



Detroit Tigers Clips Friday, May 11, 2012

Detroit Free Press

Detroit 10, Oakland 6: Tigers fend off Brandon Inge's grand slam for win (Windsor)
Scoring drought spurs extra batting practice for Tigers (Windsor)
Brandon Inge hits grand slam in first game as Tigers' foe (Windsor)
For Ernie Harwell, all games were can't-miss (Rosenberg)
Brandon Inge 'so happy' in Oakland but won't divulge Tigers' signs (Staff)

The Detroit News

Tigers' bats come alive against Athletics (Gage)
Brandon Inge gets fresh start with Oakland Athletics (Gage)
Helping kids in the cards for ex-Tiger Dmitri Young (Paul)
Ryan Raburn is filling Brandon Inge's shoes, unfortunately (Foster)

MLive.com

Adjustments pay off as Detroit Tigers' offense explodes for 10 runs (Iott)
Ex-Tigers infielder Brandon Inge hits grand slam in first game against his former team (Iott)
Detroit Tigers explode for eight runs in third inning, cruise to 10-6 victory over Oakland A's (Iott)
Brandon Inge thrilled to be back at third base, in starting lineup every day for Oakland A's (Iott)
Miguel Cabrera among four to take extra BP as Detroit Tigers try to get offense going (Iott)
Ask Schmehl! Will Detroit Tigers, Jim Leyland make anymore moves to sluggish lineup? (Schmehl)
Ask Schmehl! Detroit Tigers fan questions Jim Leyland's recent managerial moves (Schmehl)
Ask Schmehl! Should outfielder Andy Dirks remain in Detroit Tigers' everyday lineup? (Schmehl)

MLB.com

Miggy leads Tigers' A-plus offense to victory (Beck)
Inge holds no ill feelings toward Tigers (Beck)
Miggy, Young, Boesch show up for early BP (Beck)

The Oakland Press

Most criticism of Detroit Tigers manager Jim Leyland is misguided (Caputo)

FSDetroit.com

Tigers' big 3rd inning leads win over Athletics (Wakiji)
Tigers Minor League watch (Hogg)

Orlando Sentinel

Orlando native Mike Maroth back in pro baseball as minor-league coach (Lyon)

CBSsports.com

Daily Transactions

Detroit 10, Oakland 6: Tigers fend off Brandon Inge's grand slam for win

May 11, 2012

By Shawn Windsor / Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND -- Of course, we could begin with the grand slam.

And maybe, on most nights, we should. But when a team expected to contend for the World Series struggles to score, any sign suggesting a breakout is the bigger development.

Yes, Brandon Inge popped an opposite-field, two-out grand slam into the right-field seats Thursday night facing his former team for the first time. Yes, his blast cut a 10-2 lead to four runs, chased a relief pitcher that desperately needed work and forced Jim Leyland to use his bullpen in ways he didn't want to.

But the Tigers held on to beat the A's 10-6 and creep back over .500 again at 16-15.

The most important story at Oakland-Alameda Coliseum was that the Tigers' best hitter lowered his hands during his batting stance. Miguel Cabrera arrived at the park early to work on the new position before batting practice with Lloyd McClendon.

The Tigers hitting coach had been telling Cabrera his hands were too high for a few days now, but Cabrera couldn't quite make the adjustment at the plate.

"Sometimes you can't feel it," explained Leyland.

So McClendon decided to show him.

The subtle change worked. Cabrera had two hits in the second inning and finished 4-for-5 with three RBIs, snapping an 0-for-14 slump. Leyland said he could see the difference at the plate.

Cabrera said he could feel it, but wasn't much interested in talking about the change.

"We tried to figure out what was wrong. Hopefully we figured it out, you know," he said. "I don't know. It's only one game. This game is about results. It don't matter (if) your hands (are) here or your hands (are) over there."

In other words, he said, his job is to hit. How he collects them isn't important.

The same is true of Max Scherzer, who has also made recent adjustments to keep his motion tighter in order to control that nasty, late-moving fastball.

Scherzer followed a strong outing at Comerica Park last Saturday with another in Oakland. This time, he got run support as the Tigers batted around in third inning and knocked in eight runs.

Scherzer was in control from the first inning, allowing two runs on five hits. He pitched 6 1/3 innings, striking out nine. He credited the recent changes.

"I was just keeping my mechanics in line, keeping them right where I need to be," he said, "I'm bringing my hands higher and just getting a consistent delivery. I was able to do what I did last time tonight, and that's why I was able to pitch with three pitches."

Scherzer made a mistake to A's first baseman Kila Ka'aihue in the second inning when he gave up a two-run homer. Oakland took a 2-1 lead at that point – Andy Dirks poked a solo shot in the first to put Detroit up first.

For the rest of his outing, however, he mostly kept the ball down in the strike zone.

He said Alex Avila made that possible.

"Alex did a great job tonight of framing the low pitch. When the ball's coming out of my hand right, the fastball's coming down and I'm working down in the zone," he said. "When my slider's coming out of my hand, it's working down through the zone. Those are the signs that my mechanics are right."

In fact, there were signs things were clicking everywhere, from Cabrera's lowered hands to Scherzer's raised hands to Delmon Young's more relaxed leg-kick.

Young, like Cabrera, also worked with McClendon before batting practice – Brennan Boesch and Ryan Raburn did, too. McClendon wanted Young to keep his knee down as he loaded up his swing.

The DH didn't quite have the night Cabrera did, but he hit the ball hard and got two hits and an RBI. In all, Detroit had 17 hits and struck out only four times.

"Hopefully, it will loosen guys up," Leyland said. "Hopefully it's a sign of things to come. When we were 9-3 it was too early to say we were off and running and when we were 15-15 it (was) too early to really say anything, (either)."

Scoring drought spurs extra batting practice for Tigers

May 11, 2012

By Shawn Windsor / Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Tigers entered Thursday night's game against the A's playing .500 ball. Detroit's 15-15 record is not what most expected.

Jim Leyland acknowledged this was the topic surrounding the team so far.

"We are no different than the fans," he said. "We live and die with wins and losses. (It's the) topic right now: Why aren't we winning as much as we think we should be? And the answer to that is because we are not scoring runs, and we aren't hitting enough. So we got our guys out hitting early."

Specifically, Leyland was referring to the extra batting practice Miguel Cabrera, Ryan Raburn, Brennan Boesch and Delmon Young put in before regular practice Thursday. Leyland said he and hitting coach Lloyd McClendon were studying film trying to decipher any flaws in the hitting strokes. They determined Cabrera was holding his hands too high.

Leyland said the strategies are what all teams employ. He said there was no secret -- or easy -- fix to the team's batting woes.

"(It'd be great) if there was some formula you could turn on and off (and say) 'OK, you are going to hit tonight,' " he said. "(But) it doesn't work that way."

He is confident his team will hit.

"I'm not going to be negative. I'm going to stay positive. Why we aren't hitting? I don't really have the answer to that."

Then he added this: "I've always believed ... as long as the guys are going good, they don't need the manager. They need the manager when things aren't going well. Things aren't going that well right now."

Brandon Inge hits grand slam in first game as Tigers' foe

May 11, 2012

By Shawn Windsor / Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Alex Avila spotted Brandon Inge in the tunnel that connects the home and visiting clubhouses in the bowels of Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum on Thursday afternoon.

"You look ugly in that uniform," Avila told him.

Inge wasn't wearing the gold, green and white uniform the A's sport for games. He was wearing the warm-up gear, cut in those same colors. It was all the same to Avila and a sight he said would take some getting used to. Still, said the Tigers' catcher, "It was cool seeing him. I'm glad he's happy. I told him we were going to beat the crap out of him."

Inge said he would like to do the same to his former team. Not out of spite or any ill will, but just out of competitiveness.

Sure enough, he hit a grand slam in Oakland's 10-6 loss to the Tigers on Thursday, an eighth-inning blast off Collin Balester for Inge's lone hit of the night in four at-bats.

The grand slam was Inge's second in three days, a feat that hasn't been accomplished by the A's in 80 years (Jimmie Foxx).

Inge, released by the Tigers on April 26, said he was grateful to have found a new home, one where he can play every day and do it at third base. He said he arrived in Oakland with no expectations.

"I was kinda glad to get a fresh start, and I don't mean 'fresh start' by trying to get out of Detroit. I mean 'fresh start' by playing every day," he said. "I would've been very open to having a starting job in Detroit, too. That's home for me. That's family.

"But I knew that wasn't going to be the opportunity there. Getting an opportunity to start every day was key. That was the main goal."

Inge said a few clubs showed interest after the Tigers cut him. He wasn't certain that would be the case. He had played sporadically last season and this one, and though he said he'd heard over the years that other teams would like him, he wasn't sure what would happen.

"You can hear it from a lot of people, third-base coaches (for example), and I always have. That they like the way I play, that they'd take me any day on their team," he said. "But when it comes down to it, you really don't know, when you get the dollar signs mixed in with the general managers."

He continued: "You never know what is going to be a good fit. (The interest was) very gratifying. This one was the best fit for me -- getting the most number of at-bats, playing every day, Bob Melvin managing."

Inge said when he first joined the club in Baltimore, Melvin saw Inge, snapped his fingers and motioned him into his office. Inge thought he was gonna get chewed out. Turns out Melvin was joking. The two had a good laugh.

Inge has been smiling a lot lately, because of the walk-off grand slam he hit Tuesday to beat Toronto and the youthful team to which he now belongs.

Inge said he misses Detroit and that he gave everything he had for the city, the state and the organization.

"I don't hope or worry or wonder. I know in my heart I gave every bit of energy I had in the tank," he said.

