

Kluber tosses Maddux, blanks Halos on 3 hits

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- If there was ever one inning that could serve as a summation of Indians ace Corey Kluber, it would be the fifth inning on Saturday. In a span of five pitches -- all fastballs -- Kluber set down three Angels hitters in order.

Groundout. Groundout. Strikeout.

"Corey Kluber, man," Indians catcher Roberto Perez said after the Tribe's 3-0 victory over the Angels. "He was on tonight."

Facing an Angels lineup that scrapped its usual patient approach in favor of a more aggressive attack, Kluber carved his way through nine innings for the seventh shutout of his career. The right-hander adapted to the early-count swings, opting to tease contact rather than build up to strikeouts, and the result was a Maddux.

This marked only the second time in Kluber's career that his shutout fit that description -- completed with fewer than 100 pitches -- with the last being an 85-pitch gem against the Mariners on July 30, 2014. Against the Angels, Kluber finished with 98 pitches, scattered three hits and improved to 14-6 with a 2.63 ERA on the year.

The American League Central-leading Indians (60-49) are accustomed to these types of performances from Kluber, but this outing was particularly encouraging. It marks the second strong start in a row for the two-time AL Cy Young Award winner, who was dealing with a right knee issue and mechanical woes prior to the All-Star break.

"It's wonderful," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "It seemed like he was in command the entire night. And early, we weren't doing anything offensively, so it wasn't like he had a cushion to pitch with."

For the first five innings on Saturday, the Indians' lineup couldn't get anything going against Angels starter Felix Pena. The righty was firing nearly as many balls as strikes, but the approach was proving to be effectively wild. Cleveland went 0-for-14 through the first five innings against Pena.

"We just couldn't get a bead on him," Francona said. "His stuff is good, but we didn't make him pay when he didn't throw strikes."

That came to an end in the sixth, when Pena threw a 3-1 two-seamer low in the zone to Leonys Martin. The new Indians center fielder -- acquired from the Tigers prior to Tuesday's non-waiver Trade Deadline -- crushed the pitch to right field for his 11th shot of the season. Michael Brantley added an RBI single later in the frame and the Tribe tacked on a third run in the seventh.

That was sufficient support for Kluber, who struck out seven and walked one in the win.

Perez noted that the Angels are one of the more patient teams in baseball this year, but used a different style on Saturday night. Los Angeles entered the game averaging 3.92 pitches per plate appearance, but that dropped to 3.06 against Kluber. With some more swings earlier in at-bats, Kluber and his catcher tweaked their game plan.

"When you know a team's game plan is to be aggressive," Kluber said, "if anything, you can maybe start off the count a little bit more on the corners. ... Instead of trying so much to get ahead, you're more so trying to execute a pitch and if they are going to be aggressive, miss in the right spot."

That was on full display in Kluber's swift fifth inning.

Prior to that frame, Perez discussed the Angels' approach with Kluber and pitching coach Carl Willis. Then, Kluber used a four-seamer to create a first-pitch groundout from Kaleb Cowart. Next came a two-seamer, which Eric Young Jr. pounded through the infield grass for another groundout.

Kluber finished off that sequence with three elevated heaters. Kole Calhoun watched the first two and swung through the third. It was vintage Kluber.

"He's back to normal," Perez said with a smile.

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

Welcome to Cleveland: Over the past two games, Martin has done his part in winning over any remaining skeptics about the trade that brought him to the Indians from Detroit. The center fielder went 98 at-bats without a homer leading up to his ninth-inning shot on Friday night. Then, Martin went deep again on Saturday to end Pena's no-hit bid and ignite an offensive rally that gave Kluber the support he needed.

"I'm really happy, man. I came here to help," Martin said. "And I want to do my best to help this team to get where we want. We've got a long way to go still. ... I don't think about homers. They just happen. I try to hit the ball hard and do my game. I try to get on base and create situations."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Kluber fired an inside sinker in the sixth to Justin Upton, who flared the pitch over the mound for what had the makings of a bloop infield single. Shortstop Francisco Lindor charged in front of second base, plucking the baseball from the air with his bare hand after one bounce. In one smooth motion while on the run, Lindor then fired the ball to first to nab Upton, eliciting a collective roar from the Cleveland crowd.

"That was an unbelievable play," Francona said. "I was watching [second baseman Jason Kipnis], because I thought he was the only one who had a chance. And it took a funny hop on [Lindor]. That was a great play."

Lindor said he was trying to get to the ball fast enough to make the catch, but the shortstop had to improvise on the run.

"That was very important," Lindor said. "I think that changed the momentum. ... I was [trying to make the catch with] two hands and go quick. It just took that hop to the right and I barehanded it."

SOUND SMART

Entering Saturday's game, Albert Pujols had at least 15 plate appearances against 248 pitchers in his career. Kluber was the only one in that group to never relinquish a hit against the future Hall of Famer. After a popout and groundout in his first two trips to the plate, Pujols ended his 0-for-18 drought against Kluber with a two-out single in the sixth.

HE SAID IT

"It's awesome. We all knew he was a good player before he got here. He's fit in really well. Our clubhouse kinda lends to that. Guys seem to be able to come in and adjust pretty quickly. Obviously, the quicker start a guy can get off to with a new team, it just gives him that much more confidence." -- Kluber, on Martin

"I used to hate that guy. I use to hate him. He's pretty good. He's really good. He's one of the best in the game. He made that play look so easy." -- Martin, on Lindor's defensive gem

UP NEXT

Rookie right-hander Shane Bieber (5-2, 4.73 ERA) is scheduled to start for the Tribe on Sunday, when the Indians host the Angels at 1:10 p.m. ET at Progressive Field. In his last outing, Bieber yielded three earned runs in 6 1/3 innings on the road against the Twins. Los Angeles will start Deck McGuire (0-1, 6.12 ERA) in place of the injured Tyler Skaggs.

Gomes sits, but likely to avoid DL with leg injury

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- Roberto Perez walked through the Indians' clubhouse and stopped to read the lineup card for Saturday's game against the Angels. The catcher was slotted into the eighth spot of the batting order and was behind the plate for ace Corey Kluber.

"Catching Kluber. All right," Perez said, nodding as he strolled off.

Tribe catcher Yan Gomes -- who has caught 21 of Kluber's first 22 starts this season -- was out of the lineup after injuring his right leg during Friday's 7-4 loss to the Angels. Indians manager Terry Francona noted that an MRI exam revealed that Gomes is dealing with right hamstring tendinitis, but the team is hopeful that the catcher will not need to go on the disabled list.

Francona noted that Gomes was available off the bench, if needed, but the manager hopes to give the All-Star catcher a couple days to rest his legs. Francona added that Gomes has been dealing with the issue "for a while," but the problem was not severe enough to keep him out of the lineup until Saturday.

"If it lingered longer, then we'd have to maybe think about the DL," Francona said prior to Saturday's game. "But, I think the way it sits now, I don't think we're going to have to do that. He came in feeling pretty good today. ... I actually think it'll be good for [Perez], to know he's going to play a couple days in a row. I think it'll be really good for him."

Gomes doubled in the second inning on Friday night, winced as he rounded first and grabbed at his right knee after stopping at second base. The catcher initially remained in the game, but was lifted for Perez when his next turn to bat came up, in the fourth.

If Gomes' situation does warrant a trip to the DL, the next man up on Cleveland's depth chart would be catcher Eric Haase, who is at Triple-A Columbus and on the Tribe's 40-man roster. Haase, 25, impressed the Indians' staff during Spring Training, has earned positive reviews from the Major League pitchers and currently ranks 24th on the Indians' Top 30 prospects list, per MLB Pipeline.

Through 97 games with Columbus, Haase has hit .240 with 14 home runs, 20 doubles, 60 RBIs and 111 strikeouts with 28 walks in 338 plate appearances. The catcher has thrown out 50 percent (27-for-54) of would-be basestealers this season.

"Guys enjoy throwing to him," Francona said, "because he cares so much about running the game and getting the pitcher through the game. And those are the things we saw in Spring Training, even in a small sample. He's a very interesting guy. At points in his career, he's hit better than at other times. Strong kid, so he's got power."

"But his catching, he may not have the arm that Perez or Gomes has, but he does such a good job behind the plate with pitchers that they all seem to like throwing to him."

Worth noting

- According to Francona, lefty Andrew Miller was feeling good on Saturday, one day after logging his first inning of work for the Indians since May 25. The manager said the team will be careful with Miller's workload while building his stamina and endurance back up over the next couple weeks.

"He feels good. He's available tonight," Francona said. "We're certainly going to pitch him without trying to over-pitch him. The more he pitches, the better he's going to be. [On Friday] night, he threw a real good breaking ball. He didn't locate his fastball. But, he will. It's kind of like putting money in the bank. You've got to keep putting it in there to get the returns."

• Right-hander Josh Tomlin (10-day DL, right hamstring) logged two innings for Triple-A Columbus on Friday in his first Minor League rehab outing. The right-hander allowed three runs on six hits (two home runs), ending with one strikeout and no walks. Tomlin threw 25 pitches, including 21 strikes.

"OK, he gave up some hits and home runs, but he felt good," Francona said. "So, that's good. We'll kind of fall back on what we said about Andrew. A month from now, whenever he's pitching, nobody's going to care that he got roughed up in a Minor League game. I think it shows that you don't just step in and you're good."

