

Buff has a surprise for you in today's B-List! Is it his characterization of Aaron Laffey's performance? No, that's not surprising. Is it his comparison of Tom Mastny to Jason Davis? Also not surprising. In a game in which the Indians squandered three leads and fell just short in a 14-11 loss, the only truly surprising thing is that David Dellucci drove in the final run, and ... well, read The B-List and see for yourself.



FINAL SCORE				
Indians (44-56)	2	0	0	2
Angels (62-39)	0	2	0	3

W: Lackey (8-2) L: Laffey (5-7) S: F. Rodriguez (42)

Which is more unlikely: we lost the series because we couldn't get Jeff Mathis out, or that our best pitcher was Juan Rincon?

0) Administrative Note

David Dellucci has no business getting plate appearances on this team. With the admission that he hit an RBI double yesterday (to go 1-for-5 ... out of the TWO hole), there is no plausible scenario by which this team is better or becomes better by virtue of having David Dellucci appear in a Cleveland Indians game for the remainder of the season. I talked about Eric Wedge having a sort of Vision Thing, concocting scenarios in which This Player must perform at This Level to have a championship-calibre club: well, this no longer applies to David Dellucci. There is no way to sell me on the concept of Dellucci playing a meaningful role for the next successful Cleveland Indians team. He won't. He can't. Stop pretending. Stop

batting (or worse, playing in the field) David Dellucci.

And so, I announce the return of a long-standing feature: at the end of each column, from now until David Dellucci is put in a position in which he is incapable of making a plate appearance (traded, DFA'd, injured, sent abroad, elected to Congress, given a reality show with Flavor Flav), I will be telling an outrageous lie about Eric Wedge.

## 1) Vocabulary lesson II

In Cliff Lee's last outing, we discussed the difference between "command" and "control," where "control," although a good thing in that it means throwing strikes, isn't sufficient for having a truly successful outing. I mean, Paul Byrd throws strikes. Joe Borowski threw strikes. To throw QUALITY strikes, you need "command."

A third term comes to mind when discussing Aaron Laffey's latest outing: "suck."

The more "control" a pitcher has, the more likely it is for batters to be induced to swing. The more "command" a pitcher has, the more likely it is that those swings won't be productive. And the more "suck" a player has, the more the opponent beats on you like Art of Noise whacking a piano in the video for "Close to the Edit" while shouting "Hey!"

Truthfully, Laffey's problem yesterday may have been that his pitches had too MUCH movement, so much that he was unable to show much command OR control. Without a good "feel" for the strike zone, Laffey apparently overcompensated and began horking up Le Gravid Meatball Surprise to the Angels' hitters, who gladly grabbed forks, knives, and extra napkins en route to a

12-hit, 2-walk, 8-run barrage in four innings to chase Laffey, whose ERA has soared from 2.83 on June 24 to 4.23 now. He has exactly one good outing in that five-game stretch, against a Tampa Bay team that was sucking wind into the All-Star break.

Look, unlike some folks who are simply chalking this up to "the league figuring Laffey out," this looked a lot more like a rhythmless pitcher who couldn't control his own stuff. Ed Grimley was more fluid. I think this is more one of those things that happens to 23-year-old pitchers in the big leagues. But let's not sugar-coat or hand-wave here: that was putrescent. Yes, only two of the hits were for extra bases. Yes, groundball pitchers sometimes have games where grounders find holes (cf. Westbrook, J.). Yes, Jhonny Peralta could probably have shown more agility on a couple of the balls, like, say, that of Lurch. But you don't give up 12 hits in 4-plus innings due solely to bad luck and misfortune. There's some "suck" going on there, too.

I have no real clever suggestion about how to alleviate this: the fact that his ball had a lot of movement actually encourages me. It seems easier to get excess movement under control than to try to be effective with an absence thereof. Long-term, I still consider Laffey a rotation member (if, perhaps, more of the 4/5 he was supposed to be in the first place). I'm just saying that, if you're writing down the rotation for 2009, and you're demanding a certain level of performance from Laffey, well, tempering your confidence level seems prudent.

## **2) The corner turned?**

Juan Rincon threw another perfect inning.

We discussed Rincon a bit yesterday, and it should be noted that only 8 of Rincon's 15 pitches were for strikes, so maybe a full recovery to effectiveness is premature to announce. Besides, after 14 runs and 19 hits, the Angels may simply have been tired. Rincon did get Jeff Mathis out, something no other

Cleveland pitcher yesterday was able to do.

### **3) The Jason Davis Commemorative Wazoo**

Jason Davis was a pitcher who had some talent. He was infuriating and frustrating and had sold his God-given portion of chin to Casey Blake, but the man did have talent. In 2007, he was designated for assignment, largely because he was not really good enough to start every fifth day, didn't show the aptitude for back-end relieving, and was saddled with a role that he apparently could not handle. That role was the one of long relief or "swing man," a guy who takes innings from an injured or ineffective starter, or maybe makes a spot start now and then. Now, it may be argued that this was a poor role for Davis, insofar as he sucked at it, but this is one of those harsh realities of a pitching staff sometimes: we have a guy better than you here, and we have a guy better than you there, and this is the role we have left. It's a challenging role. You sometimes go days without pitching. You sometimes come in with runners on base. I'm not saying that this is the best role FOR YOU, but I AM saying that it is the role we HAVE LEFT, and if you are going to be on this roster, it is the role you must succeed in. Because, frankly, you're not better at any other role than anyone I already have there.

