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Chicago Tribune, **Cubs' Kyle Hendricks, Brewers' Brent Suter meet in Ivy League rematch**
Hendricks looks to keep Brewers at bay
By Carrie Muskat

Last season, the Cubs had the luxury of a huge lead in the National League Central. On Saturday afternoon, they'll try to create a little more distance between themselves and the Brewers in the third game of a key four-game showdown at Miller Park.

With a 5-4 win in 10 innings on Friday night, the Cubs' lead in the NL Central is now at five games over St. Louis and 5 1/2 over Milwaukee. Chicago's magic number to clinch the division for a second consecutive season is five. The Brewers are two games behind Colorado for the second NL Wild Card spot.

Kyle Hendricks will start Saturday against Brewers left-hander Brent Suter. It will be Suter's second start against the Cubs, whom he shut down on July 28 in Milwaukee, throwing seven scoreless innings. He is 3-2 with a 3.45 ERA in 12 starts and is coming off a win over the Pirates in which he threw five shutout innings.

There's been a lot of energy at Miller Park with a large influx of Cubs fans in the crowd.

"I know they're excited to be playing meaningful games -- it's such a great competitive atmosphere here and something we enjoy, the challenge of coming to the ballpark and having something to shoot for," the Cubs' Ben Zobrist said. "These are postseason-type games. They're extremely meaningful games that matter. Everybody knows that. We take the same mindset into it and I know they are, too."

To their credit, the Brewers have continued to press the Cubs. In the first game of the series, Chicago rallied to tie the game in the ninth on Javier Baez's RBI single, then go ahead on Kris Bryant's two-run homer in the 10th inning for a 5-3 win.

"You're going to have nights that are disappointing," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "You're going to have days that you don't perform. You're going to have moments you get beat. So your job is to push 'stop' at some point and look toward the next day. It feels like when you go through this, but when you're living it, it feels like we've had more of those days and had to recover a little more often, and done a good job of it. It's one of the things I don't worry about. I don't worry about us coming out and putting our best foot forward after a night like [Thursday]."

The Cubs have a 9-8 lead in the season series. Last year, the Cubs won the head-to-head meetings, 11-8. Zobrist is quick to point out that last year doesn't matter anymore.
"At this point, you forget about everything in the past," he said. "You are where you are as a team, and you do whatever you can to put yourself in position to go forward. We forget about yesterday very quickly as a team. All that stuff in the past, we don't think about it. We just try to focus on the present."

Zobrist would know. He's won back to back World Series, with the Royals in 2015 and the Cubs in '16.

"It's always different, every team is different and you find a new way," Zobrist said. "You have to find a new way to win and a new way to make it interesting. There's a lot of the same characters as last year [on the Cubs], but with new characters, it changes the mix a little bit. It's the same intensity and want to win as those other teams but in a different way."

Three things to know for this game

• Expect catcher Willson Contreras and shortstop Addison Russell to be back in the Cubs' lineup. Both are coming back from injuries, and manager Joe Maddon wanted to give them extra time off in advance of the early start. Contreras, who had been sidelined with a right hamstring injury, entered off the bench Friday night, replacing Alex Avila as part of a double-switch in the fifth inning.

• This will be Hendricks' fifth start against the Brewers this year. The right-hander posted a quality start on Sept. 10 against Milwaukee but lost. Since he's returned from the disabled list, Hendricks is 6-4 with a 2.80 ERA in 19 starts.

• The Cubs have hit 212 home runs this season, tied for the second-highest single-season total in franchise history, which was accomplished in 1998. The Cubs hit a franchise record 235 homers in 2004.

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Cubs.com
Cubs nip Crew in 10, clip magic number to 5
By Adam McCalvy and Carrie Muskat

MILWAUKEE -- The Cubs found themselves another step closer to clinching the National League Central. The Brewers found themselves in third place.

Pinch-hitter Tommy La Stella worked a bases-loaded walk from Brewers All-Star closer Corey Knebel in the top of the 10th inning, and Carl Edwards Jr. finished a 5-4 Cubs win on Friday night at Miller Park in the teams' second straight extra-innings thriller.

The victory pushed Chicago five games up on the rest of the NL Central, with the Cardinals in second place after they beat the Pirates, and the Brewers, reeling in the wake of three straight heartbreaking losses, are 5 1/2 games back.

The Cubs' magic number to clinch the division for a second consecutive season is 5. Does manager Joe Maddon feel his team is in control of the Central?

"No," Maddon said quickly. "Let's go play [Saturday's] game. I'm interested in one-game winning streaks. We've had two of them. I want another one-game winning streak [Saturday]. That's how I look at it."

The 81-73 Brewers also slipped behind the 81-72 Cardinals in the chase for the second NL Wild Card. The Rockies led by 1 1/2 games over the Cardinals with the Brewers two games back after Colorado's victory in San Diego.

"These have been two good baseball games. It's no fun losing them," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "It certainly stings this time of year, where we're at, what we're trying to do and what we've done so far. But ... it's not over. Not even close. We have eight games left. We have to look at it as opportunity."
For the second straight night, nine innings were not enough. Ryan Braun had two hits for the Brewers and teamed with Travis Shaw for back-to-back two-out doubles in the fifth inning for a 4-4 tie that lasted into the 10th. Knebel, out to the mound for a second inning and pitching for the fourth time in five days, walked Kris Bryant to open the frame as the Cubs loaded the bases with no outs. Knebel struck out Leonys Martin for the first out of the inning, but then walked La Stella on five pitches to force home the go-ahead run.

"He has not played in a bit," Maddon said of La Stella, who has been bothered by a mild groin strain. "He goes out there, and he was not too eager. He slowed everything down, and accepted his walk. That’s the thing -- with young baseball players today, many are not willing to accept their walk in that situation."

Given Knebel's recent workload, did Counsell have to think twice before sending out his closer for a second inning?

"It's certainly not ideal but with who they had coming up, and he only threw nine pitches in the previous inning, that's where the decision sat," said Counsell, who acknowledged the risk. "We can wait until the next game and not know what the game is going to be like, or we can pitch him there and know he's our best guy to put up a zero."

John Lackey and Brandon Woodruff started the game, but it was decided by the bullpens. While Knebel absorbed the loss, his second in three days, Edwards won with 1 2/3 innings of scoreless relief. Cubs relievers held Milwaukee hitless after the fifth inning.

Maddon said he pulled Lackey after the right-hander gave up a leadoff single to Eric Sogard in the fifth because it wasn't "trending well."

"I felt I was throwing the ball OK," Lackey said. "I gave up a couple homers [to Stephen Vogt and Brett Phillips in the second]. I felt it was going pretty good. ... I felt like I threw a little better the last couple innings. The biggest thing is we won the game."

MOMENTS THAT MATERIEd

Wait for your pitch: Jon Jay's remarkable, 15-pitch at-bat against Woodruff sparked a rally for the Cubs in the fifth inning. After 10 consecutive foul balls, Jay lined a single to right field. Woodruff then hit Bryant with a pitch, and, with lefty Josh Hader ready in the Brewers' bullpen, both runners advanced on Anthony Rizzo's groundout before scoring on Ben Zobrist's bouncer into center field for a 4-3 lead.

"It was a great AB. I give [Jay] a lot of credit," Counsell said. "Anybody who fouls off that many pitches -- an at-bat like that takes a piece of the pitcher."

"That really hurt their pitcher," Maddon said of Jay's at-bat. "Jon Jay, this guy lives for these moments. That's what I've learned during the course of this season. He's fine. He slows things down really well. He loves to compete. He doesn't care who's pitching, righty or lefty, it doesn't matter, velocity, breaking balls, it doesn't matter. He just competes."

It was the fifth longest plate appearance of Jay's career.

Returning the favor: Zobrist was robbed in each of his first two at-bats before getting revenge. In the second inning, Braun made a diving catch of Zobrist's fly to shallow left field to take away one hit, and in the third, Sogard robbed Zobrist of a hit and an RBI with another diving catch of a flare. So it must have felt sweet in the bottom of the fourth when Zobrist raced into shallow center field to make an over-the-shoulder catch of Domingo Santana's fly for a run-saving, inning-ending out that kept the Cubs' deficit at 3-2.

