

## The B-List: 4/14

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Now that one ranks right up there with one of the more brutal regular season losses in recent Indians history. But as I told Buff on the phone last night, losses like that always make for a very entertaining B-List the next day. And as usual, Buff failed to disappoint us. Buff says the Borowski Era must end. He contemplates bringing back The Completely False Statement. And declares that there is a fungus among us. It's The B-List!!



<b>FINAL SCORE</b>				
<b>Red Sox (8-6)</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Indians (5-8)</b>	(4	th	3 GB KC)	0

*W: Timlin (1-1)* *L: Borowski (0-2)* *S: Papelbon (5)*

You know, it would seem like a game like that would present an excellent opportunity to write about, but I haven't really figured out which words best express inarticulate rage. I considered "Argle bargle gargle," but that sounded too much like "Free Willy."

### 1) Preliminaries

Since the new season started, I have heard from several readers that were disappointed that I did not choose to reprise the Completely False Statement. For the uninitiated, I was so frustrated last season by what I perceived as intractable ineptitude on the part of the manager that I tried an Internet smear campaign, making up an outrageous lie about GM Mark Shapiro as the last List Item and warning him that these lies would remain embedded in the Google Search Engine for time immemorial unless he fired Eric Wedge. The item took on a life of its own as the team tended to play better with the item than without, and it was a bit of harmless mirth for all. (I say &quot;harmless&quot; because, obviously, it had no effect whatsoever on Shapiro, Wedge, or anyone else. It may have set new records for ineffectual fan flailing, at least as measured by ineffectualness.)

To be honest, I gave the matter some thought, and had originally decided against it, feeling that Wedge, as reigning AL Manager of the Year, would have some degree of insulation from any such flailing, it didn't work anyway, and I feel strongly that the Power of Superstition must be rooted in some small, faint hope that you believe in the underlying behavior. I truly didn't *believe* that Eric Wedge should have been fired before Opening Day, so it made no sense to start the item from Day One.

At this point, I think it's been well-established that Mark Shapiro is immune to the threat of Internet infamy: secretly, I believe he relishes the attention. So be it. If I cannot use blackmail to achieve my goals, I will have to resort to the only other weapon in my arsenal that I can think of through an inchoate haze of nausea and ineffectual rage. (We here at **The B-List** are big on being ineffectual.)

## Bribery.

Henceforth, from now until Joe Borowski is removed from the roster, I will offer him something to entice him to retire or have surgery or join the Merchant Marines or anything else that guarantees that he never throws another pitch for the Cleveland Indians. As Joe Borowski's tax burden alone dwarfs my earning potential, this may prove difficult. However, I have a secret weapon up my sleeve: I will be pathetic. I think Joe will be able to relate to that.

## 2) Ho Hum Dept.

Jake Westbrook is beginning to look less like a mid-rotation mensch and more like a Bona Fide Asset with each new start. The first inning was inauspicious, letting gnat-like Dustin Pedroia slip away from an 0-2 count and having to foul off a pair of 1-2 offerings to walk. This proved detrimental, as Pedroia advanced on David Ortiz' first single since Spiro Agnew was relevant and scored on Kevin Youkilis' well-hit opposite field double. Still, after walking J.D. Drew to load the bases, Westbrook was able to get Jason Varitek to ground out back to the mound.

Over the next four innings, Westbrook gave up only two hits, racked up three strikeouts, and generally looked like a crisp, efficient pitcher. Staked to a 2-1 lead in the bottom of the 4<sup>th</sup>, Westbrook attacked the Boston hitters with 8 consecutive strikes, the last three of which Ortiz simply swung at and could not touch. (If there is a hitter who looks more helpless and out of synch in the major leagues than David Ortiz, he must play left field for the Cleveland Indians.) Staked to a 4-1 lead

after the bottom of the frame, Westbrook got out of a little trouble in the 6<sup>th</sup> by inducing a double play of the ol' 4-3-6-4 variety. (I'm not really going to try to explain that one.) He then struck out Jason Varitek to end the inning.

