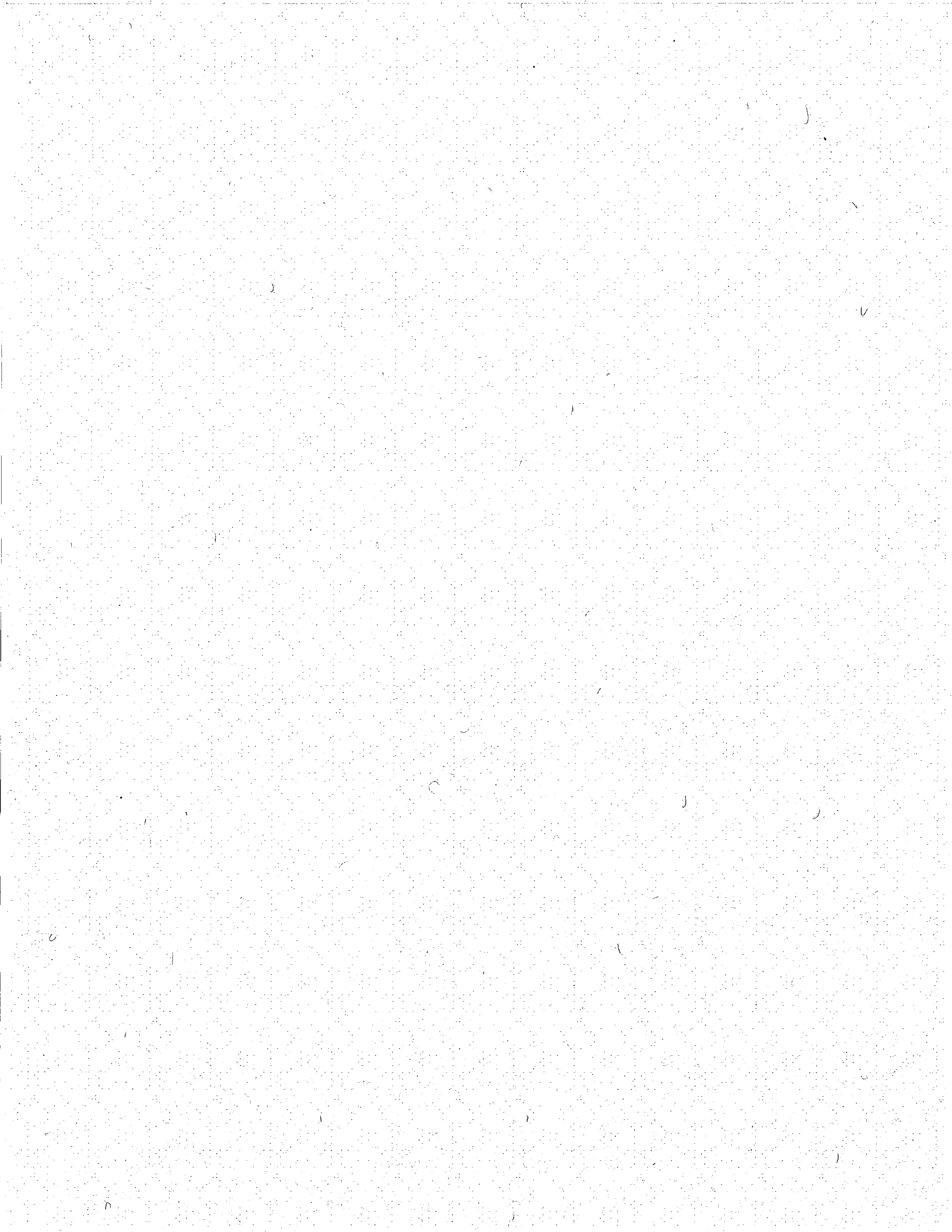




New York Yankees Clips
Thursday, July 19, 2012



Teixeira, Kuroda lead Yankees

First baseman hits big HR
in first; righty up to 9-7

By Brian Heyman
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NEW YORK — Lightning bolted from the sky, but after a 51-minute delay at the start to let the storm clouds pass, Yankees thunder crackled again in the thick Bronx air.

Mark Teixeira figurines were the promotion of the day, but he turned into a live action hero in Wednesday's matinee against Toronto, launching a two-run homer off Ricky Romero to highlight a four-run first. Hifoki Kuroda needed only one, allowing just four hits over a scoreless seven-inning outing.

The lightning returned after the top of the seventh, this time accompanied by a deluge of rain, causing another delay. After 58 minutes, the game was called. The Yankees had finished sweeping the last-place Blue Jays out of Yankee Stadium with a 6-0 victory, capping a 5-1 homestand before heading to Oakland.

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YANKEES: Ballclub rolling heading to West Coast swing

Continued from Page 1C

Power and pitching. Again. That's why the Yankees started the day sitting on a 9½-game cushion in the AL East. At this rate, the games are going to turn into glorified exhibitions for them as they prep for the postseason.

They have won three straight, nine of 11, 26 of 35 and 36 of 49, making them a season-high 23 games above .500 at 57-34.

"We've pitched well and we've swung the bats really well the last couple of weeks; I mean really, really well," Joe Girardi said. "We've had some big outputs. We've jumped on people early. We've come from behind late in games. We've tacked on. It's probably about as good as we've played."

They lead the majors with 146 homers and have hit at least one ball out in 41 of their last 47 home games, including 14

straight. The Yankees have also scored at least three runs in a franchise-record 42 straight games. It didn't take long this time.

Derek Jeter opened the first with a double off the wall in right-center. Nick Swisher followed by smacking an RBI single into right for his 500th hit as a Yankee. And Teixeira followed by sending up his 19th homer, a shot to the Toronto bullpen in left-center.

"To me, the season feels like one long slump with just a few hot streaks mixed in," Teixeira said after going 2 for 3 to improve to .326 in July, with six homers and 19 RBI. "As a power hitter, you're going to go through a lot of streaks where you don't do much at the plate. But you can put a couple of weeks together that make up for those down times."

One out later, Robinson Cano doubled to extend his career-high hitting streak to 21 games. Andruw Jones singled him

in for the 4-0 lead.

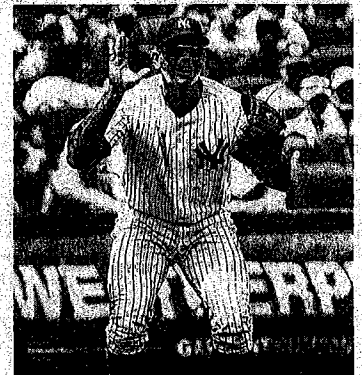
Dewayne Wise later displayed more of the Yankees' bench strength as Curtis Granderson's fill-in, coming through with an RBI double in the fourth and an RBI single in sixth.

Kuroda, meanwhile, kept Toronto off balance. The 37-year-old righty has gone 6-1 over his last 10 starts, bringing him to 9-7.

The down-on-their-luck Jays had lost All-Star Jose Bautista to a wrist injury in Monday night's series opener, and then third baseman Brett Lawrie departed after he suffered a bruise below his right calf falling into a camera well in the third inning of this game.

"Well, it was costly series," manager John Farrell said.

And it was another priceless series for the Yankees. As Swisher said, "It's a lot of fun coming to the ballpark right now."



Alex Rodriguez reacts after committing a throwing error during the first inning of Wednesday's game against Toronto at Yankee Stadium. SETH WENIG/AP

By DAN MARTIN

Bring on October.

The Yankees continued their rampage through the American League, tossing aside the Blue Jays 6-0 yesterday in a game that was called after seven innings. Only the rain was able to put Toronto out of its misery.

The victory completed a sweep of a team once considered a legitimate threat to the division title.

Not anymore. Not after the Yankees won for the sixth time in seven games and scored five or more runs for the 10th game in a row.

And though veterans of The Bronx tend to shrug off long winning streaks and huge division leads, newcomers don't.

"I've never seen anything like it, let alone been a part of anything like it," Dewayne Wise said. "Not even close."

YANKEES 6
BLUE JAYS 0 7 INN. BOX. / P. 54

Wise has been one of the unexpected reasons the Yankees have maintained such a torrid output. Yesterday, filling in because Curtis Granderson got the day off in center, Wise had two hits and a pair of RBIs.

"That's how you win," Derek Jeter said. "You've gotta get contributions from everyone. All the teams I've been a part of have contributions from a lot of different guys ... sometimes more than 25."

Jayson Nix added a pair of hits and scored twice.

"We've gotten contributions from so many different people," manager Joe Girardi said. "It makes it difficult to get through the lineup, and I think it wears on pitchers."

Jeter got the offense going, opening the bottom of the first with a double and scoring when Nick Swisher followed with a single to right. Mark Teixeira followed with his 19th homer of the season and Andruw Jones added a run-scoring single to give the Yankees a 4-0 lead in the first.

The Yankees are just 6-5 this year when they've scored three runs in the first, but Hiroki Kuroda made sure that early lead held up.

The right-hander tossed seven shutout innings, bouncing back

POURING IT ON

Yanks storm past Jays in rain-shortened rout

from consecutive subpar outings.

He was able to shake off a 51-minute delay because of ominous weather to start the game and a two-base throwing error by Alex Rodriguez in the first. Pitching in temperatures that soared over 100 degrees on the field, Kuroda (9-7) didn't allow more than one baserunner in any of his seven innings.

Ricky Romero, who dropped his fifth straight start, wasn't as good — or as fortunate. The Blue Jays have been shut out in each of his last three appearances and he fell to 8-6.

Now, the Yankees head to Oakland and Seattle for a seven-game trip before returning home to face Boston.

"We've jumped on people early. We've come from behind late in games. We've tacked on," said Girardi, who added he didn't manage any differently because of the impending bad weather through-

out the game. "This is probably as good as we've played."

And they show no signs of slowing down, even if they aren't checking the standings daily.

"Probably in Boston," Jeter said of the last time he saw the standings. "They're sort of right there in front of your face. But it doesn't make a difference."

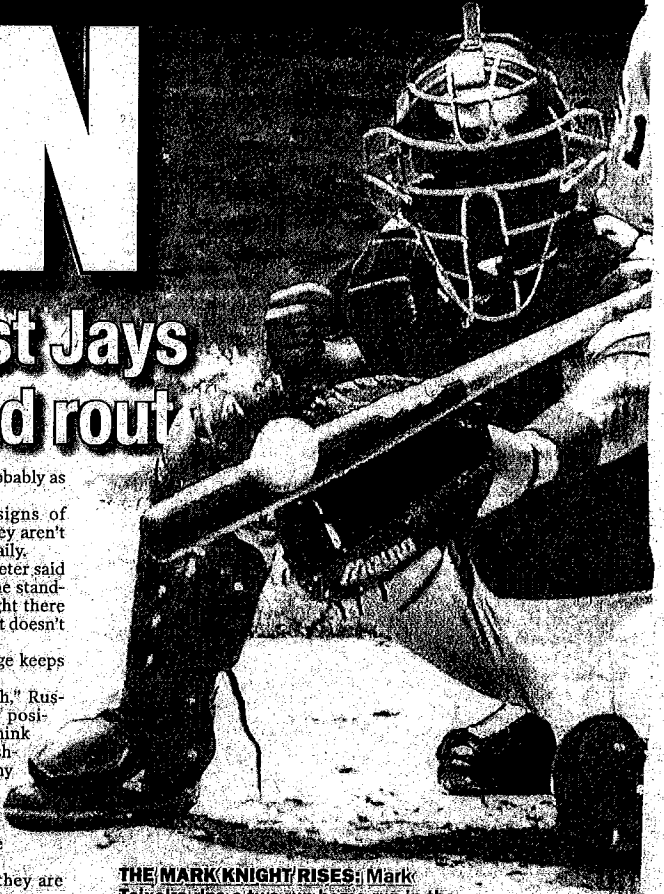
It will if their advantage keeps growing.

"No lead is big enough," Russell Martin said of their position in the AL East. "I think we're just gonna keep pushing and try to win as many games as possible. It would be nice to win 100 games. If we do that, we should be right where we need to be."

Probably right where they are now, first place.

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THE MARK KNIGHT RISES: Mark Teixeira rips a two-run home run in the Yankees' four-run first inning to jumpstart yesterday's 6-0, rain-shortened win over the Blue Jays at the Stadium.

By HOWIE KUSSOY

Less than 18 hours after CC Sabathia returned from the disabled list to pitch a scoreless outing, Hiroki Kuroda followed the ace with an equally impressive performance.

Buoyed by the Yankees' four-run first inning, Kuroda pitched seven shutout innings in a rain-shortened complete game yesterday, earning the win in a 6-0 vic-

tory over the Blue Jays at Yankee Stadium.

It was the fifth time this season Kuroda has held the opponent scoreless while pitching at least seven innings, the most such starts by an AL pitcher. He improved to 7-3 with a 2.68

ERA at home and 4-0 with 30 shutout innings in four daytime games.

"He kept away from the first guy getting on, which has plagued him the last couple starts," manager Joe Girardi said. "I thought his slider was good, his split was

really good. He was able to locate his fastball really well in and out to right-handers. I thought he threw the ball well his last start, but he was brilliant today."

His brilliance was begat by uncertainty. Kuroda's previous two outings had resulted

in shaky no-decisions. He had allowed a combined 18 hits and 12 runs and had an ERA of 7.62 in July.

"I tried not to think about my last two outings as much as possible," Kuroda said through a translator. "I didn't want to dwell on it. I just

wanted to regroup myself and focus on today's game."

Kuroda was given extra time to prepare, forced to sit through a 51-minute weather delay. Citing a chance to rest mentally during the All-Star break, Kuroda, in his second start since the

Starter Kuroda rises to Hiro-ic level to

Bombers bat men a bane for pitchers

SO, YES: It turns out the Yankees Express can be halted.

All you need are a few million buckets of rain, a few thousand hail stones, a sky that's darker than their caps, some lightning streaks to break up the darkness...

Of course, the way things are going for the Yankees right now, there were a few thousand brave souls who actually stood under the stands while an angry summer rainstorm pounded Yankee Stadium, and there can only be one good reason why: With this team — as well as it's playing, as well as it's hitting — there's no guarantee it wouldn't have figured out a way to put a 4-spot on the board even as the tarpaulin covered the infield.

You think we're kidding?



Mike Vaccaro

Well, we are kidding. Still, look at the pitchers' faces. Every one of them. Look at the way Josh Beckett and Jon Lester talked to themselves on the mound at Fenway a few weeks ago, reduced to grinding ham-and-egggers.

Look at the terrified expression Blue Jays' reliever Jason Frasor wore Monday night as he pondered having to throw a 3-and-1 pitch to Raul Ibanez with the bases juiced in an eighth-inning tie. Frasor had just made Nick Swisher's knees buckle with one of the best full-count curveballs you'll ever see and still it seemed he couldn't bring himself to throw the ball to Ibanez.

With good reason, as it turned out. Ibanez's grand slam all but ended it.

Goodness, look at Ricky Romero, yesterday's starter for the Jays. Now, Romero is having a rough year — he had a fat 5.05 ERA heading into yesterday — but before the bottom of the first inning was three batters old, the Yankees had a 3-0 lead. It was 4-0 by the end. And Romero looked like those cartoon boxers look just after the punch lands, just before the tweeting birds start circling their head.

"There really isn't an easy out in our lineup," Swisher said after this rain-shortened 6-0 throttling of the Jays was done. "And it doesn't matter what lineup we have out there lately."

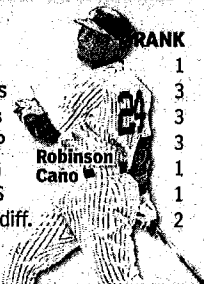
Lately? They've scored at least three runs in 42 straight games. They've scored at least five in 10 straight. Yesterday they rested Curtis Granderson and never missed him, the way they never miss anybody who is given a day off to catch a breather, rest weary legs and let the swelling in their hands die down from all the bludgeonings they commit with them.

Pinstripe power

Offense has been the catalyst for the Yankees' recent hot streak. Here's a look at some of their season stats and MLB rankings:

STAT	RANK
145 HRs	1
449 Runs	3
432 RBIs	3
.339 OBP	3
.467 SLG	1
.806 OPS	1
+80 Run diff.	2

Neil Miller



"I've never seen anything like it," Dewayne Wise said. "I've never seen anything like it. Not even close."

But he is a part of it. These past six weeks have featured a whole lot of Dewayne Wise, a whole lot of Jayson Nix, a whole lot of Eric Chavez, Andrew Jones is playing like it's 1999. Even at a time when Russell Martin can't shove himself above the Mendoza Line, when Alex Rodriguez endures one humbling at-bat after another, it doesn't matter.

"We've jumped on people early. We've come from behind late in games. We've tacked on [runs when we need them]," manager Joe Girardi said, shaking his head, marveling at the power in his pen, the one that can write out any lineup card he wants and hand his starting pitcher a barrel of runs. "We're just playing really, really well."

They are 36-13 across their past 49, and that's .735 ball in any league, and enough of that damage has come against winning teams that not only do you not have to worry about the legitimacy of those numbers, you can easily ponder what it might be like as they pillage and plunder their way through Oakland and Seattle across the next seven days.

What they are doing, thanks to their bats, thanks to the way they rumble through series now, is making certain they won't have to take part in this season's Grand Experiment, those one-game crappshoots that will spit out wild-card representatives. Win your division, you won't have to worry about dallying with that.

And as they boarded their plane west, they did so safe in the knowledge that they were 10 games clear of anyone else in the AL East. Good baseball. Good strategy. Let everyone else muck it up for the right to endure nine hellacious innings the day after the season ends. The Yankees will enjoy it just as much watching the game on TV, thank you very much.

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blank Blue Jays across 7

All-Star break, looked rejuvenated, attacking the strike zone while consistently keeping the ball low. Pitching with an early lead, the 37-year-old right-hander allowed four hits, striking out five and walking none.

"Especially when you have

that kind of run support early in the game, you can be aggressive and go inside, and that's what I tried to do," Kuroda said.

Catcher Russell Martin said the gameplan couldn't have been executed any better, with Kuroda throwing 78

strikes on 108 pitches.

"We wanted to make them earn it, not give them any free passes," Martin said. "He's the type of guy that he always feels like he can do better. It has gotten him to where he is."

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Thunder in Bronx

Tex's homer keys 4-run 1st; Kuroda, storm cap sweep

BY STEVE ZIPAY
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The rolling thunderstorms struck at about 4 p.m. yesterday in the sweltering Bronx. Following a 58-minute rain delay, a 5-1 homestand ended for the Yankees, who raked Ricky Romero for six runs in six innings for a 6-0 win and a three-game sweep of the Blue Jays.

Hiroki Kuroda (9-7) allowed four hits and no walks to rebound from two poor outings. Mark Teixeira drilled his 19th homer, a two-run shot into the visitors' bullpen in a four-run first, and Dewayne Wise, giving centerfielder Curtis Granderson a day off, drove in two with two hits. Nick Swisher and Andruw Jones had an RBI each before play was suspended after the top of the seventh.

