



Detroit Tigers Clips

Monday, May 26, 2014

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Drew Sharp: Seven days in May won't nuke the Tigers' season

May 26, 2014

By Drew Sharp / Detroit Free Press

It seems like eons ago, doesn't it?

But it was only seven days ago.

The Tigers finished off a three-game sweep at Boston on national television May 18, pushing their consecutive road winning streak to 11 games and solidifying their hold as the majors' best team eight weeks into the regular season. And with that came the requisite levity of listing divisional championship magic numbers as early as the Fourth of July.

And then, seven days later, Justin Verlander calls it an afternoon before Texas finished hitting in the top of the sixth inning, a Tigers starting pitcher rocked hard once again.

Two Sundays. Polar opposites.

But that's how quickly baseball morphs from beautiful to beastly. One week in a 162-game season is a snapshot, noticeable but not definitive. Obviously, the Tigers aren't playing well right now. But if it was premature to plan a coronation after the Tigers swept through the American League East on the road, then it's equally crazy to prepare for a burial after a 1-6 week in which the Tigers' spectacular starting pitching collapsed past mortal and into the macabre.

The Rangers lit up the Comerica Park scoreboard this weekend as though it were a pinball machine — 24 runs in the last two games.

And Prince Fielder wasn't even around.

The Tigers aren't as dominating as they appeared in Baltimore and Boston. But they also aren't as horrid as they looked at Cleveland and against Texas.

The baseball season is a marathon of peaks and valleys in the search for that consistent, effective pace. But the problem is that baseball isn't a sport conducive to the hurried analytics of social media and sports talk radio.

There **MUST** always be an issue. Verlander's third straight poor start in which he has surrendered at least five earned runs **MUST** mean he is losing velocity once again. There's a serious problem that the Tigers **MUST** immediately address. They **MUST** stop wearing the Zubaz leisure pants that have become the team's unofficial ensemble because the 1-6 week **MUST** have been a pointed response from the fashion police.

Or maybe — just maybe — it was a bad week. And bad weeks are unavoidable during the course of six months.

The body count of the last seven days reads as follows:

The Tigers' starting rotation's earned run average was just under 9.00

The Tigers gave up 57 runs off 100 hits.

Their WHIP (walks and hits per innings pitched) was 1.17 after May 18. Now, it's 1.30.

Predictably, Brad Ausmus expressed his disappointment that the Tigers haven't played well while also keeping the last week in perspective. It's done. Move on. There's a new game the next day and a new chance at redemption.

But it's a good early test for the rookie manager nonetheless.

Regardless of the sport, novices don't usually get the reins of veteran, championship-worthy teams because of their inexperience in navigating the inevitable potholes. It's easy to convey a steady cool when you're winning and everyone's loose. It's when the rough patches come that a calm, confident hand steering the wheel becomes even more important.

And like his predecessor, Jim Leyland, Ausmus trusts the professionalism and preparation of his players. He's not panicking. Nor should he be.

Nobody likes getting embarrassed. And the Tigers were. When you have to use a middle infielder as an emergency reliever twice in three games, as they did with Danny Worth, it doesn't speak well of your overall pitching performance.

It was grisly to watch. But it was just one week.

Today starts another one.

Ex-Tiger Alan Trammell recalls his Double-A days - and hitting lots of triples

May 26, 2014

By George Sipple / Detroit Free Press

Former Tigers shortstop and manager Alan Trammell was recently named to the inaugural induction class for the Southern League Hall of Fame. Trammell helped the Montgomery Rebels win back-to-back Southern League titles as a Tigers prospect in 1976-77. He still holds the league record for triples in a season, 19 in 1977. Now a bench coach for the Arizona Diamondbacks, Trammell spoke to Free Press sports writer George Sipple about his memories of the Southern League.

On playing with Lou Whitaker, who would go on to be his longtime double-play partner with the Tigers, in 1977 with Montgomery: “1976 was the first year I met Lou. He was drafted, and we met in instructional ball. That’s when they converted Lou from third to second. Then ’77, we went to Double-A together.”

On being part of two of the Rebels’ three consecutive Southern League championship teams: “In ’76, I was called up from rookie ball the first part of August. The shortstop was hurt, so I ended up playing the last month and a half for the ’76 championship team. The next year, I got to play the whole season, and we won with Lou and others.”

On how he hit 19 triples in one season: “The thing that makes the story better is the person whose record I broke was Reggie Jackson. Eddie Brinkman was our manager. He had me use a really big bat and choke up. It was actually 36-length, 35-ounce bat. I was small, but I choked up probably five or six inches on it. I had this big ol’ bat and choked up, and the way the fields were, I must have hit about a dozen for sure that were line drives right over the first baseman’s head or right down the line, and they would go down the corner and I could run and it was pretty simple. The only time I remember getting thrown out trying to stretch a double into a triple was one time, I hit a ball to left-center. Everything else I made. Because of Reggie’s name, it became more of a little story. Nobody’s duplicated it. I broke the record by the end of July, and people kept asking, ‘Are you going to hit a triple tonight?’ I don’t think you go into a game, in fact I know you don’t, trying to hit a triple. It was just ironic. It happened. Proud of that — that it has lasted this long.”

On the 1977 team: “We had a heck of a year. We pretty much dominated. ... Lou and I were there and we had good pitching. It was a very, very fun year, and then we got called to the big leagues and off we go. The Tigers at that time had a really good farm system.”

On Brinkman: “He was really good for Lou and I. He was not that far removed from playing. Here’s an ex-major league shortstop, who at the time had the major league consecutive game errorless streak at shortstop, at 72. I’m a shortstop. I know exactly who he is. He was great for Lou and I. He had a good feel for the game. He used to go out there and take grounders with us. He could throw batting practice all day. He was a fun, loose guy, and I enjoyed the heck out of him. For Lou and I, talking and telling us what the big leagues was like and what we could expect, I thought that was very hopeful as we started our journey. He was the perfect guy for us, as far as I was concerned. It was fun because we were good and we won. That’s the formula for anybody.”

On memorabilia from that time: “Yeah, I have the bat and a couple baseballs. I have them put away in some containers. I do have the bat that I broke the (triples) record. It’s a big ol’ log. I look at it and smile. When I got to the big leagues, that was too big. I used a variation. I also have the (championship) rings, both years. Just like the World Series ring — I haven’t worn it in years, just because I used to nick it on things all the time. Doesn’t mean you’re not proud. I didn’t wear it because I didn’t want to beat it up.”

On a tough season with the Diamondbacks: “We’ve dug ourselves a tremendous hole. We’ve had a few injuries, but no excuses. Every team goes through them. ... The big news here recently was hiring Tony (La Russa). ... He’s a great baseball mind, man and mind.”

On if he keeps track of the Tigers: “I saw where they won 11 games in a row on the road up till the Cleveland series, which brings back memories of our ’84 team. We won 17 in a row to set the American League record. I follow everybody, but obviously, I’ve always followed the Tigers.”

On the 35-5 start in ’84: “I just smile again. People, say, ‘How did you do it?’ Well, obviously when you get hot and confident and things go your way, you try to ride the wave when you’re hot. You know it’s going to crash at some point. That year, that wave stayed, and we were able to ride it longer than any time in baseball history, as far as the first 40 games. It’s a great story. It happened. But you think, how the hell did you do it? But

winning 17 games on the road was part of that. Everybody was doing their job, and, obviously, things went our way, too.”

Tigers notebook: Depth keeping A's on top, Nick Castellanos' growing pains

May 26, 2014

By George Sipple / Detroit Free Press

The Tigers begin a four-game series against the American League West-leading Athletics this afternoon in Oakland.

The Athletics have managed stay atop the division despite losing two of the starting pitchers — A.J. Griffin and Jarrod Parker — to Tommy John surgery.

“Their lineup is very deep and they do all the little things right,” Tigers starter Max Scherzer said of the A’s.

“That’s why they’re one of the best teams in the league. We gotta go out there and bring our A game if we want to beat them. We’ve seen them the past few years. They’ve been giving everybody fits. They are scrappy. They find every way to scratch and claw to get runs across.

“I think the only things that’s surprising is when you lose Parker and Griffin, you lose two of your guys that you’re counting on, and they’re able to find guys and keep the ball rolling. Just credit to their front office of finding talent.”

■ GROWING PAINS:

Nick Castellanos enters today’s game hitting .236 with 37 strikeouts and seven walks in 40 games.

“I don’t think anybody thought he was going to come up and be Mike Trout,” manager Brad Ausmus said.

“He’s gotta learn the league. The league’s going to learn him. He’s going to make adjustments. They’re going to adjust to him. ... They go through growing pains, but he still gives good at-bats. If he hits that line drive with the bases loaded yesterday that’s five feet one way or the other it’s two RBIs. And the truth is we don’t know what type of player he is.”

Ausmus said Castellanos has had trouble with the slider.

“The slider down, middle away, us giving him a little trouble,” Ausmus said. “We talked about him having to make adjustments ... get that pitch up or lay off it or a combination of the two.”

■ TURNING POINT: Things seemed to be turning around at the plate for Andrew Romine the past couple of days, but there was still work to be done after Saturday’s game. Romine hit his first career home run Friday and had a pair of hits in a 12-2 loss to the Rangers on Saturday.

Ausmus said Romine was working with hitting coach Wally Joyner after the game.

“There was something he felt wasn’t quite right, so he took about 10 minutes to try and fine-tune something,” Ausmus said. “He certainly looked more comfortable at the plate, whether it was psychological, physical, I couldn’t tell you.”

■ INJURY UPDATE: Tigers right-hander Luke Putkonen said he plans to start playing catch in about a week. Putkonen, who has been on the disabled list with “elbow inflammation,” visited Dr. James Andrews on Wednesday. Andrews made the same diagnosis that the club had and found the elbow is structurally sound. Putkonen said he will try some new stretching exercises.

“It’s just basically a lot of inflammation in the back of the elbow joint,” Putkonen said.

Tigers players pay their respects to veterans on Memorial Day

May 26, 2014

By George Sipple / Detroit Free Press

Tigers starter Max Scherzer has a greater appreciation for military life this Memorial Day after visiting the Navy SEALs and then the USS Carl Vinson earlier this season in San Diego.

“It gave me much more in-depth look at what military life is and the sacrifices they’re asked to make, how difficult their job is,” Scherzer said. “I gained so much more respect of what they do for their jobs. Monday will be a day to remember all the fallen ones that paid the ultimate price. It’s humbling to be a baseball player.”

Fans packed Comerica Park during the Memorial Day weekend, and there should be a big crowd in Oakland for today’s game against the A’s.

“For us as baseball players, it’s a moment and day to pay respects to the men and women who currently are in the armed forces,” Scherzer said.

Ian Kinsler noted how many people include baseball as part of their holidays in the spring and summer.

“There’s times during that day that you definitely stop and think of what’s going on in the country, the people that allow us to play this game and the people that protect us and serve our country,” Kinsler said of Memorial Day.

During his home starts, Justin Verlander hosts injured veterans from Veterans Affairs Medical Centers throughout the state of Michigan. Verlander donates the use of his suite to the veterans and their families. He also has a charity called “Wins for Warriors,” which aids veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder.

■ NOTEBOOK: As part of 12th annual Negro Leagues Weekend at Comerica Park, the Tigers posthumously honored former outfielder Bill Bruton, and his family was presented with the Detroit Tigers African American Legacy Award.

Rangers 12, Tigers 4: Why the Tigers lost on Sunday afternoon

May 26, 2014

By George Sipple / Detroit Free Press

- **WHAT HAPPENED:** Justin Verlander allowed nine runs (six earned) on 11 hits while striking out one in 5 1/3 innings. Verlander gave up three walks and has 30 in 71 1/3 innings this season. The Rangers had a 3-2 lead and then broke the game open by scoring five runs in the fifth. The first five batters reached safely in the inning. Alex Rios hit a two-run triple and scored on Robinson Chirinos' single to shallow center.
- **STREAK CONTINUES:** Ian Kinsler extended his hitting streak to 11 games with a single in the seventh inning for the Tigers.
- **ON A ROLL:** Andrew Romine is 5-for-12 since snapping an 0-for-22 slump with a home run Friday. Romine was 2-for-4 on Sunday with an RBI.
- **INJURY UPDATE:** Miguel Cabrera (right hamstring cramp) and Joba Chamberlain (right ankle contusion) both left the game for precautionary reasons and are considered day to day. Cabrera came out after getting a single in the bottom of the seventh, but said he expected to play today in Oakland. Chamberlain went to cover first on a ground ball and got hit in the back of foot by the baserunner. "Take care of it today and tonight," Chamberlain said. "We've got as short turnaround. See how it feels in the morning."
- **HITTING MACHINE:** Michael Choice hit a home run off Verlander in the second inning for the Rangers. ... Alex Rios hit a two-run triple in the fifth and finished 2-for-6 with three RBIs. ... Mitch Moreland was 3-for-5 with three RBIs and a run scored. ... Adrian Beltre was 3-for-4 with two RBIs and a run scored.
- **THREE STARS:** 1. Moreland. 2. Choice. 3. Rios.

Daily list: Is this the low point of the Tigers' season?

May 26, 2014

By Detroit Free Press Staff / Detroit Free Press

Is this the low point?

Gasp! The Tigers have lost six of seven. Let's look back at the roughest patches in recent playoff seasons:

2013

Detroit dropped six of seven at home to the Angels and at Tampa Bay in late June. During this stretch, they briefly lost their lead in the division.

2012

Lost seven of eight, including five in a row at home to Texas (surprise) and Seattle. But it was the second home stand of the season in mid-April.

2011

In late April/early May, the Tigers lost three straight to the M's, three straight in Cleveland (including two on walk-offs) and the first of three in Yankee Stadium.

