

## ALCS Game 5: So Much Time, So Little Result – by Mark Pattison

I looked at my cell phone. It said 11:54 p.m. The first pitch was at 8:07 p.m. That's three hours and 47 minutes, if you're counting. I certainly was.

The Tigers coughed up four runs early, then started chipping away in the middle innings, but fell silent by game's end to come up one run short. Final score: Red Sox 4, Tigers 3.

This game highlighted some of the inadequacies of the Tigers.

Miguel Cabrera proved to be human after all. Yes, he got a run across the plate in the seventh inning, but it was on a bases-clearing double play. He got the "go" sign from third base coach Tom Brookens on Jhonny Peralta's single to left field in the bottom of the first inning, only to blow past Brookens once he put the "stop" sign as Cabrera reached third. Cabrera, nursing groin and abdominal injuries, headed for the plate with mincing steps reminiscent of Babe Ruth in the old newsreels. Jonny Gomes fired the ball to Boston catcher David Ross, who had him dead to rights. Cabrera could offer only a token body block as resistance. In the top of the three-run Boston second, a bad-hop grounder got past Cabrera for an error and an unearned run charged to starter Anibal Sanchez.

Another shortcoming: Jhonny Peralta in left field. He was, by major league standards, as slow as molasses running down extra-base hits. This display of lack of defensive prowess will certainly factor into his future employment, and it will almost certainly not be with the Tigers.

And we cannot forget Prince Fielder. Just as (with one notable exception), David Ortiz has been stymied by Detroit's pitchers, Fielder has likewise been made irrelevant to the Tigers' offense. Fielder is generally good for a base hit a game, but his extra-base power seems to be gone, not to mention his home-run power. Moreover, he has not driven in a postseason run since Game 2 of the ALCS – of 2012. But if you are of a certain age, you would agree that all of Fielder's ground outs to second baseman Dustin Pedroia, much further left than he usually plays due to a shift, is like a broken record. And we don't mean one for the stat books.

The ultimate difference in the game was the wild pitch Sanchez threw that allowed Mike Napoli, who had homered in his first at-bat, to score from third base with two out in the top of the third inning.

Cabrera got the Tigers' comeback started when he hit a two-out single into center field to score Austin Jackson in the bottom of the fifth inning. Brayan Pena, a midgame substitute for a banged-up Alex Avila, stroked his own single into left-center with one out in the bottom of the sixth to bring the margin to 4-2 before Jackson hit into an inning-ending double play. And then it was Cabrera's double play in the seventh inning that brought Jose Iglesias in from third base to make it a one-run ballgame. But against Craig Breslow and Koji Uehara, Detroit could sustain no offense in the late innings.

But we can look at a couple of things that went right for Detroit. One is the defensive wizardry of Iglesias at shortstop. To think of how far he came to snag an opposite-field pop lofted into left field by David Ortiz, who gets an even more exaggerated defensive shift than Fielder. Great glove, great hands, great instincts.

The much-maligned Detroit bullpen also held Boston scoreless for three innings, even during the somewhat bizarre ninth inning when, after David Ross nudged a sacrifice bunt Cabrera's way only to be thrown out, pinch-runner Will Middlebrooks made a bid to go all the way from first to third. Pena, a bit late to realize no one was covering the bag, hustled down the line to retrieve Fielder's throw. But in trying to make a swipe tag on Middlebrooks, Pena tagged the umpire, who was a wee bit too close on the play.

With Detroit down three games to two in the series, the ALCS goes back to Boston. The Tigers' starters did not pitch their team to victory in their first assignment in the ALCS, but Max Scherzer and Justin Verlander are two of the best in the business. We can only hope, watch or listen intently, and hope some more.

You remember actress Melissa Gilbert of “Little House on the Prairie” and a countless number of made-for-TV woman-in-peril flicks? She married actor Timothy Busfield of “Thirtysomething” fame and a Detroit-area native. The happy couple now live on the outskirts of Detroit, and Tim has converted Melissa into a Tigers fan. She’s a regular tweeter during games, too. If you want to follow her or otherwise check her out, here’s her Twitter handle: @MelissaEGilbert.

Miguel Cabrera is now the Tigers’ all-time RBI leader, with 24 in 33 games, besting Hank Greenberg, who collected his 23 RBI in 24 games.

In Game 4, Drew Smyly needed only 18 pitches to record five outs, while Joaquin Benoit needed 21 pitches to get through the ninth inning.

Much has already been made in the complainosphere about third-base coach Tom Brookens’ go/stop signals to Miguel Cabrera. Granted, it wasn’t the best possible choice. But the worst I ever witnessed a Tigers-Red Sox game in Fenway Park July 5, 2002, the day Ted Williams died. Dmitri Young was at second base for the Tigers; he had been reduced to serving as Detroit’s DH because of a groin injury. Well, wouldn’t you know, some Tiger hit a single to shallow left field. Third base coach Juan Samuel waved Young home. Young slid, was out by a mile, and reinjured his groin to the point that he was done for the year. It was just another pathetic moment in manager Luis Pujols’ reign of error.

The last time – before Game 4, that is – that Torii Hunter ever had any RBIs as a leadoff hitter was May 14, 1999 against Oakland. And, the two RBI he collected with his second-inning double Wednesday evening the his first-ever multi-RBI came as a leadoff hitter.

How hittable was Jake Peavy in Game 4? This hittable: His 54 percent strike rate was his third-worst in any game of his career, and his worst since a 33-pitch start while pitching on an injured ankle against the Phillies in 2009. He allowed more baserunners (10) than her recorded outs (nine). He became the fourth pitcher in postseason history to allow seven earned runs on five or fewer hits. Peavy in the regular season walked only three batters on 3-0 counts. In Game 4, he did it twice in the same inning. The others were the Red Sox’ Tim Wakefield (in 1995 ALDS vs. the Indians), the Reds’ Gene Thompson (in 1939 World Series vs. the Yankees), and the Cubs’ Guy Bush (in 1932 World Series vs. the Yankees). It was also the second time Peavy allowed at least seven earned runs in fewer than five innings in the postseason, becoming the third pitcher with at least two career postseason games of seven or more earned runs and fewer than five innings pitched, the others being the Braves’ Tom Glavine (three times) and the Phillies’ Tommy Greene (twice).

Until Jackson was moved to the eighth spot in the order – he was awakened Wednesday morning by the sound of the incoming text message coach Rafael Belliard sent informing him of the lineup switch – he had been 3-for-33 with 18 strikeouts. Then he reached base safely seven straight times – a Detroit postseason record – before grounding into an around-the-horn double play to end the sixth inning.

Entering Game 5, Boston was hitting just .186 in the ALCS – and that was after they rapped out a dozen hits in Game 4. They had been at .133 before then. They were 2-for-16 with runners in scoring position. This is why, through the ALCS’ first four games, Detroit starters were a combined 2-1 with an ERA of 1.00, allowing 14 hits but striking out three times as many batters – 42, if you’re having trouble with the math -- in 27 innings.

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