

The B-List: 5/3

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Winning is fun, isn't it? The Tribe broke out the brooms last night, sweeping Toronto out of Cleveland with a 6-5 win that featured a bench clearing altercation in the fourth inning. In today's *B-List*, Buff is tells about the win ... and celebrates the return of his favorite player.



	FINAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E	
Blue Jays (13-15)					0							2		2
Indians (17-8)					0							0		3

W: Fultz (3-0) L: Frasor (1-1) S: Borowski (10)

Note to Mr. Underwood: technically, I prefer “Internet Columnist” to “blogger,” but I suppose being mentioned with the likes of [Joe Ptak](#) can’t be all bad. Now, about that home run call ...

1) The sub-triumphant return of my Favorite Player!

Cliff Lee is [my favorite Indians player](#) , so it was good to see him return from his strained oblique injury to start his first game of the season last night. Not as good as, say, seeing him pitch *well*, but this is admittedly a bit greedy. Lee lasted through six innings, giving up 5 runs on 9 hits (but only 1 walk). The real problem with the 9 hits was that 6 of them were for extra bases, including Troy Glaus’ 2-run homer in the 3rd

to stretch the lead to 4-0. It is worth noting that Lee never seemed to get rattled by the alarming frequency with which his pitches ended up in the vicinity of an outfield wall, but ... well, that’s still not good.

Lee drove me crazy last year by doing something to produce one of the most extreme low GB:FB ratios in the land: I understand that Lee is not a sinkerball pitcher and is never going to have a superior ratio, but I would settle for something a bit less overtly atrocious. Last night, Lee induced 9 GB outs and only 5 FB outs (he struck out 4 as well), which on the surface appears to be a step in the right direction. The only problem is the “other” fly balls, the ones that hit walls and went over them, which is why I dislike extreme flyball pitchers in the first place (I’m talking to you, Scott Elarton).

Ultimately, Lee looked good in his rehab starts and showed no noticeable change in form that suggested the injury has lingered, so for a first outing, 6 decent innings will be okay. Reportedly, the team did not notice Lee’s unsightly 7.50 ERA, since they had been playing behind Jake Westbrook to this point.

2) Welcome (back) to the bigs!

Rafael Perez has had an interesting history with the Tribe: he was called up last season as a rookie to provide a left-handed presence in the pen, and went through a stretch where he was simply unhittable. He ended up with decent-but-not-great numbers, certainly worthy of further consideration.

He spent winter ball airing out his repertoire as a starter, looking very effective in the same league Ferd Cabrera dominated. Although he has proven a capable starter, I still think his future lies in the bullpen, as he's not going to pass up guys like Carmona and Miller or likely even Lofgren. I'm a big fan of letting quality pitchers throw quantity innings in the minors, though, and starting is one way to do that.

Perez was called up with Lee in time to be in uniform for the game. I figure this served two purposes: it hedged our bets in case Lee totally tanked and was knocked out in the Westbrook ... er, 2nd, and it also gave us a fresh bullpen arm on the heels of a big exhausting game Wednesday. Lee performed admirably, at least in terms of innings, so Perez was not needed in that role.

As for the "fresh arm" theory? Consider Perez numbers last night:

0 IP, 0 H, 0 BB, 0 HBP, 0 R, 0 K, 0 pitches, 0 point

Say hi to Ben for me!

3) Bullpen Roundup

Well, if Perez didn't get the relief innings last night, who, pray tell, did? That would be Oldberto Hernandez, Aaron Fultz, and Joe Borowski.

For those of you with long memories, you might recall the first two of these men as being two of the three main culprits in giving away the lead that forced us to go into extra innings. So, given a choice, instead of calling on the fresh Perez, or even perhaps the terrifying Jason Davis, the call goes out to ... the oldest guy who frightens small children with his "accuracy?" Am I missing something here?

In all fairness, what I'm missing is that Hernandez was actually quite good, pitching a hitless, scoreless inning, but not before making things interesting with a walk and a wild pitch to put the go-ahead run in scoring position. Fultz was even better, throwing a perfect inning with a K, and Borowski even better still, throwing a perfect inning with TWO Ks. But I was still boggled when the call went out.

