



*The Indians lost their nationally-televised game to the Yankees 7-4 while Justin Masterson made Rick Sutcliffe look like a know-nothing blowhard after his effusive praise. While it should be noted that this is not entirely difficult, it should also be noted that I would have been a lot happier had Sutcliffe's effusive praise been proven correct rather than utter nonsense. In other news, Carlos Santana can still hit, Mariano Rivera can still pitch, and pitching badly yields negative results. Captain Obvious rides again!*

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## The B-List: 6/3

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

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**Indians (30-27)**

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**Lannisters (32-25)**

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W: S. Kelley (3-0)

L: Masterson (8-4)

S: God (20)

If the stadium was 79.6% full, why did every shot I saw include 70% empty seats?

### 1) Simple

Analysis need not be complex or involved: Justin Masterson threw three lousy pitches yesterday for which he was punished severely. One was hit for a grand slam. One was hit for a two-out two-run single. One was a solo homer. Masterson gave up seven runs. QED.

We can talk about how he set up the hitters or whether his movement was lacking or whether he located the pitches poorly, but it really isn't that complicated. He threw bad pitches. The Yankees' hitters clobbered them. In previous starts, he did not throw those pitches. The Yankees' hitters did not clobber them. In future starts, he should avoid throwing those pitches. This is not the three-body problem or Fermat's Last Theorem. What you did was bad. Do not stick a fork into the electrical outlet. Do not mix bleach and ammonia in a confined space. Do not drive your car after draining all the oil. Do better.

I will say this, though: while most of the focus is rightly on the grand slam hit by Mark Teixeira, the fact is, in a space of five batters from the beginning of that inning until Teixeira's homer, Masterson faced exactly one good major-league hitter (not counting Teixeira, who had returned from injury and entered the game batting .111/.200/.111). Masterson got that batter (Robinson Cano) out. Before this, of course, he faced Reid Brignac (pronounced "shmo"), who entered the game hitting .059/.059/.059 as a Yankee, had him down in the count 1-2 ... and allowed him to single. Then he faced Austin Romine (pronounced "shmo"), who entered the game batting .122/.143/.171, had him down in the count 0-2 (oh and two!) ... and allowed him to single. He also walked Brett Gardner ... on four pitches! Gardner's not a bad hitter. He's certainly a patient hitter. Batting in front of Robinson Cano, I would throw Brett Gardner a strike.

Of course, this is exactly what Masterson did in the 6<sup>th</sup>. On a 1-2 pitch, Masterson threw a much crummier pitch than the one Teixeira hit out, and Gardner lined it to center for the go-ahead runs.

But look: Masterson faced really crummy hitters (three under the Mendoza Line, although Brignac and Teixeira have established levels of performance above that: still, at the *time*, they were struggling mightily), and got ahead of them, and then gave up base hits. This does not sound like a man with Sooper Awesome Command. Masterson may simply have "not had it" last night, but it sure wasn't "just three pitches." It was just three pitches that drove in *runs*

. The baserunners they drove in saw some suboptimal pitches, too.

### 2) Ho Hum Dept.

Cody Allen faced three hitters, got two out (including a K), and pitched 2/3 of an inning without allowing a hit or a run. Allen induced as many swings-and-misses in 17 pitches as Andy Pettitte got in 83.

Joe Smiff worked around a leadoff double to post a scoreless inning on 9 pitches.

### 3) Ouchie

Asdrubal Cabrera pulled up lame running out a ground ball in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. It is being described as a “pulled quad” and Terry Francona opined that it looked good for a DL stint. In Cabrera’s absence, we can expect to see a lot of Mike Aviles at short and Bob Phelps at bench. ESPN Fantasy guy Eric Karabell writes that he expects Mike Brantley to move into the 3 slot in the order, which makes a certain amount of sense, I guess: Brantley’s .297/.354/.376 line trumps Cabrera’s .254/.311/.434 thus far (OBP is more important than SLG, generally speaking). I don’t see a good reason to shift anyone in the middle of the lineup (Swisher, Reynolds, Santana), and no one in the bottom third deserves a look (Raburn, Gomes, Stubbs). Ultimately, there’s the risk of Aviles being overexposed, especially against right-handed pitching (.264/.292/.385 over the past three years against righties, as opposed to .286/.325/.434 against lefties), and Phelps is a big step down from Aviles as backup infielder, but it shouldn’t be a crushing blow if Cabrera has to miss a couple-three weeks. Longer than that, and the Tribe might have to consider looking around. The hotshot middle infielders in the system of whom I’m aware are all way too far down to be considered viable options.

