naquin covered 47 feet in 3.7 seconds. The play included an 81-percent catch probability, but that raw metric does not do justice to the type of dive that was ultimately required for Naquin to stop Cincinnati from grabbing a 1-0 advantage in the opening frame.

## Brantley reacts to 3rd All-Star selection

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Michael Brantley heard the criticism floating around during the offseason in the wake of the Indians' decision to pick up his option for this year. It was never about Brantley's skills as a hitter, but a list of injury issues kept the veteran outfielder off the field for the bulk of the past two seasons.

Prior to Monday's game against the Reds, Brantley stood flanked by reporters in front of his locker, having been named to the American League All-Star team one day earlier. This season, Brantley, who was voted into the Midsummer Classic by his peers, has been a fixture in the lineup, shown no ill effects from his injury history and he has quieted any lingering critics in the process.

"I'm very thankful that I'm back here," Brantley said. "I feel like I'm doing pretty well so far. So, hopefully they made a good decision, right? At the same time, it's a blessing to be out there. It's the hard work that I put in. It's the confidence that they had in me that I was going to be able to come back, stay on the field, produce at a high level and impact this club to winning ballgames.

"So far, so good. We've got a long way to go still, and we've got a postseason to hopefully run through."

Brantley is one of five Indians players selected to the AL squad for the 89th MLB All-Star Game presented by Mastercard, which will take place on July 17 at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C. Joining Brantley will be third baseman Jose Ramirez, shortstop Francisco Lindor and starters Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer. A lot has changed for the Tribe since 2014, when Brantley attended his first All-Star Game as Cleveland's lone representative.

"My first year, I was by myself," said Brantley, who is a three-time All-Star. "I was a lot more quiet. Now, you can joke with the guys. You have your boys with you. You get to enjoy the experience a little bit more."

## • Five Indians make 2018 AL All-Star team

Brantley finished third in voting for the AL Most Valuable Player Award in 2014 and posted similar numbers across the board in '15, though his season ended early due to right shoulder woes. Complications with that injury limited the outfielder to just 11 games in '16 and a severe right ankle setback plagued Brantley's campaign a year ago. He played in 90 games in '17 and had offseason surgery, but the Indians still exercised his \$12 million team option.

Shortly into April, Brantley came off the disabled list, and he has not looked back. Through 77 games played, the left fielder has turned in a .306/.351/.490 slash line to go with 11 homers, 23 doubles, 47 runs, 49 RBIs and nearly as many walks (22) as strikeouts (30). Brantley leads the Majors in contact rate (89.7 percent) and contact rate on pitches in the strike zone (96.6 percent).

"We were betting on him," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "We saw him first-hand, the work he was putting in to be healthy. I pulled him aside [after telling Brantley he made the All-Star team Sunday] and told him, I said, 'You take a minute and take this in, because you spent so much time back there working.' He was miserable, and now he's an All-Star again. That's pretty special."

Brantley was indeed savoring the selection.

"I don't take it for granted," he said. "There's a lot of bumps in the road, a lot of highs, a lot of lows. You just kind of sit back when it's done and just kind of embrace it. It's not every day you get to go put on an All-Star uniform."

Worth noting

- Lefty Andrew Miller (10-day DL, right knee) threw a 29-pitch bullpen session on Monday and is scheduled to throw off the game mound at Progressive Field on Wednesday, per Francona. Throwing on the main mound will allow the Indians to gather Statcast™ data about Miller's mechanics, velocity and movement. If that goes well, Miller might be cleared to face hitters in a simulated setting on Saturday.
- Lefty Tyler Olson (10-day DL, left lat strain) completed back-to-back Minor League rehab outings on Friday and Saturday with Triple-A Columbus and met with Francona on Monday. The Indians are currently weighing whether the next step for Olson will be activation or having him throw another bullpen session. "He's going to be back with us pretty soon," Francona said.
- Triple-A catcher Francisco Mejia, the Indians' No. 1 prospect per MLB Pipeline, left Sunday's game after being hit on the right forearm with a pitch. The team noted that Mejia sustained a contusion and is day to day.

"He's OK," Francona said. "He had gotten hit the day before in the same spot catching, and he had gotten hit in the same spot a few days before that. So, I think it just hurts."

### **Jones, Longo among Monday's top prospects**

- No. 100 overall prospect Nolan Jones (Indians' No. 4) connected on his 11th home run in a 3-for-3, three-RBI performance for Class A Lake County. The 20-year-old third baseman is having a strong full-season debut at the plate, with a .275/.382/.442 batting line over 72 games in the Midwest League, though the jury is still out on whether Jones and his 6-foot-4 frame can stick at the hot corner, where he's committed 16 errors in 61 games.
- Indians No. 28 prospect Mitch Longo's four RBIs and season-high four hits proved the difference in Class A Advanced Lynchburg's 6-3 win over Potomac. The 23-year-old outfielder connected on a solo homer, his sixth, in his first at-bat and added three singles to finish 4-for-4 with two runs scored. The multihit effort was Longo's fifth in his past six games, during which he's improved his season average from .284 to .300.

### **Covering the Bases: Game 89**

**by Jordan Bastian**

FIRST: It is no secret at this point that Josh Tomlin is revered inside the Indians' clubhouse.

The respect for the veteran pitcher exists among his teammates, but reaches through the coaches' room, manager's office and throughout the entire organization. Someone of Tomlin's skill-set does not become the longest-tenured player in the franchise without a high level of appreciation for his impact beyond the diamond.

That is what makes what is happening on the field so difficult for Cleveland at the moment.

On Monday night, the bullpen door swung open in the ninth and Tomlin trotted out to the mound for the third consecutive day in a row. Never before had the pitcher worked in three straight games. Right now, the Indians are trying anything they can to get Tomlin back on track.

A breaking point could be coming, though.

In the wake of the loss to the Reds, who received a two-run homer from Scott Schebler during Tomlin's inning, manager Terry Francona was asked about the level of frustration over the pitcher's persistent struggles. Here was Francona's succinct response.

"I think he's fighting some stuff," Francona said. "We'll visit with him a little bit."

The manager offered nothing more, leaving only speculation rather than conclusions. Does that mean Tomlin is "fighting" something physically? Could there be a trip to the disabled list in the pitcher's future? Or, is Tomlin "fighting" something mechanically that he is frantically trying to sort out. A third outing in a row would seem to speak to the latter.

In an extremely quiet clubhouse postgame, Tomlin said his delivery could certainly be one of the problems right now.

"I think so. I don't really know," Tomlin said. "When you're going like this, it's tough to put a finger on one specific thing. You get behind a guy and you thought you made a pretty good pitch, and they still put it in play or it still finds a hole or it's over the fence. That's just where I'm at right now.

"It's frustrating, but after tonight, I'll come back tomorrow and try to find a way to get better. That's the only thing I can do, just try to figure out what I'm doing—either mentally, physically, whatever the case may be—and try to get it figure out as quickly as I can."

Within that quote, you'll see one of the reasons Tomlin's teammates respect him as much as they do.

"I mean, that's kind of the coolest part," Mike Clevinger said. "He'll be right back here tomorrow, working his [tail]off. That's Josh Tomlin. He's the Little Cowboy, man. He's the reason we were where we were the last two years, and people seem to overlook that, even with his rough stretches.

"If you didn't see what he did in October, even down the stretch, you're missing a big, big piece. I mean, he works too hard not to find it back, so I think we all have faith in him."

No Tribe fan will forget Tomlin's incredible run throughout the 2016 postseason. Without him, Cleveland doesn't reach the World Series. Last year, the righty got off to an abysmal start, but then found his rhythm down the stretch and was a key part of the Indians' 102-win campaign.

All of that said, there is no escaping the ugly truth that the numbers currently put on display.

Most HR allowed in MLB

24: Jakob Junis (101.2 IP)

22: Barolo Colon (100.2 IP)

21: Cole Hamels (103 IP)

21: Josh Tomlin (49 IP)

Highest HR/9 MLB history

(minimum 40 IP)

3.86: Josh Tomlin, 2018 (21 in 49 IP)

3.40: Jered Weaver, 2017 (16 in 42.1 IP)

3.26: Brian Matusz, 2011 (18 in 49.2 IP)

3.15: Lance Cormier, 2007 (16 in 45.2 IP)

2.93: Curt Young, 1985 (15 in 46 IP)

In the ninth inning, Tomlin entered with Cincinnati holding a seemingly commanding 5–1 lead. The pitcher got ahead, 0–1, to Billy Hamilton, who then sent a pitch to shallow center for a single. Tomlin got ahead, 0–1, to Schebler, who then capped off a four-hit night by depositing the next pitch over the wall in right to put the Indians down, 7–1.

On another night, maybe that's not that big of a deal. Francona gave the righty a chance to work on some things with Cleveland trailing by four runs in the final inning. The difference on Monday night was the fact that the Tribe's offense rallied for four runs in the bottom of the ninth. Suddenly, that homer loomed large in the box score.

Tomlin is a team-first player, so know that this stretch is also chewing him up inside, especially given Cleveland's ongoing search for bullpen consistency.

"It's very frustrating mentally," Tomlin said, "because you're not helping the team or doing anything to produce or help benefit this team going forward. When you're put in spots like that and you keep failing at them, it's frustrating as a whole, just for that reason. I've never put personal goals on anything—I never will—just for the simple fact of we're to try to do one thing and that's win a World Series.

"If you're not doing your personal thing to try to help the team do that, it's frustrating, no matter who you are or where you're at in your career. It's frustrating. We've come a long way to get to the position we're in—to make the playoffs, to try to be good in the playoffs and try to win the thing—and when you're out there just getting out there and not doing anything to benefit that, it's frustrating and it's mentally draining."

SECOND: Don't let the Reds' record fool you. They have featured one of baseball's most potent offenses over the past six weeks or so.

Heading into Monday's game, Cincinnati's 189 runs scored since June 1 were the second-most in MLB. The team's 117 wRC+ in that span ranked fourth in MLB and it boasted a .276/.364/.436 slash line in that time period. And, if you remember, that's with pitchers batting.

One thing Cincy does best? Hunt heaters.

"They're a really aggressive first-ball fastball hitting team," Francona said. "We've got try to slow them down a little bit, because they're ultra-aggressive."

To that end, the Reds came into Monday's game having swung at an MLB-high 801 first-pitch fastballs. They had swung at 33.6% of all fastballs on the first pitch. To frame it another way, six percent of ALL pitches seen by the Reds this season resulted in swings on first-pitch fastballs. That's tops in MLB.

The Reds' .376 average on first-pitch heaters and .621 slugging on those pitches ranked sixth and ninth, respectively, in baseball. On fastballs overall, Cincy's .277 batting average ranked seventh (MLB average: .267).

Is that what caused Clevinger trouble in his six-plus innings? In a couple spots, yes. Schebler led off the game with a single to right on a first-pitch fastball and then Tucker Barnhart delivered an RBI double on a first-pitch heater in the second.

Clevinger matched a career high with 11 strikeouts in his outing, but he allowed five runs on seven hits with three walks. Two of the free passes led off innings (second and third) and both later turned into runs. The Reds also hit .500 (6-for-12) on balls in play. And that doesn't include Joey Votto's fifth-inning solo homer.

Here is Clevinger's take on his outing:

"Just really bad two-strike pitches," said the starter. "They're really hot right now. I don't want to downplay what they're doing over there offensively, but it was almost like I was leading them to their barrel. So like, I'd throw really good pitches, pitch 0–2. When it's 0–0, get swing and misses, and then throw a concrete mixer in there, trying to make sure I get it away or something and then just found their barrel.

“So, it was almost like, ‘Here’s the good one, here’s the good one. All right, here’s the terrible one.’ That’s kind of how the night went. They took advantage of every ball I threw over the middle of the plate. I think they batted .500 tonight on balls in play or something like that. I made good pitches, but it seemed like every single one was under a magnifying glass, every miss. That inconsistency can’t happen.”

Clevinger cited his fourth-inning battle with Jesse Winker as an example:

Clevinger started Winker off with a slider low for ball one and then fired an inside fastball that was fouled off for strike one. On a 1–1 count, Clevinger came back with a heater low in the zone and got a called strike to get to a 1–2 count. Then, the pitcher fired a slider to nearly the identical location and Winker roped it into right for an RBI double.

“The Winker at-bat that stands out at me,” Clevinger said. “Had him in the palm of my hand and then just gave it up.”

THIRD: In the first three innings, this Reds-Tribe game was a defensive highlight reel.

First, you had Tyler Naquin making a jaw-dropping diving catch in deep right field to rob Scooter Gennett. Take a look:

<https://medium.com/media/50e0da4acef91281884d77cd7843a24f/href>

Said Clevinger: “I mean that was actually really similar to the one [Bradley] Zimmer made last year in center. You’re going to see one to three of those a year like that. I’m just grateful it’s always when I’m on the mound, it seems like. I don’t want that to get overlooked.

“They play so hard behind me it seems like, every time I’m out there, and I always appreciate that. Without them, with whatever punch-outs, I would have had six or seven earned runs if they weren’t going all out for me.”

