

## Ubaldo inspired by challenging upbringing

### Veteran righty motivated to succeed after growing up poor in Dominican Republic

By Zack Meisel / MLB.com | 08/16/12 10:00 AM ET

Outside of San Cristobal, Dominican Republic, near the market, lies a hole.

Natives refer to the area as Hoyo Caliente, or "Hot Hole." The destitute neighborhood hosts constant foot traffic from market-goers and a high volume of residents within its tight quarters.

Indians pitcher Ubaldo Jimenez spent most of his childhood in Hoyo Caliente, which he described as "always crowded," "really poor" and "really dangerous."

Every day, Jimenez and the rest of the kids in the project played baseball, sometimes in the front yard, other times in the street. Once in a while, they would play on the roof of a nearby store. Anywhere to escape the harsh reality surrounding them.

They didn't have bats and balls at their disposal. There was no Louisville Slugger factory nearby. Rather, in the sweltering heat of the ghetto, the youngsters swung a tree branch at the detached head of a doll. Such ingenuity would make MacGyver proud.

"It didn't matter what we used," said the soft-spoken Jimenez in his calm, high-pitched voice. "We were poor; we didn't have a lot of things. ... It was crazy. In the Dominican, all the kids really love baseball. It doesn't matter how you play it."

Jimenez's humble beginnings helped shape who he is today: A lanky pitcher who mostly keeps to himself and rarely shows emotion on the field, even though he has experienced the highest peaks and most cavernous valleys that a baseball career can offer.

"A lot of people think because you do bad out there, that's the end of the world, but it's not. This is baseball. Sometimes things are going to go your way and sometimes they're not. It's a tough game, but it's the game I love."

-- Ubaldo Jimenez

Despite the abundant love for the game in the Dominican, kids without a future in baseball instead turned to gangs. Jimenez said those who didn't make it on the diamond "went the easy way: to drugs, kidnapping people and stealing."

It was imperative to his parents, Ubaldo Sr. and Ramona, that Jimenez not follow other troubled teens into that hole, and they weren't shy about telling him so. He noted how they "worked hard every day so we could have food on the table and get an education," even though they also showed him tough love, which he now laughs at.

"My mom used to hit me every single day when I got home because she didn't want me to be hanging around [bad people]," Jimenez said matter-of-factly while flashing a smile. "I used to get beat every day by my mom. But I'm here because of my family and the way they raised me."

Ubaldo Sr. spent 13 years in the army before working as a bus driver and a security guard. Ramona was a nurse, which sparked her son's interest in one day becoming a doctor.

When Jimenez was finished playing ball on that day's makeshift field, he'd return to the house his family rented. The living space, which Jimenez said rivaled the width of a few lockers in the Indians' clubhouse, featured a refrigerator as its only appliance. Without the privilege of a washing machine, his mother was forced to clean the family's clothes by hand.

"I didn't realize that until I got to be 9 or 10 years old," Jimenez said. "I was always playing baseball, so I was always dirty. So she said, 'You have to do it by yourself to see how hard it is.'"

At night, Jimenez would sleep in the living room on a small cot, which he called a "bed sandwich" for its appearance when folded up.

It could have been easy for Jimenez to submit to the pressures set forth by his surroundings. Instead, he used his one passion -- baseball -- as an out. Eventually, the thousands of hours he spent outside from sunup to sundown paid off. Jimenez signed with the Rockies for \$50,000 at the age of 17, and he immediately relocated his family to a better neighborhood in the Dominican.

"I always played baseball, just because I love it," Jimenez said. "It wasn't about getting money or getting out of poverty that way. I played because I loved it. I played every single day."

Jimenez commenced the uphill climb through the Rockies' farm system the following summer. During his Minor League journey he encountered the typical ups (an 11-6 record and 3.35 ERA as a 19-year-old in Class A in 2003) and downs (a 5.43 ERA in Double-A in 2005; a 5.85 ERA in Triple-A in 2007). Throughout it all, he maintained the even keel his parents demanded from him.

"In the Minor Leagues," Jimenez said, "I saw teammates getting really aggressive and things like that and I even saw people that hit the wall and then they get hurt and injured and that's something that I think about. It's not worth it. Why are you going to hurt yourself knowing that tomorrow is another day? If you do bad today, tomorrow you'll have a chance to make it better. That's why I always try to be the same. It doesn't matter if I'm doing good or bad."

Just this season, Tribe reliever Nick Hagadone suffered a self-inflicted, season-ending injury to his hand after a string of shaky outings.

It's no surprise that the mild-mannered Jimenez says his family "is everything to me." His parents reside with him during the season on the west side of Cleveland. They no longer work. As Jimenez puts it, "I retired them."

Jimenez's older sister Leidys is completing her eighth year of medical school in the Dominican. Jimenez keeps a picture of his 8-year-old niece Crisley on the back wall of his locker. Without his family, Jimenez says he wouldn't be where he is now, and that makes it easy for him to stay grounded.

"It's not difficult, because of the way I was raised," Jimenez said. "I do my best every time I go to the mound. Off the mound, I do the same thing. I try to be a humble person. I try to be respectful of everyone."

Jimenez slipped up once. In a Spring Training tilt against the Rockies, who traded him to Cleveland last July, Jimenez took exception in an ongoing war of words with former teammate Troy Tulowitzki. He plunked Tulowitzki on the elbow, inciting a bench-clearing incident as he pounded his chest and shouted at the shortstop.

"I'm a human being. If I get challenged, I'm just like any other guy," Jimenez said. "I control my emotions more, but there are some times that you have to let it out. People think that because you're quiet or humble, that means that you're going to take everything. But not like that."

Rockies skipper Jim Tracy called it "the most gutless act I have seen in 35 years of professional baseball."

Jimenez said if he isn't provoked, such a scenario "won't happen again." For now, his only concern is improving on the mound.

The Indians continue to wait for the Jimenez of old, the flame-throwing hurler with a quirky delivery who can touch the high-90s with his heater, the guy who spun a no-hitter and posted a 13-1 mark and a 1.15 ERA in his first 14 starts of the 2010 campaign. Cleveland parted with its top two pitching prospects in a package to acquire the right-hander. Since, Jimenez has compiled a 13-16 mark and a 5.45 ERA in 35 starts with the Tribe and he's the first to admit he hasn't held up his end of the deal.

"He still has the ability to be successful," said Indians general manager Chris Antonetti. "It just hasn't translated as consistently as we'd like. But it's not through a lack of effort. He continues to work exceptionally hard."

On his off days, Jimenez runs in the sand that soaks up Lake Erie's waves. Everywhere he goes, he totes a white towel scrunched in a shape that allows him to position his fingers and practice his unorthodox throwing motion.

"He probably cares a little too much at times," said former Indians pitching coach Scott Radinsky. "Especially going into this year, he's had a lot to prove. He worked his [tail] off over the winter. If you watch him the four days between starts, you'd see a guy that cares. The work he puts in and watching his [bullpen sessions], he cares."

When the season ends, Jimenez and his parents will head back to their native country where, in the nation's capital, they own a home -- the first non-rented abode in which Jimenez has dwelled.

Every so often, Jimenez visits Hoyo Caliente, which he says hasn't changed a bit.

But it's important to the 28-year-old that he never forget where or what he came from. Kids still play ball in the streets. When Jimenez visits the town he takes it upon himself to relay the virtues his parents instilled in him.

