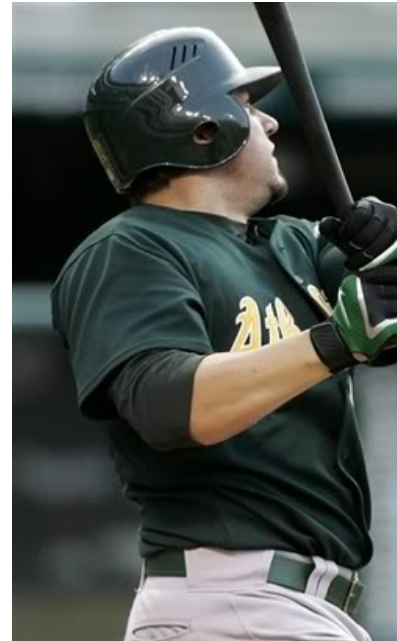


The B-List: 6/27

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Yikes! What happened to Fausto last night? In today's B-List, Buff tells us. And also says not to worry. Fausto is still very young, and this type of temporary setback is nothing new for a second year pitcher. Buff also hits on Jason Stanford's first appearance as the long man, the return of Eddie Moo, and Jason Michaels staying hot. I hate you Jack Cust.



FINAL SCORE					
Athletics (40-37)	3	6	0	0	0
Indians (45-32)	0	2	0	0	0

W: DiNardo (3-4) □ □ L: Carmona (8-4)

As impressive as a "Never say die!" attitude is, I rather prefer a "Never say suck!" execution plan.

1) Important, insightful analysis

Fausto Carmona was bad.

2) Actual insight

It is rare for a pitcher to go through an entire season without one true clunker, especially pitchers in their second year or under the age of 25. Carmona is both. Relax. Stanford let in two of his runs, anyway, but that doesn't change much of the analysis. I mean, it didn't look like "the league figured him out" or he got really wild or caught flesh-eating bacteria, he just stunk. His pitches were up and they didn't move much and the A's hit them really hard.

3) Handy without actually being valuable

Truthfully, most of the prose I normally dedicate to the starter should go to the first reliever, as Jason Stanford went 5 2/3 innings, giving up 3 runs on 9 hits and 3 walks, striking out 2. He also allowed the men on second and third when he entered the game to score, but if you were to characterize Stanford's ersatz "start," you say he started very poorly, then pitched pretty well when he got to start innings, until he ran out of effectiveness the third time through the order and gave up two more runs on the back end.

I mean, look at the numbers: more than a hit-and-a-half an inning, more than two baserunners an inning. That's not a super-valuable pitcher, that's A Guy. (It's actually Paul Byrd, but I'm hoping to avoid that topic until tomorrow.) The heading is a bit flip, because being able to drop a guy in for near six innings and 94 pitches of a game he entered 9-0 really is valuable. It doesn't do a heckuva lot for your chances of winning the game, but it saves the bullpen from having the kind of waxing that happened in the Westbrook Injury Start. If he'd pitched better, the offense actually came back significantly, but he did a credible job. I think the fantasy of The Comeback Kid has been largely scotched, though: Stanford is what he is, a fringe guy who can throw some innings. I'm glad he was able to put in starter's innings on short notice, and I like left-handed pitchers in general, but ... he's A Guy.

4) Eddie Moo sighting!

Objectively, Eddie Mujica isn't very good. He had some cachet last season, but it's largely worn off, and his numbers in Beefalo weren't much to write home about. Still, I like that he throws strikes and has some strikeout stuff, so I've always thought he could have been used more valuably than he has been.

Last night was a mixed bag: he threw one pitch to get Stanford out of the 7th with a "runner" (more a baseball term than description of Jack Cust) on first, then threw a nice perfect 8

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, including a swinging strikeout and 9 strikes in 13 pitches. Heck, he even got Mark Ellis out. The 9

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started well with a three-pitch K of Kurt Suzuki, but after a successful bunt single and a watched strike, Shannon Stewart hit a homer off Mujica that ruined his line, even considering the next two groundouts, including Jack Cust, who otherwise couldn't be stopped.

In all, Mujica threw 21 strikes and 6 balls, positively Betancourtian, and really only threw one pitch that was well-hit. Unfortunately, they ALL count: you don't get to throw out the high and low scores and average the rest. I'm not sure where Mujica fits in the Grand Scheme, mostly because I don't actually see a Scheme, Grand or Not, but he's got skill.

5) Fireworks at the Jake

Not real ones, but seven of Oakland's 13 runs and six of Cleveland's 7 scored via the home run last night. On the Cleveland side of the ledger, Jhonny Peralta hit one to center, his 13th on the season, and Casey Blake hit a solo shot to left in the 7

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More interesting to me were the other two shots:

a) Travis Hafner hit a solo shot off the left-handed reliever, continuing a show of power and adding data to the "progressing to the mean" hypothesis

b) Franklin Gutierrez hit a three-run homer in the sixth to make what had been a laugher back into a ballgame

The first case largely speaks for itself: true, Hafner punished a poor pitch, but he did hit it over the fence: recently he had been grounding that ball to second base. Gutierrez, on the other hand, lost much of his sheen as a prospect exactly because the power he had shown in the Dodgers' system at a very young age had all but disappeared in the Cleveland system. Gutierrez also drew a walk last night, a sore spot since his .273 AVG has produced a still-lousy .310 OBP, but this is still in the realm of Small Sample Size Theater.

I have yet to be convinced that Gutierrez is a legitimate everyday major-league outfielder, but if you'd asked me what I wanted to see to consider him one, I would have said,

"More power and better plate discipline." The first part seems to be as much as I can reasonably ask for (.491 SLG) ... we'll see where it goes from here.

6) Cliched but still appreciated

Hey, when you call behind 9-0 in the second inning, it would seem pretty easy to roll over and live to fight another day. Heck, you're coming off an emotional last-inning win the night before, you had a bad day, just get it over with.

Except that's not what the Indians did last night: at 10-5, I really thought there was a ballgame, and that's attributable to the way the Indians played. There have been a couple times this season where the team didn't look ready or all that interested in playing, but this too will happen over the course of 162 games. Last night seemed like the kind of situation where they could have played that card and didn't. I don't want to get carried away with the rah-rah Gipperesque 110%-giving Roster of Great Guys, but I will say this: I no longer resign myself to an expected loss when this team trails in the 7th inning.

7) (Almost) Everybody hits!

Although hot in June, Josh Barfield was the only Indian not to get a hit last night. Three players had two-hit nights: Peralta, Victor Martinez, and Jason Michaels. Michaels is now hitting .303 on the season, and one of the hit was for extra bases, giving Michaels 13 for the season and a slugging percentage of .472. Intrepid readers might want to check the archives to see why I would mention this.