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

When Vogt and Phillips hit back-to-back solo home runs in the second inning, Milwaukee tied and surpassed the 1982 American League champion Brewers for the second highest home run total in franchise history. This year’s
edition has cleared the fence 217 times. The Brewers will have to keep hitting them to reach their all-time record (231), set in 2007 when Prince Fielder led the way with 50.

QUOTABLE

"This is the time of year you play for. All of your offseason workouts, Spring Training -- this is what you've worked for your whole life since you were a little kid. Now it's go time. Things are meaningful in September. That's what we want, these last games to mean something. -- Brewers catcher Jett Bandy

"We get hit a little bit to the solar plexus, but we still keep going. [The Cubs' players] were good the whole night. The attitude in the dugout is spectacular. We get behind and everything is going [the Brewers'] way but not one guy felt down about it. It was wonderful to watch all of that." -- Maddon, on the attitude in the dugout

AFTER FURTHER REVIEW

For the second straight night, the ninth inning began with a disputed call at first base. On Thursday, Ian Happ legged out an infield grounder to the first baseman and wound up scoring the tying run in a game the Cubs won in 10 innings. On Friday, Javier Baez was initially called out on a similar play, with Knebel covering the bag. But the Cubs challenged and the call was overturned, giving Baez a hit, and the Cubs another leadoff baserunner. He was promptly erased when Knebel induced a big double play, and the rally fizzled.

The headsets were back on the field in the bottom of the 10th, when Sogard tried to take second base on a pitch in the dirt and was called out when he lost contact with the bag. Catcher Willson Contreras retrieved the ball and made a perfect throw to shortstop Addison Russell, who kept his glove on Sogard. Counsell went out to argue that Sogard had been pushed off the bag, then challenged after that argument went nowhere. The call was confirmed.

"I'm pretty sure he's still out on the replay but there's no harm at that point," Counsell said.

Said Sogard: "Checking the cameras after the game there was no evidence to really overturn it, so I think that was kind of the issue there. It's just unfortunate, just kind of how things have been kind of going this series."

Maddon was impressed with Contreras' throw as well as Russell's tag.

"Game on the line right there, really in that situation I'm looking at Sogard to see what his first move is," Russell said. "We saw a ball down on the ground in the dirt and I saw him break for the bag and I broke for the bag. Willie did a good job of seeing that whole play out and delivering the throw. I made sure I kept the tag on him and he came off the bag. Sogard was going 100 percent right there. He happened to come off the bag. I kept the tag on him."

WHAT'S NEXT

Cubs: Kyle Hendricks gets the early wake-up call on Saturday. The right-hander is 1-1 with a 4.91 ERA in four starts against the Brewers this season. Since coming back from the disabled list, he's 3-2 with a 2.42 ERA in 11 starts. First pitch was scheduled for 12:05 p.m. CT at Miller Park.

Brewers: Quick-working lefty Brent Suter will make his 21st appearance and 13th start on Saturday as the series continues. Suter is still building his pitch count after returning from a rotator cuff injury, but should be good for at least 75-80 pitches after throwing 64 last time out against the Pirates.

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Cubs.com
Edwards finishes strong night for Cubs' 'pen
By Carrie Muskat
MILWAUKEE -- Carl Edwards Jr. did his best impression of Cubs closer Wade Davis and got that World Series feeling all over again on Friday night.

On Thursday night, Davis pitched 1 2/3 innings and picked up the win in the Cubs' 10-inning victory over the Brewers. The two teams needed extra innings again on Friday; only this time, manager Joe Maddon called on Edwards with one out in the ninth. The slender right-hander struck out the two batters he faced to end that inning, and pitched the 10th to notch the win in the Cubs' 5-4 victory.

"It was exactly what Wade did yesterday," Edwards said of his outing. "Go out and finish the inning, and we take the lead, and go back out there and try to get three outs. It's something to get used to."

It's not that Edwards is lobbying to replace Davis, who will be a free agent after this season. Edwards knows he has to be ready for anything, much like in Game 7 of the World Series last year when he was called upon to pitch the 10th after the Cubs had taken an 8-6 lead over the Indians. Edwards did give up a run in that game, and Mike Montgomery finished it, picking up his first career save.

"[Friday] felt like last year's World Series when I came out in the 10th inning," Edwards said. "This time I got out of it, and I didn't need relief."

"That was one of his better outings," Maddon said of Edwards' effort on Friday.

The Cubs' bullpen has been busy. Starter John Lackey was lifted after giving up a leadoff single in the fifth inning. The veteran would've liked to go longer but Maddon felt Lackey wasn't "trending well."

"I felt I was throwing the ball OK," Lackey said. "I gave up a couple homers. I felt it was going pretty good. ... The biggest thing is we won the game."

Brian Duensing replaced Lackey and got Neil Walker to ground into a double play, but the left-hander did give up an RBI double to Travis Shaw, which tied the game at 4. Duensing then started a stretch in which he, Hector Rondon and Montgomery retired 13 in a row.

"Their bullpen did a really nice job," Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell said. "They pitched well. It was a situation that we didn't get much going against their bullpen. We had some decent at-bats, we just couldn't get anything going."

This was Rondon's first outing since Sept. 8 after being sidelined because of inflammation in his right elbow, and it was encouraging for the Cubs to see him retire the side in order. Montgomery has done everything -- start, relieve -- without a complaint.

"They've been asked to do a lot, and they've really stepped up and done a great job," Lackey said of the relief corps. "[Edwards], at the end, going more than an inning -- that's a big thing for him. It's cool to see those guys pitch well."

"That's what we have to do," Edwards said. "In order for us to all get what we want to get and do what we want to do in life, everybody has to step up, and the good thing is everybody is stepping up so we can go to anybody in the bullpen at any time to get us out of a big inning or just stop the bleeding."

That's what the Cubs did last year in the World Series. Edwards remembers that well.

Davis has been a mentor to Edwards and the other relievers. The closer wasn't available on Friday because he'd pitched in five of the Cubs' past six games. As far as Edwards was concerned, it was as if Davis was right there with him.

"Wade's Wade," Edwards said. "He's cool, calm and collected -- 'Triple C' is what I call him. Just watching him, it's like reading one book, 'Three Little Pigs,' over and over again. Sooner or later, you're going to know exactly how to
do it and know exactly what the story is. Watching Wade numerous times now, it gave me some motivation and a lot more confidence to go out there and do what he did the night before."

Which is help the Cubs move one step closer to reaching the postseason for a third straight year.

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Cubs.com

Baez relieved to hear from family in PR
By Carrie Muskat

MILWAUKEE -- Cubs infielder Javier Baez was relieved on Friday when he finally had a chance to talk to his brother, Gadiel, in Puerto Rico. Communication with family and friends has been nearly impossible since Hurricane Maria pummeled the island.

"I've been playing and doing my best to stay in the game, but my mind has been over there, trying to find out how my family is doing," said Baez, whose mother lives in Puerto Rico. "I talked to one of the lawyers over there, and he told me it was hard to get connected. He said everything was fine, everybody was just out of power. That calmed me down a little bit."

Baez was calm enough to deliver a game-tying RBI single in the ninth inning on Thursday, helping to spark the Cubs to a 5-3 victory over the Brewers.

"Sometimes, when you are going through difficult moments, getting out there is that little island you need just to park your brain for a couple hours," said Cubs manager Joe Maddon, who has asked Baez, Rene Rivera and Victor Caratini every day about the situation in Puerto Rico. "Javy has been on the stage and had the bright light shining on him, so he's learned how to handle it well."

During the World Baseball Classic, residents there rallied to support the Puerto Rico team, which included Baez. Now, it's time for the ballplayers to show their support.

"There's still people smiling and trying to get through it," Baez said. "We've got no options. I think if we work together, the process will be faster and hopefully, everybody stays together and tries to help.

"Our whole island was there for us [during the Classic]," he said. "I'm sure the Puerto Rican team and everybody who is from over there, they'll do something to help. ... If we work together, we can get through it faster."

Baez said it's been difficult for crews to reach towers to help restore electricity to the island.

