

The B-List: 6/5-6/7

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Sunday, June 07 2009 7:00 PM -

Two outta three ain't bad, just ask Meatloaf. Especially when it comes against the hated rival White Sox. And especially when you're occupying last place in the worst division in baseball. We got a three hit shutout from Cy Pavano. A game Saturday we could have won against the red hot Gavin Floyd. And an eleven hit, eight run effort against the pleasantly plump Bartolo Colon yesterday to win the series. Buff talks about the weekend set with the Pale Hoes in the Monday edition of The B-List.

FINAL

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Indians (24-33)

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White Sox (25-29)

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W: Pavano (6-4)

L: Danks (4-4)

FINAL

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Indians (24-34)

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White Sox (26-29)

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W: Floyd (4-5)

L: Sowers (1-3)

S: Jenks (13)

FINAL

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Indians (25-34)

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White Sox (26-30)

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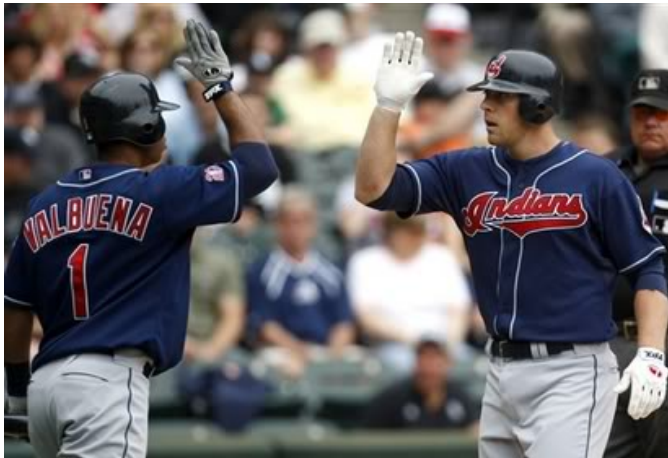
4

5



W: Huff (1-2)

L: Colon (3-6)



Ozzie Guillen is angry and frustrated at his team. Can you imagine him as the manager of the Cleveland Indians? He'd be dead. Or several players would be dead.

Possibly both.

1) Captain Carl

Carl Pavano spun a 101-pitch 3-hit complete game shutout on Friday, which raises the number of complete game shutouts by Indians starters from zero to one. In fact, it was the first complete game pitched by a Cleveland pitcher this season.

Now, I understand that complete games have largely gone the way of the dodo or Merv Griffin, but it still surprised me that this was Cleveland's first complete game. Arguably Cliff Lee should have one, given what Kerry Wood did to his 5-2 lead after 8 innings, but hey.

Part of the key to Pavano's complete game, of course, was his efficiency: a pitch count of 101

comes out to an average of slightly more than 11 pitches per inning, and Pavano hovered around this value all night. After a shaky 20-pitch first in which he allowed a leadoff double and had 7 pitches fouled off, Pavano found a groove such that none of the next 8 innings took more than 12 pitches.

Two of the three hits were doubles, and Pavano walked a pair, but he was helped by a double play and the Sox going 0-for-4 with runners in scoring position.

If you're paying attention, you'll see that three of those hitters happened in the first (flyout, swinging K, lineout), meaning Pavano faced ONE hitter in the last EIGHT innings with a runner in scoring position (Brian Anderson grounded out on the first pitch after a double in the 4th

).

Heck, he only faced one two hitters with a runner on BASE in the last five innings, and one of them grounded into a double play.

Pavano wasn't particularly dominant or anything: he struck out 6 and got 9 swinging strikes total. He showed 23 of the 31 hitters a first-pitch strike, which is good but not special. He was at least partially helped by the aggressiveness of the White Sox' hitters: four hitters saw 10 pitches or fewer in 3 trips to the plate, and rookie Gordon Beckham saw an amazing THREE pitches in three plate appearances.

Might want to work on that, Gord.

But he was in the strike zone all night (69 strikes) and generally kept the ChiSox from making good contact.

2) Weakness perceived and actual

Pavano's performance was a bit unexpected and seemed like something that would stick out given how poorly the rotation has performed this season. The bullpen was a major culprit in April, but it seems as though the introduction of Greg Aquino and Matt Herges along with the re-teaching of Raffy Perez has at least stabilized this unit.

In fact, we talked a couple weeks ago about the claim that the unit has actually become a strength.

Perhaps that's going a bit far, but it's no longer the gaping, sucking wound that it was earlier.

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No, the problem now is that the rotation gives up too many of its innings to this stretched bullpen and doesn't do a good job when it's in there. Well, that's seems like the problem, anyway. But what do you expect when you've lost Scott Lewis and Aaron Laffey and Anthony Reyes from a rotation that was already missing Jake Westbrook? Of COURSE if you're going to slot BOTH Jeremy Sowers and David Huff into the rotation, you have ...

