

Tribe kept in check by Colon in Oakland

By Jeff Fletcher / Special to MLB.com | 8/19/2012 1:30 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Having gained some weight and lost some fastball, the 2012 version of Bartolo Colon doesn't look much like the guy who pitched for the Indians a decade ago.

The results, however, have been remarkably similar.

The Indians got an all-too-close look at the 39-year-old right-hander, who continued his career renaissance with the A's by pitching a masterful eight innings in an 8-5 victory over Cleveland on Saturday night at The Coliseum.

Colon, who won 75 games for the Indians from 1997-2002, improved to 10-9 and lowered his ERA to 3.43 this season.

"For him, it doesn't surprise me, based on what we saw this spring all the way up to now," A's Manager Bob Melvin said. "There was a pretty good chance, for me, he was going to win double-digit games from the first game he started for us. We've said all along he enjoys what he's doing at this point in time of his career. He's having a lot of fun with it. He's having a lot of fun with his team, and he's a great example for all of our younger pitchers."

Colon put on a clinic against the Indians, scattering five hits. He did not issue a walk. The only run he allowed was on Carlos Santana's seventh-inning homer.

"There are not many guys like him throwing right now," Indians shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera said. "He's still throwing because he's got something. He's a good pitcher."

The Indians stacked their lineup with six left-handed hitters and two switch-hitters against Colon, but he still dominated them with a two-seam fastball.

"We knew it coming, but it was still hard to get," Shin-Soo Choo said. "He was throwing strikes. That two-seamer started on the front shoulder and came back. It looked like a slider."

By the time Colon was finished, the Indians trailed, 6-1, and they were behind, 8-1, before they got a crack at the Oakland bullpen in the ninth. They did score four runs, but it wasn't enough to prevent them from losing for the 17th time in their past 21 games.

"The pitching and the hitting, everybody is in a slump at the same time," Choo said.

A little of everything went wrong for the Indians in the third inning, when the A's scored four runs to essentially put the game away.

It started with Cliff Pennington's ground ball to Cabrera, who ranged up the middle to make a nice play. But his throw was low and first baseman Casey Kotchman couldn't handle it. Cabrera was charged with an error.

Jemile Weeks then sacrificed to move Pennington into scoring position. Right-hander Corey Kluber then walked Coco Crisp. Kluber let the runners get huge jumps and they pulled off a double steal. Santana had no chance, even though the ball got past him on an apparent cross-up with Kluber.

The double steal was costly because Josh Donaldson then hit a grounder that would likely have been an inning-ending double play. Instead, it scored a run.

Kluber completed the disastrous inning with two bad pitches, a changeup that Josh Reddick drilled into right-center for an RBI double and a slider that Yoenis Cespedes hit over the left-field wall for a two-run homer.

"I didn't make pitches when I needed to," Kluber said. "The pitches that killed me were the changeup over the plate to Reddick, and the ball Cespedes hit out was right over the middle, too."

All four of the runs were unearned, and that was all that Kluber allowed in his five innings.

Kluber has a 6.27 ERA in four starts. Manager Manny Acta said it's still too early to make any judgments about the 26-year-old right-hander.

"He's got a good fastball, a good cutter and good slider," Acta said. "We're not going to make a knee-jerk reaction. We brought him up to take a look and that's what we're going to do."

The silver lining to all of it was the Indians' four-run ninth. Choo hit a two-run homer and Brent Lillibridge hit a two-run homer as a pinch-hitter. The Indians knocked out Evan Scribner and Jerry Blevins before forcing Melvin to bring in closer Grant Balfour, who struck out Ezequiel Carrera to end the game.

"I like the fact the guys fought till the end," Acta said. "They aren't going to roll over. Unfortunately, it's not easy to make a comeback from that many runs down."

A's seek fourth straight win against reeling Tribe
By Adam Berry / MLB.com | 8/19/2012 1:30 AM ET

The Indians' losing skid continued on Saturday night, and they'll enter Sunday's series finale with the same goal as A's right-hander Jarrod Parker: Right the ship.

While the A's have won four in a row, Parker has lost three straight and hasn't put a mark in the win column since July 21 against the Yankees. He gave up five runs in his last start, all in the fifth inning, and couldn't finish that frame.

Overall this month, the young righty is 0-3 with a 5.71 ERA, bringing him to 2-4 with a 6.15 ERA and a .309 opponents' average over his last seven starts.

"I think this team has kind of gone off pitching all year, and it's something where we set the tone," Parker said. "It's been a little bumpy as of late, but it's where we'll make a few adjustments and get right back on track."

Parker said he and pitching coach Curt Young have noticed a flaw in his delivery, causing some of his outside pitches to float back toward the middle of the plate. He's been working on keeping his motion compact, finishing pitches and keeping his hand on top of the ball, hoping that will get him back to the way he pitched over his first 13 starts, when he went 5-3 with a 2.46 ERA.

"It's so simple, but it's pretty easy to get away from," Parker said. "It's one of those things where a couple bad pitches here or there make the difference from a good outing to a great outing. I had a couple walks and what-not. I'm not happy with those. Obviously just try to move forward and not look back too much.

Cleveland, meanwhile, can't afford to look back. The Indians have gone 4-17 over their last 21 games, dropping to 11 1/2 games back of the American League Central-leading White Sox. Cleveland is also the ninth team in line for a Wild Card spot in the AL, having fallen well out of contention.

But manager Manny Acta spoke highly of the way his club has survived such a stretch, praising his players' attitude and choosing to put a positive spin on such a difficult skid.

"These guys have handled everything very well. It's a good opportunity for them to build character, and it's an opportunity for us to see how they handle this situation and go about their business," Acta said. "They have been good. There are only so many things you can control.

"They've been playing hard, but they aren't Bugs Bunny. They can only play their position."

Indians: Tribe finding trouble holding runners

Cleveland's season-long difficulties dealing with baserunners continued Saturday night, when Oakland stole two bases and was caught once.

The Indians entered the game having allowed 101 stolen bases, with a 20 percent throw-out rate, second-worst in the AL. Most of that can be placed on the Tribe's pitching staff, Acta said, from veteran Ubaldo Jimenez to their younger starters.

"We have two of the best throwing catchers in the league," Acta said, "but the past two years, we are not doing a very good job of holding runners.

"It's about offsetting [the runner's] timing by sometimes holding the ball longer or by changing the look," he added. "There are different things you can do. It's not just speeding up."

- Cody Allen allowed two hits but no earned runs in two-thirds of an inning Saturday night, running his streak of consecutive shutout innings to 13 since being called up from Triple-A Columbus on July 20. That's the longest such streak to begin a career exclusively in relief with the Indians dating back to 1974, according to available research from STATS LLC.

A's: Anderson close to returning

Left-hander Brett Anderson tossed a 40-pitch bullpen session Saturday and feels ready to return to the A's rotation. Oakland manager Bob Melvin said Anderson will be back soon, adding "we will find a way to get him in there somehow." Anderson, coming back from Tommy John surgery, has made five Minor League rehab starts with Triple-A Sacramento. He hasn't pitched for the A's since June 5, 2011.

"I'm very eager to get back and pitch for this team," Anderson said.

- Oakland should also see the return of third baseman Brandon Inge fairly soon. He said he is "way ahead of schedule" in his recovery from a sprained right shoulder and expects to come off the disabled list when he's eligible on Aug. 27.

"I don't put anything past him," Melvin said. "He is a guy with a high threshold of pain tolerance."

- Seth Smith, on the other hand, was eligible to come off the DL on Saturday but is still recovering from a strained left hamstring. He took batting practice and ran the bases for the second day in a row, and Melvin said the outfielder was getting closer to a rehab assignment.

Worth noting

- Cleveland has held a lead at some point in eight of its last 17 losses.
- The A's snapped a streak of seven straight games with nine or more strikeouts Saturday night, whiffing only four times to break the longest such streak in franchise history.

Donald's first outfield nod goes well

By Jeff Fletcher / Special to MLB.com | 08/18/12 8:45 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Jason Donald's first big league start in the Indians outfield went without a hitch. In fact, he even made one nice sliding catch in foul territory.

"I felt like I've been able to make the adjustment from infield to outfield," Donald said on Saturday, a day after his first start in left field. "The biggest thing is just to react, instead of thinking so much about making sure I do this or that."

Donald said center fielder Michael Brantley was a big help: "He'll make sure I'm aware of what I'm supposed to do. It's comforting having him out there. He directs traffic really well."

The Indians began working Donald in as an outfielder during his recent stint at Triple-A Columbus. He played left and center. Manager Manny Acta said he'd use Donald at either of those spots, but not right.

The move is no doubt a sign that the Indians view Donald as a utility player more than an everyday player, but he said he's fine with whatever helps him stick in the Majors.

"It really does open up more opportunities to be able to get in a game," he said. "It maximizes my value for what I can do for a ballclub. If it's something that helps us win games and if it's something that helps my career, I'm all for it."

Tribe looks to slow opposing baserunners

OAKLAND -- Some of the Indians' youngsters are learning that pitching in the big leagues is about more than pitching.

Case in point: In the fifth inning of Friday night's game, Zach McAllister lost track of Yoenis Cespedes at second base and allowed him to easily steal third with one out. Cespedes then scored the tying run on a sacrifice fly.

"You have to do a better job of controlling the running game and minimizing damage when guys get on," McAllister said. "That's something I have to do a better job of."

Baserunners have been successful in all 11 attempts against McAllister this year, but he is not alone. The Indians have allowed 101 stolen bases, tied with the Angels for the most in the American League. Their rate of throwing out runners is just 20 percent, which is second-worst.

