

## The B-List: 9/25

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Tuesday, September 25 2007 7:00 PM -

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I literally begged Buff to rest his arm this week, in full anticipation of a long playoff grind. He's been our C.C. Sabathia this year, making quality starts day in and day out with the highly entertaining B-List. But Buff won't relent. He insisted on charging right through, and our readers are the ones that benefit. In today's B-List, Buff recaps last night's extra innings win over Seattle, and lobbying for Aaron Laffey to get a spot on the playoff roster amongst other witty revelations.



### FINAL SCORE

<b>Indians (93-63)</b>	3	0	0	0
<b>Mariners (83-73)</b>	0	0	0	0

*W: Mastny (7-2) L: Morrow (3-4) S: Betancourt (3)*

I wish I'd thought of this earlier, because it would rival the Terrible Towel or Rally Monkey or Cheese Head: take a strip of white cloth about two to three inches wide and maybe 12-18 inches long. Print "BOROWSKI BLINDFOLD" on it (I recommend "BOROWSKI on top of "BLINDFOLD"). Hand 'em out to everyone in your vicinity. We'll all be calmer, I think.

(Tell anyone who likes the idea you got it here. Tell anyone who hates the idea that it was Mark Shapiro's.)

### 1) Get down tonight

Aaron Laffey got to start last night's game in an automatic comfort zone, spotted a

3-run lead in the first inning in which the Indians made it look like they'd be pounding King Felix Hernandez out of the box in short order. As the Indians offense turned into a collection of newts, it became more important for Laffey to continue to stay in the comfort zone.

To his great credit, this is exactly what he did: not only did Laffey go 5 2/3 innings, but he gave up only 1 run on 4 hits and 2 walks. Two of the hits were infield singles, meaning that two hits (a single by Ichiro Suzuki and a double over Kenny Lofton's head by Adrian Beltre) left the infield.

Of the 17 outs Laffey recorded, ZERO left the infield.

Laffey's 11:2 GO:FO ratio is not really surprising at this point: this is what Laffey does, and why I think he has a leg up on Cliff Lee's middling-strikeout extreme-flyball stuff and Jeremy Sowers' non-strikeout middling-groundball stuff. No, the fact is that Jake Westbrook can put up a similar ratio while still being ineffective on those nights when every ball not hit on the ground is an extra-base hit. Laffey kept EVERYTHING in the infield except for those two pitches, and the double by Beltre looked as if it was misjudged by Lofton as much as being a solid hit (I'll stop short of calling it "clearly catchable," but I'm not sure it wasn't).

Laffey did walk two batters, including Jose Lopez on four pitches, which is almost inconceivable for a man with 19 walks in over 500 AB and an OBP-AVG of .031. Lopez was gunned down trying to steal, so no harm there. The second walk to Raul Ibanez, whom Laffey had owned to that point, proved to be his undoing, as the next three hitters were right-handed. Laffey had done his job to that point, so the righty Jensen Lewis was summoned to the mound to get out of the inning.

Laffey ended up throwing a mere 75 pitches on the night, aided by three double plays (two GIDP, one K-CS). He mixed his locations up very well, and stayed out of the top half of the zone, which is wise for a man who throws sinkers at under 92

mph. And here's the thing: I want you to go back through the video of this man pitching and show me where he's looked rattled, lost his composure, or generally acted like either Cliff Lee ("I'm losin' it, better hit somebody!") or Jeremy Sowers ("Oh dear, oh dear" (\*)). Laffey is unflappable and induces ground balls like nobody's business. In my opinion, Laffey is the man you want on the playoff roster to bail out an ineffective starter or act as Extra-innings Security Blanket.

*(\*) best said in a Piglet voice*

## **2) Three turntables and a microphone**

In the first inning, Chris Gomez (batting second) and Travis Hafner (batting third) laced consecutive one-out singles to set up Victor Martinez (batting fourth). Martinez then hit a 400-plus foot shot directly over the center field wall for a quick 3-0 lead.

On the night, Gomez, Hafner, and Martinez collected a total of 7 hits, with Hafner getting three and Martinez and Gomez getting two apiece.

Fifth hitter Ryan Garko had a nice night as well, smacking a double to the left-field corner in the first and getting a single later. Garko and Hafner also each walked once. So the 2-5 hitters on the night collected 9 hits and got on base 11 times. Martinez struck out once.

The Cleveland Indians collected 10 hits and got on base 14 times (one by intentional walk). For those of you counting at home, that means that the entire rest of the team posted this line:

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25 AB (29 PA), 1 H (single), 3 BB (1 IBB), 9 K

They did manage a sacrifice fly (by Kenny Lofton, which won the game, huzzah).

