



Detroit Tigers Clips

Thursday, September 15, 2011

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Daily Transactions

Tigers notes and quotes from Wednesday's win over White Sox

September 15, 2011

By John Lowe / Detroit Free Press

At U.S. Cellular Field, Chicago

What happened: Ryan Raburn and Alex Avila hit pinch-hit homers in the ninth as the Tigers wiped out a three-run deficit at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago. They scored in the 10th, won their 12th straight and put themselves in a strong position to clinch the American League Central title during the four-game series that starts Thursday night in Oakland.

Going for the Downs: That's an old expression for trying to hit a homer — as Avila tried to do in the ninth. He succeeded and chuckled afterward at the thought he now has something to tell Houston's Matt Downs, his college teammate at Alabama. Downs has 12 pinch-hit RBIs, the most in the majors this season, entering today. Avila's homer was his first as a pinch-hitter.

Going deep off Santos: Twice in the 12-game winning streak, the Tigers have overcome a White Sox lead of at least two runs in the ninth. A week ago Saturday, Raburn tied the score with a two-run homer off Santos in the ninth, and one out later, Miguel Cabrera homered to win it. Today, Avila greeted Santos with the tying homer. That meant that three of the last four Tigers hitters to face Santos had homered.

Kicked away: Phil Coke entered for the ninth and invited trouble when he walked his first hitter, Juan Pierre. Moments later, Chicago had runners at first and third with one out. A.J. Pierzynski grounded into an inning-ending double play, spiked his helmet as he crossed first, then kicked it.

Martinez got up again: It seemed the Tigers had missed their comeback chance in the eighth when Victor Martinez, representing the tying run, grounded into a double play. With one out in the 10th, Martinez doubled. Will Rhymes ran for him and scored when Carlos Guillen, the next batter, smacked a single up the middle off Santos.

He almost won: If the White Sox had held the Tigers to fewer than three runs in the ninth, then rookie right-hander Dylan Axelrod would have gotten his first big-league win. Axelrod hadn't even made his big-league debut when the Tigers' winning streak began. Axelrod had one big-league appearance, in relief, before he stepped in today for Jake Peavy, who has been shut down for the season. Axelrod went six innings and allowed two runs.

Three stars: 1. Avila, 2. Guillen, 3. Axelrod.

Closing in on an AL Central title, the surging Tigers rallied for three runs in the ninth off Chicago's bullpen to prevent rookie Dylan Axelrod from earning his first career win.

Guillen also hit a solo homer for Detroit, which hadn't won 12 in a row since 1934 — when Hank Greenberg, Charlie Gehringer and the Tigers lost a seven-game World Series to the St. Louis Cardinals' famous Gas House Gang.

Jose Valverde finished up in the ninth to remain perfect in 44 save opportunities this year.

Ryan Raburn's pinch-hit homer with one out off Chris Sale brought the Tigers within two. Magglio Ordonez walked, chasing Sale. Alex Avila pinch-hit for Andy Dirks and hit Sergio Santos' second pitch into the seats in right-center to tie it.

Santos (4-5) blew his sixth save of the season.

Miguel Cabrera singled, doubled and scored a run for Detroit.

Tigers starter Brad Penny allowed five runs — one earned — and eight hits over six innings. Phil Coke (3-9) threw a scoreless ninth for the win.

Alexei Ramirez laced a two-run double and Paul Konerko added a two-run single during Chicago's four-run second. Konerko reached 100 RBIs for the sixth time in his career.

Chicago's four unearned runs in the second were set up by Penny's error on Brent Morel's sacrifice bunt, loading the bases.

Chicago tacked on a run in the sixth when Gordon Beckham doubled home Alejandro De Aza.

The Tigers have won 22 of their last 26 games overall and 21 of 27 against the White Sox.

The Tigers can clinch the A.L. Central title Thursday night if Cleveland were to lose tonight.

The Tigers' magic number to eliminate Chicago is one. Starting Thursday, any combination of Tigers wins and White Sox losses totaling two means the White Sox are eliminated.

The Tigers' magic number to eliminate Cleveland was three going into the Indians' game tonight in Texas. Entering tonight, any combination of Tigers wins and Indians losses totaling three means the Indians are eliminated.

When both the White Sox and Indians are eliminated, the Tigers clinch the A.L. Central title.

NOTES: The Tigers can clinch the AL Central during their four-game series at Oakland this weekend. In Thursday's opener, Detroit will send Max Scherzer to the mound to face Brandon McCarthy. Scherzer has allowed just two runs in 14 innings this month.

Tigers-A's game Saturday will now be televised

September 15, 2011

By James Jahnke / Detroit Free Press

UPDATE: The Tigers announced today that the game will be picked up as part of Fox's national coverage and will be available on Channel 2 in Detroit.

Wouldn't it be something if the Tigers clinch the division Saturday -- and no one in Detroit can watch? It's possible, though not likely.

The Tigers' game at Oakland starts at 4 p.m., which falls within Fox's exclusive window for its national game of the week. That usually means another game cannot be shown on local television.

But there's precedent for Fox to play nice and waive the blackout for big games. It happened when the Rangers clinched their division last season.

We're told that "the matter is being discussed and options are being explored" -- should the situation arise.

John Blake, the Texas Rangers' executive vice president for communications, said his franchise lobbied to get its clinching game televised last season.

"We thought it was very important that our fans have a chance to see our only clinching game of the season. MLB and Fox did work with us on this," he said.

Tigers rest Alex Avila day after sparks flew from mask

September 15, 2011

By John Lowe / Detroit Free Press

CHICAGO — The day after another foul ball to his mask generated sparks, Alex Avila gets today off.

“A no-brainer,” Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. “I was a little worried about Alex getting smoked in the face all the time. You get concussions that way. That may sound crazy, but when you take some of those shots....”

Leyland repeatedly has said that he’s never seen a catcher get hit by as many foul balls as Avila this season. He suspects it might be because Justin Verlander and Max Scherzer throw hard and have lots of pitches nicked but not hit well.

With Joaquin Benoit — yet another hard thrower — pitching in the eighth inning Tuesday night, Avila took a foul ball that generated sparks off his mask. Leyland said he’d never seen that happen to a catcher.

Leyland said he kidded Avila about the sparks this morning.

He gave Avila specific instructions for what to do on his day off today.

“I told him, ‘I want you to be treated like a king today,’ Leyland said. “ ‘Don’t do anything. Get a hot whirlpool. Then get a cold whirlpool. Then have a rubdown. Just relax. Just take it easy and sit on the bench and second-guess like you have all year.’ ”

Today marks only the third game in nearly six weeks that Avila hasn’t started at catcher. As on the other two such occasions, Omir Santos is starting at catcher. Avila has become something of an iron man because Victor Martinez — the Tigers’ only other catcher until Santos could be recalled from the minors — hasn’t caught since early August because of a knee injury.

Daily list: Tigers' winning streaks

September 15, 2011

By Free Press Staff / Detroit Free Press

Wednesday's victory was the Tigers' 12th straight -- their longest winning streak since 1934. Here's a look at the team's longest winning streaks.

1) Stephen Tulloch

1934

The Tigers won 14 games from July 31 to Aug. 14.

2

2011

The current streak of 12 is now the second longest, going back to Sept. 2.

3

1968

Detroit had another September streak, winning 11 straight Sept. 9-21.

4

The 10s

Five times the Tigers have won 10 straight -- Sept. 1-11, 1949; Sept. 16-24, 1946; June 30-July 7, 1935; Aug. 10-20, 1927; and Aug. 24-Sept. 7, 1925.

Justin Verlander featured on cover of Sports Illustrated

September 15, 2011

By Free Press Staff / Detroit Free Press

Justin Verlander made a regional cover for Sports Illustrated this week. Under his name on the front is "MVP" with a qualifier headline that reads "at least he should be." Verlander (23-5) has won his last 11 starts. Speaking of the Tigers, they released their 2012 home schedule, which includes interleague home games against the Pirates, Rockies and Cardinals. The Tigers open the season Thursday, April 5, against the Red Sox.

Detroit 6, Chicago 5 (10 innings) Tigers have dozen reasons to celebrate

September 15, 201

By John Lowe / Detroit Free Press

CHICAGO -- Alex Avila was having a rare day off, and the Tigers were having a rare off day. They trailed by three runs with one out in the ninth inning Wednesday. It looked like their winning streak -- the one that basically has clinched the American League Central title -- would end at 11 games.

Then Ryan Raburn hit a pinch-hit homer, and Magglio Ordoñez drew a pinch-hit walk. Avila pinch-hit against right-hander Sergio Santos, representing the tying run.

"I was going to take one swing to really try to drive the ball," Avila said. "It's tough to try to hit a home run."

Avila drove Santos' 1-0 pitch over the fence in deep right-center. Tie game. In the 10th, Carlos Guillen, completing his first three-hit game since July of last year, singled home the go-ahead run.

Jose Valverde pitched a perfect 10th, and the Tigers had their 12th straight win, 6-5.

They have the franchise's longest winning streak since the Tigers matched the club record with 14 straight wins in 1934, the year Sparky Anderson was born.

With their fourth straight sweep of a Central Division rival, the Tigers are on the brink of the title.

"Up to this point, we're not backing into it," manager Jim Leyland said. "We've met the challenges pretty good. That's pretty impressive."

Guillen proving he can still be clutch

Guillen looked like a nice fit for the Tigers' playoff roster Wednesday. He got three hits -- including a homer and the game-winning single -- in his first start in a week and a half, thus emphasizing how he's a switch-hitting veteran who can get big hits even when he hasn't played in a while.

But what about Al Albuquerque?

"We've got to iron out the Albuquerque situation -- I'm not comfortable with that just yet," Leyland said. "I'm worried about that. I don't want to blow the guy out."

For Albuquerque's second straight outing, Leyland and head athletic trainer Kevin Rand had to go to the mound because the rookie right-hander seemed to be favoring a problem in his hip or groin area. In both cases, he stayed in the game and finished a scoreless inning.

"Hopefully, we're going to get ourselves into a situation where you can't be iffy," Leyland said.

He clearly meant that the playoff roster can't include anyone whose health is questionable. If Albuquerque had to beg out of a playoff game with a lingering injury, it could cost the Tigers that game.

It is almost certain that the Tigers will play a team from the American League East when the playoffs open two weeks from Friday. But they might not know until the final few days before the playoffs which team they will play and whether they will open the first round at home or on the road.

To open the playoffs at home, the Tigers must have one of the two best records of the three AL divisional champions. The Yankees, who lead the league in wins, likely will finish with one of those top two records.

Presuming they do, the Tigers will have to finish with more wins than the AL West champion to have the home-field advantage in the first round.

The Tigers have two more wins than AL West leader Texas and five more than Los Angeles, a close second to Texas in the West.

If the Tigers get home field for the first round, they almost certainly will host Boston or Tampa Bay, who are competing for the wild-card playoff spot.

If the Tigers don't have home-field advantage for the best-of-five first round, they almost certainly will play the Yankees in a series that will open in New York. So no matter how soon the Tigers clinch the division, they'll have an incentive to keep winning to get home field for the first round and perhaps even for the entire AL playoffs if the Yankees falter in the regular season's remaining few weeks.

Guillen turns 36 the day the playoffs start. It could be a happy birthday if he's on the roster.

"It's not my decision, and there's a long way to go," Guillen said. "I'm trying to stay ready for any kind of situation."

His manager hasn't forgotten him.

"I'm happier for (Guillen) than anybody else in here today," Leyland said after the game. "He's been working like everybody else. He's a proud guy. He knows he hasn't played for 10 days. He wants to show people he's a very capable player."

Tigers' Justin Verlander refusing to rest on his laurels

September 15, 2011

By John Lowe / Detroit Free Press

CHICAGO -- Justin Verlander is 23-5, and he's trying to get more consistent.

When he wins, he said, he can still have something to work on. That has been the case in recent weeks.

"I took a step forward from where I had been the last two or three starts," Verlander said after Tuesday night's 5-0 win over Chicago. "The positive is there were no runs on the board. The negative is I was just a hair off. However, it's probably the best I've felt in the last five or six starts. I really felt I was starting to get back into that rhythm I've been trying to find for a while."

Verlander added: "What I'm doing this year is something I'll look back at. I know where I'm at, and I know what I'm doing. But at the same time, I don't pay attention. Once the season is over, I'll look back."

Verlander said "it means a lot" to be the Tigers' nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, which goes annually to a big-league player who exemplifies how Clemente, the late Pirates outfielder, made a difference on and off the field.

