The Yankees pounced on Salazar with a three-run first inning on home runs by Brett Gardner and Brian McCann. Salazar, who allowed eight hits and five runs (four earned) over 4 2/3 innings, entered Saturday with a 1.45 ERA in his previous seven starts, holding opponents to a .147 average in that span. It snapped a streak of seven consecutive starts throwing at least six innings for the Indians’ right-hander.

"I didn't have my best today," Salazar said. "Early in the game, I was leaving too many pitches up in the zone. I let my team down."

Jacoby Ellsbury, Carlos Beltran and John Ryan Murphy each drove in a run for the Yankees, who got a hit from every player in the starting lineup.

Severino, 21, the Yankees’ No. 1 prospect, threw six innings of three-hit, one-run ball and struck out six.

"I think since I met him in Spring Training, I saw something different in him, and that is his presence. He's just a guy that, he walks around the clubhouse, but he doesn't walk around with his head down like he's afraid," Beltran said. "He's up for the challenge. In Spring Training, I said, 'This guy's going to be good,' because sometimes you have to be like that."

QUOTABLE
"Yeah, it is kind of fitting. Two guys that have a lot of power. The difference is Jorgie was a switch-hitter and Brian is strictly left-handed, but on a day that you're honoring a catcher, both of our catchers had a good day. Murph had a hit and an RBI, Brian had a home run and an RBI, so that's kinda neat to see." -- Girardi, on McCann hitting a homer on Jorge Posada Day. More >

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS
Before Saturday, the Yankees entered the game with 99 first-inning runs this season. It was the most runs by any team in any inning all season long and the most opening runs by a Yankee team since 2012, when they scored 118. On Saturday, the Yanks pounced early again with three first-inning runs.

FRANCONA EJECTED
With runners on the corners and one out in the third inning, Michael Brantley chopped into a 3-6 fielder's choice. On the play, though, the throw from Yankees first baseman Greg Bird appeared to force Gregorius off the bag at second before he caught the ball. Indians manager Terry Francona took the field and talked things over with the umpires, hoping for a crew-chief review, but the crew opted against going to instant replay. That decision got Francona fired up, leading to an argument and his third ejection of the season.

"[Second-base umpire Dan Iassogna] was trying to make three points," Francona said. "I thought all three were incorrect. He said the first one was that it has to be a throw that takes him away and he said it was a very good throw. I didn't agree there. He was set up on the inside of the bag and the ball goes to the outside.

"He said he has to be off the bag. He said he was on the bag. I've got him 0-for-2. Then, he said if the runner makes him deviate, that's the third one. The runner wasn't close to the bag. I thought it was an atrocious explanation. ... Just get it right. That's what we have replay for." More >

WHAT'S NEXT
Indians: Right-hander Trevor Bauer (9-10, 4.62 ERA) will take the ball for the Tribe in the finale of a four-game set against the Yankees at 1:05 p.m. ET on Sunday at Yankee Stadium. Bauer will be aiming to get back on track after posting an 11.91 ERA in his past three outings for Cleveland. After turning in a 2.94 ERA in his first 11 starts this season, the young righty had turned in a 6.25 ERA over his last 13 outings.

Yankees: CC Sabathia (4-9, 5.24) will take on his former club, looking for his fifth win of the season. Against the Indians, Sabathia is 4-2 with a 2.95 ERA in eight career starts. In his last outing, the lefty got the no decision against the Twins. He pitched 6 2/3 innings, giving up five hits and four runs.

Francona tossed after 'neighborhood play' goes against Tribe
By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com | @MLBastian | 6:14 PM ET + 7 COMMENTS
NEW YORK -- Indians manager Terry Francona did not think he was asking for too much. Without the ability to challenge the "neighborhood play" that came up in the third inning on Saturday, Francona hoped the umpires on hand at Yankee Stadium would at least use a crew-chief review to ensure everything went by the book.

"Just get it right," Francona said. "That's what we have replay for."
In the wake of a 6-2 loss to the Yankees, the events of that third inning -- instant-replay review not included -- loomed large for Cleveland. An out call at second by umpire Dan Iassogna, who later ejected Francona from the contest after a heated on-field exchange, changed the complexion of the inning and made the Tribe’s uphill climb a little steeper after a rough start by Danny Salazar.

Salazar coughed up five runs (four earned) in the first two innings, putting Cleveland in a 5-1 hole heading into the third. After Jason Kipnis drew a one-out walk and Francisco Lindor followed with a single to begin the third inning, the Indians looked to have the makings of a rally going.

A debatable call, combined with a subdued offense the rest of the way, put an end to that prospect.

"I don't want to say that's why we lost the game," Lindor said of the questionable ruling in the third inning, "because it wasn't that one play. But it probably could've helped us."

With one out and the two baserunners aboard in the third, Cleveland's Michael Brantley sent a pitch from Yankees starter Luis Severino sharply through the infield and into the glove of first baseman Greg Bird. The rookie turned and uncorked a relay to shortstop Didi Gregorius in the hopes of turning an inning-ending double play. The end result was a fielder’s choice groundout: Lindor out at second and Brantley safe at first.

There was a little more to this play, though.

Bird's throw sailed high and to the right of second base, forcing Gregorius to jump off the base before making the catch. At that moment, Lindor was a little more than halfway to second base, and the Indians shortstop slid into second well after Gregorius had relayed the ball back to first base. If the umpires agreed that Gregorius was off the base before the catch, Cleveland would have the bases loaded with one out, while trailing by four runs with cleanup hitter Carlos Santana due to hit.

Replays showed errant throw taking Gregorius off 2B as he made catch. Lindor not near him yet. pic.twitter.com/axBjTqCoVU
- Jordan Bastian (@MLBastian) August 22, 2015

"Whenever you can have bases loaded with one out," Lindor said, "instead of first and third with two outs, it changes the game. It changes the inning. It changes the momentum."

That is what prompted Francona, following bench coach Brad Mills’ discussion with Cleveland's replay coordinator, to head onto the field to discuss the situation with home-plate umpire Lance Barrett. After a quick chat, Barrett discussed things with Iassogna, who then met with the entire crew briefly in the infield. They ultimately opted not to consult instant replay via a crew-chief review, and Iassogna headed back to an angered Francona with an explanation.

Francona did not like the reasoning he was given.

"He was trying to make three points," Francona said, "and I thought all three were incorrect. He said the first one was that it has to be a throw that takes him away and he said it was a very good throw. I didn't agree there. He was set up on the inside of the bag and the ball goes to the outside. He said he has to be off the bag. He said he was on the bag. I've got him 0-for-2. Then he said if the runner makes him deviate, that's the third one. The runner wasn't close to the bag.

"I thought it was an atrocious explanation and it continued to be worsened. I think he was more concerned about asking me if I was going to get thrown out. I wanted him to go check it, because we needed to have bases loaded with Carlos coming up."

Instead, Francona was tossed from the game after vehemently voicing his displeasure.

Then, Santana struck out to end the inning.

"The reason I thought they had replay was because you want to get it right," Francona said. "Carlos could've hit into a double play. We'll never know. I just thought that his explanation was terribly incorrect."

**Improved defense boosting pitchers' confidence**

By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com | @MLBastian | 1:11 PM ET + 3 COMMENTS

NEW YORK -- The Indians' pitching staff already had the kind of stuff to blow away opposing lineups and pile up strikeouts at a record rate. Over the past three months, Cleveland's arms have had the benefit of also working with a much-improved defense behind them.

That combination that can create more confidence.

"Absolutely, I think it makes a difference," Indians general manager Chris Antonetti said of the defense's effect on the pitching staff. "Guys will be more aggressive in the strike zone and trust that balls put into play are converted into outs, and they don't feel the burden of having to strike out as many guys."

The numbers back that up, too. The defensive turning point for the Indians arrived in June, when Cleveland promoted rookie shortstop Francisco Lindor and third baseman Giovanny Urshela from Triple-A Columbus to shore up the left side of the infield.

In April and May, oppoossing batters had a .322 average on balls in play and the Indians' pitching staff averaged 9.79 strikeouts per nine innings and 0.69 double plays per nine innings. Since June 1, the batting average on balls in play has dropped to .276, the pitchers’ strikeout rate has dipped to 8.32 and the double plays have ticked up to 0.82 per nine innings.

"Our defense has improved tremendously now that we've got those two guys on the left side," Indians pitching coach Mickey Callaway said.

"You relax more. You don't take the two-seamer and think, 'I've got to throw it off the plate so they don't hit it hard.' You can attack them, let them put it in play and, if they hit it to the left side, there's a pretty good chance they'll be out." Since he has been up with Cleveland, Lindor has accumulated six Defensive Runs Saved with a 14.9 UZR/150 in 522 1/3 innings. Prior to Lindor, Jose Ramirez handled short for the Indians, had minus two DRS and a negative 21.9 UZR/150 in 384 1/3 innings. Through 517 1/3 innings at third, Urshela had two DRS and a 15.7 UZR/150 (up from the 10.5 mark Lonnie Chisenhall had there earlier this year).