"True fans are going to like it. Other fans ... they are gonna critique all they want, and that's fine, I don't mind it. Good fan, a bad fan, they are all fans, and I like 'em all."

For Ernie Harwell, all games were can't-miss

May 11, 2012

By Michael Rosenberg / Detroit Free Press

There are so many amazing statistics in Michigan sports history. There is 35-5 (the Tigers' 1984 start), 50-1 (the average score of a U-M football game in Fielding Yost's first five seasons) and 16 points in 94 seconds (what Isiah Thomas scored to force overtime in a 1984 playoff game).

But the one that has stuck with me, for years, is this: In 55 years as a major league broadcaster, Ernie Harwell missed two games.

Two. One for his brother's funeral, and one when he made the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association Hall of Fame. Harwell also missed one in Boston because of a union dispute that had nothing to do with him. But I don't count that one, since he was there, ready to do the game.

If you are a Tigers fan, you probably know about Ernie's near-perfect attendance. But have you ever really thought about it? What would drive a man to go from spring training to October, year after year, for almost his entire life, working most nights and every weekend, without asking for a day off?

Ernie could have done 155 games, or even 160, instead of 162 for the Tigers. For many years, he split games with Paul Carey, another outstanding play-by-play announcer -- Ernie would do six innings and Carey would do three. Surely Harwell could have taken an entire game and let Carey take the next one and they would each get a day off. It never happened. Carey didn't miss games, either.

Ernie's daughter, Carolyn Harwell Raley, said: "I don't remember him missing family things, at least the important ones." But surely he would have enjoyed an extra weekend day or two. The fact that he never asked just astounds me. What a work ethic.

I was fortunate to know Ernie. I can't say I knew him better than anybody else, but I did know him, and I feel comfortable saying: He loved the attention that came with being Ernie Harwell. I always thought that was one of his best attributes.

It is hard to be recognized everywhere you go, to be "on" all the time. A lot of celebrities see it as a burden or a nuisance. Ernie never tired of posing for photographs or shaking people's hands. He loved it, and he wanted everybody to know he appreciated it.

Maybe the most amazing thing about Ernie: He never, ever, for even a moment, tired of being Ernie Harwell. "Ernie was in love with baseball, as you know," Carey said. "Ernie loved to travel, too. He thrived off people. They energized him, they really did. He just loved the game, and that was his work ethic. You didn't miss work."

Harwell lived his job in ways that most of us can't imagine. That was how he wanted it. Carey and Ernie's daughter Carolyn say that when he was infamously fired after the 1991 season, he was not depressed. But when he came back, he came all the way back: every game, every year.

His close friend Vin Scully is still broadcasting Dodgers games, but only on the West Coast. Scully tired of the travel, but he still loves the games, and the Dodgers and their fans naturally would prefer some Scully over no Scully. The arrangement works for everybody, but it would not have worked for Harwell.

"He wanted to leave when he was in full health and presence of mind, he was all or none," Carolyn said. "He was either going to be there or be retired. One or the other."

Ernie finally retired after the 2002 season at age 84. Replacing him is impossible, but Dan Dickerson has done a marvelous job. Dickerson tries to broadcast every game, but even he has missed some: 26 when he injured his knee while running and "three or four," by his recollection, when his father died.

In the years after Ernie retired, his daughter would sometimes turn on the radio and listen for his voice. She wished he could have kept going. After Ernie Harwell retired, his daughter saw him more often. But she missed him terribly.

Brandon Inge 'so happy' in Oakland but won't divulge Tigers' signs

May 10, 2012

Detroit Free Press Staff

Brandon Inge made a good first impression in his first home game with the Oakland Athletics.

After going hitless in his first four at-bats Tuesday night -- with two strikeouts and a double play -- he capped Oakland's five-run ninth with a walk-off grand slam for a 7-3 victory over Toronto.

"I'm so happy here right now," Inge said. "I fit in. It's a new start for me. I welcomed it. I know we have a young ballclub, but they can play. I'm honored to be a part of this ballclub and trying to help them win. That's what feels the best."

Inge was 2-for-4 with a double Wednesday, bringing his average up to .173, but the Blue Jays won, 5-2.

And tonight he's hosting some old friends, the Detroit Tigers, for the start of a four-game series.

"That was a good grace period to do my thing, greet my new teammates," he told the San Francisco Chronicle.

"Them coming in will be fun. It will be a little weird, but it will be cool to see them."

Inge told the Chronicle he will give the A's scouting reports on his old teammates, but he won't tip off signs.

"If we beat them, I want it to be fair and square," he said.

Tigers' bats come alive against Athletics

May 11, 2012

By Tom Gage / Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. — Miguel Cabrera was in a slump. Past tense.

With sizzling Andy Dirks also getting four hits, Cabrera went 4 for 5 with three RBIs Thursday night in a 10-6 victory over the Oakland Athletics — a game in which the Tigers' often-dormant offense came to life.

As did Brandon Inge's.

Dirks raised his batting average from .339 to .383 with three singles and a solo home run.

Cabrera went from .263 to .285 with three singles and a double after identifying a bad habit he'd lapsed into with the position of his hands on his swing.

And in his first game against his former team, Inge hit a grand slam to right in the eighth off Collin Balester to cut the Tigers' eight-run lead in half.

The A's got no closer than four runs down after the slam, however.

"It was good to see us get some runs on the board," said Tigers manager Jim Leyland. "Hopefully it will loosen some guys up a little bit and we can get on a roll offensively.

"It does get contagious. I do believe in that."

For Inge, it was his second grand slam in eight games with the A's — his second in the last three games, in fact.

"We know he has power," Leyland said. "We've seen that firsthand."

In his two different seasons of hitting 27 home runs, to be precise.

"I'm just more relaxed," Inge said. "Playing every day is the difference in hitting and not hitting for me.

Inge said he took no special satisfaction hitting the grand slam against the Tigers, but he got a kick out of how Cabrera looked at him throughout his entire trot.

"Former team or not a former team," Inge said, "it's always fun to hit grand slams. But I liked the joking around, like Miggy watching me."

As for the Tigers' offense, Inge said he wasn't surprised to see the splurge.

"Look at that lineup," he said. "That's a team you have to respect on a daily basis no matter if they've been going good or bad.

"I know they're capable of putting up 30 runs against you if they get hot. They're good."

And Cabrera is good — but he hadn't been lately.

After a session of early hitting, though, Cabrera said he'd been holding his hands too high.

In his previous seven games, he'd gone 4 for 29. In Seattle, the Tigers' first stop of a three-city trip, Cabrera had gone 0-for-13.

So he and three other Tigers — Delmon Young, Brennan Boesch and Ryan Raburn — boarded the early team bus to the ballpark Thursday to take some swings.

Or to find their swings.

Cabrera certainly found his.

"Plus Boesch got a big double, Delmon did OK, and Raburn swung the bat pretty well," said Leyland. "That's just coaches doing their thing and seeing things. So maybe it paid some dividends."

The beneficiary of the runs was Max Scherzer, who improved his record to 2-3 by allowing two runs on five hits with nine strikeouts in 6 1/3 innings of work.

"He pitched really well," said Leyland. "Knock on wood, we've been getting real good starting pitching."

Inge was 0 for 3 against the Tigers when he connected to right. In his first three at-bats, he popped out, hit into a double play and struck out. At third base, he took a hit away from Austin Jackson on the first play of the game. Of Cabrera struggling through the Seattle series, Leyland spoke with confidence before the game that Cabrera was about to break out of it.

"In Miguel's case," Leyland said about the early session, "he came out to the outfield after he hit and said 'I've been carrying my hands too high.'

"But slumps, no matter who you are, are part of the game. That's the human element.

"Miguel Cabrera is going to hit. Mark it down that I said it. Look at the book. Take it to the bank. He's going to hit.

We'll be fine," Leyland said. "But we won't be fine just talking about it."
So they did something about it. They scored 10 runs.

Brandon Inge gets fresh start with Oakland Athletics

May 11, 2012

By Tom Gage / Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. — The green and gold of the Oakland Athletics look strange. At least on Brandon Inge they do. Maybe only different instead of strange.

But definitely different.

"I think so, too," Ramon Santiago said. "Go tell him I think so."

In his heart, Inge will always be a Tiger. On his head, however, he now wears an Athletics cap.

On his feet are their white shoes.

"More than the green, that's what takes some getting used to, the shoes," Inge said at his locker on Thursday in the A's clubhouse. "But I love them now. This is their tradition."

After more than a decade of seeing him, for better or worse, wearing the Olde English D, Inge in another uniform, and being at home in another ballpark, takes some getting used to.

Even his sons, Tyler and Chase, think that.

"Tyler (who is seven) said 'Daddy, I feel bad for you because the Tigers kicked you off the team,'" Inge said. "I almost broke into tears laughing.

"Chase (who is four) took the Tigers hat off his head and threw it on the ground. I still laugh about that, too."

There are those, of course, who rejoice at those words: "Inge in another uniform, Inge with another team."

He was booed in his final days, and weeks, as a Tiger for not hitting — and, yes, for under-performing in general because the transition from third to second base wasn't going totally easily.

Maybe just the long drawn-out saga of Inge as a Tiger was being booed — because it was drawn-out. It did last a long time.

And it came to an ugly end when a player to whom Detroit as a city and Detroit as a team were special was finally released — much to the relief of the countless fans on his case.

Not only is that saga over, however, but it has transitioned into Inge being an opponent.

The Tigers beat Oakland, 10-6, on Thursday night. They'll play the A's the next three days as well. They'll see a lot of Inge as a foe instead of a friend in this series.

