Regardless of if the Cardinals are coming off a World Series season or anything else, they just can't beat the Indians. After the weekend series between the two, the Cardinals still have not won a series against the Indians ever. Ever! They're 6-14 against Cleveland with the Indians getting the best of the Red Birds once again.

June 10th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **4**

St. Louis Cardinals - **1**

W: Vinnie Pestano (3-0) L: Jason Motte (3-3) S: Chris Perez (2)

[BOXSCORE]

And boy what a way to get back within striking distance of the first place White Sox. This team on the road is just lethal, not phased by the packed house of Cardinals fans in Busch Stadium. It's incredible. Two big sequences, the first set the stage for the second .

Imagine my nervousness sitting in a car wasting my battery life on the MLB At Bat app on my phone watching this all unfold without pictures or sound. Just numbers and whatever the app says.

Vinnie Pestano replaces Jimenez and starts it real quick with a groundout on one pitch. Then things get hairy and three simple at bats later, he's walked the bases loaded. He played the ultimate game of chicken though, doing his best Bob Wickman impression by loading the bases and then tip-toeing his way out of the jam by striking out the last two hitters.

It says even more that one was their hottest hitter in Yadier Molin

"I'm not afraid to pitch with the bases loaded," Pestano said. "I don't get worried or scared or anything like that. Having the bases loaded or nobody on base ... doesn't make a difference to me."

You may not get worried Vinnie, but we all do, especially when you walk them loaded. It may not make a difference to you, but let's not make that little routine a habit you revisit on a consistent basis. But I have to say, as nerve-wracking as it was to watch unfold without pictures, it would have seemed to set the stage for what happened in the ninth inning.

"With a pitcher like that, it's pretty much, here comes the fastball. Let's see if you can hit," Kipnis said. "He's a big power pitcher, and the best thing you can do is kind of shorten your swing and let him supply the power."

And boy did he hit it. With the Cardinals bringing in their closer Jason Motte to help them get through the next half inning, the Indians needed to club away. A Johnny Damon single followed by a Choo strikeout brought the meat of the order up. Asdrubal Cabrera walked and gave **Jason Kipnis**
a prime opportunity to send the runner home with a one-out single.

He did more than that, clubbing a 2-2 fastball over the wall. Motte threw him all heaters, none of which were lower than 96 mph and he deposited it where no outfielder could touch it.

And that's why everyone's going around saying Klutch Kipnis.

One situation seemed to feed off another though. It was almost as if the ninth started up with fire after the emotion of the bottom of the eighth with Pestano. The offense sees Pestano get out of a huge jam that surely has them thinking they'll be down at least an eight run and facing Motte with a run needed in a save situation.

So when that isn't the case, why not go out and win it?

"[Pestano]'s a guy that we let work out of it because he's got the stuff to do it," Acta said. "That right away fueled the whole team. You escape that jam and then the next thing, we've got to win this game. We've got a good chance."

And that is exactly what Kipnis did and the roommates were huge in this one. Absolute keying the win. And while they were the big reasons for the game coming through as a win, there was one big guy who was key in putting them in that position.

Of course I'm talking about The Big U. And I can say it without the groan or deflated sigh or without having to call him The Big Ewwwwww. **Ubaldo Jimenez** rolled back the clock to 2010 with this outing. Maybe it was because he was facing a National League team (he says it helped having faced a lot of them before) or maybe he's hitting a consistent stride. Who knows, but he put in a valiant effort and while he didn't get the victory, it was another good solid outing for Ubaldo. In fact, it was downright dominant according to Acta.

"He was dominant," Indians manager Manny Acta said of Jiménez. "He had the good fastball with life and a little tail to it at the end, and had a good slider. Everything was working for him."

Sure, everything was working for him, but will it always be working for him? Is this something we can come to expect on a regular basis? He may never be that dominant, but can he at least have some of what made him successful on Sunday? That's the biggest question. He can talk

about know what the oppositions weaknesses are based of having faced them before all he wants, but the key to this wasn't that, it was not walking a single hitter.

He hung one pitch to Beltran and that was it really. He spread out five hits, no walks and he struck out seven. He got his ERA below 5.00 with the outing as he went seven and I'm just wondering: Can we get excited now?

Masterson has turned in a few good outings, Jimenez is looking as good as he's looked since coming over here. Can we count on this to continue? And if we can, can we start looking forward to how July is going to pan out? Because it certainly stands to look better than how last year did.

All I have is some highlights of Ubaldo on this one, but I don't need much to know it's not the same Ubaldo that struggled to get through four innings. This is one that simply didn't walk anyone. Sure, Pestano made up for it in one inning by walking a pair. But what more can you say? He looked good. He looked like a pleasant Ubaldo to watch. He was hitting the edges a lot and the stuff he threw out of the zone was nasty enough to get the hitters to swing.

