

YANKEES WATCH



Notebook

MELKY WAY THE RIGHT WAY
— Right now, there are few Yankees **Joe Girardi** would rather have up in a big spot than **Melky Cabrera**.



CABRERA

Coming out of spring training, not many would have made that prediction.

And last August, even fewer would have.

After **Brett Gardner** beat out Cabrera as the starting center fielder in spring training — which came on the heels of the switch hitter's demotion to the minor leagues in mid-August last year — expectations for Cabrera were minimal.

Instead, a little more than two months into the season, he has turned into Mr. Clutch.

Cabrera, with three walk-off hits already to his credit this season, ripped a two-run home run in the bottom of the eighth inning to provide the final margin in Thursday's 8-6 victory over the Rangers.

"We are very comfortable when he comes up there," Girardi said of late-inning situations.

It started April 22 when Cabrera hit a walk-off homer in the 14th inning of a 9-7 win over the Athletics. He delivered a walk-off single to drive in two runs and cap a three-run rally against Twins closer **Joe Nathan** in a 5-4 win May 15, and his walk-off single capped a three-run rally against Phillies closer **Brad Lidge** in a 5-4 win May 23.

"He's always coming through for us," **Mark Teixeira** said.

Cabrera, 24, credits Girardi for instilling confidence in him, even after sending him to the minors in 2008 and awarding Gardner the job. As he gave Cabrera the bad news to conclude spring training, Girardi added an epilogue. Said Cabrera, "He always said I was going to be a guy that was going to help the club win."

Cabrera wouldn't quite say the experience of getting sent back to Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre made him a better player, but Girardi said it was a "wake-up call" for the outfielder, a regular in 2006, 2007 and much of 2008. He was hitting .242 when he was sent down last August, and after returning in mid-September, he went 6-for-13 and wound up hitting .249.

Cabrera said the experience was humbling but not debilitating. "I was down," he said, "but I never put my head down."

UP NEXT — Today vs. Tampa Bay, 1:05 (YES); **Matt Garza** (4-4) vs. **Joba Chamberlain** (3-1)

— NEWSDAY

Prospect

P KEI IGAWA, YANKEES

While no longer much of a typical prospect, Igawa seems to have found his rhythm at the Class AAA level with Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.



IGAWA

In 11 starts, Igawa is 5-1 with a 3.68 ERA and 43 strikeouts. However, he has given up almost as many home runs (11) as walks (14) in 63 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings of work.

The southpaw from Ibaraki, Japan, has been effective against left-handed hitters, who are hitting just .143 against him with one home run. Perhaps being a situational lefty could be his ticket back to New York, but he will have to improve on his numbers with runners in scoring position. Hitters have a .306 average with RISP and he's allowed 17 of his 26 earned runs in those situations.

— WILLIAM S. PAXTON

Team statistics

	Through Friday													
	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	IP	BB	K	W	L	ERA	SV
Posada	100	14	32	8	26	1	.320							
Jeter	217	33	68	7	25	10	.313							
Cabrera	148	22	46	6	22	4	.311							
Cano	223	38	68	9	32	3	.305							
Damon	202	43	60	11	33	5	.297							
Teixeira	194	37	55	16	47	0	.284							
Cervelli	46	5	13	0	4	0	.283							
Gardner	117	25	31	2	9	11	.255							
Matsui	164	18	42	8	22	0	.256							
Swisher	167	33	42	10	32	0	.252							
Rodriguez	92	13	23	7	22	0	.250							
Pena	70	11	17	0	4	2	.243							
Berroa	15	4	2	0	0	0	.133							
Totals	1903	310	534	85	295	37	.281							

Rays get to Rivera again

By Erik Boland
NEWSDAY

NEW YORK — Mariano Rivera being knocked from the game in **RAYS 9** the ninth **YANKEES 7** was surprising. Almost as surprising as the closer knocking his manager, albeit slightly.

After entering a tie game to begin the ninth, Rivera was charged with four runs — three earned — in two-thirds of an inning in the Yankees' 9-7 loss to the Rays on Saturday at Yankee Stadium. Afterward, he questioned Joe Girardi's strategy.

