

Tribe capitalizes on Twins' shaky defense Peralta drives in two, Brantley gets first RBI to back Sowers

By Anthony Castrovince / MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- The Indians made five errors in a loss to the Tigers on Wednesday, so the Tribe knows what it's like to see a defensive effort fall apart.

Perhaps, then, the Indians can empathize with a Twins team that made four errors Friday night.

But the Tribe won't make any apologies for taking advantage of those Minnesota mishaps and turning them into a 5-2 victory in front of 24,402 at Progressive Field. The opportunistic offense made a winner out of Jeremy Sowers, who was solid for the better part of six innings, and snapped a four-game losing skid.

"We were on the flip side of that the other night," manager Eric Wedge said. "At this level, it's tough to overcome that. When you give a team an extra out or another opportunity, more often than not, it's going to hurt you."

Indeed, the Indians were able to put the hurt on their old pal Carl Pavano, who made his first start against them since the Aug. 7 trade that made the Metrodome his new home, because the Twins' defenders were not their characteristically sharp selves. Minnesota entered the game with the fewest number of errors (59) of any team in the American League, but it certainly wasn't clicking on this night.

In the third inning, it was a throwing error by shortstop Orlando Cabrera that helped the Tribe put together the game's first three runs.

Michael Brantley, replacing the surgery-bound Grady Sizemore in the leadoff spot in just his fourth Major League game, reached on a one-out single and moved to second on a Jamey Carroll single. Asdrubal Cabrera grounded into what looked to be an inning-ending 3-6-1 double play. But Cabrera's relay throw went wide. Brantley scored, and Cabrera advanced to second on the error. The Tribe took further advantage through Jhonny Peralta's RBI double and Travis Hafner's RBI single to make it 3-0.

Did the error rattle Pavano?

"Those things happen," he said. "You still have to make pitches."

Sowers made his pitches, yet the Twins still managed to keep it close. For the fourth time in his past seven starts, Sowers held the opposition hitless for the first run through the order. But he gave up an RBI single to Brendan Harris in the fifth and a sacrifice fly to Justin Morneau in his sixth and final inning of work to make it 3-2.

Still, this was a strong overall showing from Sowers, who didn't fall apart in the game's middle innings, even though that possibility presented itself. Sowers eked a double-play ball out of Alexi Casilla with two on and one out in the fifth. And he left a pair of runners stranded in the sixth by getting Michael Cuddyer to fly out.

"The big thing is early fastball command," Sowers said. "Throwing strikes early forces them to put the ball in play and make guys take defensive swings. If you command your fastball on both sides and are getting first-pitch strikes, you're working in the right direction."

Meanwhile, the Twins' defense looked lost all night. And that did nothing to help the club's dwindling playoff hopes.

In the bottom of the sixth, thanks to a fielding error by Harris at third, the Indians extended their slim lead. Luis Valbuena reached on that error, moved to second on an Andy Marte groundout and scored when Brantley punched a single into center. Valbuena just barely beat the throw home from center fielder Carlos Gomez to make it 4-2.

That was the first Major League RBI for Brantley, who has looked like a natural at this level this week.

"It's not easy," Brantley said. "I'm just trying to play the best I can and help the team win."

Pavano left the game after the sixth, but the Twins' defensive troubles didn't stop. In the seventh, Morneau missed a catch at first that allowed Asdrubal Cabrera to reach and advance to second, and Peralta drove Cabrera home with a single to left to make it 5-2.

As if the Twins' transgressions on the defensive end weren't helpful enough, the Tribe got a stalwart effort from its bullpen. Jose Veras, resurrected from the waiver wire and a stint in Triple-A Columbus, worked a perfect seventh. Tony Sipp, who has allowed just one run over his past 15 appearances, pitched a perfect eighth. And Kerry Wood kept the run of perfection going in the ninth to earn his 18th save.

"The bullpen was outstanding," Sowers said. "That was really fun to see."

And after enduring an awful night of defense just 48 hours earlier, the Indians had fun being on the other end of things in this win.

Surgery will end Sizemore's season Tribe star to have procedure on left elbow, abdominal wall

By Anthony Castrovince / MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Grady Sizemore's notoriously regimented pregame routine was thrown a bit askew Friday, when his 2009 season officially came to a close.

"He's walking around like a lost man," head athletic trainer Lonnie Soloff said. "He wasn't sure what time to get here."

But after plenty of speculation over the past couple of weeks, Sizemore knows where he's headed: The surgeon's table.

Twice, in fact.

Not only will Sizemore have the season-ending arthroscopic surgery on his left elbow that has been prescribed for months, he will also have a second procedure performed to address what Soloff referred to as an "athletic pubalgia," or an unstable abdominal wall, on Sizemore's left side.

Long story short and medical mumbo jumbo aside, the left groin pull that precluded Sizemore from participating in the World Baseball Classic during Spring Training never fully healed, and he'll require surgery to fix it.

It's quite a whirlwind of medical activity for a guy who has never had surgery in his life and once played in 382 consecutive games. But the Indians' Iron Man showed signs of rust this year, and, with the club long out of contention, addressing both matters now gives Sizemore the opportunity to rest up and begin his offseason strength and conditioning program on schedule.

"We sat down and discussed the options," Sizemore said. "I understand. It's one of those things where I want to put myself in the best possible health for next year. I'll have plenty of time to work out to get back to where I want to be."

For the season, the 27-year-old Sizemore batted .248 with 20 doubles, six triples, 18 homers, 64 RBIs and 13 steals. His numbers took a drastic dip from his career norms.

The elbow surgery will take place next week at the Cleveland Clinic and will be performed by team medical director Dr. Mark Schickendantz. Soloff said a specific date had not yet been decided.

A two-time Gold Glove winner and three-time All-Star, Sizemore been hampered by the elbow problem all season, most notably on throws from the outfield. The elbow joint is inflamed, and the surgery will clean it out.

Sizemore was on the disabled list for the first time in his career with the elbow issue May 31-June 23. And while his symptoms haven't gotten worse since his activation, the Indians, who have Michael Brantley and the newly activated Trevor Crowe on hand to handle center field and the leadoff spot (Brantley led off and played center for Friday's series opener against the Twins), saw no point in Sizemore playing the season's final month.

"If we operate on him now," Soloff explained, "he is unrestricted for his [conditioning program] in early November."

While the elbow surgery was expected, the news about Sizemore's ongoing groin issue was a surprise. After all, the club has spent all season denying that the groin was still bothering Sizemore, who had to bow out of the Classic at the last minute. But the fact that it's still an issue goes a long way toward explaining why a guy who swiped 38 bags last year and 33 in 2007 had just 13 stolen bases this season.

"We knew it was something that could linger," Sizemore said, "and it did."

When the Indians were in Baltimore, Sizemore and Soloff took a train to Philadelphia, where specialist Dr. Bill Meyers examined Sizemore and determined that the issue, which is often referred to as a "sports hernia" (and inaccurately so, according to Soloff) could be resolved with either rest or a 30-minute surgical procedure. The Tribe is opting for surgery, which will take place in Philadelphia roughly one week after the elbow surgery.

Soloff said the abdominal surgery will require a three-week rehab.

"The success rates are extremely high on both [surgeries]," Soloff said.

Sizemore didn't tell the Indians about his elbow problem until early May. Manager Eric Wedge was asked if he wishes he would have known about the issue earlier.

"He's kinda quiet," Wedge said of Sizemore. "He was a little banged up, but he's a professional. We're a better team with him out there."

Still, it's obvious Sizemore was nowhere near his old self this season, and the injuries no doubt played a part in that dip in performance.

"It was tough," Sizemore said of his season. "I knew going into the year that it was going to be a battle. It's tough when you're dealing with an injury. It's going to affect you in some way. I was never 100 percent. But I was still able to go out and play."

Now, Sizemore, who will rehab in Cleveland for the remainder of the season before transferring to the Tribe's Spring Training complex in Goodyear, Ariz., near his Scottsdale home, will have to adjust to new routines.

"I'll be pacing a lot in the clubhouse," he joked.

Anthony Castrovine is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject

Brantley thrust into Tribe's leadoff role Cleveland (59-75) vs. Minnesota (67-67), 4:10 p.m. ET

Anthony Castrovine / MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Though Grady Sizemore graduated, statistically speaking, from the leadoff spot long ago, the Indians left him there because they didn't feel they had anybody in-house to replace him at No. 1.

It was a valid argument, given the composition of the Major League roster. But it's an argument that Michael Brantley has the potential to put to rest.

Brantley projects as the Tribe's leadoff man of the future. And with Sizemore shut down to have season-ending elbow surgery, Brantley is the Indians' leadoff man of the present.

That's not set in stone, of course. Though Brantley batted leadoff for Friday's series opener against the Twins and is expected to be in that spot again Saturday afternoon, when the weekend set continues at Progressive Field, Brantley might not be there every time he plays down the stretch this season. But it is a spot where Brantley feels he belongs.

"You can hope and dream that it's going to happen," said Brantley, who went 2-for-5 with an RBI -- his first in the Majors -- and run scored Friday. "But now that it's here, it's even more exciting than you imagined."

The 22-year-old Brantley, acquired last year as the player to be named in the CC Sabathia trade with the Brewers, is an exciting young player, and the fact that he was trusted with the leadoff spot in just his fourth Major League game is a testament to how much respect he's earned from manager Eric Wedge in a short time.

