Thome, injuries, mistakes, catching Detroit. We got a lot talk about. Let's get to it.

August 28th, 2011

Kansas City Royals - **2**

Cleveland Indians - **1**

W: Bruce Chen (10-5) L: Justin Masterson (10-8) S: Joakim Soria (24)

[BOXSCORE]

I told you on Thursday not to write a post mortem. After the weekend, I would assume that after winning two out of three from the Royals, we've all regrouped and set our sights on a few things.

First, let me bring this up... We'll get to all the Thomecoming stuff in due time... But let me put something into a little bit of perspective as we sit here looking at the Indians 6.5 game deficit in the Central.

The Los Angeles Angels were seven out not too long ago. In just a matter of weeks they trimmed that down to a few games and last night, even though they lost to the Rangers, they are still within three games.

So just keep that in mind when I also tell you that it is only August 29th. There is much time left. The Indians have plenty of time to gain ground on the Detroit Tigers.

Here is what they don't have however. A whole lot of depth. Just as easily as I can make a convincing argument about how much time there is, I can make an even more convincing one about how many bodies the Tribe has.

Again, we'll get to that.

But the Indians have reached bottom of the barrel right now. Their entire starting outfield has been knocked out, their DH is gone, their hot-shot second baseman is out of commission. The only thing left for their offense is their shortstop and catcher.

Among that, they've now been bitten in the pitching rotation.

The depth has taken quite the blow. So regardless of how many games are left (and there are a

lot) if some of these bodies that they are missing don't get healthy, and the ones they have healthy don't remain that way, it won't matter.

The Indians are going to have to play good ball though, regardless of who's out there. They can't win games against teams like the Royals by going out there and making mistakes. Such as the mistake **Ezequiel Carrera** made in center in the first inning of yesterday's game and in the ninth of the game on Saturday.

Now you can say what you want about **Justin Masterson** putting the first three on in the first inning. But he should have realistically escaped that without any damage at all. And if you watched that inning unfold, you would probably agree.

Zeke plays so far back, it's quite ridiculous. We know your fast, which gives you ever so much more reason to be playing in the CENTER of center field, not shading back, regardless of who's up. So what if Billy Butler hits one off the wall? You aren't catching it anyway.

If he was closer in, does it guarantee that he catches a very soft bloop single? No, but it makes all the much more likely. It also means Eric Hosmer's fly out to left is the second out, and Jeff Francoeur grounds out into the final out of the inning, not a force out.

Speaking of force out... That should have been a double play, but alas, Matt LaPorta's soft, yet wildly inaccurate toss to second forced Asdrubal Cabrera to have to have to stretch out just to make sure the ball didn't' go flying into the disaster zone.

The little things. The Indians didn't commit any errors on Sunday, but they sure as heck didn't play a solid game defensively. Asdrubal Cabrera proved what a great shortstop he is by not only saving that inning from disaster on the LaPorta throw, but also having the heads up to throw to home to get Melky Cabrera, who was darting home alertly with Francoeur getting caught up in a rundown between first and second.

Do I need to state my case any further?

Justin Masterson did not pitch bad. He didn't get much help from the defense in the first inning and that did attribute to his short outing a little. But he also threw a lot of pitches.

"My command was just a little bit off," Masterson said. "But even then, it's not like my stuff was bad, because I was still making pitches when I needed to. I kept it close to give our guys a chance to win at the end, like we've done so many times this year."

Again, Masterson should haven't been put in a position to have lost that game. He did his part and the defense didn't. And neither did the offense, which brings us to the second point of this two-pronged issue about yesterday's loss.

They made little mistakes with the bat too. So minute that, regardless of who you are, you can't do and expect to win if you make so many like the Indians did yesterday.

Being handed virtually the same position that the Royals were in just at the top of the inning, bases loaded and nobody out, scoring one run is unacceptable. And the mistake came in with Shelley Duncan's at-bat. When a guy like Bruce Chen, who's going to make his living off his command more than anything, can't find his command early, you need to pounce. Sometimes though, you need to watch how eager you are when you pounce.

"Our first inning basically killed us," Acta said. "Bases loaded, no outs and we couldn't push across a run. That really did it for us. We let him off the hook right there."

Chen settled in after that. In seven plus innings, Chen gave up five hits and two walks. In the first inning, he gave up three of those hits and one of those walks. You can do math, so you can figure out that in 6.1 innings, he gave up two hits and a walk.

Chen is crafty, but he can give you opportunities and he gave the Indians a big one in the first and all they could do is score one. Unacceptable Hawkman...

"My at-bat was the big one there," Duncan said. "I wanted to be aggressive. I had a feeling he was going to come at me. He threw a little sloppy cutter in there that I just took a poor swing at."

Yeah... Then followed up by a weak tapper to Chen to start a double play. Ehk.

The Indians are still in this, but they are in it with a depth-tested team. They need to play sound baseball in all facets if they want to do anything, and they need some of their key cogs back.

Random Details...

Congratulations to Jerad Head, called up in place of Nick Hagadone, and taking the 40-man spot of Michael Brantley who was placed on the 60-day disabled list. He came up with his first hit in his first at-bat. They call him Mr. September for his past two years of work in the Triple-A and Double-A playoffs. Maybe he's got some of that Mr. September magic in him for the parent club.

More on Masterson... The Indians have scored three runs or fewer in over half of his 27 starts! Are you kidding me? That's some poor support for your best pitcher.