After the Yankees scored twice in the eighth on Mark Teixeira's 17th homer and Melky Cabrera's RBI force-out to tie it at 5, Rivera replaced CC Sabathia and allowed a leadoff triple by Ben Zobrist, who had homered in the fifth. Three pitches later, Joe Dillon's single made it 6-5.

Two outs later, with Dillon on third, Girardi called for Rivera to intentionally walk Evan Longoria, pinch hitting for No. 9 hitter Reid Brignac. Then B.J. Upton singled sharply to center to give the Rays a 7-5 lead. Lefthander Phil Coke replaced Rivera and allowed two inherited runners to score on an RBI single by Carl Crawford and an error by Alex Rodriguez, making it 9-5.

"That's the manager's decision," Rivera said. "If it was me, I would've pitched to him. But I'm not the manager. He's the manager, and he decides to walk Longoria and pitch to Upton."

Longoria is hitting .322



Tampa Bay Rays pinch-runner Andy Sonnenstine slides safely into home in the ninth inning, beating the throw to Yankees catcher Jorge Posada in the Rays' 9-7 victory on Saturday.

JEFF ZELERANSKY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

with 13 homers and 55 RBIs in 53 games. Upton entered the at-bat hitting .216 with three homers and 13 RBIs and had struck out 62 times in 199 at-bats.

"He's pitched Upton tougher than he has Longoria during the course of his career, and that's why I made that move," Girardi said, speaking before Rivera made his comments.

Though the sample size is not huge, Girardi is correct. Entering the game, Longoria was 2-for-6 with a home run and three strikeouts against Rivera and Upton was 1-for-7 with six strikeouts.

Rivera — who had allowed one walk in 22 2/3 innings entering the game and saw his ERA rise from 2.38 to 3.47 — wasn't convinced. "That's what I do," he said when asked why he would rather pitch to Long-

oria. "I'm not going to go in there to intentionally walk guys. I think I have good stuff to get people out. But again, that's the manager's decision."

Was Rivera upset with Girardi? "Not at all," he said. "Like I said, he makes the decision, and that's best for the team. I think I have a good chance against both. He felt like Upton was the guy."

He ultimately pointed the finger at himself, saying: "After the team ties the game, to give it back in two guys is unacceptable."

The Yankees made it interesting in their half of the ninth, as Derek Jeter singled, Johnny Damon doubled and Teixeira doubled to the wall in right-center against Dan Wheeler to make it 9-7. But an offense that Rays manager Joe Maddon called "stupid

good" came up short of a 20th comeback victory. Rodriguez grounded weakly to third and Jorge Posada flied deep to center, and after former Yankees lefthander Randy Choate replaced Wheeler, Upton ran down Robinson Cano's line drive in deep center to end it.

That the game ended with 16 total runs being scored was unexpected, given the headline pitching matchup between powerful lefties Sabathia and David Price. Sabathia was given a 2-0 lead in the fourth — with Rodriguez hitting a home run off the top of the right-centerfield wall that bounced into the Yankees' bullpen — but Zobrist hit a solo shot in the fifth and Willy Aybar added a three-run shot into the Rays' bullpen in the sixth as Tampa Bay took a 5-3 advantage.

Lester brilliant for Boston

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jon Lester retired the first 19 batters he faced and finished with a two-hitter, David Ortiz homered and the Boston Red Sox beat the Texas Rangers 8-1 on Saturday night.

RED SOX	8
RANGERS	1

Michael Young doubled into the gap in left-center with one out in the seventh inning to break up Lester's bid for a perfect game. The sold-out crowd let out a loud groan as the ball rolled to the wall before giving Lester a standing ovation. Young also singled in the ninth.

Ortiz, mired in a season-long slump, connected for the second time this season and first since May 20. Mike Lowell also homered — after having his double overturned by video review.

Lester (5-5), the club's most reliable postseason pitcher last year when he threw a no-hitter on May 19 against Kansas City, got off to a slow start this year, giving up 11 runs in his first two starts.

