



*With a runner on second base, Ryan Raburn did not get a hit. With a runner on third base, Mike Aviles did not get a hit. With a runner on second, Bob Phelps did not get a hit. With a runner on third, Drew Stubbs did not get a hit. With runners on first and second, Asdrubal Cabrera did not get a hit. With runners on second and third, Nick Swisher did not get a hit. Carlos Santana got a hit.*

**FINAL**

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## The B-List: 4/18

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 19 2013 1:58 PM - Last Updated Friday, April 19 2013 8:24 PM

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**Red Sox (11-4)**

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**Indians (5-9)**

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W: Lester (3-0)

L: McAllister (1-2)

S: Bailey (2)

Bring on the Astros!

## 1) Philosophy Corner

Some decisions are better than others.

I spent some of the off-season considering whether to write this column about either the Houston Astros or the Miami Marlins in order to wheedle a book deal out of somebody. I thought the Astros had a legitimate shot at losing the 120 games necessary to go into the books with the Amazin' Mets, and I couldn't come up with a compelling reason that the Marlins would be better. Okay, actually, I came up with three reasons:

1. a)The Marlins play in the NL, while the Astros would be in the same Division as the Rangers, A's, andYes, Washington and Atlanta are as formidable a pair of Division foes as any pair from the AL West, but I expected Philadelphia to crumble under the collective weight of their collective weight and the Mets stink.

2. b)I liked the "best player combo" of Ricky Nolasco and Giancarlo Stanton better than Houston's Bud Norris and Jose Altuve.

3. c)Miami's ballpark is enormous and better-supports a young pitching staff: left field in Houston is amusing and the 'stros should allow at least nine thousand home runs this season.

These aren't very compelling reasons, of course, but Houston had the added advantage that I could watch them quasi-locally and the Marlins are odious. Well, I mean the franchise is odious. The Marlins themselves could not interest me less (besides Stanton and, oddly enough, Jon Rauch) if they were scripted by Robert James Waller. Their owner is truly despicable, and in a sense, that might have made for the more compelling story, as I honestly believe there's a nontrivial chance of a sizable group of Floridians getting fiercely intoxicated

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---

and storming the field at some point this season. They really hate this guy, and they sure don't love that team. Actually, it might just be Stanton who flips out and single-handedly destroys the home run sculpture during a 13-2 loss to the Brewers or something.

Anyway, the Astros won Opening Night and the Marlins still don't interest me and I chickened out on writing "The H-Bomb" or "Race to the Bottom" and ended up here instead because I'd at least psyched myself into writing about SOMETHING this season.

Here's the problem as it stands now (besides the massive miscalculation that the Marlins are actually even worse than I'd considered and I'll have missed an opportunity to encapsulate history, 'cause those guys are gonna post some SERIOUS loss numbers): the Indians are really not very compelling. There just isn't much "spark" here. Justin Masterson is capable of a great start now and then. The back end of the bullpen can have a good night. Carlos Santana remains one of the best offensive catchers in the game. But the offense is crummy: it's 25<sup>th</sup> in runs, 26<sup>th</sup>

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in AVG, and 20<sup>th</sup>

th

in OBP. It almost makes the top half in SLG, which is essentially Mark Reynolds by himself. And even Mark Reynolds, for all his plusses (homers) and minuses (everything else), is simply not very compelling, unless he is trying to throw a baseball, in which case he fluctuates between "terrifying" and "infuriating." The pitchers are 25<sup>th</sup>

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in ERA, although middle-of-the-pack in other things like Quality Starts, WHIP, and BAA (batting average against).

There's just precious little "there" there. Nick Swisher's tongue. Mike Bourn's hot start. The middle infielders' collective noodle bats. Lonnie Chisenhall's frying pan. I just have a hard time working up much of a lather over any of it.

Here: let me point this out: the Indians just got swept by the Red Sox, but the Red Sox are good and hot and emotionally high right now. These things happen. They should get better this weekend, after all, because they are going to face the Houston Astros, a team I declared had a favorable shot at 120 losses. Houston is terrible and they have maybe four guys you've EVER heard of and two of THEM are terrible (Brett Wallace comes to mind). Surely we're ready to make hay and get back on track now, yes?