"It's a unique opportunity for him," Wedge said of Brantley's position in the order. "With Grady shut down, it's a good opportunity for some young kids to get a chance."

Note the plural there, because Trevor Crowe, who was activated off the 15-day disabled list Friday, will also get time in center field and, potentially, in the leadoff spot. Asdrubal Cabrera, who briefly took over Sizemore's leadoff duties earlier this year, might also return to No. 1, on occasion.

Cabrera, though, has looked solid in the No. 3 spot this season, and Crowe's future as an everyday big leaguer is still a question mark. Nothing is guaranteed to Brantley, either, but it's clear the Indians view him as a potential fixture in their lineup down the road. Some in the organization think he may turn out to be the best player acquired in the Sabathia deal that also brought in the power-hitting Matt LaPorta.

So consider this a trial run for Brantley, who has made an instant impact in the Indians' lineup since his Tuesday promotion.

Brantley's skill set meshes with the leadoff mentality. He has a keen eye at the plate (he drew 59 walks against 48 strikeouts in 457 at-bats with Columbus this season) and speed on the basepaths (46 steals in 51 attempts).

"I've hit leadoff throughout my whole [professional] career," said Brantley, who was selected by Milwaukee out of high school in the seventh round of the 2005 First-Year Player Draft. "My game adapted to being a leadoff guy. I don't hit too many home runs. I'm more of a line-drive, base-hit kind of guy who likes to steal bases."

Some scouts believe Brantley's power will come as he matures as a hitter. For now, he loves hitting leadoff.

"Hearing the crowd roar and the thrill of being the first batter up is unforgettable," he said. "It's a great feeling every time you do it."

Pitching matchup

CLE: RHP Justin Masterson (4-6, 4.57 ERA)

In his sixth outing and fifth start since coming over from the Red Sox in a non-waiver Trade Deadline deal for catcher Victor Martinez, Masterson pitched well enough to keep Wedge's confidence in the righty's rotation spot through September. Masterson allowed five runs (four earned) on eight hits over 5 2/3 innings against Baltimore on Sunday, striking out six. That last stat tied a season high for him in 37 outings. It marked the third time in a row that the reliever-turned-starter has gone more than five innings as the club continues to evaluate his role for next season.

MIN: RHP Scott Baker (12-7, 4.44 ERA)

Baker has continued to pitch well for the Twins over the past several months. In his most recent outing, he limited Texas to three runs on six hits through seven innings, although he didn't factor into the decision in a 5-3 Minnesota victory. Baker has now gone 10 consecutive starts without picking up a loss, with four of those starts coming as no-decisions. He's 3-0 against Cleveland this season, with his best outing of the year -- a two-hit shutout -- coming against the Indians on Aug. 14.

Tidbits

Double-A Akron catcher Carlos Santana was named the Eastern League MVP. Santana was batting .289 with 21 homers and 94 RBIs in 127 games and was leading the league with a .518 slugging percentage, a .930 OPS and 89 walks. He had also thrown out 30 percent of would-be base stealers. "Carlos has had an extremely consistent and productive year and has not taken for granted that he's exceptionally talented as a baseball player," farm director Ross Atkins said in a release. "He has worked to improve upon what is already good enough to afford him Major League opportunity, and he clearly has the opportunity to be one of the best at what he does." ... The Indians purchased the contract of left-hander Mike Gosling to add depth to their bullpen in case of emergency. It marked the second stint with the Tribe this season for Gosling, who had been designated for assignment on Aug. 1. ... Tony Sipp has allowed just one run over his past 15 appearances, covering 13 2/3 innings. He's struck out 15 batters in that span. ... Don't forget about the Indians Wives Association's "Shirts off the Players' Backs" silent auction, which will be taking place at Section 153 of Progressive Field during Saturday's game. The auction, which will conclude at the top of the seventh inning, will feature game-worn jerseys from Indians players such as Sizemore, Peralta, Shin-Soo Choo, Cabrera and Travis Hafner. More than a dozen game-worn and autographed jerseys will be available, and proceeds benefit the Domestic Violence Center.

Doctor, doctor, give me the news

By Anthony Castrovince/MLB.com

We'll begin with a cautionary tale. In this space, I provide you with plenty of injury updates over the course of a season -- a product of my access to the clubhouse and the dugout (indigestion updates are a product of my access to the media dining room).

But I don't have access to the trainer's room, which is why I, as a reporter, get duped time and again by a team protecting its competitive integrity by misleading the press every so often.

Case in point: I've spent all season occasionally inquiring about the condition of Grady Sizemore's left groin and been told each time that it's fine and that the problem that kept him out of the World Baseball Classic was healed in Spring Training. Still, the stolen-base numbers didn't lie, and today we find out that Sizemore will have surgery to address the issue in a couple weeks.

As a reporter, you get upset when you discover you've been misled in such a manner. But as a rational-thinking human being, you understand that the Indians gain nothing by telling the dude from MLB.com that their leadoff man isn't up to full speed on the basepaths. It's a similar scenario to last season, when Victor Martinez's elbow issue was kept a secret. It's part of the game, and I get it.

I suppose I could offer up more bold assertions in my reports from this point forward, such as, "The Indians insist Sizemore is not still dealing with the groin strain, but it's obviously affecting him on the basepaths." But such speculation (while not exactly empty in this instance, given Sizemore's stolen-base total this season) would be speculation and nothing more. And I would hope regular readers of this blog and of Indians.com realize that speculation not based on legitimate conversations with people proven to have accurate information about the goings-on of this ballclub is not my specialty (there's plenty of other places on the Internet for that kind of stuff).

So, we'll just go with what we know when we know it. And sometimes we won't know it until a player is officially scheduled to go under the knife.

On the other hand, one thing I don't understand was the Indians' decision to mislead reporters in Detroit earlier this week, when we were told that the Sizemore situation was still being discussed and that no decisions had been made as to whether or not he'd be shut down. Head athletic trainer Lonnie Soloff made it clear that it was decided in Baltimore last week that Sizemore's season would come to an end after the road trip. Maybe I'm not thinking about this hard enough, but I don't see what the Indians gained by hiding that information from us.

And with that said, we move on to the minutiae.

EXCRUCIATING MINUTIAE OF THE DAY...

- Double-A Akron catcher Carlos Santana has been named the Eastern League MVP. He's batting .289 with 21 homers and 94 RBIs in 127 games. He leads the league with a .518 slugging percentage, a .930 OPS and 89 walks. He's also thrown out 30 percent of would-be base stealers. "Carlos has had an extremely consistent and productive year and has not taken for granted that he's exceptionally talented as a baseball player," farm director Ross Atkins said in a release. "He has worked to improve upon what is already good enough to afford him Major League opportunity, and he clearly has the opportunity to be one of the best at what he does."

- This is the second straight season Santana has won his league's MVP honor. He was named MVP of the California League last year, despite playing the final month of the season in the Carolina League after his trade from the Dodgers.

- In just his fourth Major League game, Michael Brantley is batting leadoff. He's excited about the opportunity. "You can hope and dream that it's going to happen," he said, "but now that it's actually here, it's even more exciting."

- Brantley, who drew 59 walks against 48 strikeouts and stole 46 bases at Columbus this season, profiles for the role. "This is a good opportunity for him at this level," Eric Wedge said.

- But this opportunity doesn't solely belong to Brantley. Wedge said the newly activated Trevor Crowe will see time in center field and possibly at leadoff, and Asdrubal Cabrera might see some more time at leadoff, as well. "We've got options," Wedge said.

- Mike Gosling is back. And that begs the question: What is Mike Gosling doing here? The Indians already had an eight-man bullpen, including a long man in the form of Tomo Ohka. And since being designated for assignment a month ago, Gosling had transitioned to starting work and posted a 6.66 ERA at Triple-A Columbus. Wedge said Gosling is here as a precaution, should some game get out of control. "We don't want to walk that line, in case we have a tough couple of days," Wedge said. "[Gosling] can pitch in multiple roles."

- Tony Sipp has allowed just one run over his last 14 appearances, covering 12 2/3 innings. He's struck out 13 batters in that span.

- Infielder Lonnie Chisenhall and Cord Phelps and outfielder Tim Fedroff are Carolina League end-of-season All-Stars. Chisenhall hit .276 with 18 homers and 79 RBIs in 99 games for Kinston before getting promoted to Akron, Phelps leads the Carolina League with 91 walks, and Fedroff is currently 10th in the league with a .277 average.

- Don't forget about the Indians Wives Association's "Shirts off the Players' Backs" silent auction, which will be taking place at Section 153 of Progressive Field during tomorrow afternoon's game. The auction, which will conclude at the top of the seventh inning, will feature game-worn jerseys from Indians players such as Sizemore, Peralta, Shin-Soo Choo, Asdrubal Cabrera and Travis Hafner. More than a dozen game-worn and autographed jerseys will be available, and proceeds benefit the Domestic Violence Center.

- Finally, from the "Old Habits Die Hard" department, Carl Pavano is listed on both the Twins and Indians rosters on the scoresheets handed out to the media tonight.

~AC

Tribe cuts Twins' hopes for top spot

Rookie Brantley again makes impact. Sowers retires 10 batters in row

By Sheldon Ocker

CLEVELAND: The Indians boosted the Detroit Tigers' chances of holding onto the top spot in the Central Division by being swept in a three-game set that ended Thursday at Comerica Park.

