

## **Lindor rakes as Tribe trims magic number**

By Aaron Rose MLB.com

TORONTO -- Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor was a force to be reckoned with on Thursday night.

The 24-year-old clubbed a pair of homers off Blue Jays starter Sam Gaviglio, including his seventh leadoff home run of the season to tie a franchise mark, and he added a two-run single in a four-hit game that culminated in a 9-4 victory at Rogers Centre.

The Tribe's magic number to win the American League Central title is down to seven.

Lindor entered Thursday hitting just .224 with a .278 OBP over his previous 25 games, but he burst out of the slump in a big way in recording his eighth career multi-homer game and tying his career best of 33 home runs, set last season. It was Lindor's sixth multi-homer game out of the leadoff spot this season, the most by any player in Major League history.

"He does a lot of things," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "He likes hitting there. ... It's good when you turn the lineup over and you've got a guy sitting there like that."

Lindor crushed a 2-0 sinker from Gaviglio over the right-center-field wall in the first to tie Grady Sizemore (2008) for the club mark before adding a solo homer in the third.

"The way I see it is, when a starting pitcher goes out there and we're at home, and he strikes out two guys on nine pitches, he gets out of the inning, that's like, 'Here we go, it's on,'" Lindor said. "It's probably the same thing if I lead off the game with a home run or a double and end up scoring, the pitcher is just like, 'All right, yes, here we go.'"

Lindor's go-ahead two-run single in the fifth inning was part of a three-run rally started by Yan Gomes' dribbler down the third-base line for an infield hit. Gomes scored on Brandon Guyer's RBI double to cut the Indians' deficit to 4-3 before Lindor's single gave the Tribe a 5-4 lead.

"He was the majority of our offense for a while there," Francona said. "He came out of the chute with two home runs, then got a big hit to drive in two more, played a good game at short. It's fun to watch."

Indians starter Shane Bieber got into trouble in a four-run fourth inning when he gave up a leadoff single, then walked Kendrys Morales. After getting Kevin Pillar swinging, Bieber gave up a pair of doubles. Two batters later, Yonder Alonso let a hard ground ball get past him for an error that scored the Blue Jays' fourth run of the frame.

"Obviously, I'd rather that I'd never have to get over a big inning," Bieber said. "But if you're going to have one, just being able to go out there and just keep competing, that was big for me, and just going out there and trying to give the team a chance to win."

Bieber went 6 1/3 innings and allowed four runs (three earned) on seven hits with six strikeouts and just one walk. He entered play on Thursday leading all rookie pitchers who have recorded at least 70 innings pitched with a 5.80 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

"I thought he was really good," Francona said. "He ran that one spot where three or four hitters there and we didn't finish the inning for him, but he bounced back and pitched really good after that, and I thought that was really encouraging."

The Indians' bullpen threw 2 2/3 scoreless innings and Jason Kipnis hit a three-run insurance homer in the ninth.

### **MOMENT THAT MATTERED**

Allen gave the Indians a scare in the eighth inning after walking the leadoff batter and giving up a double to Rowdy Tellez three batters later when a ground ball again got past Alonso at first. With the potential tying run at second, Allen struck out Teoscar Hernandez to end the frame. "I thought he spun the ball very well," Francona said. "He got some swing and miss with it. ... He gets the third out, we don't convert it, and he comes back and gets the next guy."

### **SOUND SMART**

Greg Allen singled, doubled and drove in a pair of runs in going 2-for-4. He is hitting .298 over his last 28 games.

### **UP NEXT**

Indians right-hander Carlos Carrasco (16-8, 3.52) will take the ball at 7:07 p.m. ET on Friday for the second of four games against the Blue Jays at Rogers Centre. The 31-year-old struggled in his only start against Toronto this season, allowing six runs over 5 1/3 innings in the first game of a doubleheader on May 3. Toronto will counter with righty Marco Estrada (7-11, 5.43), who has thrown just 6 1/3 innings over his past two starts due to a back injury.

### **Miller takes positive step with bullpen session**

By Aaron Rose MLB.com

TORONTO -- Indians pitching coach Carl Willis is excited about the progress Andrew Miller is making after the 33-year-old reliever threw a bullpen session on Thursday afternoon prior to the series opener at Rogers Centre.

"Carl came in, he was all smiles," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "[Carl said] the ball came out hot. That was welcomed news. He threw 20 pitches, now we've got to see what's next."

The plan is for Miller to throw another bullpen on Saturday before he's evaluated further.

"He's going to have to throw a few more times for sure," Francona said. "Depending on how he feels, we're going to give him the amount of reps that we think best prepares him."

Miller has been out since Aug. 29 when he was placed on the disabled list for the third time this season. He's posted a 3.38 ERA across 24 innings this year, his worst season since becoming a reliever in 2012.

Donaldson homers again

Josh Donaldson went 1-for-3 with a two-run homer in his first game with the Double-A Akron RubberDucks on Wednesday.

