

## The B-List: 7/2

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Monday, July 02 2007 7:00 PM -

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Huzzah! The Tribe finished off their four game sweep of the D-Rays last night, EXPLODING for seven runs in the 8th inning, capped off by a Grady Sizemore grand salami. The Indians have won five in a row, seven of eight, and moved to 31-12 at home on the season! Buff is so giddy, even the Trot Nixon Toast Watch (tm) is positive today!



<b>FINAL</b>				
<b>Devil Rays (33-48)</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Indians (50-32)</b>	0	2	0	1

W: Carmona (9-4) L: Sonnanstine (1-3)

Really, this is a game of "take-away"; if you take away one inning from Tampa Bay's offense, the Indians' pitching completely *dominated* the Devil Rays. If you take away one inning from Cleveland's offense, the Devil Rays looked like a *professional* baseball team.

1) He's Fausto!™ ...

Fans were wondering what kind of bounceback Fausto Carmona would have after one of the worst outings in recent memory last time out. From my perspective, it wasn't just the one ridiculous outing, which I could shake off as one of those starts a pitcher has over the course of 30 in a season, but coupled with his previous start in which he allowed 10 hits might have signaled a "dead spot" in Carmona's season. (Heck, if I'm looking forward to the All-Star break, imagine what the players feel like.)

Um ... he bounced back pretty good.

Three of Carmona's first six innings were 1-2-3 affairs: in the other three, he allowed a walk in one, a single in one, and a single in another. The second single was followed by a stolen base, getting Tampa's first runner into scoring position in the sixth inning. With two outs. Right before the following hitter struck out. To join seven of his teammates in whiffing against Carmona.

In all, Carmona's six-inning line is 2 H (both singles), 1 BB, 8 K, 0 R. The non-K outs were in a typical Carmonian 7:3 GB:FB ratio; through the first three innings he had six groundouts and 3 Ks.

Now, Carmona did have a few cases in which he looked like he was pitching with his eyes shut. The walk to Carlos Pena in the second involved four straight pitches to random locations nowhere near the strike zone after going 0-2. Dioner Navarro saw much the same pitch selection before whiffing in the third, and Josh Wilson, considered expendable by WASHINGTON, also ran the count full before fanning.

Some of this can be considered &quot;working the zone,&quot; changing locations in and out and up and down, but ... well, he missed by a *lot*. Still, it's hard to characterize the first six innings as anything but &quot;dominant.&quot;

## 2) ... until he's not

Carmona lost his shutout bid and apparent sharpness in the 7<sup>th</sup> on a five-pitch walk and a pair of solid singles. Still, he might have escaped more lightly had Casey Blake cleanly fielded Jonny Gomes' worthless ground ball, or perhaps not struck pinch-hitter Ty Wigginton in the middle of his back to force in a second run.

Now, sometimes you can rightfully claim &quot;second-guessing&quot; by an analyst who cries for a reliever to have been brought in after the fact. Carmona finished with 97 pitches, so he wasn't entirely gassed, and his first six innings certainly earned him significant currency getting the benefit of the doubt. However, the walk to Greg Norton (Greg Norton bats cleanup for this team!) was of the &quot;twelve-gauge&quot; variety Pena got, and the two singles could reasonably have been considered the end of Carmona's night. Even after getting Gomes to hit a weak ground ball, it was kind of jaw-dropping to see Carmona left in to face Wigginton.

Maybe there was a &quot;teaching opportunity&quot; here. I learned something, anyway.

### 3) Department of Raffies

After Wigginton was hit, a criminal investigation would have ensued if Eric Wedge had left Carmona on the hill, so Rafael Perez was summoned with no outs and the bases loaded. We can debate the use of Perez over Betancourt in the abstract, but in reality, all Perez did was:

- \* Strike out pinch-hitter Raul Cassanova on 3 pitches (looking, foul, swinging)
- \* induce a high bouncer to the mound by Aki Iwamura, which Perez snagged with a very athletic leap, then threw to the plate for the force
- \*) Got Brendan Harris to ground out to end the inning

Short of striking out the side or hog-tying them with their own intestines, it is hard to conceive of a better performance in that situation.

