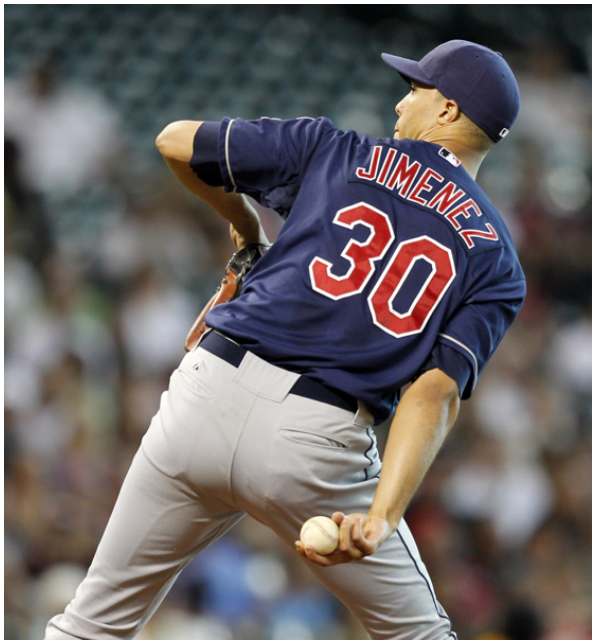

If you're a fan of offense, lots of hits, hate watching strikeouts, and don't like low-scoring games, well, you didn't find Friday night's game enjoyable. If you love old-fashioned pitchers' duels and lots of swings and misses, you were in your glory. The Indians and Astros kicked off their first series since 2001 by forgetting how to hit the ball, combining for 23 strikeouts and just eight hits in a 2-0 Indians win.

Between the Indians run in the first inning and the Indians run in the ninth inning, Ubaldo Jimenez, Joe Smith, Vinnie Pestano, Lucas Harrell, and Wesley Wright combined to put up 15 scoreless innings and allow just five hits. Jimenez did walk four over his 6.2 innings and Harrell walked three over seven, but outside of the free baserunners, both pitchers were in control of the game.

The Indians got on the board in the first inning on one of the strangest triples you'll ever see. Shin-Soo Choo nearly scraped the roof at Minute Maid Park with a high triple off the left field wall that landed right on the yellow foul line. The ball caromed back toward the third base bag and Choo, who had stopped midway between second and third, kicked it into gear again and scampered to third. It was the fourth straight game that Choo led off with an extra base hit. Asdrubal Cabrera lofted a sac fly to left and that run was all that the Indians pitchers needed.

Jimenez struggled a little bit in the first inning, fighting with his command and possibly pitching around a lefty. After getting leadoff hitter Jose Altuve, Jimenez walked Jordan Schaefer who stole second base. With first base open, Jimenez, who in the post-game said he pitched around

the left-handed hitter, walked Jed Lowrie. Carlos Lee bounced into an inning-ending double play with the final out coming at home plate. The ball glanced off Jimenez and Jason Kipnis fielded it near Lowrie going from first to second. Lowrie stopped, so Kipnis threw to first. When Casey Kotchman got the ball, he fired to Cabrera standing on second, but Lowrie had gotten caught in a rundown. The other baserunner, Schaefer, took off toward home plate and Cabrera fired home. Carlos Santana made the tag as Schaefer half-heartedly ran into him to try and dislodge the ball.

The Indians then went five innings without a hit. They mixed in one walk, but had no semblance of a scoring opportunity. For his part, Jimenez matched Lucas Harrell zero-for-zero. Between the third and the seventh, the starting pitchers recorded 13 strikeouts.

The Tribe finally picked up a scoring opportunity in the seventh. After Kipnis struck out to lead off the inning, Lucas Harrell appeared to reach the end of his rope as he issued back-to-back walks to Santana and Michael Brantley. The next batter, Johnny Damon, singled through the right side of the infield and third base coach Steve Smith held Santana. Kotchman worked into a hitter's count at 3-1 and lobbed a medium-deep fly ball to right field. Right fielder Brian Bogusevic caught the ball just into foul territory and fired a strike to home plate to retire the tagging Santana by 15 feet.

Riding the momentum from his outfield assist, Bogusevic doubled to lead off the seventh against Jimenez. After consecutive groundouts to third, Jimenez walked pinch hitter Jason Maxwell and turned it over to the bullpen. Joe Smith entered the game with men on the corners and struck out the Astros best hitter, Jose Altuve, to extinguish the threat.

The Indians went quickly again in the eighth. The Astros went 1-2-3 in the eighth, but it wasn't very conventional. Vinnie Pestano came on to try for his league-leading 18th hold. Facing the 2-3-4 hitters, Pestano gave up three long flyball outs, including one that Choo had to catch right up against the right field wall. Pestano stood on the mound after his inning with his hand on his hip, not totally sure how the Astros' loud outs didn't turn into runs.

Brantley added some insurance for the good guys in the ninth. Cabrera led off the inning with a single and advanced to second on a Kipnis walk. After Carlos Santana struck out flailing at a breaking ball, Brantley pulled the ball just past a diving Altuve and Cabrera scored easily. The ball caromed off catcher Chris Snyder's glove about 20 feet from home plate. Carlos Lee showcased his baseball awareness, flying in from the middle of the diamond where he was

poised to take the cutoff throw and slapped the tag on Kipnis as he tried to score. Aaron Cunningham struck out to end the inning.

In the bottom of the ninth, the strikeout trend continued. Chris Perez, finally getting some steady work as the Indians are starting to play better, had extremely sharp stuff and struck out the side on just 13 pitches, 11 of them for strikes. He mowed through J.D. Martinez, Bogusevic, and Chris Johnson, all swinging, and the Indians celebrated a series-opening win over the Astros.

Ubaldo Jimenez is now 7-5 on the year as Lucas Harrell dropped to 6-6. Chris Perez notched his league-leading save #23. With the White Sox 1-0 loss to the Brewers, the Indians lead in the Central is now 1.5 games with a record of 37-32

Stat of the Night: The Indians are now 6-1 in the opening game of a series in June. For the year, they're 18-6 in the first game of a series. That's a recipe for success as it makes it far easier to win series when you only have to win one of the last two or to split a four-game series.

Player of the Game: Ubaldo Jimenez gets this honor tonight. He gave the Indians a strong start, pitched out of the first inning jam that was crucially important in such a low-scoring game, and kept the Astros hitters off balance.

Tomorrow's Game: Jeanmar Gomez (4-6, 4.95) will take the mound for his most important start of the season against Houston left hander Dallas Keuchel (0-0, 1.80), making just his second big league start. A bad outing from Gomez and he may not accompany the ballclub to New York for the next series because he'll be sent to Columbus. First pitch is at 4:05.