I probably should just start things off by eating some sawdust. I'm sorry Jose Lopez for trashing you. Thanks for helping win this one game. Forgive me.

May 17th, 2012

Seattle Mariners - **5**

Cleveland Indians - **6**

W: Joe Smith (1-0) L: Brandon League (0-3)

[BOXSCORE]

Now that that's out of the way, when it's going right, it's going right. Down 4-0 going into the seventh inning, most would think, eh this is tough to get back from. And it is, but it certainly is not impossible.

It's hard for me to sit here and talk about a game that happened in the afternoon and was not televised. So we'll just have to rely on the magic of video replays and quotes.

Honestly, it came down to that **Jose Lopez** blast. The Indians had the opportunity in the eighth and had they not done it there, or at least got a few runs off that second and third, two-out situation, then they probably don't do it in the ninth .

"It was great," Indians designated hitter Travis Hafner said. "Lopez had a huge three-run homer for us in a game that we really didn't do much. We had plenty of chances, but we couldn't get the big hit. He got a huge hit for us there in the eighth, and then we just battled and came back."

Chances, in the seventh, Cabrera's RBI single was with two outs and up until that point, the Indians didn't come through in their chances, mostly because they had little and the ones they did have, two outs. In the fourth with the bases loaded, Jose Lopez grounded out with two outs and that represented the best chance before his blast in the eighth inning.

And he more than made up for it with the game-tying three run home run. He more than made up for his error, he perhaps even bought himself a pass with me. Welcome to the club Jose. You still can't field. But I'll give you a pass because you also had the quote of the night .

"The count was 2-0 with two guys on base," said Lopez. "I was looking for a fastball where I could tie the game. I was trying to do the same thing in my first two at-bats. So I went 1-for-3."

So we've established that all he's trying to do is hit home runs. That or all he was trying to do was hit home runs against his former team in Seattle. But that's cool.

Lopez's heroics aside, the game still needed to be won, and the Indians waited until the 11th to do it and they did it from behind and they had to do it against Brandon League, the Mariners closer who said he had no control in walking three guys in an inning. The Indians have a history off league though and while Manny Acta says that you can't get to the closer very often, the history against League probably helped in the confidence department. Kipnis says so.

"I think it was probably in his mind, too," Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis said. "We know that we've done it off him before and I think we know we can do it again. Doing it off him before means guys have seen him and guys have had success against him. I think people are pretty confident when they go up to the plate against him."

But the Indians, and Carlos Santana specifically got to him and it seemed to me it was one of those combustible situations at the end of the game for a closer that can only end in tragedy and it did, for the Mariners. The Indians surrender a run in the top of the frame with Joe Smith on the mound and I wouldn't blame you if you thought things were going to end badly.

But all of a sudden, Jose Lopez walks to start the inning and there may be fire because smoke is present. And League simply didn't have it, he walked Kipnis, Cabrera would follow with a single and it would eventually set up a bases loaded situation with one for Carlos Santana.

And uh, Carlos is unbeatable in these spots. In addition to having a career OBP over .500 in bases loaded spots, he's 6-for-11 with a home run and 16 RBI in bases loaded, less than two out situations. He's in a winning situation and he's someone who doesn't disappoint.

League wasn't the only wild one on this afternoon. Indians starter **Zach McAllister**, who gave up three earned and pitched into the sixth inning ended up walking five hitters while only giving up three hits. A run also scored on a passed ball, but it wasn't the easiest pitch to corral for Santana and it got away.

Not the normal McAllister if you ask me. He also struck out six, but he's not really one to walk that many guys. Maybe it's the Mariners, maybe it was one of those days. Regardless, he did pitch well enough to keep his team in the game, which was incredibly important in the Indians having the ability to come back. It could have been worse with all the walks, but it wasn't.

Random Details...

Credit that bullpen for pitching four scoreless innings after McAllister was done for the day, and although Smith surrendered a run to give them the lead, you can't fault a bullpen for going that long with just one run.

Asdrubal Cabrera's two RBI hits were both to kind of get the ball rolling. He was able to plate the first runs in both comebacks.

Carlos Santana had two hits and two walks, a game winning RBI. That's a Carlos Santana type of game.

Michael Brantley was quiet for the first time in a few games, going 0-for-5, but that's okay because in addition to Lopez's three-run blast, Casey Kotchman helped support the bottom of the lineup going 2-for-4 with a pair of runs and a walk. Not so crappy now is he?

If you missed the game and was perplexed as I was reading the box score and play recap to see **Travis Hafner** replaced in that 11th inning by Aaron Cunningham, here's why. Cunningham ended up walking to load the bases in the 11th, but that should have been Pronk. Acta pinch-hit Cunningham because earlier in the game, Hafner was hit by a pitch in the ninth inning. That magical pitch from Charlie Furbush also made Pronk the all-time Indians leader in hit by pitches, passing Nap Lajoie.

That's one record I probably wouldn't have wanted broken in this game. But oh well. Hafner

appears to be okay and it seems to be in the hands of his hand not getting too swelled. If he comes in Friday and it feels good, he'll play.

You hope he's in there, but the fact that he didn't even have to undergo an X-ray should be a good sign. The Indians must not feel all that worried about it.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Despite the fact that he says he said he hasn't really changed his approach in his new role, **Shin-Soo Choo**
has changed his approach at the plate
as he is more aggressive
.