Overall, the Indians rank fifth in the American League and 10th in the Majors with 12 Defensive Runs Saved. That is a drastic improvement over 2014, when Cleveland ranked last in the Majors with minus 75 DRS.

"It's nice to have it," Indians ace Corey Kluber said. "When the ball's put in play on the ground, you know there's a pretty good chance you're going to get an out."

Worth noting
**Bauer, Indians go for series win in the Bronx**

By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com | 4:29 PM ET + 3 COMMENTS

Once a Cy Young-winning arm for the Indians, left-hander CC Sabathia is now trying to get his season back on track for the Yankees in the heart of a postseason chase.

Sabathia will take on his former team on Sunday, when the Indians and Yankees conclude their four-game series in the Bronx. The 35-year-old southpaw has gone just 4-9 with a 5.24 ERA on the season for New York, and has only one win (July 8) over his past 11 outings. Sabathia has shown some improvement of late, posting a 3.38 ERA in his last three turns for the Yankees.

In parts of eight years with Cleveland from 2001-08, Sabathia won 106 games and the 2007 American League Cy Young Award.

The Indians will counter with young righty Trevor Bauer (9-10, 4.62), who is also trying to turn things around. Bauer opened the season with a 2.94 ERA in his first 11 starts, but has posted a 6.25 ERA in his last 13 appearances, including an 11.91 ERA over his last three starts. On Tuesday in Boston, Bauer lasted only 1 2/3 innings after giving up five runs on six hits for Cleveland.

**Things to know about this game**

- Yankees right-hander Bryan Mitchell, who sustained a nasal fracture on Monday after being struck by a line drive against the Twins, is tentatively scheduled to throw off a mound on Sunday. Mitchell is currently on Major League Baseball's seven-day concussion disabled list. First baseman Mark Teixeira (right leg) remains day to day, but is not expected to be in Sunday's lineup.
- New York's lineup does not collectively have a lot of experience against Bauer. One standout in a small sample of at-bats has been Brian McCann, who has hit .500 (4-for-8) with a homer off the Tribe starter. Against Sabathia, Carlos Santana (.385 in 13 at-bats) and Mike Aviles (.348 in 23 at-bats) have had the most success.
- Prior to Sunday's game, the Yankees will hold a ceremony to retire former pitcher Andy Pettitte's No. 46 and give him a plaque in Yankee Stadium's Monument Park. The Yankees have asked that any fans attending the game and hoping to see the festivities be in their seats by Noon ET.

**Danny Salazar done in by home run ball as Cleveland Indians fall to New York Yankees, 6-2**

Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group By Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group

NEW YORK -- The right-field corner at Yankee Stadium rests a mere 314 feet from home plate. A Merrill Lynch advertisement spans a portion of the blue wall to the left of the foul pole. The display features a bull, seemingly staring at the infield, warning a pitcher that the short porch turns harmless fly balls into game-changing home runs.

Once Brett Gardner poked a two-run shot just above the fence in that area in the first inning on Saturday, the Yankees never looked back, as the Indians dropped the third tilt of the team's four-game set by a 6-2 margin. Of course, it helped New York's cause that Danny Salazar labored through the first two frames, a critical call went against the Tribe and Cleveland's offense hit the snooze button.

Francisco Lindor also capitalized on Yankee Stadium's friendly architecture, as he slapped an 0-2 fastball to right field for a solo shot in the first inning. Two batters into Salazar's start, however, the Yankees had grabbed a 2-1 advantage, as Gardner's round-tripper plated Jacoby Ellsbury.

Two hitters later, Brian McCann swatted a Salazar offering over the wall in right-center. The Yankees padded their lead in the second, as Salazar fired a heaved to second into center field as he attempted to initiate a double play. Instead, Ellsbury reached first, John Ryan Murphy advanced to second and Stephen Drew scored. Carlos Beltran's sacrifice fly gave New York a four-run edge.

The Indians placed a pair of runners on base with one out in the third. Michael Brantley bounced a ball to first baseman Greg Bird, who gathered the baseball and tossed a high throw to second base. Shortstop Didi Gregorius leapt in the air to corral the throw, which pulled him off the bag. He landed beside the base and fired a throw to first, but Brantley reached safely. Second-base umpire Dan Iassogna ruled that Lindor was out at second, a call lured Tribe manager Terry Francona out of the dugout.

The umpires did not review the play. Francona spouted off a few choice words and Iassogna ejected him. Carlos Santana swung through a 97 mph fastball down the middle for an inning-ending strikeout. The Indians mustered only one hit over the following four innings.

**What it means**

The Indians (57-65) are 11-11 in August. They remain in last place in the American League Central. The Tribe fell to 38-13 when scoring first.

The Yankees snapped Cleveland's four-game winning streak at Yankee Stadium, the Indians' longest streak in the Bronx in 26 years.

**Leave the premises**

Francona's ejection was his third of the season. He had started to retreat to the dugout when Iassogna tossed him. Francona immediately reversed course, positioned his face a few inches from that of the umpire and resumed his barking.

Shining star
With two outs in the third, Gregorius skied a fly ball to left field. Mike Aviles, sporting sunglasses, camped under it, but lost sight of the baseball in the sun. He coiled his body in case the ball struck him, but instead, the ball landed beside him and Gregorius cruised into second base with a double. Salazar struck out Stephen Drew in the ensuing at-bat.

Sizzling shortstop

Lindor collected three hits -- a homer, a single and a double -- in four at-bats, as he lifted his season batting average to .292. Since the All-Star break, he owns a .343 batting average (47-for-137) with 21 runs scored, four home runs and 17 RBIs. On Sunday, he scored a pair of runs. He doubled and scored on Lonnie Chisenhall's single in the eighth.

They came, they saw

An announced crowd of 47,031 watched the affair at the ballpark. The Yankees retired Jorge Posada's No. 20 before the game, as Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, Joe Torre and others joined the longtime catcher on the infield for the ceremony.

What's next

The Indians and Yankees will reconvene at Yankee Stadium for Sunday's series finale, which features a 1:05 p.m. ET first pitch. Cleveland will trot out right-hander Trevor Bauer (9-10, 4.62 ERA), who has totaled only five innings in his last two starts. In those outings, he has surrendered 11 runs on 13 hits. Against the Yankees on Aug. 13, he allowed six runs on seven hits over 3 1/3 frames. New York will counter with southpaw CC Sabathia (4-9, 5.24 ERA), who limited the Tribe to two runs over six innings on Aug. 12. The Indians won that contest, 2-1.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.23.2015

For his next trick, Jose Ramirez tries his hand at third base: Cleveland Indians notes

Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group By Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group

NEW YORK -- When Terry Francona's head hit the pillow on Friday night, he planned on starting Jose Ramirez in left field the following day.

When he woke up and mapped out his batting order for Saturday's matinee, he initially placed Ramirez in left. Then, he had a thought, essentially along the lines of: "Why not?"

So, after conversing with bench coach Brad Mills and checking with Ramirez, Francona swapped the starting positions for Ramirez and Mike Aviles. Instead of the original alignment, Ramirez made his first big league start at third base since 2013 and Aviles manned left field.

"Mills and I were talking and I was like, 'Wait a minute,'" Francona said. "Aviles is so good in left that he's made himself a really good left fielder. I said, 'You know what? This might make more sense.' I just went and checked with Jose to make sure he had played a few games this year and he did. I made sure that he was OK there."

Ramirez appeared in two games at third base for the Indians in 2013. That year, he played eight games at that spot for Double-A Akron. He spent three games at third for Triple-A Columbus this year, as he has bounced around the diamond as the Indians attempt to capitalize on any versatility the 22-year-old might be able to demonstrate. This week, he also added left field to his big league repertoire.

"He could fill a variety of roles for us," said general manager Chris Antonetti. "We see him as an everyday major league player. That could come at one position or it could come with him bouncing around and playing a number of different spots. So we're trying to get him as comfortable as possible at playing different positions and being effective wherever he plays."

Classy gesture: The Yankees retired Jorge Posada's No. 20 at Yankee Stadium on Saturday afternoon. Former teammates Mariano Rivera, Derek Jeter, Paul O'Neill, Tino Martinez, David Cone, Hideki Matsui and Bernie Williams joined Posada on the infield for the ceremony. During his speech, Posada offered his best wishes to Cleveland's Mike Aviles and his family. The former catcher said he wished for them "all the health in the world." Aviles' daughter, Adriana, was diagnosed with leukemia in May.

Back at it: Right-hander Cody Anderson is slated to throw three innings for Class A Lake County on Monday. Anderson tossed a pair of bullpen sessions this week as he works his way back from a strained left oblique muscle.

"Three is probably a good way to come out of the gate," Francona said. "He could go more, but it also keeps where we can insert him or we could build him up more. It just handles a lot of things. And we're trying to manage his innings. I hate to waste them there. Physically, he's good to go. I'm sure we were a little overly protective."