Masty finished strong, but as noted, he battled very early on. Nine hits is no joke, the Royals can swing the bats, they've got a good looking team.

And finally, three things that perplex me:

Bruce Chen has the same amount of wins than Justin Masterson and better yet, fewer losses.

Melky Cabrera and Alex Gordon are both .300 hitters. The Indians had none in their lineup yesterday.

Why I wasn't consulted on the design of the Bullpen Mafia T-Shirt . I approve though.

[THOMECOMING]

What a weekend for Cleveland overall though. To get **Jim Thome** back in the fold for this stretch run. Whatever the outcome may be, it's nice to see The Thomeinator back wearing Chief Wahoo and the knee-highs. Props to Joe Smith for sparking the idea and Jack Hannahan and Shelley Duncan for getting everyone on board on the High Socks Thome Tribute.

I can only imagine the atmosphere in that park for Thome's first game on Friday and the home run on Saturday. The fact that this was able to happen is great and I'm glad Thome was on-board with the idea of coming back for this stretch run. He obviously sees how much this fanbase love him (aside from the few frosty people).

He was in a position that he pretty much had to agree to waive the no-trade clause though. He would have had to make some real crafty maneuvers to get around and go to Philadelphia and it could have tainted his image as a nice guy. Not to mention, the Twins probably would have preferred something in return, even if it's just getting rid of his salary or getting cash in return.

And did anyone doubt that Thome was going yard on his birthday? I mean really? Come on now.

Welcome Home Big Jimmy. You're back were you belong.

[INJ-IANS]

Okay, Thome coming back is all well and good, and we're glad to have him, but let's not get stuck with our head in the clouds here. There's some issues. The only reason Thome is here is because it looks as if Travis Hafner is out for the year or a good portion of September, or else the Indians wouldn't have felt the need to acquire a full-time DH.

The injury bugs have been busy though. It turns out the injury to **Michael Brantley**'s wrist was actually a hamate fracture in his right hand. Surgery will be performed this week and that will indeed end his season, regardless of how far the Indians get.

The original plan was rest, but things progressed to the point that the Indians were tipped off to something much more serious.

"About 10 days later, he came to us with complaints of pain in the palm aspect of his hand," Soloff said, "which at that point, has to increase your suspicion for a hamate injury."

Thankfully, this is a common procedure that has been done as recently as a few years ago to Carlos Santana. Travis Hafner also underwent a hamate bone removal process. Brantley will be ready for next season, but he's out for this one and that is a really big blow for this team.

How about the rest of the outfield?

Not on the disabled list, but out of the lineup, **Shin-Soo Choo** continues to struggle through what was initially called "trunk soreness." Choo had an MRI on Saturday after being removed from Saturday's game after four-plus innings, and it turns out to be a strained oblique. It was mainly something that hurt at the plate, as Choo said he felt it when he took pitches, not when swinging. Hence why he was insert into the game on Friday as a defensive replacement.

But after taking a swing in the second at-bat of Saturday's game, things didn't feel good.

"[Manager] Manny [Acta] and I saw something in the second at-bat that just didn't look comfortable, and he confirmed that with us when he came off the field the next inning," said Lonnie Soloff, the Indians' head athletic trainer. "He was adamant that he wanted to stay in the game, but at that point, it's not the prudent decision."

So it's very much a waiting game with Choo right now. This guy, and this club, can't really catch a break, can they?

Meanwhile, **Grady Sizemore** continues to progress his rehab efforts with hopes of going on a minor league assignment before the minor league season ends in the coming weeks.

"He's feeling good," Soloff said. "We're going to increase his agility activities [Monday] and we'll make a determination then."
So we should know very soon when and if Sizemore is going out on an assignment. It sounds like it could be soon, which is good news for the Indians, obviously.

As for the one injury to pitcher **Josh Tomlin**, well, that's a different story. He will likely be unable to gain from any sort of rehab assignment and has been completely shut for two weeks. Tomlin felt some pain in his outing and was placed on the disabled list with a ligament sprain in his right elbow. That's never a good thing.

In all reality, his season could very well be over. If the Indians don't make a lot of headway in the standings, the Indians may not even chance it. Heck, even if the Indians make headway, they may not even chance it. It sounds very much like Tomlin's season could be over.

What's not surprising though is the fact that this is Tomlin's first trip to the disabled list in his pro career, ever. It's a shame it had to come at this point in the year, but we obviously have to hope for the best.

And if you are hoping for **Carlos Carrasco** to fill that spot left by Josh Tomlin, keep hoping. It would have been a perfect match if Carrasco was ready, but he hasn't even begun throwing and is still feeling pain in his shoulder .

Yikes....

And finally... damn, still more? **Jason Kipnis** is about a week and a half to two weeks away. He will start to get active this week with jogging.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

This is sad.... But all the notes are injury notes... Somebody kick me in the face so I can feel some pain too. I would like you to like the Blog on Facebook though . Stroke my ego.

Hopefully, you took note of the debut of **Francisco Lindor** in Mahoning Valley yesterday. The Scrappers won 9-2
and Lindor played a few frames and was 1-for-3 with a run scored. Congrats to him on his first pro hit. Elvis Araujo made his MV debut, going four innings and giving up two runs off six hits and a walk with three punchouts.

[RAFAEL PEREZ TWEET WATCH]

I really have nothing that stands out, other than the fact that several members of the Scrappers commented on the wrestling event that took place in The Valley yesterday.

Days Without a Tweet: 97

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