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The Tribe continued to tease us this weekend, coming tantalizingly close to going to La La Land and sweeping the Dodgers, winning extra inning affairs on Friday and Saturday before falling 4-3 on Sunday. In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff recaps the weekend set, talks about the team's continued quality starting pitching, questions third base coach Joel Skinner's decision making, and calls Sal Fasano's moustache a national treasure.



FINAL SCORE

Indians (34-40)	0	0	2	1
Dodgers (34-39)	0	0	0	0

"W";: Borowski (3-5) L: Saito (3-3) S: Kobayashi (4)

FINAL SCORE

Indians (35-40)	0	0	1	0
Dodgers (34-40)	0	0	0	0

W: Kobayashi (4-3) L: C. Wade (0-1)

FINAL SCORE

Indians (35-41) (4th 6.5 GB CHW)	0	0	0
Dodgers (35-40) 4	0	0	0

W: Billingsley (6-7) L: Byrd (3-8) S: Saito (11)

It is hard to believe that a weekend series between two inept offenses was defined by a series of "big innings." It is harder still to believe that the Indians won the series because they had more of them ... *because we have Jhonny Peralta*

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1) A contrast in lack of contrast

On Friday, Cliff Lee gave up one run on six hits in 7 1/3 innings. (His 6th hit was allowed in the 8

th

inning.)

On Saturday, C.C. Sabathia gave up one run on five hits in 7 innings.

Lee had three 1-2-3 innings.

Sabathia had three 1-2-3 innings (which happened to be his first three).

Lee had two innings in which he faced four batters.

Sabathia had two innings in which he faced four batters.

Lee had two innings in which he faced five batters, including his last complete inning.

Sabathia had two innings in which he faced five batters, including his last complete inning.

Lee walked only one batter and threw 73% of his pitches for strikes.

Sabathia walked only batter and threw 69% of his pitches for strikes.

Lee continued his transformation to groundball pitcher by posting a 14:5

GO:FO ratio.

Sabathia took advantage of the Dodgers' collective approach to post a(n unusual for him) 9:2 GO:FO ratio.

Lee looked preposterous at the plate, striking out three times.

Sabathia looked only mildly ludicrous at the plate, striking out two times.

2) A contrast in extreme contrast

On the other hand, Lee struck out three batters and allowed a runner to reach third base in 4 of his 7 complete innings. One key to Lee's success was that the player who reached third generally got there by advancing on other batters' outs, so that by the time he was on third, there were two outs and he couldn't score on a simple well-struck ball. To Lee's credit, if it is true that all he needed was to get the third guy out, he did in fact produce such an out: too many times it seems like Cleveland pitchers put themselves in a situation in which they only need make "one more pitch" and then do no such thing.

This contrasts to Sabathia's more-dominant 10-K outing: as inferred above, Sabathia actually retired the first 11 batters before allowing a pair of two-out singles in the 4th. Part of Sabathia's elevated pitch count was because of the punchouts, and it seemed like a few of the groundouts he was able to coax from the Dodgers came on pitches which may have been below the strike zone on swings from hitters who didn't think they were getting a more hittable pitch any time soon.

One other contrast came in the home run department: while Lee's run was actually just a single and an exit (Raffy Betancourt then gave up a double that allowed Lee's runner to score), Sabathia's was a simple one-out homer to righty Matt Kemp, who ironically might be considered a player Los Angeles would offer for Sabathia. And while Sabathia did strike out twice, his first plate appearance was decidedly NOT a strikeout, being a 440-foot blast off Chan Ho Park that made poor Park believe he was a Texas Ranger once again. That was easily the best-hit ball by a Cleveland Indian in 2008.

This is certainly one of the differences between the two men: to say that Cliff Lee struck out is to do injustice to just how borderline criminal it is to send Cliff Lee to the plate with a piece of wood. One swing made me question whether Cliff Lee is left-handed, looking a bit like Stein from "Bad News Bears." One swing made we wonder if he had been pithed. A third made me seriously consider the possibility that he would burst into flames because he was an animatronic device used in the beginning of the Tim Burton version of "Willy Wonka." In asking for examples of major-league hitters worse than Cliff Lee, the only serious answer I got was Rich Garces, which I believe but personally never saw him hit. Bartolo Colon was especially egregious. But Cliff Lee is truly terrible as a hitter.

However, overall, if asked to pick between the two

performances, it would be a tough call. I suppose that Sabathia's 10 Ks would carry the day, but then, Lee never actually gave up a run while pitching. Here's a neat stat: after The Four Horrific Starts, Sabathia posted a 2.44 ERA in May, and has a 2.40 ERA in June. His ERA since the F.H.S. has been 2.13 (he had two excellent starts to finish April). Eight times in the his last eleven starts he has finished the 7th inning. After the worst start of his career, Sabathia is calmly plugging along at ... a rate better than Cliff Lee's Career Gork Year.

3) A contrast in a surprising lack of contrast, subset division

After the first four hitters, Paul Byrd gave up 0 runs on 3 hits in 7 complete innings of work. He struck out one batter, walked none, and used a ludicrous 59 pitches to complete those seven innings. I mean, that's really good stuff.

4) The inherent problem with cutting data

Sometimes you get a better statistical "feel"

for a data set by trimming the outliers. This is not true in pitcher evaluation.