Verlander has hosted wounded veterans at each of his home starts since May. "You don't do it to get recognized," he said. "It's a nice feeling to help. I'm in a situation where I can do that."

According to research by the Elias Sports Bureau, Verlander has tied the all-time club mark for consecutive starts won.

It was already known he had matched the longest such streak since 1919. Elias' research shows that no Tiger before that won 11 straight starts. So Verlander is in a tie with left-hander Hal Newhouser (1946) and left-hander Earl Whitehill (1930) for the most straight starts won by a Tigers pitcher.

Starting with his no-hitter in early May, Verlander is 21-2, and one of the losses was 1-0.

NOTEBOOK: Manager Jim Leyland phoned Tim Wakefield and congratulated him on his 200th career win, achieved in the Red Sox's victory over Toronto on Tuesday night. Leyland was Wakefield's first big-league manager when the knuckleballer broke in with the Pirates. ... Third baseman Nick Castellanos (Class A West Michigan) and left-hander Drew Smyly (Class A Lakeland and Double-A Erie) have been named the Tigers' minor league player and pitcher of the year.

Tigers' 2012 Opening Day is against Red Sox

September 15, 2011

By Detroit News Staff / The Detroit News

The Tigers will open the 2012 season with a six-game home stand against the Boston Red Sox and Tampa Bay Rays.

Opening day is Thursday, April 5 against Boston at 1 p.m. The Tigers announced their 2012 home schedule on Wednesday.

The Tigers' home interleague opponents in 2012 are Pittsburgh, Colorado and St. Louis.

Fans interested in making a deposit on full-season ticket plans should call 313-471-BALL (2255).

The Tigers will give away a 2012 magnet schedule to the first 10,000 fans at the Sept. 24 game against Baltimore at Comerica Park.

Sources: Tigers' possible clincher game Saturday will be on Fox

September 15, 2011

By Lynn Henning / The Detroit News

Chicago — A possible playoff-clinching game for the Tigers will not face a television blackout Saturday against the A's in Oakland.

Sources close to the team confirmed Wednesday an arrangement will be finalized with Fox and Major League Baseball officials that will permit Fox to telecast the game. An official announcement is set for today.

The game between the Tigers and A's begins at 4:07 p.m. and was to bump against Fox's national telecast of the Rays-Red Sox game at Boston. National telecasts on Fox and on ESPN must, according to the networks' contracts, avoid conflict with local telecasts of other big-league games.

That would have wiped out Fox's telecast, but things changed — the Tigers kept winning.

With their 6-5 victory Wednesday over the White Sox at U.S. Cellular Field, the Tigers moved to the cusp of clinching the American League Central Division, a playoff spot that should be secured during a four-game series that begins tonight in Oakland.

Tigers will be 'awful careful' with Verlander as season ends

September 15, 2011

By Lynn Henning / The Detroit News

Chicago — Justin Verlander's pitch-count was at 106 when he left Tuesday night's game at U.S. Cellular Field. Two innings later, his victory total was at 23.

In manager Jim Leyland's mind, those are numbers that could, and should, be repeated if Verlander and his bosses do their jobs and keep one eye on an ace right-hander's health.

"I want him to win a bunch of Cy Youngs," Leyland said before Wednesday's afternoon game against the White Sox. "I'm going to be awful careful with him."

Verlander is viewed by most national baseball analysts as a virtual lock to win this year's American League Cy Young Award. He is a heavy candidate in the Most Valuable Player voting.

Leyland played minor-league baseball during an era when pitch-counts were irrelevant and for years managed in the minors with the same disinterest in how many pitches a starter might throw in a game.

But when new science, and multi-million dollar investments, began to change the way teams looked at pitchers and workloads, Leyland adjusted.

He and the Tigers have been operating on fairly strict pitch-count limits, which was a policy promoted when Dave Dombrowski arrived in 2001 as the team's new president and general manager.

Verlander has rarely been pushed into the 130-pitch zone and more often is dismissed when his count approaches 120. Wednesday night, a pitcher who has already thrown a league-high 236 innings was excused after seven innings.

"If you're geared to pitch-counts in the minor leagues, you better be geared to pitch-counts in the major leagues," Leyland said as the Tigers got ready for what they hoped would be their 12th consecutive victory in the series finale at Chicago.

Asked how he thought Verlander was handling a steady stream of national attention, Leyland said:

"He's been terrific. He's swamped with questions. He's had to stand there when everybody in the world wants to talk about why (he's) so good. And he's been a great teammate."

Tigers rally past White Sox, push win streak to 12

September 15, 2011

By Lynn Henning / The Detroit News

Chicago— It wasn't just Ryan Raburn belting another homer in the ninth inning of a game the Tigers should not have won that proved how good they might be.

And it wasn't just Alex Avila, on what was supposed to be his day off, crushing a ninth-inning pitch 402 feet over the center field wall to tie the score of a game that had been all but over.

The Tigers' 12th straight victory — a 6-5, 10-inning victory over the White Sox on Wednesday, which gave them their longest winning streak since 1934 — was best viewed by how manager Jim Leyland maneuvered his players in the ninth and 10th innings.

Ramon Santiago played shortstop, third base, and second base in the span of those two innings. Magglio Ordonez pinch-hit for catcher Omir Santos in the ninth, drew a walk, and was replaced in the nine-spot by new center fielder Austin Jackson.

Brandon Inge pinch-hit for Andy Dirks in the ninth but never saw a pitch. Avila pinch-hit for Inge. Avila ended up catching and batting leadoff after slamming his tying homer.

Jhonny Peralta pinch-hit for third baseman Wilson Betemit in the ninth and played shortstop in the 10th. Will Rhymes pinch-ran for Victor Martinez. Danny Worth ended up playing third base, replacing second baseman Carlos Guillen — who had homered and singled in the winning run — with Santiago moving to second.

"I asked Worth if he could catch," Leyland said as clubhouse music rocked in celebration. "And I said, 'If you're smart, you'll say yes.'"

"We were out of players. I was going to have to use a pitcher as an outfielder. I'm not going to tell you who, but it wasn't gonna be (Justin) Verlander."

But it was going to be a victory for the Tigers. Their games haven't ended any other way for the past two weeks. Tonight they begin a four-game road series against the A's, where they are likely to clinch their first division title in 24 years.

Wednesday's drama was simply the latest peek into a world the Tigers have not experienced since the 1934 team won 14 straight.

They did it, once again, with a categorical whipping of a team that was viewed only days ago as a serious threat to the Tigers playoff chances.

Brad Penny started and allowed one earned run in six innings.

The bullpen had its usual flawless day, right down to the ninth-inning double play winning pitcher Phil Coke lured from A.J. Pierzynski just as the White Sox were poised to win with a walk-off run.

Guillen, who had not played in nine days, smacked a home run a winning single, another single and hit the ball hard five times.

Raburn continued his outlandish second-half antics with his fourth career pinch-hit homer.

Martinez, who put away Tuesday's game with a big home run, lashed a double down the left-field line in the 10th, gave way to Rhymes, who would score the winning run one at-bat later.

"You can pick that game apart and find all kinds of things that happened," Leyland said, again brushing off invitations to talk about a historic Tigers streak.

"I would say one thing. Up to this point, we've met the challenges pretty good."

Avila certainly has.

Leyland, whose team is 25 games over .500 (87-62), told Avila before Wednesday's game to "treat himself like a king." This was to be a genuine off-day for a catcher who for the past two months has worked like a CPA at tax time. He has taken physical abuse of such scope that during Tuesday night's game sparks flew from Avila's mask when A.J. Pierzynski's foul ball tore like a laser into the metal bars.

Scientists probably have an explanation for how that happened, but the Tigers have been generating so much energy and heat of late that it's not entirely surprising Avila's mask looked like a Roman candle.

Avila launched his own rocket Wednesday, another of his, taut swings that sent a Santos fastball deep into the green seats in right-center.

"You've got to have some luck," Avila said as he slipped into a suit for the flight to California. "But we're obviously enjoying it. The key is to not take it for granted.

"Winning baseball games in the big leagues is hard to do."

For earthly teams, anyway. The Tigers, of late, make you wonder from what planet they recently arrived.

On deck: A's

Series: Four games, tonight-Sunday, Oakland Coliseum, Oakland

First pitch: 10:07 tonight, 4:07 p.m. Saturday-Sunday

TV/radio: FSD tonight-Friday and Sunday/WXYT tonight-Friday, 97.1 Saturday, 1270 Sunday

Series probables: Tonight — Max Scherzer (14-8, 4.27) vs. Brandon McCarthy (8-8, 3.45); Friday — Doug Fister (8-13, 3.06) vs. Trevor Cahill (11-13, 4.32); Saturday — Rick Porcello (14-8, 4.83) vs. Gio Gonzalez (13-12, 3.41); Sunday — Justin Verlander (23-5, 2.36) vs. Guillermo Moscoso (8-8, 3.41)

Scouting report

Scherzer: Right-hander was mowing them down a year ago during the second half. Less consistent in 2011, but can be very good.

McCarthy: Another typical A's starter. A right-hander who throws hard and has good secondary pitches and location.

Tigers old-timers kick in key at-bats

September 15, 2011

By Lynn Henning / The Detroit News

Chicago— The Tigers have a couple veterans who figured big in Wednesday's stunning, 10-inning, 6-5 victory over the White Sox.

Carlos Guillen was the headliner. A creaky-kneed second baseman, only two weeks from turning 36, got his first start in nine days and walloped a home run and two singles, including the winning single that scored Will Rhymes.

Magglio Ordonez pinch-hit in the ninth inning of a game the Tigers trailed 5-2 going into their final at-bat. He drew a walk ahead of Alex Avila's 402-foot home run that tied it.

"I'm happier for him than anybody," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said of Guillen, who has spent most of 2011 on the disabled list and who was basically shelved last week because of his limited range.

"He's been working, he's a proud guy, a pro."

Ordonez, 37, has also been used on a part-time basis after roster limits expanded Sept. 1 and allowed Leyland more flexibility on defense.

But the savvy and experience each hitter brings at a game's most critical moments is why Leyland is happy to have both players on hand.

"Magglio got a huge walk," Leyland said of Ordonez's work against White Sox closer Chris Sale in the ninth, one batter after Ryan Raburn's homer had cut Chicago's lead to 5-3.

"I've been feeling good at the plate," said Guillen, whose July 31 home run against Angels ace Jered Weaver appeared to ignite the Tigers second-half fury. "Just trying to stay in shape and be quick with the bat."

Ailing Alburquerque?

Leyland is concerned language, as well as a pitcher's desire to play through pain, might have put right-hander Al Alburquerque in a tough spot.

Alburquerque has been pitching with a sore hip that he has insisted is just fine.

But after he pitched a scoreless eighth inning Wednesday, Alburquerque's body language told a different story.

"We've got to iron out the Alburquerque situation," said Leyland, who has been speaking with Alburquerque in concert with Miguel Cabrera and Ordonez as a means to better communicate with his primarily Spanish-speaking reliever.

"I'm just concerned from a health standpoint. I saw him grab (his side) three times after three pitches. I don't want to blow this guy out. (He) is a very valuable piece of our bullpen."

Penny's perspective

Brad Penny could appreciate sentiments from those who didn't see the game, in which he allowed five runs.

But Penny, in fact, pitched well. His biggest mistake was bobbling a second-inning sacrifice bunt by Brett Morel that set up back-to-back, two-out, two-run singles good for four unearned White Sox runs.

"I thought I threw a lot better today," Penny said. "I made pitches when I needed to."

Skipper strategy

The situation was desperate when Leyland visited the mound in the ninth after Juan Pierre worked Phil Coke for a leadoff walk.

A sacrifice bunt was in order — or was it? — and Leyland wanted Coke and his infielders to be prepared either way.

Leyland told Coke to "not just lay something in there" for batter Alexei Ramirez .

Leyland was aware White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen knew of Leyland's plans to walk the next batter, Paul Konerko . Coke needed to make tough pitches in the event Ramirez wasn't bunting.

As it turned out, Ramirez sacrificed Pierre to second. But after Konerko walked and Pierre stole third, Coke got A.J. Pierzynski to hit into an inning-ending double play.

Chevy has standing offer for Tiger Stadium site upkeep

September 15, 2011

Louis Aguilar / The Detroit News

Chevrolet says its offer to fix up the baseball diamond at the old Tiger Stadium site still stands, despite being rejected by the city of Detroit, a company spokesman said Wednesday.

