

The B-List: 6/24

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Wednesday, June 24 2009 7:00 PM -

Carl Pavano takes his turn on the comedy tour, giving up 11 hits and recording 11 outs and taking the loss. The Tribe tried to make it interesting, but failed, and Buff outlines why Pavano is hilarious, how Tony Sipp has taken lessons from one pitcher but not another, and wonders if maybe Victor Martinez (not to mention all Indians fans) might need some actual days off. **FINAL**

Indians (30-43)	0	0	0	1
Pirates (32-39)	0	3	0	6

W: Duke (8-5) L: Pavano (6-6)

I, much like Carl Pavano, do not have a clever start with respect to this game.

1) Cap'n Carl

Maybe we don't need to trade for Ian Snell after all. Because Carl Pavano is ***hilarious***!

Seriously, the man gave up three hits per inning. He only walked one and struck out three, but ... dude, he gave up *three hits per inning*. I would have loved to see him go the distance: has anyone ever given up 24 hits before? (I'd say 27, but I somehow doubt the Pirates would need to bat in the bottom of the ninth against a performance like that.)

Now, Pavano's trouble in his last start, over a week ago, was that he worked too high in the zone. I opined that this suggested a possible elbow injury, which in fact doesn't seem to hold much water: Pavano was skipped in the rotation because he reported *shoulder* soreness. He did a much better job of keeping the ball down in the zone with some sinking movement, and 10 of the Pirates hits were singles on which the fielder had to run forward to get the ball. So while Pavano wasn't exactly being clubbed to death, he was still bleeding pretty bad. I mean, one hit per out is simply poor.

Pavano's problem wasn't so much that he didn't throw strikes (66 in 91 pitches), but rather that he did. More specifically, it was the fact that his strikes tended to be in the middle third of the plate rather than shifting from side to side: in essence, the Pirates were able to tee up on pitches down the middle, and they did, and Pavano was gone after 3 2/3. It's not like it was all the 4th inning, either: Pavano gave up 3 runs in the 2nd n

, and that INCLUDES weaseling his way out of a 1-out bases-loaded jam. Think about this: his third inning was perfect ... and he still gave up 11 hits in 3 2/3!

But that's not really the most hilarious part, although I have to admit that giving up a two-run bases-loaded single to the opposing pitcher is pretty special. I should also note that this opposing pitcher has a higher batting average than BOTH our center fielders (Sizemore, Francisco), our defensive catcher (Shoppach), our starting shortstop (Valbuena), and a bench utility guy (Gimenez). C'mon, that's pretty funny. But he's still the opposing *pitcher*, fer crine out loud.

Even THAT isn't the most hilarious part. Because of an error by Valbuena at short (now with a .970 fielding percentage, which is lower than ostensibly iron-fisted Jhonny Peralta at EITHER shortstop OR third base ... c'mon, you gotta find that amusing ...), five of Pavano's runs were unearned, so he only got charged with 3 runs in 3 2/3 IP, a 7.36 ERA which isn't much worse than his average performance this year (which, again, is pretty chuckle-inducing). I mean, that's got some amusement value there.

But really, now: I think someone has to take a look at the scoring rule for unearned runs. I say that the rule should be changed so that after an error that would have resulted in the third out, anyone who scores because they were on base or at bat during that error counts as an

unearned run. Everyone who hits AFTER that would basically be starting a new inning and they should count as EARNED runs. Consider: Valbuena's error came with Nyjer Morgan on first, and Freddy Sanchez reached. Those two guys are unearned. They scored, so that's two unearned runs.

But after that, Pavano yielded a single, another single, and a double. The first guy stole second, so he scored on the second single: that guy scored on the double. And then the guy who hit the double scored on the Jensen Lewis that followed, but that's the old inherited run thing that no one gets very uppity about.

Now, on what planet is Carl Pavano NOT **responsible** for those three runs? Come on! He put them on base. He gave up the hits that drove them in. He left one on base for Jensen Lewis, which is tantamount to ceding the run. Those are Pavano's runs fair and square. I say he gave up 6 earned runs and 2 unearned instead of 3 and 5.

And that, my friends, is pretty f*#&ing funny.

2) Awesome awesomeness

Jensen Lewis came in to relieve Carl Pavano. The first hitter he faced hit a home run. (To his credit, Lewis did not allow any more runs after that.)

Tony Sipp came in to relieve Jensen Lewis. The first hitter he faced hit a home run. (To his credit, Sipp did not allow any more runs after that.)

I optimistically chalk this up to "mentoring."

