

Late Cleveland surge sinks Sox in opener

Chicago's Dotel allows trio of runs, Tribe's catcher out

BY TOM WITHERS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEVELAND — Their ballpark may have a new name. Little else changed about the Cleveland Indians.

The defending AL Central champions won in familiar fashion at Progressive Field — home to so much late-inning drama when it was called Jacobs Field for the past 14 years. Casey Blake hit a three-run double in the eighth inning Monday to give the Indians a 10-8 season-opening win over the Chicago White Sox.

It may not be known as the Jake anymore, but everything else seemed in place for the Indians, who won 23 times in their final at-bat last season.

With the score 7-7, Kelly Shoppach and Jhonny Peralta opened the eighth with singles off Octavio Dotel (0-1), who bounced back and got two quick outs. Franklin Gutierrez, who hit a three-run homer in Cleveland's seven-run second, walked to load the bases.

Blake followed with a shot high off the 19-foot-high wall in left, starting a new chapter of memories for Indians fans, who have resisted the ballpark's new corporate moniker.

Unlike last year, when a blizzard wiped out the home open-

Game notes vs. Indians

- Thome was the first White Sox player to homer twice on opening day since Sammy Sosa in 1991. He has 41 career multihomer games.
- Guillen plans to hold a brief meeting before the opener of each series. It's something new, an idea borrowed from Atlanta's Bobby Cox, whom Guillen played two seasons for late in his career.

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er and Cleveland's first home-stand, the game was played in unexpected 60-degree temperatures but a strong tail wind that helped the teams combine for five homers, including a pair of two-run drives by Chicago's Jim Thome off reigning AL Cy Young winner C.C. Sabathia.

Jermaine Dye homered in the ninth off Cleveland closer Joe Borowski, last year's AL saves leader who once again had pulses racing before retiring Joe Crede on a foul pop to get the save for winner Rafael Betancourt.

Consecutive controversial calls went against the White Sox in the eighth, preventing them from going ahead.

It started with a double by Crede who was held at third on Juan Uribe's hard-hit double to left-center off Betancourt.

After an intentional walk, Orlando Cabrera bounced to

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Chicago White Sox outfielder Alexei Ramirez makes a diving catch to get a ball hit by Cleveland Indians' Jason Michaels in the fourth inning Monday, in Cleveland. The Indians went on to beat the White Sox, 10-8.

Brewers top Cubs in Wrigley thriller

'Big Z' exits early; Fukudome makes spectacular debut

BY RICK GANO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — The start of the Cubs' 100th season since winning the World Series ended like so many seasons at Wrigley Field — with a loss. Tony Gwynn hit a sacrifice fly in the 10th inning, and the Milwaukee Brewers beat Chicago 4-3 Monday. Kosuke Fukudome went 3-for-3, hitting a tying, three-run homer in the ninth off Eric Gagne (1-0), but it wasn't enough for the Cubs, who haven't even reached the World Series since 1945. Pinch-hitter Craig Counsell opened the 10th with a double off Bob Howry (0-1) and moved up on a sacrifice. After Rickie

Game notes vs. Brewers

- A pitcher, Sheets, batted eighth for the first time in Brewers history.
- A moment of silence was observed before the game for the Northern Illinois students killed this year.

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Weeks was hit by a pitch for the second straight inning, Gwynn delivered the go-ahead fly. David Riske pitched the bottom of the 10th for the save. Milwaukee's Ben Sheets and Chicago's Carlos Zambrano pitched shutout ball, the Cubs ace forced out in the seventh because of a forearm cramp. The Brewers went ahead in the ninth off Kerry Wood. Ryan Braun hit an RBI single before falling down coming out of the batter's box, and Corey Hart's two-run double made it 3-0. Chicago honored Ernie Banks by



Chicago Cubs right fielder Kosuke Fukudome takes a curtain call after hitting a three-run home run to tie Monday's game in the bottom of the ninth.

unveiling a statue of him in front of Wrigley Field on a wet afternoon. The game was delayed by 41 minutes at the start and another 49

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Mr. Cub, Ernie Banks, honored with statue outside Wrigley Field

BY ANDREW SELIGMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Ernie Banks couldn't believe what he saw when he yanked away the blue tarp.

"Is that me?" he kept asking. "Is that me?"

