

The B-List: 4/7

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Now that one hurt. Especially if you were one of those that stayed up past 1 AM EST to watch it live. Indians go down 2-1 in the bottom of the eighth, rally for three runs in the top of the ninth to go up 4-2, then bring in Joe Borowski to start a fire and then spray gas all over it. Not surprisingly, Buff is in rare form after last night's heartbreaker, and tells us about the loss in today's B-List. And it's official folks - Jason Michaels is a fungus. **FINAL SCORE**

Indians (3-4)	(3	rd	2 GB CHW)	0
Angels (5-3)	0	0	0	0

W: Shields (1-0) L: Borowski (0-1)



Let me tell you, that was **TOTALLY** worth staying up past midnight for. **TOTALLY.**

1) Department of Corrections Department

In the column before the weekend set, I insisted that Asdrubal Cabrera was not a useful switch-*hitter* unless he was actually able to *hit* from each side. I neglected to mention that the two hits he got this weekend were against left-handed starter Dana Eveland, so now his "platoon split" is virtually nil: he is able to hit equally terribly

from each side of the plate.

Alert reader James Sandy pointed out that when I said that Jason Michaels got the first hit of the season by a Cleveland left fielder, I neglected to notice that he was actually playing right field at the time. Although he is regularly the left fielder, he was in fact not playing that role. This means that Jason Michaels now sports a .250/.250/.500 line as a right fielder: his line as a left fielder is still a more-pristine .000/.125/.000.

In the weekend column, I suggested that having Victor Martinez catch instead of Kelly Shoppach would improve the team's defense. I ... I'm not sure how to be wronger. Wrong, wronger, wrongest. Boy, was I wrong.

2) Bring me the head of the hand-buttering coach!

Really, I'm not even sure why we've retained this fellow. Perhaps for burn treatment. Perhaps for between-inning snacking. Maybe they show movies in the clubhouse, and it's just not the same without the delicious flavor of ersatz butter-flavored oil drizzled across the tops of the buckets of popcorn. But really: for a team that is looking to save money, I would think that hiring a guy just to butter the players' hands is a luxury item we could do without. Even if his contract runs another two years, this is a "sunk cost," meaning that the money is already spent: the value he is adding to the team is really debatable, and I'd like to try to play a couple of weeks without his services: you know, just to see what happens.

It's one thing to approach seasoned buttery veterans Casey Blake and Jhonny Peralta, allowing them to make errors on routine ground balls, albeit with only Blake's costing us an overt run. (Peralta's error was erased on a 1-6-3 double play, so one wonders how thorough a job the H.B.C. is doing in the first place.) However, I simply must draw the line at buttering the hands of the pitching staff. This seems like overkill, and could potentially cause problems with the Mitchell Commission, where players of the past such as Bobby Witt will hold press conferences, touting their ability to perform "au naturel"; without any blunderbuss-enhancing substances.

Fausto Carmona really had expert stuff last night, inducing another superhuman 14:1 GO:FO ratio and yielding only 4 singles in 6 full innings of work. The only run he allowed was due to the H.B.C.'s performance on Blake where he threw well wide of first on a grounder by Mike Napoli with two outs. However, the fly in the ointment was that Carmona surrendered five walks and had already struggled through 85 pitches in five innings of work: although the sixth was a mere 9-pitch affair, it was enough to send Carmona to the showers.

Carmona's lack of command contributed to the Angels' FIVE stolen bases, as he and buttered catcher Victor Martinez yielded four of them. On one, Martinez was unable to handle a high fastball: on another, he struggled to get the buttered ball out of his glove cleanly.

Carmona did induce two double plays and was able to strand runners in scoring position in each of the third through fifth innings (including the bases loaded in the third and fifth), but after starting the game with two perfect innings, I was hoping for something a little more efficient and a lot better for my arteries.

3) Welcome back!

Although Victor Martinez did not have a tremendous day behind the plate (he did throw out Gary Matthews Jr. trying to steal in the 7th just before Vlad Guerrero singled, so that potentially saved a run, while the other steals added all together resulted in just the unearned run, which wouldn't have happened without the H.B.C.), he did make a fine return to with the bat. Although he grounded out to end the 3rd

with runners at first and third, he was able to collect two hits, none bigger than the run-scoring double that tied the score in the top of the ninth, which looked really important at the time. Representing the go-ahead run at that point, he was replaced by David Dellucci on the basepaths, which was prudent in that Martinez is slow when healthy and was coming off a hamstring pull. On the other hand, it was discouraging in that being replaced by David Dellucci because he is significantly faster than you suggests nothing so much as being helped across the street by a Cub Scout in a wheelchair. Martinez' 2-for-4 night lowered his batting average to a pedestrian .571, which is 18 points lower than the combined averages of both of Cleveland's left fielders, its right fielder, its starting third baseman, and its starting second baseman.

When asked if those five players could play "designated runners" to allow Martinez to bat five times through the lineup, the Angels politely declined.

4) The resistable force meets the portable object

In the 7th inning, Raffy Perez was summoned to replace the buttery Carmona, apparently giving him a high five with his pitching hand before heading to the mound. He was able to retire Chone Figgins, but then walked Matthews on five pitches, the fourth of which was technically a strike.

5) We interrupt this writeup to bring you this Public Service Announcement

It's Gary Matthews Jr., guys. I know it says he's hitting .344 and he *seems* like an offensive threat, but he's actually still Gary Matthews Jr. Throw him a strike.

