

Two homers all Tomlin, Tribe need to top Tigers

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

CLEVELAND -- The Indians launched a pair of home runs on Tuesday and nothing else. It was another cold game for the offense on another bitter night in Cleveland, but this Tribe roster is proving resilient in light of its overpowering pitching.

The players inside Cleveland's clubhouse know they would likely be dealing with a much deeper slump if it were not for the arms that make up the pitching staff. Instead, the Indians continued to hold the top spot -- along with the Twins -- in the American League Central after eking out a 2-1 victory over the Tigers at Progressive Field.

"Tip the cap to the pitchers. They're the ones who are doing great," Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis said. "We've got five starters who can go out every night and feel like they give you a chance to win. Right now, especially when the bats are cold, they're the ones pulling the most on the rope."

Over the past five games at home, where the temperature climbed to a balmy 40 degrees by the first pitch on Tuesday, Tribe pitchers have held the opposition to five total runs. Starter Josh Tomlin did his part against Detroit with five scoreless innings, lowering the rotation's collective ERA to 1.05 in the five-game stretch.

Tomlin, who allowed eight earned runs in three innings while battling a back issue in his season debut in Anaheim last week, finished with three strikeouts and two walks in a no-decision. Cody Allen took care of the ninth for the save.

The message that manager Terry Francona has hammered home in his time in Cleveland is to win the game at hand. The only thing that matters is doing everything possible to finish one run better than the other team when the day is done. Lately, though, the Indians have been putting that into practice in extreme fashion.

The one-run victory this time around -- powered by a solo shot from Jose Ramirez in the first and another via Roberto Perez in the eighth -- was the seventh one-run affair for the Indians through 11 games on the young season. During the five-game homestand, the Tribe has scored 10 runs and produced a .153/.238/.264 slash line as a team, but it has still notched four wins.

To put things into perspective, this marks the first time in 111 recorded seasons that the Indians have won three consecutive games with no more than four hits by the offense in each victory.

"Our pitching staff has kind of saved the day," Francona said. "And, it's not just pitching good, but every game has been one run, so there's not a lot of margin for error. That's probably the understatement of the year. They've done a really good job."

The defense played a big role on Tuesday night, too.

Shortstop Francisco Lindor made a pair of impressive plays in the hole -- first to rob Miguel Cabrera of a hit in the first and then doing the same against Victor Martinez in the eighth. Kipnis came through in the seventh with two outs and a runner on second. Cabrera sent a pitch from Dan Otero up the middle, where Kipnis made a backhanded grab and throw to first to preserve a 1-1 tie.

"Their defense was the story, I thought," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Their starter was fantastic, but their defense made some kind of plays."

On another cold night for the lineup, that is precisely the recipe the Tribe required.

"We all take a little bit of pride in doing whatever we can to win that day," Tomlin said. "Offensively, defensively, pitching, whatever the case may be, as long as we're one run better at the end of the game, that's all we really care about."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

It took two: Lefty Matthew Boyd stymied the Indians over seven innings with the exception of one flinch in the first. Ramirez, who reached base three times on Monday, sent a 1-1 pitch out to left with a 107-mph exit velocity. In the eighth, it was Perez's turn. The catcher came into the night 0-for-9 on the season, but he capped off a two-hit day with his opposite-field, go-ahead blast against Alex Wilson.

"It feels good," Perez said. "I mean, I know it's early in the season, but we're capable of scoring more runs than one or two runs a game. It's nice to see the pitching staff carry us throughout a slump."

Tomlin's escape: The Tigers managed seven baserunners in Tomlin's five innings, but the right-hander wiggled free of every jam he encountered. His biggest escape act arrived in the third, when Tomlin hit Jeimer Candelario with a pitch, gave up a single to Cabrera and later issued a two-out walk to Martinez to load the bases. Tomlin then used a curve to induce a weak chopper back to the mound from Niko Goodrum, leading to an inning-ending groundout.

"I was just trying to execute a pitch down, trying to get a ground ball," Tomlin said. "We've got a really good defense. For me, it's just trying to get someone to put the ball in play as much as possible and as quick as possible. In that situation, the plan of attack was to throw a curveball and just trying to execute the curveball down."

QUOTABLE

"The guy has proven to be a Major League pitcher. I don't think anybody in here wanted to count him out after one bad start, and he got right back on there and shut these guys down and gave us a chance to win. He's one of those guys that goes out and competes each time." -- Kipnis, on Tomlin

"It was kind of a tough go offensively, but after [Perez] hit that home run, in the dugout, everyone was jumping on him. They're trying to weather this. They're playing good defense, and they're staying after it." -- Francona

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

The run scored by the Tigers in the seventh snapped a 19-inning scoreless streak turned in by Cleveland's pitching staff. That marked the longest such run since the Tribe's 30-inning scoreless run on the mound from Aug. 24-28 last season.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The Tigers' newfound baserunning aggressiveness led Goodrum to test Rajai Davis' arm in center field, tagging up from first base on a flyout to medium-depth left-center. Goodrum was originally ruled out, but a replay review showed him sliding around the tag attempt at second base. Once Goodrum was ruled safe, it marked the fifth overturn in as many challenges for Gardenhire in his brief Tigers tenure.

WHAT'S NEXT

Indians righty Carlos Carrasco is slated to take the mound on Wednesday against the Tigers in a 6:10 p.m. ET clash at Progressive Field. Last year, Carrasco went 4-1 with a 1.82 ERA in six starts vs. Detroit with 45 strikeouts and nine walks in 39 2/3 innings..

Carrasco does play-by-play on off-day

By Andrew Mearns Apr. 10th, 2018

Carlos Carrasco didn't pitch on Tuesday. He wasn't scheduled to start, and he wasn't needed anyway, as Josh Tomlin threw five shutout innings en route to a 2-1 Indians victory over the Royals.

To pass the time, Carrasco grabbed a Fox Sports microphone in the bottom of the sixth and gave the Indians' broadcasters a brief reprieve by calling the end of Jose Ramirez's at-bat (as seen in the video above). He seemed to be perfect for it, too, reading Tomlin's pitching line to the viewers before providing his own play-by-play of Ramirez's ground ball to third.

Lindor to host youth program in Puerto Rico

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

Apr. 10th, 2018

CLEVELAND -- Francisco Lindor remembers going to Hiram Bithorn Stadium in his youth and watching the Major Leaguers on the diamond play out his dream before him in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Now, the Indians' shortstop will have a chance to take that same field, giving kids in the stands another example to follow.

During the Tribe's upcoming trip to San Juan for a pair of games against the Twins on April 17-18, Lindor also plans on giving back through a special clinic at his old elementary school. Lindor will host the program for approximately 250 kids on Monday in Gurabo, P.R., as part of the "Players Going Home" initiative.

"I've been looking forward to this opportunity for a long time," Lindor said in a statement. "And I couldn't be more excited now that these games are less than a week away. I have said many times that playing in Puerto Rico is a dream come true. I can't wait to take the field in front of the fans in my homeland. I'm sure it is going to be a moment that I'll never forget."

Twins outfielder Eddie Rosario will also be taking part in the "Players Going Home" program, which is part of the Youth Development Foundation, a joint fund put together by Major League Baseball and the MLB Players Association. There will also be a charity golf event to benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Puerto Rico and Habitat for Humanity, a PLAY BALL event and a Puerto Rico R.B.I. (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities) game at Hiram Bithorn, along with other special programs and unveilings.

Besides Lindor, Indians catcher Roberto Perez and first-base coach Sandy Alomar Jr. were born in Puerto Rico.

"For Frankie, Roberto and Sandy, it will be really special," Indians manager Terry Francona said of the upcoming trip. "They're trying to do some things in the community, things like that. I think it'll be fun. Again, you've got to remember that they're not exhibition games, because sometimes you get [distracted] in that atmosphere. But, I think it's good for baseball, and I think our guys will enjoy it."

Worth noting

- Heading into Tuesday's play, Indians top prospect Francisco Mejia had caught two games and played another pair in left field for Triple-A Columbus. The Indians are getting Mejia innings in the outfield in order to potentially expedite his path to the Majors, given the presence of catchers Yan Gomes and Perez in Cleveland.

"It's a work in progress, which we knew," Francona said. "I don't know that you can go from being a catcher to being a Gold Glove outfielder, I don't think. But, as long as he's willing to try it and put the work in, which he is, it just opens up maybe more avenues for him to get to the Major Leagues."

"He has a tremendous arm. That's not going to be an issue anywhere. Balls off the bat, you can take all the drills you want -- and he does -- but balls off the bat are probably the hardest thing. Your first step. Making sure you're going in the right direction. Not coming straight up. Repetition will be the best thing for him."

• Left fielder Michael Brantley played three games in a row after being activated from the disabled list on Friday, and he returned to the starting lineup Tuesday after a scheduled day off on Monday. Said Francona: "We'll just try to use some common sense with him. He's worked so hard that he deserves the best chance to come back and stay back. If that means us making some concessions at some point, it's really worth it."

Covering the Bases: Game 11 by Jordan Bastian

FIRST: Jason Kipnis has been taking the field with three-quarter sleeves protruding from under his jersey. He doesn't like the feeling of having his forearms covered while on the field.

Those ski masks that everyone else has been wearing? Not for Kipnis.

"I'm an adult," Kip quipped.

Earlier this week, with the temperature hovering in the 30s, Kipnis strolled the field wearing a short-sleeve T-shirt amidst his teammates in hoodies. He took to Instagram, calling them "soft warm state players."

"I grew playing up in weather like this, with snow on the ground," said Kipnis, who originally hails from the Chicago area. "As soon as you get a couple sprints in and that blood moving, it's not as cold as it is for somebody who sits there and is just taking the wind."

OK, so maybe the bitter temps don't bother Cleveland's veteran, proud Midwestern second baseman. Mistakes in the field? That's what gets under his skin more than a winter chill.