2006

Detroit lost five in a row twice this season. In mid-August, to the Twins and White Sox. And the final five of the year, at home vs. Toronto and K.C., when just one win would have clinched the division.

1987

Starting in mid-April, the Tigers lost eight of nine, including a three-game sweep at the Yankees, and a two-game sweep in Seattle.

Shawn Windsor: Historians try to uncover what happened to all-time great shortstop Dobie Moore

May 26, 2014

By Shawn Windsor / Detroit Free Press

One of the best shortstops in the history of baseball may or may not have jumped from a second-story balcony and suffered a compound fracture in his leg. Dobie Moore may or may not have been running from his girlfriend, who had a gun, and who likely wasn't happy that he was married.

The stories from that night aren't as reliable as Peter Morris would like. Then again, as Morris, a baseball historian, points out, leaping from a balcony to escape an ill-tempered mistress only adds to the aura of the sweet-swinging shortstop.

As it happened, Moore did get shot that night, in the lower leg. And yes, his girlfriend pulled the trigger, ending his career six years after it started.

Moore played for the Kansas City Monarchs in 1920-25 and put up such outsized numbers he nearly got elected to the Hall of Fame in 2007 anyway. After the injury, he moved to Detroit and disappeared.

The Tigers are hosting their 12th annual Negro Leagues Weekend, including wearing the throwback uniforms of the Detroit Stars in Saturday's tribute game. The team honored several former Negro leagues players before the game.

Morris and his fellow researchers are a group of baseball enthusiasts determined to memorialize the forgotten greats of the Negro leagues. They spend thousands of hours unearthing the details of these players because so many fell into anonymity after they played.

They left behind diamond feats carried along by an oral tradition that eventually faded to silence. Now all that's left are specks of dust, names on a ship registry or a signature on a military registration card.

Morris and his band of diggers are a kind of baseball anthropologist, reminding us that the most accomplished deserve to be remembered no matter what the cultural circumstances were. Players such as Moore don't have their likenesses cut in bronze, greeting fans entering ballparks.

So many of them don't even have proper grave sites. Morris and fellow Moore researcher Gary Ashwill are mostly convinced the shortstop is buried at Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery in Warren.

If Moore was interred there, it's easy to miss. There isn't so much as a headstone.

Think about it this way, explained Morris, a book editor in Lansing, "If (Moore) had been a comparable white player from that era, there is no way we wouldn't know what happened to him. His shooting would be looked upon as a mythic event."

Imagine if Rogers Hornsby had taken a bullet? Or Ty Cobb?

Morris and his comrades aren't trying to undo history as much as they are trying to fill it out. Give it a bit more complexity.

"They deserve their story, too," he said.

Telling Moore's is a complicated one. Blame it on a robbery. And a funeral.

The search for answers

Ashwill, who, like Morris, is a book editor — he lives in Durham, N.C. — started trying to discover what happened to Moore about seven years ago. He didn't find much: a few news stories about the shooting that ended his career, another article detailing his interest in Western fiction, the statistics from his days as a Monarch. From 1920 to 1924, Moore hit .355 with a slugging percentage of .527.

Ashwill found that Moore had played for the Santa Clara Leopards in Cuba, that baseball-crazed country's version of the '27 Yankees. Moore also played the 25th Infantry regiment in Hawaii, a squad so potent it traveled and played major league teams, including the White Sox.

Because the military was segregated, too, many of the best players from that infantry unit went on to the Negro leagues, and several of them played for the Monarchs, the dominant team of the '20s.

"He was the best shortstop in baseball, by all accounts," said Ashwill. "He made a lot of plays."

Other than his predilection for women, not much is known about him. Ashwill and Morris have managed to put together an outline of his career.

The story?

Well, they hope that by sharing what they know, they might flush out a distant relative, or perhaps jar the memory of someone related to someone who used to play with him. Back in the '70s, when historians first began digging into the lives of the best Negro league players, teammates proved a terrific resource. Unfortunately, if those initial researchers didn't find a reliable teammate back then, the stories of players such as Moore went untold. Even now, Morris and Ashwill aren't certain about fundamental characteristics. Moore might have been 5-feet-10 or 6-1. He might have weighed 165 pounds (so says his WWII draft card) or 185 or 220. Ashwill, for the record, thinks Moore played at 180 or so, which would make for a muscular shortstop, and explain some of his power.

As Ashwill began compiling documents and numbers, he posted them on his blog, read by fellow Negro league researchers from around the country. He knew that Moore was born in Georgia, that he'd served in the military and played in Kansas City and that he had moved to Detroit after he was shot.

What he didn't know was the rest of the story, including when he died and where he was buried.

Morris became interested in Moore last year and e-mailed Ashwill offering to help. He found Moore's family in a Detroit directory in 1922. He found Moore listed in the 1930 census. He found the death certificate, indicating Moore had died in 1945, and that he was buried in the cemetery in Warren.

That would be the end of the story — except for a couple of newspaper stories after 1945. One from Chicago claims Moore was robbed in that city in 1946. The other, from Los Angeles, reported that Moore was a pallbearer at a teammate's funeral. Such errors aren't uncommon for the times.

Both Morris and Ashwill are almost certain those stories are inaccurate, the result of mistaken identity or sloppy reporting. The census data and cross-referencing they've done point to his death in 1945. Besides, in all the years of digging they've never encountered another candidate who could be Moore.

Still, there is that 1% possibility that he didn't die in 1945 and isn't buried in Warren. So they'd like a couple more documents, or an anecdote from a relative to be certain.

For now, they will keep searching, convinced their man was laid to rest below a tin marker — #1768 — at the Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery. One day they want to commission a proper headstone next to that nameless marker.

“There is nothing like being able to uncover something that's been forgotten because of an injustice,” said Ashwill. “You feel like you are righting a wrong in some way.”

Contact Shawn Windsor: 313-222-6487 or swindsor@freepress.com. Follow him on Twitter @shawnwindsor. Meet Moore

Not much is known about Doobie Moore, a star shortstop for the K.C. Monarchs in the early 1920s. What we do know:

- The basics: He was born in Atlanta in 1896 and grew to at least 5-feet-10. He hit and threw right-handed.
- On the field: He played seven seasons for the Monarchs, hitting .347 and slugging .520 in just more than 1,900 recorded plate appearances.
- The end: He retired in 1927 after being shot in the leg in Kansas City during the season.

Detroit Stars

The Tigers played their 20th annual Negro Leagues tribute game Saturday, wearing throwback Detroit Stars uniforms in tribute to Detroit's team in the Negro National League in 1919-37. Some of the notable players:

- Ted (Double Duty) Radcliffe: The catcher started his career in Detroit before moving around the league. He earned the nickname “Double Duty” by catching the first game of a doubleheader in the 1932 Negro League World Series, then throwing a shutout in the second game.
- Turkey Stearnes: Stearnes, who played in Detroit in 1923-31, was one of the greatest power hitters in Negro league history, finishing his career tops in recorded home runs with 176, 50 more than the second-place finisher. He is also considered the best leftfielder in league history. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2000, and Comerica Park features a plaque honoring him on the outside of the park.
- Pete Hill: One of the Negro leagues' early stars, Hill was ranked as the fourth-best outfielder all-time in a 1952 poll. He played for the team in 1919-21, serving as a player/manager starting at the age of 36. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.

Texas 12, Detroit 4: Justin Verlander roughed up again, this time by Rangers

May 26, 2014

By George Sipple / Detroit Free Press

Justin Verlander continued to tinker. The Rangers continued to beat up on the Tigers.

Verlander was roughed up for the third consecutive outing and has allowed at least five earned runs in each of those starts. Verlander gave up nine runs (six earned) over 5 1/3 innings to the Rangers on Sunday. He surrendered 11 hits and three walks with one strikeout.

The Rangers went on to beat the Tigers, 12-4. The Tigers were outscored 35-15 in the four-game series at Comerica Park.

“Obviously not a good series for us,” said Tigers manager Brad Ausmus. “Our starters had a bit of a rough series, with the exception of (Anibal Sanchez). You wouldn’t expect, based on our starters, that this would be the case, but every team goes through it. It was a rough patch. We’re not obviously happy about it, but it’s over. We’re going to move on.”

The Tigers open a four-game series this afternoon at Oakland.

Verlander hasn’t allowed five earned runs or more in three consecutive starts since 2008.

This was the sixth time in 277 career starts that Verlander has been limited to one strikeout or less. It was the first time since May 31, 2008, that Verlander had one strikeout in a start.

“Overall, obviously wasn’t a good day, but you gotta turn the page,” Verlander said. “I’m confident in myself. I can guarantee that I’m going to work my butt off to turn this around.”

Verlander tried putting his hands over his head, in an effort to stay back on the mound a little longer out of the windup. But he abandoned that after a few innings.

“I know I’m not executing my pitches the way that I should,” Verlander said. “I am sometimes, and then it gets out of sync. I’m just trying to find that consistency.”

Verlander allowed three runs in his first time through the Texas lineup.

Alex Rios’ two-out infield single scored Shin-Soo Choo in the first inning for the Rangers. The Tigers came back to tie it in the bottom of the first. Rajai Davis came home when Victor Martinez grounded into a forceout. The Rangers regained the lead in the top of the second, after Michael Choice hit a solo home run off Verlander. Robinson Chirinos followed with a double, advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt and scored on a throwing error by Verlander.

The Rangers added five runs the fifth and one in the sixth before Verlander exited. The Rangers added three more in the seventh to take a 12-2 lead.

“Wasn’t quite able to throw my off-speed for strikes the way I would like,” Verlander said. “A lot of stuff was kind of running back towards the middle.”

The Tigers came back to score twice in the bottom of the seventh to make it 12-4. Miguel Cabrera singled, but left with a right-hamstring cramp and is considered day to day. Torii Hunter had an RBI single and Bryan Holaday came home when Austin Jackson grounded into a forceout.

Joba Chamberlain is also considered day to day, after leaving with a right-ankle contusion in the top of the eighth. Al Alburquerque replaced Chamberlain with the bases loaded and two outs and got Luis Sardinas to strike out swinging.

The Rangers beat the Tigers, 12-2, on Saturday. It is the first time the Tigers have given up 12 or more runs in consecutive games since June 28-29, 2011, against the N.Y. Mets.

“I wasn’t able to do the job today,” Verlander said. “The next starting pitcher is going to do the job the next time. That’s the way you have to look at things.

“We’ve got a great rotation, we’ve got a great lineup, we’ve got a great ballclub. Even great ballclubs go through rough stretch over the course of 162 games. It happens. It’s not the end of the world.”

Recent slip by Tigers, Verlander likely just a blip on the season

May 26, 2014

By Bob Wojnowski / The Detroit News

Detroit — If you close your eyes and concentrate, you might remember when the Tigers used to be really, really good. Like, a week ago. That sheen of invincibility with their glossy starting pitchers? It's gone for now — not gone for good — and it's hard to figure out where it went.

Justin Verlander is virtually unrecognizable at the moment, and so is the team. It happens in a long season, but what happened again to Verlander on Sunday was concerning. It's not inexplicable lately when he has a rough outing, and that's inexplicable.

Another huge crowd witnessed another flop, as the Rangers pounded the Tigers 12-4 to officially turn an odd slide into an ugly slide. That's six losses in seven games, and it could end up being just a blip. In fact, the way it's unfolded, with every starter other than Anibal Sanchez getting knocked around, it's likely a blip. Aces don't turn into jokers in a week, and we'll learn more during a tough road trip that starts today in Oakland.

Verlander's struggles are pushing the boundaries of a blip, coming off a wobbly 2013, followed by off-season core-muscle surgery. We've learned not to wonder too deeply about him because he tinkers early, toys often, and usually returns to dominant form at the end. But over-tinkering can lead to over-thinking, which led to Verlander testing a new arms-over-the-head delivery Sunday.

He abandoned it early in the game, and nothing really changed. The Rangers feasted on his off-speed stuff and didn't fear the fastball, which rarely touched 95 mph. Verlander gave up 11 hits, nine runs (six earned) in five-plus innings and struck out only one. When Alex Rios laced a two-run triple to make it 7-2 in the fifth, you could hear a smattering of boos from the sellout crowd of 42,583.

Verlander's command was a mess — just 62 of his 109 pitches were strikes — so you can bet there's more tinkering ahead, for better or worse.

"I'm not gonna stay where I'm at," he said. "I'm determined. I've got the mental confidence to turn the page. I know how good I am, and I'm not gonna dwell on these past starts. That's not me and it's never been me."

Residual effects

Verlander has surrendered five or more earned runs in three consecutive starts, one of his rockiest stretches since 2008. He's 5-4 with a 4.04 ERA and his WHIP (walks plus hits per innings pitched) is an unseemly 1.51, the highest of his career. For comparison, his WHIP was 0.92 in his 2011 Cy Young season.

Although he's recovered from the January surgery, he admits there could be some residual effect. What exactly it is, he doesn't know. It's a familiar befuddlement, as Verlander struggled early last season and didn't regain his famous edge until late.

"Every now and then, it'll get a little sore," Verlander said. "I know Torii (Hunter) had a similar surgery and he said it took him a year to really feel he was back. I don't feel pain when I'm throwing. It could still be weak, who knows? That's not something I can concern myself with."

It's not something manager Brad Ausmus is concerned about either. The Tigers are 28-18 and in first place after a week of horrid pitching, so the rookie manager also leans heavily toward the Big Blip Theory, not the Big Bang Theory.

Watching the Tigers' talented rotation get pummeled is like being served cold soup for a week at your favorite restaurant. It makes no sense and it may never happen again, but you're going to wonder about that next bowl of minestrone.

"The last couple starts haven't been vintage Justin Verlander, but this guy is a competitor, he'll get his kinks worked out and he'll be back," Ausmus said. "(Tinkering) is part of what makes him great. His stuff is great and his makeup is unbelievable. (Roger) Clemens' approach to pitching was very similar — he would tinker to try and make himself better."

