This truly feels like the beginning of something different. I don't know what's going to be different, how it's going to be different, or how different it will be... It isn't so much about a new manager as it is something else.

September 30th, 2012

Kansas City Royals - **3**

Cleveland Indians - **15**

W: Zach McAllister (6-8) L: Luke Hochevar (8-16)

[BOXSCORE]

There will be people that sit there, and understandably so, that point to these past past few games and say, hey look...Since Manny Acta was canned, this team has seemingly woken up.

I can't really argue with that. It sure does look like that. It looks like the offense has finally started to pick things up.

Maybe 2013 won't be so bad! We can score. Let's not trade Asdrubal, let's get one more bat. Heck, bring in Tito Francona! Let's do this!!! WORLD SERIES MAN!

Settle... down...

I'm going to sober you down with some statistics. Yes, the breakout is a little out of the norm and it shows signs of life in this team that have been far and few between since the All-Star Break.

29 runs in three games, that's insanity, that's three runs per-game.

Here's a few things.

Royal's pitching in the month of September: Just as bad as Cleveland's at 4.40 ERA. Sunday's starter Luke Hochevar has given up 34 earned runs, including the nine he gave up on Sunday, in 32 innings.

Jake Odorizzi, who started on Saturday, still finding his footing and the Royals completely taxed what has been a deep bullpen by burning through pitchers like it was nobodies business.

And on Friday, not that Will Smith made his 16th career start. He's inconsistent.

Moral of the story, yeah there was a little bit of more oomph for Sandy Alomar Jr., but let's

temper the "THEY WEREN'T PLAYING FOR ACTA! SEE!!!"

Yeah that may have been the case the past few weeks or so, not playing as hard as they possibly could, but also consider this.

Jason Kipnis is out of his slump, Carlos Santana is actually hitting in this month of September now, and strangely Cord Phelps, Russ Canzler have provided a nice offensive spark. Not to mention there's this healthy guy over at third base named Lonnie Chisenhall.

I think if you put all of that together, there's a lot more than a team not playing for their previous manager.

Now after that lovely rant, I will just say, I'm certainly not opposed to seeing what we saw this past weekend. It just goes to show you that when all the pieces are working, the offense can put some runs up. These 15-run outbursts with 19 hits and all of that. Those are not often occurrences for many teams. Outside of a team like Texas with a slugger at every spot, you don't see that type of stuff from teams on a weekly basis.

But there's no question, the team did some run scoring this weekend and played good offensive baseball. They're still missing pieces. They're still a team that needs a middle of the order bat that won't betray them, that they can count on. They still need pieces at certain spots if they want to have a consistent offense.

Not to mention, as I alluded to with Cord Phelps and Russ Canzler, some young and hungry guys are getting chances to play and they don't care who the manager is, they're going to do what they can to get on base every time
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"It's always good to win games," interim manager Sandy Alomar Jr. said, "especially when you give young guys opportunities to play and they perform. You feel good about it and say, 'That's great for them.' It's something you can build confidence from."

It was good mainly to see nine hits with runners in scoring position a night after they blew so many chances in extra innings to win it. Some of which are gimmies that you don't even need a hit for. But a win is a win, a loss is a loss, regardless of if you win by 12 or lose by one, it's just good that they got two this weekend.

"We needed one of those hits yesterday," Alomar said with a slight laugh. "The guys were not trying to do anything extraordinary. They just tried to do the necessary thing to keep the rally going. They were not getting big."

Everyone did their part and got in the action for the most part. Chisenhall and Lillibrdige were the only ones that never really got into the action, but they didn't need to with Asdrubal Cabrera hitting a grand-slam and the bottom of the order, Hannahan, Marson, and Donald, picking up the slack.

The plus in this was getting to see **Zach McAllister** just go out and pitch. He had so many runs after the fifth that he could afford to go out and just be aggressive and do his job. He got burned by Alex Gordon in return, but he managed to get into the seventh and pitch a quality start to finish his season on a real high note. He had the one run lead for a majority of his outing, so he had to be as tight as possible.

Random Details...

Jason Donald was able to start on Sunday after appearing on Saturday and scoring a run. His return was nice, going 1-for-4 with a few runs scored and a RBI.

The other Jason, Mr. Kipnis, is really lighting it up as of late.He did go 0-for-5 on Saturday, but he walked three times in that insane 14-inning game.