"My brother told me it was crazy," Baez said. "He said to be there [during the hurricane] was something he'd never seen before. They say there's no trees in Puerto Rico now. It's really bad."

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Cubs.com

Cubs blow off steam with in-game 'retreat'
By Carrie Muskat

CHICAGO -- If you see the Cubs' players suddenly disappear from the dugout, don't worry. They're on a mini retreat. Anthony Rizzo apparently started it, but he didn't want to take credit.

"It's not just me, it's anyone who needs to let out some steam this late in the season," Rizzo said Friday. "It's a team thing. It's a long season, and you go through ups and downs, and there's times when you get to that boiling point and you want to kill anything in your way. It happens about 25 times a year. Now in September, we've come up with a team thing where we're all in it together."
Apparently, they did it during Thursday's game after Rizzo struck out in the eighth inning when there were two on and nobody out against the Brewers. The game, which the Cubs won in 10 innings, 5-3, was tied at 2 at that point.

"Rizzo struck out in a situation and he called everybody inside, and we try to make everything fun, even the strikeouts," Javier Baez said. "You just have to keep playing the game, all nine innings."

Baez didn't want to reveal any more details, other than to say they're enjoying it.

"When somebody's mad, everybody walks in and we do some fun thing that kind of gets us hyper," Baez said. "It's really fun."

The reason the Cubs' players go inside is to avoid having their escapades caught on camera.

"I've been through 20 helmets this year," Rizzo said. "You go through bats. You can only stay sane for so long. It's September, it's the team. It's worked. We're 3-for-3 on it. It's not me. It's whoever feels it's time, you'll see the team rushing off the bench and go on our little retreat.

"You can't be selfish. It's got to be the right timing. It helps, too. It's been fun the last couple weeks since we started doing it."

• Kyle Schwarber hit his 29th home run on Thursday. Considering the slow start to the season, to be that close to 30 is quite an accomplishment.

"He works hard," Rizzo said of Schwarber. "He doesn't put his head down, he just keeps working and stays in the moment. It's not easy to do. He's done a really good job at it."

Schwarber's season could've easily gone the other way, especially after he was sent to the Minor Leagues on June 21 when he was batting .171.

"He handled everything so properly," Maddon said. "I remember sitting there with him, telling him he's going back [when he was demoted]. He was fine. He knew he needed to, he knew he'd earned the right to go back. There's still a lot of work to do. ... It's a tough start he had to work through, but he's worked back from that."

• Ben Zobrist made his 63rd start at second base on Friday. Last season, he started 113 games there. Injuries have limited the 36-year-old infielder and Maddon has made a point of giving him plenty of rest.

"I'll do whatever I have to do for the team," Zobrist said. "That's what comes first. By rest, hopefully that's for the betterment of the team. I have to take care of myself the best I can, prepare myself the best I can and be focused when I'm out there. It's been tough to not allow physical things to hinder focus and things that I need to be prepared for out on the field. Joe's known that."

Zobrist didn't want to talk about what, if anything, has been bothering him lately. He did battle a wrist injury earlier in the year.

"We have guys who can do the job," Zobrist said. "We're not trying to push me to a place where I could get injured. I feel ready right now and I feel prepared. My body has to heal a little bit from various things that are going on and there's no time for that. It's time to play these meaningful games and do what I can to help the team win."

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ESPNChicago.com
Wade Davis has been a perfect addition to the Cubs
By Jesse Rogers

MILWAUKEE -- Just how good was Chicago Cubs closer Wade Davis over seven days, ending Thursday?
“Amazing,” one Cubs player said.

“So good, but I’m not sure he broke a sweat,” another one chimed in with a smile.

Davis is shooting for perfection, as he’s the only closer in the game who hasn’t blown a save, but this last week added another layer to his great season. Davis pitched in five of six games, throwing a combined six innings while giving up two hits and a walk to go along with 10 strikeouts. Not one runner crossed the plate on him while he earned three saves plus a win. And the best news was his ability to pitch in more than one inning. It’s the first time he has been called upon to attempt it. One time, he entered the game in the eighth, and another time in the ninth, and all he did the next inning was set down the opposition in order each time.

“He’s got guts,” first baseman Anthony Rizzo said Friday afternoon. “It’s been fun to watch him pitch. He’s pitching better and better every time out.”

Those guts Rizzo is referring to were on display in the ninth inning Thursday when Davis entered a tie game with a runner on first and one out against the Milwaukee Brewers. He was supposed to come into the game with two outs, but manager Joe Maddon asked him to hurry up in order to face Ryan Braun.

“They made the phone call [to the bullpen], so I said, ‘Sure,’” Davis calmly recalled. “Probably wasn’t ready.”

Davis hit Braun then gave up a hard hit single to Travis Shaw, loading the bases with the winning run 90 feet away. There was no margin for error. What happened next got everyone’s attention.

“I was more nervous than he was,” pitcher Rob Zastryzny said as he watched from the bullpen. Reliever Justin Grimm added: “I put my head down, but this is a guy with a plan, always with a plan.”

Davis struck out Domingo Santana on a high fastball then got behind Orlando Arcia 3-1 in the count before getting him to bounce one back to him on a 89 mph cutter on a 3-2 pitch. The drama-filled sequence was a thing of beauty.

“I got lucky Shaw’s hit didn’t score the run,” the always understated Davis said. “It allowed me to take a deep breath. That 3-1 pitch to Santana was huge because he didn’t swing at it. I threw it right down the middle. I took a chance. Then, he had seen enough straight fastballs, so I went to a cutter.”

As for the multi-inning saves, Davis is all for it. He hasn’t been overused, and besides, there’s always Red Bull and hot sauce for his arm to keep his adrenaline going between innings. And coffee.

“I think I’ve been drinking too much caffeine,” he said with a smile. “Self-induced jitters.”

On one hand, it’s easy for his teammates to describe Davis, but those that know him best couldn’t find the exact words because he doesn’t fit one mold. He doesn’t say much; that much everyone agrees on, but there’s something always going on inside him.

“He’s quiet, but he’s involved,” Ben Zobrist said. “He listens. You can tell he knows what’s going on. It’s like he’s analyzing things all the time. I don’t think he takes breaks. He may not be the center of attention, but he knows exactly where his place is and what he wants to say.”

When told Davis is kind of the pitching version of himself, Zobrist smiled: “No, I’m not that composed.”

Zobrist has played with Davis on two different teams and sees the same person, just in a different role. His days as a starter are in the past, but he has never given up on that mentality. He pitches with a purpose. Thursday was a great example.

“I couldn’t believe he threw a 3-2 cutter,” Grimm said shaking his head. “Watching him, you just know he has a plan and he’s going with it. ... He just has it figured out. He’s always in control.”
Davis is most certainly a lead-by-example type of guy. His process to get ready to pitch is an inspiration to his younger teammates.

“He’s taught me more in the span that I’ve been here than I learned from a lot of my coaches growing up,” Zastryzny said. “He goes out there with a purpose. It’s not a fluke he’s doing his job so well. He knows what he needs to do and how to get there. That’s what I’m learning from him. Every now and then I’m walking around here trying to find something [to do]. He knows what he needs to do all the time.”

Teammate after teammate spoke of the plan Davis follows. Told what they think of him, the 32-year-old free agent-to-be shrugged it off.

“If they want to believe that stuff, it’s good,” Davis said. “But I’m just doing my job.”

Will he continue to do his job for the Cubs next season? It’s not a topic which has come up much considering the Cubs have bigger things on their mind, but a closer who’s 32-for-32 in save opportunities is sure to get a look from other teams.

“I love it here,” Davis said. “It’s great. The front office is great, so are the fans, but I’m anxious to get to the postseason, then anxious to get home and hunting. I’m not worried about next year as much as I am winning the World Series then shooting a big deer.”

Some of Davis’ hunting stories are legendary, and perhaps some of his pitching antics will be, as well. He had a good one Thursday, shutting the door on the Brewers when all looked lost. He has done the same a few times during the past week, earning a rare night off Friday. He won’t get many nights off down the stretch as he could be this year’s version of Aroldis Chapman for the Cubs -- a closer who is used a lot. Considering the way he’s been pitching lately, it’s not a bad strategy. He does most of his talking on the mound anyway.

