It was the Indians' bullpen that shut the Tigers down over the final three frames.

CLEVELAND -- Chris Perez did not know what his reception would be like when the bullpen door swung open and he jogged to the mound in the ninth inning on Tuesday. Given his controversial comments over the weekend, it could have been ugly for the Indians' closer.

With each step Perez took, though, more and more fans stood from their seats and the cheers inside Progressive Field grew louder. The sight of the standing ovation made for an admittedly emotional moment for him.

"I was truly humbled," Perez said after the Indians' 5-3 victory over the Tigers on Tuesday night. "I didn't know what to expect, but that's the loudest I've ever been cheered here. It didn't go unnoticed, trust me. I'm humbled. That was really nice."

To show his appreciation, Perez mowed down Motown in the first meeting between the American League Central rivals this season. Prior to his much-anticipated entrance, Ubaldo Jimenez dodged danger en route to a win and the Cleveland offense manufactured just enough to take the opener of this three-game series.

The Tribe also snapped a 10-game losing streak against the Tigers.

It remains to be seen if the first-place Indians (24-18) are in the process of issuing a statement as to their chances of avoiding a similar late-season slide as suffered last summer. The only statement clearly made on this night was by Tribe fans, who offered their support for Perez in the wake of his recent critical rant.

Perez expressed disgust over recently being booed at home and disappointment over the Indians' low attendance figures early on this year. After his outing against the Tigers (20-22) -- during which Perez collected his 14th save of the year -- the only regret felt by the closer dealt with the added distraction around the ballclub.

"The only thing I would try to take back is try to keep it away from the team," Perez said. "The last thing you want to do is bring undue attention to the team, especially in this kind of light. At the same time, I think it kind of picked us up, too. The guys kind of said, 'Yeah, we've been feeling like that, too. We're glad you said something and we're glad you didn't back down.'

"At the same time, I think it might push up through a little bit. If tonight's any indication, we had some energy back in here and it was fun."

Perez did deliver a touch of drama, though.

With a 5-3 lead in hand, Perez issued a one-out walk to Ramon Santiago and then surrendered a base hit to Andy Dirks. That set the table for the Detroit slugging duo of Miguel Cabrera and Prince Fielder. Perez was hardly going to back down from such a situation. In fact, it was

precisely the kind of save chance he hoped would arise.

"That's why we play the game," Perez said. "I like to face those guys. I told you guys on Sunday I wanted a one-run game with Fielder and Cabrera coming up. They were the winning runs, so I got what I wanted. Luckily, I made some pitches and got out of it."

Perez froze Cabrera on a called third strike for the second out in the ninth inning. Then, after falling into a 3-0 count against Fielder, the All-Star fought back and eventually induced a game-ending fielder's choice groundout.

That sealed a win for Jimenez (5-3), who danced around the potential harm of the six walks, five hits and two wild pitches he piled up in six innings of work. Despite all the traffic, the lone setback from the right-hander came courtesy of a three-run home run off the bat of Detroit catcher Alex Avila in the second inning.

"I don't feel good walking guys," Jimenez said. "But once I walk them, I have to find a way to get the next guy out without him doing much damage. I think I found a way to get out of that."

Jimenez's effort gave the Indians' lineup time to chip away against Tigers right-hander Rick Porcello (3-4). Asdrubal Cabrera put the Indians on the board with an RBI double in the first inning and Travis Hafner chipped in an RBI single in the third. Hafner later added a sacrifice fly in the fifth, plating Shin-Soo Choo to pull the game into a 3-3 tie.

The decisive turn came in the sixth inning, when Cleveland scored two runs against Porcello to grab a 5-3 lead. Michael Brantley singled, stole second base and crossed home plate on a base hit from Casey Kotchman for the go-ahead run. Jose Lopez added an RBI double to give the Tribe a bit more breathing room.

"Give them credit, they got some big hits," Detroit manager Jim Leyland said. "They just kept nickel-and-diming Ricky [Porcello]. Every other inning, they were getting a run for about the first six innings. You've got to be able to shut it down a little bit."

It was the Indians' bullpen that shut the Tigers down over the final three frames.

Tribe manager Manny Acta was pleased to see the fans' response to Perez.

"Of course I'm happy," Acta said. "The majority of our fans are positive and supportive of this ballclub. It's just like with everything else -- negativity is louder. Our fans appreciate when people want to win, and when people care, and that's what this guy does.

"Whether he says what people want to hear at times, that's another story. He cares and wants to win, and he gets out there and gives it everything he's got every day."