Yes, Paul Byrd pitched very well after the first four hitters, but that was rendered irrelevant by the fact that each of those four hitters scored. Of the four hits Byrd allowed, only Juan Pierre's single was not for extra bases: Matt Kemp's double bounced over the wall, James Loney doubled to right, and Russell Martin fouled off three two-strike pitches before homering to effectively end the game. One conjures up all the hindsight at one's disposal and wonders if maybe Byrd shouldn't have simply let Russell walk and taken his chances with the bottom half of the Dodger lineup (only one of whom got a hit in the entire rest of the game, an infield single).

In one of those rare cases when a ballplayer accidentally provides Real Insight, Russell Martin said something more profound than I could, so I'll cede the floor to him:

"He did a good job keeping in the game," Martin said. "Everybody had the mind-set that we

were going to stay aggressive and hit the first fastball we saw. That's what we did in the first inning, and then he made an adjustment where he was throwing a lot more off-speed stuff the second and third time through the lineup and keeping the ball down more."

Now, in one sense, this speaks highly of Byrd: he was able to adjust his approach, and still threw a very high strike percentage (66 in 82 pitches), and all but shut down the Dodgers for seven innings. It was a one-run game after the top of the third, and Byrd gave his team ample chances to win the game. On the other hand ... well, it would be nice if Byrd had been a little quicker on the uptake ... you know ... like before giving up a two-run bomb to Russell Martin.

(quote courtesy Associated Press)

5) Jholtin' Jhonny!

No one had a better weekend at the plate than miscast

cleanup hitter Jhonny Peralta: on Friday, Peralta drove in one run in the cruising portion of the game with a two-out single, then recalimed the totally-lost momentum from the Dodgers with a two-out two-run double in the 11th to effectively win the game.

On Saturday, Peralta's doubles off Chan Ho Park and Jonathan Broxton were largely wasted, but his single drove in the first run of the 6-run 10th to spark the rally that won the game.

And on Sunday, Peralta smacked two more hits in 3 AB, which doesn't include the two-strike walk he drew to eventually score Cleveland's third run.

On the whole, Peralta went 7-for-13, and four of the hits were for extra bases. He hit at least one double to each part of the outfield (left,

center, right).

6) Now coaching third: Joel Magoo

This was probably not the memory most fans will take away from the three-game set, though, because as the tying run on second after a double, Peralta ran to third when David Dellucci lined a double down the right field line. Right fielder Andre Ethier made a wonderful sliding stop to prevent the ball from getting into the corner, and the relay throw came to the infield at roughly the time Peralta was rounding third.

Peralta was waved home by third base coach Joel Skinner.

After finishing a lovely ham sandwich and dictating the third chapter of his memoirs ("The Year I Wore No Pants"), Russell Martin wiped the mayonaise off his chin before tagging Peralta out.

Listen, I have heard the justification for this maneuver: there were two outs, and Dellucci would have been on second, so first base was open. The argument was that the Dodgers would simply have walked Kelly Shoppach, and Paul Byrd would have been forced to bat with the bases loaded and two outs, likely ending the inning. It was only the fifth inning, too early to pinch-hit for Byrd, so it was worth seeing if Peralta could force a bad throw.

This, of course, is utter hogwash.

Look, here is the chance that Paul Byrd would have gotten a hit:

(very small)

But here is the chance that Peralta would be out at home:

Completely F*#^ing Certain

Peralta was no more than two steps around third when the ball got to the relay man. To send Peralta at that point was tantamount to having him attempt a straight steal of home.

Jhonny Peralta may be young, but he is not

fast. And he was really, really, REALLY out. Not just out, Ryan Garko out. Just bloody out.

Here's the thing: given a choice between Low Chance (Dodgers pitching to Shoppach, Byrd getting a hit, wild pitch, balk, meteor strike, Act of Congress) and Zero Chance (Peralta being so very out as to offend Peter Gammons, Ring Lardner, and Abner Doubleday), you have to take the Low Chance. Low is better than No.

Since this is the first time Skinner has ever done this, I'm inclined to ... well, not really the *first* time, but more like the *third* ... er, *fif*
th

... er,

sixty-seven THOUSANDTH

... remind me, why is this guy the third base coach again?

7) The Super Joe Show!

Ah, yes, Joe Borowski.

Eh, we won the game. It is what it is. I love the fact that the bases were loaded when he got the third out. Just perfect.

8) Death on a Stick

Raffy Perez recorded two outs on Friday.
Each was a strikeout.

Raffy Perez recorded three outs on Sunday.
Each was a strikeout.

Ironically, his best performance was
Saturday, when he didn't strike anyone out,
but only gave up one single in a 1-1 game.
(He gave up an RBI single Friday, charged
to Betancourt, and a pair of singles
Sunday). Perez posted strike-to-ball ratios
of 8:1, 11:3, and 14:4.

Raffy Betancourt threw a scoreless inning
Saturday, although his single batter Friday

doubled and gave up Lee's inherited run.

Masa Kobayashi got the save with a scoreless inning Friday after Borowski's hilarity, and "won" Saturday's game with a perfect inning punctuated by 2 Ks.

Scott Elarton did not complete soil himself in protecting a 6-run lead.

9) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Grady Sizemore had at least one hit in each

of the three games, including a triple (after which he did not score). So did Jamey Carroll, now hitting .281 on the season.

Kelly Shoppach blasted a two-run homer.

Casey Blake drove in a run in each of the three games.

Sal Fasano struck out only twice in three ABs, but his moustache remains an American Treasure.