



CHICAGO CUBS DAILY CLIPS

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September 10, 2018

- Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs' tough home stretch gets tougher with Sunday rainout, hot Brewers on deck**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/cubs-tough-home-stretch-sunday-rainout-hot-brewers-rivalry-playoffs/>
- Chicago Sun-Times, **Fall guys? What you see might be what you get in Cubs' bullpen in October**
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/sports/fall-guys-cubs-bullpen-october-playoffs/>
- Daily Herald, **Rozner: You might want to enjoy this era of Chicago Cubs baseball**
<https://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20180909/rozner-you-might-want-to-enjoy-this-era-of-chicago-cubs-baseball>
- The Athletic, **10 takeaways from the Cubs' playoff drive and wacky-weather weekend at Nationals Park**
<https://theathletic.com/514114/2018/09/09/10-takeaways-from-the-cubs-playoff-drive-and-wacky-weather-weekend-at-nationals-park/>
- Cubs.com, **Cubs-Nats rained out, rescheduled for Thursday**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/cubs-nationals-postponed-until-thursday/c-293989128>
- Cubs.com, **More of Gore? Speedster impressing Cubs**
<https://www.mlb.com/cubs/news/terrance-gore-impresses-cubs-with-speed/c-293952876>
- ESPNChicago.com, **Cubs' long stretch of games continues after rainout**
http://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/24627680/cubs-lose-day-rescheduled-nationals-game
- NBC Sports Chicago, **Cubs feel like Carl Edwards Jr. is 'one moment away' from turning the corner**
<https://www.nbcsports.com/chicago/cubs/cubs-feel-carl-edwards-jr-one-moment-away-turning-corner-cubs-bullpen-october-postseason-nationals-brewers>
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- Chicago Tribune, **Speedster Terrance Gore attempting to swipe spot on Cubs' roster**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-terrance-gore-20180909-story.html>
- Chicago Tribune, **Brewers MVP candidate Christian Yelich lets Twitter trash talk get under his skin**
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-spt-cubs-brewers-christian-yelich-sullivan-20180909-story.html>

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Chicago Sun-Times

Cubs' tough home stretch gets tougher with Sunday rainout, hot Brewers on deck

By Gordon Wittenmyer

WASHINGTON — Days off? The Cubs don't need no stinking days off.

They'd better hope not, anyway. Because they're all gone.

When the road trip from hell concluded with a third consecutive day of steady rain and another rainout Sunday in Washington, the Cubs were arm-twisted into a makeup game at 3:05 p.m. Thursday — shoe-horned between a Wednesday night home game against the Brewers and a Friday afternoon home game against the Reds.

Sunday already represented the 20th day of a 23-games-in-23-days grind through six cities.

There were more gallons of rain than fans even when the Cubs and Nats managed to play over the weekend.

Make it 30 in 30 and seven cities, including their Sept. 17-19 trip to Arizona. By the time the Cubs collapse into their last scheduled day off Sept. 20, it already will have been compromised by a projected 5 a.m. arrival in Chicago after the night game in Phoenix.

"This has got to be the worst road trip I think most of us have been on," said Kris Bryant, who only returned from the disabled list Sept. 1, near the start of this 11-day, four-city trip that ended in Washington, where the Cubs spent more time in rain delays (10 hours, 56 minutes) than in actual game action (10 hours, zero minutes).

"Hopefully, we can get through this and the last three weeks, the majority of the games are at home," Bryant said. "That's going to be huge."

Other than returning to Chicago and more favorable forecasts, it won't get easier anytime soon.

While the Cubs were rained out Friday, then swept by the Nationals on Saturday in a rain-swamped doubleheader, and rained out again Sunday, the Brewers won their last three games to close to two games behind the division-leading Cubs.

And guess who's coming to town for the next three nights?

Even with the Thursday back-and-forth to Washington, when the effects of Hurricane Florence are expected to make the weather there worse than Sunday, 16 of the Cubs' final 20 games are at Wrigley Field.

Only the Red Sox and Yankees have better home records than the Cubs.

But it's a fine and weary line the Cubs walk as they head home trying to close out a third consecutive NL Central title with second-place Milwaukee and third-place St. Louis in wild-card position as they try to chase down the front-runners.

"This is a first with this intensity throughout the entire weekend, especially this time of the year," manager Joe Maddon said of the absurdity of five rain delays that averaged more than two hours in less than a 48-hour span. "It's unusual to be in this position right now, but we've done it before. Not been into this weather-related stuff as heavily as we are right now. But there's nothing you can do about it, man. You just do it."

And even if Sunday's rainout means a third meeting against Cy Young favorite Max Scherzer (17-6) on Thursday, the Cubs say they're "fine," "confident," and ready for a sprint down the stretch whether they get a breather or not.

"You put yourself in good position at this time of the year, and now this is playoff baseball we're getting into," said veteran Ben Zobrist, who at 37, seems only to be getting stronger the second half. "When the rubber meets the road, then you have to execute. And that's what we're coming into, the execution time.

"I've been on teams where you're behind and you're just surviving. I don't feel that way about this club. I feel like we still have a lot of legs left in us as a team."

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Chicago Sun-Times

Fall guys? What you see might be what you get in Cubs' bullpen in October

By Gordon Wittenmyer

WASHINGTON — Forget the havoc that the weather caused the Cubs this weekend at Nationals Park.