"But I'll be glad to see him," manager Jim Leyland said. "We'll exchange pleasantries, absolutely."

There will probably be moments the checked-swing third strike that drove you crazy as an observer will rear its familiar head.

Even hitters who bat .300 overall, let alone in a four-game series, make more outs than they get hits — so you'll get more than one chance to see what you don't mind missing in Inge as a hitter. Then again, he did hit a grand slam in the eighth inning Thursday, his second slam of the week.

But he also could rob the Tigers of a hit or two at third base. In fact, that is what he did with Austin Jackson's shot to third in the first inning Thursday night.

"I want to make every play that I can against every team," Inge said. "They know that. But to do that against them, and give them a wink or two, that would be fun."

The green looks different, though. Not wistfully different - because no one is saying that Inge should still be a Tiger.

Not even he is saying that.

"I was glad to get a fresh start," Inge said. "I don't mean fresh as far as getting out of Detroit. I mean fresh about playing every day again."

His time in Detroit had run its course.

The Tigers gave him a chance to switch to second, but because it had become an awkward revolving door with Inge, Ryan Raburn and Ramon Santiago — with none of them doing much at the plate — one of them had to go.

It wasn't going to be Raburn, in whom the Tigers continue to believe despite another rough start.

It wasn't going to be Santiago, whose ability to play shortstop made him more valuable than Inge.

It had to be Inge — and it was.

No sooner had the Tigers released him, though, than reports began that other teams were interested in him. What quickly became clear was that there'd be baseball life for Inge after Detroit.

A change of scenery was about to take place for him — and it was Oakland that enticed him with the most playing time.

"This was the best fit for me," Inge said.

That explains the green and gold.

Has he hit yet with the Athletics? Yes and no. The "yes" part is composed mostly of the walk-off grand slam he hit on Tuesday in Oakland against Toronto, plus Thursday's slam.

Inge said he might not even have swung at the slider on which he hit Tuesday's slam if he wasn't playing every day.

"I'm not talented enough to get an at-bat, then take four or five days off and get another," he said.

Inge as a Tiger, even his toughest critics would have to admit, demonstrated an occasional flair for the dramatic. With Oakland, he's already had one of those dramatic moments.

"I give these guys a good grade for the beating I took," he said.

The balancing argument of Inge as a player, however, was always Inge as a person. Most of the good deeds he did went unnoticed — for the simple fact that he didn't visit hospitals and cheer up ailing children for the publicity of doing so.

He did it because they needed it.

So while Inge, in his heart, will always be a Tiger, he knows he can't control how he will be regarded in return.

"But I know I gave every bit of energy I had in the tank for that team, that organization, that city, that state," he said. "I will always be a Detroit guy.

"I'm there for the long haul as far as where I'll live — but towards the end, it was hard to focus on baseball."

He didn't hit enough. That's the reason why people got down on him.

Maybe he'll hit for Oakland, and maybe he won't.

But the green will look strange on him no matter what.

Because it's not the hat nor the uniform color that will ever mean the most to him.

Helping kids in the cards for ex-Tiger Dmitri Young

May 11, 2012

By Tony Paul / Detroit News

Like so many kids, Dmitri Young was big into collecting baseball cards.

He doesn't still have those cards from his childhood, though.

"Oh, God, no," the former Tigers first baseman said during a telephone interview from his home in California.

"I had parents who, if your room wasn't clean, my mom would come in and clean up and be a bulldozer.

Everything on the ground leaves the room and enters the Dumpster."

The mass cleaning happened three times, by his recollection.

"My dad got me one time for ... bad grades," he said.

His parents were strict. Dad, after all, was a Navy fighter pilot.

These days, though, Young is 38. It's his decision when to do the spring cleaning. And the time has come.

During his 13-year career, Young spent approximately \$5 million of his \$53 million in career earnings on baseball cards — and the result was perhaps the best collection of rookie cards in the world.

And now it's up for sale, through California-based SCP Auctions. The auction began April 30 and is scheduled to end May 18, which will be the three-year anniversary of the death of his mom, Bonnie.

"I look at it like my mom is giving me a gift," Young said.

Proceeds from the auction will help Young start The Dmitri D. Young Foundation, which will work with kids with baseball and softball camps and support of the Boys and Girls Club, among other ventures.

Two of the cards, Roberto Clemente and Hank Aaron, already are over \$100,000, and the Pete Rose and Reggie Jackson cards are closing in on that mark.

While Young's love of baseball cards dates to his childhood, this collection began when he broke into the majors. He remembers doing a card show with Reds teammate Danny Graves in 2000. And rather than being paid in cash, Young requested a Rose rookie card.

He got one that was graded 8 (out of 10) by PSA, or Professional Sports Authenticator. Of course, at that time, he knew nothing about the grading of cards. He didn't even know why the Rose card came in a case.

"So I go home and do more research," Young said. "And that offseason, I wanted more cards."

He started with the grade-8s, eventually worked up to 9s, and then to 10s — the cream of the crop, with perfectly sharp corners, no wear and tear, no manufacturer errors (off-centering, bubble gum-spots, etc.). All of Young's nearly 500 cards up for sale through SCP Auctions are graded 10 gem mint, or mint condition.

Young's card collection started to really take shape when then-Reds GM Jim Bowden traded him to the Tigers in December 2001. In February 2002, Tigers general manager Dave Dombrowski signed Young to a five-year contract that, in the end, was worth \$36 million.

Suddenly, he had more money to play with. And he played with it — for more cards.

But, in reality, Young wasn't making the best of investments. Young started talking to Tigers teammate Robert Fick about purchases he had made, to which Fick responded, "Dude, you're getting ripped off."

Makes sense. Many card collectors saw Young as a rich athlete who'd pay anything for cards. Fick helped put an end to that by introducing Young to collector Dave Bailey of Whitmore Lake. Bailey schooled Young on the art of collecting, with special emphasis on how not to get taken advantage of. And today, Young refers to Bailey as the "architect of the collection."

"He educated me," Young said. "And now I am an expert."

Before Young met Bailey, he was collecting cards from all the major sports. After Bailey entered the picture, however, the focus shifted to just baseball. Around that time, Young traded the NBA logo (Jerry West) for the MLB logo (Harmon Killebrew) — their rookie cards, that is.

"It was all over the place," Young said of his inventory. "What we did was we got it to where it was just baseball, because I am a baseball player and that's what I know."

The collection includes cards from 1948 through the early 2000s, and features a variety of players. There are plenty of cards that might interest Tigers fans, too, including Al Kaline and Willie Horton, which is one of his favorites because of what Horton meant to Young while he was with Detroit. Young even is selling his rookie card, as well as those of his brother, current Tigers outfielder Delmon Young.

While the collection is immensely valuable, it actually served another — perhaps greater — purpose, too. Young has dealt with a variety of issues over the years, from drug and substance abuse to battling Type 2 diabetes. He's coming up on a year sober, and he's down to 225 pounds. But during his playing days when the outlook wasn't as rosy, including during a tough final year in Detroit when he struggled on and off the field, he turned to his baseball cards, which at times served as an escape.

"So I'd get home, and when you submerge yourself into your baseball cards, your focus changes from, 'grrrrr' to, 'Let me find out if this card is (graded) a 10 or not.' Your focus changes, your body is in a more relaxed state," Young said. "That's what I mean by therapeutic, right there. I was able to get away from reality for a while and come back and be able to handle reality."

The reality now, of course, is the cards no longer will be his a week from today.

Considering the time and resources he's put into his hobby, you'd think it'd be tough to say goodbye.

But with the good the proceeds can do — Young has plans to teach kids not only about sports, but also about making good life and health choices — it's tough to have any regrets about parting with his prized collection.

"Actually, no," said Young, who plans to open up a switch-hitter university this fall, as well as hit the motivational speaking circuit. "The cards served their purpose.

"I feel proud to be able to let the world have what I built."

Ryan Raburn is filling Brandon Inge's shoes, unfortunately

May 10, 2012

By Terry Foster / Detroit News

Ryan Raburn is the Tigers' new Brandon Inge.

He's entered into the crosshairs of many Tigers fans who cannot figure out why he stays and why he plays. Raburn went 0-for-3 during another frustrating Tigers 2-1 loss Wednesday night in Seattle, dropping his batting average to .130.

How bad is that? Some Major League Baseball players can hit .130 wearing a blindfold and shackles. His latest outing helped ruin a very good outing by pitcher Drew Smyly and highlighted once again how pathetic the Tigers offense has been after an opening-series explosion against the Boston Red Sox. Since that series, the Tigers are averaging just 3.6 runs a game despite a lineup that features Miguel Cabrera, Prince Fielder and the setup man Austin Jackson.

Back then Inge was our whipping boy. He hit a home run in Kansas City and a long fly ball double at Comerica Park. Outside of that all he did was ground out, pop out and strike out. Inge batted .100 with the Tigers and the boos were so loud that you thought Claude Lemieux was coming to the plate.

Inge always has been a lightning rod because his game is good enough to intrigue and bad enough to frustrate. Somehow Inge and his supporters thought a career batting average of .234 was something at which to marvel. On the flip side, you could not ignore his two 27-home run seasons and ability to deliver clutch hits. But they were too few and far between. Inge was getting swallowed up by the boos, and you could tell he could not handle it here and needed a fresh start.

The Tigers will return from this nine-game road trip Wednesday to play the Minnesota Twins at Comerica Park. It will be interesting to see how fans greet Raburn. Will he even be in the lineup?

Tigers manager Jim Leyland always has given Raburn the benefit of the doubt, and for now said he will play him, hoping he breaks out of his slump. Raburn is a slow starter and Leyland still believes he can catch fire. Here is the payoff. Raburn has batted .307 from August through October. He's hit with power and been a plus bat. But Leyland can't wait that long for Raburn to wake up.

