

Carl Pavano continued his strong May to go to 5-1 on the month, and Buff discusses how he got there last night in the rain. He also comments on the homer-only offense of the Indians, talks up the wonderful numbers of Mark DeRosa with an ulterior motive, and wonders why the heck B.J. Upton leads off for Tampa Bay. **FINAL**

		1	2	
Rays (23-25)	0	0	0	0
Indians (19-28)	0	1	1	0

W: Pavano (5-4) L: Garza (4-3)

1) Head-to-head comparison, or the Importance of Timing II

In Carl Pavano's last three starts, he has matched up with Matt Garza, who has a 3.65 ERA and a 1.13 WHIP on the season, Zack Greinke, who has an 0.84 ERA and a 0.88 WHIP on the season, and Garza a second time. He is 2-1 in that stretch, because the Cleveland offense only scored two runs for him in his first matchup against Garza in Tampa.

I don't want to belabor the point I've made earlier about Pavano being a very solid pitcher after his first disastrous start, so let's look at a few of the things that made him effective last night. Through six shutout innings, he had thrown a mere 75 pitches, 51 for strikes for a strike pct of 68%. He had given up only three hits, one walk, and struck (stricken?) out six. Although one of the three hits was a double, there was only one inning in which he was truly threatened, the 4th, in which a leadoff single and a walk (losing Evan Longoria after starting 0-2, grrr) put two runners on with nobody out. I might have expected the bunt-and-steal-happy Rays to try to put both men in scoring position, but with Carlos Pena at the plate, it made sense to let him swing away.

He struck out.

Willy Aybar liked the 2-0 pitch he got, but fouled out to third.

And Buggy Zobrist grounded out on an 0-2 pitch.

That was pretty much it: the double came with two outs and the next hitter was out, and the other single allowed was in the 5th when Pavano helped his own cause with a nifty 1-6-3 double play.

Now, as it turns out, Pavano didn't pitch only 6 innings last night, so his stats slip a bit from "dominant" to "quite good:" giving up a solo shot to Pena is hardly an unusual event, seeing as though he has 16 (!) homers on the season, although a four-pitch walk to Zobrist suggests a certain lack of aplomb. Still, he got helped when Gabe Gross swung away at 3-0 (flying out), and Dioner Navarro popped out to end the threat.

I was looking for a reason as to why Pavano was pulled after "only" 92 pitches, and I think the walk to Zobrist tells us more than the homer to Pena. Pena is a good power hitter, but when you go through 6 innings throwing 68% of your pitches for strikes, then cough up an inning in which you throw more balls than strikes (9 to 8), the reasonable conclusion is that the pitcher is losing his command and anything you get after that is pushing your luck pretty severely.

(It didn't help that the game was played in a steady drizzle and that Pavano had sat through a half-hour delay: in that sense, his performance was even that much more impressive.)

Anyway, it looks like Pavano will be matched up against Phil Hughes on Sunday. Hughes was spectacular against the Rangers Monday, tossing 8 innings of 3-hit shutout ball. On the other hand, after Garza, Greinke, and Garza, I'm not ceding the matchup away from Pavano.

2) Team smash!

The Indians scored 5 runs last night, 5 of which came from home run blasts.

Really, now: it's one thing for Ryan Garko to hit his third home run in two games. Garko is a notoriously streaky hitter, and if he's locked into one of his better streaks, it's not surprising to see him muscle a ball out. It was encouraging to see his blast travel to the right of dead center: it seems like the majority of his home runs are pulled mistakes, so this was a good piece of hitting.

And it may seem like Mark DeRosa is an unlikely home run candidate ... except he actually leads the team in homers. He looks well on his way to posting the kind of numbers he had for the Cubs last year, and DeRosa was the only Indian to hit a homer with a runner on base (Garko, who'd been hit with a 3-2 offering from Garza). His shot came with two outs: it, too, went right of center for a nice piece of other-way power.

And it certainly isn't surprising to see Kelly Shoppach pull one over the left-field wall off a marginal left-hander. Shoppach, with 9 walks and 32 Ks in 76 AB, is the closest thing Cleveland has to a "Three True Outcomes" player, although he has only 4 homers on the season to date. Still, when Shoppach hits a ball in the air, it seems to go a pretty long way in general.

