

## **Gomes slams Tribe into win column vs. KC**

By Jordan Wolf MLB.com

KANSAS CITY -- After Francisco Lindor gave the Indians the lead with a grand slam in Monday's game, Yan Gomes decided to get in on the fun Tuesday night.

Gomes' sixth inning slam reclaimed the lead for the Tribe and was the difference in its 6-4 victory over the Royals at Kauffman Stadium. "I was able to get a pitch up and drive it," Gomes said. "[Danny] Duffy, we all know, he's a tremendous pitcher. Once he settles in, he's hard to beat. I felt like we were maybe chasing him a little bit instead of letting him come to us."

Gomes had chances to make his mark earlier in the game, but fell behind Duffy both times. In the first, after Cleveland had rallied for two runs off the Kansas City starter and had runners on first and second, Gomes couldn't keep the line moving, as he flied out to end the frame. In the fourth, after a Duffy wild pitch advanced Yonder Alonso to second, Gomes stifled the momentum again by grounding out to third.

He wouldn't let Duffy win the third time around, though. After laying off a slow curveball high and outside, Gomes sent a changeup over the left field wall and gave the Tribe the lead that would hold until the end.

The inning began with a walk to Edwin Encarnacion, Brandon Guyer getting hit by a pitch and Alonso reaching on an infield single. Then Duffy, nearing 100 pitches, left that changeup out there for Gomes, who turned on it to clear the bases.

The blast traveled an estimated 369 feet, according to Statcast™, and left Gomes' bat with an exit velocity of 104.8 mph. It was his third career grand slam, and his first of the 2018 campaign. The Tribe has now hit eight slams on the season.

Shane Bieber got into trouble early when he allowed a two-run homer to Lucas Duda in the first. The damage continued in the second, when Whit Merrifield drove in Adalberto Mondesi with a single, and then was knocked in himself on a Rosell Herrera double.

It was not too late for Bieber to say sorry, however, as he flipped the switch and was steady after those two frames. He allowed nine hits and four runs in his six innings of work.

"Early on, it was a real struggle," manager Terry Francona said of his starter. "Especially with his secondary pitches ... they were kind of flat. Then as the game got going, he actually kind of got into a groove and threw the ball much better."

Bieber was making just his fifth start in the Major Leagues, so his ability to keep his composure after a rocky start despite his inexperience was impressive to Francona.

"For a younger kid that's not very experienced, he has a ton of poise," Francona said. "He could've cracked and gave up six or seven and we're out of the game, but he didn't. He kept us in it, and gave us a chance to win."

Cody Allen came in with two outs in the eighth to escape a jam, and picked up a four-out save. That gave him No. 139 of his career with the Indians, which ties Bob Wickman for the all-time franchise lead.

"It's an unbelievable honor. It's something I definitely don't take lightly," Allen said. "But like I said, it's an effort by a lot of people ... it's a testament to the quality of pitchers we have in the bullpen, our starting rotation, just how good of a team that we've had the last six or seven years I've been here."

Guyer exited the game in the ninth inning after fouling a ball off his left knee and crumpling to the ground in the batter's box. X-rays came back negative, however, and Francona said they would reevaluate his condition tomorrow.

### **YOU GOTTA SEE THIS**

When Jorge Bonifacio lined the ball to right with two outs and a runner on second in the fifth, Guyer charged in and made a fantastic catch while falling forward to save a run from scoring.

"He willed himself to catch that ball," Francona said.

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

The Indians' lead was in danger in the eighth when Hunter Dozier singled up the middle, and Salvador Perez took off from second. Perez appeared to be hung out to dry after running through the stop sign, but Lindor, who was serving as the cutoff man, was caught off guard by Perez's decision, which created a play at the plate.

"When I looked at first, I saw [Royals third base coach Mike Jirschele] sending him," Lindor explained. "So I was like, 'OK, he's going to score.' I was just trying to keep the guy from going to third, so I set up to throw to third. As I'm catching the ball, I hear Gonzalez saying, 'Four! Four! Four! Four!' so that's when I threw to home plate."

Lindor's delayed throw was initially ruled to be behind Perez's delayed attempt at coming home, but he was confident enough that the inning was over to run into the dugout. After the replay review, it was determined that his throw had indeed beaten Perez to the plate, the call was overturned and the Tribe's lead remained at two.

### **UP NEXT**

Right-hander Trevor Bauer (7-6, 2.45 ERA) will close the series out for the Tribe at Kauffman Stadium on Wednesday at 8:15 p.m. ET. Bauer has historically been sharp against the Royals, as his 3.39 career ERA against them is the third best among teams he's faced more than five

times. No starting pitcher for Kansas City has been announced, as scheduled starter Ian Kennedy (1-8, 5.11 ERA) was placed on the 10-day disabled list during the game.

### **Chisenhall hits DL (calf), Allen recalled**

By Jordan Wolf MLB.com

KANSAS CITY -- The Indians are bringing Greg Allen back up to the Major Leagues as Lonnie Chisenhall hits the disabled list.

Chisenhall was placed on the 10-day DL on Tuesday after sustaining a left calf strain before Monday's game against the Royals in Kansas City. He had just returned to the club a few weeks prior after missing nearly two months with the same injury in his opposite calf.

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While the MRI during Monday's game showed enough to warrant a trip to the disabled list, the full extent of Chisenhall's injury is still unknown.

"We don't know," manager Terry Francona said. "I don't think Lonnie knows, I don't think the trainers know. Did he hurt some scar tissue, did it bleed? That's what shows up on the MRI. That's just as honest as I can be about it."

The Tribe lineup will miss Chisenhall, as he was batting .343 since returning at the beginning of June. Michael Brantley is now the lone active Indian hitting above .300 entering play on Tuesday.

Allen joins the big league roster after being sent down to Triple-A Columbus on June 18. In his 14 games since being sent down, he batted .411.

"He's swinging the bat pretty good," Francona said. "That gives us coverage at all three outfield spots, and a switch hitter. So it kind of made common sense to get him here."

Allen has struggled to find much of the same success when with Cleveland, as he has hit just .204 in his time in the Majors. He had a solid May, hitting .273, but that progress took a step backwards in June with a .083 clip at the plate.

The trip back down to Columbus allowed Allen the opportunity to fix that. But even as his game may change as he bounces back and forth down I-71, his approach and mentality stays the same.

"For me, just being able to make a few adjustments at the plate, mentally and physically, and just go out there and play," Allen said. "Be free and easy, be loose. Again, just find ways to try to factor in and influence and help the team, whether it's here or with the Columbus team."

### **Indians sign their top 2 picks from 2018 Draft**

KANSAS CITY -- The Indians announced Tuesday that they have signed three picks from the 2018 Draft, including their top two selections.

High schoolers Noah Naylor, Ethan Hankins and Korey Holland and Oregon State's Steven Kwan all signed with the Tribe for more than their slotted or expected amounts. Naylor signed for a bonus of \$2,578,138 (No. 29 pick value: \$2,332,700), Hankins for \$2,246,022 (No. 35 pick value: \$2,016,400) and Holland for \$515,000 (No. 433 pick value: \$125,000).

Naylor, a catcher from St. Joan of Arc Catholic in Mississauga, Ont., projects as a strong hitter with heavy power, and he has a strong defensive profile in addition to his proficiency at the plate. He was previously committed to play at Texas A&M.

"We're excited about Noah's bat. He can really hit," director of amateur scouting Scott Barnsby said during the Draft. "[He] controls the strike zone, [has] really good hand-eye [coordination]. Can drive the ball to all fields. There's power there. Defensively, [he's] a stay-behind-the-plate catcher with arm strength."

Naylor's power culminated in an appearance at the High School Home Run Derby during last year's All-Star festivities at Marlins Park in Miami. He finished second in the competition to Nolan Gorman, who was taken 10 picks before Naylor by the Cardinals.

As a member of the Ontario Blue Jays (an elite 18-and-up team based in his home province), Naylor hit .421 in seven games. He also played for the Canadian Junior National Team, touring Spring Training facilities in Florida to play against members of the Red Sox and Blue Jays.

The Indians found Naylor a battery-mate just six picks later, when they drafted Hankins, a right-handed pitcher from Forsyth Central High in Cumming, Ga. He had been committed to pitch at Vanderbilt.

Hankins was projected by many to be one of the first pitchers drafted this year, but a muscular issue with his throwing shoulder made his stock fall. He did make a recovery, however, and finished the season strong.

Cleveland was drawn to Hankins' 6-foot-6-inch frame, which allows his long arms to operate smoothly in his delivery. He projects as a starter, with his best pitch being a fastball that sits consistently in the mid-90s and tops out at around 98 mph.

"Ethan is an impressive young man," Barnsby said during the Draft. "It's a four-pitch mix, and he throws a lot of strikes. He's an athletic kid. The arm works well, so we're absolutely looking at him as a starter."

Kwan was a member of the Oregon State squad that recently captured the 2018 College World Series title. Battling an injury, he started just one game in the Finals, and pinch-hit in another.

The regular leadoff hitter for the Beavers, Kwan swings a consistent bat and has good speed out of the box. It translates to the outfield as well, where he exhibits strong range in center field.