The bigger concern as the Cubs launch into a 20-game sprint toward what they hope is a long and prosperous October is a bullpen that has sprung as many leaks as a Washington basement this weekend.

Worse yet, it's looking more doubtful that any significant help is on the way.

Case in point: shutdown closer Brandon Morrow (22-for-24 in save chances, 1.47 ERA).

He hasn't pitched since the All-Star break, primarily because of a bone bruise that developed in his elbow, and a bullpen session Sunday was supposed to be his next big test toward planning a timeline for his return.

Instead, his 25-pitch bullpen session was characterized as more "touch and feel" and "light" than any kind of test of velocity, stuff or the health of his arm.

Morrow and the team are expected to have more to say Monday, but for now it doesn't sound like the stuff of October promise.

And left-hander Drew Smyly, whose sharp rehab appearance and bullpen sessions in recent weeks had manager Joe Maddon describing his potential activation as “intriguing,” now seems to be talking out a more cautious path with the medical staff and front office.

“He did throw the other day, but I don’t know exactly what they’ve decided upon yet,” Maddon said Sunday of Smyly, who had Tommy John surgery in 2017.

Beyond the anticipated return to the bullpen of left-hander Mike Montgomery at the end of the season, the Cubs likely will navigate late nights in October with a mix-and-match formula involving Steve Cishek, Carl Edwards Jr., Justin Wilson, Jesse Chavez, Pedro Strop, Jorge De La Rosa and possibly Randy Rosario, Brian Duensing, Dillon Maples or James Norwood.

Rotation gyration

When Sunday’s game against the Nationals was rained out, Montgomery lost a start.

The Cubs plan to stick with Jon Lester, Jose Quintana and Kyle Hendricks for their three-game showdown against the second-place Brewers.

They haven’t announced a starter for Thursday’s makeup game in Washington, with their options including Cole Hamels on a normal fifth day or bringing back Montgomery and providing the rest of the rotation an extra day the next time through.

Either way, the Cubs expect to see Cy Young frontrunner Max Scherzer (17-6, 2.31 ERA) for the third time in barely a month.

Scherzer, who leads the majors in innings pitched and strikeouts, has allowed three runs in 16 innings against the Cubs, including his victory in a 10-3 complete game Saturday.

Gore vital?

Recently acquired Terrance Gore, who stole three bases in two appearances against the Nationals, is as fast as any player Maddon has had in four seasons in Chicago.

It gives him 25 steals in 29 career tries over parts of five big-league seasons, plus another 4-for-5 in the postseason. He even got his first hit Saturday, against Scherzer, in 16 career plate appearances.

Despite his limitations in the field and at the plate, he’s building a compelling case to make the Cubs find a spot for him on the playoff roster.

“He’s definitely an interesting cat to have on a team, man,” said Maddon. “If you ever went to a 26-man roster, he might be like the perfect fit during the regular season, having somebody like him.”

How about a 25-man roster in October?

Maddon said he hasn’t started to consider ways to make that happen yet.

“I just want to get there,” he said.

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Daily Herald

Rozner: You might want to enjoy this era of Chicago Cubs baseball

By Barry Rozner

The last time the Chicago Cubs won three straight division titles was, well, never.

They have a chance in the next couple of weeks to do precisely that.

The last time the Cubs won 90 games in at least four consecutive seasons was 1912, a mere 106 years ago, but they're a few weeks away from doing it again.

The last time they finished over .500 in at least four straight seasons was in 1972 -- some 46 years ago -- when they completed a stretch of six seasons in a row, but the most they won during that time was 92 games, and -- sorry -- that was 1969.

They didn't make the playoffs during those six years and averaged 86 wins.

The Cubs are on pace for 95 wins this season, and this four-year stretch -- beginning in 2015 -- would average 97 wins based on that victory total.

They're winning percentage over these four years is .597.

The Cubs are about to reach the postseason for the fourth straight year. Last time they did that? Never.

The Cubs reached their third straight NLCS last October. Last time the Cubs did that? Yeah, you know the answer. Never.

And then there's that World Series victory in 2016. It had been awhile since they last won the last game of the season, but you probably knew that as well.

The point here is not to suggest that the Cubs are satisfied. It's quite clear they are not.

Theo Epstein didn't have to go digging around for the likes of Cole Hamels and Daniel Murphy, but when he sees a need he tries to fill it within some reasonable parameters.

He measures his team's chances in the division and the National League and makes a decision based on all of the factors, not limited to but including payroll, salary tax, greatest deficiency, available assets and width of an open window.

Epstein doesn't have the luxury of overreacting to bad stretches or sitting on his hat when it all looks so very pretty.

Either way, the Cubs president wants to win more titles before he leaves this job, and he probably won't be satisfied regardless of how many the Cubs win while he's here, especially if that number is one.

And this is not to suggest that you, as a Cubs fan, ought to be satisfied, but this period of Cubs baseball is not just the best you have ever seen. It's also the best in more than a century.

And it might be the best you will see in your lifetime.

So, yes, get angry about the Yu Darvish contract and his inability to stay on the field this year.

Be frustrated with Jose Quintana, who has not made anyone forget what the Cubs gave up to get him.