Anderson opened the season at Double-A Akron, for whom he posted a 1.73 ERA in 10 starts. He earned a promotion to Triple-A Columbus, where he logged a 2.33 ERA in three outings. For Cleveland, he has compiled a 4.31 ERA in eight starts, though he has flashed some resemblance to Jekyll and Hyde.

In his first four starts with the Tribe, Anderson boasted a 0.89 ERA and the opposition batted .165 with a .189 on-base percentage against him. In his next four outings, he posted a 10.19 ERA, as opponents hit .367 with a .412 on-base percentage against him.

Anderson has racked up 119 1/3 innings this season. His career high in the minors is 136 innings.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.23.2015

Five ways Cleveland Indians would be affected by President Mark Shapiro's departure

Paul Hoynes, Northeast Ohio Media Group By Paul Hoynes, Northeast Ohio Media Group

CLEVELAND, Ohio – If Mark Shapiro leaves to become president of the Toronto Blue Jays, here are five ways it could affect the Indians.

No.1: Who would replace Shapiro?

That depends if Shapiro is allowed to take anyone with him.

Andrew Miller would be a leading candidate. Three years ago Shapiro named him senior vice president of strategy and business analytics.
Miller joined the Indians in 2006 in the baseball operations department. He was and still is involved in the financial and contractual elements of player acquisitions. He was also involved in the building of the team's spring training complex in Goodyear, Arizona.

After Shapiro made the move from general manager to president in 2010, he brought Miller over to the business side in 2011. Miller has been heavily involved in the renovation of Progressive Field and is in charge of strategic planning, research and analysis in all areas relating to business operations.

Chris Antonetti could follow Shapiro's path from GM to president. This is his 17th year in the organization and he has climbed the organization ladder just as Shapiro did.

Brian Barren, executive vice president of sales and marketing and Dennis Lehman, executive vice president of business are among the other possibilities.

No. 2: Owner and CEO Paul Dolan could assume the role of president.

Shapiro is the first Indians president who wasn't owner of the club since former Ohio State athletic director Rick Bay was hired by the late Richard Jacobs in 1991.

Bay lost a front-office power struggle and was fired in November of 1992. Jacobs assumed presidency.

No. 3. If Shapiro leaves, would Antonetti or manager Terry Francona go with him?

That's highly unlikely. If even one of them headed north – assuming Dolan agreed to such a move – there would have to be compensation coming from Toronto.

Francona had a clause in his contract when the Indians hired him before the 2013 season that said he could get out of his contract if Antonetti or Shapiro were fired. I don't know if that applies if one of them leaves by their own choice, but I'd guess not.

No. 4. How much influence would the new president have over baseball decisions?

Shapiro has been with the Indians for 24 years. He came up through the ranks: assistant in baseball operations, assistant farm director, farm director, assistant general manager, general manager and president. Outside of Dolan, he has the final say on all baseball and business matters.

Internally, the Indians don't have another candidate with Shapiro's resume unless they promoted Antonetti and named Mike Chernoff, Ross Atkins or Derek Falvey the new general manager. Chernoff is the assistant general manager, Atkins is vice president of player personnel and Falvey is director of baseball operations.

Antonetti is in his fifth year as general manager. No matter who would replace Shapiro, it seems like some additional power could swing to the baseball side of the organization.

No.5. In the end, could this simply be a paper move?

As good a leader as Shapiro is -- he is respected in the organization and throughout baseball -- no matter who replaces him, the spending patterns of ownership are not going to change.

In other words, unless the new president finds a way to fill Progressive Field on a nightly basis without having a $120 million player payroll -- drafting an overlooked Mike Trout-type player for six or seven years in a row is another option -- there is not going to be a big change with the Indians no matter who is sitting in the president's chair.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.23.2015

**Cleveland Indians have Terry Talkin' about the frustrating Carlos Santana, Mark Shapiro's future and Michael Brantley**

Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer By Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The most disappointing Indian this season is Carlos Santana.

The overall numbers are so sad: .225 average, 14 HR, 57 RBI, .735 OPS. Making the situation even more depressing is the Indians thought Santana would have a good year -- and there were reasons for optimism.

Trivia question: Who was the Tribe's opening day third baseman in 2014? Since this story is about Santana, that's a safe guess. He also was serving as the backup catcher in 2014. But in June, the Tribe made him into a full-time first baseman. At that position, he batted .274 (.912 OPS) with 20 HR and 63 RBI in 94 games.

The Indians believed that catching was wearing down Santana, who suffered at least two concussions from foul tips and developed other injuries. It was affecting his hitting.

The theory seemed sound, based on how Santana finished 2014. So the Indians opened with him at first in 2015, only to receive his worst season in five full years in the majors.

Early in the year, the Tribe wanted him to bat second. He didn't like it (hitting .196), so he was returned to the middle of the lineup. He still didn't hit. In 2012 and 2014, Santana had poor starts, then finished strong. But this year he's only .236 with 4 HR and 17 RBI since the All-Star break and nearly helpless against off-speed pitches.

Then there's this. From 2012-14, he was a better hitter from the right side of the plate -- .281 (.847 OPS), 20 HR in 533 at-bats. From the left side: .235 (.781 OPS), 45 HR in 1,056 at-bats. But this season, he has 142 right-handed at-bats without a single home run. He's batting .218 (.635 OPS).

Santana is 29. He should be in his prime, not a decline. But this has been a miserable season, highlighted by his inability to adjust to all the soft stuff. His defense is worse. He's batting .221 with runners in scoring position. It's just discouraging.

In 2012 and 2014, Santana finished strong. But this year he's at .236 with 4 HR and 17 RBI since the All-Star break.
Santana has an $8.5 million contract for 2016 and $12 million in 2017, but only $1.2 million in 2017 is guaranteed.

It may be time to trade Santana. The problem is finding his replacement.

THE INTERNAL OPTIONS

1. The Tribe hoped Jesus Aguilar would show more progress. The 25-year-old is batting .251 (.729 OPS) with 15 HR and 77 RBI at Class AAA Columbus. His big swing makes scouts wonder if he can produce in the majors.

2. Jerry Sands and Chris Johnson both have value because they hit lefty pitchers very well. Sands can also play the outfield, while Johnson is a natural third baseman. But neither seem likely to hit enough to play first on a regular basis.

3. At Class A Lake County, Bobby Bradley is breaking records. He has 26 homers and 83 RBI in 94 games, batting .264 (.884 OPS). At 19, he has enormous power. But he also has struck out 132 times in 356 at-bats. At first base, he has 16 errors. He is a young, exciting prospect in need of a lot of work in the field. His two-strike approach needs to improve.

4. Nelson Rodriguez has just been promoted to Class AA Akron, where he is off to a rough start (3-of-31). At Class A Lynchburg, Rodriguez batted .275 (.894 OPS) with 17 HR and 84 RBI in 108 games. So the best first-base prospects -- Bradley and Rodriguez -- are in the low minors.

5. Among starting American League first basemen, Santana ranks eighth in OPS, ninth in RBI, ninth in batting average and 11th in home runs. It's surprising he still ranks that high in some categories. It just demonstrates how hitting has dropped off in the majors.

ABOUT MARK SHAPIRO

1. The Tribe president is indeed a serious candidate to become what amounts to CEO of the Toronto Blue Jays. Shapiro is not commenting on the reports. He has been approached for GM roles with other teams in the past. But this job is different because he'd be in charge of the entire franchise.

2. Shapiro has been president of the Indians for the last five years after turning the baseball operation over to General Manager Chris Antonetti. That began with Antonetti's hiring of Manny Acta as manager in 2010. Shapiro and Antonetti worked together on the baseball end that season, which ended with Shapiro named team president.

3. While Antonetti discussed the baseball moves with Shapiro, it was Antonetti who made the final decisions. Obviously, ownership was involved when it came to budget issues. That's true of every franchise. Shapiro gave Antonetti freedom to run the baseball side. If Shapiro does leave, Antonetti would remain as general manager.

4. The presence of Shapiro and Antonetti is why Terry Francona joined the team as manager in 2013. Francona has developed a very strong working relationship with Antonetti. I don't think Shapiro's decision will affect Francona's desire to stay.

5. Shapiro is 48. He has been with the Indians for 24 years, the only franchise he knows. In my book, Dealing, I outlined many of the challenges he faced after the 1990s came to an end and the economics radically changed for the franchise. He rarely received credit for his role in putting together two teams -- 2005 and 2007 -- that won 93 and 96 games on a payroll in the bottom 25 percent of baseball.

6. The Blue Jays' average payroll is $130 million over the last three seasons. Toronto is a major market that is seeking its first playoff team since 1993. It is a strong contender this season.

ABOUT JOSH TOMLIN

In two starts since returning from shoulder surgery, Josh Tomlin has allowed three runs (all solo homers) in 13 1/3 innings. His ERA is 2.07. The Tribe is thrilled with his comeback.

They have been looking for a veteran to claim the No. 5 spot in the rotation all season. Tomlin was one of the candidates in spring training, but had a shoulder problem that required surgery.

