OVER!

August 8th, 2012

Minnesota Twins - **2**

Cleveland Indians - **6**

W: Justin Masterson (8-10) L: Brian Duensing (2-7)

[BOXSCORE]

Over over over!!!

Now that I got that out.

Boy it's always good to win one. Perhaps though, the Indians should play all their games non-televised because that's all it took.

That and some solid pitching from (a beardless) **Justin Masterson**. Hey it's hard to tell by just looking at numbers, but he gave up more walks than hits, so he definitely had his stuff with the seven strikeouts. The only thing he got stung by was a two-run Alexi Casilla homer, the nine hitter who strangely had half of the Twins hits.

And it stops the Indians from tying the dubious 12 game losing mark that was set as a record years before anyone on the team were even thought of.

"I'm sure it was a relief in all of Cleveland," Masterson said.

-

"I was a hair selfish," said the pitcher. "I wanted to go out there and just do it no matter what [the score] was. I was going to try to keep them to as few runs as I could."

I will take two quality starts in a row. That's not a winning streak, but it's a good streak and as Manny Acta said, pitching got them into this mess, it was the thing that ultimately got them out.

As I have had a tendency to do lately though, let's go a little off-topic of the actual game and talk about that pitching. I've lamented about the options this team is down to lately and have even had conversations on Twitter about the bleak outlook of the rotation as a whole because quite simply, there are a real lack of options for this club.

And all this is really topical because yesterday the Indians announced that they have officially released **Jason Knapp**.

Wait WHO?!

Jason Knapp the guy who pitched a grand total of 40 regular season innings in the minor leagues for the Indians organization between 2009 when he was acquired and 2012. None of those innings came in the past season. Knapp is only 20 and it really looks like his career may be over.

What you may or may not remember is that Knapp was the centerpiece to the Cliff Lee deal, not Carlos Carrasco. Knapp was the top prospect with the great arm and while he probably wouldn't be in Cleveland had he not issues with his arm, he'd have been close.

That is if he even pitched well.

But it just goes to show you in this scary Adam Miller repeat (never threw a major league inning for the Indians) just how a high school arm, or any arm for that matter, can flame out.

I mean the Indians have acquired plenty of them. Just look at Paul Cousineau's latest in regards to the arms discussion. The Indians nabbed 14 different arms when they had their big selling point of 2009. Knapp was a member of that group.

In case you don't remember (or if you've blocked those Trading Deadlines from your memories), the Indians cleared the decks of any and all veterans in a little more than a year and in the process, they targeted arms – lots of them – when those trades were made . All told, 18 players were added from the time DeRosa in early July of 2009 was moved until Westbrook went to St. Louis a year later, with an astonishing 14 arms making up the bulk of the 18 players added. In the present tense, Masterson, McAllister, and Kluber all came as a result of those deals as well as C. Perez and a gaggle of other arms, both interesting (Barnes, Hagadone, etc.) and forgettable (Jess Todd, Yohan Pino, etc.).

That is downright, sad.

And it perfectly displays the position this club is in. Because in addition to that scary statistic, the

arms they have right now...Well, do we even have to go there? White and Pomeranz were used to get Ubaldo, Fausto is not Fausto anymore, Carrasco hurt himself, and the rest, you can just forget really.

Which brings us all the way back to Justin Masterson. Is he an ace? The Indians wanted to believe it, we all thought we could believe it. But really, he isn't. He's a really good pitcher. When he's right, he's dangerous. And he had a fantastic year in 2011. But to the root of it all, he's got some inconsistencies and on top of that, he just isn't ace material.

He's a really good number two, which is great to have, but that's all the Indians have.

That's the situation the Indians have been put into due to the injuries, trades, flame-outs, releases, mistaken identities, and whatever else you want to come up with.

It's almost poetic that it took Masterson to end the streak, even though he damn well contributed to it. It was Masterson that had to end it, because again, he's all the Indians have right now and for the foreseeable future. Whether that means rolling with him and trying to find pieces to compliment him or use him to find pieces is another discussion for another day, because I'm not hijaking this topic anymore, but the fact that it took Masterson to end things should be of no surprise to anyone.

