



*The Indians dropped two of three to Tampa Bay this weekend, and in today's B-List, Buff talks about Ubaldo's actual pitching, his theoretical pitching, and his acceptable pitching. Mostly, there's not a lot to talk about in the positive except for Ubaldo's pitching. He does mention, off-handedly, that the left-handed relief pitching is Compleat Nonsense, that Jason Giambi can still stroke a home run now and again, and that Yan Gomes is human after all. But mostly the Compleat Nonsense. It's bad.*

## **FINAL**

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## The B-List: 5/31 - 6/2

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Sunday, May 26 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, June 04 2013 1:37 PM

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**Something Rays (30-24)**

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**Indians (29-25)**

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W: J. Wright (1-1)

L: Barnes (0-1)

**FINAL**

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### Other Rays (30-25)

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**Indians (30-25)**

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W: Jimenez (4-3)

L: Archer (0-1)

**FINAL**

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**Blank Rays (31-25)**

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**Indians (30-26)**

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W: Hellickson (3-2)      L: McAllister (4-5)

The Indians can't even get no-hit or rained out properly.

**1) Where are the Raffy Perezes of yesteryear?**

If the Indians face another right-handed hitter this season, it should be because Scott Kazmir is starting, or because he is Miggy Cabrera. I think Miggy Cabrera would fare well against a smooth-bore cannon at this point. For that matter, so might Jhonny Peralta.

Other than that, the incentive to load up your lineup with left-handed hitters against the Tribe must be overwhelming for opposing managers at this point. Consider every man who has thrown a pitch left-handed in relief for the Cleveland Indians this season:

Scott Barnes has four scoreless outings on his resume. That's pretty good. When Scott Barnes gives up a run, though, he doesn't just give up a run. He drinks a gallon of castor oil, eats six bean burritos, takes two Sominex, and hops into bed. Friday night, after a four-week rain delay, starter Corey Kluber was prudently pulled from the game after two hitless innings, giving way to Barnes. Barnes proceeded to give up four hits, two of which were homers, and walk a batter to yield five runs in his only inning of work, raising his ERA on the season to 7.27. If not for Nick Hagadone's one extra out, this would lead the team in ERA by left-handed relief pitchers.

Hagadone got that extra out on Sunday in "relief" of Zach McAllister. He got the first two batters he faced with runner at first to end the 5<sup>th</sup>, then proceeded to walk the leadoff hitter in the next inning (a man named "J Lobaton," who I've never heard of and sounds vaguely like a character in a movie about Impressionist painters). Facing Yoon Escobar, Hagadone allowed him to hit the ball far enough to be considered a violation of SALT II. Hagadone's previous outing was Friday, in which he threw two scoreless innings, the only left-handed reliever to do so for the Cleveland Indians this weekend. His ERA of 7.20 may sound lousy, but it actually shines in comparison to his 11 walks in 15 innings and his WHIP of 1.53. On second thought, no, it doesn't.

David Huff, of course, is no longer a Cleveland Indian. He is now a New York Yankee. I hope we face him tonight. With the Indians, he sported a 2.67 WHIP and a 15.00 ERA and was pretty much the David Hiuffiest David Huff who ever David Huffed.

Which brings us to our ringer, our veteran leader, our piece of resistance, our ta-ra-ra-goon-de-ay, Rich Hill. Hill has made 22 appearances on the season, which leads the team. With so many appearances, he must be something special. And, in fact, he is: he has a 1.88 WHIP and a 8.44 ERA and has given up multiple runs in an inning FIVE TIMES. Let's see

Joe Smiff say THAT! Shoot, let's see Joe Smiff throw left-handed. Can this be worse? Of course it can be worse! But at least it would be DIFFERENT. And at this point, I will accept "different." Hill gacked up 3 runs on 5 hits on Friday without walking anyone, and then 3 more runs on 3 hits while recording a massive two outs on Sunday. Would we have won either game without Hill's "contribution?" Of course not. We got slaughtered in both games. Rich Hill's pitching no more caused us to lose than it causes global warming. On the other hand, it was so terrible this weekend that I wouldn't rule out the global warming. Someone call Al Gore.