Last month, the Detroit Economic Growth Corp. rejected an unsolicited offer by the General Motors Co. division to take care of the diamond free of charge to let youths play baseball there.

The diamond is all that is left of the Corktown site, which was demolished more than two years ago after the Tigers left following the 1999 season. The Tigers have played at Comerica Park in downtown since 2000. Chevrolet officials were surprised at the city's refusal but kept the offer open when the news of the rejection leaked Wednesday.

"This is our hometown. We know a lot of employees here would be happy to volunteer to work on the field," said Mike Albano, a Chevrolet spokesman. "We will respect the city's decision."

But Albano reiterated, "If the decision (by Detroit officials) were to change, the invitation still stands."

Officials from the Detroit Economic Growth Corp. did not return calls Wednesday.

The city continues to strike out in the public relations game because of its handling of the former Tiger Stadium site, a marketing expert said.

"This is a fastball right down the plate, and Detroit looks like it's swinging at it with a blindfold," said Michael Bernacchi, a marketing professor at University of Detroit Mercy.

"There is no way the city of Detroit wins this battle — in terms of public perception. Their long-term vision of the site has always sounded very reasonable and solid — that they need to find a feasible development. But this sounds like such a reasonable short-term solution by a venerable brand, and they missed it. It's going to dig, gnaw at that perception out there that the city didn't do all it could."

Chevrolet was willing to pay and provide employee volunteers and work with the nonprofit Old Tiger Stadium Conservancy to preserve the diamond for youth baseball. Chevrolet was in informal talks with the conservancy group to determine ways they could work together over the long term, both sides said.

But the city is looking to find a developer who will find a new use for the site, which has access to local freeways, and turned down the offer.

The decision opened an old wound for Tiger Stadium fans, many of whom tried and failed to preserve the stadium.

"It is disappointing," said Thomas Linn, president of the conservancy.

Tiger Stadium fans like urban planner Francis Grunow were quick to lash out at the city's decision on various social media sites.

"Come on Mr. Mayor ...," Grunow wrote in a post on Facebook within an hour of the story breaking Wednesday. "Chevy's offer still stands. Do it for the kids."

Tigers to open 2012 season at home against Red Sox, end season at Royals

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO -- The Detroit Tigers will open the 2012 season at home against the Boston Red Sox and end it on the road against the Kansas City Royals.

The 2012 schedule was released today and includes two visits to Comerica Park by the New York Yankees. The Tigers open the season at home April 5 with a three-game series against the Red Sox and will play a three-game series against Tampa Bay before their first road trip of the season. They will host the Colorado Rockies, the St. Louis Cardinals and the Pittsburgh Pirates for interleague series at Comerica Park.

The Tigers will play road interleague games at the Chicago Cubs, the Cincinnati Reds and the Pirates.

The Tigers will give away 2012 magnet schedules to the first 10,000 fans to enter the park Sept. 24 for their game against the Baltimore Orioles. Fans can also pick up a 2012 home schedule at all the remaining home games this season at Comerica Park.

Tigers to start Brad Penny, rest several regulars in series finale against White Sox

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO -- CHICAGO -- Detroit Tigers manager Jim Leyland left several of his regulars out of the starting lineup today. Catcher Alex Avila was one of them.

Leyland passed along a message to Avila prior to the game.

“I said, 'Look, I don't normally do this, but I want you to be treated like a king today. Don't do anything. Go in there and get a hot whirlpool, then get a cold whirlpool ... then get rubbed down. Just relax,'” Leyland said, then snuck another joke in. “ 'Just take it easy and second-guess like you've been doing all (expletive) year.'

That's what I told him.”

Leyland gave a rapid-fire explanation of what led him to alter his lineup for the game.

“He was a no-brainer,” Leyland said of Avila. “Jhonny Peralta plays all the time. We've got a long trip to Oakland. I'm going to put (Ramon) Santiago at short. (Carlos) Guillen needs a game. He needs to get some at-bats.

“(Austin) Jackson needs a blow. Long trip to Oakland. He's gone through the whole grind. He's leading off against those nasty guys every night. Give him a blow. (Don) Kelly needs a game. That's just the way it is. ...

“Day game after a night game. They're grinding it out. Hopefully I'll reach a point at some point where I can give (Miguel) Cabrera a whole day off. I'd like to get to that situation, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.”

Brad Penny (10-10, 5.19 ERA) will start for the Tigers. White Sox right-hander Dylan Axelrod (0-0, 0.00 ERA) will make his first start and second appearance in the majors.

Here are the starting lineups:

Detroit Tigers

1. Andy Dirks, CF
2. Ramon Santiago, SS
3. Delmon Young, LF
4. Miguel Cabrera, 1B
5. Victor Martinez, DH
6. Carlos Guillen, 2B
7. Wilson Betemit, 3B
8. Don Kelly, RF
9. Omir Santos, C

Chicago White Sox

1. Juan Pierre, LF
2. Alexei Ramirez, SS
3. Paul Konerko, 1B
4. A.J. Pierzynski, C
5. Dayan Viciedo, DH
6. Alex Rios, CF
7. Alejandro De Aza, RF
8. Brent Morel, 3B
9. Gordon Beckham, 2B

Tigers prospects Nick Castellanos, Drew Smyly earn postseason honors

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO -- Third baseman Nick Castellanos and left-handed pitcher Drew Smyly have been named the Detroit Tigers Minor League Player and Pitcher of the Year.

Castellanos hit .312 with 36 doubles, three triples, seven home runs and 76 RBIs in 135 games with Single-A West Michigan.

Smyly went a combined 11-6 with a 2.07 ERA and 130 strikeouts in 126 innings for Single-A Lakeland and Double-A Erie.

Castellanos was selected in the first round of the 2010 draft, while Smyly was a second-round pick the same year.

Tigers' Alex Avila: 'That looked like a firecracker coming off my mask'

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO -- Alex Avila did not see the replay of the sparks flying off his catcher's mask until he returned to the team hotel after the game late Tuesday night.

When he returned to the Detroit Tigers clubhouse Wednesday morning, he was still shaking his head.

"That was nuts," Avila said. "That was absolutely nuts."

The incident took place in the eighth inning Tuesday night, when A.J. Pierzynski fouled off an 0-2 fastball from Tigers relief pitcher Joaquin Benoit. The ball smacked into Avila's mask and sent sparks flying in all directions.

"It was ridiculous," Avila said. "That looked like a firecracker coming off my mask."

Avila did not see the sparks at the time but saw replays on the Internet later that night.

"I hope none of the tape the trainers use is flammable," he joked. "I've got to check my mask out. I didn't notice anything. I left my mask on. I didn't feel anything jar or break on my mask. I don't know. Maybe there are some burn marks on my mask."

Tigers manager Jim Leyland, a former catcher in the minor leagues, was asked about the incident.

"I was kidding him about it this morning," he said. "I said, 'Sparks were flying out of my (expletive) when you struck out.'"

Avila went 0-for-3 with a strikeout in his team's 5-0 victory in that game.

Tigers' Jim Leyland says hard work is paying off for outfielder Magglio Ordonez

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO -- Detroit Tigers manager Jim Leyland raved this morning about how hard 37-year-old outfielder Magglio Ordonez has been working with strength and conditioning coordinator Javair Gillett and how good Ordonez has looked lately.

"It's hard to get motivated sometimes when you're that age to go out and do the necessary things, but Magglio's been doing great," Leyland said. "He's got more spry in his legs right now than he's had.

"Some of that's probably from not playing and being a little rested, but still. His bat's quicker. He looks good to me right now."

Leyland expects that hard work to pay off even more down the road.

"I just have a sneaking suspicion that Magglio still has a few really good moments in him," Leyland said.

Ordonez currently has a 12-game hitting streak going.

Tigers' Jim Leyland: Justin Verlander has been 'terrific' in dealing with MVP, Cy Young talk

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO – Justin Verlander has been answering questions for weeks about whether a pitcher should be named the league's Most Valuable Player.

This week, Sports Illustrated put him on the cover and declared that he should be the American League MVP. He seems to be a lock to win the AL Cy Young Award.

Tigers manager Jim Leyland said Wednesday he appreciates that Verlander has stayed focused on the task at hand, which is the team's pursuit of its first division title since 1987.

“He's been absolutely terrific,” Leyland said. “He's swamped with questions. It's hard to stand there with everybody in the world wanting to talk to you and find out why you're so good. That's hard to do. He's done a tremendous job of handling everything. He's been a tremendous teammate. That's the impressive thing to me.” Leyland said it is tough to balance discussions about individual awards with the best interests of the team.

“You don't want to downplay it, but I think you have to be careful because all we do as managers is preach all our life about the team and winning games,” he said. “That's what it's about. That's what it's all about. To me, all that stuff is a special personal achievement that you put somewhere else.”

For the record, Leyland said he believes Verlander has been the most valuable pitcher in the American League – “without question,” he said – and believes Jose Valverde should be in the discussion for the top five. He said that Verlander is also a top candidate for MVP.

“I want Justin Verlander to win the MVP,” he said. “Why wouldn't I?”

Still, the main focus is all about team goals.

“This is about winning games,” Leyland said. “When you start talking about that stuff and putting too much emphasis on it as a manager then you're preaching against everything you believe and everything you stand for.”

Carlos Guillen knocks in winning run in 10th inning as Tigers win 12th in a row

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO – The Detroit Tigers just cannot lose right now.

The Tigers trailed by three runs and were down to their final two outs Wednesday afternoon before rallying for a 6-5 victory in 10 innings against the Chicago White Sox.

Carlos Guillen, who has played sparingly this month, singled in the winning run in the top of the 10th inning.

Guillen also homered in the second inning to knock in the first run of the game.

The Tigers trailed 5-2 in the ninth before Ryan Raburn and Alex Avila hit pinch-hit home runs to tie the game 5-5.

Victor Martinez doubled with one out in the 10th and was replaced by Will Rhymes, who came around to score on the single by Guillen.

The Tigers extended their winning streak to 12 games, the longest streak for the Tigers since the 1934 team strung together 14 consecutive wins.

The Tigers' magic number to clinch their first division title since 1987 shrunk to three games against the Cleveland Indians, pending the outcome of their game tonight, and to just one over the White Sox.

That means the White Sox will be eliminated with their next loss or the next Tigers victory.

The Tigers opened the scoring when Guillen, making just his second start since returning from the disabled list Sept. 1, hit his third home run of the season to lead off the second.

The White Sox loaded the bases with no outs in the second on a single, a walk and an error on starting pitcher Brad Penny on a sacrifice bunt attempt. Alexei Ramirez delivered a two-out double later in the inning to make it 2-1, and Paul Konerko followed with a two-run single to make it 4-1.

All four runs were unearned.

The Tigers scored a run in the sixth to make it 4-2. Miguel Cabrera doubled to open the inning, then came around to score when Alex Rios mishandled the ball on a single to center by Martinez.

The White Sox bounced right back with a run in the bottom of the inning to make it 5-2.

After Raburn hit a solo home run in the ninth, Magglio Ordonez drew a pinch-hit one-out walk to bring the tying run to the plate.

That's when Avila entered as a pinch-hitter and sent a Sergio Santos offering over the wall in right field to tie the game 5-5.

The White Sox put runners on first and third with one out in the bottom of the inning against Phil Coke, but A.J. Pierzynski hit into an inning-ending double play to push the game to extra innings.

Pierzynski slammed his helmet to the ground as he crossed first, then sent the helmet spinning toward second base when he kicked it after hit hit the dirt.

Penny left after six innings after allowing five runs – one earned – on eight hits and three walks. He struck out three. Coke (3-9) earned the victory and Jose Valverde picked up his 44th save.

The Tigers struggled against rookie right-hander Dylan Axelrod, who was making his first major-league start. Axelrod struck out eight and allowed just two runs on six hits and two walks in six innings pitched.

Wilson Betemit struck out in each of his three at-bats against Axelrod.

Report: Tigers-A's game Saturday afternoon will be televised on Fox 2

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

CHICAGO -- It appears that the Detroit Tigers-Oakland A's game Saturday afternoon will be televised after all. The Tigers said Wednesday afternoon that "progress is being made" with efforts to get the game on television. Later in the day, Ryan Ermanni, a sports reporter at Fox 2 in Detroit, reported on his Twitter page that the game will be televised on Fox 2.

The game is scheduled to start at 4:07 p.m. Fox holds exclusive broadcast rights during that time slot, so the game has been scheduled all season to be untelevised.

But once it became apparent that the Tigers might have a shot at clinching their first division title since 1987 with a win in that game, efforts were made to get it on television, and it sounds like they paid off.