"Now you're the one that some of the kids are looking up to," he said. "They want to be you. I definitely want to be a good example, not only on the field, but off the field too."

Jimenez understands that most people will point to the numbers and the perceived nonchalant attitude on the mound and assume that he's content with mediocrity.

"That's the farthest thing from the case," Radinsky said.

Jimenez knows the work he puts in can only take him so far. There are certain things out of his control. Whether it's with a stick and a doll or a bat and a ball, some days things won't go as desired. And Jimenez is OK with that.

"A lot of people think because you do bad out there, that's the end of the world, but it's not," he said. "This is baseball. Sometimes things are going to go your way and sometimes they're not. It's a tough game, but it's the game I love."

After all, Jimenez has climbed out of deeper holes than this.

**MWL notes: Lindor happy to compete  
Tribe's top pick in 2011 feeling no pressure at Lake County**

By Curt Rallo / Special to MLB.com08/16/2012 11:23 AM ET

Francisco Lindor's smile beams out his passion for baseball. And while many Midwest League players are frustrated by hitting the metaphorical August wall in their first full season of professional baseball, Lindor expresses a happiness to have another challenge and another learning opportunity.

At 18 years old, Lindor is putting smiles on the faces of the Cleveland Indians front-office staff who drafted him in the first round last year. The 5-foot-11, 175-pound switch-hitting shortstop is hitting .258 for Lake County and isn't fazed by the 'grind it out' stage of the season.

"I'm playing baseball every day, and I'm grateful for that," said Lindor, the eighth overall pick in the 2011 Draft out of Montverde Academy near Orlando. "It's a long season, but you have to grind it out. You still have to play hard and make adjustments. You have to look at it like, 'I'm tired.' You have to look at it like you still have a chance to learn and gain experience.

"It's more about the mental side of the game," Lindor continued. "You have to come out and compete. You can't think about what you did in April, what you did in May, what you're doing in August. ... It's the mental side of the game that separates you. If you can stay strong the last couple of months, that's what it's all about."

Lindor's manager at Lake County, David Wallace, said that Lindor's outlook reflects his maturity.

"Francisco is the complete package," Wallace said. "He is just as good of a person off the field as he is a player on the field. We value that in this organization. All the talent, the work ethic, it's all there. He's got his feet firmly planted on the ground. He knows it's not going to be an easy path to the big leagues. Hopefully it's a quick path, but he understands that he's not going to be handed stuff because he's a first-rounder.

"He's a manager's dream because he's low maintenance," Wallace added. "He's a mature guy for his age. He understands the game way better than a lot of guys his age. He doesn't cause any trouble. You can tell that he was raised the right way, whether that was his family or a coach."

Lindor said that he looks at every situation as a learning opportunity, including when he was one of five players at his classification invited to participate in the Futures Game.

"I was happy and thankful to be in that game," Lindor said. "It was a great honor. The best thing was I learned a lot from that game. I soaked in everything possible that I could. So many people helped me. ... The best thing was just being around great players, watching how they went about the game, their preparation, and learning from that."

Lindor's switch-hitting talents have developed nicely in the Midwest League, according to Wallace. He's also adjusted well to a minor switch in his fielding -- Lindor only has 15 errors this season, and most of those were early in the year.

"We wanted him to play a little bit deeper than he was used to, just to cover more ground," Wallace said. "That kind of affected his internal clock, as he fielded a ball. ... Now, guys are getting down the line a little bit quicker, he's playing a little bit deeper, so that's one of the things that separates him. You tell him once, he takes it and makes the adjustment seamlessly and quickly, especially offensive adjustments that might take a guy a week, a month, even a year, we work on it before a game, and he's taking it into the game that night."

In brief

Reunited: Lake County manager David Wallace and Roberto Hernandez (formerly known as Fausto Carmona) were reunited recently when the Indians sent Hernandez to Lake County for a rehab assignment. Wallace and Hernandez played together for Lake County in 2003, the franchise's first season.

"It was a surreal moment for sure," Wallace said of managing a team with Hernandez on the roster. "We sat down, we laughed about it. ... It was exciting for me to be a small part in him getting back to that point. We're excited to see him get back to help Cleveland. He was very gracious. He got the team postgame spreads both times he was there, so we ate like big leaguers for a couple of nights. It was good for our guys to see how he goes about his business, and for them to know that he was right here where they are at one time."

Painful record: Wisconsin's Brandon Macias is the Timber Rattlers' King of Bruises. Macias was hit by a pitch for the 19th time this season, a Timber Rattlers' single-season record. The previous HBP mark was held by Luis Tinoco, who was beamed 18 times in 1996.

Shuffle time? Eleven of the Midwest League's 16 teams have Player Development Contracts that expire at the end of this season. If teams decide that they want to change affiliations, they must give written notice to Major League Baseball and Minor League Baseball between Sept. 3 and Sept. 11. The two-week negotiation window for PDCs is Sept. 16-30. The deadline for teams to have PDCs locked up for the 2013 season is Oct. 7.

Swing and a miss:: Quad Cities pitcher Hector Hernandez struck out a career-high nine batters in five innings of work against Burlington, and the River Bandits' pitchers struck out a season-high 17 batters in a 12-inning game against the Bees. Burlington, though, held on for a 7-6 victory. Interestingly, Hernandez's previous high of eight strikeouts in one game came against Vermont last season, which, like Burlington, is an Athletics farm team. On Monday, six of Hernandez's nine strikeouts came against batters he faced in his eight-strikeout game against Vermont last season.

## **Phelps stays hot as Clippers cruise**

### **Second baseman with seven hits, nine RBIs in two-game span**

By Zack Cox / Special to MLB.com 08/17/2012 12:47 AM ET

You won't see a much better two-game stretch at the plate than the one Cole Phelps has enjoyed.

The Columbus second baseman followed up his 4-for-4 effort Wednesday with another four-hit performance Thursday night, going 4-for-5 with a home run, a double and five RBIs in the Triple-A Clippers' 7-1 win over Durham.

Over the two-day span, Phelps has gone 7-for-8 with three doubles, two home runs, nine RBIs and four runs scored.

A International League midseason All-Star, the second baseman has put up quality numbers this season, hitting .283 with 15 home runs and 53 RBIs. But even he said that he was surprised by his recent hot streak.

"It's pretty cool," Phelps said. "It's kind of a weird thing. It's not really how baseball usually goes, but when things fall your way like this you just have to ride it out.

"I'd say it is [my best two-game stretch]. I don't know if I can remember two games where I've put as many quality swings on the ball."

The 24-year-old has made a steady ascent through the Cleveland farm system since being selected by the Indians in the third round of the 2008 Draft. Phelps saw some action in the Majors at the end of last season, batting .155 in 35 games before returning to Columbus in 2012. He said the prospect of another late-season callup has not burdened his mind, though.

"The goal is just to enjoy [the rest of the season]," Phelps said. "I just want to stay in the moment and have fun, enjoy being with my teammates. As for offseason, I'll take some time off, then take some time to reflect on what things I did well, what things I did poorly and get ready for next season."

The Bulls mounted a late comeback to steal a 9-7 win Wednesday, but Columbus starter T.J. McFarland made sure Durham did not enjoy the same good fortune Thursday.

