



Not all who wander are lost, but Ubaldo Jimenez sure looked it in 2012. As the Indians kick off 2013, so much depends on whether he and Justin Masterson can approximate good starters that it was encouraging to see each put up identical 6-inning 1-run lines, and in today's B-List, Buff looks at Ubaldo's wandering, Mike Brantley's OPS, how Mark Reynolds behaves like a diode, and wonders aloud how you can have so many people in the bullpen without any of them being named "Raffy."

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Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

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W: Albers (1-0) L: S. Santos (0-1) S: J. Smiff (1)

I'm not sure a blind squirrel has ever been involved in any activity that featured something travelling 457 feet.

1) Why the long face?

In my childhood, we had two sets of encyclopedias I used to flip through to kill time. It's where I learned earth-shattering facts like Peter Snell won the 800 and the 1500 at the Melbourne Olympics in 1960, which taught me of the existence of Snell and New Zealand and meters. I was so inspired that I nearly learned the metric system in elementary school, because we were told that by 1980, the U.S. would certainly be joining the rest of the world, you betcha, boy howdy, it's a-comin'. This ... well, this did not happen. We do not use the metric system, Peter Snell is dead, and New Zealand was swallowed by the ocean only to re-emerge in Middle Earth. My son uses his excess brain energy to argue with strangers on Fire Emblem boards. It is a legitimate question as to whose time was more productively spent.

One of the more esoteric facts I remember was the existence of a fellow named U Thant. I always loved the idea of a guy with a one-letter name, especially "U." It turns out his name wasn't "U:" it's more of an honorific. If I recall, it's the equivalent of "Sir" in Burmese. If I weren't

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so lazy, I'd take eighteen seconds to look it up in Wikipedia. Shoot, I probably spent more time writing about why I wasn't looking it up than it would have taken to look it up. Anyway, That was an important figure at the U.N. and highly-respected and the sum total of the remainder of my knowledge of him was that he was listed in the encyclopedia as "U."

Where am I going with this? Honestly, I don't remember. It had something to do with Ubaldo Jimenez' unusual name and random facts about the letter U and ... look, it sounded better in my head this morning, okay? The fact is, I really don't know WHAT to say about Ubaldo Jimenez' pitching. I have seen side-by-side video GIFs on other sites showing me how his mechanics looked before, when he was great, and after, when he was terrible, and later, when he was changing something, and this year, when he was trying to singlehandedly revive the lost art of chiropracty, but all any of this stuff ever convinces me of is:

1. Ubaldo Jimenez has a very difficult delivery to repeat
- 2.

I'm not really qualified to evaluate pitching mechanics

I mean, honestly. Jimenez looks ridiculous when he's awesome. He looks ridiculous when he's atrocious. He looks ridiculous when he's mediocre. Ubaldo's very pitching motion is ridiculous on the face of it. I can't tell one flavor of ridiculous from another. I mean, I sort of can, but I pretty much can't. I accept that more observant observers can do a better job of this than I can, but I'm no help here.

So while I can't tell how how much of his performance last night was him or the Blue Jays or sustainable or repeatable or obsequious or purple or clairvoyant, I can tell you that Ubaldo Jimenez is going to win a good number of games if he posts a WHIP under 1.00, strikes out a man an inning, and sports a 3:1 K:BB ratio. 3 hits in six innings is very good, even if one is a homer. 2 walks in six innings isn't terrific, but it sure beats Masterson's 4 and is mildly encouraging for Jimenez. 64 strikes in 103 pitches is extremely bland. I liked that he started more than half his guys with a first-pitch strike, and an 8-to-4 GB:FB is more like what I expect

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to see from Good Ubaldo.

My favorite plate appearance of the night might have been the last out of the third, because this is in the same inning in which he gave up a homer and faced lefty Melky Cabrera after already having thrown 17 pitches in the inning. After the homer, he struck out the next two batters (Jose Reyes on three pitches!), then started Cabrera off with three straight balls. Last year, this would have been quite the harbinger, combining the two worst characteristics of Jimenez' pitching: lack of command and a propensity to fly open to leave a hittable ball up in the zone. Instead, he came back with a strike and was able to get Cabrera to lift one the other way for the third out.

I mean, listen, you grasp at your straws and I'll grasp at mine. I can't tell you anything about the repeatability of his mechanics, so I'll just look at the result that he could have mentally collapsed in a tight newly-tied game against a very good hitter, and instead retained his composure, retired the hitter, and gave up only one more hit the rest of the way.

2) This having been said

You can't give up a home run to Mice Izturis. I mean, I actually thought that statement was literal instead of an admonishment.

3) Nothing, nothing, nothing, all, nothing, or nothing

I read here and there about Tribe fans being frustrated by Mark Reynolds. This confuses me. Did Mark Reynolds strike out last night? Of course he struck out last night! He's Mark Reynolds! I can't believe this surprises anybody. This is not a case of False Advertising. This is a case of Mark Reynolds. He is the most honest, most pure major-league player in existence. He is not trying to fool you. He is not trying to trick you. He is trying to hit a home run. Every

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time. If he hits the ball, it is reasonably likely that it will travel a fair distance. If he does NOT hit the ball, it is extremely likely that it will travel another eighteen inches into the catcher's mitt. Did he ground into a double play. Sure, he most certainly did. You know who else grounded into a double play? Jose Bautista. Twice!