But on Saturday, he showed how dominating he can be, striking out 11 and walking just two. It was his third career complete game.

Texas scored on Andrew Jones' sacrifice fly in the ninth.

In 2006, Lester missed the end of the season after he was diagnosed with a rare form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. A year later, he was the starting and winning pitcher in the Game 4 clincher of the 2007 World Series.

On Saturday, Lester struck out nine of the first 15 batters he faced, getting four swinging at pitches down outside the strike zone — including the side in the fourth.

The hard-throwing left-hander, once rumored to be possible trade bait when Minnesota was looking to deal lefty Johan Santana, was overpowering early, mixing in a number of sharp curveballs and cut fastballs that made many of the Rangers' hitters miss badly.

In the fourth, he fanned Ian Kinsler and Jones with curveballs, and Young with a fastball. The pitch to Jones was in the dirt inside the plate.

Lowell was awarded his homer after umpires used video review to overturn their on-field call of a double in the second inning to give Boston a 1-0 lead against Derek Holland (1-3).

Boston chased Holland with a three-run fifth highlighted by Jason Bay's two-run single to make it 4-0.

Ortiz homered on a line drive just inside the right-field pole for his second of the season to key a four-run sixth against Kris Benson that made it 8-0. Pedroia and Kevin Youkilis added RBI singles.

Lowell's line drive near the left-field pole bounced first off a ledge in the front row of the Green Monster Seats and caromed onto the field.

The replay review system was used for the third time in four games at Fenway Park. The Red Sox lost the previous two.

Third base umpire and crew chief Jeff Kellogg signaled the ball was in play as Lowell headed to second, but when the umpires returned from the review Kellogg came up from Boston's dugout steps and signaled that it was a homer.

Lannan fires complete game at Mets

By Joseph White
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Helped out by all sorts of double plays and supported by three home runs, John Lannan threw his first career complete game Saturday night to lead the Washington Nationals to a 7-1 victory over the New York Mets.

NATIONALS	7
METS	1

Lannan (3-5) allowed an unearned run and four hits, facing the minimum number of batters through the first seven innings. He was helped out by a franchise-record-tying five double plays — two 6-4-3s, two 4-6-3s and a head-shaking 9-3-6 that took a while to sort out.

Adam Dunn, Elijah Dukes and Nick Johnson homered for the Nationals, who had lost three straight and

nine of 10. Dunn is the only player in the majors with more home runs (17) than his team has victories (15).

Washington chased John Maine (5-4) before he could record an out in the fifth inning of a game that lasted just 2 hours. Lannan needed only 96 pitches, including 61 strikes, to finish.

Lannan gave the Nationals their third complete game of the season, the type of pitching performance desperately needed by a last-place team that started the day with a worst-in-majors 5.61 ERA. In fact, for one night at least, all seemed right at Nationals Park: The weather was splendid after a solid week of rain that played havoc with the schedule, and the crowd of 31,456 made the stadium feel lively for one of the few times this season.

Dunn's homer in the three-run first inning got the fans buzzing. Dukes'

shot in the fourth and Johnson's drive in the three-run fifth only added to the fun, but the wackiest moment came in the fourth on the unusual double play.

With Luis Castillo on first, Emil Brown hit a drive to right field. Dukes made a sliding stab to scoop the ball, with the umpire ruling it a trap. Castillo, however, thought the ball had been caught and headed back to first. Brown whizzed passed Castillo on the basepaths and told his teammate to head back toward second base. By that time, Dukes had made a throw while on his back to the first baseman, who then threw to the shortstop for the forceout. Brown was then called out because he had passed a runner.

After that sequence, it's little wonder Lannan made sure he didn't let anyone else on base again for a long while.