The No. 20 Indians prospect scattered six hits over seven one-run innings to pick up his sixth victory of the year. Loek Van Mil followed with two innings of no-hit relief to secure the win.

Lance Pendleton (7-5) took the loss for Durham, giving up six runs on 10 hits -- including homers by Phelps, Gregorio Petit and Russ Canzler -- over five frames.

## **Indians report: Roberto Hernandez will not be judged on poor first start**

### **By Sheldon Ocker**

ANAHEIM, CALIF.: What conclusions can be drawn about Roberto Hernandez's future by his first start of the season Wednesday night against the Los Angeles Angels?

Probably none. In six innings, Hernandez gave up eight runs and 10 hits, including two solo homers, but three runs were unearned because of three errors in a horrendous second inning, when the Angels scored five times.

Hernandez said he was unaffected by the shoddy defense around him, and maybe that's the truth.

"I thought it was impressive that he kept his composure through that inning and the whole game," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "In the past, he would have made it worse."

Pitchers seldom throw their teammates under the bus when they make defensive mistakes, and Hernandez kept the faith in that regard.

"You just have to keep throwing pitches and get one out at a time," he said. "I was very excited to be out there and very happy to get a second chance to pitch in the big leagues."

Hernandez spent eight months trying to persuade the U.S. State Department to give him a work permit after it was revealed he had used the identity of a relative, Fausto Carmona, since he was a teenager. After Hernandez got his green card, he was suspended by Major League Baseball and concurrently pitched four times on a minor-league rehab assignment.

For most of the months he was stuck at home in the Dominican Republic, Hernandez worked out and pitched to 17-year-olds at the Tribe's Dominican camp. And two of his rehab starts came against Class A competition at Lake County.

So is it reasonable to think he's ready? Acta thinks so.

"I'm fine with the way he threw the ball," Acta said after Hernandez's first start. "We didn't catch the ball for him; we didn't help him at all."

Hernandez's next start will be against the Seattle Mariners at Safeco Field. If his teammates support him, maybe reasonable judgments can be made about what lies ahead for him.

His future employment status with the Indians depends on how he pitches the final six weeks of the season.

No assistant needed

Vinnie Pestano has carried the entire load of holding leads in the eighth inning. On some teams, Pestano would receive an occasional break, while a No. 2 setup man takes over.

That hasn't been necessary with the Tribe, because eighth-inning leads are not an everyday event.

"Ideally, you don't want to use a second guy unless the first guy is just overloaded with work," Acta said. "When you have two setup men, it has to be a very good club. You would have to have two guys you really trust to pitch the eighth inning.

"But if you have two, you can get into a situation where if one guy blows the lead, the other guy starts asking, 'Why wasn't I in there?'"

Trivia pursuit

Hernandez is still looking for his first win over the Angels. In eight starts, he is 0-4 with a 2.44 ERA.

He came into Wednesday night's game with the fifth lowest ERA (1.77) of any Angels opposing pitcher with five or more starts. Justin Masterson is No. 1 on that list with a 1.35 ERA, but he has a 3-0 record in seven starts against the Halos.

Other stuff

The Indians have lost 12 of their past 13 road games. ... The offense is averaging six runs in the past four road games. ... Since the All-Star break, the Tribe has a .303 winning percentage, lowest in the American League.

Farm facts

Cord Phelps had two doubles, two singles and four RBI in Durham's 9-7 win over Columbus in Class AAA. Jared Goedert hit his 11th home run of the season and singled, driving in two runs. David Huff gave up two runs and four hits in seven innings. ... Jordan Smith and Jerrud Sabourin each had two hits and two RBI, as Lake County blanked Dayton 7-0 in Class A. Shawn Morimando (6-4, 3.50 ERA) threw six scoreless innings, allowing two hits and walking none.

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## **Would San Francisco want to replace suspended Melky Cabrera with Shin-Soo Choo? Cleveland Indians Insider**

**Paul Hoynes**

SAN FRANCISCO -- The Giants were rumored to be interested in the Indians' Shin-Soo Choo and Chris Perez before the non-waiver trading deadline on July 31.

Choo and Perez are still with the Indians, but on Wednesday shock spread through the Giants clubhouse and the Bay Area when All-Star MVP Melky Cabrera was suspended for 50 games for using testosterone, a substance banned by MLB.

Cabrera, the Giants' left fielder, was hitting .346. The All-Star MVP is leading the big leagues with 159 hits and the National League with 84 runs. The suspension could cost the Giants a spot in the postseason.

GM Brian Sabean did add outfielder Hunter Pence before July 31 in a deal with the Phillies. As of Wednesday, he was looking for yet another outfielder. Choo, a free agent after 2013, could certainly help to Giants win the NL West, but such a deal would be nearly impossible. He would have to clear waivers in the American League. A contender would certainly claim him before that happened.

If he did clear waivers in the AL, every NL team with a poorer record than the Giants would have to pass on him. Again the chances of that happening are extremely small.

Choo, who hit a three-run homer in Wednesday's 9-6 loss to the Angels, is hitting .284 (124-for-436) with 70 runs, 35 doubles, two triples, 13 homers, 51 RBI and 13 steals. Teams have until Aug. 31 to acquire a player as long as he clears waivers. Any player obtained after Aug. 31 is not eligible for the postseason.

Wise words: Manny Acta, always a good quote, wants to coin this phrase about the nature of baseball: "You can expect and you can project, but you can never predict."

Here's how he came up with it.

"You're always thinking about your team, right? The other night I was thinking, 'you expect so-and-so to do this. You project with numbers that he'll do this and he'll do this.' But you can never predict."

Somewhere Branch Rickey is smiling.

Finally: Plate umpire Greg Gibson, spiked above the left eye by Angels outfielder Torii Hunter when he slid home in the fifth inning Wednesday against the Indians, is apparently all right. He received X-rays and stitches after leaving the game.

"After the game he said he was OK," said Hunter. It could have been worse if Hunter had been wearing metal spikes instead of plastic.

Hunter tried to score from first in the fifth on Kendrys Morales' double to right. Choo overthrew the cutoff man at second, but third baseman Jack Hannahan retrieved the ball and threw home where Carlos Santana tagged the belly-flopping Hunter in the head.

No call was made as Gibson was treated. Acta and Angels manager Mike Scioscia were on the field waiting, but crew chief Gerry Davis didn't make a call until Gibson left the field.

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## **Roberto Hernandez's return to Cleveland Indians was eventful, if not successful**

**Paul Hoynes**

SAN FRANCISCO -- Torii Hunter, like many others, still isn't comfortable calling Fausto Carmona Roberto Hernandez.

In the spirit of unity, of blending the past with the present, Hunter called him "Fausto Roberto Carmona Hernandez" late Wednesday night after the Angels ruined Hernandez's 2012 big-league debut with a 9-6 victory over the Indians at Angel Stadium.

Hunter has 36 at-bats against Hernandez. When he played for the Twins, he once said that trying to hit Hernandez made him feel like was hung over because the ball moved so much.

"He's the same," said Hunter, a .167 (6-for-36) hitter against Hernandez. "His ball was moving like crazy. He left some balls up and we were able to capitalize. But that was our plan, to get him up, because his ball moves like crazy."

Hernandez has never been a pretty pitcher to watch. When he pitches, it looks like hard work. He's not poetry in motion like Steve Carlton or Jim Palmer. It's more like watching somebody dig a ditch. So it was Wednesday night.