The Tribe is not giving the same deal to the Minnesota Twins, who entered Friday night's game five games behind the Tigers in second place.

Instead of falling on their swords, the Indians beat the Twins 5-2 at Progressive Field as they faced former teammate Carl Pavano.

In addition to a solid performance by Jeremy Sowers and timely hitting by several players, including rookie Michael Brantley, the Tribe got a little help from the Twins, who committed four errors: two by third baseman Brendan Harris and one each by shortstop Orlando Cabrera and first baseman Justin Morneau.

Brantley has been in the big leagues four days but has made an impact. Friday night, he got his first big-league RBI, after stealing his first big-league base on Thursday and producing his first big-league hit on Tuesday.

"The faster you get those out of the way, the better you're doing," he said.

In addition to his RBI single, Brantley singled and scored the Indians' first run Friday night.

Brantley's father, Mickey, who preceded his son as a major-league player, was in the grandstand, as he has been since Tuesday in Detroit.

"I love playing in front of my father," Brantley said. "As a kid, I grew up dreaming that I would do what he did."

Aside from giving up a mandatory run in the fifth inning, Sowers did just about everything right against a hot Twins team that had won nine of its past 12.

Sowers (6-9, 4.78 ERA) retired 10 batters in a row before allowing a harmless single to Cabrera with one out in the fourth. After he gave up a run in the fifth — on Jason Kubel's double and Harris' single — he allowed another run in the sixth, but only because Cabrera dribbled a ball into no-man's land down the third-base line for a single that started the abbreviated rally.

After that inning, Sowers came out of the game having given up six hits and walking none. His pitch count of 91 indicated that he had made efficient use of his time.

"Jeremy was solid, strong, he was making his pitches," Indians manager Eric Wedge said. "He was getting his fastball down in the zone as consistently as I've seen him."

The fifth inning has been Sowers' Achilles heel all season, but Friday he threw a double-play ball to Alexi Casilla to keep the damage to a minimum.

"I was fortunate to make a good pitch to Casilla, and Jhonny [Peralta] made a good play on a tough ball," Sowers said.

In eight starts since being recalled from Triple-A Columbus, Sowers is 4-2 with a 3.62 ERA. In five of the outings, he gave up two or fewer runs.

"The best thing has been my fastball command," Sowers said. "I've been consistently getting my fastball on both sides of the plate and down. When you do that and throw first-pitch strikes, you're going in the right direction."

In addition to being sabotaged by his defense, Pavano (11-11, 5.09 ERA) had one bad inning. Otherwise, he displayed the same proficiency he showed in leading the Tribe in wins, with nine at the time of his trade to the Twins. (So far, no pitcher has passed him up; Aaron Laffey is closest with seven.)

Pavano gave up four runs (three earned) on eight hits and two walks in six innings.

"He was pretty much the same guy," Wedge said. "He makes you earn it."

One out into the third inning, Brantley and Jamey Carroll singled to put runners on first and second. Asdrubal Cabrera then slapped a ground ball to first, and Morneau flipped to Orlando Cabrera at second for the force on Carroll, but Cabrera heaved a wild throw to first trying for the double play.

Brantley scored on the error, and Asdrubal Cabrera ended up on second, from where he scored on Peralta's double. Travis Hafner followed with an RBI single to make it 3-0.

Harris committed his first error when Carroll led off the fifth with a ground ball to third, but Pavano refused to give up the score, even after Carroll stole third.

Harris committed his second error in the sixth on Luis Valbuena's bouncer. This time, Pavano succumbed, as Andy Marte's ground out moved Valbuena to second, and he scored on Brantley's two-out single.

The errors didn't stop after Pavano retired for the evening. Morneau's error led to the Tribe's final run in the seventh.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 09.05.2009

Sizemore to have 2 surgeries

Elbow injury, as well as sports hernia, will be operated on week apart

By Sheldon Ocker

CLEVELAND: It's no longer news that Grady Sizemore needs arthroscopic surgery to clean out the inflammation beneath the lining of the left elbow. But it came as a surprise Friday to learn that Sizemore also will undergo an operation for a condition known as athletic pubalgia.

"It's called a sports hernia, but it's not really a hernia," Indians head trainer Lonnie Soloff said. "It's an instability of the abdominal wall, and has been causing Grady symptoms."

The ailment is common among hockey, soccer and baseball players, and is seen frequently in individuals who play recreational sports.

Soloff said the surgery is not considered serious and takes only 30 minutes. It will be performed in Philadelphia by Dr. Bill Meyers, whom Sizemore visited last weekend, when the Tribe played the Orioles in Baltimore. Meyers made the diagnosis.

Sizemore's operations are not expected to affect his readiness for spring training. But inasmuch as both the elbow and groin injuries have bothered him since spring training, why wait until now?

"His [elbow] symptoms haven't really changed since he was activated from the DL," Soloff said. "This is more of a decision based on the time of the season. Having it now means his offseason program will be unrestricted. He usually starts it in early November."

Another factor: Sizemore wanted to keep playing.

"It was tough [to play], but I knew going into the season it might be," he said. "I would like to be injury free, but sometimes you play with injuries. Before the season, I didn't know how it would affect me. And it never got to the point where I couldn't compete."

However, Sizemore spent time on the disabled list and his numbers suffered. He carries a batting average of .248 with 18 home runs, 64 RBI, 73 runs and 13 steals, all below the norm for him.

Sizemore's surgical schedule is busy, but the recovery time should be relatively brief. Dr. Mark Schickendantz will perform the operation on Sizemore's elbow next week at the Cleveland Clinic. About seven days later, Meyers will repair Sizemore's abdomen.

Four to six weeks after the doctors have done their jobs, Sizemore is expected to begin his normal offseason conditioning routine in Goodyear, Ariz. (20 miles from his home), and long before spring training begins in February, he should be 100 percent.

After the operations, Sizemore will remain in Cleveland for rehab until the end of the season.

Even though he felt some effects of the ailments in spring training, he didn't reveal them to anyone.

"It was a progressive thing starting in spring training," Soloff said. "He didn't say anything about it until early May. It was just something he worked through himself."

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 09.05.2009

Indians' Sizemore to miss rest of season.

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — .Cleveland Indians center fielder Grady Sizemore will miss the remainder of the season because of soreness in his left elbow that will require arthroscopic surgery.

The procedure will take place next week at the Cleveland Clinic.

Sizemore has been bothered by the elbow since early May. He was on the disabled list from May 31-June 23 and has played through the pain since.

Indians head athletic trainer Lonnie Soloff said Sizemore also will undergo lower abdominal surgery a week after the elbow operation. Sizemore said it's the same groin injury that forced him out of the World Baseball Classic in March. He has played with the injury all season.

Sizemore expects to be fully recovered when he reports to spring training in February.

"I should be in good shape by the start of camp," he said.

Convincing Sizemore to shut it down wasn't easy. He played in 162 games in both the 2006 and 2007 seasons and appeared in 157 games last season.

"If he had his way, he'd play all the way through," Indians Manager Eric Wedge said. "This is the right time to do it. This way we're not taking any chances on next year."

The injuries affected the three-time All-Star. A .279 career hitter going into the season, Sizemore was batting .248 with 18 home runs and 64 RBIs. He had 13 stolen bases after swiping 33 in 2007 and 38 last season.

"I knew going into the season it was going to be a tough year," Sizemore said. "You'd like to be injury free. I knew it was going to be a battle."

The Indians waited to make the decision even though they fell out of contention in the AL Central early in the season.

"He was a little bit banged up," Wedge said. "He wants to play. We're a better team with him out there. We took it as far as we felt we could."

Losing Sizemore is yet another down note in what has been a disappointing season for a team that had high expectations. The Indians stumbled to a slow start and never recovered, leading to several trades that dramatically cut the team's payroll.

Left-hander Cliff Lee, last season's Cy Young Award winner, and catcher Victor Martinez were traded in July. Third baseman Mark DeRosa, first baseman Ryan Garko, left fielder Ben Francisco and reliever Rafael Betancourt were also dealt.

Rookie Michael Brantley, acquired last season in the trade that sent ace pitcher CC Sabathia to Milwaukee, played center field and batted leadoff Friday night against Minnesota. Trevor Crowe, who has been out with a strained oblique, was activated from the disabled list prior to the game.

The Indians also purchased the contract of left-hander Mike Gosling from Triple-A Columbus on Friday. He had no record with a 6.75 ERA in seven appearances earlier this season.

Trio is key to success this season

Eastern League's best are in Akron: Gomez, Sarbaugh and Santana

By Stephanie Storm Beacon Journal sports writerPublished on Saturday, Sep 05, 2009

If one wanted to know how it is that the Aeros have gotten to this place — owning the best record in the league, being the top team in all of minor-league baseball for a majority of the season and cruising to a regular-season division title — one need look no further than the trio of Mike Sarbaugh, Carlos Santana and Jeanmar Gomez.

They claimed three of the Eastern League's four season-ending awards. Sarbaugh was named Manager of the Year; Santana, the Most Valuable Player; and Gomez, the Pitcher of the Year.

It was quite a coup for the group, even though the Aeros entered the holiday weekend with an 85-53 record with just four games against the visiting Erie SeaWolves left in the regular season.

"The players work so hard all season, it's always nice to see them rewarded," said Sarbaugh, in his second year managing the Aeros and sixth overall.