In the third inning, Indians catcher Yan Gomes threw out Schebler from his knees on a stolen-base attempt. Check it out:

<https://medium.com/media/b625170011f5cc23843ca0bd95b304ca/href>

And Greg Allen turned in a wall-slamming leaping catch to rob Adam Duvall in the second inning. Here’s the video of that one:

<https://medium.com/media/ec33bdc5efdb9a4d5846ffd26282ed60/href>

My favorite gem of the night actually came via the Reds. Jose Ramirez chopped a pitch to Joey Votto, but the ball nicked off the first baseman’s glove. Gennett was heading to back up Votto on the play, but had to lunge in the opposite direction to try to grab the deflected ball.

Gennett made a bare-handed grab and fired to first just in time to get Ramirez. At least, the call stood after a replay review. It was close enough that, had Ramirez been deemed safe, that ruling may have stood, too. Take a look:

HOME: Two relievers who are surely on the Tribe’s radar with the July 31 Trade Deadline looming are Amir Garrett and Raisel Iglesias of the Reds. Cleveland got a first-hand look at the pitchers on Monday and, well, the Indians won this round.

I don’t think the Indians are crossing their names off their wishlist, but...

Garrett took over for Anthony DeSclafani after the starter’s seven shutout innings, gave up a single and then breezed through Michael Brantley, Ramirez and Edwin Encarnacion for the escape. In the ninth, it didn’t go as well. He walked Yonder Alonso and then yielded a two-run homer to Jason Kipnis.

That shot by Kipnis ended an 0-for-17 skid with runners on base for the Indians, going back to the sixth inning on Sunday.

That trimmed the Reds’ lead to 7–3 and brought Tanner Rainey in from Cincinnati’s bullpen. He allowed a double to Gomes and wound up in a one-out, runners-on-the-corners jam after a single by Greg Allen. With a save situation at hand, it was Iglesias’ turn.

Francisco Lindor came through with a sac fly and then Brantley ripped a pitch to deep right-center, where the Reds outfielders struggled to quickly corral the ball, allowing Allen to score from first. Suddenly, the deficit was down to two runs.

Iglesias ended the comeback by striking out Ramirez.

“If you can get the tying run to the plate,” Francona said. “especially with Jose hitting, you give yourself a chance. You want to win. If you don’t win, you want to certainly make them use their closer. Maybe it helps us win tomorrow or the next day.”

### **Tito and Brantley pregame minutiae: July 9 by Jordan Bastian**

Q: What did it mean to you to be named to the All-Star team again?

Brantley: “It’s great, just to go out there and represent the Cleveland Indians. It’s a great group of guys that we have going. It’s an honor. It’s a blessing. And I don’t take it for granted. I’m very fortunate and blessed to be in this situation and very appreciative of all the votes.”

Q: How much more fun will it be to have four of your teammates there with you?

Brantley: “It makes it a lot of fun. My first year, I was by myself. I was a lot more quiet. Now, you can joke with the guys. You have your boys with you. You get to enjoy the experience a little bit more.”

Q: What’s been the key to staying on the field this year for you?

Brantley: "The key? I don't know if there's a special key. At the same time, I'm coming in and taking care of my body the best I can, just like I do every year. I'm doing the same preparations and making sure I go out there and do the best I can for my team as soon as I get on the field."

Q: When you make an All-Star team, do you get much of a break at all?

Brantley: "Not really, but at the same time, you don't take it for granted. It's a lot of hard work that goes into it in order to be going to this game. So, it is what it is. But, at the same time, you've got to enjoy it the best you can, especially when you're going with the group of guys that we have in this locker room. That makes it even that much more special."

Q: Is this selection any more special to you than the previous two?

Brantley: "I mean, I don't take it for granted. I think you've got to cherish each one for what it is. There's a lot of bumps in the road, a lot of highs, a lot of lows. You just kind of sit back when it's done and just kind of embrace it. It's not every day you get to go put on an All-Star uniform."

Q: When the Indians picked up your option, there was criticism about that decision due to all the time you missed the last two years. How happy are you to have backed up the team's belief in you to this point?

Brantley: "I'm very thankful that I'm back here in front of you guys as well. And to perform. I feel like I'm doing pretty well so far, so hopefully they made a good decision, right? At the same time, it's a blessing to be out there. It's the hard work that I put in. It's the confidence that they had in me that I was going to be able to come back, stay on the field, produce at a high level and impact this club to winning ballgames. So far, so good. We've got a long way to go still and we've got a postseason to hopefully run through and we'll see what happens then."

Q: What's it been like watching Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez develop into the stars they are today?

Brantley: "Yeah, they're phenomenal young players that come in with a smile every day and a lot of energy. I get to hit in front of one and watch one hit behind me. Great at-bats day in and day out. But, they come looking to get better every day and I think that's one of the biggest things I can say about both of them. They're never satisfied. They're always pushing the envelope and always keeping everybody up in the dugout."

Q: Lindor says you're like a dad to him...

Brantley: (laughing) "Is that good or bad?"

Q: Do you feel that old?

Brantley: "I hope not. I don't feel that old. But, at the same time, he's a young kid that was coming up and I just wanted to do whatever I could to help him out, because veterans did that for me. So, you kind of pass it down—anything that I could. Any questions that he has and to tell me or ask me and I give him the best answer I could. But, I hope I'm not a dad, yet. I mean, I have kids, but he's a little old to be my son."

Q: We saw Tyler Olson is here with the team. What's the next step for him?

Francona: "We just visited with him. He threw a side today with Carl [Willis, pitching coach]. He's doing pretty good. Maybe a little bit of stiffness, a little soreness, which is good. We kind of told him that, 'Let us talk to Chris [Antonetti] and [Mike Chernoff],' and do we activate him the next couple days? Do we ask him to throw one more time [in the Minors]? Those are some of the options. He's going to be back with us pretty soon. Whether it's tomorrow or the next day, again, [I'd prefer] to wait until we talk to the guys upstairs and see what they'd like to do. They weren't in on that conversation, but he'll be back with us pretty soon. There's nowhere for him to [pitch] Triple-A's on their break now, so he came back to check in and throw a side with us. We'll figure that out."

Did Andrew Miller throw a bullpen session today?

Francona: "Yeah, I think 29 pitches. Carl said every one's been better. I think this is his fourth one, and every one's been better. He'll throw another one on Wednesday and Saturday he may face some hitters. Like, we've even talked about doing it like at Akron, just 'cause he doesn't like facing his own guys, which you understand. That's not set in stone. He's doing OK. ... Wednesday, he's going to throw off the game mound, just so we can use some of the Statcast stuff and get some of the information that that gives. And again, [Saturday] is not etched in stone. We'll see where, see when. We'll put everybody's head together and we'll see what we think is in his best interests."

Q: What makes for a good relationship between a Major League team and a Minor League affiliate like Columbus?

Francona: "We'll, good young players is always good. But, communication and [Columbus manager Chris Tremie] and those guys do a really good job of communicating, not over-communicating. Like, when I need answer or something, I know I get an honest one from Trem, which is appreciated. We've known each other since I was at Double-A, back in the '90s, so that's good. [Steve] Karsay with the pitching or Ruben Niebla. The cooperation and the communication is outstanding. That's the biggest thing."

Q: How proud are you to have five players going to the All-Star Game?

Francona: "Very. You know, back six years now, when I came here in the winter, I remember that first press conference I said something about, 'If you're an Indians fan,' I wanted people to walk with their chest out and be proud. These are five guys that, they're really good, they do it the right way and they're great people. And it's not once. It's not done with smoke and mirrors and it's a one and done. These are now guys that

are repeating. They're All-Stars. And the fact that we got five... You can do the math. There's 30 teams and probably 60 spots, so not every team's getting five. So, it's pretty cool."

Q: Is Francisco Mejia OK after being hit on the right forearm by a pitch on Sunday?

Francona: "He's OK. He had gotten hit the day before in the same spot catching and he had gotten hit in the same spot a few days before that, so I think it just hurts."

Q: Jason Kipnis is back in the lineup, so is everything OK with the hamstring issue?

Francona: "I think staying away from him yesterday was good."

Q: What's been your impression of the Reds so far?

Francona: "You know, they started out so bad. Their record doesn't look very good, but they've played really good baseball, especially offensively. They're playing in a ballpark that's conducive to hitting, but they're taking advantage of it. Their infield—[Joey] Votto, [Jose] Peraza, [Eugenio] Suarez—they're scoring a lot of runs. Between Peraza and [Billy] Hamilton, they're going to run. They run. They run a lot. They're fast, so... And they have maybe one of the best back-end arms in baseball. They've been playing good baseball."

Q: What have you thought about Raisel Iglesias?

Francona: "Well, I mean, if the game doesn't speed up on you when you're young, a pitcher... His stuff is phenomenal. He's got three different arm slots, so he's got some deception to go with tremendous stuff. It's like [Blake] Treinen and those guys that may be in their second year. The game slows down a little bit and all of a sudden you're seeing the guys like the kid in St. Louis, [Jordan] Hicks. He was in the Midwest League last year, but he's athletic. If you're throwing 103, it probably doesn't matter what league you're playing in. I guess there's a thought that, 'If you're throwing 103 and the game's not speeding up, you're stuff's going to play,' so might as well pitch him in the Major Leagues."

Q: Is there any update on your rotation plans going into or coming out of the All-Star break?

Francona: "When it's appropriate, I'll tell you. We're just not there. We're trying to maximize our roster a little bit. I just think there'll be a time to walk through it."

Q: You guys were criticized some for picking up Michael Brantley's option over the offseason, not based on his ability as a hitter, but because he missed so much time. How pleased are you to see him perform the way he has and to see him make the All-Star team?

Francona: "Whatever he's making, it's really hard to go get that guy and for one year. It's not like somebody's going to come for one year. We were betting on him. If you're going to bet on anybody, [bet on Brantley]. We saw him first-hand, the work he was putting in to be healthy. I pulled him aside [after telling Brantley he made the All-Star team Sunday] and told him, I said, 'You take a minute and take this in, because you spent so much time back there working.' He was miserable and now he's an All-Star again. That's pretty special."

Q: This is the second year in a row the AL manager put Kevin Cash on the All-Star coaching staff...

Francona: "Maybe they think he's never going to be there on his own."

(laughter)

Francona: "I don't feel that way. I saw that. I'm glad. That's good for Cashy. He'll certainly bring some personality."

Q: Just keep him away from the hitters, right?

Francona: "They signed some kid last year [Brendan McKay], their first-round pick was from my area in Pittsburgh. I got his phone number and I told him, I said, 'When you go in there, you go up to Cash and I said you tell him, "Stay away from me as a hitter."' He goes, 'I can't say that.' I go, 'Yes you can!'"

## **Baseball | Clippers a funnel for Cleveland Indians' All-Stars**

By Adam Jardy

CLEVELAND — Michael Brantley was 22 years old and in the midst of a pair of significant changes to his professional career when he arrived at Huntington Park for the first time.

The brand-new ballpark in the Arena District was to be the new home for the recently acquired Brantley, who in 2009 was the final piece of a blockbuster trade that brought him to the Cleveland Indians organization from Milwaukee.

It was Brantley's first exposure to triple-A baseball and his first impressions of the Indians. A season and a half later, Brantley was with the Indians for good save for injury rehab appearances, and Sunday he was named to the American League All-Star team for the third time and second straight year.

"It's a hometown environment," Brantley said inside the Indians clubhouse Monday afternoon before opening a three-game series against the Cincinnati Reds. "We're right down the street from Cleveland. Your goal was to get in the car and drive two hours north and get to play for the Cleveland Indians."

"They took care of everybody down there. It was a brand-new stadium, so you felt lucky to have that type of facility to use, especially at such a young age."

He's not the only Indian able to point to his time in Columbus as having been beneficial to his career. Cleveland had five players named to the All-Star team, and all of them — pitchers Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer, third baseman Jose Ramirez, shortstop Francisco Lindor and Brantley — spent some of their maturation and development period with the Clippers.

Lindor was a first-round pick in 2011 and worked his way up the ladder from low-A ball in Mahoning Valley to eventually triple-A ball in 2014, where he played 38 games for the Clippers. Fifty-nine games into 2015, he was called up to the Indians and is now playing in his third consecutive All-Star Game after amassing 97 appearances for the Clippers.

"They've got a great fan base over there," Lindor said. "The games, people always go and support. The league is older, so you get to face older guys and guys that know what they're doing. I loved the city."

Ramirez was signed as a free agent in 2009 and likewise worked his way up, starting in rookie ball. He's making his second consecutive All-Star appearance and is the first Indians player voted into the starting lineup since Roberto Alomar and Manny Ramirez in 2000 after playing in 104 games spread across the 2014-15 seasons.

Kluber, acquired from San Diego in a three-team trade in 2010, pitched for the Clippers from 2010 to '14 and made 52 starts. He's won two Cy Young Awards and is also playing in his third consecutive All-Star Game. During the 2013 and 14 seasons, Bauer made 29 starts before being recalled for good. This is his first All-Star appearance.

"It's definitely been a goal of mine," Bauer said. "The people who are All-Stars are recognized as the best players in the game, and that's where I want to put myself in that conversation as the best pitcher in the game. It's nice to have my first half of the season be recognized with an All-Star bid."

Indians manager Terry Francona said the relationship between the Indians and Clippers is strong because of the level of communication he enjoys with manager Chris Tremie.