“He doesn’t say too much,” Kris Bryant said. “He’s all business, all the time. I guess that’s what a closer is. You need a completely different mindset to do that. ... I’d love to see him back here. Would be cool.”

Zastryzny added: “It’s one of the most impressive things in the world. To see a guy do what we’re all trying to do [be perfect], but he’s out there doing it. It’s amazing.”

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ESPNChicago.com
Cubs come together again, close in on division with another win in 10
By Jesse Rogers

MILWAUKEE -- The Chicago Cubs are prepping for the postseason and using the second-place team in their division as a sparring partner. Or at least the Milwaukee Brewers were in second place before the Cubs won their second consecutive extra-inning road affair over them, 5-4, in 10 innings on Friday.

"We get behind, everything is going their way, but not one guy felt down about it," manager Joe Maddon said of the Cubs' early 3-0 deficit. "It was wonderful to watch all that."

Maddon loves extra-inning road victories because he feels as if they bring a team together, but when they happen in September and he uses nearly the entire roster to get the job done, they feel even better. Over the course of two nights, the Cubs' manager has stretched his bullpen to the limits while employing position players in every manner possible, from double switches to pinch hitters.

On Friday, Tommy La Stella was the hero when he drew a bases-loaded walk in the 10th inning from Brewers closer Corey Knebel. It was a classic La Stella at-bat, as he refuses to swing outside the strike zone despite not playing much. There's no anxiousness to his game.
"He has not played in a bit and he goes out there, not too eager," Maddon said. "Slowed everything down. Accepted his walk. Young players today, many are not willing to accept their walk."

La Stella is one of those cheerleaders in the dugout who's into every pitch of every game. His teammates believe that's one reason he can be so ready with an at-bat like Friday's. His .383 on-base percentage speaks to his patience at the plate.

"It 100 percent helps that he's into it," Jason Heyward said. "If you're not doing that, it's much harder. It's already hard, but if you're into the game it helps.

"He's always going to give that same at-bat. He's always into every pitch doing what he has to to prepare."

La Stella's at-bat was just one of many little moments over the past two days to help propel the Cubs closer to the NL Central title. There was the throw by Willson Contreras and the tag by Addison Russell in the bottom of the 10th that killed any thought of a Brewers rally. Russell held the tag on Eric Sogard as he came off the bag while trying to advance to second on a ball that skipped away from Contreras.

"There's so many little things," Maddon said, acknowledging that play.

And how about Jon Jay's 15-pitch at-bat to lead off the fifth inning that included 11 foul balls before he got on base with a single to right. He's only the third player this year to foul off 11 pitches in one plate appearance. It helped cook Brewers starter Brandon Woodruff, who gave up a two-run single to Ben Zobrist later in the inning.

"That hurt their pitcher," Maddon said. "No question. This guy [Jay] lives for these moments, I believe."

We haven't even gotten to the bullpen yet. Maddon pulled John Lackey after a leadoff hit in the fifth, which meant he would need six innings of relief without the use of closer Wade Davis, who pitched more than an inning the night before. Up stepped Brian Duensing, Hector Rondon, Mike Montgomery and Carl Edwards Jr. Two of them had pitched the night before, Rondon was throwing in his first game since early in the month and Montgomery started Tuesday's contest, throwing 81 pitches. But there he was, pitching 1 1/3 innings of scoreless baseball Friday.

Edwards was the closer for the night, going the final 1 2/3 innings. It reminded him of another late-inning performance last season after the closer was out in the game.

"It actually felt like last year's World Series when I came in the 10th inning," Edwards said with a smile. "This time I got out of it."

On Friday, Edwards relieved Montgomery. Montgomery had came in for Edwards in Game 7. It worked out then, as it did here. And so two total team efforts in two nights have put the Cubs on the brink of another trip to the playoffs.

"It's going to take everyone," Heyward said. "It doesn't get easier from here. It's commendable in this room, what they've done the last two nights. Finding a way to get it done."

That's a reminder of last year's postseason as well. And maybe it's a little foreshadowing because the Cubs are displaying their team-first mantra once again.

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CSNChicago.com
Sprinting toward October, Cubs close in on another division title
By Patrick Mooney
MILWAUKEE – “Yeah, that really killed us, that sweep at Wrigley,” John Lackey said sarcastically late Friday night, dismissing a question about what’s happened to the Cubs since the Milwaukee Brewers made their statement against the defending World Series champs two weekends ago. “Come on, dude, it’s 162 games. Things happen.”

The Cubs are 9-1 since then, but Lackey was in no mood to talk about this finishing kick in the National League Central race, probably because manager Joe Maddon gave him the quick hook in a Big Boy Game, pulling him with a runner on and no outs in the fifth inning. But that’s what’s happening here, the Cubs sprinting away from the Brewers and peaking at the right time.

The Brewers are gasping for air after these pulsating back-to-back nights at Miller Park, the Cubs again coming from behind to win in 10 innings and close in on their second straight division title and third playoff appearance in a row, something this franchise hasn’t done since the run capped by the 1908 World Series title repeat.

After a hard-earned 5-4 win, the Cubs knocked the Brewers back to third place and chopped the magic number to eliminate the St. Louis Cardinals down to five, meaning the clinch party could be in Busch Stadium’s visiting clubhouse next week.

“We played fine that series, actually,” Lackey said, referencing three games where the Cubs lost 2-0, 15-2 and 3-1, allowing the Brewers and Cardinals within two games of first place. “S---, you can lose in this league and still play good. That’s why it’s the big leagues.”

Actually, it looks like the Cubs responded to the challenge from an upstart team, the crowd of 40,116 and a playoff environment.

“It’s been amazing,” Carl Edwards Jr. said. “It actually felt like last year’s World Series when I came in the 10th inning.”

Edwards notched the last five outs this time – with All-Star closer Wade Davis unavailable because he did the same thing the night before – part of a group effort that included a guy whose right elbow hadn’t allowed him to pitch since Sept. 8 (Hector Rondon) and a lefty swingman who took a no-hitter into the sixth inning three days ago against the Tampa Bay Rays (Mike Montgomery).

Lackey’s response when asked about the bullpen’s performance – three runs allowed in 11 innings – halfway through a four-game showdown: “They’ve been asked to do a lot…and they’ve really stepped up and done a great job.”

“In order to win, you’re going to need contributions from non-All-Star players at times,” general manager Jed Hoyer said. “You’re going to have to get contributions from players stepping up because of someone else’s bad performance or someone else’s injury.

“You want your best players to play best in these situations. But ultimately that won’t always happen. And when that doesn’t happen, you’re going to need some contributions from other guys.”

That’s been crucial for the 2017 Cubs. The game-winning run scored when Tommy La Stella – the pinch-hitter who had been dealing with a groin injury recently and personal issues that led him to walk away from the organization last summer – drew a bases-loaded walk against All-Star closer Corey Knebel.

If you want to see a grinding approach for October, just look at Jon Jay’s 15-pitch at-bat against Milwaukee starter Brandon Woodruff in the fifth inning, which led to a leadoff single, Ben Zobrist’s two-run single up the middle and a 4-3 lead after Lackey’s slow start.

Yeah, the Cubs look locked in now.

“I’m so proud of the way our guys (respond),” Maddon said. “They get hit a little bit, maybe something to the solar plexus, but we still keep going.”
CSNChicago.com
The Godfather, Anthony Rizzo, lays down new law in Cubs clubhouse
By Patrick Mooney

MILWAUKEE – Javier Baez broke the code of silence when he mentioned to reporters the latest thing for a Cubs team that designed a Party Room for their state-of-the-art clubhouse at Wrigley Field, turned Jason Heyward’s Rain Delay Speech into World Series mythology and interviews each other in the dugout for pretend TV segments after hitting home runs.

“He doesn’t know how the Italian way works,” Anthony Rizzo said. “There are supposed to be team things that stay with the team.”

