I don't take part in must-wins unless it's later in the season, and I'm not going to say this was a must win. But Boy it was really big to win it.

July 16th, 2012

Cleveland Indians - **3**

Tampa Bay Rays -**2**

W: Zach McAllister (4-1) L: Alex Cobb (4-6) S: Chris Perez (26)

[BOXSCORE]

The point is completely moot because **Shin-Soo Choo** ended up scoring on a based ball later in the inning. But there would have been some angry people if he ended up not scoring on the game's first big play in the first inning.

The call was right though . In the first inning Choo did it again. He lead off the game with a blast to right center and it bounced off the top of the wall. It appeared to hit the top above the yellow line and bounce out. A definitive replay showed that it hit the yellow line though. The umpires took a look at it and made the right call.

"After they made the call, we came in and watched the replay," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "It hit the yellow line and came back. At the beginning, from the dugout, we thought that it might've hit the top and then the back where it has that sign. But it was the right call."

Replays aside, Choo came around to score after being awarded second with a double. It's another extra base hit to lead off the game and it is still a run on the board, so no one has any reason to complain. Especially more since the Indians won the game and the call was correct.

Choo certainly carried the team though. Not only did he sore that opening run, he knocked in the second one and scored the third one. He doubled home Johnny Damon in the third and then scored on a Jason Kipnis double a few batters later. No Choo in this one, no win. He was a man last night and he did it all from the first spot in the order. Sometimes there's those games were it is just one person. This was not one of those games. Even though Choo accounted for the offense, without

Zach McAllister

or the bullpen, the Indians do not win the game either. Start with the starter, who was not lights out, but really good after starting off really shaky.

In the first two innings Z-Mac walked three of his four hitters on the night. Then he got it together. Of course three straight singles in the fourth caused his first and only run given up, but he got a double play and a groundout to get out of that jam and it was smooth sailing for the next two frames before he gave way to the bullpen.

Things got harry in the seventh inning after Acta went to the pen. Joe Smith would be the regular option, but with him not available for this one it came down to entrusting Esmil Rogers. The kid has been great since coming over, we just talked about him yesterday, so it only makes sense that he struggled.

It really was Acta's first time entrusting Rogers with this kind of situation and although he did not blow it, he entered the game and immediately gave up the two-run cushion by submitting a ball that Desmond Jennings muscled over the fence.

Acta kept him out there though and he got a few outs, unfortunately though he walked that pesky Will Rhymes and Acta saw enough and pulled him for Tony Sipp.

That seems like it would end well. Sipp would walk Sean Rodriguez, so Acta would walk out again.

Why he just didn't immediately go to
Vincent K. Pestano
is beyond me, but he finally did to face one of Tampa's best in Ben Zobrist and
Vinnie did what Vinnie does best
to end the seventh.

"He never really looks intimidated out there," Perez said of Pestano. "He always wants the ball and he believes he can get his way out of any situation, which is how I believe. I don't think it's a coincidence that we have the same kind of mentality and we've been able to put together the run we've put together."

He would give up a few singles in the eighth inning, but in between that he struck out a few more hitters and got the outs that he needed to give way to **Chris Perez** in the eighth, the other dominant member of the Tribe's late inning duo. He would do much of the same, striking out a pair, one to end the game, and giving the Indians a much needed victory.

And also getting Chris Perez out there against the team that last foiled him.

"They have two guys that are really, really good," Tampa Bay's Luke Scott said. "To beat them, you've got to take advantage of mistakes if they present themselves. If they don't, then obviously it's going to be even tougher."

No mistakes on this night though.

Random Details...

The Indians should have scored more in the third inning with Jason Kipnis on second with the double and Brantley grabbing one of his three walks and one out. Until #DopeyTime hit a line

drive to Jeff Keppinger and he caught Jason Kipnis off the bag at second. It happens, but it is frustrating.

Travis Hafner had the Michael Brantley game as well, walking twice and not scoring a run.

Johnny Damon, two hits, a run scored. His third multi-hit game in his past four games.

Choo also stole his 10th base of the season, which puts him halfway to 20-20 in both categories. Something he has done before and is certainly capable of the way he's swinging the bat.

Overall it is good the Indians didn't need more than three runs because they were 2-for-12 with runners in scoring position, which is incredibly awful that they had that many opportunities. Like I said yesterday, the hitting is there, they notched eight hits and eight walks, plenty of traffic. They just are not seemingly getting it done as much as they need to.

How bad is Asdrubal Cabrera scuffling? He's already down to .274 in terms of his average. At one point a few weeks ago when the Indians faced the Rays he was at .294. He's dropped .20 points in just a few games. He has had one hit since his 2-for-3 night on July 6th. Really really scuffling. In just 10 days he's put up a few 0-4s and last night marked his second 0-for-5 against the Rays.