... well, wait a minute. What DO you have?

Here are the last two complete turns through the rotation:

Pitcher IP H R(ER) BB K HR

Huff	5	4	3	3	3	1
Sowers	6	5	3(2)	2	5	1
Pavano	9	3	0	2	6	0
-----	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lee	8	7	1	1	5	0
Huff	5	9	4	0	5	1
Sowers	5	3	1	5	2	0
Pavano	7.1	7	3	0	4	1
-----	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lee	6	9	3	2	5	0

What you see here is kind of interesting: there are 5 Quality Starts here, and one that is an inning short. You see six starts in eight in which the Cleveland pitcher gave up fewer hits than innings pitched. You see a maximum of 4 runs allowed in a minimum of 5 innings pitched. There are only a few truly bad numbers here: Sowers' 5 walks when he went insane against the Yankees, and Huff's 9-hit 4-run affair (in which he walked no one and struck out 5, so there was no complete absence of encouraging signs there).

Now, of course, I've cheated in removing Fausto Carmona from the list: his two starts were clearly putrescent and we lost both games big-time. Carmona gave up as many homers in his two starts as the rest of the rotation did in these eight.

He was awful and can't be simply ignored.

But the combination of these other four pitchers produces this average line:

6.4 IP
5.88 H
2.1 ER (2.25 R)
1.88 BB
4.38 K

I mean, you could win some games with that rotation, especially considering that I'm averaging over the ostensible 1, 2, 4, and 5 starters. If these numbers are hard to think about, their rounded counterparts are a start of 6 innings with 6 H, 2 R, 2 BB, and 4 K.

Not a terrific start ... but a **QUALITY** start: our rotation over the last two turns and removing Fausto Carmona **AVERAGES** a **QUALITY START**.

Now, it looks like Tomo Ohka will get slotted into Carmona's spot, and there's no way I'm going to claim that it's reasonable to expect Quality Starts from Tomo Ohka. It's not. He'll hold the fort, and great puffer fish on a stick, he'll be better than Fausto, but he's a guy.

He's better than Zach Jackson, but so what?

Still, word is he'll simply be skipped with the day off, meaning the next turn through the rotation will be these four fellows on their normal four days rest ... we can win with these four fellows.

3) Ducks, ducks, everywhere, but not a drop to drink

The Chicago offense is a sad, strange little thing, and it has my pity. The Sox gathered an anemic 15 hits over the weekend, and although they did draw 12 walks, 8 of those were Sunday in a loss. Part of the White Sox' problem is a thorough inability to hit with runners in scoring position: on the weekend, they were a combined 2-for-21, although admittedly one of those was a three-run homer.

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However, the Indians gave Chicago a run for its lack of money, hitting a still-poor 6-for-26 with runners in scoring position, a .231 clip. The difference was that they got two such hits in each of the three games, and hit more homers to boot.

The interesting thing was that three of the hits came from our most-punchless offensive "forces," Jamey Carroll (who went 2-for-3 in such situations) and Josh Barfield, who singled home a run on Friday in support of Pavano. A fourth run scored when Luis Valbuena (of all people!) lofted a sacrifice fly Sunday.

Barfield and Ben Francisco had the best percentages, each going 1-for-1. Among those players who never, ever, never got a hit with a RISP are Shin-Soo Choo, Victor Martinez, and Travis Hafner, the ostensible "middle of the lineup."

4) The other two hits

Why, that would be Mark DeRosa.

In three games, DeRosa came to the plate with runners in scoring position in each game, delivering a hit in two of the three games. This includes the mammoth three-run homer off John Danks that gave Pavano all the cushion he would need for the remainder of the game.

You know, I might be misguided about thinking about DeRosa being traded to an N.L. Central team. Mark DeRosa might be too GOOD for your team. I am not sure I am willing to let such a valuable asset go for just any Tom, Dick, or Colby out there.

The latest rumor involves the San Francisco Giants considering dealing inconsistent flamethrower Jonathan Sanchez for DeRosa: although DeRosa would surely be an asset to a team who plays a White Sox castoff and a panda bear at third and has a powerless schmoe backing up the panda at first, not to mention having Nate Schierholz and his magic .603 OPS backing up each outfielder, I wonder about Sanchez' ability to adjust to the American League.

But I would imagine this would set the bar for deals from other NL contenders. Still, I wonder: is

it really worth trading such a valuable asset?

I am having second thoughts.

I suppose I will still listen to offers ... that would only be prudent.

Did you know DeRosa is second on the team with 38 RBI, as well as second with 9 homers?

These numbers wouldn't surprise the astute GM, I'll tell you that, but I don't know how many of these are out there ...