A weak week

The search for the perfect delivery can be painstaking and often fruitless. Verlander was fiddling with all sorts of release points Sunday, and while hitters didn't know where the ball was coming from, he had no idea where it was going.

It's magnified right now because Max Scherzer and Rick Porcello also had poor outings, and what a difference a weak-armed week makes. The Tigers had won six straight after sweeping the Red Sox, then got swept by the Indians and lost three of four to the Rangers, outscored 35-15.

This has nothing to do with the Tigers' plane troubles that made their trek to Cleveland so difficult. And I doubt it's about over-confidence or boredom after stomping to an early lead in the division. Baseball is a funny, humbling game — heck, the world champion Red Sox have lost 10 straight — and that's partly why Verlander isn't freaked out.

“You're trying to find the right pieces to fit, but it's not like I'm questioning everything,” he said. “I've got the past and I've got the mental fortitude, so it's only looking forward and finding it. There's no doubt in my mind I will.”

If there was any doubt, he wouldn't say it. Verlander falls into these ruts and claws his way out, and so do the Tigers. Slips become blips, and they certainly hope it's nothing more than that.

Shortstop Willy Adames on a hot streak for West Michigan Whitecaps

May 26, 2014

By Lynn Henning / The Detroit News

Andrew Graham remembers seeing him, for the first time, during last October's postseason Tigertown instructional camp in Lakeland, Fla.

Willy Adames had just a few weeks earlier turned 18.

"I didn't know much about him," said Graham, who now manages Adames at the Tigers' Single A affiliate at West Michigan. "But I think in his first eight at-bats he had six hits, all on the first pitch.

"This is a kid who loves playing. He's always smiling. And that's why he's good, too. He's great at relaxing. He just loves to play baseball."

Relative to age, Adames is one of the better prospect position stories in the Tigers' farm chain. He is a shortstop, 6-foot-1, 180 pounds, who signed two years ago when he was 16 and living in Santiago, Dominican Republic.

He is batting .270 in 40 games for the Whitecaps, with a .746 OPS. Analyze his numbers from the past 10 games and you appreciate why Graham believes the season's second half could treat Adames and the Whitecaps better: .286, with an .828 OPS.

He does not yet have a home run, which Graham ties to a large Fifth Third Field ballpark and to heavy air from nearby Lake Michigan. Adames, though, has six triples to go with five doubles.

"And on another of those two doubles he has been thrown out at third base," Graham said. "He's got power, but he's got right-center power. In the second half you'll probably see more power as he begins pulling a few pitches he can pull.

"He's hit the ball against the fence twice in center. One was a foot from going out. He was a little frustrated — he thought he had hit his first professional home run."

No one, beginning with Graham, is worried about Adames' long-ball potential. A more intense plan is to acquaint an aggressive right-handed hitter with some helpful boundaries.

"The main thing I've seen this spring is his adjustment to the strike zone," Graham said. "When he first came up, he was chasing too many balls in the dirt. He kind of lost his aggressiveness for a while afterward. But since then, in the last 10 to 15 games, he's been walking more, not swinging at the ball in the dirt anymore.

"It's amazing to me to see an 18-year-old making those kinds of adjustments and getting himself into hitter's counts. But that's why he's special."

Defensively, Adames is good enough to have allowed another prized youngster, Javier Betancourt, who earlier this month turned 19, to settle in at second base.

"He's got an average to a little above average arm," Graham said of Adames. "He's got good range up the middle — he's really made some great plays up the middle, diving and spinning. The kid can play shortstop.

"He's still learning the speed of runners and how to react, and when to charge. When he first came up, he was putting a little pressure on himself and he made quite a few errors — he has 11 errors for the year.

"But I think he's made only one error in his last 15 games."

Adames is one player shining at an outpost that probably has the best collection of across-the-board talent in Detroit's minor-league channels.

Pitching has been the bigger story at West Michigan, where one of a sterling crew of starters is last year's top draft pick, Jonathon Crawford, who has allowed just three earned runs in his last seven starts.

Crawford, 22, is 6-2, 205, throw right-handed, and was Detroit's first choice after he had dazzled at the University of Florida.

"Last night," Graham said, referring to Friday's Whitecaps victory at Dayton, "he went seven innings and (allowed) three hits. He had nine punch-outs (strikeouts) and one walk, just throwing quality strikes at the bottom of the zone.

"He was running 92-94 (mph) and topped out at 95. He was using his changeup and slider to get outs when he needed them. He's pitching more now rather than just throwing.

"He's having an idea, where in college he tended to just throw."

In the bushes, it's all about learning. As an infielder, as a starting pitcher — low Single A is a transitional experience suiting the needs of two young players named Adames and Crawford.

Tigers minor-league report: 2012 first-round pick RHP Jake Thompson impressing at Lakeland

May 26, 2014

By Lynn Henning / The Detroit News

Triple A Toledo

Who's hot ...

James McCann, C: A good spring for McCann, 23, who was the Tigers' top pick in 2011: .284 on the season and .300 in his last 10 games. He is 6-2, 210, bats right-handed, and played at the University of Arkansas.

Tyler Collins, OF: Picking it up of late: .293 in his last 10 games, with two home runs, a triple and a double, which accounts for an .853 OPS. Collins, 23, was with the Tigers earlier in the season. He was a sixth-round pick in 2011 (Howard University).

Hernan Perez, 2B: Batting .293 in his last 10 games. Moving to his more natural second base, thanks to Eugenio Suarez's arrival, is probably helping.

Chad Smith, RH reliever: Basically pitching the way he did at Double A Erie ahead of his Toledo promotion: 1.59 ERA in his seven Mud Hen appearances, with a .220 opposing batting average. Smith, 24, is 6-3, 215, and was grabbed by the Tigers in the 2011 draft's 17th round (Southern Cal).

Kevin Whelan, RH reliever: It's never too late. Whelan, 30, was Tigers property before he was part of the Gary Sheffield trade with the Yankees. Signed a minor-league deal with Detroit this year and has pitched well. In 11 games: 1.32ERA, .178 opposing batting average, with 14 strikeouts and four walks in 132/3 innings. He was a fourth-round pick by the Tigers in 2005 (Texas A&M).

And who's not ...

Jordan Lennerton, 1B: Simply hasn't been happening for Lennerton, who on the year is batting .182, with a .595 OPS. He is 28, bats left-handed, and was expected to have a robust year in 2014. So far, it's been anything but pleasant.

Double A Erie

Who's hot ...

Steven Moya, OF: Beginning to click for Moya, 22, who had four hits, including two home runs, and six RBIs in Saturday night's victory. Still having issues with walks (six on the season versus seven home runs) and strikeouts (51 in 44 games), but Moya's moving upward. He is 6-foot-6, 230 pounds, and bats left-handed.

And who's not ...

Aaron Westlake, 1B: Batting a frosty .083 in his last 10 games, with a .212 OPS. Westlake was a third-round pick (Vanderbilt) in 2011.

Single A Lakeland

Who's hot ...

Jake Thompson, RH starter: Rare that he isn't in command. Thompson, 20, and the Tigers' first overall pick in 2012, is 4-1, with a 1.80 ERA in nine starts. He is 6-4, 235.

Chad Wright, OF: .295 in his last 10 games, with an .809 OPS. Wright is 24, bats left-handed, and was a ninth-round pick in 2011 (University of Kentucky).

Angel Nesbitt, RH reliever: Could be destined for Erie, thanks to the prowess he has sustained at Lakeland: 1.03 ERA in 17 games, with a .211 opposing batting average. Nesbitt, who is 6-1, 237, was signed in 2009 out of Aragua, Venezuela.

And who's not ...

Yorfrank Lopez, RH starter: Dismal start year to date for Lopez, who is 23: 6.28 ERA in nine games, with a .310 opposing batting average before throwing seven shutout innings Sunday.

Single A West Michigan

Who's hot ...

Javier Betancourt, 2B: .341 in his last 10 games, with an .780 OPS. Betancourt, 19, is one of the system's brighter lights. He is 6-foot, 180, and bats right-handed.

Austin Kubitza, RH starter: Not much different for Kubitza, 22, a 6-5, 225-pound muscleman from Rice (4th round, 2013 draft) who has these numbers spanning nine starts: 5-0, 2.08 ERA, .197 opposing batting average. And who's not ...

Ben Verlander, OF: Hasn't been a comfortable May for Verlander: .167 in his last 10 games, with a .385 OPS. He is 6-4, 200, has a famous older brother, and was a 14th-round pick in 2014 (Old Dominion).

Tigers' Miguel Cabrera leaves game with hamstring cramp but he's OK

May 26, 2014

By Rod Beard / The Detroit News

Detroit — Tigers manager Brad Ausmus wasn't around last season to see an injured Miguel Cabrera play his way through the end of the season. Despite an injury that required core-muscle repair in the offseason, Cabrera finished another MVP season but clearly wasn't at 100 percent down the stretch and into the playoffs. Ausmus would like to keep Cabrera healthy, but got a scare when Cabrera pulled up after lacing a single to left in the seventh inning on Sunday against the Rangers. Cabrera made it to first base but was pulled from the game for a pinch-runner.

"I feel better," Cabrera said. "It was a little cramp but they decided to take me out."

It was a precautionary move, but Ausmus didn't want to take any chances with Cabrera's health, especially with the Tigers trailing by 10 runs.

"He said he could stay in. If this was Sept. 19 and an important game and we weren't down by 10, it would have been a different story," Ausmus said. "There was no reason to take a risk — might as well just get him out of there."

Cabrera went 4-for-12 in the series and had a single and a walk on Sunday. After hitting .276 with two home runs and 15 RBIs in the first month of the season, Cabrera has hit .372 in May with five homers and 27 RBIs. As if the bullpen issues weren't bad enough, Ausmus has to monitor Joba Chamberlain, who suffered a right-ankle bruise in the eighth, which happened as he was covering the base on a grounder to first.

"The concern level is low," Ausmus said. "The runner's foot hit him so it's more of a contusion."

Chamberlain gave up two hits and a walk and recorded two outs. His status is day-to-day.

Heating up

Shortstop Andrew Romine ended his 0-for-22 drought on Friday with a home run — the first of his career. He added two hits Saturday and two on Sunday and finished the series 5-for-10.

Even after the two hits Saturday, Romine was still looking to correct his swing and try to lift his average back above .200.

"I know he was working with (hitting coach) Wally (Joyner) after the game (Saturday) despite the fact he had some good at-bats. There was something he felt wasn't quite right," Ausmus said. "He took 10 minutes to try and fine-tune something. He certainly looked a lot more comfortable at the plate — whether it was psychological, physical I couldn't tell you.

"I was hoping that maybe the home run would be the start of something good and it looks like it's moving in that direction — and I hope it continues."

Coke improving

Phil Coke had been struggling for much of the season, but seems to be trying to turn things around. In two combined appearances against the Rangers, he didn't allow a run and gave up just one hit and a walk, with two strikeouts.

With the bullpen logging heavy innings this week, Coke had four appearances this week, including two innings on Monday against the Indians and another 12/3 on Wednesday. He followed with 11/3 perfect innings on Thursday.

"He's definitely throwing better his last couple outings, for sure. Maybe there's something to be said for him being a little tired because his velocity was still good. Maybe his command is a little better; he doesn't try to overthrow it," Ausmus said. "He's really helped us out a lot — we all know how short the bullpen's been the last week; he's given us some big outs. The last couple of games probably have been his best of the year."

Rough start

Rookie Nick Castellanos has been up and down at the plate with a .233 average. He has struggled of late, going 1-for-11 in the first three games against the Rangers. On Sunday, he had two walks and a single in the eighth. It's a switch for Castellanos, who has 37 strikeouts and a .258 on-base percentage.

"The slider down middle of the way is giving him a little bit of trouble. He's got to learn to get that pitch up in the zone," Ausmus said. "Teams are going to see that on video or scouting reports and continue to attack that,

so we've talked about him having to make adjustments and get that pitch up or lay off it — or a combination of the two.”

Castellanos had just five walks in 39 games but seems to be developing better recognition and patience, with the two walks on Sunday and one on Saturday, with just one strikeout.

Tigers at Athletics

Series: Four games at Athletics, O.co Coliseum, Oakland, Calif.

First pitch: 4:05 p.m. Monday; 10:05 Tuesday-Wednesday; 3:35 Thursday.

TV/radio: FSD/1270-AM and 97.1-FM

Probables: Monday, LHP Drew Smyly (2-2, 2.97) vs. LHP Tommy Milone (2-3, 3.99); Tuesday, RHP Max Scherzer (6-1, 2.59) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (5-1, 1.99); Wednesday, RHP Anibal Sanchez (2-2, 2.83) vs. LHP Scott Kazmir (5-2, 2.56); Thursday, RHP Rick Porcello (7-2), 2.91 vs. RHP Jesse Chavez (4-1, 2.54)

Race for the top: The Athletics get their first matchup since last season's A.L. Division Series.

Tigers' Justin Verlander still searching for way to dominate without overpowering fastball

May 26, 2014

By Tony Paul / The Detroit News

Time for a few observations on the Tigers as we wait to fire up the grill for Memorial Day -- a day after the Detroit pitching staff was lit up yet again.

What's up with JV?

Justin Verlander is struggling. There's no two ways around it.

And, quite frankly, it shouldn't be all that surprising. This happens in baseball. It's simple anatomy. As hard-throwing pitchers near and then move into their 30s, there is something missing from that arm particularly for pitchers who've thrown as much as Verlander, who averaged 220 innings from 2006-13.

Verlander's fastball is down in velocity, and substantially so over the last couple years.