He's not even walking either as he's garnered just a few walks and his OBP has dropped too from .371 to .352.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Manny Acta is making no bones about it. His best hitters are going to hit first. It is an unorthodox approach, considering last year you would have thought **Michael Brantley** would be hitting leadoff and Shin-Soo Choo would be hitting cleanup, but this is the world the Indians now live

in. It's completely backwards, but this is the approach Acta will take .

"I believe that the best formula for scoring runs is to bunch up your best hitters together," Acta said. "Right now, those are our four best hitters [at the top of the lineup]. Ideally for us, Santana and Hafner should be hitting in the middle of our lineup, but they're not swinging the bat the way they're capable of right now, especially with runners in scoring position."

Why not right? Who cares if he isn't a power hitter, he's hitting and if he's hitting and people are in front than he's knocking runs in and that's all that counts. With your big gun in Santana struggling and Hafner in and out, what other option do you have? It's better than this Jose Lopez business. Why would you have a guy like Brantley hitting behind Lopez? A) You are basically giving Lopez the opportunity to have more at-bats than Brantley and B) Just why?

It's unfortunate that Brantley's hit streak came to an end last night, but when you walk three times, that should just really not count cause they were totally avoiding him.

Speaking of #DopeyTime, he was starting at third, and Acta says that he'll pretty much take Lopez as his starter when he doesn't value defense as much. That's uh, great.

"If I have Masterson or I have Lowe pitching," Acta explained, "then I value the defense more than what the guy can bring offensively. That's when it changes."

Casey Kotchman will always play when Lowe and Masterson play and you could see more Marson in that aspect, which I'm fine with. Kotchman seems to be hitting well lately though so I would get him in there more than you would think.

I seem to be catching some flack for defending **Trevor Crowe** like I am, but I will continue. I said on Twitter that I wonder how Crowe would have turned out had he not been a first round pick. Before you hear me out, Crowe was released by the Indians yesterday

. Crowe took to Twitter to thank the fans and the Indians, just showing both his class and the Indians.

Not many better people in the organization than Crowe. He's a classy individual and he seems to be one to "keep it real" as they say.

Maybe that's part of why I'm a fan and want to defend him, maybe it is just because I truly believe what I'm saying. But Crowe was a talented player. He could do a lot. He's a great defender, not a great arm but not bad. He could play all three spots in the outfield, he could run a bit and was showing a good track record for hitting in the minors.

His downfall though was perhaps the fact that he was selected in the first round by the Indians and now stands as one of the many first round picks of the failed John Mirabelli draft era.

Was he a first rounder? Obviously not after watching him as a professional. But how are we to know exactly what he was when he was picked by the Indians. The thought is your first rounder is supposed to impact. The higher ones are can't miss guys, everyone else it at least talented enough to make it to the big leagues and do well. You have your busts, your let downs, your surprised, your whatever.

Crowe is not so much in any of those categories. I wouldn't call him a bust, but considering he was a first round pick, there's a level of expectations that come with that. I can't argue that, but what I can say is that maybe the expectations were too much for what Crowe actually matched talent wise.

Was he a great hitter at the major league level? Not so much. But he can be a serviceable outfielder. You look at the way Aaron Cunningham is making his money this year and there's no reason that can't be Trevor Crowe with a little more playing time.

I think Crowe can still pan out. I thought this year he had turned himself around and was going to maybe surprise but he never got that shot. Someone will take a shot on him though and he'll try it again in a new organization. Overall the biggest thing is the injuries that cost him time and

decisions the Indians made like putting him at second base.

It worked for Jason Kipnis, not so much for Trevor Crowe.

Vinny Rottino has been on fire since arriving in Columbus, which probably had something to do with the Indians releasing Crowe. Rottino was in the outfield last night for the Clippers and he hit a home run and knocked in a pair in a 8-2 win. With Rottino, Carrera, LaPorta, Canzler, Huffman, Goedert, AND Fedroff all capable of playing outfield, there's many options. Not to mention the fact that they had Jason Donald in left.

The Indians are certainly trying everything they can right now at left field in case Grady Sizemore can't come back and they can't make a move. That is for sure.

[TIGER WATCH]

The good news is that the Indians gained a game on first place as they won and the White Sox lost, so now they are just three back. The bad news is that the Detroit Tigers also gained a game with their victory over the Angels.

Yeah and it was an impressive win. Even though Rick Porcello gave up five runs, the Tigers offense woke up and erupted in an interesting way. They scored a few unearned runs, but largely got a few key hits from Brennan Boesch homering in the seventh to break a 5-5 tie and then Quentin Berry singling an inning later to score an insurance run after Mark Trumbo responded with a homer of his own.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a vist at The Tribe Daily , because he's more Italian than Vinny Rottino. Pizza Pie!

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