6) Back to our force-object metaphor already in progress

Now, Perez is apparently struggling with his command. I infer this from the balls flying through either batters box. (It's a skill we analysts have to identify these subtle nuances of the game.) However, at the plate is Vladimir Guerrero. Guerrero sports the highest pitch-to-swing

ratio in the game at .927. Vlad will swing the bat. So to go 3-2 on Guerrero takes some doing. In fact, it takes a sequence like this:

Strike (foul), Ball, **Strike (foul)**, Foul, Foul, Ball (caught stealing), **Foul**, Foul, Ball, single

The highlighted pitches were probably in the strike zone.

Anyway, Perez then got Garret Anderson to pop out. Still, Perez' 11:8 strike-to-ball ratio is probably heavily influenced by the number of "Guerrero Strikes."

7) Managerial Head-Scratcher

Travis Hafner caught stealing. I have no snappy rejoinder here. There is an "element of

surprise" in swallowing a live bee: it does not necessarily recommend this as a course of action.

8) The most encouraging inning of offense in the season to date

Look, let's put snideness and bitterness aside for a moment and recognize the joy that was the top of the ninth. This is one of the reasons we are baseball fans, after all: I can be disappointed in the final result and some of the foibles that got us to that point, but the top of the ninth was really, really fun.

Travis Hafner was able to work a walk after fouling off two pitches from Francisco Rodriguez: although Rodriguez is not at the top of his game due to a gimpy ankle, he is still a premier closer and Hafner showed good patience to wait him out. (He also showed a shocking lack of pre-2007 Pronkitude in missing those pitches, but he did draw a walk.) He was replaced by Asdrubal Cabrera, a fine move in that he represented the tying run.

Victor Martinez then RIPPED a pitch down the right-field line for a double, and Cabrera was able to score without high stress. Since we'd hit so poorly in the past nearly-five games to that point, it was great to have a clutch hit like that. Dellucci replaced him as mentioned.

Jhonny Peralta then hit his own double to right, a bit less forcefully, but a nice piece of hitting to go the other way like that. Peralta's solo shot in the 4th had provided the entirety of Cleveland's offense to that point, so it was a nice night at the plate for Peralta.

It was a less-fine night on the basepaths, as Peralta tried to take advantage of no one covering third to get the extra base. However, he didn't take the pitcher into account, and Vlad Guerrero (who consistently sports one of the best right-field arms in the biz) was able to hit Rodriguez with the throw to nail Peralta at third. This cost Rodriguez his night, as he appeared to tweak an ankle rushing to cover the bag, but Peralta's out may have meant more than Rodriguez' ankle at that point, as least with respect to this single game. It wasn't an

obviously-poor decision, and Joel Skinner made the decision on Peralta's behalf, but it doesn't take Pure Hindsight to want that one back.

Garko drew a four-pitch walk off the laboring Rodriguez, who yielded to Scot Shields. Shields got Franklin Gutierrez down 0-2, got battled for four more pitches, and finally surrendered a single to right. Gutierrez is actually hitting right-handed pitching, formerly his bugbear, at a .300 clip this season (3 for 10), and a hard-fought single off a premier right-handed reliever is very encouraging.

Casey Blake then singled on the next pitch to produce Cleveland's fourth run.

9) Questionable tactics, irritating results

After Jamey Carroll drew a four-pitch walk, Grady Sizemore came to the plate with the bases loaded and produced possibly the most-irritating combination imaginable: he swung at the first first (after a four-pitch walk; he fouled it off), then at none of the following three, only the first of which was called a ball. Meekly striking out looking with the bases loaded is just infuriating.

Not as infuriating as grounding out to second on the first pitch, as Jason Michaels did, though.

A fly ball or even grounder (because Sizemore has speed and is rarely doubled up) would have scored a fifth run: a hit would have put the game into non-save territory, which would have been really, really nice in retrospect. In my defense, it would have looked really, really nice in forwardspect, too, as I said so at the time.

10) The Voice of Reason

It is tempting to vent great spleenloads of venom at Lord Joedemort (He Who Should Not Be Closer) for blowing a two-run lead, but it bears noticing that baseball is a game of high variability and that no relief pitcher is flawless. In the young season, closers from Kerry Wood to Trevor Hoffman to J.J. Putz have blown saves, and every pitcher has a bad outing now and again. After retiring Figgins on three straight strikes and quickly going 0-2 to Matthews, Borowski accepted a mound visit from the H.B.C. and walked Matthews on a 3-2 slider that missed by no more than a parsec after shaking off Victor Martinez' call for a pitch in the strike zone.

11) We interrupt this writeup to bring you this Public Service Announcement

It's Gary Matthews Jr.! You have a two-run lead!

Throw him a #@%*ing strike!

12) We return you to the Voice of Reason

In any event, Vlad Guerrero singled on the next pitch, the H.B.C. prepared a fresh coating, and Borowski walked Garret Anderson on four brisk pitches. One buttered fastball out of the zone later, Borowski served up *Le Gravied Meatball Surprise*, allowing Torii Hunter's second homer of the night to win the game.

Objectively speaking, though, this was simply one bad outing by our proven closer.

13) Rebuttal: the Voice of the Fan

Objectively speaking, @#%* you.

14) Miscellaneous Miscellany

Jamey Carroll collected his first hit as an Indian and drew the aforementioned walk. He also made a terrific diving stab of a grounder and looked comfortable at second.

Ryan Garko drew a pair of walks and sports a fine .448 OBP with a .970 OPS.

The Indians managed to strand 5 of their 7 runners in scoring position.

Five Indians are tied with the team lead in RBI with 4, and one is Casey Blake.

Jason Michaels is a fungus.