

The B-List: 7/28

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Monday, July 28 2008 7:00 PM -

Bye bye, Byrdie? No one knows for sure, but if that was Paul Byrd's farewell performance, it was a heckuva way to go out: the Indians throttled the Tigers 5-0 to take the opener of a three-game set, and Buff provides us with insights from the game in today's B-List. Included are notes about Byrd pitching with men on base, the surge of Eddie Moo, a very young lineup, and some kind words for a manager who found a way to avoid using David Dellucci. Huzzah!



FINAL SCORE					
Tigers (53-52)	0	0	0	0	0
Indians (46-58)	1	0	1	0	0

W: Byrd (5-10) L: Rogers (8-7)

The Casey Blake Haiku contest already has an historic 11 people entered, only one of whom used an inappropriate sexual reference, so get your entry in soon.

1) Balancing act

I like Paul Byrd the guy: he is witty and self-effacing and goes out of his way to

say nice things about his teammates while absorbing blame. He certainly has his faults, but I like Paul Byrd the guy. After last night's game, for example, he made sure to [single out bullpen catcher Dennis Malave](#) for his contribution to last night's successful outing: Byrd apparently plunked Malave several times trying to get into the rhythm of pitching inside, and Malave encouraged him to continue to do so because Byrd's success is heavily dictated by how much of the plate he is able to use. Without throwing inside, hitters load up against Byrd's somewhat marginal stuff and pound it somewhat mercilessly: 43 of the 134 hits Byrd has allowed have been for extra bases, and the league slugs .484 against him, including a preposterous .578 by left-handed hitters. So the problem is not limited to the fact that Byrd doesn't miss a lot of bats (53 K in 115 IP), it's that he doesn't miss sweet spots, either.

On the other hand, when he does use both sides of the plate and shows good command, he can induce a lot of non-solid contact and look like a pretty good pitcher: in fact, Byrd's 7 2/3 innings of 4-hit 3-walk 4-K ball look identical to the Game Score metric to those excellent outings of Cliff Lee and Jeremy Sowers this weekend. In a very real way, the fact that each of those innings, whole or partial, was completely scoreless argues for Byrd's as the most effective outing of the three. Only one of the hits was really clocked, a leadoff double by Curtis Granderson in the 6th: Granderson advanced exactly zero feet as Byrd retired the next three hitters in order.

If you were looking for one stat that told more of the story than any other, consider that the Tigers batted .000, 0-for-11, with runners on base against Paul Byrd. (With Eddie Mujica's single batter thrown in, they were 0-for-12.) Consider that Byrd came into the game allowing hitters to bat .285/.315/.457 is no one one base, but .329/.364/.589 with runners on base: is it any wonder this man's ERA has been over 5 most of the season, including an execrable 1-5 June in which his ERA was 7.47 and he gave up 9 homers in 31 1/3 innings? Instead, last night Byrd was able to throttle the nascent Tigers' offense in its proverbial cradle and leave the field to a warm round of applause by Cleveland fans who may have seen his last start in a Tribe uniform.

Obviously, Byrd is on the block: the question is whether he could be considered an upgrade for any potential playoff team. I count three: the Mets, with Maine and Martinez hurt and Ollie Perez no more dependable than Robert Downey Jr. in a '90s coca field; the Phillies, who sent down Eaton and Myers and basically have two starters (and Byrd has pitched acceptibly there in the distant past), and the Dodgers, who currently trot out a cardboard cutout of Chan Ho Park's once-promising career. The Mets and Dodgers in particular give Byrd the added advantage of pitching in large, ball-deadening ballparks. In a celebration of the upcoming Olympics, Byrd did his part by giving up 800 meters of outs to Detroit hitters: his apparent unstated goal is "a thousand foot inning." I suppose St. Louis could be considered, but ... eh.

Anyway, Byrd was really good last night.

2) You know who was good in the ninth inning?

Eddie Moo.

Now, it should be noted that Matt Joyce hit a ball further off Mujica in the 9th than most of the Tigers managed off Paul Byrd, but he was out and huzzahs all around. Mujica struck out the other two batters in the 9th

, and, possibly more importantly, came in with runners at first and second with two outs in the 8th

and induced Magglio Ordonez to ground out harmlessly to short to end

the inning.

After a truly putrid outing against the Padres in which he allowed 5 runs in 1 inning, Eddie Moo has thrown 12 innings while allowing zero runs on 5 hits and 1 walk. He has 9 strikeouts in those 12 innings. I mean ... that's pretty damn good. Up to the Padres game, Mujica's GO:FO ratio was an incredulous 4:23; since then, it's a more-palatable 14:11. Mujica's "out" pitch is a splitter: these numbers suggest he threw a better one after the Padres game than he had before it.

Anyway, he was pretty good last night, too.

3) A Discourse on Timeliness I

Cleveland's first run was the product of an aesthetic blend of largeball and smallball in which Grady Sizemore's leadoff double was augmented by a groundout to the right side and Jhonny Peralta (of all people!) beating out the second half of a double play to allow the run to score. Peralta also smashed an opposite-field double (well, right center) with two outs in the third to score a run, and both Kelly Shoppach and Asdrubal Cabrera (of all people!) hit home runs in the 6th (Cabrera with

two outs) to complete the scoring. This means that 4 of the 5 Cleveland runs were driven in with two outs, four of them came via the extra-base hit, and three were driven in by getting a hit with a runner on base with two outs.

4) A Discourse on Timeliness II

On the other hand, of the 7 men Cleveland left on base, 5 of them were in scoring position. Cleveland hitters made the last out of an inning more often with a runner on second base than they did without a runner in scoring position (5 to 3). Five different Indians left ended innings in such a manner, including, oddly enough, one each by Peralta, Cabrera, and Shoppach.

5) St. Grady

Grady Sizemore led off the game with his 23rd double of the season; later in the game, he stole his 26th

base on the season off right-hander Aquilino Lopez. In

all, Sizemore reached base three times in 4 trips to the plate.

When considered with his 25 HR, there is an outside shot that Sizemore could end up with a 40/40/40 season of doubles, homers, and stolen bases. I know there was a big foofraw in years past in talking about the 40/40 homer/stolen base season of Jose Canseco, but ... how many 40/40/40s are there out there? Alfonso Soriano had one with Washington in 2006 ... but that's still gotta be pretty rare.

Sometimes it gets lost what a remarkably consistent player Sizemore is: consider that his "slash numbers" the past four years go:

.289/.348/.484
.290/.375/.533
.277/.390/.462

.279/.384/.544

Now, the slugging fluctuates a significant amount, and his OBP was low in his first season, but if you drew a line around his three-year averages, you'd see about a .280/.385/.520 guy. Which is a pretty good guy. And at age 26, it isn't unreasonable to think that his power could develop still further; a move out of the leadoff spot could help this as well. Of course, a .385 OBP looks awfully tasty in the leadoff slot: until we have another player capable of approximating that, it'd be hard to argue that moving Sizemore is the most pressing issue for the Cleveland offense.

6) How you know your team is rebuilding

Yesterday's lineup in ages:

25

25

26

26

28

24

27

26

22

Sure, the pitcher was 37. But that's still pretty young overall.

7) How you know your team is rebuilding II

Andy Gonzalez is your Designated Hitter.

8) Completely True Statement Singing the

Praises of Superior Wisdom

Eric Wedge has a higher career winning percentage as a manager than Miller Huggins, John McGraw, and Casey Stengel did in their combined losses. And I applaud this, because David Dellucci did not make a plate appearance. Huzzah!