Kipnis has now made it on base in every game started since September 13th. He's got five multi-hit games in that span and just seemingly seeing the ball much better than he was in

August with his .180 average and .250 OBP. If there's any wonder the Indians struggled in August, look no further than that.

Matt LaPorta nearly doubled his RBI total for the season. That is all.

[MANAGER SEARCH]

It is official. The Indians will be talking to him, but really, you should temper your excitement, if you have it.

Terry Francona is now a candidate for the open manager spot. Chris Antonetti confirmed as much and Francona even spoke out about it. And it would seem as if it is down to two men and two men only, Francona and Sandy Alomar Jr.

"We'll acknowledge both of those guys," Antonetti told the media on Friday. "Beyond that, we won't acknowledge other names."

Let's be real, I know Antonetti says they will not acknowledge any other names, but why should he if there are? We know there are two very well established candidates who fit real well and are just flat out good. Why even bother discussing others? Sure you should bring in a few more to do your due-diligence and scout a little, but we know who this is coming down to.

Francona is the pie in the sky for a lot of people. Hey, he's a great guy, a World Series-winning manager, very brilliant and good at what he does. He was ousted unfairly in Boston by most accounts and it is only a matter of time before he is back in the game again.

Some believe he'd be foolish to take a post in Cleveland though because of what is currently there and how it would take some time to build up, and he can just go elsewhere and basically, pick his seat.

"I wouldn't come in and interview if I wasn't interested," Francona said. "They have some things to get in order. I know Sandy Alomar is also a candidate and I'm sure they'll be doing their homework. I'll let him do his business and [the team can] get back to me when it's appropriate."

Francona said he spoke to Chris about interviewing and that he will most definitely at some point. The connection is with Antonetti and Shapiro as Francona is good friends with both, otherwise Cleveland may not even be a serious thought for Tito.

And as Francona would also tell Paul Hoynes, he likes a challenge.

But it is and he'll interview and as I've said, I think it's a two horse race.

Let's be completely real. Anything that the Indians do in these final six, and now three, games was not and is not going to make an impact on what the Indians decide to ultimately do about their vacant manager post for 2013.

Sandy Alomar Jr. has two wins under his belt and has the opportunity for a few more, but they will a very small, if any sort of factor in the Indians removing the interim tag and naming him their next manager. What he can do is establish what kind of manager he will be though because the guy he is up against has had plenty of games to show that.

"I feel good about it," Alomar said. "Otherwise, I wouldn't have accepted it. I feel like I understand the game very well. ... I feel like I've coached enough."

Alomar is ultimately here because he received Manny Acta's blessing to do assume the post that was opened up when the Indians fired Acta last week. It says a lot that he would actually want to check with him before he accepted just a six game audition, but it sets him up to be one of the primary candidates for the Indians in their choice to name a new leader.

"It was a very difficult time for us [on Thursday]," Alomar said. "For the staff and myself. Manny played a role in bringing me here back to Cleveland and I have a great deal of respect for him."

Alomar has made it known that the focus is not on anything but just playing the string out and have a pride in the game. The stance you'd expect someone in his position to take.

If it isn't a given that the next manager will be either Alomar or Francona, I don't know what is. These are the choices. They're both good ones and they both sound like they want to be in Cleveland. I don't think it would behoove the Indians to bring in anyone else at this point. They're two of the best out there and both good fits for Cleveland for their own individual reasons.

Right now, I don't have an opinion on which one to go. I'm sort of at the "either one is fine for me" point, but I'll wait to pass official judgment. We saw Anthony Castrovince throw his name in for Sandy Alomar Jr. and now Terry Pluto is all for Terry Francona, telling the Indians to throw everything at him . If he doesn't want the job, give it to Sandy.

The genuine interest by Francona is the main reason the Indians didn't simply make Sandy Alomar the permanent manager, rather than interim for the rest of this season. While no one from the Tribe has said this, it must be intriguing for them to consider Francona as the manager with Alomar remaining as bench coach. His time with Francona can also be a type of "manager's finishing school" for the 45-year-old Alomar. He had never managed a game at any level until he took over for Manny Acta in the Tribe dugout this weekend.