"Trem and those guys do a really good job of communicating and not overcommunicating," he said. "When I need an honest answer I know I get one from Trem, which is appreciated. We get reports on guys so we know what they're like: not just that they had two hits, but how their work is, how their routines are. We get pretty good information."

And now, they've gotten five All-Stars.

### **Baseball | Cleveland Indians' Andrew Miller throws in bullpen session**

By Adam Jardy The Columbus Dispatch

CLEVELAND — Injured Indians reliever Andrew Miller got some work in before Monday's home game against the Cincinnati Reds, but an exact path back to the active roster remains up for discussion.

Manager Terry Francona said that Miller threw a 29-pitch bullpen session and is showing improvement in the eyes of pitching coach Carl Willis.

"Carl said everyone's been better," Francona said. "I think this is his fourth one. He'll throw another one on Wednesday."

Miller has been on the disabled list since May 26 because of right knee inflammation. After posting a sub-2.00 earned run average in each of the last two seasons, Miller is 1-3 this season with a 4.40 ERA.

By the end of the week, Miller might throw a simulated game at a to-be-determined location.

"Saturday, he may face some hitters," Francona said. "We've talked about doing it in (double-A) Akron, because he doesn't like facing his own guys, which we understand. That's not set in stone. He's doing OK. I don't think it'll be in the cage. That's hard for everybody. Wednesday, he's going to throw off the game mound just so we can use some of the Statcast stuff and get some of the information that gives."

Likewise, left-handed relief pitcher Tyler Olson is progressing from an injury and will force a decision soon. Olson went on the disabled list with a left latissimus dorsi strain June 17 and threw a side session with Willis today.

"Maybe a little bit of stiffness," Francona said. "No soreness, which is good. We told him, let us talk to (the front office). Do we activate him in the next couple days? Do we ask him to throw one more time? Those are some of the options. He's going to be back with us pretty soon. Whether it's (Tuesday), the next day, I'll defer to wait until we talk to the guys upstairs and see what they'd like to do. He'll be back with us pretty soon."

This season, Olson is 1-1 with a 7.27 ERA in 28 appearances.

Ohio Cup



Monday marks the first game between the Indians and Reds in the 21st annual Ohio Cup. Inside the Indians clubhouse, players were given red T-shirts with the slogan, "The Land vs The 'Nati" written in white letters.

Indians players downplayed the notion of the series being a true rivalry.

"They're not in our division," shortstop Francisco Lindor said. "They're on the other side (in the National League). It's not a rivalry. The fans, they're both from Ohio. You've got the Cincinnati fans, the Indians fans, but there's no rivalry. I don't see it like that. I see it as another team we've got to go out there and beat. Regardless of if it's Cincinnati or someone else, we've got to go out there and compete and try to win."

The Reds are 36-36 since they fired manager Bryan Price and pitching coach Mack Jenkins and made bench coach Jim Riggleman the interim manager. Since June 10, Cincinnati is 17-8, tied for the third-best record in baseball during that time.

"They started out so bad that their record doesn't look very good, but they've played really good baseball, especially offensively," Francona said. "They're playing in a ballpark that's conducive to that, but they're taking advantage of it. And their infield: (Joey) Votto, (Jose) Peraza, (Eugenio) Suarez, they're scoring a lot of runs. Between Peraza and (Billy) Hamilton, they're going to run. They run a lot. They have one of the best back-end arms in baseball and they've been playing good baseball."

The Ohio Cup also features a most outstanding player. Previous winners include Cleveland's Jason Kipnis (2015) and Cincinnati's Adam Dunn (2008).

Lindor, who said he didn't know there was such an award, immediately had a prediction for this year's winner.

"Jose (Ramirez) will get it," he said.

Quotable

"No, I'm not. I can be better than I am right now. I'm pitching well and I'm happy about that, for sure, but there's always things you can get better at and things I plan to get better at." — Indians starting pitcher Trevor Bauer, when asked if he's pitching his best right now.

### **Reds 7, Indians 5 | Reds roll behind Scott Schebler home run, 3 RBI**

By Adam Jardy

CLEVELAND — Scott Schebler is serving as Cincinnati's leadoff hitter while the Reds, as interim manager Jim Riggleman put it, are "searching a little bit" for the right player.

Time will tell if Schebler will be Mr. Right for the Reds. On Monday night at Progressive Field in the opening game of the Ohio Cup, he was Mr. Good Enough For Tonight. Schebler singled on the first pitch of the game to set an early tone and went 4 for 5 with a two-run home run as the Reds held off a late Indians rally to win 7-5 in front of 22,561 fans.

The win ended a two-game losing streak for the Reds and handed the Indians a third straight loss.

"I love the way our guys are competing and getting after it after a really tough series in Chicago," Riggleman said. "To go out there and compete and do what we did, I'll take it just like it was. Really good team effort."

The Reds entered the game having lost 15 of their last 17 at Progressive Field. But they never trailed against Indians starter Mike Clevinger (7-4), who tied a career high with 11 strikeouts but departed after one batter in the seventh inning and the Reds leading 3-1. Tucker Barnhart hit an RBI double to right-center in the second inning and Jesse Winker had an RBI double and Barnhart singled in a run in the fourth.

Yonder Alonso snapped Cleveland's 42-inning home run drought in the fourth with a 352-foot blast to right field to make it a 3-1 deficit in the bottom of the fourth. Joey Votto answered in the fifth with a two-out, 392-foot home run to left-center after Clevinger had struck out the first two batters of the inning. Clevinger was ahead in the count 1 and 2 before Votto worked the count full.

In the seventh, Billy Hamilton singled, stole second, advanced to third on a throwing error by Gomes and scored on a Schebler single. Schebler provided needed breathing room with a 390-foot homer against Josh Tomlin in the ninth inning.

The Indians, who were 0 for 12 with runners on base through the first eight innings, rallied in the bottom of the ninth. Jason Kipnis hit a two-run home run just inside the right-field foul pole to make it 7-3 and chase reliever Amir Garrett. He was relieved by Tanner Rainey, who was greeted by a double to right from Gomes as Schebler hesitated before breaking in on the looping liner.

Greg Allen's bloop one-out single to left chased Rainey and brought Raisel Iglesias to the mound. Francisco Lindor flied to left to score Gomes with two outs, and with Allen running on the pitch Brantley doubled to right-center to score the center fielder. That brought the tying run to the plate in Jose Ramirez.

Iglesias struck him out on three pitches for his 18th save.

Reds starter Anthony DeSclafani (4-1) went a season-high seven innings before the bullpen made for a nervy ninth inning.

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"I was just throwing a lot of fastballs, honestly," DeSclafani said. "I honestly didn't think my off-speed stuff was too effective. I got a lot of outs with four-seamers away and throwing some four-seamers in. Getting through that seventh inning felt really good. I hadn't done that in awhile."

### **DeSclafani allows 1 run, Schebler homers; Reds top Indians**

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Anthony DeSclafani gave the Cincinnati Reds seven strong innings Monday night.

Raisel Iglesias made sure they hung on in a tense ninth for a 7-5 win over the Cleveland Indians.

DeSclafani (4-1) allowed one run and Scott Schebler was 4 for 5 with a homer for Cincinnati, which took the opener of the team's annual battle for the Ohio Cup and sent the AL Central leaders to their third straight loss.

Cincinnati took a 7-1 lead into the ninth, but needed its closer to seal the win.

"We certainly were hanging on the edge there, but he got the job done," interim manager Jim Riggleman said. "I love the way our guys are competing and this was a good solid game."

Jason Kipnis hit a two-run homer in the ninth off Amir Garrett, cutting the lead to 7-3. Tanner Rainey allowed two hits and recorded an out before Iglesias relieved.

Francisco Lindor's sacrifice fly and Michael Brantley's RBI double made it a two-run game, but Iglesias struck out All-Star Jose Ramirez on three pitches for his 18th save.

"I'd rather not be down six, but if you can get the tying run to the plate, especially with Jose hitting, you give yourself a chance," Indians manager Terry Francona said.

All-Star first baseman Joey Votto also homered and Cincinnati improved to 9-2 against American League teams. The Reds are 37-36 since Riggleman replaced Bryan Price on April 19.

DeSclafani (4-1) held the Indians to five hits. Yonder Alonso's solo homer broke Cleveland's 17-inning scoreless streak in the fourth.

DeSclafani, making his seventh start, strained his left oblique in spring training and began the season on the 60-day disabled list. The right-hander missed last season because of a sprained elbow ligament and made his longest outing in two years.

"That was great for me, getting through the seventh inning," DeSclafani said. "It was kind of a milestone since I've come back and felt real good."

Votto hit a fifth-inning home run off Mike Clevinger (7-4), who matched a career high with 11 strikeouts in six-plus innings. Cleveland's right-hander allowed five runs and needed two outstanding defensive plays to keep the Indians in the game.

Schebler had an RBI single in the seventh and a two-run homer in the ninth.

Tucker Barnhart's RBI double put Cincinnati ahead in the second. Jesse Winker had an RBI double in the fourth that was followed by Barnhart's run-scoring single.

Schebler singled on the game's first pitch, but was nearly picked off with Jose Peraza batting. Schebler went back to the bag standing up on Clevinger's pickoff throw and was called out by James Hoye. The Reds challenged the play and the call was overturned.

Clevinger struck out the next two hitters and Tyler Naquin robbed Scooter Gennett of a run-scoring hit with a diving catch on the warning track in right.

Barnhart's double scored Eugenio Suarez, who drew a leadoff walk in the second. Greg Allen crashed into the center field wall while making a leaping catch of Adam Duvall's drive.

"They're really hot right now," Clevinger said. "I don't want to downplay what they're doing offensively, but it was almost like I was leading them to the barrel. It's kind of how the night went."

Votto hit his 266th career homer, moving into second place among Canadian-born players in MLB history and passed Matt Stairs. Larry Walker holds the record with 383.

### **LOOKING GOOD**

Gennett, the Reds' All-Star second baseman, turned in a highlight-reel play in the third after Ramirez's hard grounder glanced off Votto's glove. Gennett went to shallow right field to back up the play, stopped, turned around to make a diving barehand grab and threw Ramirez out from his knees.

### **TOUGH NIGHT**

Josh Tomlin's rocky season continued when he gave up Schebler's two-run homer in the ninth. Tomlin has allowed 21 homers in 49 innings this season.

#### TRANSITION TIME

Reds RHP Homer Bailey (right knee inflammation), moving into a relief role, tossed two scoreless innings on a rehab assignment with Triple-A Louisville on Sunday. He went 1-7 with a 6.68 ERA in 12 starts with Cincinnati before going on the disabled list on June 2.

"I know he's gone into this situation leery about how it will work, coming out of the bullpen," Riggles said. "Guys like (Dennis) Eckersley and (John) Smoltz have made this move before, but they did it in spring training to get ready for the year, so this is more of a challenge for Homer."

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: LHP Andrew Miller (sore right knee) might face hitters in a simulated game Saturday. He threw 29 pitches in a bullpen session Monday and will throw off the mound again Wednesday. Miller has been out since May 26.

#### UP NEXT

Reds RHP Sal Romano (5-8, 5.40 ERA) takes on Indians RHP Trevor Bauer (8-6, 2.45 ERA). Bauer, named to the All-Star team Sunday, is seeking his MLB-record seventh straight quality start with at least eight strikeouts and zero homers allowed.

#### Indians Notes: Gamble on Michael Brantley paying off for Tribe and outfielder

**Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** | Published on July 9, 2018 | Updated 6:30 a. m.

CLEVELAND — The Indians gambled when they exercised an \$11 million option on off-injured left fielder Michael Brantley in the offseason.

Both sides are cashing in.

"We were betting on him," manager Terry Francona said of Brantley, who has proved again that when healthy he is one of the game's best pure hitters. "We saw him firsthand, the work he was putting in to be healthy. I pulled him aside (Sunday), though, and I said, 'You take a minute and take this in because you spent so much time back there working.' He was miserable and now he's an All-Star again. That's pretty special."

"I feel like I'm doing pretty well so far, so hopefully they made a good decision, right?" said Brantley, whose .306 batting average through Sunday ranked eighth in the American League, while his 19-game hitting streak accounted for the longest in the majors. "At the same time, it's a blessing to be out there. It's the hard work that I put in. It's the confidence that they had in me that I was going to be able to come back, stay on the field, produce at a high level and impact this club."

"So far, so good. We've got a long way to go still and we've got a postseason to hopefully run through and we'll see what happens then."

For the second straight season, Brantley will be joined by four teammates at the All-Star Game, including Francisco Lindor — a rising superstar who Brantley has mentored since Lindor arrived in the majors during the middle of 2015.

Lindor affectionately calls Brantley, "Daddy."

"He's a young kid that was coming up and I just wanted to do whatever I could to help him out, because veterans did that for me," Brantley said. "So you kind of pass it down — anything that I could. Any questions that he has and I give him the best answer I could."

"But I hope I'm not a dad, yet. I mean, I have kids, but he's a little old to be my son."

There's no doubt Francona feels like a proud papa when it comes to the All-Star representatives — Brantley, Lindor, Jose Ramirez, Corey Kluber and Trevor Bauer.

"Ya know, back six years (ago) when I came here in the winter, I remember that first press conference I said something about, if you're an Indians fan, I wanted people to walk with their chest out and be proud," Francona said. "These are five guys that, they're really good, they do it the right way and they're great people."