Perez retired two more hitters in the 8<sup>th</sup>, a rather nice thing that

causes me to rethink my objection to multi-inning outings for him, before walking Carlos Pena. This summoned Betancourt in to face Delmon Young, and Betancourt had an off night, needing *five* pitches to strike Young out. (Two balls! I checked for a misprint.)

I think Betancourt would have stayed in the game had the Indians not exploded in the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup>.

Final tally for Aggregate Raffies: 2 IP, 3 K, 1 BB, 0 H, 0 R.

#### **4) Now I'm just angry**

Ben Francisco banged out 3 hits, including a solo home run, an RBI single, and an RBI double. He also walked and scored two runs, but think about the hits again for a moment: Ben Francisco drove in a run with a hit every time he didn't walk. If there

was a runner in scoring position, Francisco made him score. If there wasn't, he created his own runner by hitting it over the wall.

Francisco also showed above-average range in left.

It makes no sense to talk about his batting numbers, as his samples are so small (he's not a .500 hitter, no matter how much we like him). However, it does beg the question: WHY HAVE WE BEEN PUTTING UP WITH OUR CORNER OUTFIELDERS UNTIL JULY WHILE THIS GUY HAS BEEN IN BEEFALO?

Okay, I mean, some of this is normal development and he needed to play every day and left-handed proven veterans and senseless muttering, but *day-u m* .

Can I have me some more of that there Ben Francisco, please?

## **5) Chico called, he's getting out of the bail bonds business, so you have to stop wearing those jerseys**

Gary Glover replace Jay Witasick in the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup>. Glover is sort of a retreaded retread, having made several stops between the White Sox and Devil Rays. He gave up a single to Victor Martinez, then Wigginton butchered a ground ball by Travis Hafner to put runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Both runners advanced on a wild pitch, and Ryan Garko hit a sacrifice fly.

The sacrifice fly was a bit of an adventure, as Jonny Gomes crossed in front of Delmon Young and made a preposterous Jonny Gomes Throw to ... somewhere infieldular, I think ... it wasn't good, but neither is Gomes' fielding. Joe Maddon elected to intentionally walk Trot Nixon to get to Ben Francisco.

Let us contemplate the thought process here, as although Nixon is a lefty with a sizable platoon split, Francisco actually sported a negative platoon split in Beefalo this season. Also, Trot Nixon cannot hit the ball for extra bases any more, and Travis Hafner is wearing osmium shoes. Francisco has a double and a homer in the game, and hit a homer to win Friday's game. He is what you might call, &quot;hot,&quot; whereas Trot Nixon is what you might call &quot;Trot Nixon.&quot; So the thought process here is ... um ... okay, I got nothin'. Neither did Maddon.

Franklin Gutierrez pinch-ran for Nixon, and Francisco laced a single. When Carl Crawford made the first *official* error of the inning, Gutierrez alertly took third, putting runners at the corners for Mossy Mike Rouse, whose single AND sacrifice fly earlier in the game upgraded him from &quot;mineral.&quot;

Rouse worked the count full, and with Francisco running on the pitch, took ball four.

Now, for those of you scoring at home, Francisco gets second base for free here. Trying to throw him out it pointless. Even Tampa's middle infielders know this. How do I know they knew? Because neither covered the bag as Cassanova threw the ball into center field. Gutierrez scored and Francisco went to third.

Oh, by the way, Francisco's single and Rouse's walk were off heretofore-excellent closer Al Reyes.

Reyes then walked Barfield, and Grady Sizemore hit a grand slam. That was pretty

much the ballgame.

## **6) Because it was pretty much the ballgame**

Ferd Cabrera got to pitch! Yay! (He did pretty well, too, giving up a walk but no hits in a scoreless inning.)

## **7) Ducks off the Pond!**

The Tribe stranded 5 runners, only one of whom was in scoring position. Scoring twice as many runs as you have LOB has to be considered &quot;efficient.&quot;

## 8) Trot Nixon Toast Watch

Nixon singled and was walked inexplicably ... er, intentionally in four trips to the plate. He made an awkward sliding flop on Carlos Pena's single in the 7<sup>th</sup> to remind people to tie their shoes for safety and to expedite the appearance of Gutierrez. The color code is "sand," with a consistency of "lightly singed."