Not a bad sendoff as the Yankees (57-34) head west for four games in Oakland and three in Seattle.

"Depth is the most important thing," said Teixeira, who is hitting .326 with six homers and 19 RBIs in July. "If you rely on one or two guys to carry your team, you're not going to be able to score runs consistently. D-Wise had another great game and [shortstop Jayson] Nix [two hits after three Tuesday] is swinging the bat well. If you need to give a guy a day off or a guy gets banged up, you need that."

It was the eighth series sweep, one shy of last season, for the Yankees.

"Our guys set the tone early," Joe Girardi said. "Jeet's [lead-off] double and Swish doing a good job; [Romero] throws a lot of balls in to righthanders and [Swisher] goes the opposite way, then Tex hits a home run and we tacked on a couple others. . . . We've swung the bats really well recently; it's about as good as we've played."

That's an understatement: The Yankees, who have won nine of the last 11, have scored three or more runs in a club-record 42 consecutive games.

SCORECARD

YANKEES 6 : 0 BLUE JAYS

Tonight Yankees at Oakland
TV: YES, 10:05 p.m.
Radio: WCBS (880)

And that's just one of the streaks:

■ Robinson Cano's first-inning double extended his hitting streak to 21 games, the longest by a Yankee since Jeter hit safely in 20 straight in April and May 2007.

■ The Yankees have hit at least one home run in 14 straight games and have an MLB-best 145.

■ Kuroda's seven innings of blanks one-upped CC Sabathia's six shutout innings against the Jays Tuesday night.

"Our middle of the lineup has been pretty consistent," Swisher said, "but when the guys at the top and the bottom turn it over and you get great starting pitching, it's a lot of fun coming to the ballpark. I'm starting to expect that stuff every day now."

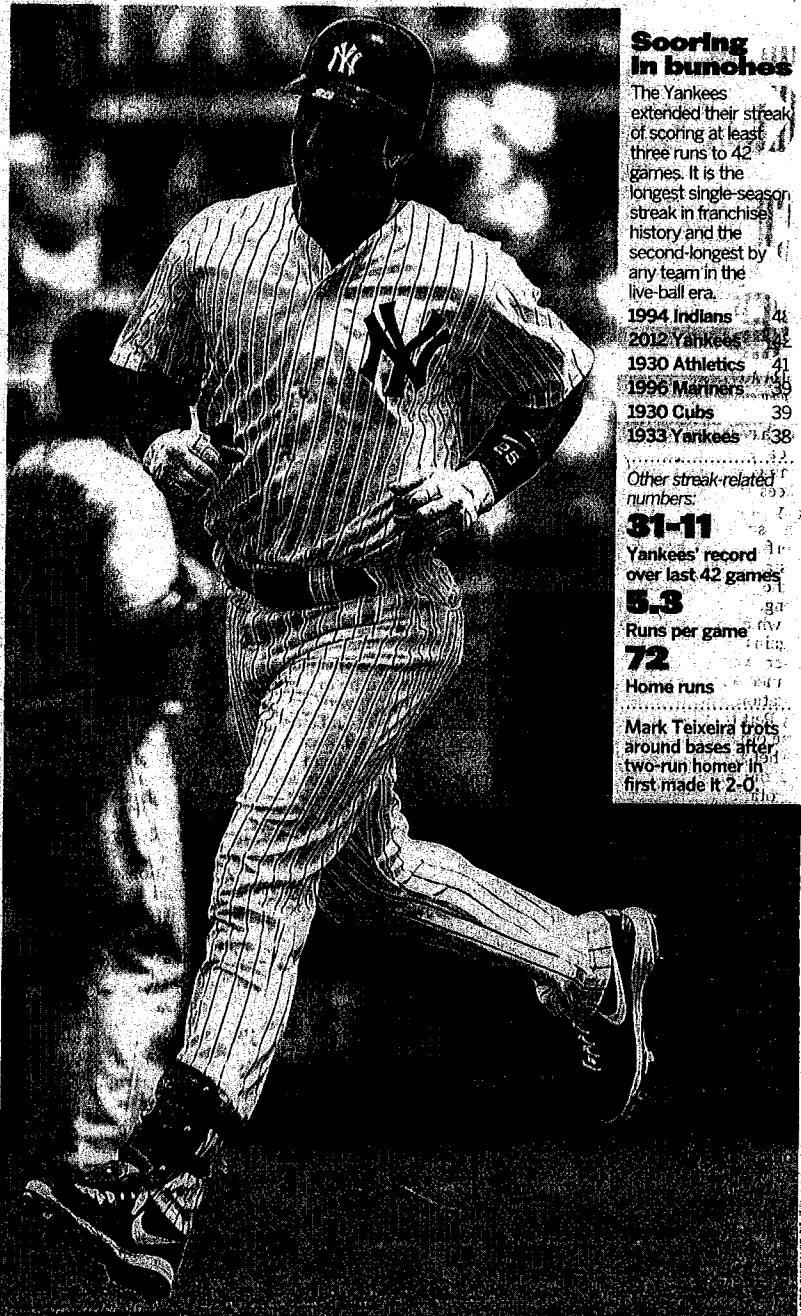
Teixeira's bomb, on a 2-and-2 fastball, was the killer stroke of the first inning and gave Kuroda a cushion.

"Just one of those hot streaks," said Teixeira, who's hitting .255 with 63 RBIs. "Sometimes the season feels like one long slump with a few hot streaks mixed in."

The start of the game was delayed 51 minutes because of lightning in the area, and that could have affected Romero, who has lost five straight starts, although the Jays have been shut out in the last three of them.

The weather didn't bother Kuroda, who struck out five, and the four early runs helped his confidence. "You feel better pitching out there when you have a little bit of a lead," catcher Russell Martin said.

The Yankees are doing that a lot right now as they head for California, where they have beaten the A's nine straight times. Oh, that's another streak on the line.



Scoring in bunches

The Yankees extended their streak of scoring at least three runs to 42 games. It is the longest single-season streak in franchise history and the second-longest by any team in the live-ball era.

- 1994 Indians 42
- 2012 Yankees 42
- 1930 Athletics 41
- 1996 Mariners 40
- 1930 Cubs 39
- 1933 Yankees 38

Other streak-related numbers:

31-11
Yankees' record over last 42 games

5-3
Runs per game

72
Home runs

Mark Teixeira trots around bases after two-run homer in first made it 2-0

at start, finish

Kuroda finds groove again against Jays

BY LAURA ALBANESE
laura.albanese@newsday.com

You have to wonder if Hiroki Kuroda isn't a little bit like the lightning streaking across the Yankees' tarp-covered field yesterday afternoon. He's been often surprising, sometimes powerful, and, in his two previous starts against the Angels and the Red Sox, frustratingly fleeting.

So which one was it going to be against the Blue Jays? The pitcher who showed signs of brilliance while helping anchor a rotation that was missing Andy Pettitte and CC Sabathia? Or the other guy? The one who was shellacked the last time he faced the Blue Jays, and gave up a total of 11 runs and 18 hits in his previous two starts, both no-decisions.

Well, far be it for Kuroda to start being predictable now. The 37-year-old righthander withstood a 51-minute lightning delay to start the game and went on to shut down the team that hit him up for seven runs in May. He allowed no runs on four hits with five strikeouts in the 6½-inning, rain-shortened 6-0 victory. It was technically the third complete game of his five-year career.

"I try not to think about my last two outings as much as possible," Kuroda said through his interpreter. "I don't want to dwell on it and just regroup myself and focus on today's game."

That was easy enough, especially with the Yankees supplying four first-inning runs against the Jays' lefty starter, Ricky Romero. Kuroda, in

Bronx tale

In his first season in pinstripes Hiroki Kuroda has made himself right at home at Yankee Stadium. His home-road splits:

HOME		ROAD
11	Starts	8
7-3	W-L	2-4
74	Innings	48⅓
59	Hits	57
61	Strikeouts	33
17	Walks	16
2.68	ERA	4.66
1.027	WHIP	1.51

NOW ONLINE

Mark Teixeira helped power the offense yesterday. Check out Yankees first baseman through the years at newsday.com/yankees

turn, used his spot-on splitter to fan four batters in the first two innings, all on swinging third strikes. He didn't allow an extra-base hit until J.P. Arencibia's leadoff double in the fifth.

"His splitter was really good today — one of the better splits that he's had," manager Joe Girardi said. "He located his fastball extremely well, in and out to righthanders. And he kept away from the first guy getting on today, which has plagued him in his last couple starts . . . He kept them in check for most of the game."

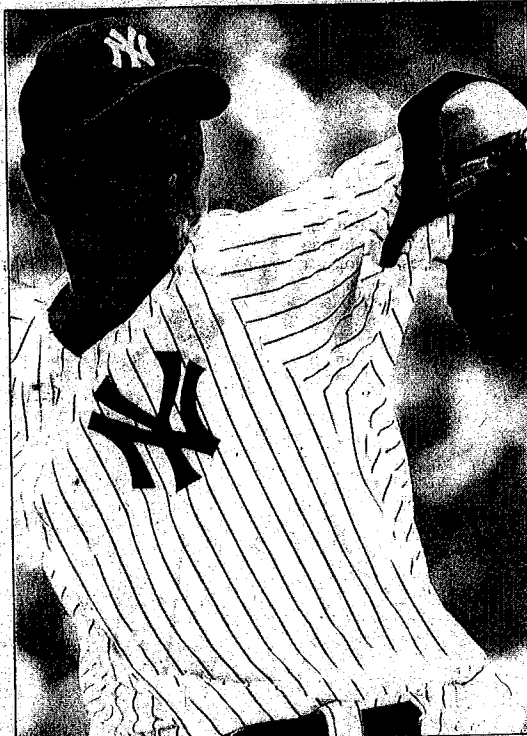


PHOTO BY DAVID PORRES

Hiroki Kuroda withstood a 51-minute lightning delay at the start and shut down the Blue Jays, allowing four hits in seven innings.

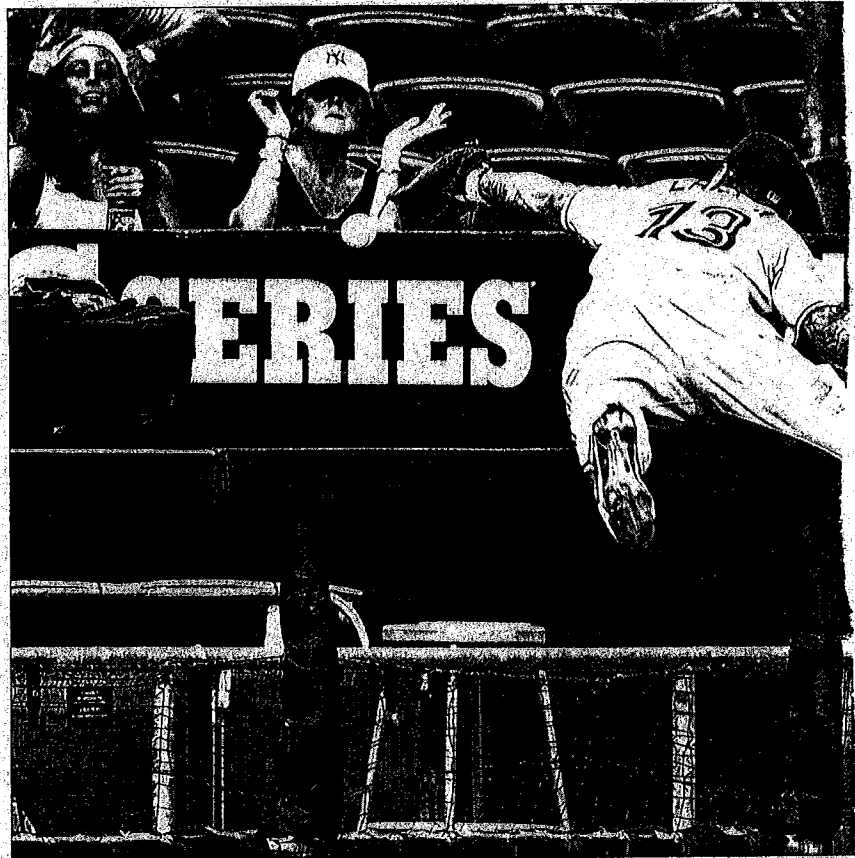
Kuroda (9-7, 3.46 ERA) earned his third win in a row and has won all four of his day starts this season, not allowing a run in those 30 innings. And despite his recent missteps, Girardi said the most important thing was ensuring that Kuroda bounced back mentally because Girardi thought he pitched well in his last start against the Angels, when he allowed eight hits and five runs in 7½ innings.

"I thought he threw the ball great his last start," Girardi said. "He ended up giving up five runs and you look at that and say wow . . . I think [this start was] important because guys don't want to have two outings where they don't pitch what they're capable of. They want

to turn it around the next day."

Kuroda said the run support allowed him to be more aggressive against the Toronto lineup, which seemed particularly punchless coming into the game on a two-game losing streak and lost third baseman Brett Lawrie on a freakish flip into the photographer's pit in the third inning. X-rays on Lawrie's right calf came back negative and he's listed as day-to-day.

"Especially when you have that type of run support early in the game, you can be aggressive and try to go inside on righties or the lefties," Kuroda said. "When I have my splitter, I can get a lot of strikeouts and for this lineup, I think that was really effective."



It's Christmas in July for

JACOB Ruppert, the great Yankee owner of the '20s and '30s who, among other things, built the original Yankee Stadium and fitted it with Babe Ruth, purchased from the Red Sox, once said famously: "My idea of a great day at the ballpark is when the Yankees score 10 runs in the first inning and then gradually pull away."

You've got to believe the old beer baron would've loved this Yankee season — and Wednesday's sultry matinee getaway game in particular — watching the Bombers routinely bludgeon their opposition into submission day after day. Wednesday was more of the same as the Yankees scored four runs in the first inning, two of them on the obligatory daily home

run, this one by Mark Teixeira, before gradually pulling away to a 6-0, rain-shortened seven-inning victory over the Toronto Blue Jays.

And as the Yankees jetted off to the West Coast amid the parting thunder and rain clouds afterward, you could almost hear the plaintive cry of the rest of the American League East: "Stop the season, we want to get off."

Maybe the cavernous Oakland Coliseum and the pitchers' haven, Safeco Field in Seattle, will be able to tame these Yankee bats and

slow this runaway pinstriped express. So monotonous, so routine has their offensive prowess been in forging a 10½-game division lead barely past the midway point of the season, it's almost laughable. They have now scored three or more runs in 42 consecutive games, a feat accomplished by only one other team — the 1994 Cleveland Indians with 48 — during the Live Ball era

from 1920 and on. Teixeira's two-run homer off Jays erstwhile ace Ricky Romero made it nine straight games in which the Yankees have gone deep at least once. They have now homered in 75 of



POWER'S STILL ON

Tex homers as Yanks surge

BY PETER BOTTE
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

IT TOOK the Yankees just three batters Wednesday to keep alive one of the most impressive offensive streaks in team history.

Fueled by Mark Teixeira's fourth home run in six games in a four-run first inning, and a bounce-back gem from Hiroki Kuroda, the Yanks completed a 5-1 home stand and a three-game sweep of the Blue Jays with a rain-shortened 6-0 win at the Stadium that was called after 6½ innings.

The AL East-leading Bombers now have scored at least three runs in 42 consecutive games, making them just the second team in the Live Ball Era (since 1920) to accomplish that feat in a single season: The Indians did it in 48 straight games in 1994. The Yanks can break the record during a seven-game West Coast trip beginning Thursday in Oakland.

"It's amazing," Joe Girardi said of the streak. "I've been really pleased with how it's been shared.

It hasn't been two guys doing all the work. We've got contributions from so many different people, and that's really pleasing to me, because it makes it so difficult to get through our lineup. And I think it wears on pitchers.

"I know we're a club that doesn't manufacture runs, but that's who we are and that's how we score runs."

YANKEES	6
BLUE JAYS	0

Other than the threatening weather — which held up the start of the game by 51 minutes and saw heavy rains forced a delay of 58 minutes before the game was called in the seventh — the outlook remains bright for the rolling Yanks. The Bombers led the AL East by 10½ games after Tampa Bay's 10-6 loss to the Indians Wednesday night.

Kuroda had coughed up 11 earned runs without a decision in his previous two starts, but the veteran righty was "brilliant" Wednesday, according to Girardi. Kuroda was in command with his fastball and splitter from the start, allowing

just four hits and walking one over seven shutout innings to improve to 9-7.

"I tried not to think about my last two outings. I don't want to dwell on it, just regroup myself and focus on today's game," Kuroda said through his interpreter. "And especially when you have that kind of run support early in the game, you can be aggressive and pitch inside."

Derek Jeter (2-for-3) opened the four-run first against Toronto lefty Ricky Romero with a double off the wall in right, and Nick Swisher promptly knocked him in with an RBI single to right. Teixeira then crushed a 2-2 pitch to left for his 19th homer of the season and a 3-0 lead.

"It's just one of those hot streaks," Teixeira said of his six homers and 19 RBI in July. "To me, sometimes the season feels like one long slump with a few hot streaks. . . . You can put a couple of weeks together that make up for those down times."

The Yanks (57-34) mostly have avoided stretches of downtime with contributions throughout the lineup and from several role players. That includes the platoon of Raul Ibanez and Andruw Jones, who added an RBI single to right in the first, and Dewayne Wise, who rapped run-scoring hits in the fourth and sixth innings for a 6-0 lead.

"We've swung the bats well the last couple of weeks. I mean, really, really well. . . . It's probably about as good as we've played," Girardi said.

"You hit the nail on the head. The depth is the most important thing," Teixeira added. "If you rely on one or two guys to carry your team, you're not going to be able to score runs like that consistently."

"But one-through-nine we can get the job done. . . and 1-through-25 we have everybody making contributions. That's what it takes to win."



Jays third baseman Brett Lawrie goes over railing and into the photographer's pit in failed attempt to catch foul pop by Mark Teixeira, brushing his right calf. Corey Sipkin/Daily News



Bombers, whose gift is AL East

their 91 games or 82.4%, and no team in history has ever homered in more than 81% of its games during a season. Their major league-leading 146 homers have them on pace to shatter their club record of 244 in 2009, and threaten the major league record of 264 by the 1997 Seattle Mariners.

Considering all this, it was a wonder the umpires took so long to call Wednesday's laughter because of the thunderstorms. The Blue Jays looked and played like a beaten team as soon as the Yankees put up that four spot in the first in which they pummeled Derek Jeter that missed being a homer by inches, an RBI single by Nick Swisher, Teixeira's homer, another double by Robinson

Cano and an RBI single by Andruw Jones.

As Joe Girardi said, what's been most impressive about all this record-threatening offense is that "so many different people up and down the lineup have been contributing." By that, he especially included the "irregulars" such as Jones, who has 12 homers and 26 RBI in 137 at-bats and DeWayne Wise, who had an RBI double and a single out of the No. 9 hole Wednesday, filling in for Curtis Granderson in center field.