Before the season, Sarbaugh was selected by Baseball America as the Best Managerial Prospect in the Eastern League. He certainly lived up to his billing, not only in managing the winningest team, but also in helping to develop some of the Indians' top minor-league talent.

"Having had that previous experience as a coach has really benefited me," said Sarbaugh, who spent five seasons as a hitting coach, including four seasons with the Aeros (2000-03). "I got to see how others went about the job and was able to slowly develop how I wanted to manage by taking things here and there from others."

Santana's honor came as no surprise. The catcher has been an offensive force all season. In 127 games, he's batting .289 with 21 home runs and 94 RBI.

He leads the league with a .518 slugging percentage, a .930 OPS and 89 walks. He ranks second in the league in home runs, RBI and on-base percentage (.412). He is third in runs scored (89) and fourth in both extra-base hits (52) and total bases (217).

Defensively, Santana, 23, has also been solid, ranking fifth in the league, throwing out 30 percent of would-be base stealers.

"Carlos has had an extremely consistent and productive year, and has not taken for granted that he's exceptionally talented as a baseball player," said Indians Director of Player Development Ross Atkins. "He has worked to improve upon what is already good enough to afford him a major-league opportunity, and he clearly has the opportunity to be one of the best at what he does."

Santana has already set a franchise record for walks in a season (breaking Ken Ramos' mark of 82 in 1992), currently ranks fourth on the Aeros' single-season list in on-base percentage, and entered Friday's game just three RBI away from tying Wes Hodges' single-season record of 97, set last year.

Gomez, a right-hander, made his mark in the team's history books as well, throwing a perfect game in May at the Trenton Thunder. But his honor came not so much for that rare effort, but for his consistency all season. Gomez is 10-4 with a 3.38 ERA in 21 starts. He is tied for fourth in the league in wins, ranks third in ERA and is sixth with 105 strikeouts in 117 1/3 innings.

Ingraham: Keep Wedge, fire Wedge? Reasons are plentiful

By Jim Ingraham JIngraham@News-Herald.com

The countdown to managerial resolution for the Indians is underway. Will they or won't they change managers after this season? We'll know in about a month.

The last game of the Indians' season is Oct. 4. If Eric Wedge is fired as manager, the announcement could come as early as Oct. 5.

Teams that change managers typically make the change within a week of the end of the season.

Here are five reasons why the Indians should and shouldn't fire Wedge:

SHOULD

1. **FAILURE TO PREPARE THE TEAM FOR THE START OF THE SEASON** — The most distressing characteristic of the Indians under Wedge is their constant slow starts. It happened again this year. Picked by many to win their division the Indians lost their first five games and seven of their first eight, finishing April with a record of 8-14. By June 1, they were 22-30 and the season was essentially over.

In Wedge's seven years as manager, the Indians are 73-96 (.432) in April and 481-454 (.514) in all other months. By now the pattern has become painfully familiar. They enter the season with high hopes, crumble under the weight of those expectations, then play much better after that, when the pressure is off.

The last two years, the Indians had a combined winning percentage of .415 prior to the all-star break, and .568 after it. In four of the last six years under Wedge, the Indians have had losing records at the all-star break.

Clearly, the team is not being prepared properly.

2. **HIS "LONG SEASON" MANTRA HASN'T WORKED** — One of Wedge's pet philosophies is that it's a long season, and no particular game or sequence of games are more important than any others. That, of course, is not true. And, worse yet, it sends the message to the players that there is never any sense of urgency to win. Lose one today? No big deal. It's a long season.

Of course, after a couple months of that kind of thinking you're trading away Cy Young winners.

Maybe it's time the players heard a different voice.

3. **HE'S LOST CREDIBILITY WITH THE FANS, THE MEDIA, AND MAYBE HIS PLAYERS** — Among other examples, you can't, without your credibility taking a hit, keep saying "We'll put the team out there that gives us the best chance to win," as Wedge frequently does, and then play Jhonny Peralta at shortstop for the first half of the season when Peralta is not the best shortstop on the team.

4. **QUESTIONABLE PERSONNEL DECISIONS AND DEPLOYMENT** — Ryan Garko in right field? Ryan Garko in left field? Utility infielder Jamey Carroll in right field? Chris Gimenez, hitting .111 over the last two months, but on the roster since May 31? The refusal to play top prospect Matt LaPorta regularly when he was up from Columbus for the month of May? Waiting, despite the fact the season was a lost cause, until Aug. 19 before bringing LaPorta back? The decision to keep Ramon Vazquez over Brandon Phillips? The list is a long one.

5. **THE TIME IS RIGHT** — Very few men manage one team as long as Wedge has managed the Indians. There's a reason for that. The message may be valid, but it can get stale after seven years. A different approach is not always a bad thing, especially after consecutive years in which the Indians were arguably the most disappointing team in the majors.

Wedge — who three weeks into his first spring training fired his pitching coach, and later fired as hitting coach Hall of Famer Eddie Murray, a close personal friend of GM Mark Shapiro, and later still, in a move that smelled of raging scapegoatism, fired bullpen coach and longtime loyal employee Luis Isaac, a move that was mostly just kind of embarrassing — has, for a first-time major-league manager, had uncommon clout and latitude within the organization since day one. If they are going to let you do all the shopping, you had better eventually cook a meal. Wedge hasn't.

SHOULDN'T

1. **YOU CAN ONLY MANAGE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN** — Should Wedge be the one who loses his job because the Indians have drafted so poorly and failed to develop enough homegrown core players to fuel any kind of sustained success? Probably not. And it wasn't Wedge who signed Masa Kobayashi and David Dellucci.
2. **HE'S VERY PROFESSIONAL** — Wedge is very good at all the peripheral aspects to the job. He's a standup guy, who consistently, if colorlessly, handles the media responsibilities that come with the position. He's a good spokesman and face of the organization, and he's always on the same page — some would say to a fault — with the front office.
3. **THE INDIANS HAVE NEVER QUIT ON HIM** — There's a difference between playing bad and quitting. The Indians have frequently played poorly for Wedge, but they always play hard. It's almost never a question of effort.
4. **HE'S TOUGH** — When things go bad, Wedge doesn't blame his players or go into an Ozzie Guillen-style song and dance about it. Wedge manfully steps up with the much more refreshing, and honest, "We stink right now. I'm the manager. Blame me." It's hard to preach accountability if you don't practice it.
5. **HE'S BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN IT SEEMS** — Over the last six years, Wedge's Indians have won the same number of division titles as Terry Francona's Red Sox. In his seven years on the job, Wedge has won more division titles than the Tigers. Over the last five years, Wedge's Indians have won the Central Division as many times as the Twins, and over the last four years they've won it as many times as the White Sox.
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Sizemore done for the year; Tribe wins, 5-2

By Jim Ingraham Ingraham@News-Herald.com

First, the Indians pulled the plug on Grady Sizemore, then they pulled the plug on the Minnesota Twins.

Jeremy Sowers pitched six solid innings, and the Indians' bullpen was sensational as the Tribe beat the Twins, 5-2, Friday night.

Prior to the game, the Indians announced that Sizemore will play no more this season and instead will have not one but two surgeries.

Next week Sizemore will have arthroscopic surgery to clean out his inflamed left elbow. A week after that, he will have surgery to repair a strained left abdominal wall.

According to head athletic trainer Lonnie Soloff, the rehab time for both injuries is relatively short, and Sizemore should be 100 percent by the start of spring training.

Sizemore has played the entire season with both injuries. In other words, his 2009 statistics, which previously looked decidedly un-Sizemore-like — a .248 batting average with 18 home runs, 64 RBI, and career lows in runs scored (73) and stolen bases (13) — now look like the heroic work of a man playing in almost constant pain. Sizemore said he suffered both injuries in spring training, but wanted to try to play out the season despite the pain.

"I knew going into the season it was going to be a tough year for me," he said. "I was just hoping I could go long enough to help my team win some games."

Sizemore admitted he could have had the surgeries in April and would have been back by May or June.

"I could have gone that route," he said. "But I didn't want to start the season with surgeries. So I decided to begin the season with it. You never know how it's going to affect you, but I was able to play hurt."

He played, but the injuries clearly impacted Sizemore's performance. The inflamed elbow prevented him from doing anything more than lobbing the ball back to the infield from center field, while the abdominal injury limited his effectiveness running and stealing bases.

"Grady's a pro. If he would have had his way, he would have played all the way through," said Manager Eric Wedge, who met with Sizemore during the Indians' recent road trip and reached an agreement that it was best for him to shut it down now.

"It was a decision based on the time of the season and our desire, and Grady's, for him to be unrestricted in his offseason conditioning program, which he begins in November. By having (the surgeries) done now, there will be no restrictions on him once he begins his offseason workouts," said Soloff.

"The recovery time for both surgeries is short, so I should be in good shape by the start of spring training," said Sizemore.

Wedge said rookies Michael Brantley and Trevor Crowe, who was activated off the disabled list Friday, will handle the center-field duties the remainder of the season.

Brantley started there Friday night and went 2-for-5 to keep his batting average at .400 through his first four major-league games.

The Indians, with the help of four Minnesota errors — the Twins came into the game with the fewest errors in the American League — reached former teammate Carl Pavano (11-11) for three runs in the third inning, and Tribe pitching was good enough to make it stand up. Four Indians pitchers combined on a six-hitter.

Jhonny Peralta (single) and Travis Hafner (double) stroked a pair of two-out RBI hits to key the Tribe's three-run third. Brantley's RBI single in the sixth and another RBI single by Peralta in the seventh accounted for the Indians' other two runs.