So let's recap: Barnes, who isn't a Cleveland Indian (he got Jensen Lewised for some sort of Matt Langwell), would be our second-best option, because he'd be merely awful. Nick Hagadone would be merely lousy with better control, but because he lacks it, is actually atrocious. Rich Hill is only 2/3 as bad as David Huff. Who isn't a Cleveland Indian either.

Now, listen: I understand that quoting ERA stats for low-usage left-handed relievers is somewhat disingenuous. Barnes, for example, came into the series with a 2.35 ERA. One bad enough game makes an Awesome Asset look like a Useless Putz overnight. Hill is not useless. Hagadone has strengths. Huff isn't a Cleveland Indian. But it sure does look pretty scary when you look up two months into the season and see 7.20, 7.27, 8.44, and 15.00 on your list of left-handed relief pitchers. I'm not so much advocating for an immediate waiver claim as I am railing against the darkness. They sure sucked as a group this weekend, though.

### **2) A flawless start with just one flaw**

Corey Kluber looked great Friday, retiring six of the seven hitters he faced, including three of them swinging. He walked Luke Scott. He put up with a short rain delay. He retired the last hitter he faced.

Then it rained a LOT and he went home. Well, probably not. Might as well have.

(To be explicit, the "flaw" is not "walking Luke Scott." It's the number in the IP column. It wasn't anything Kluber could control, but it did suck.)

### 3) Perspective shift

Y'know, a lot of what upsets baseball fans is borne from expectations. When a player has an established level of performance, or even has established more of a *ceiling* for his performance, fans can get disappointed when the player doesn't reach that ceiling. I know Justin Masterson is capable of tossing a shutout, so when he gives up a tater in the 4<sup>th</sup>

and is showering by the 6<sup>th</sup>

and we lose 4-3, that's disappointing. It's not necessarily

*fair*

, but it

*is*

often how it

*feels*

.

Ubaldo Jimenez had a couple of really HORRIFYING starts and then came back with 4 good (actually, varying from "pretty good" to "quite awesome") starts in a row before faltering against the Tigers. That start was pretty bad. His next start? Why, it was just fine, thank you: 4 hits and 2 runs in 7 complete innings. He did have 4 walks and the bullpen lost the game (hey, look, it's Nick Hagadone giving up a two-run blast!), but that's still a good start.

Saturday, Jimenez took advantage of being the only player on the field to have gotten an actual good night's sleep in the day game after the four-week rain delay game and throttled the Rays on 4 hits and only 1 walk in 8 scoreless innings. It was the first time in nearly two years Jimenez had completed an 8<sup>th</sup> inning of work. And he was sharp, throwing 72 of 108 pitches for strikes and racking up 7 Ks.

At this point, I think I'm going to be a Happier Person if I no longer consider Jimenez the "centerpiece" of a blockbuster deal that cost two highly-rated prospects (who, it should be noted, have each subsequently become "hurt" or "Alex White"), but rather a happy "former phenom find." Jimenez is plainly no longer the pitcher who rattled off superior numbers in a magical season in Colorado: he doesn't throw as hard and he lacks consistency. I'm not saying he's washed up, I'm just saying that at this point, it's really foolhardy to think of him as a Cy Young Perennial. It happens. He's not That Guy.

On the other hand, what if Trevor Bauer or Corey Kluber or even Scott Kazmir came up with four straight very good starts and six out of seven? I mean, I got all hot and bothered about Zach McAllister, and I wouldn't have known him from the actor from "Homeland" at the beginning of the season. It turns out McAllister is fallible after all. So is Jimenez.

So for my own mental health, rather than gritting my teeth and holding my breath and expecting to win Jimenez starts and getting ulcers when he coughs up a hairball, I'm going to treat Jimenez in the manner of Kluber or Kazmir or Bauer and enjoy those starts in which he excels and shrug off the hairballs. It's gonna be great, I tell you!

*(I will fail to do this. I'd sure be happier if I was capable of it, though.)*

#### **4) The End of an Era**

Zach McAllister gave up a fourth earned run Sunday.