Hernandez opened with three straight ground-ball outs. He was out of the first inning in 10 pitches, including a groundout to shortstop by Hunter. Hernandez's velocity looked normal. In a six-pitch at-bat against Erick Aybar, the Angels' second hitter, he ranged from an 85 mph off-speed pitch to a 95 mph fastball that Aybar grounded to first for the second out.

In the second, all that changed as Hernandez lost some sink on his fastball. Kendrys Morales, Mark Trumbo and Alberto Callaspo started the inning with consecutive singles for a 1-0 lead.

"The ball came up a little," said Hernandez.

Then everything connected with the Indians but Hernandez's pitches crashed. Vernon Wells sent a hard grounder to short for what should have been a double play. Brent Lillibridge fumbled it for an error as the Angels led, 2-0.

Maicer Izturis, looking to advance Callaspo and Wells, bunted in front of the plate. Catcher Carlos Santana couldn't handle it as the Angels loaded the bases. Chris Iannetta's sacrifice fly made it 3-0, but the Indians' defense, like a seaside home slowly tumbling into the ocean during a mud slide, continued to roll downhill.

Mike Trout sent a grounder to third. Jack Hannahan threw to second for the force, but Trout ran his way out of the back end of the double play. After the game, manager Manny Acta said the DP should have been turned.

Trout stole second, drawing an bad throw from Santana that allowed Wells to score on the second error of the inning. As Wells headed home, Lillibridge made an equally bad throw home for the third error in the inning as Trout went to third.

Through it all, Hernandez kept his cool, which was not always the case when he was Carmona. But even he got into the act. With the count 1-1 on Aybar, Hernandez threw a strike and started walking off the mound. He thought the inning was over, but plate umpire Greg Gibson waved him back for more. Aybar turned the next pitch into a triple and a 5-0 lead.

Unlike the first inning, Hernandez needed 27 pitches to complete the second.

"I think Hernandez threw the ball a lot better than those numbers indicate," said Acta. "We played terrible defense behind him, especially in the second inning."

Hernandez pitched four more innings. After the second, he never needed more than 14 pitches to get through an inning. It meant he was throwing strikes, but he was also getting hit hard. Trout homered in the fourth and Iannetta did so in the sixth. Hernandez allowed eight runs, five earned, on six hits in his first big-league start since Sept. 25.

He threw 62 percent of his pitches (56 of 91) for strikes, which is just about the MLB average.

It has always been hard to get inside Hernandez's head. Language is a problem, but Hernandez's reluctance to reveal himself goes beyond his poor English and the most of the English-speaking media's poor Spanish. He was arrested outside the U.S. Consulate in the Dominican Republic on Jan. 19 when he applied for a visa as Fausto Carmona. His true identity and age -- it jumped from 28 to 31 -- was revealed.

It took the Indians and Hernandez's agents, with the help of lobbyist Stephen Payne, nearly six months to get his visa renewed so he could return to the United States on July 22. Along the way, he lost \$4.5 million when the Indians insisted he renegotiate his contract because he committed fraud when he originally signed it in 2008.

Asked if any or all of that went through his head when he finally climbed back on a big-league mound Wednesday, Hernandez said, "I didn't think about that. I was thinking about pitching."

Really?

Hernandez signed with the Indians on Dec. 28, 2000. He essentially lived a lie for 12 years. Not that he's been even remotely close to the 19-game winner that he was in 2007, but how much did it hurt not having a veteran starter in the Tribe's rotation for more than half a season? Surely he would have been more consistent than an injured Josh Tomlin or an unproven Jeanmar Gomez.

"We're not going to put what has happened to us this year on one guy," said Acta. "Unfortunately, we have underachieved until now. It would have been nice to have an arm like this [all year]."

The best Hernandez could do was say, "I happy to get a second chance to pitch in the big leagues."

Said Hunter, "He has a good spirit, man. I don't blame him. I understand. He's got a chance to play major-league baseball and make millions of dollars."

Not to mention a heckuva story that will probably never get fully told.

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## **Cleveland Indians P.M. links: Tribe no longer last in average home attendance; checking Roberto Hernandez' return**

### **Mike Peticca**

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The Cleveland Indians, mired in last place among baseball's 30 teams for much of the season in average home attendance, have vaulted past two teams in the category and rank 28th through Wednesday's games.

Indians' fans, though, have been watching a team that, given its roster makeup, should never have been considered a contender. That has been borne out since May 24. At the end of play that day, the Indians were 26-18 and in first place in the American League Central Division. They are 28-46 since, and at 54-64 overall, in third place in the division, but closer to last than to first.

Meanwhile, the two teams that now have worse (barely) average home attendance than the Indians are both contenders for at least AL wild card berths.

The Indians, who are off today, have drawn an average of 20,677 fans to their 59 home games, as shown in an ESPN.com chart. That's an average of 19 more fans a home game than the Oakland Athletics (20,648) and 105 more than the Tampa Bay Rays (20,572).

Indians' fans would likely show up to support a contender better than those backing, for instance, the Pittsburgh Pirates and Chicago White Sox. The Pirates, in the midst of their best season in two decades, are 21st with an average home attendance of 26,807; the White Sox are 24th, at 24,432.

Cleveland has a chance to expand its average-home-crowd lead on Oakland on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. That's when the Indians pay a three-game visit to the Athletics. The Tribe is not among Major League Baseball's best road draws, too. Teams are averaging crowds of 28,978 fans when they play Cleveland. That's better than only the road crowds for the Toronto Blue Jays (27,664), Kansas City Royals (27,991) and Seattle Mariners (28,042).

The Indians are last in overall average attendance -- including home and road games -- and with nearly three-fourths of the season over, could stay there. The average crowd for the 118 games the Indians have played is 24,828. The next lowest is Tampa Bay's 25,318.

Plain Dealer and cleveland.com Indians coverage includes Paul Hoynes' game story on the Indians' 8-4 loss to the Angels in Los Angeles on Wednesday night; Hoynes' Cleveland Indians Insider, reporting that manager Manny Acta says the Indians need to find some more hitters before next season; the Indians' Minor League Report; and more.

Indians story links

Tribe starting pitcher Roberto Hernandez, formerly known as Fausto Carmona, made his 2012 debut in the loss to the Angels on Wednesday night. An analysis of his performance. (By Merritt Rohlfing, Wahoo's on First)

Indians starting pitcher Ubaldo Jimenez grew up in poverty in the Dominican Republic. His major league career has enabled him to take care of the family he's so thankful for. (By Zack Meisel, MLB.com)

Things are so bad, the Indians need a complete overhaul. (By Marla Ridenour, Akron Beacon Journal)

Manny Acta's comments about the Indians' needs were a bit out of character, so do they mean anything besides the mere words? (By Jim Ingraham, News-Herald and Lorain Morning Journal)

Around the Indians' farm system on Wednesday. (By Jim Pete, Indians Prospect Insider)

Angels 8, Indians 4, in a strange game. (By Sheldon Ocker, Akron Beacon Journal)

Roberto Hernandez certainly wasn't great, but he sure didn't get much help from his teammates. (By Nino Colla, The Cleveland Fan)

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### **Cleveland Indians vs. Oakland Athletics: On Deck**

**Where:** The Coliseum, Oakland, Calif.

**When:** Friday through Sunday.

**TV/radio:** SportsTime Ohio, WTAM AM/1100.

**Pitching matchups:** RHP Zach McAllister (5-4, 3.46) vs. LHP Tommy Milone (9-9, 3.91) Friday at 10:07 p.m.; RHP Corey Kluber (0-1, 8.56) vs. RHP Bartolo Colon (9-9, 3.55) Saturday at 9:07 p.m. and RHP Justin Masterson (9-10, 4.50) vs. RHP Jarrod Parker (7-6, 3.55) Sunday at 4:07 p.m.