It was Donaldson's second Minor League game since coming over from the Blue Jays on Aug. 31. He went 1-for-2 with a grand slam in his Triple-A debut for the Columbus Clippers on Monday.

"It's still nice to see a guy look healthy and swing the bat the way he does," Francona said. "He'll work out today and then he'll play again tomorrow."

Brantley nursing foot injury

Michael Brantley was not in the starting lineup on Thursday as he nurses a left foot injury he sustained in the third inning of Wednesday's 3-1 win over the Royals.

"He hit that ball off the top of his foot yesterday," Francona said. "He finished off the game OK, but he got on the flight and it got stiff, so we'll give him tonight [off] to kind of let the trainers do their stuff, but he'll be fine."

Brantley hit .330 with a .405 OBP over his previous 30 games dating to the start of August.

### **Most pressing questions for Tribe, AL Central**

By Jeffrey Flanagan MLB.com @FlannyMLB

There are less than four weeks to go in the regular season, and each team still has at least one or two burning questions they'd like answered.

So let's take a look at those questions as it pertains to the American League Central:

#### **INDIANS**

The question: Will the Tribe's sidelined stars be primed for October?

Shortly after the Indians acquired Josh Donaldson last Friday, the club announced that the 32-year-old former AL MVP Award winner will become the team's everyday third baseman, moving All-Star Jose Ramirez to second base and sliding Jason Kipnis into the outfield. Usually, a positional shuffle of that magnitude with less than a month left in the season would pose the most questions, but the Tribe is still waiting for Donaldson to return fully healthy from his Minor League rehab assignment, along with other key pieces returning from injury.

The Tribe is also missing right-hander Trevor Bauer, who's been out since Aug. 12, and was in the midst of an AL Cy Young Award-caliber season with a career-best 2.22 ERA and an fWAR of 6.0 (second in the AL), according to FanGraphs. Relief ace Andrew Miller (left shoulder impingement) has also been out since Aug. 27. Should Donaldson, Bauer and Miller return healthy and productive, it's not unreasonable to consider Cleveland as World Series contenders.

#### **Indians won't use Chief Wahoo logo in Toronto**

By Anthony Castrovince MLB.com @castrovince

Chief Wahoo did not make the trip across the border to Toronto for the Indians' four-game series with the Blue Jays that will begin Thursday night at Rogers Centre.

Acknowledging increased sensitivity to the Chief Wahoo image in Canada, the Indians, who have already announced their plans to remove the logo from their uniforms completely beginning in 2019, opted not to feature it during this series. They are exclusively wearing their "Block C" caps, and the Wahoo logo has been removed from its usual placement on the left sleeves of their jerseys.

Chief Wahoo will return to the Indians' uniform scheme when the club continues its current road trip in Tampa Bay on Monday. It will then remain on their uniforms for the balance of 2018, including the postseason, before being permanently retired from on-field use.

Scrutiny of the logo's use specifically in Canada grew in 2016, when an activist tried to block the Indians from displaying their name and logo during the American League Championship Series against the Blue Jays. The Indians were uncertain whether they would be able to take the field with their regular uniforms for Game 3 at Rogers Centre until shortly before the first pitch, when a Canadian judge dismissed the case. Indigenous people accounted for nearly 5 percent of the total Canadian population in the most recent census data.

Major League Baseball and the Indians jointly announced in January that the 2018 season will be the last in which Chief Wahoo will be a part of the club's uniform scheme.

"Major League Baseball is committed to building a culture of diversity and inclusion throughout the game," Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement at that time.

Chief Wahoo has been used in various versions by the team since 1947.

## **Francisco Lindor, once again, leads the way as Cleveland Indians pound Toronto, 9-4**

**By Paul Hoynes**

TORONTO - If you haven't noticed by now, Francisco Lindor takes batting leadoff seriously.

In spring training he petitioned manager Terry Francona to bat him atop the lineup because he felt he was born to push the ignition button on this offense. Well, he hasn't just pushed the button, he's close to reinventing it.

Lindor, for the seventh time this season, started a game with a home run. But he didn't stop there Thursday night at Rogers Centre, he homered in his next at-bat as well and added a two-run single just for kicks as the Indians beat Toronto, 9-4, to reduce their magic number to clinch the AL Central to seven over the idle Twins.

It was the sixth multi-homer game of the season for Lindor. They've all come out of the leadoff spot, marking the first time that's happened in big-league history, according to STATS.

The seven leadoff homers tie Grady Sizemore for the single-season franchise record. Sizemore did it in 2008.

Lindor opened the game with a homer to center on a 2-0 pitch from Sam Gaviglio (3-8, 5.25). He did it again to Gaviglio in the third, this time waiting until the count was full. It was Lindor's 33rd homer of the season and gave the Indians a 2-0 lead.

When asked about Lindor after the game, Francona said, "Wow, he was the majority of our offense for a while there. Came out of the chute with two home runs. Got a big hit to drive in two more and played a good game at shortstop. It was fun to watch."