At 15-15, the Tigers are not exactly tearing up the league. If Raburn remains silent the Tigers must turn things over to Ramon Santiago or Danny Worth or find somebody else.

Raburn started his sixth straight game Wednesday night, going 1-for-10 against the Mariners in the series and 2-for-23 in May. Inge got released for going 2-for-20.

Leyland told broadcaster Dan Dickerson that Raburn can do damage when he gets going. He also called out second baseman Ramon Santiago, who has failed in limited opportunities at second base. It seems as if the position is jinxed. This season the four players who competed for the position in spring training are hitting a combined .138 with one home run and eight RBIs. The lone home run came from Inge.

"If you get Raburn going, that's production," Leyland told reporters in Seattle. "He produces. He hits the ball over the fence. I'm trying to give Raburn the benefit of the doubt to play him a few days in a row to see if we can get him going."

He'd better get going soon, or the boos will grow louder and the atmosphere around here more contentious. People grew tired of Inge's feeble attempts at the plate. They are growing tired of Raburn, too.

Adjustments pay off as Detroit Tigers' offense explodes for 10 runs

May 11, 2012

By Chris Iott / MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Detroit Tigers made some adjustments at the plate.

The most important one might have been relaxing a bit.

The Tigers found an offensive groove Thursday night unlike any they have seen since the first week of the season while rolling to a 10-6 victory over the Oakland A's.

The Tigers scored in double-digits in two of their first three games this season, but then didn't in any of their next 27 games. They broke that streak with a 10-run showing against the A's that included an eight-run third inning, their highest-scoring inning of the season.

The Tigers had 17 hits, the most since they had 17 in an 11-inning win over the Boston Red Sox on April 8.

Tigers manager Jim Leyland was asked if one game is enough evidence to show that his team has broken out of its offensive doldrums.

"I don't think so," he said. "You just have to keep grinding it out. Tomorrow's a new pitcher, a whole different day, but it's a good sign for us. The guys relaxed a little bit. Once we started swinging them decently we continued swinging them good."

Leyland returned to the theme of the Tigers relaxing more than once during his post-game comments. An opposing player who has spent his share of time in the Tigers clubhouse implied that relaxing might be the cure for what has been ailing them.

"I've been in that clubhouse," Oakland third baseman Brandon Inge said. "I know that they're capable of throwing up probably 30 runs on you one day if they get hot. They're good. They just need to -- speaking from an outsider -- they just need to relax a little bit and trust their ability."

Relaxing likely played a factor, but so, too, did some extra work the Tigers put in before the game. Four Tigers players took some extra batting practice during the day, and at least two made adjustments to their swings.

Miguel Cabrera lowered his hands. Delmon Young worked to reduce his leg kick.

Cabrera ended an 0-for-14 slump in a big way, with a 4-for-5 effort and three RBIs. Young finished with two hits for his first multi-hit game since April 21.

"It's only one game," Cabrera said. "It's all about results. If you hit, you're good."

The offensive struggles have prevented the Tigers from stringing wins together. They have not won consecutive games since wrapping up a sweep of the Kansas City Royals on April 18, and their last 12 games have been a true back-and-forth: L-W-L-W-L-W-L-W-L-W-L-W. They have either been .500 or one game above throughout that span.

The Tigers will try to make it two in a row Friday, when they face A's left-hander Tommy Milone (4-2, 4.42 ERA). One inning like the one they had in the third inning Thursday night would go a long way toward helping them put together a win streak.

"It was important for us," Leyland said. "Hopefully, that'll loosen the guys up a little bit. Hopefully we can get on a little bit of a roll."

Ex-Tigers infielder Brandon Inge hits grand slam in first game against his former team

May 11, 2012

By Chris Iott / MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Brandon Inge took no extra pride in hitting a grand slam in his first game against his former team.

"Former team, not former team," Inge said, "it's always fun to hit a grand slam."

Inge hit a grand slam in the eighth inning Thursday night to tighten up what turned out to be a 10-6 victory for the Detroit Tigers over the Oakland A's.

Inge also hit a grand slam Tuesday in a win over the Toronto Blue Jays and became the first A's player to hit two grand slams in three games since Jimmie Foxx did it in September 1932.

Inge said he enjoyed some playful trash talking with his former teammates and said Miguel Cabrera stared at him while he rounded the bases with a face that seemed to jokingly say, "Really?"

"That's what makes it fun playing against your old team," Inge said. "You want to win. The competitive side of you, you want to win. I want to play well. But I don't do it for the reason that I want to rub it in."

Inge was 0-for-3 with a strikeout when he stepped to the plate in the eighth. Tigers manager Jim Leyland replaced Phil Coke with right-hander Collin Balester at that point.

Inge greeted Balester by hitting his second pitch the opposite way for a grand slam.

"He threw a first-pitch fastball and came back with another one," Leyland said of Balester. "I was hoping for a breaking ball to expand the zone a little bit. You've got to give (Inge) credit it. He hit it."

Inge didn't lead a comeback, but he did mess up Leyland's bullpen plans for the night. Had Balester retired Inge, Leyland was going to leave him in to pitch the ninth. Instead, Leyland pulled Balester immediately, inserted Joaquin Benoit to finish the eighth and used Jose Valverde in the ninth.

"We just didn't expand the zone enough on him," Leyland said. "We know he's got power. We've seen that first-hand."

Detroit Tigers explode for eight runs in third inning, cruise to 10-6 victory over Oakland A's

May 11, 2012

By Chris Iott / MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- That looked more like the offense Detroit Tigers fans expected to see.

The Tigers scored as many runs in the first three innings as they had in their previous three games while cruising to a 10-6 victory Thursday night over the Oakland Athletics.

The Tigers scored a combined nine runs while losing two of three to the Seattle Mariners prior to opening a four-game series Thursday night in Oakland.

Former Tigers infielder Brandon Inge hit a grand slam in the eighth inning for the A's in his first game against his former team. That helped the A's close the gap after they had trailed by eight for most of the game.

The Tigers sent 13 hitters to the plate and scored eight runs in the third inning to take a 9-2 lead. Miguel Cabrera had an RBI double and an RBI single in the inning, while Alex Avila knocked in two with a double.

Andy Dirks -- who hit a solo home run in the top of the first inning -- singled, walked and scored a run in the third. He reached base five times -- on four hits and a walk -- before being replaced by a pinch-runner in the seventh inning.

Cabrera entered the game with no hits in his previous 14 at-bats but had three hits by the end of the third inning and finished 4-for-5 with three RBIs. He took extra batting practice prior to the game -- as did Delmon Young, Brennan Boesch and Ryan Raburn -- as the Tigers tried to work their way out of an offensive funk.

Cabrera told Tigers manager Jim Leyland that he had been holding his hands too high recently and made the adjustment as a result of the extra batting practice.

The Tigers entered the game 10th in the American League in runs scored. They scored 10 runs in their second game of the season and 13 the next day, but they had not reached double-digits in runs in 27 games since. But they had 10 runs on the board before the end of the fifth inning in this one.

Max Scherzer put together his second consecutive impressive outing after struggling earlier in the season. He allowed two runs on five hits and two walks in 6 1/3 innings. Scherzer finished with nine strikeouts for the second consecutive game.

The A's took a 2-1 lead in the second inning when Kila Ka'aihue hit a two-run home run -- his first homer of the season -- to right field. Ka'aihue has 12 career home runs, four of them against the Tigers.

The Tigers led 10-2 when Inge hit his grand slam -- his second in three days -- off Tigers reliever Collin Balester in the eighth inning. Ballester replaced Phil Coke with the bases loaded in the eighth. Inge was the only batter he faced.

Brandon Inge thrilled to be back at third base, in starting lineup every day for Oakland A's

May 10, 2012

By Chris Iott / MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Brandon Inge said Michigan will always be home to him.

But it still feels great to be back at home at third base and in the lineup every day.

"I guess I'm going to say that I'm not talented enough to take an at-bat and then take four, five days off and then have another at-bat," he said. "I'm not knocking anyone. I'm just not very good at it. I need to have an at-bat to base my next at-bat off of, to have a feeling.

"Everything I do I do off of feel. If I don't have something to go off of, I get lost in limbo a little bit."

Inge is hitting .219 (7-for-32) with a home run and nine RBIs since signing with the Oakland A's after the Tigers released him during his 12th season with the club. He has a .469 slugging percentage and a .766 OPS. Both numbers were helped by a walk-off grand slam Inge hit to give the A's a 7-3 victory Tuesday over the Toronto Blue Jays.

Inge said he drew interest from multiple teams but that the A's were the best fit. Still, the process was a bit daunting at first.

"There's a lot of uncertainty, especially when you go your whole career in one place, whether or not teams are going to have any interest in you," he said. "You can hear from a lot of people, and I always have -- third-base coaches, other players -- about how they liked the way I play, they'd take me any day on their team. But when it comes down to it, you really don't know. ...

"There was some uncertainty, but it was very gratifying to know right away that there was interest."

After Inge said his heart will always be in Detroit, he was asked if he hoped Tigers fans would return that feeling for him.

"I don't hope, I don't worry or wonder to be honest with you," Inge said. "And I'm not saying that in a bad way. The way I mean it is, I know in my heart that I gave every bit of energy I had in the tank for that team, for that organization, for that state, for the city, everything.

"True fans are going to like it. Other fans, they're going to critique all they want, and I don't mind it. Good fans, bad fans, they're all fans, and I like them all."

Inge said he heard from the majority of his former Tigers teammates after he joined the A's.

