

## The B-List: 6/12

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Fausto Carmona looks more and more like C.C. Sabathia every day: the build, the great stuff at the young age, the ability to pitch a dominant game and still lose because his offense shoots itself in the foot with a bazooka. In today's B-List, Buff recounts exactly how a guy can throttle an opponent and still lose, as well as wondering aloud about baserunning, pinch-hitting, and U.N. Ambassadors.



### FINAL SCORE

Indians (37-26)	0	0	0	0
Marlins (32-33)	0	0	0	0

W: Olsen (5-5) L: Carmona (7-2) S: Gregg (10)

I really hate losing to the Marlins.

### 1) A game of inches

Fausto Carmona has nasty stuff. Once again, he left the opponent singing his praises as they went many innings without putting together anything resembling an offense. And he induced twice as many ground ball outs as fly outs, at least in part due to a sinker with strong downward action.

This downward action ended up costing him the game: not because he bounced one past the catcher, but because his ball sank several millimeters too far for Miguel Olivo's chop in front of the plate to be the double play ball Carmona needed to complete his escape from a no-out bases-loaded jam in the 7<sup>th</sup>. With

no outs, he had induced a popup, so there was one out when Olivo was at the plate: Olivo has been beaten out in his career by such luminaries as Josh Paul, Ru Paul, Pat Borders, Wiki Gonzalez, Mrs. Butterworth, and Telly Monster. Olivo came into the game hitting .222/.242/.347 on the season and had roughly the same chance of beating out a double play grounder as Patrick Star. Instead, his chopper went down instead of out, which made it bounce over the outstretched glove of Casey Blake and into the left field corner. Truthfully, it didn't matter that it was a 3-run double instead of a 1-run single, given the awesome ineptitude of the Cleveland offense, but Carmona deserved better nonetheless.

Through six shutout innings, Carmona gave up 2 hits, 0 walks, and struck out 6 batters. As it was, Olivo's double will actually cause his ERA to rise. Carmona has now struck out 5 (in 6 IP), 5 (in 7 IP) and 6 (in 7 IP) in his last three outings, a robust 7.2 per 9 IP, and a rate much more conducive to long-term success than his previous infinitesimal ones.

He's good.

## 2) Anything you can do, I can do more comically

Hanley Ramirez is one of the Bright Lights of the Future at shortstop. He came into the game hitting .320/.389/.494, which is positively Nomarian for a 23-year-old. However, as a shortstop ... meh, let's say I wasn't impressed. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning, he bollixed a ground ball by Franklin Gutierrez, then showed it was no fluke by doing the same on Travis Hafner's grounder in the 4<sup>th</sup>. In the 7<sup>th</sup>

, he was the beneficiary of a truly sympathetic official scorer, who ruled

that Jhonny Peralta's ground ball near the bag was an "infield single." This, I assume, was based on Peralta's near-racehorse-like speed, as evidence by him being gunned down by roughly forty feet on the subsequent steal attempt.

For a while, it looked like Cleveland would boast the better defensive shortstop, until Peralta decided to take matters into his own (battered) hands and toss two of the more "interesting" throws on Olivo's double and a ground ball by fireplug Dan Uggla.

Really, this is where it becomes a matter of taste: do you prefer your butchery of the simple Iron Glove variety, or do you fancy the Scattershot Blunderbuss approach? Frankly, it's more situational for me, as I enjoy a good thrashing around as much as anyone: it's a treat when one gets the "compound error" of the clanged grounder compounded by a rushed, errant throw, but really, this is like asking for a triple play or something: you really have to be in the right place at the right time, and execute it just *exactly* wrong. That's why we watch the ballgames, I suppose.

### 3) Managerial Head-Scratchers

The first head-scratcher came at tachyon speed, happening even before play began, as Franklin Gutierrez led off the game. Now, this isn't exactly unprecedented: in fact, I wrote a number of times last season about the frustrating tendency of Eric Wedge to slot the batting order by position. Because Gutierrez was playing center field in place of (the resting) Grady Sizemore, and Grady Sizemore bats leadoff, well then, it stands to reason that Gutierrez would bat leadoff, too.

I had hoped this was a discredited theory, like the Flat Earth or the aether, as Casey Blake batted third the other night while Jason Michaels returned to his 2006 #2 position. Blake had been so wildly successful in the 2 hole that it seemed like it would take quite a set of circumstances to move him, so maybe Wedge was becoming more flexible in his middle age.

No such luck. Did I mention that Franklin Gutierrez is a .160 hitter with an on-base percentage of .192? He is comparatively fast, so I suppose leadoff is a natural role for him. Except for the getting on base thing. Now, I complain, who would I rather have had lead off? We already put a guy in the leadoff spot that isn't exactly what we think of: Sizemore gets on base with great frequency, but it could be argued that his power is not optimally exploited there. So this is not a roster with a lot of natural leadoff men. So, who would I rather have lead off ... hm ... let me think ...

