

Tribe's offense stalls on J-Ram's 2-HR night

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- It seemed like a foolish decision: Pitching to Jose Ramirez in the ninth inning with the game on the line on Monday night. The Tribe slugger had already launched two home runs and Francisco Lindor stood on third, representing the go-ahead run.

Twins closer Fernando Rodney worked the count full -- both of Ramirez's blasts earlier in the evening came on full-count offerings -- and fired a fastball over the meat of the plate. When Ramirez swings, he rarely misses, but this time proved to be a critical exception in Cleveland's 5-4, walk-off loss at Target Field.

Even Ramirez looked shocked, standing at the plate for a moment before retreating to the visitors' dugout.

"He was like, 'What happened?'" Indians manager Terry Francona said. "Yeah, that's kind of rare."

Ramirez, who is now tied with Boston's J.D. Martinez for the MLB lead in home runs with 32 on the year, had gone 46 plate appearances without a swinging strikeout, dating back to July 15. His 11-percent strikeout rate is the eighth-lowest mark among qualified hitters. Swinging strikeouts only account for 8.2 percent of his plate appearances.

The decisive pitch was a 96.9 mph heater that tailed away from Ramirez's barrel. Three pitches earlier, Rodney gave the switch-hitter a look at his changeup. The closer also took some velocity off his fastball at the start of the at-bat to toy with Ramirez's timing.

"Their guy put enough of an offspeed in his head," Francona said, "that he was able to get the fastball by him."

Rodney escaped harm in the inning, leaving Lindor 90 feet from home. The Indians shortstop was also stranded there in the seventh after a one-out triple. On the night, Cleveland was 0-for-11 with runners in scoring position and 1-for-13 with runners on overall. Those escapes by Minnesota -- a club in sell mode ahead of Tuesday's 4 p.m. ET non-waiver Trade Deadline -- paved the way for the game's decisive moment.

In the ninth inning, Indians reliever Neil Ramirez issued a leadoff walk to Miguel Sano, who was replaced on the bases by pinch-runner Ehire Adrianza. Following a sacrifice bunt by Twins center fielder Jake Cave that moved Adrianza up to second, Mitch Garver pulled a pitch from Ramirez to deep left-center field for a walk-off double.

Earlier in the game, the Twins struck for four runs (three earned) off Tribe rookie Shane Bieber, who walked away with a no-decision after his 6 1/3 innings. The Indians' situational hitting left a lot to be desired, but the lineup did pick up Bieber with three homers, including one by Yan Gomes, in a four-run showing against righty Ervin Santana.

Ramirez led the charge with a solo shot in the first inning and another solo job in the fourth -- both crushed over the wall in right. That outburst came on the heels of a seven-game skid with zero hits for the All-Star third baseman, who posted a remarkable .000/.414/.000 slash line in 29 plate appearances in that span.

During that "slump," Ramirez drew 11 walks, stole three bases, collected two RBIs, was hit by a pitch and crossed home plate five times. Against the Twins, he not only had the two homers, but was intentionally walked in the seventh and stole second. So, Ramirez has gone 2-for-20 over his last eight games, while posting an .841 OPS.

The main issue is that pitchers have been giving Ramirez few pitches to hit in the strike zone. Ramirez's zone rate of 40.6 percent this year is the lowest in any season in his career.

"This is a game. There's ups and downs with it," Ramirez said through team interpreter Will Clements. "Sometimes, the pitchers are throwing you a lot of strikes. Sometimes, they're throwing balls. So, I just stay focused on trying to get my pitches."

In the ninth, Rodney gave Ramirez a pitch to hit. It was a rare moment when the slugger was the one overpowered.

"We got Josey up in the ninth inning," Francona said. "That's the guy you want up."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Kipnis' miscue: Brian Dozier led off the second by pulling a pitch from Bieber to the left side of the infield for what looked like a routine groundout. Second baseman Jason Kipnis -- positioned up the middle in a shift -- ranged to his right and got to the ball in time, but did not glove it cleanly. The baseball wound up in left field and Dozier reached first. Dozier then moved to third on a single (Max Kepler) and scored on a sacrifice fly (Robbie Grossman) to account for the unearned run on Bieber's line.

Double trouble: With one out in the sixth inning, Santana hit Edwin Encarnacion with a pitch and Yonder Alonso followed with a sinking liner to center field. Per Statcast™, the play had an 18 percent catch probability, but Cave -- caught in-between -- attempted to stop the ball with a dive. It nicked Cave's glove as he slammed to the ground and skipped behind him, giving Alonso an RBI double to tie the game at 4-4.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Following an RBI double by Sano in the second, the Indians called for a pitch-out on an 0-1 count to Cave. Gomes gloved the pitch from Bieber and snapped off a quick throw up the middle to Lindor. The Tribe shortstop applied a tag on Sano as he dove back into the base and Lindor raised a fist in celebration of the pick-off.

SOUND SMART

Ramirez's 32 home runs are the most by an Indians batter prior to August since 2001, when newly inducted Hall of Famer Jim Thome had 33. Ramirez has drawn at least one walk in eight games in a row. That's the longest streak of that kind for a Tribe hitter since Victor Martinez had at least one free pass in 10 straight games from Sept. 15-25, 2006.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Trevor Bauer (9-6, 2.32 ERA) is slated to start for the Tribe on Tuesday, when the Twins host the Indians at 8:10 p.m. ET at Target Field. Bauer has a 2.64 ERA in 11 starts on the road this season. Minnesota will counter with righty Kyle Gibson (5-7, 3.42).

Indians recall Allen, keep tabs on trade market

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Indians continue to scour the trade market for possible solutions to their thinning outfield. In the meantime, Cleveland has promoted center fielder Greg Allen to help shore up a cast that is down three players to injury.

