



*The Indians did not deserve to win on Wednesday, but they came close to doing so before the bullpen performed suboptimally and the Tribe lost 6-5. You would THINK that the Indians, who outhit the Royals 12-6, DID deserve to win on THURSDAY, but the fact is, they did NOT. Walks still count. And hit-by-pitches. And fielding the ball. And not throwing pitches that are excremental. And since the Cleveland bullpen did ALL of these things, they LOST. The Tigers are now in first place in the A.L. Central. Fortunately, Buff is not bitter.*

## FINAL

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## The B-List: 7/3 - 7/4

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Sunday, June 30 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Monday, July 08 2013 9:11 AM

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**Indians (45-39)**

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## The B-List: 7/3 - 7/4

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**Royals (39-42)**

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## The B-List: 7/3 - 7/4

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W: W. Smith (1-1)

L: C. Allen (3-1)

S: Holland (18)

**FINAL**

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**Indians (45-40)**

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**Royals (40-42)**

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W: Hochevar (2-1)      L: B. Shaw (0-2) S: Holland (19)

So much bad, so little time.

### **1) The Worst Pitch in the World**

I recently addressed how it is often difficult to use conventional adjectives to describe Ubaldo Jimenez' pitching performance, but through five innings yesterday, it was unusually straightforward: he was very good. He gave up no runs on only two hits, and while he did walk three, it still had the makings of a fine performance. Certainly better than his counterpart, nominal Ace James Shields, who still has an ERA in the low 3.00's but gave up five runs in 5 1/3 innings and generally looked pretty beatable, giving up four RBI to Drew Stubbs alone.

However, Jimenez started the 6<sup>th</sup> inning with a quick 0-2 count to Eric Hosmer, meaning that anything close to the strike zone would probably require a swing.

Over the course of five pitches, Jimenez was "anywhere close to the strike zone" exactly once. Hosmer fouled off that pitch. On the other four, he did not, and he walked. Any of those four pitches might normally qualify as The Worst Pitch in the World.

Not yesterday.

No, Jimenez then threw four MORE balls to Bubba Butler. Now, Butler will draw a walk now and again as one of the few Royals with Actual Plate Discipline. But Butler will ALSO ground into 50 or 60 double plays per year, so throwing him a strike still seems like a good idea. Jimenez did not execute this good idea. And yet, none of these pitches were The Worst in the World, either.

After a quick strike to Mike Moustakas, Jimenez coughed up three phlegmballs, then got a grounder to first, where he ... dropped the ball covering the bag. This loaded te bases for Lo Cain, a right-handed hitter who entered the game with a .375 SLG on 3 homers, posting a semi-feeble .117 ISO. Jimenez fell behind 3-1, induced a foul ball, induced a foul ball, then ...

... BOOM. Grand slam. End of the day for Jimenez.

Now, should Terry Francona have seen this coming? Well, not really to START the inning: while 3 walks in 5 innings is too many walks, Jimenez had a five-run lead and was pitching well.

And Cody Allen did warm up that inning, preparing to take over the 7<sup>th</sup>, since Jimenez was likely to get up around the 100-pitch mark in sawing through the 6

th

. It also bears mentioning that Allen's second pitch was driven out for a game-tying homer, so it's not like pulling Jimenez was guaranteed to accomplish anything of great value.

Sure was a lousy pitch, though.

## 2) The Worst Pitch in the World

Wait, did I say Jimenez threw The Worst Pitch in the World? I spoke too soon. That had a terrible result, to be sure, but it wasn't necessarily an awful pitch. Okay, well, yes, it was an awful pitch. At least it had some downward movement. Cain did a good job hitting it out. It wasn't a good pitch, but it may not have been The Worst.

However, the Indians snatched the lead back in the top of the 7<sup>th</sup> on a walk, a single, and a two-run double by Carlos Santana. So, despite Allen's hiccup, at least the bullpen could fix their issues with the previous night's game and get Joe Smiff on the mound where he belongs, protecting a lead in the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Smiff walked Al Escobar on five pitches. Al Escobar has walked 13 times in over 325 plate appearances. Al Escobar has the plate discipline of a raver at a Stone Roses concert. Not only SHOULD you not walk Al Escobar on five pitches, it is nigh impossible TO walk Al Escobar on five pitches. Any of these would qualify as The Worst Pitch in the World.

Except that Smiff then threw a fat sidewound mini-slider to Eric Hosmer on a full count that Hosmer deposited FOUR HUNDRED THIRTY feet away to re-tie the game. Note that Smiff had Hosmer down 1-2 in the count before tossing two balls and a pitch Hosmer fouled off. Forget Jimenez' pitch, Smiff's was clearly The Worst Pitch in the World.