Holland, who was drafted in the 14th round, is a speedy center fielder with a solid line-drive approach at the plate. He was committed to play at Texas.

### **McKenzie spins another gem for Akron**

By Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com @GoldenSombrero

- No. 21 overall prospect Triston McKenzie (Indians' No. 2) returned to form in earnest as he carried a no-hit bid into the seventh inning in best start of the year for Double-A Akron. He ultimately allowed just one hit -- a leadoff triple in the seventh inning -- over 6 1/3 scoreless frames, issuing one walk and striking out four, while throwing 59 of his 91 pitches for strikes and facing two above the minimum. Right forearm tightness postponed McKenzie's season (and Double-A) debut until June 7, but the 20-year-old right-hander has quickly made up for the lost time by posting a 3.34 ERA and 0.93 WHIP over his first five starts.

- Indians No. 19 prospect Luis Oviedo furthered his dominant start to the season by tossing seven scoreless innings of four-hit ball with seven strikeouts as Class A Short Season Mahoning Valley blanked State College, 2-0. Oviedo also recorded eight ground-ball outs and threw 50 of his 75 pitches for strikes. The 19-year-old right-hander is 3-0 with a 0.39 ERA and 0.52 WHIP through four starts, during which he's posted 34 strikeouts against three walks while permitting just nine hits (.117 BAA) in 23 innings.

### **José Ramírez, Francisco Lindor and their new place in the Cleveland sports scene**

Zack Meisel Jul 3, 2018 5

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — As soon as the baseball disappeared beyond the bright yellow Sprint ad on the wall in right field, Francisco Lindor could slow to a leisurely stroll around the bases.

With one swift swing, responsible for producing four runs, Lindor offered a reminder to any Cleveland sports fan still wallowing in the aftermath of LeBron James' re-relocation: There remains some marquee athletic talent in this sports-crazed town.

No one can match the clout LeBron carries or attract the spotlight he helped to shine on a city once starved for a championship. For some, that sense of emptiness might persist past the start of training camp or the first playoff game in October.

The Indians have some talent worthy of the extra eyeballs that might not be glued to the action taking place in the building adjacent to Progressive Field. On the left side of the infield stand two of the top position players in the sport, two guys who rank among the league leaders in a plethora of categories, two guys who captivate audiences with their play and their personalities, two All-Stars bound to call Cleveland home for at least another few years.

Lindor was the flashy first-round pick, the slam-dunk prospect who has rarely experienced failure as a professional. He was a Rookie of the Year runner-up. He's the face of New Balance, a shortstop with a knack for seizing the moment, as evidenced by his ALDS grand slam against the Yankees and his island-buzzing home run in his native Puerto Rico.

Ramírez has blown past every expectation along his journey to stardom, stunning evaluators, casual observers and his peers with his ability. The guy who once struggled to keep Lindor's seat warm has blossomed into one of the most imposing forces at the plate. His teammates say they aren't surprised by his power, but no one, including those in the Indians' front office, pegged him as a 40-homer guy.

Lindor has the trademark smile. Ramírez has the signature strut, the showy stride that saps any mimickers of their energy supply. Every pregame session in the clubhouse is a must-see event. As players rest on couches or sit at their lockers and scroll through Instagram, Ramírez bounces around the room like a crazed gnat, slapping the backs of teammates' heads, challenging them to table tennis matches or "Mario Kart" races.

Ramírez walks around the clubhouse, dugout and infield with a carefree spirit. But those who know him well stress that he's obsessed with winning and destroying the opposition. That doggedness can be overlooked when he's rattling off new English words he's learned or swiping the bullpen catcher's phone during a FaceTime call.

But just consider Ramírez's answer when The Athletic asked him if he hopes to earn an invite to the Home Run Derby.

"I've wanted to do it," he said, via team interpreter Will Clements. "If they put me there, I would win it."

That sort of innocent bravado is refreshing to hear, especially in baseball, a sport saddled with out-of-touch unwritten rules.

As for the on-field credentials, it's a near-impossible task to pinpoint a weakness in either player's game. Their stat lines ooze substance.

Ramírez: .298/.402/.612, 24 homers, 24 doubles, 15 stolen bases, 171 wRC+, 5.7 WAR

Lindor: .298/.373/.581, 23 homers, 27 doubles, 10 stolen bases, 158 wRC+, 5.0 WAR

They both rank in the top four in baseball in homers and WAR. Lindor has scored seven more runs than any other player. Ramírez has walked more often than he has struck out. Both guys rank second in the American League at their position in defensive runs saved.

And yet, Corey Kluber recently spotted Lindor speaking with a couple of teammates about ways he can perfect his swing.

"For a guy who is doing as well as he is to feel like he's not where he wants to be and then to go seek out help to fix it, that's pretty impressive for somebody who's as young as he is," Kluber said.

Fans clamor to admire athletes who boast such a blend of confidence, energy and a desire to be great. No one can compete with the legacy LeBron has established in Cleveland, from his Northeast Ohio roots to his return to that unforgettable Sunday evening in June two years ago. (That said, a thriving, Super Bowl-winning quarterback can certainly carve out a similar spot in Cleveland sports lore.)

Lindor is under team control through the 2021 season. Ramírez is signed through 2023. They seem intent on turning heads for at least the next few years. Maybe they'll turn a few more now that there's a bit of a void in the city's sports landscape.

### **José Ramírez, Francisco Lindor scripting two of the most prolific offensive seasons in recent Indians lore**

**Zack Meisel Jul 3, 2018 11**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Francisco Lindor continues to insist he is not a power hitter. If he swung for the fences, he says, he'd submerge into an 0-for-35 skid, a helpless bystander holding a thumpless piece of lumber in the batter's box.

So, this guy who preaches sound, fundamental baseball, a guy who takes pride in bunting and moving runners and in completing every minute task to inch a team toward the win column, has somehow stumbled upon 23 home runs in the Indians' first 83 games.

That total places him fourth in the majors, tied with some 6-foot-8 behemoth named Aaron Judge. Yeah, that guy is a power hitter. J.D. Martinez and Mike Trout, who rank first and second? Yeah, they're power hitters.

Though, there is one guy near the top of the leaderboard who swears he only swings toward the sky when fed a "home run pitch." José Ramírez, Lindor's quirky, goofy partner on the left side of the Indians' infield, is tied for second in the big leagues with 24 homers. The diminutive third baseman who seemingly couldn't hit the ball out of the infield a few years ago now stands shoulder to shoulder with the league's goliaths at the plate.

Lindor and Ramírez have produced highlight after highlight throughout the first three months of the season. Both appear destined for Washington, D.C., in two weeks, an All-Star trip that will soon seem routine for the duo.

Lindor slugged a couple of home runs — a grand slam and a three-run blast — at Kauffman Stadium on Monday. Ho hum, seven RBI from the leadoff spot. And, naturally, he delivered the moon shots in the two trips to the plate after a sacrifice bunt attempt that trickled back toward the pitcher.

"It's a routine day for him," Corey Kluber said, smiling.

Well, it's not a routine day in team history. Chico Carrasquel is the only other Tribe shortstop to tally seven RBI in one game. He accomplished the feat a mere 22,712 days earlier, against the Kansas City Athletics. (Incredibly, Lindor was not aware of this information. In fact, Roberto Pérez asked Lindor if the seven RBI represented a career high. The shortstop wasn't sure.)

"That's good," Lindor said. "I'll take it."

So many things can happen that make "on pace" statistics rather shallow, but both Lindor and Ramírez appear to be headed for some gaudy numbers.

If we combine their numbers ...

164 games, 47 HR, 110 RBI, 131 runs scored, 25 stolen bases, 51 doubles, 89 walks, 111 strikeouts

Where do these seasons stack up among the most prolific of the last quarter-century by Indians hitters? Glad you asked.

Albert Belle's 1995 season is considered the gold standard since it's the only one in major-league history to feature 50 homers and 50 doubles. Plus, he attained those numbers in only 143 games, thanks to the strike. Belle's numbers during the 1994 campaign, also shortened because of the work stoppage, were even more imposing.

Albert Belle, 1994: .357/.438/.714 slash line, 186 wRC+, 36 HR, 35 doubles (in 106 games)

Albert Belle, 1995: .317/.401/.690 slash line, 173 wRC+, 50 HR, 50 doubles (in 143 games)

Manny Ramirez produced a couple of memorable seasons at the end of his Tribe tenure.

Manny Ramirez, 1999: .333/.442/.663 slash line, 172 wRC+, 44 HR, 165 RBI

Manny Ramirez, 2000: .351/.457/.697 slash line, 181 wRC+, 38 HR, 122 RBI

Jim Thome, bound for Cooperstown later this month, holds the single-season franchise home run record with 52 in 2002.

Jim Thome, 2001: .291/.416/.624 slash line, 167 wRC+, 49 HR, 124 RBI

Jim Thome, 2002: .304/.445/.677 slash line, 189 wRC+, 52 HR, 118 RBI

Travis Hafner contributed some Thome-like seasons before his shoulder tapped out.

