

FAQs Indians face as they head to playoffs

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

The Indians took a depleted roster into the playoffs two years ago and still found a way to cruise to an American League pennant. Cleveland looked like a powerhouse last season and was then bounced from the October stage after one round.

There is a heightened sense of unfinished business for this year's Tribe, which captured the American League Central crown for the third consecutive campaign. While the path to the division title may have been easy given the current state of the Central, Cleveland dealt with a variety of issues that are finally being ironed out as the AL Division Series approaches.

"Our record, we might not have as many wins as what we had in those previous years," Indians general manager Mike Chernoff said. "But, it does feel like over the past several weeks, we've seen a lot of things come together in ways that we hadn't seen for the majority of the season. So, we do feel like we're sort of on an upward trajectory heading to the postseason."

As the ALDS looms, here are some FAQs on the Indians' situation:

Q: What are the dates for the ALDS and where can I watch the games?

A: Games 1 and 2 of the ALDS will be on Friday and Saturday. Game 3 in Cleveland is scheduled for Oct. 8, following an off-day. If necessary, Game 4 in Cleveland would be Oct. 9 and Game 5 would follow on Oct. 11 at Houston. All of the ALDS games will be televised by TBS, and will be available to MLB.TV subscribers who are authenticated subscribers to TBS through a participating pay TV provider.

Q: Have the game times been announced?

A: Not yet. Stay tuned.

Q: How have the Indians fared against the Astros this season?

The Indians and Astros squared off seven times between May 18-27, with Houston winning four in the season series. The Indians were outscored, 45-29, in the seven games. Arguably the game of the season for the Tribe was its May 27 tilt against the Astros. Jose Ramirez sparked a five-run rally in the ninth with a 17-pitch battle and rookie Greg Allen belted a walk-off homer in the 14th for a 10-9 win.

Q: How will the Indians handle the four off-days prior to the ALDS?

A: Indians manager Terry Francona said there will be an "extremely optional" workout at Progressive Field on Monday. Then, the team will try to simulate a game-type setting for an intrasquad contest on Tuesday (details to come). Cleveland would then hold another workout at home on Oct. 3 and one more on the road on Thursday.

Q: Who will be in the Indians' rotation?

A: Francona has announced that Corey Kluber will start Game 1, with Carlos Carrasco taking the ball in Game 2. The Game 3 starter comes down to Mike Clevinger or Trevor Bauer, but the Indians have not announced their plans, yet. It is possible that either Clevinger or Bauer will be available out of the bullpen in Game 1 or Game 2 before returning to start Game 4. Those details will become more clear in the coming days.

Q: Last postseason, Cleveland put three starting pitchers in the bullpen. Will the team take a similar approach with the relief corps this year?

A: If the Indians go with a four-man rotation as planned, that probably means there will be seven arms in the bullpen. Francona did say, "Don't assume anything," when asked this weekend if he would field an 11-man staff. Rookie Shane Bieber, Cleveland's fifth starter, will likely be in the bullpen. Bauer, Carrasco and Clevinger might be on call out of the bullpen, depending on the game, series status and their rest situation.

Besides Bieber, the virtual locks are Andrew Miller, Brad Hand, Cody Allen and Oliver Perez. Cleveland would then take likely two from a group including Adam Cimber, Tyler Olson, Dan Otero, Neil Ramirez and Josh Tomlin.

Q: Who will be on Cleveland's bench?

A: If Cleveland features an 11-man pitching staff as anticipated, that would create five bench jobs. Backup catcher Roberto Perez gets one. That leaves four spots for Allen, Rajai Davis, Yandy Diaz, Erik Gonzalez and Brandon Guyer. Gonzalez (a utility man) is the only backup shortstop, but he is currently in MLB's concussion protocol after being hit in the head by a pitch on Sept. 26. The hope is Gonzalez will be cleared to play in Tuesday's intrasquad game with the goal of being ready for the ALDS.

If Gonzalez is carried due to his versatility, and the Indians prioritize speed and defense, then both Allen and Davis could figure into the plans. That would leave one of Diaz and Guyer as the odd man out. If the priority is right-handed bats to face tough lefties, then Diaz and Guyer could both be carried, leaving one of Allen or Davis off the roster.

Q: Will Yan Gomes be recovered in time for the ALDS?

A: Gomes sustained a laceration on his right thumb on Saturday and received two stitches. He did not play Sunday in Kansas City, but the Indians are optimistic that he will be ready for the ALDS. Francona said there is a chance that Gomes will have the stitches removed by mid-week.

Q: Is Josh Donaldson ready to be the everyday third baseman?

A: Donaldson's return from the DL has gone about as well as planned so far. He has built up to playing multiple games in a row and has been tested on the bases and in the field. Other than some rust in the batter's box due to the long layoff from playing, Donaldson has looked fine and poised for an everyday role in the playoffs.

Q: How will the Indians use Allen, Hand and Miller in the playoffs?

A: It's been written before, but it should be emphasized again: Cleveland does not have a closer. The Indians will use Allen, Hand and Miller late in games, depending on the situation and the lineup segment that is due up. Any of the three could appear from the sixth inning on in a postseason setting. Francona has said he likes having an "end point," but I think that could be Allen or Hand. Miller is more likely to be leveraged in the innings prior to the ninth, but he could close, too.