In the seventh inning on Tuesday, Victor Reyes of the Tigers singled and then swiped second base. On the play, Roberto Perez short-hopped the throw to Kipnis, who couldn't corral the ball before it bounced into center field. Reyes scooted over to third base and scored three batters later.

Perez said he was hit by Dixon Machado's bat on the backswing, but there was no interference call on the play.

"He kind of just hit me barely in my mask," Perez said. "Those things happen, man. I just think I've got to make a better throw."

Kipnis shouldered the blame for not snaring the ball.

"I just completely whiffed on the short hop on it," Kipnis said. "It should've been made 100 percent of the time. I could keep my head down, crawl under a rock and be pissed off, or I could keep playing defense and try to make the next play. To me, it's not even an option. You've just got to keep playing.

"You [expletive] up and it sucks and it's embarrassing. But, one way to get through it and get past it is to make the next play."

SECOND: It wasn't the next play, but Kipnis got his chance at redemption before the conclusion of the seventh inning.

With the game now caught in a 1–1 tie, Miguel Cabrera came to the plate with a runner on second and two outs. Miggy sent a pitch from Dan Otero up the middle and to the left of second. Kipnis ranged to his right, made a sliding grab and fired to first in time to nab the Detroit slugger.

<https://medium.com/media/a7b8155681567e11e4037bd0ec7d0797/href>

"You giveth and you taketh," Kipnis said. "I know I missed the ball, but like I said, I'm happy I played through it."

Kipnis wasn't the only player putting on a show up the middle, either.

Francisco Lindor also made a pair of spectacular plays at short. In the first inning, he dove into the hole to snare a sharp grounder from Miggy. By the time the shortstop collected himself, he was in the left-field grass. He shifted to a knee, popped up and fired to first in time.

In the eighth—one play after Kipnis made another slick sliding stop to rob Nick Castellanos—Lindor made a flashy back-handed pick on a chopper from Victor Martinez. He had plenty of time to nab V-Mart at first.

"Really, the big part of the game, in my opinion, is their defense," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. "They made some plays that just stopped us. We hit some balls right on the button. That defense that they played out there tonight was phenomenal, or we would've had a lot more chances."

THIRD: There is that old adage that "pitching and defense wins championships." Well, Cleveland is sure experimenting with that theory here in the season's early going.

The defense on Tuesday was sharp and, in turn, so was the production from the men on the mound. In particular, Josh Tomlin was solid over five shutout innings. He encountered seven baserunners in that span, but maneuvered around trouble.

It was an encouraging bounceback performance after Tomlin was torched for eight runs in three innings in his 2018 debut in Anaheim.

"We're not going to lose confidence in him after one start," Kipnis said. "Other people might, but we're not going to. We've seen him have a bad start before. The guy has proven to be a Major League pitcher. I don't think anybody in here wanted to count him out after one bad start. And he got right back on there and shut these guys down and gave us a chance to win."

Earlier this week, we learned that Tomlin was actually dealing with a back issue in that Anaheim start. It was brought up by Francona in explaining why the starter was pushed back a couple extra days before his second outing. Tomlin never mentioned it in Anaheim and the righty still veered away from making excuses when asked about the minor injury Tuesday.

"It wasn't really that big of an issue," Tomlin said. "Going back and looking at the film, sometimes it will tell you a different story. And the way the ball was coming out of my hand was not the same. But, feeling wise, I felt like I was able to get through it. I felt like I was going to be able to get through it. It was the sitting down getting back up part was the most difficult part for me."

Over the past five games, here is what the rotation has done:

Tomlin: 5 IP, 0 ER, 3 K, 2 BB

Kluber: 8 IP, 0 ER, 13 K, 1 BB

Clevinger: 7.1 IP, 1 ER, 4 K, 2 BB

Bauer: 8 IP, 1 ER, 7 K, 2 BB

Carrasco: 6 IP, 2 ER, 4 K, 1 BB

Combined, they posted a 1.05 ERA with 31 strikeouts vs. eight walks in 34.1 innings.

"Our pitching staff has kind of saved the day," Francona said.

HOME: The only offensive output was a solo each for Jose Ramirez and Perez. Cleveland only managed four hits total. So, no, the lineup isn't back to firing on all cylinders, yet.

In fact, this is the first time in 111 years of recorded Indians history that the team has won three consecutive games with no more than four hits from the offense in each affair.

"They're all too good of hitters to [keep slumping like this]," Francona said. "We're looking for any reason to be positive, but there's certainly some pieces there."

Ramirez provided one of the positives. After reaching base three times on Monday, the All-Star third baseman had two hits, including the homer in the first. Perez was another. The catcher came in 0-for-9, but collected a single, walk and the go-ahead blast.

Over the past five games, the Indians offense has managed 10 runs total with a .153/.238/.264 team slash line. Here's the good news: Cleveland has four wins in that stretch and is in first place.

"Right now, man, we're supporting each other," Perez said. "We're just trying to score runs. Like I said, we're capable of scoring more than one run a game. But, that's baseball, man. Baseball is crazy. I think the weather has something to do with it. Guys don't feel comfortable in this cold weather, especially me. We're not from here."

Perez is from Puerto Rico, where the Indians will head for a series against the Twins next week. Over the winter, though, he did spend time in Cleveland. He even posted a photo of him shoveling snow for the first time in his life.

"That was once, man," Perez said with a laugh.

Bieber, Morgan among prospect performers

By William Boor MLB.com @wboor

• Indians prospects Shane Bieber (No. 8) and Elijah Morgan (No. 28) put together impressive outings for Double-A Akron and Class A Lake County. Bieber picked up his first win of the year and extended his scoreless streak to 13 as he struck out eight and fired seven scoreless frames for Akron. Meanwhile, Morgan, who was stuck with a no-decision for Lake County, gave up one run over six innings and struck out nine.

Puerto Rico Series: Bernie, Beltran to attend

By Daniel Kramer MLB.com @DKramer_

The highly-anticipated matchup in Puerto Rico between the Indians and Twins next week received more anticipation on Tuesday, as Major League Baseball announced its full slate of ceremonial events surrounding the two-game series at Hiram Bithorn Stadium in San Juan.

Among the former big leaguers who are native Puerto Ricans that will be in attendance will include Bernie Williams and Carlos Beltran, as well as musical artist Daddy Yankee, the Grammy Award nominee for his famed single "Despacito." And, of course, the games themselves will feature Puerto Ricans such as Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor and Twins left fielder Eddie Rosario, among others.

Williams, the 16-year big leaguer who has been a well-respected guitarist off the field, will sing the Star-Spangled Banner ahead of the first game of the series, on April 17, while Pedrito Guzman will sing "La Borinqueña," the national anthem of Puerto Rico.

Beltran will throw out the first pitch. The recently retired outfielder is a native of Manati, and is the 2013 winner of the Roberto Clemente Award, one of the game's most respected honors for the big leaguer who best exhibits community contributions. Clemente, of course, died in a tragic plane crash in 1972 en route to Nicaragua while delivering hurricane supplies.

A ceremony honoring local Puerto Ricans who aided relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria will also be held before the first game, and will be escorted by former Major Leaguers from Puerto Rico.

For the second game, on April 18, Puerto Rican musician Pedro Capo, who was instrumental in raising relief funding for the hurricane, will perform "La Borinqueña," and Daddy Yankee, who donated \$1 million in relief, will throw out the first pitch.

There will also be a throng of special events, relief-project unveilings and school visits throughout the week in coordination with both clubs, MLB and the MLBPA. Lindor and Rosario will also visit their childhood schools as part of a youth-focused Play Ball event, and host a special Puerto Rico RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities) game.

"As a Puerto Rican, it's an honor and a pleasure to have the opportunity to represent the Minnesota Twins," Rosario said in a press release by MLB. "I'm very happy and excited to be able to play in front of my family and friends which haven't had the opportunity to see me play in person in a Major League game.

"It will be emotional and bittersweet for me as my grandmother won't be there, but I know she will be watching me from heaven, these two games will be dedicated to her and I'm looking forward to put on a good show for my people. I'm happy because we will be able to bring happiness to my island after Hurricane Maria. These two days will be unforgettable for me and the island of Puerto Rico. People are extremely excited and happy to be able to witness Major League Baseball."

Lindor added: "I've been looking forward to this opportunity for a long time, and I couldn't be more excited now that these games are less than a week away. I have said many times that playing in Puerto Rico is a dream come true. I can't wait to take the field in front of the fans in my homeland. I'm sure it is going to be a moment that I'll never forget."

The Puerto Rico Series, which was announced by MLB, the MLB Players Association and MB Sports last June, will be the first official game on the Puerto Rico soil since the Mets and Marlins met there in June 2010. MLB also held games there in '01, '03 and '04.

The Twins and Indians are fitting clubs to play in the international showcase, with a handful of players who hail from Puerto Rico, and who represented their native land in last year's World Baseball Classic. In addition to Lindor and Rosario, Twins right-hander Jose Berrios and catcher Roberto Perez are from Puerto Rico.

Kluber's stretch among best in recent memory

By Joe Posnanski MLB.com @JPosnanski

Something amazing happened in the seventh inning of Monday night's Tigers-Indians game: Corey Kluber was pitching for the Tribe, and you expect amazing things to happen all the time when he pitches, but this was truly crazy.

Kluber was in the midst of a difficult seven-pitch at-bat with one of baseball's grand old men, Victor Martinez. On the seventh pitch, Kluber threw a ridiculous curveball that moved like a moth in the wind and ended at Martinez's knees. The hitter swung and hit a ground ball to first base, and Edwin Encarnacion smothered it. Kluber ran over to cover first, received a good throw and stepped on the bag for an out.

And then it happened -- Kluber smiled.

It was almost impossible to believe. Kluber never smiles. Everybody knows that. Not smiling is his thing. He's the Klubot, the unmovable force, the Buckingham Palace guard of pitching. But whatever it was -- the absurdity of the cold weather, some remark that Encarnacion or Martinez made, a flashback to the "Anybody want a peanut" scene in "The Princess Bride" -- something broke him up. For a moment, the dominant right-hander looked just like anybody else.

