



The Indians surged back into second place in the A.L. Central with a thrilling 4-3 victory over Kansas City, driving the Royals back below .500 where they belong, and rising to .500 themselves, where ... well, they probably belong. In today's B-List, Buff marvels at our pitching staff's collective ability to throw baseballs in almost any direction but at their targets, gleefully recaps the three-run 8th, and remembers a time when Cody Allen's play on Eric Hosmer's grounder seemed commonplace.

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The B-List: 6/18

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Wednesday, June 19 2013 1:01 PM - Last Updated Saturday, June 22 2013 11:27 AM

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W: C. Allen (2-0)

L: Herrera (3-5)

“S”: Pestano (2)

... he sure knew how to get the crowd into the game at the end.

-- Bill Pestano

1) Bob Wickman shakes his head

News from the minors comes that Chris Perez had one of the less-effective outings of all time, coughing up three gopher balls and a double in 23 pitches. It is not clear if he recorded an out or, if, in fact, the opponent is still batting as you read this.

Fortunately, Cleveland has other options, and Vinnie Pestano picked up his second save of the season by pitching a scoreless 9th inning last night. Of course, there is “scoreless,” and there is “*scoreless*.” The Royals did not score, this is true. Pestano also allowed four baserunners in the inning, and the Royals at one point had runners on second, third, and third.

Which, of course, illustrates the problem with the Royals’ scoring strategy: Pestano gave up a weak single to David Lough, then a sharper single to Mike Moustakas before getting Chris Getz to strike out swinging, which is like getting Gabriel Iglesias to eat a slice of cake. With one out, Alcides Escobar lined a single to right, which probably should have scored Lough from second.

Here’s the thing: Lough ran through a stop sign from the third base coach, then realized his error, and hustled to get back to third, getting caught in a rundown in the process. Moustakas, seeing Lough run through the sign, also hustled to third. Drew Stubbs’ throw was egregious, and Lough would have scored while moonwalking, but instead found himself in a bit of a logjam.

Pestano, somehow inserting himself into the rundown process, found himself at third with the ball, two Royals, seven Indians, three umpires, two ushers, a ballgirl, and the ghost of Ron Palillo. Remembering the sage advice of Terry Francona, Pestano tagged both Royals, three of the Indians, one umpire, both ushers, and Palillo, who was ruled safe.

Actually, it was Moustakas who was ruled out. Escobar went to second. Pestano walked Alex Gordon on four pitches.

And then Eric Hosmer grounded out to first and everyone went home.

2) Author's note

Pitching around Gordon, an established hitter, with first base open to face Hosmer, who is not, is a perfectly valid strategy. I nod sagely.

3) Final score: PAC 17, Dairy Queen 11

In Little League, there is the concept of the "bunt home run," in which the batter bunts the ball (expected success rate: 13%), which is fielded by either the pitcher or the third baseman. The fielder then throws the ball to first base (expected success rate: 6%), except the ball sails over or around or even right to the first baseman, who does not catch it, and the ball rolls into foul territory in right field.

Fate has not yet decided whether the right fielder will become the next great software engineer or the next great Miller from "Repo Man," but in the present, the right fielder is easily the least-attentive player on the field. The second baseman races toward the ball. The right fielder continues his Gedanken Experiment as to whether Spongebob should actually be able to cook a Krabby Patty on a grill that resides entirely under the surface of the ocean. It is anyone's guess as to which player will reach the ball first, but if it is the second baseman, there is a small chance the runner will be gunned down at third (expected success rate: 4%). If it is the right fielder, the runner does not even slow down, as the throw is as likely to end up in center field as the infield: (expected success rate: 0.0004%). The throw to third is functionally useless. The runner scores. He probably slides into the plate whether there is a throw home or not. There is likely a collision between the baserunner and the catcher, again independent of whether there is an actual play to be made. One or more parents will injure themselves cheering in the bleachers. The pitcher will not back up the play. It is astonishing how few bunts are actually attempted in Little League.

Eric Hosmer hit a ball back to Cody Allen to lead off the eighth inning. Sadly, time has passed Drew Stubbs by, and he was both paying attention to the play AND was capable of throwing the ball to third base, thus depriving us of the home run Cody Allen's throw so richly deserved. (Hosmer did score one play later.)