"And it's not done with smoke and mirrors and it's a one-and-done. These are now guys that are repeating. They're All-Stars. And the fact that we got five, you can do the math. There's 30 teams and probably 60 spots, so not every team's getting five. So it's pretty cool."

"It's a great group of guys that we have going," Brantley said. "It's an honor. It's a blessing. And I don't take it for granted. I'm very fortunate and blessed to be in this situation and very appreciative of all the votes."

"There's a lot of bumps in the road, a lot of highs, a lot of lows. You just kind of sit back when it's done and just kind of embrace it. It's not every day you get to go put on an All-Star uniform."

#### Miller moment

Andrew Miller (right knee inflammation) threw a 29-pitch bullpen session Monday at Progressive Field.

"(Pitching coach) Carl (Willis) said every one's been better," Francona said. "I think this is his fourth one, and every one's been better."

Miller, who will not be activated until after the All-Star break, is scheduled to throw from the mound Wednesday. Francona said Miller would throw again Saturday, possibly facing some hitters in a simulated game with Double-A Akron.

The left-hander, who has made only 17 appearances, has been sidelined since May 26 in the midst of his second trip to the disabled list this season.

\*\* Fellow lefty Tyler Olson (right lat strain) also threw a bullpen session and, according to Francona, is close to leaving the injured list, which he has been on since June 17.

Minor detail

Triple-A Columbus catcher/DH Eric Haase was named International League player of the week, hitting .346 with two homers, four doubles and eight RBIs.

Haase, a seventh-round draft pick in 2011, was batting .235 with nine homers and 40 RBIs in 76 games for the Clippers through Sunday.

Roundin' third

Lindor joined Hall of Famer Lou Boudreau as the only shortstops in franchise history to be selected to three straight All-Star Games.

Ramirez is the first Indians third baseman elected to start in consecutive All-Star Games since Al Rosen in 1953-54.

Kluber is the first Cleveland pitcher to be selected to three straight All-Star Games since Doug Jones from 1988-90, and he is the first starting pitcher to accomplish the feat since Sam McDowell was named to four straight from 1968-71.

### **Reds 7, Indians 5: Too little, too late for Tribe in series-opening loss to Cincinnati**

CLEVELAND — Mike Clevinger wasn't at his best and the Indians offense was at its worst for much of Monday night at Progressive Field.

It added up to a 7-5 defeat in the series opener against intrastate rival Cincinnati — Cleveland's third straight loss following a five-game winning streak.

The Reds tagged Clevinger for five earned runs — matching a season high — on seven hits and three walks over six-plus innings. The right-hander equaled a season high with 11 strikeouts, but surrendered runs in four of the seven innings he appeared and allowed the leadoff batter to reach in five of them.

"They're a really aggressive, first-ball fastball hitting team," manager Terry Francona said of the last-place Reds, who improved to 9-2 in interleague play. "(Clevinger) made some mistakes with his fastball and he paid for that. But he had a lot of swing-and-miss, too, especially with his breaking ball, just trying to slow them down a little bit because they're ultra-aggressive, especially fastball, and they took some pretty healthy swings with his fastball."

"They took advantage of every ball I threw over the middle of the plate," Clevinger said. "I think they batted .500 tonight on balls in play or something like that. (I) made good pitches, but it seemed like every single one was under a magnifying glass, every miss. That inconsistency can't happen."

"There were a few first-pitch hits, but I think for the most part they were just barreling balls with two strikes. I was not making good pitches and they were taking full advantage of it the whole game."

Had Clevinger, who was in the conversation to join five teammates in the upcoming All-Star Game in Washington, pitched better, it may not have mattered.

Cleveland's offense continued to scuffle, managing just a run against Reds right-hander Anthony DeSclafani, who entered his seventh start with a 5.08 ERA.

The Indians, who scored their lone run off DeSclafani on Yonder Alonso's 13th homer in the fourth inning, have been limited to eight runs over their last three games.

"He was getting his fastball past our barrel enough where he could throw the breaking ball," Francona said. "We just weren't squaring up a lot of his fastballs."

Of the eight runs the Indians have scored in three straight losses, half of them came in the ninth inning, as they rallied against Cincinnati's bullpen.

Alonso drew a leadoff walk and scored when Jason Kipnis followed with his eighth homer. After Yan Gomes doubled and moved to third on Greg Allen's one-out base hit, the Reds were forced to employ right-hander Raisel Iglesias, their top-notch closer.

Francisco Lindor scored Gomes with a sacrifice fly and Michael Brantley plated Allen with a double to the gap in right-center to bring Cleveland within two runs.

Iglesias recovered quickly, striking out Jose Ramirez on three pitches to earn his 18th save in 21 opportunities.

"I'd rather not be down six, but if you can get the tying run to the plate, especially with Jose hitting, you give yourself a chance," Francona said. "You want to win. If you don't win, you want to certainly make them use their closer. Maybe it helps us win tomorrow or the next day."

Though it didn't seem significant at the time, another rough outing from Josh Tomlin cost Cleveland. He allowed a two-run homer to Scott Schebler in the top of the ninth.

"I think he's fighting some stuff," Francona said of Tomlin, who has surrendered 21 homers over only 49 innings.

"I don't really know (what's wrong)," said Tomlin, who lost his spot in the rotation and is in jeopardy of being removed from the big league roster. "When you're going like this, it's tough to put a finger on one specific thing. You get behind a guy and you thought you made a pretty good pitch and they still put it in play or it still finds a hole or it's over the fence. That's just where I'm at right now. It's frustrating."

### **Captains run win streak to three against Whitecaps**

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

Oscar Gonzalez had the night off July 9 when the Captains concluded a four-game series against the West Michigan Whitecaps.

It was a rare respite for Gonzalez, a 20-year-old outfielder from the Dominican Republic who has been one of the busiest and most consistent producers this season for the Captains.

Gonzalez has started 80 of the team's 88 games. He's batting .286 with 11 home runs and team-high totals of 43 RBI, 16 doubles and 144 total bases.

The Captains fared quite well without Gonzalez on July 9, scoring early and often en route to a 10-6 victory.

Signed as a non-drafted free agent in July 2014, the 6-foot-2, 180-pound Gonzalez began to turn heads in 2016 with the rookie-league Arizona Indians. He batted .303 with eight home runs and 26 RBI in 40 games.

With short-season Mahoning Valley in 2017, he batted .283 with three home runs and 34 RBI to earn New York-Penn League All-Star honors.

Gonzalez said he started playing baseball at age 6 in his hometown, San Cristobal, a city on the Dominican Republic's southern coast with a population of about 275,000.

"When you're a little kid, you always dream of being in the big leagues. That was my dream," he said.

By the time he was signed by the Indians, Gonzalez had made the move from shortstop to outfield. This season, he has started 74 games in left field.

"I liked shortstop, but outfield is better. I take pride in playing defense," he said.

Gonzalez plays with a sense of purpose, verve and, often, a smile on his face.

"I love this game," he said. "I try to help my team win in every way I can. That's the most important thing."

While he said his goal is "to make it to the big leagues with the Indians and get there fast," Gonzalez understands the climb through the minor leagues is a necessary part of the process. He is working hard on his command of English to help speed that process.

"It absolutely helps me be a better player. This is America.. You have to learn English," he said.

Gonzalez said he stays in daily contact with his family in the Dominican Republic that includes his father, Oscar, mother, Fiol, three sisters and two brothers.

When he's back home, Gonzalez said his favorite pastime is going to the shore of the Caribbean Sea and fishing for Mero, a sea bass with rich texture and a sweet flavor.

The Captains improved to 9-10 in the second half of the Midwest League season with their third straight victory and fifth in the last seven games.

Nolan Jones paced Lake County's offense, going 3-for-3 with a home run and three RBI. The Indians' second-round pick in the 2016 draft now has 11 home runs and 39 RBI. Captains starter Gregori Vasquez (3-4, 3.85 ERA) gave up four runs on five hits in five innings to earn the win.

The Captains are off on July 10. They begin a three-game road series in Illinois against the Peoria Chiefs on July 11. After three games in Iowa against the Cedar Rapids Royals, they'll be back at Classic Park on July 16 to begin a three-game series against the Clinton (Iowa) LumberKings.

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David Glasier

David has been a full-time writer with The News-Herald since 1984. He writes about news, sports and entertainment. He served as president of the Television Critics Association from 1993-95. Reach the author at [dglasier@News-Herald.com](mailto:dglasier@News-Herald.com) or follow David on Twitter: @nhglasier.

### **Gammons: With an eye on October, smart contending teams are going easy on their starters**

By Peter Gammons Jul 9, 2018 4

What happened to Cory Kluber could have happened anytime, from March through November. The two-time Cy Young Award winner threw seven shutout innings against Oakland. It was near the end of a record-setting heat wave; the A's have been one of the best offensive teams in the American League for nearly a month; the Indians had an 11 ½ game lead in a division where the second-best team run differential was -30; and, as everyone in Cleveland understands, this is the third straight season for this low-payroll team to win it all since the Chicago Tribune "Dewey Defeats Truman" headline. If they are going to end the jinx of José Mesa, they're going to need one of the sport's best pitchers to come up big in the postseason.

Hall of Fame manager Earl Weaver used to say, "it's practically impossible to win if you don't know how to lose—or you're afraid of losing," and Terry Francona, who will have a HOF plaque someday, gets it. The Indians' bullpen without Andrew Miller and others have forced Kluber, Trevor Bauer, Mike Clevinger and Carlos Carrasco deeper into games in the first half than Francona would prefer, knowing that after a 2017 season when they were the best team in the league and didn't make it past the Division Series, 2018 will be judged on their postseason.

The Indians lost in 11 innings. Francona did what was necessary, remembering that Kluber lost Game 5 of the ALDS to the Yankees last October. Worn? Maybe. Just one of those days? Maybe.

Things do happen. Max Scherzer left two games in the 2013 ALCS with a lead, allowing one run each time, and the Detroit bullpen blew both leads and the Red Sox won the World Series. In 1997, Mike Mussina threw a one-hit shutout for nine innings in the deciding game of the ALCS and was pulled after the ninth in a scoreless game. In the 12th inning, Tony Fernández homered off Armando Benítez and the season in which the Orioles led wire-to-wire was over.

A decade later the Indians had been up 3-1 on the Red Sox in the ALCS and hit the wall. C.C. Sabathia, who won the Cy Young and led the league in innings, pitches thrown and batters faced during the regular season, was simply baked by Game 5. He gave up eight runs, walked five and struck out just three, and Boston didn't lose another game until the following April.

What is fascinating right now, in the heat that last week produced 15-1, 17-1, 17-5, 15-3, 11-1 and 14-12 games, is how managers whose teams have a chance to make October runs have clearly held off on the whips with their horses. Now, we all understand that it's a little different in the two leagues. Barring some odd collapses, we have a pretty good idea that the Astros, Indians, Red Sox, Yankees and Mariners are going to be in the playoffs. In the National League, there are three teams in the East, two or three in the Central and two to five in the West that rightfully believe they can make the postseason.

Even with that seeming clarity, the Red Sox and Yankees will go right down to the last series of the regular season at Fenway Park fighting for the advantage first place establishes, knowing that a one-game series against Seattle's James Paxton is a 50/50 proposition. Beyond Boston's occasional struggles against left-handed pitching, there are some in the Red Sox organization who believed that the acquisition of Steve Pearce was a September move with the Yankees and Paxton in mind. In six plate appearances against Paxton, Pearce is 2-for-5 with a walk. Against J.A. Happ, often rumored to be on the Yankees radar with his 7-3 lifetime record at Fenway, Pearce had 33 plate appearances with five homers and a .357/.429/.964/1.389 slash.

A.J. Hinch last season used his starting pitching judiciously, with no starter accumulating as many as 154 innings in the regular season other than Justin Verlander, and even his 206 inning total between Detroit and Houston was only his eighth-highest total of the last decade. "I learned a lot working with A.J. and the way he handled that staff," says Alex Cora. "The starters were so fresh in October we could use (Charlie) Morton and (Lance) McCullers out of the bullpen, and they were great."

Cora went into his first managerial season with that in mind. Clearly, Aaron Boone figured this out long ago. Francona knows. Davey Martinez learned from Joe Maddon, who is a great believer in proper rest over an entire season.

Now, start with the decline of the innings-eating starters, with this list:

2017: 15 starters threw 200 innings, two threw 210  
2016: 15 threw 200, nine threw 210  
2015: 28 threw 200, 14 threw 210  
2014: 34 threw 200, 17 threw 210  
2008: 34 threw 200, 18 threw 210, 8 threw 220.

This season, there are 11 pitchers presently on pace to throw 200 innings. There are only another five on paces to be close to that total.

Then see how the aforementioned managers have used their elite starters:

—Boone has started Luis Severino with an extra day (five days' rest, rather than on the fifth day) 10 times, and he's thrown a maximum of 112 pitches twice.

—Hinch has started Verlander seven times with at least an extra day's rest.

—Francona has started Kluber seven times with at least an extra day.

—Cora has started Sale seven times with more than four days' rest, even with what currently are three Red Sox starters on the disabled list.

—Martinez has also had Stephen Strasburg on the DL, and his lineup at times slumping, during what is shaping up as a serious race with the Phillies and Braves — and he has given Max Scherzer an extra day six times. It should be noted that as Aaron Nola has risen to the level of the elite, Gabe Kapler has held back and Nola is on a pace for less than 210 innings.

