

The B-List: Indians 6 Yankees 4

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, October 08 2007 7:00 PM -

The virtual sounds of wailing and teeth-gnashing and Wedge-idiot-calling nearly brought the entire Internet grinding to a halt yesterday as everyone, his brother, their dentist, and an army of three-toed sloths in Peru were questioning the decision to start Paul Byrd in Game Four rather than C.C. Sabathia on three days' rest. And you just know Buff has some opinions on that in today's B-List. (Chip Caray is a fungus)



FINAL SCORE				
Indians (3-1)	2	2	0	2
Yankees (1-3)	0	1	0	0

W: Byrd (1-0) L: Wang (0-2) S: Borowski (1)

The poor TBS announcers were so sad, I thought I'd check up on them. They had some extra facts to report:

- The Yankees won the season series against Cleveland 7-3
- Derek Jeter grounded into the fewest double plays of any player in post-season history who grounded into three or more double plays in a playoff series
- Joe Torre loves puppies and kittens
- Canada won the Crimean War

Chip Caray's fact checker has no facts and does not check them. He is a fungus.

1) Now is the time on Sprockets when we say, "Neener, neener"

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*I can fake with the best of anyone
I can fake with the best of them all
I can fake with the best of anyone
I can fake it all
-- Seether, "Fake it"*

The virtual sounds of wailing and teeth-gnashing and Wedge-idiot-calling nearly brought the entire Internet grinding to a halt yesterday as everyone, his brother, their dentist, and an army of three-toed sloths in Peru were questioning the decision to start Paul Byrd in Game Four rather than C.C. Sabathia on three days' rest. I admit that I openly opined that left-handed groundball pitcher Aaron Laffey might be a better matchup for the Yankees' lineup in Yankee Stadium: at the very least, I figured that the "shadowing" system that New York employed in Game Three with Phil Hughes prepared to step in for a shaky Roger Clemens was in order (especially because that worked very well for New York). In my defense, I believe Laffey was in the bullpen in the very early innings.

Which is where Laffey stayed.

Paul Byrd's performance last night is not going to remind anyone of Fausto Carmona's brilliance in Game Two, but neither did it conjure images of Jake Westbrook beachballing his way into Yankees fans' hearts. To the non-Cleveland fan who marvelled at Byrd's ability to get people out with his patented Nothing Pitch and strand many baserunners, this game must have seemed like a severe aberration of Bad Clutch Hitting or Super Clutch Pitching or Tremendo-Luck Action. To the season-long Indians fan, this was ... well ... Paul Byrd. Guys get hits. Byrd gets outs. Cleveland wins game.

To quote Byrd's game statistics (5+ IP, 8 H (2 XBH), 2 R, 2 BB, 2 K) seems beside the point: the point is, Paul Byrd took the mound, threw many baseballs, didn't get a whole lot of respect from the umpire, and won the game. On the largest stage (as TBS kept telling me) in a game no one expected him to win against a lineup that, on paper, ought to have pummeled him within an inch of Jim

Barrett's life, Paul Byrd threw 84-mph fastballs by, through, and around hitters until they simply ran out of time to do anything about it. Byrd stranded two men in the first, three more in the second (partly thanks to a fine defensive play by Casey Blake to keep a bases-loaded hit to an infield single), and one in each of the third through fifth innings: after a shaky first two innings, Byrd actually looked pretty masterful. He was at his best (not surprisingly) when ahead in the count: his two hits in the 3rd and 4th were to hitters in "hitter's counts" (2-0 to Posada, 3-1 to Melky Cabrera). His 5th was especially enjoyable, featuring three of the four hitters hitting the first pitch, and needing a mere FIVE pitches overall.

Byrd did give up a home run to start the sixth and end his night, as Eric Wedge obviously took the attitude that once Byrd got his 4-5 innings in, he was playing with House Money and would pull the trigger as soon as he started busting. However, after throwing 31 pitches in the 2nd and 47 in the first two innings combined, Byrd retired the Yankees on only 30 more pitches over the next three innings to finish with 52 strikes in 77 pitches on the evening.

Now, if you want to ask me how excited I would be to see Paul Byrd pitching in Coors Field or the BOB ...

2) Let's get it started

Unlike Wedge, Joe Torre made the decision to start his #1 starter, Chien-Ming Wang, on three days' rest. Torre, of course, had a different decision from Wedge, in that he was down two

games to one, facing elimination, had a fourth starter in Mike Mussina who had pitched much, much more poorly down the stretch than Paul Byrd, and had in Wang a sinkerball pitcher, a species of hurler that sometimes actually *benefits* from short rest (cf. Hershisser, O.). The proof of the pudding, so to speak, would be in the sinking: if Wang's trademark hard sinker was bearing down early, it would likely be a successful start: if not, Mussina would probably make more than just a cameo appearance.

Grady Sizemore helped answer this question rather emphatically on the third pitch of the game.

Sinkers are rarely effective weapons when offered at belt-level, and 400 feet later, the Indians had a 1-0 lead and Mussina began throwing pitches in earnest in the bullpen.