"This is a tough lineup to pitch to," Wise said. "I've never been in a lineup like this, with Hall of Famers up and down it. I know they'd much rather pitch to me than to Jeter or Alex so I can expect to see a lot of fastballs."

"Hey, 43 (actually 42) straight games with three or more runs?" said Girardi. "That's hard to do!"

Maybe so, but the Yankees are making everything look easy right now. There is no team in their division capable of making it a race with them: The Tampa Bay Rays were the class of the division for the first month of the season, 15-8 and in first place when their best player, Evan Longoria, tore his hamstring. They've been 32-37 ever since, with good reason. They don't have the kind of veteran fill-ins (such as Raul Ibanez, Eric Chavez, Jones and even Wise that the Yankees do. No team has. The Blue Jays, who have had almost their entire starting rotation wiped out with injuries, lost their best hitter, Jose Bautista, the other

day with a wrist injury that will sideline him for weeks. His place in the lineup Wednesday was taken by a singles-hitting minor league call-up, Anthony Gose. And Wednesday they likely lost third baseman Brett Lawrie for awhile after he took a nasty tumble into the third base photographers pit and suffered a bruised calf attempting to catch a Teixeira foul pop.

So, I'm here to tell you, Yankee fans, it's okay to go on summer vacation now. In fact, take an extra few weeks if you can. What was a pennant race a few weeks ago is officially over. The rest of the American League East has raised the white flag. The Yankees will be back to you in October.

Yankees Extend Hot Streak in Rain-Shortened Game

By ZACH SCHONBRUN

Yankees outfielder Dewayne Wise can think of one team in his career with a lineup that can compare with the team he now plays for.

YANKEES	6	It was in 2005.
BLUE JAYS	0	The Class AAA Toledo Mud Hens, a minor league affiliate of the Detroit Tigers, had a batting order that could really do some damage, he said. "One through nine, guys would just rake — it was stupid, man," Wise said. "But to be on this level and have a lineup like this, it's..."

His voice trailed off, and he pointed to the Yankees' lineup card for Wednesday's game, a rain-shortened 6-0 victory against the Toronto Blue Jays that included 12 hits in six innings off the Blue Jays' Ricky Romero. "You look at this," Wise said, the card in front of him. "It's hard to find a lineup like that."

For the 42nd consecutive game, the Yankees scored at least three runs, extending a franchise record. They reached the mark in 10 pitches Wednesday.

Romero allowed a leadoff double to Derek Jeter, a run-scoring single to Nick Swisher and a two-run homer to Mark Teixeira and, fast as lightning, the Yankees were ignited. They added a fourth run on a single by Andruw Jones before Romero could finish the first inning.

"We've had some big outputs; we've jumped on people early; we've come from behind late in games; we've tacked on; and it's



SETH WENIG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nick Swisher, left, congratulated Mark Teixeira on his homer.

probably about as good as we've played," Manager Joe Girardi said.

The game began in sweltering heat and choking humidity, but storm clouds persistently threatened overhead. Finally, in the seventh, the skies opened. The game was called after a 58-minute delay before the bottom of the seventh.

By then, the Yankees had done their damage. Wise added two run-scoring hits in the fourth and sixth to put them ahead, 6-0.

Starting in center field in place of Curtis Granderson, who was given the day off, Wise helped show the depth and ability of the Yankees' roster with his contributions. Utility man Jayson Nix also was 2 for 3 in a spot start at shortstop, with Jeter starting as the designated hitter.

"That's how you win," Jeter said. "All the teams that I've been a part of that have won have gotten contributions from a lot of different guys."

The only other team to score at least three runs in more consecutive games in the live-ball era was the 1994 Cleveland Indians, whose streak reached 48 games.

"We've gotten contributions from so many different people in this lineup," Girardi said. "I think it wears on pitchers."

Yankees starter Hiroki Kuroda's splitter was sharp, and his command with it was precise. Sixteen of his 21 outs were by strikeout or groundout. He did not issue a walk in seven shutout innings and has now held opponents scoreless in all four day-time starts this season.

"Over all I threw the splitter really well," Kuroda said through an interpreter. "I tried to concentrate on keeping everything down."

Kuroda had been shaky in his past two outings, allowing 11 earned runs in 13 innings after giving up only nine runs in his seven starts before that. He glided through Toronto's banged-up

lineup Wednesday.

On Monday, Toronto slugger Jose Bautista hurt his wrist on a swing. In the third inning Wednesday, third baseman Brett Lawrie was injured after leaping into the concrete-floored photographers' well while going for a foul ball. He left the game, and X-rays on his right ankle were negative; he is day to day.

But the symbolism was fitting: Toronto limped out of town after receiving a battering in this three-game series. The Blue Jays were outscored, 19-4, and outhit, 30-17, in three losses.

"This was a rough three days here in New York," Toronto Manager John Farrell said.

In Wise's estimation, he has never played for an offense clicking as seamlessly as the Yankees are now. That Toledo squad — which featured a young Granderson playing center and which averaged 4.84 runs a game — was the only one comparable.

Granderson gave the nod to the minor league team. "This one's close," he said with a smile.

Both teams — the Mud Hens and the Yankees — had the best record in their league. It is no wonder why.

INSIDE PITCH

The Yankees recalled pitcher **DAVID PHELPS** and optioned reliever **D.J. MITCHELL** to Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. ... With a double in the first, **ROBINSON CANO** extended his hitting streak to 21 games. ... The injured Yankee closer **MARIANO RIVERA** rang the opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday morning.

NY Times 7/19/12

MLB.COM

Yanks earn sweep with rain-shortened shutout

Teixeira homers in four-run first; Kuroda splendid through seven

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | 7/18/2012 6:55 PM ET

NEW YORK -- The Yankees flashed their brand of impressive thunder before Mother Nature decided to take the stage for her own show on Wednesday. That seems to be just about the only thing capable of cooling off their red-hot bats.

Mark Teixeira's two-run homer highlighted a four-run first inning and Hiroki Kuroda hurled seven superb innings as the Yankees notched contributions up and down the lineup, posting a rain-shortened 6-0 victory over the Blue Jays at Yankee Stadium.

"If you rely on one or two guys to carry your team, you're not going to be able to score runs like that consistently," Teixeira said. "One through nine, we can get the job done. We've had different guys step up. When those guys are coming through, it makes the whole lineup that much better."

Teixeira's early two-run blast -- coming after fans received a ceramic figurine in his likeness as a stadium giveaway -- forecast an ugly afternoon for lefty Ricky Romero, who was belted for six runs in six innings before the rains came.

The game was declared official and complete following a 58-minute delay, with the Yankees waiting to bat in the seventh inning. Earlier, lightning delayed the first pitch for 51 minutes.

Dewayne Wise also drove in two runs for the Yankees, who have won nine of their last 11 games. They've scored three runs or more in 42 straight games since May 30, joining the 1994 Indians (48 games) as the only teams to do so in the live ball era.

"We've swung the bats really well in the last couple weeks," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "I mean, really, really well. We've had some big outputs. We've jumped on people early. We've come from behind late. We've tacked on. It's probably about as good as we've played."

Robinson Cano extended his hitting streak to a career-high 21 games, the longest by a Yankee since Derek Jeter hit in 25 straight from Aug. 20 to Sept. 16, 2006. Nick Swisher logged a first-inning RBI single -- his 500th career hit as a Yankee -- and Andruw Jones also drove in a run.

"Our middle of the lineup feels consistent and has a chance to do some damage every day," Swisher said. "It's a lot of fun coming to the ballpark right now."

It was plenty of backing for Kuroda, who bounced back from a pair of rocky outings against the Red Sox and Angels for his first win in three efforts. He is undefeated in eight of nine starts since May 27.

"Especially when you have that kind of run support early in the game, you can be aggressive and try to go inside on righties and lefties, and that's what I did today," Kuroda said through an interpreter.

Kuroda showed excellent command of his splitter and slider in particular, limiting the Blue Jays to four hits. He walked none and struck out five in a 108-pitch outing, credited as his third career complete game.

"The Blue Jays are an aggressive team, and we just used their aggressiveness against them," catcher Russell Martin said. "The main thing is, you don't want to walk anybody. You want to make them earn it, so we pitched to contact."

The Yankees padded their lead in the middle innings off Romero. Wise stroked a ground-rule double in the fourth and added a sharp RBI single in the sixth, driving home Jayson Nix both times.

"You know you're going to get some pitches to hit," Wise said. "I know they'd rather face me than [Derek] Jeter and Curtis [Granderson]. You know you're going to get some fastballs, so you've just got to go in there, see it and hit it."

Romero has lost his last five starts for Toronto. He surrendered 12 hits, walking two and striking out two.

"I thought early on he was up in the zone quite a bit," Jays manager John Farrell said. "The way Kuroda was pitching, one run was going to hold up."

Toronto's star-crossed season received another scare in the third inning as third baseman Brett Lawrie tumbled into the camera well pursuing a Teixeira foul pop. Lawrie was taken for X-rays but was diagnosed with just a right calf contusion.

"I saw him go down and then I heard a loud crash," Teixeira said. "You really worry about a guy's head, neck and back. You never want to see somebody get hurt on a play, especially when you hit the ball."

The Yankees head for a seven-game West Coast trip vaulting off a 5-1 homestand, owning a healthy cushion in the American League East -- not that they see that as any invitation to slow down.

"No lead is big enough," Martin said. "I think we're just going to keep pushing and try to win as many games as possible. It'd be nice to win 100 games. We've just got to keep fighting, keep playing hard. If we do that, we'll be right where we need to be."



Yankees lineup pounces on Toronto Blue Jay pitching in 6-0, storm-shortened win

Published: Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 5:06 PM Updated: Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 9:25 PM



By **Brendan Prunty/The Star-Ledger**

NEW YORK — They were wearing their traveling day best, trying to do a quick pack-up-and-go to beat the traffic to their flight to the West Coast, but neither Derek Jeter nor CC Sabathia could get past the silliness of the moment.

A group of reporters had asked the **Yankees** captain if today's storm-shortened victory and latest display of raw baseball power signaled that this team had established itself as one of the powers of the American League.

"Seven, eight games ago, everyone said our season was over with," Jeter said. "Right? With how bad we were playing — we were terrible. Wouldn't make the playoffs. Remember, C?"

"Yeah, I remember that," Sabathia bellowed from behind him.

These days, it would be amazing if anyone still felt that way. Any pinstriped problems that may have existed seem well in the past as the Yankees completed a three-game sweep of the Blue Jays today with a 6-0 win in a 6½-inning matinee.

The game was called early due to the severe thunderstorms that pelted the metropolitan area but not before the latest example of the Yankees flexing their considerable offensive muscle.

By the time their seventh hitter reached the batter's box in the first inning, the Yankees had already scored four runs. Toronto starter Ricky Romero (8-6, 5.22) became the latest opposing hurler to get buried under the power of this lineup. Even with reserves Dewayne Wise, Jayson Nix and Andruw Jones in the lineup card, the Yankees rolled with minimal effort.

And for the 43rd consecutive game, the Yankees scored three runs or more.

"To be able to score three or more runs in 43 straight games, that's pretty tough to do," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "I know we're a club that doesn't manufacture a ton of runs, but that's who we are. That's how we score runs.

Case in point: The first inning featured a lead-off double by Jeter, who scored on a single by Nick Swisher, who scored on a Mark Teixeira home run. After a groundout by Alex Rodriguez, Robinson Cano doubled (extending his hitting streak to 21 games) and was driven in by Jones.

It made for a confident afternoon for starter Hiroki Kuroda (9-7, 3.46), who scattered four hits over seven innings. But for good measure, the Yankees got some additional offensive support from Nix and Wise. Nix had base hits in the fourth and sixth innings and was driven home both times by Wise.

"It's good, you're always going to get pitches to hit," Wise said. "Everybody thinks of Jeter, Alex, Curtis (Granderson), Cano, so you know you're going to get some fastballs going in there. You just have to see it and hit it."

If that approach seems simple, it's because it is. These days the Yankees aren't trying to overthink things. Heading out to the West Coast for back-to-back three-game series against Oakland and Seattle beginning tonight, the Yankees have won 10 of their 13 games in July.

All thanks to their offense, which is averaging nearly six runs a game over that stretch.

"Our middle of the lineup is consistent and has a chance to do some damage every day," Swisher said.

"But the top and the bottom turning it over? It's a lot of fun coming to the ballpark right now."

A couple of weeks ago, that wasn't the case. But the Yankees know that this is baseball, which means there's plenty left of it. They also know that with the way they're hitting, things can start to fly by quickly.

"I've been really pleased with how it's been shared," Girardi said about his team's offensive production. "It hasn't been two guys doing all the work, in a sense. We've gotten contributions from so many different people in this lineup and that's really pleasing to me. It makes it difficult to get through our lineup and I think it wears on pitchers."

NORTHJERSEY.COM

Yankees top Blue Jays, 6-0, in shortened game

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 2012 LAST UPDATED: WEDNESDAY JULY 18, 2012, 10:32 PM
BY ANDREW GROSS

NEW YORK – Perhaps it's obvious, given how everything that can go well is going well right now for the Yankees. But the team opens its final West Coast trip of the season tonight in Oakland at somewhat of an apex.

"It's probably about as good as we've played," manager Joe Girardi said.

The Yankees finished a three-game sweep of the Blue Jays – and a 5-1 homestand – with a 6-0 win Wednesday afternoon in a rain-shortened seven innings at the Stadium before a crowd of 45,986. The start of the game was delayed 51 minutes due to lightning and it was called off after 58-minute wait.

Hiroki Kuroda (9-7), buoyed by a four-run lead after the first inning, rebounded after two shaky starts and was credited with his third career complete game. Bench players Jayson Nix and Dewayne Wise combined to go 4-for-6 with two runs and two RBI.

Meanwhile, the Yankees (57-34) scored at least three runs for the 42nd straight game and at least five for the 10th straight. They've homered in 14 straight home games and 23 of their last 24.

"You don't go into a game thinking you're going to get a certain amount of runs," Nick Swisher said. "I don't know if [the pitchers] are relaxed, but you definitely feel better out there pitching when you have the lead.

"No [division] lead is big enough, so we're going to keep pushing," Swisher added. "We want to win as many games as possible. It'd be nice to win 100 games. We'll keep pushing and fighting hard and, if we do that, we'll be right where we need to be."

Overall, the Yankees, who swept their eighth series of the season – just one shy of 2011's total – have won nine of their last 11. They go into Oakland having won nine straight there, their longest road winning streak against the Athletics since 1956, when that franchise was based in Kansas City, Mo.

"I thought we had a really good homestand playing a tough Angels team and a pretty tough Toronto team that's been tough on us in the past," Girardi said. "We've swung the bats well the last couple of

weeks. We've had some big outputs. We've jumped on people early. We've come from behind late in games. We've tacked on."

This time, the Yankees led, 4-0, after five batters against lefty Ricky Romero (8-6), who lost his fifth straight start.

Derek Jeter opened the inning with an opposite-field double and scored on Swisher's single up the first-base line. Mark Teixeira then hit a 2-2 pitch over the wall in left-center to make it 3-0. Robinson Cano's one-out double extended his hitting streak to 21 games – the team's longest since Jeter's 20-game streak in 2006 and the longest by a Yankee second baseman since Joe Gordon's 29-game streak in 1942 – and he scored on Andruw Jones' single.

"We feel really good," said Teixeira, who is hitting .326 with six homers and 19 RBI in July. "It all starts with starting pitching. It allows the defense to go out and make plays behind them and it allows the offense to relax.

"The depth is the most important thing," Teixeira added. "If you rely on one or two guys to carry your team, you're not going to be able to score runs like that consistently."

Nix, playing shortstop with Jeter as the designated hitter, doubled in the fourth and scored on Wise's ground-rule double. In the sixth, Nix singled and Wise, playing center field with Curtis Granderson given the day off, singled him home.

Meanwhile, Kuroda, who had strong command of his splitter and was able to locate his fastball on both sides of the plate, notched four of his five strikeouts in the first two innings as he allowed four hits and walked none.

"Especially when you have that kind of run support early in the game, you can be aggressive and try to go inside on righties," the right-handed Kuroda said.

Kuroda had no-decisions in his last two starts, allowing eight hits and five runs in a 6-5 win over the Angels on Friday and 10 hits and six earned runs in a 10-8 win at Boston on July 6.

"He was brilliant today," Girardi said.

Yanks cap sweep of Jays in rain-shortened win

Associated Press

7/13/12

NEW YORK -- On Wednesday, it was [Dewayne Wise](#). Next time it might be [Raul Ibanez](#) or [Andruw Jones](#) or [Jayson Nix](#). The [New York Yankees](#) are on a roll and a big reason for the success is the contributions of their role players.

And Wise knows why.

"They'd rather face me than ([Derek Jeter](#), and [Curtis Granderson](#)), [Alex Rodriguez](#) and ([Robinson Cano](#))," Wise said after driving in two runs in the Yankees' 6-0, rain-shortened victory over the [Toronto Blue Jays](#) that completed a thorough three-game sweep.

"You got Hall of Famers all through the lineup. It's just one of those lineups that don't come around that often."

[Hiroki Kuroda](#) pitched four-hit ball for his first shutout since 2008, when he was with the [Los Angeles Dodgers](#). The tarps came out after he pitched the seventh inning, and the game was called following a 58-minute rain delay. The complete game was the third of Kuroda's career.

[Mark Teixeira](#) hit a two-run homer in a four-run first inning, lifting the Yankees to their ninth win in 11 games. They are a season-high 23 games over .500 (57-34).

New York scored at least three runs for a 42nd straight game, the second-longest streak since 1920. The 1994 [Cleveland Indians](#) went 48 games in 1994, the Yankees said based on information provided by the Elias Sports Bureau.

"We've pitched well. We've swung the bats well the last couple of weeks. I mean really, really well," manager Joe Girardi said. "I've been really pleased with how -- it's kind of been shared. It hasn't been one or two guys doing all the work. You've gotten contributions from so many different people in this lineup. ... It makes it difficult to get through this lineup, and I think it wears on pitchers. They gave [Ricky Romero](#) no time to settle in. He lost a career-worst fifth straight start. The Blue Jays not only are leaving town two games under .500 for the first time this season, they will be limping into Boston with two injuries. [Brett Lawrie](#) bruised his right calf flipping over a railing trying to catch a foul pop in the third inning. All-Star slugger [Jose Bautista](#) strained his wrist on a swing Monday night and was put on the 15-day disabled list.

"Well, it was a costly series," Blue Jays manager John Farrell said. "Obviously getting swept, first and foremost, and then the injury to Jose in Game 1 and then today with Brett going over the railing."

Lawrie slammed his right leg onto an unpadding railing inside a camera well while somersaulting over the cushioned railing separating the deep well from the field next to the Toronto dugout. The 22-year-old

tried standing up but immediately went down after putting weight on his leg. Several members of the Blue Jays' staff ran from the dugout to assist Lawrie.