Sowers, who retired the first 10 men he faced in a row, gave up single runs in the fifth and sixth innings, but that was it. He did not walk a batter in six innings and improved his record to 6-9. In his last eight starts, he is 4-2 with a 3.62 ERA.

Tribe relievers Jose Veras, Tony Sipp and Kerry Wood pitched one inning each and combined to retire all nine batters they faced, striking out four, with only one ball leaving the infield.

Notes

The Indians made a couple roster moves Friday, activating Crowe off the disabled list and bringing back pitcher Mike Gosling from Columbus. Crowe had been on the disabled list since Aug. 19 with a strained oblique. This is Gosling's second stint with the Indians. His first was so unimpressive — a 6.75 ERA and 17 hits allowed in 12 innings — that they released him. When nobody claimed him off waivers, the Indians sent him to Columbus, where he wasn't much better: 0-3, with 6.66 ERA. Wedge said the Indians brought Gosling back to give them more options in the bullpen. The Indians are now carrying 10 relievers on their active roster. ... Joe Mauer was 1-for-4 Friday night, causing his batting average vs. the Indians this season to nose dive all the way down to .513. ... Akron Catcher Carlos Santana, who hit .289 with 21 homers and 94 RBI has been named the Most Valuable Player in the Eastern League. ... Today at

Clippers 12, Mud Hens 11

Clippers sour player's night all over field

By Jim Massie THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

TOLEDO -- Mickey Hall didn't mind spoiling Mike Hessman's special game last night in Fifth Third Field.

Hall's two-out single keyed a two-run, ninth-inning rally that carried the Clippers to a 12-11 victory over the Toledo Mud Hens and made a loser of Hessman.

The Toledo third baseman had played the other eight positions during the game before taking the mound in the ninth with a chance to earn the save.

"I'm actually glad that we did," Hall said. "They were saving him to close in the ninth, and I'm glad we got to him."

Story continues below Advertisement Hessman (0-1) retired the first two hitters before Hall singled. He moved up two bases on a wild pitch and scored on a Niuman Romero single to tie the score at 11.

After a Donnie Webb single pushed him to third, Romero came home with the winning run on a throwing error by shortstop Andy Ciriaco.

"That was a lot of fun," said Hall, who also homered and tripled. "We never really did (get down). You've just got to keep battling through it and try to pick up teammates, whether it's the pitchers picking up hitters one night or us picking up the pitchers. It's back and forth."

The game was like that, too. The Clippers grabbed a 5-0 advantage and still had an 8-5 lead when the Mud Hens struck for two-run homers by Scott Sizemore and Brent Clevlen in the sixth to take a 9-8 lead.

The Clippers trailed 10-8 in the eighth when Jordan Brown connected on a two-run homer to tie the score at 10.

Toledo regained the lead in the bottom of the eighth against newly arrived relief pitcher Matt Meyer (10-10) on an RBI single by Max Leon. The last-ditch rally helped the Clippers end a seven-game losing streak to the Mud Hens.

"I don't remember getting on a bus leaving Toledo stadium and heading back to Columbus with a win," Clippers manager Torey Lovullo said. "It's nice that these guys will be sitting on a bus for two hours thinking about how well we played."

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coverage on Dispatch.com

September 4, 2009

Steaming toward drydock

The Clippers play their final road game of the season tonight against the Toledo Mud Hens in Fifth Third Field.

This is not a bad thing. It has been a tough season. All seasons eventually feel long. In 1980, I vividly recall Roy Staiger, a taciturn third baseman from Oklahoma, announcing loudly in the clubhouse in early August that he couldn't wait for the year to be over "so that I can go home and pick my own friends."

Teammates looked at him momentarily and went on with their business because most understood. That team won the International League pennant and the Governor's Cup trophy. It was still a long season. The current Clippers will get to go home after Monday's season finale in Huntington Park. They are in last place in need of every friend they can find.

A new face is in Toledo tonight. Relief pitcher Matt Meyer is up from Akron to take the place of pitcher Mike Gosling, whose contract was purchased yesterday by Cleveland. Meyer was on the disabled list with a strained calf. Anyway pushes the Columbus roster moves to 183.

In other Aeros news, catcher Carlos Santana was named the Eastern League most valuable player today. He is batting .289 with 21 home runs and 94 RBI and among the league leaders in most offensive categories. Santana, of course, is the top prospect in the Cleveland organization according to Baseball America.

Akron pitcher Jeanmar Gomez was the EL pitcher of the year and Mike Sarbaugh was the manager of the year. Gomez was 10-4 with a 3.38 era and pitched a perfect game early in the season.

In Mud Hens news, veteran Mike Hessman is scheduled to play all nine positions in the game tonight. Hessman, a third baseman by trade, is beginning the game as the catcher

Tribe notes: Grady Sizemore, facing two surgeries, shut down for rest of season

Chronicle-Telegram Sports

Brian Dulik/The Chronicle-Telegram

CLEVELAND - The Indians still have one month to play, but Grady Sizemore's season is over.

The popular center fielder was shut down for the remainder of the season Friday due to lingering left elbow pain and an abdominal strain - both of which he has played with since spring training.

Sizemore will have arthroscopic elbow surgery next week at the Cleveland Clinic, then undergo athletic pubalgia surgery seven days later in Philadelphia. He is expected to be fully recovered from both operations in time for spring training 2010.

"I wasn't 100 percent, but I did my best and went out there and played," said Sizemore, who hit .248 with 18 home runs, 64 RBIs and 13 stolen bases in 106 games - his worst numbers in each category since his rookie year of 2004. "At the beginning of the season, you don't know how it's going to affect you, but I knew it was going to be a battle.

"Now, I'm going to put myself in the best position possible to be physically healthy for next year."

Tribe manager Eric Wedge said the decision to shelve his leadoff hitter was made last weekend while the team was in Baltimore. During that road trip, Sizemore also visited Philadelphia doctor Bill Meyers, who found instability in his left lower abdominal wall.

"It's pretty common in baseball, hockey and soccer players, but it's not a sports hernia because there is nothing poking out of (the skin)," trainer Lonnie Soloff explained. "No question, it affected him on the basepaths because he pushes off his left leg."

Sizemore's initial surgery will be performed by team doctor Mark Schickendantz to "relieve synovitis in the elbow joint and maybe a (remove) loose body," Soloff said. Sizemore is expected to be fully recovered from that procedure by early November.

Soloff said the second operation might require more than arthroscopy, but will only take 30 minutes and has a three-week recovery period. The abdominal injury led to the groin problems Sizemore has battled all season.

"I imagine I'll be in some pain for a couple of weeks afterward, so I'm kind of wondering about that," said the 27-year-old, who has not had an operation in his life. "Until then, I'll be pacing a lot in the clubhouse, not knowing what to do with myself before games."

Sizemore will remain in Cleveland under Soloff's supervision for the remainder of the season before having his rehabilitation shifted to the Indians' player development facility in Goodyear, Ariz.

"We felt like we took him as far as we could, but this was the right time to do this," Wedge said. "If Grady had it his way, he'd keep playing, but he understands why the decision was made."

Three-peat

Catcher Carlos Santana of the Akron Aeros was named the Eastern League MVP, giving the Indians a clean sweep of the major awards in the Class AA circuit. Right-handed starter Jeanmar Gomez previously won the EL Pitcher of the Year award, while Mike Sarbaugh was named Manager of the Year.

Santana, 23, was acquired from the Los Angeles Dodgers in exchange for Casey Blake last July 26. This is his second straight award-winning season as he was the 2008 California League MVP while playing for the Inland Empire 66ers (Class A).

The 5-foot-11, 190-pound backstop is hitting .289 for the Aeros with 21 home runs and 94 RBI in 126 games. Santana also leads the EL in slugging percentage (.518) and walks (89), and has thrown out 30 percent of prospective base stealers.

Happy returns

Left-handed pitcher Mike Gosling was promoted from Columbus (Class AAA) prior to the game. He went 0-0 with a 6.75 ERA in seven appearances for the Indians earlier this summer and posted a 0-3 record with a 6.66 ERA following his demotion to the Clippers.

Also added to the active roster was outfielder Trevor Crowe, who had been on the disabled list since Aug. 17 with an oblique strain. He is hitting .208 with 10 RBIs in 44 games with the Tribe.

Cleveland's 40-man roster now stands at 38, including three players that passed through waivers unclaimed and were later brought back up to the majors (Andy Marte, Jose Veres and Gosling). There are 30 players on the Indians' big-league roster.

Tribe tidbits

Wedge said rookies Michael Brantley and Crowe will share Sizemore's spot in center field, while Brantley and shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera will see time as the Indians' leadoff hitter.

"It's a great opportunity for us because Grady has had all but a handful of leadoff opportunities since I've been here," the skipper said. "We've got options and we're going to take a look at some of them the rest of the way."

Brantley, who batted .400 (4-for-10) during the Indians' most recent series at Detroit, was used in both roles for the series opener against the Twins.

• Cabrera is hitting a team-best .361 since August 1. He ranks eighth on the season in the American League with a .314 batting average.

- Closer Kerry Wood, who was given a handful of days off because of a sore right shoulder, is available to pitch. His last appearance and save came Aug. 27 at Baltimore.

Weekend outlook

The Fox network was originally scheduled to air today's game regionally, but passed, so it will not be televised in Cleveland. All fans will receive a Travis Hafner pen holder bobblehead.

