

Major League Baseball



AP PHOTO

Cincinnati Reds starting pitcher Bronson Arroyo throws to the Chicago Cubs during the first inning Wednesday in Cincinnati.

Reds

■ CONTINUED FROM 13 walk. He threw 94 pitches 60 for strikes and struck out seven.

Samardzija spent most of his first four seasons in the Cubs bullpen. He won a spot in the rotation during spring training and has pitched well enough to keep it.

"It seems like things keep getting more and more important," he said. "It was important to have a good spring, then important to have the good start. It'll be important to finish strong."

Bryan LaHair and Ian Stewart hit solo homers off Bronson Arroyo (1-1) for only the Cubs' third multihomer game of the season. They managed only nine homers in April, fewest in the majors.

LaHair's leadoff homer in the second gave him six overall. Stewart's was his second. The third baseman also had a nice barehanded play to rob Drew Stubbs of a hit in the fourth.

"I take a lot of pride in my defense," he said. "Making a play for me sometimes tops a hit."

Samardzija contained Jay Bruce, holding the NL's player of the week to a harmless double. Carlos Marmol retired all three batters in the ninth for his second save in four chances, finishing off the combined three-hitter.

The Cubs have had only six save opportunities this season, underscoring their early struggles.

It was the second straight impressive start for Samardzija, who struck out a career-high nine Cardinals in 6 2-3 innings on May 24. He's

made 10 career starts in the majors.

"He usually doesn't have that command or control," Reds manager Dusty Baker said. "He was throwing 95-98 at the start and he was still at 95-96 when he left. Tonight wasn't us, it was him."

Bruce went 10 for 21 last week with homers in four straight games. He needed a homer on Wednesday to tie the club record Ted Kluszewski, Johnny Bench, Ken Griffey Jr. and Adam Dunn all homered in five straight.

Bruce flied out, grounded out and doubled.

LaHair led off the second inning with his sixth of the season off Arroyo, who gave up a club-record 46 homers last season when he pitched with mononucleosis and a sore lower back. He's been better so far this season, giving up only two homers in his four previous starts.

Baker said before the game that Arroyo has been bothered by a sore lower back again. Arroyo got an extra day to rest when the series opener was postponed.

Stewart homered in the fourth inning, matching the Cubs' season high for homers in one game. They put together three singles for another run in the sixth off Arroyo, the run scoring on Geovany Soto's hit. Arroyo gave up nine hits and a walk in six innings, throwing 99 pitches.

The Reds scored in the fourth when Brandon Phillips got caught in a rundown and extended it long enough to let Joey Votto to cross home plate.

Baseball

Troy-Piqua



Nick Antonides, Ian Nadolny and Nathan Helke congratulate each other after Troy plated two runs.

■ CONTINUED FROM 13 do it feels amazing. And what better way than to do it against Piqua?"

Troy (17-8, 8-2 GWOC North) lost a pair of games to Greenville, but rebounded by sweeping perennial champ and preseason favorite Butler the next week. Entering Monday and Tuesday's series with the Indians (10-11, 7-3 GWOC North), the Trojans needed a sweep to capture their first crown since playing in the GMVC, while Piqua needed only a split to get its first since 1995.

"We've had momentum since those Vandalia wins," Troy coach Ty Welker said. "We've just been trying to keep it going and keep the guys' heads on straight. We knew we controlled our own destiny. That's exactly what we wanted."

After a 5-1 Troy win on Monday, sophomore Ben Langdon got the call to start the program's biggest game in decades.

And despite getting into trouble in the first two innings on Tuesday, Langdon found ways out of those jams — and came back Wednesday on fire after thunderstorms suspended the action, the extra day actually helping rather than putting on additional pressure.

"I felt (pressure) probably on the first day," Langdon said. "But the delay helped me. I just went home and relaxed. I knew if I just executed my pitches, I shouldn't have to worry that much."

Langdon gave up six hits, walked two and struck out three over 5 2-3 innings of work, leaving five Piqua runners stranded in the process.

"I struggled a little bit towards the end, but I fought through it," Langdon said. "I knew I couldn't get down on myself if there was a bad call or an error. I just had to keep throwing."

And in the bottom of the third, he got the offensive support he needed.

Thomas Harvey drew a walk to lead off then moved to second on a bunt by Jay Swigard. Then Monday's hero, nine-spot hitter Devin Blakely, singled up the middle to bring home the game's first run — and leadoff man Dylan Cascaden tripled over the center fielder's head to bring home Blakely. Nathan Helke then blooped in a two-out single to score Cascaden to put Troy up 3-0.

"Coach intended me to be leadoff at the beginning of the season, but I dropped to nine in the order to get some confidence," Blakely said.



STAFF PHOTOS/ANTHONY WEBER

Troy's Thomas Harvey (4) and Dylan Cascaden watch as a ball goes through the infield Wednesday.

"But it really worked, so he kept me there — and it's helped the team. It's like having a second leadoff guy at the bottom of the order."