Right now, for me, either one will do.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

One more note to sort-of wrap up this whole **Manny Acta** fiasco that went down. I think beyond

this morning, it doesn't do any good to continue to bring up. Not worth dwelling over any longer. But I'd just like to continue to make this whole point. It is exactly what Justin Masterson in the link I had just used about Sandy.

"If I was pitching well early on, Scott Radinsky would probably still be here," Indians starter Justin Masterson said. "And if I was pitching well later on, Manny would probably still be here. Coaches coach and players play. It's unfortunate that when you're in that leadership aspect that you'll have to sometimes take the fall for the team."

Oh, but it is the truth and we'll leave it at that. I don't think anyone can ultimately blame the Indians for wanting to make a change. Again, I liked Manny and I would have preferred him to not be fired, but if you are going to fire him, there are other people that need to go because it is not just his fault and he doesn't even deserve a majority of the blame.

You have to like the push **Lonnie Chisenhall** is being given, with the chance to hit in the cleanup spot as of late. It's really something he needs as he attempts to make up for lost time due to the injury that claimed most of his season and a lot of meaningful major league at-bats. It's a bold move on Sandy's part, but really, why stick with what hasn't been working and why not change things up in the final few contests?

"I think Chisenhall is going to grow into a role like that," Alomar said. "He's going to become a pretty good hitter. I'm just giving him a spot in the four-hole, and I hope it'll help his confidence build up like the player he's supposed to be."

It may not be cleanup role, but Chisenhall seems like an ideal five-hole hitter. Someone who is right there in the meat of the order swinging a good stick. Not big power, but some pop, some solid hitting. Someone who will make pitchers who have to throw to the third and four hitters.

That, or he'll be counted on being someone who hits smack dab in the middle as the three-hole as guys like Choo and Cabrera could vacate big spots. Depending on how things shake out of course. I like Kipnis in the leadoff spot, so if the Indians can somehow find someone to hit third, that would really help things come together.

One thing that the Indians will not do to help Chisenhall make up for lost time is send him to winter ball .
Given how much time he has been able to have in the final few weeks here, I'd say that is actually an okay decision. He got his at-bats, he has confidence that he can play and overcome his injuries. The biggest thing he needs is not at-bats, but major league at-bats.

"I recently backpedaled on that," Chisenhall said of playing in the Dominican Republic this winter. "I feel like it's going to be more beneficial for me to get in the gym. It's a short turnaround to Spring Training next year with the World Baseball Classic, and I just want to make sure my forearm is ready to go next spring."

Chisenhall mentioned that he is good with his at-bats and that recovering and showing up for Spring Training completely healthy is much more important and I'd have to agree. At first, winter ball seemed important, but because he worked so hard to get back for the major league season and he played in a good amount of games, I think the rest is much more beneficial to him.

Again, major league at-bats is what he needs and he can only get those at the major league level, not winter ball.

You will not see **Roberto Hernandez** make another start for the Indians this season and therefore you might have seen Roberto Hernandez make his last start for the Indians completely. However it may be possible that the Indians get him into a game in a relief role in these next three games, just to get him some live-game work.

"There's a possibility that he might come out of the bullpen," Alomar said. "It's mostly for peace of mind for himself. He could pitch or just shut it down, either way. We're still evaluating the situation."

Ultimately, it isn't anything getting excited over. Even if he did start, it wouldn't have been one where he could go deep into the game, so perhaps a relief spot, if possible, makes the most sense.

The Indians were able to use Asdrubal Cabrera and Michael Brantley in Saturday's 14-inning marathon, but only one would return on Sunday. After the game recap, you know who that was. Brantley has been dealing with a left groin and may or may not get in the final series, but I'd have to believe he'll see some action given that he played Saturday.

Finally, if you haven't seen or heard yet, Paul Cousineau has decided to step away from writing about the Indians on The DiaTribe, the blog he started seven years ago. I e-mailed Paul some personal thoughts and thanks and just wanted to say additionally in public that it was an honor to share some space with him at The Cleveland Fan and that his points and enthusiasm for this team will be missed on the internet. He's a leader to us all doing this "blog" thing about the Indians, that is for sure. They're will be a missing space on the world wide web without his routine Lazy Sunday. Best of luck to Paul.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a visit at The Tribe Daily , because Shin-Soo Choo will certainly be dancing 'Gangnam Style' somewhere there.

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