- In the series finale Sunday at 1:05 p.m., Cleveland lefty David Huff (8-7, 6.57 ERA) takes on Minnesota righty Nick Blackburn (9-9, 4.16 ERA). All children 14-and-under will receive an Onion Hot Dog Mascot plush doll as part of Kids Fun Day.

Receiving some help: Indians feast on four Twins errors

Brian Dulik/The Chronicle-Telegram

CLEVELAND - Progressive Field has seen plenty of bad baseball in 2009, most of it courtesy of the home team.

On Friday night, though, the clown shoe was on the other foot.

The Minnesota Twins committed four errors in a five-inning span and failed to come up with big hits when they needed them, allowing the Indians to post a 5-2 victory.

All five Tribe runs came during Minnesota's defensive blooperfest with third baseman Jhonny Peralta knocking in a pair.

"At this level, it's tough to get away with that - and we did take advantage of it," said Cleveland manager Eric Wedge, whose squad was two days removed from a five-error outing of its own. "I thought you saw a lot of nice things out there tonight."

Among the most encouraging sights for the Indians? Pitcher Jeremy Sowers, who went six solid innings to win his second straight decision, and rookie center fielder Michael Brantley, who went 2-for-5 with his first big-league RBI.

Sowers (6-9, 4.78 ERA) allowed two runs on six hits and did not issue a walk. The left-hander, who retired the first 10 batters, also struck out one and induced a key double play to end the fifth inning.

"Good defense is the pitcher's best friend," he said. "Since I'm not striking too many guys out, I need those guys to make plays for me. All season long, my defense has been impeccably good.

"I hope that I didn't just jinx it by saying that."

Brantley - batting leadoff in place of the injured Grady Sizemore - singled and scored the game's first run in the third inning and had a run-scoring hit in the sixth.

The son of former Mariners outfielder Mickey Brantley is batting .400 since making his MLB debut Tuesday.

"My goal is to set the table to the best of my ability for my teammates," he said. "And I love hitting leadoff because the crowd is so into it in the first inning when you get up to the plate."

Jose Veras, Tony Sipp and Kerry Wood locked up the victory with perfect innings in relief of Sowers. It was Wood's 18th save.

Ex-Cleveland pitcher Carl Pavano (11-11, 5.09 ERA) took the loss, but could point fingers at his entire infield, save second baseman Alexi Casilla. Third baseman Brendan Harris made two errors, while first baseman Justin Morneau and shortstop Orlando Cabrera had one apiece.

Pavano, who was traded by the Indians to Minnesota on Aug. 7 in exchange for pitcher Yohan Pino, went six innings. He allowed four runs, three of them earned, and struck out six.

"Carl makes you earn it," Wedge said. "That was the same way he pitched when he was here."

Left fielder Jamey Carroll had three hits for the Tribe, which took a 3-0 lead in the bottom of the third when Cabrera flung a potential inning-ending double play ball into the Twins dugout.

Brantley scored on the miscue, while Asdrubal Cabrera came home one batter later when Peralta doubled. Travis Hafner followed with an RBI single to give Sowers a nice cushion.

Minnesota got on the scoreboard in the fifth when Harris drove in Jason Kubel, and a Morneau sacrifice fly in the sixth pulled the Twins within 3-2.

The Tribe, though, answered in the bottom of the inning when Brantley singled home Luis Valbuena, who got on base via Harris' second error.

Cleveland closed out the scoring in the seventh, making it 5-2 when Morneau whiffed on a low throw from Harris and put Cabrera on first. Cabrera scored on Peralta's sharp single to left field off reliever Ron Mahay.

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Twins commit four errors in 5-2 loss at Cleveland

Lack of offense only compounds their troubles

By Kelsie Smith

CLEVELAND — Puzzled looks abounded in the visitor's clubhouse at Progressive Field on Friday night.

Minutes after Minnesota fell 5-2 to the Cleveland Indians, some Twins seemed confused about what it was that made Jeremy Sowers so dominant, and baffled that they had just committed four errors in a game for the first time since June 21, 2000.

"I looked after, and I thought, 'Four errors?' I didn't even know that we got four errors," Orlando Cabrera said after the Twins fell to six games back of Detroit just four days after climbing to 3 ½ back. "It didn't even seem like that."

It did to Brendan Harris. The third baseman was charged with three of the four errors, though the final ruling switched one of those to Justin Morneau. One of Harris' errors came on a throw that skipped past first base, and the other happened when he bent to pick up a grounder but didn't come up with the ball.

The error with the gravest consequence, though, belonged to Cabrera. With one out and runners on first and second in the third inning, Asdrubal Cabrera stung a ball right to Morneau. Morneau quickly threw to short to start a double play, but when the Twins' Cabrera was ready to throw the ball back to first, Carl Pavano wasn't yet there.

When the pitcher did arrive, he stopped short, with the ball out of his reach. One run scored on the error and two more scored before the inning was over.

"I hesitated a little bit off the bat, and it ended up costing us," said

Pavano, 11-11 with a 5.09 earned-run average after giving up four runs on eight hits in six innings. "A big inning for them, and it worked out to a loss for us."

The big inning wasn't really that big. Three runs, if Minnesota's offense is collectively clicking, is a surmountable hole to escape, and rebounding from that 3-0 Cleveland lead should have been possible against Sowers, Cabrera said.

"For us, I don't think (the errors were) it," the shortstop said. "We should have scored more runs. Especially against — nothing against Sowers because he pitched pretty good today, but his ERA, he's given up a lot of runs."

Sowers took the mound with a 5-9 record and a 4.88 ERA. The lefty disposed of the first 10 batters he faced before Cabrera reached on his first of two singles with one out in the fourth inning. In six innings, Sowers gave up six hits. Five of them were singles, and five of them came in the fifth and sixth innings.

Afterward, when asked what worked so well for Sowers, Cabrera and Harris, and even Twins manager Ron Gardenhire, seemed perplexed.

"Uhh, man, I don't know," Cabrera said with a weighty pause. "He really was in the zone. He was able to come back and throw strikes. His sinker was pretty good. His cutter seems like it was working pretty good, and I think he was getting the lefties out."

"It was one of those where you go through an at-bat, and you think, 'Oh, we're going to get something going,' and then you turned around, and it was the sixth," Harris said. "He got through six innings, and we felt like we left a few chances out there."

The Twins scored one run in the fifth and another in the sixth, but once Cleveland's bullpen took over in the seventh, Minnesota's early-inning ineptitudes returned. Three Indians relievers combined for a perfect seventh, eighth and ninth.

"Not a particularly good night. When you make four errors in a ballgame, you probably deserve to lose, and that's what we got tonight," Gardenhire said. "We just gave them too many opportunities. Too many outs, and you end up losing the ballgame. Tough to swallow, but we'll have to come back tomorrow and see if we can play a better baseball game."

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, Brantley lead Indians past Twins, 5-2

CLEVELAND (AP)—On a day the Cleveland Indians learned a player who is a big part of their present won't play again this season, one who's a big part of their future helped them to victory.

Rookie Michael Brantley had two hits and his first career RBI, helping the Indians to a 5-2 win over the Minnesota Twins on Friday night.

The Indians announced earlier in the day that center fielder and leadoff hitter Grady Sizemore will have surgery on his left elbow next week and will miss the rest of the season. Brantley, called up from Triple-A Columbus on Sept. 1, stepped into both roles nicely. The left-handed hitter singled and scored a run in the third and drove in a run with a sixth-inning single.

"This is a great opportunity for me to show what I can do," said Brantley, acquired last season in the trade that sent ace pitcher CC Sabathia to Milwaukee. "That's the whole goal."

Jeremy Sowers (6-9) pitched six strong innings and the Indians took advantage of sloppy play by the Twins, who committed a season-high four errors. The loss dropped Minnesota six games behind first-place Detroit in the AL Central.

"Not a particularly good night," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "When you make four errors, you probably end up deserving to lose. That's what we got tonight. We gave them too many opportunities and too many outs."

Brantley is batting .400 (6 for 15) in four games. He had his first major-league hit Tuesday against the Tigers.

"I couldn't be happier," Brantley said. "This is a dream come true. I can't stop smiling from ear to ear."

Brantley's father, Mickey, a former major league outfielder, was in the stands Friday night.

"I love playing in front of him," Brantley said. "As a kid, you always dream about doing what your father did."

Brantley batted .267 at Columbus and led the International League with 46 stolen bases. The Indians have high hopes for the 22-year-old, who could be in the starting outfield when next season begins.

"It's early," Cleveland manager Eric Wedge said. "I'm sure there will be an adjustment period for him, but he's doing a good job for us."

Sowers (6-9) allowed two runs, six hits and didn't walk a batter. The left-hander, who retired the first 10 hitters, is 4-2 with a 3.62 ERA in his last eight starts.

"My fastball command has been better," Sowers said. "I was throwing strikes early and getting ahead in the count."

Twins shortstop Orlando Cabrera thought the offense should have been more productive.

"We should score more runs," he said. "Nothing against Sowers because he pitched pretty good today, but his ERA (4.78), he's given up a lot of runs. So we should have scored more runs today."

Kerry Wood pitched the ninth for his 18th save in 23 chances.

Carl Pavano (11-11), traded by the Indians to the Twins last month, allowed four runs in six innings, including a three-run third. The right-hander is 2-3 in six starts with Minnesota.

