

The B-List: 6/25

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Thursday, June 25 2009 7:00 PM -

In a game in which Cliff Lee goes seven strong innings (yawn) and Victor Martinez hammers a home run (ho hum), was there any doubt that the Indians would lose a close game in which the bullpen was handed a major role? Of course not. In today's B-List, Buff has a prescription for the bullpen, considers Lee quite the outlier in the 2009 rotation, and congratulates Victor for telling the author to mind his own business. **FINAL**

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Indians (30-44)	0	0	1	0	0
Pirates (33-39)	0	0	0	0	0

W: Capps (1-3) L: Herges (2-1)

Honestly, was there any doubt once Cliff left the game?

1) Greatness for Granted

Cliff Lee went 7 innings, which is not really surprising, because he is averaging 6.9375 innings per start this season.

Consider this: here are the other Cleveland starters this season:

Carl Pavano: 5.69
David Huff: 5.125
Jeremy Sowers: 4.90
Anthony Reyes: 4.79
Fausto Carmona: 5.056
Aaron Laffey: 5.5 (as a starter)
Scott Lewis: 4.33
Zach Jackson: -12

Tomo Ohka actually averages 6.5 innings per start, so that's good. I'm not sure how much money I want to bet on Tomo Ohka going six-and-a-half innings per start given 20+ opportunities.

Lee had three bumpy starts at the beginning of the season in which he went 5, 5, and 6 innings: since then, he has finished at least the 7th inning 10 of 13 times (and never failed to finish the 6th

). In that stretch, he's actually averaging 7.31 innings per start, making this one of the less-durable ones.

It's hard to tell if Lee had his Very Best Stuff last night: you'd have to say no overall, but his first five innings were certainly excellent. His only baserunners through 5 were two Jack Wilson singles (one extremely feeble) and an error by Luis Valbuena. Only two of eighteen hitters saw ball three. And his fifth inning was a thing of efficient beauty: even though it included Wilson's second single, it featured two strikeouts (although Ross Ohlendorf might be the worst hitter in North America) and 11 strikes in 13 pitches.

After that, the sixth showed why it's hard to record a shutout: Andrew McCutchen laced a double to left, but advanced on a groundout and scored on a flyout, so that's one run on one baserunner. Hard to begrudge Cliff that one.

The 7th was pretty bad, though: yes, Andy LaRoche fouled off several two-strike pitches, but walking him there was a bad start. After a single to a lefty, the runners were moved over and Wilson was walked intentionally. This isn't a bad move: not only did Wilson have 50% of the hits off Lee, but Lee had been getting the Pirates to beat the ball into the ground, posting a 9:5 GO:FO ratio to that point. It's hard to double up McCutchen, who can fly, but putting the force on everywhere is a reasonable strategy.

Walking in a run rarely is. Especially after you have him down 0-2. And he's a rookie. Who doesn't walk.

Anyway, giving up 2 runs in 7 innings is better than his season ERA and 4 hits and 3 walks lowers his WHIP as well: Lee pitched very well. But before you get too angst-ridden about how he lost the chance for a win, both when he gave up the tying run and when the Indians bollixed a bases-loaded opportunity in the 8th, consider this: if the Indians had led 2-1 in the bottom of the ninth, do you think they would have won? Of course not. So this simply spared Lee the anguish of having a win blown for him: he beat them to the punch and blew it himself.

As always, Cliff Lee was completely in control.

2) Big Orange Matt and the Sixteenth Minute

Let me digress for a moment: I am a terrible fantasy player.

The primary reason for this is that I do not think of my team in terms of needing this many of this stat to rank in this position amongst the other league members. I pick guys who do what I consider positive things, and think that raw counts are a lot more important than ranks. If I am 100 of something better than the next guy, this is equivalent to being 1 worse in something else. Also, I micromanage my team and churn through marginal players like nobody's business. Hello, Scott Feldman!

Anyway, Matt Herges is one of those guys: looking for cheap saves and knowing that Herges was going to be the Giants' closer, I picked him up even though he was kind of in the Joe Borowski School of Closing. Sure, he saved 23 games ... but he blew 8 saves, gave up 8 homers in 65 innings, and had a 5.24 ERA. By any objective measure, Herges wasn't really very good. Still, because I attached to this guy in an effort to get the under-the-wire smartness-play kind of guy, I've kind of followed Herges ever since.

(As an aside, Jeff Manto won me a league in 1995. Yes, Jeff Manto. Thome was hurt and I needed a 3B and Manto went through one of those fluke stretches for

Balmer.)

In Herges' first 13 outings, his numbers almost defied belief. His ERA was 0.96. His WHIP was 0.64. Zero point six four! His hits per inning were an absurd 0.43. He basically was the only reliable right-handed reliever the Indians had from May 7 to June 13.

Since then, he has also been absurd ... ly bad.

Herges has two outings in which he faced more than one hitter and recorded zero outs. He has given up multiple runs in 3 of his 6 outings, and was only spared doing it again last night because the game ended before his runners could score some more. He is giving up 3.25 hits per inning and has a WHIP of 3.50. Three point five! His ERA requires scientific notation.

Now, listen, I understand the concept of small samples. I know that six games is not much to base an evaluation on. And Herges does do one thing that few of our

relievers do: namely, throw strikes. He could be a good mentor for someone who ... well, maybe not. I mean, he's out there NOW, and they STILL don't throw strikes for shit. Also, his mobility is severely limited with that giant pumpkin suit on.