Allen spent the past couple of days with the Indians in Detroit, but due to other roster complications, he was not officially recalled from Triple-A Columbus until prior to Monday's game against the Twins. With Allen back from the Minors, Cleveland's outfield has been patched together for the time being, but the front office will keep searching for reinforcements prior to Tuesday's 4 p.m. ET non-waiver Trade Deadline.

"A kid like Greg in center, he catches the ball really well," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "So, can he get better right in the middle of a pennant race? It's hard to do, but he's a real mature kid. And then, when you have a kid that's young and is getting better, it's kind of fun to watch. And we've done it before."

According to MLB.com's Jon Paul Morosi, the Indians have inquired about the availability of Nationals superstar Bryce Harper -- a pending free agent -- though the talks have not advanced. Cleveland has also been linked to Baltimore's Adam Jones and Texas' Joey Gallo in recent reports. The Tribe is targeting center or right field for potential upgrades.

Other outfielders who fit to varying degrees include Leonys Martin and Nicholas Castellanos of the Tigers, Adam Duvall and Billy Hamilton of the Reds, Curtis Granderson of the Blue Jays and Derek Dietrich of the Marlins, among others. San Francisco's Andrew McCutchen would also make sense, but he may be a more realistic target for the August waiver trade period.

"I don't want to get too in-depth in what they're talking about trade-wise," Francona said. "That's why I try to be pretty consistent. The guys we have, I never, ever want to be like, 'We need that,' because that's going to directly tell somebody out in the clubhouse [I don't think they can get the job done]. And I don't feel that way."

"Like I've said, if we make a trade that helps us, good. If we don't, good, because I feel like [the front office] already helped us."

The speedy Allen takes the spot recently vacated by Tyler Naquin, whose return timetable is uncertain due to a stress reaction in his right hip. Besides Naquin, center fielder Bradley Zimmer (right shoulder) is done for the year and right fielder Lonnie Chisenhall (right calf) could miss the rest of the season as well.

To clear room on the active roster, the Indians optioned right-hander Adam Plutko back to Columbus after a two-day stint to offer insurance innings for the pitching staff.

Cleveland, which acquired relievers Brad Hand and Adam Cimber on July 19 in exchange for highly touted catching prospect Francisco Mejia, is also weighing the recent uptick in production by its current group of outfielders. The only fixture is All-Star Michael Brantley, who carried a .302 average and an .825 OPS into Monday's series opener with the Twins.

At the moment, the Indians are using a platoon-type situation in both center (Allen and Rajai Davis) and right (Melky Cabrera and Brandon Guyer). Davis had three hits in Sunday's win in Detroit and has a .321 average in his past 60 plate appearances entering Monday. Guyer was batting .274 (.952 OPS) against lefties, while Cabrera has hit at a .407 clip (1.021 OPS) in eight games since returning from Triple-A.

The Indians are not going to draw sweeping conclusions based on small samples of success, but the recent showings by Guyer, Cabrera and Davis will surely be considered. The Indians could also consider moving second baseman Jason Kipnis to center -- a transition he made late last year under similar circumstances. Third baseman Jose Ramirez would likely slide to second in that scenario.

"It's not rotisserie baseball where you just have everything you want," Francona said. "Sometimes, it may not be perfect, but that doesn't mean you can't win."

Worth noting

- Relief ace Andrew Miller (60-day disabled list, right knee) is scheduled to make a Minor League rehab appearance at Triple-A on Monday. The next step in Miller's return remains to be determined.
- Right-hander Josh Tomlin (10-day DL, right hamstring) is slated to throw a simulated game on Tuesday at Target Field.
- Righty Evan Marshall (10-day DL, right elbow) is penciled in to pitch a rehab game with the Rookie-level Arizona League Indians on Tuesday.
- Naquin is scheduled to meet with specialist Dr. Bryan Kelly on Thursday in New York to gather more information about his hip injury. The Indians will have more details on his status following that consultation.

Indians minor-league analysis: Top tools report

By Michael Hattery 4h ago 1

This is a stand-in for the weekly "Trip Around the Farm" column, which will return next week in its regularly scheduled time slot.

One of the most fascinating pieces of minor-league coverage is identifying impact or plus tools and tracking their development. Further, identifying carrying or impact tools improves one's ability to evaluate whether a prospect is hitting certain checkpoint goals and making progress.

Before diving into the tools themselves, it is important to discuss the inputs, nature and context of my tool rankings. My eye test is a portion of the input because I have seen almost everyone listed. However, it is limited in terms of efficacy and influence, which is why the predominant influence is from three categories:

conversations I have had with those inside the Indians' organization

information I have received from external scouts

analytical inputs guided by research published by Chris Mitchell, formerly of FanGraphs

Like you'd find in a high school yearbook, I have highlighted superlatives or individual tools or skills in addition to the traditional five-tool allocation for position players.

Speed: Quentin Holmes

The 2017 second-round pick features elite speed as his primary carrying tool. Those who analyzed Holmes as a prep prospect had him as a 75 or 80 on the 20-80 scouting scale. The issue for Holmes is getting this tool into games both offensively and defensively. As Billy Hamilton has demonstrated, elite speed can only be so valuable if the hit tool is below average. Holmes needs significant refinement to make the speed tool actionable. Unfortunately, Holmes' developmental timeline has been slowed due to an injury in his first Arizona League game in 2018.

Honorable mentions: Gabriel Mejia, Willi Castro, Ernie Clement

Raw power: Bobby Bradley

Bradley has consistently accessed above-average raw power by leaning on a pull-heavy approach. Bradley has spent the past year and a half diversifying his batted ball dispersion, using the opposite field increasingly to reduce strikeouts. Bradley wields raw power to the pull side but he is a three outcome guy: walk, strikeout or home run.

