



The Indians dropped the opener to Kansas City, falling behind the Royals into third place in the A.L. Central, and falling back under .500 in the process. In today's B-List, Buff congratulates the alien that inhabited Carlos Carrasco's body, laments Jason Kipnis' tough day at the plate, wonders if Mike Aviles was actually worse, wonders whether Brian Shaw was the best choice, likes all of Matt Albers' pitches but one, and takes cheap shots at Jason Giambi's speed, Rich Hill's fielding, and John McDonald's existence.

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Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

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W: Crow (3-2)

L: B. Shaw (0-1) S: G. Holland (15)

I have seen better offensive displays.

1) Possessed

My wife has become engrossed in watching the TNT series “Falling Skies.” I used to be less thoughtful about “aliens invade Earth” movies and stories, but I’ve come to wonder exactly what sort of approach an alien civilization would take when coming in contact with our planet. I’ve come to think of the alien approach as something like the Europeans coming en masse to North and South America: there’s a lovely land with lots of juicy natural resources and if it weren’t for all these pesky people running around, it would be a wonderful place indeed. The aliens could try negotiating with the inhabitants, or they could try to enslave them, or simply wipe them out, but really, it’s not like they’re IMPORTANT or anything. Sure, they’ve got some nice art, and hey, it’s certainly neighborly of them to show us which foods aren’t poisonous and all, but really, they just take up so much SPACE. And gold. Anyway, it’s fine if they want to stay. They just can’t be anywhere we actually want to GO.

The Europeans represented an interesting mix of Superior Technology and Inferior Technology. They certainly had guns and horses and Really Big Boats and such, and it’s hard to conceive of a full-scale invasion force not being successful on these grounds alone. But the Europeans also had one other factor in their favor: they were sick. Well, not actively sick, all of them, all the time, but rather they had antibodies to various diseases that the Americans did not, and diseases like smallpox and typhoid ravaged the indigenous peoples.

How would this apply to aliens? On one hand, the technology required for interstellar travel would have to be quite staggering. And in the same way that Westerners use antibacterial soap and develop allergies because they haven’t had to deal with intestinal parasites and such for generations, one would imagine that a culture technologically advanced enough to make it to Earth would also have advanced to the point where they’d largely have eradicated all but the most ingenious pathogens. H.G. Wells was thinking in a similar way when the “War of the Worlds” Martians were ultimately thwarted by prolonged exposure to (if I recall correctly) the common cold viruses. It would be difficult to conceive of a European-type superposition of technology and poor health when it comes to an alien race.

Of course, “Falling Skies” handles this in some regard by having the invading ground troops actually be a SECOND type of alien, enslaved by the ACTUAL invading aliens. And then there are insurgents of the second type, and consultant aliens of a third type, and really, while I appreciate the drama of the show, it exhausted my Gedanken Experimentalist a bit back in the past. Anyway, one of the elements of the show is the old “brain-controlling parasite,” where the human acting as alien of the first type after having been enslaved by a device implanted by aliens of the second type drops an insect-like creature into the son of the hero and ... look, it’s

the mind-control thing. You've seen it before. "Star Trek" had one. "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" has one. It's an age-old device, playing on the fear of being forced to do something that you can't control. It's what makes parasites so terrifying at a base level, and is one of the classical fears of human literature, along with "being eaten" and "having to work for Donald Trump." We don't like dying like animals, so "Alien" is scary. We don't like losing control of who we are, so "Body Snatchers" is scary. We don't like poorly-written, ill-conceived schlock, so "Battlefield Earth" is scary.

There are times, though, that you simply have to tip your hat to the aliens and thank them for inhabiting Carlos Carrasco's body, 'cause that alien could really pitch.

2) More serious, less flippant, more significant, less likely

Carrasco retired the first 13 hitters he faced. He allowed one run on four hits in 7 1/3 innings, which required only 90 pitches to complete. 64.4% of his pitches were strikes, and he sported a nice 11:7 GO:FO ratio. While it would have been nice to have more than 4 Ks, he was still in command the whole time, and only walked one batter (a problem in the past). Only one of the hits was for extra bases (a double), and with runners in scoring position, Carrasco got a pair of groundouts in the 5th, a groundout and a K in the 6th, and a groundout in the 7th (0-for-5). The run he allowed came after a single, a sacrifice (after which Carrasco left), and a bloop over the shortstop's head.

The reason I bring up Carrasco's performance with runners in scoring position is that the knock on Carrasco has always been how he responds to adversity. This isn't really enough adversity to allow us to draw any grand conclusions: while the game was tight, the "adversity" that caused him to collapse in the past is more of the "allow multiple runs in an inning" variety. My son can handle throwing a gutter ball. It's when he has three or four frames in a row with a gutter ball that he struggles with his composure. The same goes for Carrasco: this was one series of tests, but until I see more, I'll reserve judgement.