"We have two of the best throwing catchers in the league," manager Manny Acta said, "but the past two years, we are not doing a very good job of holding runners."

Although Acta singled out the young pitchers, the Indians pitcher who has had the most trouble in that area is veteran Ubaldo Jimenez. Jimenez has allowed 26 stolen bases, the most in the Majors.

"He's got a lot of moving parts," Acta said. "That's nothing new with him. Some guys just have a certain type of delivery and they are always going to have issues holding runners."

Acta said he doesn't necessarily want the pitchers to disrupt their mechanics by speeding up their deliveries.

"It's about offsetting [the runner's] timing by sometimes holding the ball longer or by changing the look," Acta said. "There are different things you can do. It's not just speeding up."

Sheldon Ocker: Brent Lillibridge doesn't look the part, but hits with some power

OAKLAND, Calif.: Brent Lillibridge hit 13 home runs for the Chicago White Sox last year.

This might seem like a modest feat unless you've seen Lillibridge. He is listed at 5 feet, 11 inches, 185 pounds. Maybe that's accurate. I wouldn't be surprised if it's at least a slight exaggeration.

Then there's his face. You wonder if he's a year away from getting a driver's license, or that his first communion is coming up soon. You figure his teachers loved him, because he probably was the first kid in class to volunteer for that extra-credit project.

So you think what it must be like to pitch to Lillibridge. Is a pitcher going to take seriously a hitter who looks like he should be in the cast of Glee or resembles Hannah Montana's boyfriend?

Is that an edge for Lillibridge? He has hit only 19 home runs in his big-league career, and it's probable that U.S. Cellular Field's hitter-friendly outfield dimensions helped him reach double figures for the White Sox.

But something else is at work here. Lillibridge has hit two home runs for the Indians, both in a three-game span from last Saturday at Progressive Field against the Boston Red Sox to Monday night against the Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim.

On both occasions, the bases were empty. Against the Sox, Lillibridge was leading off the inning; against the Angels there were two out.

For his career, 11 of Lillibridge's 19 homers have come with nobody on base; he has hit 10 either on the first pitch or with a 1-and-1 count; five others have come when he is behind in the count. Only four times has he gone deep when he is ahead in the count.

Ten have come when he is in the bottom third of the order compared to four when he is in the top third. Only five have been hit with runners in scoring position.

What does all of this mean? Maybe pitchers take one look at Lillibridge and figure he can't possibly do more than slap a single up the middle, so they throw it down the middle and see how far he can hit it. Sometimes, he hits it pretty far.

How much tougher is it for a hulking behemoth like Albert Pujols to hit a home run? He steps to the plate and casts a shadow all the way to center field.

The pitcher is thinking: "I have to be very careful how I pitch to this guy. I can't let him beat me with one swing." Does that thought ever enter a pitcher's head when he is facing Lillibridge?

Audition time

Who wants to play for the Indians?

Be at Progressive Field for the tryout camp bright and early Sept. 1. Bring your own cleats and glove. The Tribe will provide peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Just kidding. Only players from Triple-A Columbus are invited. The date might depend on whether the Clippers make the International League playoffs.

Who is likely to be called up? I'm only concerned with the position players. I'm intrigued by the prospect of seeing outfielders Tim Fedroff, Jared Goedert and maybe Lars Anderson plus third baseman Russ Canzler.

What about Matt LaPorta? Face it, the Tribe's deep thinkers don't have any interest in his continuing his career in Cleveland, so there's not much point in bringing him up.

For his sake, I hope they let him flee to another organization and get a fresh start. LaPorta hasn't demonstrated the discipline at the plate to become an everyday major-leaguer, but he deserves another chance somewhere else.

Fedroff, 25, has hit wherever he has played. After starting the season with the Double-A Aeros and batting .305, he was promoted to Columbus and immediately began tearing up IL pitching. Currently, he is hitting in the .320s in about 200 at-bats. Fedroff isn't a power guy, but between Double-A and Triple-A, he has hit 10 home runs, so maybe he's learning.

Goedert, 27, has been around for a while, but he never seems to pique the Indians' interest. I don't know why. He hits for average, doesn't strike out much, and 37 percent of his hits have gone for extra bases. Nevertheless, he continues to be passed over.

He made too many errors at third and was moved to the outfield. Not having seen him in regular-season games, I don't know if he has adjusted.

Canzler first joined the Tribe in spring training and looked like he could hit. His problem: no position. He's only batting about .260 but that's mostly because of a slow start. Canzler can hit the ball out of the yard. Let's see him.

I have only modest curiosity about Anderson, who was the Red Sox's version of LaPorta, a one-time prospect who never quite made it.

But at 24, maybe switching organizations will revive his career.

Walking man

Lou Marson's batting seems perpetually stuck in the .220s. He has five home runs and 58 RBI for his career, including no homers and 11 RBI this season. So why do pitchers continually walk him?

You say you haven't noticed? Check the numbers carefully. Because he is not an everyday player, Marson's penchant for reaching first without taking the bat off his shoulder might escape most fans.

But in 163 plate appearances through Monday, Marson had walked 21 times, including with the bases loaded Monday night to drive in an important run against the Angels.

To put that in perspective, through Monday Adam Dunn had drawn the most walks of anyone in the American League, 82, one walk for every 6.0 plate appearances. Ben Zobrist was No. 2 in walks with 72, which is one walk every 6.6 plate appearances. Carlos Santana was third with 69 walks, one per 6.1 plate appearances.

Marson's walk rate is one for every 7.8 plate appearances. By comparison to the rates of the league's top three walk-getters, that doesn't sound impressive, but if Marson were to receive 650 plate appearances (normal for an everyday player), he would draw 83 walks a season.

Eighty-three walks would have put Marson in eighth place among his AL lodge brothers in 2011. Not bad for a guy who struggles to hit .225.

Why does Marson think he draws so many walks?

"I don't know," he said. "I just try to look in a certain area for the ball. If it's not where I'm looking, I don't swing. I try to be patient and have quality at-bats. But I hit at the bottom of the order, and you'd think pitchers would come right at me."

Then it occurred to him what might be happening.

A smile came across Marson's face, and he said, "Maybe the umpires like me."

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Kluber and Tribe fall to A's 8-5

Sheldon Ocker

OAKLAND, Calif.: Team efforts can go both ways.

For the Indians tonight, all the elements of the team pulled together to achieve a 8-5 loss to the Athletics at Oakland Coliseum. And don't let the four-run ninth fool you.

Shin-Soo Choo and pinch hitter Brent Lillibridge each hit a two-run homer in the ninth to put a more respectable sheen on the defeat, but there was little chance the too-little, too-late rally would turn the game around.

"We tried to come back late in the game, but it was too much to overcome," manager Manny Acta said. "I like the way these guys fight. I've seen them for three years now. They're not going to roll over."

Corey Kluber didn't pitch well enough in a starting role, the hitters produced almost nothing until the last inning and the bullpen gave up four runs. The defense also faltered, committing two errors, one of which gave the A's a boost in their biggest offensive inning.

It was one of those innings when the pitcher's statistics don't take a beating but he does.

The Oakland half of the third began with Cliff Pennington slapping a ground ball to shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera, who muffed it for an error. After Pennington was sacrificed to second, Kluber walked Coco Crisp.

That led to a double steal by Pennington and Crisp to put runners on second and third, from where Josh Donaldson's ground out scored the first run of the game.

Kluber had a chance to limit the damage. Instead, he served up a 1-and-1 pitch to Yoenis Cespedes, who launched his 16th home run of the season over the wall in left to give the Athletics a 4-0 advantage.

"The error opened the floodgates, but Kluber should be able to limit the damage, and he couldn't," Acta said. "He was behind in the count too much and got his pitch count way up."

All the runs were unearned, which helped Kluber's earned-run average. And it needed it, because he came into the game with an 8.56 ERA.

But what does that say about the quality of his pitching, especially going forward?

"It's tough to label these guys on four outings in the big leagues," Acta said. "He has good stuff, so we want to keep throwing him out there. We brought him up here, and we want to look at him."

Kluber (1-1, 6.27 ERA) pitched through the fifth inning and gave up no other runs, allowing four hits and three walks on 95 pitches.

"I wasn't sharp," he said. "I threw too many balls. What I need to do is take that last inning and carry it forward."

Kluber retied the side in order in the fifth with no balls hit out of the infield.

The error by Cabrera's was his 16th of the year, a total that leads the team. In the fifth inning, third baseman Jack Hannahan dropped a pop foul for his ninth error. He and Carlos Santana are tied for second on the club with nine errors each.

"Defense has been a strength for us," Acta said. "The only thing is when it's not there, it has hurt us."

The Tribe signed Bartolo Colon in 1993, when he said he was 18 (he became two years older much later). He was in Cleveland's rotation from 1997-2002, when he became too expensive, and the White Sox paid him \$8.25 million in 2003 after he had made \$4.9 million the previous year.

At 39, Colon is still going strong, with a 10-9 record and 3.43 ERA for the Athletics. That includes his start Saturday night, when he gave up one run, five hits and no walks in eight innings.

The Indians might have made him sweat if not for a botched opportunity in the fourth inning, immediately after the A's scored.

In what were the Tribe's first two hits of the game, Cabrera delivered a one-out double, and Shin-Soo Choo singled Cabrera to third. But Santana grounded into a double play to end the inning.

The Indians made no further threatening moves against Colon until the seventh, when Santana swung at his first pitch and sent it sailing over the fence in right for his 13th home run of the season. Michael Brantley followed with a single, but the rally stopped there.

In the sixth, the A's added a run off Frank Herrmann on Chris Carter's one-out double and George Kottaras' two-out single. Cespedes singled off Cody Allen to score Jemile Weeks in the seventh, and Chris Seddon gave up a two-run triple to Coco Crisp in the eighth.