Go ahead and wonder what the future holds for Tyler Chatwood.

Drive yourself crazy when the Cubs' offense reverts back to a home run-only attitude and goes days without an effective approach at the plate.

And get aggravated that the Cubs have let the Brewers back in it, creating a crucial series at Wrigley Field beginning Monday night.

But at the same time, recognize where you are at this moment, in the middle of a decade -- starting in 2015 -- that might go down as the greatest baseball this team has ever played.

There's no guarantee it will last another six years, but that's what Epstein hoped to create when he asked you to suffer through 2012, 2013 and 2014, when Tom Ricketts asked you to have faith that Epstein knew what he was doing.

Epstein makes mistakes, and he will make more. He would not deny that and would not expect you to do it.

He does not walk on water.

But Epstein has delivered over the last four years something very special, something stunning for a franchise that previously took pride in being lovable.

Have great expectations, get upset, pound the table and spill your beverage when the game goes the wrong way.

But for the love of Gene Hiser and all that's holy, find a way to enjoy this season and those that will follow, because it may never be this good again.

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The Athletic

10 takeaways from the Cubs' playoff drive and wacky-weather weekend at Nationals Park

By Patrick Mooney

WASHINGTON — “Have you ever seen ‘The Deer Hunter?’” Cubs manager Joe Maddon wondered during a pre-doubleheader riff on Saturday at Nationals Park. “Robert De Niro, up in the mountains, right after the wedding, they’re going deer hunting and he gets upset and he let the other boys know that, ‘This is this.’ One of my favorite lines of all-time.”

This is a 10-point snapshot of a Cubs team that will just have to deal with it after heavy storms washed away Sunday’s game in Washington, a decision announced 3 hours and 1 minute after the scheduled first pitch, or essentially when it stopped raining. This on top of Friday’s rainout, weather delays that lasted 3 hours and 39 minutes on Saturday and 19 games in the previous 19 days. The Cubs haven’t had a true day off since Aug. 20 and won’t get another one until Sept. 20. Oh, and Max Scherzer is now looming for Thursday’s rescheduled game at Nationals Park.

1. Maddon is “beyond an amateur meteorologist” — much less a climate scientist — but he’s never experienced something like this during his 44 seasons in professional baseball.

“This is a first with this intensity throughout the entire weekend, especially this time of the year,” Maddon said. “Normally by this time, the weather seems to straighten out. That fall weather becomes a little bit more stable. I remember makeup games in Baltimore and New York at this time, but that was from earlier in the year, not that you just got totally wiped out right now.

“It’s awkward, but then the bright side is we’ve had enough to cover. You look at all the names on the card, you say, ‘Damn, that’s a lot of guys.’ But we’ve needed them to cover. It’s just unusual to be in this position, that’s all. But there’s nothing you can do about it, man.”

2. The Cubs will keep Jon Lester, José Quintana and Kyle Hendricks — three durable, playoff-tested, double-digit winners — lined up for a showdown against the Milwaukee Brewers that begins Monday night at Wrigley Field.

“It’s in the back of your mind,” said Hendricks (11-10, 3.71 ERA). “You know where you want to go, where you want to be. But in order to do that, you got to put your work in every single day. So, yeah, I’ve been feeling a lot better over the last couple weeks and I’m just trying to build on that. You’re always trying to get stronger as the year goes on. I’ve been feeling good and trying to roll with it.”

3. Lester turned out to be the free agent that Cubs officials once predicted would be their version of Jayson Werth, who signed a seven-year, \$126 million deal with a Washington team that lost 93 games in 2010. During Werth’s contract, the Nationals captured four division titles, employed five different managers and won zero playoff series. If that “Ring of Honor” ceremony felt a little forced on Saturday night — unveiling Werth’s name on the upper-deck façade off the right-field line — imagine what Lester and the rest of the 2016 Cubs will get.

It’s another reminder that these opportunities don’t come around that often. Cole Hamels appreciated Werth mentioning his name during an on-field speech and helping create that bond within the 2008 Philadelphia Phillies team that won the World Series.

“In baseball, you think when you first come up that you’re going to be here forever,” Hamels said. “And it definitely changes quickly. I was very fortunate to be able to play with him. He was a phenomenal teammate.

“We got to see what he did in transforming that Nationals clubhouse and the winning ways that they developed. It was amazing. He was the right guy for the job.

“We’ll always come toward those points in our career. It was nice of him to shout-out my name because he’s always going to be a person that I’m going to remember in my career and recognize as a great ballplayer that I was fortunate enough to play with.”

4. The Cubs went 5-5 on this four-city road trip and lost both games started by Hamels, who got two no-decisions and continues to impress with his accountability and professionalism. Hamels is 4-0 with a 1.42 ERA since getting traded from the Texas Rangers — where he had an 11.12 ERA in July — and that \$20 million club option for 2019 looks like an obvious decision.

“I’m here to help this team win,” Hamels said, “and be that kind of guy that can really make it a little bit easier when we do have these tough stretches. To have the two types of games where I wasn’t able to go deep into the ballgame kind of gave the opposing team some sort of life — that’s not what I’m

supposed to be doing. I'm supposed to hold them so we can run through and get a decisive victory. It's pretty tough because this is what I'm here for."