The Blue Jays, 3-8 in their last 11 games, came back against Shane Bieber (9-3, 4.63) to take a 4-2 lead in the fourth. Teoscar Hernandez's two-run double was the big hit in the inning as the Jays sent eight men to the plate. An error by first baseman Yonder Alonso on a tough hop off the bat of Aledmys Diaz allowed the fourth run to score.

The Indians bounced back with three runs in the fifth. Yan Gomes reached on a slow-rolling single down the third-base line and Greg Allen followed with a single to left. Brandon Guyer doubled home Gomes.

Jose Fernandez relieved Gaviglio to face Lindor, who sent a broken-bat single into left to score Allen and Guyer for a 5-4 lead. The switch-hitting shortstop went 4-for-5 with three runs and four RBI. For the season he's hitting .288 with 33 homers, 84 RBI and 117 runs.

The Indians used an unearned run to stretch the lead to 6-4 in the sixth. Edwin Encarnacion singled to start the inning, but should have been erased on a double play grounder off the bat of Alonso. Second baseman Devon Travis threw the ball away to put runners at first and second. Allen doubled home Encarnacion.

A three-run homer by Jason Kipnis in the ninth put the Tribe's 80th win of the season under lock and key. Kipnis is hitting .395 (15-for-38) with four doubles, four homers and 14 RBI in his last 11 games.

"Kip had a tough night," said Francona. "He was frustrated, but that was a gorgeous swing. It let us stay away from (closer Brad) Hand. A lot of good things came out of that."

Bieber, thanks to his offense, was able to pitch into the seventh inning. He allowed four runs, three earned, on seven hits in 6 1/3 innings. He stuck out six, walked one and rebounded from his loss to the Rays in his last start.

The best part of his night was the way he came back after allowing four runs in the fourth.

"That was big for me," said Bieber. "People say the one way to get over a big inning is by never having one. If you're going to have one, it was big for me to go out there and just keep competing."

"I can't say enough about this offense and how they picked me up right away. That's huge for a pitcher. To be able to go out there and have the lead again and try to keep doing what you're doing."

What it means

The Indians are now seven games behind AL West-leading Houston for the right to host the ALDS. The Astros, winners of five straight, were idle Thursday before opening a three-game series against Boston at Fenway Park.

The pitches

Gaviglio threw 72 pitches, 44 (61 percent) for strikes. Bieber threw 89 pitches, 62 (70 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Blue Jays drew 20,618 to Rogers Centre. First pitch was at 7:05 p.m. with a temperature of 77 degrees. The roof was open.

Next

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (16-8, 3.52) will face the Blue Jays and Marco Estrada (7-11, 4.53) on Friday at 7:07 p.m. SportsTime Ohio, WTAM and WMMS will carry the game.

This will be Carrasco's second start against the Jays this year. He's 3-1 with a 5.60 ERA against them in his career.

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### **Cleveland Indians shrink magic number to 7 with victory in Toronto**

**By Joe Noga**

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- With a 9-4 victory Thursday against host Toronto, the Cleveland Indians have reduced their magic number to clinch the American League Central Division to 7.

Cleveland's division lead over idle Minnesota is at a season-high 16 1/2 games with 22 to play. Any combination of Indians wins or losses by the second-place Twins that is greater than or equal to 7 will clinch a third consecutive division title and postseason appearance for Cleveland.

The Indians (80-60) continue their series against the Blue Jays on Friday at 7:10 as Carlos Carrasco faces Marco Estrada. Minnesota opens a three-game weekend set at home against Kansas City at 8:10 p.m.

You can calculate the first-place Tribe's magic number by starting with 162 (games in a season) and adding one, then subtracting the number of Indians wins and subtracting the number of losses by the second-place team.

### **Bruised foot keeps Cleveland Indians' Michael Brantley out of lineup Thursday vs. Toronto**

By Paul Hoynes

TORONTO - The Indians played their 140th game of the season on Thursday night, but Michael Brantley wasn't in the starting lineup. That has been a rarity this season.

Brantley fouled a ball off the top of his left foot in the third inning of Wednesday's 3-1 win over the Royals at Progressive Field and manager Terry Francona decided to give him Thursday night off.

"He's OK," said Francona. "He hit the ball off the top of his foot, but finished the game OK. Then you get on a flight (to Toronto) and it got stiff. So we'll give him tonight to let the trainers do their stuff. He'll be fine."

Brantley, who has played in 125 games this season, is hitting .303 (152-for-501) with 14 homers and 70 RBI. He was limited to a total of 101 games in 2016 and 2017 because of right shoulder and ankle injuries. This year Brantley leads all Tribe outfielders in games played.

In his career, Brantley is hitting .378 (54-for-143) with five homers and 23 RBI against the Blue Jays. This year he's hitting .625 (5-for-8) against them.