Travis Hafner, 2005: .305/.408/.595 slash line, 166 wRC+, 33 HR, 42 doubles  
Travis Hafner, 2006: .308/.439/.659 slash line, 176 wRC+, 42 HR, 31 doubles

We'd be remiss not to mention Michael Brantley, who garnered recognition as an MVP finalist in 2014.

Michael Brantley, 2014: .327/.385/.506 slash line, 151 wRC+, 20 HR, 45 doubles, 23 stolen bases

And so how do these two stack up about halfway through the season?

José Ramírez, 2018: .298/.402/.612 slash line, 171 wRC+, 24 HR, 24 doubles, 15 stolen bases, more walks than strikeouts

Francisco Lindor, 2018: .298/.373/.581 slash line, 157 wRC+, 23 HR, 27 doubles, 73 runs scored

And that doesn't take into account their fielding exploits. Both players rank second at their respective position in defensive runs saved.

"They're not satisfied with where they are," Kluber said. "Even though they're both putting together unbelievable years right now, if something doesn't feel right, they're not going to be content with where they are. They're still going to try to get it to where they want it to be. Obviously, they're both super talented. But their work ethic and the way they're able to make adjustments and are always looking to improve, that's what separates them."

Lindor's 2017 WAR: 5.9

Lindor's 2018 WAR: 5.0

Ramírez's 2017 WAR: 6.7

Ramírez's 2018 WAR: 5.7

Just don't call Lindor a power hitter (when he's within earshot).

"Home runs are great," he said. "They're great. I love home runs. Don't get me wrong. When I see the ball go over the fence, it's great. But I'm not trying to (do that). My job is to move guys, to get on base, to score. Yeah, I drive the ball. If it goes out, it goes out. I'm not trying to hit home runs. When I try, that's when I go in an 0-for-35 slump, so I'm trying to stay away from that."

Thus far, mission accomplished.

## **Indians sign top picks Noah Naylor, Ethan Hankins**

By Ryan Lewis

The Indians signed first-round draft selection Noah Naylor and compensation pick Ethan Hankins, taken No. 29 and No. 35 overall, respectively, to deals above their slot values Tuesday.

Naylor, 18, a catcher out of Ontario who ranked as the No. 20 overall prospect according to Baseball America and No. 27 in the draft class by MLB Pipeline, signed for \$2,578,138, above the slot value for that selection (\$2,332,700).

Hankins, 18, a hard-throwing right-handed pitcher out of Georgia, was ranked as the No. 21 prospect by MLB Pipeline and signed for \$2,246,022, also above the slot value for that selection of \$2,016,400.

The specifics of the deals were first reported by Jim Callis of MLB.com/MLB Pipeline. The club has confirmed the signings.

With the Indians signing Naylor and Hankins to deals ahead of Friday's deadline, they have locked up all four of the selections made on the draft's first night. Right-handed pitchers Lenny Torres (No. 41 overall, competitive balance round) and Nick Sandlin (No. 67 overall, second round) had previously signed deals, both below their respective slot values.

Chisenhall goes on DL

For the second consecutive season, Lonnie Chisenhall is having a productive year at the plate, but one that has been limited by his troublesome calves.

Chisenhall on Tuesday was placed on the 10-day disabled list with a left calf strain. He already had missed much of the year with a strained right calf. He also missed extended time last season with a strained calf and earlier this year said that it felt like déjà vu.

When he's been healthy, he's been productive. In 2017, Chisenhall posted an .881 OPS in 270 at-bats, easily his best season. This year, albeit in only 95 at-bats, he's hitting .321 with an .846 OPS.

Greg Allen was recalled from Triple-A to replace Chisenhall.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 07.04.2018

## **Cleveland Indians sign Bo Naylor, Ethan Hankins, top two picks in June draft**

By Paul Hoynes

KANSAS CITY - The Indians landed the two big fish in their 2018 draft - high school catcher Noah "Bo" Naylor and high school right-hander Ethan Hankins.

Word on Hankins' signing broke early Wednesday when the Indians signed him for above slot value at \$2,246,022. Hankins slot value was \$2,016,400.

Naylor signed for above slot as well, coming in at \$2,578,138. His slot value was \$2,333,700.

The 18-year-old Naylor just graduated from St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School in Mississauga, Ontario. He's a left-handed hitter who played on the Ontario Blue Jays this spring for the Canadian under-18 national team on a tour of big-league spring training camps.

The Indians selected him with the 29th pick in the first round.

Hankins, the 35th pick overall, pitched at Forsyth Central High School in George. The 18-year-old pitcher is 6-6 and 200 pounds.

The Indians also announced the signing of fifth round pick outfielder Steven Kwan from Oregon State; 14th round pick outfielder Korey Hollan from Langham Creek (Texas) High School and 23rd round pick Cody Farhat from Texas Tech University.

The Tribe has signed 32 of the 42 players it drafted last month. They signed all 12 of the players they took in the first 10 rounds. They had a bonus pool of just over \$9 million to sign those 12 players.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.04.2018

### **Cleveland Indians recall OF Greg Allen from Triple-A Columbus to replace injured Lonnie Chisenhall**

By Paul Hoynes

KANSAS CITY -- The Indians placed outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall on the disabled list Tuesday and recalled switch-hitting outfielder Greg Allen from Class AAA Columbus to take his spot.

Chisenhall, hitting .321 (27-for-84) with one homer and nine RBI, is making his second trip this season to the DL with calf problems. He missed nearly two months early in the season with a strained right calf. Now he's on the DL with a strained left calf after suffering the injury in pregame warmups before Monday's game against the Royals.

Last season Chisenhall missed most of the second half with a strained right calf.

Allen hit .204 (21-for-103) with three doubles, three homers and four RBI during his time with the Indians this year. He scored 11 runs and stole four bases without being caught.

He's hitting .326 (42-for-158) with 11 doubles, one homer and 10 RBI at Columbus. Allen, 25, was the Indians sixth round pick in the 2014 draft.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.04.2018

### **Cleveland Indians, RHP Ethan Hankins have come to terms on \$2,246,022 signing bonus**

By Paul Hoynes,

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Right-hander Ethan Hankins, the Indians second pick in the June draft, passed his physical and has officially signed for an above slot bonus of \$2,246,022.

The slot value for Hankins, the 35th overall pick in the draft, was \$2,016,400.

The Indians have now signed 10 of the 12 players they selected in the first 10 rounds of the draft. First round pick Noah Naylor, a high school catcher from Canada, and fifth round pick Steven Kwan, an outfielder from Oregon State, are the only unsigned players in that group.

Overall, the Indians have signed 28 of the 42 players they've selected in the draft. Friday is the deadline for teams to sign their draft picks.

The Indians used a compensation pick to take the 6-6, 200-pound Hankins. They received the pick after losing first baseman Carlos Santana to the Phillies.

The slot value for Naylor is \$2,332,700 and \$303,400 for Kwan, who helped Oregon State win the College World Series.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.04.2018

### **Francisco Lindor's bunt grows into record-setting night for Cleveland Indians' shortstop**

By Paul Hoynes

KANSAS CITY - The best game in Francisco Lindor's career started with a sacrifice bunt. It wasn't a particularly good bunt, but because, as manager Terry Francona said, he was playing the game the right way he was rewarded.

Jakob Junis, Kansas City's pitcher, dropped Lindor's bunt in the third inning. He was safe at first, but more importantly Rajai Davis advanced from second to third base, which was the point of the bunt in the first place. Sacrifice flies by Michael Brantley and Edwin Encarnacion, with a double wedged in between by Jose Ramirez, followed and the Indians were tied, 2-2.

If the error on the sacrifice bunt was a reward from the inner forces that drive the game - and still believe in fading old school standards - Lindor's next two at-bats produced a bonanza of new-age baseball. Lindor hit a 3-1 pitch from Junis in the fourth into the right field seats for just the second grand slam of his career. In his next at-bat, against the same pitcher, he hit a three-run homer in the same direction, only a little farther.

Two swings and a career-high seven RBI for the Tribe's switch-hitting shortstop, who is now batting .298 (101-for-339) with 27 doubles, 23 homers and 55 RBI. Lindor leads the big leagues with 73 runs, six ahead of second-place Mike Trout.

Some other Lindor numbers to digest from Monday's 9-3 win.

\*He's homered in three straight games for the second time this season. He did it the first time from June 22 through June 24.

\*Travis Hafner was the last Indians player to do that in 2006.

\*The seven RBI are the most by an Indians player since Brandon Moss had seven against the Tigers on April 24, 2015.

\*The only other Indians shortstop to drive in seven runs in a game, according to records that go back to 1908, was Chico Carrasquel on April 26, 1956.

\*Lindor joined Manny Ramirez (Sept. 24, 1999 vs. Toronto), Vic Wertz (Sept. 14, 1957 vs. Boston) and Pat Seerey (July 13, 1945 vs. the Yankees) to hit a grand slam and three-run homer in the same game.

\*Lindor is hitting .343 (71-for-207) with 17 homers and 54 RBI in 54 career games against the Royals.

\*Lindor's slam gave the Indians seven for the season and their third in the last 10 games. They're tied with Boston for the second most in the big leagues behind the Reds.

Before Francisco Lindor's two homers, there was a sacrifice bunt

And all that started with a bunt.