Here are 14 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 3-0 win against the Los Angeles Angels on Saturday night.

By Ryan Lewis

1. There was a time in the not-so-distant past that Corey Kluber clearly wasn't himself. His mechanics were off. He was being roughed up and allowed six earned runs twice in a four-start stretch. He eventually needed a knee injection that forced him to miss the All-Star Game, as the Indians' ace instead needed to use the break for some maintenance. He looked, well, human.
2. It was all pretty short lived. Kluber delivered one of the best outings of his already decorated career on Saturday night to the tune of three hits allowed and seven strikeouts in a shutout. In his previous outing, he allowed only one hit in 7 1/3 against the Tigers. At the very least, Kluber is well on his way to correcting his course. Call it, perhaps, self analysis and a downloaded software update.
3. Kluber said after the game he feels closer to where he wants to be. The main issue is repeating his delivery, something that was a challenge while battling the knee issue.
4. "The sense of confidence probably comes from being able to repeat your delivery, make adjustments and reel things back in when they do get a little bit out of whack," Kluber said. "Results aside, that's where I want to feel like I can repeat my delivery. The rest of the stuff, release point and all that kind of falls in place and allows you to execute pitches if you're able to repeat all that stuff beforehand."
5. Added Indians manager Terry Francona, when asked about Kluber's outing: "It's wonderful. I mean, you could tell they were trying to hit early in the count because of that. What, did he have a five-pitch inning? And when you look up and he's approaching 100 [pitches] in the ninth, that means a lot of things are going well. But he had one walk, they squared up a couple balls, fortunately that went right to Yonder, but it seemed like he was in command the entire night, and early we weren't doing anything offensively, so it wasn't like he had a cushion to pitch with."
6. Teams are often aggressive with Kluber, not wanting to get deeper into counts, when his breaking ball becomes even more dangerous. On Saturday night, Kluber recored his second career Maddux, in reference to Greg Maddux, as he notched a shutout while throwing fewer than 100 pitches. He needed only 98 to put away the Angels. In 2014, he recored an 85-pitch Maddux against against the Seattle Mariners. For an opposing lineup, Kluber lasting deeper into games is a bad scenario. But, in the moment, it's better than falling behind 0-2 and letting him pick hitters apart.
7. Said Kluber on countering that aggressiveness: "I wouldn't necessarily say I try to take advantage of it, so to speak. When you know a team's game plan is to be aggressive, if anything, you can maybe start off the count a little bit more on the corners as opposed to a third or something like that. Instead of trying so much to get ahead, you're more so trying to execute a pitch and if they are going to be aggressive, miss in the right spot. That's maybe the only difference in our approach."
8. Kluber was also able to limit Shohei Ohtani, who has destroyed Indians pitching this season. He's also hit a home run off of Kluber. He belted two off Mike Clevinger Friday night. On Saturday night, he was silent, going 0-for-4 against Kluber. Francona said before the game that they didn't need to change their plan of attack against Ohtani, it just needed to be better executed.
9. Said Kluber: "It wasn't a whole lot different than what we had been, or at least I tried to do the last time I pitched against him. Last time he hit the home run off me, I made a mistake up and out over the plate. I just didn't make that mistake tonight."
10. The new guy seems comfortable in this lineup. Leonys Martin has played two games in Cleveland, and he's belted two home runs, including the go-ahead shot in the sixth that broke up a no-hit bid Saturday night. Martin was brought in—at the cost of prospect Willi Castro—to stabilize center field. He's also stabilizing the No. 9 spot in the Indians' lineup who can serve as a de facto leadoff man, one with some power and who can steal bases, in front of Francisco Lindor and Michael Brantley. Martin can give the Indians another gear later in games if he can be a spark ahead of the three All-Stars.
11. "It makes a difference," Francona said. "It gives us—it kind of thickens out the lineup a little bit and he can run, so if he hits ninth, and I don't think he's a 9-hole hitter, it's where he's sitting at the moment. but it's a good way to turn the lineup over to Frankie."
12. Said Martin on hitting ninth: "Yeah, when I was in Texas my first couple years in the big leagues. it doesn't matter where you hit, man. You hit ninth in the first inning, but as long as the ballgame keeps going, you can be a leadoff guy two or three times. I just keep doing my game, try to get on base and create rallies."
13. It's safe to say Martin liked the view from center field, being able to watch Kluber work—instead of worrying about trying to face him—and watching Lindor make a highlight-reel, bare-handed play in the mold of Omar Vizquel rather than seeing a hit of his own taken away.
14. Said Martin: "Yeah, man. I used to hate that guy. I used to hate him. He's pretty good. He's really good. He's one of the best in the game. He made that play look so easy."

Indians notebook: Catcher Yan Gomes day to day with hamstring tendonitis; Andrew Miller feeling good after return

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: One of the strongest parts of the Indians' roster over the last few years — depth at the catching position — is about to be put to the test, at least for a few games.

Yan Gomes left Friday night's game and received an MRI on his right leg. On Saturday, manager Terry Francona said Gomes has been diagnosed with right hamstring tendonitis, which Gomes has been dealing with "for a while."

The club is hopeful it won't warrant a stint on the disabled list, but Gomes won't start the next several games, leaving the full-time catching duties to Roberto Perez.

"If it lingered any longer, then we'd have to maybe think about the DL," Francona said. "But I think the way it sits now, I don't think we're going to have to do that. [Gomes] came in feeling pretty good today."

Francona added that Gomes will be available, but Perez will receive several starts in a row, which he hopes could be a small benefit to the situation. Gomes, who this year was selected to his second All-Star team, has appeared in 79 games and logged 305 plate appearances. He has played about twice as much as Perez, who has appeared in 42 games and registered 140 plate appearances.

"I actually think it'll be good for 'Berto to know he's going to play a couple days in a row," Francona said. "I think it'll be really good for him."

Solid return

Andrew Miller returned from the disabled list on Friday and delivered a scoreless inning, issuing a walk and striking out a batter. More importantly to the Indians' long-term view, Miller was feeling good on Saturday, according to Francona.

Francona said on Friday that for about seven to 10 days, Miller would follow somewhat of an active schedule. The club wants to monitor him while also ensuring that he keeps pitching to get him back to peak form.

"We're certainly going to pitch him without trying to over-pitch him," Francona said. "The more he pitches, the better he's going to be. [Friday] night he threw a real good breaking ball. He didn't locate his fastball, but he will. It's kind of like putting money in the bank. You've got to keep putting it in there to get the returns."

Long road

Josh Tomlin, on the 10-day disabled list with a right hamstring strain, made his first rehab appearance on Friday night for Triple-A Columbus. The results are not always the goal for a rehab start, but they also weren't pretty.

Tomlin gave up three earned runs on six hits in his two innings of work, which included surrendering two home runs.

"He gave up some hits and home runs, but he felt good," Francona said. "[We] kind of fall back on what we said about Andrew. A month from now, whenever he's pitching, nobody's going to care that he got roughed up in a minor-league game.

"I think it shows that you don't just step in and you're good. Even guys that are really good major-league players and pitchers, they need their repetitions and they need their confidence and they've gotta go through some things to get there."

Reliever traded

Right-handed pitcher George Kontos was traded to the New York Yankees for cash considerations on Saturday.

Kontos was designated for assignment on July 6 and later sent to Triple-A Columbus. He was originally signed to a minor-league deal in early June and had his contract selected from Columbus on June 19.

In 5½ innings with the Indians this season, he gave up two runs on three hits with four strikeouts.

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Indians 3, Angels 0: Corey Kluber delivers shutout, Leonys Martin homers in win over Angels

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: It sure seems like the new guy is fitting in just fine.

Leonys Martin, the recently acquired center fielder who came to the Indians in a pre-deadline trade with the Detroit Tigers, homered for the second consecutive night to help support Corey Kluber, who delivered a shutout in the Indians' 3-0 win over the Los Angeles Angels on Saturday night at Progressive Field.

In one swing, Martin ended bids for a no-hitter and a shutout and gave the Indians their first lead of the night. Angels starting pitcher Felix Pena struggled to find the strike zone, but he also didn't allow a hit through the first five innings. At the same time, Kluber was dealing, equaling Pena's zeros on the scoreboard inning by inning.

That was until Martin led off the bottom of the sixth inning of a scoreless game. On a 3-1 pitch, Martin was offered a fastball low in the zone, one that he crushed for a solo home run to right field. Just like that, the no-hitter and 0-0 deadlock were gone.

Martin also belted a home run to right field in Friday night's loss, giving him two homers in as many home games he's played as a member of the Indians.

After five innings of nothing offensively, Martin's home run led to a rally in the sixth. Francisco Lindor followed Martin with a double to center field. Michael Brantley then singled up the middle to score Lindor and put the Indians on top 2-0.

Some insurance was added in the seventh. Facing Angels reliever Hansel Robles, Melky Cabrera walked and Brandon Guyer entered the game as a pinch runner. Jason Kipnis then walked and Roberto Perez advanced both runners with a sacrifice bunt.

Martin and Lindor failed to drive a run in, but the Indians took a 3-0 lead on a passed ball by catcher Francisco Arcia, allowing Guyer to easily score from third.