Tomlin now appears healthy. The 30-year-old was 12-7 with a 4.25 ERA in 2011. His average fastball is 89.1 mph in the two 2015 starts, slightly higher than his 88.8 career mark. His curve seems sharper. The key with Tomlin is control.

The Indians would like Tomlin to keep the fifth starter's spot. Cody Anderson (2-3, 4.31) had some initial success, but struggled later. He is now on the disabled list with an oblique injury, but expected to return fairly soon.

The Tribe may send Anderson to Class AAA. He pitched only three games at that level before being promoted to Cleveland.

ABOUT THE TRIBE:

1. Michael Brantley is batting .395 since the All-Star break, with 4 HR and 22 RBI in 108 at-bats despite battling back problems and other minor injuries.

2. Brantley is such a consistent player. This has been a discouraging season for the team, and Brantley has not been healthy. Yet, he keeps hitting. On the season, Brantley is batting .320 with 9 HR and 68 RBI. A smart baserunner, he is 13-of-14 in stolen bases this season, 36-of-38 in the last two years. He is a leader and role having without having to say a word.

3. Lonnie Chisenhall is batting .385 (20-of-52) since returning from the minors and moving to right field. He seems comfortable in the outfield. Will he be able to sustain his hitting? Last season, Chisenhall batted .332 in 70 games before the All-Star break. He dropped to .218 after. He was batting .214 when he went to the minors in June.

4. It feels as if Chisenhall has been around forever, but he's only 26. The Indians are looking for outfielders. The other day, they started Jose Ramirez (LF), Abraham Almonte (CF) and Chisenhall (RF). It's a wide open opportunity for Chisenhall.

5. Tyler Naquin opened the season batting .348 at Class AA Akron. After 34 games, he was promoted to Class AAA Columbus, where he is batting .264 with 6 HR and 17 RBI. He returned to the lineup Aug. 17 after missing two weeks with a concussion. The 24-year-old outfielder will probably be promoted to Cleveland in September.
6. Since being traded to St. Louis, Brandon Moss is having a terrible time. He is hitting .167 with 0 HR and 1 RBI in 48 at-bats. David Murphy is batting .263 (.679 OPS) with 2 HR and 7 RBI with the Angels. Nick Swisher and Michael Bourn are a combined 7-of-62 (.113) for Atlanta.

7. Looking at some minor league stats, I found some old friends of hard-core Tribe fans playing for Class AAA Lehigh Valley of the Phillies' farm system: Cord Phelps is hitting .244 (.642 OPS) with 3 HR and 34 RBI. Russ Canzler is hitting .276 (.749 OPS) with 7 HR and 37 RBI.

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**A year ago, could Carlos Carrasco have envisioned this degree of success? 'To be honest, no'**

Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group By Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group

NEW YORK -- Carlos Carrasco found himself in the Indians' bullpen last season after another fruitless stint as a starting pitcher.

Now, the right-hander has established himself as a key contributor in Cleveland's rotation, with a 3.53 ERA and 173 strikeouts in 158 innings this season. Carrasco carried the Tribe to a 7-3 win against the Yankees on Friday night. Here is what the hurler, manager Terry Francona and reliever Kyle Crockett had to say after the affair.

Carrasco, on whether a year ago, he could have envisioned this kind of success as a starter (since rejoining the rotation on Aug. 10, 2014, he has posted a 2.85 ERA in 35 starts, with 251 strikeouts in 227 innings):

"You know what? To be honest, no. I've just put in hard work from then to now, and it's paid off."

Francona, on Carrasco, who submitted a strong start in the same building in which he made his triumphant return to the rotation a year ago:

"We were talking about that when we came in here, because last year he threw five innings. And it was probably longer than we thought he would go. From there, look where he is now. In a season where he's now up around 160 innings, he's holding his stuff so well. I would say probably more than holding. And I think as he's starting to get to know himself and the league and how to pitch. I'll tell you what, he's done a pretty good job. Every once in a while, you'll see a hiccup, but he's a pretty strong kid and pretty durable."

Francona, on turning to Crockett with two on and two out in the seventh:

"I was actually going to leave him in there to finish the inning, but when they hit, I just thought, OK, with Teixeira not being available, it just seemed like a good time to go to Crockett."

Francona, on turning to Cody Allen with two outs in the eighth inning:

"In those situations, especially when they're running all those left-handers up there, that's the guy you want in the game. Again, I thought that was a save in the eighth inning."

Crockett, on getting the call at a critical moment in the seventh inning:

"There's not many other options of lefties out there, but I'm glad he was able to go with me there and have the trust of putting me in the situation like that, with guys on when we needed a big out. That was good to see."

Crockett, on fanning Didi Gregorius on three pitches to end the Yankees' threat in the seventh:

"[Carrasco] pitched really well for us, so I was glad to get him out of there without any runs tacked onto his ERA. Just to keep the team there, I feel like this Yankee team, they kind of get things going and they hit a stride if you let them. It was good to shut them down right there."

Francona, on Crockett's role, with Marc Rzepczynski traded and Nick Hagadone out for the season with an elbow injury:

"We're going to bring him in to face lefties. He doesn't have like the big sweeping breaking ball, but we need him to get left-handers out."

Crockett, on what entered his mind when he jogged in from the bullpen with the crowd in a frenzy and the tying run at the plate:

"I'm just trying not to think at all. You try not to listen to the crowd or anything and just go out there, get ahead of him and pitch to my strength."

Francona, on Jose Ramirez, who tallied three hits and a walk and scored three times:

"Since he's been back, he's been the player that we got used to last year. He does a lot for us. He's been playing second. He'll probably play left [on Saturday]. He's moving around and has a lot of energy."

Francona, on Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka, who allowed four runs (three earned) on seven hits over six innings:

"He's good. My goodness. You can't run on him. He's quick to the plate. He keeps the ball down. Fortunately, we got a couple runs. Early on, I think he was at 41 pitches after four and then we made him work a little bit and, fortunately, got him out of the game. But he's a good pitcher."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.23.2015

**How can Cleveland Indians get big bat they need this winter? Hey, Hoynsie**

Paul Hoynes, Northeast Ohio Media Group By Paul Hoynes, Northeast Ohio Media Group

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Do you have a question that you'd like to have answered in Hey, Hoynsie? Submit it here or Tweet @hoynsie.

Hey, Hoynsie: With Nick Swisher and Michael Bourn now in Atlanta uniforms, what will the Indians brass do this off-season with the newfound financial flexibility? Obviously, I'm thinking over and above any arbitration-related pay increases. Pitching seems set, but what options will be there for an impact power bat? -- Casey Dubiel, Belmont.

Hey, Casey: The only way the Indians are going to add a big bat is by trade, the emergence of said bat via one of the players currently on their big-league club or from the farm system. It's not going to come through domestic or international free agency because they can't compete in those markets unless someone drops through the cracks.

The Indians saved about $4 million in trading Swisher and Bourn. That's chump change in the big leagues and it's not going to get the kind of bat you're looking for and the Indians desperately need.
Hey, John: The national media is aware of the talent the Indians have in the starting rotation. Ditto for the 29 other clubs in the big leagues. That's why GM Chris Antonetti was flooded with calls before the July 31 trading deadline.

Which makes it hurt even more because all that good pitching is being wasted on a last-place team.

Hey, Alan: I usually don't like nickname guys unless it's something like The Big Hurt (Frank Thomas), Sudden Sam (Sam McDowell), Dr. Smooth (Michael Bourn) or the Wild Horse of the Osage (Pepper Martin), but I love Sac Francisco.

Hey, Hoynsie: With Shapiro with a foot out the door, and sagging attendance, when will the Dolans come to their senses and sell the team?

Hey, Howard: I think you will like this nickname ... since Lindor seems to bunt a lot early in the game how about Sac Francisco? — Alan Wilson, Milwaukee.

Hey, John: I don't get the sense that the Dolan family is serious about selling the Indians. In the past, they have looked for minority partners.

Hey, Hoynsie: I think you will like this nickname ... since Lindor seems to bunt a lot early in the game how about Sac Francisco? — Alan Wilson, Milwaukee.

Hey, John: The national media is aware of the talent the Indians have in the starting rotation. Ditto for the 29 other clubs in the big leagues. That's why GM Chris Antonetti was flooded with calls before the July 31 trading deadline.

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Hey, Hoynsie: With Shapiro with a foot out the door, and sagging attendance, when will the Dolans come to their senses and sell the team?

— John Bryndal (@jjsnowcat) August 22, 2015

Hey, Howard: I love the way Ramirez has played since he returned from Class AAA Columbus, but I don't see the Indians moving Kipnis to the outfield to make room for Ramirez as the regular second baseman.

I know manager Terry Francona said he considers Ramirez an everyday player. But unless they give him a shot at third base — Giovanny Urshela's glove is a wonder, but is he going to hit? — I think Ramirez is the next Mike Aviles. He's a high-energy, change-of-pace player who can play all over the diamond.