Honorable mentions: Eric Haase, Will Benson, Yu Chang

Hit tool: Yandy Díaz

This is a complex category, especially for the Indians system. First, a note: For the purposes of evaluating this tool, I have rolled in overall on-base ability. Obviously, Díaz has limitations and he has been picked apart more publicly than many. Díaz simply has exquisite discipline and above-average contact skills. The limitations are in the batted ball profile. An abundance of ground balls limits Díaz's power tool significantly, but in terms of pure on-base ability, Díaz stands atop a system that does not have a particularly striking group of hit tools.

Honorable mentions: Bo (Noah) Naylor, Tyler Freeman, Nolan Jones, George Valera

Defense: Willi Castro

Castro is cut in the traditional mold of the shortstop, an athletic middle infielder with strong instincts and a light frame. Castro has above-average range and enough arm to handle all the throws demanded of a shortstop. Those connected to the organization in Akron have spoken very highly of Castro's continual defensive development and skill. The issue for Castro is whether he can develop offensively to the point of raising him above utility infielder to starting-caliber shortstop.

Honorable mentions: Conner Capel, Luke Wakamatsu

Arm: Will Benson

Benson has an absolute hose for an arm and appears to have been sculpted by the gods to conform with the scouting ideal for a right fielder. Of course, the arm tool, like speed, is in many ways capped in impact as a secondary tool that is only influential if first-level tools allow the secondary tool to surface. Here, Benson has to slay his demons: strikeouts. There have been marginal gains, but the freakishly athletic right fielder has to break through his hit tool issues to allow outstanding additional tools to play up.

Honorable mention: Conner Capel

Fastball: Ethan Hankins

As soon as the Indians signed their 2018 first-round compensation pick, Hankins immediately had the best fastball in the system. Hankins' fastball sits 94-97 when the right hander is healthy, and perhaps its best feature is the weight of the pitch. Hankins' fastball is a heavy offering with impactful arm-side run. Further, Hankins demonstrates solid extension, wielding his 6-foot-6-inch frame to increase the perceived velocity of the offering.

Honorable mentions: Kieran Lovegrove, Sam Hentges, Henry Martinez, Luis Oviedo

Changeup: Eli Morgan

Morgan's changeup may be the best singular secondary offering in the Indians system. The pitch has solid depth and is very deceptive. Having a weapon to take advantage of left-handed hitters is a dynamic advantage for Morgan. This pitch alone appears to establish a big-league reliever floor for Morgan with reverse splits. The key test he must pass to develop a rotational future is further development of his slider to use as a weapon against right-handed hitters and demonstrating an ability to add and hold velocity late into starts.

Honorable mentions: Zach Plesac, Aaron Civale, Luis Oviedo

Breaking ball: Triston McKenzie

McKenzie's curveball is the best breaking ball in the system. Important when grading any offering is not only the shape and velocity of the offering but also a pitcher's ability to command the offering inside and outside the strike zone. McKenzie's curveball is a plus offering because it shows solid depth, and McKenzie has outstanding feel for manipulating the offering inside and outside the strike zone when he needs to.

Honorable mentions: Luis Oviedo (slider), Sam Hentges (curveball), Aaron Civale (slider), Henry Martinez (slider), Mitch Brown (curveball)

Command: Triston McKenzie

If Shane Bieber remained prospect eligible, the category would be named for him. Alas, McKenzie has an outstanding feel for pitching and demonstrates good command of his fastball and curveball combo. The next step for McKenzie is improving his comfort with his changeup and showing an ability to use it in varying counts against left-handed hitters.

Honorable mentions: Aaron Civale, Elijah Morgan

Jim Thome's tremendous turnout in Cooperstown yet another sign of his impact off the field: Hayden Grove

By Hayden Grove, cleveland.com

COOPERSTOWN, New York-- As he rode down Main St. through the sea of cheering fans representing teams from the California coast to the New York islands, Jim Thome pumped his fists, pointed his fingers and clapped his hands in appreciation.

His wife, Andrea, sat immediately in front of him in the truck, doing much the same with an identical grin beaming as the "THO-ME, THO-ME" chants echoed through the Cooperstown crowd.

The soon-to-be 48-year old appeared to be just eight once again.

"That was incredible," Thome said of the Hall of Fame parade Saturday. "I'm getting chills thinking about it."

Though the cheers and support for Thome throughout the weekend were universal amongst the fans in attendance, everywhere you looked, his No. 25 was plastered in bright red and white trim.

Cleveland's faithful, which Thome made sure to acknowledge and thank in his induction speech, were perhaps the most visible and populated bunch of the many fans in town.

It could be that someone living in Cleveland and writing about Thome and the Indians would be unconsciously more drawn to taking notice of the Tribe uniforms in attendance.

It also, however, could just be that Cleveland-- and baseball in general-- wanted to show support for a man they appreciate so wholeheartedly for his contributions to and away from the game.

The fans weren't the only ones showing their appreciation for Thome.

Take, for instance, the massive contingent of former players, coaches and front office staffers that traveled to Cooperstown for the entirety of Hall of Fame weekend to help honor and congratulate him.

The former players represented his impact on nearly each stop throughout his big-league journey.

From Cleveland, Carlos Baerga, Richie Sexson, Sean Casey, Travis Fryman, John McDonald and more came for the festivities.

Paul Konerko, his former teammate with the White Sox, too made the trip.

From the Twins, Justin Morneau, Nick Punto and Michael Cuddyer were amongst those in attendance.

The coaches and staffers-- Charlie Manuel, Chris Antonetti, John Hart, Mark Shapiro, Mike Hargrove and more-- represented his vast journey through the game as well.

Sure, others, in the class had plenty of baseball's best joining them too.

Heck, most of Chipper Jones' teammates were on the stage behind him as No. 10 joined them in the Hall.

The depth and breadth of Thome's entire base, however, really seemed unmatched.

Be it the loads of fans that journeyed from around the country to wear No. 25 proudly across their backs or those closest to him from years throughout the league, individuals genuinely felt it necessary to make the trip and to be there as Thome took another step into baseball immortality.

