

The B-List: 4/14

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Tuesday, April 14 2009 7:00 PM -

Paying your income taxes or watching the Indians: which is more painful? This is the question Buff poses in the intro to today's B-List. Buff then goes on to call for the heads of several of the players and coaches on the team, and then calls for my head for assigning him this column every weekday. There's no way to sugar coat it Tribe fans, things are U-G-L-Y right now. Let Buff try and soothe your pain with The B-List.

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W: Davies (1-0) L: Pavano (0-2)

Paying your income taxes or watching the Indians: which is more painful?

1) Bring me the head of Raffy Perez!

We talked a bit after the weekend slate about just how poorly Raffy Perez is performing thus far.

With all the normal caveats about cold weather and early season and small samples, the fact is, Raffy Perez has been pitching very poorly indeed.

Now, there's certainly little substitute for game experience: the only way Perez is going to pitch better is for him to pitch. Sure, there are mechanical adjustments to be made in the bullpen and simulated games to be thrown God knows where, but at the end of the day, Perez will pitch better because he pitches better, and there's not much of an alternative until then.

I leave the analysis of mechanics to the Will Carrolls of the world, and I can't tell you that Raffy is "obviously doing this" or "obviously doing that," except insofar as he is "obviously sucking rocks." He was spectacular in 2007 and reasonably effective in 2008: he throws hard, has a nasty slider, and is generally unpleasant to face as a hitter.

But right now, Raffy Perez could no more mow down an opposing lineup than he could breast-feed a tree sloth.

Consider his first inning of work last night: he started Albert Collapse-o with a pitch out of the strike zone, then induced a groundout. He then walked Covelli Crisp on six pitches, not ONE of which Crisp so much as moved toward. He then started Mike Aviles with two pitches out of the strike zone.

For those counting at home, that is 7 balls in 10 pitches. And it isn't even obvious that the pitch Collapse-o hit was a strike. This is inaccurate flinging at this point.

The saving grace was that the second pitch to Aviles was far enough out of the strikezone as to act as a de facto pitchout, and Crisp was gunned down at second: Aviles grounded out on the next pitch.

I will address the wisdom of a second inning later, but let's talk briefly about that second inning: a 2-1 triple to David DeJesus, a first-pitch groundout, an intentional walk to the right-handed Billy Bubba, an 0-2 single to Mike Jacobs, and a FOUR-PITCH WALK to LEFT-HANDED Alex Gordon. (Jacobs is left-handed, too: I will buck the Attribution Error here and credit Jacobs more than blaming Perez for that hit.)

Now, I understand that the intentional walk skews things a bit, but 10 strikes in 27 pitches still becomes 10 strikes in 23 pitches without it, and that is simply dreadful. Walking Gordon on four pitches there is preposterously bad.

And as much as anything, Perez' command is simply excremental at this point.

I have read he has an option left. Let's use it. I'm not throwing Raffy Perez under a bus here: he is one of my favorite pitchers, still young, and obviously a huge asset when pitching as he is capable. Which he is not right now. Get him right.

2) Bring me the head of Vinnie Chulk!

John Buck? John Freaking Buck? You gave up a grand slam to John Freaking Buck? Come on!

(Do not send me links about how John Buck improved his core strength and is poised for a breakout season. He's John Buck! He hit .224/.304/.365 last season! He's John Buck! Ptui!)

3) Reattach the head of Carl Pavano ...

Carl Pavano is now tied for the Very Best Start by a Cleveland Starter with Antny Reyes, giving up 4 runs in 6 innings. In fact, Pavano's may have been better in that he struck out 8 hitters and did not walk anyone. Pavano's start was quite efficient, requiring only 80 pitches to sail through six complete innings, 56 of which were strikes.

I had always considered Pavano more of a groundball pitcher, so the 4:6 GO:FO ratio was a little disturbing, but 80 pitches in six innings that INCLUDES eight strikeouts is pretty amazing.

(For what it's worth, Pavano has never been much of a strikeout pitcher, hovering around 6 per 9 innings in the good portion of his career before cratering to 3.18 and 3.93 in his final two "seasons" in New York. But I'll take 8 Ks, yes indeedy.)

