



One Cleveland starter pitched pretty well, coming an inning short of a Quality Start, and he lost. One Cleveland starter pitched really terribly, and it wasn't Ubaldo Jimenez. The Indians won a game in which they hit 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position. Yan Gomes hit his first career triple. Mark Reynolds hit his 7th home run and his .737 SLG does not lead the team. Does all of this make sense? Not really. But what is really "sensible" when contemplating the Houston Astros?

FINAL

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The B-List: 4/19 - 4/21

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, April 22 2013 12:56 PM - Last Updated Monday, April 22 2013 1:37 PM

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Indians (5-10)

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Astros (5-11)

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W: Harrell (1-2)

L: B. Myers (0-3)

S: Veras (1)

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Indians (6-10)

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Astros (5-12)

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W: Kluber (1-0)

L: Humber (0-4)

FINAL

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Indians (7-10)

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Astros (5-13)

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W: C. Allen (1-0)

L: Ambriz (0-1)

S: C. Perez (2)

In each of the Indians' 10 losses, either the offense has scored 3 or fewer runs, or the staff has given up double-digits. Punky Carrasco's start was the only game in which we managed both feats.

1) Pathos on a Stick

After Friday night's tough-luck loss to the mighty Astros, I fantasized about Cash-Box Myers rolling through the season, receiving no run support and pitching just well enough to hold his rotation slot, giving up his customary couple of homers and going 0-32 on the season for a streak that would make Anthony Young weep in his beer while Brian Kingman consoled him and Bert Blyleven did a brief clog dance in the background. This isn't to say that Myers has pitched particularly well on the season: he flat-out earned that first loss, and he has allowed 10 home runs in 21 1/3 innings, which is really just astonishingly bad: projected over a 211-inning season, obviously, this is 100 home runs and Blyleven would be asking for tips, as his previous record would have been nearly doubled. But in his last two losses, Myers has given up a hit an inning, recorded one Quality Start and one that was an inning short, posted a decent 12:5 K:BB ratio, and received a total of 3 runs worth of support.

Friday's start was merely an extension of what happened to Myers his last time out against the ChiSox, except that he had the misfortune of being in Houston's preposterous ballpark at the time. Neither of the home runs Myers allowed travelled over 360 feet. He did walk two hitters, but he got 10 swinging strikes and K'd 4 in 5 innings of work. It wasn't entirely clear why he was lifted after only 76 pitches, except ...

... the next day he went on the DL with "elbow inflammation" and flew back to Cleveland to die.

While I have no insight into the extent of the injury (the official wire report lists the injury as "forearm," which one source said sounds like a flexor tendon to him), it looks at least as though 32 losses are now out of reach for the intrepid Myers.

2) Houston giveth, Houston taketh away

It seems hard to pitch in Houston. Well, I mean, not so much AGAINST Houston, but IN Houston. If you're going to do it, I will tell you that April is about the best time to make the attempt: even in late September, the weather fluctuates between "too hot" and "really too f&@#ing hot." But while the ballpark really is splendid, is in one of the better parts of town, and features some very nice concessions, actually PITCHING in the Juice Box can't be something that's good for your nerves.

Part of the reason for this is the layout of the park. You can hit what amounts to a solid pop fly to either corner and it's a home run. The entire left field is taken up by something called a Crawford Box which is apparently a fancy term for "Jason Tyner can reach this." Center field is hilarious. It's a nice park, though.

Ubaldo Jimenez needed a nice defensive play by Drew Stubbs to remain in the game past the first inning, but after that, Jimenez retired the next 13 hitters in a row and generally looked more like a major-league pitcher than at any point since July of 2011. Of course, the reason that there was a doubt was because he hadn't retired any of the first three hitters, including a leadoff walk and a two-run homer. Still, the homer travelled a paltry 338 feet, and this was kind of bad luck for Jimenez, whose pitch to Ferd Martinez wasn't really that bad.

And then, of course, Jimenez let Marwin Gonzlaez, a man I have literally never heard of, off the hook at 0-2 to single on a 2-2 pitch, gave up a triple to Tiny Altuve, and watched Nick Hagadone give up a sac fly to Chris Carter. So to recap: first two batters, very bad, two runs. Last two batters, very bad, two runs. Fifteen batters in between, fifteen outs.

