

## The B-List: 6/25

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Welcome to last place Tribe fans. It's been since 1993 that our beloved Erie Warriors have inhabited last place this late in the season. 15 years! And as if things could not get any worse, we were shut down last night by Barry Zito, who came into the game with a 2-11 record and a 6.32 ERA ... pitching in the worst division in the National League. As we all know by now though, the worse the game, the funnier the B-List. Bartender!!!!



### FINAL SCORE

|                 |    |    |             |   |
|-----------------|----|----|-------------|---|
| Giants (34-44)  | 2  | 0  | 1           | 0 |
| Indians (35-43) | (5 | th | 7.5 GB CHW) | 0 |

*W: Zito (3-11) L: Sowers (0-3) S: B. Wilson (21)*

Welcome to last place!

Keith Hernandez called: he wants his Indians years expunged from his record because he's embarrassed. (Dave Otto called, but I put him on hold, so I don't really know what he wanted.)

### 1) Fluid solidity

Jeremy Sowers absorbed his third loss of the season by giving up 3 runs on 9 hits, an unconscionable 5 walks, and only 3 Ks. He gave up a home run in the third and generally did not pound the strike zone, throwing 60 strikes in 101 pitches. He was aided by a fine throw by Ben Francisco to throw Benji Molina out trying to stretch a single into a double and by two double plays.

But there are certainly positives to take away from this start: Sowers' 7 innings were the most he's gone this season, and 101 pitches is not bad for 7 innings of work. After a standard Inning of Crap™ in the first in which he allowed two runs on three singles and a walk, Sowers settled down to allow only a solo shot the rest of the way, and in his last inning of work, he escaped from a bases-loaded one-out jam by inducing a weak opposite-field fly ball and striking out the Giants' nominal Best Hitter after getting squeezed on the 1-2 and 2-2 pitches. Sowers posted a nice 11:6 GO:FO ratio, which contributed to the two DPs, and kept the Tribe in the game. I mean, that's a Quality Start by definition, his first of the season.

The problem thus far with Sowers is that he's just too damned hittable. He's allowed 47 hits in 31 2/3 innings, and has only one start in which he didn't give up more hits than innings pitches. In that outing, he gave up a pair of homers: he only has one start this season in which he hasn't allowed a homer. His season-high in Ks is 4, and his K:BB ratio of 15:10 is poor. However, this was the first start in which he allowed more than 2 walks, so maybe that should be taken with a grain of salt.

Three of Sowers' five walks were actually of the four-pitch variety, although admittedly, one was intentional (in the 7<sup>th</sup>). Still, four-pitch walks smack of something more than simple lack of control: perhaps Sowers is rightly concerned that a grooved 2-0 or 3-0 fastball will end up over the wall, or maybe he decided that he'd lost that hitter and would attack the next one. One of the four-pitch walks was with a man on second, so he might have been &quot;intentionally unintentionally&quot; walking that guy (Brian Horwitz, who may or may not be a Beastie Boy).

His ERA of 5.97 is obviously poor. His WHIP of 1.80 is completely abysmal. And letting the league hit .343 off you is no way to make a living. If anything, Sowers reminds me of the Texas version of Doug Davis, a lefty without superior stuff and lousy K:BB and K rates that eventually figured it out in Milwaukee. It's worth remembering that, despite being spoiled by Fausto Carmona and Aaron Laffey, 25-year-old third-year starters often look a lot like this. And this outing really was pretty good. So, kudos.

## **2) A bright spot in the void**

With two outs in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, Kelly Shoppach got his obligatory Extra Base Hit Full of Sound and Fury, Signifying Nothing with a double to end Barry Zito's night. As Franklin Gutierrez, He Who Should Not Face Righties, was due up next, the San Francisco manager called for right-hander Keiichi Yabu, and Eric Wedge prudently sent Shin-Soo Choo to pinch hit.

Let us pause for a moment in thanks that Wedge chose Choo instead of David Dellucci.

Now, this sounds snide, mostly because it's snide, but there is an element of sincerity here as well. At this point in the season, Shin-Soo Choo is simply a better hitter than David Dellucci. Dellucci's pinch-hitting performances have been just jaw-droppingly bad, with most ending in strikeouts. For better or for worse, Choo has a lot more of a role on the next contending Indians team than Dellucci does. And, before we bend over backwards with praise for Wedge, it should be noted that Gutierrez was playing right field,

something Choo does a lot better than Dellucci, especially since both had arm surgery recently (Choo to repair a torn UCL, Dellucci to afix an industrial-strength length of fettucine to his shoulder to imitate armlike function). So simply changing right fielders was a little less involved conceptually.

Choo took the first pitch, then lined a sharp single to right that scored Shoppach from second.

And the crowd goes mild!

### **3) The offense in a nutshell**

Barry Zito is having a tough time living up to his contract. The reason for this is twofold:

- a) his contract is an absurd overpayment
- b) Barry Zito is bad

How bad? He came into the game with a 2-11 record which was NOT the product of poor run support: it was the product of Bad. His ERA was 6.32, pitching in the National League. His May was actually pretty decent, with a 3.49 ERA and none of five starts yielding more than 3 runs, but none of those starts lasted more than 6 1/3 innings (in fact, that's true of the season at large). He has a "negative" 44:48 K:BB ratio. His WHIP on the season is 1.82. He is bad.

Barry Zito allowed 1 run on 4 hits on the Shoppach-Choo hits outlined above. He struck out 4 hitters. He walked no one. (His ERA is now 5.91.)

Amusingly enough, he is owned in 6.4% of ESPN

Fantasy Leagues. I have to conclude from this that 6.4% of ESPN Fantasy League players are severe imbeciles.

#### 4) Nice hose!

It is one thing to gun down Any Random Molina trying to take an extra base. It's a Molina Brother, fer crine out loud: where Cleveland fans measure absence of speed in Garkoes, [the rest of the world uses Molinas as its standard](#)

. I mean, it's still a nice throw by Ben Francisco, but ... look, it's a Molina Brother.

It's another thing entirely to cut down Ray Durham trying to score from second on a single. Ray Durham may be old, but that was a GREAT THROW.

## **5) The dark side of that throw**

It made Joe Borowski look on paper like he'd pitched somewhat effectively. (He hadn't.)

## **6) Silver Lining Dept.**

The Cleveland Indians drove in fully half of all baserunners to get into scoring position.

Casey Blake has a 1.000 fielding percentage as a shortstop.

David Dellucci had his best pinch-hitting performance to date.

Jamey Carroll had two singles.

**7) I am ready**

For the end of the Andy Marte Era.