The attendance says more about the man that Thome is and the values that he represented than it does about his ability.

Sure, Thome's prodigious power and uncanny eye earned him a spot on the Hall's hallowed walls, but those numbers in no way correlate to the number that made the trek to Cooperstown.

There are Hall of Fame players that have better stats than Thome, but there may be none that has more friends and fans throughout the game of baseball than he.

Certainly, Thome earned his spot in the Hall of Fame on the field, but his authenticity, grace, humility, kindness, respect, appreciation and dedication are without question what makes him most impressive.

As much as he's a Hall of Famer on the diamond, this weekend's turnout proved that Thome truly one of the greatest of all-time off of it as well. Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.31.2018

Testy Twins: Cleveland Indians, Minnesota Twins starting lineups for Monday, Game No.105

By Paul Hoynes,

MINNEAPOLIS -- Manager Terry Francona was honest when asked about how the Indians have played against the Twins this season.

"We know coming in here for these next three days that they've really played better than us this year," said Francona. "So this will be a good test for us because they've outplayed us six out of nine games. I think that will get our attention."

The Twins lead the series, 6-3, and they've won five of the last six games between the teams.

This series is going to be especially interesting because the Twins are selling. They recently traded third baseman Eduardo Escobar to Arizona and right-hander Aaron Pressly to the Astros as Tuesday's non-waiver deadline approaches.

Then, just before game time on Monday night, they reportedly sent right-hander Lance Lynn to the Yankees for first baseman Tyler Austin.

Lynn was scheduled to start against the Indians on Wednesday.

But they still have Eddie Rosario, who is hitting .436 (17-for-39) with six homers and 11 RBI against the Tribe this year. So that will be a test in itself.

Cleveland Indians, in midst of Twins' fire sale, continue to look for ways to improve

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

MINNEAPOLIS - The Indians find themselves in the middle of a trading frenzy, but they're not the team doing the trading.

They opened a three-game series against the wheeling-dealing Twins on Monday night. Before the start of Monday's game, the Twins sent right-hander Lance Lynn to the Yankees for utility man Austin Taylor and left-hander Zach Duke to the Mariners for two minor leaguers. In the past several days they've traded infielder Eduardo Escobar to Arizona and right-hander Ryan Pressly to Houston.

And they may not be done.

The Twins, if you've checked the standings, are the closest thing the Indians have to competition in the AL Central. The Tribe entered the series with a nine game lead and that was before the white flags started flapping from the standards above Target Field.

While the Twins dump talent, the Indians are still looking for help. They added arms to the bullpen in Brad Hand and Adam Cimber, but they're still trying to add some heft to the outfield and the offense in general.

The rumors about the Tribe and Nationals talking about a Bryce Harper trade have little traction. But the Indians do have real interest in Twins second baseman Brian Dozier, but it's unlikely he'll walk across the infield at Target Field to change dugouts before Tuesday's non-waiver deadline at 4 p.m. ET.

Derek Falvey, the Twins chief baseball officer, grew up in the Indians' organization and has a good working knowledge of their farm system. It's hard to imagine the two sides being able to agree on equal value for Dozier, a free agent at the end of the season. That doesn't mean Dozier won't be traded, but he's unlikely to be coming to the Indians.

Pittsburgh has had a scout following the Indians on this trip. They have some talented outfielders in Starling Marte, Gregory Polanco and Corey Dickerson, but they're seven games out in the NL Central and are still trying to decide if they're in or out of the race.

The Indians activated Greg Allen on Monday and he started in center field against the Twins. Allen is replacing injured Tyler Naquin, who will go to New York on Thursday to his right hip examined by Dr. Bryan Kelly.

Other outfielders the Indians have been linked to include Joey Gallo of Texas, Leonys Martin and Nicholas Castellanos of Detroit and Baltimore's Adam Jones.

It may turn out that the Indians let Tuesday's non-waiver deadline pass and try to make a waiver deal like they did last year when they acquired Jay Bruce from the Mets. There will be more clarity in August on who is in and who isn't in the race and perhaps the asking price for players won't be as high.

The Indians have been getting decent production of late out of the right field platoon of Melky Cabrera and Brandon Guyer. Cabrera is hitting .407 (11-for-27) in seven starts since being added to the club for a second time on July 20. Guyer is hitting .302 (13-for-43) in 27 games since coming off the disabled list.

Rajai Davis, meanwhile, is hitting .319 (22-for-69) over his last 27 games.

But that has not stopped the Indians from trying to improve.

"We know what we have," said manager Terry Francona. "I don't want to get too in depth about what they're talking trade wise. I never want the guys we have (to hear me say) we need that because that tells somebody in the clubhouse (that we're looking to replace you) and I don't feel that way.

"If we make a trade that helps us, good. If we don't, good. I feel they've already helped us. It's not Rotisserie baseball where you have everything you want. Sometimes it may not be perfect, but that doesn't mean you can't win."

So if that means Allen is the center fielder for the time being, Francona will deal with it.

"Greg catches the ball real well in center field," said Francona. "Can he get better right in the middle of a pennant race? It's hard to do, but he's a real mature kid. And when you have a you player who is getting better, it's fun to watch. And we've done it before."

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Cleveland Indians lose to pesky Minnesota Twins in walk-off fashion, 5-4, in ninth inning

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

MINNEAPOLIS -- Monday afternoon manager Terry Francona said the Twins would be a good test for the Indians, because until this point of the season they've outplayed his club.

Well, they did it again Monday night. The Twins, despite their front office selling their players in rapid fashion, beat the Indians, 5-4, in walk-off fashion at Target Field. They are 7-3 against the AL Central leaders.

Catcher Mitch Garver hit the game-winning double with one out in the ninth inning off Neil Ramirez to score pinch-runner Ehire Adrianza from second base. Ramirez put himself in the frying pan by walking Miguel Sano to start the ninth. Adrianza pinch ran, took second on Jake Cave's sacrifice bunt and scored on Garver's double in the gap in left center field.