It took a while to get the offense going, but it was more than enough for Kluber, who was dominant from start to finish to give the bullpen a night off. Kluber allowed only three hits and one walk to go with seven strikeouts in what was his first shutout of the season and the seventh of his career. He needed only 98 pitches to do it. As Kluber came out to the mound for the ninth inning, the Indians didn't have anyone warming in the bullpen.

Following a rougher-than-usual stretch in which Kluber also received a gel injection in his knee that caused him to miss the All-Star Game, Saturday night's outing was his second consecutive strong start. In his previous outing, he allowed only one run in 7½ innings against the Tigers.

The Indians played in front of their seventh sellout crowd (34,814) of the season Saturday night. It was their second consecutive sellout.

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Leonys Martin on no longer facing the Indians rotation: 'Thank God I'm here now'

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: There was a moment, amid the chaos that comes with being traded in the middle of a season and having much of your life upended and sent to a new city in the blink of an eye, that Leonys Martin paused and realized something gratifying.

At least for a while, he wouldn't have to face the Indians' vaunted rotation anymore.

He breathed a sigh of relief as he made his way to Minnesota for a road series to meet his new teammates after the pre-deadline trade that brought him to the Indians from the Detroit Tigers.

No more games in which he's facing Corey Kluber three or four times. No more series in which he faces Kluber and Carlos Carrasco and Trevor Bauer and on and on.

"It's really tough when you're playing in this division and you don't play for the Cleveland Indians," Martin said. "You've gotta face the best rotation, for me, in the American League, in baseball. It's really hard to play three or four games against the Indians and face some of the best pitchers in the league every single day. I'm really happy I don't have to face them anymore. It's nice."

Looking at his numbers — albeit in a small sample size — the relief might not be as great as expected, though. Martin is one of the few hitters who has had some success against Kluber, Carrasco and Bauer. He's 3-for-11 against Kluber but has a home run and a double off of the two-time Cy Young Award winner. He's 5-for-10 against Carrasco and 7-for-13 while facing Bauer.

It was Danny Salazar who had Martin's number, retiring him all 10 times the two met.

It goes to show that even those who have found some success against Kluber and the others still don't enjoy walking into the batter's box against them. It's an act of survival as much as anything.

"It's just getting prepared to go out there and do my best," Martin said. "You're just trying to learn from mistakes. That's all [you can do]."

"For sure, it's tough, man. Thank God I'm here now."

When asked about the toughest part about facing Kluber, Martin paused for about six seconds and took a deep breath, contemplating his answer.

"Oh, man. There's a lot," Martin said. "You just go out there and try to learn from your mistakes and you have to fight for every single pitch."

Martin was acquired from the Tigers along with relief pitcher Kyle Dowdy to help stabilize center field in exchange for Willi Castro, the Indians' No. 8 prospect. A quality defensive center fielder, Martin has also had a strong offensive season compared to his career norms, posting a .256 average and .750 OPS.

He started out on the right foot in his home debut Friday night, going 2-for-3 with a home run and two RBI.

And, even though he's seemingly cracked the code against some of the Indians' best, he's relieved to be walking into the home clubhouse instead of the alternative.

Leonys Martin on no longer facing the Indians rotation: 'Thank God I'm here now'

By Ryan Lewis

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Greater Akron Baseball Hall of Fame: Class of 2018 announced

Beacon Journal/Ohio.com

The 2018 class of 14 will be inducted in the Greater Akron Baseball Hall of Fame during a celebration weekend Aug. 10-12. In addition, five winners of special awards will be recognized at the induction ceremony, to which the public is invited.

This year's inductees:

- Ken Babby: Purchased the RubberDucks (then Akron Aeros) in October 2012 and infused the team with new resources and a renewed spirit, investing more than \$7 million into Canal Park, including one of the largest HD video boards in minor-league baseball. Attendance has climbed 28 percent.
- Wilmer Caraballo: After graduating from Western Carolina University in 1999 at age 36, Caraballo moved to Akron and began a 15-year coaching career, one season at Lake and 14 at Coventry, where he was a teacher. Born in Puerto Rico, Caraballo played in the minor leagues for eight seasons for the New York Yankees, New York Mets and Chicago White Sox.
- Chuck Crowder: Named to the 1996 collegiate All-Freshman team by Baseball America, Crowder was inducted into the Georgia Tech Hall of Fame in 2010. Crowder was drafted three times, finally signing with the Colorado Rockies, who took him in the fourth round. But elbow and shoulder injuries, dating to college, ended his career after four years in the minors.
- Ron Dessecker: A resident of Orrville since 1976, Dessecker umpired high school games for 33 years. He worked 120 tournament games and five state title games. He was inducted into the OHSAA Officials Hall of Fame in 2008. He retired from the Wayne County Sheriff's Office in 2013.

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Cleveland's next Baseball Hall of Famers: How about Hoynsie and Hammy? - Terry Pluto

By Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- I was thinking about the names.

Gordon Cobbledick.

Hal Lebovitz.

Sheldon Ocker.

Three sportswriters. All members of the writers wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

Cobbledick and Lebovitz spent most of their careers at The Plain Dealer. Ocker was inducted this season as the J.G. Taylor Spink Award winner after spending 33 years covering the Tribe for the Akron Beacon Journal.

Cobbledick was my father's favorite sportswriter. He was the final word on the Tribe to my dad. He also wrote Don't Knock The Rock, The Rocky Colavito Story. I read the book as a kid and loved it. I recently met several members of his family at a speech in Burton. I was honored to hear them say Cobbledick would have liked my work.

Cobbledick died in 1969 at the age of 70.

ASKING HAL

There were a lot of Northeast Ohio sportswriters who influenced me. But I learned the most from Lebovitz. My Terry's Talkin' is a different spin on the notes he used to write for The Plain Dealer and later The News-Herald.

From Hal, I learned how to be critical of people and teams without being personal. His "Deli" columns of characters talking about Cleveland sports led to me do my "Talking To Myself" columns. I guess that came from growing up in the Baby Boomer "Me" generation.

At least once a week, I receive a question from a reader about rules in a certain sport. Hal was a former official in several sports. I used to tell readers, "Ask Hal."

But Lebovitz died in 2005. I still miss him.

Hal Lebovitz 1999 J.G. Taylor Spink Award Speech

I also remember him telling me this in 1980: "There is no such thing as a road trip. A team is either on the road, or on a trip."

Then he walked away. That was the last time I've written "road trip" in a story.

His Best of Hal Lebovitz book should be required reading for anyone who cares about Cleveland sports.

WRITIN' TRIBE

I was covering the Tribe for The Plain Dealer when Ocker joined the beat in 1981. He was coming off the stress of dealing with the Cavaliers under Ted Stepien. It was as if he had left a sports journalist war zone. Ocker felt paroled when switched to the Tribe beat. He became a close friend. I admired his sense of humor and his relentless dedication to the beat.

Some seasons, he covered every single game. Once upon a time, that was the norm ... probably in the days of Cobbledeick and Lebovitz. Not in the last 40 years.

But Ocker did it. He wrote fresh stories. He had a way of debating people, yet making them laugh. Now, he's on the list with Cobbledeick and Lebovitz -- impressive company. He belongs in Cooperstown with them.

Paul Hoynes joined the baseball beat in 1982. First, he was with The News-Herald. He then replaced me on the beat at The Plain Dealer, starting in 1985, and now covers the Tribe for cleveland.com. His stories appear in The Plain Dealer.

For about 30 years, the Indians were covered by Ocker, Hoynes and Jim Ingraham (a wonderfully entertaining writer for The News-Herald and now the Elyria Chronicle Telegram).

But the next Hall of Famer? Hoynes is still going in his 35th season, and there should come a time when he has his own day in Cooperstown.

Paul HoynesCleveland.com Indians beat writer Paul Hoynes in the Progressive Field press box in 2012. (Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer)

TALKIN' TRIBE

I was surprised to discover Jimmy Dudley is the only Cleveland broadcaster in the Ford Frick broadcasters wing of Cooperstown. Joe Tait did the baseball beat for 10 years and was terrific. But he was the voice of the Cavaliers and is in Basketball Hall of Fame.

Herb Score will always be dear to my heart because he was the voice of the Tribe when I was growing up. But right now, fans are listening to a Hall of Fame broadcaster.

I consider Tom Hamilton a friend and we wrote a book on the Tribe of the 1990s together -- so this is not exactly an unbiased opinion.

Tom HamiltonCleveland Indians announcer Tom Hamilton in 2014. (Gus Chan, The Plain Dealer)

But I have mentioned my belief that Hamilton should one day go into the Hall of Fame to several fans. Most quickly agreed. He's been broadcasting Indians games for 29 years.

I think about those who have written about the Tribe for ages. And those whose voices have told us about the team coming through the radio. Often, their coverage was better than the team on the field.

For that, we are blessed.

Leonys Martin's homer, Corey Kluber's shutout lift Cleveland Indians to 3-0 win over Los Angeles Angels

By Paul Hoynes

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Welcome to Cleveland, Leonys Martin. And welcome back, Corey Kluber.

Martin, acquired from Detroit on Tuesday before the trading deadline, led the Indians to a 3-0 win over the Angels on Saturday night in front of a sellout crowd at Progressive Field. Kluber's contribution, a three-hit shutout, did not go unnoticed as well.

