

The B-List: 6/12-6/14

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What a set of starting performances this weekend: David Huff's 3 runs in 7 1/3 innings was the WORST of the three, including a gem by Tomo Ohka, of all people. And, of course, these both paled in comparison to Clifton Phifer Lee, who gets the Epic Hero Treatment from Buff. In today's B-List, Buff also touches on the good weekend from Mark DeRosa in front of a possible suitor, a possible power surge from Jhonny Peralta, and how goofy the Cardinals look in their stock photos. **FINAL**

	1	2	3	
Cardinals (33-29)	0	0	0	1
Indians (28-35)	1	0	0	1

W: Huff (2-2) L: Pineiro (5-7)

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Cardinals (34-29)	0	0	0	1
Indians (28-36)	0	0	0	1

W: B. Thompson (1-2) L: Ohka (0-1) S: R. Franklin (15)

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Cardinals (34-30)	0	0	0	0
Indians (29-36)	2	0	0	0

W: C. Lee (4-6) L: Carpenter (4-1)



Let the record show that I recorded the game to watch after everyone went to bed, but followed along on the computer. I could not resist and turned the game on in the top of the 8th, thus causing Yadier Molina to double. I learn at a glacial pace.

1) The Epic of Cliffgamesh

When LaRussa heard St. Louis' words, he placed control of the Bull of Heaven, Albert Pujols, in her hand.

St. Louis led the Albert Pujols down to earth.

When he reached Cleveland, he climbed down to Jacobs Field.

At the snort of the Albert Pujols, a huge pit opened up, and David Huff fell in.

At his second snort, a huge pit opened up, and Tomo Ohka and Raffy Perez both fell in.

At his third snort, a huge pit opened up, and Mark DeRosa fell in up to his waist.

Then DeRosa jimpued out and seized the Albert Pujols by his horns.

DeRosa addressed Cliffgamesh, saying, "Brother, you and I are now hailed as one.

How could we defeat a god?

Brother, I see great challenge here, but can we dare defy such force?

Let's defeat him if we can right now.

Be unrelenting and hope that we have the strength.

DeRosa stalked and hunted down the Albert Pujols.

He grasped him and forced him into the batter's box, while Cliffgamesh, like an expert butcher,

boldly and surely approached the mound to pitch to the Albert Pujols.

On the corners and through the strike zone he thrust his cut fastball and changeup.

After they had defeated the Albert Pujols, the entire Cardinals team fell before them,

and they ripped out its heart and presented it to the fans.
Then Cliffgamesh retreated from the mound itself
and did spout bland platitudes
before drinking a beverage of his choice.

(Thanks to [Wolf Carnahan](#) for transcribing a translation of Maureen Gallery Kovacs, and to the [Poznan Supercomputing and Network Center](#) for an alternate paraphrasing.)

2) More mundane analysis

Consider these statistics from Lee's complete-game shutout.

He threw 70 strikes in 93 pitches, which is astounding ... but he walked two of the first three hitters, throwing 6 strikes in 15 pitches, meaning that after walking Pujols, he threw 64 strikes in 78 pitches, which is plainly absurd.

He threw first-pitch strikes to 26 of 32 hitters, but again, after Pujols, this is 25 of 29.

After walking Pujols in the first, he set down the next 20 in order.

He struck out 6, but also recorded a brisk 14:7 GO:FO ratio.

He had a 4-pitch inning and threw 50 pitches in innings 2 through 7.

Except for the first inning, in which he got a bit fortunate that Ryan Ludwick's blast to right stayed in the park (this is a much different game if St. Louis goes up 3-0), Cliff Lee basically pitched the analog of a Chuck Norris joke.

The game took 1:58 to play, one of three games in the majors this season to break the two-hour mark. This is approximately the length of the New York Yankees' fourth inning against the Mets.

3) The corner is back there where I turned it earlier

Our worst starting performance from the weekend was David Huff's, because it was merely very good.

Through 7 innings, David Huff had allowed 1 run on 5 hits, walking 1 and striking out 5. The only run he gave up was a solo shot by the Bull of Heaven. He had thrown only 90 pitches to that point, a marked contrast to, say, Jeremy Sowers, who can reach that level in the 4th or 5th

There was no real special "key" to Huff's improved performance: he has simply performed better. Huff kept the Cardinals' lineup off-balance with a fastball that seems to have gained a couple of ticks since his first two outings, and he located it very well. (I would say "exceptionally well," but the standard for "exceptionally well" is Cliff Lee, and he is not going to meet that standard.) He buttressed this with some better offspeed offerings, and generally kept the Cards from stringing anything together: through 7 innings, he never allowed a second Cardinal to reach base, and erased one of them with a double play.

Huff basically ran out of gas after a 9-pitch out to Joe Thurston and a 7-pitch single by Brendan Ryan: he ended up throwing 112 pitches, 74 for strikes, but getting through 7 innings is a real accomplishment for our back-end starters, and was a welcome development.