"That's a class act over there in that other clubhouse right now," he said. "It's weird to say 'that other clubhouse.'" Inge said the change from the Tigers to the A's felt a bit funny for his family as well. He told a story about his 4-year-old son, Chase, throwing his Tigers cap on the ground and having a puzzled look on his face after the Tigers released Inge.

Inge cracked up while relaying the story of how his son Tyler, 7, reacted.

"He said, 'Daddy, I feel really bad for you that the Tigers kicked you off the team,'" Inge said. "I almost broke into tears laughing."

Miguel Cabrera among four to take extra BP as Detroit Tigers try to get offense going

May 10, 2012

By Chris Iott / Mlive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Most people expect the bats to warm up for the Detroit Tigers at some point. Jim Leyland just wants to make sure his players know that they can't simply sit around and wait for it to happen. "The one thing I will not tolerate is, 'Well, we'll come out of it,' " Leyland said. "You can say that until you're blue in the face. I think we will, too. But it's not like, 'Well, I don't have to do it today because I know eventually we're going to do it.'

"That's not the point either. The point is, come out here every day and try to win a ballgame, and that's what they're trying to do."

Miguel Cabrera, Delmon Young, Brennan Boesch and Ryan Raburn all took extra batting practice on the field Thursday prior to the series opener against the Oakland Athletics. Cabrera, who went 0-for-13 in the three-game series with Seattle, found something during the extra work that he felt needed corrected.

"When he came out to the outfield after he hit he said, 'I was carrying my hands too high,' " Leyland said.

"That's what you do all this stuff for. But sometimes slumps, no matter who you are, that's the element of the game. That's the human element. It's a very difficult game to play."

Cabrera has seen his average fall from .300 to .263 in a little more than a week. Young, Boesch and Raburn are all hitting under .230.

Young is hitting in the fifth spot behind Cabrera and Prince Fielder but has just seven RBIs for the season.

Raburn has knocked in two runs.

"We've got our guys out hitting early," Leyland said. "We look at tape, we look at film, we try to figure out if there's some kind of flaw in the swing compared to when they're going good. I don't know of anything else to do. I don't know that anybody in baseball knows what else to do. It's a pretty simple formula."

Leyland said players don't need much guidance when everything is going fine. But when it isn't?

"That's when they need the manager and the coaches, to try to keep them pumped up, try to keep them positive, try to keep them grinding," Leyland said. "But they have to take some responsibility themselves. You've got to grind your (butt) off.

"I'm responsible for the team's performance, but each individual is responsible for his own performance. That's just the way it is."

The Tigers came into the season with high offensive expectations after they scored 787 runs last season (fourth best in the American League) and signed first baseman Prince Fielder in the offseason. But after averaging 4.86 runs last season, the Tigers are averaging 4.13 this season, which puts them 10th in the American League.

The Tigers have also seen other offensive numbers fall. They are 12th in walks in the American League after finishing fifth last season. Their slugging percentage of .434 ranked fourth in 2011. They are eighth at .393 this season. Their OPS has fallen from a fourth-best .773 in 2011 to a ninth-best .702 in 2012.

Leyland said it takes a combination of working hard and working smart for a team to break out of a hitting slump.

"It's a hard game to play," he said. "The competition is very good every night. We'll be fine. But we won't be fine just talking about it. We'll be fine by working at it and working at it and grinding it out and doing what we do, and we will definitely come out of it."

Ask Schmehl! Will Detroit Tigers, Jim Leyland make anymore moves to sluggish lineup?

May 10, 2012

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

Question: Other than dropping Brennan Boesch to the No. 8 spot, is there any other shakeups in the lineup coming that could help jumpstart this anemic offense?

Andy Dirks seems to be a pretty good fit in the No. 2 hole. He's a real good contact hitter, doesn't walk, but doesn't strike out either. Do you see him getting an extended everyday tryout, or just in and out of the lineup? -- Rob of Grandville, Mich.

Answer: Thanks for the question, Rob. The second half of your question has already been answered, but allow me to address the first part.

It's always tough to predict Leyland's lineups. For the most part, he typically likes to keep players in a set spot -- depending on that day's pitching matchup.

He's also steadfast on alternating left- and right-handed hitters in the order to keep opposing pitchers on their toes and create problems for opposing managers when making pitching changes.

However, there are a few players that likely won't move from their slot for the remainder of the year. Austin Jackson being one.

Jackson will be the team's leadoff hitter everyday. Why? Because the team really doesn't have an alternative. No other player is a guarantee to wind up at third on a base hit to right. Perhaps Andy Dirks, but he's the new No. 2, right?

Also, it's a safe bet that Prince Fielder will remain the team's cleanup hitter for the remainder of the season. Despite Miguel Cabrera's so-so season, Leyland won't flip-flop him with Fielder. He just won't. He was asked about it this spring and simply pointed to Fielder's success at the cleanup spot in Milwaukee behind Ryan Braun.

As far as anyone else in the lineup? Who knows for sure.

The past two games, Ryan Raburn has batted sixth behind Delmon Young. If Raburn continues to struggle at the plate, I find it hard to believe Leyland will put him in that spot, even with a left-handed starter on the mound.

If struggles persist, Raburn would be more suited to bat ninth -- as he already has in nine games this season. Or, he could simply find himself back in Triple-A Toledo. (He's been optioned three times since 2005, but all three stints in the minors were less than 20 days in length, so he has one remaining.)

Delmon Young has had trouble with his offense as of late, but I wouldn't say his spot behind Fielder is in jeopardy. Why? Because there's really no one else that can fill it, either.

Brennan Boesch is the only slugger that makes sense at No. 5, but his struggles are far worse than Young's at this point.

Ask Schmehl! Detroit Tigers fan questions Jim Leyland's recent managerial moves

May 10, 2012

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

Question: I couldn't believe my eyes when Jim Leyland pulled (Doug) Fister after throwing only 73 pitches Monday.

Then to bring in (Octavio) Dotel in the ninth -- with his wildness? Only Leyland would do that. He is the worst manager I have seen manage in 30-plus years.

-- Bob.

Answer: Bob, do you remember John Russell?

He didn't have much to work with in Pittsburgh, but he probably isn't bragging about his 186-299 managerial record. Care to reconsider?

This isn't so much an answer, considering a question wasn't exactly asked. But, regardless, I'll offer my opinion about how Monday played out.

It's easy to second-guess a manager when things go awry, like they did Monday. But to place all blame on Leyland is foolish.

Leyland made it clear Sunday that both Joaquin Benoit and Jose Valverde wouldn't be available Monday after the two had combined to make five appearances the past three games.

As a result, it was assumed Octavio Dotel would enter the ninth if a save opportunity presented itself. As he should.

Dotel's 108 career saves played a large role in why the Tigers expressed interest in the 38-year-old journeyman this offseason.

He has a track record of success and he should have received the ninth-inning call before Phil Coke.

Dotel just simply blew it.

So, why didn't Leyland keep Fister in the game, you ask? Simply put, it was Fister's first start since April 7.

Coming off a 68-pitch rehab start last Wednesday, Fister hasn't quite built up the arm strength to throw 100-plus pitches. It takes time.

Also, three left-handed hitters were due up in the eighth. It was a picture-perfect scenario for the left-handed Coke to make an appearance.

Sure, Fister probably could've pitched another inning -- and, rather than bring in Coke, Fister probably could've gone another inning.

But, there was no chance that he would've or could've pitched a complete game. And, it only made sense to pull Fister and bring in Coke and Dotel in that order.

After the game, Leyland said Benoit might've been able to pitch, but didn't want to risk it, instead deciding to stick to his game plan and use Dotel in a save situation.

If Leyland were to receive any blame, it should only be in his decision to not use Benoit -- otherwise, simply chalk Monday's loss as a bad appearance by Dotel.

Ask Schmehl! Should outfielder Andy Dirks remain in Detroit Tigers' everyday lineup?

May 10, 2012

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

Question: I really applauded the move by Jim Leyland to move Andy Dirks in to the No. 2 spot. Do you think he should remain in that spot against left-handers, or should he only face right-handers?

Also, he seems to be a better than average defender. Why not make him the teams No. 2 hitter and full-time left fielder?

The team would gain offensively and defensively? Is this a sound plan or do you feel Dirks is in the big picture for the Tigers?

-- Greg of Toledo, Ohio.

Answer: When Leyland shuffled the team's lineup Sunday, it was the first indication this season that he was willing to reconsider altering his everyday order to address a glaring problem.

And, so far, the lineup change has paid off.

The hot-hitting Dirks now has two hits in all three games he's batted No. 2. And, as long as he continues to swing a hot bat, I really don't see a reason as to why Leyland would pull him or drop him down the order. Even with a left-hander set to take the mound.

Typically, Leyland would rest the left-handed hitting Dirks on days that called for a left-handed starter -- using him as a late-inning defensive replacement or pinch-hitter.

However, Ryan Raburn's offensive struggles, coupled with Brennan Boesch's early-season issues, have seemingly forced Leyland to reconsider such a move.

It's a small sample size, but Dirks has shown that he can hit against southpaws, batting .325 in 40 at-bats. A career .269 hitter, Dirks is batting .260 lifetime against right-handers, but is tearing the cover off the ball this season -- hitting a team-high .339.

Again, it's only nine at-bats so evaluate accordingly, but Dirks is batting .333 with a home run and a walk against southpaws this season.

If the Tigers were willing to roll the dice and call up the hot-hitting Brad Eldred in an effort to spark their offense, I see no reason as to why Leyland wouldn't test Dirks against left-handers, too.

