

The B-List: 7/9

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Ten in a row. TEN! I'm still personally having a hard time coming to terms with how quickly this season veered off track. Last night's loss was gut-wrenching. The Tribe shot out to a 6-0 lead, only to have the bullpen completely melt down in the final three innings, with the collapse capped by a Miggy Cabrera two run walk off job in the bottom of the ninth. In today's B-List, Buff has some amusing thoughts on the meltdown, calls Sal Fasano "a revelation", and talks about the potential of Paul Byrd being dealt.



FINAL SCORE

Indians (37-53)	3	1	0	1
Tigers (46-44)	0	0	0	0

W: Todd Jones (4-0) L: Lewis (0-3)

Tribe '85: this is my team!

(Administrative note: I had a clever idea, but not the time to execute it, so the column is short.)

1) Does it count as "jumping the shark" if you land IN the shark?

I like Paul Byrd. I mean the guy: I don't like watching him pitch, necessarily, at least not on a "steady diet" basis, but I like Paul Byrd. I'd like to see him develop an eephus pitch and butter his hands and be the closer in a gigantic new ballpark with 500-foot fences someday. He's had an interesting career. I've been waiting for Byrd to be traded for a while, something that seemed more and more unlikely as he began reeling off subprime outings, to the point where I'm not sure there's a contender out there that would improve by adding Paul Byrd. The only possibility I see is St. Louis, where they have a larger park and some serious mooks throwing innings, plus the mad genius of Dave Duncan who takes washed-up veterans and coats them with Secret Sauce or something and molds them into Dustin Hermansons: past that, I'm not sure there's a compelling reason to add Paul Byrd to your roster. And he is one of our five best starters in the entire system. (I think I hurt myself.)

Paul Byrd's last Actually Effective Start came in Comerica, and this one looked much the same, except, oddly enough, for the lack of homers. This is pretty big news from Byrd Headquarters, as he hadn't had a homer-free start since the invention of bat-powered flight, but Comerica is a larger park and Byrd had goodish stuff. Through five innings, Byrd had a shutout on 5 hits, 1 walk, and an uncharacteristic 5 Ks. Really, this is the Stuff of Paul Byrd, a virtually magical ability to sail through uneventful innings even though it's not altogether obvious how the innings are sailing by. Still, through 5 innings, this was a terrific start.

In the sixth, Byrd lost his shutout bid with a double-single combo, but even when Sal Fasano airmailed a ball into center on a stolen base, Byrd calmly got the final out and had 6 innings of 1-run (7-hit) ball under his belt.

Now, at this point, Byrd had gone through the order almost exactly three times. (Nine hitter Dane Sardinha had not batted a third time.) With Byrd, familiarity breeds contempt, so it's really pushing your luck to send him out for a fourth trip. I understand that his pitch count was low (77 pitches through 6), but really, this is a case with a 6-1 lead where you take your good fortune and leave the table.

Instead, Byrd was sent out, and two singles later, had accomplished nothing more than he would have had he been relaxing in the shower after his six successful innings.

That was dumb.

2) Now wearing the immolation suit, Raffy Betancourt!

That was so, so, so, so bad, words fail me. I will try fruit.

Kumquat! Orange, orange, orange, cherry, kiwi! Banana, grape, Granny Smith apple boysenberry black currant! Kumquat!

Shoot, that doesn't work, either. Anyway, the double to Guillen actually looked like a pretty good pitch that Guillen looped the other way, and it looked like the ump was squeezing him a bit, but the two-run jack to Matt Joyce was simply the second-worst pitch I've ever seen. He bypassed the "golden platter" and simply encased that pitch in a Fabrege' egg. Just awful.

Anyway, Betancourt gave up Byrd's two runs plus three of his own, and left the game tied 6-6.

Now, had Betancourt simply started the inning from the windup, would he have been as abysmal? Who the heck knows? I still say it was stupid.

3) Eddie Moo sighting!

And a good one, to boot: not only did he get out of Betancourt's inning by inducing a double play on a nasty split-finger pitch, he threw 9 strikes in 11 pitches and polished off the first two hitters of the 8th before giving way to Raffy Perez. That was damned nice.

