You know what hadn't been an issue lately that suddenly had an impact in the game last night?

July 25th, 2012

Detroit Tigers - **5**

Cleveland Indians - **3**

W: Max Scherzer (10-5) L: Derek Lowe (8-9) S: Jose Valverde (19)

[BOXSCORE]

Defense...

Now I'll give Acta and the Indians that there was one error, not two, committed in the second inning.

"Let's be honest, one error," said Acta, when asked about Cabrera's two throwing miscues. "The first one, the guy was out by two steps. The human element got confused there. I don't know why. If you watch the replay, the guy was out at first base. ... I cant blame Cabrera for that one. But that's how it goes.Sometimes the human element goes on your side and sometimes it doesn't. It didn't today, but that's not the reason why we lost the ballgame."

He is right on all accounts, but we'll talk about why the ballgame was lost in a bit. Right now, the error(s) hurt. However you want to chalk it up, even if Infante was called out, Cabrera's error the second time around allowed Alex Avila to score and
Derek Lowe
still gave up a single to follow that that scored another run.

As Acta said, it isn't why the Indians lost, but it could be a reason that the Indians didn't win as they ended up scoring three runs.

The Indians have been playing so well defensively, it hasn't been an issue. So let's hope the series continues without it being an issue. The Indians already can't seem to pitch or hit right now at the same time, so complicating it by playing shoddy defense is unacceptable.

About the pitching...

Derek Lowe wasn't any good in this one. Let's just be honest. He went six innings and gave up four earned, which is a lot better looking than some of the other games he's pitched as of late, but make no mistake about it, he looked rather bad once again.

He pitched well to get out of that first inning with just one run, and after that ridiculous second inning he put up calm third and fourth innings. But when Lowe goes sour, he is really bad

looking. He walked three straight hitters in the fifth and while he escaped that inning with just one run given up, what kind of pitching is that? Living every inning on the edge, giving up runs here and there by loading the bases up and getting out of jams? That's just a sign of disaster waiting to happen at anytime and that's not really going to get you far as a starting pitcher.

As Derek Lowe said himself, it could have been a lot worse than it actually was.

"I've played this game too long to be searching," Lowe said. "I've struggled numerous times in my career. I guess it affects you because you're not pitching the way you'd like, but by no means do you go out there and think you're not going to get the job done. I've been fortunate to play 16 years, and I've struggled at times. I'm in a little funk, and you just keep pitching and keep plugging away."

There's two things that that quote opens up to discussion. The first is, the Indians can't really afford to see him in this funk, mainly because this funk has been going for a good stretch now. How much longer can they sit here and watch him "keep plugging away" in search of what makes Derek Lowe, a good Derek Lowe?

And secondly, when do you go from searching for your form that makes you successful to, simply not having it. Yeah, 16 years in the big leagues, struggles before, but now you are getting older. Granted there was success earlier this year and while I don't think anyone expected THAT to continue, I think most people still think you are capable of some success.

But again, how much longer can you afford to wait?

"We're working on it," Acta said. "But we have to get better in here, within our clubhouse. We can't expect that one guy is going to come from the outside -- whether it's on the offensive end or pitching -- and everything is going to be OK. We need more than one guy and they're in here in this clubhouse."

Not getting swept will keep the Indians afloat and perhaps a little more in contention than getting swept would have. But gaining a game on Detroit in this series would be a great thing. That

becomes really difficult with Justin Verlander pitching today, but by losing to Max Scherzer, this is the position you've put yourself in as a team.

Fact of the matter is this. Derek Lowe is going to get more starts, but he needs to start doing something more than six innnings, eight hits, three walks and five runs. Now the lack of strikeouts is starting to look pitiful. When he was going the whole game not striking out anyone and getting productive outs, it was okay, but now it's starting to look as if he doesn't have anything what so ever.

Yes Roberto Hernandez is on his way, but Lowe is not the only one struggling right now.

Offensively, the other roller-coaster in this theme park of the Cleveland Indians, what can you say? Another 0-for-5 night in the RISP department. Four walks, with just one being capitalized on, and three runs that had to be scored off the home run ball.

Santana goes 0-for-4, Cabrera goes 1-for-4 with a pair of strikeouts and Kipnis walks once. That will not get you very far as we've noted. Shin-Soo Choo provided plenty of opportunities getting on base three times, doubling, but one inning was stymied when he attempted to steal, but was thrown out in a strike 'em out-throw 'em out play with Cabrera.

So yeah, that's kind of why you only sore three runs. It's a miracle they scored that many off just five hits.

That type of formula will not win you many ballgames. It will win you the games that Justin Masterson pitches brilliantly in and the bullpen is given a chance to take a lead late and bring it home.

But it won't win you games in which pitching and defense implodes, even if it's only to the tune of five runs.

Sure you can give Max Scherzer some credit, but a pitcher with a 4.49 ERA can have 10 wins because he gets help more times than not. Derek Lowe can get a majority of his eight wins off early success, but he could get a few more if the Indians figured out this whole hitting thing.

Random Details...

Cody Allen tossed an inning-plus and struck out two. Good to see him get in for some more time and come into what is still a close situation that the Indians need to find some zeros in. That's kind of what we need from the bullpen. Guys to come in when the game is still close and the Indians are behind. Allen and Esmil Rogers, who also turned in a scoreless frame, can really do for this bullpen.

