

The B-List: 5/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Thursday, May 28 2009 7:00 PM -

Four in a row! A sweep of the defending AL Champion Tampa Bay Rays!! And David Dellucci has been designated for assignment!!! It's just a glorious day to be a Tribe fan. Buff is understandably stoked, and in response, today, unveils The Fourth Annual Walt Svirsky Commemorative Haiku Contest. I'll provide a nice prize for the winner. Buff delivers a witty and comprehensive analysis of yesterday's win in today's version of The B-List.

FINAL

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The B-List: 5/28

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The B-List: 5/28

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The B-List: 5/28

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W: Herges (1-0)

L: Niemann (4-4)

S: K. Wood (8)

0) Emergency Edit: The Fourth Annual Walt Svirsky Commemorative Haiku Contest

[David Dellucci has been DFW'd](#) .

And so, the obvious response is ... haiku!

Send me (buff@theclevelandfan.com) your haiku about Anything David Dellucci, in 5-7-5 format (we relax the seasonal connection in the Svirsky), and someone will win something.

Huzzah!

1) Today's Lesson in Quantum Mechanics

*If quantum mechanics hasn't profoundly shocked you, you haven't understood it yet.
-- Niels Bohr*

I took quantum mechanics as part of my undergraduate degree in physics, and sat there for the longest time waiting for it to make some intuitive sense. In retrospect, this was a foolish endeavor, as quantum mechanics DOESN'T make intuitive sense.

That's kind of the point.

But I was young and foolish, and sure enough, after a couple of months, I had a flash of insight that allowed me to think of wave/particle duality as something that I could grasp.

I was able to look at the Schrödinger Wave Equation and say, "Well, yes, sure, I can use this, I understand what it means!"

As the material began to draft away from me again, I waiting patiently for the second flash of insight that would allow me to continue my deeper understanding of physics.

This insight never came.

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Oh, I took another semester of quantum, and a semester of nuclear, and audited a grad class, but nope, no more insight for me. But one thing that stuck with me from the grad class was the notion of non-locality, or quantum coupling over distance.

The principle behind the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox is that if a source produces two spin-1/2 particles that travel in opposite directions, those particles are perfectly coupled. That is, their spins have to add up to zero: they have to have opposite spin to preserve the total amount.

Okay, this is a fine thing to consider, until you actually think about what it MEANS: the basic tenet of quantum mechanics is that until you MEASURE the spins of the particles, they live in a sort of probabilistic nether region as a linear combination of superimposed states, which is a fancy way of saying, "It's 30% of this, and 50% of that, and 20% of something else."

Of course, this makes no intuitive sense, because it isn't intuitively sensible.

As the famous Schrödinger's Cat thought experiment shows, our brains are simply not wired to dig this.

But once you measure the spin of one of the particles, it is forced into a 100% totally-defined you-bet-your-bippy spin state. The spin is completely defined, and no longer "some of this and some of that." It's *this*. Just *this*. Not that. *This*.

And the other particle becomes the opposite.

Now, this simply makes no sense. It doesn't. Don't try to make it make sense. It doesn't make sense. But it is completely (and, I might add, measurably and totally experimentally verified) true.

A nice place to start reading about this is a discussion of [Bell's Theorem](#), which, of course, makes no sense.

(Skip the math, go to the Final Remarks.)

John Bell came up with an inequality that DOES make sense, except when applied to a sensible treatment of reality, in which his inequality implies that "local realism," that is, that what you normally think of as sensible, is false.

A corollary is the Buffum Function, which states:

$f(x) = 0$, where $x = \text{"quantum mechanics"}$; and f is the "sense function" ;

(Replacing x with $\text{"theoretical appeal of American Idol"}$; or "Yo Gabba Gabba!" ; preserves the truth of the function.)

To this end, I postulate that Jeremy Sowers and David Huff have been issued forth as coupled particles from a pitching source. I know this doesn't make any sense. That's how you know it's *true*.

2) A side note on data collection

I was very pleased with Huff's 4 shutout innings (he was pulled because of a very long rain delay in the bottom of the 4th), although I can no more explain them than I can the ending of $\text{"2001: A Space Odyssey"}$; but there is one factor Huff should probably address: Huff faced 17 hitters on the day, and FIVE of them saw a first-pitch strike.

In fact, that may not even be technically true, as Carl Crawford popped out on a bunt attempt on the first pitch he saw.

I'm not sure it was in the strike zone.

Now, Huff only walked 1 hitter and threw more strikes than balls (although a 59% clip still isn't very good). Two of his four hits were infield singles and only one was for extra bases (a double by Brad Zobrist). He got the Rays to hit 1-for-12 with someone on base, and the 1 hit was one of the infield singles. (3 of the 4 hitters who started innings reached base: walk, double, single.)

He struck out Willy Aybar swinging to end the first with a runner in scoring position, and struck out Evan Longoria swinging as well.

But once again, Huff put more balls in the air than on the ground, and although quite a few of

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these were simple popups, I'm not confident of Huff's ability to be effective while constantly pitching behind in the count.

Sowers appears to be the measurable that forces Huff into his pitching state, so let's hope we get a strong outing from him Monday so that Tuesday's start will be good as well.

