

The B-List: 4/5

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Thursday, April 05 2007 7:00 PM -

Man ... we had the sweep in our sights. And then another bullpen meltdown, giving Tribe fans an evil dose of deja vu from last season. In today's B-List, Buff hits on the Oldberto Hernandez collapse, Grady Sizemore making history, and Honny Peralta's inability to bunt. HOME OPENER ... today, 4:05 PM! Go Tribe!



FINAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E	
Indians (2-1)				1							0		1

White Sox (1-2)			1								0		0
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W: Jenks (1-0) L: R. Hernandez (0-1)

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If you told me Grady would lead off with a homer, Jason Michaels would hit a bomb AND a double off the wall, Jeremy Sowers would throw six innings of one-hit ball, and Mark Buehrle would be knocked out of the game in the second inning, I would probably have taken it. This shows that when Lucifer approaches TheClevelandFan.com and offers to grant one wish, I'm keeping my @#%*in' mouth *shut*.

1) Mea @#%*ing culpa already!

All right! I said I liked Oldberto Hernandez! I admit it! It's my fault! Here, all right, we'll try something else:

I hate all Cleveland relief pitchers! I hate all of them! I hate their pitch selection. I hate their repertoires. I hate their eye colors. I hate their shoes. I hate all relief pitchers who used to pitch for Cleveland. I hate all pitchers who used to be relievers. I hate all pitchers who considered signing with Cleveland. I hate all *future* Cleveland relief pitchers. I hate all pitchers *named "Cleveland."* I hate all pitchers *from Cleveland.* I hate all *baseball* hate *made* *s* in Cleveland. I hate all of *them*, and all of *you*, and *myself*.

But mostly, I hate that Eric Wedge felt compelled to use both Hernandez and (to a lesser extent) Betancourt in three consecutive games and that Hernandez was about as comically bad as relief pitchers not named Jose Canseco can get. He gave up two hits, *then* threw a pickoff into center field, *then* walked a guy intentionally to load the bases, and *then*

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HIT A.J. Pierzynski to force in the winning run in the bottom of the ninth, without hitting Pierzynski in the face in the process. If you're going to suck rocks, get your goddam money's worth. Geez.

Seriously, I have a soft spot for Oldberto, since we were born in the same year, but that means ... well, that means we're @#%*ING OLD, all right? Don't pitch the guy three straight games in 30-degree weather. That sucked.

2) Yeah, but can he make the Charles Nagy *face*?

Jeremy Sowers has an impressive array of garbage, and by golly, he only gave up one hit in six innings. Sowers rarely throws two consecutive pitches in the same place, with the same speed, or with the same movement. He really does "know how to pitch" and has an impressive calm demeanor on the mound.

But part of this is because Sowers lives in the mid-80s most of the time (I saw him dial it all the way up to 90 once) and nibbles like a rabbit on ecstasy. Along with the one hit came five walks, a hit batsman, one jam escaped with a 9-6 DP, and two runs driven in without a hit (the one guy to get a hit scored, though). The 4th inning alone featured the following sequence:

Walk

HBP

Walk

SF

There it is, the massive back-breaking rally that allowed Chicago to tie the score. (I'm not sure I want Jeremy Sowers to throw the ball inside to Jermaine Dye, anyway.) It was a fine start, a Quality Start, and was good enough to win ... but it wasn't a very GOOD start, if that makes sense. By the way, his K:BB ratio is now 0.2. That's considered ... me-ian.

3) This Sizemore guy might work out

In the history of the Cleveland Indians ... wait a minute, think about that. In the HISTORY of the Cleveland Indians. The history that includes Tris Speaker and large guys in the nineties who never ever would have considered using a steroid but were still really large and live balls and dead balls and World Wars and Washington Senators and Philadelphia A's and Bert Blyleven and extra super triple expansion and everything, the HISTORY of the Cleveland Indians, no one has ever hit a home run in each of the first three games until April 5, 2007, when Grady Sizemore lead off the game with a home run off left-hander Mark Buehrle. Sizemore also had a single and scored when Jason Michaels doubled him in. He made three very fine catches in center field, has 4 RBI, and is slugging 1.071. That's not his OPS (which is 1.538), that's his *slugging percentage*. He is batting .800 against left-handed pitching. His slugging percentage against lefties requires scientific notation. Bringing in Matt Thornton to face Grady Sizemore at this point would be tantamount to child abuse.

