



The Indians got back to their winning ways, beating the worst pitcher on the best team they've faced in a while, and today's B-List looks at the length of Ubaldo Jimenez' leash, the resurgence of Asdrubal Cabrera, the intercontinental ballistic capabilities of Mark Reynolds, and a contrast between relief pitchers Nick Hagadone and Chris Resop. He also calls Jason Giambi "old," which is a bit of pot-and-kettling by the columnist. At least Joe Smiff is back from whatever strike zone insanity afflicted him.

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Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

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Athletics (18-15)

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Indians (15-14)

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W: Jimenez (2-2)

L: J. Parker (1-5)

The Formula might need a little tweaking to absorb an average bullpen performance, but it still seems to be working thus far.

1) Leashmotif

A decent “envelope proxy” for plate discipline is to consider OBP - AVG. It isn't perfect, in that “plate discipline” and “walks” are often mistaken for being equivalent, when they aren't really. Plate discipline is all about swinging at pitches you can drive, and while players with good plate discipline do tend to draw more walks, walks are not the GOAL of plate discipline. They are a BY-PRODUCT. But a decent quick-glance way to see if a player is a patient hitter is to see if his OBP is 70 points (or more, obviously) higher than his AVG. Did I pick 70 for some Officially Official sabermetric reason? No. It seems like a good value: a guy hitting .280 with an OBP of .350 seems patient to me. I'm not even sure how I'd evaluate where that cutoff line should be.

Last, night Oakland started EIGHT players who meet this artificial threshold, and the #9 hitter, Eric Sogard, suffers because he can't actually hit. At .227 with a slugging percentage of .280, I'm not sure why you wouldn't throw Sogard anything BUT strikes. What's he going to do, bleed on you? And even he posted a .293 OBP that just barely misses the 70-point cutoff.

(For comparison, the Indians started FOUR players who met this goal, although admittedly Mike Brantley missed it by 2 points.)

So if there were ever a lineup you'd be concerned about facing a guy with as many command problems as Ubaldo Jimenez, this would be the kind you'd construct. The two-through-six hitters all have good pop, too, with Seth Smith at .442 the only player with a SLG under .474. Every A's hitter is a threat to get on base and make you work, and the middle of the lineup can punish those mistakes with a longball. In fact, three A's hit doubles last night.

Thankfully, none of them came off Ubaldo Jimenez.

Through five complete innings of work, Jimenez gave up a paltry two hits and 1 walk, while reeling off 8 Ks. He did give up a homer to Yoenis Cespedes, but that lad is strong. Still, he retired the first six hitters in order, and after a leadoff single in the third, struck out the next two batters, walked a guy, and struck out the final hitter of the frame. After Cespedes' homer, he came back to strike out the next two hitters swinging. (Six of Jimenez' eight Ks were swinging.)

Of course, in the 6th inning, things didn't go as swimmingly: Jimenez threw 4 straight balls after an 0-2 count to John Jaso, gave up a single, then after two outs, yielded a second single before walking Josh Donaldson, also on a two-strike pitch. That ended Jimenez' night, and while his line looks perfectly similar to those of Masterson, Kazmir, and Kluber's this weekend (5 2/3 IP, 4 H, 2 R, 3 BB, 8 K), it doesn't do much of a job of conveying how good Jimenez had looked up to that point.

You don't get to discard the data you don't like, though, and Jimenez DID give up two hits and two walks in that last inning of work, and frankly, there wasn't much of an indication he would. If you're grasping for warning signs, the 3-0 count he rang up on Josh Reddick in the 5th might qualify ... except that he then struck Reddick out swinging and retired the next two hitters on four pitches (three in the strike zone). See, the "smoking gun" or "flaming ferret" or whatever it is we're looking for with Jimenez is nebulous at best. He pitched well under adversity in the third. He was kinda mediocre doing it in the 6th

. I'd argue that Terry Francona managed Jimenez' outing as close to perfectly as possible.