**Season series:** The Indians lead the A's, 2-1. Overall, the A's lead, 251-222.

**Indians update:** They went 1-2 against the Angels on the first leg of this nine-game, three-city West Coast trip. They're averaging 3.6 runs since the All-Star break. Shin-Soo Choo hit .357 (5-for-14) against the A's in April.

**Athletics update:** After going 19-5 in July, the A's are 5-8 in August entering Thursday's game in Kansas City. They were four games behind Texas in the AL West and 1 1/2 games out of the second wild-card spot. They're 18-16 since the break.

**Injuries: Indians** -- RHP Josh Tomlin (right elbow), DH Travis Hafner (back), 3B Lonnie Chisenhall (right forearm), LHP Rafael Perez (left lat), CF Grady Sizemore (back) and RHP Carlos Carrasco (right elbow) are on the disabled list. **Athletics** -- RHP Brett Anderson (right elbow), LHP Dallas Braden (left shoulder, groin), RHP Andrew Carignan (right elbow), LHP Joey Devine (left elbow), RHP A.J. Griffin (right shoulder), 2B Scott Sizemore (right knee), OF Seth Smith (left hamstring), 3B Brandon Inge (right shoulder) and SS Eric Sogard (back) are on the disabled list.

**Next:** The Indians open a three-game series against Seattle at Safeco Field on Monday.

## Jim Ingraham: Manny Acta's words speak volumes

By Jim Ingraham

As this Indians season continues to circle the drain, and as the vultures begin to circle the team, it seems to be producing a certain uncomfortable edginess that could lead events down any one of a number of dark alleys.

It led to Manager Manny Acta on Wednesday making perhaps his most extraordinary statement since becoming manager of the team 2½ years ago.

He basically called out the front office, or made a pre-emptive PR strike against speculation, if not outright fact, that his job is hanging in the balance of what happens the rest of this inglorious Indians season.

Maybe that wasn't his intent, but it was such an out-of-character comment by Acta, that it almost begs some dot connecting.

A pitching coach has already lost his job because of this season.

Is Acta concerned he could be next?

Whatever it is, something seemed to be going on Wednesday in Anaheim, when reporters asked Acta what needs to be done to improve the team next year.

"It's no secret," he said. "We're going to need to improve our offense. We're going to have to find a solution in left field, we're going to have to find a solution at first base and we're going to have to find a solution at DH. That's pretty obvious.

"And the third-base situation is not determined, either. Lonnie (Chisenhall) has a broken arm. The guys that are here right now are fine and doing what they can, but we expect more."

Then the Indians went out and in their error-filled, P.T. Barnum 8-4 loss to the Angels, played the kind of game that made you think, "This is how teams play when a manager is about to get fired."

I don't think Acta will get fired. I don't think he should get fired. I do think a lot of people think he should. Perhaps some of those people are Indians employees. Perhaps Acta knows that. Perhaps that's why he said what he said.

Let's read between the lines of what he said. If you do that, here's what I read: "Are you kidding me? Win with this lineup? Look at these guys!"

When a manager comes out and says four of the nine positions in the starting lineup need to be fixed — and he's willing to identify those positions by name — that's about as blunt an indictment of the roster he's been given as a manager can make.

Most managers, when asked that question, would respond with something far more generic. Something like this: "Well, obviously, we need to improve offensively, in any way we can," — and let it go at that.

Acta didn't. Acta went way beyond that.

Why?

It almost seemed like those words were directed at General Manager Chris Antonetti. If so, that wasn't necessary because Acta and Antonetti have undoubtedly covered this ground before in their private conversations. Antonetti already knows what this team needs. But maybe Acta was trying to make a point to Antonetti by saying it publicly, to turn up the heat a little on the GM.

Or were those words directed more at ownership, on behalf of Antonetti, who is forced to construct a roster every year on a shoestring budget? Let's be honest. When you say you need to replace four of the nine position starters in the lineup, what you're really saying is, "If we want to compete, we've got to start spending some money around here."

Or were those words meant for the fans, who in situations such as these tend to support the knee-jerk reaction of firing the manager because, well, it's all his fault.

Is this Acta's way of saying to the fans, "My fault? Name me one manager anywhere who could win with this roster."

In reality, Acta's comments are probably the result of a little bit of all that — plus a whole lot of frustration. It's late in the year, the season is going down the drain, and there is no help on the way.

Maybe Acta just decided it was a good time to remind everyone — his bosses and the fans — that this isn't just a flawed roster, it's a fatally flawed roster.

It's certainly not a roster with which, if a manager didn't win he deserves to be fired because of it.

Baseball isn't always fair.

Managers get fired after seasons like this, because of rosters like this. It's not fair, but it happens. Acta knows that. So why not remind everyone that four of the nine spots in your lineup are ghosts?

On the other hand, Acta does have one more year left on his contract — but so what?

So did Eric Wedge.

### **Clippers 7, Bulls 1: Phelps on a tear with homer, 5 RBI**

**By Jim Massie**

Clippers second baseman Cord Phelps is causing the kind of trouble for opponents that could lead to an invitation to take the next stagecoach out of town. (OK, an SUV would be a more likely possibility.)

He had his second four-hit game in a row last night at Huntington Park while leading the Clippers past the Durham Bulls 7-1.

Over the two games, Phelps was 8 for 9 with two home runs, three doubles, three singles and nine RBI. The splurge raised his batting average from .270 to .283 but didn't change the decibels of his typical soft-spoken demeanor.

"It's a rare thing," Phelps said. "You just have to enjoy it. Baseball usually doesn't work that way. When it happens, it's fun."

Phelps, a switch-hitter, was 4 for 4 on Wednesday against the Bulls with a home run, two doubles, a single and four RBI. Durham overshadowed the performance by scoring seven runs in the eighth inning to win 9-7.

He singled in his first at-bat last night and followed that with a three-run home run in the third and an RBI single in the fifth to help the Clippers move ahead 6-1.

Asked about the streak's reason, Phelps shook his head.

"Nothing has changed," he said. "That's the game. Sometimes it rolls your way. Sometimes it doesn't."

His home run on Wednesday came from the right side, cleared the left-field bleachers and bounced into the second-floor restaurant. His home run last night was from the left side and bounced atop of the balcony roof in right field.

"A lot of times during the year you don't feel good on one side or the other," Phelps said. "It's kind of once in a blue moon when you get hits from both sides of the plate. That's how it's been the last couple of nights."

Gregorio Petit and Russ Canzler also hit home runs in support of T.J. McFarland (6-6), who shut down Durham's offense on one run and six hits over seven strong innings.

He turned a 6-1 lead over to the bullpen in the eighth. The Clippers led 7-2 in the eighth on Wednesday before the game came apart.

