

The B-List: 9/12

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
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After winning the last two games of the Angels series, and the first two of the White Sox series, the Tribe came back down to earth last night ... falling 7-4 to Chicago. Buff notes in today's column that Jake Westbrook did not have his best stuff last night, and was not helped out by the defense either. Buff also reminds us that not only is Cliff Lee no longer his favorite player, but he's repulsed by the sight of him at this point.



FINAL SCORE				
Indians (85-61)	0	1	0	0
White Sox (62-84)	0	1	0	1

W: Vazquez (12-8) L: Westbrook (5-9)

Not a well-played game.

I'm impressed that Javy Vazquez is 12-8 for an 62-84 team.

1) Let's review: sinkers go *down*

I'm not sure I'm ready to draw a lot of long-term conclusions from Jake Westbrook's start, but it's pretty obvious that he didn't have his best stuff yesterday. In fact, it isn't obvious that he has ANY stuff yesterday. A typical GO:FO ratio for Jake is 12:6 or 12:4 or something: yesterday, it was 4:9, something more befitting a Cliff Lee or Cliff Lee. He did strike out 5 batters, but

he gave up a pair of homers and five other hits in 6 innings to give up 5 runs (4 earned: more on that later) and lose his ninth game on the season.

Basically, Westbrook did not have any meaningful command of his pitches. Jake Westbrook may have many skills, but without the capability to induce some ground balls, he's just destined to have a long day. His 66 strikes in 102 pitches really isn't bad (only 1 walk), but this illustrates the difference between the scouting terms "command" and "control." **Control** normally means putting pitches in the strike zone, which Jake was able to do.

Command

normally means making the pitch go to the right location with the proper intentional speed and movement, which Jake was apparently

unable

to do.

Although it's true that the three runs in the fifth inning were largely the result of an egregious defensive misplay, it's also true that the two batters after the error got clean hits, so it's not like Jake was thoroughly victimized. Sure, the outcome might have been different, but you can't argue that Westbrook was sharp. Long-term, I'm not worried about one troublesome start.

2) Terror on the basepaths!

Well, *I* was terrified. That was scary.

In the first inning, the first two hitters reached base off Javier Vazquez. With the spectre of a big inning staring him in the face, Vazquez threw a 2-2 pitch that Ryan Garko smoked ... right into Vazquez' glove: he caught Grady Sizemore leaning off third and got a double play. After a walk, Franklin Gutierrez fouled out to end the inning. (This isn't really a blunder by Sizemore, just an unfortunate play.)

In the second, after an error and a single, Trot Nixon ran the count full before striking out swinging. On what was either the worst-executed double steal in modern history or the worst hit-and-run in modern history, Kenny Lofton was so very out, he didn't even make it to third base. The next hitter, Josh Barfield, singled in Blake, meaning that a successful attempt would have meant two runs, and a lack of attempt would have meant only one but only one out and two runners on and the next play simply avoided.

The next play was to have Barfield caught stealing second.

Of the first six outs, Vazquez induced three of them, while three were out on the basepaths. [Count Floyd](#) would have approved.

3) A nothing or nothing approach

After the first two innings of Houdini-like escapism, Vazquez recorded the following outs:

3rd:

Sizemore K

Cabrera F-8

Garko K

4th:

Martinez F-7

Gutierrez K

Lofton K

5th:

Blake K

Nixon K

Barfield K

I mean, I would get on Trot Nixon's case for striking out there ... but why single *him* out?

Javier Vazquez is a good pitcher having a fine season (3.90 ERA) ... but 7 Ks in 9 hitters? Feh!

4) Butchery at the ball yard

With Jake Westbrook in trouble in the 5th and runners at first and third with one out, Josh Fields hit an inning-ending double play ball to Josh Barfield ... who cued up the violins ("Weet! Weet! Weet!"), pulled a cleaver from the back of his pants, and proceeded to chop the ball into tiny, indistinguishable pieces. This loaded the bases for two RBI singles and extended Chicago's lead to 5-1.

I give Barfield full credit for driving in our first run, with two outs no less ... but that was a seriously bad play. Given the choice between Peralta/Cabrera and Cabrera/Barfield, I find myself reaching into science fiction for a cloning device to play a Cabrera/Cabrera combination.

5) It's the enormous, tall yellow thing!

With two outs in the 7th inning and a man on first, Paul Konerko drove a ball deep into the stands, but foul. Then he drove another ball deep into the stands, but foul ... and drove in two runs with it.

Seriously, that ball was foul. I don't understand why they had an umpire conference to validate a clearly incorrect call. It was foul.

6) Thanks for the Christmas card

-- Everclear

This having been said, who's to say this call made any difference? What makes you think that ex-Favorite Player Cliff Lee was going to get Paul Konerko out? Yes, he got two outs ... against the guys who went 1-for-8. Konerko went 3-for-4 on the day: the other player to go 3-for-4 was Jim Thome ... who got a hit off Cliff Lee. Oh, and by the way, the next two hitters after Konerko? They got hits, too, which would have driven in the same two runs that the errant call did.

No, Cliff Lee was simply bad. In 1 inning, he gave up 4 hits and 2 runs. He struck out two

guys, and so what? Feh.

Lee's 1:0 GO:FO ratio was a career high, so he had that going for him, which is nice.

7) The Komeback Kids!

Now, I had just praised the Indians in the previous column for not phoning the game in like the White Sox have been, so I must be pretty upset at the Tribe losing such a desultory effort, right? Well, not exactly: you see, down 5-1, they scored a run in the top of the 7th: now down 7-2, instead of rolling over, they scored a run in each of the 8th

and 9th

to make the final score 7-4. Yes, it fell short, but the game did not end when the team fell behind, and not even an appearance by Cliff Lee could demoralize the team to the point of non-competitiveness.

8) A Kaveat

How can you watch strike 3 on an 0-2 count to end the game? Don't you have to protect the plate as the Last Freaking Out?

9) Don't look now

Ryan Garko went 2-for-4 with a run scored and an RBI. He has hits in 8 of his last 9 games, gathering 11 hits in that span, raising his September average to .234 and his Sept. SLG to .511.

10) Viewer Mail

I forgot to mention last time that Tom Oktavec sent me the following list:

Tera = 1 trillion

Peta = 1 quadrillion

Exa = 1 quintillion

Zetta = 1 sextillion

Yotta = 1 septillion

I hope you are as excited to learn this as I was ... but kind of doubt you are. My contention is that Chris Gomez is worth 1.5 PetaRouses, while Tom actually pegs the value at 999 YottaRouses. Next week, we will discuss how many pitches I would let C.C. Sabathia throw for each Cliff Lee offering, but Tom will have to do a little more research for me.

11) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro is in the process of learning hypnotism and plans to convince Randy Lerner to re-name Cleveland Browns Stadium "Mark Shapiro's Crib." I

don't believe Shapiro would be excited to be associated with the Browns at this stage of their development, and find it truly unlikely that Mark Shapiro has ever referenced his "crib," so this statement is unlikely to the extreme (13.4 ExaUnlikelies).
Fire Eric Wedge.