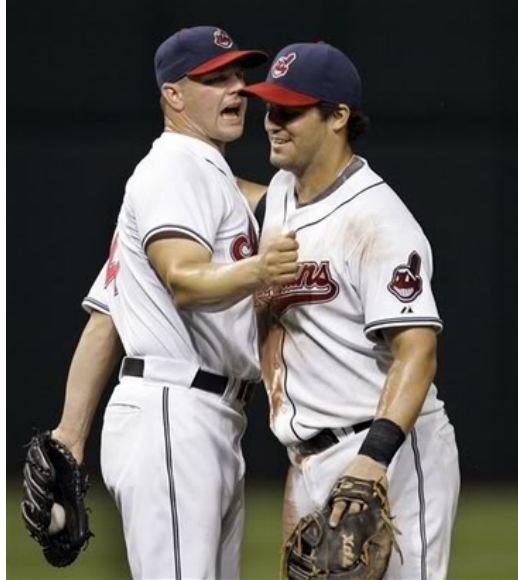


## The B-List: 8/29

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
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If you'd have told me that the Indians would beat Johan Santana 4 times in one season, I would have thought you were insane. Of course, I would have said the same thing had you told me we'd carry the performances of Josh Barfield and Mike Rouse as far as we did. Perhaps you're simply insane. (You probably got that way watching Joe Borowski.) The B-List recaps the sweep of the Twins by looking at C.C. Sabathia, who may have been driven insane with actual run support, and other features of the 4-3 win.



FINAL SCORE				
Twins (67-66)	0	0	0	0
Indians (75-57)	4	0	0	0

W: Sabathia (15-7) L: Jo. Santana (14-10) S: Borowski (39)

More likely: beating Santana four times, or ... anything else?

### 1) Vision problems

*"It was hard to pitch with the tears of joy obscuring my vision."*  
--- Not C.C. Sabathia

I would not be surprised to read that Sabathia has multiple bruises from pinch marks on his arms today, as he tried to wake himself from his apparent dream watching the Indians' offense score 4 runs in the FIRST INNING against JOHAN

SANTANA while SABATHIA WAS PITCHING. Whatever he might say to the contrary, this must have shocked him beyond belief.

It didn't shock him enough to prevent him from posting his eighth consecutive start allowing fewer than 3 earned runs, albeit this time in only 6 innings of work. Sabathia has been a strike-throwing machine this season, maintaining an impressive 176:31 K:BB ratio, and last night was still a good 71:38 strike-to-ball ratio, which is actually a bit low for him this season. However, 109 pitches is a lot to use in 6 innings, and it made perfect sense to end his night there.

It's not immediately obvious why he threw so many pitches: he gave up 7 hits, but only walked and struck out 2 apiece, while turning a pair of double plays (all things that normally contribute to keeping the pitch count lower). At least part of the issue can be attributed to last year's Pet Stat: Sabathia induced 6 swings and misses, but allowed 19 foul balls. He got a fair number of strikes looking (he always does, he pounds the zone), but two of the swinging strikes came against a batter he subsequently hit. In fact, he hit two batters, and went deep into counts on a bunch of others.

Last year, I talked about how Sabathia tended to have better outings when he could get people to flat-out miss the ball. This season, this hasn't been so much of an issue, and look: eight straight supra-quality starts is just damned good whether you're throwing smoke, gunk, or Cherrystone clams. It might be argued that this start should be considered impressive specifically *because* Sabathia did not have his best stuff, as inferred by the low number of strikeouts and misses, combined with the relatively high number of baserunners, yet still gave up only two runs in six innings.

I bet Sabathia would tell you one thing, though: it's more fun to pitch with a lead. He hasn't done a lot of that lately ... and it hasn't been his fault.

By the way, I think the definition of "not having his best stuff" can be at

least partially defined as "giving up extra-base hits to Alexi Casilla and .162-hitting Toastel White." (Casilla now has more doubles on the season than White, which says more about White than Casilla.)

## 2) At least worth a callback

I think the best-case scenario for any team is to have the starting pitcher be dominant and efficient and pitch complete games in 100 or fewer pitches and huzzahs all around. I think this can't be considered a common event in today's game.

So the second-best scenario for winning a game for this Indians team involves a starting pitcher giving the team a Quality Start, going six or seven innings, then letting Raffies handle the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> and Borowski finishing the 9<sup>th</sup>. This is a more common event, but you can't use Raffies every game or they will die. In fact, I'm already concerned about wearing out Betancourt, a pitcher who has historically had a tough time going back-to-back and a brutal one going three in a row.

So the third-best scenario involves coming up with someone outside the pool of {Raffies + Borowski} to bridge the gap from the middle of the game to the end. Really, intuitively, this should be the toughest thing for any team to do: almost by definition, your starters and primary setup men are your best pitchers, and your closer is fixed, so you're using what amounts to second-tier pitchers doing the rest of the work. I mean, Earl Weaver preferred the four-man rotation because it's easier to find four good pitchers than five. Well, it's easier to find 8 good pitchers than 11. Someone has to be your tenth-best pitcher, and the odds of having that guy be Super High Quality are virtually non-existent.