— Geoff Curtis (@Geoffcurtiss) August 22, 2015

Hey, Zack: I thought Francona made a good observation about Urshela last week. He said because he dealt with a knee injury before the start of spring training and a back injury during camp and early in the season that it's been hard to get a read on him as a hitter.

Francona said he'd like to see what Urshela could do if he was healthy from the start of the season.

Urshela has shown flashes of power and as you said there's no question that the glove belongs in the big leagues. This has been a test run for him and Francisco Lindor on the left side of the infield. There's no question Lindor will be back next year. I'm not sure if the Indians feel the same about Urshela.

Hey, Hoynsie: Why, oh, why is Carlos Santana still batting cleanup? Guys in front of him set the table, then he kills the rally. It's late August and he still isn't hitting and won't adjust his swing. — Howard Smith, Gainesville, Va.

I understand your frustration, but who else are the Indians going to hit there? You're not going to mess with Kipnis or Michael Brantley. Brandon Moss, Nick Swisher and David Murphy were traded. When Yan Gomes gets moved up in the lineup, he does a lot of swinging and missing.

Besides, if you want to create trade interest in Santana, why not keep running him out there and pray that he gets hot over the last four or five weeks of the season. He's certainly due.

Hey, Hoynsie: With Trevor Bauer struggling like this, it's tough to watch. Would you agree that he might need to spend some time at Class AAA to work on his mechanics? The Indians could put Zach McAllister in the rotation or even TJ House. — Justin Blyer, Louisville, Ohio.

Hey, Justin: Bauer has been struggling, but he can't be sent to Class AAA Columbus because he's out of options.

McAllister has been in the bullpen too long to just put him in the rotation. You'd run the risk of injuring him. House is on the disabled list with a sore left shoulder.

— Lee Stevens (@snevetseel) August 21, 2015

Hey, Lee: The Indians entertained offers on Santana at the trade deadline so I think they will definitely try to move him during the off-season. But they have to get a productive hitter back.

If not it makes no sense to trade Santana. As bad as he's been this year, he's still one of their most productive hitters signed to a club friendly contract through 2016 with a club option for 2017.


Hey, Marshall: That's the $60,000 question isn't it? And we don't really know if Brantley will play left or center field, do we?
Lonnie Chisenhall has certainly made a good impression in right field. If nothing else, he could be a platoon player. I think Abraham Almonte has put himself on the map for next year, but I'm not sure if it will be as a starter. I think Jose Ramirez is more of an infielder than outfielder. I think he could push Urshela for the third base job in spring training.

@hoynsie Hey Hoynsie, why is Ramirez playing OF when Kipnis has far more experience, and is a worse 2B? Haris Hadzimuratovic, Chicago

— Wen Bickert (@wenbickert) August 21, 2015

Hey Wen: I've covered Kipnis since he broke into the big leagues in 2011 and have never seen him play the outfield. So I don't know how good an outfielder he is, but I do know he's gone to the All-Star Game twice in the last three years as a second baseman.

Kipnis just came off the disabled list with a sore right shoulder so I don't think the Indians would be real anxious to put him in the outfield right now.

Ramirez has been playing left field because Brantley is confined to DH until his left shoulder is strong enough to go back to the outfield.

@hoynsie What is going to be the Indians' priority this Winter? Re-tool or rebuild? Do they contend in '16? Matt Fisher, Dallas, TX

— Matt Fisher (@NextWaveMLB) August 21, 2015

Hey, Matt: I think they will try to retool. A rebuild isn't necessary, especially with their starting rotation, and pretty much their entire 25-man roster under control for next year.

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Terry Francona says he received 'an atrocious explanation' from umpire on call that led to his ejection

Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group By Zack Meisel, Northeast Ohio Media Group

NEW YORK -- Terry Francona wasn't pleased with a call made by second-base umpire Dan Iassogna in the third inning of the Indians' 6-2 loss to the Yankees on Saturday. He was even less satisfied with Iassogna's explanation.

With runners on first and second with one out in the third, Michael Brantley bounced a ball to first baseman Greg Bird, who heaved a high throw to second. Shortstop Didi Gregorius leapt in the air to grab the throw, which pulled him off of the base. He landed beside the bag and fired a throw to first, but Brantley reached safely. Iassogna called Francisco Lindor out at second, a result of "the neighborhood play," which permits defenders to stray from the bag while attempting to turn a double play to avoid a collision from an oncoming base runner.

Should the neighborhood rule have been in effect, though? Lindor didn't appear to be anywhere near Gregorius -- he was a little past halfway between first and second -- and Gregorius only strayed from the base because of Bird's wayward toss.

Francona twice left the dugout to ask for a replay and an explanation. The umpires did not review the play and Francona called Iassogna's reasoning "atrocious" and "terribly incorrect."

With two outs and runners on the corners instead of one out and the bases loaded, Carlos Santana struck out. Did the ruling change the complexion of the game? That's debatable, as the Indians were already trailing by four runs.

Still, Francona was miffed and frustrated as he watched the remaining innings from his office.

Here is Francona's take on the third-inning developments.

"Well, when I went out, I wanted to let [Yankees manager] Joe [Girardi] go first, because I knew he was checking the play at first. It was good, because it gave us time. I just wanted to check with them, because I know what I saw, but I wanted to talk to them first. As a crew, they got together, which was good. Then they came back to explain it to me.

"He was trying to make three points and I thought all three were incorrect. He said the first one was that it has to be a throw that takes him away and he said it was a very good throw. I didn't agree there. He was set up on the inside of the bag and the ball goes to the outside.

"He said he has to be off the bag. He said he was on the bag. I've got him 0-for-2.

"Then he said if the runner makes him deviate, that's the third one. The runner wasn't close to the bag.

"I thought it was an atrocious explanation and it continued to be worsened. I think he was more concerned about asking me if I was going to get thrown out. I wanted him to go check it, because we needed to have bases loaded with Carlos coming up. That's all they had to do. Just get it right. That's what we have replay for.

"The reason I thought they had replay was because you want to get it right. Carlos could've hit into a double play. We'll never know. I just thought that his explanation was terribly incorrect."

Francisco Lindor, on his vantage point of the play at second base, and Francona's ejection:

"To be honest, I didn't really see anything, because I was just running. I was running to the base. Then, when I came back to the dugout, I saw it. I saw the replay inside. He was off the bag. I'm not 100 percent what the ruling is. I'm not too educated on that play. But he was backing us up. That means a lot. He went out there to let us know he has our back."

Lindor, on whether the ruling influenced the outcome of the game:

"A lot. Whenever you can have bases loaded with one out instead of first and third with two outs, it changes the game. It changes the inning. It changes the momentum. I don't want to say that's why we lost the game, because it wasn't that one play. But, it probably could've helped us."

Francona, on Danny Salazar's rough start:

"It was disappointing. We have [47,031] people here and, my goodness, if anything, you'd probably be over-amped. But he came out and his velocity wasn't really good and they took advantage of it. It seemed like the game sped up on him. They hit the ground ball back to him and he
didn't check the runner and then he didn't move his feet. Then he kind of kicked it in gear. He was throwing 97 [mph] by the time he came out. That's not helpful. He needs to get it going. We beat them twice. You know they're going to come out and play."

Salazar, on his outing, in which he allowed five runs on eight hits in 4 2/3 innings:

"I didn't have my best today. Early in the game, I was leaving too many pitches up in the zone. I let my team down."

Salazar, on what changed as the game progressed:

"I felt more calm on the mound. I was executing the pitches better down in the zone. If I would've started the game like that, with that confidence that I had in the last two innings, it would've been a different game."

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Severino gets first big league win, Yankees beat Indians
By HOWIE RUMBERG (AP Baseball Writer)
NEW YORK (AP) -- After only four starts, Yankees manager Joe Girardi thinks it's too soon to say if Luis Severino is ready for the rigors of a playoff run.

The rookie right-hander's teammates, though, see something special in the 21 year old.

Severino earned his first major league win, getting all the support he needed in the first inning Saturday on a pair of home runs from Brett Gardner and Brian McCann as the New York Yankees beat the Cleveland Indians 6-2.

"He has embraced the whole thing," Yankees outfielder Carlos Beltran said. "He's been good to watch. He's just going to get better because he has huge talent."

Severino (1-2) gave up a one-out homer in the first to fellow rookie Francisco Lindor, but he yielded only two singles the remainder of his six gritty innings, pitching without his best slider.

Severino impressed Girardi during spring training, and that has carried over to the big league mound. Still, thinking about having the youngster pitch during the stretch run could be a bit much to ask.

"I think that's a little early to put that type of pressure on him," Girardi said. "But I will say everything we've seen from him we like. I think he will even get better."

Jacoby Ellsbury and Beltran drove in runs in the second off Danny Salazar (11-7), helping the AL East leaders improve to 2-4 against the last place Indians this season.

New York has a chance for a split of the four-game series Sunday, following a pregame ceremony to retire left-hander Andy Pettitte's No. 46.

The team held festivities before this game, too, retiring the No. 20 of fiery catcher Jorge Posada. The Yankees then showed some spark of their own in the first inning.