Baez let it slip before Friday’s game against the Milwaukee Brewers, replaying the dramatic 10-inning comeback victory from the night before at Miller Park. If you see the Cubs instantly disappear from the dugout, or a TV camera shows a shot of an empty dugout...

“We got this new thing,” Baez said. “I don’t want to be the one saying it. I’ll just let him say it. But it’s really fun. When somebody’s mad, everybody walks in and we do some fun things that get us hyper. You guys ask Rizzo.”

The Godfather gave a cryptic response. Omerta is expected to be part of The Cubs Way.

“It’s a team retreat,” Rizzo said. “It’s not just me. It’s anyone who needs to let out some steam this late in the season. It’s a team thing. It’s a long season and you go through ups and downs. And there’s times where you get to that boiling point where you just want to kill anything in your way.”

Rizzo needed to vent and called his teammates into the visiting clubhouse on Thursday night after striking out with two runners on in the eighth inning of a tie game that could swing the National League Central race.

“Throughout the year, you go back in the tunnel probably 25 times,” Rizzo said. “You got to take it out somewhere. You can only stay sane so long. It’s September. It’s a team (thing) now.

“It’s worked. We’re 3-for-3 on it. But it’s not me gathering. It’s just whoever feels like it’s time – you’ll see the team rushing off the bench and going for a nice little retreat.”

In many ways, Rizzo sets the clubhouse tone with his laid-back vibe off the field and intense competitive streak on the field. Tom Verducci’s book, “The Cubs Way,” detailed a scene before last year’s World Series Game 7 where Rizzo got naked, played “Rocky” music, quoted movie lines and shadowboxed until reliever Hector Rondon joined “in on the hijinks, picked up an aerosol can of shoe cleaner and sprayed it in the direction of Rizzo’s groin.”

“This is strictly in-game,” Rizzo said. “You can’t do it, though, and be selfish and go on a nice little retreat when we’re winning. It got to be the right timing. It helps, too, because it’s been fun the last couple weeks since we started doing it.”

One obvious benefit: There are no annoying TV cameras. Like in late July when frustrated pitcher John Lackey bumped into Rizzo in the Wrigley Field dugout and exchanged words with the face-of-the-franchise first baseman.

“We’ve come together now,” Rizzo said. “It’s not about anyone. It’s about us. When things go wrong for a certain individual, we rally around him. And that’s what we got to keep doing from here on out.”

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CSNChicago.com
Javier Baez stars for Cubs while his mind drifts to Hurricane Maria and family in Puerto Rico
By Patrick Mooney
MILWAUKEE – Javier Baez tries to use baseball as an escape, but his thoughts inevitably drift toward Puerto Rico and the damage and destruction Hurricane Maria has inflicted on his beloved island.

“I’ve been doing my best to stay in the game,” Baez said. “But, really, my mind has been over there, trying to find out about family, how they’re doing.”

Baez could compartmentalize enough in the ninth inning to deliver the two-out, two-strike, game-tying RBI single on Thursday night at Miller Park, setting the stage for a dramatic 5-3 comeback victory over the Milwaukee Brewers that created a huge shift in momentum for the Cubs in the National League Central race.

But several Cubs have been distracted during this nightmare hurricane season, seeing the haunting images on TV and thinking about more than magic numbers. Baez finally made contact with his brother, Gadiel, before Friday’s game in Milwaukee.

“He finally found a spot that has service. Everybody’s disconnected,” Baez said. “It’s been really, really crazy over there. They say there’s no trees in Puerto Rico right now.

“It’s really bad. (But) there are still people smiling and trying to get through it. We got no (other) option. Our whole family is over there. I think if we work together, the process is going to be faster and the help is going to be (stronger). Hopefully, everybody stays together and just tries to help.”

Baez has been using his social-media platforms, asking for prayers and helping raise funds through the GoFundMe page started by catcher Rene Rivera’s family and supported by teammate Victor Caratini.

Known for his flash and highlight-reel moments, Baez is actually more of a low-key personality off the field, close to his family and developing into one of the most important and dependable players for the defending World Series champs.

“Sometimes, when you are going through difficult moments,” manager Joe Maddon said, “getting out there kind of is that little island that you need just to park your brain for a couple hours.

“You keep reading about it. You’re talking four-to-six months without power. When you read those lines, you know it’s devastating. But live it.

“Again, as an athlete, when you’re going through difficulties outside of your occupation, sometimes it’s the best place to be for those couple hours. And then you go back to reality afterwards.

“Javy has been on the stage. He’s had the bright lights shining on him for a long period of time for a young guy. He’s learned how to handle this pretty well.”

Baez starred for the team that made it to the World Baseball Classic championship game in March. He could feel the pride and energy and what that meant to Puerto Rico during an economic crisis.

“Our whole island, they were there for us,” Baez said. “If we really work together, we can get through it faster, and everything’s going to be OK over there.”

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Chicago Tribune
Cubs top Brewers in 10 innings to cut magic number to 5
By Mark Gonzales

Jon Jay fouled off 10 consecutive pitches before hitting a single on the 15th pitch of his at-bat to start the fifth inning Friday night.
Jay's patience set the tone for another tedious but successful triumph as the Cubs took a 5-4 victory over the Brewers in 10 innings.

The victory trimmed the Cubs' magic number for winning the National League Central to five. They now lead the Cardinals by five games with the Brewers 5 1/2 games behind.

The key moments were pinch-hitter Tommy La Stella drawing a bases-loaded walk in the 10th and defensive replacement Addison Russell maintaining a tag on Eric Sogard as Sogard's left hand came off second base on a head-first slide for the second out in the bottom of the inning.

"I just made sure I kept the tag on," Russell said. "Sogard was going 100 percent. He happened to come off the bag."

Carl Edwards Jr., pitching for the sixth time in the Cubs' last seven games, pitched two innings to earn the victory.

Jay scored in the fifth on Ben Zobrist's two-run single that enabled the Cubs to overcome a 3-0 deficit and take a short-lived lead.

"That really hurt their pitcher (Brandon Woodruff)," manager Joe Maddon said. "Jon Jay lives for these moments. That probably was the best at-bat of anybody in the last 10 days."

The significance of Friday's game wasn't lost on Maddon, who pulled starter John Lackey with a 4-3 lead after Sogard led off the Brewers fifth with a single. Lackey admitted after the game he didn't have his best stuff.

For the second time in three seasons, Maddon has managed to push the pedal and back off in his use of relievers. But with the chance to maintain a lead, Maddon opted for left-hander Brian Duensing for the second consecutive game after a three-day break.

"You have to take these chances," Maddon said.

Duensing induced Neil Walker to ground into a double play, but Ryan Braun and Travis Shaw hit back-to-back doubles that tied the game 4-4.

After using six relievers in Thursday's 10-inning victory, Maddon knew his bullpen options were limited. Closer Wade Davis threw a season-high 1 2/3 innings to secure that triumph and was unavailable. Koji Uehara stayed in Chicago, presumably to rehab his infected right knee.

Duensing pitched two innings — his longest stint since throwing 2 2/3 innings on June 12.

Hector Rondon made his first appearance since Sept. 8 and pitched a perfect seventh with the aid of a sharp breaking ball. Left-hander Mike Montgomery, who threw six-innings of one-hit ball in an 81-pitch outing Tuesday against the Rays, pitched a scoreless eighth with help from Javier Baez.

Baez, starting at shortstop in place of Russell, made a diving stop and threw accurately to first base from his knees to retire Braun.

The Cubs solved Woodruff the second time through the order but missed chances to score more.

That was the perfect script for Brewers manager Craig Counsell, who was able to preserve hard-throwing left-hander Josh Hader until the sixth.

Hader, who was unavailable in Thursday's game because of his heavy workload, held the Cubs scoreless for 2 1/3 innings.
Hurricane damage in his native Puerto Rico a concern for Javier Baez
By Mark Gonzales

The three-plus hours Javier Baez spends on the baseball field alleviates some of the stress of coping with the damage caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria to his native Puerto Rico.

"These couple of days I've been doing my best to stay in the game, but really my mind has been over there to find out about my family and how they are doing," Baez said Friday.

Some of Baez's nerves were calmed when he finally spoke to one of his brothers and learned that his family is OK.

