

## The B-List: 8/1

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Today's B-List is one of the funnier I've ever read, and that's good ... because I felt like crying when Buff submitted the column to me. Last night's game was just painful to watch. And the Indians are tailspinning. Buff relives the horra for us today, making snide comments about Paul Byrd's beard, the non Raffie Tribe bullpen, and Willie Eyre's blue glove along the way.



<b>FINAL SCORE</b>				
<b>Rangers (48-59)</b>	3	0	1	0
<b>Indians (60-47)</b>	0	4	0	0

*W: Benoit (5-3) L: J. Lewis (0-1) S: C.J. Wilson (2)*

Wow, you say, an extra-inning affair that goes over four hours! That must be some entertaining baseball there!

No.

### 1) The mirror broke and the smoke machine is on the fritz ...

... and yet Paul Byrd still only gave up three earned runs in 5 1/3 innings. I wish he'd stop channeling Yassir Arafat's Norwegian cousin with the beard, but the man does know how to pitch.

Well, sorta. The record will indicate that Paul Byrd retired 16 Texas Rangers,

including 3 by strikeout, but the box score doesn't adequately count the involuntary gasps of line drives hit at outfielders or Raffy Perez bailing his punk ass out in the 6<sup>th</sup>. All told, Byrd gave up 10 hits and 4 runs (1 unearned), while walking a guy unintentionally, walking another on purpose, and hitting Frank Catalanotto not hard enough in the leg. But here's the infuriating thing about this: of Byrd's 10 hits, 6 came with 2 strikes, and the other 4 were on the first pitch. And the "error" on Garko (which was a pretty tough call on Garko, actually) was on two strikes ... to Ramon Vazquez! When you have the "stuff" of Paul Byrd, you can't make a two-strike pitch catch as much of the zone as Byrd did last night. (Note that several of the two-strike counts were 3-2, so some of the zone was certainly warranted.)

Ultimately, though, this isn't about making bad decisions: this is simply about execution. On the one hand, you have to hand it to Byrd that he stuck it out and kept us in a game on a night when he had absolutely nothing. On the other hand, Byrd had absolutely nothing. And needs to shave.

## 2) Hilarity at the ball park

I was trying to come up with an absurd tale of how the Indians lost the game in the 10<sup>th</sup> inning, but really, my work is cut out for me here. Anything I make up is going to pale in comparison to what actually happened.

Jensen Lewis strode to the mound in the 10<sup>th</sup>. I do not know how Jensen Lewis became the go-to guy in this situation after our three Major League relievers had been exhausted, but there

you have it. Lewis kicks, and throws, and goes 0-2 to Ramon Vazquez. A ball, he's not fishing. A foul. A ball, he's not fishing. A foul. A ball, he's not fishing (I believe we have established this at this point). And then a solid single to center that Lewis can't stab over his head on the way by.

Now, in the top of the 10<sup>th</sup>, sort of by definition you are playing for one run, so Frank Catalanotto squares up to bunt. He bunts pretty much right to Lewis, who grabs the ball awkwardly but acceptibly.

At this point, we have to ask what is going through the team's collective minds. Kelly Shoppach is thinking that Jensen Lewis is a season veteran with eyes in the back of his head, not realizing that, hey, he's a baseball player, he wears a CAP over the back of his head, he can't see behind him. Casey Blake is thinking, wow, that's a long way to run, even for Captain Hustle, Lewis has this one. Ryan Garko is thinking, okay, here comes the throw, just catch and jog, catch and jog. Jhonny Peralta is thinking about jogging to second with the fewest number of muscle fibers firing as possible. And

Jensen Lewis is thinking ... well, it's hard to say what Jensen Lewis is thinking ... how yellow Spongebob is, or possibly that growing Beverly Hills 90210 sideburns makes him look older so he can avoid getting carded at the 7-11 ... but he throws the ball to second to not get Ramon Vazquez out.

Now, everyone on Earth knows that Ian Kinsler is going to bunt. They just bunted, this is even more bunt, here comes the bunt. Bunt deluxe. Yes, indeedy doo. Everyone knows this, and they spend some extra time on it. Carl Willis comes out. Kelly Shoppach comes out. John Bolton comes out and thrashes people with his moustache. Bunt, buntity, bunt bunt bunt.

Lewis pounces ... he whirls ... he looks like Pablo from the Backyardigans, running in small circles and panicking and wooga wooga wooga ... doesn't throw to third ... doesn't throw to first, either ... but instead throws to Lenny the Mole, and Vazquez scores.

Not only does Vazquez score, but it's a TWO-base error, and now runners are on second and third, which was the point of the sacrifice bunt in the first place, except no one is actually out.

IBB, sac fly, run-scoring single, good night ladies and germs, don't forget to tip your waiter.