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Tribe's Acta likes power arms

Sheldon Ocker

OAKLAND, Calif.: Manager Manny Acta has spoken frequently about the advantages of having hard throwers in the bullpen.

"I like power arms," Acta said. "They really come in handy. Guys who throw in the mid-90s can handle both left-handed and right-handed batters [with their fastball]. It's also easier for them to stop rallies when they come in the game in the middle of an inning, because they can strike out people."

As you go around the league, you will notice that most teams have at least one or two relievers who routinely throw 94 and above. Some bullpens are populated with three or four pitchers who throw hard, even left-handers who traditionally have relied more on movement than on velocity.

Until recently, the Tribe was not a team that had an abundance of hard throwers in the bullpen. When the season began, the relief corps was made up of closer Chris Perez, setup man Vinnie Pestano, left-handers Rafael Perez and Tony Sipp, sidearming righty Joe Smith, veteran Dan Wheeler and Jairo Asencio.

Attrition has significantly altered the composition of the relief corps. Gone are Wheeler and Asencio, and Rafael Perez has been on the disabled list since late April with a strained lat.

Of the original seven relievers, Chris Perez delivered the most velocity, consistently throwing 93-95. Pestano was next at 92-94; none of the others consistently threw more than 91, which doesn't mean they weren't effective. But if you believe that speed kills, the Tribe bullpen was not your first choice.

That has changed. Chris Perez, Pestano and Smith have been the major players in the pen all season, and they have demonstrated a very high rate of proficiency. Sipp went through a slump that is over.

But the rest of the relievers are young or relatively so and rely on above-average fastballs.

- Esmil Rogers, 27, acquired from the Rockies two months ago, probably has the loudest fastball, with an average velocity of 95 or 96. Now and then, he exceeds those numbers.
- Cody Allen, 23, is in his debut major-league season and has impressed Acta in his first four weeks with the club. Allen has a 94-plus fastball.
- Frank Herrmann, 28, has shuttled between Triple-A and the big leagues the last couple of years. His 94-95 mph fastball is not the problem. He has been searching for a consistent second pitch and began throwing a curveball three weeks ago.
- Even though he is left-handed, Nick Hagadone, 26, often throws fastballs 94. His problem: He has a fractured wrist and won't be around until next year.

What will happen to these four hard throwers in 2013? If Chris and Rafael Perez, Pestano, Smith and Sipp return next season, only two of the newcomers can make the team.

But Rafael Perez and Sipp might be vulnerable. Because of the threat of arbitration, Perez was able to negotiate a salary of \$2.005 million this year. Even though he hardly has pitched, his service time probably will entitle him to a raise.

Sipp will be eligible for arbitration for the first time in the fall, and his \$505,000 salary will at least double.

The amount of cash involved is modest for most teams, but if the Indians can lop \$3.5 million off the payroll and add four high-powered arms, won't they at least think about it?

Asked whether he would like to have seven power pitchers in the bullpen, Acta said: "The more the merrier. And how about five in the rotation?"

Running wild

Eleven runners have tried to steal on Zach McAllister; none has been thrown out. A stolen base Friday night led to an important run, pointing out the necessity of holding runners.

"We've worked very hard on that the last two years," Acta said Saturday. "But young guys take longer to learn, and we don't want them thinking about the runner so much that it takes them out of their game."

McAllister is in his first extended big-league trial and has made 18 starts. Ubaldo Jimenez has been the biggest offender among the starters, allowing 26 steals with only four runners thrown out.

"Ubaldo has a lot of moving parts to his delivery," Acta said. "Being quick to the plate helps, but it's not really about that. It's more about keeping runners off balance in different ways, like holding the ball."

It's not the effort

The Tribe has been in deep descent since the beginning of an 11-game losing streak three weeks ago. But it's not because the team isn't trying.

"These guys have handled everything very well," Acta said. "This has been a good opportunity for them to build character. I like the way they've been going about their business."

"During that stretch [losing streak], you could play as hard as you want, but if you're behind by 10 runs, you can multiply the effort by 100 and it wouldn't matter."

Scoring change

The fly ball hit by Michael Brantley that fell between the shortstop and the left fielder in the fourth inning Friday night has been changed from an error to a single.

No error will be charged to left fielder Yoenis Cespedes, but starting pitcher Tommy Milone will be charged with four earned runs instead of three.

Farm facts

Matt Packer gave up two runs and eight hits in 5½ innings, as Columbus defeated Durham 4-3. Juan Diaz hit his first home run since being promoted from Akron last week. Russ Canzler hit his 19th homer of the season, and Cord Phelps hit his 16th. ... Mike Rayl (10-8, 4.08 ERA) gave up three runs and six hits in six innings, as Carolina beat Myrtle Beach 4-3. ... Mason Radeke (6-6, 3.52 ERA) pitched six scoreless innings, allowing one hit and one walk, as Lake County beat Dayton 5-3. Bryson Myles hit his third home run of the season, singled and drove in two runs. ... Jake Sisco gave up two runs and four hits in seven innings in Mahoning Valley's 3-2 loss to Batavia.

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Perfectionist Vinnie Pestano is still a Tribe believer: Cleveland Indians Insider

Paul Hoynes

Indians Chatter

Clubhouse confidential: It's not good when a pitching staff leads the American League in runs and walks. Welcome to the world of the Cleveland Indians, whose hurlers have allowed 618 runs and 415 walks entering Saturday night's game against the A's.

When manager Manny Acta watched Zach McAllister walk Brandon Moss in the fourth inning following a leadoff single by Chris Carter, he did not have a good feeling about the end result. When Joe Smith started the eighth with a walk to Carter, Acta felt the same.

Both walks turned into runs in the Tribe's 6-4 loss to the A's.

"We have allowed more runs than anybody and I think there's a correlation in that we've walked more guys than anybody," said Acta. "The walks just continue to hurt us."

Gift from above: Michael Brantley was awarded a hit Friday on a ball that was originally called an error. In the fourth inning, Brantley skied a ball into left field that Oakland's Yoenis Cespedes lost in the twilight. After the game, the call was changed to a hit.

"I thought it was a hit all the way," said Brantley.

Stat of the day: In the last 32 games in which the Indians have hit a grand slam, they've lost twice — April 11, 2010 against Detroit and Friday night against the A's. The slams belonged to Luis Valbuena and Shelley Duncan.

— Paul Hoynes

OAKLAND -- In a second half filled with defeat and disappointment, Vinnie Pestano is still a true believer. Not only does he believe he can do the impossible, he believes the Indians still have a good run of baseball in them.

Manager Manny Acta put him in one of those impossible situations Friday night against the A's. He relieved Joe Smith in the eighth inning with runners on first and second, Josh Reddick at the plate and the score tied, 4-4.

Reddick blooped a single into left center field to load the bases. Josh Donaldson singled to make it 5-4. Pestano retired the next three batters, but not before another run scored on a sacrifice as the A's won, 6-4.

The two runs that scored belonged to Smith. So did the loss, but after the game Pestano sat in front of his locker staring into it.

"No matter how tough the situation is, I expect to be perfect," said Pestano, who has allowed just three of 18 inherited runners to score this year. "I take it hard because I felt like those were my runs. I want to make sure that I'm helping that guy out way more than myself. I expect the people behind me to do the same thing and they do."

Pestano is 3-0 this year with a 1.53 ERA in 53 appearances. He has 59 strikeouts and 19 walks in 53 innings. Left-handers are hitting .198 (19-for-96) and right-handers .148 (13-for-38). If he's not the best set-up man in the big leagues, he's pretty close. His 32 holds, the most in club history, lead all of baseball.

"The tougher the situation, I want the ball in my hand," said Pestano. "No offense to anyone on our team, but if we had Mariano Rivera, Trevor Hoffman and Lee Smith in our bullpen, I want the ball as opposed to those guys. I want to be the one throwing the baseball when the game is decided."

That's why Pestano was angry Friday.

"I've been in bases loaded situations this year with no outs and gotten out of it," he said. "It's a situation where I've done it before. If I've done it before, I expect myself to do it again."

OK, so Pestano thinks he's the Harry Houdini of relievers. But does he really think the Indians can get a hot and at least dip their toe into waters of contention before the season is over? They entered Saturday's game against the A's having lost 16 of their last 20. Since the All-Star break, they're 10-24.

"There's plenty of season left," said Pestano. "We saw last year what can happen in September when the pressure gets on the teams on top. Guys start pressing and things can happen."

Pestano is also realistic about what ails the Tribe. "We just can't put it all together," he said. "We can't get pitching, hitting and defense on the same page. It's been that way the entire year. That's why we haven't been able to win more than four games in a row."

The Indians' four-game winning streak came in April. They haven't won more than three straight since.

"We haven't been what our team is built on: pitching, defense and timely hitting," said Pestano. "No one expected us to score as many runs as the Yankees. Or give up fewer runs than the Nationals. But it was the competitive balance of our team that was going to do it."

"If you want to rank in order what we've done the best, it's been defense, hitting and pitching. When you take the backbone of your team [pitching], and that's the worst part of your team, you find yourself in the position we're in."

Pestano still has faith that lead-dog starters Justin Masterson and Ubaldo Jimenez can start putting quality starts together. He believes that Zach McAllister, Roberto Hernandez and Corey Kluber can follow their example.

"We haven't had that one spark, that instance that turns everyone on. There's always a belief that that is going to happen."

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.19.2012

Terry Pluto's Talkin'

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- With 38 games (on Sunday) left in the MLB season, we start today's thoughts by talkin' ...

About the Indians' pitching ...