The Indians and Angels were locked in a scoreless game entering the bottom of the sixth. The difference being that right-hander Felix Pena was throwing a no-hitter for the Angels, while Kluber was working on a three-hitter.

Martin changed that as he started the sixth with a line-drive homer into the right field seats for the Tribe's first hit and a 1-0 lead. It was Martin's third hit in as many games, and second homer, since the trade.

Pena fell behind Martin, 3-1, and the lefty-hitting center fielder did not miss his next pitch. He hit it 415 feet with an exit velocity of 107 mph.

"I was looking for a good pitch and I saw it right in the middle of the plate," said Martin.

After Martin created the opening, the Indians were quick to jump through it. Francisco Lindor doubled and scored on Michael Brantley's single for a 2-0 lead. When Jose Ramirez lined out to left, Pena was done for the night.

The Indians stretched the lead to 3-0 in the seventh when Brandon Guyer scored on a passed ball charged to catcher Francisco Arcia.

Manager Terry Francona said Martin isn't a ninth place hitter, but the Indians have been looking for a way to solidify the bottom of the lineup all season.

"It makes a difference," said Francona, when asked about Martin. "It thickens the lineup a little bit and he can run as well. I don't think he's a nine hole hitter, but it's where he's hitting at the moment and it's a good way to turn the lineup over to Frankie."

Kluber (14-6, 2.63) threw his second complete game of the season and the 17th of his career. The shutout was his first of the year and seventh of his career.

"It seemed like he was in command the entire night," said Francona. "Early on, we weren't doing anything offensively. It wasn't like he had cushion to pitch with."

In two starts against the Angels this season, Kluber has allowed two runs in 16 innings with 13 strikeouts. In 22 starts this year, Kluber has made 19 quality starts -- six or more innings with three or fewer earned runs allowed.

In his last start Pena (1-3, 4.97) didn't make it out of the first inning. He allowed seven runs on six hits in one-third of an inning to Seattle. On Saturday night, he held the Indians hitless for five innings. He allowed just two baserunners in that stretch as Brantley walked in the first and fourth innings.

Kluber wasn't dealing with a no-hitter, but he was equally as effective in preventing runs. He ended the game with 10 straight outs.

Corey Kluber feeling confident again in his delivery.

He allowed a one-out double to Eric Young in the third and walked Kole Calhoun. But he retired Justin Upton and Shohei Ohtani to end the inning.

Andrelton Simmons singled with one out in the fourth, but Kluber retired the next two batters to end the inning. Kluber retired the next five Angels in order before Albert Pujols singled with two out in the sixth. The inning ended when Simmons grounded out to second.

Lindor helped Kluber in the sixth with a fine barehanded grab and throw of Upton's bouncer over the mound for the first out of the inning.

"That was an unbelievable play," said Francona. "I was watching Kip (Jason Kipnis) I thought he was the only one who had a chance, but it took a funny bounce on him."

Kluber had a lubricant injected into his right knee at the All-Star break. His first start after the break was shaky as he allowed seven runs, three earned, on nine hits in four innings against the Pirates.

In his last two starts, he's beaten the Angels and Tigers, allowing one run in 16 1/3 innings.

"I guess the sense of confidence comes from being able to repeat your delivery and reel things back in when they do get a little bit out of whack," said Kluber. "Results aside, that's where I want to be. . .to where I can repeat my delivery. The rest of the stuff kind of falls into place and allows you to execute pitches when you can repeat your delivery."

The pitches

Pena threw 86 pitches, 47 (55 percent) for strikes. Kluber threw 98 pitches, 64 (65 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Angels and Indians drew a sellout crowd of 34,814 to Progressive Field. First pitch was at 7:10 p.m. with a temperature of 82 degrees.

It was the Tribe's second straight sellout and seventh of the season.

Next

Rookie Shane Bieber (5-2, 4.73) is scheduled to start against the Angels Sunday at 1:10 p.m. SportsTime Ohio, TBS, WTAM/1100 and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the game.

In Bieber's last start he allowed three earned runs in 6 1/3 innings in a non-decision against the Twins on July 30. He will be facing the Angels for the first time.

Left-hander Tyler Skaggs (8-7, 3.34) was scheduled to start for L.A., but he's headed to the disabled list with a left abductor strain. Right-hander Deck McGuire (0-1, 6.12) is expected to start for the Angels. He's spent time in the big leagues this season with Toronto and the Angels.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.05.2018

How Francisco Lindor converted an awkward infield pop up into another highlight for his collection

By T.J. Zuppe 4h ago

If players were asked to raise their hand if they've ever felt personally victimized by Francisco Lindor's defense, Leonys Martín would likely be among the many to oblige.

"I used to hate that guy," Martín joked. "I used to hate him."

Then again, it's hard to blame the Tribe newcomer.

As an opponent, he's been on the undesirable end of Lindor's proclivity for poaching potential hits with the infielder's propensity to pick it at shortstop.

Luckily, instead of being forced into some more unfortunate right turns back to the dugout, Martín's acquisition at the deadline now offers a nightly center-field view of the slick fielder's typical antics.

"He's really good," Martín said. "He's one of the best in the game."

The metrics, once again, couldn't agree more.

After a down year in 2017 — at least, by his own standards — Lindor entered the night with 11 defensive runs saved to his credit, second most in the American League. He also owns the third-highest UZR (ultimate zone rating) among shortstops this year, and since the start of the 2016 campaign, Lindor has saved the fourth-most runs at the position.

His latest chance to demonstrate the defensive ability that has earned him a stellar reputation (and forced more than a few hitters like Martín into some frustrating nights) came in Saturday's win over the Angels.

With Corey Kluber in the midst of an eventual complete game shutout — one that required just 98 pitches to finish — Angels outfielder Justin Upton settled in to lead off the sixth. Anxious to attack the first hittable offering he saw, Upton took a big swing at a 91 mph fastball, one that carried in off the plate.

The pitch jammed the right-handed hitter, but Upton was able to muscle it over the head of the Tribe ace. The looper was almost perfectly placed between the pair of Indians middle-infielders.

That's when the fun began.

"Both of us, we freeze for a second," Jason Kipnis told *The Athletic*. "Then you see both of us charging in."

From his spot in the dugout, Terry Francona initially thought Kipnis had a better shot at catching the pop on the fly.

"I thought he was the only one who had a chance," Francona said.

At the same time, Lindor, who also thought Kipnis had a better beat on the fly, began charging hard.

"My first reaction was to go get it in the air," Lindor said. But he quickly realized Kipnis wasn't going to get there in time.

It was at that point, Lindor began to shout: "I got it! I got it!"

Kipnis understood this was going to be a tough angle for him and was pleased to hear Lindor's voice. The second baseman realized that, if the ball isn't caught on the fly, this is an easier play for the shortstop.

"The good thing about that is Frankie called it earlier," Kipnis said. "I was able to put the brakes on and get out of his way quick enough." With Upton picking up speed down the first base line, his blooper finally landed on the infield grass. But this wasn't your ordinary pop up. Because of Kluber's ability to jam the right-handed hitter, the ball had an awkward spin to it, one that would soon send it in an unexpected direction. Lindor extended his glove to corral the ball. He had planned to quickly catch and release, all in one motion.

But things change.

"I was going to (use two hands)," Lindor said. "I saw it bounce back the other way."

Without hesitation, Lindor, channeling his inner Omar Vizquel, reached back with his right hand, caught the bouncing ball, squeezed it with his fingers and fired it toward first baseman Yonder Alonso.

Alonso's glove popped just before Upton's right foot came down on the bag, an audible confirmation of what the eyes were still attempting to process — the inning's first out.

Once again, the star shortstop had made a difficult play look effortless. But those on the scene realized Lindor's actions were anything but.

"On those balls, we kind of know which way they're going to go, you just never know how much they're going to go," Kipnis said. "Ideally, those ones in the middle, you want the shortstop coming towards the bag to take it. It's a harder throw for me to go across my body.

"That ball took a nasty hop and he still made a great play on it."

As difficult as it might be to believe, Lindor said he had no intention of neglecting his glove at any point. Much of the play, as he explained, all came down to instinct and reaction. That's why he didn't reach back with his right hand until the awkward bounce forced a quick adjustment.

That's when his natural ability took over.

"I just went after the ball," he said with a grin. "Like a little kid, you just see the ball up (in the air) and you go get it."

With little time to process it in real time, Lindor conceded that he was still pondering it by the time *The Athletic* caught up with him at his locker Saturday night. The infielder often goes back to watch his highlights, not just for the personal satisfaction, but also to critique himself.

"Whether I dive, whether I make a great play, a crazy play, I always go back and learn from it," Lindor said. "I find ways to get better from it. Maybe if my first reaction, maybe if I would have dove, maybe I would have caught it in the air. Maybe I wouldn't have to make that big scene of a good play. There's always ways to get better. When I dive for the ball and I catch it, if I were to move a little bit to my left or my right, there's always ways to get better."

Fair, but it's difficult to imagine handling the sequence any better.

"We did everything right, and still, on top of that, (Lindor) made a great play," Kipnis said. "Those are awkward ones that you really can't practice for."

