Wooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Now that that's out of the way, on with the Rundown. You know, I think most of us would have been thrilled with winning two out of three. We gutted out a win with Ubaldo on the mound. Zach McAllister went pitch-for-pitch with Doug Fister and the bullpen nailed it down. As a reward for taking the first two games, we got to face Justin Verlander.

May 24, 2012

Detroit Tigers 1

Cleveland Indians 2

W: Justin Masterson (2-3); **L:** Justin Verlander (5-2); **SV:** Chris Perez (16)

[BOXSCORE]

Justin Verlander was coming off a near-no-hitter in his last start against the Pittsburgh Pirates, losing it on a flare single by Josh Harrison with one out in the ninth. Part of me was rooting for Verlander to throw the third no-hitter of his career. Look, whether we like it or not, the guy is a Hall of Fame caliber pitcher and, in my humble opinion, the best pitcher in all of Major League Baseball. You don't have to like the guy, but you have to respect his talent. His makeup, his team-first mentality, and his stuff are off-the-charts impressive. Plus, if he throws a no-hitter in his start prior to facing the Indians, unless he throws a perfect game, he can't really do better against us.

Take one look at Verlander's eighth inning against the Indians today and you'll see what I mean about his stuff. It took Verlander just 11 pitches to strike out the side in an inning where his fastball ranged from 96-102 mph and he dropped in two unfair curve balls to Asdrubal Cabrera, both called strikes. Oh, by the way, he started the inning with 106 pitches. It was his 116th pitch of the afternoon that checked in at 102.

This guy is damn good. The Indians had beaten him one time in the last three seasons, a game on September 29, 2010 in Game Two of a doubleheader which featured household names like Jordan Brown, Jayson Nix, Trevor Crowe, Drew Sutton, and Luis Valbuena. Shelley Duncan hit cleanup. The Indians scored a run on a wild pitch and another on a squeeze bunt.

All of the pressure in this game was squarely on the shoulders of Justin Verlander and the Tiger hitters. The Tigers left 20 men on base in the first two games of the series. The Indians battled to win the first two, which they had to do with Verlander on the hill in the series finale. For the Tigers, this was a must-win game. In fact, every time Verlander starts is a must-win game because the Tigers pitching staff, outside of Verlander and Fister, has been pretty horrible.

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