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OPENING DAY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Yesterday's game vs. Toronto was the longest recorded Opening Day game in MLB history with 16.0IP.

Previous longest Indians Opening Day game: April 19, 1960, Detroit at Cleveland (15.0IP).

Yesterday's contest between the Indians and Blue Jays drew 43,190 fans to Progressive Field, the highest attendance figure ever for a home opener in the 19-year history of this ballpark (1994-2012).

There were so many miracle finishes in front of the home audience last season that it practically became an expectation for the fans that flocked to Progressive Field. Early deficits often ended in celebratory dog piles while fireworks popped above in the Cleveland sky.

On Thursday, the Indians began this campaign with a draining contest packed with drama, but the late heroics belonged to the Blue Jays in the season's inaugural affair. In the aftermath of a grueling 7-4 defeat in 16 innings, a loss that spoiled a stellar performance by sinkerballer Justin Masterson, all Cleveland had was history.

"Longest Opening Day game in MLB history, right?" Masterson said. "I guess we got in the record books. At least that's something. Who started it? That's the trivia question."

The answer is Masterson, and he started the season beautifully for the Indians. His eight-inning effort -- one that showed precisely why he was handed the Opening Day task -- went for naught when closer Chris Perez blew a save in the ninth. The win officially went by the wayside seven frames later, when Toronto catcher J.P. Arencibia launched a ball into the left-field stands.

Arencibia's three-run blast off Cleveland's Jairo Asencio in the 16th inning completed a seven-run turnaround for the Blue Jays, who hope to be a surprise American League contender this season. The Indians have designs of doing the same, though their potential climb to the October stage began with a slip on the first step.

"It's just a game," Indians manager Manny Acta reminded. "It's a long journey. It just started the wrong way."

It ended in 16 innings, surpassing the previous baseball record for the longerst Opening Day game by one frame. The Philadelphia A's and the Washington Senators played 15 innings in their season opener on April 13, 1926. The Indians and Tigers equaled that record with a 15-inning tilt on April 19, 1960 in Cleveland.

After the game, Indians catcher Carlos Santana -- behind the plate for all 16 frames -- stood at his locker with thick ice wraps strapped to both knees.

"It's the first game of the season, so I was prepared," Santana said. "I'd play whatever. I don't care if I'm playing nine innings or 15 or 20, I'll be ready. There's an off-day [Friday], so you just keep going. First game of the season."

The new mark for Opening Day longevity ended in five hours and 14 minutes, when Cleveland's Jason Kipnis chopped a pitch from Blue Jays closer Sergio Santos to second baseman Kelly Johnson for a game-ending groundout. The ballgame began at 3:08 p.m. ET, when Masterson induced a feeble swing attempt from Toronto's Yunel Escobar.

That was the theme early on.

On a brisk afternoon, Masterson took advantage of the hitters' cold hands, using his signature sinker and sweeping slider to collect 11 outs via gound balls and 10 strikeouts. The big right-hander scattered just two hits, including a solo home run by Blue Jays slugger Jose Bautista in the fourth. Beyond that lone blemish, Masterson was brilliant.

"Masterson was terrific," Acta said.

And that is why Perez felt so terrible.

"I already apologized to Masterson," Perez said.

Cleveland's offense gifted Masterson with a four-spot off Toronto left-hander Ricky Romero in the second, which was highlighted by a three-run homer from Jack Hannahan. With Masterson sitting at 99 pitches, and the Indians holding a 4-1 advantage in the ninth, it was an appropriate time to hand the ball off to Perez.

Perez promptly allowed back-to-back singles to Escobar and Johnson, followed by an RBI

sacrifice fly from Bautista. The closer then walked Adam Lind before surrendering a two-run double to Toronto designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion. Just like that, Cleveland's three-run lead was erased and the game was pulled into a 4-4 deadlock.

"He did everything you want in an ace," Perez said of Masterson. "He dominated them, obviously. Two hits in eight innings with 10 strikeouts. I mean, that's awesome. I don't even think he had his best stuff today and he still did that. So, yeah, it feels twice as bad.

"Any loss hurts, but that was the easiest save in baseball. A three-run lead."

Perez's teammates showed support after the lapse.

"We still trust him," Indians right fielder Shin-Soo Choo said. "He's still our closer."

Romero left after five innings, allowing Toronto's bullpen to do the rest. From the third inning on, Cleveland's lineup managed no runs on four hits across a 14-inning stretch. Toronto relievers accounted for 11 of the innings, during which they struck out the Indians eight times

"The bullpen did an outstanding job -- 11 shutout innings," Blue Jays manager John Farrell said. "Hopefully we're not going to look at that too often. And, if tonight is any kind of insight into this season, strap in, we're in for a long ride."

As the game wore on, fatigue set in and emotions ran high. In the 15th inning, Choo threatened to charge the mound when reliever Luis Perez threw a pitch in the direction of the right fielder's head. Both benches empties, but the situation was swiftly calmed. Both Perez and Choo were alowed to remain in the game, which resumed in a matter of minutes.

The Indians certainly had their chances.

In the ninth, Cleveland had a runner on third base with one out, but Casey Kotchman and Kipnis were unable to bring him home. With runners on the corners and one out in the 12th inning, Asdrubal Cabrera chopped into an inning-ending double play on first pitch, while Toronto utilized a five-man infield.

"It's not exactly the way you wanted to start the season," Acta said. "But you cant blame anybody but ourselves. We had three opportunities to win the ballgame and we couldn't get it done. We'll take 100 chances like that again."

The Indians also expect to enjoy a few miracle comebacks of their own.

"We were spoiled last year," Hannahan said. "It seemed like every time we got in that situation, we always pulled one out. It felt like the crowd was just waiting to erupt. We just came up a little short."