

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
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It was a career night at the plate for Casey Blake, and an offensive explosion from the normally meek Indians bats, as the team pounded out 16 hits and 13 runs en route to bailing out Aaron Laffey, who came unglued in the fifth. In today's B-List, Buff chronicles the Indians offensive awakening, talks about the bad pitching we saw from the Rangers, and the solid relief work administered by Masa Kobayashi and Raffie Perez. The winning streak continues tonight! The winning streak continues tonight?



<b>FINAL SCORE</b>				
<b>Indians (26-31)</b>	(3	rd	4.5 GB CHW)	0
<b>Rangers (29-30)</b>	0	1	2	0

*W: Kobayashi (3-2) L: Guardado (0-1)*

My HS freshman son was studying for his Geometry final last night, so I called him over to check out the umpire's strike zone last night.

"Is it a parallelogram?" he asked.  
"No, a parallelogram has only four sides, try again."  
"Maybe a hexagon?"  
"I'm not sure it's a regular polygon."

After a couple of innings, he threw up his hands. "I've seen nothing like it," he declared. "We are only studying Euclidean geometry this year."

Kids today. They don't even get exposed to [Lobachevsky](#) or [Sierpinski](#), unless they watch major-league baseball umpires.

## 1) Mighty Casey at the Bat

What, you want to start with a discussion of the starter?

Casey Blake had a career night at the plate, which was actually a tie in many regards with a night back in 2003 against Minnesota: in the second inning Blake followed an opposite-field double by David Dellucci with an opposite-field home run of starter Doug Mathis. The Indians were unable to capitalize further on a pair of walks, so it fell to Blake again in the next inning, this time with two outs, to hit a 3-0 pitch over the left field wall for a second 2-run homer. And in the NEXT inning, after a walk and a pair of singles loaded the bases, Dellucci's whiff was the second out of the inning, and Blake lined a pitch down the right-field line for a three-run double.

No home run, what a piker.

Seriously, not only did Blake drive in SEVEN of the first eight runs, but FIVE of them came with two outs, and ALL of them came with a(t least one) runner in scoring position. In one of the all-time eye-popping sample size gorks, Blake is hitting .442/.538/.791 with runners in scoring position ... and .143/.228/.231 with no one on base. With none on and 1 or 2 out (53 AB), Blake is hitting a preposterous

.057/.138/.075. In 19 AB with a runner on second, he has 10 hits, 4 for extra bases, 9 RBI, and his hitting .526/.625/.842. I mean, nary a one of these numbers is statistically meaningful, but it's just downright bizarre, especially given that over the previous three years 2005-7, Blake hit .203/.288/.323 with runners in scoring position and .288/.366/.501 with none on and 1 or 2 out.

At some point, a figure in a dark hood is going to emerge, shake &quot;Casey Blake's&quot; hand, and annihilate this quadrant of the galaxy.

## 2) Regression to the suck

There aren't a lot of ways to spin Aaron Laffey's start into anything but, &quot;Golly, it's hard to beat a good offensive team in a bandbox with the wind blowing out if you only have one average pitch.&quot; Although Laffey only walked two and threw 49 of his 88 pitches for strikes, it was pretty clear that he had no feel for his secondary pitches, like his slider, sinker, or anything that involved a spheroid with stitches.

The whole night was really an exercise in Gunk Management, which is one of the reasons it is so valuable to have Paul Byrd on the staff. One imagines Laffey going back to the dugout and conversing with Sifu Paul after every trip around the tightrope. His first inning wasn't all that bad, in that the single was of the infield variety and he struck out Josh Hamilton, but he did hit Milton Bradley with his first pitch and went 3-1 to David Murphy before getting him to fly out. His second inning was more ugly, and only a lovely caught stealing by Victor Martinez

prevented a bigger inning, as a double and RBI single followed the CS. The next batter grounded into a double play, so perhaps Laffey had found his groove.

Nope.

Look, giving up an opposite-field homer to Hamilton is nothing to get real upset about: Hamilton is the Story of the Year offensively in the AL, looking like a Triple Crown threat. And Laffey got Travis Metcalf to ground into another double play in the 4<sup>th</sup> after a walk and a single. But the 5<sup>th</sup> ... well, it became clear that Laffey was Byrd-like in more ways than one last night, as a pair of singles and a walk loaded the bases for Marlon Byrd.

Now, it's fine and dandy to call for someone to come in, but the fact is, Marlon Byrd is bad. At what point would it have made sense to pull Laffey, who was at 61 pitches to start the 5<sup>th</sup>?

Kinsler, hitting .305, doubled on Laffey's second pitch. Young, hitting .296, singled on Laffey's first pitch.

Okay, so let's say you had someone warming up from the start of the inning. I'm not sure why you would have been

doing that, since Laffey got a GIDP to get out of that scoreless inning, but it could happen. Who do you want facing Josh Hamilton? Well, nobody, the way Hamilton is hitting, but Laffey's as good as choice as anyone but Perez, who I don't want to see the fifth inning as long as I live.

Hamilton, hitting .331, singled on Laffey's first pitch.

Bradley, a switch-hitter with little platoon split, came up next. He actually swung and missed at two of Laffey's offerings, but Laffey tried to be too fine and walked him to load the bases.

Now, the next hitter was Dave Murphy, with a HUGE platoon split. I have no idea what Dave Murphy is doing in the lineup against Aaron Laffey. You want Laffey to face Murphy. Murphy fouled out.

The next hitter was Marlon Byrd, who is terrible. Really, he would fit right in on the Indians, hitting .217/.289/.377.