1. When Manny Acta spoke of the Tribe's needs in 2013, he told the PD's Paul Hoynes: "We're going to have to find a solution in left field. We're going to have to find a solution at first base and we're going to have to find a solution at DH ... and the third base situation is not determined either. Lonnie [Chisenhall] has a broken arm."

2. The Tribe manager is right. But what the Indians need more than anything in 2013 is starting pitching. The situation is so bleak that barring a major collapse or injury, Roberto Hernandez will be back in 2013. They are expected to pick up his \$6 million option for next season. How many games has Hernandez pitched in 2012? One. Last year as Fausto Carmona, he was 7-15 with a 5.25 ERA. In the previous four years, his ERAs have been 5.44, 6.32, 3.77, and 5.25.

3. So this is not exactly like waiting for Bob Lemon or even an aging Orel Hershisier to come back. Few believe he will ever be the Fausto Carmona of 2007 (19-8, 3.06), but they hope he can be the pitcher of 2010 (13-14, 3.77) -- only now under his legal name.

4. This is not picking on Hernandez. It is about a rotation with an ERA of 5.15. As Jonathan Knight tweeted me, only Zach McAllister (3.46 ERA) has an ERA under 4.50 among the nine guys to start games for the Tribe this season. McAllister leads the AL in unearned runs, so I'd argue that his ERA is a bit deceiving because he has failed to stop the bleeding a few times when the defense has opened a wound.

5. But OK, we'll put McAllister in the 2013 rotation. I like him and see him making major progress. Justin Masterson is a legitimate middle-of-the-rotation starter. Then what?

6. Before answering (as if there is one), let's just point out the starters are 12th in AL ERA. That stinks, especially for a team with limited offense which counted upon pitching to be the great eraser. Instead, the collapse of the starters led to the 11-game losing streak and the fall from .500. It has put Acta's job on the line, and led to the dismissal of pitching coach Scott Radinsky.

7. When the Indians have had good or at least respectable starting pitching, it's reflected in the standings. The 2007 Tribe won 96 games with the lowest ERA (4.19) of any AL starting staff. In the last four years, they've been 4.43 and higher. The best they've ranked in the last four years is 10th in 2011, when the team was 80-82.

8. No pitcher has won more than 13 games since Cliff Lee in 2008. From 2005-08, the Indians had these four in their rotation: C.C. Sabathia, Jake Westbrook, Lee and Hernandez. Only Hernandez remains. The other three left because of contract issues, and have pitched well.

9. The Tribe traded its two top pitching prospects (Alex White and Drew Pomeranz) for Ubaldo Jimenez. Pomeranz is 1-7 with a 5.04 ERA, White is 2-6 with 5.83 ERA for the Rockies. Would they have pitched better here had they remained? Who knows? Jimenez was a good pitcher in Colorado (46-32, 3.24 ERA from 2008-10), but not here.

10. The Indians have a \$5.75 million option on Jimenez for 2013. They will pick it up. They will search for a new pitching coach who may be able to help. Jimenez is 2-7 with a 7.16 ERA in his last 10 starts, 13-16 with a 5.45 ERA since coming to the Tribe on July 31, 2011.

11. There's always Jeanmar Gomez (6-3, 2.92 ERA at Columbus). Yes, he was 4-7, 5.32 in the rotation early this season. But the 24-year-old righty is 16-9 with a 2.79 ERA in Class AAA over the last two years, so I'm not sure how much is gained leaving him in Columbus.

12. That leaves Corey Kluber (11-7, 3.59 ERA at Columbus) as a possibility. He has been hit hard in his brief Tribe trial, but also has a 92-95 mph fastball and some decent breaking pitches. A year ago, the Indians thought Scott Barnes was a viable alternative. They converted the lefty to the bullpen, and that didn't work when he came to Cleveland. Maybe work him as a starter next season.

12. David Huff? He's 5-6 with a 5.34 ERA for the Clippers. Josh Tomlin may have surgery. He's out with arm problems. Kevin Slowey has been injured for months at Columbus. When it comes to "Now what?" for the rotation, I don't have many answers. But if it doesn't change for the better, then nothing will for the Tribe.

Cleveland Plain Dealer LOADED: 08.19.2012

Oakland's Yoenis Cespedes, Bartolo Colon lift Athletics over Indians, 8-5

Paul Hoynes

Oakland -- Remember when Bartolo Colon was young and fat and threw so hard he made a baseball sound like bacon frying in a skillet on its way home?

Colon is old and fat now, and doesn't throw nearly as hard as he did back in the day, but he still threw well enough Saturday night to befuddle the Indians in Oakland's 8-5 victory at O.co Coliseum.

The Indians losing streaks are many and varied. They've lost four straight and 17 of their last 21 games. On the road, they've lost 15 of their last 17 games.

Colon, 39, was signed and developed by the Indians. He pitched in the big leagues for them from 1997 until they traded him to Montreal for Grady Sizemore, Brandon Phillips and Cliff Lee in 2002. Contrary to popular belief that was not the last good trade the Indians made, but sometimes it sure seems like it.

"Bartolo has always been successful because he throws strikes and that's half the battle," said manager Manny Acta before the game. "He's been healthy the last few years and that's all he needs. He'll pound the strike zone and you have to swing the bat to beat him."

The Indians did not follow their manager's advice. Check that. They did swing the bat, they just didn't swing it well.

Colon (10-9, 3.43) started the game with 10 straight outs, seven on fly balls, to start the game. He threw between 88 mph and 91 mph, but the Indians didn't do much at all against him.

He allowed five hits and one run in eight in innings. He struck three and didn't walk a batter in throwing 72 percent (74-for-103) for strikes.

"There's not many guys like him still throwing," said shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera. "But he still pitching because he's got something. He stopped us tonight."

When Colon was with the Tribe, he pitched at 95 mph and above and lived for the strikeout.

The Indians only run against Colon came on Carlos Santana's two-out homer in the seventh. It was his 13th overall and ninth from the left side of the plate. Colon is 6-3 against the Indians.

Santana's homer was the first of three by the Indians, but none of them were big enough for a victory. Shin-Soo Choo and Brent Lillibridge each hit two-run homers in the ninth as the Indians scored four runs. After Jason Donald followed Lillibridge's pinch-hit homer with a pinch-hit single, closer Grant Balfour relieved to strikeout Ezequiel Carrera for his 11th save.

"I hope this ninth inning can carry into Sunday's game," said Choo, who has 15 homers. "Right now we've all gone into a slump at the same time. I'm talking about pitchers and hitters, but tonight Colon was very good."

Choo homered off Evan Schirer, who started the ninth. Lillibridge, pinch-hitting for Casey Kotchman, hit an 0-2 pitch off lefty Jerry Blevins. It was his third homer of the season. He's hit them with the Indians since being acquired from Boston on July 24.

Rookie right-hander Corey Kluber did a five-and-fly in the loss. He gave up four runs, all of them unearned and all in them coming in fourth. Kluber (0-2, 6.27) allowed four hits and three walks on 95 pitches. He struck out three.

Cliff Pennington started the fourth with a bouncer over the mound to short. Cabrera charged the ball and made an off balance throw to first. Kotchman stretched for the one-hop throw, but couldn't hold it.

Cabrera was charged with his 16th error, one more than he made last year. When asked what happened on the error, Cabrera said, "What do you mean what happened? I threw to first and it was too hard for him to catch."

Jemile Weeks moved Pennington to second on a sacrifice bunt. Kluber and Santana had trouble with the signs with a man on second. Santana went to the mound for a meeting, but the results were not good.

Kluber walked Coco Crisp. Pennington and Crisp worked a double steal as Josh Donaldson faked a bunt. A lot of catchers would have simply caught Kluber's pitch, but Santana must not have seen it because he didn't move his glove.

Fortunately, the ball hit the backstop so hard it bounced back to Santana before Pennington or Crisp could advance farther.

Josh Donaldson sent a grounder to short to score Pennington for a 1-0 lead. Josh Reddick made it 2-0 with a double and Yoenis Cespedes homered on Kluber's 1-1 pitch to make it 4-0.

The homer was Cespedes 16th of the season.

"The error opened the flood gates, but Kluber should be able to pitch around that," said Acta. "He couldn't do that and allowed the inning to get out of control a little bit. Overall, he hung in there for five innings, but he threw way too many pitches."

Said Kluber, "I didn't attack the strike zone enough and threw way too many balls."

Acta said the Indians are going to keep giving Kluber the ball.

"We have to be patient," said Acta. "He's got good stuff. We just have to throw him out there and see if he puts it together. We brought him up to take a look at him and that's what we're doing."

The Indians tried to rally in the fourth, but a great throw by Reddick from right field stopped them. Cabrera doubled to left center with one out. When Shin-Soo Choo followed with a single to right, it appeared Cabrera would score easily, but he slipped going around third as Reddick threw a strike to the plate. If Cabrera had continued, he would have been an easy out.

The inning ended when Santana bounced into a double play.

The A's made it 5-0 in the sixth against Frank Herrmann.

Chris Carter doubled with one out in the sixth. Herrmann struck out Brandon Moss, but George Kottaras singled to right to score Carter.

The A's, who have won three straight, but lost 11 of their 22, made it 6-1 in the seventh. Cespedes singled home Weeks off Cody Allen. The run was charged to Herrmann.

Crisp's two-run triple off Chris Seddon in the eighth gave the A's 8-1 lead.

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Is Esmil Rogers a candidate to start for the Cleveland Indians? Hey, Hoynsie!