That flyball stuff concerns me, though ... I can't quite put my finger on it ...

4) ... so that you may bring me the head of Carl Pavano once again!

Oh, yes, here it is: of the 8 hits Pavano allowed SIX were for EXTRA BASES.

His first three hits were for extra bases.

His first two runs scored because of a TRIPLE to Crisp. On a 2-0 count, I might add. (Crisp scored on a sac fly, another lifted ball to the outfield.)

He gave up a home run to John Buck. You may have formed a notion of how I feel about John Buck as a hitter.

Look, the strikeouts were obviously a wonderful thing, and any time a Cleveland pitcher doesn't walk someone, a kitten gets its wings, or something like that. An 8:0 K:BB ratio, I'll take that any time. But the hard-hit balls!
Great Caesar's dentist!

You keep giving up that many laser shots, and this 4-runs-in-6-IP start is the CEILING for what Carl Pavano can contribute.

And, ladies and germs, that's not good.

5) Bring me the head of Grady Sizemore!

Everyone loves Grady Sizemore. He is a perennial down-ballot MVP candidate and arguably the best player on the team. He is young, dynamic, exciting, and supremely talented. Few work harder at their craft, and he has an unusual blend of power, speed, and patience.

He is truly be-awesome.

But right now, he is performing like a schmuck.

Grady Sizemore came to the plate with a two runners on base on two separate occasions and struck out swinging and flied to left. He is now batting .176 and has struck out 13 times in 39 plate appearances.

I like that of his six hits, 2 are singles, 2 are doubles, and 2 are homers. I like that he's drawn five walks to sport an OBP more than 100 points higher than his AVG.

But his AVG is putrid and he has one hit with a runner in scoring position in 10 tries, with 6 whiffs.

That's very very very very very bad.

Snap out of it!

6) Bring me the head of Eric Wedge!

After a terribly labored 7th inning, Raffy Perez was brought out for a second inning.

Now, this is admittedly second-guessing of the more egregious type: the first two hitters of the inning were lefties and four of the first five. Who better to face them than our supreme left-handed reliever? That seems like a no-brainer, right?

Well, doesn't the fact that Raffy Perez just threw about as bad a minimum-facing inning as one can and came into the game with atrocious stats come into play at some point here? I know that Wedge's mantra has always been that it's a long season and the inclination is to let struggling players play their way through tough times, but at what point does a preponderance of empirical evidence hold SOME sway?

See, letting Raffy Perez pitch the 8th is a perfectly valid decision ... in a vacuum ... on paper. But after watching the 7th, did you really feel warm or fuzzy about him coming in for another shot at the heart of the KC lineup?

Would I have brought in Zach Jackson there? Golly, I don't know. He's kind of a mook, and not really that "left-handed."

And shoot, I might have said Chulk, handedness be damned, and we can see where that got us.

So maybe it was a lose-lose proposition.

But we sure lost, boy howdy.

Note: I realize that had the 8th been scoreless, we still would have lost. The process interests me more than the results here ... mostly because the process might yield future success, while the results are a vat of hydrofluoric acid being dumped in my crotch.

7) Bring me the head of the baserunning coach!

The rally in the 5th inning was scotched when Asdrubal Cabrera tried to score on an infield

single to shortstop.

From second base.

Josh Barfield, brought in to pinch-run for Victor Martinez, was caught stealing.

8) Send the head of Josh Barfield to Columbus on my behalf!

Spot-starter Aaron Laffey will start today's game at the expense of Josh Barfield, who does nothing of value.

9) Bring me the head of Mark Shapiro!

This roster move gives us a 13-man pitching staff. In April.

10) Department of Optimistic Optimism

Mark DeRosa had two hits.

Victor Martinez went 2-for-3 with a double and also walked once. He had zero RBI.

Kelly Shoppach threw out the only attempted basestealer.

Jhonny Peralta has not, to this point, dumped a vat of hydrofluoric acid in his crotch.

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11) Bring me the head of Rich Swerbinsky!

This is a bad gig, man.