"I hit it so flush, and it was just a long fall. I felt like I was in the air for like 5 seconds," Lawrie said. "From where the cameras sit behind that, it looks like it kind of cuts off right there but it actually goes down like another 3 1/2 feet. So it's like a 5-, 5 1/2-foot drop. It sure felt like it."

X-rays were negative, and he is day to day. Lawrie hopes to play Friday. Farrell saw this series as a chance help define the Blue Jays' season. Well, the Yankees outscored Toronto 18-4 and outhomered their AL East rival 4-1.

"It's not what we envisioned," Farrell said. "And yet, I thought we came in here and we played well for the first game and three-quarters. (The Yankees are) a very good team that's probably playing their best baseball of the year over the last month or so."

Headed to Oakland immediately following the game for the start of a six-game trip that begins Thursday, the Yankees wasted no time after a 51-minute delay at the start caused by some dramatic lightning and booming thunder -- but no rain. Jeter led off the first with a double, the first of the four extra-base hits in the inning. Nick Swisher had an RBI single, Teixeira followed with his 19th homer, a two-run shot. With one out, Cano and Jones had consecutive doubles to make it 4-0. Cano has a 21-game hitting streak.

Wise had an RBI double in the fourth and a run-scoring single in the sixth off Romero. He started in center field, giving Granderson a day off. Granderson had started 89 of New York's first 90 games.

"You've got to get contributions from everyone," Jeter said.

Kuroda (9-7), meanwhile, allowed a single hit in each of the second, fifth, sixth and seventh innings. He struck out the side in the second.

It was an encouraging outing for Kuroda after he allowed 11 earned runs over 13 innings in his previous two starts as his ERA rose from 3.16 to 3.67. Pitching with a big early lead helped.

"You can be aggressive and go inside on righties and lefties," Kuroda said through an interpreter.

Romero (8-6) appeared to be emerging from a slump. He had yielded just three runs in 12 innings over his previous two starts -- allowing 16 runs in the two outings before that. But he gave up six runs and 12 hits in six innings this time. The losing streak follows a stretch where he lost only once in 15 outings.

Game notes

Injured Yankees closer Mariano Rivera rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday morning. ... Several members of the Wounded Warrior Project rode hand-pedaled bicycles onto the field before the game as part of the Soldier Ride. Swisher greeted the injured troops and fans gave them a warm ovation. ... Following the game, the Yankees recalled RHP David Phelps from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and optioned RHP D.J. Mitchell to their top minor league club.

A Suddenly Sharp Rotation Sweeps Away Jays

By **JARED DIAMOND**

7/19/12

Considering the immense collection of talent that populates their everyday lineup, the Yankees' offensive explosion over the past month—while impressive—shouldn't come as much of a surprise. Any team that can put an All-Star at every position expects to score plenty of runs.

But in the past three days, the Yankees showed the rest of the American League what happens when their starting pitchers hold up their end of the bargain: They look practically unstoppable.

Hiroki Kuroda allowed just four hits in seven sparkling innings Wednesday, leading the Yankees to a 6-0, rain-shortened win over the Blue Jays. Kuroda received credit for a complete game in a contest that ended before the bottom of the seventh. Mark Teixeira smashed a two-run home run in the Yankees' four-run first inning, providing Kuroda with all the run support he needed.

In the process, the Yankees completed a dominating three-game sweep of Toronto, totally stifling one of the best hitting teams in baseball. Kuroda, CC Sabathia and Phil Hughes—the top three pitchers in the Yankees' rotation—combined to surrender a total of two runs in 20 innings throughout the series.

"This is probably about as good as we've played," manager Joe Girardi said.

From the moment the season began, a shaky starting rotation seemed like the only thing that could possibly lead to the Yankees' undoing.

They dealt with devastating injuries to front-line pitchers, losing Michael Pineda for the entire year and Andy Pettitte for most of it. They temporarily bounced Freddy Garcia from the rotation altogether after a horrendous April, and Hughes nearly went with him. Kuroda and Ivan Nova struggled to maintain any semblance of consistency.

At this point, though, the Yankees see a rotation starting to find itself. CC Sabathia came off the disabled list Tuesday and threw six scoreless frames. Hughes owns a 2.83 ERA since June 3. Kuroda's ERA sits at 2.61 since May 27.

More important, the Yankees won five of their first six games since the All-Star break, improving their MLB-best record to 57-34. Following their win Wednesday, the Yankees led the Tampa Bay Rays by 10 games in the American League East standings.

"Pitching is the one constant that you have to have to win on a daily basis," Girardi said. "And we've been getting that."

That didn't change with Kuroda on the mound Wednesday. He kept the Blue Jays off balance throughout the afternoon with a dizzying array of sharp sliders and disappearing splitters. He barely allowed a hard-hit ball all day. Afterward, Kuroda said that he threw his splitter "really well." Girardi said he liked how Kuroda painted his fastball on both sides of the plate.

Kuroda also extended an impressive streak: A Yankee starting pitcher last gave up a run in the sixth inning of Monday's game—a stretch of 14 consecutive innings.

"It's been very pleasant to see all of our pitchers get in the groove and get that confidence on the mound," catcher Russell Martin. "It just seems that when they're out there they expect good things to happen and expect to perform."

More than anything, the Yankees will always depend on their offense. That will not change this season. Wednesday marked the Yankees' 42nd consecutive game with at least three runs scored. In the live-ball era, only the 1994 Cleveland Indians put together a longer streak (48 games).

But the Yankees know that if they expect to make noise in the postseason this year, they will need starting pitching like they received against the Blue Jays. If that continues, they will remain extremely difficult to beat.

"It's a lot of fun coming to the ballpark right now," Nick Swisher said.

Yankees postgame: The wins keep on coming

Posted By [Brian Heyman](#) On July 18, 2012 @ 7:55 pm In [Misc](#) | [295 Comments](#)

It's hard to nitpick these days. All the Yankees do is win.

After this 6-0 rain-shortened victory, they had taken three straight, six of seven, nine of 11, 26 of 35 and 36 of 49, making them a season-high 23 games above .500 at 57-34. This was their eighth sweep, one short of their total for all of last season.

"We've pitched well and we've swung the bats really well the last couple of weeks; I mean really, really well," Joe Girardi said. "We've had some big outputs. We've jumped on people early. We've come from behind late in games. We've tacked on. It's probably about as good as we've played."

The lead is up to a large 10 games in the East, pending tonight's activity. But Derek Jeter rained all over that fact.

"It really doesn't make a difference," Jeter said. "There are so many games to go. Everyone said our season was over with (two months ago); how bad we were playing; we were terrible; we wouldn't make the playoffs. ... It's way too early for any of that."

Mark Teixeira is having a big July. After going 2 for 3 with a two-run homer, he's up to .326 with three doubles, six homers and 19 RBI this month.

"To me, the season feels like one long slump with just a few hot streaks mixed in," Teixeira said. "As a power hitter, you're going to go through a lot of streaks where you don't do much at the plate. But you can put a couple of weeks together that make up for those down times."

Teixeira liked his figurine that was given out. So did Nick Swisher.

"Swish asked me for one, so I gave mine to him," Teixeira said. "It looks pretty good, good swing there. Whoever made it did a great job. I got a big box. I brought them home. My kids will like playing with them."

Teixeira obviously didn't like seeing what happened to Brett Lawrie. The third baseman went flying over the rail trying to catch Teixeira's foul pop in the third and fell into the camera well. He left the game, but the x-rays came back negative. He suffered a bruise below the right calf. The Jays have him as day to day.

"You kind of feel somewhat responsible when you hit a ball and a guy gets hurt on the play," Teixeira said. "... I'm glad nothing was seriously injured."

No complaints with Hiroki Kuroda. Not after allowing four hits, fanning five and walking none in seven innings. Girardi praised his slider, splitter and fastball location.

The Yankees did make a roster move after the game, sending D.J. Mitchell to Triple-A and calling up David Phelps.

So now it's on to Oakland for four games and then three in Seattle. Thursday night's matchup will feature Freddy Garcia and A.J. Griffin.



Wednesday, July 18, 2012

Rapid Reaction: Yankees 6, Blue Jays 0

What it means: That right now, the Yankees are so good they can beat everything but the weather. They jumped on **Ricky Romero** in the first inning, were up 6-0 after 6-1/2 innings, but couldn't quite outrun Mother Nature, who shut things down before the Yankees could bat in the seventh. It goes into the books as a win, their fifth in the six games since play resumed after the All-Star break and eighth in their last 10 games. And now, they head to the West Coast, where they should clean up on the Athletics and Mariners.

Complete Hiro: **Hiroki Kuroda** got credit for a complete game, and he was completely dominant for his seven innings, in which he allowed just four hits, two of them infield singles, walked no one and struck out five. Quietly, he has developed into a more-than-reliable No. 2 starter.

Figure of strength: On **Mark Teixeira** Figurine Day, the real Tex blasted a first-inning changeup from **Ricky Romero** into the bullpen with **Nick Swisher** aboard to give the Yankees a 3-0 lead.

24 up to 21: **Robbie Cano** extended his hitting streak to 21 games when his first-inning liner to deep left was scored a double even though it bounced off left fielder **Rajai Davis'** glove.

De-lightful: Starting in CF on a rare day off for **Curtis Granderson**, **Dewayne Wise** had a double and a single and two RBIs.

Close call: Blue Jays' third baseman **Brett Lawrie** made a spectacular attempt to catch Teixeira's foul pop in the third, but wound up flipping over the rail and tumbling, frighteningly, into the photogs well, his right leg coming down hard on a steel railing on his way down. He had to leave the game; **Omar Vizquel** moved from SS to 3B and **Yunel Escobar** came in to play short. Report from the Jays is Lawrie suffered a right calf contusion and was taken for a precautionary X-ray, which was negative. Could've been a lot worse.

E-Rod: After two days of DH duty to rest his stiff neck, **Alex Rodriguez** airmailed his first throw of the day into the photographer's well, allowing Lawrie to get to second base with one out in the first. But Kuroda set down the next two Jays to bail out his third baseman.

Bronx cheers: A-Rod's fielding has replaced his (lack of) hitting as the object of scorn from Yankees fans. After he bobbled a grounder by Escobar -- scored a base hit -- in the sixth inning, he got a very mock cheer from the crowd when he settled under a pop fly by the next batter, **Colby Rasmus**. Funny, no one said a word when he pulled up short of first base on his two ground outs.

What's coming: A column from me on why the Yankees are so good, they're boring. Also, **Mike Mazzeo** will have assorted blog items on the day's Hiro.

And then?: Cross-country flight tonight, followed tomorrow by game one of a four-game series against the Athletics in Oakland. **Freddy Garcia** (4-2, 5.25) vs. RHP **A.J. Griffin** (1-0, 2.63), first pitch at 10:05 p.m.



Wednesday, July 18, 2012

Kuroda cruises to seven-inning shutout

The Yankees handed **Hiroki Kuroda** a 4-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning -- and the 37-year-old Japanese righty did the rest.

Kuroda cruised en route to a seven-inning complete-game shutout -- the third complete-game shutout of his career -- allowing just four hits in the Yankees' 6-0 rain-shortened victory over the Blue Jays on Wednesday afternoon at Yankee Stadium.

"When you get a lot of run support you can be really aggressive and try to go inside on righties, and that's what I did today," Kuroda said.

Kuroda (9-7), who walked none and struck out five, has not lost since June 19 and is 6-1 in his past seven decisions. He had given up a combined 12 runs in his previous two starts, so this was an impressive turnaround performance.

"I tried to not think about my last two outings as much as possible. I try not to dwell on it," Kuroda said. "I just wanted to focus on today's game."

On Wednesday afternoon, he had to wait out a 51-minute lightning delay before taking the hill. But from the first inning on, he had great command of his splitter and slider.

"I thought he located his fastball extremely well, and he kept away from the first guy getting on, which has plagued him the last couple starts," manager **Joe Girardi** said.

The Blue Jays connected for one extra-base hit off Kuroda -- **J.P. Arencibia's** double leading off the fifth. Toronto never got a runner past second against him and had two runners on base in the same inning just once.

In four daytime starts, Kuroda has held opponents scoreless in 30 innings pitched.

Journal News 7/19/12

Supporting cast stars again in 6-0 victory over Jays

Wise, Nix latest examples of Yankees' depth making outstanding contributions

By Brian Heyman
bheyman@lohud.com

NEW YORK — Curtis Granderson has been a quick-moving, home-run-hitting fixture, starting 88 of the Yankees' first 90 games in center. Plus, there was one game as the DH.

But with lefty Ricky Romero starting for the Blue Jays, Joe Girardi gave Granderson a day of rest Wednesday in the homestand finale.

"If I'm going to take a day off for him, I'm going to do (it against) a left-hander,"

Girardi said. "I think on the road trip we're going to see six out of seven right-handers, so I just chose today."

Dewayne Wise filled in and contributed two hits and two RBI. Also, Derek Jeter received a partial rest, serving as DH. Jayson Nix played the part of the Captain at shortstop and added a single and a double to go with no mishaps defensively in the Yankees' rain-shortened 6-0 victory at Yankee Stadium.

Their depth was showing again. "That's how you win," Jeter said. "You've got to get contributions from everyone. All the teams that I've been a part of that have won have gotten contributions from a lot of different guys."

The lead in the East reached 10 games, pending the outcome of Wednesday night's activity. But Jeter wasn't declar-

ing victory.

"It really doesn't make a difference," Jeter said. "There are so many games to go. Everyone said our season was over with (two months ago); how bad we were playing; we were terrible; we wouldn't make the playoffs. ... It's way too early for any of that."

Teixeira's figurine: The Mark Teixeira figurine that was distributed depicted him in mid-swing left-handed. Teixeira could see a resemblance. He handed one over to Nick Swisher.

"Swish asked me for one, so I gave mine to him," Teixeira said. "It looks pretty good, good swing there. Whoever made it did a great job. I got a big box. I brought them home. My kids will like playing with them."

Lawrie takes a tumble: Toronto third baseman Brett Lawrie left the game in the third after flying over a rail trying to catch a Teixeira foul pop and falling into the camera well near the Blue Jays' dugout. Jays manager John Farrell said: "That camera well is pretty deep." Lawrie went for X-rays, which came back negative. He has a bruise below the right calf and is day to day.

"You kind of feel somewhat responsible when you hit a ball and a guy gets hurt on the play," Teixeira said. "... I'm glad nothing was seriously injured."

Extra bases: After the game, the Yankees recalled righty David Phelps from Triple-A and sent down righty D.J. Mitchell. ... The Yankees have eight series sweeps, one short of their total from all of last year.

Wednesday, July 18, 2012

Yanks are lean, mean win machine

By Wallace Matthews
ESPNNewYork.com

Covering the Yankees these days is about as much fun as writing technical manuals. And very similar.

It is difficult to imagine a subject more boring than writing about machinery, and right now, the Yankees are a machine.

A hitting, fielding, pitching, winning machine.

They played a game against the [Toronto Blue Jays](#) on Wednesday afternoon that started at 1:56 p.m. -- there was a 51-minute non-rain delay -- and was over about six minutes later.

Unfortunately, the official end didn't come for another three hours, a period of time that included another rain delay -- this one a real one that lasted 58 minutes before the umpires did the sensible thing and waved this one off.

But after the Yankees put four runs on the board in the first inning -- three of them on the first 10 pitches thrown by [Ricky Romero](#) -- the only time the game was truly interesting to watch was whenever the baseball was hit to [Alex Rodriguez](#).

The rest of it was so predictable the tickets to this one should have had "Foregone Conclusion" stamped across them.

That's how good the Yankees are right now.

They are 36-13 since May 21, 5-1 since the All-Star break and 8-2 since July 6, when they traveled to Boston for what would have been a pivotal midsummer series in years past but turned out to be a weekend massacre.

In this series, they not only swept the Blue Jays, who have traditionally been tough on them, they broke them as well. Toronto leaves town without its most fearsome hitter, [Jose Bautista](#), who went on the DL on Monday after injuring his wrist on a swing, and possibly without [Brett Lawrie](#), who took a frightening tumble into the photographer's well chasing a foul ball and miraculously came away with only a bruised calf.

"This was tough three days here in New York," said Blue Jays manager John Farrell, with more than a hint of understatement.

Now, the Yankees head to the West Coast for seven games, four against the weak [Oakland Athletics](#), who they swept at Oakland in May, and three against the even weaker [Seattle Mariners](#).

By the time they get back, they might well have a double-digit lead in the AL East, and be close to, if not at, 30 games over .500, with two months of baseball left to play.

"Two months ago, they said our season was over with," [Derek Jeter](#) said. "Seventy games ago, everyone was saying how bad we were playing. We were terrible. We weren't going to make the playoffs. Right, CC?"

"Yeah, I remember that," said [CC Sabathia](#).

Well, I don't recall anyone saying that then -- Jeter never identified who "they" might be -- and I can guarantee no one is saying that now.

The numbers say that on July 18, 2012, the [New York Yankees](#) are the best team in baseball, and your eyes tell you that they win with a machine-like precision that over the past month or so has wrung almost all the suspense out of their games.

"This is probably as good as we've played," said Joe Girardi, who used to be kidded about relying on his collection of binders but lately has been making moves as if they were preordained in the Bible.

As a result, 90 games into the season, the only thing that has been able to stop the Yankees is Mother Nature, and even that powerful and bellicose lady has only been able to do that once this year.

They lost [Michael Pineda](#) in spring training? So what. They lost [Brett Gardner](#) nine games into the season? No big deal. They lost [Mariano Rivera](#) before Memorial Day? Pish.

Nothing seems to have any effect on this team, not even the news that Gardner, expected back months ago, may not be seen again until next year. So the Yankees will have to muddle through with a platoon of [Andruw Jones](#) and [Raul Ibanez](#), who between them have 75 years on earth and 24 home runs this season.

Or that [Andy Pettitte](#), counted on to rescue the staff after Pineda went down, probably won't be back before September after breaking an ankle. In his place, suddenly [Hiroki Kuroda](#) is pitching like an ace and [Ivan Nova](#) and [Phil Hughes](#) are justifying the faith the Yankees have stubbornly showed in them.

No Rivera? It's OK, there's [Rafael Soriano](#). No [Joba Chamberlain](#)? There's [David Robertson](#). And [Boone Logan](#), [Cody Eppley](#) and [Clay Rapada](#).

You want to give Jeter a DH day? [Jayson Nix](#) can play short. And pick up a couple of hits and score two runs. [Curtis Granderson](#) is overdue to sit out a game? [Dewayne Wise](#) can play center. And drive in a couple of runs with a single and a double.

"Our depth is the most important thing," said [Mark Teixeira](#), who set the tone on Mark Teixeira Figurine Day by hitting a two-run homer off Romero before the Yankees had made an out in the first inning.

And if there is a difference between last year's Yankees and this year's, it is the fact that no injury is catastrophic, any absence can be overcome, and any area of under-performance can, and has been, compensated for.

