A lot of people are saying that the Indians have yet to play their best ball. A few members of the team have said it, Chris Antonetti has said it... Well stop saying it. Let's just do it okay? Play your best ball. It's time. Don't save it for the postseason because you might not get there. Start playing what you believe to be your best ball.

June 26th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **4**

New York Yankees - **6**

W: Phil Hughes (8-6) L: Justin Masterson (4-7) S: Rafael Soriano (16)

[BOXSCORE]

Justin Masterson has an ERA of 4.09 after last night's game with the Yankees. It was just below 4.00 before the game. He has just four wins.

Phil Hughes lowered his ERA to 4.48 from 4.94 with eight shutout innings. He's been on a bit of a role lately, perhaps finally living up to his potential. He claimed his eighth win with the Yankees victory on Tuesday.

You have a pitcher who's given up four or more runs six times this season (15 starts) and has won eight games. He only won one of those games, but he's had a decision in all but one start, one of them being a game in which he gave up seven runs, the most he has all year.

And then you have Justin Masterson, just wanting some run support so he can win more than four games.

Was this one worthy of a win? Eh. It certainly wasn't his best effort, but it wasn't his worst, and he went six innings kept his team within a reasonable enough of distance but he simply had nothing helping him out.

I should stop there. He had something, it just.. It just didn't go right. But we'll get to that in a second.

Justin Masterson took his seventh loss of the season . A game maybe not worthy of getting a win for, but definitely not one you can blame and say he lost all on his own. I'd say if anything, holding the Yankees to just four runs (three of which came in one inning) while giving up seven hits and walking three is actually respectable.

"We went out there and more or less pitched the way we wanted to," Masterson said. "It wasn't the best control today, but we were able to make pitches. We had a lot of missed-hit balls, not real comfortable swings, which is exactly what you want. Somehow, four runs got on the board."

He is talking in "we" terms, crediting his catcher of course, so he believes he pitched well. If he thought he pitched bad, he most definitely would have said "I" instead of "we". I like and pretty

much agree with what he said that "somehow four runs got on the board." That's pretty much how you can summarize it.

The first run that scored off Chris Stewart's soft liner to third probably should have been an out had **Jack Hannahan** come up with the catch. It gets him out of the inning with no damage at all and that big second doesn't even happen.

Of course if we're going to get technical, the way the Indians put their four runs on the board was rather lucky. Johnny Damon's simple bloop to center was just luckily placed for a run to score and give Jose Lopez the opportunity to launch a three run blast with two outs.

So I guess in the end, it all worked out, but the central point is that Masterson pitched well and had that play been made, we're talking about this game taking on a completely different look.

Of course if the Indians also would have come through offensively, this game takes a different look. Of the nine innings, the Indians started five of them off with their leadoff hitter on base. Five times! That's more than half of your opportunities throughout a game. Overall they were 2-for-11 with runners in scoring position and those two hits came at the very end of the game with two outs.

Which was perhaps the greatest conundrum of last night's game to me. You a closer in Rafael Soriano that you can use, especially to get one out. Usually home runs are rally killers for your offense. Girardi wasted no time in bringing in Soriano after Wade gave up the home run.

However Soriano as nowhere near ready having not started warming up. The question becomes is he even prepared to close a game? He was just brought in, no time to really warm up. If here was more than two outs, I think the Indians would have had more of a chance because he would have probably been more inclined to show that ineffectiveness if there was any. With one out, he just needed one pitch.

But all of that is besides the point in the overall focus of this recap. A) Masterson was decent and could have been really good save for one pitch. B) The offense is frustrating.

"The team felt better after the last inning," Lopez said. "We've been struggling for a couple of games, but in the ninth inning, we showed up."

You can only hope that this was just simply them breaking out and the early stages of the offense turning things around and not simply an avoidance of not being shutout, which they did with that ninth inning and keeping the one shutout on the season just one.

Fact of the matter is, this is four straight losses, something the Indians have not suffered yet this season. It's also the second series loss in a row, which can't be happening. If anything, avoiding the sweep is crucial not just for standings and record sake, but for sanity.

Random Details...

Boy Dewayne Wise i just in the center of controversy lately with his "triple" Monday and a defensive play on Tuesday.. In the top of the seventh with two outs, Wise flew over the railing in left field in to retrieve a foul ball. He took a tumble into where the seats and when he reemerged, he had the ball in his glove.

But did he catch it? Watching closely, it was pretty clear the ball bounced off the heel of his glove and the likelihood of it actually being caught is slim to none. It is more likely someone in the stands put the ball in his glove and I'd expect nothing different from those crafty New Yorkers.