5. Dave Martinez hasn't had a great rookie season as the Nationals manager, but Daniel Murphy saw what made him such a popular bench coach for the Cubs and Maddon's Tampa Bay Rays. Washington probably needs a sense of continuity now as much as anything.

"A lot of similar characteristics between Davey and Joe," Murphy said. "I'm excited about what the future has for Davey over there in D.C. for the Nationals. I enjoyed playing for him. He's a good man. He's a really good baseball man.

"I thought that in the midst of a lot of trials, he was always positive and we always played hard for him, which I think is a reflection of the manager, even when things aren't going well. I just enjoyed playing for him. I wish I would've been able to play more for him. I wish I would've been able to play better for him."

6. The tiny separators between the Cubs and Nationals became noticeable during last year's razor-thin playoff series and a dramatic elimination game. That's why Maddon is focusing more on the occasional baserunning gaffes, defensive miscues and mental mistakes than the shape of a potential postseason roster.

"These little things," Maddon said after Thursday's 10-inning win at Nationals Park. "We got to work better at-bats. We can't be chasing so much. I'm talking about October. I'm not just talking about September 6th. These are the kind of things you got to do a better job with as you get this thing closer to where you're trying to get.

"I would just like to see the at-bats cleaned up a little bit. Love the fight. Love the fight. Tremendous fight. Awesome. But there's little things now that have held us back in the past. I don't want to see it hold us back now."

7. What a difference a year makes: David Bote watched last year's playoff series from the Arizona Fall League, where he played on the Mesa Solar Sox with Victor Robles, Washington's uber-prospect who got called up for the postseason. The Bote Game might have essentially ended this Nationals season, accelerating the idea of the August sell-off that put Murphy in a Cubs uniform.

"I watch all the playoffs," Bote said. "I'm a baseball guy. I'll go home and watch it tonight, whatever game's on the West Coast."

8. Jason Heyward took care of the purple Fran Tarkenton Minnesota Vikings jersey that Maddon wore for the football-themed flight home, a generous gesture that also covered teammates and staffers. The Cubs are optimistic that Heyward — a Gold Glove defender and one of the clubhouse leaders — has enough runway to recover from his hamstring injury and return before the regular season ends.

9. While Brandon Morrow threw a light bullpen session on Sunday in his long-shot attempt to pitch through a bone bruise in his right forearm and reenter the team's late-season plans, the feeling is a full 40-man roster will be one of several factors that probably block lefty Drew Smyly's return this year as he recovers from Tommy John surgery.

10. Vent all you want on Twitter and in the comments sections, but brace yourself for three weeks of white-knuckle baseball before the playoffs even start. The Cubs don't have a false sense of security. It's more of a we've-been-here-before attitude that plays in October, or the opposite of "#Natitude."

"From my experience, confidence is always a key for winning ballclubs," said outfielder Albert Almora Jr., a rookie on the 2016 World Series team. "That's something we have right now. If we mess up, no matter what, everybody's there to pick you up and get the next guy going. That's all you really can ask for. In this game, no one's going to be perfect. But it's how you bounce back from little things and we do a really good job of that."

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Cubs.com

Cubs-Nats rained out, rescheduled for Thursday

By Ian Quillen

WASHINGTON -- After waiting through at least three hours of weather delays for a third consecutive day, the Cubs departed Washington on Sunday without completing the finale of their scheduled four-game series against the Nationals.

Sunday's rainout was rescheduled for Thursday at 3:05 p.m. CT, which means the Cubs must make an out-and-back trip to the nation's capital in the middle of a six-game homestand. Tickets for Sunday's game will be honored for the rescheduled game.

The makeup game also forces the Nationals to return home in the middle of a three-city, eight-game road trip, traveling after a night game in Philadelphia on Wednesday and before a Friday night game in Atlanta.

The probable starters for the Cubs' home series against the Brewers remain unchanged, beginning with lefty Jon Lester facing Milwaukee southpaw Wade Miley on Monday. The Brewers won their third straight on Sunday to pull within two games of the first-place Cubs in the National League Central.

Sunday's scheduled Cubs starter, Mike Montgomery, will be skipped.

After the Cubs' 10-inning win Thursday night, they endured 10 hours and 56 minutes of rain delays over three days while playing only two of the three scheduled contests, dropping both ends of Saturday's doubleheader. They finish a 10-game road trip 5-5.

"This is a first," manager Joe Maddon said Sunday morning. "This is a first with this intensity [of weather] throughout the entire weekend. Especially at this time of the year."

While the rain cuts short a stretch of 23 scheduled games in 23 days, it also wipes out the Cubs' first true off-day. Instead, they're likely to return from Washington on Thursday night before opening a weekend series against the Reds with a 1:20 p.m. start on Friday.

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Cubs.com

More of Gore? Speedster impressing Cubs

By Ian Quillen

WASHINGTON -- Cubs manager Joe Maddon insists he hasn't looked ahead to the potential construction of a postseason roster amid a tight National League Central race.

If Chicago gets there, however, Terrance Gore has given Maddon something to think about.

Gore came on as a pinch-runner in the seventh inning in the nightcap of Saturday's doubleheader, and he immediately stole second and third before scoring on Kris Bryant's double.