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Houston is 4-11. This is clearly awful. Projected over the whole season, that's a 59-win team, meaning a 103-loss team, which would actually represent a step UP for Houston.

Cleveland is 5-9.

### 2) Average Z!

It takes quite an occurrence to bump the starter out of the #1 slot, but Zach McAllister is just the guy to do it. McAllister struck out 7 guys and now sports a 8.31 K/9 rate on the young season. I don't know if this is sustainable, but it sure would be nice after years of Mitch Talbots and Fausto Carmonae to have a starter other than Masterson who could strike some damn guys out. On the other hand, after walking zero in his first two starts, McAllister yakked up 3 walks in 5 innings and ended up taking a powder after heaving 112 pitches in only 5 frames. The Red Sox will make you work, I guess.

Anyway, McAllister coughed up three extra base hits in six hits overall, including tripe to Mike Napoli, who took advantage of Ryan Raburn's enthusiasm at the left field wall. Mike Napoli is essentially Ryan Garko, except one who can hit. Believe it or not, this is his first triple on the season. McAllister gave up three runs and lost the game and I'm struggling to say anything interesting about it. I will say this: for a guy who threw 19 first-pitch strikes in 26 batters in his last start, throwing 9 first-pitch strikes in 24 this time out wasn't exactly the kind of April Surprise I was hoping for.

I guess he didn't have his best stuff, control-wise. Or maybe he did, with 7 strikeouts. I gotta be honest: Zach McAllister simply hasn't made a dent on my consciousness yet.

### 3) Smallball for Fun and Profit but not Interest

The Indians went 1-for-7 with runners in scoring position. This is not particularly notable, although it is transparently putrid. One scored on a double to deep right by Carlos Santana, who had two hits in what is hopefully a return to form. (Careful readers will note that this is the "1" in the "1-for-7.")

The other two runs scored on groundouts. Congratulations Mike Aviles and Drew Stubbs, your plate appearances with runners in scoring position were simply discouraging rather than causing abject despair. Run-producing groundouts! One of the most compelling plays in all of major league baseball! I can't believe I didn't keel over dead last night! Maybe tonight they'll call an Infield Fly Rule, or someone will reach on Catcher's Interference! I tingle with anticipation!

(There are no congratulations in order for Raburn, Bob Phelps, Asdrubal Cabrera, or Nick Swisher in this regard.)

#### 4) Minor Correction

I will credit Aviles for having enough awareness and gumption to go from second to third on a groundout to short, which was close to being up the middle. And then he scored on a groundout, which I guess takes a sort of professionalism, in that he did not react the way I did, which was to smack my head at the thirty-seven hopper and go, "Gah!" This would probably have prevented Aviles from scoring had he executed the same maneuver.

Mark Reynolds showed much the same steely resolve, but we have come to expect steely resolve from Reynolds, who is in fact an automaton.

#### 5) The Bounceback Kid

Chris Perez blew a save opportunity in Toronto on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, although the Tribe did win the game. Since then, the Indians have not given him many save opportunities, so he's made only three appearances, all at the back ends of losses. This is clearly not Perez' responsibility, and I'll give Terry Francona credit here for making sure Perez gets some work.

In those three outings, Perez has allowed one hit and no walks in three scoreless innings. He's struck out three, one in each game, and pumped 13 of 17 pitches through the strike zone last

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night. Walks have been a problem for Perez in the past: he seems locked right now, though.

### 6) Of the Set of Interesting Things

Ryan Raburn, Bob Phelps, Drew Stubbs, and Nick Hagadone and Brian Shaw last night remain disjoint from the Set.

### 7) This having been said

Shaw's been a nice surprise to me this season. He struck out 2 more hitters in 2 innings of work, and while his 7<sup>th</sup> wasn't very effective, his 8<sup>th</sup> was, and he sports a 1.13 ERA with a 0.63 WHIP on the young season. He has not walked a batter in 8 innings, and has collected 11 whiffs. I seriously doubt he's THAT good, but ... hey, that IS good, so I'll take it, no question.

ERAs of Cleveland pitchers last night:

McAllister: 3.12

Hagadone: 2.25

Shaw: 1.13

Perez: 1.80

I mean, it's Game Fourteen, these samples are preposterously small, but it's pretty neat to see numbers like that on the Cleveland side of the ledger.