"He said everything was fine, and everyone is out of power," Baez said. "That kind of calmed me down a little bit."

Nevertheless, the task of rebuilding the island begins with the chilling scene described to Baez with so many trees having been knocked down.

"You can see a mile away," Baez said he was told. "If we work together, the process will be faster and help will be more. Hopefully everyone will stay together."

All for the team: Manager Joe Maddon has been careful about giving 36-year-old Ben Zobrist ample rest, and Zobrist is willing to accept a break even with the Cubs trying to clinch a playoff berth.

"If Joe intends to give me a day off here or there and rest toward the end of the season, then I trust that's what's best for the team at the moment," said Zobrist, who has played in 120 games. "I just have to go with it."

Zobrist missed nearly three weeks in June with a sore wrist, but he would not say if the ailment still bothers him.

"I don't think that's important right now," Zobrist said. "It's important to give 100 percent of what I have."

Pillage on the paths: Ian Happ's speed helped the Cubs rally to a victory Thursday night, and Happ would like to attempt to steal more bases next season if presented with an opportunity.

Happ started the Cubs' game-tying rally when he legged out an infield hit in which he beat Brewers reliever Jeremy Jeffress to the first base bag. After a replay, the safe call stood because of a lack of conclusive evidence to overturn it, and Happ went on to score on Baez's single with two outs in the ninth.

"There are a lot of things that dictate how much I can run, but definitely going forward, it's something that next year I hope I'll get the opportunity to be able to," said Happ, who stole 56 bases in three seasons at the University of Cincinnati and has eight steals in 11 attempts this season.

"I love to be aggressive on the base paths and make things happen."

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'Retreats' help Cubs deal with tense moments like wild games with Brewers
By Paul Sullivan

Anthony Rizzo revealed Friday that the Cubs have adopted a new method of taking out their frustrations during games, reasoning that "you can only stay sane for so long" without snapping.

Speaking of John Lackey, the snap-happy starter was removed with a one-run lead against in the fifth inning of the Cubs' 5-4, 10-inning win over the Brewers, a move that seemingly signals the end to any remote chance Lackey could earn a postseason start.
Tommy La Stella's bases-loaded walk in the 10th put the Cubs ahead, and Carl Edwards Jr. pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings for the win.

With the win, the Cubs moved 5 1/2 games ahead of the Brewers and reduced their magic number to win the National League Central to five games. The Cardinals leapfrogged the Brewers and are five behind the Cubs after their ninth-inning comeback victory over the Pirates.

Can the Cubs clinch by Monday?

"Yeah, but baseball is a funny game," Edwards said. "We might have a game or two that don't go our way, but as of now we're playing great baseball and we're going to continue to do that."

Lackey declined to get giddy about the possibility.

"I don't know about that," he said. "We'll play (Saturday)."

Manager Joe Maddon opted to split up the combustible battery of Lackey and Willson Contreras, whose dueling ejections one week ago at Wrigley Field led Lackey to bark about being denied a chance at a win, saying they "don't grow on trees."

Maddon instead paired calm and cool catcher Alex Avila with the not-so-calm-or-cool Lackey, hoping to get six or seven innings out of the veteran.

No chance.

Despite serving up back-to-back home runs in the second inning, Lackey held a 4-3 lead before being removed after only 77 pitches following a leadoff single in the fifth. If looks could kill, Maddon would be referred to as the dear, departed manager of the Cubs.

Asked if he wanted to pitch longer, Lackey said: "Ya think?"

Either way, another opportunity for a win was denied Lackey, and he's expected to make his final start as a Cub next week in St. Louis.

Shortstop Javier Baez, who threw out Ryan Braun from his knees in the eighth inning, spilled the beans on Rizzo before the game. Baez said Rizzo called a meeting in the clubhouse during the eighth inning of Thursday's game after he'd struck out with runners on in a 2-2 tie.

"We got this new thing," Baez said. "I don't really want to be the one saying it. Let him say it.

"It's really fun when someone is mad — everyone walks in and we do some fun thing that kind of gets us hyper. ... You guys ask Rizzo."

Rizzo was tipped off about the clubhouse leak but pretended to be upset.

"He doesn't know how the Italian way works," Rizzo said while smiling. "Jeez."

Rizzo called the bonding exercise a "team retreat (for) anyone who wants to let out some steam" and claimed the Cubs were 3-for-3 since their first retreat a couple of weeks ago. It can only be called when they're not ahead, and Rizzo insisted guys can't "be selfish and go on a nice little retreat and snap when we're winning."

What's the point?

"It's a long season and you go through ups and downs, and there are times (you) get to that boiling point (when) you just want to kill anything in your way," he said.
"It happens upwards of 25 times a year. Now in September we've come up with a team thing where we're all in it together."

Lackey's name was not mentioned, but Rizzo insisted playing behind him was "fun."

"Like I said, we've come together now," Rizzo said. "It's not about any one (individual), it's about us. And when things go wrong for a certain individual, you rally around him.

"That's what we've got to keep doing from here on out until it's all said and done."

During the year, Rizzo speculated he'd destroyed 20 helmets. No TV cameras or mics are allowed at the retreat, not even the pretend ones Tommy La Stella and Ian Happ use when impersonating reporters.

"That would be considered fake news," Rizzo said.

Rizzo did admit some cameras were put in "designated areas for later on," so chances are you may be seeing see some retreat videos on someone's social media account in the near future.

Meanwhile, the Brewers are barely alive, though manager Craig Counsell noticed a story in Friday's Milwaukee Journal Sentinel said Thursday's game was tied in extra innings when the paper went to print. A reporter explained he had an early deadline and had to file his article before the wild ending.

"I did make a comment to my wife about it," Counsell said. "'I don't think it will be good for your job security' is what I said. I made some reference to the future of the newspaper industry."

Rest assured, the Journal Sentinel will still be printing Oct. 2 when the regular season ends.

Whether the Brewers will still be playing remains a question mark.

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**Chicago Tribune**
Cubs' Kyle Hendricks, Brewers' Brent Suter meet in Ivy League rematch
By Mark Gonzales

The Cubs and Brewers are developing a healthy rivalry, and pitchers Kyle Hendricks and Brent Suter will oppose each other Saturday for the first time since their Ivy League days.

Hendricks, who graduated from Dartmouth in economics, outdueled Suter, who earned a degree from Harvard in environmental science and public policy, 3-1 on May 1, 2011 at Cambridge, Mass.

Hendricks pitched a 106-pitch seven-inning complete game for the Big Green, hurling a four-hitter while striking out nine and walking two.

Hendricks went on to become an eighth-round pick of the Rangers the following month before the Cubs acquired him in a deal for Ryan Dempster in 2013.

Suter also went the distance by throwing 125 pitches while allowing seven hits and striking out 11 for the Crimson. Suter was a 31st round pick of the Brewers in the 2012 draft.

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**Chicago Sun-Times**
Cubs beat Brewers in 10th again, close in on another division title
By Gordon Wittenmyer
MILWAUKEE – If the Cubs and Brewers keep this up all weekend, neither one might be left standing to throw a punch by the time the playoffs start.

Back-to-back extra-inning games at Miller Park that taxed the bullpens and exhausted the emotions of every player involved also produced victories for the Cubs that have put them on the brink of another division title.

“It’s awesome. It’s definitely a playoff atmosphere,” said Tommy La Stella, whose bases-loaded walk as a pinch hitter in the 10th pushed across the game winner in the 5-4 victory over the Brewers on Friday night.

“These are incredibly important games from both sides,” he said, “so obviously emotions are high, and the stakes are high, and everybody’s locked in so it’s a good time.”

The Brewers’ third final-inning loss in a row dropped them to third place, behind the Cardinals, who beat the Pirates on Friday night.

With nine games left, the Cubs’ magic number for clinching a second consecutive division title over the Cardinals is five — putting them in position to clinch a championship in St. Louis for the first time since 1938. They open a four-game series at Busch Stadium on Monday.

“These are postseason-type games even though it’s not the end of the season for one of the teams at the end of the series,” said cleanup hitter Ben Zobrist, who gave the Cubs a brief lead in the top of the fifth with a two-run single. “They’re still very, extremely meaningful games that will matter. Everybody knows that.”