A few years back, when he was winning the Cy Young and MVP awards, his heater was the best in the game, sitting in the mid-90s -- and able to get up to 99 and 100 pretty much whenever he wanted to, from the first inning through the ninth. According to Fangraphs, he hit 99 mph in 15 starts in 2012.

Now, at age 31, he's sitting in the lower 90s -- and rarely approaches 95 or 96 anymore. He touched 99 in two starts last year, and this year hasn't thrown harder than 97, and even that was in just one start.

Fangraphs says his fastball ranges from 91 to 96; that range was 91 to 101 just two years ago.

The result: Far fewer swings and misses, and thus far fewer strikeouts, the bread and butter of Verlander's game when he was the ace of baseball from 2009-12.

So now it's up to Verlander to make the adjustments, as so many great pitchers have over the years. Few men throw 100 in their 20s and 40s; there is only one Nolan Ryan, a freak whose hard-core leg regimen kept him chucking blazing fastballs well into retirement.

The good news: Verlander still has a lot going for him, including perhaps the best curveball for a starting pitcher. He also has a plus change-up, so there are tools to work with as he attempts to right the ship -- following three consecutive dud starts, the latest in Sunday's 12-4 loss to the Rangers.

He found "it" down the stretch last year, and into the postseason. No doubt, he can again.

That said, this is the perfect example why so many major-league teams balk at giving starting pitchers huge-money deals, like the \$180 million contract Verlander signed last spring which will pay him \$28 million a year every year from 2015-19, and potentially another \$22 million in 2020, when he turns 37.

It's just such a tremendous risk for a ballclub, when the numbers aren't on the side of long-term success. CC Sabathia is unraveling, with potentially \$73 million owed by the Yankees from 2015-17. Johan Santana eventually was a bust with the Mets. Tim Lincecum, Barry Zito, and the list goes on.

And don't think for a second they're not sweating in Seattle (Felix Hernandez) and Los Angeles (Clayton Kershaw and Zack Greinke). Those deals look fine in their infancy. Odds are, at least two of the three won't look so rosy in a few years or even sooner.

This is exactly why the Tigers are balking at giving the \$200 million or so that Max Scherzer is seeking. They'd love to keep him in their rotation for the next five years. He has the most explosive fastball in the game, a dynamite slider, and an improved change-up that perhaps is to credit for making him a true ace.

But even putting aside the threat of injury -- a very real threat for any pitcher, let alone one who throws so violently as Scherzer, 29 -- that high-octane fastball, history says, won't be in his back pocket forever. And who knows how a pitcher will adapt when he no longer has that lethal weapon.

It's not that easy. The Tigers are seeing that firsthand, with Justin Verlander.

Damn, that's ugly

The Tigers still have one of the best pitching staffs in all of baseball. I think anyone with a hint of brain matter can acknowledge that.

But man, the last week has been absolutely awful for the staff, from top to bottom.

From the series opener in Cleveland through the series ender against Texas in Detroit, seven games in all, the Tigers pitchers allowed 57 runs (54 earned) in 66.1 innings. That's an ERA of 7.33 during that span, raising the team ERA from 3.13 on May 18 to 3.80 today, an eye-popping jump in late May.

The last time I can remember the Tigers staff having a horrid stretch like this was 2011, when during a six-game stretch from June 28-July 3, the ERA was 8.17, and three times they allowed 11 or more runs.

And that led to the firing of pitching coach Rick Knapp.

For those wondering, no, Tigers current pitching coach Jeff Jones is not in any jeopardy.

A lot of folks mistakenly believe Knapp got the ax for the Tigers pitching woes, but that wasn't the whole truth. In reality, Knapp, who had spent his entire coaching career in the minor leagues before Jim Leyland hired him ahead of the 2008 season, struggled to adjust to the speed and complicated nuances of the major-league game. So the Tigers and Knapp parted companies, and replaced him with Jones, 57, a good fit given his many stints with the major leagues, in a variety of roles, under several different managers.

It just so happened the team ERA the rest of the season was 3.67 and the Tigers coasted to their first American League Central championship, winning it by a whopping 15 games.

Jones got some credit, but truth be told, Verlander was having a once-in-a-generation season, Max Scherzer was starting to show signs of the ace he'd become, and Doug Fister proved a brilliant mid-season acquisition by president and GM Dave Dombrowski.

The maturation of Rick Porcello and Drew Smyly, and addition of Anibal Sanchez, has kept the Tigers pitching staff -- particularly the rotation -- among the game's elite ever since.

That's not to say Jones doesn't deserve praise. He has a great, laid-back relationship with all pitchers, and works his rear off. He changed Porcello's delivery, tweaked Scherzer's mechanics and pored over so much video last year with Verlander, he'd be the first guy I'd call if I can't figure out which remote control goes with what.

Sure, the Tigers are scuffling now, in terms of pitching. But there's too much talent not to turn things around, perhaps as early as Monday in Oakland.

And Jones will have a little bit to do with that turnaround, just like in 2011.

Doesn't get any easier

On this kind of skid, there certainly are more appealing teams to play than the A's.

The teams start a four-game series at 4:05 p.m. Monday, followed by a weekend three-game set against the Mariners in Seattle, where Lloyd McClendon -- beat out by Brad Ausmus for the Tigers skipper job -- now is managing.

Typically, the Tigers don't play all that tremendous on the West Coast, at least not during their recent baseball renaissance.

And Oakland is as tough as it comes in the American League nowadays.

Really, it's remarkable that the A's continue to be so competitive, with their shoestring budget and two big starting pitchers -- Jarrod Parker and A.J. Griffin -- out for the season with elbow surgery. Yet, there they are, at 30-20, their .600 winning percentage bested only by the Tigers' .609 (28-18).

Surprisingly, the A's are winning as much with offense as pitching. Led by still-underrated Josh Donaldson, plus Brandon Moss, Derek Norris, Yoenis Cespedes and Jed Lowrie, they're tops in the AL with 248 runs scored. Baby-faced Sonny Gray and Co. also have them in pitching, with just 158 runs allowed.

It should be a fun series, a rematch of the last two AL division series -- both won by Detroit in five games. Just like the Tigers wanted some revenge in Boston last week, the A's will want to make a statement against Detroit, as well.

Don't sleep on that series with the Mariners, though. Seattle is hanging around at .500, with that premier pitching and upgraded offense.

The Tigers will get on track before too long, but their work remains cut out for them over the next week.

Making contributions

Alex Avila had two more walks Sunday, bumping up his on-base percentage .359 -- trailing just Victor Martinez, Miguel Cabrera and Ian Kinsler on the Tigers.

He also threw out another would-be base stealer, showing off footwork and an arm that have been very impressive this season. On the year, he's thrown out 42 percent -- a pace 10-percent better than his career best.

Of course, many Tigers fans don't want to hear it.

In their eyes, Avila, 27, can do no right.

Like, if he cured cancer, some would scoff, "Well, call me when you solve world peace."

Rough patch doesn't worry Tigers' Brad Ausmus: 'It's just baseball'

May 26, 2014

By Rod Beard / The Detroit News

Detroit — On the heels of a six-game win streak, the Tigers have lost five of their last six games in the past week and are in a bit of a tailspin. The skid has dampened some of the enthusiasm after they streaked out to the best record in the majors.

Still, the Tigers are pacing the American League and maintain a five-game lead in the Central Division as they prepare to head out on a West Coast road trip, where they'll face the A's and Mariners.

The Tigers are 28-17 (.622) heading into Sunday's game against the Rangers -- second only to the Giants (31-18, .633)

Manager Brad Ausmus isn't worried about the recent swoon, as the Tigers are just passing the quarter mark of the season and their longest losing streak of the year has been just four games. After being swept in Cleveland, the Tigers have lost two of three to the Rangers at Comerica Park, with the starting rotation struggling for the first time this season.

"It's just baseball. We won six in a row but we weren't going to win the rest of them — that's just how it goes," Ausmus said Sunday morning. "We hit a little bit of a skid, starting with Cleveland, and we're hoping to turn it around today."

It's anything but a rarity to have a tough stretch of games; last season, the Tigers had five such spans of five losses in six games, including one in the last series of the regular season and into the first three games of the playoffs -- in the Division Series against the A's.

Ausmus said dropping a few games just happens from time to time but it's how teams react to them that defines them.

"You never enjoy losing but I've been through enough losing streaks to know that it's part of the game. It's going to happen to every team at least once," Ausmus said Saturday. "The part that nags at you a little bit is that we were in all of them.

"One was 10 innings, one was 13 and had the lead a couple times. That gets a little bit irritating, but it happens. It's better than being blown out four straight games. We got blown out in the game that Darvish pitched but the first three were all close and we were in them, despite the fact that our starters struggled a little bit. The hitters never gave up."

Having a veteran clubhouse and experienced players helped ease some of the concern about the losses. Even the defending World Series champion Red Sox — whom the Tigers swept last weekend — are on a nine-game skid. As the Tigers have been winning more in recent years, they've raised expectations and fans aren't accustomed to longer skids.

"The success we've had over the last few years and the type of organization we've built where we expect to win every single year, that's the mindset to where even when you lose a few games in a row, there's no reason to panic," Alex Avila said. "You understand it's part of the game and eventually the talent of the team takes over and you're able to get on the right track."

But Ausmus sees the effort and fight in the Tigers, who aren't giving up, despite a few lopsided scores against the Rangers and some less-than-stellar outings by the starting rotation.

"It wasn't a lack of effort; the only time a manager or coaching staff would get upset is if it's a lack of effort or lack of concentration," Ausmus said. "I wasn't overly stressed or overly concerned it wasn't going to end. I still felt very good about the team every time we took the field."

Tigers week in review: Detroit gladly says farewell to an ugly stretch

May 26, 2014

By Rod Beard / The Detroit News

A look back ...

Monday: Indians 5, Tigers 4 (10) -- WP: Scott Atchison, LP: Al Albuquerque

Tuesday: Indians 6, Tigers 2 -- WP: Trevor Bauer, LP: Justin Verlander

Wednesday: Indians 11, Tigers 10 -- WP: Josh Tomlin, LP: Phil Coke

Thursday: Rangers 9, Tigers 2 -- WP: Yu Darvish, LP: Robbie Ray

Friday: Tigers 7, Rangers 2 -- WP: Anibal Sanchez, LP: Scott Baker

Saturday: Rangers 12, Tigers 2 -- WP: Nick Martinez, LP: Rick Porcello

Sunday: Rangers 12, Tigers 4 -- WP: Colby Lewis, LP: Justin Verlander

BEST GAME

Well, the only win of the week has to qualify as the top game. The Tigers' 7-2 win on Friday was the second straight triumph for Anibal Sanchez since his return from the 15-day disabled list. Sanchez pitched seven innings and gave up two runs on five hits with five strikeouts. Andrew Romine had his first career home run and Ian Kinsler had three doubles.

WORST GAME

Much harder to pick because of so many contenders. Wednesday's 11-10 loss to the Indians in 13 innings gets the nod because the Tigers lost the lead in the bottom half of an inning twice. Max Scherzer gutted through seven innings — and seven earned runs — but in the end, Al Albuquerque's walk-off balk gave Cleveland a victory in a thoroughly ugly game.

... and a look ahead

TIGERS AT A'S

Series: Four games, at O.co Coliseum, Oakland, Calif.

First pitch: 4:05 p.m. Monday; 10:05 Tuesday-Wednesday; 3:35 Thursday.

TV/radio: All games on FSD, and 1270-AM and 97.1-FM.

Probables: Monday, LHP Drew Smyly (2-2, 2.97) vs. LHP Tommy Milone (2-3, 3.99); Tuesday, RHP Max Scherzer (6-1, 2.59) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (5-1, 1.99); Wednesday, RHP Anibal Sanchez (2-2, 2.83) vs. LHP Scott Kazmir (5-2, 2.56); Thursday, RHP Rick Porcello (7-2), 2.91 vs. RHP Jesse Chavez (4-1, 2.54)

Race for the top: The Athletics meet the Tigers for the first time since last season's A.L. Division Series.

TIGERS AT MARINERS

Series: Three games, at Safeco Field, Seattle.

First pitch: 10:10 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 4:10 p.m. Sunday.

TV/radio: All games on FSD, and 1270-AM and 97.1.

Probables: Friday: RHP Justin Verlander (5-4, 4.04) vs. RHP Hisashi Iwakuma (3-0, 1.76); Saturday, LHP Drew Smyly (2-2, 2.97) vs. RHP Chris Young (3-2, 3.53); Sunday RHP Max Scherzer (6-1, 2.59) vs. LHP Roenis Elias (3-3, 3.68).

Reunion: The Tigers will get their first glance at the new-look Mariners, with former Tigers hitting coach Lloyd McClendon at the helm and Robinson Cano at second base.

On deck: Slumping Detroit Tigers travel to West Coast to take on AL West-leading Oakland A's

May 26, 2014

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

Here's a quick look at the next series for the Detroit Tigers:

Opponent: Oakland Athletics

Site: O.co Coliseum in Oakland

Records: Tigers, 28-18 (1st in AL Central); Athletics, 30-20 (1st in AL West)

Schedule

Monday: LHP Drew Smyly (2-2, 2.97 ERA) vs. LHP Tommy Milone (2-3, 3.99 ERA), 4:05 p.m., FSD

Tuesday: RHP Max Scherzer (6-1, 2.59 ERA) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (5-1, 1.99 ERA), 10:05 p.m., FSD

Wednesday: RHP Anibal Sanchez (2-2, 2.83 ERA) vs. LHP Scott Kazmir (5-2, 2.56 ERA), 10:05 p.m., FSD

Thursday: RHP Rick Porcello (7-2, 3.88 ERA) vs. RHP Jesse Chavez (4-2, 2.61 ERA), 3:35 p.m., FSD

Scouting the A's: Despite owning the league's best record, the A's have dropped four straight -- their longest losing streak of the season -- after being swept by the Blue Jays. Oakland entered its series in Toronto leading the American League in runs, but scored just seven times the past four games. Left-handed starter Tommy Milone will counter Drew Smyly in the first game Monday. Milone has a 1.37 ERA over his past three starts, helping account for the team's league-leading 2.84 ERA. The A's also sport the AL's best rotation ERA (2.89). Side note: Nick Punto suffered a left calf strain Friday and is expected to miss Monday's opener. He could land on the disabled list.

