

The B-List: 6/4

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Bada bing bang BOOM! The offensive explosion from the Indians continued last night at The Launching Pad in Arlington, as the good guys dropped another 15 runs on the Rangers, and will look to leave Texas winning three of the four games in the series tonight. Buff's got all kinds of good stuff in today's B-List. Managerial Head Scratchers, Duckophobia from Honny, and comments on the strange but productive nights at the plate for Garko and Francisco. It's the best daily Indians column in existence. It's The B-List.



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|------------------------|----|----|-------------|---|
| FINAL SCORE | | | | |
| Indians (27-32) | (3 | rd | 5.5 GB CHW) | 0 |
| Rangers (30-31) | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

W: Lee (9-1) L: El. Ramirez (0-1)

You know who would look good in a Texas Rangers uniform? Pitchers.

1) The value of context

Cliff Lee's numbers from last night are pretty bad: Lee allowed 6 runs on 9 hits (and a pair of walks, but those had nothing to do with the scoring) in only 5 innings of work, needing an ugly 112 pitches to get

through those five innings. Although he had pretty good command of the strike zone (72 of 112 pitches for strikes, 8 Ks), 4 of the 9 hits were for extra bases, including a very unusual pair of triples and a homer by Milton Bradley from the right side. It's pretty hard to consider any outing in which you give up more than one run per inning as anything really positive.

Without putting too fine a point on it, though, it does make sense to look at the conditions of the park last night: the wind was blowing out to right-center at about 30 mph: there were some gusts stronger than that, but it never really slowed below 25. This is a well-known feature of the ballpark in Arlington (which may or may not be called "Amerquest" or "The Ballpark" or "Buck-Buck McFate"), and the announcers on both radio and television refer to it by name ("It's a jetstream night here at the ball park."). Now, I don't know how this affects pitching off the mound: Texas pitchers still walk way too many guys as a general rule, and I'm not sure how the wind affects a sharp groundball single through the hole, but let's stick to what makes sense as a direct attribution for now.

Ian Kinsler led off the game with a triple over Grady Sizemore's head and scored on a groundout. At the time, I thought Grady could have made a better play on the ball, but I'm wondering after the fact if maybe that ball is a more-routine flyout under normal circumstances. **(1 run)**

In the third, Kinsler beat out an infield single on a sharp hop, Michael Young doubled down the right field line, and Josh Hamilton singled the other way to left to produce two runs. These look like pretty mundane "better hitting than pitching" runs, and all three men have

averages over .300. Sometimes the other guy is just good. But then Milton Bradley lifted a routine fly ball that carried ... and carried ... and suddenly was a two-run homer that gave Texas a 5-4 lead. Bradley's a good hitter, too, but that was bogus. **(2 runs)**

Lee sawed through the rest of the 3rd with three outs and a single; he then sawed through the 4th with three outs and a single. After a whiff, single, and fly out in the 5th

, Lee faced Brandon Boggs, got him down 2-2, threw strike three, got it called a ball, then watched Boggs lift a second triple over Sizemore's head. It would have been a helluva play for Sizemore to catch the ball the way it was blown ... but not so much under regular circumstances. **(1 run)**

So by my count, at least 3 hits and 4 runs were directly attributable to the fact that the game was played in early June in Arlington. Now, "What If Calculus" is complicated because you can't really say, "Well, this would have happened" because the circumstances aren't the same any more, but just quick-and-dirty removal results in 5 innings of 6-hit 2-run ball with 8 Ks. That's a good start. Not a great start, mind you, but a pretty good one. (Lee likely would have gotten a sixth inning at least with the saved outs.)

Now, look, this doesn't absolve Lee of all blame: the fact is, he WAS pitching in Arlington in June with the wind. That's his job.

It's not always a fun job, but that's the job. Guys do it in Wrigley. Guys do it here. Maybe you adjust to work lower in the zone. Maybe you mix in some better breaking stuff. Lee has changed his flyball tendencies enough that he is actually a groundball pitcher this season. Of course, there's no guarantees: remember, the other guy is adjusting, too: maybe the Texas hitters know to elevate the ball on a day like that. But ultimately, I think the lesson to take from this performance is fivefold:

- i) Lee didn't pitch as bad as it looks on paper
- ii) Lee didn't adjust as well as he could have
- iii) I wouldn't take a lot of long-term lessons/consequences from this outing
- iv) Texas has some pretty good hitters
- v) Sir Sidney Ponson is still fat

2) A consistent approach I

Ryan Garko reached base his first five (!) trips to the plate last night, drawing a walk and collecting four hits. The hits were:

A single to center
A single to center

A single to center
A single to center

Now, a couple things should be mentioned here: two of the singles ended up in center, but did not land there: at least one was a ball that hit approximately nine inches from the front of the plate and ended up eventually rolling as far as center. The more positive thing to mention is that each of the four hits came with runners on base, and each of the four drove in at least one run.

Here's the thing I liked: Garko has more power than he's shown, but ultimately he, like many hitters, is more likely to be successful if he "uses the whole field." That is, don't try to pull sliders away, don't overcompensate and try to "push" everything to right, use the whole field. He's strong enough to hit it soundly to all fields.

Garko appeared to have made a conscious decision to hit the ball more up the middle, back through the box, just getting squared up and driving it straight ahead. By golly, four singles to center counts in this regard.