Then the smile faded, the "Terminator" look returned, Kluber stepped back on the mound and he threw a "Bugs Bunny" changeup to Mikie Mahtook, who flew out to end the inning.

* * * * *

Let's talk numbers: As our own Andrew Simon tweeted, over the past 26 starts (dating back to June 1 of last year) Kluber has pitched 189 1/3 innings. And he has been absurdly good -- his ERA over that stretch is 1.62. His record is 16-3.

In fact, with the help of Tom Tango, we looked back at the best 26-game stretches of the century so far. Yes, "26-game stretches" are a little bit awkward, but they are long enough to generally rule out flukiness. If you are Kluber-esque for 26 consecutive starts, there's a pretty good chance that you are all-time great material.

There have been eight 26-game stretches since 2000 where a pitcher maintained a 1.70 ERA or less. Here are those stretches in order of dominance:

9. Zack Greinke (Aug. 30, 2014 to July 26, 2015)

13-2, 176 1/3 IP, 124 H, 153 K's, 31 BB, 1.58 ERA

Will Greinke end up in the Hall of Fame? It's a trickier question than you might think no matter which side you happen to be on. Greinke's 2009 season with Kansas City is one of the best over the past quarter century, but this was his most dominant stretch.

When Greinke first came up, people often compared him to Greg Maddux; it's not a fair comparison -- nobody can compare to Maddux -- but it is fair to say that he shares the Hall of Famer's tendency to rarely seem overpowering even while he is.

Speaking of Maddux, I have to share this crazy statistic with you: Kluber has not given up more than four earned runs in any contest during his 26-game streak. That seems impressive to go 26 straight games without giving up more than four, so I decided to look it up: What is the longest modern streak for consecutive starts without allowing more than four earned runs in a game? Here they are from the past 40 years:

5. Jake Peavy, 47 starts
4. Kyle Hendricks, 48 starts
3. Tyson Ross, 49 starts
2. Jake Arrieta, 52 starts

Those are really good, certainly -- look at Ross get in there! You already know who No. 1 is, but wait for it.

1. Greg Maddux, 106 starts

Yes, that's right -- 106 starts. He did not allow more than four earned runs in a game from July 1991 to June 1994. Maddux is the master.

8. Roger Clemens (Sept. 19, 2004 to Aug. 7, 2005)
12-4, 177 1/3 IP, 118 H, 169 K's, 50 BB, 1.42 ERA

Yes, this was the old Clemens, who has become hugely controversial because of the performance-enhancing drug allegations. But the truth is that by this point in his career, he had simply figured out pitching. Clemens' strikeout-to-walk ratio is the least impressive of the nine pitchers on this list, but he only gave up seven home runs and very few hits. He simply knew how to get people out. People's strong feelings about Clemens have made it easy to overlook just how brilliant he was on the mound.

7. Johan Santana (June 25, 2004 to May 6, 2005)
20-3, 186 1/3 IP, 103 H, 234 K's, 34 BB, 1.69 ERA

It seems likely that everyone will too quickly forget just how good Santana was with the Twins. He was the best pitcher in baseball for a handful of years, and this was his most extraordinary stretch. You just could not hit Santana's fastball-slider-changeup combination; it was particularly his changeup that left hitters shaking their heads. By the way, Minnesota went 23-3 over those 26 games.

6. Clayton Kershaw (Sept. 21, 2013 to Sept. 8, 2014)
20-3, 190 1/3 IP, 125 H, 228 K's, 29 BB, 1.56 ERA

Well, wait for it: We'll see Kershaw again.

5. Corey Kluber (June 1, 2017 to April 9, 2018)
16-3, 189 1/3 IP, 114 H, 251 K's, 27 BB, 1.62 ERA

The thing about Kluber is that he always seems in complete control. Maybe it's because he displays so little emotion. Maybe it's because Kluber has a curveball that seems to operate in its own gravitational universe. Whatever it is, the Tigers on Monday seemed entirely beaten more or less from the first pitch.

There's something else fascinating about Kluber -- something that is true about the greatest pitchers: He plays off umpires the way Frank Sinatra played off the microphone. Sinatra famously said that his voice was not his instrument, it was the microphone; he knew precisely how to use it, how far to keep it from his mouth, when to get closer, when to pull back, etc. I was thinking about that while watching Kluber throw all of these borderline pitches, right on or off the corner, a millimeter from a ball or strike call. He challenges umpires by throwing those sorts of pitches over and over and over again -- just on the corner, just over the plate, just off the corner, just off the plate.

And every time an umpire calls one of those pitches a strike -- especially a strike three -- the batter loses his mind with the thought bubble bursting, "Well, if that is a strike, what chance do I even have up here?"

As Sinatra sang: It's the summer wind.

4. Randy Johnson (July 5, 1999 to May 16, 2000)
15-5, 208 1/3 IP, 142 H, 276 K's, 48 BB, 1.51 ERA

You will notice that Johnson threw the most innings -- he averaged eight innings per start and threw a complete game in 11 of them. He did not get enough credit for that; The Big Unit was virtually indestructible. Here's one for you: the left-hander completed 100 games. You can wager that Johnson will be the last pitcher to ever reach triple digits in that category; Kershaw, for comparison's sake, has 25.

3. Clayton Kershaw (July 8, 2015 to May 23, 2016)
18-2, 197 2/3 IP, 119 H, 249 K's, 20 BB, 1.32 ERA

Twenty walks, that's just ridiculous. Sure, it's all absurd beginning with the fact that Kershaw is the only pitcher with two of these streaks. The southpaw just attacks from the first pitch of every at-bat. His ERA this year -- even as he looks for his first win -- is 1.89. If Kershaw manages to keep it below 2.00 all year, it will be his third such season, tying him with Sandy Koufax for the most sub-2.00 ERA seasons since the Deadball Era.

2. Pedro Martinez (Aug. 24, 1999 to July 28, 2000)
20-3, 193 IP, 110 H, 285 K's, 30 BB, 1.21 ERA

The way Tango pulled out this list was he looked for pitchers who has a sub-1.70 ERA for 26 consecutive starts. With Martinez, it's different -- he essentially had 26 of these streaks. That's because he had a 52-game stretch where his ERA was sub 1.70: From Aug. 3, 1999 to May 30, 2001, he had a 1.58 ERA. That's basically superhuman stuff, especially when you consider that it was at the height of the offensive era and that he was pitching half his games at Fenway Park. I remain convinced that over a five- or six-year period, Martinez was the best pitcher in baseball history.

1. Jake Arrieta (June 21, 2015 to May 3, 2016)
22-1, 190 IP, 96 H, 184 K's, 39 BB, 0.85 ERA

And there it is -- the craziest 26-game stretch in baseball this century. How the heck did Arrieta do it? He didn't quite average a strikeout per inning. He walked more than most guys on this list. But here's the thing: He was flat unhittable. Arrieta allowed four home runs during the entire stretch -- yeah, four. Batters hit an unfathomable .147/.203/.210 against him. They simply could not get any sort of solid wood on the ball; it was like trying to hit one of the agents in "The Matrix.

Indians 2, Tigers 1: 14 Walk-Off Thoughts on Jason Kipnis totally redeeming himself and Josh Tomlin's 180

By Ryan Lewis

Here are 14 Walk-Off Thoughts after the Indians' 2-1 win against the Detroit Tigers.

1. Jason Kipnis knew he screwed up—he'd use a different word, but this is a family company. Roberto Perez had the runner—the potential tying run—nailed at second base by a couple of steps. It wasn't a perfect throw, but it's a play Kipnis is expected—and himself expects—to make.
2. Instead of a back-breaking play for the Tigers, the tying run ended up 90 feet away and later scored on Jeimer Candelarios's double. The error went to Perez, but it was more-so on Kipnis, and he knew it.
3. Said Kipnis: "When you miss a play that should be made like that—just completely whiffed on the short hop on it, should have been made 100 percent of the time. I could keep my head down, crawl under a rock and be pissed off, or I could keep playing defense and try to make the next play. To me, it's not even an option. You just gotta keep playing. You f***** up and it sucks. And it's embarrassing. But one way to get through it and get past it is to make the next play. I was happy the ball was hit to me right after that."
4. Kipnis regrouped and made a sliding pop-up play to potentially steal a hit away from Miguel Cabrera. Now, you really only get half-credit for throwing out Miguel Cabrera, but it helped to keep it tied before Roberto Perez went oppo-taco for a solo home run.
5. He added, "Exactly. You giveth and you taketh. Freakin, you give 'em a run and then you take one back. If I'm going to give them one, at least I'll keep it right there and not give them another one. Yeah. And I know I missed the ball, but like I said, I'm happy I played through it."
6. Kipnis and several other hitters in the lineup have simply had to do that—just play through it. Line drives aren't falling as they should according to league averages. Barreled-up balls are hanging up—or being held up—in the wind. Five hitters who are all struggling—Kipnis, Francisco Lindor, Bradley Zimmer, Yan Gomes and Yonder Alonso—all actually have higher hard-hit percentages this season than last, according to FanGraphs.
7. That context means the Indians should be in line for some helpful regression to their norms. It isn't the case that nobody is making hard contact. They now stand 6-5, even while trudging through a collective offensive slump. They have also won four of the five games in this homestand despite not scoring more than three runs in any game.
8. Said Kipnis: "It means we've got some pretty darn good pitching and some good defense. Tip the cap to the pitchers. They're the ones who are doing great. We've got five starters who can go out every night and feel like they give you a chance to win. Right now, especially when the bats are cold, they're the ones pulling the most on the rope right now. And we're following their lead. Because we know it's not always going to be like this. Guys are going to start hitting."
9. Tuesday night's game marked the 13th time in franchise history that the Indians went at least three games with no more than four hits. It was the first time in franchise history that they went 3-0 in those such instances (H/T to Jordan Bastian of MLB.com, and I hope I have that right, because I got a headache as he was trying to explain that one). But, it highlights more-so the Indians' stellar pitching than a sluggish offense that hasn't yet found its rhythm.
10. Added Indians manager Terry Francona: "Our pitching staff has kind of saved the day. And it's not just pitching good, but it's, every game has been one run, so there's not a lot of margin for error. That's probably the understatement of the year. They've done a really good job, and our defense ... I think Kip was kind of upset when that ball got past him and after that he made a couple really good plays."