I would be in favor of completely ignoring Spring Training entirely, except that I think seeing Hector Luna play shortstop with a cleaver in one hand and buttered toast in the other was actually pretty instructive.

4) Small Sample Size Theater

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Jason Michaels is hitting .600/.600/1.400 after coming up a triple short of the cycle Thursday.

Victor Martinez' 0-for-4 collar means that his OBP is down to .600 and he is in danger of falling below a batting average of .500.

Travis Hafner's OBP is more than 100 points higher than his SLG, a designation normally reserved for the Jason Tyners and Wile E Tavaresesseseseses of the world.

Aaron Boone is a fungus. (However, he is within 78 points of batting average of Andy Marte, who may be sporting spores.)

5) Dee-fense!

The Tribe turned two double plays, one of which was a nice doubling-off of Jose Uribe on a liner to Casey Blake in right field. A good, heads-up play there, and with one out and a man in scoring position, a real timely one, too. The other was a plain old 5-4-3, although it was nice to see Garko take part in that. And Vic caught Scotty Pod stealing again. (Sizemore had the aforementioned plays in center.) Marte did have an error, but it didn't lead to a run.

6) Smallball

I don't want to hear about the 2005 White Sox using Smallball or Smartball or Ozzie Guillen Likes To Hear His Own Voice Ball, but I will say this: the Sox definitely "manufactured" their runs Thursday. In the first, Podsednik singled, stole second, went to third on a ground ball to the right side, and scored on a groundout. Doesn't get much smaller than that. The fourth

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featured that dreadful walk-HBP-walk-sac fly run, and the run in the seventh arguably wouldn't have scored without another groundout-to-the-right-side that advanced Iguchi from second to third. (He may have scored from second on the single, but he sure did from third.) And then the run in the ninth was a product of ... well, extreme putridity, but I suppose it wouldn't have even occurred to Ozzie Guillen or Bobby Jenks to try to pick a guy off second base in the ninth inning.

I am not saying I want the Indians to do this sort of thing or that they will lose because they don't. I'm not convinced they can't, and generally speaking more than one run is better than one run (which is what Smallball tends to yield). But I gotta give credit to the Sox for using what they could on a day when hits were scarce.

I will note that the Indians' 3 runs came on 2 solo shots and a double off the wall. Just sayin'.

7) The Cliff Lee Memorial Bunt Attempt

I am usually very careful about the difference between "Memorial" (which is for people who have died) and "Commemorative" (for the living), but watching Cliff Lee try to bunt last season makes me think that his bunting history is dead. No one would possibly ask Cliff Lee to bunt again. It would be like asking R.A. Dickey to throw a few knuckleballs, or maybe Bartolo Colon to pinch-hit. Not a good idea.

You know what else is a bad idea? Having Jhonny Peralta bunt. Great Odin's left testicle, that was one hell of a terrible, horrible, no good, and very bad attempt at bunting right there, boy howdy. Don't do it again.

By the way, what was the thought process there? Set up Barfield, he of the .143 batting average? Or maybe Marte, he of the .077 BA? Heaven forfend that Peralta and his

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.364/.462/.636 (*after* the bad bunt turned into a strikeout) get a shot at driving Dellucci around the horn. Sure, the mighty Mike Rouse could have come in and ... aw hell with it. I can't type that with a straight face. I know these are piffulously small samples, but they are indicative of "hotness," and Peralta's temperature compared to Barfield's and Marte's is orders of magnitude higher.

Don't ask Peralta to bunt. Shoot, if you didn't ask ANYONE to bunt, that'd be okay with ME, but I understand that's radical. But Peralta ... no.

8) Oh, by the way

Three players stranded runners in scoring position with two outs. Barfield and Marte were two of them.

(You get no bonus points for guessing the identity of the third.)

9) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Aaron Fultz struck out Paul Konerko and Jim Thome in a perfect inning of work.

Tom Mastny defeated Jason Davis and Ferd Cabrera in a rousing cribbage tournament in the bullpen. They certainly had nothing to do with pitching.

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10) No Credit Where No Credit Is Due Dept.

Casey Blake was caught stealing on a pitchout. That makes twice in one series that an Indian was caught off base, leading many to speculate that the Sox were stealing signs or that Eric Wedge is a fungus.

11) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Oldberto, Oldberto, alas, I knew him, Horatio. Of course, so did the Sox, having JUST SEEN HIM IN EACH OF THE PREVIOUS TWO GAMES. Grr.