

C's the day before: Chicago, Cleveland ready

By Anthony Castrovino / MLB.com | [@castrovino](#) | October 23rd, 2016

CLEVELAND -- The baseball season ends with someone else celebrating. That's just how it is for fans of the Indians and Cubs. And then winter begins, and, to paraphrase the great meteorologist Phil Connors from "Groundhog Day," it is cold, it is gray and it lasts the rest of your life.

The city of Cleveland has had 68 of those salt-spreading, ice-chopping, snow-shoveling winters between Tribe titles, while Chicagoans with an affinity for the North Siders have all been biding their time in the wintry winds since, in all probability, well before birth. Remarkably, it's been 108 years since the Cubs were last on top of the baseball world.

So if patience is a virtue, the Cubs and Tribe are as virtuous as they come. And the 2016 World Series that arrives with **Monday's Media Day** - the pinch-us, we're-really-here appetizer to Tuesday's intensely anticipated Game 1 at Progressive Field -- is one pitting fan bases of shared circumstances and sentiments against each other. These are two cities, separated by just 350 miles, on the Great Lakes with no great shakes in the realm of baseball background, and that has instilled in their people a common and eventually unmet refrain of "Why not us?" But for one of them, the tide will soon turn and so, too, will the response:

"Really? Us?"

Yes, you.

Imagine what that would feel like for Norman Rosen. He's 90 years old and wise to the patience required of Cubs fandom. But in 1945, he was young, he was spry and he was skeptical of those crazy people lined up outside of Wrigley Field, waiting for tickets to a World Series game against the Tigers. Norm was walking home from a date with his girlfriend, Sally, and the two thought the sight of all those people literally camped out was pretty silly.

But then, after he continued home, Norm had a thought: "Who knows when this will happen again?"

He didn't know the answer would be 71 years in the making.

Norm doubled back late in the night and got in line. When the ticket window opened in the morning, the people who had set up tents and seats took their sweet time getting to the window, so Norm strolled right up and bought a pair of standing-room ducats. Sally was still in high school, so he showed up at the school and asked her guidance counselor for permission to take her to the afternoon game, and the guidance counselor gave the go-ahead.

The Cubs lost, but Norm won. He and Sally were married for 67 years, and they started a family full of rabid Cubs fans.

When their son, Barry, was studying abroad in Brazil in the summer of 1969, Norm sent him the Chicago Sun-Times sports section every single day. By the time Barry finally received the paper, it was about 30 days old. So when he left Brazil, he was under the impression the Cubs had a comfortable cushion in the NL East. By the time he landed back in Chicago, he learned they had blown it.

Such was life in Cub fandom. Deep dish pizza topped with trauma. That is, until Theo Epstein came to town in the midst of the 2011 World Series (you know, one of many won by the rival Cardinals) and promised to tear it all down and build something better.

The Cubs club Theo constructed would melt even the most hardened hearts, with a quirky, bespectacled skipper named Joe Maddon and an unusually profuse and versatile assortment of young talent supported by some been-there, done-that vets. The Cubs have not once shied from the spotlight or the target or the weighty expectations placed upon them, and they simply don't give a damn about the billy goat or any "woe is me" sentiment that once reigned supreme.

Chicago might be rightly celebrated for its blues scene and heritage, but the Cubs and their fans are profoundly sick of singing them. And now they've got a ballclub worthy of a more happy tune.

Unfortunately, like so many others, Sally didn't live to see this. She passed away in April. And so when Norm watched Saturday's NLCS clincher, he shed a tear, confident his departed bride had a hand in the outcome.

"Through all the so-called curses and things," Norm said, "including the times when it looked like they had it won and then didn't -- the Bartman Game and all those things -- I never gave up hope. And here we are, 71 years later."

And here we are, 68 years after the Indians' last World Series title and 19 years after their last appearance. Game 1, believe it or not, is taking place in Cleveland for the very first time.

It's different in Northeast Ohio, a place where your daily commute will often involve the sight of a beat-up vehicle sporting a "Cleveland: You Gotta Be Tough" bumper sticker.

Here, the tales of the teams have long been intertwined, because their misery was too long collective and all too reflective of a sagging Rust Belt economy that prompted many of the area's college grads to leave for, well, places like Chicago and elsewhere. Dramatic, traumatic twists of fate like The Drive, The Fumble, The Shot or The Jose Mesa carried significance far beyond their own immediate effects. When the Indians saw their 100-win season in a strike-shortened 144-game 1995 go to waste against the Atlanta Braves or frittered away a ninth-inning lead in Game 7 in Miami in '97, they were part of a bigger, blurry, baneful picture.

In Cleveland, you had pierogies, and you had pain.

So you can't tell the story of the 2016 Cleveland Indians without telling the story of the 2015-16 Cleveland Cavaliers. For 52 years, fans here rooted desperately and fruitlessly for a Cleveland team to win a major sports title, and that made it unmistakably appropriate that when local product LeBron James and his teammates won the NBA Finals in June, they only did so after falling behind 3-1 in the best-of-seven to a Golden State Warriors team coming off the greatest regular season of all time.

For a Cleveland team to win, the script had to be preposterous. And beating the 103-win Cubbies would fit that pattern.

There is something to be said about the pressure that was lifted off the Indians when the Cavs pulled off that miracle run. Because now, no longer was a losing skid or an assault of injury issues viewed as an ominous signal of pending failure but, instead, just a bump on the road to glory.

"I think there was a sigh of relief when they did it," first baseman **Mike Napoli** said. "If they hadn't won, I'm sure our situation now would be a lot crazier. I think it helped ease a lot of people around here."

Despite the home-field edge, the Tribe enters the World Series as the underdog, and, as first-base coach Sandy Alomar Jr. joked, "I don't ever remember Cleveland being the overdog." The Indians' vaunted rotation took some hard hits to its health late in the year, and piecing it together in the postseason has taken a ton of creativity from manager Terry Francona and his staff. But Francona brought this ballclub his earned experience of two Boston titles along with a passion to make his dad, the former Tribe All-Star Tito Francona, proud.

And so, in Cleveland, it's not just about faith but also about family. It always is.

The downside of this Series is that somebody has to lose it. That frankly doesn't feel fair. Indians fans have endured enough, Cubs fans have endured enough. Neither of them deserves another defeat.

But at least the loser will be able to appreciate what the result means to the victor. Tribe fans and Cubs fans are too similarly aligned in upbringing and environment not to know how sweet such success would be for the other.

And anyway, win or lose, they'll all be breaking out the shovels soon.

Anthony Castrovine has been a reporter for MLB.com since 2004. Read his **columns** and follow him on Twitter at **@Castrovine**. This story

Tribe to open WS with Kluber; Bauer, Tomlin to follow

CLEVELAND -- There was never really a question about who would take the ball for the Indians in the World Series opener Tuesday night.

Ace **Corey Kluber** will get that assignment. The uncertainty comes into play with virtually every other slot in the rotation.

During Sunday's World Series workout at Progressive Field, Indians manager Terry Francona announced that Kluber will indeed start against the Cubs in Game 1 in Cleveland. **Trevor Bauer** is the planned starter for Game 2 on Wednesday and righty **Josh Tomlin** is slated for Game 3 on Friday at Wrigley Field, but Francona said that order could change.

The Indians are holding off on announcing a Game 4 starter, as the team is still evaluating **Danny Salazar**'s progress, weighing whether rookie **Ryan Merritt** will make the roster and holding off on deciding whether Kluber may need to return on short rest.

"Kluber's going to start Game 1," Francona said. "Bauer and Tomlin will be Games 2 and 3. We're going to hold off as long as we can with Trevor, just to get the most information we can. If it works out right, we'd like him to pitch second."

Francona was referring to the fact that Bauer is still dealing with a lacerated right pinkie finger, which he cut badly while repairing one of his personal drones on Oct. 13. While the injury does not impact Bauer's pitching, he would not be able to remain in the game if the wound opens and begins bleeding. That scenario came to life in Game 3 of the American League Championship Series.

During that outing against the Blue Jays, Bauer only lasted four batters and 21 pitches, as his cut -- one that required 10 stitches -- opened and dripped blood on the mound. Bauer is able to keep the wound covered during workouts, but is not permitted to have any kind of covering on his finger in a game setting. If he starts Game 2 of the World Series, Bauer will have had eight days to heal between appearances.

"But, if the doctors or the trainers deem that those next two days would really give him a better chance," Francona said, "then we could move him back. So, we'll see."

Francona noted that Bauer was scheduled to play catch Sunday. During Monday's workout, Cleveland is hoping to have Bauer throw off the mound with batters standing in. After that bullpen session, the Indians will have a "much better idea" about the right-hander's status, according to Francona.

Indians pitching coach Mickey Callaway was confident that Bauer would be ready to go for Game 2.

"I think he'll be OK again," Callaway said. "He could throw 120 pitches tomorrow if he had to."

Through three starts this October, Kluber has collected two wins and turned in a 0.98 ERA in 18 1/3 innings, in which he has piled up 20 strikeouts against seven walks. The AL Cy Young Award contender defeated the Red Sox in Game 2 of the AL Division Series, took down Toronto in the ALCS opener and then picked up a hard-luck loss while working on short rest in Game 4 against the Blue Jays.

Tomlin has gone 2-0 with a 2.53 ERA in two postseason starts -- one each against Boston and Toronto -- with 10 strikeouts and three walks in 10 2/3 innings. The righty pitched the clinching win over the Red Sox in Game 3 of the ALDS and then took the mound in Game 2 of the ALCS on short notice in the wake of Bauer's injury.

Another result of Bauer's injury in the ALCS was the emergence of Merritt, who tossed 4 1/3 shutout innings in the Game 5 clincher against the Jays. Merritt would presumably be in the mix for Game 4, but the Indians are also monitoring Salazar. If Salazar (right forearm strain) gets through a three-inning simulated game Sunday with no issues, he could be in the World Series roster mix.

There is also the possibility that Kluber could return on short rest to pitch in Game 4.

"It's going to be TBA after Game 3 probably the rest of the way, for obvious reasons," Francona said. "It's not that difficult to figure out. Kluber's certainly an option. It could be a lot of things, so we're just kind of keeping it open. We found out the last series that that's probably a good way to do it."

Jordan Bastian has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog,

Tomlin's dad will be there for Game 3 start

By Anthony Castrovine / MLB.com | **@MLBastian** | October 23rd, 2016

CLEVELAND -- **Josh Tomlin** got the nod to start Game 3 of the World Series in Wrigley Field. His father, Jerry, got the nod to travel to Wrigley to watch his son pitch.

Enter one of the great subplots of an Indians-Cubs World Series loaded with them.

Last week, **we told you the story** about how Jerry has been paralyzed from the chest down since mid-August because of a rare condition called an arteriovenous malformation -- a tangle of blood vessels on the spinal cord -- that required emergency surgery. Josh left the Indians for a couple of days on family medical emergency leave to be with his dad in Tyler, Texas, as he recuperated from the surgery, but the two haven't seen each other since. Jerry watched both of Josh's postseason starts, one in the American League Division Series and one in the AL Championship Series, from his room at the Baylor Institute for Rehabilitation in Dallas.

But Jerry was released from the hospital last Wednesday, which just so happened to be Josh's 32nd birthday and the day the Indians clinched the AL pennant. And so the family has made arrangements for Jerry to travel to Chicago along with his wife, Elana, and Josh's aunt and uncle, Shawn and Scott Hilburn. Josh's wife and kids will also be in attendance.

"It's neat," Josh said, "because he's always talked about Wrigley Field and Fenway Park, two historical ballparks, being the ones he wants to go see. As a Father's Day gift, we let my father-in-law and him decide what game they wanted to see, and he was supposed to come to a game in Chicago [at U.S. Cellular Field]. But because of the incident, he wasn't able to enjoy that gift. So it's nice to be able to share this with him."

Jerry, who uses a wheelchair as he holds out hope that he'll one day be able to walk again, had joked that he would climb on somebody's back to go see his son pitch in the World Series, if he had to.

Instead, much more comfortably, he'll be flying commercial.

The Indians are not ruling out the possibility that they might have to reshape their rotation in Games 2 and 3 of this Series. While **Trevor Bauer** is currently slotted to follow Game 1 starter **Corey Kluber** in Game 2, the Indians are monitoring his progress from a deep finger cut suffered in an accident repairing a drone. But for now, Tomlin was told the Game 3 assignment is his. There is some thought there that if Bauer should have another mishap, as he did in Game 3 of the ALCS in Toronto, the Indians would be better equipped to empty their bullpen in Game 2, which precedes an off-day, than Game 3, which is followed by two more games on successive days.

• **Tribe to open WS with Kluber; Bauer, Tomlin to follow**

Tomlin, who has a 2.53 ERA in 10 2/3 innings over two starts in this postseason, is facing a daunting assignment. Game 3 will be the first World Series game at Wrigley Field since 1945, so it goes without saying that the crowd won't be on his side.

"That's going to be something else," he said. "I've never actually pitched in Wrigley Field, but we played there last year, so I've gotten to experience a game there. But I take it this will be a little bit different atmosphere than it was that day."

At least he knows he'll have his dad there, leading his cheering section.

Anthony Castrovince has been a reporter for MLB.com since 2004. Read his [columns](#) and follow him on Twitter at [@Castrovince](#). This story

Series has a wrinkle for Chicagoland's Kipnis

CLEVELAND -- **Anthony Rizzo** caught the final out and thrust his arms skyward, celebrating a moment that was more than seven decades in the making. The fans inside Wrigley Field did the same, some shedding tears of joy, as the championship-starved Cubs secured a place in the World Series.

In Cleveland, **Jason Kipnis** did not know how to react.

"I'm not going to lie," Kipnis said Sunday, while sitting on a table in the tunnel behind the dugout at Progressive Field. "I even teared up, because I didn't know how to handle it."

Why did it have to be the Cubs? That was Kipnis' initial reaction, as text messages from family members and close friends began buzzing his phone. The Indians' second baseman was born and raised in Northbrook, Ill., a suburb on Chicago's North Side. Reaching the World Series has been a dream come true for Kipnis and his Cleveland teammates, but there is now a torturous tone to it for him.

One of Kipnis' uncles is a doctor who delivered one of the children of Cubs great Ryne Sandberg. Kipnis grew up in the same area and attended the same high school as Steve Bartman, who is infamous in Chicago for interfering with a foul ball in Game 6 of the National League Championship Series with the Marlins in 2003. Kipnis' brother, Blair, has a close friend who runs a sports bar in Wrigleyville, a short walk from the ballpark.

"The Cubs are part of who I am," Kipnis said.

In his backyard as a kid, Kipnis played through the same scenario as plenty of kids who grew up on the North Side. It was the ninth inning in a critical World Series game. The count was full. His team was down. He was stepping to the plate with a championship on the line at Wrigley Field, which has not hosted a Fall Classic since 1945.

"I always thought it was going to be the bottom of the ninth," Kipnis said. "It's the top of the ninth now."

The Cubs have not won it all since 1908, representing the longest title drought in baseball. Kipnis is concerning himself with ending another streak, though. As Cleveland's leader in the clubhouse, and a steady force on the field, he is hoping to end his new home city's own World Series drought. The Indians have the second-longest run without a title, having not won it all since 1948.

Kipnis' family and friends understand.

The second baseman had friends in the stands at Wrigley on Saturday night, when the Cubs defeated the Dodgers to clinch a spot in the World Series. Kipnis, who watched the game at home in Cleveland with former Indians pitcher **Joba Chamberlain**, began receiving encouraging messages from people who are rooting for him to win it all with Cleveland.

"They're Chicago fans," Kipnis said. "My brothers and sister are really big Cubs fans. With that being said, even unprovoked, I've had all of them and a bunch of my friends text me saying, 'It's not even an option. We're Tribe all the way.' It's meant a lot.

"It's reassured me of the inner circle that I've chosen for myself. Without me having to say anything, they reaffirmed that, 'Hey, we're on the Indians' side. The curse can wait one more year.'"

The Cubs will enter this World Series as the heavy favorites, which is fine by the Tribe's players. They have already beaten the Red Sox and Blue Jays as the underdogs, and they know most of the country is probably hoping to see Chicago finally end its fans' suffering.

"We know the Cubs' following, the Cubs' fan base, the nation's lovable losers," Kipnis said. "We know a lot of people are going to be cheering for the Cubs and it's going to make Wrigley that more fun."

Kipnis said he remembers following Sandberg and Mark Grace as a kid, and listening to famous Cubs broadcaster Harry Caray. He said it was "must-see TV" when Sammy Sosa came to bat during his 1998 home run race with Mark McGwire. Kipnis remembers watching Kerry Wood strike out 20 batters in one game and sitting in the stands in 2003 when Mark Prior outdueled Greg Maddux in the playoffs.

Kipnis also remembers what it was like in Northbrook in the days following the Bartman Game. Kipnis attended St. Norbert School, as did Bartman. Chicago fans remember the guy sitting in Aisle 4, Row 8, Seat 113, wearing a turtleneck, dark sweatshirt, glasses and headphones over his blue Cubs cap. Kipnis can still picture the police cars on Bartman's street.