I'm way, way, WAY far short of declaring Jimenez "fixed" or "fine" or even "adequate" at this point: 4 runs in 5 innings is simply not very good, ballpark be damned. And giving up 4 runs in 5 innings LOWERED Jimenez' ERA. Still, he threw 44 strikes in 65 pitches, posted a tidy 4:1 K:BB ratio, didn't hit anybody, and posted a 1.00 WHIP for the game. The strikes are the most encouraging thing for me, of course, although I obviously wouldn't be saying that if they didn't get people out. Still, the most optimistic way to look at this is that when Jimenez throws strikes, he can get guys out, even if they are from the Houston YMCA. The homer was cheap, and Altuve executed a nice piece of hitting on his triple. The less-charitable way to look at this is that he remains Ubaldo Jimenez.

3) Welcome to the club, Scott Kazmir!

Wait, I got all excited for THAT?

4) Everybody hits!

Well, technically, Mike Aviles took a Size Four Collar Sunday afternoon, but otherwise, every other Cleveland hitter got a base hit in the 5-4 win. Aviles is a step up from our standard Futility Infielder fare: I'm thinking of past instances such as Mike Rouse and the O.F. Ramon Vazquez. The Indians collected the same number of singles (four) as home runs as 7 of the team's 11 hits went for extra bases, including a back-half cycle by Yan Yan the Catching Man and a home run by Mark Reynolds that would have left the Polo Grounds and several ballparks on planets outside the asteroid belt. Three of the Tribe's five runs were scored with two outs.

But for my money, with all due respect to Reynolds' game-winning homer in the 7th, the most notable hit of the game came after starter Erik Bedard retired Jason Kipnis and Nick Swisher on strikeouts sandwiched around a booming double by Carlos Santana. After getting ahead 0-2 on swinging strikes to Reynolds, Bedard let him off the hook for a walk, and then got ahead of ersatz right fielder Ryan Raburn 0-2 as well. Raburn didn't bite on a couple of two-strike offerings, then lined a 2-2 pitch the other way to score Santana from second.

Why is this notable? Well, it was a good piece of hitting, and kudos to Raburn and all, but the fact is that Ryan Raburn came to the plate with a runner in scoring position and HE GOT A HIT. The Indians went 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position Sunday. That was the one. The fact that it came with two outs is just gravy. Raburn joined Santana and Yan Gomes as players with two hits in the game.

5) Everybody HITS!

Yeah, Sunday is not really the game you want to talk about when you claim that everybody hits.

In the FIRST INNING of Saturday's game, Carlos Santana was the only Cleveland player to not get a hit, because he walked. Mike Brantley led off the game with an out, but fortunately, since the Tribe batted around, he got a second opportunity and smashed a two-run double to complete the scoring for a brisk 8-0 lead.

This will not go down as Philip Humber's most-effective start. In all, Humber allowed 8 hits, including FIVE for extra bases, and a walk, and retired ... Brantley.

For the game, the Tribe collected 22 hits and EIGHT walks. They went 11-for-22 with runners in scoring position, and I can't decide which of those numbers is more absurd. They left 12 men on base, because scoring 30 runs is rude. Drew Stubbs went 2-for-2 with runners in scoring position. Jason Giambi went 2-for-3 in those situations. Jason Kipnis went 0-for-3 and went 1-for-6 overall, meaning he probably owes money in Kangaroo Kourt. Of the three substitutes in the game, Mike Aviles went 2-for-4 in place of Asdrubal Cabrera, Yan got a hit in his only plate appearance, and Ryan Raburn grounded out on the only pitch he saw because he wanted to go home.

6) When you slam the door, please remove your fingers first

I mentioned last week that Chris Perez has not been given many save opportunities. He's pitched well, but the Indians so infrequently take a small lead into the 9th that Perez entered the weekend with a paltry one save.

Sunday afternoon's 1-run lead was tailor-made for Perez, and he proceeded to eat a hot dog with extra mustard while sitting on a bench covered in wet paint before catching every seam on a nail.

After yielding a leadoff double, Perez managed to hit rookie Matt Dominguez with a 3-2 pitch. Marwin Gonzalez, whose name I just wrote fifteen minutes ago and has STILL not managed to make a dent on my consciousness, advanced the runners on a bunt (one of the circumstances in which I applaud its use), and Perez walked Altuve intentionally to load the bases.

