

The B-List: 8/5

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Tuesday, August 05 2008 7:00 PM -

Thirteen men left on base. Eight of them in scoring position. The Tribe knocked out 12 hits last night against one of the best pitching staffs in baseball, but their inability to hit in the clutch led to the team being outscored 8-4 by the Rays, who beat the Indians for the first time in six tries this season. In today's B-List, Buff talks about Fausto's loss of command, the lack of clutch hitting, and the perpetually frustrating Indians bullpen.



FINAL SCORE

Indians (49-63)	1	0	2	0
Ignored Rays (67-45)		0	0	3

W: E. Jackson (8-7) L: Carmona (5-4)

Fausto Carmona vs. Edwin Jackson: brought to you by Allied Blunderbuss Manufacturing, Incorporated!

1) Next on "Lost"; Fausto Carmona's season

Let's face it: any statistics Fausto Carmona ends up with at the end of this season are almost irrelevant, except insofar as they point out that he had poor command this season. Some parts mechanical, some parts injurious, some parts Bell's palsy, who the heck knows exactly what happened to Carmona this season? It's

pretty clear he doesn't have the same stuff he had last season, so we look to 2009 for a rebound.

In the meantime, it certainly bears working on whatever it is that isn't working, and right now, that's strikes. Carmona threw 41 strikes in 83 pitches, or fewer strikes than balls. He started 2 of the first 12 hitters and 5 of 19 overall with first-pitch strikes. He walked five guys in four innings. By any objective measure, Fausto Carmona had little idea where the ball was going. When he did get it over the plate, two of the three hits he allowed were blasted over the center fielder's head for triples.

But here's the thing: after a leadoff triple, Carmona got out of the first with one run of damage and no other hits, blowing past Evan Longoria and Eric Hinske on swinging Ks with a man on third. In the second, he faced the minimum thanks to a double play ball despite throwing 6 strikes in 14 pitches. And his third was a 1-2-3 affair featuring another swinging K.

So for three innings, Carmona's line looked like 3 IP, 1 H, 1 R, 2 BB, 3 K (swinging). I mean, he was clearly fighting the strike zone (and losing), but there were some encouraging things to be seen there.

The next inning, the walks came back to bite him and Carmona finished with the loss. He did end up with a good 6:2 GO:FO ratio, so although his stuff is not in the zone, it does appear to be moving the proper way. Two triples is bad (and 5 walks is preposterous), but it's not like Carmona turned into a newt. I'll say this: I'm a lot less sanguine about him being a front-of-the-rotation starter in 2009, though.

2) Ducks, ducks, ducks, Spam, ducks, eggs, Spam, ducks, ducks, David Dellucci, and ducks on the pond

The B-List: 8/5

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Tuesday, August 05 2008 7:00 PM -

The AP report of the game singles out the opportunity the Indians had to score runs in the sixth, when Asdrubal Cabrera and Grady Sizemore drew two-out walks to push Ryan Garko (who had singled) to third base. With the left-handed J.P. Howell, on the mound, Ben Francisco pinch-hit for David Dellucci, a sound tactical move in that Francisco hits either lefties OR righties (if Howell was replaced) better than Dellucci hits lefties, which is none. The fact that Francisco flew out after fouling off three 0-2 pitches is just one of those missed opportunities in baseball. True, Francisco stranded two guys in scoring position to end the inning, but just how much does this make him stand out?

Very little.

Grady Sizemore: 2

Ryan Garko: 1

Andy Marte: 1

Jhonny Peralta: 1

Thumper Ruled Player: 1

So, of the THIRTEEN players we managed to leave on base, EIGHT were in scoring position when they died on the pond. In fact, with runners in scoring position, Cleveland hit 2-for-16 with a walk. (The walk came immediately before Francisco's aforementioned out.)

Now, two hits is two hits, and huzzahs all around for Shin-Soo Choo (with two outs, no less) and Sizemore (three opportunities, pretty cool for your leadoff guy), but two for sixteen is truly wretched. We got 12 hits, including three doubles, and drew six walks, and we scored four freaking runs. That blows, man.

3) Everybody hits!