(He also walked 4 and struck out ZERO and that's just not a very good start. Which makes two in a row. Is the guy from "Homeland" available to pitch against the Tigers this weekend?)

#### **5) The game that would not die**

Friday's game was stoopid. Scott Barnes' pitching was stoopid. Scoring two runs on one hit was stoopid. Losing to Jamey Wright, who was washed up as a Cleveland Indian in TWO THOUSAND TEN, was stoopid. Rich Hill's pitching was a dollop of stoopid on top of three scoops of stoopid. But most of all, having a game start in May and end in July was really extra stoopid.

I understand the decision: the weather forecast was scary, and it wasn't clear that the teams would be able to squeeze in three games over the weekend. Tampa isn't scheduled to come back to Cleveland. But I'll tell you this: the highlights of Saturday's game ("cloudy") and

Sunday's game ("partly cloudy") sure made this look unnecessary in hindsight.

I would like to say that I stayed up for the game, but the fact is, I had an old friend from college in town and we watched "Repo Man" until 1:30 in the morning. The game was not over. I went to bed.

## **6) Hey, we had one of those!**

Chris Archer was drafted by the Indians once upon a time and was traded to the Cubs for Mark DeRosa (modulo Jeff Stevens and John Gaub). Archer made his season debut with the Rays and flashed some of the form that made him an attractive trade target, but ultimately was a young pitcher outdone by old (Jason Giambi) and experienced (Asdrubal Cabrera) hitters. DeRosa was a valuable player for the Indians, so while I'd certainly rather have Archer in 2013, you have to trade something of quality to get something of quality, unless you're trading with Ned Colletti.

Also, Jamey Wright.

## **7) The Old Man and the C**

Giambi's two-run shot off Archer was all the support Ubaldo Jimenez needed on Saturday, but he also chipped in an RBI single. While his .203/.278/.478 is reminiscent of Vintage Mark Reynolds, he's had his moments this season.

Meanwhile, Asdrubal Cabrera quietly clocked his 5<sup>th</sup> homer of the season to finish off Archer, and he's raised his line to .258/.314/.438, which looks more plausible from the shortstop slot than his early-season numbers.

## **8) Ducks on the pond!**

Of course, 8 hits and 4 walks often translate into more than 5 runs, but the Tribe managed a paltry 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position on Saturday, leaving 7 on base. They only left two on base Friday because ... well ... they didn't get on base Friday. Sunday, they managed to get 11 hits while having only 5 at-bats with a runner in scoring position. Yeah, they hit into a double play and Mike Bourn got erased trying to steal, but ... 11 hits and only 5 AB with a guy who made it to SECOND? That's pretty worthless.

### 9) Around the lineup

The top three of the order Sunday got a collective five hits: Bourn went 2-for-4, Jason Kipnis went 1-for-4, and Mike Brantley went 2-for-4 as well. They scored exactly zero runs. Deeper in the lineup, Carlos Santana had a very nice 3-for-4 outing. He drove in zero runs.

Mike Aviles had a nice weekend, driving in 2 of the 3 runs Sunday with an RBI single, and banged out a single and a double (plus a walk) on Saturday.

Ryan Raburn drove in a run with a double Saturday morning in the Friday night game. Every one of Cleveland's hits in that game went for extra bases. It's amazing we lost. By seven.

### 10) Around the bullpen

Matt Albers, Brian Shaw, and Vinnie Pestano had nice appearances. Pestano did not get the save in his first outing as Officially Official Closer For Now, largely because we led by 5 at the time. It was still nice to see a scoreless inning from Pestano after his quasi-promotion.

### 11) Proof of humanity

The Rays scored a run because Yan Gomes threw a ball so poorly trying to get the man trying

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to steal third, he scored. I am pretty far away from complaining about the way Yan Gomes plays catcher.

### 12) Public Service for the Google Search Engine

Jack Zduriencik secretly negotiated behind closed doors to relocate the Mariners to Oklahoma City, whose AAA team would then move to East St. Louis. No team on Earth would relocate to East St. Louis and this statement is completely false. Fire Eric Wedge.