"It was the same scenario as last night," manager Mike Sarbaugh said. "The same guy (Tim Beckham) was up, and we had a five-run lead. That went through my head. I thought it was very coincidental."

The Bulls scored seven runs before three were out that time. On this occasion, 7-foot-1 reliever Loek van Mil made his Clippers debut and didn't allow a hit over the final two innings.

"He threw the ball really well," Sarbaugh said. "He's so big I told guys he was throwing the ball from about 48 feet."

Phelps' streak of seven straight hits was broken in the sixth inning when he grounded out catcher to first base.

Even so, he began another streak in the eighth with an RBI double.

#### **Aeros 4, Senators 1: Holt leads Aeros to win on road**

Tyler Holt hit an RBI triple, Chun Chen had an RBI single and the Aeros defeated the Senators 4-1 in an Eastern League game Thursday in Harrisburg, Pa.

Holt tripled to score Roberto Perez and later scored on a sacrifice fly by Jordan Henry in the third inning to give the Aeros a 2-0 lead.

The Aeros added another run in the sixth inning when Chen singled to score Henry and scored again in the ninth when Thomas Neal scored on a wild pitch to put the Aeros ahead 4-1.

The Senators scored in the eighth inning on a solo home run by Seth Bynum.

Aeros starting pitcher Toru Murata gave up four hits and struck out two in four innings in the no decision.

Reliever Trey Haley gave up one hit and struck out four through three innings for the win. Shawn Armstrong earned his second save of the year.

The Aeros host the Reading Phillies tonight at 7:05.

The game will be broadcast on WARF (1350-AM).

Notebook

Former Negro League player Hank Presswood will be a special guest at tonight's game.

A former shortstop and third baseman for the Cleveland Buckeyes, Presswood is scheduled to throw out a first pitch and will sign autographs on the concourse before the game.

— Staff report

#### **Growing number of injuries gives MLB pause**

**By Bob Nightengale, USA TODAY Updated 7h 53m ago**

The Boston Red Sox frantically are trying to stay alive in the American League wild-card race. But considering their historic rate of injuries these days, they have a lot more problems than finding out which players want to play for manager Bobby Valentine.

Major league teams have used the disabled list 539 times this year through Aug. 13, including 118 players on the 60-day DL — a 28% increase in serious injuries from last year and 55% since 2010.

It's the highest total since Major League Baseball began keeping statistical DL data in 2002.

MORE: Injury updates

"It's been brutal this year," says Toronto Blue Jays President Paul Beeston, whose club in one week lost starting pitchers Drew Hutchison and Kyle Drabek to major elbow injuries and fellow starter Brandon Morrow to an abdominal injury.

"As an industry, we have to look at why this is happening."

There have been more players placed on the DL than at any time since MLB began recording the transactions at the perceived height of its steroid era in 2002, costing owners tens of millions of dollars and changing the pennant race landscape.

Commissioner Bud Selig has brought in medical experts to speak to owners and his special on-field committee, but there are no answers.

"We're all asking ourselves the same thing," said Lewis Yocum, one of the nation's leading orthopedic surgeons and the Los Angeles Angels team doctor. "You look at Toronto. You look at Kansas City (which lost four pitchers to Tommy John elbow surgery).

"Everyone is looking around asking if we're doing something wrong. I don't think it's a training or conditioning thing. It seems like we just go through cycles."

Red Sox battered, bruised

And no team has suffered more than the Red Sox.

Boston, which overhauled its medical and training staffs in the offseason, has had more injuries than any other team in baseball since at least 1987, according to STATS.

The Red Sox have had an entire roster — 25 players, including 13 All-Stars — go on the DL a total of 29 times. They've already used 48 players, one shy of their total all last year, with two weeks remaining before September call-ups.

Red Sox general manager Ben Cherington defends his new medical and training staffs and reminds critics the staff shouldn't be blamed for inheriting several players with major injuries, such as starters John Lackey and Daisuke Matsuzaka, who had Tommy John surgery last year. Left fielder Carl Crawford had wrist surgery in January.

Shortstop Will Middlebrooks, second baseman Dustin Pedroia, closer Andrew Bailey and outfielder Cody Ross suffered their injuries on the field. Bailey, injured in spring training, was not activated until Tuesday.

"The restructuring of our medical staff has gained traction, and we are ahead of where we were last year in terms of individual preventative measures being taken," Cherington said in an e-mail to USA TODAY Sports.

"We are very focused on the prevention of soft-tissue injuries and improving our screening of players when they come into the organization so we can get ahead of any potential issues down the road.

"It's a work in progress."

The biggest concern, of course, is the rash of injuries to pitchers. The Washington Nationals are being so cautious they plan to shut down ace Stephen Strasburg, who had Tommy John surgery two years ago.

"I will say that we are acutely more aware of the elbow," said Yocum, who performed the surgery on Strasburg. "In the past, a pitcher would be diagnosed with a sore elbow. Now, it's a partial tear of the ligament.

"There's more of an awareness, and the fact is that with surgery we get decent results. So front offices are more inclined to get them over with and move on."

Reds on other side of debate

No team has had more success staying healthy than the Cincinnati Reds. They are the only team in the major leagues that has used only five starting pitchers, and it has had nine players go on the DL.

This is the longest stretch in 112 years the Reds have gone using their original starting rotation — and the longest streak by any team since the Seattle Mariners went the entire 2003 season using the same five starters.

The common denominator is Reds pitching coach Bryan Price, the Mariners' pitching coach in 2003.

"If there was a way to create some sort of road map of success," Price said, "it would have been written well before today. We haven't done anything here that reinvented the game. We've just had different guys that have put a lot of work into it and have been fortunate. Arm injuries aren't the only thing that shelves pitchers. You've got hamstrings and and rib-cage pulls that we've been able to avoid, as well.

"It used to be rotator cuff and back problems. Now, it's Tommy John surgeries and oblique strains."

Why?

The sports medicine field and MLB surely will dig deeper to find out.

For now, there are only theories.

Says Cherington: "I think players put their bodies in positions that they never did before in the name of performance. Pitchers manipulate the ball like never before: cutter, sinker, split, multiple types of fastballs. This all requires different finger pressure, different hand position at release. When this happens, it could very well change the torque on the elbow and shoulder.

"Pitchers have had to do this because hitters are so much better. They'd get killed if they weren't manipulating the baseball. But it could come with a downside — more stress on the joints.

"I have no data to support this. It's just a hunch."

## **On the Beat**

### **A Clubhouse Scorned**

**by John Perrotto**

Maybe this is the solution for the Red Sox: Place an emergency call to Popeye's for fried chicken with a side order of red beans and rice, and have it sent to the home clubhouse at Fenway Park. Fried chicken and beer became part of a scandal in Red Sox Nation in the wake of last season's historic collapse, during which the Red Sox blow a sure post-season berth in September while the starting pitchers sat in the cramped Fenway clubhouse eating, drinking, and playing video games when it wasn't their turn in the rotation.

Though the Red Sox were losing on a daily basis at the end of last season, it is hard to believe their clubhouse was as disharmonious as their current ones. A lot of details of their current discord came out in this story by Yahoo! Sports' Jeff Passan. After visiting the Red Sox' clubhouse last Thursday before and after a loss to the Indians in Cleveland, "toxic" would be a mild word to describe the atmosphere.