"He's definitely an interesting cat to have on the team," Maddon said. "If you ever went to a 26-man roster, he might be the perfect fit during the regular season, having somebody like him."

Gore, who played in parts of four seasons with the Royals, collected his first career big league hit in Saturday's opener -- against Nationals ace Max Scherzer of all people -- but he had four combined steals for Kansas City in the 2014 and '15 postseasons.

The Cubs did not activate speed merchant Quintin Berry for the 2015 postseason, but Gore is "different than him," according to Maddon.

"He's had the experience," Maddon said. "And you see out there. Even when he had a bad jump the other day, he still beat the throw. And he's got this knack to slide late and hold onto the bag, it just sticks."

Gore joined the Cubs for September after they acquired him in a trade for cash in mid-August. He was 4-for-4 in steal attempts and scored twice.

Flipping good

Victor Caratini's first career grand slam in Saturday's nightcap was only his third big league homer.

But his bat flip -- in which he flung the lumber like a majorette's baton -- rivaled some of the best sluggers in the game.

"It felt really good -- I felt like I got all of it as soon as it got off the bat," the second-year catcher said through an interpreter. "It's just a natural reaction to the moment. It's just where my arm and my bat went."

Maddon said Saturday a stiff headwind was to blame for the blast not clearing the right-center fence by a greater distance. He also believes Caratini's power potential is greater than his two round-trippers in 147 at-bats this year backing up Willson Contreras. Caratini hit 10 homers at Triple-A Iowa in 2017.

"If I put my scout's cap on, he's capable of 10 to 15 a year if he played often," Maddon said.

Decked out

On the opening Sunday of the NFL season, many of the Cubs entered the clubhouse donning the jerseys of some of their favorite gridiron stars, purchased by currently injured outfielder Jason Heyward.

Maddon's choice? The No. 10 of Minnesota Vikings Hall of Fame quarterback Fran Tarkenton.

"I have my [Joe] Namath jersey, I have my [Mike] Ditka jersey," Maddon said. "I wanted to do something a little different this year."

Injury notes

- Left-hander Drew Smyly (Tommy John surgery) has talked with Cubs president Theo Epstein and general manager Jed Hoyer about his next move after pitching one rehab inning, with an update expected Monday, Maddon said.

- Closer Brandon Morrow (right biceps) threw about 25 pitches in a light bullpen session Sunday in Washington.

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ESPNChicago.com

Cubs' long stretch of games continues after rainout

By Jesse Rogers

WASHINGTON -- The schedule was supposed to do the Chicago Cubs some favors down the stretch, but now it could help derail their division title hopes after a historically bad weekend of weather in the nation's capital.

"This is a first [for him] with this intensity throughout the entire weekend, especially at this time of the year," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said before Sunday's game against the Nationals was postponed.

"Normally, by this time, the weather seems to straighten out. That fall weather becomes a little bit more stable."

It was anything but stable this weekend, as the two teams were postponed Friday after a lengthy delay, only to be delayed before and during a doubleheader on Saturday. The Cubs lost both those games. Then came another long delay Sunday before another postponement.

The Cubs will make up the season series finale with the Nationals on Thursday afternoon in Washington, sandwiched between a home game the night before and a day game at Wrigley Field on Friday against the Cincinnati Reds. The Cubs could adjust some start times at home to make things more manageable, according to a source.

The sequence means the Cubs will have a scheduled game for 30 straight days, through Sept. 19, though they will not have played a full nine innings in all of them. A game against the New York Mets last month was suspended, then completed the next day before the regularly scheduled game. On Friday, the Cubs and Nationals were delayed to start their contest, only to play 1.2 innings before another lengthy delay and a postponement. That led to Saturday's delayed doubleheader. Then came Sunday's long day at Nationals Park before yet another postponement.

Meanwhile, the second-place Milwaukee Brewers swept the San Francisco Giants in a weekend series to pull within two games of the Cubs. The teams have a huge three-game series at Wrigley Field starting Monday.

To add to the mess, a hurricane off the Atlantic coast could potentially impact the Thursday makeup game.

The Cubs lone off day left in the season is Thursday, Sept. 20, but that comes after an overnight flight home from Phoenix.

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NBC Sports Chicago

Cubs feel like Carl Edwards Jr. is 'one moment away' from turning the corner

By Tony Andracki

WASHINGTON — Just over three weeks remain in the 2018 regular season and the Cubs are still waiting for Carl Edwards Jr. to completely turn the corner.

Granted, he's been close.

Edwards looked to be finding his form as August came to a close, but then he hit another speed bump, struggling against the Brewers (Monday) and Nationals (Thursday and Saturday) in back-to-back-to-back appearances as he walked four guys and gave up three hits while recording just four outs.

His final line could've been much worse Saturday in D.C. if not for the generous call from home plate umpire Jansen Visconti, ringing up Nationals catcher Spencer Kieboom on a full count pitch that came in below the strike zone.

Will that break help jumpstart Edwards at the most important time of the season?

The Cubs certainly hope so.

Edwards has allowed the leadoff hitter to reach safely in each of those three appearances, giving up a hit Monday in Milwaukee and then walking the first batter he faced both Thursday and Saturday night at Nationals Park.