3) More mentoring required

Tony Sipp did throw a post-homer perfect inning, in the sense that after the leadoff blast, he didn't allow another baserunner and struck out a batter for good measure. He ended up throwing 9 of his 15 pitches for strikes.

As a contrast, I present you with Raffy Perez.

Perez didn't give up any hits or runs. In this sense, he was even better than Sipp. In every other sense, he was not.

After having Nyjer Morgan down 1-2, including a swinging strike, Perez proceeded to throw three of his next four pitches out of the strike zone: since Morgan fouled the one strike off, he drew a leadoff walk. But hey, Morgan can run and Perez did throw a strike ... okay, it's not a great rationalization.

But it beats the heck out of getting Fungus Vazquez down 1-2, then

pumping three straight balls through the nether zone to put runners on first and second with nobody out.

Now, to Perez' credit, he induced two ground balls, one of which was almost a double play, and the other of which was a double play, so Perez escaped the inning. But he threw 10 strikes in 20 pitches and generally behaved as if he'd never seen a catcher's mitt before.

Which means that Tony Sipp has a long way to go to catch up to the Hilarity Factor (8.6) of Raffy Perez.

4) A flair for the pre-dramatic

When the Indians had their giant comeback game against the Rays, I knew it was a Real Ballgame once more when Ryan Garko hit a three-run blast to bring the score to within 2 runs. So, once you get to that point, that creates some real drama.

Before that, it's a bit less dramatic.

This doesn't take anything away from the 2-out multi-run homers Kelly Shoppach and Grady Sizemore hit in the top of the 9th: they came with two outs, and they were well-struck. Shoppach's in particular had to make it over the oddly-shaped left field wall in Not Three Rivers.

But ... we still lost by four runs. My guess is that Jackson is not Pittsburgh's highest-leverage most-reliable reliever.

5) Bring on the All-Star Break!

In April, Victor Martinez got off to a tremendous start, hitting .386/.446/.636 with 5 homers and 5 doubles. Truly excellent stuff.

And in May, Martinez stayed consistent (not to mention hot), losing some power, but still hitting .321/.413/.468. An .881 OPS player is a valuable thing indeed.

In June, Martinez' power is back, after a fashion: he has 5 homers, but only 2 doubles. (In May, he had 2 homers but 10 doubles.) But Martinez has morphed into a Very Ordinary Player, hitting .259/.348/.481 in June.

Now, look, that's still an .829 OPS, and most teams don't get that from their catcher. .481 is good power and would lead the team (100+ AB). And .348 isn't crummy.

In past years, I have wondered (then insisted, then yelled, then screamed, then started Completely False Statements) if Martinez wouldn't benefit from catching fewer games. He certainly has caught fewer games this season: 35 games at C, 37 at 1B. But I'm wondering (I'm still at the wondering stage: it's only June) ... maybe Victor would benefit from a few more flat-out OFF days.

6) The pumpkin seed

Have Luis Valbuena's Wrigley-aided homers given him the dread Kenny Lofton Disease? I don't know for sure, but a day after needing only 8 pitches to make 4 outs, he stretched that into 11 pitches for 3 outs ... because two of the outs required at least three pitches ... because they were punchouts.

Now, starting the left-handed Valbuena against Zach Duke may seem like a poor percentage play, but there are several reasons to think this was a reasonable thing to try:

- a) Duke actually has a negative platoon split, allowing lefties to hit .316 (.795 OPS) off him while holding righties to .244 (.673)
- b) The right-handed hitter most likely to replace Valbuena is Josh Barfield

c) Sitting Valbuena would cause Jhonny Peralta to play short, which would cause Eric Wedge to have an aneurysm

(Hm ...)

Well, anyway, Valbuena has been dreadful against Pittsburgh. C'mon, champ! Shake it off and gimme a couple line drives, eh, sport?

7) Flashing the absence of leather

3 of Jackson's 5 runs were actually unearned because third baseman Andy LaRoche coughed up an error on Ryan Garko's pinch-hit worthless ground ball. And he wasn't done: Jamey Carroll then beat out an "infield single" which LaRoche cleverly threw to Lenny the Mole instead of Steven Pearce. (Perhaps he was expecting his brother over there and got distracted.)

With Valbuena's error, Zach Duke botching a throw, and Carl Pavano augmenting his array of singles with a wild pitch, it is safe to say that this was not the cleanest-played game in the

short history of Not Three Rivers Stadium.

8) Snidely Whiplash

Shoppach drove in three runs, including the two-run blast in the ninth. His other RBI also came with two outs, as he went 2-for-4 on the night.

Soon he may even be over the Mendoza Line! (Badump-bum!)