Granted, this is the bullpen era. But it seems the Weaver wisdom holds through. If the Angels had done that in 1977 with a mediocre team and not pounded Frank Tanana into the complete-game ground, Tanana today might be in Cooperstown. If you don't remember Tanana, at ages 21, 22 and 23 in 1975-77, he was 98-55 with a 2.53 ERA and a 735-207 strikeout-to-walk ratio. And because Nolan Ryan was so strong and prospered on three days' rest, the team did the same to Tanana in 1976 and 1977, and he was never the same, although he learned to pitch at 86-88 mph rather than the 96 he had early on, and finished his career with 240 victories. Ted Williams once said Herb Score was the best lefty he ever faced but had he faced a young Frank Tanana he'd have had to think twice.

Indians President Chris Antonetti theorizes that one reason for 180 being the new 200 innings is that most pitchers today grow up "throwing all-out from the start. It's difficult to maintain that pace. It's like the difference in approach between running 220 yards and running five miles. You can't start out sprinting and maintaining it for five miles."

Then Indians carefully monitor their starters, "but all programs are individualized. Each person's effort, recovery, body is different." Kluber is extraordinarily disciplined, right down to his concentration on mechanical perfection when he works out during the winter in Massachusetts.

"We try to give pitchers the extra day whenever we can," says Dodgers manager Dave Roberts. "These guys are so competitive, you have to protect them against themselves. A good example is Clayton (Kershaw). He's one of those people who is so competitive he'll come out throwing his first pitch at maximum effort. We need him rested and healthy in October. That's a monitoring goal."

Cora, pitching coach Dana Levangie, Brian Bannister and the Boston training staff had worked out a plan for all their starters before they got to spring training. Sale was wearing down at the end of last season; he didn't dominate against the Astros. "We wanted Chris and most of our veteran starters to get into spring training slowly," says Cora. "We didn't rush them into games quickly. When they had their throw days, in the bullpen or live BP, we had them do their conditioning, lifting and other physical work all on the same day.

"Sale right now is at an amazing elite level," Cora says. "He's throwing 97 to 100. His changeup is really getting good, his slider is almost unhittable. But what strikes me is how easy he seems to do it. He was always a max-effort guy, but right now he looks as if he's as relaxed as anyone I've ever seen. The way he throws strikes, he knows he can do what he wants with the ball, and he seems really relaxed pitching. I know the comparisons to Randy Johnson are easy to make, but I think I remember that Randy was in his late twenties when he became truly great."

It was 1993, when Johnson was 29, that he had his breakout season, going 19-8. He finished his career with 303 wins and a place among the five best left-handed pitchers who ever lived.

Chris Sale today is 29. He is on his way to his sixth season finishing in the top five in the Cy Young balloting.

Cora learned from Hinch the importance of maintaining brilliant, dominant starting pitchers. He talks to his brother Joey, who began playing with Johnson when Randy was 31, in 1995.

When it comes to starting pitchers, things do happen. Owner John Henry's personal analytics told him Jon Lester couldn't maintain his level after 30, and so he let him go to the Cubs. Next season, Henry will have to make the call on whether or not his analytics tell him Sale is on the far side of the mountain, something Cora cannot think about.

He is a rookie manager in Boston, and what he cares about is Chris Sale in October, just as Aaron Boone is a rookie manager in the Bronx doing all he can to ensure the Luis Severino in October is the Luis Severino who is neck and neck with Sale right now.

They're not starting Jim Bunning and Chris Short every other day down the stretch, like the '64 Phillies, and they won't be using Sabathia on three days' rest in consecutive starts in the final weeks, as the Brewers once did. In the end, they all know that Earl Weaver is right. You're not going to win if you're afraid to lose.

### **A Trip Around the Farm: Luis Oviedo breaks out**

By Michael Hattery 3h ago

In the player development layout, there are prospects, and then there are "prospects." The latter group is inherently unpredictable.

This is the very nature of the Dominican Summer League and the Arizona Rookie League. These are the places that the raw, the project-able, the high ceiling and nonexistent floor types begin.

Luis Oviedo was once in this situation, anchored in Arizona where key developmental steps were necessary before he could transition to one of the Indians affiliates.

Oviedo made this leap before many others do. Having just turned 19, he is facing 2018 college draftees and numerous other challenges. He is young and imposing at 6-foot-4. And now, at roughly 180 pounds, he offers the sort of athletic frame with long levers and extension that scouts dream about.

The stuff is even more exciting. Oviedo uses his length and leverage to make 92-94 mph feel like more, occasionally touching 97. He has a solid and improving feel for both a slider and a changeup. The results have been eye-popping over 28 innings pitched: 40 strikeouts, 5 walks, 14 hits and 1 earned run.

In part, Oviedo has been dominating because he is demonstrating something essential to upside: control, a tool that rarely seems to appear for young pitchers with his type of raw stuff. But more, nearly every indicator for Oviedo has been astounding, and seeing production paired with a hyped arsenal allows him to make the transition from presumptive prospect to substantive prospect.

Of course, the sample is limited, but nearly every component provides strong ground for optimism. Chris Mitchell, formerly of FanGraphs and now employed by a big-league organization, created an analytical prospect projection system called KATOH. The forecasting model incorporates different statistics and indicators, elements Mitchell's research found most effectively correlate with big-league success.

While this perhaps truncates Mitchell's work, the four key indicators he isolated as most effectively predicting future big-league success for pitchers are (in order of their weight): age of prospect as compared with competition; home run rate; strikeout rate; and walk rate. Now, how does Oviedo rate among those indicators? At just 19, he is 2 1/2 years younger than the league average in the New York-Penn League. His home run and walk rates are both elite as compared with competition. Finally, at 39.2 percent, Oviedo leads the league in strikeout rate.

He has always shown promise, but for the first time, Oviedo is showing how his arsenal can play against challenging competition. For the Indians, the results have all been positive.

#### Blue chip production

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

Nolan Jones: Jones followed up his impressive May OPS of .803 with an even better June OPS of .852, demonstrating a continually improving ability to tap into his raw power. He is a highly advanced hitter with a strong game plan every time he steps into the batter's box. A challenge promotion should come posthaste.

Will Benson: While Captains manager Luke Carlin noted a few of Benson's positive adjustments in last week's sit-down, Benson has continued to struggle, now hitting a bleak .171. His largest opponent remains his strikeouts and consistent contact authority.

Quentin Holmes: The 2017 second-round pick remains stationed in Arizona and has been out since an injury in game action June 18.

Triston McKenzie: McKenzie has been dominant since the calendar turned to July. Over two starts McKenzie has thrown 12 innings with 10 strikeouts and 3 hits. His control has been impressive, and his ability to integrate his entire arsenal has improved. The velocity is sitting at 90-93 mph at the moment.

#### Hot three hitters (last 28 days)

Name	Level	AVG	OBP	ISO	K%		
Eric Haase	Columbus (AAA)	.293	.368	.280	23.80%		
Mitch Longo	Lynchburg (A+)	.279	.330	.221	15.80%		
Bobby Bradley	Akron (AA)	.256	.296	.333	29.60%		

Hot three pitchers

Name	Level	IP	ERA	K/9	BB/9		
Henry Martinez*	Akron (AA)	24	2.25	9.40	2.30		
Kyle Nelson*	Lake County (A)	32.1	0.57	12.70	5.80		
Nick Sandlin*	Lake County (A)	3	0.00	15.00	0.00		

\*Denotes reliever status. Sandlin is a 2018 draft choice.

Photo: Luis Oviedo (Zachary L

### **The Indians, Josh Tomlin and a late-arriving breaking point**

**By Zack Meisel 2h ago 5**

Josh Tomlin packed up a red bag, pushed in his black leather chair and headed toward the exit of the home clubhouse at Progressive Field.

He'll return to the ballpark Tuesday. He'll visit with Terry Francona and Carl Willis. Maybe he'll study his mechanics on the team's supply of video evidence, not that anyone would be particularly antsy to watch replays of their own destruction.

A breaking point is approaching for Tomlin and the Indians. The fact the two sides haven't yet reached that crossroads speaks to the widespread struggles plaguing the bullpen, to Tomlin's presence in the clubhouse and to his track record at reversing course from these sorts of rough patches.

This is no ordinary funk, though. Tomlin's numbers have plummeted to unprecedented depths. And, at some point, the Indians must declare that enough is enough.



Francona indicated Monday night — after Tomlin served up a two-run homer to Reds outfielder Scott Schebler — that the right-hander was “fighting some stuff.” He didn’t elaborate, other than to say they planned to convene with the hurler. Tomlin noted some mechanical issues, not physical. He said his body feels “good,” even after pitching on three consecutive days for the first time in his career.

Let’s pore over these unsightly statistics.

The “makes you grimace” department

Tomlin owns a 6.98 ERA, the third-worst mark of any big-leaguer with at least 40 innings under his belt this season. San Diego’s Bryan Mitchell (7.08) landed on the disabled list in late June. Rangers lefty Matt Moore (also 7.08) was bounced to the bullpen in mid-June.

Tomlin’s FIP stands at 8.26, by the way.

The “cover your eyes with your hands but peek through your fingers” department

Four pitchers have surrendered 20 or more home runs this season. Tomlin is the only one who has not logged 100-plus innings. In fact, Tomlin hasn’t even cracked the 50-inning mark.

24: Jakob Junis (101 2/3 innings)  
22: Bartolo Colon (100 2/3 innings)  
21: Cole Hamels (103 innings)  
21: Josh Tomlin (49 innings)

His rate of 3.86 home runs allowed per nine innings would set a single-season record for any pitcher with at least 40 innings.

The “do not leave this tab open on your work computer” department

Opposing hitters have compiled a .300/.338/.657 slash line against Tomlin this season. That’s a .995 OPS. That .657 slugging percentage would rank second in the majors behind Mookie Betts (.674) and ahead of J.D. Martinez (.654), Jesus Aguilar (.639) and Mike Trout (.627).

The “your computer or mobile device will self-destruct after reading this stat” department

Tomlin has allowed 21 home runs in 210 at-bats, or one homer for every 10 at-bats. The all-time career record for home runs per at-bat for a qualified hitter is one homer for every 10.61 at-bats, by Mark McGwire. Babe Ruth ranks second at one homer for every 11.76 at-bats.

(Many readers have suggested that Tomlin throw to José Ramírez in the Home Run Derby next week.)

“When you’re going like this,” Tomlin said, “it’s tough to put a finger on one specific thing. You get behind a guy and you thought you made a pretty good pitch and they still put it in play or it still finds a hole or it’s over the fence. That’s just where I’m at right now.”

It’s not a velocity issue (not that that has ever mattered much to the soft-tosser). Tomlin averaged 89 mph on his fastball last month, higher than any month in 2017. He’s simply getting pummeled. His hard contact rate has crept past 40 percent.

2015: 33.2 percent  
2016: 33.9 percent  
2017: 36.2 percent  
2018: 40.1 percent

The Indians have been able to grant Tomlin a longer leash to straighten himself out because of the state of the AL Central. (They have not, however, used their standing to get a glimpse of Yandy Díaz or Francisco Mejía. Wait, wrong column. Sorry. Carry on.)

Eventually, though, the team must subtract him from the bullpen equation or, perhaps, send its longest-tenured player on a phantom DL trip. On April 30, a few days before Tomlin limped into Yankee Stadium with a 9.16 ERA, I wrote about Tomlin’s early-season struggles and his limited time to keep his grip on a rotation spot. The headline read: “The Indians, Josh Tomlin and the approaching crossroads.”

Ten weeks later, Tomlin’s performance has remained steady, which isn’t what the Indians had in mind. Thanks to a maligned bullpen, he has, incredibly, maintained a roster spot. Maybe the Indians are finally ready to re-evaluate that stance.

“The only thing I can do,” Tomlin said, “is just try to figure out what I’m doing, either mentally, physically, whatever the case may be, and try to get it figured out as quickly as I can.”

He better hurry. Time typically doesn’t wait for pitchers with those numbers.

### **Starting 9: The Indians ought to value shop at deadline**

By Travis Sawchik Jul 9, 2018 6

1: While bullpen help remains arguably the Indians’ top priority as many have noted, particularly relief arms with multiyears of control, the Indians have been connected to position players of interest where there are also needs.

According to MLB Network insider Jon Heyman, the Orioles are prepared to impending free agent Manny Machado soon, perhaps even this week. The Indians are among the contenders who have been connected to Machado, who figures to be this summer's biggest trade chip.

Jim Bowden, a contributor to both The Athletic and CBSSports.com, reports the Indians are among the eight clubs with serious interest in Machado.

Wrote Bowden last week:

"I've talked to people involved in this over the last 24 hours, and I've talked to teams. Eight teams have confirmed to me that they've had discussions with the Orioles on Machado over the last 10 days. This is heating up. I've also been told, for people that are skeptical if the Angelos family will approve a deal, I've been told they are going to approve a deal. Their intent is to trade the player. When they get the package they like, they will move him."