3) Our Victor Martinez is better than your Victor Martinez

Oh, wait: you don't HAVE a Victor Martinez.

Gee, that's too bad.

(snicker)

4) Note to Twins fans

Be quiet, you.

5) The Outlier

One of the things that made Jensen Lewis an effective closer for a stint last season was that he is fearless. He will throw inside. He will throw high and low. He will attack hitters, and he seems to be able to put last night's bad outing behind him.

So it is problematic that one of the things that makes Jensen Lewis an unreliable schmoe this season is that he is fearless. The pitch that Willy Aybar lifted over the wall was an inside pitch

The B-List: 5/28

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that seemed to move and hang simultaneously: it just doesn't go fast enough to really sneak past anyone, and doesn't bear in hard enough to truly jam them.
(The replay I saw was conclusive that the ball hit ABOVE the yellow line initially, a clear home run.)

And Lewis was pretty lucky that Longoria's blast stayed in the park.

Here's the ultimate problem, though: I know the samples are miniscule, but righties hit .196/.237/.357 off Lewis. That's only 2 home runs in 56 AB, and he sports a fantastic 18:3 K:BB ratio against these hitters. If you think of a typical innings as 4 AB (just to guesstimate), that's the equivalent of pitching 14 innings, or a K/9 of 11.57.

Against right-handers, Lewis has been tremendous.

Against lefties, he has been preposterously bad. Lefties pound him to the tune of .391/.444/.848 with 6 HR and 5 K in 46 AB. U
sing the same translation factor, this would equate to more than a home run every other inning, and a K/9 rate of 3.91.

I mean, these are just sickening, execrable numbers.

The funny thing is that in his career before 2009, Lewis sported platoon splits that barely register over statistical noise: .261/.327/.398 against lefties (4 HR, 38 K in 176 AB) and .251/.330/.387 against righties (5 HR, 48 K in 191 AB). There's no difference there.

So, in a sense, he has picked up something that is working exceptionally well against right-handers this season, but lost whatever it was he used to get left-handers out with. I mean, slugging .848?

SLUGGING?

That's a bad OPS to allow, but slugging alone ... that's just terrible.

This is where having a pitching coach or a AAA affiliate might help.

6) Check that man's birth certificate

In 2003, Matt Herges was a terrific relief pitcher: starting the year in San Diego, he posted sub-3.00 ERAs for both the Padres and the Giants (to whom he was traded), striking out 68 hitters in 79 innings and giving up fewer than 1 hit per inning. He was so effective, the Giants made him their closer, where he pioneered the Joe Borowski Style of closing with 23 saves but a 5.24 ERA. He gave up a redonkulous 90 hits in 65 1/3 innings, and though his star shone brightly, it shone briefly, and he was clearly finished.

In 2005, he only threw 29 innings, but of 7.14 ERA ball, and ...

... well, wait. Florida signed him, and he appeared in 66 games. His 4.31 ERA was no great shakes, but hey, that's serviceable.

And then he went to Colorado in 2007, the place where pitchers go to die, and he was ... great.

He was a key part of the Rockies' improbable run to the World Series, giving up nary a run in the post-season.

He was hurt from April to July, and was 37 years old, so that was a nice finish, and he was clearly done.

In 2008, his 5.04 ERA signalled the end, as Herges rode into the ...

... well, wait. Herges looked like a NRI flier this off-season where, at 39, he had clearly been finished at least twice. He's old. He's mediocre. He's ...

... been awesome.

Matt Herges has now thrown 13 1/3 innings for the Indians and has allowed 2 runs on FIVE hits.

He has a 14:3 K:BB ratio, striking out more than 1 an inning, and sports a 0.60 (!) WHIP with a 1.35 ERA.

Plus, he spouted one of the great quotes I've seen:

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"He's a lot better than I am," Herges said of Longoria. "Anytime I get him out, I'll take it. He's going to get me a lot more than I'll get him."

By all accounts, he has taken a leadership role in the bullpen.

I am thinking that, with at least three lives under his belt, we have been misspelling his real name of "Cat" for quite a while now.

7) Ho Hum Dept.

Raffy Betancourt threw 17 pitches, 17 of which were in the vicinity of the outside corner. Only 9 were strikes, but a couple of those CALLED strikes were actually outside, so his working the corner is paying off as an ump-influencing strategy.

He walked one and struck out two in a hitless, scoreless 8th

.

Kerry Wood dispatched the Rays in order on 7 pitches, 6 of them strikes. It appears that whatever Wood "found" in that "angina on a bun" save in which he walked the bases loaded against the Royals and got the save has righted his proverbial ship.

I miss the vandyke, though.

8) Today's Lament

The Indians scored 11, 5, and 12 runs in the games against Tampa Bay in which Mark DeRosa played.

In the game in which Mark DeRosa did NOT play, the Indians managed a paltry TWO runs, one

of which was driven in by a routine ground ball.

I think the correlation should be obvious to all the truly astute general managers out there who are reading this column: just imagine what kind of impact DeRosa would have on, say, the Chicago Cubs. I'm not *promising* anything, of course, but it certainly seems clear from where I'm sitting.

9) Schadenfreude Dept.

Detroit and Minnesota scored one run each in losing to Baltimore and Boston respectively.