Trailing by a run, New York came out swinging. Ellsbury singled and Gardner homered to right. One out later, McCann connected on a drive to right-center.

The three runs gave the Yankees a major league-best 102 runs in the first, the most in any inning this season.

Salazar helped New York add on two runs in the second, when he fielded Ellsbury's comebacker, spun and made a wild throw to second base.

Salazar recovered to pitch 4 2-3 innings. He was charged with eight hits and five runs - four earned. He struck out six without a walk.

"It seemed like the game sped up on him," Cleveland manager Terry Francona said. "Hit the groundball back to him and he didn't check the runner and then didn't move his feet and then he kind of kicked it in gear, throwing 97 by the time he came out."

The Indians put runners on first and second with one out in the third, but Michael Brantley hit a grounder to first baseman Greg Bird, who made a high throw to shortstop Didi Gregorius.

Coming across the bag, Gregorius had to come up on his toes to glove the ball. Second base umpire Dan Iassogna called Lindor, who was a triple shy of the cycle, out.

Francona objected and was tossed, the second ejection doled out by Iassogna this series. He gave Girardi the heave-ho Thursday night for arguing balls and strikes.

Severino then got out of the inning by striking out Carlos Santana.
"For the first time I feel like I belong," Severino said. "I feel like I can pitch at this level."

Lonnie Chisenhall had an RBI single off Dellin Betances in the eighth, ending the big reliever's scoreless stretch at 18 appearances dating to July 8.

**TRAINER'S ROOM**

**Indians:** Cody Anderson (left oblique) will throw three innings in a rehab start Monday at Class-A Lake County. He had a bullpen session Friday.

**Yankees:** Pitcher Bryan Mitchell, recovering from a broken nose after being hit in the head by a line drive Monday, is set for a bullpen session Sunday. Girardi said Mitchell has stitches that need to be removed before he can pitch in a game. ... Of Dustin Ackley (back strain) was working out at first base during warmups. ... Before the game the Yankees recalled RHP Branden Pinder from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and designated LHP Chris Capuano for assignment.

**STAND-UP GUY**

During his speech, Posada wished Indians utility man Mike Aviles and his family best wishes as their 4-year-old daughter undergoes treatment for Leukemia. Aviles, watching the ceremony from the Cleveland dugout, pointed to Posada and tipped his cap in appreciation.

**UP NEXT**

**Indians:** Trevor Bauer (9-10) will be making his fifth career start against New York. He is 1-3 with a 5.85 ERA against the Yankees, including an 8-6 loss on Aug. 13.

**Yankees:** LHP CC Sabathia (4-9) faces his former team for the second time in less than two weeks. He allowed nine hits and two runs over six innings at Progressive Field.

**Bulls 5, Clippers 2 | Bullpen gives up big inning in loss**

After Clippers starter Toru Murata threw six strong innings, reliever Michael Roth entered in the seventh and walked the bases full, and host Durham went on to score four times en route to a 5-2 victory on Saturday night.

Bulls starter Matt Moore struck out 16 batters in his six-inning stint — every Clippers batter struck out at least twice, except Zach Walters (once). Moore struck out the first six batters of the game. He also struck out the side in the fifth and recorded three strikeouts in the sixth.

Durham pitchers combined for 20 strikeouts in all.

Murata kept the Bulls in check, allowing one run on four hits, with nine strikeouts and three walks. The Clippers took a 2-1 lead when Tyler Holt singled and Walters homered off Moore in the sixth.

The lead didn’t last long. Roth (8-8) walked Joey Rickard, Jack Elmore and Luke Maile to open the seventh, and Boog Powell followed with a sacrifice fly.

Carlos Marmol came on for Roth and gave up an RBI single to Nick Franklin and a two-run single to J.P. Arencibia.

**SeaWolves 7, RubberDucks 1**

**Story lines:** In the midst of the Eastern League playoff hunt, the Ducks lost their fourth consecutive game and second straight to the visiting SeaWolves. It’s the first time since early July that the Ducks lost back-to-back series. With the defeat and the Curve’s win at Bowie, the Ducks fell out of second place in the Western Division and are a game behind Altoona with 16 regular-season games to go.

**Quick hits:** Erie pounced on Ducks starter Adam Plutko for four runs in the first two innings and six total. He allowed nine hits, including a solo home run, struck out six and walked two in five innings. In six innings, SeaWolves right-hander Michael Fulmer allowed just one run on two hits.

**Next:** 2:05 p.m. Sunday at Canal Park. Akron left-hander Shawn Morimando (9-10, 2.97) and Erie right-hander Austin Kubitza (7-11, 5.79) are the scheduled pitchers.

**Longtime friends D.J. Brown, Jake Lowery reunited as RubberDucks teammates**

When D.J. Brown made his Double-A starting debut for the RubberDucks in Portland, Maine, a week ago, his family made the trip from his hometown in Virginia to watch from the stands.

But that wasn’t the only “family” with Brown that night, as a best friend and former college teammate was sitting behind home plate calling his first game — Ducks backup catcher Jake Lowery.
“That was awesome,” said Brown, who played with Lowery at James Madison University for two years. “I haven’t thrown to him since college — bullpens here and there in spring training, but other than that in a game situation, it’s been since college. So we were definitely rekindling some memories there.”

Shortly after seeing his best friend drafted by the Indians in 2011, Brown suffered a shoulder injury that required surgery and forced him to miss the entire 2012 season.

When the following year’s MLB draft rolled around, Brown was playing Xbox with some of his fellow Dukes who were hopeful of having the same fate as Lowery. Zoned out with the draft in its 39th round, Brown witnessed his name scroll across the bottom line and couldn’t believe it.

“It was pretty surreal,” he said. “I was pretty freaked out. I had to call my roommate in to make sure it was actually me. It was definitely a great experience.”

With his injury behind him and an opportunity presenting itself in Cleveland, Brown called Lowery to ask for some advice.

“He kind of showed me the ropes within the organization,” Brown said. “He’s been a good guy to talk to, especially when it comes to baseball.”

“I don’t think he wanted to go back to school,” Lowery said. “We were having a conversation about, ‘Hey, you’re going to be with expert care. You’re probably going to go out to Arizona and rehab. You’re going to be around professional trainers and guys who have been through the same stuff.’

“I think that was a key in him signing, just getting the money and stuff he wanted. I think if you asked him, it’s worked out for both ends.”

Lowery, who is in his fifth season in the Tribe’s farm system, has always been a proponent of Brown’s talents on the mound and believes that his ceiling is as high as anyone’s.

“He can go to the big leagues,” Lowery said. “He’s got three or four plus pitches he can throw anytime in the count. He’s more of a pitch-to-contact guy than a strikeout guy, but he’s going to give you six, seven innings every time, quality starts.

“Everybody wants that on their defense. He’s a good guy and he’s going to keep moving up, so hopefully he can keep doing it.”

Aside from the game they play for a living, Lowery and Brown share a close relationship. Since their days at James Madison, the two have been so tight that they were in each other’s weddings.

“We’re both best friends,” Brown said. “Outside of baseball, we can talk about anything.”

“We go back five, six years,” Lowery said. “Our wives are friends.”

Now reunited as teammates once again for the first time since 2011, Lowery and Brown are excited to play together for the rest of the year.

“He’s always been a level or two below me,” Lowery said. “But now that we’re at the same level it’s going to be pretty cool. It’s a good friendship that we have, so hopefully we’ll continue that throughout the season.”

Read the RubberDucks blog at www.ohio.com/rubberdu

Nick Cafardo / SUNDAY BASEBALL NOTES Who will Dave Dombrowski hire as Red Sox GM?

By Nick Cafardo GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 23, 2015

The new general manager role under Dave Dombrowski is going to be tricky sledding, much as it is with other “president of baseball operations” roles around baseball. In some cases, the GM is essentially the assistant GM, but with a bigger paycheck. The guy in Boston who makes the deals and signs the free agents will be Dombrowski. He’s not going to relinquish those duties; that’s why he took the job and didn’t take on any business duties, as was the case in Detroit.

The Red Sox’ new model will be very similar to the Chicago Cubs’ model. Theo Epstein is in charge of baseball operations, person nel, you name it, and GM Jed Hoyer is basically Epstein’s assistant and handles lesser duties such as implementing rules, putting players on waivers, recalling a player from the minors, and some of the minutia involved in the everyday running of a big league team.

Boston’s new GM will certainly have input in deals, signings, and team composition. He’ll be the equivalent of a bench coach to the manager. He’ll offer suggestions, come up with ideas for Dombrowski to mull. He may coordinate the pro scouting of trade targets, etc. But as it is with Epstein, Dombrowski will have the juice.

It’s slightly different in Arizona, where Tony La Russa likely gives GM Dave Stewart more power in player personnel, with La Russa having the final say. Philadelphia will be an interesting study as Andy MacPhail also seems inclined to allow his GM to make the daily moves.
Who will Dombrowski put into place as Red Sox GM? The overwhelming consensus is that Frank Wren ends up with the job. Dombrowski and Wren have a working relationship that goes back to Montreal, when Wren was the scouting director for Dombrowski. They were also together in Miami when the Marlins won the 1997 World Series. Last year in Detroit, Dombrowski brought Wren in to speak to his minor league staff.