And I suppose you should tip your cap to Tony Sipp for striking out two of the three hitters he faced. He's given up just one earned run in the month of July thus far. His appearances have been a little scattered, but it is good to see that getting turned around, even if it's slowly.

Michael Brantley recorded his 11th steal of the season. Normally I'd take this opportunity to wonder what he's doing not stealing more, but the guy ends up second base with a double to the gap more times than not, so same effect.

Hafner's ninth inning solo blast was his 9th of the season. He needed to try and catch up to Casey Kotchman, who hit his 10th. Can't be getting out-homered by Casey Kotchman now. It really hid the fact that Hafner was having a rough game with three strikeouts.

Going back to Santana, Acta even said it before the game .

"We need him badly. I'm happy for him, but I'm happy for our ball club. We're not going to go anywhere unless him and [Travis] Hafner swing the bat the way they're capable of."

Those two have to hit. Santana more than Hafner, because you count on putting Santana in that

four spot right behind the three guys getting on and you count on him being the catalyst of sorts to this offense being successful. It's a lot of pressure for a guy, but that's what he gets for being so good.

Jordan Bastian even noted something in his blog post to recap the game. The Indians offense is really at the same point it was at this point last season. The numbers are eerily identical with the Indians of course having improved on A) The number of times they strike out and B) The number of times they walk. The only difference is that the big guy that contributed to a lot of those numbers last year, is not contributing this year. The Indians would be more than capable offensively if he can just wake up and be consistent for them.

Pitching is still the key.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Anytime **Travis Hafner** gets to talk about his speed though, it makes for some sort of comedy. Which was the situation after Tuesday's game in which Hafner hit the crucial triple that put the Indians in a position to win.

Along with the comedy of Hafner running around the bases and accomplish feats of speed, there also comes some concern in that Hafner just had surgery on his knee.

"Before the game, I was running and my knee felt really good," Hafner said. "I was like, 'If I have to run hard on it, I feel really comfortable doing it now.' I was pretty happy about that. It feels pretty good now."

Well, he had to run hard and run hard he did. Thankfully he got to third with no problems, and well, he got to third.

Of course as we've rehashed by now, that triple allowed **Aaron Cunningham** to bunt home

pinch runner Lou Marson and become a hero,
right before he got booted off the team
. The Indians did indeed decide that Cunningham was getting designated for assignment to make room for Brent Lillibridge.

"We like Aaron," Acta said. "He was a good teammate. He did everything we asked him to do. We just felt that by having a guy like Lillibridge, we could use him on the infield to rest [Asdrubal] Cabrera. It was more convenient for us."

If Cunningham clears waivers, he'll likely go to Triple-A and remain with the organization just in case. And honestly, he probably will clear waivers unless there is a team out there that really values him. But this was the move that had to be made to bring **Brent Lillibridge** in. Yes he already had a 40-man spot, but with Rafael Perez oh-so-close to returning, he'll need a 40 man spot himself.

And with Acta already saying Lillibirdge would play left field late as a defensive replacement, the writing was on the wall.

"I've had some success in the outfield, which I feel like is a lot easier than the infield," Lillibridge said. "But I love the challenge of being on the infield, especially shortstop. You've got to be in on every single pitch. You're locked in the whole game."

Lillibridge said he's glad to be back in the AL Central with some familiarity and that he's looking forward to being on a team that is in contention. I'm looking forward to this team being in contention too.

If you are concerned about Manny Acta being able to execute a suicide squeeze without Aaron Cunningham bunting, have no fear. Manny is actually shooting 100% when it comes to that call, being successful on all five attempts where the Indians bunt with a runner on third and less than two outs.

Consider the idea that the Indians needed this series to stay afloat and not count themselves

out of the race as a reality. The Brewers just exited a situation in which their GM said they needed to win on their last road trip or else they would be sellers. Well the Brewers have lost six straight and are now considered sellers , looking to possibly move spare parts like starter Randy Wolf, reliever Francisco Rodriguez, and possibly outfielder Corey Hart. Of course Zack Greinke too. That piece of news has relevant news in that the Brewers were in the same situation the Indians are, only in a much more tougher division that doesn't tolerate any sort of long losing streak, and in that maybe some of their spare parts could be targets for the Indians if they decide not to join the Brewers.

The only relevant rumor on the Indians is a note that they checked in on the suddenly likely to be traded Chase Headley
, third baseman for the San Diego Padres. The Pads took Carlos Quentin off the market by signing him to an extension awhile ago, but could still move pieces that could net them some more talent. Headley could do that, but I'm not sure he's someone the Indians pursue for long term reasons and the price. They likely couldn't make something happen without giving up a whole lot of something.

Yesterday, Chris Perez gave a pitching lesson to young J.T. Taylor as a part of a charity auction.

J.C. Romero gave up two runs and blew the lead for the Clippers in the second game of a double header on Wednesday. He had his debut a few days ago and pitched a scoreless inning of relief.

There was a time that **Matt Packer** could have been perhaps an option for the Indians late this year, early next, until Packer missed most of this season with an injury and rehabbing.
Packer is now 2-0 for the Aeros
as he pitched into the eighth giving up two runs off eight hits and no walks in Akron's win on Tuesday. Packer has put himself in a legit spot to be some sort of option for the Indians at some future point in time. He's a legit prospect the way he's pitched and risen through the system.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a vist at The Tribe Daily , or else Will Smith will drop down and erase

your alien face memory.

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