"I'm more confident right now," Choo said. "It doesn't matter where I hit. Lineups are lineups. My goal is to be in the lineup every day, eight-hole or nine-hole, every day in the lineup. I think about it the same way. I don't stress about it or anything. I'm very comfortable in the leadoff spot right now."

As it's been noted, this isn't permanent, it's temporary. How temporary? However long it keeps working. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. This lineup is going good, they're winning, I don't see anything wrong with keeping this adjustment until it's clear it isn't working anymore. Choo is hitting well, he seems to be giving his teammates good pitches and or opportunities due to his position. Just keep going.

The reason Jose Lopez was able to extract some revenge on his former team and has been playing so much lately is the continued ailing back of **Jack Hannahan**. Every day we seem to hear "he could return soon" and despite the idea that he could play on Thursday, I said, it was unlikely with another day game following the night game. But it appears as if he could
actually return this weekend
for the series against Miami. Turns out he was in a great deal of pain.

"I feel a lot better than I did. This has been the best day," Hannahan said. "I feel like the inflammation and the spasms have gotten better. Today's the best I've felt. I'm hoping to play either Friday or Saturday."

After awhile though, enough is enough. If the Indians have held out this long, they must feel Hannahan is close, or else they would have made a roster move by now. They can't continue to play a man-down during this stretch of games, they're already playing without a backup shortstop due to Hannahan's injury.

I don't know if it would have been (or still could be) Jason Donald returning if Hannahan were to visit the DL, but **Matt LaPorta** is doing the "hey remember me dance" again in Columbus with a solo home run on Wednesday and a 2-for-4 game on Wednesday. Canzler is also doing the dance, going 2-for-4, as he has hit three homers in his past 10 games.

To follow up our discussion on **Derek Lowe** the other day in the Rundown, Lowe provides some great perspective on his season thus far and really,
his career in general
.

"If you play a long time, you're going to have good years and bad years and some in between," Lowe said. "There's not always an answer for why you have a bad year. If you play 16 years and don't have a bad one, you're in Cooperstown, and I'm obviously not going there. So you're in the clump. That's how I took last year."

Lowe contends his 2011 was the result of fatigue and lack of sinker. I think the two can relate. Kind of hard to throw a baseball if you are fatigued. The answer for him was putting on 20 pounds (he said he was lighter in 2011, which caused him to tire) and fixing his mechanics. Viola, old Derek Lowe is back. He says the prospect of finishing the season with more double plays than strikeouts would be "awesome." It would, and it would be remarkable for a pitcher to do such a thing.

I mean heck though, two outs are always better than one.

In Castrovince's long piece, Lowe said a lot and he finished up by saying he thinks the grass in Cleveland is not only greener, but longer, giving his infielders a slower rolling ball, where in Atlanta, it was a short infield and it led to the ball getting sped up.

"Atlanta is one of the fastest infields in all of baseball," he said. "And it wasn't like we didn't try [to change it]. We asked many different times to see if you could grow the grass longer. But it's just something they believe in, and it's been like that for 20 years. Obviously, it doesn't mean you can't have success there, because many people have had success there. But any time you have a slower infield, it gives us a better chance."

I'm not sure how you can't come away liking Derek Lowe. He was just what this rotation needed. A veteran leader who knows what's up. And on top of all that, he's pitching well, which is the most important thing.

Look who's coming to town... A bunch of old friends in Ozzie Guillen and Mark Buehrle, and the team that ripped the guts out of this club in 1997. For the first time since 2004 and I believe, the second time since that heart-breaking postseason, the Marlins franchise returns to the place that used to be (officially, but still is by some) called Jacob's Field.

Yeah, so Edgar Renteria is nowhere to be found on that club, but they're led by Indians favorite Ozzie Guillen, who is just endearing to this club's as the Marlins are. Together, they might as well be the Enemy of the State.

[TIGER WATCH]

Oh hey, the Tigers lost again, and it was another close one. Doug Fister gave it a good major league try, but the Twins offense mustered enough. And the walls seem to be burning down in Detroit .

"The only thing that has been consistent for this team is the inconsistency, and that's mind boggling to me," manager Jim Leyland said. "We just aren't putting together the combinations that we need to win."

Alright, so that doesn't seem that bad, but voicing serious concern is a good thing to see for Tribe fans. They are aware of their issues. Jim Leyland might think it's sleepwalking, but what if... What If it's not?

What If....

[UNTIL JUNE...]

A lot can happen in a few weeks in baseball. Which is why I'm hoping that on June 1st, the Indians are still playing good ball and the Tigers are playing like...crap.

Why? Well I'm off to the country of Italy Saturday morning and I won't be back until the end of the month. What will hurt me the most is not being able to keep up with this team and my lack of activity over the next few weeks.

I will still be around, as I don't expect to be completely ripped off the universe as I'm sure that country has WiFi, but I'm pretty sure they don't televise Indians games and, we're on a different time, so while the Indians are playing, I'll probably be sleeping. So no Rundown for the next few days, but stick with me on Twitter as I hope to have the company of good old Tom Hamilton on some days with my trusty Kindle Fire, and there will be some stuff down the pipe on both the blog and TCF from me in my absence.

Until June though... Go Tribe!

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Nino has a blog that he creates dumb nicknames, even for players not on the Indians. Give it a vist at *The Tribe Daily* *.*

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