The Brewers – now 5½ games behind the Cubs – remain close in the race for the National League’s second wild-card spot. The loss put them 1½ games behind the Rockies, pending the outcome of the Rockies’ late game at San Diego.

It was just two weeks ago that the Brewers swept the Cubs at Wrigley to launch the closest division race the Cubs have had in a decade.

The Cubs have gone 9-1 since, with two left to play in Milwaukee before a four-game series at St. Louis starting Monday.

“Yeah, that definitely killed us, that sweep at Wrigley,” crabby starter John Lackey said sarcastically after getting pulled from the game in the fifth.

The Cubs came from behind in both victories at Miller Park, including a ninth-inning comeback Thursday.

“They get hit a little bit, maybe a little something in the solar plexus, but we still keep going,” manager Joe Maddon said.

These games have become so big that big-game starter Lackey was gone as soon as he gave up a leadoff single to Eric Sogard in the fifth with the Cubs clinging to a 4-3 lead.

“He obviously wasn’t trending well,” Maddon said. “Johnny just didn’t have his best stuff tonight.”

Lackey, who gave up a run quickly in the first and back-to-back homers in the second, disagreed and said he believed he was trending better into the fifth – at one point cutting off a question about the early hook when the columnist mentioned the veteran’s desire to pitch more than four innings.

“Ya think?” said Lackey, who then passed on the larger question. “The biggest thing is we won the game.”

Lackey took over the major-league lead in homers allowed at 36.

Brian Duensing took over for Lackey and got a quick double play, but then gave up back-to-back doubles to Ryan Braun and Travis Shaw for the 4-4 score that held through nine.
The intensity of the series might have been summed up in a single at-bat by Jon Jay leading off the Cubs’ fifth.

Jay fouled off 10 consecutive pitches during that 15-pitch at-bat before hitting a single to right. Kris Bryant was then hit by a pitch, and after the runners moved up on Anthony Rizzo’s grounder, both scored on Zobrist’s hit.

In the 10th, Bryant led off with a walk against Brewers All-Star closer Corey Knebel, and Rizzo singled to right to send Bryant to third before Zobrist was intentionally walked to load the bases.

After Leonys Martin struck out, La Stella – batting for Albert Almora Jr. – drew the RBI walk on a 3-1 pitch before Knebel wriggled out of the jam without further damage.

With Cubs closer Wade Davis unavailable because of his recent workload, Carl Edwards Jr. got the final five outs of the game to earn the win.

The Cubs caught a break in the bottom of the 10th when, with one out, Sogard slid past second base on a steal and was tagged out – confirmed after a video review.

“We’ve done that so many times. I guess that’s experience,” Bryant said after the Cubs opened the series with Thursday’s 10-inning victory on the strength of his home run. “We’ve played so many games like this our heartbeats aren’t going too fast when the game’s on the line. That kind of plays to our advantage.”

Especially in a race that has been much tighter than last year’s boat race to the playoffs.

“It’s just a different year than last year,” Bryant said. “Now it’s like we’ve got to win these games, and it’s really showing us what we’re made of.”

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**Chicago Sun-Times**
Hot like summer? Feels like fall. For the Cubs, it’s that time again
By Steve Greenberg

MILWAUKEE — Man, what a scorcher it was here Friday — hot enough to pull into a parking lot at Miller Park, dump a bag of brats directly onto the pavement and grill up a good time. No, it sure didn’t feel like the first day of fall.

I repeat: the first day of fall. How about that? If you’re anything like me, you hear those words every year and almost instantly are struck by the realization that the World Series is nigh. No matter how summer-like the weather is, the arrival of autumn — trumpeting the onset of the baseball postseason — must give ballplayers chills.

Wouldn’t you think?

“No, it doesn’t,” Cubs veteran Jason Heyward said. “The only thing it makes me feel is that it’s our last road trip. I love that. Otherwise, it’s just a date on the calendar.”

Well, that’s a rather uninspired way to look at it.

“No, no, it doesn’t,” two-time World Series winner Ben Zobrist echoed. “The weather makes me feel like it’s fall, when it starts to get cold. It has nothing to do with the actual date.”

Sheesh. That attitude sure isn’t going to write my column for me.

The first day of fall! It’s right where a tense game belongs — like Friday’s 5-4 victory over the Brewers in 10 innings. It’s the front door to the thrilling conclusions of pennant races and four blessed weeks of stressed-to-the-max
playoff baseball. Players bring out the long sleeves, fans in the stands begin to see their breath, and there’s just nothing like the gravity of it all. Thursday was a fine day, but Friday was full of all that first-day-of-fall promise. A baseball lifer surely would agree.

“There’s a map on WeatherBug that indicates where the fall colors are showing up prominently,” manager Joe Maddon said. “And I think our area has been kind of fooled by the weather recently — [the leaves] aren’t turning. Pennsylvania is.”

There goes that conversation down the Joe-being-Joe rabbit hole.

Maybe the Cubs just aren’t as sentimental about this time of year as I am.

“It’s the first day of fall?” Albert Almora Jr. said. “I wouldn’t have had any idea if you hadn’t told me. That’s kind of cool.”

It is, isn’t it?

“I mean, not really from a baseball standpoint,” he said. “It’s just another day. The seasons don’t mean that much to me anyway. The winter is my summer.”

I don’t know what that even means. OK, I give up.

But the calendar has turned, and in this case I mean that metaphorically. In so many ways, as the first-place Cubs took on the second-place Brewers, it was visible that fall baseball had arrived. Cubs fall baseball, to be more precise.

It was visible in the way Javy Baez jumped over the dugout railing and played third-base coach, waving his right arm in a furious circle as Jon Jay scored on a third-inning bloop single by Kris Bryant.

And in the way second baseman Zobrist — a couple hours after admitting he’s playing hurt — chased a bloop off the bat of Domingo Santana 30 feet into the outfield grass to make a run-saving, over-the-shoulder catch, the 36-year-old’s best defensive play of the season.

“There’s no time for [injuries] right now,” Zobrist said. “It’s time to play these meaningful games and do what you can to help the team win. I’m ready to do that, whatever it means.”

After the play, it felt a lot like October, when Heyward, Jay, Baez, Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and Kyle Schwarber all mobbed Zobrist with congratulations before he got anywhere near the dugout.

In the fifth inning, after Zobrist’s single up the middle scored two runs, teammates in the dugout took turns imitating his one-of-a-kind stance and swing. They were all revved up and having a blast. It was a scene right out of last year’s division series against the Giants.

And you’d better believe it felt like fall Cubs baseball when Maddon walked to the mound and yanked starting pitcher John Lackey after four-plus innings and only 75 pitches. Too soon to go to Aroldis Chapman? Oh, that’s right, he isn’t around anymore.

But it’s that time again.

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Chicago Sun-Times
Are they mad? Cubs turn individual anger into team-bonding experience
By Gordon Wittenmyer
MILWAUKEE — If it seemed for a moment in Thursday’s eighth inning that the Cubs’ dugout was suddenly empty, your eyes weren’t playing tricks on you.

After Anthony Rizzo struck out with two men on base and the Cubs trailing by one, he was so angry he needed to break something and vent.

And his boys followed him into the tunnel behind the dugout to join him in the “fun.”

 Seriously.

In the Cubs’ latest twist on bonding, the players – specifically Rizzo – have come up with a way to turn individual anger into a team concept.

“There’s times where you get to that boiling point where you just want to kill anything in your way,” Rizzo said. “It happens probably upwards of 25 times a year. Now in September we’ve come up with a team thing, and we’re all in it together.”

The baseball family that screams together wins together?

“It’s worked. We’re 3-for-3 with it,” Rizzo said. “But it’s not me. It’s just whoever feels like it’s time, and then you’ll see the team rushing off the bench and going for a nice little retreat. … It’s got to be the right timing.”

Retreat.

Apparently, it beats the solo version that tends to prove costly to equipment.

“Throughout the year, you go down the tunnel [to vent],” he said. “I’ve been through 20 helmets this year. You go through bats. You’ve got to take it out in some way. You can only stay sane so long. … It’s a team thing now.”

