

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Wednesday, September 24 2008 7:00 PM -

What's more fun than losing to the Red Sox because Paul Byrd pitched five times as well as Fausto Carmona? Cleaning crude oil off seabirds? Sharing a locking room with Charles Haley? Watching the Browns? Well, the first two, anyway. In today's B-List, Buff outlines the virtues of Bryan Bullington, the frustrating nature of grounding into double plays, and wonders aloud if anyone pines for Jon Van Every.



FINAL SCORE				
Indians (79-79)	0	1	2	0
Red Sox (93-65)	4	0	0	0

W: Aardsma (4-2) L: Perez (4-4) S: Delcarmen (2)

I'm pretty sure not even David Foster Wallace could say a lot of interesting things about this game, primarily beause he's dead.

1) Here's my theory

"Mr. Carmona, you can serve a six-game suspension, or you can pitch so poorly against the Red Sox as to allow them to take a huge lead and we'll cut it to one game on appeal."

2) Holy shit, what was THAT?

Here's what I know about Bryan Bullington:

He is right-handed

He was a truly regrettable first overall pick by an intensely inept Pirates organization

He hurt his shoulder

He rates 0.65 Maicer Izturises on the "dorky stock photo" scale

His name is Bryan Bullington

In his favor are high GB:FB ratios: 2.13 in Pittsburgh last year and 1.75 in Cleveland this season. Of course, this is in 17 innings in Pittsburgh and 9 2/3 innings in Cleveland. He also sports ... nothing. Absolutely nothing. He made 3 starts in Pittsburgh and lost all three. His best start featured giving up 2 runs on 5 hits in 5 innings (one of the hits was a homer). The best feature of his Pittsburgh tenure was that his ERA fell after every appearance, from 15.00 to (eventually) 5.29. If you asked me to distinguish him from Brian Slocum, I would respond that I don't hate him yet. He is younger with less facial hair than Matt Ginter. He is less blue than Tinky Winky.

Against him are the fact that he's already had shoulder surgery and didn't have great stuff in the first place. His K rates were pedestrian, and he balanced this with a poor 7:5 K:BB ratio. He walked too many guys in the minors and struck out too few. His stuff is mostly theoretical. His spot start against Kansas City was poor even by spot-starting standards, yielding 6 runs on 8 hits, including a Sowerian 3 homers, in 4 2/3 innings. Against Kansas City! That's just lame.

So when Bryan Bullington strode to the mound in the second to replace a fiercely uncompetetive Fausto Carmona, this was tantamount to ceding the game in favor of not using important bullpen arms. Eat the game, kid. Welcome to the A.L.

And a funny thing happened: Bryan Bullington was ... *awesome*.

In 5 shutout innings of relief, Bullington gave up a paltry two hits, each of which was an infield single. He erased one of these on a nifty 3-6-3 double play. He stranded the other by inducing a "double play ball" with two outs to get the force to end the inning. More shockingly, he struck out SIX Red Sox and walked ZERO. Bullington, with a lousy 4.0 BB/9 rate for Indianapolis in 2007, didn't walk ANYONE. And with a putrid 3.8 K/9 rate since returning from labrum surgery in EACH of Indy and Pittsburgh in 2007, Bullington struck out SIX in FIVE INNINGS.

Now, surely some of this is acorn lipstick on a blind pig, but ... there's just nobody on Earth, including anyone named Bryan Bullington, Brian Bullington, Bull Brianton, or Peter Gammons who would have predicted this kind of outing from Bullington. Nobody.

Now, do I think Bullington deserves consideration to be put into the fifth starter or long reliever mix in 2009? Sure ... in Columbus. He's still Bryan Bullington. But at least it looks like there's a reason to watch this guy and let Matt Ginter et al (where "et al" is Latin for "Brian Slocum") go gently into that good night.

3) By the way

Slocum hurt his elbow and didn't tell anyone until he was called up and guaranteed a month of major-league money.

Yeah, that's smooth.

4) Continued awe

Cleveland scored 4 runs last night, but only one was driven in under the clutch situation of having two outs.

It was driven in by Josh Barfield.

5) Less "awe" than "disgust";

*Squander, squander, squander,□
We squander night and day,
Squander, squander, squander,□
And gack the game away□
-- Indians offense Hanukkah song (traditional)*

With 13 hits and 3 walks, you would expect more than 4 runs ... UNLESS ...

- *) You left nine men on base
- *) You grounded into THREE double plays
- *) You let Paul Byrd strike you out 4 times in 5 innings

Special derision goes to Victor Martinez, who singled in two of his four plate appearances ... and GROUNDED INTO DOUBLE PLAYS in the other two. One double play was immediately followed by a double by Travis Hafner: had Martinez simply struck out, we would have scored another run.

Of course, this was Hafner's only hit: he also whiffed and grounded into the third double play.

Each of the first five hitters in the lineup had two hits. Two of the players also

drew a walk in addition to the two hits. Those are the two players who did not score a run.

6) Everybody hits!

Actually, Ben Francisco didn't, but he did draw a walk.

More to the point, so what?

7) Bullpen roundup

Rich Rundles tossed a scoreless inning, striking out one and allowing an infield single. His ERA on the season is 2.08. He's given up a run in one of his 7 appearances and sports a 6:2 K:BB ratio. I don't see him a Sooper Talented or anything, but he could be a second lefty out of the pen next season and I would simply nod rather than form any kind of serious objection.

Raffy Perez lost because he gave up a triple to Some Guy Bailey and a double down the line to Mark Kotsay, who was mired in a 3-for-35 slump. A foot or so off the line and Perez is out of the inning even after the triple. I'm about ready for Perez to take a seat after 71 appearances and 76 innings, though.

8) Hey, we had one of those!

Congrats to Jon Van Every, who did nothing of import, but he used to be in the Cleveland system, so huzzahs for him and all that. He did strike out, as he has done in 5 of his 9 plate appearances. That's ... that's not good. I wouldn't run out and buy a #60 Red Sox jersey if I were you.