

## The B-List: 4/11

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Wednesday, April 11 2007 7:00 PM -

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The Indians fell to 3-2 on the season with a 4-1 loss to the Angels last night in leg two of The Milwaukee Diversion. In today's B-List, Buff thoroughly breaks down the game in a way that only he can ... paying special attention to Jake's start, the Angels nasty bullpen, and the performances of Fernando Cabrera and Jason Davis.



<b>FINAL</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	<b>R</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>E</b>	
<b>Angels (6-3)</b>					1							0	0
<b>Indians (3-2)</b>					0							0	0

*W: J. Saunders (1-0) L: Westbrook (0-1) S: F. Rodriguez (4)*

Again, I must commend the fair city of Milwaukee for bringing out 16K+ on a freezing night with snow to see two teams they not only don't actually care about, but aren't even in their flippin' LEAGUE. I would make a snide comment about the Brewers that this point, but ... I actually picked the Brewers to win the N.L. Central, and my ego is larger than my need to pick on baseball fans in Wisconsin. (The Bucks, however, are dreadful, although you could do worse than to support Charlie V.)

### 1) That limp is probably exacerbated by that bullet you've propelled into you foot

There were good stretches of the game in which Jake Westbrook looked very much like a very good starting pitcher, but the problem I've always had with Westbrook is that for a severe groundball pitcher with a low K rate, Jake's ability to concentrate through an entire game is sometimes wanting. Yes, the run in the first inning probably doesn't score if Marte doesn't boot the ground ball, but it ALSO likely doesn't score if Westbrook doesn't walk Vladimir Guerrero. Say that again slowly to yourself: Westbrook **walked Vladimir Guerrero**. Do you know how hard that is to do, especially with a runner in scoring position? Yes, Vlad fouled off three pitches, but ... you really have to be throwing Super Gunk to walk a guy who hits pitches that **bounce**

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In the sixth, which basically put the game out of reach (more on that later), Kotchman scored on Napoli triple (again, Mike Napoli hit .228 last year and is a catcher: the man gave up a triple to the speed merchant that is the light-hitting catcher. Number of triples for Mike Napoli in 2006: zero) after being hit by a pitch. Then Napoli scored on a wild pitch. Not just a wild pitch, but a **two-strike** wild pitch. Not just a two-strike wild pitch, but a two-strike wild pitch with **My Sir Izturis** at the plate. Who bats **ninth**. Because he **stinks**

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Look, this was far from *terrible*: Westbrook gave up fewer than a hit an inning and induced his customary 9:2 GB:FB ratio. He induced two double plays (including the one that forced in the first run) and worked out of jams. Hey, he only gave up two earned runs in 6 IP, that's a Quality Start. But he also walked four, threw fewer than 60% of his pitches for strikes, hit a guy, and uncorked a wild pitch. His early-season ERA is a spiffy 7.36. That's simply not good. It is, however, bad.

### 2) The incredible shriking ballgame revisited

The reason that the game was pretty much over after Westbrook uncorked the wild pitch was that the Angels sport one of the finest bullpens in the league. Heck, the Angels probably have one of the top three bullpens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's real good. How good? Justin Speier, a guy I wanted to sign as a closer away from Toronto, pitched the 7<sup>th</sup>

(1 out in 5 pitches), giving way to the setup man, Scot Shields, who throws unearthly stuff and recorded 2 Ks in a perfect 8<sup>th</sup>

before yielding to the closer, K-Rod, who only struck out 1 in his perfect 9<sup>th</sup>

for his fourth save. Of the four pitchers the Angels used last night, Rodriguez' 3.60 ERA was the highest by a significant margin.

I may hate the Minnesota bullpen, but I envy the Angels'. But the underlying point here is, the 7 consecutive outs recorded by the Angels' bullpen wasn't a "great performance," it was "completely expected." Yeah, that sound you hear is me turning green.