But Asdrubal Cabrera? Well, in all fairness, he's been showing a good ability to drive the ball, especially from the left side. But the man has 2 home runs. His career high is 6. I am surprised when Asdrubal Cabrera hits a home run.

(I think Matt Garza was, too.)

3) The Ballad of the Team Leader Who Led the Team

No, really, Mark DeRosa leads the team with 8 HRs.

And he leads the team with 32 RBI (although he is tied with Victor Martinez here).

He is second on the team with 81 total bases, more than Cabrera, Shin-Soo Shoo, or Grady Sizemore, all of whom hit higher in the order than he does. His 29 runs are third-best behind Martinez and Cabrera.

You see, I think we should play up numbers like these. Numbers like these are very impressive, especially to other teams. Especially to other teams who are looking to add a versatile player who can play second, third, and left. A team like, say, St. Louis. I think we should go about dropping Mark DeRosa Facts into casual conversations, like, "l'd like to order 8 widgets: you know, like the number of home runs Mark DeRosa has to lead the Cleveland Indians." Or, "Let's all wish Bob a happy 32nd birthday, which happens to be the same number as Mark DeRosa has RBI to lead the Cleveland Indians."

I think we should post these things on message boards

and write them in letters to the editor. We should sprinkle them into weblog comments and announce them to telemarketers that call our houses. We should make bumper stickers and change them daily with thick, black markers so that they're easily visible from hundreds of yards away. Lime your yard. Tattoo your brother-in-law. Rearrange the letters on sale signs at Wal-Mart.

I think we could get something better that way.

4) A moment of sincerity

DeRosa's having a nice-enough season. I like the guy. I'm glad he's recovered from his slow start. He is producing at Casy Blake levels (.267/.332/.450), which is fine.

I want better pitching.

5) The Tale of the Barking Elbow

It sounds very much like Grady Sizemore has [bursitis](#) in his throwing elbow. The treatment, unfortunately, is pretty much "stop doing what annoys your elbow," which hardly seems appropriate for Sizemore. The other treatment is either anti-inflammatories, which I think Sizemore is already doing, and corticosteroids, which carry a connotation of "last resort" with them. Actually, the "last resort" is surgery, but that's awfully rare with garden-variety bursitis.

I'm of mixed feelings here. If it were an acute injury, I would be all for putting him on the DL. However, this sounds like one of those things that doesn't necessarily "heal" with rest as much as "quiets down," meaning it will probably reoccur. I think the team may try a DL stint when Travis Hafner is ready to return, because Sizemore has been primarily a DH recently, and Hafner can no more play the field than he can devour a Volkswagen.

Can this team win without Grady Sizemore? Well, we don't actually have enough evidence to answer that. The only thing we know for sure is that the team can lose with a BAD Grady Sizemore (.222/.312/.407). But really, Cleveland's problems are all pitching: their 249 runs is actually third in the AL behind Tampa and New York. The offense can score. I say, "Shelve him."

6) Ducks on Luis Valbuena's pond

The Indians had two hits that were not home runs, and they both came in the 4th inning. Jhonny Peralta and Mark DeRosa singled, and Ben Francisco reached base on a Willy Aybar error to load the bases.

The Indians left three men on base.

Those three.

To Valbuena's credit, he worked the count full from a 1-2 count, even fouling off a pitch, but ultimately, he struck out to end the threat.

7) This just in

Luis Valbuena still can't hit major-league pitching.

This is not the Indians' biggest problem, and giving him time in the majors is a time-honored way of developing this skill. But I'm pointing out: this skill is, to this point, absent.

8) On the other hand

Luis Valbuena is hitting better than B.J. Upton.

Who leads off.

In EVERY GAME.

Seriously. Upton has 169 AB this season, and each and every one of them have come from the leadoff slot. He plays every game, and he always leads off.

His AVG is .189. His OBP is .285. Two eighty five! Now, I understand that Tampa leads the AL in scoring and that the offense is not a real problem for the Rays, but ... isn't this the sort of move you have to make on general principle? I mean, one eighty-nine and two eighty-five from the ONE slot? That's just mind-boggling.

(He slugs .284.)