At the beginning of the season, Aaron Fultz was considered the primary left-handed weapon to go with Betancourt, but he followed a month of great performance with some lousy control and an injury, and it's hard to gauge exactly what's left. He's been supplanted by Perez, anyway, but it's hard to really feel confident about Fultz as a bridge guy. (He's still not a lefty *matchup* guy, BTW: that's no knock on him, just a statement based on historical performance.)

So the problem lies with the fact that Oldberto Hernandez sucked and Tom Mastny turned into a newt and Jason Davis stubbornly remained Jason Davis and Mike Koplove is a fraud and Matt Miller SPROING!s and Jason Stanford is Just Some Guy and Eddie Mujica doesn't exist. Potentially fortunately, though, Jensen Lewis has provided hope that he could be the mythical sixth-inning guy that we've been looking for. Early in the season, I talked about Mastny in this way, saying that getting 6 from Byrd, then Mastny-Betancourt-Borowski-Ballgame looked like it could win an important game. And I'm certainly not writing Mastny off: the rust is awfully thick on his hull at this point. But Lewis has simply been more impressive recently: last night, he polished off a perfect seventh in 9 pitches, 6 for strikes, getting a pair of ground balls and catching a bad bunt himself.

Like many pitchers, Lewis seems to be best-suited to starting innings, but overall his ERA of 3.31 and 19 strikeouts in 17 1/3 innings are both good, quality numbers for a relief pitcher. His WHIP is too high, but cutting back on the 6 walks would help here. If Lewis can continue to throw strikes and not get rattled with runners on base (opponents OPS is over 100 points higher, although, look, we're talking about 30-some ABs for each data set here), he can provide the crucial innings that will keep Betancourt from dying and games from being lost in the gap between a starter's short outing and General Raffiliciousness.

### 3) Droob smash!

The Indians took an immediate 2-0 lead when Asdrubal Cabrera connected for a two-run blast off Johan ...

... wait a minute, are you f\*%#ing kidding me? Asdrubal Cabrera? Home run? Johan Santana? Hubbawhazzit?

Actually, this isn't complete Jason Tyner territory here: Cabrera is still very young, and although he didn't show a lot of power rushed through the Seattle system, he grew into some slugging percentage in Beefalo before arriving. He's not David Eckstein or anything here: he's a decent-sized guy. And Johan has actually given up more homers (29) than anyone else in the AL this season. But to see Cabrera line an offering off Santana off the top of the wall ... geez, I know he needed the development time in Beefalo so that he could GET to this level of success, but to think we carried Mineral Mike Rouse and gave Josh Barfield a bat every day for months ... man.

By the way, he got another hit and was part of three double plays giving Jhonny Peralta the night off. Peralta is less successful against Johan, racking up 22 strikeouts in 29 career ABs.

I like this guy.

#### **4) When do we see the YouTube video of Chris Gomez hanging out with Mike Vick?**

How did we get this guy on waivers again?

Hey, I'm not telling you he's an All-Star or even a starter: he's got Tyner's pop and is old. But the man got two more hits last night to raise his average to .311, plus played credible 2B in place of Josh Barfield allowing us to sit both Peralta (who can't hit Santana) and Barfield (who can't hit humans) in favor of players who can produce offense.

Again: Mineral Mike, or Chris Gomez. Hmmm. Gimme a minute.

#### **5) Department of Corrections Dept.**

The heads-up defensive play I attributed to Trot Nixon, catching Torii Hunter straying too far off second base, was actually a heads-up play by cutoff man Ryan Garko.

At this point, I have to say that concerns about Garko's defense at first, although founded, appear to have been grossly overblown.

#### **6) Ho Hum Dept.**

Victor Martinez hit a solo shot off Santana in the first. Martinez continues to sport an AVG over .300 as both a left and right handed hitter, an OBP over .370 as both a left and right handed hitter, and a SLG over .500 as both a left and right handed hitter. He essentially has a platoon split of nothing-point-zero.

Martinez also has 93 RBI to lead the Tribe. His worst month of July featured him posting an OBP of .358 and a SLG of .448, which would still make him one of the better catchers in the AL. At home he hits .304 with an OPS of .885. On the road he hits .303 with an OPS of .886.

Basically, Vic is a machine. (A good one.)

## 7) Let's turn two

As a connoisseur of ground balls, I naturally like the double play as well. And certainly the 6-4-3 turned by Cabrera, Gomez, and Garko counts as a nice way to end an inning.

Two other DPs made the highlight reel, though: in the second inning, Sabathia stabbed Tyner's ground ball to the box with his bare hand to start the 1-6-3. And with a runner on first and Garko guarding the line, pinch-hitter Brian Buscher hit a hard ground ball to first that Garko snagged, stepped on first, and threw to Cabrera to tag out Tyner at second for an unconventional 3-6 DP. (That was a good decision by Garko to take the out: he had plenty of time to get Tyner, while a 3-6-3

would simply have introduced more chances for error.)

## **8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine**

Mark Shapiro painted peach pits orange and sold them at the local organic farmer's market as "kumquats," causing several cases of laetrile poisoning. No one on Earth would mistake a hard peach pit for a pliable kumquat, so this statement is untrue. Fire Eric Wedge.