He didn't so much lose his stuff in the 7<sup>th</sup> as ran out of time: he gave up an unearned run on a walk, groundout (FC), bunt single (runner advanced to third on a bad throw), and an infield single by Pedroia. At that point, Westbrook had thrown 70 strikes in 111 pitches, and that was truly Enough of That.

Jake wasn't exactly dominant: two of the seven hits were doubles, and not cheap ones, either. He walked three guys, although Boston is very good at doing that sort of thing. It should be noted that both of the runs he gave up were scored by guys who essentially walked. (The walk in the 7<sup>th</sup> was technically erased on the fielder's choice, but the guy who reached first on that play was the one who scored.) Still, Westbrook struck out 5 and got back to his customary 10:4 GO:FO ratio: this is still on the low side for previous incarnations of Westbrook, but I think he he mixing in some non-sinkers, and I can't say this is not to good effect thus far. The only complaint I can muster is that 111 pitches is a lot to throw to record 19 outs, but again, you have to give Boston some credit for that as

well.

### **3) Don't you have a larger horse?**

One of the troubling things about the early season is how Not Dominant our heretofore Unapproachable Raffy Corps has looked thus far: both men sport ERAs over 5 and each has one truly execrable inning under their belts in which they gave up 4 hits and multiple runs before recording a second out. Raffy Perez actually has only one truly awful inning on his ledger, but he did blow the save on Opening Day with a wretched hit. Spring Training ... well, I think I've established in the past I have no clue what I'm looking for in Spring Training.

Perez wasn't asked to do a whole lot of great value last night, but after Lord Joedemort had completely gift-wrapped the game for the Sox, he did come in to face Drew with a runner on second, and threw

him three pitches. The first Drew took for a strike. The second he fouled off. The third he missed entirely. Strikes are good. And if Perez is throwing them, he is a lot more effective than when he's not (at least partly because when he's not, he begins throwing mid-zone strikes to compensate).

Betancourt, on the other hand, was brought in with runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in a 4-2 game and promptly struck out the left-handed Ortiz before getting Manny Ramirez on three straight to K him as well. It's nice to be able to bring Betancourt in to face a lefty, because this avoids the sort of nine-pitcher Tony LaRussa knee-jerking that makes endgames so excruciating sometimes.

Betancourt did serve up a solo shot on a 2-0 fastball to Kevin Youkilis, but he registered a third K and got through the 8<sup>th</sup> without further damage. Anyway, it's good to see both guys get back on the horse.

## **4) Mr. Martinez is on the line, he says you're an idiot**

Yeah.

Mere hours after declaring that Ryan Garko might be the best hitter on the team (and in my defense, he did extend his hitting streak with an RBI single), Victor Martinez calmly stroked three singles in four trips to the plate, nearly killing poor Jon Lester with a liner through the box in the 4<sup>th</sup> to drive in Asdrubal Cabrera. He got stranded and did leave a runner on third in making his only out to end the first, but this just in: the man can hit.

## **5) Mr. Martinez is calling back, shall I tell him you're out?**

No, I'll take this one.

The first batter of the game was Covelli Crisp, who laid down a bunt down the third base line to open the game.

Martinez sprang from behind the plate, whirled all the way around to his left (a pirouette-type maneuver), and fired a blind rifle shot (I mean, he was facing Garko when he released the ball, but had started his throwing motion before that) to Garko to gun down Crisp.

It was one of the greatest, most athletic &quot;ordinary&quot; plays I've ever seen from a catcher.

Now, Vic also made an errant throw that cost Jake his unearned run, but boy, that was some play. Since next two hitters reached and Youkilis doubled one of them home, a lesser play on that bunt by Crisp could very well have cost an *earned* run.