Jose Ramirez hit two homers to give him 32 for the season, but in the ninth inning he struck out against Twins closer Fernando Rodney with Francisco Lindor, the go-ahead run, waiting at third base. The 32 homers tied Ramirez for the MLB lead with Boston's J.D. Ramirez.

"Josie is the guy you want up there in the ninth inning," said Francona. "He (Rodney) put enough of a threat of the off speed pitch in his head that he was able to get the fastball by him. That's rare. Josie had a look of 'What happened?'"

The Indians stranded seven runners on second and third base and went 0-for-11 with runners in scoring position.

Rodney started the ninth by walking Lindor, who promptly stole second and went to third on Michael Brantley's grounder. After Ramirez struck out, Edwin Encarnacion walked and Rodney struck out Yonder Alonso.

Indians rookie starter Shane Bieber, coming off the worst start of his short-big league career, pitched 6 1/3 innings and struck out seven. He left with the score tied, 4-4.

In his last start, Bieber allowed seven runs on seven hits in 1 2/3 innings against the Pirates.

"I think he pitched better than his line," said Francona. "His fastball had good life through the zone. Especially when he kept it down. It had a little extra giddy-up. So I thought he was better than his line."

Bieber said he was able to make "a little adjustment" after the Pittsburgh start that helped him Monday.

"Carl (Willis, pitching coach) pointed out a little adjustment we had to make," said Bieber. "We made the adjustment and definitely felt better. I felt more like myself."

Ramirez gave the Indians a 1-0 lead in the first with his first homer of the night. He hit Twins starter Ervin Santana's 3-2 pitch over the wall in right field to end an 0-for-17 slump.

The Twins came back to take a 2-1 lead in the second on Robbie Grossman's sacrifice fly. Rookie center fielder Greg Allen, going back toward the wall, made a great running catch to keep the inning from getting away from Bieber.

Sano put the Twins ahead with a double to score Max Kepler from first. Yan Gomes, with a big inning brewing, helped Bieber's cause by picking Sano off at second base for the second out.

Brian Dozier started the inning by reaching on an error by second baseman Jason Kipnis. A single by Kepler sent Dozier to third, and he scored on Grossman's long sacrifice fly.

Ramirez powered the Indians back into a 2-2 tie in the fourth with his second homer in as many at-bats. Ramirez finished last season with 29 homers.

Gomes, following Ramirez's example, homered in the fifth off Santana for a 3-2 lead. It was the 11th homer by Gomes and first since July 3.

Bieber needed one out to get out of the fifth with the lead, but he gave up a two-out, two-run single to Jorge Polanco as the Twins took a 4-2 lead. Bieber struck out dangerous Eddie Rosario, who entered the game with six homers and 11 RBI against the Indians this season, with the bases loaded. But Polanco burned him.

The Indians tied the game again at 4-4 on Yonder Alonso's double in the sixth. Encarnacion scored from first on the play when Alonso's double skipped past a diving Cave in center field.

Santana, in just his second start of the season, allowed four runs on six hits in 5 1/3 innings. He underwent offseason surgery on the middle finger of his pitching hand and didn't make his 2018 debut until Wednesday against Toronto.

What it means

Ramirez's 32 homers are the most by an Indians player before August since Jim Thome had 33 in 2001.

The Tribe's third baseman has drawn a walk in eight straight games. It's the longest streak by an Indians player since Victor Martinez walked in 10 straight games from Sept. 15-Sept. 25, 2006.

The pitches

Santana threw 88 pitches, 60 (68 percent) for strikes. Bieber threw 95 pitches, 67 (71 percent) for strikes.

Andrew Miller update

Miller, after not pitching well Saturday in a rehab appearance for Class A Lake County, pitched one scoreless inning Monday night for Class AAA Columbus. Miller threw 10 pitches, eight for strikes, with one strikeout.

He has been on the disabled list since May 26 with a sore right knee.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Twins drew 26,256 fans to Target Field on Monday night. First pitch was at 8:10 p.m. with a temperature of 82 degrees.

Next

Trevor Bauer (9-6, 2.32) will face the Twins on Tuesday night at 8:10. Right-hander Kyle Gibson (5-7, 3.42) will start for the Twins. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM and WMMS will carry the game.

Bauer, coming off seven scoreless innings against the Pirates, will be facing the Brewers for the second time this season. He lost to them on June 2.

Gibson will be making his third start against the Indians this season. He is 1-0 with a 2.13 ERA in those games, allowing three runs in 12 2/3 innings.

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Loons fly late to beat Captains

By David Glasier, The News-Herald

Sometimes, the baseball fates can be cruel.

Against the Great Lakes (Mich.) Loons on July 30 at Classic Park, they dealt an unkind hand to Captains starter Jean Carlos Mejia in what ended as a 3-0 victory for the Loons.

Mejia was close to perfect through six innings. He'd faced 19 batters, one over the limit, and had not yielded a hit.

When the 21-year-old right-hander from the Dominican Republic retired Loons shortstop Brandon Montgomery on a routine fly to center field to start the top of the seventh, he was eight outs away from a no-hitter.

The next batter, Drew Avans, punched a single to right-center field to end the no-hit bid. Mejia got through the rest of the frame impressively, posting two strikeouts. As he made his way off the mound, he was given a spirited ovation by fans in the seats behind the Lake County dugout.

Mejia's night was done at that point. He'd surrendered one hit in seven innings, striking out 10 and issuing one walk. He'd thrown 87 pitches, 59 for strikes.

It was the second straight standout performance by Mejia. Against the West Michigan Whitecaps on July 25, he blanked the host Whitecaps on three hits through seven innings. That outing also produced 10 strikeouts.

The Captains squeaked out a 1-0 win against West Michigan.