And in the middle of a scoreless game, the significance of keeping the leadoff runner from reaching base couldn't be overstated.

After Upton was sent back to the dugout in disappointment, Kluber struck out the red-hot Shohei Ohtani. Two hitters later, Kipnis provided his own highlight with a scoop and shovel toss to retire Andrelton Simmons, setting the stage for Martín's second home run in as many days, a leadoff blast to provide the club's first hit off of Felix Peña.

That's a hell of a momentum shift, one that seemingly began with the type of play that would have frustrated Martín before his arrival in Cleveland.

On that topic, a reporter relayed Martín's comment to Lindor following Saturday's game. The switch-hitting shortstop immediately chuckled.

"I'm doing whatever it takes to get all the hits that you take from me," Lindor said with a giant smile. "I'll try to take them, too."

Elsewhere, Justin Upton sighed, shook his head and raised his hand.

Corey Kluber finding his groove for Indians after rough stretch |Jeff Schudel

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

Takeaways from Indians-Angels game Aug. 4 at Progressive Field:

- It is so rare when Indians starting pitcher Corey Kluber isn't dominant that when he does hit a rough stretch it's like watching Superman crash into a tall building instead of leaping over it in a single bound.

Kluber hit one of those stretches from his last start in June, when he gave up six runs in 1 2/3 innings to the Cardinals, through a start against the Pirates on July 23 — his first start since getting an injection in his right knee on July 13. He gave up six home runs and 18 earned runs during the stretch of five starts.

The Indians never panicked, and, of course, Kluber never panicked. All is right with "Klubot" again, who on Aug. 4 against the Los Angeles Angels looked like the defending Cy Young Award winner he is in his second straight start.

Kluber pitched a complete game three-hit shutout in the Indians' 3-0 victory over the Angels. He is 14-6.

"It was wonderful," manager Terry Francona said. "He had a five-pitch inning. When you look up in the ninth and see he's approaching 100 (pitches) it means things are going well. He had one walk.

"It seemed like he was in command the entire night. We weren't doing anything early, so it wasn't like he had a cushion to work with."

Prior to facing the Angels, Kluber allowed one run in 7 1/3 innings against the Tigers in an 8-1 Indians victory. He pitched with confidence from the first pitch to the last against the Tigers and the Angels.

"I think the sense of confidence probably comes from being able to repeat your delivery and make adjustments and reel things back in when they do get a little out of whack," Kluber said stoically. "Results aside, I think that's where I want to feel I am — where I can repeat my delivery, because I think the rest of the stuff falls in place and allows you to execute pitches if you're able to repeat all the stuff beforehand." The Indians have their ace back.

- Indians manager Terry Francona had good news to report on injured catcher Yan Gomes.

Gomes left the game against the Angels on Aug. 3 with a sore right knee. He underwent an MRI on Aug. 4. The injury was diagnosed as right hamstring tendinitis.

"He's not going to start for the next couple days, but he's available," Francona said. "If it lingers longer, he'd have to maybe think about the (disabled list), but the way it sits now, I don't think we'll have to do that."

The injury has been bothering Gomes for a while, Francona said, but Gomes tried to fight through it.

Gomes would normally have caught the pitches thrown by Kluber Aug. 4, but Roberto Perez was behind the plate.

"I actually think it would be good for 'Berto to know he's going to play a couple days in a row," Francona said.

Gomes gets the lion's share of the work behind the plate. He has appeared in 79 games with 280 at-bats (.243 average, 11 homers, 35 RBI). Perez has played in 42 games with 123 at-bats.

>> Indians' manager Terry Francona: 'We have the ability to be special'

- Another huge crowd (34,814) jammed into Progressive Field on Aug. 4 to watch the Indians and Angels on a perfect night for baseball — a cloudless sky and a game-time temperature of 82 degrees. It was the second consecutive sellout and seventh of the season.

The Indians went into the game ranked 21st in the major league in attendance with an average crowd of 23,642, about 700 fans a game behind the 20th-ranked Minnesota Twins.

Just three years ago, the Indians finished a dismal 29th in attendance with an average crowd of 17,806 — nearly 4,000 a game behind the Miami Marlins, who finished 28th.

Climbing eight spots in three seasons is an obvious reflection of the success the Indians have enjoyed under Francona. The Indians are in position to win their third straight American League Central Division title.

The Indians would be even higher on the attendance ladder if not for the miserable weather that kept attendance down in April, in which MLB scheduled 17 home games.

- Jason Kipnis is in another major slump. The Indians second baseman hit .266 in June, but went into Aug. 4 with three hits in 16 at-bats in the last seven days and seven hits in 36 at-bats in the last 14 days.

Kipnis was 0-for-2 against Angels starter Felix Pena, who entered the game 1-2 with a 5.23 ERA. Pena had a no-hitter through five innings until Leonys Martin broke it up with a home run in the bottom of the sixth inning.

Kipnis has played in 100 of the 109 games played by the Indians. Only third baseman Jose Ramirez and shortstop Francisco Lindor (each has missed only one game) have played in more.

The Indians don't have many options other than to let Kipnis hit his way out of the slump. He was 4-for-22 in the ALDS vs. the Yankees last October. They will need more than that from him this fall.

SPORTS Chris Assenheimer: The Indians will definitely be underdogs in the postseason, but that doesn't mean they can't hold their own against the big dogs

Chris Assenheimer | The Chronicle-Telegram | Published on Aug. 5, 2018 | Updated 3:01 a. m.

The Indians are probably the fourth-best team in the American League behind, in no particular order, the defending world champion Houston Astros, New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox.

If you want to get technical, the Seattle Mariners and Oakland A's had better records than Cleveland through Friday, though few believe either are superior to the impending Central Division champions.

Plus, none of it matters anyway.

If history has taught us anything, it's that once you get to the postseason, anything can happen.

I know it's a cliché, but it's true.

The Indians were the AL favorites and at one time overall favorites to win the World Series last year and what did it get them?

A first-round ouster from a team that wasn't half as good as them — on paper.

Well, the roles will be reversed this time around.

Though they patched up their hole-leaking bullpen prior to the trade deadline with the additions of two-time All-Star Brad Hand and promising rookie Adam Cimber, the Indians added only Leonys Martin — a defensive specialist — to their weak-sauce outfield that includes Brandon Guyer, Melky Cabrera, Rajai Davis and Greg Allen alongside All-Star Michael Brantley.

So no matter what they do on the August waiver wire — Andrew McCutcheon, Adam Jones, etc. — they're going to enter October as the underdog.

But this is no run-of-the-mill underdog.

For starters, Cleveland's rotation includes a pair of all-stars and Cy Young candidates in ace Corey Kluber, who's won the award twice, and Trevor Bauer, who has pitched better than Kluber — and nearly everyone else in the majors thus far.

Then you throw in Carlos Carrasco and Mike Clevinger, two of the league's top starters for much of the season. We're not even talking about Shane Bieber, who is in the midst of an impressive rookie season and could be used as a long man in the bullpen come playoff time.

Speaking of the bullpen, that's top-notch, too — at least it is now or can be if left-hander Andrew Miller returns to his elite form after being activated from the disabled list Friday, where he has spent much of the season.

With the addition of Hand, the Indians have three legitimate closers once you throw in the actual closer — Cody Allen, who became the franchise leader in saves this year.

Neil Ramirez and Oliver Perez have been solid situational guys and Dan Otero will probably find a way onto the postseason roster as a veteran with experience, if Bieber doesn't take his spot.

Don't worry, Tribe fans, you won't have to see any more of right-hander Zach McAllister, who was designated for assignment to clear room on the 25-man roster for Miller.

It would have been nice to add another bat to the lineup, preferably in right field, but the Indians are far from deficient in the offensive department.

Cleveland led the majors in runs in July and ranked third in the majors overall through Friday, with its team batting average of .259 ranking fourth in the big leagues.

Just like the Yankees, Red Sox and Astros, the Indians have potent weapons, including a pair of MVP candidates in third baseman Jose Ramirez and shortstop Francisco Lindor. It's tough to find a better duo in the majors than those two.

With Brantley batting in between them and one of the game's top home run hitters over the past five years, Edwin Encarnacion, hitting behind them, the Indians possess one of the most fearsome foursomes in baseball.

First baseman Yonder Alonso has also provided pop in his debut season with the Indians, entering Saturday with 18 homers and 64 RBIs in 97 games. The guy he replaced? Carlos Santana had hit 16 homers and driven in 63 runs in 108 games through Friday.

Finally, there's Terry Francona, a Hall of Fame manager with two World Series titles.

No team has won more games in the AL since Tito came aboard in 2013 than the Indians, whom he's guided to three postseason appearances in five years, including his masterful performance in 2016 that ended with Cleveland making it to Game 7 of the World Series.

Francona brings an intangible few teams possess, certainly not the Yankees and Red Sox, who are led by first-year managers Aaron Boone and Alex Cora.

The Indians have everything it takes to end their world championship drought. Yes, they may not be the favorites, but that isn't required.

They just have to be the best once October begins.

Indians 3, Angels 0: Tribe breathes Cy of relief as Corey Kluber returns to dominant ways with three-hit shutout

(AP)CLEVELAND — Corey Kluber appears to be over whatever was making him look ordinary.