... how about ANYONE ELSE (besides Carmona)?! Why not Blake? Why not Michaels? Heck, give Peralta a go. Did I mention the .192 OBP?

Now, once it became obvious that both pitchers were really on top of their respective games, I applaud the decision to try to play for a single run. Hey, I would have bet a significant sum after a few innings that this was a 1-0 or 2-1 game in the making, figuring any scoring would come off the bullpens. One run was especially precious last night, and I have no problem trying to manufacture a run.

But trying to do this by sending Travis Hafner to steal second base is one of those, "They'll never expect that!" moves because it's a completely bizarre decision to make. Hafner was safe, and huzzahs all around, but the throw was truly awful and Hafner is simply not a good runner. Okay, we got away with one there, the element of surprise and all that, hey, I saw Boog Powell steal a base for the Indians, anything can happen once.

Note that last word: once. Sending Jhonny Peralta after his "infield (scoff) single" was simply ridiculous. In 2003-2006, Jhonny Peralta stole one base while being caught SEVEN TIMES. True, he was 2-for-3 this season, but the man is not a basestealer and the element of surprise was gone.

Jason Michaels helped out on the play by standing like a lump at the plate, distracting Olivo with ... I don't know, maybe his uncanny Madeline Albright impression.

These having been scratched, it should be noted that it is perfectly defensible to let the slumping Travis Hafner face Olsen instead of the hyper-slumping Ryan Garko, if only because Hafner seems more immune to embarrassment.

#### **4) Silver Lining Dept.**

Casey Blake extended his hitting streak with a single. He also grounded into a double play, but I don't think sabermetricians consider this egregious enough to invalidate a hitting streak.

David Dellucci singled to lead off the third inning and actually made it all the way to third base. Had Blake done ... pretty much anything but ground into a double play, Dellucci would have staked Carmona to a lead. (Blake grounded into a double play.)

Matt Miller threw 8 strikes in 12 pitches to record a hitless, walk-free inning of work. (Peralta made an error to prevent a

perfect inning.) This makes one nostalgic for what might have been Monday, but it's not like Miller's pitch Sunday was a thing of beauty, so who knows? It would be nice to have a second reliable right-hander in the pen, so let's hope Miller stays SPROING!-free for at least a little while.

## **5) A case of mistaken identity**

You guys realize that was Armando Benitez on the mound in the 8<sup>th</sup>, right? The guy the Giants actually paid to leave? Benitez struck out two Indians in his perfect 8-pitch inning, including Trot Nixon, who was pinch-whiffing for Carmona. After a long and drawn-out process in which the Giants could not and could not and could not find someone, ANYONE to take Benitez off their hands, Benitez has pitched 7 innings for the Marlins, giving up 4 hits, 2 walks, and 1 run, striking out 5 batters. I will now gnaw the skin off my left elbow.

## **6) National League Baseball: catch it!**

An exhausted but happy Scott Olsen watched as he was pinch-hit for in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup>. Olsen, who had been suffering from strep throat (which is funny, because

I have not seen him at my daughter's day care center), admitted that he had gone as far as he could, and pinch-hitting at that point was a no-brainer.

To the plate steps Joe Borchard. Now, Joe Borchard is hitting .195/.298/.322 on the season. Joe Borchard is a clod. And he is pinch-hitting because ... uh ... okay, I can't tell you that. Maybe Mike Jacobs is hurt. Maybe sending up a competent hitter felt like &quot;piling on.&quot;

(Borchard made an out.)

## **7) Postscript on course-running**

I am no longer able to pretend that either of two things are happening:

- a) The smear campaign against Mark Shapiro is influencing the cosmos and helping us win
- b) The smear campaign against Mark Shapiro is going to get Eric Wedge fired

The campaign has run its course. Truthfully, if sending out Franklin Gutierrez to lead off or letting Nixon and Dellucci face lefties when other options are available or letting Aaron Fultz repeatedly come in with the bases loaded or sending Jhonny Peralta and Travis Hafner to steal second in the same game or leaving Joe Borowski out long enough to give up a game's worth of runs or any of the other things is not enough, my modest contribution is not going to push it over the top. This game felt almost like Wedge himself thumbing his nose at me, telling me in front of some thousand people in Miami that there is nothing he can do to get fired short of actually executing all the things I have falsely attributed to Shapiro over the past weeks. It isn't going to happen, and it is no longer helping, so that's enough of that.

However, I did hear a rumor that Mike Brown flew to Greenland and fried three baby seals with leeks and shallots. Okay, I didn't so much &quot;hear&quot; the rumor as &quot;fabricate&quot; it. Ignore Eric Wedge.