Carlos Guillen bat, glove key to Detroit Tigers winning 'freak game'

September 15, 2011

By Chris Iott / Booth Newspapers

It is difficult to name a Detroit Tigers position player who has played less during the team's current winning streak than Carlos Guillen.

It is difficult to name one who contributed more to keeping that streak going.

Guillen hit a home run, turned a key double play and knocked in the winning run in the 10th inning Wednesday afternoon as the Tigers rallied for a 6-5 victory against the Chicago White Sox.

"You play nine innings and sometimes anything can happen," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "It just happened today. It was one of those freak games. They don't happen very often."

The Tigers trailed by three runs and were down to their final two outs before pinch-hit home runs by Ryan Raburn and Alex Avila tied the game in the top of the ninth.

Detroit extended its winning streak to 12 games, the longest streak for the Tigers since the 1934 team strung together 14 consecutive wins. The Tigers, who have won 22 of their past 26 games, likely will clinch their first division title since 1987 during their four-game series in Oakland that begins Thursday.

"I will say this," Leyland said. "Up to this point, we're not backing into it. ... Up to this point — and I stress 'up to this point' — we've met the challenges pretty good."

Tigers starter Brad Penny seemed baffled by the way someone seems to step forward to make winners of the Tigers every single day.

"This team's special," Penny said. "This is my 12th year and I haven't seen this going on too many times."

Leyland seemed to choke up a bit when talking about how happy he was for Guillen, who was making just his second start since returning from the disabled list Sept. 1.

"I couldn't be happier for him," Leyland said. "I'm happier for him than anybody else today."

Leyland is often criticized by fans for being too willing to play everyone on his roster. And in this game, he did just that. In the 10th inning, he was left without a position player on the bench.

Leyland said he was pondering which pitcher he would send into the game to play the outfield in case of an injury, and also asked third baseman Danny Worth a question he likely didn't see coming.

"I asked Worth if he could catch," Leyland said. "Before he answered, I said, 'If you're smart, you'll say yes.' "

Guillen said the fact Leyland spreads playing time around has helped the team.

"Skipper is giving confidence to everybody," Guillen said. "He believes in the players. That's pretty good."

Leyland left several regulars out of the starting lineup, but he sent several of them into the game as pinch hitters in the ninth.

The Tigers trailed 5-2 with one out in the ninth when Raburn hit a pinch-hit solo home run to cut the deficit to 5-3. After Magglio Ordonez, pinch-hitting for catcher Omir Santos, drew a walk, Avila hit a two-run home run to right field to tie the game.

Avila was pinch hitting for Brandon Inge, who had been announced as a pinch-hitter for Andy Dirks. But Inge never batted as Leyland opted to replace him with Avila when the White Sox changed pitchers.

The White Sox put runners on first and third with one out in the bottom of the ninth against reliever Phil Coke, but Guillen started a 4-6-3 double play to end the inning on a grounder to second by A.J. Pierzynski.

Pierzynski slammed his helmet to the ground as he crossed first, then sent it spinning in the direction of second base with an awkward running kick.

The rest of the White Sox likely know the frustration Pierzynski felt after the Tigers swept them for the second time this month.

The Cleveland Indians and Minnesota Twins likely understand as well. The Tigers swept both of those teams between their two sweeps of the White Sox.

Guillen played for the Seattle Mariners in 2001, when they won 116 regular-season games and advanced to the AL Championship Series. He said the feeling in the Tigers clubhouse is familiar.

"It's a similar feeling," Guillen said. "Every day, a different guy comes through with a clutch hit."

Penny just shook his head when pondering how hot the Tigers have been.

“We have a lot of confidence,” he said. “Look what happened today. Guys come off the bench and hit home runs. That happens a few times throughout the course of the season. It’s happening a lot here. “This team doesn’t quit.”

Pondering Tigers playoff rosters, opponents and home field advantage

September 15, 2011

By Ian Casselberry / Booth Newspapers

The Detroit Tigers and manager Jim Leyland have a few postseason issues to ponder over the next two weeks. So what do we talk about when the Detroit Tigers are cruising through September? After Wednesday's 6-5 victory against the Chicago White Sox, the Tigers have a 13 1/2 game lead in the AL Central.

13 1/2 games. That is the largest division lead in all of baseball. (The Philadelphia Phillies lead the Atlanta Braves by 11 games in the NL East, and have clinched a playoff spot.)

Was it just two weeks ago that many of us were sweating over the White Sox and/or Indians closing in on first place? How many were still awaiting the inevitable second-half collapse?

Instead, the AL Central has turned into a snoozer with two weeks remaining on the regular season schedule. A division title and postseason berth are all but assured. With their magic number down to two after the Cleveland Indians' loss to the Texas Rangers Wednesday night, champagne could be spraying in the Tigers' clubhouse before the weekend.

Again, what's left to talk about? Not much, when it comes to the regular season. Justin Verlander's drive to 25 wins, perhaps?

That leaves the postseason to discuss, which is kind of fun compared to agonizing over whether the team would even make the playoffs during the past few seasons. But it's kind of unfamiliar territory. Talking about the postseason still feels like risking a jinx, despite the certitude of the Tigers' chances now.

(I still feel like I messed with something when writing about a potential playoff matchup with the New York Yankees in 2009. This whole subject is kind of uncomfortable for me. I need to see some champagne spraying.)

One thing worth talking about is the Tigers' playoff roster. Which 25 players will the team take into their first-round divisional series? (Detroit also has some wiggle room, with three players on the disabled list that can be replaced.) There's a couple of players whose status looks pretty shaky.

Brad Penny, for example. Can you see him starting a playoff game for the Tigers? And if not, how comfortable do you feel about him coming out of the bullpen? Yet his veteran status and season-long place in the starting rotation probably stakes out a place on the postseason roster.

What about Don Kelly? We know Jim Leyland loves him. But where is he going to play with a presumably set lineup during the playoffs? Will the Tigers need him to fill in at either the corner outfield or infield spots?

Maybe. And he provides a left-handed bat off the bench, too.

How many pitchers will the team carry into the postseason? 10? 11? A 10-man staff seems appropriate, since the Tigers can funnel one or two starting pitchers into the bullpen. But the Yankees and Red Sox love to work counts and foul off pitches to really make opposing pitchers work. So will the team want to carry more relievers, knowing that they may only get five or six innings out of a starter?

Another postseason concern that's a bit more pertinent is home field advantage. As it stands right now, the Tigers have a better record (86-62) than the Rangers (84-64). That would give them home field advantage in their first-round playoff series.

As the team with the AL's best record, the Yankees would play the worst playoff team. (Unless that team was the Red Sox. Teams from the same division can't play each other in the first round.) That currently matches them up with the Rangers. The Tigers would then face the Red Sox. Even if Boston finishes with a better record, the wild card team can't have home field over a division winner.

And if the Tigers were to get past the Red Sox and the Rangers were to upset the Yankees, Detroit would have home field advantage in the ALCS, as well.

Is home field advantage really that big a deal in baseball's playoffs? It didn't seem like one in 2006, when the Tigers beat the Yankees and Oakland Athletics despite beginning play on the road in each series.

Would home field be helpful against the Red Sox? The Tigers played only twice at Fenway Park this season, losing both games. That's not a large sample to work with. But the idea of Delmon Young playing left field in front of the Green Monster kind of scares me. So does that short right-field corner against hitters like Adrian Gonzalez, Jacoby Ellsbury and David Ortiz.

Then again, the Red Sox won three of four against the Tigers at Comerica Park this year.

In a playoff series against the Rangers, home field might not matter that much, either. The Tigers won two of three at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington this season. And in Detroit, they won four of six games.

During last year's postseason, home field didn't work so well for the Rangers. Against the Rays in the ALDS, they won each game of the series on the road. In the World Series, the Rangers lost two games at home and watched the Giants celebrate a championship on their field.

Yankee Stadium could provide a tough road to the World Series if the Tigers end up playing the Yankees.

Detroit lost two of three in the Bronx to begin the season. Funny things seem to happen to the Tigers in the Yankees' home park, too. Like Alex Rodriguez getting cheapo home runs off Justin Verlander by hitting pop flies over that ridiculously short right field wall.

But if the Tigers can get one win at Yankee Stadium, they could very well end a playoff series in Detroit. The Yankees lost three of four games on the Tigers' home turf in early May.

Another playoff victory over the Yankees at Comerica Park? Another champagne celebration on the field, in front of the fans? Those are the kinds of things that will be fun to imagine over the next two weeks. It's so much better than fighting out the regular season to the very end, don't you think?

Guillen gets rare start while regulars rest

September 15, 2011

By Paul Casella and Jason Beck / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Rattling off 12 straight wins has not only allowed the Tigers to run away with the American League Central, but now it's giving manager Jim Leyland a chance to keep his players fresh for their postseason run.

After winning the first two games against the White Sox, Leyland gave a few of his regulars the day off. Missing from the Tigers' starting nine were catcher Alex Avila, shortstop Jhonny Peralta and center fielder Austin Jackson, while Carlos Guillen, Ramon Santiago and Don Kelly all found their names on the lineup card. For Guillen, Wednesday marked just his second start in the last month with the only other one coming Sept. 3 also against the White Sox. Guillen wasted no time taking advantage of the opportunity, hitting his first home run since July 31 in his first at-bat of the game and then knocking in the game-winning run with an RBI single in the top of the 10th to give the Tigers a 6-5 victory.

"It's fun when you win," Guillen said. "If you lose, it feels different, so that's the most important thing right now. It's great because everybody feels confident and they're giving that confidence off to everybody else." With October looming and the Tigers in a comfortable spot atop the division, Leyland figured Wednesday was the perfect time to take care of those things, especially considering who was toeing the rubber for the White Sox. Detroit was facing 26-year-old Dylan Axelrod, a right-hander making his first-career Major League start. "These are nightmare games because you don't know the pitcher, you don't know what he does," Leyland said. "You've got tapes to watch him and you've got scouting reports, but that's the best you can do. So I just put a lineup in there that at one point there's three switch hitters back-to-back and another one in the two-hole."

Leyland: Verlander should be MVP candidate

CHICAGO -- In recent weeks, Tiger manager Jim Leyland has said publicly that he doesn't believe a pitcher should win the MVP Award.

On Wednesday, he clarified those comments, saying those are just his personal feelings on the matter. Given the wording of what qualifies a player to be voted for MVP, however, Leyland said Tigers ace Justin Verlander has to be considered one of the most worthy candidates.

"I have to be careful with this one," Leyland said. "I personally do not think pitchers should be MVP. But the way the system is, he should be a top-notch candidate for MVP. There's no question about it. And I'll just leave it at that."

While a pitcher being named MVP is rare -- the last was Dennis Eckersley in 1992 -- Verlander's numbers this season aren't exactly typical. The right-hander has worked at least six innings and thrown 100-plus pitches in each of his 32 starts this season, allowing more than three earned runs just five times. He also has 0.915 WHIP, which puts him on pace to become just the second American League pitcher since the introduction of the designated hitter in 1973 to post a sub-0.920 mark. The other came in 2000 when Pedro Martinez recorded a 0.737 WHIP and won his second Cy Young, but finished fifth in MVP voting.

And then there's the simple stat of victories. More important than Verlander's 23 victories perhaps is the fact that 14 of them have come against his own division. With his seven shutout innings on Tuesday night, Verlander improved to 14-1 against the AL Central, becoming just the second pitcher since the introduction of the unbalanced schedule in 2001 to win 14 games against one division (Roy Halladay, 14-1 vs. National League East in 2010).

"This is about winning games," Leyland said. "And when you start talking about that stuff and putting too much emphasis on it, as a manager, you're preaching against everything you believe and everything you stand for."

"But I want Justin Verlander to win the MVP. Why wouldn't I? I hope he wins it."

Progress made to televise Saturday's game

CHICAGO -- The Tigers are making progress toward getting their Saturday afternoon game at Oakland on television, according to a source. But instead of working around the FOX blackout rules, it now appears the game would end up on FOX itself, at least in Michigan and Toledo.

The Detroit Free Press first reported the shift, saying the game will be on FOX 2 in Detroit beginning at 4 p.m. ET. While progress is being made, talks are believed to be ongoing with FOX and Major League Baseball. Some details still need to be addressed before anything is finalized, enough that neither the Tigers nor the network was ready to announce anything on Wednesday afternoon.