The two-time Cy Young Award winner pitched a three-hitter for his first shutout this season and new arrival Leonys Martin homered again for Cleveland, leading the Indians to a 3-0 win over the Los Angeles Angels on Saturday night.

Kluber (14-6) got better as the game went on, and his performance eased any concerns the Indians had about the star right-hander. Kluber had lost two of his three previous starts and received an injection in his right knee before the All-Star break. He walked one, hit a batter and struck out seven.

He's back.

"It's wonderful," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "It seemed like he was in command the entire night, and early on we weren't doing anything offensively, so it wasn't like he had a cushion to pitch with."

Kluber matched zeros for five innings against Felix Pena (1-3), who carried a no-hitter into the sixth inning before Martin hit a leadoff homer. Martin has quickly endeared himself to his teammates and Cleveland fans by hitting two homers and batting .500 with three RBIs and three runs in just three games since being acquired in a trade with Detroit.

"I'm really happy, man," Martin said. "I came here to help. And I want to do my best to help this team to get where we want. We've got a long way to go still."

The AL Central-leading Indians only got four hits but notched their 60th win.

The Angels were again without All-Star outfielder Mike Trout, who missed his third straight game with a sore right wrist.

But even with Trout in the lineup, Los Angeles would have had a tough time against Kluber. The right-hander was never in trouble and he cooled off Japanese star Shohei Ohtani, who homered twice in Friday's win.

Ohtani came in batting .643 with four homers and eight RBIs in three games against Cleveland, but went 0-for-4 and struck out twice against Kluber.

"It wasn't a whole lot different than what we had been (doing), or at least I tried to do the last time I pitched against him," said Kluber, who gave up Ohtani's first homer on April 4. "Last time he hit the home run off me, I made a mistake up and out over the plate. I just didn't make that mistake tonight."

Pena didn't get out of the first inning in his previous outing, and the right-hander started poorly, walking the first two batters. However, he settled in and didn't give up his first hit until the sixth, when Martin drove a 3-1 pitch 415 feet to right-center.

Moments before Martin connected for his second homer in two days, the Indians attempted to jinx Pena by displaying — "Felix Pena is currently throwing a no-hitter" — on Progressive Field's enormous scoreboard.

The strategy worked as Martin ended Pena's flirtation with history. The Indians added a second run when Francisco Lindor followed with a double and scored on Michael Brantley's single.

"Got the ball right in the middle, and, thank God, I put a good swing on it," Martin said.

Super shortstop

Lindor took an infield hit away from Justin Upton with a sensational play in the sixth.

Upton hit a pop between the mound and second base that the All-Star shortstop snagged barehanded on one hop before throwing in time to get the Angels left fielder.

Martin remembers Lindor making similar plays against him.

"I used to hate that guy," he said, smiling. "I use to hate him. He's really good. He's one of the best in the game. He made that play look so easy."

Star power

Ohtani showed off his power to all fields in Friday's game, homering to right and left against Mike Clevinger.

Although Ohtani doesn't have a typical slugger's swing, Francona says he's got plenty of pop.

"And he can run," Francona said. "He's an interesting guy. He's got a chance to be pretty special."

Trainer's room

ANGELS: Left-handed pitcher Tyler Skaggs was placed on the disabled list with a strained hip muscle. Manager Mike Scioscia said Skaggs, who was scheduled to pitch today's finale, felt tightness in his previous start on July 31.

INDIANS: Catcher Yan Gomes will be out of the starting lineup for several games due to hamstring tendinitis. Gomes has been bothered with the condition for a while, and aggravated his leg while running out a double in the second inning on Friday.

Up next

Indians rookie Shane Bieber will make his first start against the Angels, who will call up rookie Deck McGuire from the minors. Bieber pitched into the seventh inning against Minnesota on July 30, but didn't factor into the decision.

Nick Cafardo / SUNDAY BASEBALL NOTES / Which players could be available on trade waivers?

By Nick Cafardo

It's August, the time of year when teams place most of their players through trade waivers. And while it's more difficult to make a deal, it's not impossible.

Last season, the headliner came on Aug. 31, when the Tigers traded Justin Verlander to the Astros. Also in August, Justin Upton went from the Tigers to the Angels. Jay Bruce, Neil Walker, Yonder Alonso, Brandon Phillips, Rajai Davis, Tyler Clippard, Mike Leake, and Sean Rodriguez also changed hands last August.

The Red Sox made one of the biggest August deals of all time when they sent Adrian Gonzalez, Carl Crawford, Josh Beckett, and Nick Punto to the Dodgers for a few minor leaguers in 2012, shedding some \$240 million in salaries.

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

Before we get into who could be the August headliners this season, let's review August trade rules:

Players must first be placed on trade waivers, which last 48 hours. If no team claims the player, he can be traded anywhere without restrictions. If a player is claimed by multiple teams, the claiming team with the worst record gets first dibs. The claiming team can try to work out a deal or the team placing the player on waivers can allow the claiming team to have the player. The team can also pull back the player. A player can only be pulled back once, and once he is pulled back he cannot be traded.

It also goes by leagues. For instance, if the Orioles' Mychal Givens isn't claimed by an American League team, then National League teams get a shot at him. If an AL team and an NL team put in claims, the AL team would have first shot. Again, claiming priority depends on record. The Orioles would have first shot at anyone, while the Red Sox would have the last shot. The Orioles, however, would likely not be claiming anyone. It would likely be contending teams bidding for these players.

One player who could get claimed or traded this month is the Blue Jays' Josh Donaldson, who has had an injury-filled season but appears to be making progress. He could help a team in need of a third baseman, a righthanded power bat, and a guy whose energy would be good to have during a pennant run.

Donaldson is also a candidate because even though he'll be a free agent this offseason, he does have some money remaining on his \$18 million salary.

Would the Yankees, Indians or Red Sox put in a claim for Donaldson? Would the Yankees do it to block the Red Sox? And would the Jays just let Donaldson go or would they try to work out a deal knowing that Vladimir Guerrero Jr. is their likely third baseman next season?

Higher-priced players are more likely to clear waivers, which is how Verlander was traded last season, and how the Red Sox were able to trade with the Dodgers in 2012. Another interesting possibility is San Francisco's Andrew McCutchen. He'll be a free agent after this season, and while it looks as though the Giants are going to have a struggle to capture a wild card, McCutchen might be someone they would deal.

If the Red Sox need a reliever, might they see if the Twins' Addison Reed, a player they acquired last season, would make it through waivers because he's owed \$8 million next season? Most teams would punt on Reed because of next year's salary commitment. You might see the Reds' Joey Votto get through waivers because he's got so much money remaining on his deal, but the likelihood of any team assuming that kind of money (another \$125 million) doesn't appear likely.

Who else could be available? Here's a partial list:

Infielders — The Twins recently acquired Logan Forsythe from the Dodgers, and he can play a few positions. The Marlins have Starlin Castro, Martin Prado, Derek Dietrich, and Justin Bour. Would Milwaukee part with Travis Shaw, a third base/first base option now, that they have Jonathan Schoop at second base and Mike Moustakas at third? White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu could be a candidate, but it would be hard to get him through waivers. Donaldson and Adrian Beltre, for sure. Beltre can veto any trade, but as he told this reporter, he would likely go to a

contender if he were going to be a regular player. Scooter Gennett has had a nice season in Cincinnati. If the Nationals begin to sell off, they have Daniel Murphy. Other candidates are the Mets' Todd Frazier and the Tigers' Jose Iglesias.

Outfielders — Jose Bautista has had a good road back with the Mets and could be an available big bat. He could also protect a team at first and third base. The Orioles' Adam Jones said at the trade deadline he wasn't ready to move anywhere, but if the situation is right, he could go in August. The Reds' Billy Hamilton, the White Sox' Avisail Garcia, the Blue Jays' Curtis Granderson, and the Rangers' Shin-Soo Choo could also be candidates.

Catchers — Devin Mesoraco, Mets; Francisco Pena, Cardinals; A.J. Ellis, Padres; Drew Butera, Royals; Russell Martin, Blue Jays.

Designated hitter types — Victor Martinez, Tigers; Jose Martinez, Cardinals; Mark Trumbo, Orioles; Lucas Duda, Royals; Logan Morrison, Twins; Kendrys Morales, Blue Jays.

Starting pitchers — The Reds' Matt Harvey was not dealt on July 31, so he could be a guy an NL team claims, with a deal then having to be worked out. Detroit's Mike Fiers has had a consistent season. It's doubtful he makes it through without being claimed. Minnesota's Ervin Santana will be auditioning for a possible move after his recovery from finger surgery. Other candidates: Dan Straily, Marlins; Francisco Liriano, Tigers; Tyson Ross, Padres; Tyler Skaggs, Angels; James Shields, White Sox.

Relief pitchers — Kyle Barraclough, Drew Steckenrider, and Adam Conley of the Marlins. None of them would get through waivers, but a claiming team could make a deal with Miami. Shane Greene of the Tigers. The 30-year-old closer would be a really good pickup for any team. Again, he wouldn't get out of the AL, but a claiming team might be able to work out a deal with the Tigers. Other candidates: Kirby Yates and Craig Stammen, Padres; Will Smith and Tony Watson, Giants; Fernando Rodney, Twins. There's a boatload of guys out there.