5 things to watch: Can Tigers' rotation get back on track? Will bullpen finally get a chance to breathe?

May 26, 2014

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

DETROIT -- Starting pitching has been the key to the Tigers' success through the first quarter of the season. But the rotation has been downright terrible as of late, giving up 41 runs en route to an atrocious 8.77 ERA during a 1-6 stretch.

Once considered the hottest team in baseball, the AL Central-leading Tigers have quickly cooled, allowing division foes Cleveland and Kansas City to climb back into the race. Will Detroit's starting core regroup this week? Or will trouble carry over into their series in Oakland and Seattle? Here's five things to watch this week:

Justin Verlander

1. Can Detroit finally solve its rotation woes?

Detroit's starting pitching has gone from red hot to ice cold and has left the team's bullpen bruised and battered as eight different relievers were forced to eat 18 innings between Monday and Thursday. The Tigers' starting pitchers owned a major league-best 2.64 ERA in their first 39 games but have watched it balloon to 3.50 in the last week after giving up 38 earned runs in 39 combined innings since Monday. If Detroit's starters continue to exit early, the bullpen could be in big trouble as the next off day isn't until June 2.

2. It's always Sonny in Oakland

Sonny Gray has quietly emerged as one of the best starting pitchers in the American League. That shouldn't come as a surprise to the Tigers, who witnessed Gray evolve from a small-town starter to Oakland's ace when he traded zeros with Justin Verlander in Game 2 of last year's AL Division Series. An early AL Cy Young frontrunner, Gray will take the mound Tuesday in what should be another classic showdown against reigning AL Cy Young winner Max Scherzer.

Miguel Cabrera

3. Who will emerge in battle between slumping division leaders?

The Tigers no longer lead the league in wins. That lead belongs to the A's, who sport a 30-20 record. Despite losing Jarrod Parker and A.J. Griffin to season-ending Tommy John surgeries, the A's have been nearly unstoppable, thanks largely to a pitching staff that owns an American League-best 2.87 ERA. However, like the Tigers, the A's are in the midst of a slump in which they have dropped a season-high four straight. Did the Tigers catch the A's at the right time?

4. Will Lloyd McClendon get the last laugh?

It will be a reunion of sorts next weekend when the Tigers travel to Seattle for the final leg of their seven-game road trip to square off against the Lloyd McClendon-led Mariners. It will mark the first time McClendon, who served as the Tigers' hitting coach the past seven years, will face Detroit since being offered the managerial job in Seattle this past winter. Will McClendon, who was passed over for the vacant managerial role in Detroit, make the Tigers regret their decision?

Max Scherzer

5. Will Mad Max return to form after shaky start?

In his first seven starts this season, Scherzer was nearly unhittable, masterfully striking out 74 batters in 59 pitched innings. But Scherzer took a giant step back at claiming a second straight AL Cy Young when he was lit up for seven runs on 12 hits and two walks in his most recent start in Cleveland. Will Scherzer get back on track Tuesday when he takes the mound for Game 2 of a four-game set in Oakland? He'll have his hands full against an Oakland squad that has scored a league-leading 248 runs this year.

Injury updates: Miguel Cabrera not concerned about hamstring; Joba Chamberlain suffers bruised ankle

May 26, 2014

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

DETROIT -- Tigers first baseman Miguel Cabrera wanted to stay in the game Sunday after his right hamstring cramped up in the seventh inning.

Manager Brad Ausmus wouldn't let him.

"If this was Sept. 19 and an important game and we weren't down by 10, it would have been a different story," Ausmus said after the Tigers' 12-4 blowout loss to Texas. "There was no reason to take a risk. Might as well get him out of there."

The Tigers trailed the Rangers, 12-2, at the time of the injury delay.

Cabrera confirmed after the game that he only suffered a minor cramp and expected to be ready to return to the lineup Monday for the team's series opener in Oakland.

"I'll be alright (Monday) and we'll try to win," Cabrera said. "It happens."

The cramp appears to be completely unrelated to the injury that forced him to undergo surgery to repair a core muscle this past winter.

Cabrera was spotted limping in the seventh inning when he returned to first base after taking off for second on a foul ball off the bat of Don Kelly. He was visited by head athletic trainer Kevin Rand at first after he grabbed his hamstring.

"I feel better. It just cramped," Cabrera said. "But they decided to take me out."

Cabrera is listed day-to-day, according to a team official.

Joba listed as day-to-day

Less than 15 minutes after Cabrera exited the game, right-handed reliever Joba Chamberlain was forced to leave the game due to an injury.

Chamberlain was removed in the top of the eighth inning with two outs after he suffered a right ankle contusion. He, too, is listed day-to-day.

Chamberlain suffered a deep bruise when Texas infielder Rougned Odor stepped on the back of his ankle when he covered first base on Odor's grounder.

Chamberlain was spotted limping as he walked back to the mound and was visited by Rand and Ausmus. He remained in the game, but was removed a batter later when he issued a six-pitch walk to Shin-Soo Choo.

He was replaced by right-hander Al Alburquerque, who struck out Luis Sardinas to end the inning.

"I've hurt this ankle before, and I thought I could keep going, because I didn't want Al to have to pitch again," Chamberlain said. "But after that first batter, I could tell it was swelling a little."

Chamberlain had his foot wrapped in ice after the game and said he expects to be available Monday if needed.

"The concern level is low," Ausmus said. "It's just a contusion."

Rangers 12, Tigers 4: Justin Verlander ties career worst with 9 runs surrendered in another lopsided loss

May 26, 2014

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

DETROIT -- Justin Verlander didn't solve Detroit's biggest problem Sunday. He only made it worse. Coming off arguably his worst start this season, Verlander tied a career high by giving up nine runs as the Tigers' starting pitching woes rolled over to Sunday afternoon in Detroit's 12-4 lopsided loss to the Texas Rangers.

It marked the sixth loss in seven games for the free-falling Tigers, who were outscored by the Rangers, 35-15, and outhit, 57-41, during their four-game homestand.

The Tigers will now head to Oakland for a four-game series against the AL West-leading A's, who own an American League-best 30-20 record.

Key to the game

Verlander didn't have his 98 mph heater. He didn't have any bite on his curveball. Really, he didn't have much of anything.

Verlander gave up a season-high 11 hits and struck out just one batter, marking the fourth time this season he's struck out three or fewer batters. He retired just 15 of the 31 batters he faced and walked three.

Verlander has now allowed 16 earned runs with an 8.31 ERA in his last three starts after recording a 2.67 ERA in his first eight games.

The Tigers' starting pitchers owned a major league-best 2.64 ERA in their first 39 games but have given up 41 runs and recorded an atrocious 8.77 ERA during a 1-6 stretch.

Tigers' lowlights

-- Miguel Cabrera was removed in the seventh inning after he suffered a right hamstring cramp. He's listed as day-to-day.

-- Verlander gave up three runs, four hits and a walk the first time through the Rangers' lineup. It marked the second straight start that Verlander has given up three or more runs in the first two innings.

-- Michael Choice homered to lead off the second and Robinson Chirinos followed with a double. Chirinos scored on Rongned Odor's sacrifice bunt after Verlander's throwing error. Verlander was only charged with six earned runs.

-- The Tigers were forced to rely on five relievers to eat the final 3 2/3 innings, including Ian Krol, who could retire just one batter after giving up three straight RBI singles in the seventh.

Tigers' highlights

-- Andrew Romine stayed hot Sunday with an RBI single in the second and finished 2 for 3. He has raised his batting average 36 points to .209 since Friday when he hit his first major league career home run.

-- The Tigers scored a pair of runs in the seventh, highlighted by Torii Hunter's RBI single and Austin Jackson's RBI fielder's choice.

-- Ian Kinsler extended his hitting streak to 11 games with a single in the seventh.

Game notes

-- Tigers reliever Joba Chamberlain exited in the top of the eighth inning with a right ankle contusion. He, too, is listed day-to-day and was replaced by right-hander Al Alburquerque.

-- Rangers starter Colby Lewis gave up two runs on five hits in 5 2/3 innings pitched. He walked five.

Detroit Tigers prospect Corey Knebel brushes off struggles in major league debut: 'It's all in the past'

May 26, 2014

By James Schmehl / MLive.com

DETROIT -- Corey Knebel was pumped up. And, understandably so. He was about to make his major league debut.

But, by his own admission, he let his nerves get the best of him Saturday night and turn what should have been a celebratory milestone into a frustrating debut with the Detroit Tigers.

"I felt a little amped up," Knebel said after the Tigers' 12-2 lopsided loss to Texas. "It my first time in the big leagues."

Called up from Triple-A Toledo late Thursday, Knebel relieved Rick Porcello with one out in the sixth inning front of a sellout crowd of 43,447 fans at Comerica Park. It didn't take long before the adrenaline kicked in.

"I didn't think he was overamped," manager Brad Ausmus said. "He didn't seem to be panting or sweating profusely."

Knebel may have appeared calm on the outside, but make no mistake about it, the 22-year-old's pulse was racing and his stomach was filled with butterflies.

"There wasn't anything I could do about it," said Knebel, who was drafted out of the University of Texas last June with the No. 39 pick in last year's amateur draft.

The Tigers called up Knebel on Thursday night in an effort to add a fresh arm to their bullpen. Considered the club's seventh-best prospect, he has the tools to be a legitimate threat out of the bullpen, thanks largely to a nasty 12-6 curveball.

But Knebel's curveball proved to be his undoing Saturday.

"You have know when to throw one (curve) for a strike and to throw one that goes in and out of the zone," catcher Alex Avila said. "That will be important for him."

Porcello had just issued a four-pitch walk to Shin-Soo Choo and it appeared Knebel might escape a jam after he induced a comebacker off the bat of Elvis Andrus.

But Andrus beat the throw to first on a potential 1-6-3 double play, which extended the inning and allowed Mitch Moreland to crush a belt-high fastball for an RBI double off Knebel, who consistently touched 93-95 mph as advertised.

The troubles carried over into the seventh inning when Knebel gave up a leadoff single and issued a pair of walks before Rougned Odor took advantage of a hanging breaking ball and tripled to center to clear the bases.

"There were a lot of things that went wrong with that at-bat," Knebel said. "Next time, I'll make my pitches earlier in the count."

Knebel's first line in the majors wasn't pretty: one inning, three hits, three earned runs, two walks and one strikeout. But when he met with a group of reporters after the game, it was clear his outing was already out of sight and out of mind.

"I came in here and it was a little tough," Knebel said. "I just have to tell myself not to think about what happened. It's all in the past. I'll still come in here tomorrow with a smile on my face."

Verlander adds to tough week for Tigers starters

Detroit ace ties career high with nine runs allowed in 5 1/3 innings

May 26, 2014

By Jason Beck / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Justin Verlander seemed to be nitpicking earlier in the week when he talked about making adjustments after seven quality starts in his first eight outings. Five days later, the Texas Rangers gave him a reason to worry and adjust.

It wasn't just a career high in runs that he tied in Sunday's 12-4 loss to the Rangers, or the fact that he gave up double-digit hits in back-to-back starts for the first time in his career. It was a lack of command that included four 3-0 counts, all of which led to runners on base, compared with just a pair of 0-2 counts. It was the lone strikeout he recorded in 5 1/3 innings, the first one-strikeout performance for him since 2008.

In general, it was the sense that on a day when the Tigers badly needed a strong outing from Verlander, he had some of the biggest struggles he has had for a while, closing out a week that Detroit's starting rotation would like to forget.

"I'm trying to find the right pieces to fit and make it be right," Verlander said afterward. "I'm not questioning everything, no. It's just a matter of finding something that clicks. I've got the past. I've got the mental fortitude. It's only looking forward and finding it. There's no doubt in my mind I will."

He's trying to find his old form, and he's looking hard enough that he went with an overhead delivery for the first few innings Sunday. It was an adjustment made with encouragement from pitching coach Jeff Jones, trying to get him to stay back in his delivery longer.

It went badly enough that he went back to his old form about midway through.

"It felt pretty good in the bullpen. It just didn't quite translate into the game," Verlander said. "I'm not going to sit there and continue to throw balls all over the place. I've got to be able to try to throw deep into the ballgame."

The way things have been going, somebody needed a deep start. With the exception of Anibal Sanchez, nobody did. For the week, Detroit starters allowed 41 runs on 67 hits over 39 innings, walking 19 and striking out 25. It was a long enough week that catcher Alex Avila, normally with a sharp memory for individual pitches, had to be reminded of a particular play.

"I've caught so many pitches over the last few days," Avila said, apologizing.

For the four-game series, the Rangers outscored the Tigers by a 35-15 margin, with 24 runs allowed the last two games.

"It was obviously not a good series for us," manager Brad Ausmus said. "Our starters had a little bit of a rough series with the exception of Sanchie. You wouldn't expect that would be the case with our starters, but every team goes through it. It was a rough patch. We're obviously not happy about it, but it's over, so we're going to move on."

Fourteen of those runs, 11 earned, came in two starts against Verlander, who has given up 16 earned runs in his last 13 1/3 innings since the Orioles' five-run fifth inning off him May 14 in Baltimore.

After Verlander's start in Cleveland on Tuesday, he said he had been working on an adjustment in his delivery to hide the ball better while also gaining some velocity. That was different than the overhead move.