Pitching, as Manny Acta likes to say and as he said after this one, sets the tone. Pitching is the key. It's something I've said time and time again. You can look at these Minnesota Twins as a prime example. Since they've fallen on hard times, what has been the key ingredient? Pitching. They've never been a great offense team, but they invested their money in position players like Mauer and Morneau. Yeah the injuries hurt them, but pitching was never very good.

Yeah they're scoring some runs now with the lineup they've put together (how they envisioned it with Mauer and Morneau helping anchor it all around good pieces) , but they're sitting in fourth in the division because they have no one throwing the ball. When they were good, it was Santana, Radke, Silva, Lohse, Liriano, Nathan, so on so forth.

It's funny that all these pieces were in play yesterday, from playing the Twins as our example, to Knapp being released, to Masterson ending the streak. If it doesn't tell you everything you need to know, I'm not sure what will.

Random Details...

Shin-Soo Choo said that after the game it was like all the stress went away. Hopefully that means they can now play loose. Choo did his part in this one for sure with his 4-for-4 day, scoring a run and knocking in two.

The rispy hitting was better, with four hits, that will create you some runs and when you have as many as 11 opportunities, that is suitable with 11 hits.

Back to the streak ending. Vinnie Pestano started using Nino terminology to describe the streak, calling it a disease. Sort of like how I was calling it a festering wound.

"Kind of like a disease, like a virus," setup man Vinnie Pestano said. "Sometimes you can't sweat it out -- just gotta battle through it. That's what we did, and we were able to lock it down today."

Acta said that he went through 11 games of losing in a row in D.C. but that was with a rebuilding club, that supposedly didn't have the talent this one does, or that was having a good season like the one this one was having.

Coming off a game in which they beat the second place team, their best pitcher to boot? I don't think anyone saw it coming either. Unfathomable.

Hey take nothing away from starter Brian Duensing, who matched Masterson's seven innings and gave up four earned. He was really let down by the error machine that Nishioka seems to be over there at second. Duensing walked just one guy around the 11-hits, so the Indians took

advantage of the opportunities the Twins gave them.

There's one streak that the Indians have on their side and it is still going after yesterday. **Vinnie Pestano**'s scoreless streak, it went up to 19 after his scoreless frame in the eighth inning. With one more inning he'll tie J.P. Howell's 20 innings as second longest this season. The longest is held by Fernando Rodney, who's was still in progress as of last night as well, but he fell victim to a solo home run in a two-run lead. He picked up the save, but his streak is over at 22, putting him in striking distance for Pestano.

[RANDOM RUNDOWN]

Didn't get a chance to see **Chris Perez** but I'm sure if we did, he would have bounced right back to things. He's done it all the other times he's blown a save this year (which has been minimal).

"I still haven't watched video," Perez said. "I don't need to, because I know it's just minor, nothing major. If I was throwing stuff to the backstop and hitting guys, that's a major mechanical issue. ... It's just little things that are painful."

The way Perez looked at it, if he held the runner in his latest fiasco, he would have had Kotchman in a better position to make a play rather than where he to field that bad hop he got. Which may be the case. But that's over and done with now and like most good closers, Perez is looking forward to getting back out there and putting the past behind him.

On the flipside of that was **Corey Kluber**, who did his job and got the Indians in position to win that game. Kluber said he didn't feel "great" but that it was a confidence booster in only his second start.

"I didn't feel great [Tuesday]," Kluber said. "I was a little erratic, but I was able to make pitches when I needed to. For the most part, I was able to escape the damage I got myself into.

"It gives me confidence," Kluber said, "with it being my second start, knowing that even if I get in a jam, I still trust my stuff to get out of it as long as I execute pitches."

McAllister and Kluber have some open audition time for the next two months. It's their opportunity to show they can be steady rotation options for this team. We can go back to the pitching discussion but here's the thing. There are no options, as we discussed. There's nothing there, there's no one waiting in the wings. So if they can go out and put together two months of good pitching, they can probably claim rotation spots for 2013 right off the bat.

Travis Hafner was out again with his back issue so he underwent an MRI yesterday after the game. I'd expect some results rather soon and probably a decision as to what to do with him. Obviously opening up the DH spot to someone like LaPorta, Canzler, or Fedroff could be a good thing.

-

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.

Follow @TheTribeDaily