Apropos of nothing

1. One of the interesting aspects of covering the induction ceremonies in Cooperstown, N.Y., is being reminded how many living Hall of Famers have Red Sox ties. Just in terms of starting pitchers, for instance, there's Ferguson Jenkins, Juan Marichal, Tom Seaver (who wasn't present last weekend), John Smoltz, Pedro Martinez, and Dennis Eckersley. You also have Tony Perez, Orlando Cepeda (not present), Luis Aparicio (not present), Rickey Henderson, Andre Dawson, Jeff Bagwell, and Tony La Russa. As well as ones who went in as Red Sox, including Jim Rice, Carlton Fisk, Wade Boggs, and Carl Yastrzemski (not present).

2. The Red Sox met with their minor and major league teams concerning Twitter, basically telling the players they need to go back and check if there was anything offensive they posted, as well as to be careful going forward. This came after four major league players were outed for racist or homophobic tweets they made as teenagers. The Brewers' Josh Hader, the Nationals' Trea Turner, the Braves' Sean Newcomb, and the Yankees' Sonny Gray were all called out for inappropriate tweeting as youngsters. People are on the lookout for such tweets, so teams are trying to get out ahead of it.

3. It figures that Hall of Famer Randy Johnson says he watches most of Chris Sale's starts.

4. Former Red Sox shortstop Glenn Hoffman took a couple of days off from his third base coaching duties with the Padres to be with his brother Trevor Hoffman, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

5. One thing we wonder: How long after the Pawtucket Red Sox move to Worcester will Larry Lucchino stay on as the lead owner of the team?

6. Will Red Sox lefthander Trey Ball wind up being a first-round bust? As our Alex Speier detailed, Ball has been taking batting practice lately and possibly preparing for a positional switch to the outfield.

7. The Indians should have acquired Jonathan Schoop, the Red Sox should have acquired Zach Britton or Kelvin Herrera, and the Brewers should have acquired Kevin Gausman. We'll see if any of these swings and misses wind up haunting them.

8. Ray Bourque and Tim Wakefield will be suiting up on Aug. 16 in Steve Buckley's 25th Oldtime Baseball Game at St. Peter's Field in North Cambridge. The pregame ceremony begins at 7 p.m. WEEI's Lou Merloni, who played nine seasons in the majors, including parts of six with the Red Sox, will also play. This year's game will benefit the American Heart Association and be in memory of Steve Harris, a longtime hockey writer for the Boston Herald who died in February.

9. The Astros remain the only team to have used just five starters this season: Gerrit Cole, Lance McCullers Jr., Charlie Morton, Justin Verlander, and Dallas Keuchel.

10. Through Aug. 1, only one team had starter and bullpen ERAs both under 3.50, the Astros, with their starters at 3.04 and their relievers at 3.16. The Red Sox were close with their starters at 3.54 and their relievers at 3.34.

11. Jarrod Saltalamacchia, who was the Red Sox' starting catcher on their 2013 championship team, has spent the season in Toledo (Triple A, Tigers), hitting .140 with four homers and 18 RBIs in 150 at-bats. Salty is now 33 years old.

Updates on nine

1. Adam Jones, CF, Orioles — Jones did not approve a deadline deal to Philadelphia, which is pretty close to Baltimore, where Jones prefers to stay with his young family after he bought Cal Ripken Jr.'s old house. Jones exercising his 10-5 rights was a bit surprising to the Orioles. The free agent-to-be could re-sign with the Orioles, who may need an anchor for their rebuilding effort.

2. Trevor Bauer, RHP, Indians — Call him a throwback? Bauer has a major league-leading 23 starts in which he's thrown at least 100 pitches. Will Bauer wear down in September?

3. J.T. Realmuto, C, Marlins — Realmuto, who may now be the most talented catcher in baseball, received interest from the Nationals and Astros, according to one major league source. The Marlins understandably want an enormous haul if they were to deal him. That hasn't happened. The Nationals were unwilling to include one of their coveted young outfielders — Juan Soto or Victor Robles — in any deal. The Astros kicked the tires on Realmuto before the deadline but nothing came of it. There's one school of thought with the Marlins that you build around Realmuto, and there's another that by the time the Marlins are competitive again, Realmuto may be three or four years into his career.

4. Pedro Martinez, RHP, retired — Martinez said he's moving his family to Boston to be closer to his activities with the Red Sox. Martinez will continue in his role as special assistant to president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski. He has been splitting time between Miami and the Dominican Republic. Martinez has also been linked to two prominent players in the AL East — Yankees starter Luis Severino and Blue Jays

third base prospect Vladimir Guerrero Jr. Martinez helped Severino refine his pitches in the offseason, and he's Guerrero's godfather. Martinez's former batterymate, Jason Varitek, also moved his family to the Boston area recently.

5. Kyle Barraclough, RHP, Marlins — The Red Sox did make an inquiry on him at the trade deadline, but wisely backed off. He's allowed 11 earned runs in his last 4½ innings and has blown three of his last four save chances, including a ninth-inning meltdown on Thursday. Barraclough has been throwing an inordinate amount of breaking balls, which is giving rise to speculation about fatigue or an injury.

6. Greg Holland, RHP, Cardinals — Agent Scott Boras said that Holland's problems in St. Louis began when former manager Mike Matheny decided to keep Bud Norris in the closer role rather than Holland, who led the NL with 41 saves last season with Colorado. Holland was finally released by the Cardinals on Friday, and by then Boras said he had already fielded five calls on him. Holland was signed on Opening Day and needed 10 days to get ready, and he seemed behind from the start. Holland was 0-2 with a 7.92 ERA and was designated for assignment at Boras's urging. Holland's velocity was about 3 miles per hour slower than last season. Could he help someone in a late-inning role?

7. Shane Victorino, OF, retired — Nice touch by the Phillies to have Victorino retire as a Phillie in a pregame ceremony on Friday. He was instrumental in two championships, by the Phillies in 2008 and by the Red Sox in 2013. Victorino was a great influence on Mookie Betts. He had the knack for big hits at big times and was a consummate warrior on the field.

8. Wade Davis, RHP, Rockies — Holland's replacement in Colorado, Davis has not had the best of seasons with a 4.57 ERA and five blown saves in 36 chances. From 2015-17 Davis had a 1.65 ERA with just five blown saves, going 76 for 81. The Rockies have lost five games when leading after the seventh inning. That can be damaging to the psyche of a team.

9. Ben Cherington, vice president of baseball operations, Blue Jays — Cherington is being mentioned often as a top candidate for the Mets' GM job. He hasn't been eager to jump back into the fire, enjoying his role in Toronto. Is the Mets' job the one to jump at? One of the problems candidates and those who work with the Mets have mentioned is working for the Wilpon family. The Mets don't appear to be considering Omar Minaya, John Ricco, and J.P. Ricciardi, who are running the baseball operation as Sandy Alderson undergoes cancer treatments. Also mentioned for the job are Orioles GM Dan Duquette, former Dodgers GM Ned Colletti, and former Red Sox scouting director Jared Porter, who is now with Diamondbacks.

Extra innings

From the Bill Chuck files — "The Giants have not hit a grand slam nor surrendered a grand slam this season, the only team still able to make that claim." . . . Also, "Rafael Devers and Yan Gomes each hit .284 in June and .214 in July." . . . And, "Only two players had double-digit homers in July: Matt Carpenter (11) and Kole Calhoun (10). Last July there were only two as well: Giancarlo Stanton (12) and Rougned Odor (10)." . . . Happy birthday, Carl Crawford (37), Eric Hinske (41), Bobby Kielty (42), John Wasdin (46), John Olerud (50), Reid Nichols (60), and Bernie Carbo (71).

Boston Globe LOADED: 08.05.2018

Ken Rosenthal / Sources say Angels manager Mike Scioscia is expected to step down at the end of the season

By Ken Rosenthal Aug 5, 2018 17

Bill Clinton was still president when Mike Scioscia managed his first game for the Angels on April 3, 2000. Mo Vaughn batted third for the Angels that day. Ken Hill was the starting pitcher.

Scioscia's 19-year run in Anaheim is the longest since Bobby Cox managed 21 straight years with the Braves and the sixth longest in major league history, according to STATS LLC.

For Scioscia, it apparently is enough.

Scioscia, nearing the completion of a 10-year, \$50 million contract, is expected to step down at the end of the season, according to major-league sources. His decision not to pursue a new deal would be his alone and not the result of pressure from the club, sources said.

Scioscia, who turns 60 on Nov. 27, has built a Hall of Fame resumé with the Angels, winning the 2002 World Series, six division titles and two American League Manager of the Year awards. It is not clear whether he would want to manage again immediately, but a number of positions are expected to open this offseason, creating opportunities for him to pursue a fresh start.

Both Scioscia and general manager Billy Eppler declined comment, consistent with their approach since the end of last season when asked about Scioscia's expiring contract. Scioscia has put off any talk of his status, preferring to focus on the performance of his club, which got off to a 13-3 start after a seemingly fruitful offseason that included the addition of Japanese sensation Shohei Ohtani. A devastating series of injuries, however, helped sink the Angels' chances; at 55-57, the team is 15 1/2 games out in the AL West.