Q: How have Jason Kipnis and Ramirez looked in center field and at second base, respectively?

A: The acquisition of Donaldson pushed Ramirez off third and, in turn, sent Kipnis out to center. Second base is Ramirez's natural position and he has looked fine there, with only a handful of hiccups since shifting off third. Kipnis has taken some adventurous routes in center, but he has looked better as the innings of experience have piled up.

Q: Will Lonnie Chisenhall or Tyler Naquin factor into the postseason plans?

A: Naquin (hip) will join the team this week in Cleveland, where the medical staff will gauge his ability to be a viable insurance option in the event that something goes wrong with the current group of outfielders. Naquin is not expected to be in the ALDS plans, though. Chisenhall (left calf) continues to do baseball activity, but he is not part of the ALDS picture.

Carrasco, Bauer sharp in final ALDS tune-up

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

KANSAS CITY -- As Indians starter Carlos Carrasco worked through his final few Royals batters on Sunday, Tribe pitcher Trevor Bauer fired weighted baseballs into a wall in the visitors' bullpen. It was an unusual, but necessary arrangement, for Cleveland's final regular-season game.

In a 2-1 win at Kauffman Stadium, Carrasco handled the first five innings before Bauer finished things out. It was a reversal in roles from Tuesday, when Bauer started against the White Sox and Carrasco came out of the bullpen. With innings running out in the regular season, the approach served as preparation for the upcoming American League Division Series against the Astros.

"We've done the very best we could," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "We tried to manage some challenges we've had. I think we need a good week of practice, which I think our guys will do, but I think it's time. I think the guys have felt like it for a while. It's kind of like the end of Spring Training. Let's go play."

The AL Central-champion Indians (91-71) tapered the pitch counts of both ace Corey Kluber and Carrasco over the past two days, giving the club's top two starters a lighter workload ahead of the ALDS. Kluber (80 pitches on Saturday) is slated to start Game 1 on Friday, followed by Carrasco (77 pitches on Sunday) in Game 2 on Saturday in Houston.

"I really feel happy," Carrasco said of the Game 2 assignment. "I got experience last year -- Game 3 [of the ALDS] in New York. ... I'm just going to prepare myself the same way I've been doing the whole season."

Cleveland has yet to announce its plans for Game 3, but Bauer's final appearance needed to be factored into the equation prior to making anything official.

Francona said Sunday that the team's plans will be unveiled in the coming days. Cleveland has four days of workouts planned leading up to the ALDS, giving the team time to sort through its scouting reports and roster alignments. The Indians have until Friday morning to put the final touches on its ALDS roster.

"Honestly, I don't think a lot of people are looking at us," Indians third baseman Josh Donaldson said. "You get a lot of talk about New York and Boston. But I think we're going to come in and hopefully surprise some people. I definitely think the talent and ability is here to be able to make a run."

Carrasco held the Royals (58-104) off the board for the first four innings before surrendering two hits, including an RBI single to Meibrys Vilorio, in the fifth. The big right-hander struck out six and walked two in the outing, which put the finishing touches on a strong campaign. Overall, Carrasco went 17-10 with a 3.38 ERA and 231 strikeouts vs. 43 walks in 192 innings.

Bauer ended his stellar season with four innings in Kansas City, tacking two strikeouts onto his 2018 line. The right-hander was a leading contender for the AL Cy Young Award earlier in the summer, but a six-week stint on the disabled list between August and September took a toll on his chances of grabbing any season-end hardware.

In 28 appearances this season, Bauer finished 12-6 with a 2.21 ERA and 221 strikeouts against 57 walks in 175 1/3 innings.

Bauer, who sustained a stress fracture in his right fibula after being hit by a comebacker off the bat of Chicago's Jose Abreu on Aug. 11, made three appearances for Cleveland after being activated. The righty showed no ill effects from the injury, allowing two runs in 9 1/3 innings with seven strikeouts in his bid to rejoin the rotation for the ALDS.

"It was fun watching him come out of the bullpen and kind of pitch like a reliever," Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor said. "First pitch of the game, curveball. So, it's fun. It shows how versatile he is, and I'm looking forward the postseason. Whether he starts or he's in the bullpen, he's going to help us a lot."

In discussing the best-of-five ALDS plans this weekend, Francona has noted that the Indians may want to "maximize their pitching staff against the Astros." That could mean that Bauer or starter Mike Clevinger are deemed available for Game 1 or Game 2 before potentially returning to start for Game 4 (if necessary on Oct. 9), with the other starting Game 3 (Oct. 8). Both pitchers have expressed a willingness to accept any role assigned to them.

"Whatever's best for the team," Bauer said.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Lindor goes deep: Royals left-hander Eric Skoglund sent a 1-0 two-seamer low in the strike zone in the third inning to Lindor, who sent the pitch 110.4 mph out to left field for a leadoff shot in the third inning. The blast was the 38th of the season for the Indians' shortstop, who has 29 homers off righties compared to nine against lefties this season. The home run gave the Tribe a 2-1 advantage.

