



Does it still count as a “sweep” if it’s only two games? The B-List says, “Yes,” especially when the collective score of the games is 20-2. The Tribe routed the Phillies again last night, roughing up ex-Tribesman Cliff Lee and generally making the Phillies’ offense look feeble, yet pathetic. Despite six walks, Trevor Bauer won his first game as an Indian, looking about as dominant as one can look while ... well ... walking six guys. Also, Ryan Raburn. Yes, still.

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The B-List: 5/1

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Thursday, May 02 2013 1:11 PM - Last Updated Thursday, May 02 2013 2:50 PM

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Phillies (12-16)

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Indians (12-13)

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W: Bauerbuss (1-1) L: C. Lee (1-2)

While still a win, I think we need to get back to The Formula.

1) T-Bau'ing

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Trevor Bauer won his first game as a Cleveland Indian, and at no point gave the impression that he would give up a big hit to a Philadelphia hitter.

He did, however, give the impression that he'd allow several runs.

The disconnect here is that while Bauer only gave up one hit, a clean single by Domonic Brown, Bauer did walk 6 guys in 5 innings, requiring some fancy pitching at ... virtually all times. Bauer managed to walk the leadoff hitter in four of his five innings, so he spent the majority of the game pitching from the stretch with runners on base. In fact, Bauer faced 21 hitters, and a grand total of EIGHT came with the bases empty. FIVE of those eight were guys leading off an inning. Bauer had exactly one 1-2-3 inning, and that came because it is impossible to walk Delmon Young, leading off an inning or not.

It seems almost quaint to talk about his overall strike percentage (50 strikes in 93 pitches): when you walk more than a guy an inning, it seems pretty obvious that speaking of "command" isn't really the point. The fact that Bauer struck out 5 and allowed only the one hit speaks to the fact that he has (or at least had last night) excellent stuff. The fact that he walked more guys than Ubaldo Jimenez did in his Most Disastrous Outing Of All Time is a bit more concerning.

And here's the thing: Bauer actually walked MORE guys in his FIRST start (against Tampa Bay). On the season, Bauer is holding opposing hitters to an unsustainably-low .097 AVG. That's just ridiculous. He's allowed 3 hits in 10 innings in the big leagues. Nobody does that. He's also walked 13 guys in 10 innings in the big leagues, resulting in a 1.60 WHIP even with that .097 AVG. Nobody does that, either. I'm reminded of Robert Wuhl talking about "new league records" with respect to Ebby Calvin LaLoosh.

Let's give credit to Bauer for a couple things, then: he didn't lose his composure after yielding the walks. He didn't squawk at the umpire that he was being squeezed, and he didn't groove fastballs just to get some strikes. His fastball rode high all night, which is where he missed the majority of the time. His slider and curve were really astonishingly good, which is how he got the majority of his punchouts. He helped the staff induce the Phillies to hit 0-for-10 with runners in scoring position, which I attribute entirely to the Indians and none to the Phillies because I am immensely biased.

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I can't help but being reminded of another young pitcher, known for his quirky personality and astonishing "stuff." This pitcher struggled at first, then put it together for a Cy Young caliber season (in that he actually won the Cy Young), but has since still had issues. Obviously, if Trevor Bauer puts together a Cy Young season before turning 30, that would be a huge achievement. It remains to be seen, though, if Trevor Bauer is Cleveland's answer to Zack Greinke.

2) Ryan Raburn

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He has been better at his job the past three days than you have ever been at yours.

3) More explicitly

Raburn went 4-for-5 with a double, meaning that in the last three games he is 11-for-13 with a double, four home runs, 24 total bases, 9 RBI, and 2 OUTS. He has made TWO OUTS in THREE GAMES. He raised his average from .216 to .364 in those three games. He drove in two runs last night, EACH with two outs. He went 2-for-3 with a runner in scoring position. He invented a new kind of kitten that plays guitar. He is in negotiations to replace the actor on the Dos Equis commercials.