### 3) Timing is everything

It seems unfair to single out any one offensive player for ineptitude on a night on which we

score 1 run on 4 hits, but I really have to hand it to ersatz cleanup hitter Ryan Garko for grounding into a one-out inning-ending double play with the bases loaded in the bottom of the third. Garko had already grounded out to second his first time up, which suggests that he had seen the kind of “stuff” Joe Saunders could use to induce such an event: Saunders ended the game with an 8:7 GB:FB ratio, so it’s not like he was throwing Westbrookian power sinkers out there. Really, about the only thing you can’t do there is ground into a double play: even a strikeout allows fans to shift the blame onto ersatz 5 hitter Casey Blake. Garko did get a hit later, but ... remember, the only way you beat the Angels is to jump on their questionable rotation, because if you aren’t at least tied in the sixth inning, you have a seriously steep hill to climb to win the ballgame. Getting no runs there was really deflating.

#### **4) A bright spot in the void**

Jhonny Peralta did not have the finest game, making a poor throw for his second error of the embryonic season and whiffing in the ninth. However, he completely kicked ass Chuck Norris Style on the rest of the “offense,” banging out a two-strike opposite-field home run (a nice piece of hitting) and adding a single (only Sizemore and Garko had as many as *one* hit). Peralta now leads the team with 6 RBI and is hitting a robust .353: although neither stat is likely to hold all the way through the ... week ... it is still a nice start for a player who could really use one.

#### **5) Dee-fense!**

The Tribe turned two *more* double plays, although Westbrook does tend to induce such things.

Of course, a 1:1 double-play-to-error ratio is not considered special, but hey.

#### **6) Managerial Back-Patters**

Look, if you're going to complain about something, you ought to own up and hand out praise when the even you've called for is executed. That's only fair. And sure enough, the three relief pitchers used last night were Ferd Cabrera, Jason Davis, and Tom Mastny, so kudos to Eric Wedge. Beers are on me! Huzzah!

Now, this having been said, Ferd Cabrera was @#%\*ING GREAT! I know, it's terribly frustrating to watch this guy blow up as often as he did last season, his delivery is still too Mitch Williams slash John Daly for my taste, and he really may never morph into that Shiny Capital-C Closer many of us have wanted, but DAY-UM! The man can seriously throw a baseball! Is three swinging Ks (18 strikes, 8 balls) in two one-hit no-walk innings any good? It *is* good! Again with the huzzahs!

Jason Davis ... is not good. I'm sorry, small sample size, one outing, phase of the moon, I don't care any more. Jason Davis is monkey chow. I hate watching Jason Davis pitch.

Tom Mastny threw three pitches and got one out. All three pitches were strikes. Get used to it.

### **7) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.**

Kelly Shoppach didn't get any hits, but he he did draw two walks in three plate appearances, which I'll take. I'm not sure Shoppach will ever be a good-hitting catcher, but the approach seems to be there.

### **8) Around the Division**

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Detroit took a scoreless draw into the 12<sup>th</sup> before Craig Monroe pounded a grand slam to beat the Orioles, leading one to wonder, "How the hell do you get shut out for 11 innings by the Orioles?" (Partial answer: you strike out 14 times.)

Chicago, fresh off watching Fat Bobby Jenks blow a save, returned the favor against Oakland and scored 5 runs in the last two innings to clout Oakland 6-3. Huston Street took the loss after he realized he was on my fantasy team.

Minnesota beat the Yankees 5-1 because Ramon Ortiz pitched 8 tremendous innings. Yeah, I had to read that more than twice, too. Ortiz is now 2-0 and sports an ERA of 1.80. To show I have not been transported to Bizarro World, Sidney Ponson is still awful, augmenting his bad pitching with a really unfortunate hairstyle.

Kansas City is apparently allowed to continue to field a team. David Riske blew a save the previous night, causing several outbreaks of Not Surprise amongst Indians fans.