Joe Maddon called on Edwards to pitch the bottom of the eighth inning Thursday in a 4-4 ballgame and after walking Bryce Harper and getting a fly out, the Cubs setup man gave up a double to NL Rookie of the Year candidate Juan Soto.

Only a great play by Ben Zobrist in right field kept Harper from scoring, but by that point, Maddon had already seen enough, opting for Justin Wilson over letting Edwards get out of his own jam.

"I didn't know where Carl was at at that point after the double in the corner," Maddon said. "We [let him try to get out of his own jam] the other day — I let it fly a little bit. Try to build up his confidence, but today to win that game, you like Wilson's stuff vs. [Mark] Reynolds and you want [Wilmer] Difo hitting right-handed."

The move worked, obviously, as Wilson struck out Reynolds and got Difo to fly out to left.

But it was the second time in a week Edwards couldn't finish the inning he started, which is disconcerting at this time of the season — especially with Brandon Morrow's status still very much in question.

Maddon wasn't piling on Edwards after Thursday's game, but he also assessed the situation honestly — "We need to get Carl through that inning."

Edwards' season ERA is still very good and would represent a career best if the season ended today (2.33). But his 1.23 WHIP is abnormally high and strikeout rate (11.8 K/9) slightly below the 12.8 K/9 mark he posted in 109 games from 2016-17.

Maddon gave Edwards a longer leash Monday in Milwaukee in hopes of trying to let the 27-year-old get through tough moments but can't afford to do that every time out, as Thursday proved.

Even after Edwards walked Ryan Braun on a borderline pitch in Milwaukee, he still could've buckled down and got the next hitter and left with the lead intact.

Instead, he walked pinch-hitter Mike Moustakas on four pitches, surrendering the tying run in a game the Cubs eventually lost.

"Getting through this month, having him feeling as good as he possibly can matters," Maddon said. "It matters to us. It didn't work [Monday night], but it will. He's pretty good at flushing it; he's pretty good at moving on to the next moment.

"We've just been trying to have him make that adjustment in the moment rather than not having to wait until it's over, sit down, think about it and come back out the next time and make the adjustment. He's gotta be able to do it in the moment.

"...He's gonna get better. I know he's like 27, so he's not young-young anymore, but this guy still has a chance to be — he is still one of the best relievers in the National League. He has closer ability and that may eventually surface."

The Cubs could really use that "closer ability" this fall since they don't know what they can get out of Morrow, if anything.

Even if he never pitches in the ninth inning, Edwards will be a huge part of this Cubs bullpen in late September and October, so it's imperative they get him right as soon as possible.

A couple weeks ago, Maddon said he thought Edwards was pitching too tentatively, worried about trying not to walk guys instead of attacking hitters.

The Cubs manager doesn't see that same issue anymore but believes for Edwards to turn the corner, he needs to do two things — get his breaking ball over for strikes more often and work through tough moments better mentally.

"He's like one moment away from really turning it around for himself internally," Maddon said after Edwards' tough outing against the Nationals Thursday night.

Maddon also believes too much rest can be a bad thing for Edwards because it might be tougher to maintain his "feel" on the mound.

"We're working on different things with him," Maddon said. "He's so good; he's so talented. And he primarily has good outings. He doesn't have many bad ones. He's so vital to our success now and in the future."

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Chicago Tribune

3 things we learned from the Cubs-Nationals series

By Mark Gonzales

Here are three things we learned from the rain-shortened series between the Cubs and Nationals:

1. MLB must make better weather-related decisions.

Perhaps it was a sign of things to come Friday night when the game started after a 1 hour, 21 minute delay with the knowledge that another another shower was about to arrive, which it did 23 minutes

later, resulting in the postponement. One of the cardinal rules when rain is looming is for both teams not to risk losing their starting pitchers to a rainout, but this happened to both teams.

The Nationals also gave Jayson Werth a memorable ceremony that included a rocking chair as a gift, but the festivities went 15 minutes past the scheduled start time of the second game. That came back to haunt everyone when the rains returned in the eighth inning and caused a delay of 1 hour, 29 minutes.

It seemed fitting when Sunday's game was postponed after a 3 hour, 1 minute delay — before the rain stopped.

2. Someone besides Javier Baez needs to step up.

The Cubs need Baez in the lineup, even if he's 4 for his last 22 with one extra-base hit and 11 strikeouts. His defensive excellence and versatility, along with his plate presence and game-changing base-running ability, are too valuable. But Ben Zobrist requires an occasional rest, and Daniel Murphy cooled off after an impressive start. There was little offense in Saturday's second game after Victor Caratini hit a grand slam.

3. Cole Hamels is human.

Hamels took responsibility for his part in the Saturday's second-game loss. He was upset he issued three of his five walks to Bryce Harper. Saturday's loss was a reminder that no lead is safe, even 4-0 with Hamels on the mound. Had he been able to stretch his outing to six innings, the script for the final three innings might have been smoother.

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Chicago Tribune

Cubs-Nationals postponed until Thursday, taking away much-needed off day
By Mark Gonzales

Rain gear would have been more appropriate than the jerseys the Cubs wore to Nationals Park for their football-themed trip.

Sunday's game was postponed after a 3-hour, 1-minute delay, which made the sum of combined delay time 10 hours, 56 minutes in five weather-related delays during this series that started Friday.