"I remember seeing cops lined outside of his house for the next month or two, just blocking it," Kipnis said. "Totally undeserving. Even as a sophomore in high school, I could see that everyone else was going for the ball, and everyone still does that. They needed a scapegoat, and they found one."

Kipnis understands the pain that has been associated with being a Cubs fan, so he also realizes how special this year is for the city of Chicago. Now, though, he knows he needs to try to extend the Cubs' drought to 109 years.

"This is tough," Kipnis said. "The 10-year-old boy in me is saying, 'Why does it have to be the Cubs?' My whole social media and Facebook and everything is all Cubs posts, because that's what all of my friends and my hometown are fans of. And now I have to go try to disappoint all of them."

Jordan Bastian has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog,

Don't miss it! Historic World Series is on MLB.TV

By Mark Newman / MLB.com | October 23rd, 2016

The World Series for the ages begins at 8 p.m. ET on Tuesday with Game 1 between the Cubs and Indians at Progressive Field, and each FOX broadcast on the way to the drought-busting clincher will be streamed live to eligible subscribers for only \$9.99 with the A one-time authentication is required for eligible U.S. subscribers, and then you can watch live online and with select mobile devices. Check your TV provider for availability. You get live-game DVR controls and full-game archives. This package also includes 2017 MLB Spring Training games for free, a \$24.99 value.

Fall Classic reunion fitting for Chapman, Miller

By Richard Justice / MLB.com | October 23rd, 2016

When **Aroldis Chapman** and **Andrew Miller** took off the Yankees pinstripes and said their goodbyes to one another last summer, they knew this kind of reunion was a possibility.

Yes, trades sometimes work out exactly the way they're drawn up, and this World Series is a reminder of that. The Cubs and Indians might very well have gotten here without the trades that brought them two of baseball's best relievers, but both teams were transformed by the deals.

At some point over the next few days, Miller and Chapman -- who were teammates with the Yankees for four months -- will cross paths and are sure to congratulate one another on how it has all worked out.

First, Miller.

If there has been a transformative figure in this postseason, Miller is it. Indians manager Terry Francona has used him in so many roles that every team is certain to revisit how to construct a bullpen this offseason. In other words, they're all going to be searching for someone to fill an "Andrew Miller role."

Good luck with that. Unless they can find someone with Miller's stuff and Miller's attitude and Miller's durability, they're going to be disappointed. Here's the other part of it. Relievers rarely become marquee stars in October. Miller is the exception to that rule. He has a chance to be a very prime-time player, right there along with **Kris Bryant**, **Francisco Lindor** etc.

The Indians have played eight postseason games, and Miller has been in six of them. And he has been absolutely dominant: 21 strikeouts in 11 2/3 innings. As Blue Jays manager John Gibbons said, "He has that slider that looks like a fastball and then just absolutely disappears."

To put it another way: unhittable. Francona signaled how things would go when he brought Miller into the fifth inning of Cleveland's first postseason game. He would also be used in the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth innings throughout the postseason, and for a pitching staff that has lost three starting pitchers to injuries, Miller -- and Francona's use of Miller -- probably saved a season.

He was named the American League Championship Series Most Valuable Player after pitching in all four Cleveland victories and striking out 14 of 26 Blue Jays. If the Indians have a lead around the fifth inning in the World Series, Francona will start looking for an opportunity to get Miller into the game.

When Indians general manager Mike Chernoff was discussing the acquisition of Miller a day before the Aug. 1 non-waiver Trade Deadline, Francona knew exactly how he'd fit.

"When they were in the -- upstairs in their meetings about the trade talks and they were talking about Andrew," Francona said, "they were actually talking -- and I was in there listening and doing some talking, just about how he would fit into a bullpen and how you could leverage him, just like we are now. So the thought was alive before we got him. We envisioned using him like we are."

Sure, Miller would make the Indians better. But Chernoff had given the Yankees such a nice package of prospects, including outfielder **Clint Frazier**, that Miller simply had to be more than another setup guy. He has been. Francona showed again why he'll someday have a plaque in Cooperstown by how he has used Miller simply as a weapon instead of in a defined role.

In some ways, Miller's arrival was as much about Francona's genius as Miller's. In Miller's first four appearances with the Indians, he entered games in the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth innings, with stints ranging from two batters to two innings.

From the beginning, Miller told Francona that a defined role was unimportant, the gist of which was: "Simply use me when you need me." Cleveland's bullpen had a 3.49 ERA, ninth best in the Majors, before getting Miller. Afterwards, that bullpen blew just one save and had the fourth-lowest ERA (3.31).

By contrast, Chapman got a more traditional role with the Cubs. He saved 16 games and never entered a game before the eighth inning. He worked longer than one inning only twice.

But he had a huge impact on the Cubs. When he arrived, the Cubs were in their only slump of the season, having lost 19 of 31 games.

Chapman gave the Cubs a comfort level that the ninth inning was taken care of. After his arrival, Cubs relievers had the third-lowest ERA (3.20) in baseball.

And the Cubs got hot again.

They were 44-18 with Chapman in uniform and won 103 games, their most in 106 years. Beyond the numbers, Chapman gave the Cubs an emotional boost. Because he can be a free agent after this season, his arrival sent a message to the clubhouse that management was all-in to win this season. He also added an element of excitement.

When Chapman takes his jacket off and begins to warm up, there's a buzz in the crowd. The players feel that electricity, and especially the buzz that comes with having a guy who blows up radar guns, routinely hitting 102-103 mph.

The Cubs have been widely viewed as baseball's best team since the first day of Spring Training, and Chapman solidified that standing.

Miller and Chapman could both be household names by the time this World Series ends. Few pitchers in history have ever thrown as hard as Chapman, and few relievers have ever had the role Miller now occupies.

When Chapman was asked Saturday night if he was looking forward to being matched up across from his former teammate, he said: "I'm ready to do it. I'm ready to get on with it."

Indeed, we all are.

Richard Justice is a columnist for MLB.com. Read his blog, **Justice4U**. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or

Connecting the 2016 Indians to the 1948 Indians

Starting with Game 1 on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET air time/8 ET game time on FOX), the Indians will try to win their first World Series championship since 1948. That '48 Indians team, which topped the Boston Braves in six games, featured an All-Star shortstop, a couple of intimidating pitchers and, of course, Satchel Paige. The '16 Indians, who will face the Cubs, feature an All-Star shortstop, a couple of intimidating pitchers and, of course, MLB's premier party host.

Just how much separates the two teams, besides 68 years? To answer that question, we turn to Baseball Reference's [Oracle of Baseball](#), which can connect any two Major Leaguers in history by way of a series of teammate connections. It's like the six degrees of Kevin Bacon, but baseball-ier.

Salazar throws sim game, could pitch in Series

Tribe righty feels strong, but club making sure he's '100 percent healthy'

By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com | [@MLBastian](#) | October 23rd, 2016

CLEVELAND -- Wild Thing might just be the Indians' wild card for the World Series.

During Sunday's workout, right-hander [Danny Salazar](#) took the mound at Progressive Field as the song, "[Wild Thing](#)," blared through the stadium's sound system. The hard-throwing starter then worked through a three-inning simulated game, taking another important step in his potential return from a strained right forearm, and in his quest to make the World Series roster.

"We're going to evaluate where he's at, what his stuff looked like," Indians pitching coach Mickey Callaway said. "I expect that, if he gets through this, he'll be available at some point in the World Series."

Salazar met briefly with reporters before his sim game and said that he was feeling close to full strength. The right-hander, who has not started since Sept. 9, when he exited an outing against the Twins with the forearm injury, noted that he has been throwing fastballs, changeups and sliders in his recent mound workouts.

During the American League Division Series, Salazar continued his throwing program in Arizona, where he faced hitters for the first time since the injury. The pitcher then joined the Indians during the AL Championship Series in Toronto, where he threw a two-inning sim game. On Sunday, the righty faced an assortment of Cleveland's regular batters with two breaks between his innings.

"[I feel] really strong right now," Salazar said. "The way I feel right now is the way I feel like when I'm 100 percent."

Salazar went 11-6 with a 3.87 ERA in 25 starts this season, but Cleveland is undecided about whether the righty would return as a starter or reliever for the Fall Classic. It is possible that he could be a candidate to start Game 4 with a pitch limit. Manager Terry Francona has already shown this postseason that he is willing to lean heavily on his bullpen after abbreviated outings from his starting pitchers.

"We want to make sure that he's 100 percent healthy," Francona said. "Then, if he shows that, OK, then you take it another couple steps. Is he commanding? Can he help you win? Can he pitch an inning? Can he pitch two? What role can he fill? Because of his side day the other day, it's progressed to the point now where I think we need to take a good, long look, because he looks pretty healthy. So that's what we'll do."

Not your typical sim game

When Salazar hit the field, a roar came from the home crowd. That wouldn't be all that notable, except for the fact that this wasn't an actual game. The Indians had roughly 400 team employees on hand in the stands to provide some atmosphere for the local nine.

"Just so this place wasn't so silent," said Bob DiBiasio, the Indians' senior vice president of public affairs. "Add a little entertainment value."

Francona and team president Chris Antonetti concocted the idea after a silent workout Saturday evening. They remembered the atmosphere of the simulated game they had to stage immediately after Game 2 of the ALCS, when they needed to get their unused relievers some work. Some fans still remained in the stands for that one, and it helped bring a little life to the proceedings.

When teams advance efficiently in the LCS round, the time before the World Series can sap them of their momentum. So the Tribe players appreciated a little added enthusiasm. In addition to the employees, who were treated to a pregame pizza party, the club piped in crowd noise and scoreboard effects to make the conditions as game-like as possible.

Kipnis nursing sore ankle

After [Carlos Santana](#) caught the final out of Game 5 of the American League Championship Series, securing Cleveland's place in the World Series, second baseman [Jason Kipnis](#) ran over to celebrate with shortstop [Francisco Lindor](#). During their leaping hug, Kipnis landed awkwardly, rolling his left ankle. He was then limping in the clubhouse during the champagne celebration.

On Sunday, Kipnis took grounders during an early fielding workout to test his ankle and later stepped up to the plate to face Salazar in his simulated game. Francona, who said the second baseman had a low ankle sprain, expressed confidence that Kipnis would be fine in time for Game 1 of the World Series.

"Some of the guys had a tough time getting through the celebration," Francona quipped. "He's going to be OK. Thankfully, we had some time off, which is good. He's not moving yet like he can, but I'm guessing with another 48 hours and 37,000 screaming fans, I bet he'll be OK."

[Jordan Bastian](#) has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog,

1948 WS fan hopes to see 'beloved Tribe' win again

By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com | [@MLBastian](#) | October 23rd, 2016

CLEVELAND -- The regulars at Shimrak's Cafe, located at E. 33rd St. and Superior Ave. once upon a time in Cleveland, used to quiz little Pete about the Indians. He rarely was wrong. Pete knew all the batting averages for the hitters and records for the pitchers.

Many Sundays in that summer of 1948 were spent walking to old Cleveland Stadium and taking in Tribe games. Pete Shimrak's dad, Eli, who ran the bar, would sometimes get tickets from local brewers. When the Indians made the World Series that year, Pete was not going to miss it for the world.

"That was the first great summer in my life," Shimrak says now.

Shimrak, 84, bursts into a joyful laugh when asked about this season's Indians, who will try to [defeat the Cubs](#) to win a World Series for the first time in 68 years. When he exited Cleveland Stadium after Game 5 of the World Series on Oct. 10, 1948, a 16-year-old Shimrak never would have predicted that a lifetime would pass without another Indians championship.

There have been return trips for the Tribe -- in 1954, '95 and '97 -- but no titles.

On Sunday morning, Shimrak was full of energy as he recalled that magical 1948 season for Cleveland. He had just learned to drive and inherited a '41 Buick Special, and his dad gave him "some bucks" for World Series tickets. The Indians won the American League pennant behind a stout rotation of Bob Feller, Bob Lemon and Gene Bearden and an offense led by Larry Doby, Lou Boudreau, Joe Gordon and Ken Keltner.

Pete scored some tickets down the right-field line, among crowds of 80,000-plus.

"I was sitting behind the post somewhere around first base, short right field," Shimrak said. "The place was packed. There was a fence out there, and behind that fence were people -- it was standing room."

In Game 4 of the World Series on Oct. 9, Shimrak watched Doby launch a home run off Johnny Sain of the Boston Braves. Cleveland held on for a 2-1 victory.

"Boy, I remember the games," Shimrak said.

On Oct. 10, Feller took the hill, but he was on the wrong end of an 11-5 loss. Hall of Famer Warren Spahn came out of the Boston bullpen and worked 5 2/3 scoreless innings for the win.

"It ticked me off, because Feller didn't win," Shimrak said. "I wanted him to win so badly. [Feller was] the greatest I've ever seen, the greatest pitcher I've ever seen."

Shimrak went to East High School and later studied journalism at Ohio University. After a stint in the Air Force, he returned home and worked as a reporter for the Cleveland Press. Later in life, Shimrak went into banking and had a stint as a minority owner of the Indians in the 1970s. Long before then, though, he went into the public relations field in '59. That led to a chance meeting with Tito Francona.

"One of the first jobs with the small PR firm was with Johnson's shoe wax company," Shimrak said. "They wanted my little firm to take three athletes around to the radio and TV stations and the newspapers to plug the polish. One of the guys that I took was Tito."

Naturally, when asked about Indians manager Terry Francona, Shimrak referred to him as "Tito's son."

"We are fortunate enough to have him," Shimrak said. "Tito's son is a very bright guy that knows two things: He knows how to manage people and the game. The Dolans did a phenomenal job ... bringing Francona here, and then making the moves like [Mike] Napoli and [Rajai Davis](#)."

Asked about all the [adversity the Indians have overcome](#) to reach the World Series, Shimrak said: "It's what makes American history great. You never surrender -- no matter the odds. That's the Indians this year."

• [This is our year': Tribe fans confident vs. Cubs](#)

As Shimrak spoke from his home on Sunday, he said he had a 1948 Indians-Braves World Series program sitting on the table in front of him. It cost 50 cents back then. He jokingly referred to himself as an S.O.B. -- a son of a bartender -- and spoke fondly of memories of talking about his team in his dad's cafe so many decades ago.

After a 68-year wait, Shimrak hopes to see the Indians win it all again.

"My beloved Tribe is back," he said, "and I lived to see it."

[Jordan Bastian](#) has covered the Indians for MLB.com since 2011, and previously covered the Blue Jays from 2006-10. Read his blog,

Cubs, Tribe set to meet with media today

Managers and Game 1 starters to speak on last off-day before World Series

By Doug Miller / MLB.com | 1:30 AM ET

The red, white and blue bunting will bedeck the facades of Progressive Field. A classic autumn chill will hang in the lakeside air. On Tuesday night, the last two teams standing in Major League Baseball will begin what figures to be an epic showdown.

It's almost time for the World Series, and what a long-awaited one this will be. It can't be repeated enough that the Cubs are in the Fall Classic for the first time since 1945 and haven't won it all since 1908, and that the Indians last claimed a world championship in 1948 and haven't been in the Series since 1997.

But prior to Tuesday's Game 1, there might be a bit of gamesmanship during an important pre-Series tradition. Today is 2016 World Series Media Day, when both teams will step in front of the cameras and lay out their plans for the best-of-seven duel to become baseball lords of the rings.

It starts at 3:45 p.m. ET at Progressive Field, where Cubs manager Joe Maddon will reveal his team's 25-man roster -- which might include slugger [Kyle Schwarber](#) -- and announce his Game 1 pitcher. Indians skipper Terry Francona has not surprisingly already made it public that Cleveland ace [Corey Kluber](#) will get the ball to open the Series.

Most observers of the sport seem to think Maddon will tab either right-hander [Jake Arrieta](#) or left-hander, postseason veteran and co-National League Championship Series MVP [Jon Lester](#) for the Game 1 start.

Lester might be more of a likely choice for the nod, given the fact that he started the openers of the NLCS vs. the Dodgers and NL Division Series vs. the Giants. If that's the case, expect speedsters in Cleveland's lineup, including [Francisco Lindor](#), [Jose Ramirez](#) and [Tyler Naquin](#), to push the envelope when it comes to taking leads off first and stealing bases. Lester is notoriously shaky when it comes to throwing the ball to first base, a flaw the not-as-fleet-of-foot Dodgers tried to exploit in the NLCS.

And Kluber has been dynamic this October, too, with seven shutout innings in a win in Game 2 of the American League Division Series over the Red Sox and a 1-1 record with a 1.59 ERA and 13 strikeouts in 11 1/3 innings in his team's AL Championship Series triumph over Toronto.

Chicago's Game 1 starter will meet with the media after Maddon, and the Cubs will then take the field from 4-5:30 p.m. ET for a workout. At 5:15 ET, Kluber will take questions from the media, and he will be followed by Francona. The Indians will work out on their home field beginning at 6 ET, and that will conclude Monday's activity before the fanfare of Game 1 begins Tuesday.