Now, it bears mentioning that the Cardinals' lineup is essentially Albert Pujols and his All-Mook Review. Brendan Ryan is hitting near .300, but he's a career .685 OPS guy and essentially Jamey Carroll with a much, much goofier [stock photo](#). Tyler Greene is a rookie with a .305 OBP. Nick Stavinoha aspires to be a schmoe.

(Seriously, a corner outfielder with a .246 OBP? Really? I

guess so, since Ryan Ludwick is the other corner OF with a .299 OBP. And then Stavinoha is your DH Sunday? Your **DH**? Does Tony LaRussa remember that the "H" is for "Hitter," not "Hilarity" or "Horror?" The man managed the Bash Brothers, fer crine out loud.)

But this doesn't diminish Huff's fine performance (much): over his past four starts (one sadly rain-shortened), Huff has posted a 4.21 ERA and a 1.36 WHIP, which are solid numbers for a BOR starter, not to mention one who's a 24-year-old rookie.

4) A bit of the Alamo, a dash of Thermopylae, a tilted windmill, and a serious lack of Enkidu

The fact that Huff's performance was the least of the three is actually debatable, since through 7 innings he has given up fewer hits, fewer runs, had more strikeouts, and threw fewer pitches than Tomo Ohka on Saturday. But you don't get bonus points for being bad for an extra third of an inning, even if Junkin' Joe Smiff yields the last two of your runs.

More to the point ... Tomo Ohka?!

Seriously, did ANYONE see this coming? Didn't you mentally chalk this up as a loss before the series started? And not just a loss, but a run-an-inning sort of thing where Ohka would simply be left out there to give pitch as long as Wedge could stand it before giving way to the bullpen when he'd finally had enough?

That's not what happened.

Ohka gave up 2 runs on seven hits: he only struck out two, but more crucially, he didn't walk ANYBODY. He wasn't anything like "dominant," but he, like Huff, kept St. Louis from stringing anything together, only once pitching with two men on base. He really only had two problems:

- a) He threw a strike to Albert Pujols, which Pujols hit for a home run
- b) He threw another strike to Albert Pujols, which Pujols hit for a home run

Now, I gotta be honest: if I'm Tomo Ohka, who pitched in Milwaukee, I am probably not going to throw Albert Pujols a pitch he can hit. I would nibble ... on the back of the left-handers' batter's box. I am pretty sure that throwing Albert Pujols a strike is generally a risky proposition, but if you're

Tomo Ohka, the risk factor is compounded. And seriously, once you give up one homer to the man, why are you throwing him a strike his next time up? Are you depending on Gambler's Fallacy, thinking you're "due"? You're not due. You're Tomo Ohka! He's Albert Pujols! Roll the ball!

Really, now: if the Cleveland Indians had intentionally walked Albert Pujols in every one of his plate appearances on Saturday ... they would have won 1-0. Ohka received roughly the offensive support that impala give their brethren when attacked by a lioness.

But this doesn't take away from the fact that Ohka was put into a tough situation (spot start with no real ramp-up) and performed WAY better than anyone could have reasonably projected. Well done, sir. (Of every pitcher who has started a game for the Indians this season, Ohka's 4.24 ERA would be third-best behind Lee and Aaron Laffey.)

5) Terror on the basepaths

Oh. My. God.

Really, it's been better, certainly better than 2006, when I coined the phrase. That season was remarkably infuriating, in which it seemed that the Indians did something pointless or damaging on the bases in at least every other game. But Saturday, the Indians helped shoot themselves in the foot on the "strength" of two particularly egregious baserunning blunders.

In the bottom of the 4th, after Pujols' first homer, Jamey Carroll reached on an error, Mark DeRosa walked, and Victor Martinez singled Carroll home, putting runners on the corners with no one out. This had "big inning" written all over it, especially against a spot-starting converted reliever with a much, much goofier [stock photo](#) than even Brendan Ryan. Brad Thompson's a pretty good pitcher, but he's hardly stultifying: he has 13 Ks in 30 innings. So with Thompson beginning to flail, he throws a pitch in the dirt: Victor Martinez thinks about going to second, taking a few steps and keeping an eye on Yadier Molina, who has arguably the finest arm amongst major-league catches. Molina fired to first, Martinez was out, and two whiffs later (which, really now, is remarkably bad ... did I mention that coming into the game Thompson had 8 strikeouts in 24 innings?), the inning was over and everyone wore ruts in their scalps scratching their heads as to where the bloody hell Victor Martinez thought he was going. Hey, Vic! You're slow!

Stay on first unless the ball hits the backstop and dies there!

(Now, I understand that this is a "bang-bang" play and that Victor Martinez knows a helluva lot more about baserunning than I ever will. I get that this is an emotional overreaction to a single miscue. But I'm telling you that this pales in comparison to my emotional overreaction on Saturday, when I tried to grind my laptop into dust merely by squeezing it as hard as I could. It was really That Infuriating. You gotta be aware of who's behind the plate there, and Molina is universally regarded a superior defensive backstop. Man!)