### **3) On the bright side**

Tom Mastny came in, struck out Nel Cruz, and got a nice throw on a very bad stolen base attempt to eventually gun down Mike Young trying to score from third. I would say that was hilarious, but compared to Lewis, it was not.

### **4) The Raffies giveth, the Raffies taketh away**

Be honest: if the opposing team has loaded the bases, is there anyone you'd rather see on the mound than Raffy Perez? Anyone? Sabathia, no. Carmona, no. Borowski, no, please, be serious. Even Betancourt, no. With the bases loaded this season, Rafael Perez has faced nine batters and allowed 1 hit (3 runs). Opponents hit .125/.111/.125 against Rafael Perez with the bases loaded. He has gotten out of no-out bases loaded jams. I love this man.

After Paul Byrd got an out, hit Catalanotto not hard enough, then a 2-2 double to Kinsler, Wedge had him walk Mike Young to load the bases for Perez. Here is what happened:

*Jason Botts: Strike (looking), Strike (swinging), Strike (swinging)*□

*Marlon Byrd: Strike (looking), Strike (swinging), Strike (swinging)*

Hey, is that any good?

It should be noted that Byrd's "swings" were more checks he couldn't hold, but those were some nasty sliders he didn't hit.

But then after starting 2-0 and going to 2-2 against Nellie Cruz, Perez walked him before striking out Saltalamacchia. Putting a guy on base when you can't be touched is kind of irritating, but it's hard to argue that Perez didn't do his job.

And Rafael betancourt came in, whiffed Gerald Laird on four pitches, and this looked like a game well salted away. Except that Betancourt turned 0-2 against Ramon Vazquez into 2-2 into a single, and his double to Catalanotto (see what I mean about Byrd not hitting him hard enough?) tied the game.

Really, this isn't about second-guessing: this is about execution. The right guys were asked to do the right things, and failed. And we lost. There are still few (if any) better left-right pair of setup guys ... but they lost that game. And weren't nearly as hilarious as Lewis, who reminded me of John Cleese in the Ministry of Silly Walks trying to figure out bunt defense.

## **5) Dept. of Double Takes**

Joe Borowski threw a perfect inning with the game on the line.

Casey Blake hit a two-run homer with two outs and a runner in scoring position ... which turned a deficit into a lead.

Kelly Shoppach did not strangle himself with his catcher's mask.

## **6) If you're going to refuse the cookie, you can't choke on a turnip**

With a runner on first and one out in the bottom of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Travis Hafner came to the plate. Now, right-handed Joaquin Benoit is on the mound, left-hander C.J. Wilson is in the pen, and the ginormous shift is on, giving Hafner free reign over the left half of the infield. This says two things:

- 1) We don't think you're good enough to bring in a left-hander for
- 2) We think you're too stubborn to take the free base

Admittedly, Benoit is the titular closer now that Gagne has been traded and Otsuka is hurt. Benoit's a pretty good pitcher. But in past years, this is a no-brainer to bring in Wilson to face Hafner, and this year, Ron Washington has correctly determined that Hafner is no longer a threat.

Say this again with me: Hafner ... is ... not ... a ... threat.

That is not good for the Indians.

Hafner is swinging away. Okay, you may swing away. You are a power hitter, you might get a hold of something. But listen: the team is down 9-6. Do you know how hard is it to hit a three-run homer with one man on base?

Really, really hard. Even if Hafner hits the world's first 700-foot bomb, the score is still only 9-8. Hafner's run is actually completely meaningless, except insofar as it leads to a meaningful ninth run, which has nothing to do with Hafner. So why not take the base? I know, how do I know Hafner can bunt? Because he's a human being, that's how. Great Scott, just tap the ball left. I know how not hard this is to do, because I have done it, and I have one femtoHafner of talent.

Hafner struck out, and looked really really really really terrible doing it, fouling off gimme fastballs before missing an admittedly-nasty changeup (although at 3-2, you need better pitch recognition as an eight-figure DH).

**7) Please, take off the damned pumpkin suit**

Kelly Shoppach!

## **8) More insightful insight from the Rangers' crew!**

Okay, they didn't talk about Betty Crocker, they didn't talk about ducks, but I found out that, in addition to the observation that Rafael Betancourt is slow (no! really!), that Willie Eyre is one of the Texas relievers that wears a blue glove.

Now, this observation might have more weight on a radio broadcast. It may be nice to see in print. But I am WATCHING THE F\*#%ING GAME ON TELEVISION, I can SEE that he is wearing a blue glove! What is this, broadcast for the blind? Why do I have a television if I'm

blind? Man, what dorks.

Oh, by the way, C.J. Wilson is left-handed.  
Thank God they told me this, otherwise I would  
have had to depend on me SEEING HIM  
THROW THE BALL LEFT-HANDED.