"My first at-bat, I got jammed (ground out to first)," said Lindor. "Then I got the bunt down and I said, 'OK, I'm fine.'"

One bunt can do that?

"Sometimes it's not all about the hits," said Lindor. "Sometimes it's quality at-bats, getting guys over. For example, Brantley's sac-fly that's as valuable as a guy getting a base hit. It's not always about the hits. It's about you tracking the ball, being successful and helping the team. That gives you a release - yes, I'm part of the team."

That's what Lindor felt when he moved Davis from second to third.

All the stars. All the stripes. All the runs. #VoteFrankie | #RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/m3NYMNSE6x

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) July 3, 2018

"That's huge. . . huge," said Lindor. "It made me made me feel like I did my job that day to help my team. Whether I scored or not, I got the guy over and Brantley hit the fly ball and the guy scores. We ended up scoring another run that inning."

Lindor said it freed him for the rest of the game to go "do his thing."

"It gave me the confidence to go up to the plate and say, 'I did something today. I don't have to do something extra to feel like I'm part of the team,'" said Lindor.

But he did. . . twice.

Stuff the ballot, folks.

He deserves it. #VoteFrankie | #RallyTogether pic.twitter.com/jRJ8Jryi5g

-- Cleveland Indians (@Indians) July 3, 2018

"This was pretty much a routine day for him. . . today and Sunday," said Corey Kluber, Monday's winning pitcher, when asked about Lindor. "I just think he continues to get better. It's kind of scary to think that."

"I saw him talking to a couple of guys the other day about his swing. For a guy that's doing as well as he is, feeling like he's not where he wants to be, and to go seek help to fix it, that's pretty impressive for somebody who is as young as he is."

It's hard to talk about Lindor without mentioning Ramirez. He had two more doubles Monday night and is hitting .298 (93-for-312) with 24 doubles and 24 homers. Like Lindor, he has 55 RBI.

"I think they're not satisfied with where they're at," said Kluber. "They're both having incredible years, but if something doesn't feel right, they're not going to be content with where they're at. They're going to still go try to get it where they want it to be."

"They're super talented, obviously, but the way they make adjustments and are always trying to improve is what separates them."

Yes, Lindor said it again and again and again. He's not a power hitter. He's a player that has to bunt, get on base and drive the ball. But he's enjoyed every one of his 23 homers.

"The home runs are great," he said. "I love home runs. Don't get me wrong. When I see the ball go over the fence. . . but I'm not trying."

"My job is to move guys, get on base and score. Yeah, I want to drive the ball. If it goes out, it goes out. But I'm not trying to hit home runs. When I try, I go into an 0-for-35 slump. I'm going to try and stay away from that."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.04.2018

### **Cleveland Indians use grand slam for the second straight night to beat Kansas City, 6-4**

By Paul Hoynes

KANSAS CITY -- Another game, another slam, another win. Don't you love it when a plan comes together?

Yan Gomes gave the Indians a 6-4 come-from-behind victory over the Royals at sizzling Kauffman Stadium on Tuesday night with a sixth-inning grand slam that turned a two-run deficit into a two-run lead.

It was the eighth slam of the year for the Indians and the second in as many days. Francisco Lindor's slam Monday night in the fourth inning broke a 2-2 tie and ignited the Tribe's 9-3 win.

Cody Allen pitched the ninth Tuesday for his 17th save and first on the trip. It was Allen's 139th career save with the Indians, tying him for the franchise lead with Bob Wickman.

Danny Duffy (4-8, 5.99) entered the sixth with a 4-2 lead. He walked Edwin Encarnacion and hit Brandon Guyer with a pitch to start the inning. Yonder Alonso sent a double-play grounder to shortstop Adalberto Mondesi, but he couldn't handle the ball cleanly and the Indians had the bases loaded.

Manager Terry Francona raved about Guyer's hustle to second base.

"It's like instant energy, especially when you're on the road," said Francona. "Those are plays that don't show up in the scorebook, but he got a very good secondary lead and he hustled his butt off to second and all of a sudden, we have bases loaded and nobody out."

Mondesi wasn't scheduled to start, but when third baseman Mike Moustakas was a late scratch because of back spasms, veteran shortstop Alcides Escobar moved to third and Mondesi came off the bench to play short.

Gomes wasted no time against Duffy. After taking the first pitch for a ball, he drove an 84 mph change over the left field wall for a 6-4 lead. It was the third slam in Gomes' career and gave him 10 homers for the season.

"That's one of the things where, you get a chance like that to cut the lead a little bit and I was able to get a pitch up and drive it," said Gomes.

Gomes said all the pressure is on the pitcher in a no-out, bases-loaded situation. "The advantage is totally on our side," said Gomes. "Whether you chop one into the ground to get a run home or something like that. He has to make a pitch and all I have to do is put the bat on the ball and let it drive someone in."

Rookie right-hander Shane Bieber (4-0, 2.97) went six innings for the win, but the Royals put some scuff marks on him. They reached him for four runs on nine hits.

The Indians took a 2-0 lead in the first. Lindor and Michael Brantley opened the game with singles to put runners on the corners. Jose Ramirez singled off Duffy's glove to score Lindor.

Duffy loaded the bases on a walk to Brandon Guyer, and Alonso delivered Brantley with a sacrifice fly.

The Royals came right back to take a 4-2 lead against Bieber with two runs each in the first and second innings. Lucas Duda hit a 436-foot two-run homer in the first. Bieber allowed three hits in the second as Whit Merrifield made it 3-2 with a single and Rosell Herrera doubled home Merrifield for a 4-2 lead.

"That was an interesting start," said Gomes. "The first two innings, whether they're hard hit or not, they're moving the ball around and gives up four runs.

"You just don't see many young guys be able to (recover) and take that through six innings and settle in. That was the definition of settling in."

Indians catcher Yan Gomes on Shane Bieber and his grand slam

Bieber did not let the Royals expand the lead. Guyer helped him in right field as he made a sliding catch against Jorge Bonifacio with Duda on second to end the fifth inning. Duda reached on a long double to the gap in right center.

In the second, Guyer chased down Hunter Dozier's long drive to the fence in right to start the inning. If not for that catch, the Royals may have had a bigger inning than they did.

Guyer was left the game after fouling a ball off his left knee in the ninth. X-rays were negative.

The Royals, who are 36 games below .500 and have lost 16 of their last 19 games, challenged again in the eighth. Dozier, with Salvador Perez at second, singled through the middle with two out off Allen. Perez tried to score as Lindor, thinking Perez would stop at third, took the relay throw with his back to the plate.

When he saw Perez was trying to score, he threw home to Gomes. Perez was originally called safe, but the Indians challenged the call and it was overturned after a short replay review.

What it means

The Indians, by rallying for Tuesday's win, finally pulled even at 4-4 on this nine-game trip. If they can beat the Royals on Wednesday, they could go home with a winning record, which certainly seemed unlikely as they went 2-4 on their first two stops in St. Louis and Oakland.

Terry Francona on rookie Shane Bieber and catcher Yan Gomes

The pitches

Duffy threw 105 pitches, 64 (62 percent) for strikes. Bieber threw 95 pitches, 65 (68 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Royals drew 19,005 fans to Kauffman Stadium on Tuesday night. First pitch was at 8:15 p.m. with a temperature of 94 degrees and a heat index of 102.

Next

Right-hander Trevor Bauer (7-6, 2.45) concludes this nine-game trip when he faces the Royals on Wednesday night at 8:15. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM will carry the game. Ian Kennedy was scheduled to start for Kansas City, but he was placed on the disabled list before Tuesday's game with a strained left oblique muscle. The Royals did not announce who would start in Kennedy's place.

This will be Bauer's third start against the Royals this season. He's 0-1 with a 3.55 ERA. He's 2-4 against the Royals in his career.

Kansas City is expected to start right-hander Trevor Oaks, who is 5-3 with a 2.00 ERA in 13 starts at Class AAA Omaha.

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## **Did Adam Schefter just swing and miss or are the Cleveland Indians really invisible?**

By Paul Hoynes

KANSAS CITY - Maybe Adam Schefter just swung and missed. It can happen.

Or maybe he was just tweaking the Browns. Perhaps he had a bad experience on Dollar Dog Night at Progressive Field.

Whatever the reason, in the wake of LeBron James' exit from the Cavs, Schefter, ESPN's NFL Insider, Tweeted on Monday "And so now, Cleveland's hopes rest with the Browns."

The Browns? Would that be the 0-16 edition from 2017 that was so bad their head coach was forced to jump into Lake Erie? Or the 1-15 version in 2016?

What that says about the Indians, who went to Game 7 of the World Series in 2016; won an AL best 102 games last year and entered Tuesday night's game against the Royals with a 9 1/2 game lead in the AL Central title, can be taken several ways. A bemused look, a shrug of the shoulders or a revival of Rodney Dangerfield's old take about respect, as in not getting any. . .all of them would make sense.

Or it could be something like what appeared on Tribe third baseman Jose Ramirez's Twitter feed on Tuesday. Ramirez, the leading recipient of All-Star votes for AL third basemen, Tweeted "Are we invisible?"

And so now, Cleveland's hopes rest with the Browns.