What's next for Donaldson? Josh Donaldson, who has homered in each of the two rehab games he's played for the Indians, had the day off Thursday, but will rejoin the Class AA Akron RubberDucks on Friday in the Eastern League playoffs.

The Indians acquired Donaldson from Toronto a few hours before the Aug. 30 midnight waiver deadline for a player to be named. Right-hander Julian Merryweather, recovering from Tommy John surgery on his elbow, is the player to be named.

"No one is going to care if somebody struggles in the minor leagues, but it's still nice to see a guy look healthy and swing the bat the way he does," said Francona. "He'll work out today and play again on Friday."

The Indians put Donaldson on the 10-day DL on Monday with the move retroactive to Saturday. So he could join the Indians on Tuesday at Tropicana Field.

"We just want him to get as many reps as he can, while Akron is still playing, and then we'll get him back here with us," said Francona.

Asked what the acquisition of Donaldson brings to the clubhouse, Francona said, "Well, it can be a little split. Some guys will be thrilled and there will be other guys who it affects. You have to balance that. We're going to move Jose (Ramirez) to second and Kip (Jason Kipnis) is going to play some center.

"So you try to balance that, but I think what he can bring outweighs any potential unsettling (feeling) that you have at this time of year because he can make such an impact."

Former Indians executive Mark Shapiro and Ross Atkins, who now run the baseball operations for the Blue Jays, are taking heat in Toronto for the Donaldson trade. Donaldson is a free agent at the end of the year.

Blast from the past: Former Tribe farmhand Tom Pannone is scheduled to face the Indians on Sunday. The Indians sent Pannone, a left-hander, to the Blue Jays last year for Joe Smith.

Pannone, a rookie left-hander, is 1-1 with a 4.58 ERA. He isn't overpowering, but he has a quick arm action and the ball gets on hitters fast. He's made eight appearances with the Blue Jays this year, including two starts, with 13 strikeouts and four walks.

In March, Pannone was suspended for 80 games for testing positive for an anabolic steroid. Pannone is starting for Marcus Stroman, who has a blister on the middle finger of his right hand.

Finally: The Indians entered Thursday's game ranked third in the big leagues with 699 runs. They trailed the Red Sox with 766 and the Yankees with 720. Houston was fourth with 695.

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### **Cleveland Indians' Andrew Miller says 'it's full speed ahead' after encouraging bullpen session**

By Paul Hoynes

TORONTO - Terry Francona knew the news was going to be good before he heard it.

"I could see the smile on Carl's face," said Francona.

Pitching coach Carl Willis had just watched Andrew Miller throw his first bullpen session since he went on the disabled list for the third time on Aug. 29 with an impingement in his left shoulder.

Willis told Francona that the "ball came out really hot" from Miller's left hand in the visitor's bullpen Thursday at Rogers Centre.

"I felt really good," said Miller. "As frustrating as I felt a week or two ago, I think that's in the past. It's full speed ahead. It's just a matter of getting sharp, getting innings and being crisp. I know I've been saying that for a while. I do feel it's all in line right now and we're getting ready to take off."

Miller received a cortisone shot in his shoulder after hitting the DL for the third time on Aug. 29. The shot apparently found its mark.

"We hit what was bugging me and took care of it," said Miller. "I'm excited ... as truly excited as I have been in a while. My knee feels great. My arm feels great. It's up to me to go out and pitch now and remember how to do that."

Miller was eligible to come off the 10-day disabled list on Thursday, but that's not going to happen.

"I don't know what they're saying, but if I'm not ready by Tampa, then certainly by the time we get back," said Miller.

The Indians opened a four-game series against the Blue Jays at Rogers Centre on Thursday night. They move Tropicana Field on Monday for a three-game series against the Rays.

"Ideally I'd like to come back and get five, seven, eight appearances in and feel really good about it going into game that really matters," said Miller.

Francona said the Indians are working on what Miller's next step will be.

"Things went really well today and that was welcome news," said Francona. "He threw 20 pitches. Now we have to see what's next. Does he face hitters? Does he throw another bullpen, but Carl was really excited about the way the ball came out of his hand."

A healthy Miller would go a long way to helping an inconsistent bullpen as it prepares for the postseason. He's made only 23 appearances this year, going 2-3 with a 3.38 ERA. Still he's averaging 12.38 strikeouts per nine innings with lefties hitting .179 and righties .217 against him.

The Tribe's bullpen went into Thursday night's game ranked 13th in ERA in the AL at 4.71. They're 11-21 with 37 saves and have thrown the fewest innings of any pen in the league.

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### **Eric Haase and the value of a September learning experience**

T.J. Zuppe Sep 6, 2018 1

Eric Haase had packed his entire Columbus apartment. His essentials were securely stowed. His clothing was safely arranged within several bags. The Triple-A season was coming to an end, that much he knew for certain. But his next destination was still in doubt.

"It's either go home or (get called up to Cleveland)," Haase said.

It's not difficult to guess which scenario the Michigan native preferred.