Jose Lopez was able to hit that home run because Jack Hannahan, who started, was kicked out in the eighth inning for arguing with third base umpire Mike DiMuro about that Wise catch. Hannahan was ejected after he went into the dugout and saw a replay of it. When he came out to man the hot corner, he talked to DiMuro and got ran.

"I can live with the fact that [DiMuro] didn't see him drop the ball," Hannahan said, "or the fan jumping up two feet away that was excited he got the foul ball. But for him not to just ask [Wise]

to see the ball, that's absolutely inexcusable, and it's frustrating."

DiMuro went on to say that he believed the ball was in the glove when he came out of the stands. Okay that's true, but was it in there when he fell into the stands? Of course DiMuro saw the replay and admitted Hannahan was right. Classy on him to admit the mistake, too bad it hurt the Indians for it to matter though.

Hannahan also charged him with his no-catch at third base that started the run in the second inning. He believed the ball that bounced off his glove was a foul ball. I'm not as ready to buy that argument because it was so close it was a judgment call.

This bullpen hasn't been real good lately. Tony Sipp gave up the solo shot to Alex Rodriguez and in his one inning, Nick Hagadone gave up a run. Both ended up being the difference in the final score as the Indians were able to put a big four spot up on the board. But again, different little things can impact the game at any time.

Two more hits for Johnny Damon. The one that knocked the run in during the ninth was pokey, but you can't argue as the average rises.

Kipnis/Santana: 1-for-8, four strikeouts. That's why the Indians offense continues to struggle. Choo was on base twice, the guys at the bottom managed to get on at times. The chances were there. Just not coming through.

[PEREZ STARTS ANOTHER FIRE]

There he goes again. We all remember **Chris Perez**'s statements earlier when he said he was tired of getting booed at home. That was a big thing, fans attacked him for attacking them. Truth is, the media gets all these quotes either twisted out of context, or published with highly misleading headlines.

Such as the bogus one from the CBS Sports post I'm linking here ... "Indians closer Chris Perez bewildered by attendance woes. "

Right. Chris Perez says nothing about attendance specifically and does not sound real woeful about it. Let's actually maybe get to what he said. He took Browns fans to task as well as Cavalier fans. His argument about the Browns fans was simple and one that I've been making for quite some time ether to people who continue to battle me in these issues or in my head's running log of daily things that come out of my mouth.

“That's what I don't understand,” Perez said. “Their whole thing is, ‘We want a winner.' Well, why do you support the Browns? They don't win. They've never won. They left. You guys blindly support them. I don't understand it. It's a double standard, and I don't know why. It's head-scratching. It's just — they don't come out. But around the city, there's great support. They watch it in the bars. They watch it at home. They just don't come.”

You may not want to hear it and I think the common misconception about this and maybe perhaps reasons for avoidance. People who get upset at Chris are probably the ones he is talking about. It has nothing to do with Browns fans in general. Look, I'm not a Browns fan and never will be. This isn't to say you can't be a Browns fan. But there are groups of people out there that are Browns fans and claim to be Indians fans. They support the Browns til the end of time despite their failures and will do anything.

But then when it comes to the Indians, they bash them and pull the "Dolan is Cheap" argument or "they don't win" argument in why they don't support the Indians the same way. Chris Perez isn't saying how you should spend your money or how you should root for a team. He's simply calling out the people who are this double standard.

Perez also had words for the Cavaliers fans that continue to root against LeBron James.

“I don't get the psyche,” said Perez, who grew up in Florida. “Why cheer against a guy that's not even in your city anymore? Just to see him fail? Does that make you feel good? I could see if the Cavs were in the championship, but that's their mentality. They've had a lot of years of misery. They say, ‘You just don't understand because you don't live here.' O.K., maybe I don't. But that doesn't mean it has to keep going.”

Again, not a Cavaliers fan, not a LeBron James fan. Never was, never will be. I never had any problem with him leaving either, but how he left makes him a complete egomaniac. I don't really root against him though. In fact I've completely stopped following basketball altogether. I really don't care. As a Magic fan that is seeing Dwight Howard do the same type of crap, I'm not

interested. There's going to be a few teams soon that really only matter, so why bother with that sport? But I can see Perez's point here too. I can also see the reasoning in cheering against LeBron. Some people take it to the extreme though and it just goes back to what he was saying about the Browns fans. There's a point where it just becomes ridiculous and nonsensical.

Why did Perez say what he said and why has this been brought up again? I think that's a big question that needs answered. Well for one, the New York media is in it's own world. Unless they talk about something, they haven't gotten the story. So with Perez in town, they of course asked him
about comments he had already commented on
earlier in the year.