"Whatever we did in the regular season, nobody cares," Lindor said. "It doesn't matter. Whatever we did in the past is in the past. Now, we're focused on enjoying the plane ride today, enjoying the next couple days and then focus on Houston."

Stealing a run: In the first inning, Lindor reached safely on a dribbler up the first-base line, which Skoglund was unable to field cleanly. The Indians shortstop then stole second and third base. On the second steal (No. 25 on the year for Lindor), Royals third baseman Alcides Escobar could not corral the throw from catcher Salvador Perez. That led to an error that allowed Lindor to trot home for the Tribe's first run of the game.

"When he plays with that energy like that, it's infectious for our whole team," Francona said. "We remind him of that all the time, because so often, as he goes, we go. That's a good thing."

SOUND SMART

Lindor's 129 runs scored move him into the Indians' single-season Top 10 for that category. Earl Averill holds the record with 140 runs in 1931, followed by Roberto Alomar (138 in '99), Tris Speaker (137 in '20), Averill (136 in '36), Grady Sizemore (134 in 2006), Speaker (133 in '23), Kenny Lofton (132 in '96), Manny Ramirez (131 in '99), Charlie Jamieson (130 in '23) and Lindor.

Lindor joins Alfonso Soriano (2002), Larry Walker (1997) and Ellis Burks (1996) as the only players in MLB history to have at least 25 steals, 35 homers, 40 doubles and 125 runs in a single season.

HE SAID IT

"I've been saying it for a couple years now: He's been one of the most exciting young players in the game. For him to be able to continue to evolve as a player, continue to get better and do it on a day-to-day basis, it's pretty special. He affects the game at every level: defense, offense, on the bases. That's what you see with great players, and that's what he does." -- Donaldson, on Lindor

UP NEXT

The Indians will have four days off before heading to Houston for Game 1 of the AL Division Series against the Astros on Friday (game time to be announced) at Minute Maid Park. Kluber (20-7, 2.89 ERA) is slated to start in Game 1. The Astros have not announced their starter, but veteran Justin Verlander (16-9, 2.52 ERA) appears lined up for that day. In his career, Kluber has gone 4-2 with a 3.54 ERA in eight postseason starts.

Tribe optimistic Gomes will play in ALDS

By Jordan Bastian MLB.com @MLBastian

KANSAS CITY -- The Indians feature multiple contenders for both the American League's Cy Young Award and MVP trophy this season. On a talent-rich roster, catcher Yan Gomes does not exhibit the type of flash that steals the spotlight, but he has been a steady source of reliability.

Losing Gomes for an extended period of time would be a tough blow for the AL Central champions, making Sunday's optimistic forecast about the catcher's status a welcomed development in Cleveland's clubhouse. One day after a freak play led to a right hand injury for Gomes, manager Terry Francona said the catcher should be fine for the AL Division Series against the Astros.

"The doctors, trainers and Gomer all think he's going to be OK," Francona said prior to Sunday's regular-season finale against the Royals. "So, that's really good news."

In the third inning of Saturday's 9-4 loss to Kansas City, Gomes attempted a throw to second base when Adalberto Mondesi sprinted away from first. On the play, Alex Gordon swung at the pitch from Tribe ace Corey Kluber, and the Royals outfielder's bat lingered over the plate. On the throw attempt, Gomes' right hand hit the end of the bat at full force, resulting in a laceration and bruising on his thumb.

Gomes initially thought he broke his thumb, but X-rays taken on Saturday night came back negative for any structural damage. The catcher was out of the lineup for Sunday's game against the Royals, but Francona did not rule out getting Gomes some action in the scheduled intra-squad game during Tuesday's workout at Progressive Field.

"We'll see," Francona said. "It would be great for him, if he could, but we're not going to hurt him to do it."

In 112 games this season, Gomes has hit .266 with a career-high 26 doubles, along with 16 homers, 48 RBIs and a .762 OPS. Dating back to Aug. 1, the catcher has hit at a .320 clip with an .856 OPS in 35 games for the Tribe. Per Baseball Prospectus, Gomes ranks seventh in MLB in blocking runs above average (1.6), 14th in fielding runs above average (8.5) and 16th in framing runs above average (6.9)

ALDS rotation plans

Francona already made it known that ace Kluber and righty Carlos Carrasco were the projected starters for the first two games of the ALDS against the Astros. The manager confirmed as much on Sunday, noting that Kluber would take the ball in Game 1 on Friday and Carrasco would follow suit in Game 2 on Saturday.

The Indians have yet to announce their plans for Game 3 (Oct. 8 at Progressive Field). The two leading candidates are Trevor Bauer and Mike Clevinger, but there is a chance that one of them will be made available out of the bullpen for Game 1 or Game 2. That could influence the alignment for Game 3 and a potential Game 4.

"I think we know what we're going to do and everything," Francona said. "But, I just think we'll wait to kind of explain it after we get through [Sunday's game in Kansas City]. I think things will be [clearer]."

Worth noting

- Utility man Erik Gonzalez (hit in the head with a pitch in the eighth inning of Wednesday's game against the White Sox) remains in MLB's concussion protocol but continues to increase his activity level on a daily basis. Francona remains optimistic that Gonzalez will be cleared to take part in Tuesday's intra-squad game in Cleveland.

