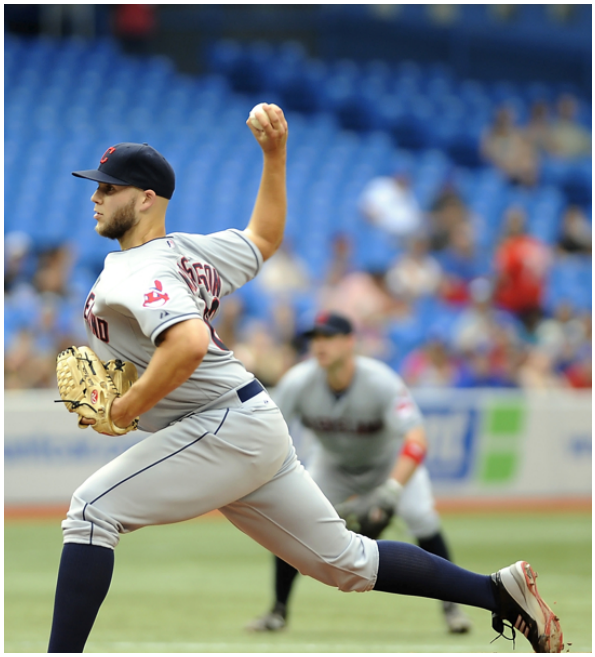

The Indians offense decided that it needed another day of the All-Star Break, but Justin Masterson brought his “A” Game and threw seven spectacular innings. Vinnie Pestano fired a scoreless eighth and Chris Perez threw a 1-2-3 ninth to shut the down and send the Indians to a 45-41 record with their first win of the second half by beating the Toronto Blue Jays 1-0.

It was a big win for the Indians, getting a phenomenal start from Justin Masterson and winning a game where their offense struggled. They also beat a lefty for the fifth straight time after having just five wins against left handed pitching as of June 28. If you blinked, you might have missed an inning as the teams combined for just 13 hits and one run.

Both teams went quickly and quietly in their first inning of hitting since Sunday. Some offensive struggles are to be expected early on as guys try to regain their timing and get acclimated to facing live pitching again. It didn’t help that both pitchers were locked in. Right from the start, both Masterson and Jays’ starter Ricky Romero had terrific stuff and showed the ability to throw all of their pitches for quality strikes.

Travis Hafner, who had a rough first half to the season, started the second half off on a tremendous note. Hafner picked on a hanging curve ball from Romero and hit a towering fly ball to deep right that just kept carrying and landed over the fence to put the Tribe on top 1-0. It would be the only real mistake Romero would make and the only mistake made by any pitcher in the game. After a Carlos Santana ground out, Michael Brantley picked up the first of his three hits in the game, extending his hitting streak to 11. Brantley was erased on a fielder’s choice,

Johnny Damon singled, and Jack Hannahan struck out to end the threat.

Masterson faced the minimum in the second and third, inducing inning-ending double plays in both frames. In the fourth, the Indians got a one-out walk from Santana and a double from Brantley to put runners at second and third. Lou Marson struck out and Johnny Damon grounded out, the most obvious example of the Indians lack of situational hitting in the game.

Masterson was undeterred. He got three groundouts in the fourth and two more groundouts in the fifth, working around a single and a wild pitch. The Indians failed to add on in the sixth. Jason Kipnis walked to start the inning, but was picked off by Ricky Romero when he took off on first movement. After Hafner popped out, the Indians started a two-out rally. Santana singled sharply to center and Brantley collected his third hit of the ballgame on a rocket through the hole between first and second that nearly hit Santana. Unfortunately, Marson was the next hitter and he left a small village on the basepaths tonight, grounding out to the pitcher to end the inning.

In the sixth, Masterson worked around another single to preserve the 1-0 lead. Johnny Damon got to third base in the seventh after an infield single, a stolen base, and a groundout, but Asdrubal Cabrera popped out on a 3-2 pitch, blowing another opportunity for the Indians to grab some insurance.

Masterson bent in the seventh but did not break. Jose Bautista flew out to fairly deep center to lead off the inning and Masterson issued his only walk of the night to Edwin Encarnacion on a 3-2 pitch. Adam Lind flared a ball to left field that landed in front of defensive replacement Aaron Cunningham to put runners at first and second. Pitching Coach Scott Radinsky came out to the mound, appeared to tell a joke or two, and then trotted back to the dugout. Masterson made quick work of Yunel Escobar, sending him back to the dugout on a nasty slider on the outer black, and then got Kelly Johnson to end the inning on a sharply hit ground ball to short.

In total, Masterson went seven brilliant innings and never allowed a Blue Jay to reach third base. He walked only one, struck out five, and got 13 ground ball outs. He set the tone that needed to be set for the Indians starting rotation to begin the second half.

The Indians worked a couple of walks off southpaw Darren Oliver in the eighth, but those runners were erased on a double play and a caught stealing. Vinnie Pestano worked a 1-2-3

eighth with a couple of K's to start his second half on the right foot. In the ninth, naturally, with nobody on base, Marson singled to extend his hitting streak to eight games. He never advanced past first.

Chris Perez needed a good outing to erase the memory of Sunday's blown save. His other blown save of the season came against the Jays on Opening Day. He had to face the Jays 2-3-4 hitters, which included Jose Bautista and recently-extended Edwin Encarnacion. Leadoff hitter Colby Rasmus hit a ball that looked good off the bat but died about 30 feet short of the wall in center field for the first out. Bautista took some healthy cuts, as he always does, but grounded out sharply to short. Encarnacion battled, working the count full, but swung through a slider for strike three and the Indians celebrated a 1-0 victory.

With the win, the Indians moved to 45-41. The Tigers battered the Orioles to stay a half game behind the Indians and, at time of post, the White Sox had just erased a 5-3 deficit in Kansas City to lead 6-5.

Stat of the Night: I already mentioned this, but the Blue Jays failed to get a runner to third base in this game.

Player of the Game: Easy one here. Justin Masterson. That's what an ace should do and that's what an ace looks like. Terrific effort from Masterson who deserved to win this game 1-0 after some tough luck losses since joining the Indians in 2010. Masterson got 13 groundball outs, only walked one, and was in control all night long.

Tomorrow's Game: The Indians will look to lock up the series with Ubaldo Jimenez facing off against former Indian Aaron Laffey at 1:07 p.m.