It's safe to say both teams are more than happy to oblige the media on their last off-day before the World Series, although they might prefer to get between the lines.

"We're living the dream," Cubs first baseman [Anthony Rizzo](#) said. "This is what you dream of as a kid. I know it's cliche, but we're going to the World Series. This is what you dream of, and we're going to enjoy it as much as we can."

[Doug Miller](#) is a reporter for MLB.com. Follow him on Twitter [@DougMillerMLB](#). This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

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History lesson: 20 amazing Cubs and Indians facts

No one knows who will win this year's World Series between the Cubs and Indians, which begins with Game 1 on Tuesday night in Cleveland. But one thing is for sure: One long-suffering franchise will finally get to celebrate when the dust finally clears.

The teams in this year's Fall Classic features the longest winless streaks in each league; the Indians have not won a World Series since 1948, while the Cubs have famously not won it all since 1908. Despite the lack of championship pennants, both teams boast long and storied histories that involve some of the greatest players to ever step onto the baseball diamond.

Before Chicago and Cleveland get underway in the 112th World Series, here are 20 amazing facts you should know about the history and iconic players for these franchises:

Chicago Cubs

- The Cubs were one of the original teams to make up the National League when it was founded in 1876, and they have played in Chicago for all 141 years since then. They are the only franchise to play continuously in the same city since the Senior Circuit's inception.
 - The 1906 Cubs had the winningest season in MLB history. That year, Chicago went 116-36 in the regular season, a remarkable .763 winning percentage. Their 116-win mark has been equaled only by the 2001 Mariners, who lost 10 more games than the Cubs did.
 - The last Cubs team to win the World Series, the 1908 club, was anchored by four Hall of Famers. On the mound, they had Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown, who went 29-9 with a 1.47 ERA and nine shutouts. Behind him, they had Joe Tinker at shortstop, Johnny Evers at second base and player-manager Frank Chance at first base -- the famous "Tinker to Evers to Chance" double play combination memorialized in the poem "Baseball's Sad Lexicon."
 - This is the Cubs' 101st season at the iconic Wrigley Field. They moved into the Friendly Confines in 1916, and they've played 7,959 regular-season games there. Ernie Banks alone played in 1,285 of those games.
 - Banks, Mr. Cub himself, holds the Major League record for most games played without a postseason appearance: 2,528, and every single one was with the Cubs. Banks played 19 seasons in Chicago from 1953 to 1971, was an 11-time All-Star, won back-to-back NL MVP awards -- and never reached the playoffs.
 - In 1930, Hack Wilson, one of the 14 Hall of Famers to play more games for the Cubs than any other team, set the all-time single-season RBI record, driving in an incredible 191 runs for Chicago in 155 games. It's a record that might never be broken.
 - Sammy Sosa, the Cubs' all-time franchise leader in home runs with 545, hit 60 or more home runs in a single season three times during his time with Chicago. He hit 66 in the famous 1998 home run race with Mark McGwire (when Sosa finished second in homers but won the NL MVP), as well as 63 in 1999 and 64 in 2001. Sosa is the only player in Major League history with three 60-homer seasons.
 - Cubs Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg is one of only four Major League second basemen to ever hit 40 home runs in a season. Sandberg hit 40 homers in 1990, one of his 10 consecutive All-Star seasons and nine consecutive Gold Glove seasons with the Cubs.
 - The Cubs have one of the three pitchers in Major League history to strike out 20 batters in a nine-inning game. Kerry Wood joined the 20-strikeout club on May 6, 1998, with a one-hitter against the Astros, the fewest hits allowed in any of the 20-strikeout games.
- 90-year-old fan Norm Rosen discusses the 1945 Cubs' National League championship team and reacts to Chicago winning the pennant in 2016
- Cubs third baseman Ron Santo and outfielder Billy Williams, also both Hall of Famers, co-led the Major Leagues in games played in 1965, with 164. They became two of just six players in MLB history ever credited with 164 or more games played in a single season. It was only possible because the Cubs played two tie games that year.

Cleveland Indians

- The Indians' history actually begins in Grand Rapids, Mich., where they were known as the Grand Rapids Rustlers of the Western League from 1894-99. The franchise then moved to Cleveland and became known as the Lake Shores before joining the brand-new American League as the Bluebirds in 1901.
- The team's first home in Cleveland, League Park, was among the first baseball stadiums to be built using concrete and steel after renovations in 1910. Ten years later, another set of improvements added a 40-foot wall in right field -- three feet taller than the famous Green Monster at Boston's Fenway Park.
- Lou Boudreau seemingly did it all in 1948. The shortstop batted .355, drove in 106 runs, clubbed a career-high 18 home runs and struck out only nine times in 560 at-bats. Boudreau did all of this while also managing the Indians to 97 wins, and their most recent World Series title.
- Stan Coveleski went 3-0 in the 1920 World Series to lead the Indians to their first championship. Coveleski is still one of only nine pitchers to post three complete-game victories in the same Fall Classic, and his 0.67 ERA in 1920 is tied with Lew Burdette for the second-lowest among that exclusive group (leader Christy Mathewson famously tossed three shutouts in five days in the 1905 World Series).
- In that 1948 World Series, Larry Doby -- who one year earlier had made history by becoming the AL's first African-American player -- became the first black player to hit a home run in the Fall Classic. Doby's .318 average and .875 OPS in Cleveland's six-game triumph was tops among full-time Indians players in the series.
- On Aug. 23, 1936, a 17-year-old rookie named Bob Feller set a record by striking out 15 St. Louis Browns batters in his first Major League start. Three weeks later, Feller set a then-AL record with 17 strikeouts against the Philadelphia Athletics. After his rookie season was over, "Rapid Robert" went back to Van Meter, Iowa, to finish his senior year of high school.
- Nap Lajoie became so iconic in Cleveland that the franchise changed its name from the "Bluebirds" to the "Naps" in 1903 after Lajoie's first season with the team. During his tenure in Northeast Ohio from 1902-14, Lajoie ranked in the top five among AL players in average (second), hits (second), runs (third), doubles (first) and runs batted in (second).
- Bob Lemon was the Indians' center fielder for Opening Day in 1946, but switched to become a full-time pitcher by the beginning of 1948. Lemon threw a no-hitter that year, and went on to win at least 20 games in seven of the next nine seasons.
- Joe Sewell possessed one of the sharpest plate disciplines the game has ever seen. In 7,132 career at-bats, Sewell struck out only 114 times -- or once every 17 games. In fact, Sewell recorded more hit by pitches than strikeouts in five different seasons between 1924 and 1933.
- Tris Speaker posted his career-best batting average (.389) and on-base percentage (an AL-best .479) with the Indians in 1925 at the age of 37. That .389 average is still the highest single-season mark for any player 37-or-older in baseball history.

World Series positional breakdown: Cubs vs. Tribe

You know as well as we do that the World Series is going to be dominated by history. You'll see the years 1908 and 1948 just about everywhere. One way or another, one of these two teams is going to end a **painfully long drought**.

There's a place for all that, of course, but at its core, this is also a pretty fascinating baseball series. On one hand, Chicago is the undisputed best team in baseball, with hardly a weakness to be found. On the other, Cleveland continues to defy the odds presented by a tattered starting rotation, with manager Terry Francona continuing to deploy his bullpen in nontraditional ways to maximize leverage and effectiveness.

Only one team is going to walk away with the title, but despite the forces of history that pushed the Cubs to this spot, it's not like Cleveland

 came this far to just roll over, either. Let's break down the 2016 World Series, position by position. **Catcher**
Roberto Perez has caught every inning for Cleveland so far, **earning high praise from Tribe pitchers** for his excellent pitch framing and game-calling, and that matters. Still, after hitting just .183/.285/.294 (58 wRC+, where 100 is league average) during the season, he hit only .174/.269/.348 in the postseason. Meanwhile, Chicago's **Willson Contreras** has not only been **impressive behind the plate** as well, his bat (.282/.357/.488, 126 wRC+ in the regular season, .400/.429/.550 in 21 postseason appearances) is a threat, and **David Ross'** impressive throwing skills are perhaps the No. 1 reason **Jon Lester** can survive his inability to throw to first. Throw in the fact that it was actually **Miguel Montero** who hit **the biggest homer of the postseason for the Cubs** so far, and this group of Chicago catchers outweighs the valuable skills Perez provides for his pitchers.

Advantage: Chicago

 **First base**
Remember when **Anthony Rizzo** was in an October slump and everyone was panicking? It seems so far away now after he had eight hits -- including two home runs and two doubles -- in the final four games of the NLCS, and it's a good reminder that performance over long periods of times outweighs what happens over a few days. Rizzo has been one of the five or so most valuable players in baseball over the last three seasons (**per FanGraphs WAR**), averaging .285/.386/.527 (148 wRC+) over that time, and although **Mike Napoli** (.239/.335/.465, 113 wRC+ in 2016) was a quietly excellent signing for Cleveland, he's a very good player being compared with a superstar.

Advantage: Chicago

 **Second base**
Don't worry, Cleveland fans, this won't be a Chicago sweep, or close to it. Although the **endless exploits** of **Javier Baez** may be one of the biggest stories of the postseason, his spectacular plays have helped mask some simple fielding mistakes and the fact that he wasn't even a league-average hitter this season (.273/.314/.423, 94 wRC+). **Jason Kipnis**, meanwhile, just put up his second consecutive excellent season (.275/.343/.469, 117 wRC+) and fourth in the last five. We may look back on this October as the month Baez burst onto the national stage, but for now, Kipnis is still the better player ... assuming the **ankle sprain** he sustained celebrating the ALCS win doesn't prove serious.

Slight advantage: Cleveland

 **Shortstop**
That this advantage goes to Cleveland says a lot less about **Addison Russell** -- who is proving himself to be one of baseball's most exciting young shortstops -- than it does about **Francisco Lindor**. Both are just 22 years old, and both rank very highly on defense, with both **DRS** and **UZR** considering them to be top-four defenders at the position. But even though Russell did set a career high in home runs, with 21, his overall line -- .238/.321/.417 (95 wRC+) -- doesn't match up with Lindor's .301/.358/.435 (112 wRC+). Lindor is also more of a threat on the bases (19 steals to five) and has been better this October (.323/.344/.581 to .189/.211/.378). Russell's becoming a star; Lindor may already be a *superstar*.

Advantage: Cleveland

 **Third base**
This is sort of like the shortstop situation, but in reverse. Whereas **Jose Ramirez** had a breakout season (.312/.363/.462, 122 wRC+), making starts at four positions, **Kris Bryant** had a Most Valuable Player-caliber season (.292/.385/.554, 149 wRC+, 39 homers) ... while also making starts at four positions. It's fair to say that Cleveland doesn't get here if Ramirez doesn't step up to replace the injured **Michael Brantley** in left and later the ineffective **Juan Uribe** at third; it's also not an insult in the least to say that Bryant, one of baseball's five best players, has the edge here.

Advantage: Chicago

 **Left field**
With the rise of Baez at second, **Ben Zobrist** has been the primary left fielder in the postseason, and may be even more so now that other Cubs will have to step up to fill the designated hitter role. Zobrist's first season in Chicago was a success (.272/.386/.446, 124 wRC+), so that and his track record give him a clear advantage over **Coco Crisp** (.231/.302/.397, 90 wRC+). That said, Indians manager Terry Francona does have a weapon to use here in lefty masher **Brandon Guyer** (.288/.390/.469, 144 wRC+ career against lefty pitching), which may be key against Lester and several bullpen southpaws.

Advantage: Chicago

 **Center field**
Cleveland will platoon rookie lefty **Tyler Naquin** (.296/.372/.514, 135 wRC+, with poor defensive numbers) with veteran righty **Rajai Davis** (career .288/.343/.437, 112 wRC+ against lefties), and watching Davis and his 43 steals face off against Lester ought to be a treat. It's a good combination, yet neither one is as good overall as **Dexter Fowler** (.276/.393/.447, 129 wRC+). For what it's worth, Fowler has more extra-base hits this October (five) than Naquin/Davis have *hits* (three).

Advantage: Chicago

Right field

"All of **Jason Heyward**'s struggles will be forgotten if he comes up big in the postseason," went the refrain from Cubs fans, and time is quickly running out for that to happen. After a miserable Chicago debut (.230/.306/.325, 72 wRC+), Heyward has appeared overmatched in the postseason (.071/.133/.179 in 30 plate appearances), and he was actually benched and replaced with rookie **Albert Almora Jr.** in Game 6 of the NLCS. It's not as though **Lonnie Chisenhall**'s lesser defense or decent regular-season line of .286/.328/.439 (103 wRC+) inspire a ton of confidence, either. It's just that Heyward has hit so poorly, despite still providing elite defense, that it may only be Cleveland's lack of lefty

starters outside **Ryan Merritt** that keeps him in the lineup.

Advantage: Push



Designated hitter

We know what you're thinking: What if **Kyle Schwarber makes it back**? It doesn't take too much imagination to think of the storybook ending that could write, but not only do we not know yet if he will return, it won't be easy to shake off the rust of an entirely missed season. Otherwise, **Jorge Soler** (who started seven of 10 Cubs regular-season games in AL parks) could start in Games 1 and/or 2, and his .238/.333/.436 (106 wRC+) line, along with potential contributions from **Chris Coghlan** or one of the extra catchers, can't match up with the underrated brilliance of **Carlos Santana's** .259/.366/.498 (132 wRC+) line and 34 home runs.

Big advantage: Cleveland ... unless Schwarber provides miracles



Starting rotation

Cleveland deserves tremendous respect for getting this far without **Carlos Carrasco**, **Danny Salazar** and most of **Trevor Bauer's** pinky, as **Corey Kluber** has been the ace he's expected to be while **Josh Tomlin** and Merritt have been nice surprises. At full strength, this is a pretty difficult conversation between these two rotations. Cleveland isn't at full strength, of course, or anything close to it, and the Cubs are in a situation where **Jake Arrieta**, who won last year's Cy Young Award and is among the best pitchers in the game, is their *third* starter. You saw how **Kyle Hendricks carved up the Dodgers**, right? You've seen that Lester's throwing issues haven't prevented him from dominating, right? It's not a fair fight for Cleveland, not that it has been all month.

Big advantage: Cubs



Relief ace

Since Cleveland has made it perfectly clear that closer is no longer the most important role in the bullpen, we're going to do the same here, comparing each team's best reliever -- **Andrew Miller** and **Aroldis Chapman** -- though they're used somewhat differently. Although it may seem inconceivable that the flame-throwing Chapman could be bested by anybody, **what Miller has done this postseason** (41 batters faced, 21 strikeouts, two walks, five hits, zero runs) is just about unprecedented. Meanwhile, Chapman hasn't looked quite himself in October, allowing batted balls hit 100 mph or more on 8 percent of swings against him, compared with 3.4 percent during the regular season. Although we wouldn't normally place much emphasis on small-sample postseason stats for someone as elite as Chapman, it doesn't take much to allow Miller to pull ahead.

Small advantage: Cleveland

Other relievers

Of course, doing it that way means that Cleveland still gets to count **Cody Allen** among the rest of its relievers, and although it may be easy to forget given Miller's dominance, **Allen is still really, really good**. Over the last three years, Allen's 33.4 percent strikeout rate is seventh among relievers (Chapman and Miller are among the six ahead, of course), and he's been unscored upon this postseason, striking out 12 in 7 2/3 innings. But whereas **Bryan Shaw** has been useful and we may see a surprise Salazar appearance, the Cleveland bullpen depth drops off, whereas the Cubs can still throw **Hector Rondon** and **Carl Edwards Jr.** and **Pedro Strop** and **Mike Montgomery** and **Travis Wood**. Edwards is **the best reliever you don't know about**, but ultimately there's a lot of talent on both sides.

Advantage: Push

Mike Petriello is an analyst for MLB.com and the host of the Statcast podcast. He has previously written for ESPN Insider and FanGraphs.

Tribe's return to World Series stirs memories for Thome

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | [@scottmerkin](#) | October 23rd, 2016

CHICAGO -- When the Indians inducted Jim Thome into their Hall of Fame at the end of July, Thome's son, Landon, came away with an Indians sweatshirt and hat along with a plethora of memories.

Landon wore that Indians gear to his suburban Chicago school. That was even before Terry Francona's squad won the American League Central and ripped off a 7-1 run through the AL side of the postseason to return to the World Series for the first time since 1997, when his dad played first base for the team.

"All his buddies wear Cubs stuff," said Thome during a phone interview. "This was before they advanced, so everybody was like, 'Why are you wearing Cleveland Indians stuff?' Now, he wears the same gear and I think they get it."

The elder Thome currently serves as a special assistant to White Sox general manager Rick Hahn, but has direct connections to both of this season's World Series combatants. Thome grew up in Peoria, Ill., a city with many Cubs fans despite an almost equal distance to St. Louis. And, of course, the slugger with 612 career homers played a major role on the Indians' last trip to the Fall Classic.