Look, you loved Jim Thome. How could you not love Jim Thome? Sure, Thome had a better eye and better bat control than Mark Reynolds, but Thome is a legitimate Hall of Fame candidate. Mark Reynolds is not going to be in the Hall of Fame. But how can you love Jim Thome and not Mark Reynolds? I mean, besides the walks and the hits and the .300 AVG and the .400 OBP and that sort of thing.

Okay, he's not Jim Thome. How about Richie Sexson? You loved Richie Sexson for a while, no? Sexson was always famous for whaling the bejeezus out of rotten pitching and turning into a newt against good pitching and this was always awkward come September and October, but he could hit the ball a fair distance and whiff with the best of them. I mean, besides the walks and the hits and that sort of thing.

Not quite Sexson? How about Russ Branyan? You loved Russ Branyan, right? I mean, kinda? A bit, no? Again with the "walks" thing. I understand. Also, he was kind of a jerk. Maybe you didn't really love Russ Branyan.

Well, listen, maybe you're old enough to remember Charlie Spikes, then. Spikes' first two full seasons with Cleveland, he hit over 20 home runs (a bigger deal then) and whiffed over a hundred times (a bigger deal then) and really wasn't very good at all. Embrace your inner nine-year-old. Embrace Mark Reynolds.

Because he really did hit that ball a really, really long way. That mackerel was holy, man.

4) Welcome to the Club, Redux!

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I do not know Brian Shaw from a blue-footed booby, except that Shaw appears to be much taller. He was wearing shoes at the time, so I have no real idea what color his feet are. He seems to be reasonably effective, though, and he's young and cheap and threw 11 strikes in 17 pitches. In a vacuum, I applaud each of these things, although you wouldn't hear me because, y'know, vacuums can't transmit sound.

Matt Albers I actually know a bit. He won the game last night by throwing two pitches and being a teammate of Mark Reynolds. Those must have been some two pitches is all I can say.

Rich Hill is apparently our lefty out of the pen. GM Steve would have told you that Rich Hill was an exciting young player to acquire. In 2006. Seriously, Rich Hill is our only left-handed pitcher? How the heck did THAT happen? I know Scott Kazmir is on his way eventually, but he's a starter. Did Nick Hagadone shave someone's dog?

5) One man gang

I'm not going to pretend this is sustainable and I still think he's a very ordinary ballplayer, but Mike Brantley followed a 1-for-2 with two walks game with a 4-for-5 game. In 9 plate appearances, he's made TWO OUTS. Mark Reynolds strikes out two times between breakfast and lunch. An OBP of .778 is simply absurd. Well done, sir.

6) Ducks on the pond!

The Indians had thirteen at-bats with a runner in scoring position and produced ONE HIT. The hit was Brantley's first RBI on the season and came with two outs. This is impressive and very welcome. The other twelve at-bats: zero hits, including 5 Ks, including three straight in the third.

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There were two line drives. Woot!

Of course, Cleveland's second run did score on a ground ball to third with runners on first and second when Mice tossed a ball wide of first trying to double up Carlos Santana. Still, 1-for-13 with RISP is very, very lame. Special mention goes to Reynolds for an 0-for-3 collar including a GIDP.

By the way, the Blue Jays did not get a single hit with a runner in scoring position ... because they NEVER HAD A RUNNER IN SCORING POSITION. Not once. They hit two solo shots, had a few guys on first ... but never a guy on second or third. That's pretty outstanding. (For Cleveland. For Toronto, that's not outstanding.)

7) This just in

Brandon Morrow is good. The Mariners are idiots.

8) I am ready

For Jason Kipnis and Lonnie Chisenhall to stop sucking.

9) The Fundamental Error of Attribution

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Technically, Chris Perez blew the save last night when he gave up a blast to Jose Bautista. The pitch was neither good nor bad: it had good movement but lousy location. Edwin Encarnacion probably doesn't hit that ball out. Jose Bautista most certainly does.

And that's the thing: we sometimes forget that the other guys are good. Joey Bats is really, really good at hitting. With Miggy Cabrera fresh off a Triple Crown, I'm not going to tell you he's the best hitter in the AL any more, but he was recently, and he's still really good. Perez didn't make a high-quality pitch. Bautista hit it out. That's baseball.

I mean, while we're here, the pitch Santos threw to Reynolds wasn't a terrible pitch, either. It had good velocity and might not even have been a strike (it looked high to me). Reynolds just identified it and made up his mind early (like, Tuesday) that he was going to swing through it. I really hated Santos with the White Sox, so I'm okay with him getting burned there.

10) Oh, by the way

Congratulations to Joe Smiff for his first career save. Does anyone realize that Smiff has never posted an ERA over 4.00 and has been in the 2's the last two seasons over 70+ appearances in each? And for a guy with such a pronounced delivery, he actually has no platoon split AT ALL:

vs. RHB: .212/.288/.289

vs. LHB: .216/.309/.303

Okay, maybe a little split. How many guys have a sub-.100 ISO against EACH kind of batter, though? He walks too many guys, but ... so what? He sure has been awfully good here.

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11) This just in

Colby Rasmus is still terrible.