

The B-List: 9/18

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And the train just keeps on a rollin' bay-bee! The Tribe was lifted by longballs from Garko, Pronk, and Gutierrez last night, and kicked a little more dirt on the graves of the Motor City Kitties with a big 7-4 win before a packed house at The Jake. In today's B-List ... Buff recaps the victory, breaks down Jake's start, fawns over the teams offensive efficiency, and talks about Jensen Lewis as a guy that should be able to help us in the playoffs. GO TRIBE!!!



FINAL SCORE				
Tigers (83-69)	0	1	3	0
Indians (89-62)	0	1	3	0

W: Lewis (1-1) L: Verlander (17-6) S: Borowski (41)

My expectations have changed.

1) Bending over backwards to avoid the Big Man

After Paul Byrd got in so much trouble yesterday for imitating C.C. Sabathia's **Inning of Crap**

TM

, Jake Westbrook took the radical step of producing a single Inning of Goodness. In the first inning, Westbrook gave up a single to Potato Head Polanco, but then got swinging Ks from Gary Sheffield and Magglio Ordonez to end the first.

No other inning was one-*tenth* as sanguine.

In each of the next four innings, Westbrook gave up at least two hits and stranded at least two runners, at least one of whom was in scoring position. In the third through fifth innings, one of the stranded runners was actually as far as third base. Now, the good news is that only one of the hits was for extra bases, and that pretty much saved Westbrook, forcing the Tigers to string together a series of hits to score runs. And it helped in the second that Carlos Guillen squandered his leadoff walk by getting gunned down stealing second; two batters later, Marcus Thames hit the aforementioned double, and the Tigers ultimately used three hits (four total baserunners) to score one measly run.

Even in the **Inning of Severe Ineptitude™** that was the third, the three runs scored on the back of three singles, a walk, a single, an error, and an HBP. (Actually, the HBP had nothing to do with the scoring, but I wanted to point out that there were SIX baserunners that inning ... and they scored *three runs*.)

I suppose one could credit Jake for "battling" through two more scoreless innings before finally succumbing to a pitch count of 102 and an Ineffectiveness Factor of about a million and six. And, by golly, he did make it through five innings: heck, one more scoreless inning and he'd have had the Worst Quality Start of the new millenium. But 12 hits, two walks, and a hit batsman add up to an average of three baserunners per inning, and shoot, most of the innings were near-average by that definition. Westbrook was like the action

hero in a movie in which the bad guys shoot approximately three hundred thousand bullets and hit the hero once in the upper arm.

Anyway, he didn't lose, he did strike out 4 guys, and gave up only 3 earned runs (4 total) ... but it still wasn't *good*.

2) In direct contrast

Jensen Lewis and Joe Borowski combined to pitch four innings. The Tigers entered the sixth inning with 4 runs on 12 hits, two walks, and an HBP.

They exited the ninth with 4 runs on 12 hits, two walks, and two HBP.

Only Lewis' plunking of Potato Head prevented the bullpen from chalking up 4 *perfect* innings of relief. As it was, they had to settle for 4 hitless, walkless innings and Lewis' first career major-league win. Lewis threw 25 strikes in 36 pitches, striking out 4 in his 3 innings of work; Borowski recorded a K with 9 strikes in 14 pitches.

Now, in the best possible scenario, you don't need any relievers at all. And in a plausible good scenario, a single game can use the simple Raffies-to-Joe formula. But in a playoff series, you better have at least one more arm you can count on to get from Point A (starter) to Point B (Raffies), and that arm belongs to Jensen Lewis.

3) Dept. of Effi

It's not even "efficient." That word isn't *efficient* enough.

The Indians score seven runs on SIX HITS. Normally, that would be because of a lot of walks, and the Indians did have five on the night, but two of the walks were in the late innings by Jason Grilli. No, the reason the Indians had such a high run-to-hit ratio was that their hits tended to be of the taterian variety.

Of the seven runs driven in by Indians, seven were driven in by home runs. From Travis Hafner's three-run shot to solo shots by Ryan Garko and Victor Martinez, with an insurance sprinkling of a two-run job by Franklin Gutierrez, the only other weapon in Cleveland's arsenal was the Kenny Lofton Single (he

had two, one in front of Gutierrez' blast).

The striking thing about the home runs was that not one was cheap, or even inexpensive. Gutierrez' shot in particular was so far out it would have left the Polo Grounds. That ball was STRUCK. But Hafner's had plenty of leg, and the other two were to deep parts of the park.

Now, part of the reason for the homers was that Justin Verlander tried to make a living high, high, HIGH in the zone, but the fact is, even if they were mistakes, it's hard to argue with the amount of punishment the Indians meted out to them.

4) Stats Corner

Although Verlander isn't having a super-duper Cy Young season, he is 17-6 with a 3.70 ERA on the year. Concerns about him showing the effects of such a large jump in innings in last year's run to the World Series appear to have been overstated (by *me*, among others).

Justin Verlander is 1-3 with an 8.13 ERA against the Cleveland Indians. (He is also 0-2 against Minnesota, meaning he is **16-1**

(!!) against the rest of the league.)

Johan Santana is 15-12 on the season. He is 0-5 against the Cleveland Indians.

If you are to be successful, one method is to have a good record in your division, and being able to compete with your rivals' top starter is a good piece of that puzzle.

5) What have you done for me lately?

Casey Blake, the hero of Friday and Monday, went 0-for-3 with a K.

Jhonny Peralta, another hero of Monday, went 0-for-4 with THREE Ks.

I'm inclined to shrug this off.

6) Stats Corner II

The Indians have won four of their last five games: they have out-hit their opponent ONCE in those five games.

Look, I'm all for being "effi" and winning is the bottom line, but I sure would feel more confident rounding the fourth turn if my team was actually getting at least as many hits as the other team. Whether this means hitting better or pitching better is ... well, actually, it's hitting better.

7) Nice hose!

It didn't work, and it didn't matter, but Franklin Gutierrez did make a nice throw to the plate to get Magglio Ordonez except for that pesky "catcher holds onto ball" thing.

8) Stats Corner III

Victor Martinez hit his team-leading 24th home run last night.

Think about this: Victor Martinez leads the team in home

runs. Okay. He's a good hitter, this is a career high, that is not inconceivable.

But if I told you that on Sept. 19, the Cleveland Indians would have no player with more than 24 home runs, would you have expected this to have been a good season? Twenty-four. That's it. We have become the Twins. (We even have our own Nick Punto! Of course, we keep *ours* nailed to the *bench*.)

9) Viewer Mail

Reader Dale Hlaves expresses his anticipation of reading The B-List after a win. This distinguishes Dale from roughly every other mailer, who have told me they look forward to reading The B-List primarily after egregious losses.

Let's hope Dale is happier than the rest of you for a while.

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro has been videotaping the opponent's third base coaches' and catchers' signs and mailing the tapes to Bill Belichick. I have no idea why this would be valuable to Belichick, but still find him tiresome, so despite this statement's falseness, I still wanted to mention it. Fire Eric Wedge.