Another challenge that eventually has to be worked out is finding a sufficient crew. Though Fox Sports Detroit has some crew members on the trip, that doesn't include such behind-the-scenes cogs as cameramen and some folks in the truck. With college football in full swing, Saturday is a busy day for television crews, which book games well in advance.

Saturday was the lone Tigers game not scheduled to be televised when the Tigers released their broadcast schedule in February. The 4:05 p.m. ET start time chosen by the A's falls into the FOX blackout window, and FOX had decided not to select it for one of its regional Game of the Week broadcasts.

V-Mart foils White Sox strategy

CHICAGO -- Victor Martinez didn't take any offense to the White Sox intentionally walking Miguel Cabrera to pitch to him in the sixth inning of a one-run game on Tuesday night.

After all, the one-out walk put runners on the corners, setting up a potential double play, and avoided the White Sox having to pitch to the dangerous Cabrera. Instead of an inning-ending ground ball, though, Martinez hit a game-changing three-run homer to right field.

"If I was a manager, I'd walk [Cabrera] to pitch to myself," said Martinez, who frequently hit behind Travis Hafner during the 2007-08 seasons in Cleveland when Hafner was intentionally walked 33 times. "You can't play around with Miggy. He's a guy that can hurt you. I don't take it as an insult. If I'm the manager, I'd do the same thing. I wouldn't take a chance with him. I'd pitch to myself. That demonstrates how great of a hitter he is."

As for White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen, he said if he was faced with a similar scenario, he'd handle it the same way. Not because he doesn't think Martinez is a capable hitter, but because he said he thinks Cabrera is the best hitter in the American League and has been for the last three years.

"As a manager you know the next hitter is going to be pumped up," Guillen said. "Those two hitters, they are too good. You have to gamble and see. Right now, there's no doubt in my mind Cabrera is swinging the bat better than anybody. That's why I picked Victor."

Avila catches a break after rough night

CHICAGO -- Alex Avila has taken countless foul balls off his mask, chest protector and just about everywhere else this season, but the catcher has never seen anything like what happened to him on Tuesday night.

When A.J. Pierzynski fouled off a 96-mph Joaquin Benoit fastball in the eighth inning, the impact of the ball striking Avila's mask actually sent sparks flying. Avila, who was unaware of the sparks until seeing video footage, stayed in the game without any sort of delay.

"I had no idea how that happened. I've gotten hit right in the mask a lot," Avila said. "When I got back to the hotel, it was on the Internet. That was ridiculous. That was like a firecracker coming off my mask."

Considering the most recent blow to his catcher came the night before a day game, it was an easy decision for manager Jim Leyland to give Avila a rare day off Wednesday.

"I told somebody -- this sounds carried away, but I'm not getting carried away -- I was a little worried about Alex getting smoked in the face all the time," Leyland said. "You can get concussions that way. I told him today, I said, 'Look, I don't normally do this, but I want you to be treated like a king today, don't do anything. Just relax and take it easy.'"

That time off wouldn't even last through Wednesday's game, though, as Leyland called on Avila to pinch-hit with a runner on and the Tigers trailing, 5-3, in the top of the ninth. The eight innings of rest seemed to work for Avila, as he quickly connected on a two-run homer to tie the game and send it to extra innings, where the Tigers pulled out a 6-5, 10-inning victory.

"I told him to be ready about two innings before [the ninth]," Leyland said. "It turns out he made me feel like the king today."

Tigers to open 2012 at home against Boston

September 15, 2011

By Jason Beck / MLB.com | 09/14/11 10:00 AM ET

CHICAGO -- For the first time in four years, the Tigers will celebrate Opening Day at Comerica Park to start the 2012 season. Depending on how the next few weeks unfold, their showdown with the Red Sox could be a postseason rematch.

After opening this season at Yankee Stadium, the Tigers will start 2012 with another AL East titan, but they'll get the Red Sox on their home turf. They'll open the season on Thursday, April 5, at Comerica Park, part of a six-game season-opening homestand that will include the Tampa Bay Rays.

From there, the Tigers embark on a 2012 slate that includes two visits to Detroit from the Yankees, the Tigers' first visit to Wrigley Field since 2006, and Interleague Play against the National League Central.

It'll be the second consecutive year that Major League Baseball has opened the season on a Thursday. The Tigers were one of the early starts this year with an afternoon game against the Yankees. Considering the Tigers have always held their home opener in the afternoon, they could be one of the first starts again.

Detroit will have an off-day on April 6 to serve as a potential makeup date should weather postpone the opener. The Tigers will complete the series on April 7-8 before another off-day on April 9. The Rays come to town for three games from April 10-12.

The homestand highlights an early stretch heavy on out-of-division opponents and not short on challenges.

After a seven-game homestand against the Rangers and Mariners in late April, the Tigers will head to Yankee Stadium for three games from April 27-29. They won't wait long to meet Seattle again, hitting the road for nine games against the Mariners, Athletics and White Sox.

The only division foes the Tigers will face in their first 37 games are the White Sox and resurgent Royals, visiting them April 13-18 before hosting them April 30-May 6. Their return to U.S. Cellular Field will be a two-game series April 14-15 before they welcome the Twins to Detroit.

The Tigers will get their first look at the 2012 Indians from May 22-24, when they venture to Progressive Field for three games as part of a 10-game road trip that will take them to Minnesota and Boston around Memorial Day weekend. After the Yankees make their first visit to Comerica Park for a three-game weekend set from June 1-3, the Indians head pay a visit from June 5-7.

For the first time since 2009, the Tigers will have the bulk of their Interleague schedule against the National League Central. That includes six games against the Pittsburgh Pirates, who will be the first NL team to meet the Tigers twice in the same regular season since the 2005 Arizona Diamondbacks. It also includes the Tigers' first visit to Wrigley Field since 2006.

The Pirates will serve as the Tigers' first taste of Interleague Play for the second straight season, this time in Detroit from May 18-20. A month later, the Tigers return to Pittsburgh for another weekend series from June 22-24 to kick off what should be a challenging three-city trip that sends them from Pittsburgh to Texas to St. Petersburg.

Just two of those Interleague opponents besides the Pirates will be venturing to Detroit. The Rockies and Cardinals will come to town for three games each from June 15-21. Before that, the Tigers will make their first trip to Cincinnati since Great American Ball Park opened, visiting the Queen City for three games on June 8-10. From there, they'll meet the Cubs at Wrigley for a midweek set from June 12-14.

The Yankees make their second trip to Detroit for four games from Aug. 6-9.

Just as with this year, the Tigers will have a chance to determine their fate in the AL Central late in the season. Twenty-eight of their final 34 games will be against division foes -- nine against the Royals, seven against the White Sox, and six each against the Indians and Twins. The Royals and Twins will comprise the final 12 games -- six at home from Sept. 21-27, then a season-ending road trip to Minnesota from Sept. 28-30 and Kansas City on Oct. 1-3.

Tigers on the hunt for 13th straight win against A's

September 15, 2011

By Jon Star / MLB.com

The Tigers entered September with a relatively comfortable 5 1/2-game lead in the American League Central. Two weeks later, Detroit has run away with the division thanks to a 12-game winning streak -- the franchise's longest since 1934 -- with their rivals shrinking in the rearview mirror and their magic number down to two. The winning streak means that Jim Leyland's club is closing in on a chance to clinch the franchise's first postseason berth since 2006 and its first divisional title since 1987 when it was a member of the AL East. With a clinching celebration potentially this weekend in Oakland, the Tigers have the flexibility to gain valuable rest down the stretch. However, Leyland is not ready to take his foot off the accelerator.

"We've got a little something going, we've got to keep it going. We'll have to work [hard] to keep it going, but it's been a lot of fun."

Victor Martinez has been a significant part of the Tigers' September surge. Martinez, who went 2-for-4 with a walk on Wednesday, is hitting .386 (17-for-44) with three home runs, 17 RBIs and six multihit games in his last 11 starts.

"It's a long season, obviously, and there's a lot of ups and downs, and you just don't know what's going to happen the rest of the season, so I'll definitely enjoy it and keep playing the game," Martinez explained.

He and the rest of the Tigers will aim to extend the win streak to 13 games behind Max Scherzer, who has put together back-to-back strong starts. Scherzer has allowed just two earned runs on 10 hits in 14 innings (seven per start) with 12 strikeouts. The right-hander has not faced Oakland this season, but blanked the A's for 5 2/3 innings with 14 strikeouts on May 30, 2010.

Countering Scherzer in the series opener will be Brandon McCarthy, who is also riding a hot hand. Though 2-2 in his previous four outings, McCarthy has posted a 2.35 ERA and kept the opposition to a .196 batting average (22 hits in 30 2/3 innings). Oakland will not only look for the win behind McCarthy, but a chance to snap the Tigers' streak and keep them from celebrating a division title in the Coliseum.

"Certainly you don't want them celebrating on your field and in your clubhouses, but having said that, I've seen that happen before," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I think the younger players, the catch-22 is they get to see something that we would like to do. But if you have the opportunity to hold them off and not have them do it at your place, that's probably the better of the two outcomes."

Tigers: Cabrera nearing rare club milestone

Miguel Cabrera has battered AL pitching since Aug. 1, hitting .387 (60-for-155) with four home runs, 29 RBIs and 18 doubles in that stretch. In addition to his summer surge, the magic number for Cabrera appears to be 100. The first baseman needs three RBIs and two walks to go with his 102 runs scored to become the fifth player in Tigers history to eclipse 100 in those three categories. The other Tigers to accomplish the feat were Rocky Colavito and Norm Cash, both in 1961, Hank Greenberg ('37, '38) and Charlie Gehringer ('38).

Athletics: Crisp's timetable clears up

- Coco Crisp, who is nursing a sore right ankle, could potentially return during the Tigers series barring any further setbacks. He was set to try hitting in the cages on Wednesday morning and Melvin said that, if all went well, he wouldn't be surprised if the center fielder was back in action by this weekend.
- Josh Willingham has provided needed thunder to the A's lineup. Over the last 11 games, Willingham is hitting .371 (13-for-35) with four home runs, 13 RBIs, six runs scored and three doubles. With his two RBIs on Tuesday, Willingham set a new career high, surpassing his previous best of 89 RBIs, which he reached in 2007 with the Marlins. Willingham extended his 2011 RBI total to 91 with his solo home run on Wednesday.

Worth noting:

- The A's have used 48 different players this season. Oakland has not used fewer than 49 players over the course of a season since 2006 (40 players). The A's have used 26 pitchers, tying the most used by the franchise since its move to Oakland. The franchise record is 27 pitchers by the 1915 Philadelphia A's and the 1955 Kansas City A's.
- The Tigers bullpen has a 2.04 ERA (27 ER in 119 innings) and 112 strikeouts since Aug. 4, including four shutout innings on Wednesday.

Rally helps trim Tigers' magic number to two

September 15, 2011

By Paul Casella / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- With the clock about to run out on their longest winning streak in 43 years, the Tigers decided they weren't ready for the fun to end.

Staring at a three-run deficit with just two outs to work with, Detroit tied the game with a pair of ninth-inning homers and went on to beat the White Sox, 6-5, in 10 innings. The come-from-behind victory extended the Tigers' winning streak to 12 games -- the club's longest since winning a franchise record-tying 14 straight in 1934 -- and lowered their magic number to three. Cleveland's loss to Texas on Thursday night lowered that magic number to two.

Manager Jim Leyland left literally no stone unturned in the series finale at U.S. Cellular Field, using every available position player in one facet or another. His two biggest substitutions may have come in the top of the ninth inning when both Ryan Raburn and Alex Avila connected on pinch-hit home runs to force extra innings. Trailing 5-2, Raburn started the rally with a solo home run against Chris Sale, who then walked Magglio Ordonez before turning the game over to closer Sergio Santos. Avila welcomed Santos to the game with a game-tying two-run blast on the second pitch, and Carlos Guillen later delivered the game-winning RBI single off Santos in the 10th.

"Normally when you're pinch-hitting, you're facing their best pitchers, and after sitting for the entire game, it's something that's extremely difficult to do," Avila said. "In learning from other guys that are successful pinch-hitting, they're pretty aggressive early in the count. I was just trying to be aggressive and hit a ball hard somewhere."

"I didn't have anybody left," Leyland said. "I used everybody. I was just trying to figure out what pitcher I was going to put out in the outfield if I had to. I asked [utility player] Danny Worth if he could catch and before he answered, I said, 'If you're smart, you'll say yes.'"

As it turns out, Leyland ended up using Worth at third base for the bottom of the 10th and leaving Avila behind the plate. As for which pitcher would have taken over in the outfield if the situation arose?