11. Josh Tomlin in his first start of the season was rocked for eight runs in three innings against the Angels. Tuesday night, he turned it around and tossed five scoreless innings, though he did have to dance around traffic for much of it. Tomlin, on most nights, won't be either of those pitchers, of course. He'll end up somewhere in-between. But the army of people wanting Tomlin to be sent to Lake County or tossed into Lake Erie because of his first start of the season were quieter on Twitter Tuesday night. Tomlin also said his back felt better than during his start in Anaheim.

12. Said Tomlin: "I did, yeah. I felt a lot better. The command still probably isn't where it needs to be or where I want it to be, but it was close enough and we were able to get a win. We played good defense all night long, had good at-bats, strung some good at-bats together and got the big hit in the end. So today was a good day."

13. Dating back to last season, the Indians have now won nine consecutive games against the Tigers. The pitching staff has posted an ERA of 0.78 in those games. There was a time when Miguel Cabrera tormented the Indians, actually putting up Ruthian figures. Now, that's shifted to the other dugout and Jose Ramirez. Since the beginning of last season, Ramirez is batting .485 with 10 home runs and 26 RBI against the Tigers, including his solo home run in the first inning of Tuesday night's game. His nine home runs last year against the Tigers were the most by any Indians player since David Justice hit 10 against Detroit in 2000.

14. Finally, to speak to Cody Allen's somewhat quiet consistency and quality, he notched his 125th save on Tuesday night, which allowed him to pass Chris Perez for third place on the Indians' franchise ranks. He's now four behind Doug Jones for second place.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 04.11.2018

Indians 2, Tigers 1: Two solo home runs, Josh Tomlin's strong outing lift Indians

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The offense hasn't been aplenty, but it's been enough.

The Indians mustered only two runs in continued frigid conditions, but they again topped the Detroit Tigers, this time 2-1 Tuesday night at Progressive Field.

Two solo home runs in the Indians' first and final at-bats provided all the scoring they needed. Jose Ramirez blasted a solo home run — a much-needed hit for last year's MVP finalist who came into the game hitting .086 — off Tigers starter Matthew Boyd in the first inning.

In the eighth, with the score deadlocked at 1-1, Roberto Perez drove a solo home run to right-center field off Tigers reliever Alex Wilson to again put the Indians on top.

Two swings, and the Indians (6-5) notched their second consecutive win over the Tigers this series. It also marked the Indians' ninth consecutive win against the Tigers dating back to last season.

The Indians have now won four of the five games on this homestand but have yet to score more than three runs in any game.

"Our pitching staff has kind of saved the day," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "And it's not just pitching good, but it's every game has been one run, so there's not a lot of margin for error. That's probably the understatement of the year. They've done a really good job."

Josh Tomlin turned in an outing that was a complete 180-degree-turn from his first start of the season, a disastrous outing in Anaheim in which he was rocked for eight runs in three innings while dealing with a back issue. On Tuesday night, it was a different story. Tomlin had to work out of trouble on multiple occasions but escaped unscathed each time, tossing five scoreless innings and allowing four hits to go with three strikeouts.

"I felt a lot better," Tomlin said. "The command still probably isn't where it needs to be or where I want it to be, but it was close enough and we were able to get a win. We played good defense all night long, had good at-bats, strung some good at-bats together and got the big hit in the end. So today was a good day."

Zach McAllister worked a scoreless sixth inning to get to Tyler Olson. Victor Reyes singled to right field and then advanced to third while trying to steal second base when Perez's throw beat Reyes to the bag by several steps, but Jason Kipnis couldn't corral it.

After the Indians brought in Dan Otero, Jeimer Candelario doubled to left field to tie it 1-1. Kipnis somewhat redeemed himself for the defensive miscue by making a terrific sliding stop to retire Miguel Cabrera and end the inning with the score still tied. Kipnis also made a second sliding stop for the first out of the eighth inning.

"To me, it's not even an option," Kipnis said. "You just gotta keep playing. You f***** up and it sucks. And it's embarrassing. But one way to get through it and get past it is to make the next play. I was happy the ball was hit to me right after that."

Closer Cody Allen worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his third save.

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"You just gotta keep playing. You f***** up and it sucks. And it's embarrassing. But one way to get through it and get past it is to make the next play."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 04.11.2018

Cleveland Indians will take Corey Kluber on a roll for as long as it lasts

By Paul Hoynes,

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Indians know what Corey Kluber looks like on a roll. Last year he came off the disabled list on June 1 and went 15-2 with a 1.52 ERA the rest of the season.

The next stop after that was Cy Young award No. 2. But all that came after Kluber spent most of May on the disabled list with a strained lower back.

In 2016, Kluber was 4-6 after his first 11 starts. He went 14-3 over his next 21 starts to finish 18-9.

In 2014, when Kluber won his first Cy Young Award, he was 7-6 on June 30. He went 11-3 the rest of the way, including posting a 5-1 record in September.

What the Indians have not seen is Kluber on a wire-to-wire run. Could it happen? Maybe, but there are a lot of elements working against it. Bad luck, injury and poor performances are always a threat to disrupt any player's season.

But to stay hot for a whole season requires a hot start and that's what Kluber has done. Three starts into the season, he's 1-1 with a 1.57 ERA. He's pitched well enough to be 3-0, but a lack of run support and two ill-timed two-run homers prevented that from happening.

The most important thing is that Kluber looks like the Kluber who last September went 5-0 in five starts with a 0.84 ERA. The Kluber who followed September with two poor starts in the ALDS against the Yankees, saying he wasn't hurt even though he was, is no longer in the building.

Corey Kluber on win over Tigers

Kluber went 4-0 with a 2.25 ERA in five Cactus League starts this spring. Since the season opened, Kluber has allowed four earned runs in 23 innings. He's struck out 27, walked five and allowed 11 hits. He was especially good Monday night at chilly Progressive Field, holding the Tigers scoreless over eight innings with 13 strikeouts in a 2-0 win.

"Boy did he pitch well. ... My goodness," said manager Terry Francona.

Francona said Kluber made an adjustment on how he gripped the ball to throw his off-speed pitches to counteract the cold. Kluber just said he squeezed the ball tighter.

Catcher Yan Gomes and the Tigers saw the results.

"That thing was moving everywhere," said Gomes. "I don't think the weather had much of a factor with him tonight. It's his ability to make adjustments throughout the game. We really didn't have much of a feel on the arm side with him, in to righties, away to lefties. So we made an adjustment there.

"It's pretty crazy, man. His ball was dancing. He just makes an adjustment, just to figure out how to throw more strikes."

Terry Francona on Bradley Zimmer's homer, Corey Kluber's win over Tigers

Gomes has caught Kluber's first three starts of the season. He's caught the majority of his games since Kluber established himself in the big leagues in 2013.

When asked about Kluber being on a roll early, Gomes said, "Absolutely. Like you said, he usually tries to find his way a little bit and then he'll turn it up. He's ready to go from the get-go. You saw in in spring training. You saw the way he was doing in things in spring.

"I think we're starting to see (that) with our pitching staff. These guys are on a mission, They're trying to really set the table to keep it going throughout the year."

Kluber tapped the breaks on talk of a wire-to-wire run. Three starts into a season is just three starts. But even Kluber said there is a difference between this start and those he's gone through over the last few years.

"It sounds simple, but it's just a matter of not making mistakes at the wrong time," he said. "Physically I don't feel any different. It's just a matter of not making those big mistakes with multiple guys on base or allowing big innings.

"That's obviously the case throughout the entire year, but if I had to point to one difference, that's probably the difference between early on this year and early on the last couple of years - (when) I tended to make those mistakes with guys on base. Not to say that it won't happen through the year, but it just hasn't through these first three starts."

Francona believes that players can get on rolls. He counts on it.

He believes some players can do it on sheer talent, while others do it because of the consistency of their preparation. Kluber is in the latter category.

"He'll be in here tomorrow (Tuesday) working his rear end off," said Francona, after Monday night's win.

As for the length of the roll, Francona isn't putting any limits on Kluber.

"It's exciting," he said. "We've all seen that when he gets on a roll, he can maintain it for, sometimes, shoot ... as long as you can play. And that's a really good feeling."

Cleveland Indians announce community-outreach programs

By Marc Bona, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - The Indians will have several community-outreach initiatives this season, matching players and programs.

The programs focus on veterans, hospital patients and families in need:

Lonnie's Lineup

Outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall and his wife, Meredith, will host families from the Salvation Army during batting practice at select home games. After checking out BP, the families will watch the game from the Club Lounge. They will receive gifts like t-shirts and stuffed animals from the Chisenhalls. Chisenhall, who injured his right calf Saturday, is on the 10-day disabled list.

Edwin's Squad

A patient from Cleveland Clinic Children's and his or her family will watch batting practice at select home games. They will have a chance to take pictures with Edwin Encarnacion and receive a jersey before watching the game from the Club Lounge.

Friends of Francona

Manager Terry Francona and UnitedHealthcare will team up with Cleveland VA Medical Center to provide Club Lounge tickets to veterans and their families for the team's 14 Sunday home games. The veterans will receive Indians military caps and t-shirts, and an in-game scoreboard message will be flashed.

Kluber's Kids

Pitcher Corey Kluber and his wife, Amanda, will host a child from Cleveland Clinic Children's on select home games. The child and his or her family will watch batting practice, receive jerseys and watch the game from the Club Lounge.

Kluber and Cleveland VA Medical Center

The couple will host veterans from the Cleveland VA Medical Center on some home games. The veterans will watch batting practice and then head to the Club Lounge for the game.