2: The Phillies, Cardinals, Cubs, Dodgers, Braves and Diamondbacks were cited as the other interested parties with Bowden believing the Phillies and Cardinals are the front-runners. While a Lindor-Ramírez-Machado infield is something to dream on in Cleveland, while it would bump the Indians' postseason odds up several percentage points, if the price includes a Francisco Mejía, Shane Bieber and/or Triston McKenzie, the cost is too steep for three months of control over Machado. Trading six-plus years of control of multiple promising young assets for three months of any player, even a superstar, is rarely a winning move particularly given the small sample and unpredictable nature of the postseason. The Indians have other attractive prospects like Yu Chang and Bobby Bradley they could part with more easily. But overpaying could be folly as the Indians have an easy road to a division title and bypassing the wild-card play-in game. Even with Machado, the Astros (and perhaps even the Yankees and Red Sox) would remain favored over the Indians.

3: While the Indians ought to be in search of upgrades like most contenders at the deadline, they would do well to seek more affordable players and also look internally.

There is certainly a case to be made that the Indians ought to upgrade over Jason Kipnis in the infield, who has struggled for a second consecutive season as both a defensive and offensive performer. José Ramírez's versatility to shift between second and third base gives the Indians the flexibility to seek a second or third base upgrade, and it might make more sense to target third base as more power, more offensive impact, typically resides at that position.

4: If not Machado, the ageless Adrián Beltré continues to perform at third base but he has 10-and-5 rights that allow him to block a deal. The other premier impending free agent at third base, Josh Donaldson, is nearing a return from the disabled list in Toronto, but he's dealt with a balky shoulder all season. Toronto also could deal the versatile Yangervis Solarte, who could at least upgrade the bench over Erik González. Solarte has a 105 wRC+ for his career. Mets third baseman Todd Frazier has dealt with injury this season, but he has also retained last season's walk-rate bump and is owed a modest \$9 million next season. Perhaps the Padres would listen on Christian Villanueva. The Royals would like to move Mike Moustakas, who has become more and more a one-dimensional home run threat at third base. With so many non-contenders selling this deadline, there will be cheaper opportunities to upgrade the infield if the Indians choose to do so.

5: The Indians could also look internally as Yandy Díaz has a .418 on-base mark in Triple A after posting a .454 mark there a year ago (.352 in the majors). While he has just one home run and continues to be a ground-ball machine, he simply gets on base and can play a competent third base.

6: One advantage of the Indians' significant lead in the AL Central is they can afford to experiment with young players like Díaz and Mejía if they choose to this summer.

7: That González is playing more often suggests the Indians are open to finding position-player upgrades. González is on pace to nearly double his playing time of a year ago at the major-league level. After playing sparingly in April — appearing in eight games and logging 12 plate appearances — he recorded 34 plate appearances and played 12 games each in May and June. While González is a defensive upgrade over Kipnis at second base, while he hit .430 in May, his true offensive talent is below league average.

8: While the Indians being tied to the Machado sweepstakes will of course grab attention and headlines, the outfield is arguably the greater position-player need. The problem is the outfield trade market appears to be extremely weak.

Lonnie Chisenhall's continued lower-body injury issues make right field, at least the strong side of a platoon there, a question mark that could be addressed. One of the most intriguing options available, a resurgent Shin-Soo Choo, is owed more than \$40 million, which makes his name a non-starter for the Indians unless the Rangers are willing to pick up the majority of his contract. If the Rangers did that, the prospect return would have to be significant.

Indians manager Terry Francona said late last month that Mejía, who has split his time between catcher and outfield, is not an option for the major-league outfield this season. Mejía seems reluctant to play right field where he has spent a lot of time this season in Triple A. Still, if the Indians called upon Mejía to play right, it's hard to believe he would absolutely refuse to take the position. The greater question is whether he'd hit enough to play in a corner and overcome whatever defensive challenges he has there.

9: Whether the club ought to upgrade its center field options is another question.

Greg Allen remains intriguing as he has slashed .326/.429/.434 at Triple A this season despite his major-league struggles. On the other hand, Bradley Zimmer struggled upon his demotion to Triple A and is out at least four weeks with a shoulder issue. While he might be the future of the

position, Zimmer probably cannot be counted upon the second half. If the Indians upgraded their infield, Kipnis is perhaps a candidate to slide to the outfield as he did late last season and into the postseason.

This author is still a believer in some club experimenting with Billy Hamilton as a type of super sub who would enter early in games as a pinch-runner and then remain in as center fielder. Hamilton is an elite baserunner and defender, he just can't hit. But such employment would artificially enhance his on-base percentage. Hamilton scores 44 percent of the time he reaches base. The MLB average is 30 percent.

STAT OF THE WEEK: 4.5

Trevor Bauer's AL-leading pitching WAR

STAT OF THE WEEK II: 121 1/3

Bauer's first-half innings, which ranks second to only Houston's Justin Verlander (125 2/3)

STAT OF THE WEEK III: 2.16

Bauer's MLB-best fielding independent pitching mark among qualified starters

HE SAID IT

"I should be an All-Star. I imagine I will be, and if I'm not, they didn't do it right."

— Bauer on his All-Star prospects last week. He's not wrong. And he's a first-time All-Star, though it took the commissioner's office as a last line of defense in the process to vote in the AL's pitching WAR leader.

### **Reds 7, Indians 5: 11 Walk-Off Thoughts on Josh Tomlin looking for answers, fighting mechanics and trying to contribute**

By Ryan Lewis Here are 11 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 7-5 loss to the Cincinnati Reds.

1. The Indians inserted Josh Tomlin into the ninth inning of a 5-1 game Monday night, just hoping he can work a scoreless inning, keep it close and save some work for some of the other relievers in the bullpen. That didn't happen. Billy Hamilton singled to center and Scott Schebler rifled a two-run home run to right field to extend the Reds' lead to 7-1.

2. At the time, it only seemed like another rough outing for Tomlin, who just hasn't had it this entire season. It was the 21st home run he's allowed this season in only 49 innings pitched, by far the worst ratio in baseball for those who have logged anywhere near that amount of innings. Now, there's no way of knowing what happens in a 5-1 bottom of the ninth instead of it being 7-1, or what pitchers would have been called on in what order, and so on. But, as it turns out, those two insurance runs ended up being the difference. The Indians went on to rally for four runs in the ninth, eventually bringing the tying run to the plate before Jose Ramirez struck out to end it 7-5.

3. Everything has gone wrong for Tomlin in 2018. His 3.86 HR/9 rate is the worst mark in the majors, and it isn't particularly close. The 21 home runs Tomlin has given up this season is the fourth-most in baseball, but the other three pitchers who have given up more—Jakob Junis, Bartolo Colon and Cole Hamels—have all thrown at least twice as many innings.

4. The amount of respect Tomlin's peers have for him is well known. Manager Terry Francona has called him one of the best teammates he's ever been around during his time in baseball and raves about his willingness to do whatever the team needs every chance he gets. Tomlin is a valued member of the clubhouse and the longest-tenured Indians player. That does have some value. But, on the mound, Tomlin can't find any answers, and the questions are mounting. Francona said after Monday's game that he thinks Tomlin is fighting something. Right now, Tomlin is looking at just about everything with his mechanics to try to keep the ball in the ballpark.

5. Said Tomlin: "I don't really know. When you're going like this, it's tough to put a finger on one specific thing. You get behind a guy and you thought you made a pretty good pitch and they still put it in play or it still finds a hole or it's over the fence. That's just where I'm at right now. It's frustrating, but after tonight, I'll come back tomorrow and try to find a way to get better. That's the only thing I can do, just try to figure out what I'm doing, either mentally, physically, whatever the case may be, and try to get it figure out as quickly as I can."

6. The Indians are one of the prime candidates to add a higher-end reliever prior to the non-waiver trade deadline. If they do that, it's possible this could be the end of the road for the longest-tenured player with the franchise, unless he accepted an assignment to Triple-A Columbus. The club might not have much of a choice. Thus far this season, he hasn't been able to give much value to the club, even as someone who can bring length to the bullpen—that's been the tough part for Tomlin.

7. Said Tomlin: "Personally, it's very frustrating mentally, because you're not helping the team or doing anything to produce or help benefit this team going forward. When you're put in spots like that and you keep failing at them, it's frustrating as a whole, just for that reason. I've never put personal goals on anything. I never will, just for the simple fact of we're to try to do one thing and that's win a World Series. If you're not doing your personal thing to try to help the team do that, it's frustrating, no matter who you are or where you're at in your career. It's frustrating. We've come a long way to get to the position we're in, to make the playoffs, to try to be good in the playoffs and try to win the thing, and when you're out there just getting out there and not doing anything to benefit that, it's frustrating and it's mentally draining."

8. Monday night was the first time Tomlin had pitched in three consecutive games. He's trying to work through some obvious issues, and the Indians are giving him every chance to do so. He's been pitching in Cleveland since 2010 and the last few years has been a decent bargain against market value. But, for a World Series contender, he knows he has to figure something out.

9. Said Tomlin: "My stuff felt like it was just as good the past two days. Obviously, it's not good enough. I have to come back tomorrow and figure out why it's not good enough and make that adjustment, because right now, it's not good enough. Period."

10. Mike Clevinger struck out 11, the fourth time this season he's reached double digits, but he was also hit hard for five earned runs. It would have been more if not for highlight reel plays by Tyler Naquin and then Greg Allen in the first two innings. Clevinger viewed it as that he fell behind an aggressive lineup.

11. Said Clevinger: "Just really bad two-strike pitches. They are really hot right now, I don't want to downplay what they're doing over there, but it was almost like I was leading them to their barrel. So like, I would throw really good pitches, pitch 0-2 when it's 0-0, get swing and misses, then throw a concrete mixer in there, make sure I get it away or something and then just found their barrel. It was almost like, 'Here's the good one, here's the good one, then here's the terrible one.' That's kind of how the night went. They took advantage of every ball I threw over the middle of the plate. I think they batted .500 tonight on balls in play or something like that. Made good pitches, but it seemed like every single one was under a magnifying glass, every miss. That inconsistency can't happen."

## **Reds 7, Indians 5: Indians hitters continue to struggle in loss to cross-state foes**

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The Indians couldn't muster much offense until their final at-bat and a couple of stellar defensive plays weren't enough to prevent Mike Clevinger from being knocked around in a 7-5 loss to the Cincinnati Reds Monday night at Progressive Field.

Indians hitters were stifled nearly the entire night and entered the final inning trailing 7-1. Still, the Indians (49-40) managed to bring the tying run to the plate in the form of Jose Ramirez with two outs.

Jason Kipnis belted a two-run homer to make it 7-3, Francisco Lindor added a sacrifice fly to score another run and Michael Brantley doubled in a run to cut the Reds' lead to 7-5. That brought up Ramirez, who was struck out by Raisel Iglesias to end the game as the last-moment comeback fell just short.

Before the ninth, the Indians went 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position and 0-for-12 with men on base as the Reds built a commanding lead.

Clevinger (7-4) racked up 11 strikeouts but also gave up plenty of hard contact. He was roughed up for five earned runs on seven hits and three walks in six innings. It was the fourth start this season he reached double-digit strikeouts and the second one in which he allowed five runs.

And that was with the Indians defense taking a couple of runs off the board. With a runner on first and two outs in the first inning, Reds batter Scooter Gennett rifled a ball to deep right field. Tyler Naquin, ranging back, tracked it down and made a diving, extended catch to save a run. It was perhaps the best defensive play of the year in Cleveland and left Clevinger with both hands in the air and catcher Yan Gomes offering an emphatic fist pump.

An inning later, Adam Duvall belted a ball to deep center field with a runner on second base. Greg Allen ranged back and hauled it in as he leaped into the wall, again taking a run off the board for the Reds.

The Reds (40-51) took a 1-0 lead in that second inning, though, on Tucker Barnhart's RBI double to right field to score Eugenio Suarez, who opened the inning with a walk.

Two innings later, a leadoff walk came back to bite Clevinger again. This one was drawn by Gennett, who came around to score on Jesse Winker's double to right field. Barnhart then added an RBI single to right field to make it 3-0.

The Indians' Yonder Alonso hit his 13th home run, a solo shot in the fourth, to make it 3-1. But the Reds' Joey Votto answered with his ninth home run, a solo shot the opposite way in the fifth to push the lead to 4-1.

Right fielder Scott Schebler added onto the lead in the seventh and ninth innings with a run-scoring single off Marc Rzepczynski and a home run off Josh Tomlin. It was the 21st home run Tomlin has allowed this season.

Reds starter Anthony DeSclafani (4-1) allowed one run on five hits and two walks with three strikeouts.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 07.10.2018

## **Indians reportedly still interested in Orioles star Manny Machado; Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor address Home Run Derby**

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The Indians remain one of the teams connected to Baltimore Orioles star Manny Machado, but some roadblocks remain to finding a deal that works for both sides.

The Indians and Orioles reportedly discussed a potential deal involving the impending free-agent superstar prior to the season. Those conversations are still ongoing, according to Ken Rosenthal of the Athletic, who reported that the Los Angeles Dodgers and Milwaukee Brewers are the most serious contenders to land Machado, while the Indians are still in the mix. Jim Bowden reported with CBS Sports that at least eight teams are still negotiating terms.

Machado is eligible to become a free agent after this season and is sure to command a hefty salary on the open market, making him a short-term rental, especially in the Indians' case. Historically, and based on what president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said recently, this would go against the Indians' operating procedures as a club looking to acquire controllable assets for multiple seasons, as their contention window stands a good chance of running through at least 2020 or 2021.