3) A consistent approach II

Ben Francisco missed a chance to have a very rare 6-for-6 night by lining out to left in his 6th plate appearance. In a short illustration of the vagaries of hitting a baseball, the liner was hit "better" (that is, more solidly, travelled a greater distance at a higher velocity) than at least two of his singles and was not substantively different from the other balls struck on the evening. It's a funny game.

Here are Ben's hits on the night:

Infield single to third

Single to left

Single to left

Single to left

Single to left

Now, as with Garko, not all "singles to left" are created equal: there was a grounder through the hole between short and third, and a couple others that were nicely lined over the shortstop. Except for the first single (that didn't leave the infield), they were all well-hit, but even counting the first, they all had roughly the same path: dead pull.

Now, Ben Francisco would not be the first successful dead pull hitter. And a couple of the pitches he hit were begging to be pulled, like a hanging slider from Ponson. But this overall approach concerns me: Francisco has made some notable outs this season in which I've cried to the message boards, "Why is he trying to pull that pitch?!" (normally one low and away) It's one thing to be good at pulling the ball: it's quite another if this is the only way you try to hit the ball. It's not like Francisco has never hit the ball to the opposite field, and look: the man is hitting .343/.381/546. This is hardly something to disparage. But ... I'd keep an eye on it.

4) For those keeping track

Yes, the Indians got 17 hits and Garko and Francisco combined to have MORE THAN HALF OF THEM.

5) Ducks on the plate

The Indians only stranded 8 of their 23 baserunners last

night, and only **THREE** were in scoring position.
(Caveat: they hit into two inning-ending double plays.)

Much better than the night before, I'll say.

6) Duckophobia

Jhonny Peralta made the last out of the ninth inning by striking out with two outs and the bases empty.

I bring this up because in Peralta's other **FIVE** plate appearances, he came to the plate with runners on base. In fact, in **FOUR** of the appearances, a runner was in scoring position. In fact, in those four appearances, a runner was **ALSO NOT** in scoring position. Yes, in Peralta's first four trips to the plate, there were runners on:

first and second

first and third

first and third

first and second

In his fifth appearance, there was only a runner on first. This is because the runner on second scored on Garko's fourth single. And this is because he knew Jhonny Peralta was up next.

Peralta lined out to end the 1st, flew out to end the 2nd, grounded into a double play to end the 4th

, then simply flew out in the middle of the 6th

and 7th

. He came to the plate with a total of NINE BASERUNNERS, and advanced EXACTLY ZERO OF THEM. In a sense, he actually advanced NEGATIVE ONE OF THEM if you look at the double play in that manner.

The only other hitter in the Cleveland lineup to “personally strand” (a personal LOB stat that counts runners not advanced independent of the number of outs: the sum of the personal LOBs is always greater than the team LOB, which counts runners at the ends of innings) more than ONE runner was Shin-Soo Choo ... with FOUR. Peralta had NINE.

Not a good night at the dish for the spherically-headed one. By the way, this snapped a 10-game hitting streak for Peralta.

7) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Ron Washington called in Elizardo Ramirez (yes, THE Elizardo Ramirez!) to relieve Sidney Ponson after Ponson needed 90 pitches to get through four innings. Ramirez was good in his first inning, not so good in his second (giving up 5 runs). And then he

came back out to pitch some more ... and stayed ... and stayed ... look, I know the bullpen was depleted, but that was borderline cruel.

Ramirez finally left with two outs in the 7th after hitting David Dellucci ... after giving up an RBI single to Garko ... after giving up an RBI double to Martinez ... after a single to Francisco ... after a four-pitch walk to Sizemore. The inning after giving up a three-run bomb to Dellucci. He gave up nine runs. His ERA is 30.37. His first son is unlikely to be named "Ron Washington Ramirez."

8) Welcome ... er, back ... to the bigs!

Rick Bauer pitched in the majors from 2001-2006, but wasn't talented or healthy enough to do so in 2007. In 2008, his fine performances at the back end of the Beefalo

bullpen earned him a callup ... where he now sports a 27.00 ERA because he's pitched one inning in Arlington.

I'm not sure I'm drawing a lot of big conclusions from this.

I will ask that Rick Bauer consider mixing in a pitch that goes below the belt, though.

9) Today's colostomy bag

Milton Bradley, after drawing a walk from Masa Kobayashi, stole second base in the bottom of the 7th.

The score was 15-6.

He was stranded at third, where he was mocked by the ghost of Moonlight Graham.

10) Bullpen roundup

Raffy Betancourt, reportedly battling a stiff back, pitched a scorless inning in which he allowed a single and struck out a batter. His command wasn't great, but he was effective: since a poor outing on May 15, Betancourt has only given up 1 run in 7 appearances and has lowered his ERA from 7.31 to 5.18. (He has, however, allowed 3 inherited runs to score, so let's not get too

excited.)

Masa Kobayashi, however, was brilliant: on a night when everyone else was giving up runs left and right, Kobayashi threw two hitless innings and lowered his ERA on the season to 2.70.

11) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Larry Dolan's is considering installing wind machines at Progressive Park in order to simulate the scoring environment in Texas, figuring that the high scores will draw more casual fans. This would be prohibitively

expensive and probably illegal, and it isn't true. Fire Mark Shapiro.