

The B-List: 8/19

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Tuesday, August 19 2008 7:00 PM -

The Royals came to town and are proving that years of experience trump the flash-in-the-pan badness that Cleveland has mustered, and that they won't be denied their rightful (5th) place in the A.L. Central. In today's B-List, Buff wonders if Anthony Reyes has shaken off the ghost of Dave Duncan, if Raffy Betancourt is catching a second wind, and if Brendan Donnelly has positive attributes. He also speaks of Ross Gload and Andy Marte in disturbingly similar tones.



FINAL

1

2

3

4

5

6

The B-List: 8/19

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Tuesday, August 19 2008 7:00 PM -

7

8

9

R

H

E

Royals (55-70)

1

0

0

0

1

The B-List: 8/19

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Tuesday, August 19 2008 7:00 PM -

1

0

0

1

4

13

2

Indians (57-67)

0

3

0

1

The B-List: 8/19

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Tuesday, August 19 2008 7:00 PM -

0

3

0

2

X

9

13

1

W: A. Reyes (2-1) L: Hochevar (6-12)

This was an important game, in that it opened an insurmountable 2½ game lead on the Royals for 4th place.

1) Salvage job

There's a quote in the AP writeup from Anthony Reyes:

"I'm throwing strikes and happy with what I'm doing," Reyes said. "I got into a lot of bad habits the last couple of years and I'm working on them. I still have stuff to work on."

Now, it's worth pointing out that Reyes is 26, still younger than the age at which most starters peak. Cliff Lee is 29, for example, while Jeremy Sowers is 25. We still think of Sowers as a young, inexperienced guy, so the fact that Reyes has already made a World Series appearance shouldn't obscure the fact that he's only been in the majors for four years, and that counts a 4-game Kupa Koffee in 2005 in which he threw 13 1/3 innings. So for Reyes to "have stuff to work on" is hardly something that identifies him as a slacker or a meathead. The more salient question is, if Reyes had things to work on and had bad habits, and his pitching coach was St. Dave Duncan, then what the heck has he been doing the past two years (during which, frankly, he's pitched pretty poorly for St. Louis)?

Well, it should probably be noted that few pitching coaches reach EVERY pitcher: Leo Mazzone, for all his magnificence, could not induce Daniel Cabrera to throw strikes in Baltimore. Ray Miller had some clunkers here and there. Duncan may be more in his element with the Jeff Weavers and Dustin Hermansons of the world and not the Youth Brigade, Adam Wainwright notwithstanding. Reyes might still have a non-zero Meathead Quotient. Who knows? It bears mentioning that I've heard third-hand that a veteran pitcher who recently worked under Duncan considered him one of the worst he's ever dealt with, but Duncan may be saying the same thing in reverse.

In any event, Reyes did throw 55 strikes in 84 pitches, a reasonable ratio, although he did manage to walk 3 in 5 innings. That's pretty bad, although the first walk was a 10-pitch monster to leadoff hitter Mike Aviles that is more good hitting by Aviles than bad pitching by Reyes. His second walk came on a 3-2 count, so that doesn't bother me a lot, either. His third walk was a five-pitch flatus to Esteban German, who is hitting .233, so that's bad. And the walk led directly to Reyes' second run in that it forced Aviles to second and a pair of runner-advancing groundouts scored Aviles.

Reyes did get a few strikeouts this time, though, all three swinging. Of course, two of them were the same Jason Smith, who is ... who is ... okay, you caught me, I have no earthly idea who Jason Smith is. Apparently he's not a very good hitter, though. Anyway, the strikeout-free outing he had last time seems more like an aberration than anything now.

However, Reyes was able to continue his greater groundball propensity, inducing 8 groundouts to 4 in the air, including a double play. So if he can combine swings and misses with more ground balls, that'd be a pretty nice prescription. Three of his six hits allowed were doubles, so it's not like he was a machine, but it was still a pretty nice outing.

Oddball small-sample stat: right-handers are hitting .313 (.889 OPS) against the right-handed Reyes, while lefties hit .246 (.647 OPS). I attribute this primarily to Ross Gload and Mark Teahen.

2) I gotta ask

Is there any point ... ANY point ... any, any, any, any, any point to Ross Gload getting one single solitary more plate appearance for the Kansas City Royals? Any? He's hitting .269/.318/.344 ... as a FIRST BASEMAN. Ryan Garko, who is terrible, terrible, terrible, and terrible this season is hitting .255/.330/.378. And he has 10 HR and 62 RBI: Gload has THREE home runs (and 33 RBI). I understand that RBI is kind of a doofus stat, but ... he's the FIRST BASEMAN! How bad can Billy Butler be? How bad would Jose Guillen be? How bad would Miguel Olivo be (letting John Buck catch)? How bad is your minor-league system? Would you like a Mike Aubrey or something to tide you over? That is very, very bad. And Gload is 32, meaning his role on the next division-winning Kansas City team is Color Commentator.