And helped it has. In Thursday's come-from-behind win against Springboro, the duo accounted for four of Troy's seven runs, and in a loss to Fairfield on Sunday and Monday's win over Piqua, they again fueled the Troy offense.

"I've been leadoff since second grade. It's where I'm most comfortable," Cascaden said. "Me and Blakely — man. He gets on base, steals second — he's only been thrown out once maybe — and then I bring him in. He gets me going. That's how we've been running this, and it's been working great."

Troy tacked on a fourth run in the bottom of the fifth after a leadoff double by Nick Antonides, an intentional pass to Helke and two more walks to bring the run around, and history seemed within the Trojans' reach.

But Piqua wasn't about to give up.

Taylor Huebner — who finished 4 for 4 in the game — doubled to lead off the sixth, and two errors on the same grounder brought him around and put Brandon Wright on second. A single by Colin Lavey put runners on the corners with two outs and finally chased Langdon, who gave way to closer Helke to protect the league title for him.

"You've got to give credit to Ben," the senior Helke said. "He's a sophomore, coming in and starting the biggest game this team has had in 21 years. He threw a great game."

Justice Young singled to make it a 4-2 game, but Helke struck out the next batter with a backdoor slider for a called third strike to end the threat.

And with two outs in the bottom of the sixth, the Indians imploded. Cascaden reached on an error and Antonides was hit by a pitch, then Helke hit another routine grounder to second that was booted for one error and thrown away



Troy's Jordan Price watches a pitch go by on Wednesday in Troy.

for another to bring in a run and put runners on second and third. And for good measure, Jordan Guillozet — who was 0 for 2 with a pair of strikeouts to that point in the game — ripped an 0-2 pitch up the middle to bring home both runs and make it a five-run game.

Which was more than enough for Helke.

He struck out the first two batters of the final inning, then Huebner reached on an infield single and an error on Wright's single brought in another run. But Helke induced a slow roller to Cascaden at short, and Cascaden charged and fired the runner out by a step to finish the game.

"Man, I haven't felt like this in a long time," said Cascaden, who made a number of impressive defensive plays throughout the game. "I just went out there, played defense and did whatever I could to help. Making plays like that isn't really planned — it's just the way the ball bounces sometimes."

"I didn't even comprehend what had happened when he called the final out," Helke said. "It felt like just

another game while I was on the mound. It didn't dawn on me what we did until a few seconds after they called him out. It's the best feeling."

"This win was for our whole program, for all of the guys that have played for this team in the last 20 years," Welker said. "This means something to the program. This is something that, when new guys come up, we can instill in them from Day 1 before they step on the field. This is what we've always worked for."

"They (Piqua) fought back and kept fighting until the last out. That was a good baseball team — and that makes this even sweeter. We didn't just beat anybody to earn this. We beat teams like Butler and Piqua. There are some good teams in our division."

And for the first time in 21 years, Troy is the best of them.

Piqua 000 002 1 — 3 9 3
Troy .003 013 x — 7 6 4
Huebner, Lavey (5) and Wright, Langdon, Helke (6) and Nadolny, WP — Langdon, LP — Huebner, SV — Helke, 2B — Huebner (P), Antonides (T), 3B — Cascaden (T).
Records: Piqua 10-11, 7-3, Troy 17-8, 8-2.

Major League Baseball

Indians top ChiSox, 6-3

CHICAGO (AP) — Carlos Santana and Travis Hafner homered to lead the Cleveland Indians to a 6-3 win over the Chicago White Sox on Wednesday night.

Santana hit his fourth homer of the season, a three-run shot in the fifth inning that landed well behind the Indians' bullpen in right field. Hafner added a two-run shot in the ninth.

Jack Hannah doubled home Michael Brantley with the go-ahead run in the eighth off Addison Reed.

Johnny Damon went 0 for 3 with a walk in his Indians' debut, starting in left field and leading off. The 38-year-old Damon is with his seventh organization in 18 big league seasons, and is 277 hits shy of 3,000.

Damon was replaced in the sixth inning because of

what the team called "general cramping."

Four Cleveland relievers combined for three scoreless innings in relief of Josh Tomlin, extending the bullpen's shutout streak to 15 2-3 innings. Joe Smith (1-0) picked up the win and Chris Perez pitched the ninth for his eighth save in nine chances.

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two-run single.

Will Ohman (0-1) took the loss in relief.

White Sox starter Phil Humber held Cleveland to three runs in six innings, making key pitches to escape a couple of jams. He was wild all night, walking a career-high six and hitting another.

After throwing the 21st perfect game in big league history at Seattle on April 21, Humber allowed a career-high nine runs in five innings against Boston on April 26.

With Brantley on first in the eighth, Ohman appeared to escape the inning when Casey Kotchman hit a grounder at Dunn, but the ball was ruled foul by first base umpire Eric Cooper. Kotchman then walked and Hannah stroked a ball up the left-field line.

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