Haase had spoken to his wife about the possibility of a promotion. He had placed subtle hints with his agent, hoping for a nugget of good news in return. The 25-year-old catcher — a fixture on the Indians' 40-man roster — figured his chances were good. But it wasn't until his manager, Chris Tremie, called him into the office that he knew for sure.

At least, that's the version of the story Haase tells. His new locker neighbor, Yan Gomes, wasn't buying it.

"He knew he was going to be a big leaguer, man," Gomes interjected during Haase's chat with The Athletic. "He knew it."

Haase just laughed.

"It was pretty special," he said. "I've been with these guys before, but to be with them on this stage is awesome."

Haase impressed the Indians coaching staff during his time with the big league club in spring training. Terry Francona regularly raved about the young backstop, appreciating his defensive work behind the plate and capability to demonstrate the tools necessary to lead a pitching staff.

The former seventh-round pick spent the entire year at Triple-A, logging 120 games and slugging 20 homers. While the power was still evident, Haase really only felt "somewhat happy" about his overall production, hitting just .236 and lamenting some funky home-road splits (.671 OPS at home, .788 on road).

However, once rosters expanded, his promotion became an easy call for management. Not only is he a tweaked hamstring away from being the backup catcher, but the experience of being around a championship caliber team should pay dividends.

"As far as learning, it'll be really good for him," Francona said. "I think we felt like he made so many strides in the spring being with Sandy (Alomar Jr.) every day. Now, being around this atmosphere will be really good."

By the time reporters made their way into the clubhouse on Saturday, his manager's advice was still fresh in the catcher's mind.

Be a sponge. Try to absorb as much as you can, not just on the field stuff, but off the field, how to conduct yourself. Don't back down from anyone. You're part of this team and you've earned it.

And learning opportunities came almost immediately.

Hours after he finally settled into the clubhouse, he jogged across the field in the midst of Saturday's game. Sporting his catching gear, he made his way to the center field bullpen, where he spent the rest of the night surrounded by some familiar (and unfamiliar) faces. He warmed up a few of the relievers that night, all in an effort to get better acquainted with what they throw and how their pitches move.

"Just getting to learn all the bullpen guys and stuff like that is pretty important at this point," Haase said. "The starters take care of themselves. I've caught the majority of these starters before, so it's kind of something that I'm not really worried about. But definitely the bullpen guys, (I want to) try to get a little more used to them."

One of the first calls down to the bullpen was for Adam Cimber, the submarine-style righty, to get loose. Haase sprung into action, jogging to the far end of the tiered bullpen. He squatted, extended his glove and began catching offerings from a release point just inches above the ground.

That exchange would later prove valuable.

On Sunday, nearly 24 hours after he'd entered a major league clubhouse for the first time as a big leaguer, Brad Mills told Haase to get his gear on — he'd be making his major league debut next inning.

Gulp.

"I was really nervous leading up to it," Haase said. "But once Millsy gave me the nod that I was going to go in and catch first, that got me really excited."

Yonder Alonso grounded into a double play to end the seventh. Haase, with much on his mind, began to carefully ascend the dugout stairs. He stepped toward home plate, looking out at an empty mound.

The bullpen door swung open. Exhale. Out charged Cimber, no longer just that lanky stranger with the funky delivery.

"I was really lucky," Haase said. "That was the purpose of going out there and trying to see some of the guys I haven't seen before. It was nice to get through that. And then Josh (Tomlin) coming in after him, I had the pleasure of catching him on and off over the last couple of years. That was right what I expected."

Still, Haase will soon experience plenty more he couldn't have anticipated.

He's still building his mental Rolodex of each pitcher's arsenal. To speed up that process, he's used the time between innings to catch the warming hurlers while the starting catcher gears up. He's spent time next to Gomes — even seconds before his first at-bat (a strikeout on six pitches) — to get more familiar with the signs and how they control the running game.

Gomes could remember leaning on his college teammate, J.P. Arencibia, for advice as a rookie with the Blue Jays in 2012. He could remember how enjoyable it was to take ground balls with Omar Vizquel. He can certainly relate to the challenges and experiences Haase is now navigating in his first big league stint.

"First and foremost, this is probably the most exciting time of his baseball career," Gomes told The Athletic. "You've got to take that into consideration. Whenever you get a call up like this, it's, 'Get your feet wet, get acclimated up here, get some opportunities, and just kind of show yourself.'"

He can also relate to how overwhelming the experience can be.

"He definitely has a future," Gomes added, "but do we expect him to know all our scouting reports we talked about? Probably not. That's unfair to put that on him. But we've talked a lot, and I'm always here if he ever needs me. We understand the emotions that he's going through right now, so we want to make it as easy as possible for him."

Haase appreciates that effort.

"Yan and (Roberto Pérez) are awesome," he said. "They've been nothing but open arms and helpful about everything. That's really two great guys."

