



The Indians continued to stumble through the A.L. Central by dropping two of three in Kansas City. While the Royals are ostensibly improved to make their “playoff push,” Buff utilizes the Fundamental Error of Attribution to blame the Tribe instead, noting that the offense has three distinct flavors of Fail and Justin Masterson’s start was the stuff of Not Legend. He also lauds Corey Kluber’s fine first start of the season, notes that Scott Kazmir looks like a professional again, and wonders what music plays when the bullpen arrives.

FINAL

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The B-List: 4/27 - 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, April 29 2013 2:23 PM - Last Updated Monday, April 29 2013 2:38 PM

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Indians (8-12)

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Royals (12-8)

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W: E. Santana (3-1) L: Kazmir (0-1) S: Holland (6)

FINAL

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Indians (8-13)

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Royals (13-8)

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W: Guthrie (3-0)

L: Masterson (4-2)

FINAL

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Indians (9-13)

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Royals (13-9)

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W: Kluber (2-0)

L: W. Smith (0-1)

We lost one game because Justin Masterson was awful and another because Jeff Francoeur drew a walk. Guess which was more unlikely.

1) The Nyet Offensive: Simple Fail

Ex-Tribesman Jeremy Guthrie pitched pretty well Sunday, sailing through 6 2/3 innings of shutout ball. He struck out five and walked three and lowered his ERA to 3.06 on the season. This is lower than Justin Masterson's ERA, for example. If not for the Mighty Corey Kluber, Guthrie would be our de factor Ace.

Here's the thing: Guthrie did not have one clean inning. Not one three-up-three-down affair. In every inning, the Indians had a baserunner. And here is what they did with runners on base:

ground out to pitcher (1st inning, runner on 1st)

K swinging (2nd, runner on 2B)

ground out to first (2nd, 2B)

watching strike two (3rd, 1B, caught stealing)

K swinging (4th, 1B)

ground out to SS (5th, 1B)

ground out to 2B (5th, 1B)

walk (!!!) (6th, 1B)

6-4-3 DP (6th, 1B/2B)

single to right!!! Woot! (7th, 1B)

ground out to 3B (7th, 1B/2B)

fly out to left (7th, 1B/3B)

K swinging (8th, 2B)

K swinging (8th, 2B)

K swinging (9th, 1B)

pop out to SS (9th, 1B)

K swinging (9th, 2B)

If you're counting at home, that's 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position, but shoot, it's 1-for-15 with a walk with runners on base at all. 8 hits isn't bad, really: 8 hits and 3 walks is perfectly acceptable. But parlaying that into bupkes whatsoever is simply lame.

2) The Nyet Offensive: Complex Fail

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Ervin Santana was “sharp over 7 innings” according to the ESPN headline. Except, of course, he wasn’t really. After a perfect first, Santana allowed a leadoff single and put Carlos Santana on base because of an error. So with two runners on and one out, the Indians did still need a hit to score, but a hit would score a run, in all likelihood.

Mark Reynolds struck out.

Lonnie Chisenhall struck out.

So the next inning, Drew Stubbs led off the inning with a single to right and advanced to second on a grounder to first. And now, with a runner in scoring position, a Cleveland Indian finally got a hit! And while it didn’t score the runner, it did advance him ...

... zero bases.

Yes, Jason Kipnis was credited with a single on a grounder to short, but Stubbs couldn’t run on the play and this will go down as a hit with RISP without having any of the benefits thereof. All right, well, runner still in scoring position, here comes Asdrubal Cabrera who ...

... gets a hit with RISP! Huzzah! It advances the runners ...

... one base.

And now, with the bases loaded, Nick Swisher can score a run even with an out, as long as it’s not a strikeout or a double play or something horrifying like that.

Nick Swisher grounded into a double play.

For those counting at home, the Indians had five baserunners, ALL of them on base with zero or one out, and NONE of them scored. The Indians went 2-for-6 with runners in scoring position in those two innings, and scored exactly as many runs as Donald Segretti had scruples. Not one. Also zero.

3) The Nyet Offensive: Spectacular Fail

In the 8th inning of Sunday's game, after giving the Royals a third run, the Indians had at least a chance to salvage some pride when Mike Brantley led off the inning with a double to deep center, then took third on a wild pitch. So here's the scene: runner on third, ZERO outs. Yes, there is already a 2-2 count on Jason Kipnis, but still: zero outs.

Kipnis fought off a pitch ... fought off a pitch ... fought off moving air as he swung through strike three. Brantley remains on third.

With a three-run lead, the Royals are probably ceding the runner on third to take the out. A medium fly ball. A slow grounder. A sharp grounder where the infielder has to move laterally. Heaven forbid, an actual hit. There are so many ways to score a runner from third when the defense is not truly prioritizing his scoring. One way to NOT score the runner from third would be to pop it up to an infielder, say the third baseman.

Asdrubal Cabrera popped the ball up to the third baseman.

Nick Swisher then fell behind 1-2, but hung in there, and coaxed a walk! Huzzah! Swisher on first!

Where he died, because Jason Giambi struck out swinging.

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For those counting at home, that would be FOUR chances to score a runner from third, TWO of which were with fewer than two outs. The next number in that sequence is ZERO, which is the number of runs the Indians scored in the 8th.

But the 9th ... ah, the 9th. We'll always have the 9th inning, which is not quite the same as always having Paris, unless it's Paris, Texas, but O, the glorious 9th

. The inning in which we scored in the first two games of the series.