• World Series Game 1: Tuesday 7:30 p.m. ET air time/8 p.m. game time on FOX

In that remarkable seven-game series won by the Marlins, Thome hit .286 and belted two homers. The always upbeat Thome can put the gut-wrenching loss in perspective -- a series that ended with Cleveland closer Jose Mesa blowing a 2-1 lead in the ninth inning of Game 7 and the Marlins' Edgar Renteria delivering the World Series-winning single in the 11th.

"We didn't get to where we wanted to get to, but I always say this: 'We were in the arena. We were there,'" said Thome, who hit 337 homers over parts of 13 seasons in Cleveland. "We put ourselves in a position to be the last team that won a baseball game."

"Somebody had to lose. Somebody had to win. Unfortunately for us, it didn't happen -- and the hard part of that is just the unknown. Let's face it, I didn't get a chance to go back [to the World Series] -- and I played a considerable amount after '97."

Jim Thome made a pair of trips to the Fall Classic with the Indians in 1995 and '97. (AP)

Cleveland's teams in the mid-to-late '90s were consistently among the best in baseball. This year's squad has been excellent but surprised some with its postseason dominance in the face of injuries to starting pitchers **Carlos Carrasco**, **Danny Salazar** and **Trevor Bauer**. It embodies the "we before me" attitude that stood as the credo for Thome's dynamic teams.

Thome realizes Cleveland, a city familiar with championship heartbreak, had its thirst quenched by the Cavaliers' NBA title in June. He also comprehends what a baseball title would mean to the Indians' fan base.

"There are so many people there that, baseball-wise, have been through so much -- and fortunately for me, I've been a part of that," Thome said. "When I say fortunately, I mean they are wonderful. They truly, genuinely love their team -- just like Cubs fans. It would bring so much happiness to a city that has been dying to win a World Series.

"They show it when the excitement hits. They wear it on their sleeves. One thing I've always said about Cleveland fans: They are loyal and they are passionate -- and there is no better place to watch October baseball than ... I call it Jacobs Field, but obviously Progressive Field."

Thome enters Tribe HOF

The Indians induct all-time homer leader Jim Thome into the club's Hall of Fame

That common passion, coupled with the respective title droughts -- 1948 for the Indians and 1908 for the Cubs -- makes this World Series a special one in Thome's mind. He will return to Cleveland on Tuesday to see the competition begin.

"Both organizations have done things first class," Thome said. "Being [in Cleveland] ... five years ago, when I came back to [the Indians for] the second time [in 2011], with Chris Antonetti and their training staff -- and Francona got hired the year after I left -- they are on top of things.

"It seems like Theo [Epstein] and Jed [Hoyer] and the Ricketts [family], they are very passionate about winning, as well. And their Draft, they've done a wonderful job over the years with the Draft and it shows -- just like Cleveland.

"Personally, I have to root for my boys in Cleveland. It's been a lot of fun to watch them. From a guy that has played there for a long, long time, I'm really happy for so many people there that they are doing what they are doing."

After hitting one homer in the 1995 World Series, which the Indians lost to the Braves in six games, Thome admitted to having a more comfortable feel in the Fall Classic two years later. He advises the current participants to soak up every moment.

"You are in a World Series," Thome said. "It's easy to kind of just go, 'Wow,' and take a step back and go, 'Oh, my gosh. I'm in a World Series,' which you should. But once you've been there, then it's, 'OK, I understand it now.'"

Scott Merkin has covered the White Sox for MLB.com since 2003. Read his blog, **Merk's Works**, follow him on Twitter **@scottmerkin**.

Fans all over: Tribe's reach wider than you might think

By Anthony Castrovince / MLB.com | **@castrovince** | October 23rd, 2016

CLEVELAND -- This is no major market, and because of that, the Indians' fountain of fandom might not overflow quite as it does for their But if rooting for an oft-overlooked underdog with a puny payroll that advanced to this point **despite losing two stud starters and an elite outfielder to injury** is not enough to woo you into pulling for the American League champs in this Fall Classic, which begins Tuesday night at Progressive Field, perhaps there are other connections you ought to consider. The reach of this team is wider than you might initially think.

Buckeye brethren: It's not just the city of Cleveland and the surrounding suburbs that ought to be behind the Indians, but the entire northern half of Ohio. After all, many of these guys came up in an organization with a broad base in the Buckeye State.

When they call Ohio a "swing" state, it doesn't have to only apply to the presidential election. It can also be a reference to all the bat-swinging going on in the Minor League outposts that the Tribe stocks with talent.

Jason Kipnis, **Francisco Lindor**, **Tyler Naquin**, **Lonnie Chisenhall**, **Jose Ramirez**, **Roberto Perez**, **Danny Salazar**, **Josh Tomlin**, **Cody Allen** -- all of these guys were original acquisitions by the Indians, which means they paid their developmental dues at Double-A Akron and Triple-A Columbus. Many of them also made stops at Class A Short-Season Mahoning Valley, near Youngstown, Ohio, and Class A Lake County, on Cleveland's east side.

Just deserts: Speaking of Tribe terminals, let's get the west side of Phoenix in on the action, eh?

The Cubs can lay claim to points east in the Phoenix metropolitan area, and we all know what a tourist destination Sloan Park has quickly become. But nearly eight years ago, the Indians set up shop out west, in the middle of the desert by an aviation graveyard, and they've helped make baseball a spring staple for the good people of Goodyear, Ariz. So now would be a good time for Goodyearians(?) to show their love and support, and maybe nearby Surprise, Ariz., which must have had some mojo rubbing off on the Royals last year, can get in the action, too.

Hey, Chicagoland: Would it be crazy to suggest some people in Chicago should be rooting for the Indians? Well, no, not when you remember a good number of them are so staunch in their support of the White Sox that they can't bear the sight of the North Siders going the distance.

Lone Star love: If the people of Celina, Texas, can tear themselves away from high school football for just a few days, then surprise AL Championship Series Game 5 hero **Ryan Merritt** is their man of the moment. He was so in control on the big stage, you'd think he was G.A. Moore Jr. (the legendary Texas high school football coach who won his first state title with Celina High).

Texas is well represented on this roster, thanks to the offseason residences of Tomlin (Whitehouse), Naquin (Iola) and **Mike Napoli** (Dallas).

• **Cut4: Wedding gifts have begun arriving at Merritt's house**

P.R. power: Puerto Rico is pulling for Lindor. Well, OK, fellow young stud infielder **Javier Baez** is from there, too. But Tribe catcher Perez and first-base coach Sandy Alomar Jr. were also born in Puerto Rico, so the Tribe ought to have the edge on the island.

(South) American League champs: Brazil's on a World Series roll, first with Royals outfielder **Paulo Orlando** representing the country last fall and now with Tribe catcher **Yan Gomes**. We'll see if Gomes, who has been on the active roster but has yet to make an appearance in the postseason (he's still playing with a broken bone in his right hand) is the only guy on this Series stage from Brazil, so that ought to buy the Indians a couple hundred million fans right there.

Travelin' man: **Corey Kluber** covers a lot of ground. His dad worked in real estate, and his profession had the family on a military-like trek through various locales -- Birmingham, Ala. (where Kluber was born); Dallas (where he went to high school); El Paso, Texas; Montpelier, Vt. and Atlanta, to name a few. Surely, some folks in those areas can be programmed to root for Kluber, or at the very least, he'll have the support of everybody at Stetson University, just as fellow Hatter **Jacob deGrom** did in last year's Fall Classic.

Schooled: While we're on the collegiate path, let's get a few major programs in on the action. The University of North Carolina can pull for the legendary lefty (and former Tar Heel) **Andrew Miller**, Texas A&M can pull for Naquin (and maybe Texas can get in on the action, considering Naquin unwittingly made a "Hook 'Em Horns" symbol after his game-winning inside-the-park home run in August) and UCLA can back **Trevor Bauer**.

With the score knotted at 2 in the 9th, Tyler Naquin hits an inside-the-park walk-off home run to right-center field for the Indians' win. Come to think of it ...

Drone on: The entire drone hobbyist community (more than half a million drones were registered with the FAA just in the first eight months of the registration program this year) ought to be behind Bauer as he tries to recover from a drone attack in time to pitch in this Series. That kind of support can really propel a person to great heights!

The Francona factor: Lastly, how about the skipper, Terry Francona? He's got the western Pennsylvania region locked up, as his dad, Tito, still lives there. He's a regular at his alma mater University of Arizona's basketball games, so that's got to earn him some Wildcat love. And while Red Sox Nation, which we know comprises a lot of hearts even outside of New England, will be torn in this Series -- what with Theo Epstein on the other side -- rooting for the Cubs runs the risk that Epstein's signature achievement will no longer be breaking the Curse of the Bambino in his real hometown, but breaking the Curse of the Billy Goat in his adopted one.

You really want that to happen, Red Sox fans?

Back Tito. Back the Tribe.

Anthony Castrovince has

Indians trying to achieve what 1990s juggernaut teams couldn't

Jerry Crasnick ESPN Senior Writer

CLEVELAND -- John Hart is remembered fondly by [Cleveland Indians](#) fans as the man behind the most sustained run of excellence in franchise history. He built and maintained rosters that won six of seven American League Central titles from 1995 through 2001. During that stretch, the Tribe captured two pennants, established Jacobs Field as Major League Baseball's "in" venue and stood side by side with the [Atlanta Braves](#) as one of baseball's crown jewels.

Small-market teams must develop the players they draft and win trades. In doing both well, the Indians now find themselves in the World Series.

Is this the Cubs' year? Will the Indians' run continue in the Fall Classic? We've got you covered for every pitch of the 2016 postseason. Hart moved on to the [Texas Rangers](#) 15 years ago and currently works as president of baseball operations in Atlanta, but the old Cleveland ties die hard. While he would prefer to remain a bystander when the Indians and [Chicago Cubs](#) meet in the 2016 World Series, sentiment precludes impartiality.

"My heart is still in Cleveland," Hart told ESPN.com. "It always has been. I love it. It was the greatest time of my life, my wife's life and our family's life. The fans embraced us. It was just a great spot. We were young and we all believed.

"I want Cleveland to win so bad. You can say 'long-suffering.' The Cubs are the leaders in long-suffering. But Cleveland got hit with the recession. It's been sort of an up-and-down roller coaster economically for the city, but it's a great town and a loyal town. I love Theo Epstein and the Cubs' story, but with every ounce of my body, I'm pulling for the Indians."

As the Indians prepare for their first World Series appearance in 19 years -- and try to win their first title since 1948 -- they've been relegated to a sidebar in the Cubs-related national media storm. While Bill Murray was crashing a White House news conference in Cubs garb and Pearl Jam front man Eddie Vedder was keeping score at the National League Championship Series clincher from Theo Epstein's private box, the Indians were beating Toronto in games that started at 4 p.m. ET because they weren't deemed prime-time worthy.

As Cleveland second baseman [Jason Kipnis](#) observed after the American League Championship Series clincher, "No one picked us in the last two series, and I've got news for you: No one is picking us in the next series, either."

Against that backdrop, it's only natural to wonder: Can this unheralded and largely overlooked Cleveland club treat Indians fans to the parade they missed when the 1995 and 1997 clubs fell agonizingly short in the World Series? Can this team redeem the juggernaut Cleveland teams that failed to get over the top against the Braves and Florida Marlins? To dispel one misperception, the 2016 Indians are a better, more complete team than their low profile suggests. They finished second in the American League with 777 runs scored and fourth in the majors with 36 defensive runs saved. They are a fundamentally sound club with a budding franchise player in shortstop [Francisco Lindor](#), a perennial Cy Young Award candidate in [Corey Kluber](#) and a shutdown bullpen led by [Andrew Miller](#) and [Cody Allen](#).

But the Indians' biggest distinguishing characteristic this season has been their ability to overcome setbacks. They lost outfielder [Michael Brantley](#), their best all-around player, to a shoulder injury after 11 games and 39 at-bats. They were always perceived as a dangerous team because of their rotation, but the pitching took a seemingly insurmountable hit in September when starters [Carlos Carrasco](#) and [Danny Salazar](#) went down with injuries in the span of a week. Until recently, no one could have envisioned rookie [Ryan Merritt](#) making the postseason roster, much less throwing 4 1/3 innings of shutout ball in the pennant clincher against Toronto.

The Indians batted .208 as a team and averaged 3.4 runs per game while winning seven of eight games against Boston and Toronto in the American League playoffs. It's a distinctly different Indians club than the offensive dynamos built by Hart and managed by Mike Hargrove and Charlie Manuel in the 1990s and early 2000s.

- The 1995 Cleveland team went 100-44 in a season that began three weeks late because of a player strike. The batting order consisted of [Kenny Lofton](#), [Omar Vizquel](#), [Carlos Baerga](#), [Eddie Murray](#), [Albert Belle](#), [Jim Thome](#) and [Manny Ramirez](#) (or Ramirez then Thome if a left-hander was pitching), [Paul Sorrento](#) and [Sandy Alomar Jr.](#) But that mind-numbing array of talent fell short against [Tom Glavine](#) and the Braves in the World Series.
- The 1997 Indians were a disappointing 86-75 during the regular season, but they still ranked third in the AL in runs thanks to 131 combined home runs from Thome, Ramirez, [Matt Williams](#) and [David Justice](#). After knocking off the Yankees and Orioles in the playoffs, the Indians came within a [Jose Mesa](#) blown save of beating the Marlins in a seven-game World Series.
- The 1999 Indians were the first MLB team in 49 years to surpass 1,000 runs during the regular season. They were shut out only three times all year, and Ramirez's 165 RBIs were the most since Jimmie Foxx drove in 175 in 1938. But they imploded after taking a 2-0 lead over Boston in the division series and were outscored 44-18 while dropping the final three games.

Beyond their offensive firepower, the old Cleveland teams played with an attitude and an edge. Hart recalls showing up at the World Series in 1995 and being bombarded with "Hannah Storm questions" after the perpetually irascible Belle lashed out at the then NBC reporter in the dugout. While Belle's teammates conducted themselves more professionally, they didn't lack for confidence.

"Those teams in the '90s knew they were good, they were happy to tell you they were good, and then they went out and showed you they were good," said Tom Hamilton, Cleveland's radio voice since 1990.

"They were almost like the bullies of the American League, and Cleveland adored that, because people were so used to being made fun of. Now, for the first time in 40 years, they could puff their chests out and say, 'Yeah, let's see what you got.' A lot of times, those games literally seemed over before they started. Opposing teams were intimidated, and if they weren't, it was 6-0 by the end of the first inning.

"This team is not that talent level, but the resiliency of this ballclub is unlike anything I've seen in my 27 years. The beauty of this club is, they're just as confident as those teams were. You can tell them, 'You can't overcome all these injuries,' and they're like, 'Really? Watch.'"

The Cleveland teams of the 1990s struck a chord with the fan base through a perfect storm of circumstances. Jacobs Field debuted at the forefront of a whole new wave of "retro" ballparks. Cleveland's economy and downtown were making a comeback in the mid-1990s, and the Indians had the landscape largely to themselves when the NFL's Browns relocated to Baltimore in 1995. The Indians set a major league record with 455 straight sellouts from 1995 through 2001, and it stood until the Red Sox passed it in 2008 and sold out 820 games in a row.

Although the 2016 Indians registered strong TV ratings and generally drew well on the weekends, they bombed at the gate during the regular season. The Indians finished 28th in the majors in attendance with 1.59 million fans. Only the [Oakland Athletics](#) and [Tampa Bay Rays](#) fared worse.

Hamilton theorizes that the city was in the throes of a Cavaliers "hangover" after LeBron James and friends ended Cleveland's 52-year title drought in June. But even when fans began to take notice of the Indians, they were the kind of team that was best appreciated over time.

"It took a while for people to buy into this team," Hamilton said. "Maybe it's because it's not loaded with the star-power names that the other teams here had. And after you've done something once, you can't recapture that feeling.

"To this day, when I introduce our club on Opening Day or in the playoffs, the guy who gets the biggest cheer is Sandy Alomar. That's how much those teams in the '90s meant to Cleveland. I think those teams and the ballpark helped changed the image nationally of Cleveland. The city was no longer the late-night [TV comedy] joke. It was the first time perception changed and gave Cleveland something to be proud of."

Alomar, Cleveland's first base coach and a six-time All-Star catcher with the Indians during the 1990s, is one of the most prominent links to the franchise's glory years. He sees a competitive will in this year's roster that makes the Indians an eminently likable team once people get to know them.

"They're very coachable," Alomar said. "They're a fun group. Nobody has an ego. It's the perfect team to coach, because everybody is buying into what we bring to the table."

If the Indians can go the distance and bring the city its first World Series victory in 68 years, they'll write the ultimate happy ending in Cleveland. But they've already done something special: With their inspirational run through October, they've given baseball fans in the city a reason to believe again.