Dirks didn't play Wednesday in the team's series finale against Seattle, but his absence had much more to do with tightness in his left hamstring than the left-handed pitching matchup.

If he continues to hit and remains healthy, there's really no reason why Leyland should rest him against a right- or left-handed starter.

And, if he is to remain in the everyday lineup, he needs a position -- and left field would seemingly make the most sense.

Leyland hasn't officially declared Delmon Young the team's everyday designated hitter, but he suggested Tuesday that Young "makes us a better club" at DH.

That being said, Leyland has referred to Dirks as simply an "average defender." Whether that still makes him a better outfielder than Young -- by Leyland's standards -- is unclear.

However, if Ryan Raburn is to make consistent starts at second base, which Leyland suggested shortly after Brandon Inge's release, then left field would seemingly belong to Dirks, right?

Of course, that isn't to say that Young, Raburn and Don Kelly won't make occasional starts in left. But, for now, it seems like Dirks is slowly cementing himself into the team's starting lineup as their everyday left fielder.

Miggy leads Tigers' A-plus offense to victory

Dirks joins slugger with four-hit night; Scherzer fans nine

May 11, 2012

By Jason Beck / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Of course manager Jim Leyland predicted Thursday his team was going to hit. He didn't necessarily mean that night, but he'll take it.

So will his hitters.

"We've played some close games. We needed it," Ramon Santiago said. "We needed a game like this, to help everybody get going."

By the time closer Jose Valverde had to enter to finish off Thursday's 10-6 win over the A's, the Tigers truly needed all that offense, having watched ex-teammate Brandon Inge turn a runaway into a slugfest with his second grand slam this week. Yet by that point, Oakland didn't have enough outs left to get its new RBI producer back around.

By the time the Tigers were done batting around in the third inning against A's starter Bartolo Colon and Jordan Norberto, they had put up as many runs in three innings as they did their previous three nights in Seattle. A few minutes later, Max Scherzer had sent down Oakland and sent his team back to the plate.

For the first time in weeks, despite the bullpen adventures, the Tigers had clutch hitting and starting pitching working in combination.

"Baseball's a funny game," Scherzer said. "I always believe in momentum. The more often you're able to keep your team in the dugout, keep them swinging the bats, they seem to get a rhythm at the plate. And when you're able to do go out there and do your job, have quick innings, get them back into the dugout, they seem to rally around that rhythm."

Whether it's enough to spark the Tigers on the winning streak they've been trying to build for the past few weeks will be seen this weekend. For now, it continued their stretch of alternating wins and losses to 12 games, but it was their most decisive win in that stretch.

Two days after Leyland said his team was chasing pitches outside the strike zone and not giving itself a chance, and one night after Leyland compared his team's offensive struggles to a broken record, the Tigers had four members of their starting lineup at the ballpark early for extra batting practice.

"We'll be fine," Leyland forecast before the game, "but we won't be fine just talking about it. We'll be fine by working at it, working at it and grinding it out, doing what we do. We will definitely come out of it."

Hours later, everybody got their swings in against Colon, who attacked the strike zone and paid for it with eight runs (seven earned) on nine hits over 2 1/3 innings. Nearly a third of Colon's 31 strikes thrown were struck for base hits.

"He throws a lot of strikes," Santiago said of Colon. "He's always 70 percent around the plate, so you have to be aggressive with a pitcher who throws a lot of strikes. We had a good game plan going into the game, and we executed it."

Andy Dirks homered to open the scoring and singled off Colon for his fifth consecutive multihit game. Miguel Cabrera, who came to town in an 0-for-14 slump, singled and doubled off Colon before adding two more singles against Oakland's bullpen for a season-high four hits. Alex Avila ended his 0-for-11 skid with a single and a two-run double off Colon (3-3), the latter being part of a third inning in which Detroit sent 13 batters to the plate, put 10 on base and scored eight.

"All the guys that came out today and hit extra, they did pretty well today," Leyland said. "Cabrera and Delmon [Young] looked OK. [Ryan] Raburn swung the bat pretty well, I thought. [Brennan] Boesch got a big hit. It paid some dividends, so it's nice to get some runs on the board."

Cabrera, in particular, looked different. By lowering his hands in his swing, he was supposedly quicker to the ball with his swing. Coincidence or not, three of his four hits went to the opposite field with authority. The other was a nice, easy ground ball through the middle.

Aside from a two-homer game, it was arguably the best he has looked this year. Still, he didn't want to call the results a massive change.

"I don't know, man. It's only one game," Cabrera said. "It's all about results. It doesn't matter [about the mechanics]. If you get a hit, you're good, you know?"

It was a welcome outburst for Scherzer, who had received just 14 runs of support over his previous five outings combined. He recovered from Kila Ka'aihue's second-inning two-run homer to retire nine of Oakland's next 11 batters. Those were the only runs Scherzer would allow, as he scattered five hits and notched nine strikeouts over 6 1/3 frames.

The fact that Leyland had to use every arm in the late-inning quartet of his bullpen was the downside, centered around Inge's grand slam off a Collin Balester fastball.

"We just didn't expand the zone enough on him," Leyland said. "We know he's got power. We've seen that firsthand, but we got a good win. We put some hits together, scored some runs. Hopefully that's a sign of things to come."

Inge holds no ill feelings toward Tigers

Oakland's third baseman catches up with former teammates

May 11, 2012

By Jason Beck / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Brandon Inge had to make a whole different catch than he's known for when he was asked Thursday if any of his old Tigers teammates sent him a cool text message about his grand slam the other day. "I got a bunch from a lot of guys," he said Thursday. "That's a class act over in that clubhouse. It's weird to say that other clubhouse."

Inge isn't the only one having to make the transition, but he's having an easier time getting used to it.

His grand slam against his old team Thursday night surely didn't hurt, even though it came in Detroit's 10-6 win over Oakland. But then again, the Tigers have seen dramatic home runs from Inge over the years.

"Inge always hits a big homer in big situations," ex-teammate Ramon Santiago said, "and today he got a fastball right there and he didn't miss."

When the Tigers released Inge last month, he said his 4-year-old son, Chase, supposedly threw his Tigers hat on the ground in frustration without really knowing what he was frustrated about. His older son, Tyler, awkwardly tried to console him.

"He goes, 'Daddy, I feel really bad for you that the Tigers kicked you off the team,'" Inge said. "I almost broke into tears laughing so hard."

He's having fun with it now. Instead of a veteran without a role in Detroit, Inge has become a makeshift elder statesman for a young team in Oakland. More important to him, he has become an everyday player.

Inge doesn't want to rehash the last year as a lightning rod of attention in Detroit, but he'll gladly look back on his fond memories there, and he'll still call it home. For now, though, he just wants to play.

No hard feelings. No revenge. Just give him some at-bats, please.

"I was just actually so glad to get a fresh start," Inge said. "I don't mean fresh start by trying to get out of Detroit. I mean fresh start by being able to start every day. I would've been very open to having a starting job in Detroit, too, because that's home for me. That's family. But I knew there wasn't going to be an opportunity. Getting an opportunity to start every day, that was the key. That was my main goal."

That was what drew him here. His latest batch of at-bats came against the only organization he ever played for until a couple weeks ago.

Inge's first three at-bats Thursday came against Max Scherzer, his teammate for two-plus seasons. Scherzer got a foulout to third with a runner on in the second, a fourth-inning double play and a seventh-inning strikeout as Inge checked his swing on an offspeed pitch.

"It's always odd to face a friend, especially like him," Scherzer said. "He was such a good clubhouse guy. I really got along with him. I wish him the best and I hope he has a great season."

Once Inge came up in the eighth, the Tigers had a 10-2 lead, but two infield singles and a Seth Smith walk had loaded the bases. Rather than let Inge face lefty Phil Coke, manager Jim Leyland turned to Collin Balester. Balester threw back-to-back fastballs, and Inge sent the second of them over the right-field wall for his second grand slam this week.

"We just didn't expand the zone enough on him," Leyland said. "We know he's got power. We've seen that firsthand."

It wasn't a revenge shot, Inge said, but it still felt good.

"Honestly, it's just about being relaxed and going out there and playing and having fun, being comfortable around a group of guys that make me feel comfortable," said Inge, who is batting .179.

Inge didn't hold any resentment when the Tigers released him -- and he's sticking to it.

"I don't worry or wonder, to be honest with you," he said. "I know in my heart that I gave every bit of energy I had in the tank for that team, for that organization, for that state, city, everything. True fans are going to like it. Other fans, they can critique all they want, that's fine, and I don't mind it. Good fan, bad fan, they're all fans, and I like them. It's interest in baseball, so that's the most important thing. The only thing I care about is if I play hard for my team."

Miggy, Young, Boesch show up for early BP

May 10, 2012

By Jason Beck / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- When four members of a starting lineup are at the ballpark on the road in the early afternoon for extra batting practice on the field, it's usually not a sign of a healthy offense.

When those four include the previous night's second, third, fifth and sixth hitters, it's really not a good sign.

When they all show signs of progress in their next game, it's encouraging.

But manager Jim Leyland had been giving those signs for most of the week after the Tigers scored three runs or less in four of their previous five games, including Wednesday's 2-1 loss at Seattle.

"We'll be fine," Leyland said Thursday afternoon after the early hitting, "but we won't be fine just talking about it."

Thus, Miguel Cabrera, Delmon Young, Brennan Boesch and Ryan Raburn were all out early to take their swings. All of them had base hits in Thursday's 10-6 win over the Athletics, including a season high of four hits from Cabrera.

"It's only one game," Cabrera cautioned. "It's all about results. It doesn't matter [about the mechanics]. If you get a hit, you're good, you know?"