- Outfielder Tyler Naquin (on the disabled list since July 26 due to a right hip injury) has been training in Arizona but will meet the Indians on Monday in Cleveland. Naquin is scheduled to play in Tuesday's scrimmage, giving the medical staff a chance to gauge his progress and viability as an insurance option for the playoffs.

2019 Draft order set: Indians have No. 24 pick

By Jim Callis MLB.com @JimCallisMLB

Unlike in 2017, when the race for the No. 1 overall pick in the next year's Draft came down to a walk-off homer on the final day of the season, there was no such drama this summer. The Orioles, whose 115 losses were the fourth-most in modern big league history, clinched the top choice in 2019 with nine games remaining.

Baltimore owned the first selection only once in the previous 54 Drafts, choosing Ben McDonald in 1989. The Orioles haven't had a top-five pick since having six straight from 2007-12, when they grabbed Matt Wieters (fifth in 2007), Brian Matusz (fourth in 2008), Matt Hobgood (fifth in 2009), Manny Machado (third in 2010), Dylan Bundy (fourth in 2011) and Kevin Gausman (fourth in 2012).

- Top 10 high school prospects for 2019 Draft | Top 10 college prospects

Assigned pick values rise each year based on MLB's revenue growth, so Baltimore will be allocated more than the \$8,096,300 assigned to the No. 1 pick in 2018. The Tigers, who gained that choice when Pablo Sandoval's ninth-inning homer in the Giants' last game of 2017 dropped San Francisco to the No. 2 slot, signed Casey Mize for \$7.5 million, setting a record for the Draft's bonus-pool era. Mize's bonus tied those of Bubba Starling and Stephen Strasburg for the second-highest in Draft history, trailing only Gerrit Cole's \$8 million.

Oregon State catcher Adley Rutschman, the Most Outstanding Player at the 2018 College World Series, and Colleyville (Texas) Heritage High shortstop Bobby Witt Jr., the son of the 16-year big leaguer and No. 3 overall selection in the 1985 Draft, are the leading candidates to go No. 1 overall at this point.

- Early 2019 mock draft

Like the Orioles, the Royals locked up the second choice well before season's end, securing it when they suffered their 102nd loss last Saturday. Kansas City has picked that high three times before, taking Alex Gordon at No. 2 in 2005, Luke Hochevar at No. 1 in 2006 and Mike Moustakas at No. 2 in 2007.

The White Sox (No. 3 overall), Marlins (No. 4) and Tigers (No. 5) round out the first five selections. Detroit, which took Mize at No. 1, and Chicago, which popped Nick Madrigal at No. 4, had top-five choices this year. Miami hasn't picked that early since 2014, when it used the No. 2 choice on Tyler Kolek.

The first-round order won't be finalized until the two divisional tiebreaker games are settled on Monday. The Brewers and Cubs will play for the National League Central title and the Nos. 27 and 28 picks, while the Dodgers and Rockies will battle for the NL West crown and the Nos. 23 and 25 choices.

Three teams have multiple first-round selections because they received compensation choices when they couldn't sign 2018 first-rounders. The Braves pick ninth and 21st, the D-backs 16th and 26th, and the Dodgers either 23rd or 25th along with 31st.

Because each team's highest first-round pick is exempt from forfeiture, the only way the first-round order could change would be if a team that doesn't receive revenue sharing and exceeded the luxury tax this season has two first-round picks and signs a free agent who rejects a qualifying offer, in which case it would lose its second-highest first-rounder.

- All-time Draft picks

2019 First-Round Draft Order

Draft order is based on the reverse order of 2018 regular-season standings, with 2017 records used to break ties.

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|---|---|--|
| 1. Orioles (47-115) | 14. Phillies (80-82) | 26. D-backs (compensation for unsigned 2018 first-rounder Matt McLain) |
| 2. Royals (58-104) | 15. Angels (80-82) | 27. Brewers/Cubs Monday loser (95-68) |
| 3. White Sox (62-100) | 16. D-backs (82-80) | 28. Brewers/Cubs Monday winner (96-67) |
| 4. Marlins (63-98) | 17. Nationals (82-80) | 29. Athletics (97-65) |
| 5. Tigers (64-98) | 18. Pirates (82-79) | 30. Yankees (100-62) |
| 6. Padres (66-96) | 19. Cardinals (88-74) | 31. Dodgers (compensation for unsigned 2018 first-rounder J.T. Ginn) |
| 7. Reds (67-95) | 20. Mariners (89-73) | 32. Astros (103-59) |
| 8. Rangers (67-95) | 21. Braves (90-72) | 33. Red Sox (108-54) |
| 9. Braves (compensation for unsigned 2018 first-rounder Carter Stewart) | 22. Rays (90-72) | |
| 10. Giants (73-89) | 23. Dodgers/Rockies Monday loser (91-72) | |
| 11. Blue Jays (73-89) | 24. Indians (91-71) | |
| 12. Mets (77-85) | 25. Dodgers/Rockies Monday winner (92-71) | |
| 13. Twins (78-84) | | |

Carrasco and Bauer stifle Royals' bats in Indians' 2-1 win

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) -- Carlos Carrasco was sharp in Cleveland's regular-season finale, then proclaimed himself ready for what's next to come.