It's just a whole different pitcher and while it is pleasant and fantastic, it's also a little annoying that we've suffered through watching him labor for two months when he's simply gone out there now and looked awesome. Not to sound like I'm unappreciative of the process he's gone through to get to this, but it makes me wonder if it's going to last. Can we expect consistency or is this just a flash in the pan?

We'll find out soon enough, that's for sure, but I sure hope it's for real.

Random Details...

The boxscore will note that this is Chris Perez's 20th straight save and league leading mark on the season. However it will not not that immediately following the final out of the game, he gacked all over the field.

"It's a hot day and when I came out to throw, I took a couple drinks of warm water and it didn't really sit well with my stomach," Perez said. "After I struck out [Daniel] Descalso it almost came up and when the game was over I just let it out. Nothing serious, I'm fine."

Why he was drinking warm water is beyond me, but just chalk it up to another save in the life of Chris Perez. Maybe his regurgitation is a way of saying the Spazverde celebration dance makes him sick.

Kipnis had a big day other than the homer, going 3-for-4 with a walk. He's creeping ever so closer to .300 with his average. He also notched steal 15 on the season. All-Star game, right?

So is Michael Brantley who extended his hitting streak to 18 games. I wonder when this kid is going to get stopped?

Choo's OPB is up to .370 after a few 0-fors in the series but he came through with a few hits in the finale. That's right where you want your leadoff hitter to be. He says he's maintaining his aggressiveness though
because it just works for him
.

"Last two days I haven't been on base much, but that happens in baseball. Today's a new day," Choo said before Sunday's game. "That last at-bat, that's just baseball. I hit it, [Freese] already caught the ball."

The story notes that Choo hits .423 swinging at the first pitch, while he's .095 behind 0-2. That makes logical sense but the way he's hitting the first pitch makes him far from your normal leadoff hitter. Most work the count and get on, he just straight gets on.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Something to look forward to in the midst of what the Indians are doing is the fact that they've yet to really get
Carlos Santana
back. He makes a difference just being there, for instance the sac fly he came through with to tie the game earlier on, but he has not yet morphed

into full Santana slugging mode
.

Acta says though that while Santana is still coming back from the concussion, it is not why he's of to a slow return.

"It's a high leg kick just like every hitter that does those things, it's a lot of rhythm," Acta said. "Guys that rely on that have a tendency to be up and down at times because that's what pitchers try to do. Less is more. The less body movement you have at the plate, the better chance you have to keep those eyes quiet."

Remember the Indians worked to eliminate some of the extra showiness in his stance that helped him immensely and Santana can be a very streaky hot hitter. When he gets hot, he gets hot. So Acta's theory makes sense and I wouldn't be necessarily worried about him dealing with the after-effects of the concussion. More-so the effects of having missed time due to the concussion. I'm a little salty with Terry Pluto . The Indians are rolling, playing well, certainly enough to muster up enough chatter about them.

And in his weekly notes, his main stories: Cleveland Browns quarterback race, and the Cleveland Cavaliers. Suck and Suck. And the Indians are third on his rundown. Saltiness aside, Pluto notes that Santana is wincing behind the plate when he takes a foul ball. I'm sure most catchers do that, but the point is made wincing or not. He should not be catching regularly with Hafner out of the lineup. They have that DH spot open and they can maximize their lineup possibilities by getting him in there when there is a lefty on the mound and letting Marson play.

We have Hannahan, or at least close to Hannahan. Super
Jack Hannahan
will
begin a rehab assignment
this week, about four to give games before his return from the disabled list. Boy will it be nice to get him back. I'm tired of No-se Lopez.

Good to see Acta
building trust
in
Nick Hagadone
. I pinned for him to be the guy out of spring training and it is perhaps now a admitted mistake

on the Indians part having messed around with Dan Wheeler instead of just promoting Hagadone from the outset. Kid was ready and showing that he was not only ready for the big leagues, he's ready for big roles.

"I think he's gone through the process," Acta said of Hagadone on Saturday afternoon. "You start putting guys out there in uncomfortable situations and see how they handled themselves. I think he's gone through all those steps and now I can trust him to throw strikes in any kind of environment. I think last night was a good example of that." How about the first shutout this weekend? I'd say that it's pretty remarkable that the Indians offense went well over two months without being shutout. You can get shutdown on any night and the Indians have plenty of times this season. But they've never been shutout until they were shutout on Saturday.

[TIGER WATCH]

The Tigers faced the Indians cross-state rivals last night on National Television and came up with a huge win late. They rallied for four runs to take a 7-6 lead in the eighth inning to get to 28-32. They're doing their best to keep pace with Cleveland and Chicago, now just five games back with the White Sox sliding around. Honestly for awhile it looked like the Royals were going to pass them, but they've fallen on hard times now themselves. -

Nino has a blog that is protected by a statue of Luke Carlin. Give it a vist at The Tribe Daily , or he might eat your face off.

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