I have had the privilege of visiting clubhouses for a quarter century, but I have never experienced an atmosphere rivaling the aftermath of the Red Sox' loss. Most of the players sat at their lockers silently, holding a beer in their hand. Another group sat at a round table in the middle of the clubhouse, picking at a post-game dinner. Right-hander John Lackey, who's on the DL, was eating an ear of corn big enough to win a blue ribbon at the county fair. While Lackey attacked the corn, he glared at the Red Sox' beat reporters, who were quietly waiting for anyone willing to talk about the game.

Things were nearly as tense in the manager's office both before and after the game. The usually loquacious Bobby Valentine gave a lot of one-word answers and seemed weary, the type of weary you sense from someone wondering if his first season on the job after replacing Terry Francona will be his last. Perhaps it was just one loss too many in a season highlighted primarily by injuries, controversy, and disharmony, all of which have the Red Sox sitting on the wrong side of .500 at 57-61 and possibly headed toward their first losing season since 1997.

There was a brief exchange I had with Valentine:

Me: Do you think your club has a run in it, where it can reel off a decent-sized winning streak?

Bobby V: Yes.

Me: Why do you think that?

Bobby V: Because we're due.

Me: Would it help if David Ortiz gets healthy and rejoins the lineup soon?

Bobby V: Hope so.

That certainly went nowhere, and it was also difficult to get any of the Red Sox players' thoughts on the matter beyond left-hander Felix Doubront and utilityman Pedro Ciriaco. And let's face it, nobody is interested in what Doubront and Ciriaco think. It was clear none of Boston's players wanted anything to do with the media before or after the game. When a group of reporters approached second baseman Dustin Pedroia at his locker after the game and did not immediately ask a question, he stormed out of the room while yelling a stream of profanities. To his credit, Pedroia has always been a standup guy and apologized as I walked past him in the tunnel way outside the clubhouse.

The Red Sox, to be fair, have rarely had their full team together this season. Left fielder Carl Crawford and center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury both missed large chunks of time because of injury, and Ortiz has been out with a strained Achilles tendon. Third baseman Kevin Youkilis struggled with injuries early in the season, had his commitment to the game questioned by Valentine—which absolutely destroyed the manager's credibility in the clubhouse—and was dealt to the White Sox to make room for impressive rookie Will Middlebrooks. Now Middlebrooks is injured after breaking his wrist last weekend.

It hasn't helped that neither left-hander Jon Lester nor right-hander Josh Beckett has pitched like an ace. Lester showed promise last Sunday, though, when he struck out 12 Indians in six innings.

"For me, Beckett isn't a No. 1 starter anymore," one scout said. "I know he is still perceived to be that kind of pitcher, but his stuff isn't what it used to be. He was ridden very hard early in his career, and that odometer in his arm has rolled over. He doesn't have a great arm anymore, and he's not the type of pitcher who is going to be as successful if he doesn't have his good stuff. He's not exactly the thinking man's pitcher."

Said the same scout about Lester: "I don't know what Lester's problem is, but he's not the Lester of old. He doesn't look comfortable on the mound, and I don't know if that's either because he's hurt and not telling anyone, if he's distracted by something, or if he's just sick of the whole situation in Boston. For me, he's a guy who needs a change of scenery."

Despite all their problems and being 13.5 games behind the Yankees in the American League East, the Red Sox are still at least have a puncher's chance at one of the league's two wild card spots. The Red Sox enter Thursday 6 1/2 games out of the second wild card slot. However, the Baseball Prospectus Odds Report isn't very sure of the Red Sox' post-season hopes, giving them just a 5.9 percent chance of making it to October.

The scout who has seen the Red Sox extensively this year isn't counting on seeing them play past the end of the regular season, saying, "I don't see any way they make it. They are a train wreck. It starts in the manager's office and carries over to the clubhouse. That's just the off-the-field stuff. On the field, they're just not good. They truly are a case of being what they are: a .500 ballclub."

A player who recently played with the Red Sox and keeps in touch with some of his old teammates also offers a bleak forecast: "I don't care what they're saying publicly (in light of the Yahoo! Sports story); those guys hate playing for Bobby Valentine. Management really made a bad decision when they hired him. You're taking a veteran team that played for the best player's manager in the game in (Francona) and replacing him with a guy who threw the most-respected player in that clubhouse under the bus? There's no way that is every going to work."

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A few minutes with Padres manager Bud Black

On the importance of retaining closer Huston Street and left fielder Carlos Quentin with contract extensions rather than trading them: "I think the media was a little bit aggressive with the trade report. I'm sure our general manager, Josh Byrnes, talked to a lot of other general managers about both players because I'm sure a lot of other clubs would want Huston and Carlos. However, it was never our intention to trade either one. Even though it's the first year for both of them with us, they made it clear very early on that they enjoyed playing here, liked the Padres' way of doing things, and let it be known to Josh through their agents that they would like to find a way to make it work so they could stay in San Diego. I think it says a lot for both players that they wanted to stay here, it says a lot for Josh that he was able to work out contracts with both of them, and it says a lot for where we're at as an organization that quality major-league players want to play for the San Diego Padres."

On how the Padres have benefitted from the off-season trade in which they sent right-hander Mat Latos to the Reds for right-hander Edinson Volquez, reliever Brad Boxberger, catcher Yasmani Grandal, and first baseman Yonder Alonso: "It was difficult to give up a talented young pitcher like Mat, but I think the way you judge a trade is if both sides are happy, and both sides are. The Reds have a guy at the top of their rotation doing everything they expected from him. We got depth, which we really needed, and a volume of good players. We got a pitcher to replace Mat in the rotation, we got a catcher and first baseman who we feel can become integral parts of the lineup, and a relief pitcher with big upside. It's not every day you get four players who can help you in the same trade, and we're already feeling the impact of it in a positive way."

On the Padres showing improvement as the season has gone on: "We've played very good ball since the All-Star break, and it reminds a little bit of 2009 when we played really well after the break, then had the good first half in 2010 and just missed making the playoffs. We made some changes in the middle of the diamond (playing Everth Cabrera at shortstop and Alexi Amarista at second base), and our pitching staff and has really solidified this team. I really believe we're on the right track here to be very competitive again."

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Scouts' views

Brewers left fielder Ryan Braun: "He really looks like he's out of gas, and I can't help but wonder why. I'll leave it at that."

Rockies right-hander Tyler Chatwood: "He looks a lot more comfortable than he did the other times he was in the major leagues. He is much more aggressive. He's going after hitters and attacking the strike zone, and he's having success."

Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman: "He's a pretty good hitter now, but he would be even better if he were more patient. He goes through stretches where he gets jumpy at the plate and swings at the first pitch, whether it's a good one to hit or not. He needs to tighten up his approach."

Blue Jays third baseman Adeiny Hecheverria: "They're playing him out of position right now at third base, but he's going to be a heckuva shortstop once Yunel Escobar is gone at the end of this year. The kid can really play defense. He's got the range, the feet, the hands, and the arm, and he's got a little more pop in his bat than you think."

Mets right-hander Matt Harvey: "He's got great stuff. He needs some polish and he'll go through some growing pains, but you're talking about a potential No. 1 starter here. There's a lot of upside."

Indians right-hander Ubaldo Jimenez: "It seems like most of the time he wants to be anywhere in the world but on the mound. He doesn't give 100 percent very often. He's become an embarrassment to himself with his lack of focus and effort."