-- Adam Schefter (@AdamSchefter) July 2, 2018

So are the Indians invisible? Are they Cleveland's most successful professional sports team, while being the easiest to forget?

Like the mailman, bag boy at the grocery store or the the friendly lady at the drive thru window at McDonalds. Nice people to be sure, but 10 minutes after you've exchanged pleasantries, you can't remember what they look like.

Are we invisible? [?] <https://t.co/HQMctOsiyn>

-- Jose Ramirez (@MrLapara) July 2, 2018

"I don't think anybody forgets about a club that is in first place and went to the World Series two years ago," said second baseman Jason Kipnis. "It's a hard thing to forget about if you did. It shouldn't be taken too seriously.

"I think we're very comfortable about where we are right now. We've got a good chance of making it back to the postseason. I think we might get there before the Browns."

While other sports are defined by highly-skilled individuals, Mike Clevinger thinks the Indians may suffer some facial recognition because of the team concept they exude.

"Other sports promote individual athletes," said Clevinger. "We're more represented as a team and I kind of like that aspect of us. A lot of sports are about one individual. That's not what the Indians are about. We're more a unit.

"So potentially we may get overlooked in a popularity contest."

Clevinger still thinks Cleveland is a good baseball town.

"It still has that town vibe to every game," said Clevinger. "The people around the ballpark, you can tell they're passing their love for the Indians from generation to generation. That's really cool to see."

Said Rajai Davis, "It is what it is. I guess you've got to make a name for yourself. And then they don't forget like LeBron did. He made a name for himself and now he's moving west. Going to Hollywood. I thought was already Hollywood in Cleveland, but I guess there's another step."

Tyler Naquin missed the Tweet entirely. He doesn't have a Twitter account and didn't really care all that much.

"People can say what they want," he said. "People can write what they want. All I know is I'm here every day trying to get better and help us win games."

Manager Terry Francona did not see the Tweet, but when told about it, he smiled and said, "Obviously, Adam Schefter does not follow baseball a lot. He's the football writer, right?"

As for the Indians being invisible, Francona said, "I wouldn't penalize the fans of Cleveland because Adam Schefter Tweeted something. Who knows, maybe he just whiffed. I wouldn't spend two seconds thinking about that."

Here are responses to Ramirez's Tweet.

Are we invisible? [?] <https://t.co/HQMctOsiyn>

-- Jose Ramirez (@MrLapara) July 2, 2018

Here are some responses to Schefter's Tweet.

And so now, Cleveland's hopes rest with the Browns.

-- Adam Schefter (@AdamSchefter) July 2, 2018

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 07.04.2018

## **RubberDucks 3, Curve 0: Triston McKenzie's no-hit bid broken up in 7th inning of victory**

Triston McKenzie took a no-hitter into the seventh inning and the RubberDucks beat the Altoona Curve 3-0 in an Eastern League game Tuesday night at Canal Park.

McKenzie, the top pitching prospect in the Indians' farm system, gave up a triple to Ke'Bryan Hayes to lead off the seventh. He struck out Bryan Reynolds before being relieved by Nick Pasquale. McKenzie walked one and struck out four.

Pasquale struck out Will Craig, hit Jordan George with a pitch and struck out Bralin Jackson to strand the runners in the seventh and then worked around a two-out walk in the eighth. Henry Martinez worked a scoreless ninth for his eighth save.

Tyler Krieger doubled to knock in Bobby Bradley and Connor Marabell and scored on a single by Alexis Pantoja to give the Ducks a 3-0 lead in the second inning.

The post RubberDucks 3, Curve 0: Triston McKenzie's no-hit bid broken up in 7th inning of victory appeared first on Ohio.com.

### **Indians' No. 6 prospect Willi Castro tries to lean on Francisco Lindor as he progresses through minors at a young age by Beacon Journal/Ohio.com**

Competing at minor-league levels as one of the youngest players among your peers can be a challenge, a double-edged sword of being promoted quickly and showing some high-ceiling traits.

But having a superstar at your position within the organization who went through the same thing is a nice resource to secure.

For Willi Castro, the RubberDucks' switch-hitting shortstop and one of the Indians' top prospects, that resource is Francisco Lindor. And when Lindor speaks, Castro listens.

Castro remains one of the youngest players at the Double-A level, only having turned 21 in late April. For some added context, Castro this season became the first player to play for the RubberDucks who was born after Canal Park opened in 1997. The ballpark is two weeks older.

Castro is ranked as the No. 6 prospect in the Indians' system according to MLB Pipeline, and he was No. 7 according to Baseball America's rankings prior to the season, though both lists included Shane Bieber, who is now pitching for the Indians. Last season, Castro, who was the youngest player on the High-A Lynchburg roster, hit .290 with a .761 OPS and was named to the Carolina League postseason All-Star team.

The production this year has come a bit slower after making the jump to Double-A. Entering Tuesday's game, Castro was hitting .253 with a .315 on-base percentage, three home runs, 17 doubles, 30 RBI and 11 stolen bases in 328 plate appearances.

When Castro and Lindor first started to talk three years ago, that kind of a stretch played into the elder shortstop's main piece of advice for a prospect trying to compete at a younger age than those around him.

"[Lindor] said he really struggled a lot in the beginning," Castro said on Monday. "He said to focus on the little stuff and keep working hard every day. That's helped me a lot. He told me a lot of good things, like to keep my head up and stay in the moment, because there will be a lot of good days but also a lot of bad days where you just have to keep fighting."

That advice helped Castro keep perspective as he struggled a bit and committed more mental errors than he'd like prior to his breakout 2017 season at High-A. He still isn't where he wants to be, especially defensively. He committed 25 errors in each of the past two years and is on pace to be right around that figure in 2018. But then again, Lindor has set a pretty high bar.

"It's cool. I watch Cleveland's games, I see what he's doing and I'm not able to do that yet," Castro said. "I'm just trying to be like him one day."

### **Indians sign top picks Noah Naylor, Ethan Hankins**

By Nate Barnes, The News-Herald

The Indians signed catcher Noah "Bo" Naylor and right-handed pitcher Ethan Hankins, the organization announced July 3.

Naylor was selected with the 29th overall pick of the 2018 First-Year Player Draft by the Indians out of St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School in Mississauga, Ontario.

Hankins was drafted at No. 35 with the compensation pick the franchise received for the Phillies' signing of Carlos Santana during the offseason. A 6-foot-6, 215-pound right-hander, Hankins earned multiple All-America accolades as a senior at Forsyth Central High School in Cumming, Ga.

The Indians also signed fifth-round pick Steven Kwan, 14th-round choice Korey Holland and 23rd-rounder Cody Farhat. The Indians have signed 32 of their 42 selections from last month's draft.

### **Pitching helps Captains douse Dragons**

Mix solid pitching with timely hitting, and you've arrived at the formula that's helping the Captains right their ship.

In a 3-2 victory over the Dayton Dragons on July 2 at Classic Park, both elements were in play.

At the plate, the Captains got to Dayton starter and eventual loser Tyler Mondile (2-7, 6.51 ERA) for three runs on seven hits in five innings.

They did all their damage in the bottom of the second inning. Jose Vicente, who went 3-for-3, singled in the game's first run. He rode home on Jose Medina's two-run home run.

Given the quality of performances by Lake County starter Juan Hillman and three relievers, that's all the production the Captains needed to win for the third time in their last six games. That's not a barn-burning pace, but it's a step in the right direction for a team that finished the first half of the Midwest League season at 29-41 and in seventh place in the MWC Eastern Division.

Hillman (2-8, 5.11 ERA) earned the victory, blanking the Dragons in five eventful innings. He surrendered only three hits, but bobbed and weaved his way through an outing that saw him throw 44 strikes in 81 pitches. It was the third straight quality start for the 21-year-old left-hander from Florida, who was the Indians' second-round pick in the June 2015 draft.

"Juan didn't really have his best stuff tonight," Captains manager Luke Carlin said. "It was impressive to watch him mix and match his way through five innings to keep us in the game. That is a huge positive for him."

Nick Sandlin followed Hillman to the mound and overmatched the Dragons in his one inning of work. The 21-year-old right-hander, selected by the Indians in the second round of the June 2018 draft out of Southern Mississippi, needed only 11 pitches to set down the side in order.

The Dragons got to reliever Nick Teaney for two runs in the top of the seventh inning. They weren't nearly as effective against the fourth Lake County pitcher, Kyle Nelson.

He blanked the Dragons over the final two frames to pick up his team-high fifth save. The 21-year-old left-hander worked out of a two-on, two-out jam in the bottom of the eighth. The Dragons also had one runner aboard in the top of the ninth but did no damage.

In 21 appearances, the MWL All-Star is 3-1 with a 0.57 ERA. He's notched 44 strikeouts while issuing only two walks.

"It's so much fun going out there and competing," Nelson said of his escape act in the top of the eighth inning. "I focus on being aggressive and taking it one outing at a time."

#### **Gomes' grand slam helps Indians rally past Royals, 6-4**

**The Associated Press      The Associated Press Jul 4, 2018, 12:28 AM**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) -- Former Baltimore Orioles manager Earl Weaver said the key to winning is "pitching, fundamentals and three-run homers."