Wren, the former Orioles and Braves GM, was dismissed by Atlanta a year ago after a couple of bad deals. He signed Melvin Upton to a five-year, $75 million contract and Upton went belly-up, hitting .198 with the Braves before being dealt prior to this season. Wren also signed 35-year-old Derek Lowe to a four-year, $60 million deal. Lowe gave them one good year before his skills declined and the Braves eventually ate the remainder of the deal.

Two other busts for Wren were the signings of Japanese righty Kenshin Kawakami, who went 8-22, and Dan Uggla, whose bat became such a liability Wren had to ask ownership to eat the final $18 million on his contract.

Wren also traded Mark Teixeira to the Angels for Casey Kotchman and minor league pitcher Steven Merek.


He obtained Javier Vazquez and Boone Logan for four prospects. He obtained Jordan Walden for Tommy Hanson. He got Michael Bourn for four fringe major leaguers. He obtained Justin Upton and Chris Johnson from the Diamondbacks for Martin Prado, Randall Delgado, Zeke Spruill, and Nick Ahmed.

Wren also has strong administrative skills, a scouting background, and great knowledge of the rules of the game.

The consensus among those who know him is that he’ll be better with someone above him.

Other potential candidates for the Red Sox GM job:

- Dan O'Dowd, former Rockies GM — O'Dowd said he loves working as an analyst at MLB Network and has no idea whether Dombrowski would consider him for a job. O'Dowd said he does miss team building and appears to have a good relationship with Dombrowski away from baseball.

- J.P. Ricciardi, assistant GM, Mets — The former Blue Jays GM has enjoyed success building the Mets with Sandy Alderson. He lives in the Worcester area, loves the Red Sox, and has the urge to be a GM again. Between the Mets and Blue Jays, Ricciardi has a lot of players around baseball. One of his finest — Jose Bautista.

- Kevin Towers, special assistant, Reds — Towers currently assists GM Walt Jocketty and is seen as his successor when Jocketty retires. Towers is also intriguing because he has San Diego ties with Red Sox chairman Tom Werner and certainly Larry Lucchino. Towers prefers to live on the West Coast and that could be a deterrent.

- Mike Hazen, Red Sox assistant GM — There’s always the possibility that Dombrowski gets to know Hazen and hires him in a sign of continuity for the organization. Hazen will likely go where Ben Cherington ends up, but an opportunity could exist here.

- Dave Littlefield, vice president of player development, Tigers — Littlefield was promoted by Al Avila in Detroit, but Littlefield has been a GM (Pirates, 2001-07) and would be someone Dombrowski might consider if he moves off of Wren.

- Jerry Dipoto, former Angels GM — Dombrowski is familiar with Dipoto from dealing with him as a GM, but they have not had a working relationship. Dipoto was brought in by Cherington to do an independent evaluation of the Red Sox organization. Dipoto is more analytically oriented and might provide a good balance with Dombrowski.

- Dan Evans, former Dodgers GM — Evans has worked for five organizations is currently a scout for the Blue Jays. He has always been one of the brightest men in baseball. He also worked as an agent for a while. The Chicago native would be a solid choice for this job.

- Jim Hendry, special assistant to Yankees GM Brian Cashman — Hendry was the Cubs GM before Theo Epstein arrived. He’s done a great job for Cashman, recommending talent for the big league team. He was a special assistant to Dombrowski in Florida.

- Allard Baird, senior vice president/player personnel, Red Sox — Baird is a former GM who dealt with Dombrowski for many years. He’s part of the current evaluation fabric with the Red Sox, which may work against him. But he’s a veteran baseball guy, the type Dombrowski likes.

- Wayne Krivsky, special assistant to Twins GM Terry Ryan — He has the right temperament to work with Dombrowski. Very similar in their beliefs. Krivsky, the former Reds GM, suffered one of the more unjust firings in recent memory with the Reds.

- Omar Minaya, senior adviser for players’ association — The former Expos and Mets GM is one of the best talent evaluators in baseball, responsible for some of the Mets’ young talent.

Planning for Park

Next Korean star on his way?

The success of Pirates infielder Jung Ho Kang is a good thing for his former teammate in South Korea, Nexen Heroes first baseman Byung-ho Park.

Park, 29, entered the weekend boasting a .350 average with 101 runs, 43 homers, 116 RBIs, and a 1.171 OPS. He hit .303 with 52 homers in 2014.

Agent Alan Nero, who also represented Kang, says that the righthanded-hitting Park will go through the same posting system as Kang, a leading contender for NL Rookie of the Year.

The Pirates paid Nexen a $5.002 million posting fee. Nero negotiated a four-year, $16 million deal with the Pirates. The numbers could be similar or a little higher for Park.

“We’re just preparing for the process right now,” Nero said. “We believe there’s going to be a lot of interest as there was with Kang. Major league teams certainly covet righthanded power.”
Listed at 6 feet 1 inch, 236 pounds, Park has raw power. He does strike out a lot — 142 times last season, 128 this year — but also draws his share of walks.

The Red Sox have been scouting him for most of the season. One scenario for the Red Sox, should they win the posting, would be to platoon him at first base with lefthanded-hitting Travis Shaw. It might be a cheaper alternative than pursuing Chris Davis or Justin Morneau in free agency. Shaw has hit very well since his recall, but he remains unproven.

Statistics in Korea are tremendously inflated. Kang, for instance, was a 40-home run shortstop for Nexen, but has 12 homers for the Pirates.

And the Pirates, given their possible need for a first baseman, could also be in on him.

Apropos of nothing

1. Jim Lonborg, Cy Young Award winner for the 1967 Impossible Dream Red Sox, will be a starting pitcher Thursday night at the 22d annual Abbot Financial Management Oldtime Baseball Game at St. Peter's Field in North Cambridge. The game serves as a fund-raiser for the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Lonborg will be among three former big leaguers in the game, joining former Red Sox infielder Lou Merloni and Peabody native Matt Antonelli, who played for the San Diego Padres in 2008. Admission is free. This event has been a labor of love for Boston Herald columnist Steve Buckley.

2. There was a theory out there that Red Sox ownership hired Dave Dombrowski quickly to perhaps allow him more time to dump Pablo Sandoval and Hanley Ramirez. Fat chance. Sandoval's postseason magic could be of value, but the Red Sox would have to eat major money and that may not be in the cards.

3. One the trickiest discussions and/or decisions this offseason is how Dombrowski deals with John Farrell, who is undergoing cancer treatments. Like any incoming head of baseball, eventually he wants his own on-field staff.

4. It’s great when people who really earn it get their dream job. That’s what happened to Al Avila, who should be credited with the Marlins signing Miguel Cabrera as a 16-year-old.

Avila and Dombrowski were together a long time and made some pretty strong deals together.

5. My suggestion of trading Xander Bogaerts for Matt Harvey has drawn interesting responses. Mets people hate it because Harvey is a movie star in New York. Red Sox people hate it because they love Bogaerts. Baseball executives mostly think the Mets would need to get more for Harvey. Fascinating discussion.

6. Entering the weekend, 155 pitchers have made at least 10 starts this season. Only 13 of them have gone at least five innings in every start. And only two have pitched at least six innings in every start — the Astros' Dallas Keuchel (25 starts) and the Dodgers’ Zack Greinke (24). By comparison, in 2014, 182 pitchers made at least 10 starts and 11 of them lasted at least five innings every time out. Only one of the 11 from last year also made the list this year: Keuchel, who completed five frames in each of his 29 starts in 2014.

Updates on nine

1. Alejandro De Aza, OF, Red Sox — De Aza cleared waivers and both the Dodgers and Giants had interest, but the feeling was the asking price was too high.

2. Blake Swihart, C, Red Sox — It appears Christian Vazquez may need some time in the minors after he returns from Tommy John surgery, so the Red Sox may go with a Swihart/Ryan Hanigan combo next season, at least at the start. One conversation the Red Sox will have in the offseason will be possibly introducing Swihart to another position so he can get at-bats when he’s not catching.

Is that first base? Third base? Outfield? This could be an intriguing discussion.

3. Mark Shapiro, president, Indians — You can see why the Blue Jays want to speak to Shapiro about being team president. Shapiro is one of the smartest guys in the game, and has helped rebuild Progressive Field. But the Indians simply can't draw fans.

4. Scott Reid, Tigers adviser — He's someone mentioned as a potential adviser to Dave Dombrowski in Boston. Reid has worked with Dombrowski for a long time and he also has similar allegiances to Al Avila. To this point, Dombrowski has not asked Avila for permission to speak to some of the Tigers executives, many of whom received promotions after Dombrowski left.