Look, we got some mileage out of Matt Herges. Bully for us, and bully for him. It's good to see a 39-year-old guy come back and have some success, kind of a feel-good After School Special kind of thing. But his run is done, his goose is cooked, and where you point to small samples, I point to his 39-year-oldness and his mediocrity-bordering-on-badness since 2004 and consider his 2007 a career gork and Matt Herges is Just Some Guy.

Anyway, that's enough of that.

3) On being enough of that

In fact, there's no reason to single out Herges at this

point. Herges has value to a team trying to squeeze some extra innings out of its bullpen in an effort to win enough games to make the playoffs. This team is not going to make the playoffs. Matt Herges could be the second coming of Mike Marshall 1974 and it wouldn't make the playoffs.

*Aside: go look up Marshall's stats in '73 and '74. They are basically inconceivable. I WATCHED them and I still can't conceive of them. They are **That Absurd**.*

So ... here's my proposal. I do not want One More Inning pitched by a relief pitcher who is over 30 years old. There are two exceptions:

- a) Raffy Betancourt needs some innings to get ready for next season, but no more than two appearances a week
- b) Kerry Wood needs ... hell, I don't know ... an enema? An un-lobotomy? But he can pitch more, I guess. What a disappointment.

No Matt Herges. No Greg Aquino. No Luis Vizcaino. No Vinnie Chulk. No Masa Kobayashi. Sorry, Kirk Saarloos. Apologies, Ken Ray. I am actually shocked to learn that Jose Veras is only 28. At least now I understand the point, because Veras and Vizcaino were largely indistinguishable otherwise. Instead, I want to see guys who might become the Betancourts of Tomorrow: guys in the minors like Frank Herrmann or Jon Meloan or Steven Wright or Erik Stiller. Anyone. Anyone *young*. And really, if we're really concerned about starting the arbitration or free agent clock on these guys ... I mean, really. Be serious. These are fungible relievers. Nary a one of them is going to command 8 figures in my lifetime. Let's see what we've got.

And if you're worried about the 40-man ... consider Zach Jackson. Or Herges. Or one of our useless outfielders. Come on. Really now.

4) Eff You Dept.

Yesterday, I opined that Victor Martinez might benefit

from the occasional day off.

Yesterday, the Cleveland Indians scored two runs exclusively because Victor Martinez got on base.

With a 2-for-3 day including a homer and a walk, Martinez scored both of Cleveland's runs. The lesson, as always, is that Victor Martinez is better at his job than I am at mine.

5) Squander Ball in Theory and Practice

The Indians loaded the bases in the 8th inning on the strength of three walks: a four-pitch affair by Mark DeRosa off new reliever John Grabow, and a pair of two-out full-count walks by Jhonny Peralta and Ben Francisco. Oddly enough, the only two decent offensive performers, Martinez and Shin-Soo Choo, who to that point had collected four of the Tribe's five hits and two apiece, made useless outs, Choo whiffing on four pitches.

Against the left-handed Grabow, Ryan Garko was summoned to replace Luis Valbuena. He promptly struck out. I was not impressed.

The Pirates practiced their own kind of bases-loaded magic in the bottom of the frame, getting a pair of walks from Random Joe Smiff (after a leadoff K), necessitating a call to Raffy Perez to face the lefty Brandon Moss.

Let us pause at this point to consider the wisdom of bringing in Perez cold with two men already on base. I say this because Perez has walked an INSANE 17 men in 21 1/3 innings. He has walked a hitter in 6 of his last 10 appearances, and this includes two "zero-inning" shots. Tony Sipp was used the night before, but we do have this other guy Mike Gosling who is ... well, not Raffy Perez. I got nothin'.

Now, Perez is very good at one thing, and that is inducing double plays. I'm not sure how to explain it entirely: he does work down in the zone and uses a slider that people start swinging over and end up beating into the ground, but ... I dunno, depending on a double play there seemed a little risky.

Naturally Perez:

- a) walked the first hitter ... on four pitches
- b) induced a double play on his fifth pitch

Huzzah! Reciprocal squandering! Evenly matched teams, indeed.

6) Too much too soon?

It was impressive for Grady Sizemore to come back and hit an extra-base blast in each of his first two games back, but ... why is Ben Francsico playing against Ross Ohlendorf? You fed Sizemore to Zach Duke, who is quietly one of the best lefties in the National League, then sat him against Ross Ohlendorf, who is a righty with a near-5 ERA and No Actual Stuff?

Is this like strategy, except without the ... strategy?

7) Mark DeRosa Update

Not only did Mark DeRosa draw a walk, but esteemed Baseball Prospectus writer Christina Kahrl [suggested](#) a new suitor (premium piece):

Which leads to this argument-the Mariners should

make a go of it. With Washburn and Bedard backing up King Felix in the rotation, the team has a front three who all rank among the best 20 or so starters in baseball in Support-Neutral Winning Percentage. That's a platform you can win with now, and maybe stand a better-than-hopeless shot in a short series in October, but you have to get them runs. To that end, getting the Indians' Mark DeRosa, a utility supersub who can play anywhere every day, would go far toward giving the Mariners a correct choice for their multiple-guess lineup problems.

I naturally applaud this sentiment. But even more importantly, each and every time Ms. Kahrl has suggested that the Mariners trade for Mark DeRosa, she has been proven absolutely correct. It would be a shame to buck such a mountain of evidence. But then, I am not Jack Zduriencik ...