"I'll never tell," said a joking Leyland. "But I will tell you this much, it was not going to be [Justin] Verlander." It was a bit easier for Leyland to joke, given the fact that his team had just turned in its second ninth-inning rally against the White Sox in less than two weeks. Similar to Wednesday's series finale, the Tigers also slugged a pair of ninth-inning home runs in a Sept. 3 victory over the White Sox in which Detroit overcame an 8-1 to defeat Chicago, 9-8. And just like on Sept. 3, starter Brad Penny was the one being bailed out by the late-game heroics.

The mood wasn't as upbeat down the hall at U.S. Cellular Field, as the White Sox watched another late lead slip away in losing to the Tigers for the sixth straight time. Even after squandering the 5-2 advantage, the White Sox put runners on the corners with only one out in the bottom of the inning. They couldn't come away victorious, though, as reliever Phil Coke ended the threat by getting A.J. Pierzynski to ground into a double play.

"You can pick that game apart and find all kinds of different things that happened, but that was a heck of a win," Leyland said. "Regardless of what it is and regardless of what we have to do yet, that was a heck of a win."

"I'm out of words," Pierzynski said. "It's just one of those things you can't stop. You play a really good game and have a three-run lead in the ninth, lose it. We just keep finding new things to happen and it keeps snowballing and growing on us. It has been that way for a long time."

On the other hand, things seem to be going the exact opposite way for the Tigers, especially Penny. For the third straight outing, Penny found himself in an early hole. The right-hander gave up four second-inning runs after Guillen had staked him to a 1-0 lead with a homer, but his offense came to his rescue yet again.

"It's happening a lot here, this team just doesn't quit," said Penny, who hasn't taken the loss in any of those three subpar outings. "Our lineup is just unbelievable."

The month of September started with three teams -- the Tigers, White Sox and Indians -- all in contention in the AL Central. But after two weeks, during which the Tigers have notched four consecutive divisional sweeps, Detroit has turned that three-team race into the largest divisional lead in all of baseball.

"I will say one thing," Leyland said. "Up to this point, we're certainly not backing our way in. We're not backing anywhere up until this point. And I do emphasize up until this point."

Tigers rally past White Sox for 12th straight win

September 15, 2011

By Associated Press Staff / Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — In a memorable month filled with exhilarating moments, Wednesday's comeback win stood out for the Detroit Tigers.

Carlos Guillen singled home the go-ahead run in the 10th inning and Detroit extended its longest winning streak in 77 years, rallying past the Chicago White Sox 6-5 for its 12th straight victory.

"We hung in there and had a real nice win," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "A really unbelievable win."

Detroit's magic number to clinch the AL Central was reduced to two when Cleveland lost 9-1 at Texas on Wednesday night. The Tigers can wrap up their first division title since 1987 on Thursday with a late-night victory at Oakland preceded by another Indians loss in Texas.

It would be Detroit's first AL Central championship. The Tigers were in the AL East in 1987.

Guillen also hit a solo homer for Detroit, which hadn't won 12 in a row since 1934 — when Hank Greenberg, Charlie Gehringer and the Tigers lost a seven-game World Series to the St. Louis Cardinals' famous Gas House Gang.

Jose Valverde struck out the side in the 10th to remain perfect in 44 save opportunities this year.

Closing in on an AL Central title, the surging Tigers rallied for three runs in the ninth off Chicago's bullpen to prevent rookie Dylan Axelrod from earning his first career win.

Ryan Raburn's pinch-hit homer with one out off Chris Sale brought the Tigers within two. Magglio Ordonez walked, chasing Sale. Alex Avila pinch-hit for Andy Dirks and hit Sergio Santos' second pitch into the seats in right-center to tie it.

The Tigers have won 22 of their last 26 games overall and 21 of 27 against the White Sox.

"We've just been on a roll and able to do it with all aspects of the game," Avila said. "The biggest thing is everybody is contributing, so that's the biggest reason why we're rolling."

Guillen, a three-time All-Star, hadn't started a game Sept. 3 — but Leyland had no doubt the 14-year veteran would be ready to contribute.

"I'm happier for him than anybody else today," Leyland said. "He's been working like everybody else. He's a proud guy. He's a pro and he knows he hadn't played for 10 days. He wants to show people he's a very capable player. He showed that today."

Guillen hit the ball hard in all five plate appearances.

"He must have a dumb manager," Leyland said. "Dumb managers sit guys for 10 days and when they come out, they hit (five) balls hard. I must be pretty dumb."

Speaking in the middle of a jubilant Tigers clubhouse, Guillen said he's experienced this kind of scene before.

"When I was with Seattle in 2001, we won 116 games," Guillen said. "It's very similar. Similar feeling. The way the things happen, every day somebody comes through, different guys."

Axelrod struck out eight and threw six strong innings in his first career start just two years after pitching for the independent Windy City ThunderBolts.

"It's nice to get individual accolades like wins and things, but it's a team game," Axelrod said. "Unfortunately we came out on the losing end, but I was happy with what I did and just want to continue to build off that."

Santos (4-5) blew his sixth save of the season.

"It's a shame," White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said. "(Axelrod is) pitching very well and all of a sudden we just blew it for him. Very nice day, you see this kid having success in his first time in the big leagues and all of a sudden, poof, another bad day for the White Sox."

Miguel Cabrera singled, doubled and scored a run for Detroit.

Alexei Ramirez laced a two-run double and Paul Konerko added a two-run single during Chicago's four-run second. Konerko reached 100 RBIs for the sixth time in his career.

Tigers starter Brad Penny allowed five runs — one earned — and eight hits over six innings. Phil Coke (3-9) threw a scoreless ninth for the win.

Ramirez doubled, singled, walked and scored a run. Alejandro De Aza doubled, reached base four times, scored two runs and stole a base for Chicago.

The 26-year-old Axelrod was starting in place of Jake Peavy, who was shut down for the remainder of the season. He appeared to be in line for the win until the ninth, when Leyland's parade of pinch-hitters pulled out another win.

"You're starting with a kid that just came from, what's the league, the independent league and he shut them down and all of a sudden these big league pitchers couldn't stop them," Ozzie Guillen said. "Look at yourself in the mirror and see how big league you are. If they're happy the season's over, good. But every time you lose a game like that and you have a little bit of pride, you should be ashamed of yourself."

The mood couldn't have been more different in the other clubhouse.

"We're having a good time," Raburn said. "We're having fun going out and playing, just trying to enjoy the moment and keep going on."

NOTES: The Tigers can clinch the AL Central during their four-game series at Oakland this weekend. In Thursday's opener, Detroit will send Max Scherzer to the mound to face Brandon McCarthy. Scherzer has allowed just two runs in 14 innings this month. ... The White Sox travel to Kansas City for a four-games series. On Thursday, Chicago's Mark Buehrle will square off against fellow lefty Jeff Francis. Buehrle has allowed 14 runs in nine innings over his last two starts.

Verlander deserves to be voted AL MVP

September 15, 2011

By Mike O'Hara / FOXSportsDetroit.com

If you were a die-hard White Sox fan sitting in the seats at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago on Tuesday night, there might have been a breath of hope when the Sox put runners on first and third in the bottom of the first inning with one out.

It was a prime opportunity for the Sox to build an early cushion and go on to end the Tigers' 10-game winning streak.

You could have felt that way — until you saw Justin Verlander on the mound with the resolute look that can burn holes in the lead door of a bank vault.

It's the look that tells opposing hitters and their fans, "Uh, oh, we're in trouble."

It's the look that is the face of what might be the best team in the American League.

Verlander ended what was a nuisance more than a threat by getting cleanup hitter Dayan Viciedo to hit into a double play.

End of inning. Hope crushed.

More of the same coming.

It went like this:

Bottom of the second, Tigers ahead 1-0, runners on first and second and two out. Verlander got the third out on Gordon Beckham's fly to right.

Bottom of the fourth, bases loaded with two out. Verlander struck out Beckham to end the inning to protect the 1-0 lead.

Verlander held the Sox at arm's length long enough for the Tigers' hitters to take over, which they did. He departed after seven innings with a 5-0 lead that stood up as the final score.

It wasn't Verlander's best outing of the season, but he dominated every key moment to win his 11th straight start and make his record 23-5.

In this 2011 season, Verlander not only is the best pitcher in the major leagues, but he's the best player. He reacts under pressure like it's a challenge, not a threat. Putting him in a tight situation is like pulling on the Lone Ranger's mask — or asking Madonna if she really got those abs in the gym. Beware of the reaction.

It's a given Verlander will win the American League Cy Young Award.

Whether he wins the league's Most Valuable Player Award depends on if the baseball writers vote on what they've seen on the field, or if they get tied up in history — their own history.

The one rap heard constantly against Verlander winning the MVP is that it rarely goes to pitchers because they play only every fifth game, as opposed to position players who play every day.

The baseball writers vote for a number of awards, including the Cy Young and the MVP.

There is no intent here to claim that the baseball writers don't take the vote seriously. They do. They study and debate statistics and the history of their sport more than any group of writers in any sport.

But the argument against a pitcher winning the MVP has a flaw in logic because it's based on their own voting record.

In the American League, the last starting pitcher to win the MVP Award was Roger Clemens, pitching for the Red Sox in 1986. The last pitcher was Dennis Eckersley, a closer for Oakland in 1992.

Clemens was a deserving MVP winner, with a 24-4 record and 2.48 ERA. He was the dominant player on a Red Sox team that won 95 games and made it to the World Series.

The 1992 Oakland team won 96 games, and Eckersley had 51 saves. He pitched 80 innings in 69 games.

No sport connects more to its history and statistics than baseball. That history tells us this about Verlander and why he should be the American League MVP:

- He pitched more innings (86-2/3) in the first two months of the season than Eckersley pitched in his entire MVP season.
- Verlander leads the league in wins (23), strikeouts (238), innings pitched (236) and ERA (2.36). And if there's a stat for getting tough outs, he's probably No. 1 in that.

- Going head to head with the Angels' Jered Weaver on national TV on July 31, Verlander gave up one hit and no earned runs over eight innings in a 3-2 win.
 - Finally, looking back more than a half century at the MVP voting, Ernie Banks, a Hall of Fame shortstop with the Cubs, was the National League MVP in 1958 and '59. In both years, the Cubs finished fifth in what was then an eight-team league.
- Figure the value on that, if you can.

Tigers rally late, run winning streak to 12

September 15, 2011

By Dana Wakiji / FOXSportsDetroit.com

Like King Midas, Detroit Tigers manager Jim Leyland has a magic touch these days.

Everything King Midas touched turned to gold; every move Leyland makes turns into a win.

After trailing by three runs twice, the Tigers (87-62) rallied to beat the White Sox 6-5 in Chicago, lowering their magic number to clinch the AL Central to three.

"This was a good one," Leyland told FOX Sports Detroit's Ryan Field on the postgame show. "We played nine innings, we hung in there and got a real nice win, an unbelievable win, really."

The Tigers have won 12 straight games, which is the franchise's longest win streak since 1934, when they won 14 in a row.

But it couldn't have happened without Leyland's shrewd ninth-inning moves.

First, he sent Ryan Raburn, who is officially a White Sox-killer, in as a pinch hitter. Raburn promptly homered off White Sox reliever Chris Sale, cutting the lead to 5-3.

Leyland had Magglio Ordonez pinch-hit for catcher Omir Santos. Ordonez walked.

Leyland had Brandon Inge standing in the on-deck circle, which made White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen take Sale out in favor of closer Sergio Santos.

Leyland then took Inge back out and sent Alex Avila to the plate. Avila hit a tying, two-run home run off Santos, his 19th home run of the season.

"I got that one pretty good," Avila said. "Just trying to get something early in the count to drive and at least extend the inning."

"Once he fell behind 1-0, I was just going to try to be aggressive early in the count. A lot of times pinch-hitting, you've got to get your hit early. He is nasty. Just put a good swing on it, and it went."

Phil Coke got into trouble in the bottom of the ninth as Juan Pierre worked a walk on an 11-pitch at-bat, moved to second on a sacrifice and to third on a stolen base after Coke walked Paul Konerko intentionally. But the Tigers reliever then got A.J. Pierzynski to ground into the inning-ending double play.

Giving Carlos Guillen his first start in 11 days proved to be another smart move by Leyland.

Guillen provided the Tigers' first run of the game with a home run, but it was his second RBI that won the game.

After Victor Martinez hit a one-out double, Leyland had Will Rhymes run for him. Guillen then singled up the middle to score Rhymes for the 6-5 lead, the Tigers' first lead of the game.

