



Home sweet home! Cleveland returns to Not The Jake to face the hated Yankees, and produces ... refuse. Stuff and nonsense. All that was missing was the sound and fury, because it certainly signified something approximating nothing. Prodigal son Travis Hafner cranked up a big day in his return, while Ubaldo Jimenez pitched like he had both middle ears removed and replaced with spray cheese. The big offensive blow came from Mike Aviles, who replaced Drew Stubbs, who is a myxomycete. The B-List is nothing if not educational.

FINAL

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The B-List: 4/8

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, April 08 2013 10:00 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, April 10 2013 10:11 AM

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Indians (3-4)

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W: Kuroda (1-1)

L: U. Jimenez (0-1)

Live by the homer, die by the really crappy start.

1) U-Bad. Oh!

*Tomorrow, tomorrow,
I'll love ya, tomorrow,
Because you're not pitching then
-- "Annie" (paraphrased)*

I don't want to get into a whole lot of depth analyzing Ubaldo Jimenez' start, because I value my internal organs. It wasn't any good. It was very bad. It wasn't the worst start I've ever seen, but there was little to recommend it.

Where should I start? With a brisk three-run homer to Travis Hafner, the one player you COULD NOT let beat you? No, wait, that list has to include Vernon Wells, whose swing really suffers from the enormous meat fork permanently lodged in the small of his back. Jimenez walked Wells on four pitches. That's not letting him beat you, I admit. But Vernon Wells is a bag of slugs at this point in his career. How can you walk this man on four pitches?

Perhaps because you're spooked that you threw a sub-90s Nothing Ball to Hafner with two men on and he drove it out to the deepest part of the park. In the first inning! Sure, the ball had a little downward movement, but you know what a little downward movement buys you? A home run to the deepest part of the park, that's what. The homer that Jimenez later yielded to Robinson Cano had what looked like a radar gun reading of about 85. Jimenez walked 3 guys and threw strikes at a 57% clip. This at least partially explains the low-quality nature of his strikes: he was armed with the twin weapons of Wishing and Hoping, and neither came through to much positive effect.

On what should we dwell here? The 7 hits (3 for extra bases) in 4 1/3 innings? The 3 walks (leavened by 4 Ks, but one was Vern Wells)? The 7 earned runs? Starting six of the first seven hitters with a ball, including 3 of the first 5 with a 2-0 count (Hafner's homer came on a 2-0 pitch)? The subpar velocity, absurd command, or lack of presence? When Jimenez has his delivery in a repeatable state, he is capable of throwing some quality pitches. When he starts a game poorly, he seems to have few tools in his satchel to regain his footing: I give him credit for coming back with a 1-2-3 inning in the second after the terrible first, but after that none of his next three frames were scoreless.

No. My confidence is low. I dub thee, Fredo Jimenez. Kiss!

2) Big Mo is an illusion

Immediately after falling into a 3-0 hole, the Indians responded with a Smallball flurry that featured two walks, three singles (two of the “seeing-eye” variety), and a pair of sacrifice flies. Hey, the name of the game is scoring runs. Well, not so much the name of the game as the point, but you see what I mean. They don’t all have to be beautiful. NONE of them have to be beautiful. And we scored three runs to tie the game, so given Jimenez’ strong second, there was still hope that the “do-over” of a tie game could lead to Cleveland Success.

That ... didn’t happen.

3) Ducks on the motherf(@*#ng pond!

The Indians hit 2-for-11 with runs in scoring position. Two for eleven! To put this into perspective, Ichiro Suzuki, who is forty-seven years old and slugs .182 (AFTER going 2-for-4) got two hits with runners in scoring position. Travis Hafner, who is constructed entirely of chicken wire, paper mache’, and Crisco, got two hits with runners in scoring position. In Cleveland’s defense, the other 7-plus Yankees went 1-for-7 with runners in scoring position. In Cleveland’s non-defense, the Indians essentially were the other 7-plus Yankees.

One notable exception was the aforementioned Mike Aviles, who drilled a two-run homer in the 8th to put the finishing touches on the Shakespearean tale told by an idiot.