5. Clay Buchholz, RHP, Red Sox — Ben Cherington probably would have picked up the $13 million option on Buchholz. But will Dombrowski? Buchholz has been injury-prone throughout his career, and has never pitched 200 innings or made 30 starts in a season. “If he's out there [in free agency], he gets signed right away as a second-tier bargain-type pitcher. He wouldn’t get the $20 mil [but] be around $15 million on a three-year deal,” said an AL general manager.

“If you need depth in your pitching, you can afford a half-year out of him. He pitches well when he’s healthy.”

Short of 30 and 200

6. John Lackey, RHP, Cardinals — According to sources close to Lackey, he wants to stay in the National League because he’s found that it’s much easier to pitch there. Having an excellent season, Lackey should recoup the money lost on his major league minimum deal this season. The Cardinals have interest in bringing him back, but he hits free agency at 37 years old and the Cardinals won't extend too far in contract length.

7. Cherington, former GM, Red Sox — Cherington should have no shortage of job opportunities. With his farm-building skills, the consensus among baseball executives is that the two best places would be Milwaukee and Philadelphia. Also, don't rule out San Diego, where Padres CEO Mike Dee knows Cherington from their time together with the Red Sox.

8. Pablo Sandoval and Hanley Ramirez — Both players passed through waivers and were not claimed. They are free to be dealt but their contracts are prohibitive. The Padres were interested in Sandoval last offseason, but after their poor free agent signings it’s unlikely they would pursue Sandoval again. Ramirez appears to be untradeable. But consider this: Dombrowski was able to deal Prince Fielder two years after giving him a nine-year, $214 million contract, so there’s hope.
9. Johnny Cueto, RHP, Royals — Luis Tiant and Pedro Martinez are big Cueto fans and will likely try to help the Red Sox recruit him in free agency. We'll see how much rope Dombrowski has from the owners in pursuing an ace — perhaps Cueto or David Price.

Extra innings

From the Bill Chuck files — "The Red Sox were 656-574 (.533) while Dan Duquette was GM; the Sox were 839-619 (.575) while Theo Epstein was GM; and 290-314 (.480) under Ben Cherington." . . . Happy birthday, Mark Bellhorn (41), Jeff Manto (51), and Mike Boddicker (58).

Unlikely power source

There's no doubting Madison Bumgarner's pitching skills after his postseason performance for the ages last season in leading the Giants to a World Series title. Less appreciated is his work in the batter's box but with five homers this season — after hitting four last season — he's joined the short list of pitchers with double-digit career homer bombers since the designated hitter began in 1973. And they haven't been hit against nobodies: he's gone yard on Dodgers aces Zack Greinke (2014) and Clayton Kershaw (2015).

Boston Globe LOADED: 08.23.2015

Jorge Posada offers his support to Indians' Mike Aviles as daughter battles leukemia during Yankee Stadium speech

BY Mack Burke

Jorge Posada surprised one Indians player during the ex-Yankee catcher's speech at the Jorge Posada Day ceremony on Saturday.

About halfway through the speech, Posada looked over to Cleveland's dugout and recognized utility man Mike Aviles and his family. Aviles' 4-year-old daughter Adriana was diagnosed with leukemia in May and is currently being treated at Cleveland Clinic. Aviles has missed several games over the last few months to be with his daughter.

Posada paused and looked at Aviles, who was leaning over the railing, to deliver a message of support. Posada pointed at him and gave him a thumbs-up from his podium on the first base line. Aviles tipped his cap to express his thanks for the gesture.

"Everyone knows Posada is a class act," Aviles said after the Yankees' 6-2 win. "I obviously had no idea that he was going to say anything like that. It definitely put a pit in my throat."

Aviles, who is from New York and knows Posada only from when he played against him early in his career, said his eyes began to water when he heard Posada's message. He said it took a lot for him not to walk into the clubhouse and start crying.

Posada's son, Jorge Jr., who caught the ceremonial first pitch of Saturday's game, suffers from craniosynostosis, which is the premature fusion of two or more of the bones in the skull. It causes a change in the normal shape of the head, and if the condition is left untreated, headaches, learning disabilities or eyesight issues could develop, according to the Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

"(Posada) understands everything my family is going through with my daughter, so to have a time like this where it's a moment for him and his family and for him to take a second to be selfless and basically wish well to my family and my daughter, it speaks volumes to me of his character," Aviles said. "I can't thank him enough."

When asked about the health of his daughter, Aviles said, "She's progressing accordingly, and she's full of energy. She's a little trouper, and she always says she has a warrior heart."

SIXTH SENSE

Joe Girardi said that he plans to start Michael Pineda on Wednesday against Houston and transition into a six-man rotation in order to keep Luis Severino in the mix. Pineda will make his first start since July 24, and Masahiro Tanaka will be pushed back to start on Friday.

Pineda has been on the disabled list since July 30 due to a forearm strain. He threw 62 pitches in his final rehab start on Friday with Triple-A Scranton, allowing one earned run on three hits in 4.2 innings.

"I felt good (Friday), I was a little sharper," Pineda said Saturday. "I feel like I'm ready to pitch here."

TEX STILL ON MEND

Mark Teixeira was held out of the Yankees lineup on Saturday for the fifth consecutive game with a bruised right shinbone, but Girardi said after the game that he expects the first baseman to participate in batting practice on Sunday. "He's still hurting," Girardi said. "As much as we want to try to get him back in the lineup, he's still hurting. So I think he's going to take BP (Sunday) and we'll see where we're at."

General manager Brian Cashman indicated earlier this week that Teixeira, who leads the Yanks with 31 homers and 79 RBI, might land on the disabled list after he fouled a ball off his right lower leg on Monday against Minnesota. Cashman termed the injury a "significant" and "bad" bone bruise.

X-rays and other tests last week showed no broken bones, and Teixeira was listed as day-to-day. He hasn't participated in any baseball activities since the injury.

MITCHELL UPDATE

Girardi said "the plan" for reliever and spot starter Bryan Mitchell, who suffered a concussion and a broken nose when he was hit in the face by a line drive on Monday, is for him to throw a bullpen session Sunday. The skipper indicated that the next step for Mitchell would then be facing hitters in a batting-practice session before he's activated. Mitchell will also need to pass the final round of concussion protocol testing. "You want him to get back on a mound," Girardi said. "That's the bottom line."

New York Daily News LOADED: 08.23.2015

On Day Filled With Yankees Pomp, Luis Severino Earns First Win

By SETH BERKMAN AUG. 22, 2015
As a cadre of Yankees greats were being introduced — Bernie Williams, Andy Pettitte, Derek Jeter and so forth — Luis Severino casually jogged in the outfield, occasionally glancing toward the ceremony taking place in front of the pitcher’s mound, which would soon become his stage for the afternoon.

Like those former players, whose plaques are or will soon be displayed in Monument Park at Yankee Stadium, Severino was signed by the Yankees as a teenager and rose through the minors as a highly heralded prospect.

Severino has hundreds of games to go before he would even be considered to receive the pomp that greeted Jorge Posada on Saturday, when the Yankees retired his number. But the day still turned out to be memorable for Severino, who earned his first major league win.

Severino, a 21-year-old rookie, lasted six innings, striking out six, and all nine starting Yankees batters collected a hit by the end of the seventh inning as the team cruised past the Cleveland Indians, 6-2.

“I thought he really pitched a good game without having his best stuff today,” Manager Joe Girardi said. “He got himself out of a number of jams by making some big pitches.”

Since making his major league debut on Aug. 5, Severino has endeared himself to his manager and his teammates with a maturity that calls to mind those hallowed names like Posada and Jeter.

His first three games presented a gantlet of tests that easily could have broken another young player. His first start came against the rival Boston Red Sox, followed by a game at Cleveland in which he was seeking to halt a three-game losing streak. Last Sunday, he was handed the ball in Toronto against the Blue Jays, whom the Yankees are trying to fight off for a division title.

“The more tough situations that he goes through and has success, the more tested he’s going to be,” Girardi said.

Severino has pitched well enough that Girardi said he was not considering moving him out of the rotation for Michael Pineda’s return from the disabled list, which is expected to come Wednesday against the Houston Astros.

Facing the Indians for the second time this month, Severino showed that he was able to make adjustments against a lineup that had already seen his arsenal, limiting Cleveland to one run Saturday.

With one out and runners on first and third, Michael Brantley hit a ground ball to Yankees first baseman Greg Bird, whose throw to shortstop Didi Gregorius for the forceout at second appeared to take him off the bag. Lindor was called out at second, though, spurring a prolonged argument from Indians Manager Terry Francona, who was eventually ejected.

With two outs and runners on first and third, Severino walked two batters after being ahead in the count, and peril loomed. But Severino came through against the next batter, Roberto Perez, inducing a forceout to end the inning.

“I believed he’d get him out,” Girardi said. “That’s why I left him in there.”

A number of former Yankees have also been impressed with Severino, who was replaced by Adam Warren for the seventh inning. After the game, Severino revealed that Mariano Rivera and the other revered stars that he watched from afar earlier in the day had pulled him aside to commend him and wish him luck before he took the mound.

“For the first time, I feel like I belong here,” Severino said through an interpreter.