Cleveland Indians manager Terry Francona can go one better: grand slams.

Yan Gomes hit a grand slam in the sixth inning and the Indians rallied to beat the Kansas City Royals 6-4 on Tuesday night.

The Indians lead the American League with eight grand slams and it was their second in two nights. Francisco Lindor hit one Monday.

"I'm glad," Francona said. "I hope we have a ton more opportunities. I'm really happy about that. That's really good for us."

Edwin Encarnacion led off the sixth with a walk and Brandon Guyer was hit by Danny Duffy's pitch. Yonder Alonso's infield single loaded the bases before Gomes drove Duffy's 1-0 changeup into the left-field bullpen.

"I hope it's not contagious, because that means people are going up there looking to hit a grand slam," Gomes said. "You really just want to get up there and try to keep the line moving. I hope if we get more bases-loaded (situations), we're just able to drive more guys in, whether that's a sac fly or a base hit or a grand slam."

Gomes is 10 for 26 (.385) with three home runs and eight RBIs off Duffy.

Shane Bieber (4-0) allowed all the Kansas City runs in the first two innings, and remains undefeated in his first five big league starts.

"Things got a little ugly," Bieber said. "They could have gotten a lot worse. I was trying to go out there and compete and move on to the next pitch."

Chad Allen got the final four outs for his 17th save in 18 chances and his fifth of more than one inning. He stranded two runners in the ninth after a single and a walk.

Duffy (4-8) yielded six runs on eight hits, two walks and a hit batter. He is 0-3 against the Indians this season and has lost eight in a row against them dating to May 6, 2015.

"It was belt high and right out over the plate for him to tattoo and that's what he did," Duffy said of the grand slam. "I hate that old song and dance these things happen, bull, but these things do happen. And it's happened to us a lot lately. It's really frustrating. I gave up six runs today, which means I didn't pitch very well."

It took Duffy 25 pitches to record an out with Lindor, Michael Brantley and Jose Ramirez opening the game with singles. Ramirez's single deflected off Duffy's glove to score Lindor. Alfonso's fly to center scored Brantley with the second run.

"The first inning was a grind for Danny, 36 pitches, but he really did a pretty good job of limiting the damage there with only two runs and kind of got on a roll," Royals manager Ned Yost said.

Lucas Duda homered with Rosell Herrera, who had three hits, on board to tie it in the bottom of the first.

The Royals forged ahead 4-2 in the second. Whit Merrifield singled home Adalberto Mondesi and scored on Herrera's two-out double.

The Royals lost for the 24th time in 29 games. They did manage 12 hits, ending a club record of 24 straight games without getting double-figure hits.

#### ROSTER MOVES

Indians: Recalled OF Greg Allen from Triple-A Columbus, where he was hitting .487 in a nine-game hitting streak at the time of the promotion. He hit .204 in 34 games earlier this season with Cleveland. "It definitely helps to have gone through it before," Allen said. "That just comes with experience."

#### DRAFT SIGNINGS

Indians: They signed their first two draft picks, Canadian high school C Noah Naylor and Cumming, Georgia high school RHP Ethan Hankins. Naylor, the 29th overall pick, signed for \$2,578,138, while Hankins, the 35th overall pick, signed for \$2,246,022.

Royals: RHP Brady Singer, the 18th overall pick, signed for \$4.25 million. He was the college player of the year, going 12-3 with a 2.55 ERA as a Florida junior.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: OF Lonnie Chisenhall (strained left calf) was placed on the disabled list. This is the second straight year he has been set back by calf injuries. He missed 50 games earlier this season with a left calf injury. He was out most of the second half of last year with a right calf injury.

Guyer left in the ninth after fouling a pitch off his left knee. Francona said the X-rays were negative.

Royals: RHP Ian Kennedy (strained left oblique) was placed on the disabled list retroactive to June 30th. . 3B Mike Moustakas (lower back spasms) was a late scratch. Yost said his back tightened up after he lifted one of his children.

#### UP NEXT

Indians: RHP Trevor Bauer is 0-1 with a 3.55 ERA in two starts this season against the Royals.

#### **McKenzie lights-out in RubberDucks' gem**

By Gerard Gilberto / MiLB.com | July 3, 2018 9:13 PM ET

After breaking camp on the disabled list, Triston McKenzie's delayed debut with Double-A Akron came with an abbreviated workload. Judging by the results, he seems ready to be turned loose.

The second-ranked Indians prospect carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning before Ke'Bryan Hayes tripled to lead off the frame as the RubberDucks blanked the Curve, 3-0, on Tuesday at Canal Park. McKenzie struck out four and walked one, lowering his ERA to 3.34 in his sixth Eastern League start.

"The ball wasn't flying tonight," he said. "I think I was just pitching to where they weren't hitting the ball hard enough to get it out or above my outfielders, and I got weak contact on some ground balls."

McKenzie experienced right forearm soreness coming out of Spring Training and was sidelined until his Double-A debut on June 7. The 20-year-old earned his first win on the circuit with five one-hit innings in his return against New Hampshire. In the four starts since, he has allowed 12 earned runs over a 21-inning span but has not eclipsed 90 pitches.

MLB.com's No. 21 overall prospect said he didn't feel he was as sharp Tuesday as in his previous few outings, but found success pitching to contact and getting quick outs.

The lanky 6-foot-5, 165-pounder finished five whiffs short of Minor League leader Alec Hansen, the White Sox No. 5 prospect, with 186 strikeouts last season for Class A Advanced Lynchburg, averaging 11.71 punchouts per nine innings. McKenzie has fanned just 26 in 32 1/3 frames this year with a 7.24 K/9 rate.

With his focus in the season's early months on getting healthier, the Royal Palm Beach, Florida native said his increased contact rate doesn't represent a change in approach on the mound.

"It's more filling up the zone and getting ahead of guys," he said. "Usually that leads to early contact and you're kind of getting through innings a little bit faster."

Now that his arm is feeling "great," McKenzie isn't emphasizing strikeouts, since the differences in talent between the Carolina League and his current competition in Double-A represent a more immediate hurdle.

"It's ... understanding the level and understanding how to get guys out," he explained. "Being successful at this level and understanding what makes other guys successful at this level."

A two-out walk to Pirates No. 5 prospect Bryan Reynolds in the fourth inning was the only thing between McKenzie and perfection through six innings Tuesday. He recorded 10 outs through the air and five on the ground with three strikeouts -- including two of fourth-ranked Cole Tucker.

The first-round selection in the 2015 Draft got ahead of Hayes, 0-2, to start the seventh before Pittsburgh's No. 3 prospect lofted the three-bagger to center field. Already at 83 pitches, McKenzie struck out Reynolds on an eight-pitch at-bat to conclude his night. The Brooklyn-born right-hander wished he could have gotten a shot at finishing the inning, but understood the pitch count wasn't in his favor. "Definitely glad to be going deeper into games and helping my team out a little bit more," he said. "If I'm going deeper into games and I'm doing that successfully, I'm doing something well on my part to try and win my team a game."

Right-handed side-armorer Nick Pasquale took over for McKenzie and stranded Hayes at third with strikeouts of 16th-ranked Will Craig and Bralin Jackson. Pasquale walked one in a scoreless eighth before Henry Martinez got Craig to bounce into a game-ending double play after Hayes' ninth-inning single.

"It's huge having a bullpen that you can trust and knowing that when you're coming out of the game, regardless of whether there's guys on or not, you're going to get out of that," McKenzie said.

Cleveland's No. 26 prospect Tyler Krieger collected two hits, including a two-run double for Akron.

### **Mud Hens 8, Clippers 3 | Rough third inning sinks Chiang, Clippers**

For the fourth time in five starts with the Clippers this season, Shao-Ching Chiang gave up at least three runs in an inning, and on Wednesday night it led to an 8-3 loss to the host Toledo Mud Hens at Fifth Third Field.

The damage came in the third inning, after the Clippers had taken a 2-0 lead. Chiang (3-1) faced eight batters and allowed four runs. Harold Castro had a leadoff double and scored on a Jacob Robson single. With one out, Jason Krizan had a two-run double and Grayson Greiner an RBI single before Chiang got the final two outs.

Chiang lasted five innings, giving up 10 hits, striking out three and walking one. He also gave up a run on a Robson sacrifice fly in the fourth. On the flip side, Chiang has 28 no-run innings with the Clippers.

Drew Maggi put the Clippers ahead 1-0 when he scored on a wild pitch in the first. Eric Haase followed with an RBI double in the second, and Brandon Barnes had an RBI single in the fifth. Haase and Barnes both finished 2-for-4. Mud Hens starter Kyle Dowdy (5-3) allowed eight hits over six innings, striking out three and walking four. All three Clippers runs were charged to him.

The Mud Hens added three runs after Chiang's exit. In the seventh, Edwin Espinal had an RBI sacrifice and Kody Eaves an RBI single. In the eighth, Haase scored on a throwing error.

The loss snapped a five-game winning streak for the Clippers. Their four-game series against the Mud Hens shifts to Huntington Park on Wednesday and Thursday.

