

## The B-List: 4/17

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I think someone put it best in last night's live chat on STO's new &quot;Gameday&quot; page on their site when they said, &quot;thank God we have a game tonight. I may have killed someone had I had to wait through an off day&quot;. Not only did the Indians play, but they won, convincingly ... routing the Motor City Kitties 11-1 to split the two game series. In today's B-List, Buff hits on Fausto being Fausto, he shows a little Man Love for Jamey Carroll, and reinstates the Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine.

### FINAL SCORE

<b>Tigers (5-11)</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Indians (6-10)</b>	(4	th	3.5 GB CHW)	0

*W: Carmona (2-1) L: Verlander (0-3)*



To say that game was &quot;better&quot; than the one before it shows a shocking vocabulary deficit.

### 1) Flipping the switches

After two innings, there was very little about Fausto Carmona's start to suggest that it was going to evolve into something of anything like High

Quality. Although the 30-pitch (!) first inning was scoreless, the Tigers fouled off *seven* two-strike pitches and Miguel Cabrera's swinging strikeout stranded two runners in scoring position to end the inning. The inning featured a(n infield) single and a four-pitch walk and although there were two ground ball outs (Carmona's stock in trade), Carmona's command didn't seem very good: coming off a preposterous 8-walk performance last time out, this was clearly a concern.

Someone on ESPN's "Baseball Tonight" pointed out a mechanical flaw (it may have been Steve Phillips, which would make it fairly incredible) involving his front shoulder and arm angle: frankly, I could not tell the difference in his shoulder, but could tell the delivery point was lower. Their conclusion that the lower delivery angle made it harder to "get on top of a sinker" made intuitive sense to me, but the whole process did little more for me than reinforce my conviction that going into baseball scouting at my age is a Very Bad Career Plan. Apparently Victor Martinez, whose career plan seems much more attuned to such things, noticed it as well and visited the mound after a particularly egregious offering.

The second inning was certainly more efficient, but all three outs were recorded in the air, two of which reached the outfield, and were punctuated by a booming double to left by Brandon Inge. If Carmona was having trouble getting on top of the sinker, it certainly wasn't rectified in the second inning.

And then the Indians scored three runs, Carmona apparently realized his team was actually going to support him, and began pitching like ... well ... Fausto!™

In the 8-pitch third inning, all 8 pitches were strikes: although two of the outs were still fly balls to the outfield, it is hard to complain about an 8-pitch 1-2-3 inning. The 4<sup>th</sup> was a little more involved, in that it featured a mere 11 strikes in 14 pitches, but after a weak single by Cabrera, Carlos Guillen grounded into a double play (another Carmona staple), and Edgar Renteria was retired on a routine grounder to short. In the fifth, another perfect inning featured three straight groundouts to the left side.

The Indians scored a couple of insurance runs in the bottom of the fifth, and after Ryan Garko's two-run homer, Detroit starter Justin Verlander hit Jason Michaels with a pitch. Now, Verlander had already hit Garko earlier in the game, but with 60 strikes in 104 pitches and four walks, Verlander's command was simply poor and that didn't look intentional in any way.

*Michaels was plunked.*

I know it, you know it, the American people know it. But more importantly, Fausto Carmona knew it, because after hitting Ramon Santiago with a 1-2 slider that simply

missed (inferred from Carmona's reaction), Carmona didn't even set properly before drilling Gary Sheffield in the hip.

Now, Sheffield was hardly perturbed: he retrieved the ball and tossed it underhand to Carmona. And Carmona was hardly jawing and crowing, he just took the ball. But after the Angels hit multiple Cleveland batters without reprisal and the Red Sox got finished stylin' through their two-game mini-sweep, it seemed really important that an Indians pitcher actually do something to show that the staff considered the offense an important part of the game (which, admittedly, to this point, it has not been).