Not unsurprisingly, Davis was awful in this role and dismissed. He resurfaced in Seattle, winning two games in 16 appearances and generally looking like Jason Davis. He then failed to crack the Texas starting rotation, which truly is a sign from above that you really are one amazingly craptacular pitcher. I mean, that pretty much defines inept, right? Not Good Enough For Texas? Anyway, Davis is gone and still has no chin and well well well well welly well well. Enough of that.

Imagine Jason Davis with more chin and less stuff. That's Tom Mastny.

### **4) Speaking of failure**

It's impossible to pinpoint a play in the middle of the game and say, "If this hadn't happened, this would have been the end result," because the things that happened after that were influenced by the situation the event created. If things were different, they might have gone differently. Yes, very profound. Thank you. But the "what if" game is largely irresistible to columnists, and I'm not immune, so let's play, "What if Jensen Lewis had been Actually Good?"

Well, he gave up two runs, plus gave up the two runners he inherited (from Mastny), so he threw the pitches that Angels' hitters struck to score four runs. We lost by three. Ergo, Jensen Lewis arguably cost us the game.

Yes, yes, we may not have scored as many as we did had they had a smaller lead and blah blah blah. Here's something irrefutable: Jensen Lewis sucked. Ptui bad! A pox on that outing!

Now, WHY was he so awful? How can you go from striking out Gary Matthews to giving up a two-run double to Jeff Freaking Mathis? More to the point, with first base open, Mathis in the midst of a career day (4-for-5, 6 RBI, grand slam in his previous at-bat), and Chone Figgins on his way to taking an aggressive 0-for-SIX collar do you throw anything Jeff Mathis can hit? I know that Figgins is a .269 hitter and Mathis is a .228 hitter, but ... come on, pay attention! And throw better pitches! For Pete's sake.

Okay, I can understand pitching to Mathis there, that's hindsight at its finest, although it's a valid question there. What's almost inconceivable is why, with runners on second and third and two outs and Howie Kendrick at the plate, why you'd pitch to Kendrick. Great googly moogly, has anyone mentioned that Howie Kendrick can hit? You know, since he's hitting .341? You know, kind of leading the American League in hitting for players over 200 PA? By sixteen points? Who had THREE doubles to that point? That Howie Kendrick?

This just in: Howie Kendrick can hit.

I have no recipe for Lewis. I just want him to pitch better. I have more hope for Lewis than Mastny, but so what? I think we should trade for Tony Pena Jr.

## **5) Everybody hits!**

Let me say this: the offense never gave up the ghost yesterday, and I was impressed. Even as Laffey and Mastny and Lewis tried again and again to crush the life out of the team, the hitters responded with an excellent offensive performance. That's good stuff. Kudos, guys.

Actually, everyone had a hit except Asdrubal Cabrera, who was awful. Two Ks in an 0-for-4 collar. I don't attribute this to any soul-crushing but rather to simple badness.

However, everyone else had something to write home about (except pinch-hitter Casey Blake, who got a single plate appearance): Grady Sizemore hit his 25<sup>th</sup> homer of the season and drew a walk. Sal Fasano even had an RBI single (with two outs, no less). Jhonny Peralta had a nice day at the plate with three singles, three runs scored, and an RBI. Five of Cleveland's eleven runs were driven home with two outs, including one by Andy Marte, who also drew a walk.

Special mention here goes to Ryan Garko, though, who not only hit his 8<sup>th</sup> home run on the season, but pounded out three hits in all to drive in four runs. Garko's two-run single in the 8<sup>th</sup> made it a plausible ballgame (14-10) and came with two outs off ten-year-old Jose Arredondo.

## 6) This having been said

With the score 12-7 and Shin-Soo Choo standing on third with nobody out (he had doubled in Jhonny Peralta and advanced on an error by Juan Rivera), Garko fouled out to first, Marte struck out swinging on four pitches, and Fasano flied out on the *first pitch*

.

Ben Francisco ended the game by grounding out to shortstop on the *first pitch* with a runner on second.

(By the way, can anyone explain to me why Rodriguez got credit for a save there? There were two outs and a runner on second and they had a three-run lead. If he gave up a homer to Francisco ... they would still have been ahead. What is the formula there?)

With two outs in the 5<sup>th</sup> and runners on first and second, Asdrubal Cabrera fouled off the first pitch, so he didn't make an out on the first pitch like the others. He did swing at it, though. And then made an out on the *second* pitch.

## **7) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.**

Shin-Soo Choo had his 11<sup>th</sup> double of the season and is slugging .449 on the season, making him look like an outfielder (which is handy, because he is). He went 2-for-4 with 2 RBI.

Ben Francisco laced his 21<sup>st</sup> double of the season and is slugging .459.

David Dellucci is not owned by any ESPN fantasy owner. They're getting smarter. (Matt Ginter IS.)

## **8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine**



Eric Wedge believes that fluoridation is a Communist plot and refuses to brush his teeth with toothpaste than contains fluoride or drink tap water. You'd have to search pretty hard to find a Communist plot these days, and Wedge's teeth belie the falseness of this statement. Do not play David Dellucci.