Haase's presence over the final month is an investment in his future. Each experience better prepares him for a regular big league stint and, at the height of another impending playoff run, protects the team against the scramble typically associated with an untimely injury.

To his credit, he's already utilized the resources at his fingertips to help accelerate that process. That's something that wouldn't have been possible if his September had been spent at home.

"Thankfully," he said with a grin, "I was able to come here."

#### **Lindor has 2 HR, 4 RBIs as Indians top Blue Jays 9-4**

**By IAN HARRISON Associated Press SEPTEMBER 6, 2018 — 10:25PM**

TORONTO — Francisco Lindor is giving the Indians record-breaking power out of the leadoff spot.

Lindor had two solo homers and four RBIs, rookie Shane Bieber pitched into the seventh inning to remain unbeaten in nine road starts and Cleveland beat the Toronto Blue Jays 9-4 on Thursday night for its third straight win.

Cleveland trimmed its magic number to seven for clinching a third consecutive AL Central championship.

Lindor has six multihomer games from the leadoff spot this season, a major league record. The three-time All-Star said he likes getting the chance to set the tone.

"Whatever happens, if I do something to help the team in the first inning, teams know, 'Here are the Indians and they're here to compete pitch after pitch,'" Lindor said.

Lindor connected on right-hander Sam Gaviglio's third pitch of the game for his 10th career leadoff homer and seventh this season. He went deep to right off Gaviglio again in the third for his eighth career multihomer game. Lindor has 33 home runs, matching his total from last year. He added a two-run single in the fifth and singled again in the ninth.

"Wow," manager Terry Francona said. "He was the majority of our offense for a while there."

Bieber said Lindor's energy and output are "contagious."

"It's huge for us when he's going well," Bieber said. "It kind of sparks everybody else."

Lindor approached Francona at the start of spring training and asked to hit leadoff.

"The minute he said that, I was thrilled," Francona said.

Lindor's first blast broke a tie with Houston's George Springer for leadoff home runs this season, and matched Grady Sizemore's 2008 Indians record.

Toronto's Rowdy Tellez doubled in the second and fourth innings after getting a pinch-hit double in his debut Wednesday, making him the first player in major league history with extra-base hits in each of his first three plate appearances.

"He's the new cult hero in town," Blue Jays manager John Gibbons said.

Tellez doubled again in the seventh, joining Oakland's Ben Grieve as the only players since 1920 to record four doubles in their first two games.

Jason Kipnis hit a three-run shot off Blue Jays reliever Mark Leiter Jr. in the ninth, his 15th.

Bieber (9-3) allowed four runs, three earned, and seven hits in 6 1/3 innings, improving to 5-0 away from home.

Gaviglio (3-8) allowed five runs and six hits in 4 1/3 innings to lose for the fourth time in five starts.

Trailing 2-0 on Lindor's two homers, the Blue Jays rallied with four in the fourth. Tellez doubled home a run, Teoscar Hernandez hit a two-run double and scored on a fielding error by first baseman Yonder Alonso.

The Indians answered with three in the fifth. Brandon Guyer chased Gaviglio with an RBI double, and Lindor greeted reliever Jose Fernandez with a two-run single.

Indians outfielder Greg Allen gave his team a two-run cushion with an RBI double off right-hander Justin Shafer in the seventh.

Cleveland's Tyler Olson pitched to one batter in the seventh. Adam Cimber got two outs, Cody Allen worked the eighth and Dan Otero finished.

#### SORRY CHIEF

Cleveland removed the Chief Wahoo logo from the sleeve of its uniforms for the series, a move that is set to become permanent next season. The decision to nix the logo this series was partially driven by a failed legal challenge against the team when it played in Toronto during the 2016 AL Championship Series. While Cleveland played the Blue Jays, a lawsuit was filed to have the logo and team name banned from Canadian TV. A judge dismissed the case.

The Indians will return to their regular uniforms when they play at Tampa Bay next week.

#### FOUR AND MORE

Lindor has four four-hit games and four four-RBI games this season. He leads the majors with 117 runs scored.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: LHP Andrew Miller (left shoulder) felt good after a 20-pitch bullpen session Thursday. Miller's next step is not known. ... OF Michael Brantley was held out of the starting lineup after fouling a pitch off his left foot Wednesday. ... 3B Josh Donaldson (left calf) had the day off Thursday. Donaldson will play for Double-A Akron in a playoff game Friday.

Blue Jays: Toronto recalled C Reese McGuire and Shafer from Triple-A. McGuire started behind the plate, becoming the 61st player used by the Blue Jays this season, a club record.

#### UP NEXT

Indians RHP Carlos Carrasco (16-8, 3.52) faces Blue Jays RHP Marco Estrada (7-11, 5.43) on Friday. Carrasco had a 1.85 ERA in six August starts but allowed five runs in a loss to Tampa Bay last week. Estrada has allowed 11 earned runs over his past two outings, losing both.