### 3) The Worst Pitch in the World

Wait, did I say Smiff threw The Worst Pitch in the World? I spoke too soon. That had a terrible result, to be sure, and it sure was in a crappy location with too little movement, but when it comes to keeping a tie game in check, you really have to ask yourself, "Is there anything worse than walking the leadoff hitter?" Well, sure there is. For one thing, there is walking the leadoff hitter after having him down 1-2 in the count. That would be worse. It is also what Brian Shaw actually accomplished. But hey, George Kotteras will draw a walk now and again: he was a Red Sok, after all. Oh, well, go get the next guy. And sure enough, Johnny Giavotella was BEGGING Shaw to retire him, squaring around to bunt. (Elliot Johnson was pinch-running for Kotteras, a nominal catcher.) He bunted one foul. He bunted another one foul. He fouled off the next pitch. Johnny Giavotella is hitting .214 and is thirteen years old.

Shaw hit him with the next pitch.

When a guy is begging to make an out, has not proven that he's not simply overmatched by big-league pitching (.241/.273/.338 in 373 career AB), and is down 0-2, hitting him with a pitch is

simply The Worst Pitch in the World.

### 4) The Worst Pitch in the World

Wait, did I say Shaw threw The Worst Pitch in the World? I spoke too soon. That had a terrible result, to be sure, and it sure was lousy, but when it comes to Worst Pitches, you have to ask yourself, "What would I throw Sally Perez with runners on base?" Sally Perez stands roughly eight feet away from home plate. Perez can really hit: he's impatient as all f^&#, but he really can hit. His .307 AVG is right in line with his career .310 (although his .332 OBP is also right in line with his career .337: he is Yan Gomes' upside, in a sense). With the bases loaded because Rich Hill ended up having to walk Jarrod Dyson intentionally because his 1-0 pitch skipped past Carlos Santana, Matt Albers was called in to face the pinch-hitter Perez because Lord knows you don't trust David Lough facing as severe a lefty-killer as RICH HILL.

Albers threw a ball to Perez. This is acceptable. Really, as long as you don't throw something inside, something Perez can turn on, you're really in pretty good shape.

Albers threw the ball inside, where Perez turned on it, and blasted it down the line for a three-run double.

### 5) The Worst Pitch in the World

Wait, did I say Albers through The Worst Pitch in the World? I was right, of course, but let us not ignore the 1-0 pitch that Cody Allen threw to Eric Hosmer with two outs in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> after Cleveland had fought back to tie the score at 5 in the top of the frame. Hosmer hit the ball what is listed as 436 feet, but in reality travelled 131,366,836 feet, which is the approximate circumference of the Earth at Kansas City's longitude, plus 436 feet. Allen was fortunate that it did not count as TWO home runs.

(It was not a very good pitch. It was, however, a very bad pitch.)

## **6) The Worst Pitch in the World**

I changed my mind. Smiff's pitch was actually the lowest-quality pitch of all of them.

## **7) The Worst Bullpen in the World**

The single effective relief stint over the two games came from Rich Hill on Wednesday, in which he recorded two outs without doing anything that hurt the team in the process. That's it. That was the only one.

## **8) Staying on the right side of the line**

In deciding whether to play something for laughs or keep it straight, always err on the side of straightness when a head injury is involved. Unless it's Jose Canseco.

Jason Kipnis hit the first inside-the-park home run for Cleveland since Jhonny Peralta (!) did it in 2010. Yeah, I had no idea. Jhonny Peralta? I wish I remembered that play. Anyway, Kipnis put good wood on the ball to the opposite field, but when Alex Gordon got turned around trying to catch it at the wall, he lost his balance, fell on his hip, did not catch the ball, then banged his head on a fence support and center fielder Lo Cain had to eventually retrieve the ball. Kipnis is fast enough (heck, he leads the Tribe in stolen bases: he may not be a classical Speed Demon, but he's faster than the average guy) to be able to beat that out. It tied the game, making it all the more heartbreaking that the bullpen spent the first five innings of Scott Kazmir's excellent outing huffing paint fumes or whatever it was they were doing to prepare to give the game away.

*(Note: the bullpen never huffs paint fumes during games, and didn't REALLY pitch THAT badly, but it sure was frustrating to lose both those games, and it'd be hard to argue that the bullpen pitched WELL.)*

## **9) Lost in the shuffle**

Through five innings, Kazmir held the Royals to 1 run on 4 hits, walking NOBODY (hello, Ubaldo!) and striking out three. He ended throwing only 87 pitches, which was fine, because he'd waited out a THREE HOUR RAIN DELAY to GET into the game. He left after giving up an infield single and an opposite-field single so that Shaw could turn his fine start into a fine paste by coughing up two runs of his own on three RBI singles and an error by Nick Swisher.

## **10) Is it still clutch if the bullpen renders it moot?**

Santana's two-run double gave the Tribe a short-lived 7-5 lead late in Thursday's game.

Kipnis' homer tied the game at 3, and Mike Bourn and Asdrubal Cabrera drove in runs in the top of the 7<sup>th</sup> to tie the game at 5 in Wednesday's game (Bourn with a single, Cabrera with a sac fly).

Drew Stubbs hit a two-run homer and later a two-run single, producing more runs off James Shields as the rest of the team combined produced off everyone else.

## **11) Public Service for the Google Search Engine**

Jack Zduriencik serves his guests watered-down espresso, considered a capital crime in northwest Washington state. I have no proof of this and the statement is untrue. Fire Eric Wedge.