## 6) It has to be said

Look, everyone has already given Joe Borowski's botching as much thought as they can stand. I will add three things:

- a) He really has lost at least 5 mph
- b) He isn't throwing his slider, and there isn't noticeable variation between pitches
- c) Throwing Manny Ramirez a strike was criminally negligent. Why throw him a strike? That just smacks of complete non-thought. Take your chances with Drew. Don't throw Manny a meatball. Man, that's dumb.

He did a great job for us last season, but

this season, he is done. D-U-N done.

## **7) I am ready**

For Franklin Gutierrez to stop sucking.

## **8) Mr. Peralta on the line**

Yes, you sucked worse, with THREE horrible whiffs instead of only TWO, but you're hitting .255 and at least drew a walk.

## **9) Mister Michaels and Dellucci, line two**

Put 'em on hold, I don't speak  
"fungus."

## **10) Superior approach illustrated**

The Indians' offense was essentially three guys last night: although Casey Blake drew a walk and scored, Grady Sizemore had a hit and a pair of walks, and Asdrubal Cabrera walked, scored, and successfully sacrificed twice, the

offense really begins with Travis Hafner and ends with Ryan Garko. With two runners in scoring position after one of Cabrera's sacrifices, Hafner fouled off a Jon Lester offering, then took the next pitch back up the middle, grounding a single to center to score both runners.

The inning before, Cabrera walked, Hafner hit a solid rope for a single, then Martinez took the first two pitches before lasering the aforementioned Lester-seeking missile. After Jhonny Peralta managed to turn a 3-0 count into a swinging K, Ryan Garko fouled off a pair of 2-2 pitches before ripping a pitch back through the box to score a run.

I guess in the grand scheme of things, a quartet of well-hit singles is not much to write home about. However, for Hafner in particular, the conscious approach to drive the ball solidly through the middle of the infield is a welcome sight and generally portends future success as a sustainable strategy.

## **11) Small Ball in action**

By the way, Cabrera's bunt before Hafner's two-run single was what made it a two-run single and was well-executed (if a little funny-looking: he held the bat kinda awkwardly, to the extent that I was

concerned it was a foul ball at first). Of course, the next batter singled, but you don't know that ahead of time, and we were down 1-0 at the time.

## **12) Squander Ball in action**

With the bases loaded and Lester chased off the mound, Julian Tavaréz came in and threw some sort of petroleum jelly ball that moved like my hyperactive cat (who fetches, believe it or not). Garko approached this by missing strikes two and three, but veteran pinch-hitter David Dellucci was able to make contact with strike two

before missing strike three. This shows the difference between the young player still learning his craft and the established veteran.

Tavarez struck out 4 hitters, his highest total since 2000. Two thousand!

## **13) Shameless Bribery**

I am not a very handy person. I come from a long line of non-handy Buffum males: my mother used to hide broken objects from my grandfather in fear that

he would try to "fix" them. I am on record as cracking an entire toilet tank trying to adjust the flushing mechanism. (This was easy for me, but professionals sound perplexed that I was able to do this.) So when I took Shop Class in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I made a pipe rack for my father who, as it turned out, had stopped smoking at the time, a pair of unwearable sandals for my mother, a sailboat that listed badly to one side, and a cracked cold chisel. (This was easy for me, but professionals sound perplexed that I was able to do this.)

The one Shop project that turned out well was a cast aluminum fish:

apparently, it is hard to mess up cast aluminum. It looks very nice, possibly a perch or other sharp-finned fish, and is leaping out of ... well, the tabletop. You don't really put aluminum fishes in water. But in any event, I gave the fish to my maternal grandfather, who taught me to fish and was touched by the gesture.

After he passed away, I kept the fish. It reminds me of a time when I was able to craft something with skill and patience, and reminds me of times spent with my grandfather, a kind and soulful man. I am very attached to the

fish and would miss it terribly.

However, Joe Borowski, **I will give you this cast aluminum fish** if you are removed from the roster today. Take your time. You have until 6:45 PM.