The Indians' fixer-upper defense shines

David Schoenfield

When the Cleveland Indians drafted Jason Kipnis in the second round out of Arizona State in 2009 he had been the Pac-10 player of the year as a center fielder, a player some scouts viewed as a bit undersized but with good athleticism, speed and projectable power. He had a strong 29-game debut in the minors but was moved to second base in the instructional league that fall.

At the time, the Indians had Grady Sizemore entrenched in center field, and the fear was that Kipnis' below-average arm would relegate him to left field, where his bat wouldn't play up as much. You usually see that move going the other way -- middle infielders who maybe don't have the hands or range to stay at shortstop or second base moved to the outfield -- and Kipnis did initially balk at moving to the infield.

He soon realized changing positions would offer a faster track to the big leagues. Kipnis reached the majors in 2011. I came across a quote from 2012 that helps explain why Kipnis was not only miffed that he fell to the 63rd pick in the draft, but why the transition to second base worked.

"That's another reason why I don't think scouts know it all," Kipnis told the Cleveland Plain Dealer's Jodie Valade. "I don't think there's a formula for who's going to be successful in the game. There's prospects and there's baseball players. There's a fine difference, and you can tell which one is which."

Kipnis' defensive transition went smoothly and other than 2014, when he played through an oblique injury, his defensive metrics have always been solid, including plus-4 Defensive Runs Saved in 2016. He's not the only Cleveland player who has changed positions as a pro.

Lonnie Chisenhall came up as a third baseman, also reaching the majors in 2011. His bat didn't develop quite as much as expected when he was a top-rated prospect, but more problematic were defensive issues at third base. In 2014, he rated at minus-14 Defensive Runs Saved, second-worst among all third basemen.

The Indians were a wild-card team in 2013 but weren't a good defensive team, at minus-38 DRS. In 2014, the team went 85-77 and missed the wild card by three wins. Defense was again a key reason they fell short, with minus-66 DRS, second-worst in baseball. The outfield combined for minus-37 DRS, with right fielder David Murphy a particular disaster at minus-16 DRS.

2016 Postseason

The Cubs are headed to the World Series to face the Indians! Check out our complete postseason coverage »

In 2015, the team started 7-14. The defense was again a disaster. One headline in early May screamed, "Indians' defense is one of MLB's worst all-time." Their defensive efficiency -- the percentage of balls in play that are turned into outs -- was on pace to be the worst since 1950.

Then, suddenly, the defense improved. Francisco Lindor was called up to play shortstop, which helped. But Chisenhall moved to right field and was good at it. Chisenhall had been sent down to the minors on June 8, not because of his defense, but because he wasn't hitting. While at Triple-A, he suggested trying other positions, knowing his future in Cleveland was in doubt. He played four games in right field at Columbus, but when Brandon Moss was traded in late July, Chisenhall was called back and installed in right field. He was good at it.

If outfield-to-second base moves are rare, successful transitions from third base to the outfield are probably even rarer. Chisenhall graded out at plus-11 DRS in limited duty there last year and plus-3 this season. He has made a couple outstanding grabs in the postseason as well.

The Cleveland defense turned around from that awful April in 2015 and finished at plus-17 Defensive Runs Saved. In 2016, they ranked at plus-17 again, ninth-best in the majors. (Center field, where Tyler Naquin and Rajai Davis combined for minus-22 DRS, has been the one problem area).

In the big picture, the moves point to something small-market teams have to be willing to do: Take some chances. Not all of those risks have worked; the Carlos Santana experiment at third base back in 2014 was pretty much a train wreck, for example.

The other thing the Indians have done is show patience. I've written about how many teams would have given up on Josh Tomlin at some point, given that he's a soft-tossing right-hander who had injuries in 2013 and 2015 and mostly mediocre results. The Indians didn't cut bait though, and now Tomlin is a key cog in the rotation.

Same thing with Chisenhall. Many organizations would have viewed him as a disappointing first-round pick, gotten frustrated and traded him away. And, who knows, if the move to right field hadn't panned out, maybe the Indians would have dumped him. But it did work and he's a solid role player. The Diamondbacks viewed Trevor Bauer as a headache; the Indians saw a kid with a good arm who simply does things his own way.

That's how a team with the majors' 23rd-highest payroll can reach the World Series.

Indians react to facing Chicago Cubs in World Series; Corey Kluber to start Game 1

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: The 2016 World Series is set. The Indians will go head-to-head with the Chicago Cubs, owners of the best record in baseball this season.

The Cubs tore through the National League en route to 103 wins, capturing the attention of the baseball world as they try to end one of the most well-known title droughts — which dates back to 1908 — in all of sports.

The Indians have gone through baseball's best lineup and arguably baseball's most intense homefield advantage. Now, they'll face the team that's been perched atop the power rankings nearly the entire season.

Game 1 is 8 p.m. Tuesday at Progressive Field.

"They're obviously built for October," Indians manager Terry Francona said of the Cubs. "And I think they've known that for quite a while. They had a heck of a year and they're going to be a handful. Their starting pitching is tremendous. They catch the ball. They're athletic. This will be fun to see how we can do against them. I think we're excited about that."

The Cubs' title drought is sure to make this World Series a ratings bonanza for Fox and other media outlets. The Indians have a drought of their own that dates back to 1948, but they aren't concerned about it, nor are they interested in being swept up in the storylines.

"I think that stuff is for fans," Francona said. "I think fans enjoy talking or commiserating, however you want to put it. I don't feel responsible for the fact that my dad couldn't win. That was his fault."

"We're going to have our hands full playing against the Cubs. And trying to go back and win for years, that doesn't help. If it did, we'd do it. But I think those are more types of things that fans like to talk about, as they should. It's a fun part of baseball."

Article continues below

The Indians and Cubs are also trying to make some history of their own instead of worrying about the past.

"We can't concern ourselves with that. I can't imagine they are," Indians reliever Andrew Miller said of the atmosphere of playing World Series games at Wrigley Field and Progressive Field. "It's been a pretty long time since Cleveland won a World Series. I know they got a taste of it in the late '90s, but these 25 guys and their 25 guys didn't experience that process. We just want to win the World Series."

The Indians still have quite a few questions regarding how their starting rotation will line up in the World Series. The only aspect known in full is that Corey Kluber will start Game 1, as announced Sunday night by Francona.

Trevor Bauer and Josh Tomlin will then start Games 2 and 3, but the order is still to be determined and dependent on Bauer's stitched-up pinkie finger. Game 3 comes after an off-day, so it would be a two-day difference in giving him additional time to heal.

"We're going to hold off as long as we can with Trevor, just to get the most information we can," Francona said. "If it works out right, we'd like him to pitch second. But, if the doctors or the trainers deem that those next two days would really give him a better chance, then we could move him back. So, we'll see."

Game 4 remains a complete mystery. The Indians have several options as to who could start that game, including but not limited to Ryan Merritt, Danny Salazar, Kluber on short rest or a bullpen game.

"It's going to be TBA after Game 3 probably the rest of the way, for obvious reasons," Francona said. "It's not that difficult to figure out. Kluber's certainly an option. It could be a lot of things, so we're just kind of keeping it open. We found out the last series that that's probably a good way to do it."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 10.24.2016

Indians notebook: Jason Kipnis has ankle sprain from celebrating, Danny Salazar throws simulated game

By Ryan Lewis

CLEVELAND: Sometimes, celebrating is a contact sport. And because of it, Jason Kipnis is currently dealing with a sprained left ankle.

As the Indians clinched a World Series berth in Toronto, Kipnis went to embrace Francisco Lindor but accidentally stepped on his foot and rolled his ankle. Indians manager Terry Francona called it a "low" ankle sprain on Sunday, and said Kipnis is expected to be ready for Tuesday night's Game 1 against the Chicago Cubs at Progressive Field.

"Some of the guys had a tough time getting through the celebration," Francona said. "The good part is it's not a high ankle sprain. You hear that all the time and I never know what it means but it doesn't sound good.

"He's going to be OK. Thankfully we had some time off, which is good. He's not moving yet like he can, but I'm guessing with another 48 hours and 37,000 screaming fans, I bet he'll be OK."

Kipnis tweeted a picture of the moment he stepped on Lindor's foot with a caption saying he should be "good to go" by Tuesday.

Letting it go

Indians pitcher Danny Salazar threw three innings of a simulated game in Cleveland on Sunday. He's still not throwing his curveball but has been able to "let it go" a bit more. He remains a possible option for the Indians' World Series roster, either as a starter or reliever.

It took time for Salazar to trust his throwing motion enough to not hold back.

Article continues below

"I was kind of scared to let it go," Salazar said. "Even though I wasn't feeling any pain, I was saying to myself, 'OK, I'm going to let it go, this one.' But then when I was doing my motion, I was holding back. In Toronto, it was different. It didn't hurt the first time, so it didn't hurt the second time. I was letting go really good. It feels good."

The Indians have wanted to make sure Salazar was progressing with an eye on his long-term health. It appears as though he's now under serious consideration for also making the roster, potentially as a Game 4 starting pitcher or an option out of the bullpen.

"We want to make sure that he's 100 percent healthy. Then if he shows that, OK, then you take it another couple steps," Francona said. "Is he commanding? Can he help you win? Can he pitch an inning? Can he pitch two? What role can he fill?"

"Because of his side day the other day, it's progressed to the point now where I think we need to take a good, long look, because he looks pretty healthy. So that's what we'll do."

Champagne memories

Indians catcher Chris Gimenez brought home at least two empty champagne bottles from the ACLS-clinching celebration at Rogers Centre in Toronto. He said he has them from every round of the playoffs he's been to and has all his teammates sign them with a silver Sharpie.

Besides the Indians' division-clincher and playoff victories over the Red Sox and Blue Jays this season, his collection also includes bottles when he reached the 2013 American League wild card game with the Tampa Bay Rays and from last year's playoffs with the Texas Rangers.

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Jason Kipnis has ankle sprain from celebrating; Danny Salazar throws sim game

By Ryan Lewis

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As the Indians clinched their spot in the World Series in Toronto, Kipnis went to embrace Francisco Lindor but accidentally stepped on his foot. Kipnis rolled his ankle, but it was called a "low" ankle sprain by Indians manager Terry Francona on Sunday. Kipnis is expected to be ready for Tuesday night's Game 1.

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Three innings

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Marla Ridenour: Funny 50-50 raffle observation says much about Indians' Terry Francona's skills as a manager

By Marla Ridenour

CLEVELAND: Indians lore now has its version of the Joe Montana and John Candy Super Bowl story.

But Terry Francona's remark to Mike Napoli about the 50-50 raffle during Game 3 of the American League Championship Series on Oct. 17 in Rogers Centre shouldn't be remembered just for Francona's humor in the face of a dire situation.

It says much about Francona's skills as a manager, illustrating not only his prowess as a communicator but his powers of observation.

In leading the Indians into the World Series, which opens Tuesday night at Progressive Field against the Chicago Cubs, part of what makes Francona special is his ability to break the ice in the midst of intense pressure. And even though it was unintentional against the Blue Jays, Francona defused what could have been a panic situation when Trevor Bauer's freely bleeding pinkie finger, cut four days earlier in a drone accident, forced him to leave the game in the first inning.

As players and coaches huddled on the mound, Francona spied a message on the scoreboard that the sellout crowd of 49,507 had already raised \$82,000 in the 50-50 raffle.

"Nap, we gotta get in on that," Francona recounted after six Indians relievers combined to record the last 25 outs.

The remark was eerily reminiscent of San Francisco 49ers quarterback Montana's comment to offensive tackle Harris Barton in the 1989 Super Bowl against the Cincinnati Bengals. The 49ers trailed by three with 3:20 remaining when Montana said in the huddle, "There, in the stands, standing near the exit ramp, isn't that John Candy?" After his reference to the comedian, Montana directed a 92-yard drive and threw the winning touchdown pass with 34 seconds to play.

What would turn out to be a 4-2 Indians' victory over the Blue Jays to give them a 3-0 series lead was dripping with the same drama before Francona's quip. Surprisingly, Francona confessed Friday that he did not get in on the raffle.

Article continues below

"I had a chance to and declined. I actually showed some maturity for once," he said.

But that admission seems to indicate that someone made an inquiry to see if it were possible.

Catcher Chris Gimenez said the charity fundraiser has been a topic of conversation before.

"We make a big deal of it because sometimes we look up there when we're here and it's \$3,000 in the eighth inning," Gimenez said, referring to the small regular-season crowds at Progressive Field. "When it gets up to 100 grand, it's like, 'Wow, that's a lot of money.'"

For some, that might spoil the spontaneity. But it didn't for Francona's players.

"Everybody was like, 'That's classic Tito,'" Gimenez said. "It's him keeping a level head through the tightest of pressure situations and finding a way to make us all laugh about it."

Gimenez said the Indians don't feel a lot of pressure and Francona is a big part of that.

"There's reasons he will come out and crack a joke on you. It's Game whatever of the ALCS and you're out here goofing around. But that's how he is and that's why he gets the best out of his guys," Gimenez said.

"He knows the guys on the mound, what he can say and what he can't. He's got an uncanny ability to know how to get into somebody like that. It's pretty impressive."

While seemingly not a planned diversion, it has to be a tactic Francona honed over the years.

"It's not him being funny. There is some calculation to it I'm sure," Gimenez said.

"There's so much riding on every pitch that you need those distractions to ease your mind a little bit," right-hander Corey Kluber said.

'Aware of everything'

Just as impressive are Francona's powers of observation, although he doesn't agree on that.

"During the game you're so locked in that you don't see or hear much," Francona said. "When I say tunnel-vision, it really is — all except for that 50-50 thing, that kind of grabbed my attention."

His players say his radar is always up, the eyes in the back of his head always swiveling about the park.

"He's aware of everything. Nothing gets by him," Napoli said. "That's just who he is, the person he is. It's cool to be around."

"He's very observant. He's always paying attention, planning ahead for different scenarios so when crazy things do happen like Bauer's finger opening back up he's prepared for it," Kluber said.

"There's a lot going on in every inning or every pitch, but he's got an uncanny ability to process everything at once and to be thinking the next two, three, four steps ahead," Gimenez said.

Kluber connected the dots on everything that went into the Indians' Montana-Candy moment, a moment that shows why the Indians should never be underestimated when Francona is in charge.

"He's got an unusual ability to make everybody feel comfortable," Kluber said. "People are comfortable because he knows how to communicate with them because he's aware of all those different things."

'Why does it have to be the Cubs?' Cleveland Indians' Jason Kipnis conflicted about facing his hometown team in World Series

By Zack Meisel

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Jason Kipnis' uncle delivered one of Ryne Sandberg's children.

Kipnis grew up a little more than a half-hour north of Wrigley Field, one of baseball's most treasured sanctuaries.

Kipnis lived down the street from Steve Bartman, the most infamous man in a green turtleneck, glasses and cheap headphones to ever grace the corner of Clark and Addison.

"The Cubs are part of who I am," Kipnis said Sunday.

The Cubs are who Kipnis and the Indians must conquer if they are to capture their first championship in 68 years. Of course, Chicago's drought has persisted four decades longer than that.

Kipnis knows. He endured some of the agony.

He was a sophomore in high school when Bartman was vilified for attempting to corral a pop fly down the third-base line in Game 6 of the 2003 National League Championship Series. He spotted the line of police cars camped outside of Bartman's house for the ensuing month, ensuring that no crazed Cubs fan tried to trespass.

Kipnis remembers watching Sandberg and Mark Grace and Kerry Wood and Mark Prior and Sammy Sosa.

"It was must-see TV every time," Kipnis said. "Hey, Sammy's up.' Wherever you were, people would tune in."

He remembers listening to Harry Caray. He remembers Wood's 20-strikeout game, and then having the opportunity to play defense behind the hurler during an Indians spring training game more than a decade later. He recalls sitting at Wrigley Field and watching Prior out-duel Greg Maddux in Game 3 of the 2003 NL Division Series.

He watched the Cubs' latest postseason triumph with former Tribe teammate Joba Chamberlain.

This time, Kipnis felt conflicted.

"The 10-year-old boy in me is saying, 'Why does it have to be the Cubs?'"

The 29-year-old native of Northbrook, Illinois, didn't know how to react to Chicago reaching its first World Series in 71 years, not with his team waiting patiently for a chance to wipe away its own streak of futility.

"I even teared up because I didn't know how to handle it," Kipnis said. "I didn't know what to think."

Kipnis' friends are Cubs season-ticket holders. His three siblings maintain an allegiance to the Cubs. He scanned his social media feeds after the Cubs won on Saturday night and saw mostly pro-Cubs posts.

"And now I have to go try to disappoint all of them," Kipnis said.

Kipnis had two trains of thought when it settled in that the Indians and Cubs would clash in the Fall Classic. First, reality seemed daunting.

"It's intimidating a little bit, the idea," he said. "You dream about it and you're always excited, but then when it comes to fruition, you're like, 'Holy crap, this is actually going to happen. Everybody is going to be there watching.'"

Then again, maybe that isn't a bad thing.

"You start to think about it more positively," he said, "like, 'I could win a World Series in front of everyone I know.'"