Wang gave up another two hits in the inning to score a run, and it quickly became a foregone conclusion that his night was going to be short.

3) This just in from TBS!

The Yankees are the very best team ever to lose to Paul Byrd in a home playoff game.

4) Where's my "neener"?

Leading 6-3 in the top of the ninth, the Indians put together a miniature rally, getting back-to-back singles from Victor Martinez and Jhonny Peralta. After a groundout, Franklin Gutierrez looked about as helpless as a human being can against Mariano Rivera (in F-Goot's defense, he is not the first to be made to look foolish by Mariano Rivera), and Casey Blake flied out to very, very deep left field.

5) This just in from TBS!

Johnny Damon's catch of Blake's fly ball was one of the catches ever made in Yankee Stadium!

6) Ahem. As I was saying ...

The point was, the Indians had a chance to add to the lead and

did not.

Why am I bringing this up in a 6-3 game?

Because a three-run lead is a Save Situation, and a four-run lead is not. In a Save Situation, one brings in one's Closer. Otherwise, one lets one's Dominant Setup Man Who Sawed Through The Opposition Like A Flaming Chainsaw pitch the ninth instead.

Although Raffy Betancourt did look very good in the bottom of the 8th, Joe Borowski was summoned to the mound to protect the three-run lead, and all the pundits and fans who were griping about Byrd starting regurgitated the same acidic feeling back to the fore. Worse, the scheduled hitters in the top of the 9th were Jeter, Abreu, and Rodriguez.

Borowski got Jeter to pop out, which was huge, not only from a confidence/momentum standpoint, but also a Not Scoring Runs standpoint, as Abreu hit Borowski's Not Slider about nine thousand feet to a spot just off the coast of Newfoundland. After Rodriguez was unable to muscle a ball far enough out to right, Jorge Posada hit a

blast that might have been closer to Nuuk ... had it stayed fair. Since it did not, Borowski threw a *nasty* little breaking pitch inside on Posada's hands, induced the swinging strikeout, and saved the game.

Ho hum.

7) This just in from TBS!

Jorge Posada hit .331 as a right-handed hitter this season, and .341 as a lefty, making him the major-leagues' first .672 hitter! I think you'll have to agree that is a mighty fine ballplayer right there, and he plays for the Flagship Franchise in the Greatest Media Market ... er, City ... in the Entire World! He is also able to pick up SETI signals with his gigantic ears!

8) Captains Clutch

Jhonny Peralta and Asdrubal Cabrera each had an RBI with two outs. Cabrera's was especially impressive as he appeared to be using a squash racket at the time. Victor Martinez also singled in two runs with the bases loaded and one out.

But I bring this up because the one statistic that leaps out from the series is this:

With two outs and runners in scoring position in the series, Cleveland hit 12-for-27.

With two outs and runners in scoring position in the series, New York hit 1-for-10.

Now, most people will focus on the first number, or the ratio of the two. After all, hitting .444 is a lot better than hitting .100. But look at the raw opportunities: Cleveland had TWENTY-SEVEN ABs with two outs and runners in scoring position; New York had TEN. Now, part of this is because Cleveland got the twelve hits to sustain the situation: you get a hit, a new guy moves into scoring position, you get another shot. But that's kind of the

point, isn't it? To get the opportunity to score by getting lots of hits and such? (These stats don't include walks, which Cleveland had several of in those situations as well, and even at least one HBP.)

9) This just in from TBS!

New York's uniforms were much whiter than Cleveland's, which were a dingy grey, just like the city of Cleveland itself. We do not want to broadcast from Cleveland. Cleveland is nowhere, like Des Moines or Kansas City or New South Wales. We hate our jobs. We hate our fans. We can't believe we spent money to do this. Sob!

10) Everybody hits!

The Indians banged out 13 hits, at least one by each hitter except Kenny Lofton. Jhonny Peralta collected three hits and batted over .500 for the series. Personal catcher Kelly Shoppach had two doubles and a run scored in four trips to the plate that included him possibly

being hit by a pitch.

The Indians left 11 men on base, and so what?

11) This just in from TBS!

Tear the suit off the sucker,

Tear the suit off the sucker!

*-- George Clinton, when asked what he thought of Craig
Seeger's get-up*

12) Department of Raffies

Raffy Perez looked significantly more mortal in this outing than in his previous two-perfect-inning stint, giving up a home run to Alex Rodriguez and needing a clutch double-play grounder from Super Captain Derek Jeter ...

13) This just in from TBS!

Oh, shut up. We won! Phbt!

14) Dept. of Raffies, cont.

... while Raffy Betancourt needed 12 pitches to throw 10 strikes and rack up two swinging Ks (Giambi, Damon) in a perfect 8th. Boy, he looked good.

15) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro offered to clean Craig Seger's suit after Travis Hafner doused it with beer, then proceeded to wear it in his night job at the strip club, where he fit in famously. Mark Shapiro would not have been caught dead in that suit, and that

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statement is a bald-faced lie. Fire Eric Wedge.