"He was huge," Avila said. "Everyone's contributing. That's one of the biggest reasons why we're on a roll."

Leyland has spoken about how much he appreciates the way Guillen and Ordonez have handled their part-time roles.

"I couldn't have been happier for him," Leyland said of Guillen. "I'm happier for him than anybody else today."

Like I said about him and Maggs, they're professionals, the way they've handled this has been unbelievable. Big rewards today for them."

Guillen said no matter what his role, his preparation remains the same.

"When I was playing every day, you've got to respect the game, prepare yourself," Guillen said. "The season is not over. You never know what's going to happen on the field. You never know when you're going to be on the field."

Jose Valverde came on in the bottom of the 10th and struck out the side for his 44th consecutive save.

In the 12-game winning streak, the Tigers have a .329 batting average, a .354 average with runners in scoring position and 55 extra-base hits. They are averaging 7.9 runs a game and have seven games with 10-plus hits.

With their magic number at two, the Tigers could clinch the division as soon as Thursday night.

When asked if they were ready to pop some champagne, Guillen said, "I think we're really close."

Fister making difference for Tigers

September 15, 2011

By Buster Olney / ESPN.com

The scouts who reported to Tigers GM Dave Dombrowski had good things to say about Doug Fister in the weeks before the trade deadline. The Tigers needed a starting pitcher, given the problems in their No. 5 spot -- a 4-18 record -- so player personnel VP Scott Reid and his staff helped to draw up a list of about 25 starting pitchers that could be targets, Fister among them.

The scouts liked the fact that Fister pitched to both sides of the plate, that he threw strikes, that he worked fast and that he had a lot of movement on his pitches. And there was something else, too: Fister had a nice mound presence, and was seemingly unfazed by any crisis.

Fister doesn't have a lot of time in the big leagues, Dombrowski mentioned over the phone Tuesday, having made his debut in 2009. "But he's not a young guy," Dombrowski said. "He's 27 years old."

Fister has dealt with adversity in his climb to the majors, and right away, he handled his move to the Tigers with self-assuredness and confidence, and has posted a 5-1 record with a 2.28 ERA, with five walks and 41 strikeouts. If the Phillies' deal for Hunter Pence has turned out to be the best pre-July 31 deadline deal for any National League team, Dombrowski's acquisition of Fister has been the best trade for any American League contender.

When Dombrowski first contacted Mariners GM Jack Zduriencik, however, Zduriencik wasn't enthusiastic about discussing a Fister deal. But the conversations continued, partly because of how the Tigers assessed the market for starting pitchers. It was clear that to get a starter of any quality, they would have to pay a heavy price, so they decided that if they were to make a deal -- and give up valued prospects -- they wanted to get a pitcher whom they could control for more than a year or two. Fister has two-plus years of service time, meaning he won't be eligible for free agency until after the 2015 season.

"I remember sitting with Jim [Leyland] and the coaching staff and talking about him," Dombrowski said. "We had done some checking on his background, and what we heard was he had great makeup -- a quality guy, a hard worker, and if you put him in a pennant race, he wouldn't have any trouble with that ... We all liked him." And at this point, there's reason to like everything about Fister, and the Tigers. And it's nice for the Tigers that Fister is working behind Justin Verlander, who never loses: He's won his last 11 starts, after shutting down the White Sox on Tuesday. He hit 100 mph, as John Lowe writes.

From ESPN Stats & Info, how Verlander won:

A. Despite throwing his curveball a season-low 11 times, Verlander matched a season high by striking out six White Sox hitters with it. All six of his strikeouts came on curveballs. Four of Verlander's strikeouts were called. Eight of his 11 curveballs were down in the zone or below it, and five of his strikeouts came on those pitches.

B. Verlander went to his best fastball when he needed it. With a 1-0 lead in the fourth inning, Verlander faced Gordon Beckham with the bases loaded and two out. He started him with two fastballs, clocked at 101.4 mph and 101.1 mph. After a slider out of the zone, Verlander froze Beckham with a curveball for a critical strikeout. The 101.4 mph fastball was the fastest pitch by any starter this season.

C. Verlander threw nine pitches 99 mph or higher, matching his third-most pitches that fast in a start this season. He's thrown 68 pitches of at least 99 mph this year; only two other starting pitchers have thrown even one pitch that fast.

Verlander became just the sixth pitcher in the live ball era (since 1920) to pitch a no-hitter and win at least 23 games in the same season. Before Verlander, it hadn't happened since Sandy Koufax in 1965.

Verlander has to be the MVP, writes Richard Griffin.

• Mariano Rivera notched his 600th career save.

Just for the sake of perspective, here's a list of the most blown save chances:

Rich Gossage -- 112

Rollie Fingers -- 109

Jeff Reardon -- 106

Lee Smith -- 103

Bruce Sutter -- 101
John Franco -- 101
Roberto Hernandez -- 94
Sparky Lyle -- 86
Gene Garber -- 82
Kent Tekulve -- 81
Gary Lavelle -- 81

From ESPN Stats & Info, Mariano Rivera's milestone saves:

1 -- May 17, 1996 vs Angels
100 -- June 11, 1999 at Marlins
200 -- August 1, 2001 vs Rangers
225 -- May 9, 2002 at Rays (breaks Yankees record)
300 -- May 28, 2004 at Rays
400 -- July 16, 2006 vs White Sox
500 -- June 28, 2009 at Mets
600 -- Sept. 13, 2011 at Mariners

FROM ELIAS: Most career saves, all with one team:

Mariano Rivera, Yankees -- 600
Jeff Montgomery, Royals -- 304
Jonathan Papelbon, Red Sox -- 217
Bobby Thigpen, White Sox -- 201
Danny Graves, Reds -- 182

AL wild card: Throughout Tampa Bay's late-season rush toward the top of the standings, the Rays have been operating with almost no margin for error -- which is why Tuesday's events were so important. The Rays lost a game in Baltimore and lost a game in the standings; meanwhile, the Red Sox stopped the bleeding, and along the way Tim Wakefield picked up win No. 200. Boston's lead over the Rays is back to four games, which means the Rays have to take at least three out of four in Boston this weekend.

And Josh Beckett has been cleared to start Friday, as Scott Lauber writes.

The Red Sox always seem to go as Dustin Pedroia goes, and Pedroia busted out, writes Rich Thompson. Wakefield got some champagne dumped on his head.

NL wild card: Brian McCann lifted the Braves in a big way, clubbing an important home run. From Carroll Rogers' story:

It wasn't just a three-run homer," said Dan Uggla, who followed with a three-run homer of his own an inning later. "That was one of the biggest home runs we've had this season as far as instilling confidence back in us and getting our swagger back."

The Cardinals also won, in a weird game.

No. 2 seed in NL: The Diamondbacks won again, and cut their magic number to six, as Nick Piccoro writes.

The Brewers won, too, with a big hit from Ryan Braun.

Rickie Weeks continues to play more and more, in the No. 5 spot in the Milwaukee lineup.

Trevor Bauer is probably getting tired in the minors, says Kevin Towers.

AL West: The Rangers' bats came alive again, as Texas clubbed the Indians. The Angels rolled, too. Mark Trumbo was benched.

• Charlie Manuel aired out the Phillies after another sluggish loss in Houston, as Jim Salisbury writes.

Dings and dents

1. Alex Rodriguez is eyeing a possible Friday routine. Within the same George King piece, there is word that Francisco Cervelli continues to have concussion symptoms.

2. Matt Holliday was injured.

Moves, deals and decisions

1. Chris Carpenter's deal was finished, as Rick Hummel writes, and the pitcher is happy about it.

Tuesday's games

1. Joel Hanrahan was tagged with a loss.

2. Terry Collins was unhappy with the way the Mets executed.

3. The Mariners struck out 17 times.

4. Brandon Morrow got pounded, as Ken Fidlin writes.

The Patience Index

Looking things over

These hitters saw the most pitches per plate appearance (minimum 3 PA).

Hitter PA No. Pitches P per PA

Tulowitzki, Troy 3 23 7.7

Pierzynski, A.J. 8 48 6.0

Ross, Cody 6 36 6.0

Adams, Ryan 3 18 6.0

Ellis, Mark 5 29 5.8

Martinez, Victor 8 46 5.8

Buck, John 4 23 5.8

Helton, Todd 4 23 5.8

Mauer, Joe 4 23 5.8

Phillips, Brandon 4 23 5.8

Other stuff

- It's imperative for the Pirates that Pedro Alvarez reach his potential, writes Dejan Kovacevic. From the column:

Though management has been telling people that Alvarez is amenable to a Dominican assignment [for winter ball], it sure didn't sound like that in our conversation Tuesday.

"You know, that's something we're still discussing, the organization and myself," Alvarez said. "We haven't really talked yet. So, we'll see how that goes."

- Jose Reyes has been hesitant to run.

- Johnny Damon racked up his 400th career steal.

- Austin Romine's vacation was cut short.

- Ryan Zimmerman's throwing mechanics are no longer an issue.

- Tony Watson had a pivotal appearance Monday for the Pirates, as Bill Brink writes.

- Major League Baseball's decision to not let the Mets wear the emergency personnel hats was a mistake, writes Bill Plaschke.

FROM ELIAS: Most HR by a catcher in his rookie season:

Mike Piazza, Dodgers -- 35 (1993)

Matt Nokes, Tigers -- 28 (1987)

J.P. Arencibia, Blue Jays -- 23 (2011)

Geovany Soto, Cubs -- 23 (2008)

Carlton Fisk, Red Sox -- 22 (1972)

Rudy York, Tigers -- 22 (1937)

Four of Arencibia's seven hits (including the last three) against the Red Sox this season have been home runs. And today will be better than yesterday.

Red-hot Tigers proving to be more than the Justin Verlander Show

September 15, 2011

By Cliff Corcoran / SI.com

The Detroit Tigers won their 11th straight game Tuesday night behind yet another gem from likely American League Cy Young award winner Justin Verlander, who pushed his record to 23-5 with seven scoreless innings against the White Sox.

With Verlander watching from the dugout on Wednesday, the Tigers pushed the streak to 12 in dramatic fashion, equaling the longest in franchise history since 1934. What that winning streak proves, however, is that the Tigers are more than a one-man show. In fact, their success has had more to do with scoring runs than preventing them, a fact that has been overshadowed by Verlander's award-worthy season.

The Tigers' hot streak also stretches back much further than the last 11 games. Entering play on Wednesday, Detroit had gone 29-11 (.725) over its last 40 games dating back to the beginning of August, the best record of any team in baseball over that time. Research has shown that coming into the playoffs hot is no guarantee of post-season success, but the Tiger's aren't just hot, they're very good. Detroit possesses a potent offense, an emerging No. 2 starter to complement Verlander and a bullpen that is anchored by closer Jose Valverde, who has yet to blow a save this season.

During their six weeks of red-hot play, only the Yankees and Rangers have out-scored the Tigers, who have averaged 5.7 runs per game over that span. Leading the Bengal Brigade of bats has been 24-year-old sophomore catcher Alex Avila, who has hit .348/.449/.636 with eight home runs over those last 40 games, .302/.392/.523 on the season, and deserves every bit as much attention as a serious Most Valuable Player candidate as Verlander. Avila could claim some small contribution to Verlander's success given that he has caught all but one of the Detroit ace's starts this season, including his no-hitter back in May, but he doesn't need the help. With the average major league catcher hitting .245/.314/.388 this year, Avila has been not just the best catcher in the majors (adding a 32 percent caught-stealing rate compared to a major league average of 28 percent to his hitting heroics), but the fifth most valuable non-pitcher in the majors according to Baseball Prospectus's WARP (Wins Above Replacement Player), with only Jose Bautista and Jacoby Ellsbury out-ranking him in the AL.

Credit the Tigers for seeing past Avila's miserable rookie campaign, in which he hit just .228/.316/.340. When the Tigers signed Victor Martinez this winter only to make him a designated hitter with Avila, the son of the assistant general manager, installed behind the plate, it had a faint whiff of nepotism. No more. The arrangement has worked out beautifully for the Tigers, with Martinez also ranking among the team's top hitters and contributing a .340/.395/.500 performance and leading the team in RBIs over those last 40 games.