"It's resiliency, man," Nick Swisher said. "These guys are role players and any time they get a chance to get in there, they seem to do well. I'm starting to expect that stuff every day now. It's a lot of fun coming to the ballpark right now."

So it seems silly to point out that A-Rod is still on pace for a disappointing, and possibly ominous, 26 home runs despite apparently being healthier than he has been in years; that Granderson is on pace for 182 strikeouts, which would not only be his career high, but also more than any Yankee has ever struck out in a single season, breaking the record held by -- you guessed it -- Curtis Granderson; that Teixeira is still struggling to keep his average at about .250; that Russell Martin, the starting catcher, continues to hit less than D.J. Mitchell's weight (.179); or that Freddy Garcia is back in their starting rotation:

Or, my favorite complaint of all, that the Yankees hit too many home runs.

The fact is, the same team that was shut out three times in the first month of the season has now scored at least three runs in each of its past 43 games, and who really cares how they do it?

"I've been really pleased with how it's kinda been shared," Girardi said of his offense. "You get contributions from so many different people it makes it difficult to get through this lineup. I think it wears on pitchers."

It certainly wore on the Blue Jays, and the Angels before them, and the Red Sox last week, and just about everyone the Yankees have played for the past two months.

"It just seems like everything is going our way," Swisher said.

And so it is. The machine is running smoothly now, and has been for a long enough time that you can be pretty sure it is no fluke.

Now the only thing left to do is keep an eye on it from now through October.

YANKEES
NOTEBOOK

ALL-AROUND TOUGH DAY FOR A-ROD

BY STEVE ZIPAY
steve.zipay@newsday.com

With two groundouts and a fly to right, Alex Rodriguez struggled at the plate yesterday.

He also had a tough day in the field.

The third baseman, who was the designated hitter in the previous two games because of a stiff neck, fired a throw well wide of Mark Teixeira in the first inning on Brett Lawrie's grounder for an error. He also misplayed Yuniel Escobar's slow hopper off his glove (which was scored a hit) in the sixth.

He was cheered derisively by the crowd of 45,986 when he caught a high pop by Colby Rasmus, one batter after Escobar.

But Joe Girardi said Rodriguez, who also almost pulled Teixeira off the bag on Lawrie's bouncer in the second, "really doesn't look uncomfortable. He made a bad throw today, that's the bottom line. I don't think he gets the other guy [Escobar]; it's kind of a do-or-die play."

■ Extra bases

David Phelps was recalled from Triple-A Scranton Wilkes-Barre and righthander D.J. Mitchell was optioned to Scranton. Phelps, 25, made the club out of spring training and was 1-3 with a 3.05 in 15 games, including three starts. . . . Several milestones could be reached on the upcoming road trip: Derek Jeter needs one run scored to tie Eddie Collins (1,822) for 15th place on the all-time list, Rodriguez needs two homers to reach 300 as a Yankee and Nick Swisher needs two homers to reach 200 in his career. . . . It was the first rain-shortened game for the Yankees since Aug. 2 last season in Chicago, a 6-0 victory that was also called in the middle of the seventh.

ON DECK

AT A'S

TONIGHT — 10:05
RHP Freddy García (4-2, 5.25) vs. RHP A.J. Griffin (1-0, 2.63)

TOMORROW — 10:05
RHP Ivan Nova (10-4, 4.18) vs. LHP Tommy Milone (9-6, 3.54)

SATURDAY — 9:05
RHP Phil Hughes (9-7, 4.22) vs. RHP Jarrod Parker (6-4, 3.16)

SUNDAY — 4:05
LHP CC Sabathia (10-3, 3.27) vs. RHP Bartolo Colon (6-8, 3.88)

All games on YES, WCBS (880 AM)

INSIDE THE MATCHUPS

YANKEES: García is coming off back-to-back wins, including a five-inning, three-run effort in his last start, against the Angels at the Stadium. García also had a season-high five walks. He has won his last four decisions, and is 7-7 in 22 career starts against the A's.

A'S: The rookie right-hander has made four starts this season, earning his first major league win in his last start. He allowed three runs, two home runs, and eight hits (all season highs), but was on the winning side of a 6-3 victory over the Twins. Griffin has pitched six innings in each start, allowing no more than three earned runs.



STAT SU?

YANKEES: Mark Teixeira had a home run yesterday, and is now batting .326 (14-for-43) with six home runs and 19 RBIs this month.

A'S: Outfielder Josh Reddick is batting .412 (7-for-17) in his past four games.



OVER THE TOP: Blue Jays third baseman Brett Lawrie tumbles over the railing into the photographers' well trying to field a pop-up in a rain-shortened 6-0 loss to the Yankees yesterday, then needs help exiting the game (inset) because of a right calf contusion. AP; Neil Miller (inset)

Stormy 'leather'

By DAN MARTIN

A-Rod's glove blunders cloud return from DH spell

Alex Rodriguez was back at third base yesterday after two games at designated hitter because of a stiff neck, and he didn't take long to make the crowd pine for Eric Chavez.

On the second play of the Yankees' rain-shortened 6-0 win, Rodriguez threw wildly to first for a two-base error after fielding a grounder by Toronto's Brett Lawrie.

In the sixth, he couldn't handle a slow grounder by Yunel Escobar that bounced off his glove. The play was ruled a hit.

"He doesn't look uncomfortable," Joe Girardi said. "He made a bad throw. It was do-or-die on the other one."

The manager acknowledged earlier in the week

that Rodriguez's better performance at the plate when he doesn't have to play the field was something that was on his radar, but he had made no plans to increase the third baseman's time as a DH.

"He looks fine to me," Mark Teixeira said. "Sometimes it's tough when you haven't played in a couple of days, and then right away you get a ground ball."

The Stadium crowd didn't agree, giving Rodriguez a mock cheer when he caught a routine pop-up after not making the play on Escobar.

YANKEES NOTES

► **Brett Gardner** and the Yankees still are waiting to hear from doctors regarding his most recent MRI exam after the left fielder again complained of stiffness in his injured right elbow.

► **Robinson Cano** extended his career-high hitting streak to 21 games when Blue Jays left fielder **Rajai Davis** failed to catch Cano's drive in the first, which was scored a double.... Teixeira went 2-for-3 and is hitting .326 with six homers and 19 RBIs this

month, but said he's "still not 100 percent" from the vocal cord nerve damage that plagued him earlier in the season.

► Lawrie took a scary fall into the camera well near the Blue Jays dugout when he flipped over the railing attempting to catch a Teixeira pop-up in the third inning. He was diagnosed with a contusion below the right calf and is day-to-day.

► **David Phelps** was recalled from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre after yesterday's game. He is expected to rejoin the bull-

pen. Fellow right-hander **D.J. Mitchell** was optioned back to Triple-A to make room on the roster.

► **Mariano Rivera** isn't interested in keeping up with his daily progress as he rehabs from a torn right knee ligament.

"I don't want to know, believe it or not," said Rivera, who has not ruled out pitching again this season. "If it doesn't happen, I'll be a little disappointed. I just take it day by day."

Rivera, who rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange yesterday, tore his ACL on May 3 shagging fly balls at Kaufmann Stadium prior to a Yankees game against the Royals and could return ahead of schedule.

—Additional reporting by Anthony Sulla-Heffinger

BASEBALL

Tough glove for Alex

ALEX Rodriguez has heard his share of boos as his numbers have slipped this season. But the Yankees' third baseman was cheered mockingly Wednesday after a couple of tough defensive plays in the Bombers' 6-0 win over Toronto.

Rodriguez, who had served as the designated hitter the previous two games due to a stiff neck, drew boos after committing a two-base throwing error on his first chance of the game on Brett Lawrie's grounder in the first inning.

A-Rod later charged but mishandled Yuniel Escobar's slow bouncer in the sixth, generating more boos, but the play was ruled a single. Rodriguez then was cheered derisively upon catching Colby Rasmus' pop-up one batter later.

insider

BY PETER BOTTE

"He doesn't really look uncomfortable to me," Joe Girardi said after the game. "He made a bad throw today, that's the bottom line. And I don't think he gets the other guy (Escobar); it's kind of a do-or-die play."

COULD'VE BEEN WORSE

Lawrie, Toronto's third baseman, left the game after a scary crash into the photographers' well on a failed attempt to corral Mark Teixeira's foul pop fly in the third. Lawrie slammed his right leg on a metal bar before he crashed to the ground, but X-rays were negative, and the Jays listed him as day-to-day with a bruised right calf.

"I saw him go down and I heard a loud crash," Teixeira said. "You just really worry about a guy's neck and head and back and you never want to see a guy get hurt, especially on a ball you hit. ... I'm just glad that nothing was seriously injured."

A WISE MAN

Dewayne Wise made a rare start in center field for Curtis Granderson and had two hits and two RBI. He has eight hits in his last 17 at-bats.

"You've got Hall of Famers all

EXTRA INNINGS

STAT OF THE DAY

402 That is, Robinson Cano's batting average during a career-best 21-game hitting streak, the longest active streak in the majors.

TEST YOUR YANKEE IQ

CC Sabathia on Tuesday became the fifth pitcher since 1900 to record at least 10 wins in his first 12 seasons. Who were the other four?

UNsung HERO

Jayson Nix went 2-for-3 with a walk, giving him five hits in the past two games.

M.I.A.

Toronto starter Ricky Romero allowed five runs, including four in the first inning, for his fifth straight loss.

NEXT GAME

Tonight, 10:00, at Oakland, Freddy Garcia (4-2, 5.25) vs. AJ Griffin (1-0, 2.63). TV: YES.

and Eddie Plank, Sutton and Hubbell, John Seaver, Don

through the lineup. It's one of those lineups that don't come around too often," Wise said. "You know you're going to get some pitches to hit. I know they'd rather face me than (Derek) Jeter and Curtis and Alex and (Robinson) Cano. You know you're going to get some fastballs. You just have to see it and hit it."

Girardi again lauded the contributions of bench players such as Wise and Jayson Nix, who has five hits in the past two games. "It's been really special what these guys have done for us," Girardi said. "It allows us to not worry too much about giving a guy a day off."

THIS AND THAT

There was no update on Brett Gardner, whose latest MRI results on his right elbow were sent to Dr. James Andrews and Dr. Tim Kremenek for review. ... RHP David Phelps was called up after the game. RHP D.J. Mitchell was optioned to Triple-A Scranton. ... Golfer Webb Simpson, the 2012 U.S. Open champ, threw out the ceremonial first pitch.



Wednesday, July 18, 2012

Girardi: A-Rod doesn't look 'uncomfortable'

Alex Rodriguez heard cheers on Wednesday afternoon -- Bronx cheers.

Rodriguez committed his sixth error of the season in the first inning, when he airmailed a throw to **Mark Teixeira** that went into the stands. Then, in the sixth, he couldn't handle a slow roller off the bat of **Yunel Escobar**, which fortunately for A-Rod was scored a single.

So when Rodriguez caught **Cody Rasmus'** easy popup, the crowd of 45,986 mockingly let him have it.

"He made the one error. He doesn't really look uncomfortable," Yankees manager **Joe Girardi** said. "He made a bad throw today, that's the bottom line. I don't really think he gets the other guy on the play, it's really a do-or-die play. But he doesn't look uncomfortable to me, no."

Rodriguez went 0-for-3 in the Yankees' 6-0 victory over Toronto, and is hitting .267.

OUCH: All **Mark Teixeira** could do was grimace.

In the third inning, Teixeira hit a foul popup down the third-base line.

Blue Jays third baseman **Brett Lawrie** nearly made an improbable flying catch, but ended up falling hard into the camera well and injuring his right calf. Luckily, X-rays proved to be negative, and Lawrie was listed as day-to-day with a contusion.

"I saw him go down, and then I just heard a really loud crash," Teixeira said. "You really worry about about a guy's neck, head and back. You never wanna see someone get hurt on a play, especially, when you're involved, you kinda feel somewhat responsible.

"I heard that it's just a contusion and I'm just glad he wasn't seriously injured."

The Yankees first baseman went 2-for-3 with his 19th homer -- a two-run shot in the first.

Teixeira is hitting .326 with six homers and 19 RBIs in July.

CANO KEEPS GOING: **Robinson Cano** extended his career-high hitting streak to 21 games, the longest active streak in the majors and the longest by a Yankee since **Derek Jeter** hit safely in 25 games from Aug. 20 to Sept. 16, 2006. Cano is hitting .402 during the stretch.

NORTHJERSEY.COM

Yankee notes: Rough day for Alex Rodriguez

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2012
Rough day

Alex Rodriguez heard derisive cheers when he caught Colby Rasmus' easy pop-up for the second out in the sixth. He booted Yunel Escobar's grounder up the third-base line on the previous play, though it was ruled a hit, and threw wildly to first on Brett Lawrie's one-out grounder in the first for a two-base error.

He also went 0-for-3 at the plate, but Yankees manager Joe Girardi again discounted the notion that A-Rod hits better as a DH.

"He doesn't really look uncomfortable [at third]," Girardi said. "He made a bad throw today, that's the bottom line. I don't think he gets the other guy [Escobar]; it's kind of a do-or-die play."

Another Jay hurt

X-rays on Lawrie were negative, and Toronto's third baseman is listed as day to day with a right calf contusion after he fell over the railing and into the photographer's pit chasing Mark Teixeira's foul pop in the third inning. Lawrie landed on his back and his right leg hit a stool as he flipped.

"I saw him go down and then I heard a loud crash," said Teixeira, who cringed as he watched the play. "You just really worry about the neck, head and back."

The Blue Jays placed Jose Bautista, their home run leader, on the 15-day disabled list after he hurt his left wrist hitting a foul ball in the eighth inning of Monday's 6-3 loss to the Yankees.

Briefs

Girardi did not have an update on Brett Gardner, who underwent an MRI on his sore right elbow Tuesday. The results should be known today. ... Nick Swisher's first-inning single was his 500th hit as a Yankee. ... The Bombers recalled right-hander David Phelps from Class AAA Empire State after the game. He is 1-3 with a 3.05 ERA in 15 games for the Yankees this season, including three starts. To make room, right-hander D.J. Mitchell (0-0, 3.86 ERA) was optioned to Empire State. ... Girardi said the left-handed-hitting Curtis Granderson was given the day off because the Yankees are expecting to face six right-handers on their seven-game trip.

07/18/12 7:45 PM ET

Cano extends personal-best hit streak to 21 games

By Steven Miller and Cash Kruth / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Robinson Cano has wasted little time extending his hitting streak of late, and Wednesday was no different.

The Yankees second baseman sent a first-inning fastball from Blue Jays starter Ricky Romero to left field, where Rajai Davis was unable to make the tough catch. He was credited with a double, giving him a career-high 21-game hitting streak during an inning in which the Yanks stormed out to a 4-0 lead.

In each of his past five games, Cano extended the streak in his first at-bat.

Cano is the only Major Leaguer with a hitting streak of at least 15 games in each of the past four seasons, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. But he never had a streak this long, and it marks the first 20-game streak in New York since Derek Jeter hit safely in 20 consecutive games in 2007, and Alex Rodriguez hit safely in 23.

Cano was hitting .295 before the streak started but entered Wednesday with a .320 average after going 32-for-79 through the streak's first 20 games. He had six doubles, six homers, 20 RBIs and 13 runs scored with a .405 average in that time.

"A 20-game hit streak means that he's being productive," said manager Joe Girardi. "As far as how far it goes, I really haven't thought too much about that. I think all of us expect Robby to have good at-bats every day, and when he does that, he's going to get his base hits. Him hitting in 20 straight games doesn't really surprise me."

Yanks recall Phelps from Triple-A, option Mitchell

The Yankees recalled right-hander David Phelps from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre following Wednesday's 6-0 rain-shortened win over the Blue Jays and optioned right-hander D.J. Mitchell to Triple-A.

Phelps, 25, is 1-3 with a 3.05 ERA in 15 games (three starts) with the Yankees this season. His last Major League start came on July 4, when he allowed one run and struck out eight in 4 1/3 innings.

Mitchell had a 3.86 ERA in 4 2/3 innings in two stints with the Yankees this season.

Jones, Ibanez stepping up in Gardner's absence

NEW YORK -- Joe Girardi was still waiting on opinions from Drs. James Andrews and Timothy Kremcheck on Wednesday morning regarding Brett Gardner's MRI, but he was able to confidently pencil Andruw Jones into the lineup in left field.

Jones hit his 12th homer of the season in Tuesday night's 6-1 win over the Blue Jays and fifth in his past 10 games, as he platoons in left field with Raul Ibanez, creating a tandem most expected to be restricted to designated hitting. The lineup looks different with the 35-year-old Jones and 40-year-old Ibanez than it would with 28-year-old Gardner, but it works.

"[Gardner] can always make things happen. He can steal bases, he plays tremendous defense in the outfield. He's missed," Jones said. "When they call our names, we've just got to go out there and get the job done. With Gardner

out, me and Raul have got to get the job done until he gets back or whatever happens. When Brett comes back, we can come off the bench."

But the Yankees have no idea when or if Gardner will be back after he suffered a third setback earlier this week in his return from a right elbow strain. Girardi acknowledges Gardner is the one player who makes his lineup a little more dynamic with his speed, but the veterans Jones and Ibanez provide pop.

The pair combined for 63 starts in left field entering Wednesday's series finale against the Blue Jays and hit 14 homers, drove in 35 runs and scored 31 in that time. Jones hit an early three-run homer in Tuesday's win. Ibanez hit a go-ahead grand slam late in Monday's victory.

"When you can platoon your left fielders in a sense and get a ton of production from them -- and it's not just singles, they're home runs with RBIs -- it really helps," Girardi said.

Bombers bits

- Reliever Joba Chamberlain will make another rehab appearance Friday in Florida after he threw a 1-2-3 inning Tuesday for the GCL Yankees, manager Joe Girardi said.

- On this date in 1999, David Cone completed the third perfect game in Yankees history, retiring all 27 batters he faced in a 6-0 win against Montreal. Girardi caught Cone, who needed only 88 pitches to complete the game with 10 strikeouts.



Yankees' Robinson Cano extends hitting streak to 21

Published: Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 9:25 PM Updated: Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 9:30 PM



By **Brendan Prunty/The Star-Ledger**

NEW YORK — As the **Yankees** embark on their seven-game West Coast road trip that begins Friday night in Oakland, second baseman Robinson Cano will be packing more than clothes and baseball equipment. He'll be bringing along his 21-game hitting streak.

Cano, who had a second-inning single in **Tuesday night's game**, wasted no time getting to 21 straight in **today's rain-shortened 6-0 win** over the Toronto Blue Jays. In his first-inning at-bat, Cano ripped a double to deep left field, where Toronto's Rajai Davis couldn't close his glove on the ball.

But don't expect the Yankees to start celebrating Cano's streak. For Yankees manager Joe Girardi, **this is all part of what everybody expects Cano to do.**

"I'm excited for it now," Girardi said before yesterday's game. "A (now 21)-game hit streak means that he's being productive. As far as how far it goes? I haven't thought too much about that. I think all of us expect Robbie to have good at-bats every day and when he does that, he's going to get his base hits."