I’m starting to think that it isn’t even the players at this point. It doesn’t matter who we put up there, whether it’s Casey Blake or Trot Nixon or Teddy the Wonder Lizard. Put a Cleveland Indian in scoring position, and one game in five, he’ll have a great chance of being driven home. The other four games, he might as well take off his shoes and take preventative anti-fungal treatment, because he isn’t going anywhere. Well, Drew Stubbs shouldn’t take anti-fungal

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anything. That would be awkward.

The Yankees left 5 men on base. The Indians left 10 men on base. The Indians lost by 5 runs.

4) Small Sample Size Theater

Of the four relievers, the only one with a clean slate was Cody Allen.

In a bizarre case of super-symmetry, the most effective Yankees reliever was Switchblade Boone Logan. I have yet to read any Yankees fan who says something positive about Switchblade Boone. I miss the White Sox Hair, though.

5) You're not going to believe this

But Mark Reynolds struck out.

6) Being one-of-a-kind makes you unique!

Just by the very definition of the word, Rich Hill is unique on this staff: he is a left-handed relief pitcher. Yay for Rich!

Being "unique" does not make you "effective" or "good," however. It simply means you have a quality none of your colleagues have. Two hits, one walk, and a 15:15 strike-to-ball ratio later, Hill had given up 3 runs in a single inning, albeit one of them unearned.

I'm not sure exactly what I'm asking Rich Hill to accomplish here. He remains steadfastly Rich

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Hill, even after all these years of evidence that being Rich Hill is not really all that valuable a baseball skill. He was pretty good in limited duty for the Red Sox last season, and hasn't given up a homer since 2009. (This is mitigated by the fact that he threw 31 2/3 innings in the majors in 2010-2012.) He's certainly better against lefties than righties since 2010. He seems like a nice matchup guy.

Here's the problem: to commit to a matchup guy is to require two guys. You can't just trot out Rich Hill every time a tough lefty slate is coming up in the order, and you can't necessarily expect Rich Hill to saw through a lot of right-handed hitters. And since there are a lot of tough lefties out there, some lineups have more than one section of the order Hill'd be useful against. It's possible that Brian Shaw (for example) can handle one of those sections. I'm not a LaRussan "matchups uber alles" guy. I want pitchers who get hitters out, and generally speaking, good pitchers can get hitters out regardless of where they're standing.

I guess I'm still missing something fundamental about the bullpen construction, though: Hill's not a putz, but he was available to the Indians because he was available to everybody. He's a guy. I'd still rather have Nick Hagadone on this staff than, say, Cody Allen.

7) Terror at the end of the day

Carlos Santana hurt his left thumb receiving a pitch from Chris Perez. I like Chris Perez and all, but if he's responsible for knocking out Santana for any length of time, especially given that Extra Firm Tofu Lou got steamrolled in the closer against the Rays and has a (as yet minor) neck injury,

I will consider suggesting C-Pez shave his head in penance.

A closer on a .500 team is a nice morale booster. A catcher hitting .500/.567/.885 is an MVP. I know which I prefer. (Santana went 1-for-2 with a pair of walks.)

8) Credit Where Credit is Due Dept.

After a shaky first, Hideki Kuroda worked 4 1/3 more scoreless innings without any discernible

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stuff. He even struck out 6 guys, albeit one was Drew Stubbs. I liked Kuroda in the NL, but considered him kind of an "NL pitcher." I'm not sure he'll have a great season for the Yanks, but he did a laudable job yesterday.

Nick Swisher has had a slow start, but he reached base 3 times in 5 trips to the plate, and while he's firmly in the Tyner Zone with a .240 SLG, he does have a .375 OBP.

9) Root Cause Analysis

The Indians' 2-through-5 hitters slug .259, .269, .240, and .318. Those would be acceptable batting averages. They aren't batting averages. They're SLUGGING PERCENTAGES. Nick Swisher's .040 ISO is simultaneously feeble AND dwarfs Mike Brantley's ZERO ZERO ZERO.

Getting on base is the most important skill an offensive player can demonstrate. But a little power would be better than ... well ... the very little power the ostensible HEART of the lineup has shown thus far.