5) Something in the air

Yeah, baseballs.

The Indians slugged a ridiculous seven home runs in their two wins: given 6 2/3 innings against Gavin Floyd, they didn't hit any. You could have made a lot of money betting on that exacta.

The Indians have now hit back-to-back homers 5 times in 59 games ... because they did it **THREE** times in the last **THREE** games. They went back-to-back as many times **SUNDAY ALONE** as they had in the **PREVIOUS FIFTY-SIX GAMES**.

Sure, some of this has to do with the degree to which Bartolo Colon is no longer very good, but even after getting clubbed on Sunday, his season ERA is 4.23, which would make him Cleveland's #2 starter. Given that the first set of back-to-backs involved Chris Gimenez (now hitting .375/.444/.1125 on the season) and Luis Valbuena, I wonder aloud if this has more to do with Not Comiskey Park than it does with Bartolo Colon.

(This was Valbuena's first major-league homer: imagine how much power he'll have after he turns fourteen!)

And so, unfortunately, this tempers my enthusiasm for Travis Hafner's return in which he

socked a solo shot off John Danks (which is good: lefty-on-lefty and two outs) but also came up a bit short with the bases loaded against Floyd (here is where I was going to make a snide remark on Floyd's taterosity, but he's actually holding hitters to a .391 SLG and lefties to .378, so maybe he's less Gavin Floyd than I thought).

The second half of that back-to-back was Ryan Garko's shot, and Martinez and Choo pulled the feat on Sunday in the 5th off Colon.

6) Flashing the leather

Trevor Crowe is largely overmatched at the plate: he gets some good swings in, and stroked a double off closer Bobby Jenks (not a closing situation, but Jenks is a good reliever). He's been hitting better recently, with 3 hits in his last 4 games and 4 in his last 6, but he's largely earned the .200/.286/.260 batting line he's put up thus far.

He's a young guy and plays sporadically and that's a tough way to make a living.

However, what Trevor Crowe CAN do is play center field.

Crowe made a couple of excellent defensive plays, including a diving grab of a sinking liner with men on base that arguably saved two runs. These were plays that Ben Francisco simply does not make, not because Ben Francisco is bad but because Crowe was that good.

It's too early to pass judgement on Crowe's eventual career path, but a guy with a glove like that is the perfect 4th outfielder/late inning defensive replacement for now.

7) Can't touch this

Consider this stat: in 9 innings, Carl Pavano induced 9 swings and misses. That's all right. In six innings, Jeremy Sowers got 7, even better (rate).

Dave Huff only got 4 in 5 innings, but that's not poor.

Raffy Perez got 7 swinging strikes in 2 2/3 innings.

Yes, Perez walked in a run with the bases loaded, but here's what he did after that:

swinging K
swinging K
fly out

So with none out and the bases loaded, Raffy Perez gave up one run on a walk and nothing else.

He may not be Back: after all, he gave up a run one Saturday on a pair of hits (one an infield single) and a sacrifice, but he struck out 4 in 2 2/3 IP and threw 22 of his 31 pitches for strikes. He's back on the "asset" side of the ledger, at least.

8) Well, I can do *that*

Yes, Kerry Wood struck out 3 of the five hitters he faced without giving up a hit, but only two guys missed the ball once each. Mostly they were mesmerized by your lack of beard.

9) The Hard Luck Kid

Jeremy Sowers has been pitching better, he really has. He doesn't have a lot to show for his last two starts (a loss and a no-decision), but the Tribe has scored a total of 4 runs in support of him.
He could go deeper into games,

but his bout with insanity against New York made that impossible, and lifting him Saturday made sense even though he'd only thrown 92 pitches in 6 full innings (his longest start on the season).

In fact, add a third start and you see a guy who has given up fewer hits than innings pitched, improved his K rate (1 in 5, 3 in 5, 5 in 6), and produced quality outings (0 R, 1 R, 3 R (2 ER)).

The story on Sowers hasn't changed much: he still must keep the ball in the park and keep guys from getting the free pass. He may have fewer than a hit an inning in those three starts, but when walks are counted (and by golly they are), that pushes him over a baserunner per inning in two of the three.

I am encouraged, though: Sowers seems to be hitting his spots better, and his last three starts have all come after his latest call-up May 24. He spent a couple weeks in Columbus, so maybe he and Scott Radinsky figured something out. I

am actually interested in watching Sowers pitch next time out.

10) Adorability Factor Off the Charts

Jamey Carroll went 5-for-9 over the weekend with 3 RBI. He played both second and third.

Josh Barfield went 2-for-4 with an RBI and is hitting .625.

Luis Valbuena had a poor Saturday, but went 1-for-2 with a homer, 2 R, 2 RBI, and 2 BB on Sunday.