Carrasco and Trevor Bauer combined for a five-hitter, Francisco Lindor homered and scored twice, and the Indians beat the Kansas City Royals 2-1 on Sunday.

Carrasco (17-10) was working with a limited pitch count in a tuneup before an anticipated start in Game 2 of the American League Division Series against Houston on Saturday. He went five innings, allowing one run on three hits, walking two and striking out six.

"I finished the season strong," said Carrasco, who wrapped up the regular season with a 3.38 ERA. "More important is getting ready for the postseason. The way that I pitched today, I just tried to find myself and get ready for that game. Everything that I'm looking for, I found it."

Manager Terry Francona saw a lot to be happy with.

"He threw the ball really well," Francona said. "Good changeup and breaking ball. I think he's situated in a really good place heading to the playoffs."

Bauer took over in the sixth, hurling four scoreless innings of relief while striking out two for his first career save.

Bauer ended the season with a 2.21 ERA, second in the American League to Tampa Bay's Blake Snell.

Carrasco struck out 231 on the year, leading the Indians. Bauer struck out 221.

The Indians opened the scoring after Lindor led off the game by reaching on an error when Eric Skoglund (1-6) fumbled his grounder. After stealing second, Lindor then stole third and scored when Alcides Escobar failed to catch the throw to third for the second error of the inning.

Lindor drilled a 1-0 pitch into the stands in left-center field to lead off the third, extending the Indians' lead to 2-0. He hit seven of his 38 homers this year against the Royals.

The Indians finished the season 91-71, their sixth straight year above .500. It is their longest streak since they had winning records eight years in a row from 1994 through 2001.

Skoglund allowed two runs, one earned, on five hits and two walks, striking out three over five innings.

"I thought he was flat today," manager Ned Yost said. "I don't think he was very sharp. He grinded it out. Even when he doesn't have his best stuff, he kept us in the ballgame against our division champion. I'm very proud of his effort today."

The Royals got on the board in the fifth when Brian Goodwin led off with a hit and stole second, then scored on Meibrys Vilorio's single.

Whit Merrifield closed the season with a single in the eighth, extending his hitting streak to a career-best 20 games. The streak was the longest of the year in the majors.

Kansas City's attendance fell by 555,213 from the previous year - nearly 7,000 per game - and finished at 1,665,107, the team's lowest since 2010. The club stumbled to its worst season since 2005, when it set a team record for most losses at 106. The 58-104 mark this year matched the 2004 team for the second-worst record in franchise history. This was the fifth time the club lost at least 100 games.

Yost will be back in 2019, however. The Royals announced a one-year extension before the game.

AT THE TOP

Lindor finished tied for the league lead in runs - he and Boston's Mookie Betts both had 129.

"That's a lot of runs," Francona said. "(With) him leading off, that's the most important stat. He's done a lot of things really well. When you score that many runs, that's a huge number for us."

Merrifield finished the season with 192 hits and 45 stolen bases, leading the majors in both categories.

"It was a monster accomplishment," Yost said. "Leading baseball in stolen bases is huge, but leading baseball in hits is monstrous."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: C Yan Gomes' hand injury required two stitches but is not expected to prevent him from being available for the playoffs. "The doctors and trainers all think he's going to be OK," Francona said. ... OF Tyler Naquin is returning from rehab in Arizona to join the team in time for Tuesday's scrimmage. ... OF Lonnie Chisenhall has been running the bases and hitting, but will not join the team, instead returning to his home in North Carolina as his family deals with the aftermath of Hurricane Florence.

UP NEXT

RHP Corey Kluber takes the mound for Cleveland in the first game of the ALDS at Houston on Friday.

Q&A: Corey Kluber on playoff experience, preparation and redemption

Zack Meisel 1h ago 1

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — No American League pitcher logged more innings this season than Corey Kluber, who eclipsed the 200 mark for the fifth consecutive year.

He won 20 games for the first time. He again registered an ERA below 3.00. He averaged more than a strikeout per inning. He led the AL in walk rate. He earned his third consecutive All-Star nod.

And yet, to many, his season will be defined by the month ahead. The regular-season feats are mere footnotes, given the Indians' ultimate aims.

Kluber has already proved himself as one of the league's premier starting pitchers, as dependable and productive as they come. But after last October's ALDS debacle, when Kluber surrendered nine runs in 6 1/3 innings across two abbreviated starts and the Indians coughed up a commanding lead against the Yankees, it's all about playoff redemption. Right? Right? Bueller?

That's not how Kluber sizes up the situation.

If he's thinking about his misplaced fastballs to Didi Gregorius, that's bandwidth he isn't devoting to his Astros scouting report. That's inefficient. So, no dwelling on the past.

Kluber is treating his next start — Friday at Minute Maid Park — as he would any other. He held off on studying up on Houston until he completed his final regular-season tuneup in Kansas City on Saturday evening.

The two-time Cy Young winner sat down with The Athletic and MLB.com this weekend to discuss his mindset as the Indians begin another postseason journey.

What can you take from the postseason experiences the last two years that might help you this time?