"I know they play with a lot of energy and they put up good at-bats," Pavano said of his former teammates. "I knew I had to make good pitches and for the most part, I did that. You're going to face a lot of guys that you played with. You have to be a professional and go out there and do your job."

A throwing error by shortstop Orlando Cabrera helped Cleveland's rally in the third. Singles by Brantley and Jamey Carroll, who had three hits, started the inning. First baseman Justin Morneau fielded Asdrubal Cabrera's grounder and threw to second for a force play. Orlando Cabrera's throw to first sailed past Pavano and into the Twins' dugout, allowing Brantley to score.

Jhonny Peralta followed with an RBI double and scored on Travis Hafner's single. Peralta added an RBI single in the seventh.

Third baseman Brendan Harris committed errors in the fifth and sixth, while Morneau was charged with one in the seventh. The errors in the sixth and seventh led to two unearned runs.

"I don't think anything was particularly routine," Harris said. "It was the type of plays you really hope the next ball comes right at you so you can make up for it a little bit. It's frustrating because they were funky and balls you don't really prepare for but at the same time plays I expect to make."

Pavano was acquired on Aug. 7 for minor league pitcher Yohan Pino.

NOTES: The Twins recalled INF Matt Tolbert from Triple-A Rochester on Friday. ... Francisco Liriano, on the disabled list since Aug. 18 with left arm fatigue, is expected to throw a bullpen session on Sunday, followed by a simulated game on Tuesday. If all goes well, Liriano could return to the Twins in a relief role at some point this season. ... Sizemore will also have lower abdominal surgery a week after the elbow operation. He has been bothered by groin problems since spring training. ... The Indians activated OF Trevor Crowe (strained oblique) from the disabled list and purchased the contract of LHP Mike Gosling from Triple-A Columbus.

Ohio boy, 4, hit by foul ball has skull fracture (AP) – 17 hours ago

AKRON, Ohio — Doctors in northeast Ohio say a 4-year-old boy who was struck in the head by a foul ball at a minor league baseball game is in critical condition with a fractured skull.

Doctors say it may take five days for the swelling in Luke Holko's brain to subside. It's unclear how well he'll recover.

Holko and his family had front-row seats near first base for Wednesday's doubleheader at the home of the Mahoning Valley Scrappers, a short-season Class A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians.

Holko was hit as he sat in his father's lap and talked to his mother. Paramedics took him to a local hospital.

During a news conference Friday, the boy's mother, Nicole Holko of North Bloomfield, said her son loves baseball and the accident won't stop the family from attending games

Free-agent compensation system is unfair By Jeff Passan, Yahoo! Sports

Based on the formula that determines free-agent compensation in big league baseball, the following equations are true:

Josh Willingham > Ryan Howard

Sergio Romo > Troy Tulowitzki

Howard is a former MVP and perennial candidate for the award with Philadelphia. Willingham is an outfielder who for the season's first three months couldn't crack the everyday lineup of the worst team in baseball.

Tulowitzki is Colorado's franchise shortstop, the rare 24-year-old around whom a team can build. Romo is a relief pitcher for whom the San Francisco Giants had such little regard they designated him for assignment last year.

In the world of baseball's player rankings, the feared slugger loses to the inconsistent outfielder and the disposable reliever bests the brilliant shortstop – and the broken system is not changing soon. Leaders from Major League Baseball and the players' association said this week that the rankings, a collectively bargained item that assigns value to every player in the major leagues, will not see a major overhaul until after the current labor contract expires in December 2011.

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And so baseball is stuck with a system so blatantly outdated that Elias Sports Bureau, the league's official statistician, is embarrassed to compute them. The Elias rankings, as they are commonly known, aren't actually ranked by Elias. MLB provides the formula, one source said, and Elias just does the math.

The rankings aren't some arbitrary numbers for barstool debate, either. They contribute significantly to teams' approaches entering the offseason and at the trade deadline. Players are divided into five positional groups – first basemen, outfielders and designated hitters; second and third basemen and shortstops; catchers; starting pitchers; and relief pitchers – and ranked on a 100-point scale.

The top 20 percent of players in each group are classified as Type A. Somehow Willingham is ahead of Howard, who just recently made the cut, and Romo is there despite a 4.85 ERA. Teams can offer their free agents the option of going to arbitration, in which the player receives a one-year contract with no more than a 20 percent pay decrease. If a Type A free agent turns down arbitration and signs elsewhere, his former team receives two compensatory draft picks. Type B players (like Tulowitzki) rank in the top 40 percent and fetch one draft pick. The remainders do not garner any compensation.

Draft choices are valuable currency, and they're the reason that second baseman Orlando Hudson, shortstop Orlando Cabrera and reliever Juan Cruz remained unsigned until late in spring training this year. All three were Type A free agents. Teams wanted them, but no one wanted to give up an early draft pick, as teams signing Type A's must (first round for teams picking 16th through 30th, second round for those picking first through 15th; Type Bs do not cost the signing team a pick). As the free-agent market cratered and multiyear deals dried up, the trio was left with relative table scraps when teams leapt at a bargain, compensation be damned. Before Cruz signed with the Kansas City Royals on Feb. 28, the union and MLB had discussed tweaking the rules to keep the compensation from getting in the way of a deal.

How a system so dysfunctional remains in place is simple, leaders from MLB and the union said: Free-agent compensation is not a big enough issue in the minds of either side to re-jigger it before 2011.

"The bargaining parties at the end of this basic agreement should take a hard look at all issues related to draft-choice compensation, including the particulars of the Elias rankings," said Michael Weiner, the union's general counsel slated to take over as executive director when Don Fehr retires in the coming months. "More immediately, the parties should turn their attention to irrationalities associated with the Elias rankings, such as the relief-pitcher rankings. It's not in the interest of clubs or players for the Elias rankings to be out of touch with the way the market actually values players."

Middle relievers, such as Cruz, do face the biggest troubles. Because relief pitching tends to be affordable, teams can offer arbitration to a free agent without risking a huge financial hit if the player accepts. Most Type A players would rather pursue a multiyear deal, and teams are loath to give up first- or second-round draft picks for a middle reliever who might not have near the impact of a closer, let alone a player taken with the forfeited draft pick.

The parties continue to discuss ways around the problem. They have considered changing the Elias ranking formula only for relief pitchers. They could allow a sign-and-trade deal, where a player re-ups with his old team, then gets traded to the new one for players in lieu of a draft pick. Among those projected as Type A middle relievers this offseason: Octavio Dotel, John Grabow, Kevin Gregg, LaTroy Hawkins and Darren Oliver.

"Everybody agrees the issue is largely a relief-pitcher problem," said Rob Manfred, MLB's lead labor lawyer. "There are two separate issues. [The other] is how many players are subject to compensation. That's a collective-bargaining issue. Compensation is good for the clubs. The union doesn't like it because it burdens free agency.

"That ain't going to change until 2011."

The issue of compensation isn't necessarily hard and fast. During the last labor negotiations, the union pushed to end draft-pick compensation. MLB officials wanted to institute a so-called slotting system, where each draft pick gets paid a fixed dollar amount. Neither side budged. The issue was tabled.

And so baseball is left with a system that mostly gets things right but whiffs badly, too. The point system, which an enterprising fan reverse engineered for those interested in the full rankings, uses two years' worth of only basic statistics: batting average, home runs, RBIs, on-base percentage, plate appearances and, for infielders and catchers, fielding percentage. It's not any better for pitchers: innings, wins, ERA and strikeouts, among a handful of categories.

The groupings aren't much better. The importance of a center fielder far exceeds that of a first baseman, and yet they're ranked against one another. Because catchers have their own category, Bengie Molina – he of the .278 on-base percentage – is a Type A, while American League home run leader Carlos Pena is a Type B. And no one can argue that a relief pitcher such as Sergio Romo is more valuable than an ace – say, Brandon Webb, a Type B.

Except maybe Sergio Romo.

Beyond the ranking ridiculousness, players other than relievers are affected by their status. Following last season, Boston offered catcher Jason Varitek arbitration – and handcuffed him to Fenway Park in doing so. Varitek, coming off a poor season and still with Type A classification, would've fit any number of places outside of Boston – except for that compensatory pick he'd cost. He ended up re-signing with the Red Sox for \$5 million, a 44 percent pay cut.

None of this should impact this offseason's elite hitters, such as Matt Holliday and Jason Bay, and shouldn't work its way to Bobby Abreu, whose on-base skills could land him a multiyear deal despite turning 36 before opening day. How it trickles down to Chicago Cubs starter Rich Harden could prove interesting.

When healthy, Harden is one of baseball's best pitchers. He's just got someone poking and prodding a voodoo doll of him. As prodigious as Harden's numbers are, his file of MRIs might be more impressive. So if the Cubs offer arbitration and he declines, will a team really give Harden a multiyear deal, knowing not only that he'll want significant money but that he'll cost a draft choice as well?

Minnesota considered that at the waiver trade deadline before opting against acquiring Harden. Because of the Type A tag, the cost was too high. The Cubs wanted significant return because they would have dealt Harden and the potential first-round pick from him signing elsewhere. Minnesota was unwilling to take the leap.

Nor are the two parties who rely on the Elias rankings, no matter how obsolete. Fixing the relief-pitching issue is one thing – a must. Revamping it all will be even longer overdue.