Sunday's results were much the same. His struggles to command his fastball allowed the Rangers to wait for him to have to throw a strike.

"He was all over the place today -- missing quite a bit, behind in the count, a lot of the same issues we've been dealing with this week," Avila said. "More times than not, that's going to hurt you."

In both cases, he was shaky from the start. Five days after the Indians scored four runs on six hits the first time through the lineup, Verlander saw the Rangers take advantage of four hits for three runs. One of those hits was a broken-bat single leading off the game, putting Shin-Soo Choo on base to score on an Alex Rios dribbler to third. Another, however, was Michael Choice's home run to left on the first pitch of the second inning.

"Perfect example," Verlander said. "I'm trying to throw a fastball down and away. If it's down and away, he probably rolls over or swings through it. It runs back to the middle of the plate and he was charging fastball and

hit a home run. There are many examples like that. I wasn't quite able to throw my offspeed for strikes the way I would like. A lot of stuff was kind of running back towards the middle."

The next hitter, Robinson Chirinos, was a good example of his struggles falling behind. With a 3-0 count, he swung and sent a double to the left-field fence. Verlander's next hard fastball was a throw to first base, skipping past Miguel Cabrera for a throwing error and a 3-1 Rangers lead.

Verlander (5-4) settled down the second time through the Texas lineup, allowing a lone single -- again on a 3-0 pitch -- but retiring five in a row. The next time the Rangers got to the top of the order, five straight baserunners set up Verlander's demise.

The exclamation point actually came on a pitch Verlander executed. He threw a 94-mph fastball at the knees to Rios, who sent it to the fence in left-center field at a similarly high velocity.

"It kind of seems like fuel to the fire when you make a good pitch and they get a hit," Avila said, "but you're kind of backing yourself into a wall before that point anyways."

Verlander left following back-to-back doubles and a walk to Adrian Beltre with one out in the sixth. His nine runs allowed matched his career high from April 6, 2008, against the White Sox.

Statistically, that was Verlander's lost year, taking 17 losses on a last-place team while searching for his old form. He took lessons from that season which help him to this day.

This stretch isn't anywhere near that point. It's also not where he wants it, either.

"I'm not going to stay where I'm at," Verlander said. "I'm determined and I've got the mental confidence to turn the page. I know how good I am, and I'm not going to dwell on past starts. It's not me and it's never been me. Look forward to the next one and go out and give us a chance to win."

Cabrera, Joba exit with injuries, both day to day **Slugger has right hamstring cramp; Chamberlain bruised right ankle**

May 26, 2014

By Matt Slovin / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Things went from bad to worse for the Tigers on Sunday when Miguel Cabrera left the game in the seventh inning with a right hamstring cramp. He's officially listed as day to day.

Manager Brad Ausmus said he hadn't spoken to Cabrera since the game ended, but when he met him at first base after the injury, he seemed willing to remain in the game.

"If this was September 19 and an important game and we weren't down by 10, it would've been a different story," Ausmus said. "There was no reason to take a risk. Might as well get him out of there."

With Detroit trailing 12-2, Cabrera singled to left but was slow leaving the batter's box and came up clutching his right leg. Ausmus and trainer Kevin Rand came out of the dugout to check on Cabrera at first base, before escorting him back to the dugout.

Cabrera said after the game that he was feeling better, reiterating that it was just a cramp.

He had been in the lineup as the designated hitter Sunday before being replaced on first base by pinch-runner Bryan Holaday.

Cabrera is batting .322 with a .533 slugging percentage this season.

Joba Chamberlain also left Sunday's game with a bruised right ankle, suffered trying to cover first base on a close play with the Rangers' Rougned Odor in the eighth inning. He stayed in the game for another batter, walking Shin-Soo Choo, but was pulled after that.

"I just got kicked," Chamberlain said. "As I hit the bag, it felt like I just hit my foot."

It's the same ankle Chamberlain dislocated in a trampoline accident in 2012. There was no initial swelling immediately after the game, but it was bandaged and treated just in case.

"Just trying to make sure [it doesn't worsen]," Chamberlain said. "Obviously I don't want to get anybody up [in the bullpen] in that situation, so that's frustrating."

Chamberlain, too, is listed as day to day.

Rangers win challenge, Moreland gets RBI double

First baseman's line drive down left-field line ruled a fair ball

May 26, 2014

By Matt Slovin / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Already holding a commanding lead, Rangers manager Ron Washington opted to challenge the ruling on the field that Mitch Moreland's hit in the sixth inning landed in foul territory.

After a review of two minutes and 20 seconds, the call was overturned as replay showed that the ball landed on the left-field foul line. Moreland was awarded a double, and Elvis Andrus, who was on second base, was allowed to score. Texas' lead was extended to 9-2.

Moreland ended up being the second-to-last batter faced by Tigers starter Justin Verlander. He was replaced after issuing a walk to Adrian Beltre. Verlander allowed 11 hits and nine runs, six earned, in 5 1/3 innings.

Romine's extra work rewarded with solid weekend

May 26, 2014

By Jason Beck / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Andrew Romine had just finished up his first two-hit game in three weeks, boasting three hits in a two-game stretch, when he hit the cage Saturday. Even after some of his best swings in a month, he had extra work to do.

"It's funny, because he was actually working with [hitting coach] Wally [Joyner] after the game yesterday," manager Brad Ausmus said Sunday morning. "Despite the fact that he had some good at-bats, there was something that he felt wasn't quite right, so he just took about 10 minutes to try to fine-tune something."

It wasn't that anything was wrong, Romine said. He just wanted to reinforce what he had going right.

"I was just trying to get it solidified," Romine said. "I felt good yesterday. I just wanted to go over, I guess, kind of recap it so I had something to go home with and think about."

He wanted to think about it Saturday night, outside the ballpark. He does not want to think about it when he's at the plate. Thinking at the plate has been part of the problem at times this year.

He has taken in plenty of advice the past few weeks. Now he wants to see the ball and hit it, and not waste time thinking about what he needs to do.

"The worst thing is my brain will get in the way," Romine said. "I wish I could shut it off."

It carried over into Sunday's game. Romine had his second straight two-hit performance, driving in a run with a second-inning line drive up the middle and sending a ground ball through the right side in the sixth.

Though Romine hit his first Major League home run Friday night, his weekend performances were more productive for his style of game. He had two solidly-struck ground-ball singles Saturday -- one that began a two-out rally ahead of Rajai Davis' double to send him home, the other a one-out single through the middle after an 0-2 count. The latter nearly led to a run in the fifth before Davis' fly ball to left died near the fence.

His RBI single Sunday was one of his better at-bats of the season, fighting out of a 1-2 count by fouling off back-to-back sliders before sending a full-count fastball up the middle.

"It seems like he's using the middle of the field a little bit more," Ausmus said after Sunday's game. "He's looked good. He's stayed mostly between second base and shortstop. I don't know if the home run was the turning point, but we're hoping to keep him going because he's very good defensively."

Romine has been working with Joyner for the past couple weeks to try to figure out what tweaks would work to get his swing in tune and get him started swinging sooner. They feel like they found some adjustments that work.

It's just a few games, but the swings have been better, hit or no hit.

Increased work yields better velocity for Coke

DETROIT -- The Tigers spent most of May trying to find opportunities to get Phil Coke some situations to work. They've found plenty during this recent skid.

He entered this week having thrown just three innings over three appearances in a three-week stretch. His mop-up work Saturday gave him 6 2/3 innings in a six-day stretch.

They haven't all been productive innings, of course. He took the loss Wednesday in Cleveland, obviously, and he gave up a run on three hits over two innings two days before that. But they've been opportunities to try to get him going. He has had scoreless appearances his last two outings, showing what manager Brad Ausmus said might have been his best form of the year.

"He's definitely thrown better in his last couple outings for sure," Ausmus said. "Maybe there's something to be said for him being a little tired, because his velocity was still good. Maybe when he's tired, his command's a little better. He doesn't try to overthrow it. ..."

"He's really helped us out a lot. We all know how short the 'pen's been the past week. He's given us some big outs."

According to info from MLB.com's Gameday app and brooksbaseball.net, Coke averaged 96 mph on his fastball Saturday, to go with a sinker that came in at just over 94. Both were well above his season averages. His velocity was much the same on Wednesday in Cleveland with a different radar gun.

Basestealing helping Tigers distract opposing pitchers

DETROIT -- Part of the reason for the Tigers' aggressiveness on the bases this season was to create more consistent scoring opportunities at different spots in the lineup. Part of it, too, was to potentially distract pitchers in run-production situations.

It's hard to find data to tell definitively whether that's happening, but manager Brad Ausmus believes having Ian Kinsler and Rajai Davis on base has had an effect on how his RBI producers are pitched.

"I don't know if there are any hard numbers on it," Ausmus said. "It seems to me with Rajai and Kinsler on base, some of the pitchers' attention is being diverted from the hitter. But it's kind of a difficult thing to put a stat on.

"I'm not writing down every single pitch they throw with Rajai Davis on first. It just seems that some of the pitchers, not all of them, become more distracted with those guys on base, which theoretically should improve the odds of getting a pitch to hit."

Pitch selection stats from Fangraphs are mixed on that. For Miguel Cabrera, who has hit one or two spots behind Kinsler all season, the ratio of fastballs is nearly identical to the past three years, right around 58 percent. Separated by two- and four-seamers, Cabrera might be getting a slight uptick in four-seamers, about 40.7 percent compared to 37 percent the previous few seasons according to Pitch f/x.

Torii Hunter, who often bats directly behind Kinsler and Davis, has seen a more noticeable increase in fastballs, now comprising a career-high 64 percent of his pitches. By comparison, he's seeing fewer sliders and curveballs.

A's, Tigers meet in rematch of 2012, '13 playoffs

Teams with AL's best records open four-game series in Oakland

May 26, 2014

By Matt Slovin / MLB.com

The Tigers and Athletics, who hold the American League's two best records, will reprise their 2012 and 2013 ALDS meetings for a four-game set in Oakland starting Monday.

Detroit skipper Brad Ausmus will be up against his former bench coach, A's manager Bob Melvin. In 2000, during Ausmus' second tenure as a catcher in the Tigers' organization, Melvin served under then-manager Phil Garner.

"He worked with the catchers in Spring Training," Ausmus said of Melvin. "When he did plays at the plate, he would actually slide into home plate. And he came up with blood on his leg. He did it about 10 times, 15 times in a row -- headfirst, on the legs."

Of course, Ausmus wasn't with Detroit when the club eliminated Oakland in each of the past two seasons. Both times, Justin Verlander tossed a gem in a decisive Game 5 to advance the Tigers to the ALCS.

The A's will miss Verlander this time around, but they've still got their work cut out for them. Monday's matinee contest follows a lengthy flight back from Toronto on Sunday night, though the Tigers flew from Detroit after an afternoon game.

"It is difficult," Melvin said. "It's on the schedule and you know it ahead of time, but it doesn't make it any easier."

This will be the Tigers' fifth stop of a stretch in which they play six series in six cities. They were home for just four days from their last three-city trip before hitting the road this week for Oakland and Seattle.

"It was a short stint at home for sure," Ausmus said. "And having a day game tomorrow won't make it restful. It's always good to sleep in your own bed, I guess. It was certainly a short stint. It would've been nice to have Memorial Day at home."

According to Melvin, the renewal of a budding rivalry between the teams can add an extra energy to a first-half series.

"During the season, the players just kind of look at it as another good team in a stretch of good teams that we have right now, but it's four games, and certainly the history of the postseason would suggest there's more to a series like that," he said.

Lefty Tommy Milone will start the first game for Oakland. He has a 1.37 ERA over his past three starts after posting a 5.86 ERA over his first five.

"When I go out there I feel confident," Milone said. "Really, the last three starts [Derek Norris] has caught me, I don't think I've shook him off one time. It's a really comfortable feeling knowing I can go out there and whatever he throws down, I can execute it."

Milone started Game 2 of the 2012 ALDS against Detroit and allowed one run over six innings. His counterpart Monday, fellow lefty Drew Smyly, has pitched only in relief in the playoff series.

Smyly, who will be starting for the first time in a week, is 2-2 with a 2.97 ERA in six starts this year.

"They've got a good team, we've got a good team," Smyly said. "I know their record."

Tigers: Basestealing helping to distract opposing pitchers

Part of the reason for the Tigers' aggressiveness on the bases this season was to create more consistent scoring opportunities at different spots in the lineup. Part of it, too, was to potentially distract pitchers in run-production situations.

It's hard to find data to tell definitively whether that's happening, but Ausmus believes having Ian Kinsler and Rajai Davis on base has had an effect on how his RBI producers are pitched. Sunday, Davis stole his 15th base of the season, which ranks second in the AL.

"I don't know if there are any hard numbers on it," Ausmus said. "It seems to me with Rajai and Kinsler on base, some of the pitchers' attention is being diverted from the hitter. But it's kind of a difficult thing to put a stat on."

"I'm not writing down every single pitch they throw with Rajai Davis on first. It just seems that some of the pitchers, not all of them, become more distracted with those guys on base, which theoretically should improve the odds of getting a pitch to hit."

A's: Punto remains day-to-day with calf strain

Infielder Nick Punto missed the final game of the A's three-game series finale in Toronto while nursing a left calf strain and is expected to be held out of Monday's lineup, too.

"We'll evaluate him once again when we get home tomorrow," Melvin said Sunday. "He feels a little better, but it's tough to really get a grasp on it until he really takes off."

The A's still believe Punto will not need to go on the disabled list.

Worth noting

- The series between Oakland and Detroit is thought to be the first matchup between two Jewish managers in Major League history.
- The Giants, who entered Sunday at 31-18, are the only team in baseball with a better record than the Tigers and A's.
- Detroit has allowed more runs over its past five games than in any five-game stretch since June 28-July 2, 2011.