Paul Hoynes, The Plain Dealer

Hey, Hoynsie: Why not make Esmil Rogers a starter? We have enough relief pitching. He can do at least as well as another pitcher from Colorado. What do you think? -- *Dan Jones, Suwanee, Ga.*

Hey, Dan: Rogers made 13 starts for the Rockies in 2011 and went 5-6 with a 6.28 ERA (50 earned runs in 71 2/3 innings). He walked 38 and struck out 33, which sounds a lot like that other pitcher from Colorado.

I like Rogers' arm, but my thought is if it's not broke, don't fix it. Rogers has finally found a spot where he can throw strikes and be effective.

Why not keep him there?

Hey, Hoynsie: What's the likelihood that the Indians will decline Ubaldo Jimenez's \$5.75 million club option for next season and elect to pay his \$1 million buyout? I know that their starting pitching is thin to begin with, and I know that there's still more than a month of baseball to evaluate Jimenez, but the Indians have to be considering whether they can find a more talented and affordable pitcher at the replacement level. -- *David Bruno, Chicago*

Hey, David: I think they're in too deep to cut the cord with Jimenez. The two No.1 picks they sent to the Rockies, Drew Pomeranz and Alex White, aren't lighting it up, but that's a big investment to walk away from after 1 1/2 years.

Hey, Hoynsie: I have been reading your column for years and this year you seem to be frustrated by the Indians/management. Is that a fair assessment? -- *Jim Clark, Johnstown*

Hey, Jim: I only get frustrated when I go downstairs to get something and can't remember what it is I wanted to get. Other than that I am a sea of tranquility.

Hey, Hoynsie: Where are the Indians' impact minor-league players? The only chance the Indians will ever have to compete is to develop their stars. The Reds, White Sox, Red Sox, Angels, Orioles, Athletics, Twins and Royals have brought up impact players. The Indians need to clean house in player development and scouting and start fresh. -- *Jim Markart, Sunnvale, Calif.*

Hey, Jim: I understand where you're coming from, and certainly the farm system hasn't been a cornucopia of talent, but certainly you were excited about the prospects of watching Vinnie Pestano, Carlos Santana, Josh Tomlin and Jason Kipnis opening this season. Players follow their own timetables, not yours or mine or their teams.

How long have the White Sox been waiting for Gordon Beckham? Trevor Plouffe has had a great year for the Twins, but he's been on the back burner for a while. Eric Hosmer made a lot of noise last year for the Royals, but he's been quiet this year. Baltimore's Matt Wieters is having a good season, but it took him a couple of years to get going.

Mike Trout of the Angels? Well, he could be the exception. When dealing with young players, the patience of Job is needed.

Hey, Hoynsie: During the 10-run Twins uprising of a couple weeks back, Zach McAllister was charged with only two earned runs due to an error on what would have been the third out. Then Josh Tomlin came in and surrendered runs of his own. Were Tomlin's runs earned? -- *Wayne Smith, Wattsburg, Pa.*

Hey, Wayne: The game you're referring to was Aug. 8 at Progressive Field. Tomlin relieved McAllister in the second inning with two on and two out and gave up a three-run homer to Ryan Doumit. He pitched 3 1/3 innings and was charged with just one run, Doumit's homer.

Hey, Hoynsie: I did not like your answer to my question about "Acta's boring baseball." If I understand you correctly, there is no hope for Indians baseball. We might as well give up because of deep-seated "organizational failures." I would prefer to think otherwise and it starts by firing Acta. -- *Stanley Laybourne, Scottsdale, Ariz.*

Hey, Stanley: I'm adding your name to the list of people who don't like my answers.

Hey, Hoynsie: What was the purpose of trading a potential knuckleball starter in Steven Wright (possibly another Tom Candiotti) from Class AA to get a journeyman utility infielder Brent Lillibridge when we have Jason Donald, who was brought up anyway. Along the way, they released Jose Lopez, who had made a few good contributions while playing second, third and first? -- *Bill Eckert, Erie, Pa.*

Hey, Bill: It is the Indians' never-ending quest to improve the 25th spot on the roster. Rarely, if ever, do they try to improve the No.1 spot on the roster.

Hey, Hoynsie: With a look to the rest of this year I was wondering if you think Jared Goedert will get a shot? When I've watched him at Class AAA Columbus, he's been a line-drive machine. -- *Paul Welling, Rossford*

Hey, Paul: I would think Goedert has a chance to be a September call up.

Hey, Hoynsie: Have you ever heard Tribe ownership state that winning is a priority? They lead the public to believe that the team struggles financially, yet have no interest in selling. They must be paying themselves nicely, huh? -- *Hank Schrader, Hiram*

Hey, Hank: As I've said before, I believe that Paul Dolan and his father Larry want to win, but they want to win on their terms. Their terms have yet to take root.

Since the Dolans own the team, they're allowed to make money, right? This is America, right?

-- *Hoynsie*

With fans disenchanted, what's next for Cleveland Indians? MLB Insider

Paul Hoynes, The Plain Dealer

Paul Hoynes' Rant

The clerk at Walgreens looked at a copy of the San Francisco Chronicle and saw a picture of **Melky Cabrera** on the front page.

The clerk said, "He wanted a big pay day. Now he's not going to get a big payday."

Cabrera, who captured the hearts of Giants fans this year, has been suspended without pay for 50 games after testing positive for a banned substance. Right when the Giants need him the most, baseball's leader in hits and the National League's leader in runs is gone. The Milk Man has turned sour.

How stupid can one player be? Cabrera not only ruined his chances of signing a big free-agent contract this winter, but he may have cost his teammates a chance of making the postseason. If the stretch run does not end well for the Giants, how could GM Brian Sabean ever consider resigning Cabrera and inserting him back in that clubhouse?

Cabrera had to know he would get caught. MLB's testing program keeps getting more and more sophisticated. No one knows what Cabrera was thinking when he put testosterone in his body. But when this selfish, self-serving act blew up in Cabrera's face, he was far from the only one damaged.

— *Paul Hoynes*

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Indians' 11-game losing streak ruined their season in the standings, taking them from contenders to Palookaville in one big punch. Yet what did it cost them in the wallet?

One person in the know figures the Indians lost about 100,000 in attendance over the last 29 home games because of the streak. That includes the homestand earlier this month against the Twins and Red Sox when the streak ended.

Total cost? Probably about \$2.4 million based on the average ticket price of \$24, including concessions and parking costs, at Progressive Field.

So we're talking about the salary of a utility infielder. A drop in the bucket. The four-game series against the Red Sox, always a popular foe in Cleveland, drew 102,767 fans, an average of almost 26,000. Those were almost all pre-sale tickets.

If the Indians had been hot, if they'd been within 3 1/2 games of first place in the AL Central as they were before the losing streak started, walk up crowds may have increased by 4,000 or 5,000 per game to see the Red Sox.

The Indians have drawn 1,219,954 fans for 59 home games. Among MLB's 30 teams, they rank 29th in total home attendance. Tampa Bay is the only team which has drawn fewer -- 1,213,768. In average home attendance, the Indians rank 28th at 20,677. Tampa Bay at 20,572 and Oakland at 20,539 are 29th and 30th, respectively. The Rays and Oakland are still very much involved in the race for the postseason. The Indians have 22 home games left when this West Coast swing ends Wednesday in Seattle. The most attractive series will be the Yankees' three-game visit starting Friday. After that it will pretty much be the voice of play-by-play man **Tom Hamilton** echoing throughout the empty corridors and seats at Progressive Field.

September visits by AL Central foes Detroit and Chicago have lost their edge with the Indians tumbling out of the race. The Indians will probably reach 1.7 million in attendance. That's down from 1.84 million in 2011, but still a jump from 2010, when the team drew a Progressive Field low of 1.4 million.

It would seem the losing streak is the least of the franchise's problems. This team, which spent 40 days in first place earlier this season, never really captured Cleveland's imagination. Young players such as Michael Brantley and Vinnie Pestano have performed well, but no one has had a breakout, Mike Trout-type of year. Carlos Santana brought excitement in 2011 by hitting 27 homers, a club record for switch-hitters. This year his power has been negated.

Justin Masterson and Josh Tomlin each won 12 games in 2011, but Masterson has struggled this year and Tomlin is on the disabled list with a sore right elbow. Closer Chris Perez saved 36 games in 2011, his first big year. This year he's become the face of the franchise for not only saving games, but criticizing fans for not coming to the ballpark. As a marketing tool, he is a double-edged sword at best.

Among the veterans, Asdrubal Cabrera had a career season in 2011 with 25 homers and 91 RBI. This year he's been OK. Derek Lowe had a great start, but faded badly and was released. Johnny Damon never got started and was released. Travis Hafner is hurt again. Grady Sizemore still hasn't played a game and the best that can be said about Casey Kotchman is that he can defensively play the heck out of first base.

There are some who say fans ignored the Indians this year because they have a trust issue with the Dolan ownership. The issue is ownership won't pay to keep quality players -- CC Sabathia, Victor Martinez, Cliff Lee, etc. -- and won't pay to sign quality players from the outside. Perhaps there's some truth there, but does a trust issue really keep a person away from Progressive Field on a Friday night in July if they want to see big-league baseball?

The simple solution to some is fire everybody, starting with manager **Manny Acta** all the way up to President **Mark Shapiro**. Don't look for that to happen. The Dolans don't operate that way.

What is clear is that the present plan, whatever that might be, is not working. Something needs to change.

This week in baseball

Baseball is a game of threes. Three strikes and you're out and three outs in each half of an inning. Here are two more sets of threes to consider from last week in baseball. All stats are through Friday.

Three up

1. Miguel Cabrera because the third Tiger to drive in 100 or more runs for five straight seasons on Tuesday. Overall, he has nine straight 100-RBI seasons.
2. Arizona's Jason Kubel has 53 RBI since June 5, second only to Miguel Cabrera.
3. Philadelphia's Cole Hamels has thrown two shutouts in his last two starts and hasn't allowed a run in 22 straight innings (14 hits, one walk and 15 strikeouts).