Anyway, Carmona gave up a run, got a couple outs in the seventh, and left with 6  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings of 7-hit 1-walk 2-plunk ball under his belt. He threw 71 strikes in 105 pitches, which is quite good (over a 2:1 strike-to-ball ratio). Although he only struck out two Tigers, his ERA is back under 2.00 for the young season, but almost as importantly, he seemed to lift the whole team going into an important intradivision series this weekend.

## 2) Balancing act

Normally, I would start talking about relief pitchers here, or perhaps a particularly standout performance by a Victor Martinez or something, but check out the box score:

- \* ) Every Cleveland batter had at least one hit
- \* ) Six different Cleveland hitters drew a walk: one who didn't get HBP
- \* ) Eight different Cleveland batters scored a run

Ignoring a fielder's choice as a way to reach base, counting only hits, walks, and HBP, Travis Hafner reached base twice. Casey Blake and Jhonny Peralta reached only once each. Every other batter reached **EXACTLY THREE TIMES**. Now, look, when two-thirds of your lineup reaches base three times each, you'd damn well better score some runs.

And Cleveland did: 11 of them, all earned. Four runs

were driven in with two outs. The Indians left 10 men on, but only 4 in scoring position. SEVEN of the team's thirteen hits were for extra-bases, including a &quot;team cycle&quot; in the sixth with a single by Peralta, double by Grady Sizemore, triple (!) by Jamey Carroll, and home run by Travis Hafner.

Of these four hits, four of them were to the *opposite field*.

In this inning, Ryan Garko drew a walk after being down 0-2, and Jason Michaels (!!!) had a two-out, two-run single up the middle.

That's ... well, that's just bloody awesome. Even against Zach Miner.

### **3) Schadenfreude Up Close and Personal**

Much has been made of the poor start by C.C. Sabathia. And while Baseball Prospectus' excellent columnist Joe Sheehan notes that Sabathia has had a poor (three or) four-game stretch in each of the past four seasons, mostly due to the fact that a guy who makes 30 starts is almost guaranteed to have such a stretch, he admits that this one is worse than any of the others. (I haven't linked it because it's a premium piece, but you should be reading BP anyway.) It's really, really bad. What other contender can claim that their Ace, a guy who pitched so tremendously over the past two years, has just been flat-out awful for each of his first four starts and sports an unsightly 0-3 record?

How about ... Detroit?

Here are Justin Verlander's first four starts of the season:

3/31: 6 IP, 4 H, 4 R, 1 HR, 1 BB 6 K

4/6: 5 2/3 IP, 7 H, 9 R (4 ER), 1 HR, 3 BB, 4 K

4/12: 7 2/3 IP, 4 H, 6 R, 1 HR, 4 BB, 3 K

4/17: 5 IP, 7 H, 5 R, 1 HR, 4 BB, 1 K

Now, this isn't Sabathian: Sabathia's ERA is 13.50 and he got knocked out in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning in two consecutive starts. Verlander's Opening Day start isn't actually that bad (although it's not particularly good, either, especially against the offensively-challenged Royals) and his ERA is 7.03. Of course, if you look at his RA instead, that's 8.88. But what would trouble me as a Tigers fan would be that he's been taterific in each game, his walks are going up (1, 3, 4, 4), his Ks are going down (6, 4, 3, 1), and, more ominously, his velocity looks down. Mind you, this is &quot;down to&quot; the low-mid 90s, so we're not talking Injured Joe Borowski here. But the homers PLUS walks PLUS shrinking Ks suggests something very disturbing: Sabathia's velocity is still there, he just can't put pitches where he wants them to go.

As a non-scout, I can't tell you which problem is more quickly correctable. I can tell you that I like beating Justin Verlander, though. And I'm willing to [take credit](#) for that. Huzzah!

## 4) Nice hose!

I could be snide and include Carmona's pitch to Sheffield in the sixth here, but the real display came when Carlos Guillen singled to left fielder Jason Michaels with Sheffield on second. Sheffield tried to score on the play, and Michaels' rope beat him to the plate to record the second out of the inning and eventually held the Tigers to the single run they scored on the earlier sacrifice fly.