There was No. 14 in his batting stance, clutching a Louisville Slugger and wearing a grin similar to the one on the face of the real Mr. Cub during the ceremony.

The Chicago Cubs unveiled a statue outside Wrigley Field on Monday, and on a rainy day in which they would be lucky to play one, let alone two, Banks saw nothing but sunshine. And who could blame him?

This was his moment, his day.

In 1982, Banks became the first Cub to have his number retired. This time, he became the second to be immortalized in bronze — joining the late broadcaster Harry Caray. And besides being honored by the team, the city declared it "Ernie Banks Day."

"This is a miracle," Banks said. "So are you," one of the hundreds of fans lining Clark Street yelled back.

Banks' credentials speak for themselves.

A two-time MVP and 14-time

All-Star, Banks hit 512 homers and drove in 1,636 runs while batting .274 in 19 seasons from 1953-71 with the Cubs. Besides putting up Hall of Fame numbers, he also helped clear the way for other black players.

"I just wish (the statue) had been done 15 years ago," Hank Aaron said during the ceremony. "Be that as it may, I for one am going to be very proud of the fact that I had the opportunity not only to play baseball with you but to share in your dream. You were the greatest ambassador for baseball, and you still are a great ambassador."

The former Home Run King was one of many dignitaries at the ceremony, along with Rev. Jesse Jackson, Gov. Rod Blagojevich, White Sox great Minnie Minoso and Cubs legends Ferguson Jenkins, Billy Williams and Ron Santo.

"Ernie was truly a trailblazer," Williams, a Hall of Famer, said during the ceremony. "He paved the way for so many African-Americans."

Santo recalled watching Cubs games on Saturdays when he was a high school senior in Seattle.

"There was something about Wrigley Field, when I watched the Cubs and Ernie Banks," he

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BASEBALL 101

Look for Tigers' talent to sweep major awards



DAVE FULTZ
Baseball columnist

The opening week of baseball is finally upon us and I couldn't be more excited. Fans finally get to watch games instead of hearings and read box scores instead of the Mitchell Report.

I was thinking about putting out a complete joke of a column today — in the spirit of April Fools' Day, of course.

This would be a column where I tell you that Henry "Hank White" Blanco is primed for an MVP run and Will Ohman and

his 30-foot curve will take the Cy Young for the Braves.

That was going to be this week's Baseball 101, until I realized I didn't have enough material to be funny for the whole column. In light of my prodigious lack of humor, here come my real picks for '08.

AL MVP: Miguel Cabrera

The Tigers' new third baseman has always been a masher, but this year the young Cabrera's numbers will jump into the stratosphere.

The slugger who turns just 25 years old this April is already the owner of a ridiculous .930 career OPS (on-base percentage plus slugging) and has averaged more than 30 home runs and 110

RBI's over the last four years.

Finally back on a contender with a solid lineup around him, Cabrera should put up even more of the gaudy statistics — like RBIs and runs scored — that win MVP awards.

All this, added to the fact that the Tigers finally have a legitimate shot to take the pennant in the American League, make Cabrera an easy pick in this spot.

His top challengers: A-Rod, Manny Being Manny and Big Papi.

NL MVP: David Wright

One of the most interesting things I noticed while researching for this column was the similarity between the career

numbers of the Mets' Wright and Rockies slugger Matt Holliday.

Holliday was robbed of an MVP in '07 when he hit .340 with 36 HR, 137 RBI and a 1.012 OPS. This was a jump from a 2006 season that looked eerily similar to Wright's 2007, in terms of numbers.

Does this mean Wright is on schedule for a massive jump in productivity for '08? Maybe, maybe not. Would I be willing to bet on it and give Wright the nod? Of course.

His top challengers: Holliday, the newly vegetarian Prince Fielder, and Ryan "not the temp" Howard.

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Indiana coaching search creates flurry of speculation

Rumors spread on message boards, blogs over hiring timeline, possible candidates

BY MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — Rampant rumors and constant speculation can only mean one thing at Indiana: Another coaching search.

With the basketball season over, the Hoosiers looking for a new coach and a 10-member search committee sworn to secrecy, guessing has become the favorite past-time of Indiana fans.

About the only certainty in the race to find Kelvin Sampson's replacement is that everyone wants to know who the Hoosiers

are chasing.