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Chicago Sun-Times
‘Wear and tear’ of deep playoff runs cause of Jon Lester’s struggles?
By Gordon Wittenmyer

MILWAUKEE — Cubs pitching coach Chris Bosio said he and struggling left-hander Jon Lester worked on a mechanical adjustment Friday during Lester’s between-starts bullpen session, trying to find a solution to his four-game slump since returning from the disabled list.

But the perception that Lester is not physically 100 percent hangs in the air as the Opening Day starter makes his final two highly scrutinized starts in preparation for an anticipated Game 1 or 2 playoff start.

“He says he is,” Bosio said. “But you’ve got to remember the workload that these guys have had.”

Lester, who spent the last two weeks of August on the DL with lat tightness and shoulder fatigue, has pitched the playoffs the last four consecutive seasons, making 13 extra starts in that span, including pitching 35⅔ postseason innings last year alone.

“Playing deep into the calendar the last couple of years, yeah, there’s wear and tear,” Bosio said. But we’ve got to find a way to fight through it, and Jon’s just another one of those examples of guys that have to fight through it and get out there and get results.

“Because this is a result-based business. And we need him. We all know it. Cubs Nation knows we need him. We need him in the worst way. He realizes that. I’m going to do everything I can; he’s going to do everything he can; we’re all going to do everything we can to make sure that all of our players are supported.”
Lester, the National League Championship Series co-MVP last season, insisted after a rough start Wednesday that his velocity dip and command problems are not health-related.

“There’s no lingering effects from anything. There’s nothing physically wrong,” he said.

Lester’s next start is Monday in St. Louis, with one more scheduled for Oct. 30 against the Reds.

Thoughts with Puerto Rico

Infielder Javy Baez said he finally reached his brother in Puerto Rico just before he got to the clubhouse and was assured his family was safe after the worst hurricane to hit the island in 89 years nearly flattened the U.S. territory Wednesday.

Rookie catcher Victor Caratini said he was optimistic his family was safe, too, but he still had not been able to reach anyone at home in a more remote part of Puerto Rico.

“My brother told me it was crazy, that it was something that he’d never seen before,” Baez said. “They say there’s no trees in Puerto Rico right now.

“It’s really bad. But there’s still people smiling and trying to get through it.”

Baez said professional athletes and celebrities from Puerto Rico have come together to help relief efforts. The major-league players’ union also announced a $1 million contribution to aid victims of recent natural disasters in the Caribbean, Mexico and the U.S.

This and that

Reliever Koji Uehara remained in Chicago this week for continued treatment for his ailing back, putting his status for the rest of the season in doubt.

• Manager Joe Maddon had catcher Willson Contreras and Addison Russell on the bench as he continued a policy of easing them back into full-time action off recent injuries and looking ahead to an especially early start Saturday.

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Daily Herald
Cubs do 'little things' that prove big in win over Brewers
By Bruce Miles

MILWAUKEE -- To get big results, good teams do the little things and do them well.

There were countless little moments Friday night as the Cubs beat the Milwaukee Brewers in 10 innings for a second straight night at Miller Park.

Pinch hitter Tommy La Stella walked with the bases loaded in the 10th inning against tired Brewers closer Corey Knebel, and the Cubs walked out of Miller Park with a 5-4 victory.

The Cubs’ magic number for clinching the National League Central dropped one notch to 5, now over the second-place St. Louis Cardinals, who beat Pittsburgh. The Cardinals remained 5 games behind the first-place Cubs while the Brewers dropped into third place, 5½ games back.

"I’m so proud of the way our guys stayed there," said manager Joe Maddon, whose team is 86-67. "They get hit a little bit to the solar plexus but we keep going. They were good the whole night. The attitude in the dugout is spectacular. We get behind and everything’s going their (the Brewers’) way, but not one guy felt down about it. That was wonderful to watch all that."
The Cubs trailed 3-0 after two innings after starting pitcher John Lackey gave up a run in the first inning and back-to-back homers to Stephen Vogt and Brett Phillips in the second. Maddon yanked Lackey after only 4 plus innings, saying he didn't like the way the game was "trending."

But after reliever Brian Duensing gave up a run in the fifth, Cubs relievers retired 13 straight, with Duensing, Hector Rondon, Mike Montgomery and Carl Edwards Jr. (5-4) getting it done.

Maddon then ticked off a list of "little things" that proved big:

- A 2-run single by Ben Zobrist in the fifth that gave the Cubs a 4-3 lead.
- That inning began with a 15-pitch at-bat by Jon Jay, who fought his way to a single. "This guy lives for these moments, I believe," Maddon said.
- Addison Russell, who went into the game late, stayed with a tag in the 10th inning and caught baserunner Eric Sogard off the bag as Sogard attempted to advance on a pitch in the dirt with one out. Edwards retired Neil Walker on a flyout to end the game.

"Game on the line, kind of," Russell said. "Really, in that situation, I'm just looking at Sogard to see what his first move is. We saw a ball down on the ground and in the dirt. I saw him break for the bag. He broke for the bag. Willy (catcher Willson Contreras) did a good job of seeing that whole play out, delivering the throw. Just made sure I kept the tag on him if he came off the bag."

All of these things are boding well for a Cubs clinching party in the near future even though they're not looking that far ahead yet.

"When you talk about the biggest part is the little things, there you go -- right there," Maddon said.

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Daily Herald
Cubs use in-game 'retreat' to blow off steam
By Bruce Miles

You can call it an impromptu team meeting. Anthony Rizzo prefers to call it a "retreat."

During recent games, the Cubs dugout has emptied, and the players have beat a hasty retreat to the clubhouse to do a little "venting."

Javier Baez said Friday he didn't want to be the guy to spill the beans, but he let reporters in on a little of the fun before directing them toward ringleader Rizzo.

"We got this new thing," Baez said. "I don't want to be the one saying it. I'll just let him say it. It's really fun. When somebody's mad, everybody walks in and we do some fun thing that kind of gets us hyper. You guys ask him."

According to Rizzo, it's another in a series of team-building exercises for the Cubs. When something goes wrong or someone is upset, the team heads for the clubhouse.

"It's like a team retreat," Rizzo said. "If anyone needs to let out some steam this late in the season, it's a team thing, though. It's a long season, and you go through ups and downs. There are times when you get to that boiling point and you just want to kill anything in your way. It happens anywhere upward of 25 times a year."

Rizzo added that the group dynamic is there to show that "we're all in it together."

"Throughout the year, you go down the (dugout) tunnel," he said. "I've been through 20 helmets this year. You go through bats. You've got to take it out on something. You can only stay sane so long. In September, we came up
with, 'It's a team now.' It's worked. We're 3-for-3 on it. It's not me. It's whoever feels like it's time. You'll see the team rushing off the bench and going for a nice little retreat."

Thinking of home:

Javier Baez and teammates Rene Rivera and Victor Caratini have had their minds on friends and family in Puerto Rico, where Hurricane Maria has caused widespread devastation.

"Today, just right before I got here, I finally got through to talk to my brother," Baez said. "He found a spot that has service. But I knew everything was fine. Everybody's disconnected. They don't know what's going on outside of Puerto Rico. It's tough. But you've got to get through it, and hopefully everybody's OK over there.

"It was something that was never seen before. They say there are no trees in Puerto Rico right now. You can see over miles away.

"My mom is just traveling around and making sure all my family is fine."

Quite the turnaround:

Left fielder Kyle Schwarber's home run in Thursday's series opener was his 29th of the season, second most on the team to Anthony Rizzo.

"That's incredible, isn't it, being sent out this year?" said manager Joe Maddon.

Maddon was referring to the stint Schwarber spent at Class AAA Iowa from June 22-July 6.

Schwarber had a line of .178/300/.394 with 13 home runs and 29 RBI before the all-star break. He entered Friday at .251/.339/.575 with 16 homers and 25 RBI since the break.

Out of sight:

Reliever Koji Uehara is not with the team at Miller Park. He is back in Chicago as he continues to recover from back problems. Uehara has not pitched since Sept. 2.