As far as the actual game itself and being out there and pitching and that kind of stuff, to me, I think they're all different. I think each series is different. You're facing different teams, things like that. But I think the emotional side of it — the extra adrenaline, things like that — having done it, I think it gives you some experience to fall back on. How you feel, what was different, what was the same, how you dealt with extra adrenaline, things like that. You want to try to stay as normal as possible, but that being said, I think it's only human for everybody to get a little bit extra excited when those games roll around. So you have to learn how to control it and try to get yourself back so that you aren't so amped up and start trying a little bit too much. So I think those experiences, you can learn from.

You opted to have an extra day before your first playoff start. Was the reasoning behind that based upon previous knowledge of how to navigate the postseason?

It wasn't, per se, that I wanted an extra day before the playoffs. It was just the three or four games we tried to line up, that made the most sense without having two different stretches with seven days off. Whether it would've been Saturday or Sunday, there are so many times throughout the year when you have an extra day because of off-days that you almost have two different routines. You have a way to deal with having that extra day to adjust things.

What was the most significant thing you learned from the 2016 playoff experience, when you were pitching on short rest for a full month?

We just had to do a lot of stuff to focus on recovery, because we had three starters and we started on three days' rest every time out. So I think just the extra attention to recovery to bounce back and make sure that, if it's needed to come back on short rest or if it's needed to go out to the bullpen, just to do those extra things that maybe help you bounce back a little bit quicker in case one of those situations does come up.

Do you feel as though the pitching staff is better equipped for October than it was the last two playoff runs?

All bets are off when you reach that point in time. It's all hands on deck trying to win that day's game. It's not really worrying about trying to log that extra inning to save the bullpen. The way those games are managed now, you see guys are quick to go to the bullpen if they think it's a big spot and I think it's just because of the magnitude of those games and the importance of runs. Managers realize if you wait around to try to save a guy, sometimes you don't have a chance to get to him. That's why roles get pushed aside a little bit. If a guy's been a starter all year, they have no problem going to the bullpen, just because those outs are all equally as important, whether it's the start of the game or the middle of the game or to finish the game.

Given how the last two postseasons ended, is there a sense of striving for redemption, or is that out of mind when gearing up for this run?

I don't want this to come off the wrong way — I think fans tend to dwell on things like that a little more than we do as players. Obviously, when we were eliminated last year, there was disappointment, just like when we lost Game 7 of the World Series, there was disappointment. Part of preparing yourself for the next year is putting that behind you and getting ready for the next spring training, the next season, the next postseason. It's always having that mentality of looking forward. There's enough to worry about without having to try to make up for last year.

Does that apply on a personal level for you, too, given how last season's ALDS unfolded?

Not any more than the year prior and the last game. Obviously those situations didn't play out the way I would've liked them to, but it's no different than if you have a bad start during the season. The best way to cope with that is to flush it. If you sit and dwell on it, those things start to eat away at you and you start carrying a weight around that makes doing things that are already difficult even more difficult. Whether it's a pitcher pitching poorly or a hitter in a slump, guys have experience of pushing that aside and you keep looking forward and you focus on the task at hand for that day.

How would you assess your body of work this season? Your strikeouts are down, which you've attributed to the approach of the hitters, but your other numbers are right around where they typically are.

That's the name of the game, is adjustments. Pitchers are going to try to adjust to hitters. Hitters are going to try to adjust to pitchers. It's that back and forth throughout the course of a game, throughout the course of a season-long series against a team, a whole season. I think it's constantly adjusting. You guys know that I don't put too much stock into whatever the numbers say. To me, it boils down to being able to make those adjustments and try to give your team a chance to win as many of the games you take the ball as you can.

Do you feel any different, health-wise, than you did going into the playoffs the last two years? Do you feel any fresher?

No, I think I feel like I'd like to feel, just as I have the last few years.

What sort of impact has Josh Tomlin had on the team and, in particular, on younger pitchers over the years?

You could go a million different ways answering that question. He's made an impact on everybody he's come across. But specifically about younger pitchers, baseball nowadays is so infatuated with numbers and spin rate and velocity and all that kind of stuff. I'm not sure how many of those boxes he checks, but he's had a really good career and he's been a big part of this team for a long time. It's a good visual for players who are developing to see that, just because TV networks and broadcasts talk about velocity and all that kind of stuff, that's not a game-changer. That's not the only way to get here. Examples like him are big in that, on top of the pitching side of it, it shows the importance of being a good teammate. He's the glue that keeps our clubhouse together. That importance can't be overstated, either. He brings all of those different intangibles off the field, as well as the competitiveness and the determination that he has when he's on the mound.

What have you, specifically, drawn from him in your time together?

That's what's neat about our staff, is that we all talk to each other, watch each other, learn from each other, even if it's something as little as how you hold a pitch. It's not necessarily saying, "Hey, I want to go steal this from this guy." I think it's just through relationships and conversations and stuff, you pick up on things. It's constant learning from each other, helping each other. You might have a conversation with a guy and you don't even know that it has an impact on him. That's one of the cool things about Josh and our team in general. Nobody's off-limits in that regard.

Would it be strange not having him as your locker mate next year?

Hopefully he still is. (laughs)

Ready for October: Who is on the bubble as Cleveland Indians construct ALDS roster?

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

KANSAS CITY - So what comes first, the no doubters or the bubble players when a team picks its 25-man roster for the postseason?