They didn't get the job done against Great Lakes. The Loons got to normally stingy relievers Nick Broom and Kyle Nelson, scoring one run in the top of the eighth off Broom and two more in the top of the ninth with Nelson on the mound.

The Captains got nine hits off four Great Lakes pitchers but stranded nine baserunners.

Broom (0-1, 1.29 ERA) absorbed the loss for the Captains. Sven Schueller (1-2, 4.84 ERA) picked up the win for the Loons.

Captains manager Luke Carlin smiled when it was suggested Mejia deserved better than he got.

"He was really good tonight," Carlin said. "It's fun to watch him when he's on his game like that."

Mejia is 3-4 with a 2.64 ERA. In 12 appearances (10 starts) covering 61 1/3 innings, he has 67 strikeouts.

MLB | Twins 5, Indians 4: Twins trip Indians with walk-off win

By Dave Campbell / Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Twins lost two more teammates to trades before the game.

They finished the night, at least, in a better mood.

Mitch Garver drove in the winning run with a one-out double in the ninth inning, capping a 5-4 victory over the Cleveland Indians on Monday night and triggering the familiar bucket-dumping celebration in the infield after he rounded second base.

The Twins had more cold water poured on their disappointing season in the afternoon, when reliever Zach Duke and starter Lance Lynn were sent away in separate deals for more minor leaguers.

"That was a big win for us as a group, as a group of brothers," Garver said. "We lost some key guys to our team this year, and to come back and kind of put that one away and finish that game like is pretty exciting for us."

Jose Ramirez hit two home runs for Cleveland to match Boston's J.D. Martinez for the most in the majors with 32, but the Indians fell to 3-7 against the Twins this season. The Twins still trail by eight games in the AL Central, not nearly close enough for the front office to halt the sell-off two-thirds of the way through this disappointing season. Eduardo Escobar, who thrived at third base while Miguel Sano was out, and reliever Ryan Pressly were dealt for prospects on Friday.

"It's really good way to start the series, especially with all the tumultuous things that have been going on," manager Paul Molitor said.

Sano, who hit an RBI single earlier and went 2 for 3 for his first hits in the majors since June 12, drew a walk to start the ninth against Neil Ramirez (0-1). Jake Cave advanced pinch-runner Ehire Adrianza with a sacrifice bunt. Then Garver delivered the deep drive to left-center field.

Fernando Rodney (3-2) pitched a scoreless ninth, striking out Yonder Alonso with runners at second and third. He struck out Ramirez two batters before that.

Twins starter Ervin Santana got one out in the sixth before being removed, allowing four runs on six hits and two walks, and gave up both of Ramirez's homers before another solo shot by Yan Gomes that gave the Indians a 3-2 lead in the fifth.

Jorge Polanco's two-run single in the bottom of that inning against Shane Bieber put the Twins in front, but Santana lost the lead again when Cave made an ill-advised dive for a sinking line drive by Alonso to center field. That went for an RBI double to score Edwin Encarnacion from first base with one out.

HOLD TIGHT

Bieber allowed four runs, three earned, on six hits in 6 1/3 innings, a sharp improvement from the seven runs in 1 2/3 innings he gave up to Pittsburgh last week.

"I felt more like myself tonight," Bieber said.

SLUMP? NOT SO MUCH

Ramirez hit his 31st homer on a full count in the first inning against Santana, a no-doubt drive to right field that stopped a hitless stretch of 17 at-bats. Ramirez had 11 walks during those seven-plus games.

"Sometimes the pitchers are throwing you a lot of strikes. Sometimes they're throwing balls. So I just stay focused on trying to get my pitches and, yeah, I feel normal," Ramirez said through a translator.

TRADE ADJUSTMENTS

The Twins announced Adalberto Mejia will start on Wednesday afternoon, taking Lynn's place in the rotation. Duke's departure opened a spot in the bullpen for Addison Reed, who was returned from his rehab assignment.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: OF Greg Allen was called up from Triple-A Columbus before the game, and RHP Adam Plutko was sent down. With Lonnie Chisenhall, Tyler Naquin and Bradley Zimmer all out with injuries, Allen will help fortify the unsettled CF and RF spots with Rajai Davis, Brandon Guyer and Melky Cabrera.

Twins: Sano, who missed a month with hamstring trouble and after struggling upon his return was sent to the minor leagues for what turned out to be a six-week stay for conditioning and refining his swing, went 0 for 7 with five strikeouts in his first two games back over the weekend.

UP NEXT

Indians: RHP Trevor Bauer (9-6, 2.32 ERA) will pitch on Tuesday night. The All-Star kept up his career-best season against Pittsburgh last week by striking out 10 batters over seven scoreless innings while surrendering only two hits.

Twins: RHP Kyle Gibson (5-7, 3.42), who held MLB batting leader Boston to one run on four hits over eight innings last week, will take the mound for the middle game of the series.

Indians 4, Clippers 2 | Andrew Miller in fine form with strong inning

By Mark Znidar

Anyone running to the concession stand for another round of hotdogs on Dime-A-Dog Night when Andrew Miller was pitching in the seventh inning for the Clippers missed out on seeing a reliever who could be on the verge of making hitters look silly again.

It took him only 10 pitches — eight of them strikes — to wipe out the Indianapolis Indians in order.

The Clippers took the lead on a two-out home run by Yandy Diaz in the eighth inning, but the Indians got a sacrifice fly from Kevin Kramer and two-run homer from Ryan Lavarney in the ninth for a 4-2 victory before 11,133 on Monday night at Huntington Park.

The Clippers (55-51) fell 3½ games behind the Indians (59-48) in the International League West with 34 games remaining.

Miller was upbeat after getting Kramer on a popup to right, striking out Lavarney and getting Erich Weiss on a soft fly to left. His fastest pitch was clocked at 94 mph. He is scheduled to pitch Tuesday night in his first back-to-back games during this injury rehabilitation stint from Cleveland.