Verlander roughed up as Rangers take three of four from Tigers

May 26, 2014

By Dave Hogg / FOXSportsDetroit.com

DETROIT -- Sunday was about as bad as it gets for a Tigers fan.

Justin Verlander looked lost on the mound, Miguel Cabrera and Joba Chamberlain left the game with injuries and the Rangers took an easy 12-4 victory to finish off a convincing victory in the weekend's four-game series. Add in the sweep in Cleveland earlier this week, and things have dropped a long way in the last seven days.

"Obviously, this was a pretty bad series and a pretty bad week," said manager Brad Ausmus. "You don't expect that from us, especially when it is the starting rotation that really struggles, but every team goes through things like this. We had a big run with the six-game winning streak on the road, and now we're having a tough one."

A 1-6 week against two struggling teams is never going to be viewed as a positive, but Detroit's slump looks even worse when you consider that a week ago, they were sweeping Boston on national television. At that point, fans and pundits alike were talking about 100 wins and a World Series championship.

Since then, the best rotation in baseball has posted an 8.77 ERA and only Anibal Sanchez's successful return from the disabled list kept the Tigers from losing all seven games.

To make things even more unsettling, two of the worst starts were posted by Verlander. After giving up five runs in six innings in Cleveland on Tuesday, he had one of the worst games of his career Sunday. The Rangers scored nine times off him, matching the most runs he's given up in the majors.

The Tigers ace tried tweaking his delivery after the bad game in Cleveland, and the new motion didn't work.

"I tried bringing my hands over my head, because I was hoping that would keep me back on the rubber longer, but it didn't feel comfortable, so I got rid of it in the third inning," he said. "That really didn't have anything to do with the way I pitched today, though. I just didn't execute my pitches."

The new delivery made Verlander look like Rick Porcello, which might have been the reason that he only struck out one batter for the first time in six years. He's not ready to give up on it yet, though.

"I'm probably going to keep tinkering with it, because I want to find a way to stay back on the rubber," he said.

"I'm always going to try to find some way to do a better job of executing my pitches, and even though this has been a tough stretch, I'm always confident that I will find it."

A lot of managers might want their star pitcher to stick with what they know best, but Ausmus isn't one of them.

"The fact that Justin is willing to go out there and try a new delivery or tinker with a pitch is the reason that he's as good as he is," Ausmus said. "He's ultra-competitive, and he's going to do anything in his power to get an advantage over the hitters. Roger Clemens was the same way. They are only worried about finding a way to win."

That experimentation didn't work Sunday, but Verlander expects that both he and his teammates will be fine on the upcoming West Coast trip.

"This happens to teams -- they get hot and they get cold," he said. "But this is still a fatnastic team, and we're going to be fine."

INJURY SCARES

Things could have been much worse for the Tigers, but both Cabrera and Chamberlain said that they don't expect to miss any time with the injuries they sustained late in the game.

Cabrera's injury came first, happening in the seventh inning after he had singled off Robbie Ross. Don Kelly was the next batter, and as he fouled off a 2-0 pitch, Cabrera broke for second and immediately began limping. He grabbed for his right hamstring as he slowly came to a stop, and as he went back to first base, he was joined by Ausmus and trainer Kevin Rand.

After a brief discussion, he was removed from the game with what the team quickly announced was a hamstring cramp. Cabrera told Ausmus that he could stay in, but the manager wasn't taking any chances with his star in a 12-2 game.

"If this was a crucial game in September, we might leave him in there," he said. "But in May when we are down 10, we're going to do the smart thing."

Cabrera was walking without a limp in the clubhouse and joked with the media before saying he was fine.

"I'm already feeling better," he said. "It was just a small cramp, but they wanted to get me out of the game."

Chamberlain was equally unworried about his right ankle, which was bruised in the 8th inning as he tried to beat Rowned Odor to first base.

"He didn't spike me, he just hit me in the back of the ankle," said Chamberlain, who tried to pitch through the problem, but left after walking the next batter. "I wanted to get some ice on it to keep the swelling down, and I'll take care of it on the plane tonight. We'll see how it feels in the morning, but I'm pretty sure I'll be ready to go tomorrow."

Tigers' Justin Verlander off-kilter again, after tweaking delivery

May 26, 2014

By Matthew Mowery / The Oakland Press

DETROIT >> There is a chance that, sometimes, people can overthink things.

Justin Verlander might be in that particular mode at the moment, as his latest tweaks to his mechanics have — shall we say — not gone swimmingly.

The Tigers' nominative ace had his third straight poor start, continuing the run of clunkers laid down by the rest of the rotation, taking the loss in Sunday's series finale, 12-4 blowout at the hands of the Rangers that gave the Tigers a 1-6 mark on the week.

"The last couple of starts haven't been vintage Justin Verlander, but this guy is a competitor. He'll get the kinks worked out in the bullpen, and he'll be back," manager Brad Ausmus said of Verlander (5-4), who struck out just one batter for the first time in almost exactly seven seasons.

"He's always trying to make himself better. He's talking about tinkering a little bit with mechanics, here and there. Sometimes, we have to talk him off the ledge, remind him that he's a pretty darned good pitcher. But pitchers like that, the competitiveness in them, just won't allow them to rest, unless they're perfect."

He hasn't been that lately, giving up 19 runs in a three-start stretch, his worst in seven seasons, tying his career high Sunday in runs allowed.

"Overall, obviously it wasn't a good day, but you gotta turn the page. I'm confident in myself, and I can guarantee that I'm going to work my butt off, and turn this around," he said. "Just the feeling that I'm not executing my pitches the way I should. I am sometimes, then it gets out of synch. I'm just trying to find that consistency. ... It's kind of coming and going right now. I'll find a little bit of rhythm, then fall out of it.

"I'm just trying to find that consistent rhythm."

One of the tweaks he tried: Going back to the over-the-head windup he'd used in high school and college, like pitching coach Jeff Jones had convinced Rick Porcello to try last year, in an attempt to keep him from going toward home plate too quickly.

It lasted three innings.

"Felt pretty good in the bullpen, but it didn't really translate into the game," he said. "I'm not going to go sit there and continue to throw balls all over the place. I've got to be able to at least go deep in the ballgame."

With pitches running back over the heart of the plate — and getting tattooed by the Rangers because of that — he didn't have the chance to go deep, either, although he argued to continue, in the hopes of saving the bullpen further.

"The thing that makes Justin great, and really an ace, even at 100 pitches, and having gotten knocked around the yard, he still wanted to stay in the game. This guy will take the ball, and you have pry it out of his hands. He'll take the ball, and just keep going until he collapses. That's really what makes an ace. You have to have the stuff, like he does, to be an ace, but the makeup is off the charts," Ausmus said. "This is part of what makes him great, is that he's ultra-competitive and he's willing to try things to gain a new advantage, or a little bit of an edge, whatever it may be. Obviously, his stuff is great, but his makeup is unbelievable. He reminds me — (Roger) Clemens ... his approach to pitching was very similar. He would tinker to try to gain any advantage over the hitters."

Verlander's been tinkering because he feels he's not executing pitches.

And because he's a perfectionist.

It's not more than just tinkering. "No," he said.

It's not because he's concerned about missing velocity. "No," he said.

Could it be that he's still adjusting after offseason core muscle repair surgery?

"I mean, I don't know. I can't say I feel any side effects. Every now and again, it'll get a little sore. That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that. I know Torii (Hunter) is somebody that's had a similar surgery, and he said it took a year to be back the way he should have been. It's surgery. There's no one answer. There's no saying you're going to be great then," Verlander said, snapping his fingers. "You're putting your body through trauma; you don't know how you're going to come out. I know it's not holding me back. I don't feel pain when I'm throwing or anything. It could still be weak, who knows?"

He does know that he'll keep tinkering until he gets it right, like he did last season, in the playoffs. "I'm not going to stay where I'm at," he said. "Like I said, I'm confident, and I've got the mental confidence to turn the page. I know how good I am, and I'm not going to dwell on these past starts. "That's not me, and that's never been me."

Tigers slide continues with another blowout loss to Rangers

May 26, 2014

By Matthew Mowery / The Oakland Press

DETROIT >> This bad stretch has reached epic proportions.

For the Detroit Tigers starters, as a whole, and Justin Verlander in particular.

The Tigers' nominative ace had his third straight poor start, continuing the run of clunkers laid down by the rest of the rotation.

Verlander surrendered a career-high-tying nine runs on 11 hits (he's only given up more hits three other times), in a 12-4 loss to the Rangers, who took three of four from the reeling Tigers.

Detroit fell to 1-6 on the week.

"It's just baseball. We won six in a row, but we weren't going to win the rest of the games. That's just how it goes. Hit a little bit of a skid, starting with Cleveland. Hoping it turns around today," manager Brad Ausmus said before the game.

It did not.

The Rangers pounded around Verlander, who's been tinkering with his mechanics of late.

"He's always trying to make himself better. He's talking about tinkering a little bit with mechanics, here and there. Sometimes, we have to talk him off the ledge, remind him that he's a pretty darned good pitcher," Ausmus said. "But pitchers like that, the competitiveness in them, just won't allow them to rest, unless they're perfect."

He hasn't been perfect.

In his last three starts, Verlander's surrendered 19 runs — 16 of them earned — on 28 hits, and contributed just 17 1/3 innings pitched.

It's just the second time in his career he's given up five or more earned runs in three straight starts. The last time, he did it in four straight, from July 26-Aug. 11, 2008.

Verlander hadn't struck out one or fewer in any start since May 31, 2008.

With Verlander's six earned runs Sunday, the Tigers' starting staff posted an 8.77 ERA this week, after leading the AL in starter ERA at the start of the stretch.

Their opponents scored 57 runs in seven games, 46 of those in the last five.

The last time the Tigers had given up this many runs in a five-game span — it was 45 runs in the first six games this week — was in early July, 2011. That season, the Mets and Giants combined to put up 51 runs in five games from June 28-July 2. One day later, pitching coach Rick Knapp was fired.

FIRST INNING >> The two teams started their first-inning rallies the same way: Bloop single, pop up, walk. It was a pair of hitters beating out ground balls that allowed both teams to convert, too.

Alex Rios beat out an infield hit, scoring Shin-Soo Choo from third, to make it 1-0. Victor Martinez beat out the relay on a tailor-made double play ball, allowing Rajai Davis — who'd stolen second, then drew a balk from Colby Lewis — to score from third. Martinez was helped by the fact that Rangers first baseman Mitch Moreland double-clutched on his throw to second, throwing off the timing on the play.

SECOND INNING >> Michael Choice led off the inning with a wind-aided home run to left, then Robinson Chirinos doubled, and scored when Justin Verlander threw the ball away after fielding a sacrifice bunt attempt.

SECOND INNING >> Missing out on another double play chance cost the Rangers, when Adrian Beltre couldn't get the ball out of his glove. Andrew Romine, whose bat has perked up since his first career home run Friday night, singled Austin Jackson in from third to get one run back.

FIFTH INNING >> After mowing down eight of nine, something went awry with Verlander again, as he gave up four runs in the fifth, meaning he'd given up five earned runs or more for the third straight for just the second time in his career.

Choo walked, Elvis Andrus reached on an error — when the ball went through both Nick Castellanos and Romine — then Moreland plated Choo with a bloop single, and Beltre drove in another with an infield single that Castellanos knocked down, but could do no more with. Alex Rios cleaned it up with a two-run triple.

SIXTH INNING >> The Rangers got back-to-back doubles from Elvis Andrus and Moreland — the latter originally called a foul ball, before a replay overturn — then Verlander exited after a walk to Beltre. Evan Reed managed to keep the damage limited with a pair of ground balls.

Miguel Cabrera leaves with cramp

May 26, 2014

By The Associated Press Staff / The Associated Press

DETROIT -- Detroit slugger Miguel Cabrera has left Sunday's game against Texas in the seventh inning with a right hamstring cramp.

Cabrera was visited by athletic trainer Kevin Rand at first base after singling in the seventh. The Tigers were down 12-2 at the time, and Cabrera was removed for a pinch-runner.

Cabrera was bothered last year by shin and groin injuries, and he had surgery in the offseason. He's been putting up his usual impressive numbers at the plate in 2014. He's hitting .322 with seven home runs and 42 RBIs on the year.

Rangers rout Tigers; Cabrera exits game early

May 26, 2014

By The Associated Press Staff / The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — If the rest of the Texas Rangers keep hitting like this, Prince Fielder's injury may not be so hard to overcome.

Alex Rios tripled and drove in three runs, and the Rangers rolled to another rout of Detroit, beating Justin Verlander and the Tigers 12-4 on Sunday.

Texas took three of four in the series, scoring 35 runs in the process.

The question now is whether the Rangers can possibly keep this up after learning Thursday that Fielder would likely miss the rest of the season because of a neck problem.

"We've got to continue to play baseball," manager Ron Washington said. "We miss Prince, and we're not going to even dream that we don't need him in our lineup. We certainly would like to have him in our lineup, but we don't, so we've got to go with what we've got."

The Tigers have lost six of seven, and even Verlander (5-4) couldn't come close to stopping the slide. The Detroit right-hander allowed nine runs - six earned - in 5 1-3 innings in one of the worst starts of his career.

"Right now, I'm not in a place where I can repeat my delivery every time, and that's what I need to fix. But I'll get it straightened out. I'm not worried about that," Verlander said. "It's a rough patch, but this is a great baseball team. That hasn't changed."

Michael Choice homered for the Rangers in the second, and Texas broke the game open with five runs in the fifth.

Colby Lewis (4-3) allowed two runs and five hits in 5 2-3 innings.

Mitch Moreland had three hits and three RBIs for the Rangers, and Adrian Beltre and Robinson Chirinos had three hits apiece as well.