Three down

1. In the first five innings of the Indians' 14-1 loss to Boston on Aug. 12, Red Sox hitters batted .481 (13-for-27).

2. Dodgers reliever **Brandon League**, acquired from Seattle last month, has allowed six runs on nine hits in five innings (12.80 ERA) since the trade.

3. The Rays, including Wednesday's perfecto by Seattle's **Felix Hernandez**, have had a perfect game thrown against them three times in the last four seasons.

Tribe talk

"I'm a work in progress," **Ubaldo Jimenez**, after giving up eight runs in four innings Tuesday in a 9-6 loss to the Angels.

Stat-o-matic

Four in one: Toronto's **Steve Delabar** became the first pitcher in history Monday to strike out four batters in one inning during extra innings. He struck out four White Sox in the 10th inning after **Tyler Flowers** struck out, but reached first when the pitch bounced away from catcher **Jeff Mathis**.

Front man: **Josh Hamilton** has driven in **Elvis Andrus** 31 times this year for the Rangers, accounting for 31 percent of Hamilton's 101 RBI.

Big pop: Chicago's **A.J. Pierzynski** leads all catchers with a career-high 23 homers. Hall of Famer **Carlton Fisk** holds the club record with 37 in 1985.

Five Questions ... with Indians interim pitching coach Ruben Niebla

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Ruben Niebla was promoted from Class AAA Columbus to the Indians staff as interim pitching coach when Scott Radinsky was fired on Aug. 9.

Niebla pitched professionally for six years and has been a pitching coach in the organization for 12 years. He has a degree in Kinesiology and Physical Education from Azusa Pacific and has been a high school substitute teacher in Imperial, Calif. in the off-season.

Q: *How did it feel when you replaced the fired Scott Radinsky?*

A: It was a bittersweet moment for me. I was happy for myself, but sorry to see a friend leave.

Q: *Has it been awkward taking over a pitching staff with just under two months left in the season?*

A: It's been tough, but hopefully with a new message we can get some things figured out and headed in a new direction.

Q: *How does it help you having worked with a lot of the pitchers on the big-league staff either in the minors or in spring training?*

A: It's easier to talk to them and know what they're trying to accomplish in their side work and bullpen sessions. In the game, I have an idea how their heartbeat is going to be and what's the right thing to say to get them back on track.

The guys have been awesome. Everything has gone pretty smooth as far as the relationship with the players is concerned.

Q: *What is your main philosophy about pitching that you try to impart?*

A: The one thing is I build a relationship. I hold people accountable for their work. I also have a pretty good understanding of the biomechanics [of the body and pitching]. That, combined with the teaching background that I have, I try to make sure that each pitcher understands me. I have an approach that is going to be different to each individual.

Q: *Is it difficult having interim in front of your job title?*

A: It's tough not thinking about it, but I have to focus on the everyday work with the guys and try to figure out what makes them tick. I need to remain focused on that and winning a ballgame on a nightly basis.

Cespedes, Colon lift A's past Indians

The Associated Press – 6 hours ago

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Bartolo Colon only used his changeup twice, in the first inning and on the last pitch he threw. The way his fastball was dancing around the strike zone, the Oakland Athletics right-hander really didn't need his offspeed stuff.

It's been that way most of his career and the 39-year-old Colon sees no reason to change now that he's enjoying a renaissance with the A's.

Colon pitched eight strong innings for his third consecutive win at home, Yoenis Cespedes homered and drove in three runs and Oakland beat the Cleveland Indians 8-5 on Saturday night.

"What you see is what you get out of him," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He makes you make the adjustment. He's got great movement on his fastball, he's on the corners on both sides. We've seen quite a bit of that this year."

Colon (10-9) struck out three and scattered five hits while beating his former club for the sixth time in 10 starts. The burly right-hander didn't give up a hit until the fourth and allowed only two runners past first base.

In doing so, Colon became the third-oldest pitcher in Oakland history to reach double digits in wins after turning 35. Don Sutton (1985) and Tom Candiotti (1998) are the others.

"I didn't know that. I had no idea about it," Colon said. "I'm happy about it. At the same time I want the team to continue to play like we are."

It's the ninth time this season Colon has not walked a batter and the 18th time in 24 starts with Oakland that he's walked one or fewer.

The 10 wins are also the most for Colon since he had a career-best 21 with the Angels in 2005.

"(He) did a real good job," said Cleveland right fielder Shin-soo Choo, who singled off Colon in the fourth. "You know he's going to throw that two-seamer and you still can't hit it."

Cespedes homered and drove in three runs, Josh Donaldson had two hits and an RBI while Coco Crisp added two-run triple for Oakland, which won its third straight after entering the night one-half game behind Baltimore for the second wild-card spot in the American League.

On a night when the A's celebrated the 10th anniversary of their 20-game winning streak, Cespedes managed to steal a bit of the spotlight. He hit a two-run home run against Indians starter Corey Kluber (0-2) in the third and added an RBI single off reliever Cody Allen in the seventh.

It was the second home run in three games for the A's slugger after he went 54 at-bats without an extra base hit. Cespedes finished 2 for 4 and is batting an AL-best .377 (46 for 122) since the All-Star break.

"He gets frustrated, he gets mad but he never presses," Melvin said of Cespedes. "Shoot, when we signed him if we knew he'd have the numbers he has right now, boy we would have taken it in a heartbeat."

That was all the support Colon needed to win for the fourth time in five starts. He gave up Carlos Santana's 13th home run with two out in the seventh but was otherwise stellar.

Grant Balfour recorded one out for his 11th save after Oakland's bullpen nearly let it get away in the ninth.

Evan Scribner replaced Colon and gave up Choo's two-run home run. Brent Lillibridge later hit a pinch-hit two-run shot off Jerry Blevins to cut the A's lead to 8-5.

Jason Donald followed with a pinch-hit single before Balfour replaced Blevins and struck out Ezequiel Carrera to end it.

Cleveland committed two errors while losing for the fourth time in five games on its road trip. The Indians have dropped the first two games in this series after losing the final two games in Anaheim.

"When you walk guys and make errors it's going to be costly," Cleveland manager Manny Acta said. "Defense has been our strength all year so I'm not going to complain about that. It's only thing we've done well all year."

Colon didn't allow a hit until giving up a one-out double to Cabrera in the fourth. Choo followed with a single to move Cabrera to third, but Colon got out of it by getting Santana to ground into a double play.

The A's scored their first run off Kluber without getting a hit.

Cliff Pennington reached on a throwing error by Indians shortstop Cabrera, was sacrificed to second, stole third and scored on Donaldson's groundout.

Josh Reddick followed with a double to left center to drive in Crisp to make it 2-0.

After a visit to the mound by pitching coach Ruben Niebla, Cespedes lined a 1-1 pitch from Kluber onto the top of the scoreboard above the fence in left field.

Oakland added a run in the sixth on George Kottaras' RBI single then scored another in the seventh when Cespedes singled in Jemile Weeks.

Crisp's two-run triple in the eighth off Chris Seddon made it 8-1.

Kluber struck out two and walked three in five innings. He remains winless in four career starts.

"He has good stuff and you have to be patient," Acta said. "We're not going to make any knee-jerk reactions. We brought him up to look at him and that's what we're doing."

NOTES: Indians leadoff hitter Jason Kipnis is 6 for 55 since July 27. ... The A's honored their 2002 team in a pregame ceremony celebrating the franchise's AL-record 20-game winning streak that season. Several ex-players attended, as did former manager Art Howe. The winning streak was the subject of the Brad Pitt movie "Moneyball." ... Oakland manager Bob Melvin is encouraged about the progress made by pitcher Brett Anderson after he threw a 40-pitch bullpen session Saturday and believes Anderson will lead the team before the season ends. "We'll find a way to get him in there at some point," Melvin said. "He's that good." ... 3B Brandon Inge is hitting off a tee and is flexing his right shoulder with little to no discomfort. He's eligible to come off the 15-day DL on Aug. 27. ... RHP Jarrod Parker (7-7), who pitches the series finale for Oakland, is still looking for his first win in August. ... RHP Justin Masterson (9-10) is seeking his third consecutive win for the Indians.

Ingraham's baseball notes: LaPorta, Canzler and Goedert should get major-league looks

By Jim Ingraham

JIngraham@News-Herald.com

The Indians' starting left fielder Friday night was a utility infielder. That should do wonders for the morale among the outfielders at Columbus.

Why Matt LaPorta, Russ Canzler, and/or Jared Goedert aren't on the major-league roster remains a mystery. For all practical purposes, this Indians season is over. Since July 26, their record is 4-16 (before Saturday's game). They have the third-worst record in the American League. If they were in any AL division besides the one they are in, they'd be in last place.

Shelley Duncan is a nice guy and a good teammate, but he's 32 years old and doesn't belong on this team right now. For the rest of the season, the Indians' left fielder vs. left-handed pitchers should be LaPorta, Canzler or Goedert. Their first baseman vs. left-handers should be LaPorta or Goedert.

Starting Jason Donald in left field and Duncan at DH Friday night serves no purpose at all. Not in the big picture. So what if Duncan hit a grand slam? What's the point?

The Indians should be using the remainder of this season to evaluate, once and for all, LaPorta, Canzler and Goedert. All three of them should be in the lineup almost every night, one in left field, one at first base and one at DH.

Manager Manny Acta said the team needs to find solutions for those three positions for next year. His lineup card should reflect that.

Friday night, it didn't.