Cabrera is no stranger to early work, having spent much of Spring Training at the ballpark soon after the crack of dawn to get in extra defensive work at third base and prepare for his transition. This was different, as are his recent numbers.

Cabrera went through an 0-for-22 stretch -- the second-longest hitless streak in his career -- last month before finding something that clicked while taking extra swings in the batting cage with hitting coach Lloyd McClendon. Cabrera entered Thursday in an 0-for-14 funk.

The two skids weighed down his average to .263, his lowest average through 30 games since he was a 20-year-old rookie in 2003. Thursday's four-hit performance bumped his average to .285.

Leyland believes Cabrera found his flaw this time through his early hitting. Supposedly, he was carrying his hands too high as he readied to swing. As Leyland describes it, Cabrera compares it to a boxer trying to land a body blow.

"That's what you do all this for," Leyland said, "but sometimes slumps, that's an element of the game. That's the human element. We get spoiled. Cabrera's supposed to get two hits and knock in three runs every night. Every time he doesn't, well, that's a red flag.

"Miguel Cabrera is going to hit. Mark it down. Look at the book. Take it to the bank."

Tigers look to turn things around vs. lefties

OAKLAND -- It wasn't long ago that left-handed starters were an opportunity for the Tigers to bust out their offense, back in the years when they were heavy on right-handed power hitters.

That hasn't held this season, though they'll get a chance to try to improve against A's southpaw Tommy Milone on Friday night.

The Tigers haven't won a game started by a left-hander since they swept the Royals in Kansas City in mid-April, helped by victories against Jonathan Sanchez and Danny Duffy. The only lefty starters to take losses against Detroit have been Duffy on April 16 and Chris Sale the day before.

Detroit's 6-5 record in games against left-handed starters is just slightly better than its 9-10 record against right-handers. The more meaningful difference comes when comparing the Tigers' stats against lefties to the rest of the league.

Against all pitchers, the Tigers entered Thursday around the middle of the pack offensively. Their .249 average ranks sixth among the 14 American League clubs, while their .702 OPS ranks ninth. Their 124 runs through 30 games, while not particularly a good total, still ranks 10th.

Split up the stats against left-handers, and the Tigers are batting just .223, 11th in the league. Their .638 OPS ranks 10th.

If you're looking for a spot where Detroit truly misses Victor Martinez, this might be it. He batted .311 with an .823 OPS against southpaws last year in his first season in Detroit, and .400 the year before that in Boston.

Leyland impressed with Putkonen's arsenal

OAKLAND -- Manager Jim Leyland likes what he sees from rookie reliever Luke Putkonen, but he just hasn't had much of an opportunity to see it.

When former Tigers starter David Pauley went nine days between outings last August after his trade from Seattle, it became a mini-saga when he would pitch again. For Putkonen, his first big league stint saw him sit for that same duration before finally getting an opportunity Wednesday at Seattle. He gave up a run in his second inning and took the 2-1 loss, but it wasn't a sign of a rough outing.

Michael Saunders' pinch-hit double in the eighth was the only hit allowed by Putkonen, who struck out two batters in a perfect seventh inning beforehand while powering fastballs at 96 mph.

"I thought the kid threw the ball extremely well," Leyland said. "I was very impressed."

Most criticism of Detroit Tigers manager Jim Leyland is misguided

May 10, 2012

By Pat Caputo / The Oakland Press

The second half of 2011 — and the postseason — should have been enough to quell the critics of Tigers manager Jim Leyland.

And it was — for about a month into this season.

The Tigers' start has been shaky. Their lineup, considered among in the best in baseball after adding Prince Fielder, has been below average across the board.

The bullpen, which didn't falter with the lead going into the ninth inning last season, has been about as stable as a high-wire act featuring a man with vertigo.

Nobody anticipated the Tigers showing much range defensively or flashing any notable speed on the base paths. That assumption has been correct.

Managing his bullpen has long been considered a strength for Leyland going to back to early days as a major league manager with the Pirates, but this season many of his decisions — albeit the “darned if you do, darned if you don't” variety — haven't worked out.

It's like Monday night in Seattle when Leyland turned to Octavio Dotel in the ninth inning to protect a 2-0 lead. Dotel had pitched exceptionally well in his previous outings. Pressure isn't exactly an issue with him. Dotel is a 38-year-old veteran, who performed well in the postseason last season with St. Louis as the Cardinals won the World Series. Dotel has been a closer before.

Leyland did not use regular closer Jose Valverde because he had pitched in the previous three games.

Dotel didn't only blow the save opportunity, he melted down. The second-guessing: Why hadn't Leyland left in Phil Coke after he had thrown just eight pitches in a 1-2-3 eighth inning? Why hadn't starter Doug Fister remained in the game? Granted, he was coming off the disabled list, but had thrown seven ridiculously easy innings of shutout baseball — with only 73 pitches.

Leyland pushed the wrong button. He's done it other times this season, too. All managers do, at times. The second guessing comes with the territory.

The Tigers are still fortunate Leyland is their manager.

The knock on Leyland had been his previous Tiger clubs fading down the stretch, including a monumental collapse in 2009. Last season, the Tigers turned a 56-51 record into a 95-win season. In the previous six seasons, the Tigers have beaten the Yankees twice in divisional series — including in 2011.

There is a going to come a point where it will be obvious Leyland should no longer be the Tigers manager. With rare exceptions like Bobby Cox in Atlanta and Tony LaRussa in St. Louis, it happens in every town. If the Tigers had not performed so well the second half of last season, it might have been apparent about Leyland, too. But the Tigers were beyond good to close last season — they were exceptional. There was nothing about their postseason run coming to a close against Texas that could be traced back to Leyland.

If anything, he remains a strength, not a weakness.

While Leyland has been presented a lot of good parts, he is essentially a slave to how well the Tigers hit. This is not a team that is going to support its pitching staff with speed and defense, but rather run support generated by power. The Tigers haven't gotten off to a good start hitting, but that should change, barring significant injuries. They've also had to clear up the distraction of Delmon Young's issues and not having Fister in the rotation. Sometimes, Leyland gets grouchy with the media, and his demeanor is questioned, but it's not an issue with his players, who openly respect him.

It should be remembered where the Tigers were before Leyland arrived. They had 12 straight losing seasons and a succession of managers who lost control of the clubhouse, which was often reflected on the field.

Leyland has been right a lot more than he's been wrong as Tigers manager. The second half of last season solidified the point that manager isn't a problem for the Tigers.

The first month of this season, strange as it has been, shouldn't change that notion.

Tigers' big 3rd inning leads win over Athletics

May 11, 2012

By Dana Wakiji / FSDetroit.com

Just when you thought Max Scherzer and the suddenly prolific offense would be the entire story of the Tigers' 10-6 victory over the Oakland A's, a former Tiger had to make sure he was part of the tale as well.

But before we get to Brandon Inge, the man Tigers fans love to hate, Scherzer's outing requires some attention. Scherzer followed up his excellent start against the Chicago White Sox (one run allowed in seven innings with no walks and nine strikeouts) with another good one in Oakland.

Scherzer allowed two runs on five hits in 6 1/3 innings while walking two and striking out another nine, improving to 2-3 with a 5.73 ERA. That may not sound spectacular but it's a lot better than the 7.77 ERA he had three starts ago.

Plus, it showed that Scherzer was able to repeat the fix he made of the mechanical flaw he and pitching coach Jeff Jones found in his delivery.

It also marked the ninth straight quality start for a member of the Tigers' rotation.

The sputtering offense came to life, sparked by Andy Dirks and Miguel Cabrera, each with four hits. Dirks drove in the game's first run, a solo shot off Bartolo Colon in the first inning.

Dirks now leads the Tigers with a .383 average. He has three home runs and 11 RBIs.

"I feel pretty good at the plate right now," Dirks told FOX Sports Detroit's Mickey York on the post-game show. "It comes and goes, it goes in phases but I'm just trying to stay focused as much as I can with every at-bat, every single pitch, trying to help my team win some games."

Cabrera, who was 0-for-13 against the Seattle Mariners, had three RBIs after taking extra batting practice and finding that he had his hands too high at the plate.

"I figured out what I'm doing wrong, why I miss a lot of pitches, my swing was too long, I tried to shorten my swing, try to make better contact with the ball and good things happen," Cabrera told York on the field after the game.

Colon proved to be just the tonic the Tigers' hitters were looking for. Colon has not beaten the Tigers since April 13, 2003.

In the third inning, every Tiger reached base and scored except for Ryan Raburn, who is still struggling. The A's saw their 2-1 lead (from Kila Ka'aihue's two-run home run) turn into a 9-2 Tigers lead. Colon lasted just 2 1/3 innings.

"It was important for us," Tigers manager Jim Leyland told York. "Hopefully it'll loosen the guys up a bit. Hopefully we can get on a little bit of a roll, particularly offensively. Those guys that came out today and hit extra, they did pretty well today. It was nice to get some runs on the board."

Octavio Dotel rebounded from a wildly blown save in his last outing to finish the seventh.

That's when things got a little more interesting. Phil Coke allowed a couple of infield hits and a walk. Collin Balester, who had not pitched since April 29 in New York, came in to face Inge.

Inge, who had a walk-off grand slam two games ago, hit Balester's fastball out to right field for another grand slam. Unbelievably, Inge is already third in RBIs for Oakland. The only other A's player to hit two grand slams in three games was Hall of Famer Jimmie Foxx in September of 1932.

Inge also had a defensive gem on the first play of the game, a hot shot off the bat of Austin Jackson. The two are good friends and both had smiles after the play.