You should have been there. There was a guy on first base, and there was this other guy on second base, and then the batter hit the ball and they both **ran around the bases until they crossed the plate**

! I mean it! It was like a scene from a movie or something! I had to pinch myself! There were two Cleveland Indians, touching home plate with their respective feet, and the number on the scoreboard got set to SOMETHING OTHER THAN ZERO! I'm telling you, it was like the Olympics or the Final Four or a Michael Bay movie or something. You had to be there!

Unfortunately, this put Mike Brantley on third base, and we all know what happens when THAT happens. That's right! Jason Kipnis strikes out. Thanks for coming, everybody!

4) Too much too late

And then the Indians scored TEN runs on FOURTEEN hits and went 4-for-9 with RISP to shellack the Royals Sunday night. This included Yan Yan the Catching Man's SECOND triple on the season, a 4-for-5 night by Carlos Santana, and a career-high five RBI by Mike Aviles, who was able to manage this on ONE HIT. While he did have a three-run homer, it is more notable to me that Aviles' prodigious OUT-MAKING skills were responsible for scoring TWO runners from third base. If you go back and read carefully above, you might be able to discern how I feel about THAT.

5) A little too much perspective

In the Indians' first 21 games, they scored 3 or fewer runs 14 times. Clever readers will notice that this is two-thirds of the time. They probably also threw up.

6) It's Kluberin' Time!

It was a little hard to evaluate Corey Kluber's outing against Houston, since it wasn't a start and it was against the Astros, but all Kluber did in his first start of the season was sail through 7 complete innings, yielding 7 hits and once again zero walks. He gave up a pair of runs, but struck out six. He now sports a 1.00 WHIP on the young (for him 12-inning) season and an ERA of 2.25.

In much the same way Guthrie got the Indians to flail their way to futility with runners on base, Kluber actually put a runner in scoring position in each of the second, third, and fourth innings. In the second, he got a pair of groundouts, and in the third struck out Eric Hosmer swinging. It all caught up with him in the 4th, when he gave up a two-run single to Chris Getz, but after retiring Alex Gordon to end the inning, retired the next nine in a row to end on a high note and collect his second win on the season.

I'm not sure Kluber is really someone we need to be clamoring for to replace nine-tenths of the actual rotation (every starter but half the time Masterson pitches). He pitched a fine game, and good timing by Kluber and all that, but while he doesn't necessarily show me anything that makes me pine for the fjords, he does have credible big-league stuff and was a welcome addition to the double-header staff.

7) Okay, I see what you meant now.

Scott Kazmir's second start of the season was quite a bit better than his first. He did make an apparent mistake on a ball that Sal Perez hit over 400 feet, and because he'd just walked Jeff Franceour, which is plainly inconceivable, it gave the Royals a two-run cushion they wouldn't relinquish. Pitching for the Indians is not always a rewarding endeavor.

Look, I can't tell you that Kazmir was fantabulous. He only lasted five innings and needed 99

pitches to do so. He walked a couple guys, and one was Francoeur. He gave up five hits and two were for extra bases. His two runs allowed is still only a 3.60 ERA, which is good but not great and closer to Cashbox Myers than Justin Verlander. He lowered his ERA on the season to 8.64, which is better than Ubaldo Jimenez and worse than So What.

But he did strike out 4 batters and generally looked like a pitcher with a lot more stuff than the Caliheimgeles Angels version of Kazmir. In a season in which the Indians are a lot more likely to develop and evaluate than contend, there are worse ideas than giving Kazmir a dozen starts and seeing what comes out on the back end.

8) Brevity is the soul of suck

Justin Masterson's start wasn't any good. He walks too many guys.

9) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Why is Justin Masterson, with that delivery and platoon split, throwing his 106th pitch to Eric Hosmer, a left-handed hitter with even BIGGER platoon splits, with runners on base? Wasn't Scott Barnes called up for exactly this purpose? Was Rich Hill so worn out by his five-pitch fail of the previous night?

10) Columnist Second-Guessers

Um ... Barnes was terrible in the 9th of that game and Rich Hill remains Rich Hill.

11) The Worst Bullpen Innings in the Vicinity

Let us harken back to that fateful 7th in which Masterson "gave up" his final three (of seven)

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runs.

Masterson allowed an infield single to Getz, then a sharp single to lefty Alex Gordon. Still, even a tiring Masterson is better than ... well ... an unconscious Masterson, I suppose, but maybe the lefties weren't ready yet. Anyway, Masterson got a run-scoring fielder's choice and now there's a runner on first with one out. Masterson uncorks a wild pitch (maybe get those guys ready now?) and let's Bubba Butler off the hook for a walk (maybe get those guys ready now?). Hosmer singles in a run and the game is now Officially Out of Reach.

And now the Goon Squad Theme from Bill Cosby's Temple days plays over the loudspeakers, and the Cleveland bullpen comes roaring in:

Matt Albers: hits first batter to load bases

Matt Albers: walks Mike Moustakas on five pitches

Albers did strike out Francoeur and got Jassod Dyson to fly out. So this was a big edge over the 7th inning Saturday night. After two quick strikeouts, the 'pen coughed up:

Nick Hagadone: single to Gordon

Brian Shaw: gives up steal, wild pitches Gordon to third, walks Alcides Escobar

Brian Shaw: gives up steal, walks Billy Butler

Rich Hill: walks Hosmer on five pitches, run scores

One run on one hit. It was the third run. We lost 3-2.

12) Ho Hum Dept.

Joe Smiff and Chris Perez were fine.

13) Public Service for the Google Search Engine

Jack Zduriencik introduced a bill into the Washington State Legislature that would force all local establishments to sell decaffeinated coffee exclusively. This would shut down the entire western half of the state and clearly did not happen. Fire Eric Wedge.