Indeed, general manager Dave Dombrowski has been as hot as his team of late. From July 20 to August 15, Dombrowski made three trades aimed at strengthening his team for the stretch run, and thus far all three have been tremendous successes. On July 20, he made a seemingly minor deal that sent a pair of non-prospect minor leaguers to the Royals for third baseman Wilson Betemit. The trade was an overdue admission that longtime Tiger and fan favorite Brandon Inge, who had hit .231/.314/.389 over the past four seasons as the team's starting third baseman, didn't have the bat to carry his position, something that had become clear with Inge hitting .177/.242/.242 on the eve of the trade. Betemit has since hit .286/.336/.476 as a Tiger, well above the standard for the position, with Inge now back in the fold as his defensive caddy.

The day before the trading deadline, Dombrowski made a six-player deal with the Mariners that brought 6-foot-8 righty starter Doug Fister to Detroit along with reliever Dave Pauley in exchange for four players including fourth-outfielder Casper Wells, rookie lefty starter Charlie Furbush, and righty relief prospect Chance Ruffin. Fister, 27, looked like a league-average control and contact-oriented righty in Seattle, but thus far in eight starts for Detroit he has spiked his strikeout rate, almost completely stopped walking batters altogether (five walks in 51 1/3 innings) and has gone 5-1 with a 2.28 ERA, including a 4-0 mark with a 0.75 ERA and 36 strikeouts in 36 2/3 innings over his last five starts, one of which saw him strikeout 13 Indians in eight very efficient innings. There's no telling whether or not the soft-tossing sinkerballer can keep it up, but if he can, even if just through the end of October, he'll give the Tigers a two-man rotation punch that could make them the American League team opponents least want to see in a short series.

Then, on August 15, Dombrowski reacted quickly to sophomore left fielder Brennan Boesch's thumb injury by sending a pair of minor league relievers to the division rival Twins for Delmon Young, who had been the No. 1 overall pick in the 2003 draft. With Minnesota, Young had regressed into a disappointment, and an arbitration-eligible one at that. With Detroit, Young has rediscovered the form from his breakout season of a year ago, hitting .313/.331/.464 in 27 games for Detroit, a good match for what the rejuvenated Boesch had given the Tigers prior to what has since proven to be a season-ending ligament tear.

Detroit has also received strong production of late from their second-base/utility combination of Ryan Raburn (.329/.353/.549 over those last 40 games) and Ramon Santiago (.313/.362/.542 over the same stretch). Jhonny Peralta, despite an August slump, has been the third most valuable shortstop in baseball this year per WARP, hitting .306/.355/.487 with 19 homers on the season.

Then, as always, at the heart of the lineup has been the ceaseless run-production machine that is Miguel Cabrera. Cabrera may be a brutal first baseman, but limit the discussion to what he does with the bat and Baseball Prospectus's offense-only Value Over Replacement Player (VORP) lists him as the fifth most valuable hitter in baseball this season, and that's still relative to the standard of his position, which is the highest of any on the field. Treat first basemen and centerfielders the same, and only Jose Bautista has been more productive than Cabrera at the plate this year, so much so that Cabrera has still been walked intentionally 20 times despite having Martinez behind him in the lineup in the vast majority of his games. Cabrera is hitting .332/.435/.560 on the season and .384/.460/.576 over those last 40 games.

So the Tigers can hit a little, and that's the primary reason that they are winning. There's no guarantee that Betemit, Young, Raburn or Santiago will stay hot into October. In fact, it seems likely that at least one of them won't, but Cabrera and Martinez are just being themselves, and Avila and Peralta have been raking all season (save for Peralta's August). Combine that offensive firepower with the one-two punch of Verlander and Fister and a bullpen headed up by closer Jose Valverde, who has converted all 43 of his save chances this season (he got his 44th on Wednesday), and the solid set-up work of Joaquin Benoit, lefty Phil Coke and rookie strikeout artist Al Alburquerque (14.2 K/9, 0 HR), and the Tigers are dangerous.

By week's end, Detroit should have wrapped up its first division title since 1987, leaving them plenty of time to be rested and ready for a run in October.

These 2011 Tigers making own mark with perfect timing

September 15, 2011

By Scott Miller / CBSSports.com

CHICAGO -- Hello, Hammerin' Hank Greenberg. And Mickey Cochrane, too.

From here to Paw Paw, Mich., the Tigers are leaving extra-large pawprints. Their roar is being heard loud and clear.

It was wet, it was rainy, it was 55 degrees and it was Detroit 6, White Sox 5 in 10 innings Wednesday.

And do you know what that result means?

The Tigers now have their longest winning streak since 1934.

Think about that for a minute.

Nineteen Thirty Freakin' Four!

Not since Schoolboy Rowe schooled 'em with Greenberg, Charlie Gehringer and Cochrane, with Goose Goslin in the outfield, has a Tigers team shredded opponents like this.

That was 26 years before Hall of Famer Ernie Harwell broadcasted his first Tigers' game. It was 10 years before current manager Jim Leyland was born.

Only similarity between then and now? The ragged, snagged White Sox. In the middle of that 12-game streak in '34, according to expert researcher (and colleague) Danny Knobler, the Tigers swept the White Sox in Detroit, outscoring them 37-4 in the three games.

Sort of like the 32-6 combined shellacking the current Tigers delivered the White Sox in the final game of their series in Detroit, Sept. 4, and the opener of this week's series on Monday.

"We're having a good time," outfielder Ryan Raburn said.

Yeah? And birthday parties are a joy, too.

I mean, talk about having your cake and eating it, too. The Tigers were down 5-2 heading into the ninth when, suddenly, Raburn belted a homer and then Alex Avila walloped a game-tying, pinch-hit, two-run homer.

Then Carlos Guillen cracked the go-ahead single in the 10th and Jose Valverde converted his 44th consecutive save opportunity and, chalk up another.

This is how it's going for the Tigers: Guillen hadn't even started in 10 days, since Sept. 3, and he punched out three hits.

"He must have a dumb manager, not to play him for 10 days," Leyland quipped.

Flip side is, how dumb can the manager really be for sitting Guillen all that time? It's not like the Tigers lost during that span.

"Every day, we know what's going to happen," Guillen said. "We win."

There was another group like that in Detroit between 1934 and now. And the amazing thing is, how in the world did the 1984 Tigers not win 12 consecutive games? Especially given that 35-5 start?

"We did put a couple of nine-game winning streaks up there," says Tom Brookens, an infielder on that team and now Detroit's first-base coach. "I don't get caught up in numbers, how many games in a row you've won, but I do know there are a lot of good clubs that have never won 10 in a row."

Brookens is correct on both counts. The '84 Tigers' 35-5 start both began and ended with nine-game winning streaks.

"It's fun to talk about and, fortunately for us, this came right when we needed it," Brookens says, moving nimbly from past to present.

As it is, this 12-gamer now is the third longest in more than 100 years of Detroit baseball. The '34 team's streak went to 14 games before it was snapped. The 1909 Tigers also won 14 in a row.

These Tigers led the AL Central by 5 ½ games when it started and have extended that to 13 games, pending Cleveland's game Wednesday night. The Tigers' magic number now is one over the White Sox and three over Cleveland.

As anybody watching the ninth inning Wednesday saw, the Tigers can do no wrong. Beyond that, they're good. Justin Verlander, as Roy Halladay was last year, should be a unanimous Cy Young winner. Verlander and Miguel Cabrera are legitimate MVP contenders.

Beginning with his no-hitter on May 7, Verlander is an astounding 23-2 -- and one of those two losses was 1-0. He's also 15-3 after a Tigers' loss.

Cabrera, with 102 runs scored, 97 RBI and 98 walks, is on the verge of becoming only the fifth Tiger ever to reach 100 in each of those categories in one season, following Greenberg, Gehring, Rocky Colavito and Norm Cash. He's hitting .333, and designated hitter Victor Martinez is hitting .325.

Valverde's 44 saves is a club record.

On and on it goes. Leyland praises the club's "swagger", noting that the 2006 World Series team, while exceptionally gifted, had neither the talent nor the swagger of this group.

"Both teams were really good," outfielder Magglio Ordonez says of '06 and '11. "Right now, we have more experience and, I think, more talent. We've got pitching, defense ... I think we've got everything together."

Or, as Cabrera says, "We've got a bunch of guys here who can play."

Guillen likens it to what he experienced playing with the 2001 Mariners team that went 116-46.

"As soon as you come in the clubhouse, you know you're going to find a way to win a ballgame," Guillen says. Even when, as was the case Wednesday, the game goes into extra innings, even the expanded September rosters aren't enough and the manager actually is looking at playing one of his pitchers in the outfield.

Who?

"I'll never tell," Leyland said, then paused, then grinned. "I will tell you this much: It was not going to be Verlander."

Those 1934 Tigers wound up going all the way to the World Series, where they lost in an ugly Game 7 when Ducky Medwick slid so hard into Detroit catcher Marv Owen in the sixth inning that livid Detroit patrons responded by bombarding Medwick with all sorts of debris in left field the next inning -- bottles, fruit, vegetables. The Cardinals led 9-0, so Commissioner Judge Landis ordered Medwick out of the game so St. Louis could win before things became even uglier.

No telling yet how far these 2011 Tigers will go, but they're peaking at a perfect time. And that sure beats ducking fruits and vegetables.

"I will say one thing," Leyland said. "Up to this point, we're not backing in. Up to this point, and I emphasize up to this point, we've met the challenge pretty well."

Tigers picked right time to extend Dombrowski

September 15, 2011

By Danny Knobler / CBSSports.com

In a trade market woefully short on starting pitchers, Dave Dombrowski found a guy who has gone 5-1 in eight starts, with a 2.28 ERA. In an August waiver market that was marked by a lack of movement, Dombrowski found an outfielder who has hit .324 with 20 RBI in 26 games.

Sounds like a guy Tom Ricketts ought to want as general manager of the Cubs, especially given Dombrowski's strong Chicago ties.

One problem with that: Dombrowski just signed a four-year contract extension last month.

Maybe Mike Ilitch was more aware than we give him credit for.

The Tigers owner surprised even some in his own front office by the timing of the extensions he gave Dombrowski and manager Jim Leyland. After allowing both to start the season with expiring contracts, Ilitch chose to announce extensions for both on Aug. 8, when the Tigers were just eight games over .500 and held only a four-game lead in the American League Central.

Five weeks later, the Tigers are the hottest team in baseball, with a 10-game winning streak and magic numbers of five (over the White Sox) and six (over the Indians) to clinch the AL Central. Trade acquisition Doug Fister has pitched so well that he may be the Tigers' No. 2 starter in the playoffs, behind Justin Verlander. Trade acquisition Delmon Young has hit so well that he's the Tigers' third hitter and has kept them from thinking too much about Brennan Boesch's injury.

And Dombrowski isn't going anywhere.

Now there's no certainty Ricketts would have tried to hire Dombrowski, even if he was available. And even if Dombrowski were working without an extension now, there's no reason to believe he'd have had any real interest in leaving.

But don't you think Ilitch and the Tigers feel more comfortable not needing to worry about it?

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

Team	Player	Transaction
Baltimore Orioles	Mark Hendrickson	Cleared Waivers and Became a Free Agent
Boston Red Sox	Nate Spears	Outrighted to Minors
Colorado Rockies	Eliezer Alfonzo	Starting to Serve Illegal Substance Suspension
New York Yankees	Steve Garrison	Outrighted to Minors
Pittsburgh Pirates	Steve Pearce	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Broken right index finger)
Pittsburgh Pirates	Matt Pagnozzi	Acquired Off Waivers From, Colorado
Tampa Bay Rays	Alex Torres	Called Up from Minors
Tampa Bay Rays	Jay Buente	Designated for Assignment
Tampa Bay Rays	Dan Johnson	Purchased From Minors

Tuesday, September 13, 2011

Team	Player	Transaction
Boston Red Sox	Lars Anderson	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Trever Miller	Purchased From Minors
Boston Red Sox	Nate Spears	Designated for Assignment
Boston Red Sox	Junichi Tazawa	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Jose Iglesias	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Joey Gathright	Purchased From Minors
Boston Red Sox	J.D. Drew	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Left shoulder impingement)
Cleveland Indians	Jason Rice	Designated for Assignment
Cleveland Indians	Zach Putnam	Purchased From Minors
Florida Marlins	Mike Cameron	Released
New York Yankees	Francisco Cervelli	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Concussion)

St. Louis Cardinals	Eduardo Sanchez	Removed From 60-Day DL, (Strained right shoulder)
Texas Rangers	Darren O'Day	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Right shoulder inflammation)
Texas Rangers	Nelson Cruz	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring - out 2-3 weeks)
Washington Nationals	Garrett Mock	Outrighted to Minors