But even that pales in comparison to the beefheaded play by Josh Barfield in the 9th: trying to come back from a 3-1 deficit, Barfield led off the 9

th with a single off closer Ryan Franklin. Well, it wasn't so much a "single" as it was "a badly misplayed dorkfest in shallow right field." Yes, Brandon Ryan and Ryan Ludwick botched Barfield's blooper in comical fashion, but look: you are not the go-ahead run. You are not even the TYING run. If you

got on first and tried to steal second, you would have had a 50-50 shot of being listed as "defensive indifference." That's how little you getting into scoring position mattered. Because, you know, we're down by TWO runs.

Barfield went to second, where he was thrown out. The next hitter singled. The fans wept.

6) Hey, Raffy!

Don't pitch to Albert Pujols! The man has two homers on the day, and you're LEFT-HANDED. Albert Pujols is really quite tremendous against just about everyone on Earth except Cliff Lee (whom, I should point out, YOU ARE NOT). He hits .331/.432/.643 against right-handers like Tomo Ohka, and he is truly "locked-in" in this game.

Do you know what he hits against lefties?

.323/.475/.839.

I mean, that's just insane.

But not as insane as throwing him a hittable pitch.

Muttonhead.

7) Advertising with a personal touch

St. Louis employs Joe Thurston and Tyler Greene at third base. These are lovely gentlemen, and are reportedly kind to children and puppies, but to call

them "everyday third basemen" is a bit of a stretch. Of course, they have moved Skip Schumaker and his .327 OBP to second base, where he looks roughly as at home as a penguin on Mars. Nick Stavinoha is used regularly as a corner outfielder, and Colby Rasmus and his magic .317 OBP will someday be a grand player, although "someday" is unlikely to be in June of 2009.

On Friday, Mark DeRosa cranked out a pair of hits in 5 trips to the plate and scored a run.

On Saturday, Mark DeRosa was one of two Cleveland Indians to reach base twice with a single and a walk. (The other was Victor Martinez.)

And in a "mazel tov, hope you enjoyed your stay" farewell to the Cardinals on Sunday, Mark DeRosa hit the second pitch he saw off Chris

Carpenter and his 1.59 ERA over the left-field wall for a two-run homer that effectively ended the game as long as Cliff Lee was on the mound.

Mark DeRosa can play 3B, 2B, and either corner outfield position.

I am going to go out on a limb here and suggest that Mark DeRosa would help the St. Louis Cardinals. At least more than Nick Stavinoha does.

8) Jholtin' Jhonny, finally?

Jhonny Peralta is not having a particularly good season, and certainly did not have a good Friday, a game in which he grounded into TWO double plays. He did make a nice defensive play with the bases loaded to end the 8th inning with the score 5-3

Cleveland, but generally speaking, this has not been a good year for Peralta.

Part of Peralta's problem is that of his 54 hits, a mere 14 are for extra bases, and 11 are for doubles. That leads to a piss-poor .344 SLG, which is very bad, even for a middle infielder. To put this into perspective, Luis Valbuena, a rookie who is nine years old and is hitting .185, has a SLG of .321. Jamey Carroll slugs .378 and mocks Jhonny Peralta. David Dellucci slugged .350, and he was CUT. .344 is a lousy SLG.

So it was nice to see that the two base knocks Peralta got this weekend were both for extra bases: a double on Saturday and a triple off Carpenter. In fact, 3 of his 14 extra-base hits have come in the last week (6 games): his 4

XBH in half of June nearly match the 5 he collected in the complete months of April (5 doubles) and May (4 doubles, 1 HR).

I am not necessarily asking Peralta to go on a Pujols-type power surge, but I am asking for SOME power, especially if he's going to be slotted at third base.

9) Shop Smash!

Cy Young calibre pitcher Chris Carpenter had an excellent game against the Indians, but he certainly didn't faze Kelly Shoppach: Shoppach smashed not only his 5th home run on the season, but his 7th double as well, collecting two of Cleveland's five hits and 6 of their 14 total bases. Alas, he

was gunned down at the plate trying to score from second on a ball that skipped away from Brendan Ryan, but it was a nice game nonetheless.

10) All or nothing

Shin-Soo Choo had an excellent game on Friday, lacing three hits and walking once in five trips to the plate and driving in three runs.

On Saturday and Sunday, Choo was 0-for-7 with 3 punchouts.

The Indians scored 7 runs on Friday, and 4 on Saturday and Sunday combined.

I understand that correlation does not prove causation, but it doesn't seem like a big stretch to say that the offense is better when Choo is producing instead of sucking.

11) Ho Hum Dept.

Kerry Wood pitched one perfect ining with 5 strikes in 5 pitches. Matt Herges needed 11 pitches (8 strikes, 1 K) to record his perfect inning (and drive his ERA below 1.00).

Raffy Perez walked a hitter in each of his outings.

Trevor Crowe and Luis Valbuena combined for zero hits.