Some chill pills might be in order for the Cubs as the result of Major League Baseball's decision to reschedule Sunday's game for Thursday at 3:05 p.m. Central Time.

As a result, while nursing a two-game lead in the National League Central over the Brewers, who won Sunday:

1. The Cubs now will have a scheduled game for 30 consecutive days. Thursday would have been their first break after 23 consecutive days without a scheduled day off.
2. They will travel from Wrigley Field after Wednesday night's finale of a three-game series against the Brewers to face the Nationals in Washington on Thursday before heading back to Wrigley to start a three-game series with the Reds on Friday.

The way the rotation lines up, the Cubs would face three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer on Thursday for the second time in six days.

3. The Cubs now don't have a scheduled day off until Sept. 20, after they return in the wee morning hours from a three-game series in Arizona. Thursday marked the lone mutual day off remaining for the Cubs and Nationals.

4. Thursday's rescheduled game could be in jeopardy pending the arrival of Hurricane Florence, which is forecast to affect the East Coast.

According to a source, because of the Cubs' long stretch without a day off, they would have preferred to play the makeup game after the scheduled end of the regular season if it still affected the playoff race.

The Cubs clubhouse wasn't open to reporters after the postponement, but manager Joe Maddon provided some wisdom early Sunday morning after a doubleheader sweep by the Nationals following two delays totaling 3 hours, 39 minutes.

"This is the kind of stuff that actually can make you better as you move forward," Maddon said. "As long as nobody is crying or complaining, those are the things that can make you stronger."

This is the latest test for the Cubs, who endured five postponements in the first three weeks of the season.

"Not having as many off days and then the rain, followed by doubleheaders, it seems like the story of our season," shortstop Addison Russell said before Sunday's game was postponed. "Even in the beginning of the season, it was cold as well. Not baseball weather, for sure. That's kind of the story of our season — not baseball weather."

As frustrated as the Cubs may be about having to return to Washington on Thursday, they must attend to more urgent matters such as holding off the Brewers, who cut the Cubs' lead in the division to two games with a 6-3 win against Madison Bumgarner and the Giants.

"We knew we're going to get their best game every single game, as we do when we play every single team," Russell said. "That's what we expect. We expect their competition level to be a little bit higher because they play us.

"But we play our game. It would be nice if we could take two of three or even sweep them. We have that ability, for sure."

The Cubs elected to skip the start of left-hander Mike Montgomery, who was scheduled to pitch Sunday. Left-hander Jon Lester, whose start Friday was burned after one inning because of the rainout, will start Monday night's series opener against the Brewers.

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Chicago Tribune

Injured Cubs closer Brandon Morrow's status may become more clear Monday
By Mark Gonzales

The Cubs might gain more clarity Monday about whether injured closer Brandon Morrow could join them by the end of the season.

Morrow threw 25 pitches off the mound Sunday in what was described as a “touch-and-feel” session. The Cubs want to be sure Morrow, who hasn’t pitched in a game since July 15 due to a bone bruise in his right pitching forearm, feels fine before they plan his next step.

The light session was much less intense than what was initially forecast. The Cubs hope to determine by next weekend whether he could pitch in a game this season. Manager Joe Maddon has all but ruled out Morrow being healthy enough to pitch on consecutive days if he returns.

The Cubs also hope to learn more about the condition of outfielder Jason Heyward, who is recovering from a Grade 1 right hamstring strain he suffered Aug. 30 while attempting to make a diving catch in Atlanta.

Home sweet home: The Cubs will play 16 of their final 20 games in Chicago, starting with Monday night’s series opener against the rival Brewers at Wrigley Field and including the Sept. 21-23 interleague series against the White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field.

“I feel fine,” said shortstop Addison Russell, who has battled several nagging injuries during the second half of the season. “I’m ready for this last stretch we have. Mentally and physically, I feel great.

“It’s not just me. I see it in everyone else. We’re ready for these next couple days and finish this month strong and hopefully clinch a (playoff) spot.”

Russell believes the home crowd will provide a lift, especially with the Cubs being on the road since Aug. 30.

“It seems like we’ve been away from home for two weeks, and whenever we go back to Chicago, the fans are electric and always supporting us,” Russell said. “There are big crowds, even on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays, showing us love. That’s something we take pride in.”

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Chicago Tribune

Speedster Terrance Gore attempting to swipe spot on Cubs' roster

By Mark Gonzales

Terrance Gore is making a case for a roster spot if the Cubs reach the postseason.

Gore has stolen three bases in three attempts, and manager Joe Maddon didn’t hesitate to use him as early as the seventh inning Saturday night as he stole two bases that set up Kris Bryant’s RBI double in a 6-5 loss to the Nationals.

“You wouldn’t start him (in a playoff game),” said Maddon, adding that he hasn’t looked at his playoff roster options.

But Maddon thought the timing was right to use Gore, 27, an outfielder who got his first major-league hit off Max Scherzer in a 10-3 loss in the first game of a doubleheader.

Gore is a pinch-running specialist who has 25 career stolen bases and 16 plate appearances in parts of five seasons.

In six playoff series for the Royals in 2014-15, he stole eight bases and scored two runs without batting in eight games. He was on the roster for the Royals' World Series loss to the Giants in 2014 and inactive when they won the Series against the Mets in 2015.