The club maintains various outreach programs and focuses on assorted charitable efforts each season. In October 2016, Indians CEO Paul Dolan and Francona mobilized efforts for the Larry Doby Youth Fund, which the Cleveland Foundation coordinated. And wives of Indians players work throughout the year on various philanthropic endeavors through local charities.

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Cleveland Indians' hitters, despite three-game winning streak, still screaming for help

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio - This isn't a winning streak, it's a cry for help.

The Indians have won three straight games, but because of cold weather and a team-wide slump, they've recorded just four hits in each of those games. In the last two nights, they've beaten the Tigers, 2-1 and 2-0, respectively. On Sunday, they beat the Royals, 3-1.

They are 6-5 overall and have yet to score more than six runs or reach 10 hits in a game. Out of the 30 teams who call the big leagues home, the Indians are the only one without a 10-hit game.

The 2017 Indians cranked out 10-hit games in their sleep. They had 59 of them, going 51-8.

The current Indians are hitting .158 (55-for-349). Not only is it the lowest batting average in the big leagues, the Indians are the only team not hitting .200 or better as a team.

They rank 14th out of 15 AL teams in runs with 31. Seattle is in 13th place with 32 runs and the Royals are in last place with 26 runs. But Seattle and the Royals have played only eight games apiece compared to 11 by the Indians.

"The pitching has saved us," said manager Terry Francona.

The Indians team ERA is 2.99. The Indians are averaging 2.82 runs per game. But Francona should not overlook his defense and power.

The Indians beat Detroit on Tuesday thanks to Robert Perez's game-winning homer in the eighth inning. Jose Ramirez supplied their first run with a homer in the first.

They beat the Tigers on Monday, 2-0, on Bradley Zimmer's two-run homer in the fifth. In Sunday's 3-1 victory over the Royals, Yan Gomes did the honors with a walk-off, two-run homer in the ninth.

In their six wins, 16 of the Indians' 22 runs have been scored on homers.

The offensive slump has made every game a tight fit. The Indians have played seven games decided by one run and two decided by two runs.

"It doesn't leave much room for error," said Francona.

Tyler Naquin and Rajai Davis are the only players hitting .200 or better.

"I know it's early in the season," said Perez, hitting .182 (2-for-11) , "but we're capable of scoring more runs than just one or two a game. It's nice to see the pitching staff carry us throughout this slump. We've just got to come back on Wednesday and take good at-bats. One at-bat at a time. We're going to get out of this."

Josh Tomlin and five relievers held the Tigers to one run on six hits Tuesday. Corey Kluber and Andrew Miller tamed the Tigers on Monday with a two-hit shutout. On Sunday, Mike Clevinger, Tyler Olson and Cody Allen scattered 10 hits, but held the Royals to one run.

"Tip the cap to the pitchers," said second baseman Jason Kipnis. "They're the ones who are doing great. We've got five starters who can go out every night and you feel like they give you a chance to win. Right now, especially when the bats are cold, they're the ones pulling on the rope the most. And we're following their lead."

Kipnis, hitting .098 and in a 0-for-20 skid, said that soon the offense will grab hold of the rope as well.

"We know it's not always going to be like this," he said. "Guys are going to start hitting."

Until then it helps to play defense like Kipnis and shortstop Francisco Lindor did Tuesday. After Kipnis failed to catch a throw from Perez on a steal of second by Victor Reyes in the seventh to set up Detroit's tying run, he ended the inning and prevented the go-ahead run from scoring when he made sliding stop behind second base on Miguel Cabrera's grounded and threw him out at first.

Kipnis started the eighth inning with almost the exact same play against Nicholas Castellanos. Lindor followed with a diving stop on the outfield grass at short to throw out Victor Martinez.

"You giveth and you taketh," said Kipnis. "You give 'em a run and you take one back. . . And I know I missed the ball, but like I said, I'm happy I played through it."

Now if the Indians can just find someone to hit the ball with regularity.

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Shane Bieber shuts down Binghamton in Akron RubberDucks win

By Cliff Pinckard,

BINGHAMTON, New York -- Right-hander Shane Bieber struck out eight in seven scoreless innings as the Akron RubberDucks cruised to a 5-1 win Tuesday over the Rumble Ponies.

Bieber gave up just four hits in getting his first win of the season. In two starts, Bieber has pitched 13 scoreless innings and struck out 17 with no walks.

Binghamton starter Joseph Shaw (0-1, 6.00 ERA) was able to hang with Bieber through five innings, but the RubberDucks took control in the sixth with four runs.

Sicnarf Loopstok started the inning off with a single to Rumble Ponies left fielder Tim Tebow, the former NFL quarterback. Sam Haggerty walked, but he was thrown out on a grounder by Tyler Krieger that moved Loopstok to third.

Krieger stole second, then Andrew Calica loaded the bases by drawing a walk.

With two outs, Willi Castro singled to bring in two runs. Mark Mathias tripled to bring in two more runs. Mathias finished 2-for-3 with two RBI.

Joe Sever hit and RBI double in the eighth to give Akron a 5-0 lead.

Tebow finished 0-for-4 with two strikeouts.

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Josh Tomlin resurfaces, Jose Ramirez, Roberto Perez homer as Cleveland Indians beat Tigers, 2-1

By Paul Hoynes

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Most of manager Terry Francona's offense is still listed among the missing through the first 11 games of the season, but at least the real Josh Tomlin punched in at Progressive Field on Tuesday night.

Yes, it's still cold. Yes, most of the ballplayers are still wearing ski masks on defense to stay warm and yes the Indians are continuing to make the most out of their meager offense.

Jose Ramirez and Roberto Perez homered and Tomlin and the bullpen were at their stingiest in a 2-1 victory over Detroit at Progressive Field. The Indians have won three straight games and own a winning record (6-5) for the first time this season.

Perez, whose throwing error in the seventh led to Detroit's only run, gave the Indians the lead with a leadoff homer in the eighth off Alex Wilson's 2-0 pitch. Tiger lefty Matthew Boyd held the Indians to one run over seven innings, but was lifted after 102 pitches.

Roberto Perez on his game-winning homer for Cleveland Indians

Andrew Miller earned the win with a scoreless eighth and Cody Allen pitched the ninth for his third save.

Tomlin, in his last start, allowed eight runs on eight hits in three innings against the Angels. Four of the eight hits were home runs and six of the runs crossed the plate in the first inning. So the objectives for Tomlin on Tuesday night were simple - keep the ball in the park and reduce the damage in the first.

He checked both boxes, but still had to pitch his way around a first-inning double by Jeimer Candelario and a walk by Nicholas Castellanos. Tomlin, whose start was pushed back two days because of a sore back, threw five scoreless innings, stranding seven runners in the process.

"The first couple innings were tough," said Francona. "There was traffic all over the place. Fortunately, he made some really good pitches and then I thought he got into a pretty good rhythm.

"There were just so many pitches through the first three innings to get through it."

Tomlin allowed four hits with two walks and three strikeouts. He pitched out of a bases-loaded jam in the third and retired the side in order just once. He was at 97 pitches after five and the bullpen was summoned.

Asked what it felt like to throw a scoreless first inning after what happened at Angel Stadium, Tomlin said, "It was more like a sigh (of relief). Like, 'OK, settle down and get back to work and try to grind through as many innings as you can.'"

Cleveland Indians Josh Tomlin shows improvement vs Tigers

Zach McAllister pitched a scoreless sixth, but the Tigers tied the score, 1-1, in the seventh. Tyler Olson started the inning by allowing a single for Victor Reyes' first big-league hit, a grounder off the glove of Jason Kipnis at second base.

Olson struck out Dixon Machado, but not before Reyes stole second and went to third on Perez's second throwing error of the year. Francona checked with plate umpire Laz Diaz to see if Machado had interfered with Perez, but Diaz didn't see it that way.

"I thought he did interfere with me," said Perez, "but that's no excuse. I just made a bad throw."

Perez's throw skipped past Kipnis' glove on the short hop and left him upset.

"I completely whiffed on the short hop," said Kipnis. "It's a play that should have been made 100 percent of the time. I could have kept my head down, crawled under a rock and been mad. Or I could keep playing defense and try to make the next play."

That's just what Kipnis did.

Dan Otero relieved and struck out pinch-hitter JaCoby Jones, but allowed a double to Candelario - his third of the game - to make it 1-1. Miguel Cabrera followed with a grounder headed for center field, but Kipnis made a skidding stop behind the bag and threw out Cabrera to save a run and end the inning.

"To me there's no an option," said Kipnis. "You just have to keep playing. You screwed up and it's embarrassing. But one way to get through it is to make that next play."

Terry Francona on Indians pitching, defense carrying struggling offense

Boyd, who deserved better, allowed one run on three hits in seven innings. He struck out four and walked one.

What it means

The Indians are 6-5, but still rank 14th in runs scored in the American League. In their three-game winning streak, they have managed to get just four hits per game.

The pitches

Tomlin threw 98 pitches, 59 (60 percent) for strikes. Boyd threw 102 pitches, 64 (63 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Tigers and Indians drew 10,078 fans to Progressive Field on Tuesday night. First pitch was at 6:11 p.m. with a temperature of 40 degrees.

Next

Right-hander Carlos Carrasco (2-0, 5.40) will face the Tigers' Jordan Zimmerman (0-0, 8.71) on Wednesday night in the third game of this series at Progressive Field. SportsTime Ohio and WMMS/FM 100.7 will carry the game.

Carrasco is coming off a victory over the Royals in the home opener on Friday. He's 10-7 with a 3.88 ERA in 25 appearances against Detroit. Last year he went 4-1 with a 1.82 ERA against the Tigers.

Zimmerman is coming off a no-decision against the White Sox. He's 0-4 with a 10.88 ERA in five starts against the Indians.

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Terry Francona and Victor Martinez are forever joined at the heart after cardiac procedures in 2017

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- If anybody associated with the Cleveland Indians can empathize with Detroit slugger Victor Martinez these days, it's Tribe manager Terry Francona.