4) ***This* close to a new cause celebre**

When Mike Rouse, still batting under the ... well, if the Mendoza Line is .200, what's .100? The Bartolo Colon Line? The Mark Belanger On Acid Line? Anyway, it's really bad. Rouse had drawn a walk from first-time starter Dustin McGowan (who walked 5 in 5 innings) and scored earlier in the game, but I figure that when Shaun Marcum and his Magical Seven-Plus ERA came in, this was it: Marcum was very crummy the night before, and really this season as a whole, so if Rouse couldn't get a hit at this point, he had to be strongly considered the New Ramon Vazquez. Since I didn't care much for the old one, I wasn't that interested in a new one. Rouse not only did not get a hit, he struck out.

However, in the 8th inning, facing a guy who has been an elite setup man and was considered

for closer in Jason Frasor, Rouse came through with a single and ended up scoring the winning run on Grady Sizemore's ground-rule double.

He also started a double play at 3B, giving Casey Blake the day off. Rouse now sits directly on the Bad-hitting Pitcher Line of .100, and gains a reprieve from being mentioned in the same sentence as Vazquez for ... well, at least another week.

5) Things you never expected to read

Ryan Garko hit his first career triple.

Think about this. Ryan Garko, a man whose speed emulates none so much as an elegant Matt Stairs, who is in fact actually constructed from a barrel, hit a triple. If I told you this, what would you have thought?

"And here's Garko with a drive to right field ... the right fielder goes back ... OHH, he's struck by a meteorite! Right there in right field! An actual meteorite! Have you ever seen anything like that?"

"You know, there was this time..."

"Garko, now rounding first, he's digging for second ... the center fielder rushes over ... he appears to be having trouble finding the ball through the smoldering debris ... ah, there it is, he picks it up and ... SWEET LORD IN HEAVEN, he's been eaten by a polar bear! Have you EVER seen anything like that?"

“In Kinston one time there was ...”

“Garko rounding second, they’re going to send him to third! The first baseman has trotted gingerly out to right ... the polar bear seems occupied with the center fielder ... I think there’s a real danger there, the first baseman is a bit beefier than the center fielder ... he grabs the ball, throws it in ... NOT IN TIME! Ryan Garko safe with a triple!”

“That was ...”

“We’ll be right back after this message from Arnie’s Arctic Animal Rescue.”

Anyway, he hit a triple. He did not score. He did drive in Victor Martinez from first, which conjures up many of the same images.

Jason Smith, hitting a brisk .205, pinch-hit for John McDonald, hitting .354. There is a handedness issue, as well as a Total Flukishness Issue of McDonald being nothing whatsoever like a .354 hitter, but it still looks funny.

(At some point I will stop making fun of John McDonald ... but I doubt it will be soon.)

6) There’s hot, then there’s *hot*

Victor Martinez went 4-for-4 last night, including a double and a pair of RBI singles. Martinez has wrested the top-hitting crown from Travis Hafner, .333 to .326. He has 13 hits in his last 10 games, going hitless only once (4/27 against Balmer).

7) Fight Night at the Jake

After trying to score on an error by center fielder Alex Rios, Josh Barfield basically ran awkwardly into catcher Jason Phillips, who tagged him out and then appeared to woof at him. (In post-game interviews, Phillips said he was not addressing Barfield, which is hard to discern from the replay video since he is essentially **yelling in Barfield's face**. I think that's what confused us there, Jay.)

Barfield took exception, and there was some minor pushing, and then David Dellucci ran in from the on-deck circle, still holding a bat, and proceeded to get very much indeed into Phillips' face. No punches were thrown, no one was hurt or even really very angry at the end of it, but after watching the Dallas Mavericks go down pretty meekly to the Golden State Warriors, I am pleased to have David Dellucci on the team.

8) Don't look now, there may be a bat hiding in there

Speaking of Barfield, he now has a seven-game hitting streak, getting two hits in 3 of the seven games. Although he still looks up to Mendoza, it's good to see some signs that he's adjusting to the American League.

As I said before, I'm not really that concerned about Barfield's offense in 2007, but anything he can produce is obviously, well, productive.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro climbed into the light towers at last night's game and dropped a meteorite on right fielder Matt Stairs. He then threw a polar bear onto center fielder Alex Rios, who had come over to help. Since one cannot throw a polar bear, this is patently untrue. Fire Eric Wedge.