Since Yankees legend Joe DiMaggio set the major-league record of 56 straight games with a hit during the 1941 season, only a handful of players have even sniffed that mark. Pete Rose came the closest, hitting in 44 straight games during the 1978 season. More recently, Phillies shortstop Jimmy Rollins hit

in 38 straight games spanning the end of the 2005 season and the start of the 2006 season. Last year, Braves second baseman Dan Uggla strung together a 33-game hitting streak.

- There was no update on the results of injured left fielder **Brett Gardner's latest MRI**. Gardner experienced stiffness and soreness in his right elbow after playing a simulated game Sunday.

- Girardi said Joba Chamberlain, who is in Tampa recovering from a torn ankle ligament, is scheduled to throw Friday.

- The Blue Jays' Brett Lawrie bruised his calf when he slammed his right leg onto an unpadded railing inside a camera well while somersaulting over a cushioned railing next to the Toronto dugout in the third inning.

Jays' slugger Jose Bautista injured his wrist swinging the bat Monday and landed on the 15-day disabled list.

- Earlier in the day, injured Yankee closer Mariano Rivera rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange. ... Jets center Nick Mangold was at the game, sitting behind home plate. ... U.S. Open champion Webb Simpson threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Simpson is not at the British Open this week because of the impending birth of his second child.

Yanks Closing In On Run-Scoring Record

New York Has Scored 3-Plus Runs In 42 Straight Games

By The Sports Xchange

POSTED: 7:59 am EDT July 19, 2012

Yes, the New York Yankees have hit just .235 with runners in scoring position this season. And they are extremely reliant on the home run.

But that hasn't stopped them from closing in on a major league record with an impressive offensive streak.

With a four-run first inning in a 6-0 win Wednesday over Toronto, the Yanks became just the second team in the live ball era (since 1920) to score at least three runs in 42 consecutive games. The 1994 Indians hold the record of 48 straight.

"It's amazing," Joe Girardi told the New York Daily News. "I've been really pleased with how it's been shared. It hasn't been two guys doing all the work. We've got contributions from so many different people, and that's really pleasing to me because it makes it so difficult to get through our lineup. And I think it wears on pitchers.

"I know we're a club that doesn't manufacture runs, but that's who we are and that's how we score runs."

Mark Teixeira belted a two-run homer and Robinson Cano extended his hitting streak to 21 games Wednesday, but the Yanks also continue to get production from a number of role players. Andruw Jones, who has platooned with Raul Ibanez in left since Brett Gardner was injured in mid-April, and reserve outfielder Dewayne Wise combined for three RBI as the AL East-leading Yankees improved to 57-34.

"The depth is the most important thing," Teixeira said. "If you rely on one or two guys to carry your team, you're not going to be able to score runs like that consistently.

"But one through nine we can get the job done ... and one through 25 we have everybody making contributions. That's what it takes to win."



Thursday, July 19, 2012

First pitch: Who should fifth starter be?

Freddy Garcia, Thursday night's starter in Oakland, has compiled a 7.34 ERA in seven starts this season.

So does that give you confidence that Garcia can deliver in **Andy Pettitte**'s absence until Sept. 1, when Pettitte hopes to return to the rotation?

Garcia, 35, has to get by with guts and guile these days, no longer relying on the mid-90s fastball he once possessed.

"The Chief" has pitched to a 3.18 ERA in his last three outings, but can he sustain that type of consistency?

Perhaps the Yankees would be better served inserting a young starter such as **David Phelps**, who they recently promoted, as a stopgap until Pettitte returns.

Garcia? Phelps? Maybe GM **Brian Cashman** should make a trade? Let us know who you think should pitch in the No. 5 spot in the rotation for the next six weeks.

UP NOW: **Wallace Matthews** has a column on the Yankees becoming a machine. Seriously. They look like a juggernaut right now. I have blogs on **Hiroki Kuroda**, **A-Rod** and **Mark Teixeira**. **Katie Sharp** will be bringing you her latest edition of *Yankeemetrics* in the A.M. as well.

ON DECK: The Yankees open up a seven-day, seven-game West Coast roadtrip against the A's.

MLB.COM

A's out to halt Yankees' success in Oakland

By AJ Cassavell / MLB.com | 7/18/2012 7:13 PM ET

These days, it seems the Yankees are winning ballgames in just about every ballpark they play in.

Still, there aren't many stadiums in which the Yankees have been hotter than Oakland's O.co Coliseum.

That's where the Bombers take on the A's in the first game of a four-game set on Thursday. New York has won nine straight in Oakland, dating back to July 5, 2010. It's the Yanks' longest winning streak at the Coliseum since it opened in 1968.

The A's are in the middle of a vital stretch right now, as they fight to stay in the race for the American League's second Wild Card spot. They just finished a series against the division-leading Rangers and now welcome the Yankees, who own baseball's best record.

"You would certainly like to be able to turn the tables and do well against them," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Other than that, I don't think you're ever looking forward to playing potentially the best team in the league. I don't really think it's here nor there to tell you the truth. It's just on the schedule. We know they're here, we're playing them four games, and we have to play well to beat them."

Heading into Wednesday night's games, the A's were tied for the final Wild Card spot -- a result of their 25-14 record since June 2. Only the Yankees have a better mark during that time.

New York sends righty Freddy Garcia (4-2, 5.25 ERA) to the mound. Though he struggled early this season, Garcia has posted a 3.17 ERA in three starts since his return to the rotation.

The A's counter with right-hander A.J. Griffin, who earned his first career win in his last outing after recording no-decisions in his first three starts.

"I think throwing strikes and throwing the ball where he wants to, that's always his strength," Melvin said.

Yankees: Cano riding hitting streak

Robinson Cano extended his career-high hitting streak to 21 games with a first-inning double against the Blue Jays on Wednesday.

Cano's streak marks the Yankees' first 21-gamer since Alex Rodriguez hit safely in 23 consecutive games in 2007. Cano is hitting .402 during the streak with six homers and 20 RBIs.

"A 20-game hit streak means that he's being productive," manager Joe Girardi said before Wednesday's game. "As far as how far it goes, I really haven't thought too much about that. I think all of us expect Robby to have good at-bats every day, and when he does that, he's going to get his base hits. Him hitting in 20 straight games doesn't really surprise me."

A's: Crisp makes return

- Center fielder Coco Crisp was in the lineup for Wednesday's series finale against the Rangers after he missed three games with soreness in his left shoulder.

Crisp went 1-for-3 with a pair of stolen bases.

"Coco took a few days, where I thought we might've caught a break there," Melvin said. "Originally, I thought it might be a little bit longer, but he swung well [Tuesday] both sides of the plate, was aggressive with his swings. After the game, he felt like he was ready to go."

Worth noting

- The A's haven't won a season series against the Yankees since 2007, and they currently trail this year's meetings, three games to none.
- In 58 career at-bats against Garcia, A's third baseman Brandon Inge is hitting just .190 with 18 strikeouts.
- The Yankees have hit a Major League-high six grand slams in 2012. They also led the Majors in grand slams in each of the last two seasons.
- The A's are 13-17 in games started by a left-hander but have posted a 33-27 mark against righties.



Bradley: Jack Cust still swinging for the fences, even if it won't come with Yankees

Published: Thursday, July 19, 2012, 4:30 AM



By **Jeff Bradley/Star-Ledger MLB Columnist**

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — He will wear the pinstriped jersey of the Triple-A Empire State (aka Scranton/Wilkes-Barre) **Yankees** in a bit. But right now, Jack Cust is shirtless and apologetic.

It's pushing 100 very humid degrees on the field, and the air conditioning in the tiny makeshift clubhouse at Frontier Field is not exactly cooling things off.

"I'm sorry if this is awkward," Cust says with a slight smile, stepping outside the clubhouse and into the hallway to talk. "But it's so ... hot."

You might also think there would be some awkwardness in talking to Cust, a guy who has 10 years in the big leagues, about the fact he's got little to no chance of ever being called up by the Yankees. But the 33-year-old is totally comfortable with that.

"I just want to get back to the big leagues," Cust says. "The Yankees have given me a place to showcase myself, but I follow them, I know what they need and don't need up there."

In other words, Cust knows the Yankees don't need or want a designated hitter.

He knows Joe Girardi likes to rotate guys in and out of the DH spot. He knows the fact that he's got 20 home runs (tied for third in the International League), 62 RBI (also T3 in the IL), a .400 on-base

percentage (second in the IL) and a .903 OPS (seventh in the IL) mean little to Yankees general manager Brian Cashman.

Cust just hopes there's someone out there paying attention.

"I know I can help a big-league team with my bat and my ability to create runs," Cust says. "So I've accepted this is the way I can try to make myself attractive to other teams. I want to play in the big leagues again. That's all I want to do. I had one bad year up there. Last year in Seattle. Toughest place to hit in the major leagues. And it wasn't a full season."

Released by the Mariners last Aug. 4 after hitting .213 with three home runs in 225 at-bats over 67 games, the former Immaculata High School star has not been able to force his way back into the big leagues.

After finishing last season in Triple A for the Phillies, he was offered a contract with the Houston Astros. But a sore left elbow kept him from being able to play the outfield — a must in the NL — during spring training, and when combined with a 1-for-25 start in the Grapefruit League, it spelled another release.

"I thought at that point I'd probably just go home to Jersey," said Cust, who has a wife (Jen), two young daughters (Ava, 5, and Sophia, 2) and a home in Bridgewater. "But the Yankees had talked to me a few times through the years about minor-league contracts, and when they came to me again, I figured it was worth another shot. I can still hit."

Cust is, in fact, one of the more legendary hitters to ever come out of New Jersey. Even before he was taken No. 30 overall by the Arizona Diamondbacks in the 1997 draft, during his days at Immaculata, the tales of Cust's prowess with a bat were in full force.

How his dad, Jack Sr., built a cage in an abandoned beauty salon beneath his office so Jack and his two brothers could hit year-round. How that cage later evolved into a hitting facility in a warehouse in Flemington. That building is now known as the Jack Cust Baseball Academy, and sits down the street

from a state-of-the-art facility known as Diamond Nation, which hosts youth baseball tournaments throughout the year. The Cust family runs Diamond Nation, and it's a likely landing place for Jack when he finally decides to retire.

Cust says he's not ready for that. Not just yet.

"I feel good at the plate," Cust says. "I struggled with my swing last year, but I feel like I've figured some things out, especially the last two months here. I don't have a 'poor me' thing being here in Triple A. There are a lot of good players here. But I think, with my numbers in the big leagues, and what I've done, there should be another opportunity. I sometimes wonder if some people even noticed what I did in Oakland, because it's on the West Coast and it's not a big market. But I did well, and I think I can still do that."

In Cust's four full seasons in Oakland, he hit 97 home runs and drove in 281 runs. He led the AL with 111 walks in 2008 (Moneyball, anyone?), but also led the AL in strikeouts in three of those four seasons. Cust also cannot escape that his name appeared in the December 2007 Mitchell Report on steroid use in baseball. Minor-league fans still heckle him about it, shouting "Steroids!" and "HGH!" at him from time to time.

"I don't want to talk about the Mitchell Report," Cust said, shaking his head. "Everyone in baseball has moved on from it, and I'm no different. I'm just trying to get back to the big leagues."

Barring something unforeseen, Cust knows that won't happen with the Yankees. Not this season, anyway.

But as he returns to his locker and starts to pull the pinstriped jersey down from a hanger, he at least knows he can thank what he calls his "hometown team" for giving him more chances to keep on swinging the bat.

"In this game," Cust says, "you never know who's watching. So it's worth a shot."

Democratandchronicle.com

Empire State Yankees' Jack Cust not quite done

Empire State's Cust taking his cuts in hope of call-up

10:56 PM, Jul 18, 2012 |

[Comments](#)



Written by

Will Cleveland

Staff writer

When Jack Cust was released by the Houston Astros toward the end of spring training, he had to step back and consider if it was time to end his baseball career.

But when he got a call from the New York Yankees the same day, he knew he should give it another shot.

“Houston was a team I thought I could make, but unfortunately I was hurt most of spring training and I didn’t swing the bat well,” said Cust, 33, before his game Wednesday at Frontier Field. “I couldn’t get on the field, because my arm was bothering me. It just didn’t work out over there, so I told my agent before that if I can’t make this team, I might as well go home.

“I was going to go home and then the Yankees called. I talked to my family and I just didn’t want to look back on my career with any regrets. That was my team growing up in New Jersey. It’s all I know, so why not? It was exciting to put on that Yankees uniform.”

But with a steady rotation of bench players and designated hitters in New York, Cust, who hit 105 home runs while playing for six major league teams over the past 10 years, hasn’t had the opportunity to play in the big league this season. Instead, he has spent the season as the designated hitter for the Empire State Yankees, New York’s Triple-A affiliate. The Yankees have been unable to play any home games this season as its home park outside Scranton, Pa. undergoes massive renovations. The majority of their home games have been played in Rochester.

Away from his wife, Jennifer, and his two daughters, Sophia, 2, and Ava, 5, and living out of a hotel, this has been a season of adjustments for Cust. He struggled early in the

season with his hitting mechanics. But he has rediscovered his power stroke and hopes his strong play serves as an audition for either the Yankees or other interested teams.

"Early on, I was hitting the ball fine, but I didn't have my power," Cust said. "I haven't had my power for a couple of years, probably since 2009. Last year in Seattle, I had a really tough year and I had a tough time in that ballpark. The year before in Oakland, I got designated (for assignment) and switched my style of hitting. I got designated after having three pretty good years and nobody picked me up, so I figured I would change my style around, try to hit for more contact and put the ball in play more. But I lost my power-stroke.

07/18/12 11:38 AM ET

Rivera is opener, instead of closer, at NYSE

By Ethan Asofsky / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- After 17 seasons and five World Series championships with the Yankees, Mariano Rivera is accustomed to closing in New York. With some spare time while he continues to recover from a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, Rivera shifted his attention to something new. On Wednesday, he traveled into the heart of downtown Manhattan and, with the ring of a bell and the pound of a gavel, opened the New York Stock Exchange.

"This has been a wonderful experience," Rivera said. "It was a privilege for me to be here. It's a great event. The relationship the New York Stock Exchange has with the New York Yankees is wonderful."

Rivera has played every one of his 18 seasons in New York on his journey to become Major League Baseball's all-time leader in saves. Even still, Wednesday was a unique opportunity for the likely first-ballot Hall of Famer. The trip was his first to the New York Stock Exchange, so before ringing the bell, he took time to ask questions about its history, then lauded it after as one of the fundamental institutions of New York City.

"The history of the place, over 100 years, and it has been kept in good shape," Rivera said. "It's wonderful. That says a lot."

While on his road to recovery, Rivera is keeping busy with his therapy and assisting in the remodeling project of a local church in Curacao. But on Wednesday, he set aside his routine schedule because he couldn't say no to accepting one of Wall Street's highest honors.

While the decision to attend the ceremony wasn't hard, Rivera doesn't like to get away from his therapy too much. His doctors have praised his work ethic over the last 2 1/2 months and acknowledged there's a chance he could come back this season in what would be a remarkable recovery from the injury he suffered on May 3.

At the Stock Exchange, Rivera wouldn't speculate as to when or if he'd be back with the team this season, partly because he didn't want to elevate his personal hopes. He did mention he is ahead of schedule in his therapy.

"Believe it or not, I don't want to know," Rivera said of his chances of returning to the mound this season. "I don't want to put things in my mind. If it happens, I'll be OK, but if it doesn't happen, I'll be kind of disappointed."

When Rivera stepped down from the balcony, over which he looked out at the Stock Exchange and the crowds of workers who had gathered to catch a glimpse of him ringing the bell, he created a commotion. The cluster of supporters showered him with praise and get-well wishes.

For some players, the swarm of fans could have been overwhelming. Not for Rivera. He knows New York. He's learned how to handle the hoards of attention and channel it into a positive commodity.

"When you receive all this kind of love, it makes you continue," Rivera said. "It makes you keep going. You want to give back the same love that you're receiving."



Wednesday, July 18, 2012

Mo rings wrong bell at NYSE

Well, not really, but bear with us.

In what is a longtime tradition at the New York Stock Exchange, **Mariano Rivera** was invited to ring the opening bell on Wall Street this morning. The Yankees' future Hall of Famer also posed for some pictures, including the pretty classic one above.

Great stuff. So where exactly did Mo go wrong? Well, actually you shouldn't blame Mo for any faux pas - blame Wall Street.

Why didn't Rivera -- Major League Baseball's all-time saves leader -- ring the *closing* bell?

We figure the answer -- besides the obvious "it's just the way they do things" response -- is that he had to be in the Bronx today to cheer on his team ... but we'd have loved to see them break the mold for Mariano, just like the baseball gods did 42 years ago.

UPDATE: We hear from the Yankees that Mo was indeed permitted to bang the closing gavel while at the podium. So we guess Wall Street is mostly off the hook ... this time.

07/18/12 2:47 PM ET

Granderson's foundation helps Operation Backpack

By Adam Rosenbloom / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Standard business attire was atypically out of place on Wednesday morning, at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Manhattan.

Yankees center fielder Curtis Granderson joined 150 high-performing college students -- all donning white T-shirts bearing the logo of Granderson's Grand Kids Foundation -- for a Back-To-School community event to support the Volunteers For America - Operation Backpack program. This initiative provides backpacks to New York City kids in homeless and domestic-violence shelters.

Granderson and the students, who were selected through an interview process as primary candidates to intern with PricewaterhouseCoopers next summer, teamed up to pack over 250 New Balance backpacks, stuffed with everything from school supplies to snacks.

Founded by Granderson in 2007, the Grand Kids Foundation aims to improve the educational experience for inner-city youths, as well as helping to re-establish baseball in their communities. But Granderson's drive to promote the importance of education didn't exactly come out of the blue.

As the son of two recently retired educators and the brother of an English professor at Jackson State University, Granderson is, as he jokingly puts it, the "black sheep" of the family. So despite his abilities as an athlete the three-time All-Star opted to earn his degrees -- he double majored in Business Management and Business Marketing at the University of Illinois-Chicago -- before he began his career in the Major Leagues.

"Education, no matter what form or fashion is always going to be the key to doing everything you need to," said Granderson, one of fewer than 50 current Major League players who have earned a four-year degree.

"When I went to school at Illinois-Chicago one of the big things about being a student-athlete was we had to volunteer our time. We did food drives, we helped the community clean up parks, things like that. The kids here are doing a great thing by getting school supplies into kids' hands who normally can't get any. They understand that it's not just about the books, it's also about giving back and they're learning that at a very young age and will hopefully continue to do so as they continue to grow."

Granderson also serves as the MLB spokesperson for First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move anti-obesity campaign. The campaign aims to promote both exercise and a healthy, well-balanced diet for children across the country. On Wednesday all 150 students in attendance were treated to a Let's Move inspired breakfast. Dole Food Company provided the breakfast décor -- a pile of 1,000 bananas -- which was later donated to City Harvest, New York City's food rescue organization.