But it brings up the long-term prognosis for Jimenez: generally speaking, I didn't like seeing Chuck Nagy on the mound with baserunners past the 6th inning. Whether the data support it or not, it always FELT like he was going to lose it and give up multiple runs. There's a reason I refer to a manager's inclination toward squeezing "just one more inning" out of his starter as "Westbrooking." I've seen other Cleveland pitchers who needed to be closely monitored. When it comes right down to it, Jimenez' leash needs to be exceptionally short.

On the other hand, until you need that leash, Jimenez sure is capable of some fine innings.

2) Drooby Doo!

On April 27th, Asdrubal Cabrera hit a single in Kansas City to raise his slash line to .162/.230/.279. This served to show that even a five-game hitting streak doesn't do much for your numbers when the streak is all "one-fors" and you started at .118/.196/.255 when it started. April 2013 will not go down in history as Asdrubal Cabrera's Favorite Month.

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After that, Cabrera collected seven hits in his next three games, and in his last ten games, Cabrera has gone 14-for-39 (.359) with 5 doubles. Of course, until last night, he didn't have any home runs since April 9th.

He now has home runs since April 9th.

In the first inning, immediately following a solo shot by Jason Kipnis, Cabrera blasted a ball 400 feet off the top of the bullpen in right center, and while his second homer was a more-modest 344-foot glorified deep fly to right, it still counts as a two-homer game.

Cabrera is actually hitting pretty well this season from the left side of the plate: .262/.348/.525. Of course, a bunch of that SLG was added last night, but still, he's had a solid stroke against right-handed pitching. The problem is that as a right-handed batter, Cabrera has hit a dismal .190/.244/.310 with 12 punchouts in 42 AB (only 3 walks). The samples are clearly too small to get all worked up over, but since Cabrera has missed some time and DH'd a couple of times, I have to wonder if the quad injury he nursed for a while might have affected him more from that side of the plate.

3) Mulk smash!

You want home runs with authority? Cabrera's two homers were the SHORTEST TWO of the FIVE hit by both teams yesterday. Jason Kipnis hit one over 400 feet. Yoenis Cespedes hit one over 400 feet.

Mark Reynolds hit a ball that burned up on re-entry.

Officially, Reynolds' blast was measured at "457 feet." I believe this is because the equipment at Not Jacobs Field lacks a scale in "parsecs."

I'm telling you, Mark Reynolds hit that ball a very long way.

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4) A modest proposal

I would like to goad all opposing pitchers into hitting Mark Reynolds in his first plate appearance.

5) HagaDONE

Ublado Jimenez' second walk of the inning in the 6th actually loaded the bases, bringing up Josh Reddick with the Cleveland lead a tenuous 4-2. Nick Hagadone was summoned to face the lefty Reddick.

Strike (looking)

Strike (swinging)

Strike (looking)

Thank you for playing!

6) This having been said

Hagadone did give up a double to lead off the next inning and Josh Reddick is hitting .152 thus far. But still! Bases loaded, three-pitch strikeout? That's sweet, man.

7) Back on track

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Joe Smiff threw 11 pitches last night. Nine were strikes. Three were swung at and missed. He gave up a single and so what? Another scoreless inning for St. Joe.

8) The Old Man and the C

Jason Giambi probably has as much off-the-field value to the Indians as on-the-field virtues at this point in his career, but it should be noted that he hit his third double of the season and also banged out a two-run single in the 7th with two outs to help put the game away. On a night when the Indians went 2-for-11 with runners in scoring position, that stood out.

(The other hit was Ryan Raburn's RBI single immediately following Giambi.)

9) No Credit Where No Credit is Due Dept.

After striking out Jason Kipnis, Oakland reliever Chris Resop coughed up the following hairball:

Cabrera: Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball

Swisher: Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball

Reynolds: Ball, Strike (foul), Strike (looking), runner-advancing groundout

Santana: Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball (intentional)

With the understanding that the last four were intentional, the cold hard fact is that this is thirteen balls and THREE strikes in sixteen pitches.

This is why the bases were loaded for Jason Giambi.