3) Gark smash!

Of course, one primary reason that Garko is hitting better than Gload is that he's been on a miniature hot streak since being benched for not running out a ball against Tampa Bay: in Garko's last ten games, he's had at least one hit in nine of them, and multiple hits six times. His hot streak amounts to a brisk 15-for-36 string with three doubles, four walks, and a pair of homers, which nets to a nice .417/.475/.722 batting line. Of course, ten games are statistically meaningless, but it is certainly the response you hope to see from a chastised player.

From afar, it looked like Garko's failure to run out the ball against Tampa was less "lacking effort" and more "allowing oneself to be eaten up by frustration." This season has been an awful one for Garko, with poor average being compounded by a sudden absence of power. It has to be very frustrating for a player who has, to this point in his career, been successful at every level. So instead of

thinking that Garko used his benching to redouble his effort, I think it may have been more a case of using it as an opportunity to let go of the weight on his back and try to get back to the automatic, kinesthetic-memory sort of successful approach he's had in the past.

It should be noted that his home run came on a truly pathetic hanging breaking ball, but, to his credit, he took advantage of the opportunity. Garko went 2-for-4 with a walk and two runs scored on the day.

4) So maybe Ross Gload is just one hot streak away from being a useful player?

No. He's Ross Gload! Come on! Use your brain!

5) Is there something that Brendan Donnelly does well?

Because I've missed it.

Look, I understand the desire to consider Donnelly a low-cost reclamation, an opportunity to get a guy with experience and success in the past for a relative pittance, but the 2008 version of Brendan Donnelly is awful. Feh!

6) Second wind

If Ryan Garko's season has been frustrating, Raffy Betancourt's has been Water Torture with sulfuric acid instead of water. But I noted after his last outing that he looked better in 2 perfect innings than he had before, and the outing before that was pretty good as well. Last night, Betancourt faced three hitters, getting Butler to fly out on a 1-2 pitch, Gload to line out on the first, and Miguel Olivo to strike out swinging. In all, Betancourt threw 8 strikes in 11 pitches, which is a good sign. This is a lost season for both Betancourt and the Indians, but if he can finish on a strong note, it might help him go into next season with a clearer head.

7) Ho Hum Dept.

Raffy Perez threw ten pitches. Four straight strikes struck out David DeJesus. An 0-1 pitch was singled the other way by Jose Guillen. And a 1-2 pitch was grounded into a double play by Mark Teahen. For those of you counting at home, that's 9 strikes in 10 pitches. And three outs in three batters.

In Perez' last 11 outings, 9 have been scoreless, 8 have featured more than 1 inning pitched, and he's given up 10 hits in 16 innings, striking out 23. Without the fatal blowup against Baltimore August 14th, Perez would be on a huge dominant streak. As it is, he's only Really Good.

8) Everybody hits!

Literally, this time: each Cleveland player had a hit, and four (Asdrubal Cabrera, Grady Sizemore, the right fielder, and Garko) had a pair. Three players hit home runs, including Shin-Soo Choo's solo shot to start the scoring, and Grady Sizemore's three-run blast to break open what was a tenuous 4-3 Cleveland lead at the time.

The right fielder also chipped in a double, as did Kelly Shoppach and Andy Marte (his 8th!). Cabrera is hitting .309/.377/.491 in August and has stolen a pair of bases without being caught.

9) Sotto voce

Masa Kobayashi is still cooked.

10) The curious case of Andy Marte

One of the things I've heard about Andy Marte is that some are disappointed in his lack of plate discipline. I'm

not sure this is the best criticism: the right fielder lacks all plate discipline, but Marte has drawn 11 walks, including two last night, and sports an "isolated walking" made-up stat of OBP-AVG of .055. That's not great, but it isn't terrible. In August, this is .066: he's not Grady Sizemore or anything, but it's not too far off from, say Ryan Garko. Harping on his lack of plate discipline seems a misguided use of focus.

No, the problem with Andy Marte is that he cannot actually HIT. He hit .224/.278/.403 in July, and now in August is hitting .205/.271/.295. I'm not asking for a lot of power, although Power is better than Not Power. But I am asking for actually HITTING at this point, and I'm not getting any. Yes, I agree that he should be trotted out there most days to look his normal ridiculous self, but I'm telling you: the player who hit well in AAA at Age 21 is G-O-N-E gone. Not there. Not here, anyway. Andy Marte is bad.

11) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Ah, who cares? Maybe he can get dealt in the off-season if he finishes strong. Maybe Eric Wedge can get dealt. Maybe I can get dealt. Any other teams need a columnist?