### **Danny Duffy serves up slam as Royals fall to Indians, lose 60th game of season**

BY PETE GRATHOFF

The easy explanation for the 60th loss of this Royals season was a grand slam by Cleveland's Yan Gomes.

But a series of smaller self-inflicted blows preceding the blast, along with a key base-running mistake, and that proved damaging to the Royals in a 6-4 defeat at Kauffman Stadium.

"When you're playing good, you cover mistakes," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "Right now, we're just struggling to cover mistakes and then when we don't cover them, we can't find ways to back it up with the bats and cover it. That's why you struggle."

And, whew, the Royals are scuffling. They are 25-60, have dropped 24 of 29 games since the start of June, and are on pace to lose 114 games.

Things went south in the sixth inning on Tuesday when the Royals held a 4-2 lead.

After a laborious start, Royals' left-hander Danny Duffy retired 14 of 16 batters. But designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion drew a walk on five pitches to open the sixth and right fielder Brandon Guyer was slightly grazed by a 2-2 pitch.

First baseman Yonder Alonzo then reached on an infield single to short. Without hitting a ball to the outfield, the Indians had the bases loaded. Gomes unloaded them when he deposited an 0-1 change-up from Duffy into the Indians bullpen.

"I wanted it down, not over the middle of the plate where he could tattoo it," Duffy said. "I wouldn't have gotten into that situation had I not hit Guyer. He's a guy who's seemingly right on the plate and I let one get away. Walked the first, just a weird inning."

"All that could have been avoided if I hadn't made a bad pitch to (Gomes) ... I hate all that bull crap that these things happen but they have happened to us a lot lately."

It was the eighth grand slam the Royals have allowed this season, tying the franchise record with 77 games to be played.

A moribund offense showed signs of life after Duffy allowed two runs in the top of the first inning. DH Lucas Duda's two-run homer to right field scored center fielder Rosell Herrera and tied the game in the Royals' half of the frame. An inning later, Herrera doubled home Adalberto Mondesi and Whit Merrifield and the Royals led 4-2.

It stayed that way until Cleveland took the lead in the sixth.

The next bit of bad news came when the Royals ran themselves out of a run in the eighth inning.

Catcher Salvador Perez was hit by an Oliver Perez pitch to open the frame, and two outs later took second on a single by left fielder Alex Gordon. Cody Allen entered the game and was greeted by a single to center by first baseman Hunter Dozier. The Indians were ready to concede the run when third-base coach Mike Jirschele put up the stop sign after initially waving Perez home.

Perez tried to hit the brakes, but saw the ball was headed to the infield and took off for home. However, the throw from Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor barely beat Perez at the plate.

"Two outs, trailing by two runs, I think the throw would go to second base," Perez said. "He gave me the sign but it was a little late and you guys saw the rest."

Perez said he got to the plate, but knew it was a split-second too late.

"I almost told the umpire, but he called safe," Perez said.

An Indians challenge took the run off the board and ended the inning. The Royals got two on in the ninth, but couldn't get the key hit.

Looking for a positive? The Royals had 12 hits, which snapped a 24-game streak in which they had not collected 10 hits in a game, the longest in the American League since Kansas City did it in 1967. That was the A's, of course, and they would bolt for Oakland after season.

Kennedy on the shelf: Right-hander Ian Kennedy, who was scheduled to start Wednesday's series finale against Cleveland, was placed on the 10-day disabled list because of a strained left oblique. His time on the disabled list is retroactive to June 30, making him eligible to return on July 10.

Moustakas scratched: Third baseman Mike Moustakas was scratched from the lineup shortly before first pitch because of back spasms. Yost said it happened when Moustakas picked up one of his kids.

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### **Stark: Twelve things we learned in the first half of the season**

**By Jayson Stark 2h ago 17**

It's the 4th of July, and you know what that means.

We've made it through the snow, and we've made it through the rain. We've made it through 103 degrees and we've made it through 23 degrees.

We've made it through all the strikeouts. We've made it through all the shifts. We've made it through dozens of no-hit-alert vibrations on our phones. And above all, we've made it halfway through another baseball season, now that every team has finally played at least 81 games.

So what should we take away from the last three months? Thanks for asking. Now here they come – 12 Things We Learned from the First Half.

#### 1. Whatever happened to the greatest free-agent class ever?

Our first inclination, when we began working on this story, was to do some sort of mini-power rankings of the World's Most Amazing, Colossal, Star-Studded, Franchise-Altering, Gazillion-Dollar Free Agent Class of 2018-19. And then reality set in.

Outside of Manny Machado, which of these Amazing, Colossal, Star-Studded, Franchise-Altering, Gazillion-Dollar Free Agents has actually helped his marketability over these last few months? Not Bryce Harper. Not Clayton Kershaw. Not Josh Donaldson. Not Dallas Keuchel.

Oh, there are Craig Kimbrel and Nelson Cruz, in their own select categories. And Nick Markakis, Michael Brantley and Patrick Corbin, in the not-quite-so-star-laden tier of this class. But those megastars who were supposed to drive this market? They've mostly been driving it into the repair shop.

"We don't really start our free-agent work until August," said an executive of one club. "But when we do get to work on it, it could be so hard to value these guys – because when we look at most of these players, there's a good chance we're going to have to say, 'Can he return to form?' And the problem with that is, you know he'll be asking for money as if he already has."

#### 2. The American League has turned into the NBA

Has there ever been a league quite like the American League in 2018? Why, of course there has. It's called the NBA.

You've got your official Super Teams – the Astros (on pace to win 104 games), the Yankees (on pace to win 107) and the Red Sox (on pace to win 108). You've got a fourth team – the Indians – that looks as if it might win its division by 20 games. And you've got the Mariners, A's, Rays and Angels, who are good enough, or at least respectable enough, to fill out your playoff field. But then ...

There's baseball's dark hole, which is already ugly, with a chance to get uglier. You've got three teams – the Orioles, Royals and White Sox – plummeting toward minus-200 run differentials (or worse). And you've got at least three others – the Rangers, Blue Jays and Tigers – getting set to trade away a bunch of veteran players, which could set them on a course to lose 95 to 100 games.

"I can't ever remember a situation in any league like this," said one AL exec. "Can you?"

Of course not – because it's never happened. Not in any sport LeBron James doesn't play, anyway.

#### 3. The AL superpowers could be historically great

The Yankees are built to mash. And they're mashing. They're on pace to hit more home runs in a season (275) than any team ever. And Giancarlo Stanton hasn't even locked into his Bambino blue-heat phase yet. The record they're chasing is 264, by Junior Griffey's 1997

Mariners. That Mariners team had six players who thumped 20 or more. These Yankees could have six dudes who hit 30-plus. They're a force of modern baseball.

The Astros, meanwhile, just blow you out. Their plus-172 run differential is by far the largest we've seen on the 4th of July in the last 75 years. Only the '98 Yankees (plus-155) are even within 20 of them, and if the 'Stros keep this up, they're heading for the biggest plus-minus by any team since Red Rolfe's legendary 1939 Yankees put up a staggering plus-411. Yikes.

Meanwhile, the Red Sox merely have a shot at the winningest season in the history of their franchise, complete with the greatest run differential in the history of their franchise. Both of those records are held by Tris Speaker's 1912 Red Sox (105 wins, plus-255 differential). And this team is on pace to challenge them both.

There has never been any league – ever – with three 100-win teams. But let's remind you again that the reward for one of these three is probably going to be a fun-filled date with James Paxton in the Wild Card game, with nothing riding on it except their beautiful 106-win season. And that plot line is going to hover over the entire American League for the next three months.

#### 4. The Cubs, Nationals and Dodgers didn't get the memo

Would you please remind us next spring never to make another prediction for the rest of our lives? Playing all-knowing psychic is just a messy line of work. And nothing proves that better than the current state of the National League.

The only thing us know-it-all prediction geniuses knew for sure three months ago was that the Cubs, Nationals and Dodgers were pretty much locks to win their divisions. So naturally, they've spent a grand total of 16 days in first place combined. And almost half of them were by the Nationals, in the first week of the season.

At least the Cubs (13 over, with a plus-101 run differential) and Dodgers (30-13, with a plus-76 run differential, since May 16) are trending in the right direction. But the Nationals are turning into our planet's biggest mystery since the Bermuda Triangle.

Here's how they've fared since June 6: A 6-17 record (worst in their league) ... zero streaks in which they've even won two games in a row ... shut out six times ... a 5.43 staff ERA, worst in the NL ... and no wins by a starting pitcher other than (wait for it) Eric Fedde – who earned a "win" in a 17-7 game.

"Everyone wants to get on board with that team because they've got this guy and that guy and this guy, and they're all stars," said one NL exec. "But they're missing something. And they've been missing something for a while now. And it can't be the manager, because they've had five of them (since 2010)."

#### 5. The race for the No. 1 pick could be epic

Somewhere in Texas, Bobby Witt Jr. knows all about this. But over the next three months, the furious battle for the right to choose him – or someone just like him – with the first pick in the June 2019 draft has the makings of an all-time scramble for the baseball dungeon.

The Orioles are on pace to lose 116 games. The Royals are on pace to lose 114.