"This is huge," said Anne Marie Moscarello, one of the 150 students in attendance. Moscarello, who is studying corporate finance in accounting, will begin her senior year at Bentley University in the fall.

"Education, like Curtis, is huge in my family. What he's doing for the inner city kids, I think is unbelievable. I love how everybody can be enthusiastic together. It's nice to know that I'm going to go into corporate finance in accounting, but I'm still doing great charity work to help other kids. I want them to value education as much as me and as much as Curtis."

Brendan Dougher, the New York Metro Region Managing Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, said it's no coincidence that the 150 students selected to participate in the program are equally motivated to give back.

"Young people today, whether they go to college or not really care a lot about the community and are really focused on corporate responsibility, the environment and what you give back to the community," Dougher said. "A lot of what they evaluate their employers on is 'are they responsible and do they give back to the community?'"

The students were invited to watch Granderson and the Bombers take on the Blue Jays in Wednesday afternoon's series finale in the Bronx. After all of the backpacks were packed and ready to be sent out, the group departed for Yankee Stadium.

And even if it was just for a few hours, everybody in attendance on Wednesday morning got an inside look at what the Yankees' center fielder is really all about.

07/18/12 4:02 PM ET

Yankees again celebrate charitable HOPE Week

By Spencer Fordin / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- The Yankees got back into the community in late June to meet with some of their most deserving fans, marking the fourth straight year that they've held their signature HOPE Week. The team and its players recognized five local groups, and did their best to shine a light on the causes they represent.

HOPE Week -- which stands for Helping Others Persevere and Excel -- was introduced in 2009, and the Yankees received the President's Volunteer Service Award in both 2010 and 2011. That tradition continued this season, and the Yankees highlighted several local charitable foundations.

The week of events began on June 25, when Jennifer Steinbrenner and a few of the team's players visited the Riverdale Equestrian Center in support of Flying Manes, an organization that uses horse-riding instruction to help people with physical and emotional disabilities.

Eric Chavez, Jayson Nix and Mark Teixeira were on hand to assist in helping a class of eight children through their class. Chavez, whose wife trains horses, marveled at the courage and dedication shown by the children, who in turn were thrilled to meet some of their biggest sports heroes.

"I own horses and I'm afraid to get up on them, so the courage they have to just jump right up, I have respect for that," said Chavez of his experience with Flying Manes. "They have no fear."

The next day, the spotlight shone on An Angel In Queens, a charity started by Jorge Munoz that is dedicated to feeding hungry New Yorkers. Four players -- Robinson Cano, Curtis Granderson, Boone Logan and Hiroki Kuroda -- pitched in to help Munoz, who devotes his time to helping others.

The Yankees surprised the 48-year-old Munoz with a check for \$10,000, and he was thrilled to meet the media and to have the assistance of four Yankees to help out in his mission.

"For the Major Leaguers to be here is a great honor," Munoz said. "They know what we are doing here, and they know this is for helping people in need. This is for homeless people who have to choose whether to pay for rent or pay for food, so they line up for food."

Munoz cooks for as many as 120 people a day, a number that impressed the Yankees in attendance. Munoz was also a special guest of the Yankees at the game that night, but Granderson said that he knew that the man would be right back on the job feeding hungry people the next day.

"There's no way I could cook for more than five people, and he's able to cook for multiple amounts of people," Granderson said. "Groups of people are lined up waiting for him to come every night. Even tonight, he's going to be rushing out after the game to hurry back and get people fed."

Young Andy Fass was the team's focus on June 27, when the Yankees drew attention to the National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation. Fass, just five years old, is legally blind and suffers from oculocutaneous albinism, and he was New York's guest of honor for the day.

Fass got to meet with the players and was feted at Yankee Stadium, and a traveling delegation of dignitaries -- which included Derek Jeter and CC Sabathia -- went with him to The MLB Fan Cave for a postgame party and private tee-ball session. Jeter, like his peers, was touched by the event.

"He's got a lot of energy, man," Jeter said of his day spent with the Fass family. "It's been a lot of fun for us. This is a fun week for the whole organization -- players, coaches and ownership. We started this about four years ago, and we all enjoy it. It's something we look forward to."

Three players -- Nick Swisher, Brett Gardner, David Robertson -- spent June 28 lauding the GlamourGals, a group of high school and college-age volunteers who devote their time to giving manicures and makeovers and spending time with the elderly at senior homes.

Swisher and company went with a local chapter of the GlamourGals to the East Haven Nursing Home, and the Yankees gave a check for \$10,000 to the GlamourGals organization.

The final day of Hope Week -- June 29 -- was dedicated to the Children Alopecia Project, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to boosting and maintaining the self-esteem of children with alopecia.

Several current and former Yankees -- a group that included Alex Rodriguez, Joe Girardi, David Wells and Daryl Strawberry -- went to the New York Botanical Garden to spend time with some youngsters and raise awareness of a condition that often flies well under the radar.

7/19/12

BX. ROOFTOP BLAZE HURTS 28 BRAVES



A RAGING rooftop fire that injured 28 firefighters sent residents of a dilapidated Bronx building near Yankee Stadium scrambling for safety early Wednesday.

Flames shot into the night sky above 975 Walton Ave. for

four hours before more than 200 FDNY members extinguished the six-alarm blaze around 4 a.m., officials said.

The firefighters suffered injuries ranging from overheating to smoke inhalation to mild sprains in the marathon effort.

The blaze reportedly began on the top floor and spread to the roof, according to the building super. The cause was still under investigation late Wednesday.

**Angy Altamirano, Greg B. Smith
and Larry McShane**

NY Times 7/19/12

Mets Vow to Rebound, But Lose 6th Straight

By ANDREW KEH

WASHINGTON — The Mets began Wednesday with a meeting to discuss the importance of maintaining a standard of hard work, high energy and individual

NATIONALS	4	ability during this vital stretch
METS	3	

of games. Their day ended in disappointment hours later, after nine innings of the sort of uninspiring play that helped precipitate the meeting in the first place.

The Mets fell, 4-3, to the Washington Nationals, extending their season-high losing streak to six games and raising more questions about how competitive they can be as baseball's playoff races crystallize over the next several weeks. Their roller-coaster first half drew positive appraisals because of the way they bounced back each time they were knocked down. But try as they might, the Mets seem unable to revive themselves during their current skid.

"There are no saviors," Manager Terry Collins said after the game, expounding on the pregame theme of responsibility. "We're going to have to make sure these guys understand they've got to continue to battle and battle and get out of this and go win six in a row."

For the second consecutive game, the Mets exhibited belated signs of life. Trailing by 4-1 entering the ninth, the Mets scored twice on solo homers by David Wright and Jason Bay.

But the overdue offense fell short. Jordany Valdespin, who hit a go-ahead three-run homer in the ninth inning of the team's loss Tuesday night, entered again as a pinch-hitter, but he struck out swinging against Tyler Clippard to end the game.

In the end, Bay's performance was one of the few bright spots for the Mets. Bay was activated from the disabled list Tuesday amid questions of whether he was still a viable everyday player. He went 2 for 4 Wednesday after going hitless the previous night.

Collins said Bay's performance provided the team "huge encouragement." But Bay and his teammates were mostly fixated on the loss — and the ones that preceded it.

"We're in a skid, no question," Bay said. "But that team is in first place for a reason as well."

Collins spelled out the reason with more clarity. "They have the best pitching in the league," he said of the Nationals.

The Nationals received another quality outing from Jordan Zimmermann, a 26-year-old right-hander. He pitched six shut-out innings to earn his seventh win of the year and lower his earned run average this season to 2.85. The Mets finally broke through after he left the game, getting a run-scoring double from Andres Torres in the seventh.

Zimmermann's outing helped cancel a strong one from Chris Young, whose previous start, which went only three innings,

was his worst of the season. This time, Young lasted six innings and gave up his only two runs of the game on one solid swing in the bottom of the sixth, when Adam LaRoche, after falling behind in the count, 1-2, pounded an outside slider over the wall in left-center field.

Both Collins and Young said the pitch to LaRoche was placed right where it needed to be, and both complimented his swing on it. The Nationals tacked on two more runs in the seventh against Miguel Batista, who will start for the Mets on Saturday.

"I felt a lot better tonight than I did five days ago," Young said. "But right now, I'm just fixated on the result."

The result was a dispiriting one for a team in need of a lift. The growing sense of urgency within the organization was once again on display Wednesday, as two hours before the game, Collins gathered his players inside the visitors' clubhouse at Nationals Park for a rare full-team meeting.

He reminded them that this was a delicate time in the season, a stretch of games during which their focus must remain high if they want to maintain their chances of being competitive. Collins also said that he was somewhat irked by comments made by relief pitcher Pedro Beato after Tuesday's loss, which Collins felt could have been interpreted as subtle finger-pointing.

"One thing I want these guys to understand is there is accountability here, and we don't point fingers at anybody," Collins said. "We all stand up, and when things aren't going good, we take our licking. Otherwise, we watch each other's backs and continue to move forward."

INSIDE PITCH

Closer **FRANK FRANCISCO**, who has been on the disabled list with a strained oblique muscle, will throw a bullpen session in Port St. Lucie, Fla., on Monday. **TERRY COLLINS** said he hoped Francisco could play in a rehabilitation game by the next Friday. Collins also said Wednesday that the right-hander **JON RAUCH** had fluid drained from both knees Tuesday. Rauch pitched a scoreless eighth inning Wednesday and struck out two batters.



GARY CAMERON/REUTERS

Jason Bay hit a solo home run in the ninth inning that drew the Mets within a run.

Yankees, Tigers, Royals among those watching Wandy Rodriguez deliver a clunker

By Scott Miller | Senior Baseball Columnist

July 18, 2012 8:00 pm ET

Pfft ... you could hear the air leaking from the [Wandy Rodriguez](#) trade balloon as he struggled to get through the fourth inning in San Diego on Wednesday.

Unless ... that was simply San Diego's famous fish tacos in the fryer?

With scouts from the [Yankees](#), [Tigers](#) and [Royals](#) watching -- among others -- Rodriguez did not turn in his best performance, getting scalded in the Padres' five-run fourth.

Then again, shouldn't contenders searching for starting pitching know what they'd be getting in Rodriguez by now?

Since the start of the 2009 season, Rodriguez's 3.39 ERA ranks third among National League left-handed starters (minimum 75 starts), trailing only the [Dodgers'](#) [Clayton Kershaw](#) (2.67) and the [Phillies'](#) [Cole Hamels](#) (3.31).

And his departure after that brutal fourth Wednesday actually accentuated another of Rodriguez's impressive numbers: It snapped Rodriguez's streak of working at least five innings over 48 consecutive starts, which had been the longest in the NL and third-longest in the majors, trailing only the Yankees' [CC Sabathia](#) (76 starts) and the Tigers' [Justin Verlander](#) (71 starts).

With another year's cycle of trade rumors bearing down on him, Rodriguez hasn't been nearly as good in June (6.00 ERA) and July (4.84), though, as he was in April (1.72) and May (3.07).

"Everything's the same," said Rodriguez, at a loss to explain his recent inconsistency.

[Astros](#) manager Brad Mills yanked him after four innings solely because Houston trailed 5-0 and had a runner at second in the top of the fifth and the manager at that point was trying anything to get back into the game.

"He wasn't hurt," said Mills, who sent pinch-hitter [Brian Bogusevic](#) to the plate for Rodriguez at that point. "Nothing was wrong with him."

What hampered Rodriguez in another trade audition is what's bitten him before.

"The thing is, he couldn't stop it," Mills said of San Diego's fifth-inning rally. "The inning started with a base hit into the hole. Then he walked the next hitter, single and another walk.

"Both walks scored. The best way to stop an inning like that is to not walk guys."

As contenders scour the market for available starting pitchers, Rodriguez, according to multiple sources, is eminently available. His price tag is prohibitive to the rebuilding Astros ... and the question is, how prohibitive will it be in trade talks?

The Astros owe Rodriguez a little less than \$5 million for the rest of this season and \$13 million for 2013, the final season of his three-year, \$34 million deal. However, if he is dealt, a \$13 million club option for 2014 automatically changes to a player option.

The Yankees and Tigers are among many clubs looking for pitching. And the Royals? Yes. They're a surprise entrant in the field of clubs scouring the market for an accomplished starting pitcher this month, as colleague Danny Knobler wrote the other day.

The thing with Rodriguez is, as tantalizing as he can be in some starts, he can be equally as maddening in others. At 33, he likely is what he is.

"It's kind of tough to put a finger on it," Mills said of Rodriguez's past two months not measuring up to his first two this season. "The thing we talk about is being able to stop those innings. That's been his Achilles heel. Whether it's a walk, a big knock ... stopping the big inning, not allowing it to continue.

"His stuff is still good."

MLB trade rumors: Ryan Dempster, Zack Greinke, Cole Hamels among the most coveted chips

Published July 18, 2012

Anthony Witrado/Sporting News

The baseball world still is waiting for someone to blink.

In this new and unexplored market—changed by the new collective bargaining agreement (and its twists on compensation) and the addition of a second wild-card berth in each league—teams have hesitated to either declare themselves sellers or pull the trigger on the first blockbuster deal of the summer of 2012.

It will happen soon, though, and there are plenty of quality players available—for the right price.

Ryan Dempster, SP, Chicago Cubs

Dempster is a player we, along with several major league executives, expected to move early, but his recent stint on the disabled list changed that. It didn't hurt his effectiveness, however, as Dempster has thrown 33 consecutive scoreless innings.

His trade value has spiked over his past two starts, but his market value isn't yet known because he can be a free agent after the season and a team that trades for him won't get compensation if he signs elsewhere during the offseason. Still, Dempster is sure to be dealt and will help whatever team lands him.

Possible destinations: Dodgers, Tigers, Indians, Yankees, Braves, Nationals, White Sox, Red Sox.

Zack Greinke, SP, Milwaukee Brewers

This might sound crazy, but the Brewers are hurting themselves with each win at this point. Every time they raise their arms in victory, they get a false sense of postseason hope, preventing them from selling their ace.

Milwaukee won't win the NL Central, and keeping Greinke for a wild-card push is risky. Even if they win one of those berths, the Brewers are guaranteed only one extra game. They aren't likely to re-sign Greinke, and if they keep him they would lose him for nothing more than a compensation pick. Trading Greinke would net them at least one strong prospect to help replenish a farm system that has been drained in recent years when the Brewers were buyers.

Greinke could be the biggest trade chip on the market (when Milwaukee declares itself a seller) and is a legitimate ace, but the team might decide to keep him and offer him a below-market-value extension.

Possible destinations: Angels, Orioles, Nationals, Yankees, White Sox, Rangers, Tigers, Red Sox.

Cole Hamels, SP, Philadelphia Phillies

It is looking more and more like the Phillies are going to make a strong offer to extend Hamels. And their recent hot streak might make them reluctant to put Hamels on the trading block.

If they eventually shop Hamels, the lefthander will come with a high asking price but also might be the most attractive player on the market based on pure impact. A trade doesn't look incredibly likely, but that quickly can change at this time in the season.

Possible destinations: Rangers, Dodgers, Angels, Yankees, Tigers, Pirates.

Carl Crawford, LF, Boston Red Sox

This is the new, hot rumor in the mill. Crawford has missed most of the season with a cornucopia of injuries and his contract is something of a turnoff (he is in the second year of a seven-year, \$142 million deal), but the Red Sox will move him for the right price.

The Marlins are believed to be a possible trade partner for Boston in a deal that would send shortstop Hanley Ramirez and closer Heath Bell to Boston for Crawford in what would be one of the biggest money swaps in baseball history.

Possible destinations: Marlins, Dodgers

Justin Upton, RF, Arizona Diamondbacks

When the rumors began about Upton (and when Arizona confirmed it was willing to move him), about 29 other teams and millions of baseball fans were in shock. Upton is a potential five-tool player and won't turn 25 until August.

Because of his age, his destinations aren't limited to teams buying at the deadline. The Diamondbacks could wait until the offseason and put him back on the market when more teams will be willing to bid on him.

Possible destinations: Pirates, Blue Jays, Yankees, Rangers as of now (and just about everyone else if Arizona waits until the winter).

Clayton Richard, SP, San Diego Padres

He isn't a game-changer, but Richard could add depth to any rotation and can eat innings. He is also under team control through 2014, making him attractive as well as expensive.

Possible destinations: White Sox, Tigers, Orioles.

Matt Garza, SP, Chicago Cubs

The Cubs want to move Dempster so they can focus on moving Garza, who would bring back a bigger haul because he is 28 and under team control through the 2013 season. That makes him appealing to more than just the current contenders.

Possible destinations: Rangers, Tigers, Royals, Red Sox, Dodgers, Pirates, Blue Jays, Yankees.

Francisco Liriano, SP, Minnesota Twins

Liriano's 3-9 record and 4.81 ERA aren't anything to gush over, but the lefthander can strike people out. And that is an asset many teams believe they can use to their advantage toward the back of their rotation. Since returning to the rotation in May, Liriano has been a stud, posting a 2.84 ERA and 10.9 strikeouts per nine innings.

Possible destinations: Angels, Nationals, Yankees, Blue Jays, Braves, Red Sox, Mets.

FOXSPORTS.COM

Red Sox gauging interest in Crawford

KEN ROSENTHAL

JULY 18, 2012

How's this for a blockbuster?

Left fielder **Carl Crawford** to the **Miami Marlins** for either shortstop **Jose Reyes** or third baseman **Hanley Ramirez**, with other pieces and significant cash involved.

The **Boston Red Sox** are contacting teams to gauge their trade interest in Crawford, according to major-league sources.

No trade appears close. Such a deal would be difficult to accomplish, given the size of Crawford's contract and his lingering elbow problems. But the first lesson of the July 31 non-waiver deadline is that nothing is impossible.

The Red Sox, sources said, reached out to both the Marlins and **Los Angeles Dodgers**, though another source said that no discussions took place with the Dodgers. The Marlins, historically open to any possibility, would at least consider the idea, sources said.

USA Today reported that the Red Sox are discussing a deal that would send Crawford and a prospect to the Marlins for Ramirez and closer **Heath Bell**, but a source said the concept had no traction.

The Red Sox say that the Crawford talks were initiated by Miami, and that they did not contact other clubs.

"There's nothing going on with Carl," Red Sox general manager Ben Cherington said. "He's our left fielder and we're glad to have him back in our lineup."

Yet, while there are conflicting accounts about the nature of the Crawford talks, a trade could make sense for the Red Sox — if not now, then this offseason, assuming that Crawford plays well enough in the second half to restore his value.

The Sox could try to move Crawford to a variety of clubs; his contract allows him to block trades to only two teams, and states that any club that acquires him cannot trade him to the **New York Yankees**.

Crawford, who turns 31 on Aug. 5, is in the second year of a seven-year, \$142 million deal. A trade with the Marlins for Reyes would be an almost equal swap of contracts. A deal for Ramirez, who is signed only through 2014, would require greater financial gymnastics.