"Cleveland fans just took it the wrong way, because it was in the New York Times. It makes it looks like it's a brand new [topic], but it's not. It's the same stuff I was talking about earlier [this season]. When I get asked a question, I'm not going to just give the politically correct response unless it's something I really can't talk about." Chris also went on to say that the homestands have been great and that he didn't want to call the fans out again because the attendance has been better. But of course with headline making, fans are going to think he is doing it again. He said nothing of the sorts, it's just media twisting and going for another story.

And don't even start with the "Chris hates Cleveland, he's just going to leave, he doesn't care about this team." I think it's quite the contrary. I think he loves his team and he wants to win badly. If anything, him addressing it shows that he cares. If he didn't he'd shut his mouth, wait for his time to be up and bolt in free agency. Or he'd ask for a trade. Even Chris Antonetti made the point that he believes in the team
"Chris' comments were coming from the right place," Antonetti said. "He believes in the team. He believes that we have a competitive team that's out there and plays the game the right way in a beautiful ballpark where people come to enjoy baseball. He just wants as many people to come out and enjoy it as possible." People who want to bash Chris Perez are the same ones that want to defend the Browns no matter what. Of course it just plays into more of that double standard he was talking about. I know I don't talk to those people. For some reason they don't read what I write because if they do, I'd hear a lot more backlash for the things I say. Or they do but just choose not to say anything. I support Perez and what he has said because I agree with it. And really, that's that.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Just had someone ask me on Twitter if **Roberto Hernandez** is close to returning. Obviously with no real news lately, we continue to not know. Of course the former Leo Nunez finally was granted his return, but was promptly suspended. His timeline makes me believe we won't see Hernandez this year and the additional circumstances even give me an inkling that maybe he won't be back ever. I'm sure that won't be the case, but I still think he will not be returning in 2012, at least in the regular season.

The Indians feel differently.

"He's anxious to come up here and be part of it," Indians manager Manny Acta said on Tuesday. "He wins and loses with us, even if he's far away. And we are expecting him to come up here sooner rather than later."

Antonetti says the Indians at this point have done everything they can, so it's just a matter of waiting. He also said he thinks Hernandez will avoid a suspension. I don't think I can see that, but if he feels that way, more power to him. He says the "guidance" the Indians have been given dictate that because they re-worked his contract, he may avoid suspension. We'll see.

"It's certainly a possibility that he could be back in the United States by the All-Star break," Antonetti said. "But I can't sit here and say with certainty that that's going to happen. Until he's actually granted his visa and permitted access to the United State, no one really knows for sure." Again, that last line.. No one really knows for sure. We'll just leave it at that. Another member of the Indians rotation last year is making a comeback of his own. Of course
Carlos Carrasco
will actually be pitching again in the near future as
he's coming back from Tommy John surgery
, not banishment from the country.

"I'll be excited to play again," Carrasco said. "It's a big difference right now. I just do rehab and I think about how one year ago I played with the team. It's a big difference, but that's part of my life. I just do my rehab, and hopefully I'll come back this year." Carrasco is with the team in New York, as he tossed a bullpen session, throwing 60 pitches. Again, he won't be around in 2012 to pitch for the Indians, that's just not possible. He'll likely get back to pitching in the minor league system just to build up his strength, but for Carrasco and the Indians, the goal is 2013.

"I want to," Carrasco said. "It depends on my rehab. You never know. We'll see. Right now, everything is OK. We'll see what happens in two months." He has been throwing just fastballs in his sessions and will start adding a changeup soon. The "two months" he is referring to is the target to go out into the minor league system and get some work in.

Someone is getting their work in down in the minor leagues though. Today
Travis Hafner
will begin his
minor league rehab assignment in Columbus.
He will DH and then not play on Thursday, which likely means he'll be back on Friday. How long the Indians have him on the rehab assignment is a new story that we probably won't know until he actually gets called up. It really will depend on how he looks.

But the good news is that Pronk is imminent.

Maybe he'll be joined at some point by Russ Canzler, who's hitting the cover off the ball and was named the Minor Leauge Player of the week. In other news, Andy LaRoche was released. It marks yet another retread release in the upper levels of the minor league system, meaning that more and more movement is happening throughout the system.

[TIGER WATCH]

Thankfully the Tigers remain the same distance back of the Indians after a nice win for the Texas Rangers. Yu Darvish pitched seven innings in what really was a back-and-forth type of a deal. The White Sox won though, which just increases their lead in the division as they won 3-2, barely defeating the Twins after they came back in the ninth with a pair of runs to make the Sox sweat. Jamey Carroll!

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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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