"The speculation that's going on is amazing, and there's a lot of speculation that's not based on fact," Indiana University trustee-president Stephen Ferguson said Monday.

Not surprising given the high-profile stakes of this hire.

Since firing Bob Knight in September 2000, a move that sharply divided Indiana fans, the Hoosiers have failed to find a suitable replacement. Mike Davis, Knight's successor, never won enough to satisfy Indiana's rabid fans, and it took Sampson,

Davis' successor, less than two years to stain the university's once-impeccable reputation for playing by the rules.

Sampson left in February amid a phone-call scandal that brought five allegations of major infractions from the NCAA. Dan Dakich took over as the interim coach but lost four of seven games to close the season. He's repeatedly said he'd like the job permanently.

Not everyone is of the same mind-set as Dakich.

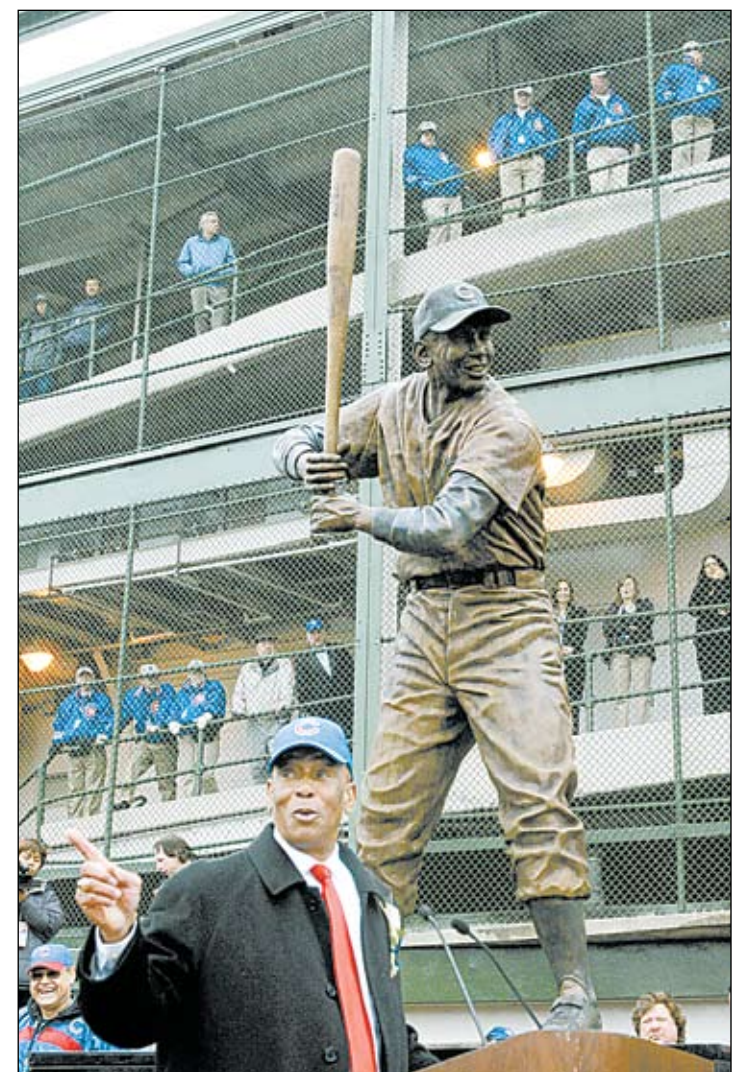
Washington State's Tony Bennett, long considered a front-runner, issued a statement Sunday saying he had talked with Indiana athletic director Rick Greenspan but would not pur-

sue the job.

Xavier's Sean Miller, another candidate believed to be on Indiana's short list, emphatically denied having any interest in the job after Saturday's regional final loss to UCLA.

"I will be at Xavier," Miller said. "I'm looking forward to coaching at Xavier and continuing on with what we've done for years behind me and what we've done this year. You know, we have the bar set high and we're anxious to recruit the very best we can — to have the opportunity to get back here."

Still, there's no shortage of names to stoke message boards



Chicago Cubs Hall of Famer Ernie Banks talks about his career at the foot of his newly unveiled statue outside Wrigley Field in Chicago on Monday.

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