Martinez missed the final month of the 2017 season after undergoing a cardiac ablation procedure in September, the same type of procedure Francona endured when he missed six games around the All-Star break.

Francona, who managed Martinez for parts of two seasons (2009-10) in Boston, said Tuesday that he spoke to the ex-Indians catcher last year when the two were walking out of the ballpark together.

"I think he's so special to everybody around here," Francona said. "But he says he feels great. So that's good. I certainly don't want him to get a bunch of hits and beat us, but he's such a great kid."

Martinez registered the second-lowest batting average of his career in 2017, striking out 63 times while driving in the fewest runs in his career (47) during a season with more than 100 games played. Entering Tuesday's game, he was hitting .292 with two doubles and five RBI in 24 at-bats.

Asked whether or not he is surprised that Martinez continues to hit at a high level in his 16th big league season, Francona credited the Venezuelan-born star for continuing to work at his craft.

"As long as he's healthy, he's just a really gifted hitter," Francona said. "He's not going to get a lot of infield hits. But he's been a good hitter from both sides of the plate for a long time."

Mejia progressing in the outfield

Indians top prospect Francisco Mejia is splitting time at catcher and left field for Class AAA Columbus through the Clippers' first four games.

Mejia was behind the plate for the team's season opener at Indianapolis on Friday and has alternated playing left field in subsequent starts. He is hitting .263 with a double and three RBI in 19 at-bats for the Clippers, who face Louisville in game two of a three-game series on Tuesday.

"It's a work in progress, which we knew," Francona said of Mejia's foray into the outfield. "I don't know that you can go from being a catcher to being a Gold Glove outfielder. But as long as he's willing to try it and put the work in -- which he is -- it just opens up maybe more avenues for him to get to the major leagues."

Francona said there are no questions about Mejia's arm in left field, and that the biggest thing he needs to work on is playing fly balls off the bat.

"Your first step, making sure you're going in the right direction and not coming straight up," Francona said. "But repetition will be the best thing for him."

Encarnacion out and about

Count Francona among those amused by Edwin Encarnacion's modest gaffe in the top of the seventh inning Monday. The Tribe first baseman started jogging off the field after catching a flip from Corey Kluber to retire Martinez with the second out of the inning.

"It's funny, but it's not funny if you forget the outs too often," Francona joked.

Monday marked Encarnacion's first start in the field in 2018. Teammate Francisco Lindor appeared to have the most fun with Encarnacion following the miscue.

"I told him 'there's two outs, two outs, buddy,'" Lindor said. "Just because it's cold doesn't mean we play two outs per inning. He was running off quick."

Mickey's so fine

Former Indians pitching coach Mickey Callaway, now managing the New York Mets, had his team sitting atop the National League East Division with an 8-1 record entering Tuesday's game against Miami.

New York pitchers lead the NL with a 2.25 team earned run average and .205 opponent batting average. The Mets are fourth in the league with 98 strikeouts and Jeurys Familia leads all NL closers with five saves.

Francona said he tries to follow his former coaches who are now managing, including Callaway and Kevin Cash.

"I just know they're hot," Francona said of Callaway's Mets. "Regardless of what their record is, I kinda knew Mickey would be successful. He's just so good at what he does, whether it's a pitching coach, manager, he's one of those guys that's pretty gifted. With his skill set, he can do whatever he wants."

Callaway served five seasons as Cleveland's pitching coach under Francona. In 2017, the Indians led the majors in team ERA (3.30), strikeouts (1,614), strikeouts per nine innings (10.1) and Wins Above Replacement (31.7), according to Fangraphs. Under Callaway, Tribe pitchers led the AL in strikeouts each of the past four seasons.

Dreaming of Puerto Rico

Count Francona among those looking forward to next week's two-game trip to play Minnesota in Puerto Rico from April 17-18. That excitement goes beyond simply the opportunity to escape the bitter Cleveland cold for a few days.

The Tribe's skipper says the trip will present unique opportunities, particularly for the Indians' native Puerto Rican players and staff.

"For Frankie (Lindor), Roberto (Perez) and Sandy (Alomar), it will be really special," Francona said. "It'll be fun."

Lindor will host a youth clinic at his former elementary school for 250 kids in Gurabo, P.R. during the trip. Twins outfielder Eddie Rosario will also take part in an outreach program, and a charity golf event will benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Puerto Rico.

But Francona cautioned against getting too wrapped up in extracurriculars during the trip.

"You gotta remember that they're not exhibition games," he said. "Sometimes you get in that atmosphere. ... But, I think it's good for baseball and I think our guys will enjoy it."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 04.11.2018

Indians have built a support system of pitching and defense to overcome their sluggish offensive start

By T.J. Zuppe 3h ago 1

Jason Kipnis was still fuming.

The veteran infielder had failed to successfully snag a short-hop throw from Roberto Perez, a toss that would have been in time to nail Víctor Reyes on an attempted steal of second. Instead, the ball skipped by the Indians' second baseman, allowing Reyes to scamper to third and eventually score on Jeimer Candelario's RBI double, tying the game Tuesday.

While others would have been looking for a nearby hole to crawl into, Kipnis channeled that frustration into his desire for another opportunity.

"To me, it's not even an option," Kipnis said. "You just gotta keep playing. You fucked up and it sucks. And it's embarrassing. But one way to get through it and get past it is to make the next play."

He wouldn't have to wait long to get that chance.

Miguel Cabrera, the future Hall of Fame slugger, slapped a pitch from Dan Otero back up the middle. Kipnis ranged to the shortstop side of the bag and began to slide feet-first toward the bouncing ball. In one fluid motion, he snagged the grounder, popped to his feet and managed enough arm strength to toss a one-hopper toward first baseman Yonder Alonso.

The relay beat Cabrera to the bag. The go-ahead run was stranded at third.

Kipnis' fancy pop-up would earn an encore presentation just one inning later. He would complete the nearly identical play, this time robbing Nick Castellanos of a base hit in the eighth.

"You giveth and you taketh," Kipnis said. "Freakin', you give 'em a run and then you take one back. If I'm going to give them one, at least I'll keep it right there and not give them another one. Yeah. And I know I missed the ball, but like I said, I'm happy I played through it."

Lately, the Indians haven't had much margin for error, needing those sorts of defensive gems to maintain an advantage.

Their offense is scuffling more than any other group in baseball. The reasons for those struggles are many, but the bad luck and cold weather that have contributed to the lack of production don't add any sort of asterisk to the rankings.

All of the logic that indicates they'll eventually emerge from their doldrums doesn't change their need to score at least one more run than the opposition every night. And the other side doesn't really care if the baseball gods haven't been fair.

But somehow, despite owning a team slash line of [covers the eyes of any young children] .158/.252/.284 and possessing baseball's lowest run-creation rate — holy crap, it's 49 percent below league average?! — their 2-1 victory over the Tigers on Tuesday night lifted them a game above .500 (6-5).

So, let's ask the obvious question ... uhhh how?

Defense like Kipnis' strong showing Tuesday night represents part of the equation. As for the rest?

"We've got five starters who can go out every night and feel like they give you a chance to win," Kipnis said. "Right now, especially when the bats are cold, they're the ones pulling the most on the rope right now. And we're following their lead. Because we know it's not always going to be like this. Guys are going to start hitting."

He's right about that. Probably.

Baseball's weird enough that it's wise to avoid dealing in absolutes.

That said, there's too much talent within the lineup to expect this to continue forever. But in the meantime, without much support at all, Tribe pitching has managed to navigate the minefields that are close, low-scoring games.

Four of the club's victories have come when the offense has recorded four-or-fewer hits. Tuesday also was the first time in the 111 recorded seasons in franchise history that they've won three games in a row with no more than four hits in each game, according to MLB.com.

Little margin for error? Try none.

"Our pitching staff has kind of saved the day," Terry Francona said. "And it's not just pitching good, but it's, every game has been one run, so there's not a lot of margin for error. That's probably the understatement of the year. They've done a really good job."

Tribe pitching ranks ninth in overall earned run average (2.99). Their rotation ERA (3.03) is now sixth-best in the majors. That number is slightly skewed by Josh Tomlin's season debut, an outing in which he gave up eight runs against the Angels and battled a balky back last week.

The group has posted a 2.07 ERA in the 10 other games.

Furthermore, they've allowed just five runs total over the first five games of the opening homestand. And with bats still stuck in the freezer, they've needed every bit of that pitching — coupled with defense like Kipnis' smooth run-saving attempts, Francisco Lindor's diving stop, Bradley Zimmer's strong throw or Yan Gomes' control of the running game — all to make the best of a seemingly unwinnable situation.

(Of course, playing the rebuilding Royals and Tigers helps, too.)

"I think we take a lot of pride in both sides of the ball having each other's back," Tomlin said after tossing five scoreless innings. "We starters go out there and have a bad one, the bullpen is looking forward to getting in there and picking up the slack, or the offense is looking to picking up the slack and vice versa.

"That's kind of the culture and the team that we've had here for quite a while now. We all take a little bit of pride in doing whatever we can to win that day, regardless of who's struggling. Offensively, defensively, pitching, whatever the case may be, as long as we're one-run better at the end of the game, that's all we really care about."

With the elements, luck and maybe a little frustration all seemingly fighting against the offense, every run scored has felt like an event, the culmination of an uphill battle, the reward for enduring an endless struggle.

It was no different after Roberto Perez's solo homer in the eighth. Despite following the vapor trail of so many other failed deep flies, the 110 mph screamer to the right-center field gap reluctantly cleared the wall, handing Cody Allen a one-run advantage in the ninth.

Perez returned to the dugout like the triumphant hero, the returning warrior after an epic win on the battlefield. He was greeted by José Ramírez, who embraced the catcher with a hug from behind, a meeting of the club's solo homer duo from Tuesday night.

In the midst of their collective struggles, the dugout has become their support group. The only elements missing are the underwhelming coffee and stale donuts in the back.