His friends and family have vowed their support of the Indians in the World Series. Kipnis has hosted a few buddies at his home when the Indians have played at Progressive Field this October. They'll grab dinner and watch TV on off-days, anything to keep Kipnis from "over-thinking stuff and having the wheels turn."

Those friends attended the Cubs' victory against the Dodgers on Saturday. After the game, they texted him: "It was a great last night of being a Cubs fan. Let's go Tribe."

"Without me having to say anything," Kipnis said, "they reaffirmed that, 'Hey, we're on the Indians' side. The curse can wait one more year.'"

That "curse" has persevered since 1945, when the Cubs last advanced to the World Series. The franchise hasn't won a championship since 1908.

And here stands Kipnis, the kid who used to imagine vanquishing that title drought himself, tasked with making sure it lasts at least another year.

"I always dreamed of playing in the World Series at Wrigley Field, full count, two outs," Kipnis said. "I always thought it was going to be the bottom of the ninth, but it's the top of the ninth now."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 10.24.2016

Cleveland Indians' Salazar throws 3-inning simulated game; next stop World Series?

By Paul Hoynes

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Danny Salazar feels like he's 100 percent. If that's true, his next real game could be in the World Series.

Salazar pitched a three-inning simulated game Sunday night during the Indians' workout in anticipation of playing the Cubs in Game 1 of the World Series on Tuesday night at Progressive Field.

"We'll evaluate Danny after he throws his sim game," said pitching coach Mickey Callaway. "I expect him, if he gets through this OK, to be available at some point in the World Series."

When Salazar took the mound Sunday night, Wild Thing blared over the sound system at Progressive Field. Front office employees, sitting behind the plate, cheered and crowd noise was bumped into the ballpark.

Salazar faced his teammates and each one was introduced to simulate game conditions. Roberto Perez, the first batter Salazar faced, homered to right field. But Salazar looked good for the rest of the outing.

Salazar has not pitched since Sept. 9 when he left a start against the Twins with a strained flexor muscle in his right forearm after four innings. The Indians sent him to their spring training site in Goodyear, Ariz. to rehab, with an eye on him being ready if they advanced deep into the postseason.

Well, the World Series is about as deep as you can go.

"I feel really strong right now," said Salazar, when asked how many innings he could throw. "The way I feel right now is the way I feel when I'm 100 percent."

Callaway wouldn't speculate if Salazar would start or relieve. But manager Terry Francona, after announcing his first three starters for the World Series as Corey Kluber, Trevor Bauer and Josh Tomlin, left the door open when he said the rotation was TBA (to be announced) after that.

"The best case scenario for Danny would be for him to be available when we need him," said Callaway. "We saw on the last two series, that maybe nobody is going to pitch on the day they're supposed to.

"We're going to just have him ready to go. If he's on the roster, you might see him in Game 2. You might see him in Game 3. We'll just have to wait and see."

Mickey Callaway believes Danny Salazar will be available for the World Series

After Kluber, Bauer and Tomlin, the Indians only other starting options are Salazar or rookie left-hander Ryan Merritt, who started Game 5 of the American League Championship Series. They could also go with a bullpen game.

"We didn't even know Merritt was going to be on the (ALCS) roster," said Callaway. "We're expecting that someone will have to do what Merritt did in and it could be Danny."

Salazar went 11-6 with a 3.87 ERA in 25 games this season. He was 10-3 with a 2.75 ERA in the first half and went to the All-Star break. He struggled after the break with a sore right elbow.

Ouch: Second baseman Jason Kipnis injured his left ankle in the on-field celebration after the Indians clinched the AL pennant on Wednesday in Toronto.

"He went over to give Frankie (Francisco Lindor) a high five and stepped on his foot and turned his ankle," said manager Terry Francona.

Got a little too close to @Lindor12BC during the celebration!! Freak accident but should be good to go by Tuesday!
#cantkeepmeoutofthisgame! pic.twitter.com/2DKgpzP0Iq

— Jason Kipnis (@TheJK_Kid) October 23, 2016

Kipnis took ground balls at shortstop before Sunday's workout to test the ankle. Francona said he's not 100 percent, but should be close by Tuesday night.

Friendly encounters: Everytime Francona turns around in the postseason, he's facing another friend.

The Indians swept John Farrell's Boston Red Sox in the ALDS. In the ALCS, the Indians beat Mark Shapiro's Toronto Blue Jays. Now he'll be facing the Cubs and Theo Epstein in the World Series.

Epstein, of course, was Boston's general manager when Francona guided the Red Sox to World Series titles in 2004 and 2007. He is now director of baseball operations for the Cubs.

"I think what it is, is that the people I've been fortunate enough to be associated with are pretty good," said Francona. "I used to get asked a lot about Theo when he went to Chicago because I had been with him for eight years in Boston. I was pretty consistent in my answer that he was too smart and too hard working to not make it work. That's come true."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 10.24.2016

Cleveland Indians kind of reveal their World Series rotation: Corey Kluber, and a whole lot of TBD

By Zack Meisel

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Corey Kluber will start the Indians' first World Series game in 19 years on Tuesday night.

That, we know. Much else, we do not.

Tribe manager Terry Francona revealed bits and pieces of his club's rotation order for the Fall Classic, which begins at Progressive Field. Kluber will take the hill against the Cubs on Tuesday.

Trevor Bauer and Josh Tomlin will start the next two games, in some order, depending on the healing process of Bauer's right pinkie. As is well known in both baseball and popular science circles, the hurler sustained a laceration -- which initially required 10 stitches -- to the finger while repairing a drone.

Bauer claimed on Friday that he would be ready to pitch in each and every game of the upcoming series. He'll throw either live batting practice or a bullpen session on Monday.

If Bauer starts Game 2, that would allow Tomlin to start at Wrigley Field, with National League rules in place. Tomlin has six hits in 12 career at-bats.

Bauer, on the other hand, said he "couldn't hit little league pitching. I'm certainly not going to hit World Series pitching."

If Bauer's finger does not cooperate as the Indians hope, they could buy the right-hander an extra 48 hours by pushing him back to Game 3 on Friday. The teams have a travel day on Thursday.

Beyond those three, the Indians' rotation is up in the air. Francona mentioned that Kluber could be a possibility on short rest in Game 4, though he said, "It could be a lot of things." Much will depend on how the Indians proceed through the first three games of the series.

"We're going to hold off as long as we can with Trevor, just to get the most information we can," Francona said.

Ryan Merritt and Danny Salazar could factor into the equation as well. Salazar was scheduled to throw a three-inning simulated game on Sunday night. Merritt, the man with the most famous wedding registry in Northeast Ohio, directed the Indians to an American League pennant-clinching victory in Game 5 of the AL Championship Series against the Blue Jays.

Salazar has not pitched in a big-league game since Sept. 9, when he exited a start in Minnesota because of a right forearm strain. He said Sunday he feels "the way I feel like when I'm 100 percent."

"Is he commanding?" Francona said. "Can he help you win? Can he pitch an inning? Can he pitch two? What role can he fill? Because of his side day the other day, it's progressed to the point now where I think we need to take a good, long look, because he looks pretty healthy. So that's what we'll do."

The Indians have managed an unsettled rotation for more than a month now. Kluber has made three starts this postseason. Tomlin made one against Boston and one against Toronto. Bauer started Cleveland's playoff opener and then lasted four batters in his outing at Rogers Centre on Monday.

Game 1: Kluber

Game 2: Bauer or Tomlin

Game 3: Bauer or Tomlin

Games 4-7: TBD

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 10.24.2016

Cleveland Indians, Browns, Cavaliers will all play on the same weekend for the first time ever

By Zack Meisel

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Those who live and die with every pitch, jump ball and snap should prepare for a stressful weekend.

For the first time ever, the Indians, Cavaliers and Browns will all play on the same weekend (preseason games excluded). The Indians will venture to Wrigley Field for at least two World Series games. The Cavs will play at Toronto on Friday and home against Orlando on Saturday. The Browns will host the Jets at First Energy Stadium on Sunday.

It promises to be the busiest weekend in Cleveland sports history.

The Indians' deep October run has much to do with that. The team reached the World Series for the sixth time in franchise history and first time since 1997. The postseason schedule runs a bit later this year, though, as Games 6 and 7, if necessary, would take place in November.

The Indians host the Cubs -- in a something-has-to-give clash of the sport's two longest title droughts -- for Game 1 on Tuesday night at Progressive Field. The series shifts to Chicago for Games 3 and 4 and, if necessary, Game 5 over the weekend.

The Cavs will receive their championship rings and unveil their new banner on Tuesday night before they tip off their new season against the New York Knicks at Quicken Loans Arena. The contest, originally scheduled for 8 p.m., was moved to 7:30 p.m. since the Indians and Cubs will begin Game 1 at 8 p.m.

LeBron James and Co. won't play again until Friday, when they battle the Raptors, the foe they dismissed in the Eastern Conference Finals.

The Browns entered Sunday's action as the NFL's only winless team (0-6). They'll play at home next Sunday for the first time in three weeks.

In 2007, the Indians' season ended on Oct. 21, when they dropped Game 7 of the American League Championship Series to the Red Sox at Fenway Park. That year, the Cavs didn't open their regular season until Nov. 1.

In 1997, the Indians fell short in Game 7 of the World Series on Oct. 26. The Cavs began their season five days later. The Browns had moved to Baltimore two years earlier.

In 1995, the Indians enjoyed their first postseason experience in 41 years, but they fizzled in the World Series against the Braves, six days before the Cavs started their regular season.

The Indians went into postseason hibernation from 1955-1994. The Cavs joined the NBA in 1970. The Browns didn't exist in Cleveland from 1996 until they returned in 1999.

Now, all three will be in action on the ultimate weekend of October.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 10.24.2016

Cleveland Indians owner Paul Dolan will fly all team employees to a World Series road game

By Zack Meisel

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- There is guaranteed to be at least a smattering of Indians fans at Wrigley Field for Games 3 and 4 of the World Series.

Well, Indians employees, to be more specific.

Tribe owner Paul Dolan is flying all of the organization's full-time staff members and their significant others to a World Series game, a source told cleveland.com. Half will attend Game 3 on Friday night in Chicago. The other half will attend Game 4 on Saturday night.

Dolan will pay for round-trip flights, game tickets, lunch and dinner for approximately 300 people. A source said he was prepared to follow the same plan in 2007, but the Indians fell one victory short of a World Series berth.

This marks the franchise's sixth appearance in the Fall Classic. The Indians claimed the championship in 1920 and 1948, but came up empty in 1954, 1995 and 1997. The team's 68-year drought is only topped by that of the Chicago Cubs, Cleveland's opponent for the next week or two. The Cubs last won the title in 1908.

It has been a year for ending droughts in the sports world. The Cavaliers snapped the city of Cleveland's 52-year championship hex when they dismissed the Golden State Warriors in the NBA Finals in June. Cavs owner Dan Gilbert paid for team employees to attend one of the first two games of the Finals in Oakland.

The Indians, by virtue of the American League's triumph in the All-Star Game, will have home-field advantage for the World Series. They will host Games 1 and 2, and, if necessary, Games 6 and 7 at Progressive Field. The Cubs will welcome the Indians to Wrigley Field over the weekend for Games 3 and 4 and, if necessary, Game 5.

According to ESPN.com, the average price of a ticket for each of the three potential games in Chicago is more than \$3,000 and the average price of a ticket for Games 1 and 2 in Cleveland is \$1,000.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 10.24.2016

Who's cheering for the Cleveland Indians in the World Series? At least one big-name celebrity

By Marc Bona

CLEVELAND, Ohio – The world outside Northeast Ohio might be pulling for the Chicago Cubs in the World Series, but at least one nationally known celebrity threw his weight behind the Tribe early Sunday, about two hours after the National League Championship Series ended.

Tom Hanks, host of "Saturday Night Live," rode out the notes of the finishing music on the NBC comedy show Saturday night, Oct. 22, thanking musical guest Lady Gaga and guest Alec Baldwin before yelling "Go Tribe!" The show ended at 1 a.m. Sunday. The Cubs defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers in Wrigley Field, 5-0, in a decisive Game 6. Early Las Vegas odds favor Chicago over Cleveland.

Cleveland theater gave Hanks' acting career an early boost. He was an intern at the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival in 1977 and 1978. He is scheduled to return to Cleveland on Friday, Dec. 2, for Greater Cleveland Film Commission's fundraiser, "Behind the Camera." That would be exactly one month after a possible Game 7 in the series.

In Saturday's show, Hanks played an assortment of characters, from Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger being bumped to co-pilot on a flight to a Donald Trump supporter who earns kudos from his fellow contestants and game-show host on an episode of "Black Jeopardy."

The World Series pits the Cubs and its mega fan base against the AL pennant-winning Cleveland Indians in what figures to be a championship for the ages: The Cubs haven't been to the series since 1945 and they haven't won since 1908. The Indians last won in 1948 and last went to the series in 1997.

The World Series starts Tuesday night in Progressive Field in Cleveland.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 10.24.2016

Cleveland Indians in World Series really is bigger than game -- Terry Pluto (photos)

Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The Indians in the World Series...

Just like the Cavs winning the NBA title, this amazing athletic event has many fans thinking about their families.

I received a long email from Jefferson Wolfe, about his mother who died in July at the age of 86 after suffering from Alzheimer's.

Here's part of his letter:

"She worked the 3 p.m.-11 p.m. shift as an emergency room nurse at hospitals in Fostoria and Bowling Green, which meant she always got home late and stayed up into the early hours of the morning. Many nights, I would give up on the Indians and go to bed early.

"Even after she retired, she was so used to staying awake, she would regularly watch until the bitter end. When they lost, she would always say something like, 'Well, they screwed up again.'

"If they won, the next day she was always happy to tell me she stayed up to watch, long after I'd bailed out.

"Mom was in college at Ohio State in 1948 when the Indians last won the World Series. She remembered how every radio on campus seemed to be tuned to the Indians and classes were cancelled during the games.

"I got interested when I was in fifth grade and our family got cable TV. We could watch the Indians regularly on channel 43. We only had one TV. In those days, her favorite players were Rick Manning, Von Hayes, and Brook Jacoby.

"My mom never went to a major league game but she always followed on TV or radio.

"Early last summer, I called her and she said she hadn't been paying attention to the Indians that year. I knew something was wrong...

"If she were alive, she would be enjoying this Indians team, with what seems like a new hero every night..."

WE HOPE THEY ARE WATCHING

I had a close friend named Jerry Crawford. He called himself "The real Chief Wahoo."

He was a distinguished playwright who had some off-Broadway productions. He also was a long-time drama teacher at UNLV.

He was from Iowa, never lived in Cleveland -- but was a borderline insane Tribe fan. He would come to spring training, which is where I met him.

He bought the MLB television package, and rarely missed a game. He often wrote former Beacon Journal baseball writer Sheldon Ocker and myself after the games.

He did not handle losing like a man. He wanted someone's head on a stick.

But he was back in front of the TV the next day, wearing his Tribe cap.

He had retired to Marquette, Michigan, to live near his daughter. My wife and I would visit in the summers. We had to go out to dinner early so he could be back in time for the Tribe.

"I have a game today," he'd say.

He died in January. Once the Tribe started rolling this season, I kept thinking, "Jerry would love this season."

FAMILY AND TRIBE

Jim Holt emailed: "I was watching (Game 5 from Toronto) with my 80-year-old father. I haven't seen him enjoy a game this much since we were in the upper deck in 1997 when Sandy Alomar hit his homer (against the Yankees in the playoffs)."

I love how this season brings back old memories...

Good memories...

Family memories...

After the Tribe won Game 5 in Toronto to earn a trip to the World Series, my brother Tom sent me this text: "Dad would have loved this!"

So true.

My father died on February 7, 1998. It was his 78th birthday. He had been battling a stroke for nearly five years.

He was the one who took me to games at the old Stadium. I remember him sometimes lifting me up and putting me on his shoulders as we walked down the old West 3rd Street Bridge.

This was the 1960s, when the team's motto should have been: *GOOD SEATS ALWAYS AVAILABLE.*

It was so tough to see him in those last years, confined to a wheelchair and unable to speak.

But he still loved watching the games...

And yes, he would have loved this team..

The Cleveland Indians are headed to the 2016 World Series. Who would have thought?

BIGGER THAN BASEBALL

Keith Crabtree sent me this email:

"My dad took me to my first Indians game. He'd tell me about the 1948 World Series and the 1954 series -- about watching Feller, Mike Garcia, Early Wynn, Bob Lemon and many more.

"My first heroes were Jimmy Piersall, Rocky Colavito, and Woody Held. When I began playing little league ball, I emulated the Rock when coming to the plate. I lifted my bat behind my head and stretched it across my shoulders.

"My dad instilled in me a love for the Indians, a love I passed on to my children, and they are passing to theirs. My Indians rarely finished above .500. It seemed they kept trading favorite players to New York, making it easy to hate the Yankees.

"When the 1995 Indians made the playoffs, I sat in the middle of my family room floor and cried. Years of frustration were finally over.

