

The B-List: 7/19

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The Tribe kicked off a four-game set in Texas with a win, taking advantage of the Rangers' innate Rangerosity to win even on a night when titular Ace C.C. Sabathia was as sharp as his pajamic uniform. In today's B-List, Buff recaps the win with a eye toward some good offense, some good defense, some very good Raffies, and not a small amount of good fortune.



FINAL SCORE		2631E		
Indians (56-39)	0	4	0	0
Rangers (41-54)	0	3	0	1

W: Sabathia (13-4) L: Loe (5-8) S: Borowski (27)

You know what's great about being able to see the game with the Rangers' announcers? Yeah, neither do I.

1) Luck is the residue of design, or Grady Sizemore

All things considered, C.C. Sabathia didn't really pitch all that well last night, giving up 4 runs on 9 hits in 6 innings. One of the runs was unearned, but then, it was Sabathia that made the error to give up the unearned run, so the Sympathy Factor is low. He only walked one man, continuing a positive trend on the season, but he only struck out two, a surprisingly-low total for Sabathia against a team with Sammy Sosa and Ramon Vazquez on it. Three of the hits were for extra bases, a stat somewhat offset by the fact that three of the hits never left the infield.

The extra bases all came in the Inning of Crap, which was the second this time, as Brad Wilkerson doubled, Gerald Laird (hitting .232/.293/.348) homered, and Ramon Vazquez (Ramon Vazquez!) doubled with two outs. Wilkerson doubled on an 0-2 pitch, meaning Sabathia (who had sawed through the Rangers in order in the first) was a good slider away from starting the third with a perfect game in tact. Then, with Vazquez on second, Sabathia got rookie Travis Metcalf (hitting .209) to hit a ball toward the mound, where Sabathia grabbed the ball and promptly threw it to ... someone other than Ryan Garko.

Now, ordinarily, I would attribute a double to Brad Wilkerson on an 0-2 pitch to a simple lapse, but extra-base hits to Laird and Vazquez on consecutive pitches followed by an air-mailed swinging bunt smacks not just of a lapse in concentration, but rather of a bout of [tardive dyskinesia](#). Kenny Lofton subsequently lined out when his bullet hit Casey Blake in the glove.

The 4th was more comical than tragic: after walking Wilkerson, Laird collected his league-leading 9th bunt hit (as a catcher! That's actually pretty neat: Laird does not look that nimble, but it's hard to argue with the numbers) to put men on first and second with no outs. Vazquez followed with an attempted sacrifice that he beat out for a hit to load the bases. The next batter, Metcalf, HAMMERED a ball to dead center that travelled 404.9 feet to the 405 sign, where Grady Sizemore hauled it in and Laird showed the baserunning acumen of a 2006 Cleveland Indian by not tagging up. Lofton then HAMMERED a ball through the middle, except it didn't get all the way through because Josh Barfield's glove was in the way, grounding into his 4th double play of the season.

Sabathia polished off the last two innings, managing to give up ANOTHER hit to Vazquez in the process.

The one thing that struck me about the game was how many times the Rangers were able to lift the ball off Sabathia: he had an

uncharacteristically-low 4:12 GB:FB ratio, and bunts aside, the Rangers had a number of very-well-hit balls against him. I'm not drawing any grand conclusions, but it wasn't a very good start, despite the win. I appreciated how he kept his composure and fought through it, but really, was this start any better than Westbrook's or Byrd's?

2) Everybody hits! (Except you)

Each Cleveland starter had at least one hit except for Josh Barfield, whose play on Lofton's ground ball was worth a couple hits by itself. In fact, because of starter Kameron Loe's rather amusing propensity to wander around the strike zone (55:40 K:BB ratio on the season, 4 walks last night), each of the first SEVEN Indians batters reached base at least twice. Only Grady Sizemore (including a solo shot) and Casey Blake (23rd double, 4th triple) got more than one hit, but the Tribe did a much better job with their opportunities last night than they had the night before, leaving only 7 on base (4 in scoring position, though, including leaving the bases loaded in the 5th).

3) Residual luck, part 2: Ramon Vazquez Edition

Cleveland took the lead for good in the 5th as Grady Sizemore led off the inning with a solo shot off Loe. Blake then tripled into the left-field corner as Brad Wilkerson had tried to make a diving catch: he made a nice recovery, though, and Blake showed good hustle making it to third. However, after a

groundout and a pair of walks to load the bases, Ryan Garko hit a fairly routine double-play ball to Jerry Hairston Jr. at second.

Now, Garko is not fast. He is, in fact, slugular. If you are rushing to double up Ryan Garko, you are expending too many calories. Take your time. Have a sandwich. You'll get him.

Unless you're Jerry Hairston, throwing the ball in an arcane lollipop loop to Vazquez, who is forced to step in front of the bag to catch the throw before relaying it to first. Garko was still Quite Out, but the umpire alertly noticed that Vazquez wasn't even close enough to the bag for the "phantom call" at second and called Jhonny Peralta safe to produce Cleveland's 6th run, as the Indians were spared the ignominy of putting a runner on third with no outs and not driving him home.

Garko and Francisco made this run technically unnecessary in the 8th, but it was a lift nonetheless.

4) Department of Raffies

After Sabathia's night ended with a 13-pitch at-bat to Metcalf, Rafael Perez came in and threw fewer pitches to finish the 7th than Sabathia had thrown to record his 18th

out. Nine of Perez' 11 pitches were for strikes, as he struck out 1 in 1 perfect inning of work. Left-handed Kenny Lofton made an out of the first pitch, which is not surprising, as Perez is allowing left-handed hitters to bat .077/.143/.154 against him. Perez has struck out 34 batters and walked 6 in 29 innings of work.

Rafael Betancourt was less efficient, giving up a single and a walk to get through a scoreless eighth with 19 strikes in 26

pitches. After a leadoff walk to Sammy Sosa, Betancourt threw 15 strikes in 18 pitches. Perez' inning lasted roughly one-tenth as long as Betancourt's, as the Rangers' announcers were able to recap the entire National League scoreboard between two of Betancourt's pitches. Betancourt has struck out 38 and walked 4 in 43 2/3 innings and sports a WHIP of 0.69.

I would take my chances in a game with Perez and Betancourt pitching the 7th and 8th innings.

5) Department of Uninteresting Saves

Joe Borowski gave up a run on two hits: having been spotted a three-run lead, he pitched accordingly. He struck out Sammy Sosa swinging with a man on base because he was bored and wanted to go home.

6) The Big Blow

Normally, this is where I would make a snide comment about Trot Nixon's current skill level, but, in fact, it was Nixon who had the biggest hit of the game's biggest inning, hitting a two-run bases-loaded double off Loe to score the game's first two runs. Nixon is hitting

.241/.313/.414 in July with more extra-base hits (3) in 29 AB than he'd gotten in all of June in over twice as many ABs (2, 59). Since the All-Star Break, Nixon is hitting .333/.385/.417, meaning that the long layoff has raised his production from Distressingly Dismal to Merely Adequate.

The course of action is clear: give Nixon a week off every week from here on out.

7) Hard to Believe

Texas right fielder Marlon Byrd has 9 hits in his last ten games, including 2 multi-hit games, over which his average has DROPPED THIRTY-SIX POINTS to a mere .351.

Three fifty one?

Marlon Byrd?

Next you'll be telling me that Ramon Vazquez went 3-for-4 and is outhitting our (f)utility infielder by a hundred forty points.