### **Lindor's two homers, RBI single, powers Cleveland past Blue Jays 9-4**

TORONTO — The Toronto Blue Jays looked more like the triple-A Buffalo Bisons on Thursday as manager John Gibbons gave his talented group of September callups an opportunity to play at the Major League level.

First baseman Rowdy Tellez had three doubles and drove in a run in his second career game as the Blue Jays fell to the Cleveland Indians 9-4. Despite the lopsided loss, there was a positive air in Toronto's clubhouse with many of the team's prospects showing glimpses of their potential.

"Pretty much played with half of these guys at some point," said Tellez, craning his neck over assembled media to scan locker nameplates around the clubhouse. "I mean, I played with all of them at spring training or elsewhere in the minors. Pretty much everybody here."

Tellez, who made his debut as a pinch hitter in the sixth inning of a 10-3 win over Tampa on Wednesday, became the first player to have an extra-base hit in his first three plate appearances since Major League Baseball's live-ball era began in 1920.

"It still doesn't feel real being here," said Tellez, who was unaware of his record-setting performance. "Childhood dreams are achieved and it's a great feeling. I'm ecstatic to be here."

Francisco Lindor had a pair of solo home runs and added a tie-breaking RBI single to lead the Indians (80-60).

The team removed its controversial Chief Wahoo logo for the series opener, taking the caricature of a First Nations man off the left sleeve of its jerseys and wearing hats with a red C on a navy blue field instead. Cleveland plans to stop using the logo for the 2019 season.

Jason Kipnis added a late three-run bomb to back starter Shane Bieber (9-3), who allowed four runs — three earned — and struck out six in 6 1/3 innings. Relievers Tyler Olson, Alan Cimber, Cody Allen and Dan Otero didn't allow a run the rest of the way.

Sam Gaviglio (3-8) threw 4 1/3 innings for the Blue Jays (63-77), striking out four but giving up five runs on six hits. Jose Fernandez, Justin Shafer, Danny Barnes, David Paulino and Mark Leiter Jr., came out of Toronto's bullpen.

Shafer allowed one unearned run in his inning of relief and Leiter gave up Kipnis's three-run homer in the ninth.

Teoscar Hernandez added an RBI double for Toronto, while catcher Reese McGuire made his MLB debut, hitting a double in the ninth inning. He also made an impressive defensive play in the fourth when he picked off Jose Ramirez from his knees as Cleveland's third baseman tried to steal second.

"I knew Ramirez was a good runner on the bases, so he's going to be a threat," said McGuire. "Gaviglio did a good job of holding him (to first base) and had a pretty quick delivery to the plate so it gave me a chance to throw him out on the slider."

Lindor led off the first with a home run then struck again in the third, putting the ball just out of the reach of Blue Jays right-fielder Billy McKinney to make it 2-0.

Tellez hit his third double in as many at bats to drive in Lourdes Gurriel Jr. the fourth inning. Hernandez then banged the ball off the wall in centre field to bring home Kendrys Morales and Tellez.

Aledmys Diaz followed that up two batters later, stroking a ball up the first-base line to score Hernandez and make it 4-2.

Gibbons wants the Jays callups to make the most of their time in the big leagues and use it to push themselves in the off-season.

"First you hope that they have some success, and I think they all will," said Gibbons. "I think they're all off to a good start, no doubt about it. I just want this to be a good experience for them.

"Whether they start in the minors, whatever it is, it will be a good experience they can take with them. Maybe they can take some things with them to work on."

Cleveland came right back in the fifth when Brandon Guyer's double cashed in a run and Lindor's single scored two more. Allen added to that in the sixth inning, doubling in a run to make it 6-4. Kipnis smashed a three-run homer in the ninth for the game's final score.

### **Eastern League Western Division Series: Nellie Rodriguez's walk-off home run in 10th lifts RubberDucks to 2-1 win over Curve, 2-0 lead in series**

by ABJ/Ohio.com correspondent

Whoa, Nellie — the RubberDucks just put themselves in the driver's seat of the Eastern League Western Division Series.

Cleanup hitter Nellie Rodriguez hit a no-doubt-about-it walk-off home run Thursday in the 10th inning to give the Ducks a 2-1 win and a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five series.

Game 3 is set for 6 p.m. Friday at Altoona, with Ducks right-hander Zach Plesac (3-1, 2.45) facing Curve right-hander James Marvel (3-1, 3.00).

"Confidence is obviously way up right now," Rodriguez said. "Especially with us taking two at home right now. They have to win at home now.

"We got the one yesterday and that was a big statement. Today with the walk-off, it was another big statement. We have the confidence. We have Plesac pitching tomorrow and have to keep going."



There's a good chance Rodriguez's home run is still going as he absolutely lambasted a hanging slider by Matt Eckelman on the first pitch in the 10th.

The ball cleared the ribbon board in left field and went an estimated 400 feet as the players in the Ducks' dugout erupted before the ball even left the park.