"Right now, man, we're supporting each other, man," Perez said. "We're just trying to score runs. We're capable of scoring more than one run a game. But, that's baseball, man. Baseball is crazy."

Crazy enough that the two worst offenses in baseball, according to the numbers, have been two of the best teams in the game — the Indians and Dodgers. Just as we all predicted.

"They're trying to weather this," Francona said. "They're playing good defense, and they're staying after it. It'll change."

Indians notes: Corey Kluber off to dominating start in any weather

Chris Assenheimer | **Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** | **Published on April 10, 2018** | **Updated 3:56 a. m.**

CLEVELAND — Pitchers normally have the advantage in the cold, but the way Indians ace Corey Kluber has started the season he'd be dominant in any weather.

Kluber, a notorious slow starter, has allowed only four runs and 11 hits over his first three outings. The two-time and reigning Cy Young award winner has struck out 27 over 23 innings.

"He usually tries to find his way a little bit and then he'll turn it up," said catcher Yan Gomes, who was behind the plate for Kluber's latest gem Monday night — no runs, two hits and 13 strikeouts over eight innings. "He's ready to go from the get-go. You saw it in spring (training). You saw the way he was doing things in spring. I think we're starting to see with our pitching staff, these guys are on a mission, man. They're trying to really set the table to keep it going throughout the year."

Kluber has gotten off to slow starts in each of the past two years, dealing with a lower-back issue last season that sidelined him for a month. But when he's healthy, the Indians know what they are going to get from the right-hander.

"I expect him to give us his best," shortstop Francisco Lindor. "That's what he does day in and day out. And his best is usually top two in the league. We're just happy that he's healthy and helping us win. We don't take it for granted for sure."

Kluber celebrated his 32nd birthday Tuesday.

Counted out(s)

First baseman Edwin Encarnacion mistakenly thought there were three outs in the seventh inning Monday night and began to run off the field after the second out had been recorded.

"I told him, 'There's two outs, two outs, buddy. I know it's cold, but we've got to wait. Just because it's cold doesn't mean we play two outs per inning,'" Lindor joked. "He was running off quick. 'Where are you going, man? There's only two.'

"You've got to have fun. It's a job, but at the same time, it's a kid's game. I'd much rather be doing this than something else."

"I think you can tell, just by the way guys react to him, they really enjoy him," manager Terry Francona said of the veteran Encarnacion. "You could tell he was embarrassed. It's one of those things where even Kluber was laughing."

Cleveland's primary designated hitter, Encarnacion made his first start of the season at first Monday.

"He's not out there a whole lot, so we'll give him a pass on that one," center fielder Bradley Zimmer said.

Mickey's Mets

Former Indians pitching coach Mickey Callaway, now manager of the Mets, has his team off to a fast start as winners of eight of its first nine games.

"Who knows how they (finish). Regardless of what their record is, I kinda knew Mickey would be successful," Francona said. "He's just so good at what he does, whether it's a pitching coach, manager, he's one of those guys that's pretty gifted. He can, with his skill set, he can do whatever he wants."

Francona's son Nick is assistant director of player personnel for the Mets.

"He said that the enthusiasm that (Callaway's) brought has been terrific," Francona said.

Special event

Once their 10-game homestand is complete, the Indians will travel to Puerto Rico to play Central Division rival Minnesota in a two-game series, April 17-18.

Francona said he's looking forward to the road trip.

"I think for (Puerto Rico natives) Frankie, Roberto (Perez) and (first base coach) Sandy (Alomar), it will be really special," he said. "I think they're trying to do some things in the community, things like that. I think it'll be fun. Again, you gotta remember that they're not exhibition games, 'cause sometimes you get in that atmosphere ... but I think it's good for baseball and I think our guys will enjoy it."

Mejia moment

The Indians are experimenting with prized catching prospect Francisco Mejia in the outfield at Triple-A Columbus. Francona said he expects him to play 2-3 times per week at the new position.

"It's a work in progress, which we knew," Francona said. "I don't know that you can go from being a catcher to being a Gold Glove outfielder. But as long as he's willing to try it and put the work in, which he is, it just opens up maybe more avenues for him to get to the major leagues."

Hitting has never been an issue for Mejia, who made his major league debut last year. He batted .297 with 14 home runs and 52 RBIs in 92 games in his first season at the Double-A level. But relocating to the outfield likely won't come as easy for the 22-year-old Dominican.

"He has a tremendous arm. That's not going to be an issue anywhere," Francona said. "Balls off the bat, you can take all the drills you want. And he does. But balls off the bat are probably the hardest thing. Your first step, making sure you're going in the right direction. Not coming straight up. But repetition will be the best thing for him."

Roundin' third

The Indians entered Tuesday with the lowest batting average in the majors (.158). Cleveland reached double digits in hits 59 times last year, but were the only team in the majors yet to do that through Monday.

** Tigers pitching coach Chris Bosio missed Tuesday's game with a health issue but could be back tonight, according to manager Ron Gardenhire.

A little offense goes a long way: Indians held to four hits, but two home runs and stellar pitching produce win over Tigers

Chris Assenheimer By **Chris Assenheimer** | **The Chronicle-Telegram** Published on **April 10, 2018** | Updated **6:38 a. m.**

CLEVELAND — It was another quiet night for the offense, but the Indians made the most of the hits they produced under more chilly conditions at Progressive Field.

Cleveland collected only four hits against Central Division rival Detroit on Tuesday, but two of them cleared the fence, and with another stifling effort from the pitching staff, that was enough to lift the Indians to a 2-1 victory.

Jose Ramirez hit his second home run in the opening inning and after the Tigers tied it with a run in the seventh, Roberto Perez went deep to lead off the eighth.

The Indians, who won their third straight, have done little at the plate for much of the season, owning the worst batting average in the majors at .158. But they are still a game over .500 and leading the division.

"Our pitching staff has kind of saved the day," manager Terry Francona said. "And it's not just pitching good, but it's ... every game has been one run ... so there's not a lot of margin for error. That's probably the understatement of the year. They've done a really good job."

"It means we've got some pretty darn good pitching and some good defense," second baseman Jason Kipnis said.

"Tip the cap to the pitchers. They're the ones who are doing great. We've got five starters who can go out every night and (we) feel like they give you a chance to win.

"Right now, especially when the bats are cold, they're the ones pulling the most on the rope right now. And we're following their lead. Because we know it's not always going to be like this. Guys are going to start hitting."

Pitching and defense were both on display Tuesday, starting with right-hander Josh Tomlin, who bounced back from a brutal debut outing in Anaheim, Calif.

Tomlin, who dealt with a back issue in a 13-2 loss to the Angels, shut out Detroit on four hits over five innings.

"I felt a lot better," said Tomlin, who allowed eight runs on eight hits (four homers) in only three innings his first time out. "The command still probably isn't where it needs to be or where I want it to be, but it was close enough and we were able to get a win. We played good defense all night long, had good at-bats, strung some good at-bats together and got the big hit in the end. So today was a good day."

Though the Indians made a number of fielding gems throughout the game, it was an error that led to Detroit's game-tying run.

Tyler Olson struck out Dixon Machado and Cleveland had Victor Reyes nailed on a stolen base attempt, but Kipnis wasn't able to handle the throw from Perez that skipped in front of him and into center field, allowing Reyes to advance to third.

Dan Otero struck out pinch hitter JaCoby Jones, but Jeimer Candelario followed with his third double past a diving Ramirez at third to make it 1-all.

Perez was charged with the error, but Kipnis took the blame and atoned immediately, saving a run on a sliding play in the hole to get Miguel Cabrera and end the inning. Kipnis started the eighth with a similar play to rob Nicholas Castellanos before shortstop Francisco Lindor followed with his second highlight-reel play to retire Victor Martinez.

"When you miss a play that should be made like that — (I) just completely whiffed on the short hop on it — I could keep my head down, crawl under a rock and be (ticked) off, or I could keep playing defense and try to make the next play," Kipnis said. "To me, it's not even an option. You just gotta keep playing. You (messed) up and it (stinks). And it's embarrassing. But one way to get through it and get past it is to make the next play. I was happy the ball was hit to me right after that."

It was another case of one part of the team picking up a different department for the Indians, something they've had to do to stay afloat with a struggling offense.

"I think we take a lot of pride in both sides of the ball having each other's back," Tomlin said. "We starters go out there and have a bad one, the bullpen is looking forward to getting in there and picking up the slack, or the offense is looking to picking up the slack and vice versa."

"That's kind of the culture and the team that we've had here for quite a while now. We all take a little bit of pride in doing whatever we can to win that day, regardless of who's struggling. Offensively, defensively, pitching, whatever the case may be, as long as we're one run better at the end of the game, that's all we really care about."

"They're trying to weather this," Francona said. "They're playing good defense and they're staying after it. It'll change."

Indians find ways to win despite anemic hitting | Jeff Schudel

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

The Indians have the lowest batting average in the major leagues after 11 games, and it isn't even close.

Instead of fretting, the players are taking the attitude that once they weather this storm, there will be warmer days ahead, literally and figuratively, because despite hitting just .158 as a team, the Indians at 6-5 were in first place in the A.L. Central after nipping the Tigers, 2-1, on another frigid night at Progressive Field.

Solo home runs by Jose Ramirez and Roberto Perez, plus stellar pitching, made the Indians winners for the third straight game. They totaled seven runs and allowed only two in those three games.

"I think it shows there are many ways we can win a ballgame," Indians first baseman Yonder Alonso said. "I think early in the year to gets wins like this is pivotal and very positive because you understand you can still get the job done."

"We're winning games right now with obviously our defense and our pitching. No question about it, but I think eventually this will turn and we'll hit pretty well."

The Indians had fewer than five hits 17 times last season and won only one of those games (3-2 over Kansas City on Sept. 17 with three hits). They have now won four games on the current homestand and in each of them had exactly four hits. So at least they're economical. Ramirez, a career .275 hitter, started this season 2-for-33. He showed signs April 9 he was breaking out of his early slump with one hit and two walks, and then in his first at-bat April 10 ripped a 1-1 pitch over the wall in left for a 1-0 Indians lead. The line drive looked like a comet off his bat.