FOX News may or may not be "fair and balanced," but the Indians' offense sure wasn't.

### 3) Get well soon!

Victor Martinez left the game after fouling a ball off his knee. He said he will be ready to catch one of the two games tonight. Maybe he'll catch the "home game" to show his appreciation for all the Tribe Faithful in our third "home park" this season (his name is Todd; hi, Todd!).

Really, if we had a third catcher, I'd give him the night off entirely: I don't think it's serious enough to affect any of the playoff games, but it still smarts. Thankfully, a catcher barely notices his knees, right?

(Just a moment, I have Sandy Alomar Jr. on the line.)

### 4) Terror on the base paths!

After the four-pitch walk to Lopez in the first, Laffey went to 3-2 on Ibanez before throwing him a nasty pitch to strike him out. Lopez was running on the pitch, and was thrown out by Victor Martinez to end the inning on a K-CS double play.

Later, some guy named "R Johnson" (okay, it's "Rob") stole the most pointless base imaginable off Kelly Shoppach. This seems like a good time to point out that Martinez has caught 32% of basestealers this season, Shoppach has caught 32.4%, and Josh Bard has caught 7.3%.

(This is not entirely Bard's fault, as Chris Young might be the worst runner-holder in modern history, and Maddux doesn't help much, either. I just thought it was striking. Runners have stolen 114 bases off Bard, and he's caught NINE. Nine!)

With Willie Bloomquist (skill set: speed plus the letter Q in his last name) on first, Jose Lopez hit a chopper to third. Since Bloomquist was running on the pitch, he made it from first to third on a GROUNDOUT TO THIRD. (Yes, the chop was that high, but still.)

Called in to pitch to the left-handed Kenny Lofton and to keep walked pinch-hitter Asdrubal Cabrera close to the bag at first, lefty reliever Ryan Rowland-Smith cleverly threw the ball into Puget Sound instead. The resulting two-base error basically ended the game, as Lofton hit a sac fly and Rafael Betancourt was available to pitch.

### 5) A tale of two closers

I will not go into great detail about Joe Borowski's blown save except to say that the last time I saw [something as fat as that pitch](#), it was in danger of smothering its own pups flopping around on the beach while protecting its territory from other males. To Borowski's credit, we didn't lose the game, and he has pitched well recently. Just a bad pitch.

In contrast, here is Raffy Betancourt:

Foulout, Ball, Strike, Groundout, Strike (looking), Strike (swinging), Strike (swinging)

That's it. The whole inning. Seven pitches. Six strikes. Good night now!

Betancourt remains the only player I've ever seen to be able to simultaneously channel enormous adrenaline into his fastball while remaining asleep on the mound. I think it's a "Zen" thing.

## 6) A tale of two setup men

Jensen Lewis entered the game with men on first and third and induced Jose Guillen to fly out to center. He then gave up an infield single and uncorked a wild pitch, but got through the scoreless inning to earn his 4<sup>th</sup> hold, which is the most useless stat imaginable.

Tom Mastny gave up a pair of singles, then after a runner-advancing groundout, was forced to intentionally walk Ben Broussard to ...

... wait, hold it. Okay, you're *intentionally walking Ben Broussard*.

Admittedly, to get to Nick Green, but you are

**intentionally walking Ben Broussard**

. Whew. Let's move on.

Anyway, Mastny struck out Green swinging at three pitches. For this, he was credited with his 7<sup>th</sup> win, which, for relief pitchers, is the

second-most useless stat imaginable.

I think I trust Lewis more than Mastny, although, I grant you, posting a scoreless inning with a WHIP of 3.00 is something.

## 7) Trot Nixon Toast Watch

Really, I feel for Trot Nixon at this point. He crushed ... absolutely CRUSHED ... two balls last night, and each was caught about 10 feet in front of the fence.

Now, this shows me that Trot Nixon is not a potted plant. He can still swing the bat, and both balls were pulled. But the man just can't get it out of the park: I truly believe he couldn't have hit those balls harder or further. That's what he's got.

Now, the good news is, the fair ball of the pair probably leaves a bunch of parks, notably Yankee Stadium or Fenway. Safeco is a big park with heavy air. And the foul ball might've snuck in around the Pesky Pole or been fair on the Short Porch as well. But I have to think this playoff run will be the End of the Proverbial Line for Mr. Nixon.

(Golden brown, crisp.)

## **8) In direct contrast**

Josh Barfield IS a potted plant.

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

Mark Shapiro is actually the Rally Monkey. (Not true.) Fire Eric Wedge.