

The B-List: 7/2

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Here is where I would type something interesting about the Cleveland Indians if there were something about the Cleveland Indians that was interesting. Well, the B-List is interesting, so read that instead. Sabathia's start, Sizemore's brilliance, a trio of Tinfoil Hats ... it's better than watching A.J. Pierzynski beat you with a walkoff homer, I'll tell you that.



FINAL SCORE				
Indians (37-48)	1	1	0	0
White Sox (49-35)	2	1	0	0

W: A. Russell (2-0) L: Kobayashi (4-4)

How perfect! Swept by my least-favorite team on a walkoff homer by A.J. Pierzynski, of all people! Good times!

1) The Farewell Tour gets off to a shaky start

It would surprise me beyond belief if C.C. Sabathia is a Cleveland Indian in 30 days. Sabathia has been one of the more enjoyable of players to follow, being drafted as a raw high school player and spending all of his professional life in the Cleveland organization, but it's all but a foregone conclusion that he will be traded for a collection of assets before the trading deadline. He would add a lot more value to a good team than to ours, he is dead set on entertaining free agent offers in the off-season, and is so unlikely to re-up with the Indians that it simply makes sense to get definable assets for him (guys who have played professional baseball) than intangible ones (draft picks). Sure, it's not inconceivable that Sabathia would re-sign with Cleveland: he's comfortable here, and the

organization has treated him well, but the raw dollars make it unlikely and, in my opinion, he wouldn't be less likely to re-sign with Cleveland after spending three months "abroad" than he would if we had the exclusive post-season window (which I expect him and his agent to eschew in favor of gathering all possible offers anyway). He's won a Cy Young award and spent most of his time hovering in the nether zone between "very good" and "truly great," has been exceptionally durable, and has, on the whole, been a joy to follow as a fan.

Anyway, I've mentioned Sabathia's remarkable turnaround after four disastrous starts to begin the season: even after a poorish outing last night, his ERA for the season stands at 3.83, which almost cracks the top 20 for qualified starters in the AL. I'm not trying to belittle that accomplishment, I'm saying that his early April was SO bad that this is actually pretty darned impressive. He leads the AL in strikeouts by a pretty good-sized margin (123 to 108 for Head Case Burnett) as well.

But this was possibly his worst start since the pair of nine-run jobs in mid-April: arguably his 6-inning performance against Texas June 5 (5 runs, 4 earned, 6 IP) was worse, but the ballpark is a mitigating factor; the 4-run outing against KC wasn't very good, but he didn't walk anyone or allow a homer. This start wasn't very auspicious, as two of the first four hitters hit the ball over the fence to squander a 1-0 lead. And the second inning didn't start much better, with a booming first-pitch double by Pablo Ozuna being followed by an RBI single.

Then a funny thing happened: Sabathia stopped worrying about his potentially-last start in a Cleveland uniform (*) and started simply pitching like C.C. Sabathia. He retired 15 of the next 16 hitters, including perfect innings in the 3rd, 5th, and 6th, as the Tribe plugged along and eventually took a 4-3 lead on Grady Sizemore umpteenth solo shot of the season.

And then, wanting to send Sabathia off on the most Clevelandy note possible, both teams chipped in and helped produce an **Inning of Crap**
TM

that was part pathos, part high comedy, and all

Crap
TM

. It was a tour de force. Three severed heads. Glove Fu. Interference Fu. Joe Bob says, "Check it out."

The inning began as Ozuna grounded the ball to Blake, who airmailed the throw and allowed Ozuna to reach second on an error. Not satisfied with this, Nick Swisher then interfered with Kelly Shoppach as he tried to throw Ozuna out on the basepaths, and was called out. Alexei Ramirez followed with a ground ball that Blake made a nice backhand stop on, but Ramirez is fast and Ozuna didn't move and now there are runners at first and second with one out made by a man who didn't actually have a recorded pitch thrown to him.

Not to worry, though, because Brian Anderson, he of the .232 average, he of the #9 slot, he of the Regular Trip To AAA Because He Can't Hit, Brian Freaking Anderson missed the first pitch, took two balls, then rocketed a two-run double to turn a 4-3 lead into a 5-4 deficit.

Sure, there was a passed ball and two more outs, but really, it's

Brian Freaking Anderson. Come on, big man! Damn.

Sabathia had crested 100 pitches in that inning, but was given another: I mean, what are you saving him for? The rest of the season? Anyway, he clearly was no longer sharp, throwing 14 balls and 9 strikes and walking two guys, but it was a hitless scoreless inning and huzzahs all around.

Anyway, it wasn't the solo shots that got my goat, it was a two-run lead-surrendering double to a guy who can't hit that hurt my eye. But I have to admit, he certainly regained his focus between the second and seventh innings.