"I felt really good — the results were the way I felt," Miller said. "A lot of times things like this take a little time, but I felt progress. I'm looking forward to pitching again."

Miller hasn't pitched for Cleveland since May 28 because of a balky right knee. He also has had a pulled left hamstring. Last season, he went on the disabled list twice because he might have been brought back too quickly.

"I threw strikes tonight and that's the first step when you are dealing with mechanics," Miller said. "When you do that, you can step on the gas more and find an extra gear. Tonight was a step in the right direction. Minor things make a big difference."

What helped enlighten Miller off the mound this past weekend was talking to Hall of Fame pitcher Ferguson Jenkins. Jenkins won 284 games in his career, and 20 or more in a season seven times.

"I spent about 10 to 15 minutes with him at the fantasy camp and it was great," Miller said. "He's a down-to-earth guy. It was a chance to learn some things. I was all ears, but I hope I didn't talk too much. He was a great pitcher and had so much success. He left his mark on the game and I'm going to look up his statistics."

Diaz homered off the facing of the railing in right field off Michael Feliz on a 2-and-2 pitch to give the Clippers a 2-1 lead.

But Christopher Bostick and Jacob Stallings led off the Indianapolis ninth against Ben Taylor with a single and double, respectively, and Kramer followed with a sacrifice fly. Lavarney hit an opposite-field home run to right.

Twins trade Lance Lynn to Yankees, Zach Duke to Mariners

By Joe Christensen Star Tribune

If last Friday's trades of Eduardo Escobar and Ryan Pressly blindsided the Twins clubhouse, Monday's moves — shipping Lance Lynn to the Yankees and Zach Duke to the Mariners — were no surprise.

Even with first-place Cleveland visiting Target Field, the Twins front office focused on swapping veterans for future assets ahead of Tuesday's 3 p.m. non-waiver trade deadline.

Will Brian Dozier be next? Or maybe Kyle Gibson?

"There's a lot of things going on, not just here, but around the game as we get closer [to the deadline]," manager Paul Molitor said. "In the next 23 hours there will probably be more flurry of activities."

The Escobar-to-Arizona and Pressly-to-Houston trades netted five minor leaguers, including four who moved into the Twins' top 30 prospects, as ranked by MLB.com. One of them, Jhoan Duran, made an immediate impression, tossing seven no-hit innings for Class A Cedar Rapids on Monday.

The Lynn and Duke moves added four more minor leaguers, including former second-round pick Chase De Jong and Tyler Austin, who once ranked among Baseball America's top 100 prospects.

The Twins were busy as the nonwaiver trade deadline neared, sending starter Lance Lynn to the Yankees and reliever Zach Duke to the Mariners.

Jim Mone, Associated Press (Lynn); Carlos Gonzalez, Star Tribune (Duke)

The Twins were busy as the nonwaiver trade deadline neared, sending starter Lance Lynn to the Yankees and reliever Zach Duke to the Mariners.

The Twins might be trade deadline buyers, not sellers, if not for their 9-15 start. Lynn took responsibility for his part, as he was 0-3 with an 8.37 ERA through the end of April but heads to the Yankees at 7-8 with a 5.10 ERA.

"I really enjoyed my time here," Lynn said. "I wish I could have done better."

The Yankees reportedly might use him out of the bullpen. To sweeten the deal for the Yankees, the Twins agreed to pay half of the \$4.5 million Lynn has remaining on his one-year contract.

The Yankees gave up Austin, 26, a power hitter who has split time mostly at first base, right field and designated hitter. He made New York's Opening Day roster this year and hit eight home runs in 34 games, but he batted just .223 with a .280 on-base percentage before heading to Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes Barre.

The Yankees also sent the Twins righthanded pitcher Luis Rijo, 19, who went 4-1 with a 2.77 ERA in seven starts at three minor league levels this season, with the highest being Class A Tampa.

The Twins have bolstered their farm system, but the veterans are still reeling from Friday, when the trades started with the team riding a four-game winning streak.

How long will it take them to get over those moves?

"Honestly, it'll be a while," said Dozier, another pending free agent. "It's not one day, two days or anything. It always still lingers and it always will."

Duke was 3-4 with a 3.62 ERA and 39 strikeouts in 37½ innings. He has made 513 career appearances and has not allowed a home run this season.

The key to that trade for the Twins was the 24-year-old De Jong, who ranked as the No. 28 prospect in Seattle's system, according to MLB.com. The Twins also acquired infielder Ryan Costello, 22, who wasn't ranked in Seattle's top 30 prospects.

The Twins agreed to pay \$75,000 of the \$675,000 Duke had remaining on his one-year contract. The Mariners, like the Yankees, would be wild-card teams if the season ended today.

"Love the guys in this [Twins clubhouse] and I'm gonna miss them," Duke said. "But I'm looking very forward to being out there in a pennant race."

De Jong is a 6-4 righthander who went 5-5 with a 3.80 ERA in 21 starts for Class AA Arkansas this season. He had 89 strikeouts in 120⅓ innings. Drafted by Toronto six years ago, De Jong also pitched in the Dodgers system and made seven appearances, including four starts, in the big leagues for the Mariners last season, going 0-3 with a 6.35 ERA.

Costello, 22, has a Midwest League-leading 16 home runs with a .266 average and 70 RBI this season for Class A Clinton. Still, it's hard to say how soon any of these players will help the Twins.

"A lot of good players in [the Twins clubhouse] with a lot of upside and a lot of good futures ahead of them," Lynn said. "I wish them all the best."

Mitch Garver's walkoff double leads Twins past Cleveland 5-4

By Joe Christensen Star Tribune

Twins players have said enough goodbyes in recent days to last a whole offseason. They had a lot more fun celebrating Mitch Garver's walkoff double Monday night.