The Indians have been sorting through their roster since before they clinched the AL Central on Sept. 15. It must be submitted to the commissioner's office by 10 a.m. Friday, a few hours before the Indians and Astros meet in Game 1 of the ALDS at Minute Maid Park in Houston.

But manager Terry Francona talked to select players during the final regular season trip through Chicago and Kansas City which ended Sunday at Kauffman Stadium to give them an idea if they had made it or not. So, let's take a look at the Tribe's potential postseason roster starting with the players you can count on making the roster.

Infielders (five): Yonder Alonso, Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor, Josh Donaldson and Edwin Encarnacion.

Catchers (two): Yan Gomes, providing his right thumb is healed after it came into contact with Alex Gordon's bat on Saturday night, and Roberto Perez.

Outfielders (three): Jason Kipnis, Michael Brantley and Melky Cabrera.

Starting pitchers (four): Corey Kluber, Carlos Carrasco, Mike Clevinger and Trevor Bauer.

Relievers (four): Cody Allen, Andrew Miller, Brad Hand and Oliver Perez.

That's 18 players, meaning there are seven spots to fill. Which leads us to these four questions?

*Can the Indians carry four lefties in the bullpen? Miller, Perez and Hand are already on the team, but Tyler Olson has looked good of late.

*Can outfielders Greg Allen and Rajai Davis make the roster?

*Does infielder Yandy Diaz have a chance to make it?

*What about utility man Erik Gonzalez, who is in concussion protocol?

Last year Olson didn't allow a run in 30 appearances with the Indians. He's been human this year, but in his last 14 games he didn't allow a run, striking out 16 in 9 2/3 innings. The thing working against Olson is that Houston's lineup is predominantly right-handed.

Francona said Sunday, to the surprise of no one, that Corey Kluber and Carlos Carrasco will start Games 1 and 2 against the Astros on Friday and Saturday, which means right-hander Trevor Bauer, still recovering from a stress fracture in his right leg, will open the series in the bullpen. Mike Clevinger, another right-hander who is in line to start Game 3 or 4, could be available out of the pen in the early going. All that works against the Tribe carrying four lefty relievers.

In the case of Allen and Davis, they do the same thing - steal bases and primarily play center fielder. While Davis has been replacing Kipnis in center field for defense the last couple weeks, Francona has been using Davis more as a pinch runner so perhaps there is room for both because of the value he puts on speed and baserunning.

"Those are some of the things we've been working through," said Francona.

If it comes down to a choice between the two, the switch-hitting Allen would probably be the pick. He hit .258 (68-for-264) with 11 doubles, three triples and 21 steals in 25 attempts. Last year he made the ALDS roster in the same role.

Diaz didn't make the ALDS roster last year and when Edwin Encarnacion twisted his ankle in Game 2 the Indians were caught short. It was one of several things that went awry for the Tribe in the five-game series loss.

If Francona needs a bat off the bench, Diaz could help. He hit .273 (12-for-44) against lefties, .328 (21-for-64) against righties and .333 (11-for-33) with runners in scoring position.

Gonzalez was hit in the head by a pitch on Wednesday night against the White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field. He's still in MLB's concussion protocol and until he's released he's unavailable to play. Diaz has played first and third this year and Jose Ramirez could move over to shortstop with Kipnis moving back to second in case of an emergency. Or veteran utility man Adam Rosales could make the roster. Last year the Indians went with an 11-man pitching staff against the Yankees in the ALDS. Asked if he would do that again, Francona said, "There are no guarantees."

But 11 pitchers is a good starting point, which means the Indians have to fill three vacancies. The candidates include Shane Bieber, Adam Cimber, Jon Edwards, Olson, Dan Otero, Adam Plutko, Neil Ramirez and Josh Tomlin.

Bieber went 11-5 with a 4.55 ERA in 20 games, including 19 starts this year. The Indians experimented with him coming out of the bullpen on Aug. 21 against Boston and things went well until he hit a snag in the seventh inning.

They could do the same thing against the Astros. Last year they had starters Clevinger, Danny Salazar and Tomlin in the bullpen.

The Indians acquired Cimber and Hand from San Diego in July. Cimber is a submarining right-hander who could give Houston's right-handed hitters a different look. He limited righties to a .239 (44-for-184) batting average with four homers this year.

Otero, after an up and down season, posted a 2.89 ERA in September. Edwards has shown good velocity, but he may be more on the Tribe's radar for 2019. Plutko has been used primarily as a starter, while Ramirez has pitched better since coming off the disabled list on Sept. 2, but allowed 17 earned runs in his last 23 2/3 innings. Tomlin held the Royals one run over 4 2/3 innings on Thursday, but his season as a whole was a struggle.

In the outfield, Brandon Guyer has been Cabrera's platoon partner in right field. He's had some injury problems, lately a sore right shoulder, but Francona likes him against left-handed pitchers. Houston has lefty Dallas Keuchel in the rotation, while Tony Sipp is their busiest lefty reliever. Guyer hit .233 (24-for-103) with five homers and 17 RBI against lefties this year.

If Gomes can't play Friday, Roberto Perez would start. If the Indians didn't think Gomes could play in the series, rookie Eric Haase would make the roster. Francona, however, said everything is pointing toward Gomes being able to play Friday.