Ramirez hustled down the first-base line on a grounder in the hole at shortstop in the fourth for his and the Indians' second hit of the game.

Perez was hitless in nine at-bats before facing the Tigers. He ended the drought with a single to left in the fifth inning and then broke a 1-1 tie by smashing the ball over the fence in right center on a 2-0 pitch in the eighth. Closer Cody Allen took care of the rest.

"The advantage goes to the pitcher in cold weather," said Rajai Davis, who started in center field for the Indians on April 10. "You have that in the back of your mind sometimes. If you don't hit it right, it might sting for a while."

"You try to not let that fear creep in, but you just have to deal with it. You try to focus pitch by pitch, moment by moment. Anytime you focus on anything external, you've lost."

Stellar infield defense by Francisco Lindor and Jason Kipnis helped hold the Tigers to one run.

Pitching, defense and timely albeit sparse hitting is taking the Indians through a tough stretch.

"We take pride in having each other's back," April 10 starter Josh Tomlin said. "If the starters have a bad one, the bullpen is looking forward to getting in there and picking up the slack. Or the offense is looking forward to picking up the slack and vice versa. That's the culture and the team we've had here for quite a while, now."

Good teams find ways to win in difficult times, and that is what the Indians are doing early in the season.

Perez's homer in 8th leads Indians past Tigers, 2-1

By STEVE HERRICK, Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Roberto Perez hit a leadoff home run in the eighth inning against reliever Alex Wilson, lifting the Cleveland Indians over the Detroit Tigers 2-1 on Tuesday night.

Perez belted a 2-0 pitch to center field that landed in the seats in front of the bullpen to give Cleveland its ninth straight win over Detroit. The Indians are 29-10 against the Tigers since the start of the 2016 season.

Jose Ramirez's two-out homer in the first put Cleveland ahead, a lead that lasted until Jeimer Candelario's seventh-inning double. It was Detroit's first run in 23 innings.

Andrew Miller (1-0) pitched a scoreless eighth. Cody Allen worked the ninth for his third save.

Indians starter Josh Tomlin bounced back from a rocky outing in his first start with five strong innings. Matthew Boyd allowed one run in seven innings for Detroit.

Wilson (0-2) came in to start the eighth and quickly fell behind Perez. The Cleveland catcher made amends for a throwing error in the seventh with his go-ahead homer.

Cleveland is batting a major-league low .158 but has won its last three games via the long ball. Yan Gomes hit a game-ending two-run homer Sunday against Kansas City, and Bradley Zimmer had a two-run homer Monday night.

Candelario had three doubles and was hit by a pitch. The Tigers hadn't scored since the first inning Sunday against the Chicago White Sox. Corey Kluber and Miller combined on a two-hit shutout Monday.

Victor Reyes, a Rule 5 draft selection from Arizona, led off the seventh with a single for his first major league hit. Reyes stole second as Dixon Machado struck out and took third when Perez's throw to second baseman Jason Kipnis was in the dirt and bounced into center field.

Dan Otero struck out pinch-hitter JaCoby Jones, but Candelario's sharp grounder over third base tied it.

Tomlin lasted only three innings in first start against the Angels, allowing eight runs, including four homers. He experienced back soreness in that game and had his turn in the rotation pushed back a day.

Detroit left the bases loaded in the third when Niko Goodrum tapped back to Tomlin to end the inning.

Tigers pitching coach Chris Bosio missed the game because of a health issue. Manager Ron Gardenhire said Bosio was undergoing tests Tuesday, a day after he didn't feel well.

HEAT WAVE

The game-time temperature of 40 degrees was a big improvement over the blustery conditions the previous three days. The teams played in 33 degree weather Monday night. Sunday's 32 degree first-pitch temperature against Kansas City set a Progressive Field record while Saturday's game-time mark was 34 degrees.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: Tigers RHP Buck Farmer (left hip) was available, but Gardenhire said he would only use him in an emergency. Farmer was removed in the seventh inning Monday after experiencing a spasm.

UP NEXT

Tigers RHP Jordan Zimmermann (0-0, 8.71 ERA) takes on Indians RHP Carlos Carrasco (2-0, 5.40 ERA). Zimmermann has faced Cleveland five times in his career, posting a 0-4 record with a 10.88 ERA.

Bats 7, Clippers 1 | Tyler Goeddel of Louisville roughs up Clippers

Tyler Goeddel of the Louisville Bats took advantage of a couple of Clippers miscues and a shaky bullpen effort on Tuesday night, scoring the go-ahead run and launching a three-run double in a 7-1 win at Slugger Field.

In the fifth inning, Goeddel led off with a walk by Clippers reliever Jack Leathersich (0-1). A throwing error on a Leathersich pickoff attempt put Goeddel in scoring position on second base. After Nick Senzel struck out and Sebastian Elizalde flew out, Goeddel raced home as Clippers left field Richie Shaffer misplayed a ball hit by Patrick Kivlehan.

The ruling was a fielding error, making the run unearned. In talking the loss, Leathersich pitched 1 1/3 innings, allowed no hits, struck out three and walked one.

Goeddel got to the Clippers bullpen again in the eighth. Reliever Louis Head faced Goeddel after loading the bases with two outs by walking D.J. Peterson, allowing a single to Tony Cruz and walking Blake Trahan. Goeddel sent a line drive into right field to give the Bats a 7-1 lead. Clippers starter Alexi Ogando allowed four hits in 3 2/3 innings, walking three and striking out none. He gave up an RBI single to Peterson in second. Leathersich, Head and Neil Ramirez combined to allow three hits and five earned runs.

The Clippers took a 1-0 lead when Yandy Diaz singled home Greg Allen, who led off the first with a double.

Bats starter Justin Nicolino (1-0) allowed just the one run in five innings. He gave up three hits, struck out six and walked three.

'Phenomenal' pitching wasted, Tigers' bats subdued in loss

Chris McCosky, The Detroit News Published 9:08 p.m. ET April 10, 2018 | Updated 5:28 a.m. ET April 11, 2018

Cleveland — Another night of frustration and teeth-gnashing at Progressive Field for the Tigers.

Catcher Roberto Perez, the first batter reliever Alex Wilson faced in the bottom of the eighth inning, bashed a 2-0 pitch over the wall in right-center field, sending the Indians to a 2-1 win over the Tigers Tuesday.

"Our starter was phenomenal, our pitching was — we only gave up two runs," Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said. "But I thought the real big part of the game was they made some defensive plays that just stopped us. We hit some balls right on the barrel and the defense they played was phenomenal.

"We always say pitching and defense wins ballgames. That's what happened tonight."

It was the fourth time in 10 games this season the Tigers have lost a game where they allowed two runs or less. No team in the designated-hitter era has earned that distinction, according to MLB.com.

Wasted was a seven-inning gem by Tigers starter Matthew Boyd. Wasted was a three-double night by Jeimer Candelario. Wasted was the first big-league hit by rookie Victor Reyes.

"It's not really (frustrating)," Candelario said. "We were making good contact. All you can do is hit the ball on the barrel and whatever happens happens. We just have to keep coming after it and try to win a ballgame."

Boyd allowed three hits. The only one that hurt was a two-out solo home run in the first inning by Jose Ramirez.

"Just one mistake early," Boyd said. "I tried to drive the ball in on him and it ran back to the middle. I made it pretty easy for him to drive it."

For six innings, that 1-0 lead felt insurmountable. After being shut out by Corey Kluber on Monday, the Tigers were working with a 23-inning scoreless streak.

Finally, though, they scratched a run across.

It started with Reyes' first big-league hit, a single to right field. He stole second and went to third on an errant throw by Perez.

After Dixon Machado and pinch-hitter JaCoby Jones struck out, Candelario slapped a double inside the bag at third.

"I saw this guy (reliever Dan Otero) throw a lot of two-seamers," Candelario said. "So, I don't want to pull this guy. I tell myself to stay middle or the other way. Thank God he threw that two-seamer away and I was able to put a good swing on it."

It looked like the Tigers were going to take the lead. Next up, Miguel Cabrera, who had an RBI single denied by a diving play by shortstop Francisco Lindor in the first inning, hit a ball up the middle.

Second baseman Jason Kipnis ranged to the shortstop side of the bag, made a sliding stop and threw Cabrera out.

Kipnis made another diving play to take a hit from Nick Castellanos to start the eighth and Lindor followed with his second hit-stealing play on Victor Martinez.

That was as close as the Tigers came to scoring again, as Andrew Miller and Cody Allen locked the doors in the eighth and ninth — six straight outs.

More:Henning: It's OK to enjoy Tigers' feel-good start while it lasts

That hit by Candelario not only broke the scoreless innings streak, it snapped an 0-for-10 drought with runners in scoring position.

"We left eight runners on base," Gardenhire said. "We have to do a better job in those situations."

The Tigers had Indians starter Josh Tomlin on the ropes in the first three innings and couldn't knock him out. They went 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position in those three innings.

In the first, doubled with one out but was stranded at second when Cabrera and Victor Martinez both grounded out.

Second inning, Niko Goodrum, starting at shortstop in place of Jose Iglesias, singled and daringly tagged on a medium-depth fly out to center by James McCann. He challenged the arm of Rajai Davis.

The ball beat him to the base, but Goodrum eluded the tag of Jason Kipnis with a swim move. He was initially called out, but the call was overturned.

He was stranded when Reyes was called out on strikes and Machado grounded out.

The Tigers loaded the bases in the third, but after a lengthy battle, Goodrum bounced back to the mound to end the inning.

Candelario hit his second double of the game, a shot down the right-field line, with one out in the fifth. But Cabrera grounded out and Nick Castellanos struck out.

"You've got to stay even all the time," Candelario said. "You always come to the park and expect to win. That's what we will do tomorrow."

The Tigers have now lost nine straight to the Indians, scoring three runs or less in all of those games.

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