The Indians have shown to be aggressive while contending, partly evidenced by the trade for Andrew Miller at the 2016 deadline, but that was still far from a three- or four-month rental. Pulling the trigger on a deal like this, which would likely require one or more of the club's top prospects — a hefty price for a half-season gamble — would be a surprise but not necessarily impossible for a team that knows it's in the middle of its contention window.

Machado, who just turned 26, is hitting .313 with a .943 OPS, 21 home runs, 19 doubles and 60 RBI. He'd likely play third base if acquired by the Indians, moving Jose Ramirez to second base and leaving Jason Kipnis — if he isn't included in the deal — possibly destined for the outfield.

Home Run Derby?

The Indians are sending five All-Stars to Washington, D.C., but there's only one who might take part in the Home Run Derby.

Ramirez (24) and Francisco Lindor (23) entered Monday's games ranked fourth and fifth, respectively, in the American League in home runs. Both would thus be natural candidates to participate in the Home Run Derby on July 16.

When asked on Sunday if Ramirez would enter the Derby, he grinned and said, "We'll be revealing that information a little bit later."

Lindor, though, had a clear answer as a shortstop who has claimed he isn't a power hitter despite the solid numbers he's put up for several years.

"No, not me," Lindor said. "[Ramirez is] more of a power hitter than me. He's got 24, I've got 23. Big time."

Almost there

Left-handed reliever Tyler Olson is nearly ready to come off the disabled list, according to manager Terry Francona.

Olson was placed on the 10-day DL on June 17 with a strained left lat muscle. The Indians are still going through their options in terms of his activation date or if he'll continue to throw for a stretch. With Triple-A now on its break, Olson was back in Cleveland on Monday.

"He's going to be back with us pretty soon," Francona said. "Whether it's tomorrow or the next day, again, [I would prefer] to wait until we talk to the guys upstairs and see what they'd like to do. Triple-A's on their break now, so he came back to check in and throw a side with us. We'll figure that out."

Miller, on the DL with right knee inflammation since May 26, still has some time left before the Indians even consider activating him, but the reports from his side sessions have been all positive.

"[Pitching coach Carl Willis] has said every one has been better," Francona said. "He'll throw another one Wednesday, and Saturday he may face some hitters. ... That's not set in stone."

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## **Remembering Chico Carrasquel and his 7-RBI game for the Indians**

By Marc Bona,

CLEVELAND, Ohio - A week ago, Francisco Lindor tallied seven RBIs against the Kansas City Royals. Sixty-two years earlier, another Indians shortstop - Chico Carrasquel - did the same thing, also at Kansas City.

On July 2, Lindor became the first Indian to drive in seven runs since Brandon Moss did it against Detroit on April 24, 2015. Carrasquel was the last Indians shortstop to record seven RBIs in a game.

Carrasquel's septet came April 26, 1956, in Kansas City, but against the Athletics, who would move to Oakland a decade later. He went 2-4 and scored three runs.

An All-Star in his three previous seasons with the White Sox, Carrasquel entered the game hitting .120. On the first pitch thrown to him in the third inning, he smacked a grand slam over the left-field wall. He added a double with the bases loaded in the fifth. Indians starter Early Wynn, who allowed only four hits, retired the final 17 A's.

In Chicago, Carrasquel had his own fan club, the Carrasquelites, with female admirers known Carrasquelettes.

Many fans are aware of Larry Doby's historic signing with the Indians in 1947, breaking the American League color barrier. But the trivial footnote is who the Indians received for Doby eight years later. In 1955, the White Sox traded Carrasquel and Jim Busby for Doby.

Carrasquel was known as El Gato de Venezuela (The Cat of Venezuela) for his quickness. While Venezuelan ballplayers are common in the Major Leagues now, it was Carrasquel's uncle who became the first player from the South American country to break into the Majors. During his career, Carrasquel had knee surgery, reportedly prompted by his habit of stopping suddenly after racing to first instead of running through the bag. And in 1951, he became one of the first three Hispanic players to appear in an All Star Game.

He hit .258 over 10 Major League seasons before becoming a manager in Venezuela and then a Spanish-language broadcaster for the White Sox in the 1990s.

Some of the players in the 1956 game that day are well known to fans - Rocky Colavito, Al Rosen, Early Wynn for the Indians, Enos Slaughter for the Athletics. But as usual, it's the trivial footnotes that emerge from the players in the box score:

Carrasquel's shortstop counterpart for the As was Mike Baxes, whose brother Jim also played in the Majors, including a stint in Cleveland in 1959. Jim's daughter married Dean Martin.

Spook Jacobs played second base for Kansas City. An obit on Jacobs said the scrappy infielder struck out only 4 percent of his at-bats. A longtime minor-leaguer, he lasted three seasons in the Majors. He was an avid stamp collector and even had a collection at the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

But Jacobs' footnote in baseball history might be that he had the misfortune of playing second base in the Brooklyn Dodgers' system at a time when the parent club had a player at that position who wasn't going anywhere - Jackie Robinson.

Longtime Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda was one of three relievers used in the game for Kansas City, pitching three innings and letting up a run, two hits and three walks while striking out three. He never won a game in the Majors, and 1956 would be his final year as a player. Twenty years later, he would begin a 20-plus season run as Dodgers manager.

Pitcher Lou Kretlow, who served up the grand slam to Carrasquel, won 27 games in 10 seasons. Four years earlier, Kretlow had what an ESPN.com story called a "glorious week" - he recorded two of his three career shutouts. The 1956 season would be his last. In his post-baseball life he became a golf pro and qualified for the U.S. Open.

Harry "Suitcase" Simpson batted cleanup for Kansas City that day, retired three years later, and eventually wound up in Akron. He spent a decade as a machinist at Goodyear Aerospace and retired in 1976.

Kansas City used a pair of pinch-hitters in the game, both of whom struck out. Elmer Valo shares the distinction of being one of only three Major Leaguers to have been born in Czechoslovakia. And Bill Renna notched his note in the record books four years earlier while playing in the American Association for the Kansas City Blues. In a June 29, 1952, game, the Blues pounded out a record 10 home runs against the St. Paul Saints. Renna hit two.

Gus Zernial, who played left field in the 1956 game, would face Indians pitcher Wynn exactly a year to the day later. He would hit his 200th home run off the eventual Hall-of-Famer.

The other big sports news of the day? Ohio State was put on probation for "excessive financial assistance" given to football players and barred from the Rose Bowl.

While seven RBIs in one game is not a record (owned by Jim Bottomley and Mark Whiten, both with the St. Louis Cardinals, at 12), the day belonged to Carrasquel.

Known as a mentor to many Venezuelan ballplayers who came after him, Carrasquel died in Caracas, Venezuela, in 2005, at age 79.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.10.2018

## Listless Cleveland Indians no match for last-place Cincinnati Reds in 7-5 loss

By Paul Hoynes,

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Do you think somebody should tell the Indians that there are still six games left before the All-Star break? It couldn't hurt, because for the last two days they looked like they misread the schedule and started their mini-vacation early.

The Reds, in last-place in the NL Central, walked into Progressive Field on Monday night to take the first installment of the battle for the Ohio Cup with a 7-5 victory over the Tribe that wasn't as close as the final score would indicate.

Mike Clevinger took the loss in an unusual start. He tied a career high with 11 strikeouts, but had trouble retiring the first man he faced in almost every inning. The Reds put the leadoff runner on base in five of the seven innings Clevinger started and three of those runners scored.

"He had a bunch of strikeouts," said manager Terry Francona. "They're a really aggressive first-pitch-fastball hitting team. He made some mistakes with his fastball and paid for that.

"He had a lot of swing and miss too, especially with his breaking ball. We're going to have to slow him down a bit, because they're ultra-aggressive especially with the fastball. They took some pretty healthy swings at his fastball."

Eugenio Suarez, the NL RBI leader, walked to start the second. He scored on Tucker Barnhart's double for a 1-0 lead.

Scouter Gennett, who entered the game tied for the highest batting average in the NL, walked to start the fourth. He scored on a double by Jesse Winker for a 2-0 lead.

Clevinger didn't have a problem with the leadoff hitter in the fifth, but he did have a problem. Joey Votto, with two out, homered over the wall in left field for a 4-1 lead.

Indians Mike Clevinger critiques loss to Reds

By the time Clevinger came out for the seventh, the Reds were still ahead, 4-1. Clevinger allowed a leadoff single to Billy Hamilton to end his night, but not his linescore. Marc Rzepczynski relieved as Hamilton stole second and went to third on a throwing error by catcher Yan Gomes. Scott Schebler brought him home with a single for a 5-1 lead.

Clevinger (8-3, 3.34), working on seven days rest, allowed five runs on seven hits in six innings. It was the fourth time he's struck out 10 or more batters in a game this season.

"They're really hot over there," said Clevinger. "I don't want to downplay what they're doing offensively. It was almost like I was leading them to their barrels. I'd throw really good pitches 0-2 -- pitches I'd get swing and misses on at 0-0 -- then I'd find their barrel.

"It was like, 'Here's the good one, here's the good one. Now here's the terrible one.' "

The final score would have been worse if not for two fine defensive plays behind Clevinger. Right fielder Tyler Naquin ended the first -- saving a run in the process -- with a diving catch on the warning track against Gennett.

In the second, center fielder Greg Allen saved another run as he banged into the wall to catch Adam Duvall's drive for the second out with a runner on second.

"Those were two nice plays," said Francona. "Instead of one or two runs, it could have been four or five. They were really, nice plays."

Offensively, the Indians spent most of the night hitting weak fly balls against right-hander Anthony DeSclafani (4-1, 4.43). DeSclafani opened the season on the disabled list with a strained left oblique muscle and missed the entire 2017 season with a strained ligament in his right elbow.

In six innings DeSclafani held the Indians to one run, a homer by Yonder Alonso with one out in the fourth. Alonso made his big-league debut with the Reds in 2010.

Offensively speaking, the first eight innings of Monday night's game felt a lot like Sunday's 6-0 loss to the A's. In that game, the Indians were held to five hits and went 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position. Left-hander Brett Anderson, just off the disabled list, kept them spellbound for five innings.

All that changed in the ninth, but not before Schebler completed a four-hit game with a two-run homer off Josh Tomlin to make it 7-1. Tomlin, making his third appearance in as many days, has allowed 21 homers, including two in the last three games.

The Indians rallied for four runs, two of them coming on a two-run homer by Jason Kipnis. A sacrifice fly by Francisco Lindor and a RBI double by Michael Brantley accounted for the two other runs.

But Reds' closer Raisel Iglesias struck out Jose Ramirez with Brantley on second for his 18th save.

"You show up to win every game," said Francona. "I'd rather not be down six runs. When you get the tying run to the plate, especially with Josie hitting, you give yourself a chance."

What it means

The Reds are 37-36 since Jim Riggleman, former Tribe third base coach, became interim manager on April 19.

The pitches

Clevinger threw 107 pitches, 71 (66 percent) for strikes. DeSclafani threw 98 pitches, 58 (59 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Reds and Indians drew 22,561 to Progressive Field on Monday night. First pitch was at 7:10 p.m. with a temperature of 81 degrees.

Next

Indians right-hander Trevor Bauer (8-6, 2.45) will face the Reds and right-hander Sal Romano (5-8, 5.40) on Tuesday night at 7:10 p.m. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the game.

This will be Bauer's third interleague start of the year. He won his first two, both against the Cubs, allowing one earned run in 12 2/3 innings for a 0.71 ERA. He is 1-2 with a 4.95 ERA in four career starts against the Reds.

Romano, in his second big-league season, is coming off a win over the White Sox. He allowed four runs on six hits in five innings in a 7-4 win.

### **Rosenthal: Mets want a lot for deGrom or Syndergaard; Trout batting third; Greinke the hitting guru; more notes**

By Ken Rosenthal 51m ago 5

I'm not buying that the New York Mets are going to make the same mistake twice. They tried to build around their starting pitching this season, and their 35-51 record shows how well that plan worked out.

By claiming they do not want to trade right-handers Jacob deGrom and Noah Syndergaard and indicating they intend to compete next season, the Mets might simply be masking their intentions, as most teams do during trading season.

Nothing has changed in the Mets' thinking, according to major-league sources. They will listen on deGrom, who is under control for two more seasons, and Syndergaard, who is under control for three. Their asking prices for both pitchers will be exorbitant, perhaps too exorbitant for prospective suitors. But if the Mets receive an offer they deem satisfactory, they will jump.

The odds probably are against the Mets getting such an offer, and Syndergaard must prove he is recovered from a strained ligament in his right index finger for any serious conversations on him to take place.

But remember, it is not in the Mets' interests to proclaim, yes, we will trade one of our aces. Such an announcement would only increase the level of distraction for the two pitchers and place additional pressure on the team's three-man interim executive team.

The Mets know the landscape for them to secure a spectacular haul for deGrom or Syndergaard might never be better. Two leading trade candidates, Texas Rangers left-hander Cole Hamels and Toronto Blue Jays lefty J.A. Happ, both got rocked Saturday. A third, Tampa Bay Rays righty Chris Archer, just returned after missing more than a month with an abdominal strain. A fourth, Detroit Tigers right-hander Michael Fulmer, pitched well Sunday, but his three additional years of control and improved performance of late assure the Tigers' asking price will be high for a pitcher who had shoulder and elbow trouble last season.