More Ready for October posts:

What can Josh Donaldson bring to the Indians in October?

Is Jason Kipnis the Tribe's best option in center?

Who should be the Tribe's 4 starting pitchers in the ALDS?

Does Terry Francona plan to rest starters down the stretch?

Will the Tribe get vintage Andrew Miller for its playoff push?

How will Cody Allen's September sabbatical help in the postseason?

Which Houston Astros pitchers have had the most success against Indians pitchers?

How will Houston Astros pitchers attack Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez in the ALDS?

Which Indians hitters have had the most success against Houston's pitchers?

Cleveland Indians end regular season with 2-1 win over Kansas City; ALDS is next

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.comphoynes@cleveland.com

KANSAS CITY -- The endless season is over and the season that can go much faster is about to begin for the Indians.

Francisco Lindor supplied all the offense on Sunday afternoon, while Carlos Carrasco and Trevor Bauer took care of the pitching as the Indians beat Kansas City, 2-1, at Kauffman Stadium to end the regular season with a 91-71 record.

They will now begin the final preparation for the best-of-five ALDS against Houston on Friday at Minute Maid Park. Corey Kluber will start Game 1 and Carrasco Game 2.

The Indians clinched the AL Central On Sept. 15. They've been stuck in baseball limbo since. They've concentrated on resting certain players, getting other players more work and getting still others healthy. That became the focal point instead of winning and losing. That all ended Sunday.

"We tried to manage some challenges we've had," manager Terry Francona. "I think we need a good week of practice, which I think our guys will do, but I think it's time. I think the guys have felt like it for a while. It's kind of like the end of spring training. Let's go play."

Lindor created the Tribe's first run as he reached first base on an error by left-hander Erik Skoglund to start the game. He stole second and then stole third. He raced home when third baseman Alcides Escobar couldn't handle catcher Meibrys Vilorio's throw and was charged with an error.

In the third, Lindor used his power to make the lead, 2-0. He hit a 1-0 pitch over the wall in left field for his 38th homer of the season. Lindor ended the season hitting .277 (183-for-661) with 129 runs, 42 doubles, 38 homers, 92 RBI and 25 steals.

"I'm very excited," said Lindor, when asked about the postseason. "First, it's a blessing. I thank the Lord for keeping us healthy day in and day out, and to be able to finish the year strong.

"The only one that's a little beat up is Yan Gomes (lacerated right thumb), but it seems like he's going to be OK. So, we're all blessed. We're all blessed and we're excited for the postseason."

In spring training Lindor set a goal of leading the big leagues in runs. He finished tied for first with Boston's Mookie Betts.

"It shows that I'm doing whatever it takes to help the team win day in and day out," he said. "And, if I score 129 out of 158 games, that says something. It was very important for me."

The only other shortstop to hit at least 38 homers and steal 25 bases in a year -- while playing at least 50 percent of his games at short -- was Alex Rodriguez, who hit 42 homers and stole 26 bases in 1998.

Carrasco (17-10, 3.38) allowed one run one three hits in five innings. He struck out six and walked two. He finished the season with 192 innings pitched and 231 strikeouts. In the last two years, Carrasco is 35-16 for the Indians.

Bauer, making his third appearance since coming off the disabled list, worked four scoreless innings to protect the 2-1 lead. He retired seven straight before Whit Merrifield singled with one out in the eighth. It extended Merrifield's hitting streak to 20 games and gave him the AL lead in hits with 192.

Merrifield stole second and went to third on a throwing error by rookie catcher Eric Haase as Adaberto Mondes struck out swinging. Bauer ended the threat by getting Salvador Perez to line out to left field.

The Royals made things interesting in the ninth. Greg Allen made a sliding catch in center against Ryan O'Hearn for the first out, but Rosell Herrera reached on what was ruled a bad-hop single off Jose Ramirez's chest at second base. Bauer retired the next to batters to earn his first big-league save.

Bauer, who missed nearly six weeks with a stress fracture in his right leg, ended the season with a 2.21 ERA. His ERA is the second best by a qualifying Indians pitcher since the mound was lowered in 1969. Gaylord Perry posted a 1.92 ERA in 1972 for the Tribe.

The Royals made it 2-1 against Carrasco in the fifth. Brian Goodwin reached on a leadoff single and stole second. He took third on a ground ball to first before Carrasco complicated matters by walking Brett Phillips and allowing an RBI single to Vitoria.

Carrasco, who entered the game 1-4 in his last five decisions, held the lead as he struck out Merrifield and retired Mondesi on a nice pick and throw by Lindor with the tying run on third.

What it means

The Indians, in winning their third straight AL Central division, finished the year at 49-27 in division play. It included a 12-7 record against the Royals.

The pitches

Carrasco threw 77 pitches, 49 (64 percent) for strikes. Skoglund threw 85 pitches, 50 (59 percent) for strikes.

Thanks for coming

The Indians and Royals drew 19,690 to Kauffman Stadium on Sunday. First pitch was at 3:17 p.m. with a temperature of 72 degrees.

Next

Kluber will face the Astros on Friday night at Minute Maid Park in Game 1 of the ALDS.