And then, after starting the ginormous Chris Carter with two balls, calmly watched three foul balls lead to a nasty swinging K to quell the immediate threat (being able to score a run without a hit) and got Jason Castro to ground sharply to third to end the game.

I have experienced more calming Saves. Not from Bob Wickman, of course, but in the past, yes.

7) Harbinger for Fun and Profit

With Kazmir woefully ineffective and Brian Shaw only good for a couple of innings, Corey Kluber was called in to finish out the 19-6 laughter Saturday. Kluber was ostensibly only called up to fill the staff until Kazmir could arrive, but with Myers going down to injury, the Tribe decided to play it safe and keep Kluber on the club. This will pay dividends against the White Sox Wednesday, as Kluber will start in place of Myers.

What can we expect? Well, he certainly wasn't any good against the Red Sox, giving up 3 hits in 1 inning of work. Last season, Kluber averaged barely 5 innings in 12 starts and posted a 1.49 WHIP with a 5.14 ERA and was declared to be Below Replacement Level (although one could argue that Kluber was, in fact, the epitome of Replacement Player in that he was EXACTLY the kind of "freely-available" player the concept is supposed to embody). He's youngish. He's largish. He's a guy.

Except ...

Obviously, the circumstances matter. Kluber was pitching the back end of a blowout, and I'm sure the Astros really just wanted to go home at that point. The game lasted roughly nine hours. Kazmir gave up 7 hits AND three walks AND uncorked two wild pitches AND gave up 6 runs in 3 1/3 and was by FAR the more-effective starting pitcher. (According to ESPN's esoteric Game Score Metric, in which 50 is average and 90 is outstanding, Kazmir registered a 23, while Phil Humber coughed up a TWO. Two!) The Astros have an inexperienced and/or crummy lineup, and the Intensity Factor measured out at negative seven.

But Kluber sailed through 4 complete innings with no walks and 4 Ks, giving up just a pair of singles and no runs. (He did hit a batter.) While he posted a 6:2 GO:FO ratio, I don't know enough about Kluber's "stuff" to tell you whether this is significant or indicative or completely random. Still, even in his crummy game, he kept the ball in the park, and while I'd rather have the Cashbox Myers of his past two starts, abstractly speaking, I won't be going into Wednesday's game with a tick in the Loss column before the first pitch.

8) Around the Bullpen

Shaw was quite good, giving up a hit in 1 2/3 innings. He posted a pair of Ks and no walks.

Nick Hagadone had trouble finding the plate with as many walks as outs (2) and as many balls as strikes (10).

Joe Smiff and Vinnie Pestano each tossed a scoreless frame Saturday. Notably, Pestano did not get a single swinging strike or K. Smiff gave up a pair of hits, but also whiffed a pair. This followed his two-K performance Friday night.

Cody Allen retired a total of six batters across Friday and Saturday, yielding only one hit and striking out three. I hope this completes the Working Out the Jitters portion of his career.

Rich Hill did not swallow his tongue.

9) Flashing the leather

Okay, frankly, it was a reasonably routine play, but Mark Reynolds is not a strong fielder, and when Castro hit the ball sharply, it looked like it might find the hole between short and third. Reynolds made a nice move to his left, snared the ball, and threw cleanly to first to end the game. I'm not sure what it says about me that I'm lauding the third baseman making an ordinary play, but I am.

Drew Stubbs made a terrific running catch in the first inning of Jimenez' start that doubled the runner off first for an unusual 9-3 double play.

10) Managerial Head-Scratchers

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With all due respect to Mike Brantley as leadoff guy, I still think Stubbs should lead off against lefties, even formerly-famous ones like Erik Bedard.

11) Bears Mentioning

The following players had hits in all three games: Jason Kipnis (!), Nick Swisher (including 4-for-7 Saturday), Mark Reynolds (now hitting .298!), and Drew Stubbs (!!!!!!!!!!!).

Given the season to date, you could argue for Justin Masterson, but right now Cleveland's All-Star representative would come down to Carlos Santana and ... Mark Reynolds. Yeah. Me too.

12) Public Service for the Google Search Engine

Seattle GM Jack Zduriencik was born John Smith, but changed his name in order to earn higher scores in Baseball Personnel Scrabble. The stakes for such a game are sufficiently low as to suggest (correctly) that this statement is a flat-out lie. Fire Eric Wedge.