Which is a shame, kind of, because the alien that inhabited Carrasco's body last night pitched a heckuva game. Moreover, that guy (for lack of a better term for human-alien symbiant) would be a huge asset for the Tribe for the rest of the season. It would allow for less dependence on Scott Kazmir, allow for less stomach-churn waiting for Zach McAllister to return from injury, and essentially render Cashbox Myers moot.

The sound you do not hear is me not holding my breath. But boy, that symbiant sure pitched well last night.

3) Sometimes you're the windshield, sometimes you're the bug, and sometimes you're the bug on the windshield that is flattened by a steamroller during a hailstorm in a pool of molten lava while William Hung sings in the background

James Shields was not especially sharp last night, walking four in six innings. In the bottom of the third, he started four of the six hitters he faced with 2-0 counts, including the last hitter of the inning. After a leadoff single, Shields walked Ryan Raburn on a full count, got John McDonald to bunt pointlessly into a force at third, Mike Bourn walked to load the bases.

Shields finally started Mike Aviles off with a strike en route to a foulout, bringing arguably the Tribe's hottest hitter to the plate, Jason Kipnis. Kipnis started 2-0 ... then watched a strike ... then swung and missed ... then watched strike three as the inning ended with the bases loaded.

This experience so traumatized Kipnis that, given the same opportunity in the 5th after a pair of walks and a single, Kipnis swung through a 2-2 pitch to strike out with the bases loaded AGAIN.

Let's stop short of declaring Kipnis a fungus or anything, but in a game in which the Indians left 11 men on base, hit 1-for-9 with runners in scoring position, and lost 2-1, let's agree that this was really atrocious.

4) Sometimes you're just the bug with a more aesthetic soundtrack

In that 3rd inning, Aviles came to the plate with a runner on third and fewer than two outs (so that he could potentially drive in a run without even getting a hit), and could not even put the ball in play.

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In the 9th inning, after Bourn doubled and advanced to third with one out on a wild pitch, Aviles was at the plate with a runner on third and fewer than two outs (so that he could potentially drive in a run without even getting a hit) ... and could not even put the ball in play (he whiffed).

That may or may not be “atrocious,” but it sure isn’t any *good*.

5) Terror on the Basepaths!

The Indians have found a new strategy: steal second and let the catcher throw the ball into center field, getting two bases for the price of one. After Kipnis did this to Solano this weekend, last night Mark Reynolds (Mark Reynolds!) did it to Sally Perez.

On the other hand, Lo Cain stole second off Carlos Santana, and the Royals’ winning run scored on a wild pitch by Matt Albers.

On the other other hand, Aviles hit a single in the 5th with runners at first and second, and at least part of the reason that his single only loaded the bases was that Jason Giambi is in his Boog Powell phase as a baserunner.

6) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Wait, let me get something else in here first.

7) General Managerial Head-Scratchers

While I can’t force anyone to develop faster than they have, and would hardly lobby for a significant trade, at some point the fact that Rich Hill and Nick Hagadone are the only left-handed relievers on the roster, each of whom has been dismal, and Scott Barnes is in the

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minors, and David Huff was David Huff right up to the point where he was no longer a Cleveland Indian ... I mean, look, this has to change, right?

8) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Okay, this having been said, with a runner in scoring position and Alex Gordon and Eric Hosmer (left-handed hitters with significant platoon splits) coming to the plate, Terry Francona resisted the knee-jerk reaction to automatically bring in a left-handed reliever. This is fine. As stated above, and listed in gory detail a couple weeks ago, Hill and Hagadone have been ... "inconsistent." I think that's the word the AP used in its write-up. Apparently they're not supposed to use the word "putrid" in something for nationwide consumption. I don't have any problem with not succumbing to severe orthodoxy here.

But Brian Shaw? Brian Shaw, who holds righties to a .206/.282/.238 line, but allows lefties to hit .295/.343/.443 off him? I understand that Joe Smiff (who's been much better against lefties) pitched twice against Washington, but he didn't pitch Sunday. I'm glad Francona didn't call on Albers, who allows lefties to reach base at a .413 clip thus far. I won't exhaust the whole list, but ... Brian Shaw?

9) This having been said

Shaw got Gordon to line out, and the "double" he allowed to Hosmer was a glorified blort that we Texans refuse to acknowledge as a "Texas Leaguer." I'm questioning the process, not the result. 'course, the result wasn't any good, either.

10) By the way

Since we can't ask for Rich Hill to get lefties out, or righties out, is it too much to ask that he can at least not fall down?

11) Bright spots in the void

Despite allowing the winning run to score on a wild pitch, it should be noted that Albers came into the game with the bases loaded and nobody out and allowed only that one run. He got a lineout, a bunt that cut down a runner at the plate, and a flyout to center.

Carlos Santana smacked a solo shot off Shields in the 6th.

Mike Bourn reached base three times in five trips to the plate.

John McDonald was not eaten by badgers.

12) Public Service for the Google Search Engine

Jack Zduriencik bought the Seattle Sounders and moved them to Oklahoma City. Drew Carey would have cooked and eaten Zduriencik if he had attempted this, and the statement is demonstrably false. Fire Eric Wedge.