Cardinals right-hander Joe Kelly: "I liked what he did during his time in the rotation. He looks like he is someone they are going to be able to count on as a starter in the years to come."

Phillies right-hander Kyle Kendrick: "He's so hard to figure out. He looks so bad at times that you wonder if he can even pitch in long relief at the major-league level. Then he'll turn around and pitch a really good game and you think he has the upside of a No. 3 starter. The Phillies aren't playing for anything this year, so they can take a good, long look at him and see where he fits into their future."

Yankees right-hander Hiroki Kuroda: "He has quietly been a lifesaver for the Yankees this season. He's been solid all year and spectacular at times. I'd feel very comfortable lining him up behind CC Sabathia in a playoff series."

Twins outfielder Darin Mastroianni: "He's been a bright spot for the Twins. He's become a good bench player. He can get the occasional hit, steal a base, and play pretty decent defense. He'd really help a National League team out."

Blue Jays catcher Jeff Mathis: "I know it's easy to laugh about him getting a two-year, \$3-million extension, but it's really not out of line for what he is—a solid No. 2 catcher. A lot of teams would take him under those terms."

Diamondbacks left-hander Wade Miley: "What I really like about him is that he has no fear. He works fast, goes right after hitters, and isn't afraid to throw his breaking pitch in any count. He pitches like a guy who is wise beyond his years."

Tigers shortstop Jhonny Peralta: "That he's been batting fifth is an indictment of how disappointing the Tigers have been this season. He's a complementary player, not a middle-of-the-order guy."

Rays first baseman Carlos Pena: "It's really tough to watch him. He looks lost in the plate, and he's no longer a plus defender for me. He looks like a guy at the end of the road."

Orioles first baseman Mark Reynolds: "It's easy to say the Orioles should give up on him, but you just don't find that many players with the type of raw power he has. Power is the scarcest commodity in the game today."

Reds third baseman Scott Rolen: "I've got to believe this is his last year. He can't stay on the field anymore. It's a shame. He's had a good career and he's a real pro, but his body has just completely broken down."

Mariners first baseman Justin Smoak: "Maybe I'm just stubborn and blind, but I still think there's something there with this guy. I still think he has the makings of a good major-league hitter."

Cubs right-hander Chris Volstad: "When does the point come when it becomes apparent to everyone that this guy isn't a big-league starting pitcher? Whatever confidence he ever had—and it was never much—has been totally shot, and I think the best thing now would be to try him as reliever and see if you can salvage something out of him in the bullpen."

Astros first baseman Brett Wallace: "There is no doubt he can hit, but I'd like to see what he could do if he'd get in better shape. He's at a point in his career where he needs to start taking it more seriously and get in shape, or he's going to be out of the league."

Nationals right fielder Jayson Werth: "I appreciate him being a gamer and trying to be on the field every day after missing all that time with the broken wrist, but he can barely move on that bad right ankle. There's a fine line between being a gamer and hurting your team, and I think he's on the verge of crossing it."

Rangers designated hitter Michael Young: "One of Ron Washington's strong points is being loyal to his players, but I don't know how he can keep hitting this guy in the middle of the lineup. I understand taking a patient approach, but at this time of year you have to go with the hot hand, and he definitely isn't the hot hand."

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Front office types' views

Angels: "For as bad as they've looked the last couple of weeks, I'd still be shocked if they didn't make the playoffs. If they don't make it, that'll be the best team in a long time that didn't play in October."

Athletics: "They seem to be running out of steam. They've played as hard as they could for a long time, but you can see their guys are just worn out."

Dodgers: "There is a really good vibe with that team. You can tell they have a lot of confidence and a lot of chemistry. I thought adding Hanley Ramirez might screw things up there, but he's been on his best behavior and playing his ass off."

Giants: "Losing Melky Cabrera to the 50-game drug suspension is a big blow, but I don't think it's a killer blow. The Giants are always very resourceful. They find a way to get things done, which is a reflection of Brian Sabean and Bruce Bochy."

Marlins: "That's a total mess. They're not going to be able to move Heath Bell's contract this winter. They've got guys who clearly don't want to play for Ozzie. They're hard to watch beyond Giancarlo Stanton. Ugh."

Pirates: "They've played a little bit over their heads this season and it's starting to catch up to them now, but they've come a long way in a couple of years. They're at least putting legitimate big-league players on the field, and they're trying to win. They've got a way to go still, but they're on the right track."

Royals: "I really like their lineup a lot, and it's only to get better as some of their hitters mature. That being said, they absolutely have to go out and get some starting pitching in the offseason or they are going to do nothing but lose again next year."

White Sox manager Robin Ventura: "Everyone talks about how his personality has made a big difference in Chicago because he's the anti-Ozzie, but he's a very good strategist. I'm impressed with the way he runs a game, especially considering he had never managed before this season"

## **Reddick back in lineup, is at DH, plus: injury updates**

### **Susan Slusser**

The A's will be very happy to leave this stadium, where they are 1-4 and have scored two runs in the four losses. It's Dan Straily vs. Luke Hochevar tonight.

Josh Reddick is back in the lineup after missing last night following some complications from a tooth extraction. He's been instructed to ice often, and the area is still causing him quite a bit of pain, so he was initially in the lineup in right field but was later switched to DH so he can ice between at-bats.

That means that Brandon Moss moves from first base to right field, and Chris Carter goes from DH to first base.

Here's the lineup: Crisp CF, Weeks 2B, Reddick DH, Cespedes LF, Carter 1B, Moss RF, Donaldson 3B, Norris C, Pennington SS.

Seth Smith is close to returning from a hamstring strain; he's eligible to come off the DL on Saturday but it sounds as if he might go on a rehab assignment for a game or two first. Considering that the A's offense looks pretty flat lately, you'd think the team would be tempted to get Smith back in there as soon as possible.

Brett Anderson's status will be determined after he throws his next bullpen session, which could be tomorrow or Saturday. He threw 96 pitches last night, so he's stretched out enough to come back to the A's. It's been 13 months since his Tommy John surgery, and he's worked hard to get back this soon, but it's unclear where Anderson will slot into the rotation. My guess is that the A's want to see how Dan Straily does tonight and maybe even how Tommy Milone does tomorrow night to figure that out. If Straily has another rough one, might Anderson just step into that spot? The timing works should the need arise. Before, it appeared the A's had Anderson lined up to go in Brandon McCarthy's spot if McCarthy's shoulder issues were to crop up again, but he was terrific last night and looks as healthy as he's been in some time.

Lots of scouts are at this series, many of them looking at potential free-agent signings for this offseason. McCarthy is a health risk because of his chronic shoulder trouble, but there is no doubt that the scouts here last night will be filing glowing reports about him. He's great when he can pitch, and some of the lower-payroll teams (there are a few represented here this series) might think they can get a bargain on him because of his injury history. It's going to be interesting to see what happens with McCarthy this winter; he would like to come back to Oakland, if the team can work something out, but obviously Oakland has loads of pitching and McCarthy always will be a question mark from a health standpoint.

He's a good fit for the A's, of course. And a good role model for the younger starters. He works like a maniac, he throws strikes, he's an intense competitor and he's thoughtful. Also: very funny on Twitter, and so is his wife, Amanda.

That's a plus in my book, though, sadly, it won't factor in contract talks.

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