4) Six-pitch Raffy

Yeah, the right-handers were coming up in the 9th, but Raffy Perez got to face one hitter. (He got him out.)

5) Now wearing the immolation suit, Jensen Lewis!

Did you wonder why I said Raffy Betancourt threw the "second-worst pitch"? Because Jensen Lewis' pitch to Miguel Cabrera was a diamond-encrusted, platinum-plated meatball that could not have been more taterrific had it been thrown by Brian Slocum.

Bartlett pear! Bing cherry! Phbt!

6) Super Sal!

Sal Fasano has been a revelation. I am insisting that everyone on the team grow a moustache like this tomorrow, except Eric Wedge, who may not. (I mean, Aaron Laffey probably can't, since he's eleven, and Jamey Carroll really shouldn't have facial hair. Doesn't Ryan Garko look like he could grow a moustache between plate appearances, though? Wouldn't Raffy Perez look tremendous with a moustache like that? Come on. Cliff Lee would bear an unfortunate resemblance to Jason Lee on "My Name Is Earl," but I'm willing to take that chance.)

Fasano is now hitting .500 for Cleveland after a 3-for-4 night including his first double of the season: his throw on the stolen base attempt was obviously cremincus, but his double ... that was a thing of beauty.

Let me set the stage here: Casey Fossum is making the Indians look simply ridiculous. In 3 1/3 innings, Fossum, who LOWERED his ERA to SEVEN POINT TWO FOUR, struck out 6 Tribesmen and generally looked like Not Casey Fossum. With the count 1-2, Fasano fouled off a pitch ... fouled off a pitch ... and then Fossum unleashed an absurdist physics-defying yo-yo remote control eephus curve that possibly reached a height of twelve feet before beginning its descent. It may have been travelling fourteen miles per hour. On the "fast" gun. I don't think I could imitate this pitch with a Nerf Whiffle Ball. This was a truly preposterous

pitch.

Fasano waited ... made a sandwich ... waited some more ... groomed his moustache ... called his grandchildren ... did a quick Sudoku (Medium) ... polished his spikes ... picked his bat back up ... and lashed a double down the left field line that caused most spectators to collapse into spasms of mirth.

That, my friends, is why you hire Sal Fasano.

7) Ducks on the pond!

Fasano went to third on an infield single, then scored when Carlos Guillen badly misplayed Jamey Carroll's grounder. Grady Sizemore made it to third on the play, so with no outs and runners at the corners, we were treated to the following sequence:

Ben Francisco popped out, advancing no one□

Jhonny Peralta struck out looking, advancing no one□

Casey Blake struck out looking, advancing no one

This inning was infinitely more satisfying than the one before, in which Francisco led off with a walk, Peralta hit a ground rule double, and they intentionally walked Casey Blake to load the bases with none out. Because that led to:

Shin-Soo Choo struck out looking, advancing no one□

Ryan Garko struck out swinging, advancing no one□

Andy Marte struck out swinging, advancing no one

For those of you counting at home, that's a total of 13 baserunners advanced a grand total of zero inches on 5 strikeouts and a pop up.

That's faaaaaaaaan-tastic!

8) Signs of life

Andy Marte were 2-for-5 with a double, and his ground ball to end the 9th was actually spanked awfully well.

Grady Sizemore went 3-for-5 with two RBI.

Jhonny Peralta hit his 22nd and 23rd doubles on the season; Blake hit his 22nd

off titular closer Todd Jones. (Blake was gunned down at the plate on a very nice play by Guillen on a groundout, which might have spared us Jensen Lewis.)

Every Cleveland starter got at least one hit except Ryan Garko, who could not have looked more helpless at the plate wearing a tutu and high heels.

The team collectively struck out in mere single-digits.

9) The tag line of the aborted column

Yes, welcome, we've been expecting you. Mephistopheles speaks highly of you. We've had to go from three to four since Sartre's day, I'm afraid: here are your new roommates: Carrot Top, Truman Capote, and Robert Mugabe.