

The B-List: 7/26

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Thursday, July 26 2007 7:00 PM -

After a pair of 1-0 nail-biters, you might think that a 14-9 barnburner might be exciting. Well, that's where you'd be wrong. In today's B-List, Buff outlines a bad loss by contrasting Manny Ramirez (who is good) with Jason Stanford (who is not), and also delivers some bad news to Cliff Lee.



FINAL SCORE

Red Sox (62-40)	0	1	1	2
Indians (59-43)	0	0	1	0

W: J. Tavaraz (6-8) L: C. Lee (5-8)

I am shocked ... SHOCKED ... that there was poor pitching last night.

(Your winnings, sir.)

(Oh, thank you very much.)

1) Favorite Player Dept.

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To: Cliff Lee
Subject: Favorite Player status

Mr. Lee,

You're fired.

To: Tom Mastny
Subject: Your application

Mr. Mastny,

We regret to inform you that your application has been rejected.

At this point I will be taking bids from readers in order to convince me to NOT declare a player you like as My Favorite Player. And no, I won't adopt Mike Rouse.

2) This just in: Manny Ramirez can hit

You know, of all the Tribe players from the mid-nineties, Jim Thome takes a lot of abuse for saying one thing and doing another, while Albert Belle got grudging

respect for saying up frton he was leaving for the money but was generally considered a humongous jerk. Manny Ramirez is more the subject of bemusement: oh, that Manny, what an adorable goofball! Hee hee!

Frankly, I'm not sure how much is cultivated and how much looks endearing on the surface and is actually pretty annoying underneath, but one thing is indisputible: Manny Ramirez can hit.

Manny has actually been having kind of an "off year" to date, although his average has climbed back over .300 after a 3-for-4 night with 4 RBI and 4 runs scored. However, his two home runs last night give him "only" 17 on the season, and his SLG of .517 is the lowest of his career since a 53-AB rookie cuppocoffee in 1993 with the Tribe.

Think about this: since 1996, Manny Ramirez has slugged over .600 more times than under .600, and has slugged under .580 exactly once (.538, 1997 ironically). 2005's .982 marked the first time he was under 1.000 OPS since 1998, and his CAREER AVERAGE OPS is 1.007. Manny Ramirez, in a terrible down year, still hits over .300, still has an OBP over .400, and still slugs over .500.

Manny is an indifferent fielder, a sometimes brain-damaged baserunner, wears a ridiculous set of pajamas instead of a uniform, and says some very strange things (in a Zen way, not in a Carl Everett way). But Manny Ramirez can hit, and is likely a Hall of Famer.

Frankly, measuring the distance of a home run has always seemed like a bit of an arcane art to me: for my money, any time you homer to dead center, you've hit the ball awfully well.

Manny did it twice.

3) I outslug Manny Ramirez!

Yeah, well, enjoy it while you can, but Franklin Gutierrez did hit his 7th home run of the season last night to give the Cleveland offense some life before Lee and Co. rendered it moot. Gutierrez is hitting .301/.342/.544 on the season, so although the plate discipline is still largely theoretical at this point, Gutierrez produces at corner-outfielder rates to this point, which puts him a leg up on ... any other Cleveland corner outfielder.

I'm still not sure what to make of Gutierrez: at 24, he's young, but not *real*

young. With 5 stolen bases, he's fast, but not *real*

fast. The home runs suggest real power, but F-Goot's power has travelled kind of a strange road from "none" to "more than you'd think for a kid!" to "where the hell did it go?" to slugging .544 in the bigs. He still has a huh-*yoodge*

platoon split, but at least part of that is a function of how he's ... well ... platooned. (His home and away splits are even larger: .345 AVG 1.084 OPS at home vs. .250 AVG .601 OPS on the road: I don't know what to make of that, given that Jacobs Field is a shade on the pitcher's park side of neutral.)

Right now, Gutierrez is very valuable in that he's an outfielder who can hit, but long-term, he probably maximizes his value as a run-producing center fielder: since we already have one of those, we can either go the White Sox 2005 route of playing multiple center fielders (which worked for them, after all), or trying to leverage Gutierrez into something else (a very good third baseman or starting pitcher). But as of July 26, he's our second-best outfielder.

4) Gark smash!

Ryan Garko didn't get the memo that teams down 9-1 need to roll over and smacked a three-run, two-out homer in the seventh to draw the Indians back to within striking distance. Like the [kitten chasing the moon](#), the pitching staff never actually allowed the Indians to close that distance down to zero, but it was a nice piece of hitting nonetheless.

Now, Garko *did* leave the bases loaded in the 5th, where a hit might have closed the distance that much further, but I think it would only have put the kitten in a tall tree given our relievers.

5) Department of Efficiency Dept.

The Red Sox were pretty efficient, converting 17 hits into 14 runs, largely on the strength of hitting the ball over the fence a lot and getting to face Lee, Mastny, and Jason Stanford. (Actually, Jensen Lewis gave up Manny's second homer, but Lewis has not ground me down yet.)

However, the Indians converted 6 hits into NINE runs, largely on the strength of Garko driving in a runner who'd walked, Hafner driving in a runner who'd reached on an error, and

Hafner getting plunked with the bases loaded. In fact, everyone scored at least one run except Casey Blake.

6) Refining the role's definition

What is Jason Stanford's role?

Well, part of it is to come in and swallow innings in a blowout. I suppose that's a valuable skill. Part of it is that he could start at the drop of a hat, you know, if someone got ill or suddenly turned into Cliff Lee. But the one thing Stanford is terrible at is coming into a game cold with runners on base. Starting an inning, acceptable. Third time through the order, not so good. Runners on base, not good at all.

Now, last night looked like he might have turned the proverbial corner: coming into a game with runners on 1st and 2nd and no outs, Stanford induced a quick double play. In hindsight, keeping them to 7-1 at that point (we scored 4 in the bottom of the frame) might have made a difference. Instead, Stanford immediately gave up a run-scoring single and a run-scoring double before getting out of the inning.

Here is a guy of average age with average stuff who can't pitch long enough to be a real rotation guy but also can't come in without starting an inning. I have to ask at this point: how really, really concerned are we if someone grabs him off waivers? Having him is better than having nothing, I guess, but ... is he actually *valuable*?

7) Fairness Dept.

Fredo Cabrera pitched a scoreless inning, the only Indian to do so. Huzzah!

8) Open Question

If Wile E. Mo Pena is hitting .219 and you let him go 4-for-5 with a 3-run bomb, score twice, and drive in four runs, do you suck?