WILLIAM S. PAXTON'S POWER RANKINGS

Records through Friday

AMERICAN LEAGUE

- Yankees (32-22)** — Time to see what the Bombers are made of with three in Boston up next.
- Red Sox (32-23)** — Tough call coming on Papi, but how long will they wait?
- Rangers (32-22)** — Road trip to NY, Boston shows Texas can play with the big boys.
- Blue Jays (31-26)** — Should request a transfer to Central or West division.
- Twins (28-28)** — Tigers in first, but Mauer and Morneau heading in that direction.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

- Dodgers (38-19)** — California cool and still three-plus months until postseason.
- Phillies (32-21)** — One good starter away from being a really scary team.
- Brewers (32-23)** — Tough to beat with Gallardo on the hill.
- Cardinals (31-24)** — Carpenter back to ace form since coming off DL.
- Mets (29-24)** — The Bad News Bears, only these guys win some times.

METS WATCH



Notebook

WAR OF WORDS — First, **Carlos Beltran** said he was embarrassed to be swept by the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Adam LaRoche responded by saying Beltran was showing "zero class."



BELTRAN

It was Beltran's turn Saturday, with the New York Mets center fielder dismissing LaRoche's comments.

"What I said was as a team we should all feel embarrassed, because, being honest, I don't care what he said," Beltran said before the Mets' game against the Washington Nationals. "I believe we're a better team than them. I don't care what he said. I know that we could have won the first game and there's no excuse why we would have lost that one. If we would have won that one, I tell you we would have won one or two more. There's no doubt."

The Pirates completed a three-game sweep of the Mets on Thursday. When LaRoche heard Beltran was embarrassed, the Pittsburgh first baseman took umbrage.

"I think it shows zero class and zero professionalism," LaRoche told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on Friday. "When somebody says that, they know what they're saying, and they know it's going to get out. He knows we're not going to be real happy about it. If you go and say that to your buddies, it's one thing. If you go to the media and make that public for us to hear? Yeah, that's no class."

CHURCH ACTIVATED — The team activated outfielder **Ryan Church** from the 15-day disabled list after its 7-1 loss to Washington on Saturday night.

Church had been sidelined since May 23 with a strained right hamstring. He's hitting .272 with one home run and eight RBIs.

To make room on the roster, the Mets designated outfielder **Emil Brown** for assignment. Brown had his contract selected from Class AAA Buffalo on Wednesday and appeared in three games with New York, including going 1-for-4 against the Nationals on Saturday.

DISTRESSING LOSS — The Nationals' win put them at 6-26 against the NL East this season and 2-6 vs. the Mets.

UP NEXT — Mets at Nationals, 1:35 (SNY); **Livan Hernandez** (4-1) at **Craig Stammen** (0-1).

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prospect

P JENRRY MEJIA

The 19-year-old right-hander was off to a 4-1 start with a 1.97 ERA for St. Lucie in the Class A Florida State League before being called up to Class AA Binghamton last Wednesday. Mejia was scheduled to make his debut in Binghamton on Saturday.



MEJIA

Mejia signed with the Mets as an undrafted free agent in 2007 and spent last season in the Gulf Coast League and New York-Penn League, going a combined 5-2 with a 2.89 ERA in 14 starts.

In nine starts this season, Mejia has allowed only more than one earned run twice and went through a three-game stretch from late April to early May without giving up an earned run. On the season, he has 44 strikeouts and 16 walks with hitters posting a .217 average against him.

Mejia has impressed scouts with a slurry breaking ball, according to mets.scout.com, and fastball.

— WILLIAM S. PAXTON

Team statistics

	Through Friday													
	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	IP	BB	K	W	L	ERA	SV
Beltran	184	33	65	7	32	7	.353							
Wright	195	34	66	3	33	13	.338							
Reed	60	5	19	0	3	0	.317							
Valdez	13	2	4	0	3	0	.308							
Cora	60	9	18	0	5	3	.300							
Castillo	153	30	43	0	13	6	.281							
Tatis	96	14	26	2	12	2	.271							
Sheffield	109	26	29	5	20	2	.266							
Santos	89	11	23	3	18	0	.258							
Murphy	149	21	36	4	18	1	.242							
Schneider	29	4	6	0	4	0	.207							
F. Martinez	30	3	6	0	4	2	.200							
Brown	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000							
Totals	1790	249	498	34	235	54	.278							