"He's an interesting cat to have on a team," Maddon said. "If you ever went to a 26-man roster, he might be the perfect fit during the regular season, having someone like him."

Gore has more experience than speedster Quintin Berry, whom the Cubs acquired for their playoff drive in 2015 but didn't carry him on their postseason roster.

"Even when he had a bad jump, he still beat the throw," Maddon said. "And he's got this knack to slide late and hold onto the bag. He just sticks.

"He Velcros to the bag as he gets there, and he's going fast. He's able to shut it down on the bag with a late slide, gets in there, and he's able to hold onto it. He's perfected the last part of the steal."

Maddon marveled over Gore's pure speed, recalling former speedsters he coached such as Devon White and, briefly, Rickey Henderson.

"Not only is (Gore) fast, but he has great technique," Maddon said. "If he's not the fastest, he's one of two."

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Chicago Tribune

Brewers MVP candidate Christian Yelich lets Twitter trash talk get under his skin
By Paul Sullivan

Brewers outfielder Christian Yelich has launched himself into National League MVP consideration with a sizzling second half, but the Cubs are one team that's managed to hold him in check.

Yelich enters Monday's three-game showdown at Wrigley Field hitting .170 (8-for-47) against Cubs pitching this season, with no home runs and five RBIs in 12 games.

He's expected to play all three games after raising a few eyebrows last week when he got a day off in the finale a three-game series against the Cubs at Miller Park. With a chance to complete a sweep, the Brewers lost 6-4. Yelich hit a pinch-hit single against Pedro Strop in the ninth inning.

The day off was agreed upon beforehand with Brewers manager Craig Counsell, but when a Cubs fan trolled the Brewers on Twitter, writing "reports coming out Yelich bargained w/ Counsell" to take his off day against the Cubs instead of during the weekend series against the Giants, Yelich responded by tweeting at the user: "Yeah that's not how it went down."

Yelich clearly was upset by the accusation he begged out of playing, even if it was speculation by a fan who calls himself "Director of Morale for the Chicago Cubs."

"Having your competitiveness and your desire as an athlete called into question is, for sure, frustrating," Yelich told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, adding: "The fact that this has even become something that we have to address here I think is ridiculous to be honest with you. But I understand where it's coming from at the same time."

Of course, if Yelich had ignored the “Director of Morale” in the first place, no one would’ve heard about it except for the troll and his followers.

Cardinals losing steam: If the Cubs win the division and the Cardinals win the wild-card game, they could meet again in the Division Series and wind up playing as many as eight times in two weeks. The teams meet at Wrigley Field for the final three games of the regular season.

Of course, the Cardinals need to fix some problems if they’re going to make it to the postseason. Before Sunday’s win over the Tigers, they lost four straight games in their opponent’s final at-bat. On Saturday, a wild pitch by closer Bud Norris brought home the winning run, their second straight walk-off loss. Norris has two losses and a blown save in his last three appearances and could be removed from the role.

“Bud’s had his hiccups and we’ll evaluate that,” manager Mike Shildt told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. “We trust his experience in what he feels he needs at that particular moment.”

Carlos Martinez, the ace who was moved to the bullpen due to injuries, was called upon Sunday to notch the save in Sunday’s 5-2 win.

Hollyweird: The Dodgers have an NL-best run differential of +131 while the Rockies are -11. Still, the Rockies maintain a slim ½ game lead over the Dodgers after losing two of three in a weekend showdown at Coors Field.

The Dodgers scored nine runs Sunday after scoring 15 runs in their last five games at Coors Field, a notorious hitters’ ballpark.

“The game of baseball is weird,” Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner said. “It’s not about scoring a ton of runs every night. It’s about scoring more than the other team.”

That usually works, but there’s no reason the Dodgers should be neck-and-neck with the Rockies with three weeks left in the season. The NL West rivals have one more three-game series, Sept. 17-19 at Dodger Stadium. If there’s one team the Cubs would like to see eliminated from the NL postseason, it’s probably the Dodgers.

Bench time: Orioles center fielder Adam Jones has been sitting more often recently as manager Buck Showalter wants to go with youth in the final weeks of a disastrous season. Jones vetoed a trade to the Phillies at the July 31 deadline and knew this was a possibility.

“I’ve shown what I can do, so it’s good to, if you’re going to move forward with the new future,” Jones told the Baltimore Sun. “So, right now is no time like the present to get them some at-bats. Of course (it’s difficult), but at the same time I’m a pro about it and I want to see these guys succeed and I’m pushing for everybody when they get their chance. Right now is a great opportunity for three or four guys to get some at-bats going down the stretch.”

With 102 losses already, the Orioles are 61 games under .500 and six losses from setting the team’s record for most defeats in a season since the franchise moved from St. Louis in 1954. That mark was set by the infamous 1988 team that lost its first 21 games and finished 54-107.

The quote: Bob Costas, to Baseball Digest, on how social media has changed some baseball broadcasts: “A lot of these people are younger than me. They grew up with it. I know of people who actually are on Twitter while they’re doing the game. What? You’re supposed to be concentrating on the task at hand.

Let's say you've got an audience of X-number millions of people and some guy in Tacoma thinks you suck. Why are you paying attention to that? You don't go down to the hardware store and look over his shoulder while he's doing his job."

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