Jon Heyman > DAILY SCOOP

National League benefits greatly from mining AL rejects; more notes Story Highlights

John Smoltz, Cliff Lee and Brad Penny have all profited from a league switch

One American League GM: "Going from the AL to the NL, it's like oxygen"

How will the Yankees handle Derek Jeter's impending free agency?

John Smoltz, who posted an 8.32 ERA for the Red Sox, has turned his game around since getting to St. Louis and has a 2.65 ERA for the Cardinals. Rafael Betancourt, who was an average reliever for the Indians, didn't allow a run his first 14 outings for the Rockies. Cliff Lee, who pitched well but lost more games than he won with the Indians this year, transformed into an almost-unhittable hurler in his first five starts for the Phillies.

Then, in perhaps the biggest league-switching eye-opener of all, Brad Penny, who was released by the Red Sox after appearing to run out of steam in Boston, threw eight shutout innings in his first start back in the National League for the Giants after never getting past seven for Boston. And that start came against the Phillies, who are described as the NL team that's most like an AL team.

"Going from the AL to the NL, it's like oxygen," one AL general manager said.

"If I'm an NL GM," said another AL GM, "I'm taking every scrap heap player from the American League."

That actually does appear to be a strategy for some opportunistic NL GMs. Whether or not they intentionally focused on the AL-to-NL switch, the Cardinals, Rockies and Dodgers especially appear to have benefited by mining the superior league for talent. Not coincidentally, those three teams are in playoff positions as of today.

The Cardinals, whose rescue of Matt Holliday from the A's was maybe the best midyear move (along with Lee), have used the Red Sox in particular as a source of talent, acquiring Smoltz and Julio Lugo this year after importing Joel Pineiro two years ago. The Dodgers, who last year transformed their season by acquiring Casey Blake and especially Manny Ramirez from the Indians and Red Sox, respectively, went so far as to take a DH, Jim Thome, from the White Sox this summer.

The Man-child became otherworldly when he went to the Dodgers in 2008 (although part of that could have been because of increased effort, as well), and so did CC Sabathia when he went to the Brewers (though to be fair, he's having that sort of second half with the Yankees, too).

Rockies GM Dan O'Dowd has done very well by importing Huston Street and Betancourt, and within the past several days took flyers on struggling former stars Jason Giambi and Jose Contreras. Giambi, who had been horrendous with the A's this season, already helped win a game. As for Contreras, well, Rockies people privately will tell you they took him because they had few other options. But Contreras could be the best test case of all. Since he was absolutely putrid on the White Sox this season, if he thrives in Colorado he has a chance to become the greatest turnaround example of all.

When O'Dowd was asked whether he considers a change of leagues in making deals, he answered honestly. "I do," he said, before adding that sometimes he also considers a change of scenery, as was the case with Jason Marquis, who was mediocre for the Cubs in recent years before becoming an All-Star for the Rockies this year.

O'Dowd said the difference in leagues has been obvious for a decade. He cited Randy Johnson's trade from Seattle to Houston way back in 1997 as the first case of an incredible transformation. "He was OK in Seattle [that year], but he went on a roll that was phenomenal in Houston," O'Dowd recalled. Johnson was known as a terrific talent with the Mariners but wound up winning his four straight Cy Young Awards with the NL's Diamondbacks.

The AL has won 11 straight All-Star decisions (assuming each team has a 50-50 chance in All-Star Games, the chances for the AL to win 11 straight would be 1 in 2,048), and has also won the interleague battle six straight years, with that tally being slightly more lopsided over the past four years. (The AL has won 55 percent of interleague games over the last six years but the percentage rises to 57 percent over the last four.)

However, it's still the individual examples that are most glaring. Holliday, a superstar with both the Rockies and now again with the Cardinals, had a rough three months with the A's before happily escaping a bad situation for one of baseball's better environments. Hitting .286 and slugging .454 with the A's, Holliday has gone on a tear since getting to St. Louis, where his batting average has jumped to .375 and his slugging percentage to .691 as he has helped to lead the Cardinals' surge that has all but wrapped up the NL Central Division.

LaTroy Hawkins is yet another example of a complete turnaround. Released by the Yankees last year, he has been lights out with the Astros this year. His ERA in New York was 5.71; with Houston it was 0.43 last year and 2.05 this year.

Since the leagues draw talent from the same amateur and professional pools, it seems odd that one league would be so dominant. Theories abound, ranging from the DH in the American League to differing styles (the sac bunt is all but dead in the AL) to the high payrolls of the Yankees and Red Sox to increased competition based on trying to keep up with the teams at the top (usually those two juggernauts in the AL East).

"You can do nothing like the Houston Astros and still compete every season in the NL," one AL executive pointed out. (The Astros aren't exactly in the mix this year, though.) Another executive said he believed that the White Sox and Blue Jays, two AL teams with losing records this year, would contend in the NL.

Many baseball people believe that there is a psychological element as well, especially for pitchers who don't have to deal with a DH and thus face shorter, generally less-dangerous lineups. No team in the National League has a hitter as talented as Robinson Cano bating seventh or J.D. Drew hitting eighth. "I am flabbergasted at how different it is," one AL executive said. "In the National League, a pitcher can pitch around the No. 6 hitter to get to 7, 8 and 9."

Patient lineups such as those for the Yankees and Red Sox wear down pitchers. And bigger ballparks provide a comfort zone for pitchers in the NL.

But many folks in the American League think the difference between the leagues is about something much more obvious.

"All the talent's here," one AL GM said. "It's a pretty [crummy] league over there."

Around the majors

- It's believed that the Yankees will treat Derek Jeter like all their iconic players and mainstays and let him go into his walk year next year unsigned. In this case, they also know that negotiating off an MVP-caliber season would favor Jeter. That's the way they handled Mariano Rivera, Alex Rodriguez and Jeter's best friend, Jorge Posada.
- Amazingly, in their mid-30s, Jeter, Rivera, Posada and Andy Pettitte all are having much better seasons this year than last year. With his home run on Thursday, Posada became the sixth catcher to have eight 20-homer seasons. Courtesy of Steve Lombardi of the famed waswatching.com, the others are Johnny Bench and Mike Piazza (11), Yogi Berra (10), Gary Carter (9) and Carlton Fisk (8). All but Piazza are in the Hall of Fame, and Piazza's overall numbers are obviously better than all the others.
- Speaking of amazing, Albert Pujols now has 361 home runs to tie Joe DiMaggio. Pujols' career start is often compared to DiMaggio's for the power without many punchouts. Pujols has 561 K's compared to DiMaggio's 369. But as for the power, let's not forget Pujols is still only 29, meaning he might only be halfway through his career.
- Josh Beckett and A.J. Burnett appear to have hit a slump simultaneously. It's probably just coincidence, but both slumps have come after they hooked up in a scoreless duel eventually won by the Yankees 2-0 in 15 innings. Since that game five starts ago, Burnett has a 7.12 ERA, Beckett 7.46.
- According to scout scuttlebutt, Holliday isn't automatic to stay in St. Louis. While he's thriving there, he could be pursued by the deeper-pocketed Yankees, Mets and maybe even the Red Sox (especially if Boston fails to sign Jason Bay). The Cardinals are going to try hard to keep him, though.
- One other possible explanation for some of the pitching turnarounds in St. Louis is pitching coach Dave Duncan. He was upset by the treatment his son Chris received there, but one competing GM said, "They better not let him get away." Both Duncan and manager Tony La Russa -- who was also upset that Chris Duncan wasn't treated as he could have been (Chris is said to be like a nephew to La Russa) -- are free agents after the year.
- The Rockies plan to keep Huston Street out through the weekend. His biceps tendinitis is something that came on suddenly.
- The Yankees don't seem too worried about Rivera's groin issue. It was recently revealed to have been bothering him off-and-on all year.
- Billy Wagner expressed some concern about his control in an article in the Boston Globe. His fastball looks pretty healthy, though, as he hit 97 on Thursday night. As promised, Boston is being cautious with him.
- Alex Gonzalez has done a nice job at shortstop for Boston. They could bring him back, or perhaps try an upgrade with Marco Scutaro, who's a free agent after this season. However, they don't seem anxious to bring back Orlando Cabrera, who's also a free agent.
- Pedro Martinez has been as good as the Phillies could have hoped. To think, only the Phillies and Rangers showed real interest. The Cubs actually were interested, but their unsettled ownership situation appeared to be an issue at the time. The Brewers had some interest, but a scout missed the workout because Pedro arrived late (maybe he should have stayed around).
- One competing GM said he could see the Cubs seeking to pay about half the \$21 million remaining on Milton Bradley's contract in order to trade him. Another GM said he felt, considering Bradley's issues, they'd have to pay nearly all of the money to be rid of the temperamental slugger.
- Curt Schilling said he has some interest in replacing Ted Kennedy as a Massachusetts senator. But the only real applicable experience he has is all his filibustering.
- Author Erin Arvedlund seemed to back away from her public claim that the Wilpons would have to sell the Mets in a year or two. (She said that in an interview with me and co-host Adam the Bull on WFAN.) Mets lawyer David Howard had beaten down Arvedlund a couple days earlier on Fox, and by the WFAN interview she conceded that she wasn't absolutely sure that the Wilpons would have to sell, or even take a partner. She also said that she didn't know anything about the Wilpons' other holdings. The Wilpons and Howard both say that they have no plans to sell. Arvedlund said a spokesman for Bud Selig also told her that she was wrong with her prediction.