The Mets prefer major-league ready prospects — the type teams rarely move — in any deal for deGrom or Syndergaard, sources say. They are willing to include cash to get better returns for players such as closer Jeurys Familia. And they are drawing serious interest in righty Zack Wheeler, who is eligible for free agency after next season.

A trade of deGrom or Syndergaard, though, would trigger a legitimate retooling at a time when a postseason berth in 2019 likely is out of reach, particularly with the Atlanta Braves and Philadelphia Phillies contending a year earlier than expected.

Maybe a deal happens before the non-waiver deadline. Maybe it gets put off until the off-season. But as maddening as the Mets can be, I refuse to believe they are going to stick with the same plan that doomed them this season.

Why Not Ricco?

The Mets often raise eyebrows with their maneuverings, and they did it again late last month by appointing their three-man interim executive team to replace general manager Sandy Alderson, who for health reasons is taking a leave of absence.

Rather than go with the trio of executives — gloriously nicknamed “The Three Tenors” by Kevin Kernan of the New York Post — the more logical move would have been to make assistant GM John Ricco the sole interim, with J.P. Ricciardi and Omar Minaya remaining special assistants.

If only it were that simple.

While Fred Wilpon, the Mets' chief executive officer, likes Ricco, he harbors reservations about whether the longtime assistant is the right choice for the head job, according to sources with knowledge of the organization's thinking.

Ricco joined the Mets from the commissioner's office in 2004 and served 25 days as interim GM between Minaya's dismissal and Alderson's hiring in '10. He will be a candidate for the full-time GM role, but the Mets plan to conduct a broad search later this year.

It is understandable the Mets want to look outside, just as they did when they hired Alderson — the organization almost certainly would benefit from fresh insight. Ricco, though, already is experienced in a key element of the job: Managing “up” and dealing with the Wilpons' distinct personalities.

Ricco, for his part, said he is not worried about whether he will be the next GM.

“I've got enough in front of me here to try to do right by Sandy, do right by (manager) Mickey (Callaway), do right by the organization, try to get through these next few months and make good decisions for the long-term,” Ricco said.

"I've been here 15 years. I feel like under the right circumstances, I'd love to be a GM. But really, that's not something I'm focused on. This organization has been great to me. I've been through a couple of different regimes. We'll see what happens at the end of the year."

#### Why Trout is now batting third

The impact of a batting order on a team's run production is debatable, but teams always try to determine which sequence of hitters works best. The Los Angeles Angels' recent dropping of Mike Trout from the No. 2 to No. 3 spot was one such example, a clear attempt by the club to maximize the production from perhaps the best hitter in the game.

The Angels made the change last Wednesday, after considerable internal debate. According to STATS LLC, Trout has the most plate appearances by a No. 2 hitter this season with the bases empty, in large part because the Angels' .277 on-base percentage out of the leadoff spot is the worst in the majors. With Trout batting third, the idea is to increase the Angels' scoring opportunities early in games.

Manager Mike Scioscia told the FOX broadcasters on Saturday that he would have made the change earlier if the team had better on-base options in the 1-2 spots. But Kole Calhoun and Ian Kinsler were struggling, Andrelton Simmons was hitting mostly fifth or sixth and Zack Cozart required season-ending surgery to repair a torn labrum in his left shoulder.

The resurgence of Calhoun and performance of rookie David Fletcher since his promotion on June 12 gave Scioscia an opening. In the reconfigured batting order, Calhoun and Simmons are batting in front of Trout against right-handers, Fletcher and Simmons against left-handers.

Through the admittedly tiny sample of five games, the new plan has yet to produce the desired results. Simmons, Calhoun and Fletcher have combined for a meager .233 OBP over that stretch. Trout is 6-for-17, but his only RBI came on a solo home run.

#### Greinke the hitting guru

Los Angeles Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner tells a great story on why he moved up on the plate several years ago, attributing his adjustment to his former teammate — and perhaps the best scout among active players — Zack Greinke.

Turner asked Greinke, "How would you get me out?" Greinke, after studying Turner's tendencies, resumed the conversation the following day with a typically blunt response: "I'd throw you 100 straight fastballs down and away."

Turner was surprised by that answer, saying he often was successful going to the opposite field. But Greinke, sensing pitchers would adjust because most of those hits came on pitches middle or middle in, told Turner, "I'd scoot up on the plate if I were you."

Turner followed Greinke's advice, and that is one reason he has been hit by 46 pitches since the start of 2015, seventh in the majors during that period.

#### Wanted (maybe): another David Ross

The Chicago Cubs have held internal discussions about acquiring a veteran leader such as the Orioles' Adam Jones or Toronto Blue Jays' Curtis Granderson and also reached out to other clubs about the possibility, sources tell me and The Athletic's Jayson Stark.

For several reasons, the idea is unlikely to come to fruition before July 31, if at all.

Cubs officials are unsure whether bringing in such a veteran at mid-season would create enough of an impact. The team also has carried 13 pitchers for much of the season, leaving little room for another position player. Tommy La Stella, the Cubs' only true bench player, leads the majors with 52 plate appearances as a pinch-hitter, and is batting .304 with a .742 OPS in that role.

Thus, the only way for the Cubs to squeeze in a Jones or Granderson would be to trade one of their young outfielders — Albert Almora Jr, Kyle Schwarber or Ian Happ. Such a move would make sense only if it brought the Cubs a top starting pitcher with multiple years of club control. And even then, the Cubs might resist.

A trade for a Jones-Granderson type might be more suitable on Aug. 31, the deadline for teams to set their postseason rosters. The fit would be easier then, with regular-season rosters expanding from 25 to 40 the next day.

#### A what-if worth asking

Baseball will have decisions to make if Baltimore Orioles shortstop Manny Machado and/or Tampa Bay Rays catcher Wilson Ramos get traded to a National League club after their respective elections to the AL All-star team.

The situation is not the same as it was in 2014, when Jeff Samardzija wore an NL jersey and generic cap in introductions after the Cubs sent him to the A's earlier in July. The game is again a pure exhibition, no longer determining home-field advantage for the World Series.

Baseball has no hard rule on what it would do with a player who is traded to the other league, but MLB probably would want Machado, in particular, to play in the game, perhaps as an injury replacement on the NL side. How the Orioles would be represented under such circumstances is another question.

#### **Dick Williams: Cincinnati Reds planning to increase Major League payroll for 2019 season**

Bobby Nightengale, Cincinnati Enquirer Published 6:55 p.m. ET July 9, 2018 | Updated 7:39 p.m. ET July 9, 2018



CHICAGO – As the baseball season ticks closer toward the trade deadline, the biggest question surrounding the Reds is how much longer their rebuild will continue.

Highlighted by a lineup that features three All-Stars and ranks second in the Majors with a .338 on-base percentage, Dick Williams is hopeful the Reds will have a bigger budget to fill holes on the Major League roster next season.

“That’s the internal plan,” said Williams, the Reds’ president of baseball operations. “What we’ve said is that we’ve always tried to put as much of (the payroll) on the field as we can. We now feel like the last couple of years, we’ve taken a lot of our resources and allocated them into the amateur draft, the international market. We hope that can shift back toward Major League payroll.”

After an abysmal start to the season, the Reds entered Monday with a 17-8 record since June 10 – tied with the Philadelphia Phillies for the best National League record in that stretch.

The Reds have nearly their entire roster under team control for the next offseason, except for pending free agent Matt Harvey, which should give the front office some flexibility to upgrade the team through free agency or trades.

According to baseball-reference.com, the Reds have an estimated payroll of \$102 million this season, which ranks 21st in MLB.

“We do believe that we’re creating a good core to invest around,” Williams said. “For the first time in a couple of years, I firmly believe we’ll have a raised payroll.”

For the last three years, the Reds had a top-five pick in the MLB Draft. It helped them add top prospects to the minor league system: infielder Nick Senzel, right-handed pitcher Hunter Greene and third baseman Jonathan India; but it cost extra money to sign the top picks.

Greene, the No. 2 pick in the 2017 Draft, had a then-record \$7.23 million signing bonus under the current slotting system that began in 2012.

During international free agency, the Reds outspent their bonus pool during the 2016-17 signing period. They gave more than \$4 million to three of the top prospects in that international class, though none of them have yet to advance past the Double-A level.

After paying penalties during the international signing period to bigger draft signing bonuses, some of that money can shift toward the Major League roster.

Nothing is set in stone with the second half of the season still to be played, but Williams said he sensed it would be a “nice increase” in payroll.

“I’m not talking like 1 or 2 percent,” Williams said. “But it’s too early to know for sure. A lot of it will depend on how we play the rest of the year, the support we get from the fans and strategic decisions we make about where our investments will go in the offseason – payroll or otherwise.”

Winning more games in the last month, the organization is rooting for increased attendance at Great American Ball Park following the All-Star break.

From the same point as last season, attendance is down about 16.5 percent.

Averaging 20,296 fans per game, the Reds rank 24th in the Majors in average attendance at a home game. They are down more than 4,000 people per game from the same point as last year.

Cincinnati Enquirer LOADED: 07.10.2018

### **Joey Votto homers, Anthony DeSclafani pitches 7 innings as Cincinnati Reds beat Cleveland**

Bobby Nightengale, Published 10:11 p.m. ET July 9, 2018 | Updated 12:33 a.m. ET July 10, 2018

CLEVELAND – Against Cleveland Indians starter Mike Clevinger, the Reds didn’t put many balls in play during their series opener Monday.

When Reds did make contact, they made the most of it.

Tucker Barnhart had two-run scoring hits, Joey Votto hit a solo home run and the Reds earned a tighter-than-expected 7-5 victory at Progressive Field, improving their record during interleague play to 9-2.

The Reds struck out 11 times against Clevinger in six innings. They were 7-for-13 against him when they made contact.

“We grinded our way through the game,” Barnhart said. “I don’t care if we struck out 35 times if we won.”

Scott Schebler, the Reds’ leadoff hitter, matched a career high with four hits. He crushed a two-run homer to right field in the top of the ninth, which turned out to be important insurance runs.

Leading by six runs in the bottom of the ninth inning, the Reds needed closer Raisel Iglesias for the final two outs. Indians third baseman Jose Ramirez stepped to the plate as the potential game-tying run before striking out on three pitches.

“They have a good offense,” Schebler said. “Once they get going, it’s tough to stop them.”

The same thing could be said of the Reds.

Barnhart, who entered Monday with two hits in his last 22 at-bats, crushed an RBI double in the second inning and an RBI single in the fourth.

In the fifth inning, Votto started with a 0-2 count. After watching three pitches to force a full count, Votto drilled a solo home run that carried over the wall in left-center.

It was the first homer surrendered by Clevinger in 29 ⅓ innings.

“There were times that we tipped our cap to (Clevinger),” Schebler said, “and I felt like he tipped his cap to us because we put some good swings against him.”

Reds right-hander Anthony DeSclafani allowed one run in seven innings, his longest start of the season.

DeSclafani didn’t feel like he had much command of his offspeed pitches. Instead, he focused on locating his fastball and he continued to force weak contact.

Behind the plate, Barnhart said he thought DeSclafani's final two innings were his best innings.

"I feel like I've felt like that in the last couple of starts," DeSclafani said. "I just kind of made some dumb pitches that skewed the line a little bit. I feel like I've been working ahead of guys and getting quick outs and having some stress-free innings."

DeSclafani, who missed the entire 2017 season because of injuries, only gave up one hit in his third time through the Indians' lineup.

He did receive some timely help from his defense earlier in his outing.

With a runner on first base in the third inning, Ramirez hit a ground ball that deflected off Votto's glove. Second baseman Scooter Gennett was running to his left when he saw the ball deflecting the other way.

As Gennett fell flat, he barehanded the ball and tossed out Ramirez on a throw from his knee for the acrobatic out.

On a day that DeSclafani didn't have his best stuff, he found a way to limit a powerful lineup. The only run was a solo homer from Cleveland first baseman Yonder Alonso, the Reds' first-round draft pick in 2008.

"You know what you're going to get every time he's out there," Barnhart said. "To miss that for almost two years, it's been tough on us. But these guys that have filled in have learned and grown and we're reaping the benefits of those guys having to jump into the deep end right away."

Headed into the All-Star break, Enquirer reporter John Fay breaks down the top Reds from the last 30 years. 10.) Reggie Sanders: Hit .271 with 125 home runs, 431 RBI, and 158 stolen bases as a Red. He'll be remembered for his struggles in 1995 NLCS, but he was a legitimate five-tool player. [Archive photo](#)

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis hit a two-run homer against Reds lefty Amir Garrett.

Tanner Rainey, a right-hander, followed Garrett and gave up a pair of hits. Against Iglesias, Francisco Lindor hit a sacrifice fly and Michael Brantley smacked an RBI double, adding late-inning drama to another Reds game.

After dropping two one-run games to the Chicago Cubs last weekend, couldn't the Reds use an easier finish?

"To come out here today against a really good ballclub and a really good pitcher, to go out there and compete and do what we did – I'll take it just like it was," Reds interim manager Jim Riggleman said.

The Reds have won 18 of their last 26 games, owning the best record in the National League since June 10.

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