4) Slow and Steady

Asdrubal Cabrera took a Cliff Lee pitch down the line in left with two runners on base to drive in

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Cleveland's second and third runs and effectively put a lid on the game. Cabrera has driven in a pair of runs in each of his last three games.

In fact, Cabrera has a quiet 10-game hitting streak going, raising his average from .118 to .227 in the process. He's also been held out of a couple games during the streak and spent last night playing DH instead of SS. He's been nursing a sore quad muscle recently, and while it's nice that it hasn't seemed to significantly affect his stroke, I'm concerned that this sort of thing won't ever really go away until maybe the All-Star Break. I mean, if he's not playing shortstop, he's almost certainly not 100%. And the 10-game streak sounds more impressive than the fact that he's 14-for-37 during it. Yes, that's a .379 clip, but there are FIVE 1-for-4 games in those 10, which is not exactly "lighting it up."

A productive Cabrera does wonders for the offensive, since he's a switch-hitter and normally bats third. .379 is absolutely productive, and 10-gamers are nothing to sneeze at. But if Cabrera isn't close to 100% and can't play short, you have to be concerned about the sustainability of his quasi-resurgence.

5) The Amazing Shrinking Ballgame

Joe Smiff has been the Tribe's best bullpen arm to date. His stats are just sick: in 10 games, he's thrown 8 2/3 innings and allowed 0 runs on 4 hits and 0 walks. He's struck out 11 guys and leads the staff in K-rate, WHIP, and ERA. Only Justin Masterson has a higher WAR on the pitching staff, and that's largely because he's thrown 40 innings. Smiff has been worth nearly half a win in NINE. Last night, Smiff struck out two batters on SEVEN PITCHES. ONE was a ball. Once upon a time, Smiff was considered a right-handed specialist because of his low delivery slot. This season, he has faced 12 left-handed hitters. One got a hit. Five struck out. The hit was a single, so his "slash line" is .083/.083/.083 ... against LEFT-HANDED HITTERS. (Righties hit .188/.188/.250 off Smiff.)

But at least I knew Smiff was capable of goodness: maybe not THIS level of goodness because NOBODY does this for an entire season, but Smiff was a savvy pickup back in the day. In contrast, I didn't know Brian Shaw from Wallace Shawn. Scratch that: I totally know who Wallace Shawn is.

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All Shaw has done on the season is give up one earned run in 12 innings, punching out 15 hitters and placing himself percentage points behind Smiff in the K-rate listing. He did give up two unearned runs, so his RA is 2.25 instead of his ERA of 0.75, but still, he's been a nice "throw-in" to the Choo-Bauer deal. Last night, he spelled Bauer, and while he did put three men on base in 1 2/3 IP (2 hits, 1 walk), he defused a first-and-second situation with a pair of whiffs and got Mike Young to ground into a double play in the next inning to put out another potential fire.

Rich Hill helped illustrate the folly of batting Chase Utley and Ryan Howard back-to-back with a brisk 5-pitch 2-out outing. His 3.38 ERA on the season was the highest of any pitcher last night ... by over half a run. Excluding the starter Bauer, it was highest by more than an ENTIRE run.

After the initial jitters of two 2-run outings to start the season, Cody Allen has made 7 straight scoreless appearances covering 8 1/3 innings. His last four have been hitless (albeit one was a single batter). Last night he finished off the game with a perfect 9th and now sports a 2.19 ERA on the season.

6) Managerial Head-Scratchers

I know it wasn't a Save situation, but Chris Perez has pitched once since April 22nd. We have the day off today. Why not give him the 9th instead of Cody Allen?

7) Back on track

After two paltry one-hit games in a row, Carlos Santana returned to form with two singles and a walk. He has 5 multi-hit games in his last 10. 14 of his 30 hits are for extra bases. He has scored as many runs as he has times striking out. He is really, really good at hitting.

8) Credit Where Credit is Due Dept.

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Mike Brantley slashed three hits from the leadoff slot. In his last 10 games, Brantley is hitting 17-for-46 (.370) with 6 multi-hit games. He will turn 26 this month.

Drew Stubbs collected two hits, including an RBI single that travelled all the way to the shortstop.