"During that year, whenever the Tribe made a good play my telephone would ring. I would know who was calling. My dad would say, 'Did you see that play?'

"This could happen several times during the course of a game. My dad passed away in 2001. To this day, whenever the team makes a good play, I still expect my phone to ring followed by, 'Did you see that?'

"It's not just a game. Look around during games at all the Indians gear in the stadium. People wear Tribe gear out of a sense of pride.

"A good Indians team can lift all of northeast Ohio. We're no longer the mistake on the lake -- or, contrary to what WTBS thinks, known for a burning river. Give me a break -- that was in 1969.

"We have a chip on our shoulders for a good reason. The Indians have given us a sense of pride in Cleveland."

Cleveland Indians are going to the World Series thanks to a huge heart and strong will.

Indians manager Francona is new king of Cleveland

Scot Gregor

It was May, 2015, and the Cleveland Cavaliers were playing the Atlanta Hawks in the NBA Eastern Conference finals.

Terry "Tito" Francona attended Game 3 of the series and he ran into some trouble after the final buzzer sounded.

Returning to his apartment in downtown Cleveland, Francona headed for the elevator and was grabbed by a security guard who thought he was trying to bother Cavs forward Kevin Love, a fellow resident in the building.

Francona wasn't happy about being treated like a random autograph hound that time, but that is no longer a problem.

After guiding the Indians to the World Series -- they host the Chicago Cubs in Game 1 on Tuesday night at Progressive Field -- Francona is the new king of Cleveland.

Step aside, LeBron James.

"Tito does such a good job of setting the tone in the clubhouse," ace relief pitcher Andrew Miller said of his manager. "It's loose. That's his style. His ability to just put us in good situations and his ability to communicate from maybe the front office or ownership to us or whatever is asked of us, it's exceptional and he's special."

In an age of statistical overload for players, major-league managers still primarily are judged on wins and losses.

The more you look at Francona's resume, the more he looks like a Hall of Famer.

Before coming to Cleveland in 2013, the 57-year-old Francona managed Boston for eight seasons (2004-11), and he led the Red Sox to two World Series championships while going 8-0 in the Fall Classic.

Working for a Boston front office that included current Cubs president Theo Epstein, Francona had the luxury of managing teams that always were among the highest paid in the game.

With the Indians, it has been the opposite. In his four seasons in the dugout, Cleveland has ranked 21st, 26th, 26th and 24th (this year) in team payroll.

Under Francona, the Indians have never had a losing record, and they are in the postseason for the second time with a shot at winning the World Series for the first time since 1948.

"I'm honored that we're going to the World Series because we always said if we could do it with this group it would be so special because this is as close to a family feel as you can get in a professional setting," Francona said after Cleveland bested the high-powered Toronto Blue Jays in the American League championship series.

"For that part of it, it is beyond feeling good. The only personal things are the relationships. I just want to talk about the players. I think those are the things I'd rather talk about."

That is classic Francona. Whether he was managing the Philadelphia Phillies (1997-2000), the Red Sox or Indians -- even when he was in the Chicago White Sox's system managing Michael Jordan at Class AA Birmingham in 1995 -- it was always about the players.

"Tito is the forefront of us, in all we do," second baseman Jason Kipnis told The New York Post. "You are not going to find one guy in here who does not enjoy playing for him and doesn't wish he would be their manager the rest of their careers."

"Once you have a guy like Tito, you really don't want anybody else to manage you. You are like, 'This is the way it should be, this is the way I want it to be, this is the way I enjoy it.' He's so much fun and he lets you be who you are."

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 10.24.2016

Star relievers Chapman, Miller yanked into World Series

Gordon Wittenmyer

The Cubs and the Indians?

When you talk about the World Series, these franchises don't exactly roll off the tongue with the same resonance as the Yankees. Or even without a smirk usually.

But both teams bring a lot of Yankee-like swagger into this matchup, if only because of the key acquisitions each picked up from the Yankees before the trade-deadline.

Three months after they were acquired for heavy hauls of prospects, lefty relievers Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman are on the biggest baseball stage of their lives and poised to play decisive roles in ending one team's generations-long championship drought.

"Both teams made aggressive trades to do that, and both teams are still standing," Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer said. "And there's something to that. Miller's been amazing for them, and their bullpen's been great. And Tito has been aggressive deploying those guys, which has been really smart."

Tito, of course, is Indians manager Terry Francona, the first manager Cubs president Theo Epstein hired when he was a general manager in Boston. Hoyer was Epstein's assistant then.

Francona, who helped bust the Bambino curse in Boston in 2004 and then won another World Series in 2007, now goes after Cleveland's first since 1948 and will try to keep the Cubs from winning their first since 1908.

Hoyer said Francona set a tone for the Indians' 7-1 run through the American League playoffs when he went to Miller in the fifth inning of a one-run game in Game 1 of the division series against Boston. Miller got the next six outs and earned the win.

Miller, who has a 1.53 ERA for the Indians, has performed even better in the playoffs: six scoreless appearances with a save.

Chapman has been a major weapon for the Cubs as well, though he hasn't proven as versatile in as many roles for manager Joe Maddon. Chapman still prefers the standard ninth-inning save situation. Still, he has pitched in eight of the Cubs' 10 postseason games, accounting for 24 outs with three saves and a 3.38 ERA.

Miller figures to be one of the most important players to watch in the series if only for the fact that he is one of only two left-handers the Indians have had on their postseason roster. The other is rookie Ryan Merritt.

In fact, as Francona looks for the ideal sequences to unleash Miller against the Cubs, watch for where Kyle Schwarber might fall into the sequence, assuming the Cubs add Schwarber to the World Series roster after he'd missed all but three games with a knee injury.

Schwarber might be the biggest reason the Cubs don't have both Miller and Chapman. The Cubs refused the Yankees' insistent demands for Schwarber to be included in any deal for Miller.

Now they might have to figure out a way to beat the lefty with 12 career scoreless playoff appearances. Miller has 31 strikeouts and three walks in 20 playoff innings.

The key to navigating that, Hoyer said, is to take him out of the equation before it gets that far.

"You've got to get an early lead and keep those guys off the mound," Hoyer said.

Which brings the Cubs to Cleveland's Cy Young ace, Corey Kluber.

But that's another story.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.24.2016

Kyle Schwarber doesn't make trip to Cleveland — yet

Daryl Van Schouwen

After his first game in more than 6½ months, Kyle Schwarber said he is in play for the Cubs' World Series roster, although he didn't travel with the team to Cleveland on Sunday night.

Schwarber had the day off after playing in an Arizona Fall League game Saturday. World Series rosters must be set Tuesday morning.

He was activated from the 60-day disabled list and went 0-for-3 with a walk. He drove a ball to the gap for an out in one of his at-bats.

"It's day-by-day," Schwarber said Saturday. "It's still up for grabs. We have to talk."

Schwarber, who was -medically cleared last Monday to hit and run the bases, is an ideal addition against an opponent with one potential left-handed starting pitcher, rookie Ryan Merritt, and one lefty reliever, Andrew Miller.

It wasn't immediately clear whom he would replace on the roster if he's ready to play. Left-handed-hitting outfielder Chris Coghlan and defensively challenged Jorge Soler are possible candidates.

Schwarber spent the last six months on the DL after he and center fielder Dexter Fowler collided in the outfield on the third day of the season. Schwarber seemed optimistic after his first game since April.

He set a Cubs record last postseason with five homers.

Starting rotations

Indians manager Terry Francona said Sunday that 18-game winner Corey Kluber will start Game 1 of the World Series on Tuesday in Cleveland. Trevor Bauer and Josh Tomlin are penciled in for Games 2 and 3, respectively. The order could change depending on how Bauer's stitched-up right pinkie heals over the next few days.

The wild card is All-Star right-hander Danny Salazar, who hasn't pitched since he left a game Sept. 9 with a strained flexor in his right forearm. Salazar threw "really well," Francona told reporters after Salazar's side session Thursday at Progressive Field, and he was slated to throw a three-inning simulated game Sunday.

Salazar might start Game 4, although soft-tossing lefty Merritt — who started and pitched 4⅓ scoreless innings in the Indians' ALCS-clinching victory — might be a better bet. Merritt has 11 innings of major-league experience.

For the Cubs, NLCS co-MVP Jon Lester is lined up for his third Game 1 start of the postseason. Jake Arrieta, who was scheduled to pitch Game 7 of the NLCS, likely would start Game 2. Kyle Hendricks and John Lackey are good bets to start Games 3 and 4, respectively, at Wrigley Field.

Bartman connection

Indians two-time All-Star second baseman Jason Kipnis was a student at Glenbrook North in 2003. How close to home did the Steve Bartman saga hit? Bartman lived on the same street as Kipnis, who went to school with Bartman's sister.

Kipnis is still friends with Glenbrook North and Duke basketball star Jon Scheyer, his old school chum who is an assistant coach at Duke.

Kipnis sprained his left ankle during the ALCS celebration when he stepped on Francisco Lindor's foot. The injury isn't believed to be serious, but Kipnis isn't 100 percent healthy.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.24.2016

Indians embrace underdog role in World Series against Cubs

TOM WITHERS (AP Sports Writer)•Oct 24, 2016, 2:22 AM

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Any other year, against any other team, the Cleveland Indians would be the sentimental choice in this year's World Series.

You know, because of that long championship drought and all.

But not against the Chicago Cubs.

The lovable Cubbies, who captured the nation's heart by exorcising curses and winning their first NL pennant since 1945 on Saturday night and are aiming for their first Series title since 1908, are a popular pick.

The odds makers in Las Vegas have pegged the Cubs as heavy favorites going into Game 1 on Tuesday night.

Heck, even First Fan Barack Obama, a die-hard White Sox supporter, said he was happy to see the North Side of Chicago rocking.

Well, all the love toward the NL champions has left the Indians as underdogs - a role they've embraced this October.

"We believe in each other," first baseman Mike Napoli said Sunday before the Indians held a workout and simulated game at Progressive Field. "We believe that if we go out there and play the game the right way, play as a team like we've done, we can win a game on any night. We've shown in the past two series we can't be taken lightly. We play as a team.

"We're a confident group."

And that assuredness has only grown. Cleveland wasn't supposed to beat Boston, but the Indians swept Big Papi into retirement and the Red Sox into their offseason sooner than expected. Cleveland's pitching staff followed that by whittling Toronto's big bats down to toothpicks in the AL Championship Series.

Now on deck are the Cubs, who won 103 games during the regular season, have three aces at the top of the rotation, a flame-throwing closer and seem to have a date with destiny.

The Indians, though, know they can match up with anyone.

"They're a good team from top to bottom," said supreme setup man Adam Miller, who has spent the postseason toying with hitters. "They have three guys that might be Cy Young (winners). We're going to be going against a good team, that's not a surprise. If you want to count us out, that works for us."

Many of the Indians watched Chicago's historic win, which was followed by a street party outside Wrigley Field that nearly lasted until dawn.

As it unfolded, Napoli found himself pulling for former Red Sox teammates Jon Lester, John Lackey and the Cubs. The more he thought about a Cleveland-Chicago series the more he liked it.

"I was rooting for them," Napoli said, wearing one of his popular "Post Party At Napoli's" T-shirts. "I thought it would be one of the coolest World Series to be a part of."

The Indians are looking to end their own 68-year title drought, and they spent the past few days resting while the Cubs and Los Angeles Dodgers finished their series. The down time has allowed Cleveland to get healthier, but manager Terry Francona revealed a new injury for his team, which has spent much of the 2016 season dealing with sprains, strains and even a few stitches.

Second baseman Jason Kipnis hurt his left ankle following Game 5 in Toronto.

"Some of the guys had a tough time getting through the celebration," said Francona, who added Corey Kluber would start Game 1 at home. "He went over to embrace (shortstop) Frankie (Lindor) and he rolled his foot on Frankie's foot. So he's got a low ankle sprain. The good part is it's not a high ankle sprain. You hear that all the time and I never know what it means, but it doesn't sound good. He's going to be OK."

"Thankfully we had some time off, which is good. He's not moving yet like he can, but I'm guessing with another 48 hours and 37,000 screaming fans, I bet he'll be OK."

Kipnis took grounders as head athletic trainer James Quinlan watched. Later, Kipnis didn't appear to favor his ankle while hitting against several Cleveland pitchers during the simulated game, which included crowd noise being pumped into the ballpark.

Nothing could replicate Tuesday's anticipated ambience when fans in both cities will hang on every pitch, knowing that each win moves their club closer to a coveted championship.

Before the first batter even steps to the plate, this World Series already has the potential to be a classic.

Two Midwestern cities separated by roughly 300 miles. Two teams with heartbreak in their pasts.

One team will end its lengthy title quest, while the others' will linger.

Napoli can't wait for it to get started.

"The Cubs have a lot of history. We have a lot of history," he said. "The big things are the droughts. That's why I wanted it to be us versus them because I think it will probably be the coolest thing ever to be a part of that - going to Wrigley on the road to see that atmosphere."

"That's something I live for."

Indians' Kipnis dealing with sprained ankle as Series nears

TOM WITHERS (AP Sports Writer)•Oct 23, 2016, 7:08 PM

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Indians second baseman [Jason Kipnis](#) sprained his left ankle during a postgame celebration in the AL playoffs, but is expected to be ready for Game 1 of the World Series.

Cleveland manager Terry Francona said Sunday that Kipnis rolled his ankle last Wednesday when he hugged teammate [Francisco Lindor](#) on the field after the final out in Game 5 of the AL Championship Series in Toronto.

Francona says he expects Kipnis to be OK for the World Series opener on Tuesday night at home against the [Chicago Cubs](#).

Francona described Kipnis' injury as a low ankle sprain. He's confident rest and the adrenaline Kipnis will feel with 37,000 screaming fans in Progressive Field will help him recover.

Kipnis, who is batting just .167 with seven strikeouts so far in the postseason, took some grounders Sunday while being watched by a member of Cleveland's training staff before the Indians held a team workout.

Kipnis was in the batting cage and not available for interviews during the period Cleveland's clubhouse was open to the media.

Indians' Kluber to start World Series opener against Cubs

TOM WITHERS (AP Sports Writer)•Oct 23, 2016, 6:47 PM

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Indians ace [Corey Kluber](#) will start Game 1 of the World Series against the [Chicago Cubs](#).

Manager Terry Francona said Sunday that he will go with Kluber, an 18-ame winner during the regular season, in the opener on Tuesday night. The right-hander is 2-1 with a 0.98 ERA in his first postseason.

Francona has right-handers [Trevor Bauer](#) and [Josh Tomlin](#) penciled in for Games 2 and 3, respectively. The order could change depending on how Bauer's injured right pinkie heals over the next few days.

Bauer's start in the AL Championship Series lasted less than one inning after his pinkie began bleeding against Toronto. He injured his finger when he sliced it open while repairing a drone.

Also, injured starter [Danny Salazar](#) could be available against the Cubs. Salazar hasn't pitched since Sept. 9 because of forearm tightness but he's made major progress in the past week and could be on the World Series roster.

How Indians were built: Shrewd drafts and even shrewder moves

David Schoenfield/SweetSpot blogger

There was a nice moment the other day after the [Cleveland Indians](#) clinched their first American League pennant since 1997. Ernie Johnson of TBS was in the clubhouse for postgame interviews, looking for manager Terry Francona, but the manager had stepped away from the celebration for a few minutes. He wanted to allow Chris Antonetti, the president of baseball operations, and general manager Mike Chernoff a few minutes in the spotlight. So Johnson interviewed the two executives, who were standing there in shorts and T-shirts.

It was a well-earned moment. The Indians organization -- first under Mark Shapiro, who departed last fall for the Blue Jays, then under the Antonetti-Chernoff regime -- has been building to this goal for several years. Cleveland's 94-67 season didn't come out of nowhere. After winning 96 games and reaching the American League Championship Series in 2007, the Indians got crushed by injuries for a couple of seasons and then entered a rebuilding phase. In 2013, the first year under Francona, the team won 92 games and a wild-card spot. The 2014 team won 85 games, undone by an 11-17 April. Last season the Indians went 81-80 as another slow April hurt, but there were positives, such as outscoring their opponents by 29 runs. The team was closer to contention than many realized.

Like all small-market franchises, the Indians must excel at player development. They've done an excellent job, ranking fifth in the majors in 2016 [in homegrown WAR](#). [Francisco Lindor](#) is the star product of the farm system, the eighth overall pick in the 2011 draft. [Cody Allen](#) was a steal in the 23rd round that same year. [Jason Kipnis](#) was a second-round pick in 2009 out of Arizona State. [Josh Tomlin](#) was drafted in the 19th round back in 2006 out of Texas Tech. [Lonnie Chisenhall](#) and [Tyler Naquin](#) were both first-round picks. [Jose Ramirez](#) and [Danny Salazar](#) were signed out of the Dominican Republic.

The Indians have supplemented that homegrown talent with some astute trades throughout the years. Only the Cubs, Tigers and Blue Jays had more WAR in 2016 that was acquired via trade.