Unfortunately, the Tigers needed to use both Joaquin Benoit and Jose Valverde in a non-save situation to finish the game, but Scherzer was good again, the offense came to life and Inge's blast didn't hurt his former team.

Now all the Tigers need is to put together two victories in a row for the first time since April 15-18 (one win at Chicago and a three-game sweep in Kansas City).

"You never know. We've got to come out tomorrow and swing the bats well again," Dirks said. "One game, it doesn't matter if you score one run and win or if you score 20 runs and win, you've got to be good for the next game. Whatever it takes to win ballgames, that's what we're trying to do."

Tigers Minor League watch

May 10, 2012

By Dave Hogg / FSDetroit.com

For Tigers fans, even if the first six weeks of the season have been a bit of a disappointment, the short-term future is bright. While the team has some holes, they still have an offense built around Miguel Cabrera and Prince Fielder and one of the best young starting rotations in the game.

Can they fill those holes from the minor-league system, either this season or next? Is the next Cabrera or Justin Verlander lurking in Erie or Lakeland? Or is the cupboard as bare as it was a decade ago? After all, the Tigers have used a lot of prospects in trades over the past few years.

To answer that, let's take a team-by-team look at Detroit's minor-league system:

TOLEDO MUD HENS - TRIPLE-A INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

If you are looking for a solution to the Tigers' offensive woes, you'll have to look somewhere other than Toledo. The Mud Hens' best hitters this season have been Brad Eldred (.350 BA, 14 HR, .890 SLG) and Danny Worth (.309 BA, .387 OBP). At 31, Eldred isn't a part of Detroit's plans, although he did get a short audition during Delmon Young's suspension, and Worth is already with the Tigers.

Beyond them, the Mud Hens roster is mainly made of older roster-filling player and younger players who aren't ready for the big leagues. Middle infielder Argenis Diaz is just 25, but hitting .250 with no power - literally. He doesn't have a single extra-base hit in 64 at-bats. Third baseman Audy Ciriaco is also 25, and has a little pop in his bat, but has a .184 batting average with more strikeouts than hits.

Things are a little better on the pitching side, as the Mud Hens have some of the pitchers who lost to Drew Smyly in the competition for the fifth-starter job. One of them - Adam Wilk - has already been to the majors with poor results, but is pitching well in Toledo. Andy Oliver is 2-1 with a 3.78 ERA, but is walking almost one batter every inning, while Casey Crosby has an ERA of 4.55 and control almost as bad as Oliver's.

There's one pitcher that has been starting for the Mud Hens and pitching very well. Yes, Fu-Te Ni could make an appearance in Detroit this season, this time as a starting pitcher. Ni hasn't been in Detroit since 2010, and has never started a major-league game, but he might be the Tigers best option in an emergency.

Almost all of Toledo's good relievers have already been to the majors, but 33-year-old Chris Bootcheck has been doing well as the Mud Hens closer, and could get a shot in the case of an injury.

ERIE SEAWOLVES - DOUBLE-A EASTERN LEAGUE

The hitter to watch in Erie is Rob Brantly, Detroit's 3rd-round pick in 2010. He's a catcher, and he's hitting .378 with power for the SeaWolves. At 22, the Tigers don't need to rush him to Triple-A, but don't be surprised if he gets some at-bats with the Mud Hens by the end of the season, and a long look in major-league camp next spring.

First baseman Jordan Lennerton is hitting well, but at 26, he should be dominating Double-A, and he's a first baseman. The Tigers aren't exactly shorthanded at first base.

When it comes to pitching, well, Detroit had to trade for Zach Miner, just to fill up the minor-league staff. He started in Erie and got called up to Toledo. The SeaWolves don't have anyone that is going to threaten a rotation of Verlander-Fister-Scherzer-Porcello-Smyly any time soon.

LAKELAND FLYING TIGERS - HIGH-A FLORIDA STATE LEAGUE

This is where Detroit keeps the prospects. First is the prize of the minor-league system, third baseman Nick Castellanos. The 2010 first-round pick is chewing up the FSL, hitting .410, drawing walks and hitting for decent power. Baseball America ranked him as baseball's 45th best prospect coming into the season, and that hasn't changed.

James McCann doesn't have the flashy numbers of Castellanos, but he is in his first full year of pro ball after being drafted in the second round last season. As another catching prospect, either he or Brantly give the Tigers a nice chip if they decide to roll over another young player for a veteran late in the summer.

Venezuelan Avisail Garcia is in his third year at Lakeland, but that's excusable at the age of 20. He's hitting .333 and actually has speed - a rarity in the Tigers system. More importantly for him, he caught the eye of Miguel Cabrera in spring training, giving him a pretty good ally at the major-league level.

Finally, there is Dixon Machado. At 20, his defense at shortstop is already good enough for the majors. His bat is probably never going to get there. Playing in A-ball, Machado is batting .204 with a shocking .265 slugging percentage. That's actually an improvement - last year in West Michigan, his slugging percentage was .247 after he managed just one double and two triples in 429 at-bats.

On the pitching side of the ledger, there is one crucial name: Jacob Turner. After shoulder problems knocked him out of the fifth-starter battle, Turner has been rehabbing in Lakeland. In four starts, he's done very well, posting a 1.66 ERA and striking out 17 batters in 21 2-3 innings. He'll be back with Toledo soon, and the injury hasn't changed his status as Detroit's number-one prospect.

In further installments of Minor League watch, we'll look at Detroit's 2012 draft class, examine the low minors for hidden gems and, of course, keep tracking players like Castellanos, Brantly and Garcia as they make their way through the system.

Orlando native Mike Maroth back in pro baseball as minor-league coach

Mike Maroth, best known for being the only pitcher in the last 32 years to lose 20 games, is excited to be back on the field

May 10, 2012

By Austin Lyon / Orlando Sentinel

LAKELAND — Mike Maroth never envisioned himself as a coach.

"If you asked me a couple years ago about coaching, I would have said no," Maroth said. "I wouldn't have even given it a second thought."

A few months after retiring from a 12-year professional baseball career, Maroth's desire to be back on the field and coaching provided that chance.

Maroth, who played at Boone and UCF, is in his first season as the pitching coach of the Lakeland Flying Tigers of the Class A Florida State League.

"Once I was able to look beyond playing, all of the sudden I grew a heart for wanting to go out there and help young players," Maroth said.

It's the latest chapter for Maroth, who was cut from Boone's team as a freshman. After three years at UCF, the slender left-hander was drafted in 1998 and made his major-league debut with the Detroit Tigers in 2002.

"He's the classic story of a kid coming in who wasn't quite ready to compete at the [Division I] level and developed himself into a major-league prospect," said Craig Cozart, who played with and coached Maroth at UCF.

"He always had to fight for everything that he got, because coming in, he didn't command respect."

While playing for the Tigers in 2003, Maroth finished 9-21 and became the first major-leaguer since 1980 to lose 20 games.

"I saw one of the last games he got beat," said Boone coach Pete Post, who coached Maroth for three years. "So many people came up to the car telling him that he was doing a good job and to keep his spirits up.

"Seeing him handle that situation so well, that will always stick out for me."

Said Maroth, 34: "It was something I wouldn't change. I learned a lot going through that, and it made an impact in a lot of good ways throughout my career."

Maroth's last major-league start came in 2007, with the St. Louis Cardinals. He signed minor-league contracts with three teams from 2008-10 and retired in January 2011.

Maroth, who lives in Winter Garden with his wife and three children, was hired as Foundation Academy's coach last May. He was prepared to guide that program until September, when Tigers assistant general manager Al Avila called.

"He just wanted to know if I'd be interested in a pitching coach job," said Maroth, whose career major-league record was 50-67. "The opportunity in Lakeland came up, and it worked out perfect."

Maroth commutes back and forth daily and is responsible for the development of the 13 pitchers on Lakeland's roster.

"When you play, it's a lot about yourself, going out there and trying to help your team win," he said. "As a coach, it's a complete opposite. You're out there to help young players. It's selfless, and that's what I really love about it."

Said Cozart: "It's no surprise to me that he's coaching. The things we would talk about from a pitching standpoint weren't shallow. He had a deep understanding and was a student of the game."

Maroth is open to working his way through the minor leagues, just as he did as a player more than a decade ago.

"I'm definitely enjoying it," Maroth said. "Just being back in uniform, on the field and back in pro ball feels good. It feels like it's where I'm meant to be."

Thursday, May 10, 2012

Team	Player	Transaction
Baltimore Orioles	Endy Chavez	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left oblique)
Baltimore Orioles	Tommy Hunter	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Justin Thomas	Designated for Assignment
Boston Red Sox	Daniel Nava	Purchased From Minors
Boston Red Sox	John Maine	Released
Boston Red Sox	Clayton Mortensen	Sent to Minors
Colorado Rockies	Jeremy Guthrie	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Miami Marlins	Kevin Mattison	Called Up from Minors
Miami Marlins	Chris Hatcher	Sent to Minors
Miami Marlins	Sandy Rosario	Sent to Minors
Miami Marlins	Mike Dunn	Called Up from Minors
Minnesota Twins	P.J. Walters	Purchased From Minors
Minnesota Twins	Matt Maloney	Designated for Assignment
Minnesota Twins	Darin Mastroianni	Called Up from Minors
New York Mets	Ronny Cedeno	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Pittsburgh Pirates	Joel Hanrahan	Placed on Bereavement/Family Medical Emergency List
Pittsburgh Pirates	Daniel McCutchen	Called Up from Minors
Tampa Bay Rays	Jeff Keppinger	Reinstated From Restricted List
Tampa Bay Rays	Brandon Allen	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Right quad strain)
Toronto Blue Jays	Vladimir Guerrero	Signed to a Minor League Contract