The Melk man goeth

Giants GM Brian Sabean said no decision has been made on whether Melky Cabrera will return to the Giants. Cabrera, who can become a free agent after the season, was suspended for 50 games for testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

"I can't answer that now," said Sabean on Cabrera's future with the team. "There's a lot of blanks to fill in as a result of this. Judging by the mood in the Giants' clubhouse after the suspension was announced, Cabrera's teammates, not surprisingly, weren't in much of a forgiving mood.

"Ultimately, it was a bad decision," said catcher and team leader Buster Posey. "That's all I'm really going to say about it."

"We've all been around the game a long time. We're used to making changes and adjustments, as we do in life," said Sabean. "This is one of those things where you're punched in the stomach, but you have no choice and you've got to move on."

Cabrera will lose the remainder of his 2012 salary, about \$1.6 million, and perhaps tens of millions in free agency.

When the regular season ends, Cabrera will have five games left in his suspension. He'll serve them at the start of next season or in this year's playoffs, if the Giants get that far and welcome him back.

The Strasburg plan

Debate continues to rage over the Nationals' plan to shut down ace Stephen Strasburg at a certain innings limit, regardless of how it affects Washington's chances to win a division, the NL pennant or the World Series.

Some things to keep in mind:

This has been GM Mike Rizzo's plan since the end of last season, really since the day Strasburg was drafted and the Nats made it clear they would monitor his innings as he progressed as a professional pitcher.

Strasburg went into the weekend with 139 innings. There is no hard-and-fast number he will be limited to, nor has there ever been. It will almost certainly fall in the range of 160 to 180, but Rizzo has said he'll decide when it's appropriate based on how Strasburg looks and what signs of fatigue he spots.

There is zero chance of the Nats tweaking the plan to make Strasburg available for the postseason. No six-man rotation. No skipping starts. No made-up injury to delay the inevitable. He'll pitch every fifth day until Rizzo decides to shut him down. And once that happens, he's done for 2012.

This isn't solely about recovery from Tommy John surgery. The Nats planned to limit Strasburg's innings from the day he was drafted, slowly bringing him along and not letting him go more than 25 to 30 percent more innings than he did the previous year.

This is the same program they use on all of their young pitchers, Tommy John patients or not. The only difference is Strasburg's time in the minors was so brief (two months) he's experiencing all this at the big-league level while most others do it in the minors. Prior to this season, he had never thrown more than 123 1/3 innings in a full season.

Mariners madness

It's been a weird year for the Mariners. They are the first team to ever have a perfect game pitched for and against them in the same season. The White Sox's Philip Humber pitched one against them on April 21, and Felix Hernandez tossed one against Tampa Bay on Wednesday.

Seattle also threw a record-tying six-pitcher no-hitter this year against the Dodgers. Hernandez's perfecto is the 23rd perfect game in history, and three of them have been this season, the most ever in one season.

RIP

Red Sox legend Johnny Pesky, who died at 92 last week, was born John Michael Paveskovich in 1919 in Portland, Ore.

He led the American League in hits as a rookie in 1942, missed the next three years while serving in World War II, then came back and led the AL in hits again in his first two years back — 1946 and 1947.

During his career, he never struck out more than 36 times in a season. In 1950, he drew 104 walks and struck out just 31 times. Ted Williams nicknamed him "The Needle" for his long nose.

Rollins keeps rolling

Jimmy Rollins played in his 1,731st game at shortstop for the Phillies on Tuesday night, passing Larry Bowa to be No. 1 in that category in franchise history. Rollins has played in 1,751 games overall with the Phillies, the third-most in franchise history behind Mike Schmidt (2,404) and Richie Ashburn (1,794).

Beat it

Rays manager Joe Maddon was thrown out of Felix Hernandez's perfect game. Only one other person has been thrown out of a perfect game — Arizona manager Kirk Gibson, as a player with the Dodgers, was tossed out of Tom Browning's perfect game for the Reds in 1988.

Attention, shoppers

Cubs Alfonso Soriano and Carlos Marmol have both cleared waivers and can be traded. Soriano's name immediately surfaced as a candidate for the Giants, who lost Cabrera to a suspension.

However, Soriano said Los Angeles is the only West Coast city that appeals to him enough to waive his no-trade rights.

About San Francisco, he said: "I don't think so. San Francisco is not good weather to play in. It's on the West Coast, and I have never played on the West Coast. We'll see what happens if they call. I'll talk to my family then and see. I know it's 50 percent my call, but it's my family's (call), too. I'd like to talk to my family and see what happens."

Soriano is owed \$36 million over the next two years, and the Cubs are apparently willing to pay a big chunk of that amount, in exchange for a decent prospect or two.

He's out ... cold

Home-plate umpire Greg Gibson suffered a broken nose and required stitches to close a nasty gash above his eye after getting accidentally spiked and kicked by the Angels' Torii Hunter, in his slide/tumble into home plate in the game against the Indians on Wednesday night.

Hunter said he was thankful he was wearing rubber-bottomed shoes instead of metal cleats.

"If I was wearing cleats, he could have lost an eye," Hunter said.

Numbers, please

-- On Tuesday, Miguel Cabrera reached the 100-RBI mark for the fifth straight season. The last Tiger to do that was Charlie Gehringer in 1932-36.

-- Sam Deduno is 4-0 with a 3.38 ERA, but the 29-year-old Twins rookie is walking batters at a faster clip than all but one other pitcher in the majors. Among pitchers with at least 40 innings, Deduno's rate of walks per nine innings (6.75) ranks second to Jonathan Sanchez (7.38), who has combined to go 1-9 with an 8.07 ERA this year for the Royals and Rockies.

-- With 19 home runs, Willin Rosario of the Rockies has tied Randy Hundley (1966) for seventh-most in a season by a rookie catcher. Mike Piazza owns the major-league record with 35 for the 1993 Dodgers.

-- Max Scherzer has passed Tigers teammate Justin Verlander for the major-league lead in strikeouts. Scherzer (178) and Verlander (174) can become the first pair of Tigers pitchers to strike out 240 hitters in a season. The last pair to do so were Kerry Wood and Mark Prior of the 2003 Cubs.

-- Addison Reed's 21 saves are a White Sox rookie record, breaking the mark set by the legendary Salome Barojas in 1982.

-- Weekly amazing Mike Trout stat: He has 22 home runs in 441 plate appearances after hitting 23 home runs in 1,312 minor-league plate appearances.

More Trout: On Aug. 10, he became the 14th AL player since 1980 to drive in two runs with one sacrifice fly.

-- Pitchers Blake Beavan of the Mariners and Jordan Zimmermann of the Nationals each have a major-league high nine starts this season in which they did not walk a batter.

-- The Giants' Buster Posey leads the NL with a .434 batting average since the All-Star break. The NL record for highest batting average after the All-Star break is held by Babe Phelps, who hit .416 after the break for the 1936 Dodgers. The major-league record is .457 by Ted Williams in 1957.

-- Nice bullpen, Brewers! They are last in the majors with 23 blown saves and 29 losses. Not surprisingly, the Brewers have suffered 24 last at-bat losses and have watched opponents walk off on them 10 times.

-- Nats outfielder Jayson Werth has been fantastic since coming back from a broken left wrist that sidelined him three months. In 13 games since coming off the DL, he is hitting .405 with a .510 on-base percentage and .548 slugging percentage. Werth has picked up right where he left off upon suffering the injury May 6 while trying to make a sliding catch.

-- None of the Yankees' 567 RBI this season belong to a rookie.

Three strikes

1. Ubaldo Jimenez is on pace to set an Indians record for the highest ERA by a pitcher with a minimum of 30 starts in a season. Jimenez is at 5.62. The Indians' record is 5.61 by Lary Sorensen in 1982.

2. The Indians' high-water mark was May 24, when their record was 26-18. Since then? Don't ask ... OK, since you asked: 28-47.

3. Indians pitchers have given up 10 or more runs 14 times this season, eight of those coming since the All-Star break. I'm no pitching coach, but I don't think that's very good.

Information for this column was gathered by personal interviews and from other beat writers around the league.

Captains 3, Lugnuts 2: Lake County capitalizes on Lansing miscues

By Cory Schuett

CSchuett@News-Herald.com

The Captains took advantage of a few late-inning mistakes by Lansing en route to a 3-2 win over the Lugnuts on Saturday at Classic Park.

With two outs in the eighth inning, Captains center fielder Luigi Rodriguez stole second, advanced to third on a throwing error and scored on a wild pitch by reliever Casey Beck.

Closer Enosil Tejada allowed the first two batters to reach in the ninth but got out of the jam unscathed for his fifth save of the season. The Lugnuts popped a bunt back to Tejada and was caught trying to steal third, running themselves out of a potentially big inning.

"There is something to be said about guys who can come in and pitch late in games," Captains manager David Wallace said. "The last three outs are a lot different than the first three. It takes a special guy with a lot of guts to pitch in that situation."

Captains starter Elvis Araujo struck out a season-high eight batters, including five of the first six batters he faced. The southpaw allowed two hits through the first five innings, but he didn't get through the sixth.

The Lugnuts scored two runs in that inning — one unearned — to tie the game at 2. With two on, Captains third baseman Yhoxian Medina fielded a grounder, stepped on third for a forceout, but threw the ball wide of first on the double-play attempt.

Kevin Patterson followed with an RBI double to left to even the score. The Captains had three errors in the game — two by Medina.

"I think that was probably (Araujo's) best start of the year," Wallace said. "He worked ahead in counts, was aggressive and located his fastball. It's a shame that he didn't get the win, but he was obviously a big part of the win."

Cody Penny (2-0) earned the victory, throwing 2 2/3 scoreless innings in relief.