Carlos Santana has 151 homers in his seven seasons with the Indians. Paul Sancya/AP Photo

- [Carlos Santana](#) was acquired from the Dodgers back at the trade deadline in 2008 for [Casey Blake](#). The Dodgers needed a third baseman for the playoff drive and while Santana was in the midst of a big year at Class A, he was in just his second year of catching.
- [Carlos Carrasco](#) was part of the [Cliff Lee](#) trade in July 2009. He was a top-rated prospect, the only one of the four players acquired who did anything with the Indians. Still, the Indians displayed extraordinary patience with him, as it wasn't until 2014 that he began delivering value.
- On July 31, 2010, the Indians, Padres and Cardinals completed a three-way deal. The Indians sent veteran starter [Jake Westbrook](#), an impending free agent with a 4.65 ERA, to the Cardinals and received [Corey Kluber](#) in return. Kluber was a fourth-round pick in 2007 and had a 3.45 ERA at Double-A at the time of the trade. He led the Texas League in strikeouts, but Baseball America still rated him as Cleveland's 26th-best prospect entering 2011, citing his "average" slider. I'd say that slider (or curveball) has improved quite a bit.
- The Indians acquired [Zach McAllister](#) at the same trade deadline for [Austin Kearns](#), who posted a .668 OPS in 36 games with the Yankees (and then re-signed with the Indians for 2011).
- Catcher [Yan Gomes](#) has gone backward at the plate, but the Indians got him after the 2012 season (along with [Mike Aviles](#)) for [Esmil Rogers](#). He has contributed 8.1 WAR since 2013.
- The Diamondbacks drafted [Trevor Bauer](#) third overall in 2011 but quickly soured on him because of some personality conflicts. The Indians were willing to buy low. As part of a three-team deal with the Reds, the Indians traded [Shin-Soo Choo](#) (with one season remaining before free agency) and [Tony Sipp](#) and acquired Bauer and reliever [Bryan Shaw](#). Bauer has won 23 games the past two seasons, and Shaw has appeared in more games than any other reliever the past four seasons.
- [Mike Clevinger](#) was acquired in August of 2014 from the Angels for fungible reliever [Vinnie Pestano](#).
- Cleveland purchased [Dan Otero](#) from the Phillies last December. He gave them a 1.53 ERA over 70 innings.
- And you may have heard of this one: [Andrew Miller](#) from the Yankees on July 31.

It's an astonishingly successful run of deals. The only players of significant value they gave up were Lee and Choo. (Plus, there's [Michael Brantley](#), injured this year, obtained in the [CC Sabathia](#) trade with the Brewers in 2008.) It's the only way a team like the Indians can compete. You *have* to make out in these kinds of trades. Relying solely on the farm system is a nice ideal, but not a solution. Six of the 10 teams with the most homegrown WAR this season missed the playoffs.

The Cubs, likewise, have made several impact trades ([Anthony Rizzo](#), [Jake Arrieta](#), [Kyle Hendricks](#), [Addison Russell](#)), but they also have the financial means to supplement them with big-ticket free agents. The Cubs had 15.9 WAR acquired via free agency; the Indians had just 4.3, most of that coming from low-cost veterans [Mike Napoli](#) and [Rajai Davis](#).

There's a reason other teams keep going to the Indians' pool of executives. Derek Falvey, the Indians' assistant GM, was recently hired to head the Twins' baseball operation. Mike Hazen, just hired by the Diamondbacks, got his start with the Indians after playing two seasons in the minors. Brewers GM David Stearns also spent a year in the Cleveland front office.

The hope for those teams: a bunch of trades like the ones above.

World Series: Corey Kluber to get things started for Indians against Cubs

By [Chris Assenheimer](#) | The Chronicle-Telegram

CLEVELAND — The Indians found out their World Series opponent after the Chicago Cubs wrapped up their National League Championship Series against the Dodgers on Saturday night.

Now the Cubs know who they will be facing in the first three games.

Manager Terry Francona announced Sunday that ace Corey Kluber would take the mound Tuesday night at Progressive Field for Game 1, followed by either Trevor Bauer or Josh Tomlin in Game 2 on Wednesday.

Francona said his preference is for Bauer to go Wednesday, but the pitcher's right pinkie injury could force him back to Game 3 on Friday at Wrigley Field, with Tomlin going in Game 2 in Cleveland.

The rest of the rotation is to be determined after Game 3, with Kluber a candidate to start Game 4 on Saturday in Chicago.

"We're keeping it open," Francona said. "As we found out last series, that's a good way to go."

Part of the appeal of the impending World Series matchup is that it pits two teams against each other who are bidding to end agonizingly long world championship droughts.

Chicago, which last appeared in the World Series in 1945, owns the longest title drought in the majors, having last won in 1908. Cleveland appeared in the World Series in 1995 and '97, but owns the longest world championship drought in the American League having last won it all in 1948.

"I was rooting for them," Cleveland first baseman Mike Napoli said of the Cubs. "I thought it would be one of the coolest World Series to be a part of. Obviously, it's going to be something special. We're in a 60-year — a long drought — too. It would be something special. When I came here, I made friends and they let me know that if the Indians ever won a World Series it would be out of control. I know it's special to this city. It's going to be a fun World Series and hopefully we'll get it done.

"The Cubs have a lot of history, we have a lot of history. The big things are the droughts. That's why I wanted it to be us versus them, because I think it will probably be the coolest thing ever to be a part of that ... going to Wrigley (Field) on the road to see that atmosphere. That's something, for me, I live for."

Francona wasn't pulling for either the Cubs or the Dodgers to win the NL pennant.

"I don't know that I had a huge reaction," Francona said of learning his team would be facing the Cubs. "I think they're really good. I guess I kept hoping that they would keep playing, extra innings, all kinds of stuff, but that didn't happen.

"They're obviously built for October and I think they've known that for quite a while. They've had a heck of a year and they're going to be a handful. This will be fun to see how we can do against them. I think we're excited about that."

As they have been the entire postseason, the Indians will enter the World Series as underdogs to the Cubs, who were the preseason favorites to win the world championship and finished the regular season with baseball's best record (103-58).

It's a role the Indians have embraced in October.

"First of all, I don't know how big of an underdog we are," left-hander Andrew Miller said. "I would assume that they will probably be favored. I think they've won the most games in baseball this year. They've got a really good team from top to bottom. They've got, I don't know, what, three guys that might win the Cy Young? It's going to be a good team, that's not a surprise.

"If people want to count us out, I think we have guys that maybe that's fueled them. Whatever works for us, whatever works for each individual is what's best. Some people like being the underdog and that's driving them for sure."

As of Sunday night, the Cubs were 2-1 favorites (-200), with the Indians listed at +180.

"I think we've shown in the past two series that we can't be taken lightly," Napoli said. "We do play as a team. We're a confident group."

Testing, testing

Right-hander Danny Salazar (right forearm strain) pitched a three-inning simulated game Sunday night at Progressive Field, facing a number of hitters, including Napoli, Roberto Perez, Tyler Naquin and Coco Crisp.

Salazar has been sidelined since mid-September, but appears likely to be added to the World Series roster — maybe even as a starter.

"Really nothing changes from the very first time we talked about it," Francona said. "We want to make sure that he's 100 percent healthy. Then if he shows that, then you take it another couple steps.

"Is he commanding? Can he help you win? Can he pitch an inning? Can he pitch two? What role could he fill? Because of his side day the other day, it's progressed to the point to where I think we need to take a good long look, because he looks pretty healthy."

Party foul

Second baseman Jason Kipnis is dealing with a low ankle sprain that he sustained when jumping into the arms of shortstop Francisco Lindor after the Indians clinched the ALCS on Wednesday in Toronto.

"Some of the guys had a tough time — one had a tough time getting through the celebration," Francona joked. "The good part is that it's not a high ankle sprain. He's going to be OK. Thankfully, we had some time off, which is good. He's not moving yet like he can, but I'm guessing with another 48 hours and 37,000 screaming fans, I'm sure he's going to be OK."

Kipnis logged a handful of at-bats during the simulated game Sunday.

Say my name

During his stifling ALCS performance, Toronto writers called Miller the "Angel of Death." He was asked what he thought of the nickname.

"I don't know," Miller said. "Nicknames aren't something you pick or anything like that. No offense, but I stay away from the media as much as I can."

SPORTS Browns have a lot to learn, but Indians and Cavs can teach them

Jim Ingraham | The Chronicle-Telegram Published on Oct. 23, 2016 | Updated 2:09 a. m.

In the span of 48 hours, starting at 1 p.m. Sunday, everything that is right and wrong with Cleveland's three professional sports teams will be on display — in all its glory and gory.

Tuesday night, for the first time in the history of Major League Baseball and the Cleveland Indians, Game 1 of the World Series will be played in Cleveland. Your host: the 2016 American League champion Cleveland Indians.

Also Tuesday night, for the first time in the history of the National Basketball Association and the Cleveland Cavaliers, the Cavs will hoist the NBA championship banner into the rafters at The Q, and present the players with their championship rings.

The Cavs won the NBA championship in June. It was in all the papers. Perhaps you heard about it.

Meanwhile, prior to all that, at 1 p.m. Sunday, the winless Cleveland Browns, a team in the National Football League, will play an NFL-sanctioned game in Cincinnati.

To review: the Indians are playing for the championship of their sport. The Cavaliers are celebrating the winning of the championship in their sport.

The Browns are 0-6.

Woof, freaking woof.

Obviously the gap between winning the championship in two sports and failing to even win a single game in another is great. So is, not surprisingly, the way the three teams are run.

There is a great deal the competitively indigent Browns, and those running — for this year, anyway — the competitively indigent Browns can learn from their two competitively affluent Cleveland neighbors.

For example:

QUIT BLOWING IT UP: This one is obvious to everyone, apparently, but the two owners the Browns have had since re-entering the league as an expansion franchise in 1999. The answer to a bad season isn't always getting rid of everybody and hiring a completely new regime every year.

To wit: Indians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti has been with the team for 18 years, scouting director Brad Grant 23 years, general manager Mike Chernoff 13 years, senior director of scouting operations John Mirabelli 17 years, director of player development Carter Hawkins 10 years, director of pro scouting Paul Gillispie 10 years, just to name a few.

HIRE THE RIGHT PEOPLE: Since 2000, the Indians have had four managers. The Browns have had three head coaches in the last four years and eight since 2000. One of the biggest reasons the Browns keep blowing it up is that they keep hiring the wrong people, which, at some point, means the wrong people are doing the hiring.

DRAFT BETTER: Tons of examples here, but I'll go with this one. With their first picks in their 2011 drafts, the Cavs took Kyrie Irving, the Indians took Francisco Lindor and the Browns took Phil Taylor.

SCOUT BETTER: There may be no more egregious example of a lack of due diligence by a scouting department than that which resulted in the Browns selecting Johnny Manziel and Justin Gilbert in the first round of the 2014 draft, two colossal whiffs that set the franchise back three years.

Contrast that with the Cavs scouting and signing in 2013 a little-known free agent named Matthew Dellavedova, or using the fourth overall pick (what?) in the 2011 draft on lowly acclaimed Tristan Thompson (who?) or the Indians in 2010 trading for a nondescript Double-A pitcher in the San Diego organization named Corey Kluber.

DON'T MISTAKE LOYALTY FOR ENDORSEMENT: Since their return to the league in 1999 there's been a certain amount of NFL-style arrogance by the Browns, a sort of "here we are, come and get us" sense of entitlement, as though the mere fact they are open for business is enough to validate their importance and titillate their fan base.

In reality, the continued, even baffling — considering the ineptness of the product — support of the team comes from a fan base turned off by all the losing, but not to the point of giving up on the core belief in what the Browns once stood for, and the hope it might someday return.

That fans remain loyal and still buy tickets to Browns games says more about the quality of those fans than the work of those currently running the team. But eventually, even in football-mad Cleveland, the bill comes due. Moreover, NFL TV ratings are down significantly this year nationwide. If that trend continues, it will inevitably be accompanied by a reduction in the velocity of the NFL gravy train.

It would, therefore, be a mistake for the league, and especially those running its worst franchise, to continue to operate from the premise that a Pavlovian response from their clientele will forever follow the mere throwing open of the ticket windows.

The Cavs and Indians ownerships understand that customer dynamic. One wonders whether the Browns owner does.

Corey Kluber will pitch World Series opener for Cleveland Indians followed by Trevor Bauer — maybe

By Jeff Schudel, The News-Herald & The Morning Journal

Corey Kluber will pitch Game 1 of the World Series for the Indians, and after that the rotation gets a little iffy.

Indians manager Terry Francona said Kluber will get the ball on Oct. 25 at Progressive Field against the Cubs in the Indians' first World Series game in 19 years.

Francona wants to go with Trevor Bauer in Game 2 on Oct. 26 and Josh Tomlin in Game 3 on Oct. 28 at Wrigley Field, but he said those plans might change if doctors think Bauer needs more time to heal from a lacerated right little finger.

"Kluber's going to start Game 1," Francona said on Oct. 23 at Progressive Field. "Bauer and Tomlin will be Games 2 and 3. We're going to hold off as long as we can on Trevor just to get the most information we can. If it works out right we'd like him to pitch second, but if the doctors or trainers deem those next two days would give him a better chance, then we can move him back.

He's going to play some catch tonight and throw a bullpen tomorrow (Oct. 24) with hitters standing in there to get it going a little bit. Then we'll have a much better idea."

Bauer was injured on Oct. 13 doing maintenance work on the drone he flies. Ten stitches were needed to close the wound. Bauer tried pitching Game 3 on Oct. 17, but the wound opened up after 21 pitches and he had to leave the game.

Francona said the starters after Game 3 are "To Be Announced" probably the rest of the way for obvious reasons."

He said Kluber could pitch Game 4 on Oct. 29. Danny Salazar or Ryan Merritt could also get the start. Salazar is recovering from a right forearm injury and is not yet on the World Series roster.

World Series: Being underdogs (again) is fine with the Cleveland Indians

By Jeff Schudel, The News-Herald & The Morning Journal

The Indians were underdogs in the ALDS and swept the Red Sox in three games. They were underdogs against Toronto and ousted the Blue Jays in five.

Well, guess what. Las Vegas has made the Tribe underdogs in the World Series against the Cubs, too, and that is just fine with the Indians.

A bettor trying to win money on the Cubs has to put up \$175 to win \$100. Someone putting down \$100 on the Indians would win \$155 if the Tribe wins the World Series.

"I think it's our responsibility to be fueled by whatever we can," Indians manager Terry Francona said on Oct. 23 before a workout at Progressive Field. "If that's part of it, fine. I don't get too caught up in that. And, if that's what it takes for us to win, I'm not sure we're as good as we thought we were.

"But if it's that little last thing that pushes somebody? Good. I think it's our responsibility to use anything to our advantage, whether somebody thinks we're good or not. But also, that's kind of why we fall back on the expectations in our clubhouse are what really matter. Because then, whatever's said outside the clubhouse, really shouldn't influence our game."

It all gets going at 8:08 p.m. Oct. 25 at Progressive Field. Corey Kluber is pitching for the Indians. Cubs manager Joe Maddon has not named his Game 1 starter.

The Cubs haven't won a World Series since 1908 — the longest drought in the National League. The Indians have won it since 1948 — the longest streak in the American League.

The Indians won the American League pennant on Oct. 19. The Cubs clinched in Game 6 on Oct. 22.

"They're obviously built for October," Francona said. "And I think they've known that for quite a while. They had a heck of a year and they're going to be a handful. Their starting pitching is tremendous. They catch the ball. They're athletic. This will be fun to see how we can do against them. I think we're excited about that."

The Cubs finished with the best record in the major leagues at 103-58. The Indians were 94-67.

According to CBSsports.com, computer simulations had the Cubs winning 59.4 percent of the time and the Indians winning 40.6 percent of the time. So even the computers think the Indians are underdogs.

"They're a good team from top to bottom," said Indians relief pitcher Andrew Miller, the ALCS MVP. "They have three guys that might win Cy Young. It's going to be going to be a good team. That's not a surprise.

"If people want to count us out, that's fine. Whatever works for us. Whatever works for each individual. Some people like being underdogs and that's driving them."

Miller said he hasn't gotten into the details of his scouting report on the Cubs yet. They were led by first baseman Anthony Rizzo, who drove in 109 runs, and third baseman Kris Bryant, a second-year player who drove in 102 runs.

Jon Lester finished 19-5 to lead a stellar pitching staff. Jake Arrieta was 18-8, Kyle Hendricks 16-8 and Jason Hammel 15-10.

"I know they're pretty good," Miller said. "They have a guy that might win MVP in the middle of the lineup. Rizzo is a veteran at 25 years old. I've seen a lot of (Ben) Zobrist. The National League is a different universe to someone in the American League.

"I have a lot of homework to do, but at the end of the day you trust what you're good at."

So far, Miller has been very good throwing his fastball and slider. He pitched in six of the eight playoff games without allowing a run. He struck out 21 hitters in 11 2/3 innings.