4) In the double-header, Dairy Queen beats PAC 9-7

Lest you think your humble columnist is simply mean-spirited, let me say that Ubaldo Jimenez' overall performance last night was quite good. He gave up a mere 2 hits (both singles) over 5 2/3 innings, and while he did walk four batters, he struck out four as well. The Royals went down in order in both the 1st and 5th, and couldn't manage a hit off Jimenez with a runner in scoring position. Jimenez was one out away from a Quality Start, and lowered his ERA to 4.66 in the process.

However, it is impossible to write about the game without at least mentioning that while both of Jimenez' runs allowed were earned, they did not involve anything as pedestrian as an actual HIT.

After walking falling behind Escobar 3-0, Jimenez came back to fill the count before walking him. Likewise, Gordon started 2-0, filled the count, fouled off a couple pitches, and coaxed the walk from Jimenez. That's not too bad, really.

Uncorking a wild pitch to allow both runners to get into scoring position is pretty bad, since one scored on a routine groundout to short.

Uncorking a SECOND wild pitch with the runner on third is really just appalling.

It amuses me that these are considered "earned runs." I guess baseball scorekeepers will cut you some slack for throwing a ball super-extra-triple errantly to first like Cody Allen, but not for throwing a ball pretty-darned errantly to home like Ubaldo.

5) Author's Note II

Blaming Carlos Santana for Cleveland starters' propensity to toss the ball willy-nilly into the ball zone seems misguided. Could he do a better job? He could probably do a better job. But Jimenez bounced that ball with a ton of spin: that's just a crummy pitch.

6) Credit Where Credit is Due Dept.

Exactly one Cleveland pitcher gave up fewer than one baserunner per inning and did not put a runner in scoring position: Nick Hagadone. His has not been my favorite relief pitcher season or all time (or even of 2013), but he pitched well last night.

Erv Santana was money, with a 6:2 K:BB ratio and 3 hits (all singles) in 7 IP (one run). Odd to see him do that on the road: in Caliheimgeles, he was strictly a Homeboy.

7) Nice Hose!

Actually, no. Drew Stubbs gets credit for an “outfield assist” in the 9th, but that wasn’t anything like a “good throw.”

8) Captains Clutch

Mike Aviles produced the only RBI off Santana with a two-out single to score Drew Stubbs from second in the 6th. Stubbs had singled and stolen second, his 7th of the season.

In the 8th, with the Tribe down 3-1, Mike Bourn spun a ball off the end of his bat over the third base bag to single home Ryan Raburn: it looked like a double, but left fielder Alex Gordon made a nice play on the ball to hold him to a single. Aviles then singled Bourn to second, and Tiny Tim Collins was called in to face the lefty Jason Kipnis.

Collins’ third pitch to Kipnis was actually quite good, a curve on the outer half of the plate. Kipnis hit the ball almost exactly in the manner of Bourn, with just a little more pep, and got his double to drive in Bourn and advance Aviles to third.

After an intentional walk of Santana, Collins got Mike Brantley to hit a 1-2 pitch to shallow right, but because David Lough was moving to make the catch and was also temporarily terrible, his throw home missed home by about thirty feet and Aviles nearly wept at how safe he was at home.

And then Mark Reynolds struck out, but really, haven't we stopped being surprised by this?

9) Open Question

The last four hitters in the K.C. lineup sport OBPs of .292, .253, .278, and .277. Now, Lough hits .277 with that .292 OBP, Moustakas was a highly-regarded prospect, Escobar is a terrific defensive shortstop, and Chris Getz has some very disturbing photos of Dayton Moore, but really: if you stack four sub-.300 OBP guys in a row, it becomes valid to ask if you are actively trying to NOT score runs.

More seriously, for all the "Greatest Farm System in the World" talk in recent years, the Royals have exactly two players who can actually HIT: Gordon and Bubba Butler. (You could argue for Lo Cain, hitting .274/.339/.398 thus far, which compares well to Mike Bourn's .274/.338/.385.)

10) Sotto voce

The Indians had four hitters in the lineup with a .333 OBP or higher, and one was Ryan Raburn.

11) Welcome back!

Speaking of Not Hitting, Lonnie Chisenhall was recalled from Columbus.

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(He did not get a hit.)

12) Public Service for the Google Search Engine

Jack Zduriencik is actively trying to raise Great Cthulhu from Puget Sound. Puget Sound is too cold for Cthulhu, and this statement is fantastically false. Fire Eric Wedge.