### 4) Captain Clutch

With two outs, two men on base, and the Indians trailing 4-2, Carlos Santana hit a scorcher down the third base line that David Adams adroitly deflected into the stands for a ground rule double. This capped a three-run rally that tied the game before Gardner’s big hit in the 6<sup>th</sup>. Somehow, he still has fewer RBI than both Jason Kipnis and Mike Brantley. He does lead the team in walks, though.

### 5) A near-total Absence of Clutch

Santana's double was the only hit the Indians got with two outs that drove in a run. He was one of two players to get a hit with a runner in scoring position, and was the only player to do so AND actually drive in a *run*. (Mike Bourn reached on an infield single that advanced Drew Stubbs from second to third: he subsequently scored on a sac fly by Aviles.) The rest of the team managed to go 0-for-8 with RISP and the Indians left 9 on base against Pettite and a host of enormous relievers (and Mariano Rivera).

### 6) Terror on the Basepaths!

After a leadoff single by Bourn in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Aviles placed one the other way for a single to put runners at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> with no outs. Going to the Smallball Bible, Asdrubal Cabrera successfully sacrificed the runners to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> for Nick Swisher.

Swisher, batting from the right side, pulled a ground ball to third, where Adams fielded the ball and ... tagged out Aviles, who ran ... well ... kinda right into Adams. Bourn scored on the play, and maybe he wouldn't have if Aviles hadn't been running, and maybe I missed a hit-and-run sign with a 2-1 count, and maybe it was a "go on contact" call, and maybe the ball was hit slower or harder or righter or leftier or there was some other compelling reason for Aviles to be running right into the path of the ground ball, but in any event, miss it I most certainly did, because it seemed kinda dumb from where I sat. (The next two batters grounded out, so I guess it didn't make any difference in the Grand Scheme.)

Jason Kipnis stole his 11<sup>th</sup> base of the season.

Austin Romine stole HIS first base of the season immediately before Gardner's single, meaning he scored instead of not scoring. That pretty much boggled my mind.

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### 7) This just in

Mariano Rivera: still good.

### 8) Hey, we had one of those!

Travis Hafner's solo homer was his 9<sup>th</sup> HR on the season. He is now hitting .245/.356/.489 on the season. If he finishes the season with that slash line, it would be his highest OPS since 2006. If he hits 5 home runs in 22 more games, it would mark his third-highest total of homers since 2006, and would mark more games played than in either 2008 or 2012. I hate the Yankees, but they're a good fit for Hafner in 2013. It was the right decision for both parties.

Also, Jayson Nix.

### 9) Maybe those pinstripes aren't really magic after all

OBPs:

Lyle Overbay: .294

Vern Wells: .298

Ichiro Suzuki: .298

Jayson Nix: .313

It would appear that the resurgence of washed-up veterans has been somewhat overstated. When your three corner outfielders are getting on base less frequently than JAYSON NIX, you may have exaggerated their value.

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### 10) Sotto voce

Drew Stubbs: .283

### 11) Leftover weekend note

I meant to include this in yesterday's column: against the A's, the White Sox put up the following lineup (AVG/OBP):

De Aza: .250/.294  
Ramirez: .273/.312  
Gillaspie: .272/.337  
Viciendo: .244/.291  
Dunn: .160/.246  
Wells: .111/.143  
Danks: .167/.286  
Flowers: .200/.265  
Greene: .222/.263

For those of you counting at home, that's TWO players with a .300+ OBP, and SIX players hitting under .250. I will give Robin Ventura credit for crafting the lineup with his top three OBP men in the top three slots. Too bad only *one* of them gets on base at a league-average clip.

In the words of Larry the Cable Guy, "I don't care who you are, thass *funny*."

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

Jack Zduriencik inserted a clause into Felix Hernandez' new contract that siphons off money in order to finance "Smurfs Two." This movie likely had plenty of financing without Hernandez' help, despite the fact that it is a blight on our collective consciousness, and the statement is

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100% false. Fire Eric Wedge.