Three potential successors to Scioscia already work for the Angels — former Detroit Tigers manager Brad Ausmus and former major-league third baseman Eric Chávez, both of whom are special assistants to Eppler; and former major-league catcher Josh Paul, who is in his first season as Scioscia's bench coach. Paul has not managed above Class A. Chavez has never managed.

The Angels almost certainly would look outside the organization as well. The list of currently unemployed managers includes Joe Girardi, John Farrell, Dusty Baker and Mike Matheny, all of whom lost jobs within the past year. Other candidates might become available as teams make changes or managers' contracts expire; the Los Angeles Dodgers' Dave Roberts, for example, is unsigned beyond this season.

While Angels owner Arte Moreno is loyal to Scioscia, the only manager Moreno has employed since buying the club in May 2003, the team might opt for a change even if Scioscia wants to stay. The trend in the game is toward hiring inexperienced managers who connect with both data-driven executives and young players. Scioscia, by all accounts, gets along well with Eppler, who became GM in October 2015. His relationships with his players are believed to be good. He might simply decide it is time for both him and the franchise to move forward.

Under Eppler, the Angels have hired a number of coaches with little or no connection to Scioscia, including Paul, pitching coach Charles Nagy, hitting coach Eric Hinske and bullpen coach Scott Radinsky. Ron Roenicke, a coach under Scioscia from 2000 to '10 and also in 2016-17, left the Angels last off-season to become the bench coach for the Boston Red Sox.

Amid the staff changes, the Angels have become less competitive in the increasingly strong AL West. A third straight losing season would be a first for the franchise under Scioscia, whose overall record as manager is 1,625-1,403, a .537 winning percentage. The team has reached the postseason only once in the past eight seasons and has not won a playoff game since 2009.

Next year will not necessarily be better; Ohtani has a Grade 2 sprain of his ulnar collateral ligament that makes his ability to pitch uncertain, and right-hander Garrett Richards, another of the team's top starters, recently underwent Tommy John surgery and is a free agent. The Angels' long-term future will become even murkier if center fielder Mike Trout, a seven-time All-Star, hits the open market as scheduled after the 2020 season.

If Scioscia steps down, he might want to take time off. Or he might want to jump right back into managing with a team that seems more likely to contend. Either way, he would be determining his own fate, avoiding a potentially messy parting with a team he helped define for nearly two decades, making one last timely call.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.05.2018

Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs must wait to redeem himself after being placed on 10-day DL

By MIKE DIGIOVANNA

Redemption will have to wait for Tyler Skaggs. The Angels left-hander was placed on the 10-day disabled list because of a left-groin strain Saturday, knocking him out of Sunday's scheduled start against the Cleveland Indians.

Skaggs hoped to make amends for what he said was "probably the worst outing I've had in my life," a 3 1/3-inning, 10-run, eight-hit effort in Tuesday night's 10-6 loss at Tampa Bay. He expects to return next Saturday against Oakland at Angel Stadium.

"I know it's not that serious [of an injury], but it's extremely, extremely frustrating," said Skaggs, who is 8-7 with a 3.34 ERA in 20 starts this season. "Words can't describe how frustrated I am at the moment, especially after the last outing I had.

"I really want to come back and pitch the way I have been all season. I'm not happy at the moment but hopefully I'll be back on Saturday ready to roll."

Since Skaggs missed all of 2015 and most of 2016 because of elbow ligament-replacement surgery, his injuries seem to have migrated south.

He missed three months of 2017 because of a rib-cage strain and two weeks this past July because of a right-groin strain. He had one start pushed back in late June because of a tight right hamstring.

"My arm feels great," Skaggs said. "It's unbelievable, man, because I do everything in my power to be ready to go, and these things keep nagging at me. It's the epitome of the season for us."

Skaggs began to feel discomfort during Tuesday's game, and his condition worsened during a 33-pitch fourth inning in which he gave up seven runs and four hits. He threw a bullpen session Friday, after which the Angels made the decision to put him on the DL.

"I think I was overcompensating for my other leg," Skaggs said. "I threw 40 pitches [sic] out of the stretch in that last inning and fatigued myself. My left leg has been doing all of the work for a month, and now that one doesn't feel good."

Reliever Taylor Cole replaced Skaggs on the roster Saturday. Right-hander Deck McGuire will start Sunday.

A sore right wrist kept Mike Trout out of the lineup for a third straight game Saturday. The center fielder was able to throw but was unable to swing the bat with enough force to play. Mike Scioscia said Trout might be available to pinch-run Saturday night.

Mike Trout watches from the bench during a against the Tampa Bay Rays. Trout is out of the lineup because of a sore right wrist.

"He's moving in the right direction, but he's not able to swing in a major league game," Scioscia said. "He didn't have a setback, but injuries heal at their own pace. We're hopeful [he can play Sunday], but you can't move forward until these things are at a level where he can go out and play, and he's not there yet."

Trout suffered the injury on an awkward feet-first slide into third base in the first inning of Wednesday night's 4-2 loss at Tampa Bay, jamming his right hand into the ground as he tried to avoid a tag on a stolen-base attempt by sliding to the inside of the bag.

Jaime Barria didn't get the win Friday night, but Scioscia liked the way the rookie shook off a rocky start in which he gave up three runs in the first two innings to blank the Indians from the third through fifth innings. The Angels won 7-4.

"As he grows and understands fastball command better, where to throw it and when to use it, he has a really wide array of things he can do against a hitter," Scioscia said. "We love his makeup, and I think that's why he's going to figure a lot of this out.

"Things started to tilt the wrong way [Friday night] and he made the adjustments, reset himself and gave us a chance to win. You can't teach that in a young pitcher, and we're excited about that."

LA Times LOADED: 08.05.2018

Mike Trout out of Angels lineup for the 3rd straight game with a sore wrist

By JEFF FLETCHER | jfletcher@scng.com | Orange County Register

CLEVELAND — Mike Trout's recovery from a jammed right wrist has not gone quite as smoothy and he had hoped or expected.

A day after Trout said he was "pretty sure" he'd be able to play, he was still not in the Angels lineup. He remains day to day.

"Injuries heal at their own pace," Manager Mike Scioscia said Saturday, the third straight game Trout was not in the lineup. "You can project and be hopeful, but you can't move forward until these things are at a level where you can go out and play, and he's not there yet."

Trout jammed his wrist, bracing himself against the dirt on a feet-first slide in the first inning of Wednesday's game. He continued to play that game as a designated hitter, but he said he was still felt discomfort in his wrist.

Trout did some throwing before Saturday's game, but Scioscia said he was still unable to swing the bat in a game.

"Mike is moving in the right direction," Scioscia said. "Swinging is getting better, but he's not able to go out there."

Felix Pena loses duel with reigning Cy Young Corey Kluber as Angels fall to Indians

By JEFF FLETCHER | jfletcher@scng.com | Orange County Register

CLEVELAND — It didn't matter to Felix Peña that he had made a dramatic improvement from his last outing.

The result was the same.

One start after he got knocked out in the first, Peña took a no-hitter into the sixth before eventually allowing a couple runs that were all it took for the Angels to lose 3-0 to the Cleveland Indians and Corey Kluber on Saturday night.

Peña was able to outduel a two-time Cy Young winner for part of his outing, but Kluber went the distance in a three-hitter against an Angels team playing once again without injured Mike Trout.

"It doesn't really matter if it was a good game or a bad game," Peña said through an interpreter. "The primary idea is to win. That's what I strive for."

A 28-year-old forced into the Angels rotation because of injuries, Peña had posted a 2.73 ERA in his first six starts. The last time, though, against the Seattle Mariners, he got only one out and gave up seven runs.

With a chance to show if that was an aberration or the beginning of the end for the converted reliever, Peña threw 12 balls in his first 18 pitches against the Indians.

He managed to escape that potentially troublesome first inning with two walks, thanks to catcher Francisco Arcia throwing out Francisco Lindor trying to steal.

Peña said he tweaked his mechanics after that, aligning himself more with the plate, and it showed.

Over the next four innings, he did not allow a hit and he only walked one. In those innings he threw 47 pitches and 30 were strikes.

"Once he found the zone," Manager Mike Scioscia said, "he matched Corey, pitch for pitch."

Facing a Cleveland lineup that included two MVP candidates — José Ramírez and Francisco Lindor — among the seven left-handed swingers, Peña did not allow a hit in the first five innings.

As he took the mound in the sixth, the video board at Progressive Field showed Peña with the caption: "Currently throwing a no-hitter."

If they were trying to get in Peña's head, it didn't work.

"My plan is never to look up at the scoreboard," Peña said.

No more playful attempts to jinx Peña would be necessary. Five pitches later, Peña gave up a homer to Leonys Martín. Lindor then doubled and scored on a Michael Brantley single. Peña retired Ramírez before his night ended with a career-high 86 pitches.

At that point, though, too much damage had already been done. Kluber retired all nine Angels hitters in the final three innings, his second complete game of the year.

Their only real shot at a rally was in the third, when Eric Young Jr. doubled and Kole Calhoun walked. Justin Upton hit a flyout and Shohei Ohtani grounded out.

"Corey is tough," Scioscia said. "We had some chances early, but he does so many things with the ball. We hit a couple of balls hard, had guys on, couldn't get that hit to get us on top. He pitched a great game obviously."

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