After seeing Zach Duke and Lance Lynn become the third and fourth players traded since Friday, the Twins were locked in a seesaw battle with Cleveland at Target Field.

Fernando Rodney escaped a ninth-inning jam, and then Garver drove a ball to left-center field, scoring pinch-runner Ehire Adrianza for a 5-4 victory before an announced crowd of 26,256.

The win halted a three-game losing streak and pulled the Twins within eight games of the first-place Indians. Minnesota leads the season series 7-3.

"To bounce back, shoot, we've got [nine] more games against these guys," Garver said. "We're just going to keep fighting."

Cleveland had a runner on third base with one out in the ninth and Jose Ramirez at the plate. Ramirez had already hit home runs No. 31 and 32 earlier against Ervin Santana. But Rodney fanned Ramirez with a 97-mph fastball. Then, after a walk to Edwin Encarnacion, Rodney struck out Yonder Alonso to end the top of the inning.

"Sometimes it's a little tough to watch, as far as how it unfolds," Molitor said of Rodney. "There's usually going to be at least one stretch where the command kind of eludes him a little bit, but he seems to like having those moments."

Molitor pulled Santana after Cleveland caught a break and tied the score 4-4 in the sixth inning. Alonso lined a ball that center fielder Jake Cave gambled on, trying to make a diving catch. The ball bounced for a double, allowing Encarnacion to score from first.

After Santana left, the Twins got some key scoreless relief appearances from Gabriel Moya and Matt Magill, who each inherited two runners apiece.

Miguel Sano, who went 2-for-3 with an RBI and a run scored, walked to start the ninth before Molitor inserted Adrianza to pinch run. Cave's sacrifice bunt moved Adrianza to second, setting the stage for Garver's game-winner.

"It's a really good win to start the series," Molitor said. "Especially with all the tumultuous things that have been going on here the last three, four days."

Reed activated from DL

The Twins replaced Duke on the roster by activating Addison Reed from the disabled list after a rehab assignment in Class AAA Rochester.

Reed, who missed 16 games with right triceps tendinitis, walked two batters and struck out one Sunday in his last appearance for Rochester.

"We'll try to get him some good matchups so we can see where he's at," Molitor said of Reed.

Etc.

- Adalberto Mejia will start Wednesday's game against Cleveland for the Twins, in place of Lynn.
- Byron Buxton went 0-for-3 with three strikeouts for Rochester on Monday, dropping his average to .215.

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Twins' sell-off has a purpose, but it's still guesswork

CHIP SCOGGINS

Good thing Major League Baseball's trade deadline happens Tuesday. The Twins are running out of veterans to purge.

Brian Dozier is probably next. And maybe more. The clubhouse has a revolving door attached to it right now.

The Twins front office waved the white flag by initiating a fire sale that involves unloading veterans in order to stockpile prospects. As of Monday night, four trades had fetched nine minor leaguers in return, and baseball bosses Derek Falvey and Thad Levine probably aren't finished reshaping the roster in a youth movement.

Falvey and Levine are acting like the two Duke brothers at the end of the movie "Trading Places" when they realize they've been duped out of their fortune.

Sell! Sell! Sell!

If 2016 served as the organization's Total System Failure, this season represents a Total Stopgap Failure.

The Falvine Regime, perhaps reluctantly, attempted to reward the team after a 26-win improvement last season by bolstering, in theory, the roster with a crop of veterans on rental deals. Their plan backfired.

So now Falvine has commenced a new plan that makes sense in conception but offers no guarantees of a meaningful payoff.

The organization suddenly finds itself in a weird, transitional spot after reaching the one-game wild card last season. The Twins are not close to being a contender, but it's hard to know if the front office privately views this as a long, slow rebuild.

Look at the lineup Monday night against Cleveland. Of the eight position players, who looks like a sure bet in terms of predicting with confidence future performance?

There's left fielder Eddie Rosario and who else?

Miguel Sano? No clue. Dozier likely will either be traded or leave in free agency. Joe Mauer's future is unknown. Shortstop Jorge Polanco and right fielder Max Kepler have shown flashes but still have a lot to prove. Catcher is up in the air. Byron Buxton remains in the minors and has yet to prove that he can stay healthy or hit big-league pitching consistently.

Turnover in the pitching staff is inevitable, too.

The decision to bring in veteran help this offseason wasn't misguided. The front office just targeted the wrong guys and/or those veterans underperformed. They were never viewed as long-term pieces.

Too many players — and not just the newcomers — have had unproductive seasons so it's hard to blame the front office for losing faith and deciding to punt on the rest of the season.

Now the narrative again returns to hoping and wishing about the future. It feels like another "Get to know 'em" campaign is upcoming.

Levine noted that four of the five prospects acquired over the weekend will crack the organization's list of top 30 prospects.

"That's meaningful," he said. "What we were able to accomplish yesterday may not pay dividends tomorrow, but on the horizon, that just got brighter."

Maybe. Maybe not.

Buxton and Sano provide cautionary tales about becoming intoxicated by potential. They were billed as generational prospects and the Twins still have no idea what their ceiling will be. That doesn't mean Falvine's plan is flawed or the wrong course of action, but nobody really knows how this will play out.

Predicting future success of Class A-level prospects is pure guesswork. Trading Lance Lynn and Zach Duke — even Eduardo Escobar, as painful and unpopular as that was — in a lost season is worth the risk.

The development of Buxton and Sano remains the most important part of this whole blueprint. The organization can't go 0-for-2 on those two cornerstones and pretend the impact would be minimal.

Sano's physical appearance upon return from his midseason boot camp provides a dose of encouragement. His body looks noticeably different after shedding 20 pounds.

Sano doubled and singled in first two at-bats Monday after striking out five times in his first seven plate appearances after rejoining the team.

"Good things are coming," he said.

He was talking about himself. The organization hopes a flurry of trades will produce the same result. In both cases, wait-and-see has become the template again.

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