Of course, to strand that many baserunners, you have to HAVE that many baserunners, so it should be noted that every player reached base, six reached base at least twice, and only Asdrubal Cabrera did not have a hit. Kelly Shoppach, moved to the 3 hole due to a hot couple of months, actually drew a pair of walks and reached base 3 times in 5 trips to the plate.

4) Ho Hum Dept.

Jhonny Peralta hit a 2-run homer, his 18th on the season, to give him 62 RBI on the season.

5) The Columnist's Bane

Jensen Lewis pitched admirably last night, giving up two hits in two scoreless innings of work. He also hit a batter, the third time in the past four outings he's done that. On the other hand, it is those last four outings that have been his best recently, outings of no earned runs after giving up two runs in five of the previous six outings. Perhaps Lewis is beginning to command the inside part of the plate better, and if hit batsmen is the cost of learning this skill, so be it. Of course, five of the six outs were in the air.

Now, I'm not saying that Jensen Lewis is the bane of the columnist. On the contrary, Jensen Lewis can pitch rather well sometimes. Other times, not so well, where "not so well" is formally defined as "execrably." I have no idea what to expect from Jensen Lewis, and can't really see anything that marks a successful outing from an unsuccessful one, except a propensity to get too much of the plate.

He reminds me a lot of David Riske. He defies actual analysis.

Jensen Lewis ... Jensen Lewis ... what is there to say about Jensen Lewis that is insightful at this point? Jensen Lewis smells like cabbage. Jensen Lewis is learning taxidermy. Jensen Lewis' favorite dish is pan-fried armadillo. Jensen Lewis secretly thinks the Bohr model of the atom is horseshit. How the holy hell am I supposed to say something insightful about Jensen Lewis, when his distribution of outcomes is a big fat rectangle? Everything is equally likely. There is no mode. There is no pattern. Jensen Lewis is Thermo's Second Law. Jensen Lewis is a hot-air balloonist. Jensen Lewis molds algae into busts of Winston Churchill. I have no idea what we have in Jensen Lewis, but I do know this: there are things worse than Jensen Lewis.

6) Things worse than Jensen Lewis

Rafael Betancourt and Juan Rincon.

First things first: Betancourt gave up three runs on a pair of taters and a walk, while Rincon gave up a homer to his first hitter and a single to his second before finally getting an out to end the 7th. These are bad performances. Betancourt in particular must be singled out, in that he threw a fastball that Evan Longoria BOMBED, but foul. So Longoria has PULLED this so-called FASTBALL, but TOO MUCH. Betancourt then throws another fastball, which Longoria BOMBS, but foul. Would you like to hazard a guess as to which location and velocity next strike was? It would be the same pitch. Longoria kept it fair.

This is simply bad pitching. Throw a slider. Throw an eephus pitch. Throw anything but the same damn pitch. That blows.

But here is an honest question: take off your Cleveland blinders and put last season out of your head. Is there a practical difference between the 2008 versions of Raffy Betancourt and Juan Rincon?

Yes, Betancourt has had historical and recent success. But so has Rincon. Yes, Betancourt once pounded the strike zone. But so did Rincon. Juan Rincon from 2004-2006 was a heckuva relief pitcher, arguably better than Raffy Betancourt. His K/9 numbers were 11.63, 9.82, and 7.87; his K/BBs were 3.31, 2.80, and 2.71, and his ERAs were all under 3.00. It's just that Rincon sucked last season, and this year is a complete nonentity. Now that Betancourt sucks this season, are we getting a glimpse into 2009?

By the way, Juan Rincon is 29 years old. Raffy Betancourt is 33.

(The confound here is that Rincon made 70+ appearances in those three seasons and may simply have been turned to mush in the process. Raffy has never made 70 appearances in a

season. But he sure is bad in 2008.)

7) By the way

Eddie Moo: 1 scoreless inning, 2 Ks. He gave up a double, but struck out Longoria with the man on second. Eddie Moo is 24 years old. He has never made 70 appearances in a season. His K:BB ratios in the majors: 12:0, 7:2, and 16:5.

8) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Our right fielder had a pair of doubles and has a hit in each game in August thus far. He did not score.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Eric Wedge has fourteen toes. I think one of our crack beat reporters would have beaten me to this story if it were true, which it is not. Do not play David Dellucci.