The Orioles just went over five weeks without winning a single game against a team from their own league. That's 0-17 – including an incomprehensible 0-15 month of June – if your hard drive just exploded trying to calculate it. And not surprisingly, no team in the interleague era had ever done anything like that.

The Royals, meanwhile, just lost 18 games in a row when they didn't throw a shutout. No team had done something like that in 111 years.

So here they are, on the 4th of July, careening toward triple-digit losses at a rate that no living human has ever seen. Want to guess the last time two different teams had winning percentages below .300 on Independence Day? That would be 1912 – when Hippo Vaughn's pre-Ruthian Yankees started 19-46 (.292) and Curly Brown's always-entertaining St. Louis Browns roared out of the gates at 19-47 (.288).

Don't go scrambling through the draft records to see what awesome No. 1 pick those juggernauts got out of that, because baseball forgot to invent the draft for another half-century. But this year, while a bunch of teams appeared to be chasing the No. 1 pick by consciously trying not to win, the Orioles and Royals weren't one of them.

"They weren't tanking," said one AL exec. "They were both semi-trying."

And shouldn't that be a lesson to tankers everywhere!

#### 6. The Manny Machado Derby is about to consume us all

It's the 4th of July, and Manny Machado has almost as many home runs (21) as the Orioles have wins (24). But we regret to announce there's pretty much a zero-percent chance that Machado will become the first player in history with more homers than his team has wins. And that, obviously, is because a month from now, his jersey can't possibly say "ORIOLES" on it. Can it?

Anything is possible, we suppose, in Baltimore, where Dan Duquette keeps reminding his trade partners what the Cubs gave up for Aroldis Chapman (i.e., premium rental property) just two years ago. And those trade partners, of course, keep reminding the Orioles of how little the Tigers got back for J.D. Martinez just 12 months ago.

But just as the Tigers decided eventually last July that they had no choice but to make the best deal they could for Martinez, the Orioles are in pretty much an identical position. So if they don't get Machado moved – to (pick one) the Dodgers, Diamondbacks, Phillies, Braves, Indians, etc. – it “would be organizational malpractice,” said one rival exec.

7. It's the year the hits disappeared

It's only the first week of July. But this sport is about to break a record that nobody seems to have noticed except us.

MOST STARTS IN HISTORY ALLOWING 1 HIT OR NONE\*

85 – 2015 (all season)

81 – 2018 (through July 2)

(\* – starts of 5 IP or more)

Source: Baseball-reference.com

Now think about this for a moment. We're about to see more starts of one hit or none by the all-star break than we've ever seen in any full season in the history of baseball? Um, is that good?

Well, it's a sign that pitching is more unhittable than ever, for one thing. Check out the trend in how the league has hit against starting pitchers over the last couple of decades:

YEAR	AVG	OPS
2018	.248	.730
2017	.261	.767
2008	.269	.760
2000	.274	.790

But clearly, that's not all that's going on here. Starting pitchers also get the hook earlier now (5.48 innings per start) than at any point in history. So 40 years ago, if Tom Seaver had a one-hitter through five innings, guess what? There was a nada-percent chance he was coming out.

Nowadays, though, as you might have noticed, nobody thinks that way. Defenses are better deployed. Every reliever on earth throws about 98 miles an hour. So the plan – every night – is to get those starters out of the game before they start to fade. And the bottom line is, it's harder to hit than it has been in nearly 50 years.

Hits per game are at their lowest level (8.38) than at any point since 1972. So here comes that next no-hitter alert on your phone, in 3...2...1.

8. It's the end of the four-times-through-the-lineup era

In a related development, how many games do you think we've seen all season in which starting pitchers navigated their way through the lineup four times (meaning they faced at least 36 hitters)?

The correct answer would be (yep) none. And if that keeps up, this would be the first season ever in which not a single starter made it through the opposing order four times.

The closest anyone has come: 34 hitters, by the Padres' Clayton Richard just last Friday in Texas.

As recently as the 2000 season, 55 pitchers made it through the lineup four times. But that number has been steadily declining, and had shrunk to six or fewer in each of the last six seasons.

So who was the last big-league starter to pull this off? It was – who else? – America's favorite 44-year-old strike-throwing machine, Bartolo Colon! He did it in a 106-pitch complete game for the Twins last Aug. 4. That was nearly 4,000 games ago. But the question is, will any pitcher ever do it again?

“The only way,” said one exec quoted earlier, “is maybe at the end of the year, if someone like a (Chris) Sale or (Justin) Verlander gets into a huge game and says to the manager, ‘I'm not going home Oct. 1, so I'm not leaving this game.’ But that's the only way it's going to happen.”

9. It's the year of the boy band

Juan Soto is 19 years old. He has a .978 OPS for the Nationals. He has a chance to have the greatest season in history by a teenager.

Gleyber Torres is 21. He has a .913 OPS. He has a higher OPS than any player on the Yankees except Aaron Judge.

Ozzie Albies and Ronald Acuña Jr. are teammates on the Braves. Albies is 21 and leads the National League in extra-base hits. Acuña is 20 – with an .818 OPS.

So how many seasons in modern baseball history have given us four hitters this young who had an OPS of .800 or better (and 400 plate appearances or more)? That answer is zilch.

have been 15 seasons with two young stars that good – from Mike Trout/Bryce Harper to Hank Aaron/Al Kaline to Jimmie Foxx/Mel Ott. But the only season that even brought us three young hitters who fit that description was 1969 (Johnny Bench, Richie Hebner, Carlos May).

But this year, if this group stays healthy and keeps doing what it's done so far, they are going to make history – together.



“That’s where this game is going,” said an AL exec. “The young players in this game are really good – and they’re good sooner than they’ve ever been.”

#### 10. Edwin Díaz could save 60 games

The closer for those Seattle Mariners might be baseball’s best-kept secret. The only kind of game his team ever seems to play is one-run games. There might be one reason, above all others, that the Mariners seem to win them all. That reason is named Edwin Díaz.

No one has ever saved 40 games before the all-star break. But don’t put it past him. He has 33 saves already. He’s on pace to save 62. Only one reliever has ever saved that many. That was Francisco Rodríguez (62) in 2008.

But don’t measure Díaz by his saves. This, said one AL exec, “feels like utter domination.”

Díaz’s numbers in those 33 saves: 0.27 ERA, 54 strikeouts, 11 hits. And the league is hitting an absurd .130 against him in save situations, with two extra-base hits.

He leads all AL closers in WHIP and strikeouts. And if he sat down next to you on a bus, you’d probably have no idea who the heck he is. But this might just be the year when Díaz goes from anonymity to massive stardom.

#### 11. Mike Trout has gotten downright Ruthian

One AL exec we interviewed for this piece objected strenuously when we tried comparing the greatness of Mike Trout with the legend of Babe Ruth.

“He’s the best player in baseball,” the exec said. “And he’s the best player ever.”

Ever? The logic here is actually tough to dispute. There’s no way we should ever find ourselves comparing baseball in the 1920s to baseball in the 21st century. In the Bambino’s day, there were no African-Americans playing baseball and no Latinos playing baseball. There were no airplanes and no light bulbs. And there was no science behind anything. So the athletes are indisputably better now. And the game is way more difficult to excel in now.

So with that as context, let’s remind you that Trout is on pace for 45 homers, 24 steals, 141 walks, 324 times on base and an OPS close to 1.100. He’s also on pace to rack up nearly 13 Wins Above Replacement. That’s a number reached by just one position player since 1900. Right you are. That would be the Babe, in 1923.

But if Trout doesn’t get to 13 Wins Above Replacement this year, just give him a few months.

“This is his best year ever, and that’s the scary thing,” the same exec said. “He’s still making adjustments. He got wise to us. He figured out that we’d found some holes and occasionally we exploited them. And now those holes are closed. And that’s what he does every year. He figures out what he’s not great at, and then he gets better.”

Best. Player. Ever. Who wants to argue?

#### 12. Jacob deGrom is the unluckiest pitcher ever

Baseball seasons just don’t get any more bizarre than Jacob deGrom’s season. Do they?

In 10 of his 17 starts, he has allowed one run or none. He has been the winning pitcher in two of those starts. But that’s not even the bizarre part.

The bizarre part is that his team has only been the winner in three of those starts.

We keep re-reading those stats over and over, but they don’t change. The Mets are 3-7 when their best pitcher allows one run or no runs.

The Elias Sports Bureau checked back all the way to 1893, the year the mound was set at 60 feet, 6 inches from home plate. They found that no pitcher in the last 126 seasons has been through more games like that in any of those seasons – meaning no pitcher’s team has ever lost more than seven starts in which he gave up no more than one run.

There are others who are tied with deGrom at seven. But remember, this guy still has half a season left to go. No telling how many more great starts his team might lose.

This is not a commentary on “pitcher wins,” by the way, because this isn’t even about pitcher wins. This is about team wins. Or lack thereof. And nothing explains that, except, possibly, for this: They’re the Mets.

“All this is,” said one of the execs quoted earlier, “is just an interesting, Jayson Stark-type tidbit. But no one in baseball is judging him any different because of it. Every five days, I’ll look at his latest game, and I’ll shake my head and say, ‘That poor bastard.’ And then I’ll move on, because what else can I say? It’s crazy.”