() this is a completely baseless attribution: I have no idea what Sabathia was thinking at the time, but his performance after the RBI single contrasted very sharply with that before it*

2) A competitor for Worst Plate Appearance in the World!

Ben Francisco did not have a good night at the plate, only earning the Tinfoil Hat with 3 whiffs on the night after a pointless single in his first at-bat. The strikeouts were annoying, to be sure, but let's be honest: they aren't exactly an

oddity on this club. After a good start in the majors and posting a .305/.352/.500 May, Francisco has cooled considerably, hitting only .269/.339/.426 in June, which still makes him one of Cleveland's most productive hitters while simultaneously being pretty darned mediocre.

His at-bat in the 5th deserves special derision, though: after Grady Sizemore worked a walk from Jose Contreras, he stole second and scored on Jamey Carroll's RBI triple. So now you have a runner on third with no outs. You pretty much have to drive him in as a 3-slot hitter. You don't even need a hit. You just need to Not Suck.

Ben sucked.

Now, look, this isn't just a Fundamental Attribution Error here: this is honest-to-goodness real-live sucking. And I say this because Francisco took ball one. He took ball two. He took ball THREE. And then ... on a 3-0 pitch ... and if you're swinging at the 3-0 pitch with a runner on third with no outs, that better be a pitch that you hit into the outfield ... Ben Francisco grounded out to third.

Jamey Carroll did not score.

Hey, look, Shin-Soo Choo struck out after Jhonny Peralta walked: why not him? Well, because he struck out on a 2-2 count, given the umpire's Heisenberg Strike Zone, he had to swing at that pitch: Francisco didn't have to swing 3-0 unless he was certain he could drive that ball.

He did not drive that ball.

Upon further review, Marte's AB was still worse. But that was infuriating.

3) Five scary words

"Bases loaded for David Dellucci."

In the first, threatening to jump on Contreras out of the

box, the Indians parlayed three singles and a walk into one run and loaded bases. Dellucci watched strike one. He missed strike two. He missed strike three. End of inning.

In the aforementioned 5th, with runners at the corners, Casey Blake drew a two-out walk to load the bases. This time, Dellucci heroically fouled off a 1-2 pitch, took a ball, and was able to lift a fly ball all the way to left field. He was equally out, and the inning, equally ended.

He got a single in the 10th. So what?

4) Badness comes in threes

Ben Francisco earned a Tinfoil Hat with three strikeouts.

Shin-Soo Choo earned a Tinfoil Hat with three strikeouts.

Kelly Shoppach, on his way to ending his 10-game hitting streak, earned a Tinfoil Hat with three strikeouts.

Well then.

5) St. Grady

Depending on your view of position players versus pitchers, Grady Sizemore is arguably the best Cleveland Indian by a rather healthy margin. Sizemore hit his 20th (!) and 21st (!!!) home runs last night en route to a 3-for-4 night

with a walk, four runs scored (!), and two RBI. The two men he drove in were Grady Sizemore and Grady Sizemore. He also stole his 20th

base of the season to become the only player in the AL to go 20/20 thus far this season. And his out was productive, advancing Ryan Garko from second to third where he subsequently scored on a groundout.

Sizemore is now tied with Casey Blake for the team lead in RBI. He is the only Cleveland Indian with an OPS over .900 (who has a fourth plate appearance). He leads the AL in homers, is tied for 4th in walks, is third in total bases (behind Ian Kinsler and Josh Hamilton of Texas), is in the top 10 of pitches per plate appearance, and your wife would sleep with him if he asked. Heck, you might, too.

6) A modest proposal

Maybe ... just maybe ... it might be time to move the 21-HR .534-SLG 47-RBI guy out of the leadoff slot. I might be crazy. Just consider it, 'kay?

7) Leftovers

I have seen multiple reports that Alexei Ramirez' homer last night should have been caught by Ben Francisco last night: it was hard to tell on a tiny computer image, but it looked like Francisco was

fooled by the ball, thinking he would catch it at the wall, then in blew over his head. Regardless of my depth perception or his, a better jump with actual effort doesn't seem like too much to have asked for there.

I'm not sure I did justice to just how poor Franklin Gutierrez' plate appearance in the 10th was: with two runners on, Gutierrez missed a couple of the most obese pitches ever seen in the Central Time Zone to shrewdly avoid adding to a one-run lead. Just cremincus.

8) A short discourse on relief

pitching

Here is the difference between my attitude toward Joe Borowski's performance and Masa Kobayashi's (he gave up a solo shot to lose the game after a perfect ninth):

Kobayashi threw a pretty good pitch to a pretty good hitter, who did an excellent job.

Borowski threw a **series** of execrable

pitches to a

S

eries

of decent hitters who did what

any

major-league player would do with
such fat, fat stuff.

That's why I'm not ranting.