The Red Sox, though, currently face a surplus of outfielders — Crawford, **Jacoby Ellsbury**, **Cody Ross**, **Daniel Nava** and **Ryan Sweeney** in the majors, **Ryan Kalish** and **Scott Podsednik** at Triple A, top prospect Jackie Bradley at Double A.

A trade of one or more outfielders is almost certain before the deadline, and it might only involve a lesser player such as Sweeney. A deal involving Crawford obviously would carry far greater implications, for both the present and future.

Crawford is owed \$102.5 million after this season. Reyes, whom the Marlins signed as a free agent last December, is owed \$96 million. Both he and Ramirez can be traded without restriction; the Marlins do not issue no-trade clauses.

So, how would it all work?

The following is speculation only:

The Sox could include top shortstop prospect Jose Iglesias in a deal for Reyes and perhaps receive a starting pitcher as well — right-hander **Anibal Sanchez**, a potential free agent and former Red Sox prospect, would make sense.

The Marlins, however, probably would prefer to trade Ramirez, whom they acquired with Sanchez in the seven-player **Josh Beckett** trade in November 2005.

Some club officials are frustrated with Ramirez, who is batting .249 with a .763 OPS while on a 25-homer, 85-RBI pace. But Cherington is a longtime admirer of Ramirez, sources said, and the Sox could return him to shortstop, his original position.

Short-term, the Marlins could take back shortstop **Mike Aviles** and play him at third, trade **Carlos Lee** to open first base for left fielder **Logan Morrison** and go with an outfield of Crawford, **Emilio Bonifacio** and **Giancarlo Stanton**, once Stanton returns from knee surgery.

The Red Sox would need to include a ton of cash to account for the differences in Crawford's and Ramirez's contracts; Ramirez is earning \$15 million this season, \$15.5 million next season and \$16 million in '14. If the Sox somehow could save money, all the better — they could redirect those funds toward a push to keep Ellsbury, who is a free agent after next season.

Of course, there is a catch to all this.

Any talks would be complicated by the possibility that Crawford could require Tommy John surgery to repair a sprained ulnar collateral nerve in his left elbow.

Cherington said recently that surgery "is not something we're looking at right now. A lot of position players play through UCL injuries without issue."

If Crawford had surgery, he would not miss as much a time as a starting pitcher — 12 to 18 months. Aviles made it back in eight months, undergoing the surgery on July 8, 2009, and returned to play the following spring.

Crawford could follow a similar timetable for a team that acquired him, getting an elbow-ligament transplant immediately with the goal of being fully recovered by next spring. Or, he could continue playing with the injury, as Albert Pujols has done since 2003, and hope to avoid surgery.

The upside is that Crawford could re-emerge as the player he was for Tampa Bay — and the player he has been the past two nights, going 4-for-7 with three stolen bases after missing the Red Sox's first 89 games due to surgery on his left wrist, his elbow injury and a groin problem.

It's the deadline. Nothing is impossible. Every player has a price.



Posted: Wednesday July 18, 2012 1:57PM ; Updated: Wednesday July 18, 2012 1:59PM



Joe Lemire > INSIDE BASEBALL

Twentysomething slugger starring for Angels. Trout? No, Trumbo

The type of late-round pick who was likely to receive a large bonus under baseball's old draft rules was the sure-thing high school prospect who needed extra convincing to be pried away from a strong college commitment.

Such a hypothetical prospect might look like the following:

- A 6'4", 220-pound righthanded pitcher who can dial his fastball up to 94 mph.
- A California Southern Section division player of the year who starred at a powerhouse high school program.
- A pitching prospect rated similarly as Jered Weaver, Phil Hughes and Homer Bailey, all first-round picks in 2004.
- A pitcher of whom *Baseball America* rated the No. 31 overall prospect and wrote that he "already has the polished look, presence and demeanor of a Double-A pitcher."
- A University of Southern California recruit talented enough to receive a scholarship offer after his sophomore year.

Such was the background of Mark Trumbo, who later signed a record bonus for a non-draft-and-follow player drafted outside the 10th round -- even though he was being signed as a position player when, two months prior, he had been drafted as a pitcher.

That was his story long before he became an All-Star slugger for the Angels, one with a league-leading slugging percentage (.634), the same OPS (.995) as the Rangers' Josh Hamilton and "the easiest pop of any hitter in the league," according to his general manager, Jerry Dipoto. "He does not have to take his max swing to hit the ball a long way."

Nowadays, after spending April as a part-time player, Trumbo has hit his way into the Angels' everyday lineup as the clean-up hitter, never minding the fact that he's a vagabond with three gloves -- for first base, third base and the corner outfield positions -- who has started at least five games in five different places: left, right, designated hitter, third and first.

Before anyone talked about his bat, everyone in Orange County talked about his arm.

Trumbo was about eight years old when he began receiving private pitching lessons. Pitching was, he recalls, his focus throughout all of high school. "Almost exclusively, actually," he said.

He made the varsity baseball team at Villa Park as a freshman, and by his sophomore season had emerged as the team's top pitcher, starting his high school's championship win at Angel Stadium. He was a very good hitter, too, but it was his strong arm and polish on the mound that attracted scouts.

Trumbo was also diligent and goal-oriented, a dedication that impressed his new coach, Scott Luke, who led Villa Park during Trumbo's junior and senior seasons.

"From the day I met Mark, he was all business," said Luke, the brother of former big leaguer Matt Luke. "His goals were very clear. At 16 years old, that wasn't the norm."

Luke recalled having 12 Division I athletes on the team when Trumbo was a senior, so he'd stash him in a corner outfield spot when he wasn't pitching, so as not to disrupt the starting infield. Trumbo could hit, but his offense was an afterthought.

He was well known to professional scouts and especially the Angels. Trumbo grew up 10 minutes from Angel Stadium, attending some 10 to 20 games a year with his father, typically sitting down the rightfield line near his favorite player, Tim Salmon. Trumbo also played for the scout team organized by the Angels.

While everyone set their sights on Trumbo as a pitcher, one part-time Angels scout named Ben Hines, a former hitting coach for the Dodgers, called his scouting director during Trumbo's senior year and said, "I like Trumbo better as a hitter." The reaction, recalled then-scouting director Eddie Bane, was surprise and the question, "What are you talking about?"

Come draft day, Trumbo's strong ties to USC scared off major league clubs until the 18th round, when the Angels decided he was worth the high upside even though, as Bane, now a pro scout for the Tigers, admitted, "The odds of signing him were not good."

The more the Angels watched Trumbo play, the more they saw how good a hitter he was, but when they decided to meet his asking price, it was as a pitcher -- only there was a problem.

"I failed my physical," Trumbo said. "Just degenerative wear in my elbow. I guess they determined it to be 'Little League elbow,' as weird as it sounds. Just wear and tear to the cartilage. Just some durability issues.

"They said we're going to pass on the pitching aspect, but we're still interested in you as a hitter, which kind of caught me off guard."

An elbow issue wasn't a deal breaker the way a shoulder injury often is, but the finding "put us over the top on what position he would be," Bane said.

The Angels had him come in for three private workouts, the final one a pregame workout at Angel Stadium in front of the franchise's braintrust, during which he was "rocketing balls of the rocks at 18 years old," Bane said, referring to the rock formation beyond the centerfield fence.

The next day, Trumbo received his record \$1.425 million signing bonus.

"If we signed him, he was an Angel," Bane said. "It didn't matter what we signed him as. If we signed him, we had him."

There were long days in the minors, when promotions seemed like they'd never come. Trumbo spent two full seasons with Class A Cedar Rapids, the first of which, he calls "the low point, by far, in my career." He batted .220, and at times like that he admits he "thought quite a bit" about pitching. "It was always an option," he said.

But he maintained his focus on hitting, and it paid off. He hit 32 home runs while splitting time between two levels in 2008. He led all of Triple A with 36 homers in 2010.

By 2011 Trumbo was the Angels' first baseman, hitting .254 with 29 homers while finishing as the runner-up for AL Rookie of the Year. He did, however, strike out 120 times compared with only 25 walks, contributing to just a .291 on-base percentage.

"My biggest thing last year as a rookie was that I felt that I needed to hit first," he said. "That came at the expense of my on-base percentage, I'd say. I think I was overly aggressive at times."

If he were too patient, he feared, pitchers would attack the zone against a hitter who didn't have a big track record and that he'd always be starting behind in the count.

Then, he suffered a stress fracture in his foot that not only ended his season prematurely but also interrupted his offseason workout plans. It wasn't the only development that threatened to derail his plans.

Trumbo's phone rang early on the day the Angels signed Albert Pujols. Among the callers was Luke, his high school coach, who recalled Trumbo's reaction to the news that he would be displaced from first base: "He said, 'I'm going to go grab another glove and work my butt off.'"

Because of his foot problem, however, Trumbo was only cleared for full workouts a few days before spring training began, so learning a new position (third base) while getting his swing back proved difficult.

He didn't quite take to third base like the organization had hoped and he spent most of April starting only every other day. That was enough, however, to show he belonged in the lineup more often than not, especially in the context of Los Angeles' 8-14 start.

After not starting eight of the Angels' first 18 games, Trumbo has started all but two games since April 26, during which time Los Angeles has gone 42-29, good for the second-best record in the majors.

While most of the national attention for the Angels' turnaround goes either to the man who displaced Trumbo at first base, Pujols, or to his same-initialed, fellow 20-something All-Star, Mike Trout, Trumbo's production as an everyday player has been equally important.

REITER: Why Mike Trout is the perfect catch

"Since he's been in the lineup consistently, he's just been banging," rightfielder Torii Hunter said. "I saw the talent. I just wanted him in there, just the power [being] in there, even if he didn't do well, just his threat of hitting a home run helps the lineup out."

Trumbo has now homered in six of his last eight games, and his 26 homers this season rank fourth in the AL. His OPS+ -- which adjusts OPS for league and ballpark -- is 173, second in the league only to Trout. He also already has 23 walks this season, nearly matching his total of 25 from all of last year.

"I'm just happy to get in there," Trumbo said. "The biggest thing for me is getting my at bats. Wherever I can find them defensively, I'm going to give it the best I have. I've transitioned to some positions better than others, but the effort's always going to be there."

"Ultimately, I just want a place to call home. Until that point, I just have to remain flexible."

That flexibility and professionalism has endeared him to the organization.

"What's impressed me most has been is his leadership qualities," Dipoto said. "Mark's an incredibly good guy, well respected in the clubhouse. He's a terrific worker and, I think, a wonderful teammate.

"Count that in addition to the 80 power," Dipoto continued, referring to scouting's 20-to-80 scale, "and he's been carrying a .320 batting average and a .360, .370 on-base [percentage] for most of the year, it's been fantastic to watch.

"We're a better team when Mark's on the field."

It hardly even matters where.

Chipper Jones says his Braves must add pitching to compete with the Nationals in the NL East

By: Tim Brown

July 18, 2012

Leave it to the guy who's retiring to advocate for a big move at the trading deadline, as those kinds of deals can clean out the top end of a farm system and don't always bring return beyond the current calendar year. But, as they say this time of year, the present is now.

Chipper Jones wants help for a final playoff push. (Getty Images)The Atlanta Braves have won seven of eight, are second in the National League wild-card race and have gained two games on the [Washington Nationals](#) in 10 days, four of which were consumed by the All-Star break.

"We're going to have to get better to contend," [Chipper Jones](#) said recently. "I think we both know the Nationals have a pretty good team, a pretty good staff."

At that point, the Braves had lost shortstop Andrelton Simmons to a finger injury but have since replaced him by trading for Cincinnati's Paul Janish, a slick fielder who batted .214 in 114 games with the Reds. There also are questions about the starting rotation, though Ben Sheets was effective in his debut against the New York Mets. Jair Jurrjens was 3-0 with a 2.13 ERA in four starts since returning from the minors before Tuesday night, when the [San Francisco Giants](#) scored eight runs against him in 3 ½ innings.

In part because of the Brandon Beachy injury, the Braves are believed to have interest in [Chicago Cubs](#) right-hander [Ryan Dempster](#) and [Milwaukee Brewers](#) right-hander [Zack Greinke](#), and could use help in the bullpen as well.

Chipper status aside, the Braves are plenty good enough to contend, but can't match the Nationals on the pitching end. So, yeah, they'll have to get better. Their competition for Dempster, who probably will be the first high-end starter to be dealt, would appear to come from the [Los Angeles Dodgers](#), [Detroit Tigers](#), [Boston Red Sox](#) and, perhaps, the [Texas Rangers](#) and [Los Angeles Angels](#). The Nationals appear to be concentrating on second-tier starters.

Dempster is scheduled to start Friday in St. Louis. He's 5-3 with a league-leading 1.86 ERA over 14 starts and carries a streak of 33 consecutive scoreless innings. In his first start since coming off the disabled list on Saturday, Dempster shut out the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) for six innings.

Some scouts expect the Cubs and president Theo Epstein to trade Dempster before that Friday start.

"Theo seems to be risking starts to drive up the price," one scout said. "There's no way [Dempster's] value is higher than it is today at any time in his career. And I know he was a 17-game winner."

The Braves and their arms-rich farm system would figure to be players.

"If we go down, we're going to go down kicking and screaming," Jones said. "Especially me."

He paused and smiled.

"Well," he added, "I'll probably go down whimpering."

And then ...

The Angels had a scout in Milwaukee on Friday to see Greinke, in Colorado on Sunday to see Cole Hamels and in Los Angeles on Tuesday to continue to monitor the Phillies.

If you're looking for starting pitching and aren't sure where to go, this is your kind of day. While Greinke is being rested and therefore will miss Wednesday's start against the St. Louis Cardinals (rookie Tyler Thornburg gets it instead), Wandy Rodriguez, Kevin Millwood and Francisco Liriano will pitch.

With Cain in mind, Phillies expected to offer Hamels about \$130M for 6 years

By Jon Heyman | Baseball Insider

July 18, 2012 12:50 pm ET

The Phillies are sending signals that they are planning to make an initial offer to star lefthanded pitcher Cole Hamels for about \$130 million over six years within the next few days, sources familiar with the team's thinking told CBSSports.com.

The Phillies are believed to have had some conversations in recent days with Hamels, and while no official offer has been made yet, sources say the team is interested in doing a deal in the range of Matt Cain's six-year arrangement with the Giants.

Cain signed a \$112.5-million, five-year extension this spring on top of his \$15 million 2012 salary, meaning the Giants had \$127.5 million in commitments to him. With that in mind, Hamels' first offer from the Phillies might be for exactly \$127.5 million. Or it could be for a bit more if they feel adjustments are needed based on their initial, unofficial talks with Hamels in the past couple of days. The figure is unlikely to be less.

The Phillies are said to be very committed to trying to bring back Hamels, and it's quite possible \$127.5 million or thereabouts may only be an opening plan. The numbers may well go up from there.

The Phillies want to have a resolution to the Hamels situation within a week or so because if they can't extend Hamels they will want to have the option to trade him by the July 31 trade deadline. The Rangers, Angels, Dodgers and many other teams will be interested if he's available in trade.

Phillies GM Ruben Amaro declined comment on their contract plans involving Hamels.

It isn't known how Hamels will react to a deal similar to Cain's. Hamels was thought to be seeking a deal at least in the range of Johan Santana's \$137.5-million, six-year Mets deal or C.C. Sabathia's \$161 million, seven-year deal.

Amaro has had a knack for signing the homegrown stars of the Phillies, such as Ryan Howard, Jimmy Rollins and Chase Utley (though Amaro was Pat Gillick's assistant GM when that deal was done). However, this isn't necessarily going to be an easy one, as Hamels is due to be a free agent after this season.

It isn't known whether Hamels might have any negative reaction to the fairly long wait for this offer, which is expected to come any day now, or how much the Phillies' recent struggles might play into his decision. Hamels is nothing if not unpredictable; he surprised folks by declining to sign a deal as a second-year player, and also by accepting a three-year, \$20-million deal four years ago.

The Phillies suggested about \$80 million for five years late last year, basing that offer on Jered Weaver's \$85 million, five-year Angels deal. But this is the first serious contract discussion since then.

Hamels clearly likes Philadelphia (he lives there year-round) but he hails from Southern California, and there have been strong whispers the Dodgers, with their new rich owners, intend to make a strong push for him after the year.

Very few stars this close to free agency sign with their original team, and Hamels could believe he's worth more than Cain because he's lefthanded and has a higher winning percentage (.594 to Cain's .510). Hamels, like Cain, has a reputation as a bulldog, and being successful in Philadelphia over a multi-year span fuels that rep. He's also done it in a hitters' park.

CBSSports.com originally reported a few days ago that Philly's bid would be for at least \$120 million.

Deals

Baseball

► American League

Baltimore Orioles: Recalled P Tommy Hunter from Norfolk (International/AAA). Designated P Brad Bergesen for assignment.

Boston Red Sox: Placed DH David Ortiz on the 15-day disabled list. Recalled IF Mauro Gomez from Pawtucket (International/AAA).

Chicago White Sox: Recalled P Pedro Hernandez from Charlotte (International/AAA). Optioned P Jhan Martinez to Charlotte.

Detroit Tigers: Recalled P Jacob Turner from Toledo (International/AAA). Optioned P Luis Marte to Toledo.

Kansas City Royals: Optioned P Ryan Verdugo to Omaha (Pacific Coast/AAA). Recalled P Francisley Bueno from Omaha.

Minnesota Twins: Recalled P Nick Blackburn from Rochester (International/AAA).

New York Yankees: Recalled P David Phelps from Scranton/Wilkes-Barre (International/AAA). Optioned P D.J. Mitchell to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

Seattle Mariners: Placed P Charlie Furbush on the 15-day disabled list. Recalled P Steve Delabar from Tacoma (Pacific Coast/AAA).

Texas Rangers: Reinstated P Colby Lewis from the 15-day disabled list. Optioned P Martin Perez to Round Rock (Pacific Coast/AAA).

Toronto Blue Jays: Transferred P Brandon Morrow to the 60-day disabled list.

► National League

Arizona Diamondbacks: Recalled P Jonathan Albaladejo from Reno (Pacific Coast/AAA). Optioned P Trevor Bauer to Reno.

Cincinnati Reds: Optioned P Todd Redmond to Louisville (International/AAA). Purchased the contract of OF Xavier Paul from Louisville.

Colorado Rockies: Agreed to terms with P Michael Solbach on a minor league contract.

Houston Astros: Agreed to terms with OF Preston Tucker on a minor league contract.

Los Angeles Dodgers: Activated P Javy Guerra from the bereavement list. Optioned P Stephen Fife to Albuquerque (Pacific Coast/AAA).

Miami Marlins: Optioned P Ryan Webb to New Orleans (Pacific Coast/AAA).

Philadelphia Phillies: Optioned P Justin De Fratus to Lehigh Valley (International/AAA).

San Francisco Giants: Placed CHector Sanchez on the 15-day disabled list. Recalled C Eli Whiteside from Fresno (Pacific Coast/AAA).