

Indians rock Astros 9-2 for another 4-game sweep

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By TOM WITHERS

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — With yet another 4-game sweep, the Indians matched a feat last accomplished by the 1961 New York Yankees.

Now, they'd like to repeat something else those Bronx Bombers did in October.

Michael Brantley and Michael Bourn had two RBIs apiece as Cleveland, clinging tightly to one of the AL's two wild-card spots with a week left, became the first team in 52 years to post six sweeps of a 4-game series in a season with a 9-2 win Sunday over the Houston Astros.

According to STATS, the Indians are the first team since the '61 Yankees, a team featuring Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, to sweep six 4-games series. The Yankees went on to win the World Series that season.

Brantley hit a 2-out RBI single in the fourth inning off Erik Bedard (4-12) and Bourn tripled in a 4-run sixth as the Indians moved 1 1/2 games ahead of Texas in the AL's wild-card scramble. The Rangers lost 4-0 at Kansas City on a walk-off grand slam in the 10th inning.

Carlos Santana homered for the Indians, just percentage points behind Tampa Bay for first place in the wild-card standings. With six games to go, Cleveland controls its own destiny.

As long as they win, the Indians have no worries. And with upcoming games against the Chicago White Sox and Minnesota Twins — the two bottom teams in the AL Central — things couldn't be lined up any better.

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In a season of twists and turns, there's suddenly a straight path to the postseason.

Corey Kluber (10-5) dodged trouble throughout 5 1/3 innings and the Indians improved to 50-18 against teams with losing records. Cleveland may not have an abundance of All-Stars or household names but rather a collection of players pulling together. And in October's chilly and electrified air, that's the kind of team that can win it all.

Chris Carter homered for the Astros, who lost their ninth straight and fell to 51-105 overall. In its inaugural AL campaign, Houston is two losses from matching the club record set last season.

Leading 3-2, the Indians broke it open in the sixth, highlighted by Bourn's standup triple off reliever Philip Humber.

Bedard, who has lost nine of his last 10 decisions, gave up a leadoff single and hit a batter before Brantley chased the left-hander with an RBI single to make 4-2. After Aviles sacrificed, Bourn brought in two more runs with his shot into the right-field corner.

Nick Swisher followed with a sacrifice fly to make it 7-2, giving the Indians their first comfortable cushion in four days against a Houston team that fought hard but made far too many mistakes.

Poor attendance has been an issue all year for the Indians but a crowd of 26,168 — their largest for any Sunday home game this season — turned out to push them toward October.

With just one week left, every game is vital for the Indians, who haven't made the postseason since 2007.

Cleveland would seem to have the easiest path to the playoffs among the current wild-card leaders. The Indians have two home games against Chicago, a team they've beaten 15 of 17

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times, and end the season with four at Minnesota.

Texas will host Houston three times and end with a 4-game set at home against the Los Angeles Angels.

Tampa Bay will finish a wraparound series today with Baltimore and then go on the road for three games at Yankee Stadium and three in Toronto.