"We would love anybody to hit that home run, but just the fact it was Nellie after what he's been through and how he's rejuvenated his career a little bit here over the last month, month and a half, and showed everybody he is back with that home run is as big for his career as it is for the game," RubberDucks manager Tony Mansolino said.

The win continued an absolutely astounding trend for the Akron organization against Altoona. Facing the Curve for the fifth time in the postseason, the franchise has never lost a series and is now 11-1 at Canal Park against the Curve.

Since the Curve became a franchise in 1999, the Ducks are 133-82 overall in the friendly confines of home.

"This is definitely a big win," RubberDucks starting pitcher Jake Paulson said. "We have to keep on attacking and doing our thing."

The onus now falls squarely on the reigning league champion Curve, who must be perfect at home to extend its season.

While the Curve are 40-29 when they play at Peoples Natural Gas Field this season, the Ducks need to scratch just one game to advance to the finals for the second time in three seasons.

"The pressure is still on them," Mansolino said. "In a lot of ways, they're still on paper the better team. For us, we're going to go out and battle. We have Plesac out there and we'll see what we can do."

Altoona got on the board right off the jump when Cole Tucker hit a leadoff home run off Paulson.

After that, the league's ERA leader was fantastic. The right-hander allowed just five hits in seven innings. He gave up just the home run to Tucker, walked two and struck out four.

Eduarda Vera was equal to the task for Altoona.

The right-hander went five innings without allowing a hit before Jodd Carter led off the sixth with a duck-snort single over second.

Daniel Salters ripped a single to right to move Carter to third.

Carter scored on a groundout to first by Sam Haggerty to snap a scoreless streak by Vera that spanned 24 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings dating back to Aug. 21 against the Binghamton Rumble Ponies.

Vera finished an eight-inning performance Thursday in which he gave up two hits. He walked one and struck out three.

"The margin for error is small [in games like this]," Paulson said. "It's fun. Team chemistry is great. We're going out, having fun and playing baseball."

## **Too much Lindor a bad thing for Jays in loss to Cleveland**

By Laura Armstrong

The Blue Jays' youngsters gave the Cleveland Indians a run for a bit Thursday night, but it wasn't enough against one-man wrecking ball Francisco Lindor.

The Indians shortstop went 4-for-5 with four RBIs in Cleveland's 9-4 win, homering in his first two at-bats against Jays starter Sam Gaviglio and hitting a game-winning two-RBI single in the fifth off reliever Jose Fernandez. Jason Kipnis added a three-run homer in the ninth off Mark Leiter Jr.

Cleveland's Francisco Lindor hit two home runs as part of a four-hit, four-RBI night against Toronto.

Toronto countered by way of its youth contingent. First baseman Rowdy Tellez, 23, making his first career start after hitting a double in his first big-league at bat on Wednesday night, went 3-for-4 with an RBI, hitting two more doubles in his first two plate appearances on Thursday to become the first player in the live ball era, since 1920, to have extra-base hits in each of his first three career plate appearances. After flying out to centre field in the sixth, Tellez hit his third double of the night in the eighth.

Opinion | Griffin: Finger issues have Jays' Aaron Sanchez and Marcus Stroman pointing to 2019

"It still doesn't feel real, being here," said Tellez, whose father, Greg, was in the stands after missing his first game on Tuesday due to travel delays.

Teoscar Hernandez, 25, doubled home a pair of runs, while Billy McKinney and Lourdes Gurriel Jr., both 24, and Reese McGuire, 23, all had hits.

It was the first career hit for McGuire, who was recalled earlier in the day with reliever Justin Shafer. McGuire also threw out Jose Ramirez trying to steal in the fourth.

"It's everything I dreamed of, except the win, but I'm just happy to be here," said McGuire.

Another debutant, reliever David Paulino, 24, became the 62nd player the Jays have used this season when he worked the eighth inning, giving up a hit, striking out two and committing a throwing error. Paulino was recalled on Wednesday.

Gaviglio worked 4 1/3 innings, pulled by manager John Gibbons before he was set to face Lindor for a third time. He left leading 4-3, after the homers in the first and third and Guyer's one-run double in the fifth, but Lindor added two runs to his pitching line with his third hit of the night.

The Indians added a sixth run in the sixth after a throwing error by Travis led to Allen's RBI double while Shafer was on the mound. Leiter Jr. hit Guyer and gave up Lindor's fourth hit before Kipnis homered to right in the ninth.

All four of Toronto's runs came off Cleveland starter Shane Bieber in the fourth. Gurriel singled to left and Kendrys Morales walked before Tellez hit a one-out double to score the shortstop. Hernandez's double cashed in both Morales and Tellez before Diaz reached on an error by first baseman Ramirez to bring Hernandez home.

Gibbons said he hopes all the call-ups figure out areas that need improvement, put the shock of being in The Show behind them and have some success this month.

"I think they all will ... I think they're all off to a good start, no doubt about it and that what (you want), for this to be a great experience for them," he said. "This is their dream."

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