Now, I have no clue why Gary Sheffield channeled the ghost of Jeremy "I'm the Ozzie to Jason's Jose" Giambi and chose to run through Victor Martinez' tag instead of, say, sliding under it. I am not privy to the man's thought process. I am concerned that there is now a chemically-based symbiosis between the two former BALCO clients. But the throw was right there and got him out, and that's an awfully handy skill for an outfielder to have.

## 5) All you had to do is ask

I complained earlier that I would like to see Masa Kobayashi pitch an inning in which he does not put two men on base. I mentioned this because Masa Kobayashi often puts two men on base. In fact, three of his first four outings were of this variety, and his last outing (Wednesday, against Detroit), featured THREE hits. Technically, he still sports a low 2.84 ERA (although a 4.26 RA) and a 4:1 K:BB ratio, but his WHIP is simply atrocious, especially for a nominal back-end reliever.

So it was nice to see a perfect inning of work from Kobayashi, in which he got two strikes on each hitter before retiring him and had a nice 9:5 strike-to-ball ratio. If it seems that I am clutching to my grasped straws rather too firmly, I understand, but I would really really really really really like for someone other than Raffy Betancourt emerge as another dependable late-inning arm.

## **6) And it doesn't look like Jensen Lewis**

Dude, 3 strikes in 13 pitches is just pitiful. We already have one Jorge Julio on the team.

## **7) Are you sure that's not a save?**

No, Raffy, I'm afraid protecting a ten-run lead is simply not considered an official statistic. I know Wes Littleton got one for protecting a 27-run lead last season, but he did throw three innings.

On the other hand, if Betancourt is going to pitch like that in a save situation (9 strikes in 13 pitches, 1 K in a perfect inning), he'll probably be okay. (So will I.)

## 8) Managerial Head-Scratchers

You have the bases loaded and your MVP candidate coming to the plate and you pinch-hit for him with .... Ryan Raburn? We're not going to plunk Magglio Ordonez with the bases loaded, Jim. What the heck is the thought process here?

(Raburn popped out to third. On a 2-0 count. Against Jensen Lewis, who had thrown exactly two of the previous 12 pitches for strikes.)

*To be explicit, this List Item is not about Eric Wedge.*

## 9) Breaking With Tradition

Where "tradition" is defined as "something done more than once." In 2006, the Indians' utility infielder was Ramon Vazquez. If you look at the archives and read between the lines, a careful reader will be able to discern my opinion of Ramon Vazquez, especially since the lines you're reading between say "Ramon Vazquez sucks!" and "Ramon Vazquez must go!"

In 2007, the Indians' utility infielder was Mike Rouse, a man who managed to make Ramon Vazquez look like a powerful hitter and a graceful fielder. Let us not mince words. I did not enjoy the Mike Rouse Experience.

Jamey Carroll does not look like these men.

I don't mean this literally, although it is literally true. He doesn't look much like Barry Bonds, either. For

one thing, he has hair. But what I mean by this is that Jamey Carroll is that rarest of birds, a guy who can play multiple position and ACTUALLY DOESN'T SUCK. Not only does he Not Suck, but he may actually be a Real Asset. Carroll's triple was one of two hits he had on the night: he also beat out an infield single that Ramon Santiago cleverly tried to throw with his left kidney, drove in a pair of runs (one with two outs), scored twice, started a double play, and filled the two slot with aplomb.

I would like to see if Jamey Carroll could handle playing third base sometime. Or left field. Since his average is higher than the two right-handed players who regularly fill those positions *combined*, I have a hard time believing he could not do at least as well.

(This is flippant, but the contention that Carroll is an astronomical upgrade over Vazquez and Rouse is virtually tautological, or at least clearly evident.)

However, not all traditions are to be so readily abandoned ...

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

Mark Shapiro is able to eat fiberglass insulation, which he metabolizes and pushes through his scalp in lieu of real hair. This would wreak havoc on his digestion and has no basis in fact. Fire Jensen Lewis' optometrist.