The Captains had seven hits and seven walks, but were 1-for-11 (.090) with runners in scoring position.

Jordan Smith got the Captains on the board with an RBI single in the first. Jarrud Sabourin grounded into a double play in the third inning, scoring Francisco Lindor from third to give Lake County an early 2-0 lead.

"Going through a whole season can beat you up, and we preach mental toughness to these guys," Wallace said. "We had a couple instances where we broke down, but we're doing a much better job of staying aware of the game situation."

Smith, who came into the game with the Midwest League's third-best batting average (.310), finished 2-for-3 with a walk.

Rodriguez was caught trying to steal third — just before a double by Medina — in the second inning but made up for the mistake with his hustle in the eighth.

"I was mad when (Rodriguez) went and got thrown out — it was just a bad situation," Wallace said. "But (Lansing) ended up doing the same thing."

Lansing starter Anthony DeSclafani allowed two earned runs on six hits. The right-hander struck out four and walked three. Beck (0-1) took the loss with the unearned run in the eighth.

Gustavo Pierre had two singles for the Lugnuts, scoring once.

The win keeps the Captains ahead in the playoff hunt with 17 games remaining in the regular season. Lake County owns the final wild-card spot and sits two games ahead of the South Bend Silver Hawks.

"Our goal isn't just to make the playoffs," Wallace said. "Obviously we're going to try to make it in, but we're not going to do it in spite of developing these players. If we don't make it, we will still feel good about the work we've put in here."

The series continues today at 1 p.m.

Bats 3 | Clippers 2, 10 innings: Clippers waste chance to gain ground in race

Sunday August 19, 2012 6:25 AM

Willie Harris singled to drive in the winning run in the 10th inning last night to lift the host Louisville Bats to a 3-2 victory over the Clippers.

Despite the loss, the Clippers remain 21/2 games behind the Pawtucket Red Sox, who also lost, in the International League wild-card race. Lehigh Valley won to close to a half-game of Pawtucket.

Denis Phipps opened the 10th with a double off Clippers reliever Bryan Price (0-1). Phipps reached third on a Felix Perez single, and the Bats loaded the bases when Cody Puckett walked. Mike Costanzo lined to third for one out, but Harris came up and drove the ball into right field for the winning RBI. The Clippers' Eric Berger was not rewarded for a solid start. He allowed two runs and five hits in seven innings. He struck out two and didn't allow a walk. Price allowed four hits over the final 1 1/3 innings, walking two and striking out none. The Clippers are 5-6 in extra-inning games this season.

After the Bats took a 2-0 lead in the first on Phipps' home run, the Clippers tied the score in the sixth when Tim Fedroff homered to right off Bats starter Pedro Villarreal. It was Fedroff's eighth homer of the season. Gregorio Petit had singled to open the inning.

Villarreal, who pitched seven innings, allowed five hits, struck out eight and walked one. Reliever Jordan Smith (3-3) got the victory for going the final two innings. He allowed one hit.

Phipps also had a single to finish 3 for 4. Bats teammate Neftali Solo matched him with three hits. The Bats had nine total to the Clippers' six.

The Clippers' series in Louisville continues with a game at 2:05 p.m. today.

No decision on Anderson yet, Reddick back in lineup and more

Susan Slusser

Manager Bob Melvin was very complimentary of Brett Anderson's 40-pitch bullpen session, but he said there has not been a decision yet on where to stick Anderson back into the rotation. My guess is that someone else will come out of the rotation briefly – until September, when rosters expand – and that the odd man out will be based on seniority because right now Brandon McCarthy's health is good. Since everyone else has been here all year or almost all year, that means Dan Straily would most likely go back to Triple-A Sacramento for the final week and a half of August or so.

That's my speculation only. I do know the A's were carefully monitoring McCarthy's health with an eye toward Anderson being able to fill in for him if needed, and McCarthy looks terrific. Straily pitched well his last time out, and he's only had one poor start in his three outings, but I can't see the A's sending out Tommy Milone or Jarrod Parker after four-plus months of work here. At any rate, if the A's do send out anyone, it would just be such a brief thing it really won't matter a ton.

Josh Reddick is feeling much better after his third dental procedure in five days on Friday, and he's back in the lineup and batting third.

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

Seth Smith will head out on a rehab assignment in a day or two, Eric Sogard took some batting practice, and Brandon Inge thinks he'll be back when eligible on Aug. 27. Plus A.J. Griffin will throw his second bullpen session tomorrow after being shut down briefly with shoulder discomfort. He was coming down with a nasty cold today, though, so I'm not sure how he's going to be feeling tomorrow. He said he's prone to bronchitis and has had pneumonia a few times, so he needs to be careful if he's ailing.

The most exciting news here today: Roy Steele will be introducing the 2002 team members on the PA system tonight. That's fantastic. "The Voice of God" has been retired for several years because of health problems, so it's special to have him back.

Before batting practice, Hub Strategy was taping a TV ad for "Fiesta Day" and Yoenis Cespedes was swinging a bat, blind-folded, at a pinata. DJ O'Neil of Hub told me that Cespedes hit the pinata so hard, they found candy in the dugout, so anyone in field level seats, take a look around – you might get some sweets!

San Francisco Chronicle LOADED: 08.19.2012

Oakland A's, Bartolo Colon take care of business against Cleveland Indians

Carl Steward

OAKLAND -- It might pale to the 2002 team's 20 consecutive victories, but the A's 2012 model is plenty happy just to be winners of three in row after a recent scuffle that hinted at a potential demise.

But suddenly, after an 8-5 victory over the Cleveland Indians behind eight strong innings from Bartolo Colon on Saturday, Oakland's playoff prospects are once again on the upswing.

With a healthy Oakland Coliseum crowd of 30,132 on hand to celebrate the 2002 team's American League record 20-game win streak anniversary, the 2012 club staged its own impressive show of pitching and offense.

It started with the veteran right-hander Colon (10-9), who allowed just five hits and didn't walk a batter while becoming a double-digit winner for the first time since 2005, when he was a 21-game winner for the Angels.

Colon didn't allow a run until the Indians' Carlos Santana launched a first-pitch, two-out homer in the seventh.

Colon weathered that, but with two outs in the eighth and a runner at first, manager Bob Melvin came to the mound just to make sure his starter was still O.K. to finish the frame. During the meeting, shortstop Cliff Pennington apparently dropped a stinging one-liner that produced a laugh for all concerned.

"Penny said, 'You look fat a little bit so you're probably tired,' " said a grinning Colon through interpreter Ariel Prieto.

Melvin said Colon took the ribbing in good humor before staying in the game and getting Jason Kipnis via strikeout with a nasty changeup.

"I was willing to go either way based on how he felt," Melvin said. "If he felt like he was still good, it was going to be his last hitter and three times he told me he was good. There were some other questions out there asked out there -- not by me -- but I'll just say (Colon) makes it pretty light out there."

Colon makes it easy for the catcher when he's pumping fastballs to all parts of the strike zone. George Kottaras was behind the plate on this night and was amazed by how precise Colon could be.

"What's it like? It's great," Kottaras said. "He can throw those 2- and 4-seamers wherever he wants, and I just set up for the location."

The A's also made it pretty easy for Colon to get the victory. By the time Santana broke through with his homer, Oakland had amassed a 5-0 lead. They posted four in the third, spearheaded by Josh Reddick's RBI double and Yoenis Cespedes' 16th homer, a line shot over the left-field fence.

"We lost a couple of series and went into a little bit of a drought offensively, but when Reddick and Yoenis are swinging the bat well, we score runs," Melvin said.

The A's added a fifth run in the sixth when Chris Carter ripped a double down the left-field line and scored on Kottaras' single. Coco Crisp added a two-run triple in the eighth, and as it turned out, those runs proved important.

Cleveland scored four in the ninth on a pair of two-run homers, one by Shin-soo Choo against Evan Scriber and the second by Brent Lillebridge off Jerry Blevins. Grant Balfour finally was called in to get the last out and his 11th save -- his third in three days.

After more than 14 months on the shelf, Brett Anderson believes he is finally ready to return to a major league mound. Now all the 24-year-old left-hander needs is an opening in the rotation.

Anderson last pitched for Oakland on June 5, 2011, and had Tommy John elbow surgery nine days after that last appearance.

But he is finally nearing the end of an arduous rehabilitation that most recently included five rehab appearances for Triple-A Sacramento.

"I'm very eager," Anderson said Saturday after a 40-pitch bullpen session at the Coliseum. "Pitching in front 350 people in New Orleans (his last minors outing) after a rain delay wasn't a whole lot of fun."

Anderson's throwing session was staged in Oakland because the A's wanted to see just how ready he is for active duty. Melvin, for one, came away impressed.

"He really had good stuff," the A's manager said —... We will find a way to get him in there at some point. We just have to find the right time."

Reddick was back starting in right field for the first time since Tuesday and believes he finally has the dental issues that have plagued him for more than a week on the run.

After having a tooth extracted Monday, Reddick has been battling infection and has had two follow-up procedures. With the help of antibiotics, he said he felt much improved Saturday.

"It's better -- not 100 percent, but feeling pretty good," he said.

The A's had a pre-game ceremony honoring the 2002 club. Former P.A. announcer Roy Steele introduced six players from that club -- Jeff Tam, Jim Mecir, Terrence Long, Micah Bowie, Chad Bradford and Scott Hatteberg -- as well as former manager Art Howe and three of his coaches -- Ken Macha, Mike Quade and Thad Bosley.

A tribute to late pitcher Cory Lidle resulted in a touching moment when Lidle's widow Melanie and son Christopher came on the field to accept a \$10,000 check for the Cory Lidle Foundation from members of the 2002 team.

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