"Everybody on this team has contributed so far, has stepped up in one way or another," Moreland said. "I think this was just a big series for us overall, to kind of right the ship, get it going."

Detroit slugger Miguel Cabrera left the game in the seventh with a right hamstring cramp.

Cabrera was visited by athletic trainer Kevin Rand at first base after singling in the seventh. The Tigers were down 12-2 at the time, and Cabrera was removed for a pinch-runner.

Cabrera was bothered last year by shin and groin injuries, and he had surgery in the offseason. He's been putting up his usual impressive numbers at the plate in 2014. He's hitting .322 with seven home runs and 42 RBIs on the year.

"Miggy said he could stay in, and if this was a crucial game on September 19, I would have left him in the game," Tigers manager Brad Ausmus said. "But we were down 10 in May, so we got him out of there."

Verlander has allowed 16 earned runs in his past three starts, and although the Tigers still have the best record in the American League, they have to wonder when this alarming stretch of poor pitching will end.

Other starters have struggled too. In its past seven games, Detroit has allowed 57 runs.

The nine runs allowed by Verlander equaled a career worst, and he gave up 11 hits. Verlander finished with only one strikeout, his fewest in a regular-season game since May 31, 2008, when he also struck out one at Seattle.

"It's good to get him early," Rios said. "The earlier you get him, the better shape you're going to be in at the end of the game."

Choice broke a 1-all tie with a second-inning homer off Verlander, and after a double by Chirinos, Rowned Odor dropped a bunt that Verlander threw away for an error, allowing a run to score.

Texas led 3-2 in the fifth when Shin-Soo Choo led off with a walk and went to third when Elvis Andrus' grounder went past shortstop Andrew Romine for another Detroit error. Moreland and Beltre followed with consecutive RBI singles, and a two-run triple by Rios made it 7-2.

Chirinos singled home Rios two outs later.

The Rangers tacked on three runs in the seventh to make it 12-2 on RBI singles by Andrus, Moreland and Beltre. Cabrera came out of the game after singling in the bottom of that inning, and to make matters worse for Detroit, reliever Joba Chamberlain left in the eighth with a right ankle contusion.

The Rangers finished with 17 hits, bringing their total for the last two games of the series to 36 - with 14 for extra bases.

NOTES: Even Sunday's time of game was the same as the day before: 3 hours, 43 minutes. ... Choo, who left Saturday's game with a sore left ankle, was back in the Texas lineup a day later but as the designated hitter. ... Detroit 2B Ian Kinsler extended his hitting streak to 11 games. ... The Tigers head to Oakland for a four-game series between the teams with the two best records in the AL. Detroit LHP Drew Smyly (2-2) faces Oakland LHP Tommy Milone (2-3) on Monday. ... Texas heads to Minnesota, with RHP Nick Tepesch (1-0) taking the mound Monday against Twins RHP Kevin Correia (2-5).

Last updated: Mon, May 26, 2014, 01:45 EDT

Sunday, May 25, 2014

Team	Player	Transaction
Arizona Diamondbacks	Zeke Spruill	Called Up from Minors, (recalled as 26th roster player)
Baltimore Orioles	Steve Lombardozzi	Sent to Minors
Baltimore Orioles	Preston Guilmet	Called Up from Minors
Baltimore Orioles	Chris Davis	Placed on Paternity Leave List
Boston Red Sox	Alex Wilson	Sent to Minors
Boston Red Sox	Brandon Workman	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Mike Napoli	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Sprained left ring finger)
Chicago Cubs	Manny Ramirez	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Chicago White Sox	Frank Francisco	Refused Minor League Assignment - Free Agent
Cincinnati Reds	Mat Latos	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Kansas City Royals	Michael Mariot	Called Up from Minors
Kansas City Royals	Francisco Pena	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Matt Shoemaker	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Wade LeBlanc	Purchased From Minors
Milwaukee Brewers	Jeff Bianchi	Outrighted to Minors
Milwaukee Brewers	Jimmy Nelson	Sent to Minors
Milwaukee Brewers	Jimmy Nelson	Called Up from Minors
Minnesota Twins	Chris Herrmann	Sent to Minors
Minnesota Twins	Chris Colabello	Sent to Minors
Minnesota Twins	Oswaldo Arcia	Called Up from Minors
Minnesota Twins	Josh Willingham	Called Up from Minors
New York Mets	Travis d'Arnaud	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
New York Mets	Vic Black	Called Up from Minors, (recalled as 26th roster player)
Philadelphia Phillies	Justin De Fratus	Called Up from Minors
Philadelphia Phillies	Cody Asche	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)
San Diego Padres	Billy Buckner	Designated for Assignment
San Diego Padres	Tommy Medica	Called Up from Minors
San Diego Padres	Blaine Boyer	Designated for Assignment
Toronto Blue Jays	Hector Gimenez	Traded From from White Sox, Chi. White Sox (for cash considerations)
Washington Nationals	Adam LaRoche	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained right quad)
Washington Nationals	Adam LaRoche	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment

Saturday, May 24, 2014

Team	Player	Transaction
Baltimore Orioles	Nick Hundley	Traded From from Padres, San Diego (with cash for LHP Troy Patton)
Baltimore Orioles	Steve Lombardozzi	Called Up from Minors

Boston Red Sox	Daniel Nava	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Shane Victorino	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained right hamstring)
Chicago White Sox	Frank Francisco	Outrighted to Minors
Cleveland Indians	Mike Zagurski	Released
Colorado Rockies	Josh Rutledge	Called Up from Minors
Colorado Rockies	Nolan Arenado	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Fractured left middle finger)
Houston Astros	Brett Oberholtzer	Called Up from Minors
Los Angeles Dodgers	Robert Carson	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Los Angeles Dodgers	Jhan Marinez	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Miami Marlins	Dan Jennings	Called Up from Minors
Miami Marlins	Brad Hand	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Sprained right ankle)
Philadelphia Phillies	Luis Garcia	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained right forearm)
Philadelphia Phillies	David Buchanan	Purchased From Minors
San Diego Padres	Billy Buckner	Purchased From Minors
Seattle Mariners	James Paxton	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
St. Louis Cardinals	Sam Freeman	Called Up from Minors
St. Louis Cardinals	Kevin Siegrist	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left forearm)
Texas Rangers	Tanner Scheppers	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Toronto Blue Jays	Esmil Rogers	Outrighted to Minors
Toronto Blue Jays	Mickey Storey	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Washington Nationals	Zach Walters	Sent to Minors
Friday, May 23, 2014		
Team	Player	Transaction
Baltimore Orioles	T.J. McFarland	Called Up from Minors
Baltimore Orioles	Preston Guilmet	Sent to Minors
Boston Red Sox	Alex Wilson	Called Up from Minors
Boston Red Sox	Stephen Drew	Sent to Minors
Cincinnati Reds	Donald Lutz	Called Up from Minors
Cincinnati Reds	Neftali Soto	Sent to Minors
Cleveland Indians	Jason Kipnis	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Detroit Tigers	Corey Knebel	Purchased From Minors
Houston Astros	Rudy Owens	Called Up from Minors
Houston Astros	Rudy Owens	Sent to Minors
Kansas City Royals	Justin Maxwell	Outrighted to Minors
Kansas City Royals	Omar Infante	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Los Angeles Angels	Efren Navarro	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Sean Burnett	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Recovery from left elbow surgery)
Los Angeles Angels	Sean Burnett	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Milwaukee Brewers	Jim Henderson	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Pittsburgh Pirates	Tony Sanchez	Sent to Minors
Pittsburgh Pirates	Russell Martin	Reinstated From League Suspension
Pittsburgh Pirates	Jason Grilli	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Left oblique strain)

Seattle Mariners	Logan Morrison	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
St. Louis Cardinals	Joey Butler	Signed to Play in Japan, (Orix Buffaloes)
St. Louis Cardinals	Joey Butler	Released
Texas Rangers	Donnie Murphy	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Texas Rangers	Prince Fielder	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Neck surgery - out for season)
Texas Rangers	Donnie Murphy	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained neck)
Toronto Blue Jays	Esmil Rogers	Designated for Assignment
Toronto Blue Jays	Liam Hendriks	Called Up from Minors
Thursday, May 22, 2014		
Team	Player	Transaction
Baltimore Orioles	Tommy Hunter	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left groin strain)
Baltimore Orioles	Preston Guilmet	Called Up from Minors
Chicago White Sox	Frank Francisco	Designated for Assignment
Chicago White Sox	Chris Sale	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Flexor muscle strain)
Chicago White Sox	Chris Sale	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Cleveland Indians	Kyle Crockett	Sent to Minors
Cleveland Indians	Mark Lowe	Purchased From Minors
Cleveland Indians	Nyjer Morgan	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Sprained right knee)
Cleveland Indians	Zach McAllister	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Lower back strain)
Cleveland Indians	T.J. House	Called Up from Minors
Detroit Tigers	Robbie Ray	Sent to Minors
Houston Astros	Alex White	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Houston Astros	Josh Zeid	Sent to Minors
Kansas City Royals	Jimmy Paredes	Called Up from Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Josh Hamilton	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Los Angeles Angels	Josh Wall	Called Up from Minors, - Not to Report
Los Angeles Dodgers	Miguel Olivo	Released
Miami Marlins	Chris Hatcher	Purchased From Minors
Miami Marlins	Rafael Furcal	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)
Minnesota Twins	Sam Fuld	Transferred to 15-Day DL, (Concussion-like symptoms)
Pittsburgh Pirates	Phil Irwin	Designated for Assignment
Pittsburgh Pirates	Russell Martin	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)
Pittsburgh Pirates	Russell Martin	Starting to Serve Suspension
Pittsburgh Pirates	Wandy Rodriguez	Designated for Assignment
Pittsburgh Pirates	Josh Wall	Acquired Off Waivers From from Angels, Los Angeles
Pittsburgh Pirates	Josh Wall	Sent to Minors
San Diego Padres	Robbie Erlin	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left elbow soreness)
San Diego Padres	Blaine Boyer	Purchased From Minors
San Francisco Giants	Santiago Casilla	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained right hamstring)
San Francisco Giants	George Kontos	Called Up from Minors
Tampa Bay Rays	Alex Cobb	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Tampa Bay Rays	Alex Cobb	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained left oblique - out 4-6

Washington Nationals	Adam LaRoche	weeks) Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Washington Nationals	Blake Treinen	Called Up from Minors
Wednesday, May 21, 2014		
Team	Player	Transaction
Boston Red Sox	Stephen Drew	Signed as Free Agent, (2014)(one-year contract)
Boston Red Sox	Felix Doubront	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left shoulder)
Chicago White Sox	Jeff Keppinger	Released
Cincinnati Reds	Joey Votto	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left quadriceps)
Cincinnati Reds	Jay Bruce	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Torn meniscus, left knee)
Cincinnati Reds	Matt Maloney	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Kansas City Royals	Mike Moustakas	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Kole Calhoun	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Sprained right ankle - out 4-6 weeks)
Los Angeles Angels	Hector Santiago	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Kole Calhoun	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Los Angeles Dodgers	Chris Withrow	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Dodgers	Erisbel Arruebarrena	Called Up from Minors
Los Angeles Dodgers	Juan Uribe	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained right hamstring)
Los Angeles Dodgers	Hyun-jin Ryu	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Left shoulder inflammation)
Miami Marlins	Carlos Marmol	Cleared Waivers and Became a Free Agent
Miami Marlins	Anthony DeSclafani	Sent to Minors
Philadelphia Phillies	Cliff Lee	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left elbow)
Philadelphia Phillies	Darin Ruf	Called Up from Minors
St. Louis Cardinals	Shane Robinson	Called Up from Minors
Tampa Bay Rays	Kevin Kiermaier	Sent to Minors
Texas Rangers	J.P. Arencibia	Outrighted to Minors
Texas Rangers	J.P. Arencibia	Called Up from Minors, - Not to Report
Washington Nationals	Ryan Mattheus	Sent to Minors

Tuesday, May 20, 2014

Team	Player	Transaction
Chicago White Sox	Matt Lindstrom	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Peroneal tendon subluxation, left ankle)
Chicago White Sox	Javy Guerra	Purchased From Minors
Cincinnati Reds	Jair Jurrjens	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Cleveland Indians	Trevor Bauer	Called Up from Minors
Cleveland Indians	Justin Sellers	Called Up from Minors
Cleveland Indians	Jason Giambi	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained right calf)
Colorado Rockies	Michael Cuddyer	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Colorado Rockies	Michael Cuddyer	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)
Colorado Rockies	Chris Martin	Sent to Minors
Houston Astros	Asher Wojciechowski	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation

Kansas City Royals	Francisco Pena	Called Up from Minors
Kansas City Royals	Johnny Giavotella	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	David Freese	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Los Angeles Angels	David Freese	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Fractured right middle finger)
Los Angeles Angels	Luis Jimenez	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Anthony Lerew	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Minnesota Twins	Chris Herrmann	Called Up from Minors
San Diego Padres	Casey Kelly	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Seattle Mariners	Corey Hart	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)
Seattle Mariners	Nick Franklin	Called Up from Minors
Seattle Mariners	Todd Coffey	Signed to a Minor League Contract
St. Louis Cardinals	Joey Butler	Sent to Minors
St. Louis Cardinals	Jason Motte	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
St. Louis Cardinals	Jason Motte	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Recovery from right elbow surgery)
Tampa Bay Rays	Desmond Jennings	Reinstated from Bereavement/Family Medical Emergency List
Texas Rangers	Martin Perez	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Left elbow inflammation)
Texas Rangers	J.P. Arencibia	Sent to Minors
Texas Rangers	Chris Gimenez	Purchased From Minors
Toronto Blue Jays	Rob Rasmussen	Called Up from Minors
Washington Nationals	Zach Kroenke	Signed to a Minor League Contract