And really, this might be the case for calling on Kobayashi, who did start the next inning, because although Byrd doesn't hit lefties much better than righties for average (.241 to .200), his power is a lot stronger (.483 SLG to .300). Admittedly, these are tiny samples. On the other hand, Byrd had essentially hit two grounders off Laffey at that point: an infield single to short and a groundout to first. A ground ball with one out and the bases loaded could get you out of the inning. So it's at least defensible to put your best uninjured groundball pitcher against a guy who isn't actually good.

Byrd did not hit a ground ball.

Anyway, Laffey got Shelton swinging and Saltalamacchia to fly out, and ended his night. This is Laffey's first truly bad start this season, and I'm inclined to shrug it off as a bad night, especially since his command was so obviously off.

### **3) Everybody hits!**

Every Cleveland starter got on base at least twice: the only player to make a plate appearance and not get a hit was Grady Sizemore, who walked twice. Five different players had an extra-base hit: three different players hit home runs. Six different players drew at least one walk, including Shin-Soo Choo, who drew THREE.

Of the Indians' 13 runs, NINE were driven in with two outs, including three by Ben Francisco, who hit a hanging curve ball for a two-run homer and drew a four-pitch bases-loaded walk. The Indians scored more runs than they left runners on base (11): *Casey Blake* drove in more runs than the Indians stranded in scoring position (6).

#### **4) The sort of game it was**

Doug Mathis gave up 12 hits in 3 2/3 innings. He gave up a pair of homers and walked three guys. Five of the twelve hits were for extra bases. The first inning was his only scoreless inning, in which he allowed only TWO baserunners. His other three innings involved giving up

multiple runs. He gave up 8 runs in all.

Aaron Laffey had TWO scoreless innings in his total of 5. He gave up a mere 11 hits instead of 12, but also gave up a pair of homers, although he only walked *two* guys. He, too, gave up 8 runs.

Each man received a no-decision.

## **5) Dominant in the 95-meter dash**

Masa Kobayashi relieved Aaron Laffey and sawed through a perfect inning with one strikeout. Given a second inning, Kobayashi struck out both Josh Hamilton and Milton Bradley, Bradley on three pitches.

He then had Dave Murphy 0-2 before allowing him to single on a pitch that didn't drop, and walked Marlon Byrd, although each of the four "balls" to Byrd



looked like they may have been in the strike zone.

Kobayashi was charged with an earned run when Raffy Perez allowed a first-pitch single, but that was a very fine relief job all things considered.

## **6) An eerie sense of calm**

I don't know how to explain it, but although Perez loaded the bases in the 8<sup>th</sup>, there was no point at which I was actually concerned that he was going to give up a run. I can't logically tell you why. But despite allowing one-out singles to Ian Kinsler and Michael Young, then walking Hamilton on a 3-2 pitch, Perez just looked like he knew what he was doing and would get out of it.

He struck out Bradley then got a ground ball to end the inning.

## **7) An eerie sense of Joe**

Joe Borowski threw a perfect ninth with 7 strikes in 10 pitches. At no point did I believe the batter would not eventually get a hit.

## **8) Amtrak presents: Joaquin Benoit**

Train, meet other train.

Really, Benoit is not a horrible pitcher, but he just had one of those nights that is hard to watch: after giving up a two-run homer to dead center to DAVID DELLUCCI, Benoit threw the following pitches:

Blake: Ball, Ball, Ball, F-8

Choo: Strike (foul), Ball, Strike (swinging), Ball, Ball,

## Ball

Cabrera: Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball

Sizemore: Ball (WP), Strike (looking), Strike (swinging), Ball, Ball, Foul, Ball

Francisco: Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball (RBI)

That's SIX strikes in TWENTY-FIVE pitches ... and at least one of those strikes would probably not have been called a strike. In Benoit's defense, I would have called at least one (probably two) of the &quot;balls&quot; to Francisco strikes. But that's just a slow-motion collision of trains, cars, pedestrians, spacecraft, and American Idol contestants. Yeesh.

## 9) Dee-fense!

I made the ground out that ended Perez' inning above sound routine, but in reality, it was a hot smash down the line than Ryan Garko made a nice

play to stop. He then composed himself enough to make a sound throw to Perez covering first, something he's had trouble doing in the past while seated on his bottom.

Had the ball gotten past him with two outs and a fast runner on first, that might have been three runs (which would have made it 13-12 and tightened everyone's collars considerably).

## **10) Dept. of the Unlikely**

Asdrubal Cabrera hit his seventh double of the season to the wall to drive in a run.

David Dellucci's home run travelled over 400 feet.

Shin-Soo Choo's only hit of the game travelled roughly 40 feet (he scored on Cabrera's double).

The only player not to score was Grady Sizemore.

The most-effective pitcher for the Rangers was arguably Robinson Tejeda. (It was really C.J. Wilson, but that's not Unlikely, and Tejeda threw a whole extra inning.)

Jake Westbrook has gone back on the DL with elbow inflammation. To make the spot start, the Indians are calling on Tom Mastny, who does not exist. Even against a pitching-challenged team like the Rangers, this seems like a bold move.

## **11) Dept. of the Sadly Likely**

Victor Martinez got one single and stranded three players in scoring position to end innings.

Can we go ahead and rest Victor some now?  
Please?

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

Larry Dolan's fed his children nothing but Oreos and Yoo-Hoo for over three years in their formative stages. I don't know if Dolan even has children, but no one can drink Yoo-Hoo for three years without going insane and slaying their parents, and this statement reeks of falseness. Fire Mark Shapiro.