

Homestand Tomahawks

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
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When you suck the life out of Paul Cousineau as an Indians fan, you know you have issues as an organization. And that's about where Paulie's at right now. Tired of the team's "consistent approach" of playing middling players at the wrong position, capturing defeat from the jaws of victory, and overwhelmingly sucking the life out of any optimism we may feel for the team ... Paulie takes some time out to hurl some tomahawks at our readers, hitting on a slew of different issues surrounding the team.



Since it is still summer and it is still (at least technically) baseball season on the North Coast, I took in a couple of games this week at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario with a few thousand of my closest friends as the Indians only have eight home games in July and...well, the way this thing is going, I'm not sure how the team I'm going to be that interested to see the team after July if the Indians are still maintaining their "consistent approach" of playing middling players at the wrong position, capturing defeat from the jaws of victory, and overwhelmingly sucking the life out of any optimism we may feel for the team.

Nevertheless, and with that rosy picture painted, let's release some Tommies:



In case you haven't noticed (and the empty seats in the Mezz near me tell me that may not have), the Indians are now 2-13 in their last 15 games against Milwaukee, the Cubs, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and the White Sox. The combined winning percentage of those six teams, year to date as of Thursday, is .501 (193-192).

Against a mix of teams whose combined records almost improbably suggest that the Indians were facing the MLB average, the Indians went 2-13.

In case you were wondering, the next off day is Monday before the West Coast trip, then the All-Star Break a week later...have I ever mentioned that off days are nice days to make a change?



After [Castro's justified tirade](#) in which he joined my long-stated confusion as to why The Ben Francisco Treat continues to receive steady AB for this team (check out [this comparison from April 30th of how Michaels and Dellucci were actually more productive than Frisco](#)), I thought I would do a little research as to how The Frisco Kid has fared this year against Andy Sonnanstine of the Rays and against all pitchers not named Andy Sonnanstine.

I'm not sure if your stomach is ready for this, but...

Frisco vs. Andy Sonnanstine - 2009

1.000 BA / 1.000 OBP / 4.250 SLG / 5.250 OPS with 3 HR, 8 RBI in 4 plate appearances

Frisco vs. non-Andy Sonnanstine pitchers - 2009

.213 BA / .293 OBP / .286 SLG / .579 OPS with 1 HR, 15 RBI in 266 plate appearances

Take away Frisco's four (FOUR!) AB against Sonnanstine and you're looking at a player that's challenging for [the lowest OPS in MLB among players with more than 250 plate appearances](#). A 23-year-old Luis Valbuena has an OPS that is 50 points higher than Francisco (non-Sonnanstine division) this year!

Would now be a good time to mention that Francisco has the 5th most plate

appearances of anyone on the team to date?

Didn't the Royals once express an interest in obtaining Francisco...assuming they don't see those numbers for the now-27-year-old, any chance there still might be some interest?

How many times can these rhetorical questions be written about Frisco until he stops seeing everyday AB...would now finally be a good time?



Much has been made regarding the importance of Fausto Carmona to the Indians going forward (admittedly by me, and I think we can come to the conclusion that his impact on the 2009 season was not a positive one), so we've all been watching these box scores as Fausto makes his way up the minor-league ladder in the hopes that he can somehow find his 2007 self down there on the farm.

To that end, Al Ciammaichella over at Tony Lastoria's Indians' Prospect Insider attended Carmona's rehab start for Akron in Bowie and while Fausto's stat line certainly looked good (7 IP, 4 H, 1 ER, 0 BB, 5 K), Al went that extra mile after the contest and called the Bowie Bay Sox director of media relations to see if he could speak to Bowie manager Brad Komminsk (yes, that one...the old Aeros' manager) and his coaching staff about Carmona, his stuff, and the Bowie hitters approach to Carmona.

Here's the report from the Bowie side via [Al at his post at IPI](#) :

When I asked Komminsk what he thought about Fausto's start, the first thing he said was, "that is just not the same Fausto." He said that Fausto used to be a power pitcher, aggressively attacking hitters with his fastball to set up his devastating sinker as his out pitch. He thinks that Carmona is a good 8 MPH slower on average with his pitches, and is trying to be a finesse guy. He mentioned a couple of times that all Carmona really did was do a good job getting a poor-hitting AA team out for 7 innings (Bowie's roster doesn't have much in the way of position player prospects now that Brandon Snyder has been called up to AAA). I asked him and hitting coach Moe Hill if they told their hitters to make any

adjustments for Fausto (lay off the sinker, make him throw strikes etc), and they both said no.

Komminsk, Hill and pitching coach Larry McCall all said that his sinker was nothing special Tuesday night. McCall did say that Carmona's slider was better Tuesday night than he remembered, but he couldn't understand why Carmona has gotten away from throwing his changeup, which McCall thought could be an out pitch for him. McCall and Hill agreed with Komminsk that Carmona had gotten away from his power-pitching mentality; McCall even went as far as to say that Carmona looked like a "right-handed Jeremy Sowers out there." Ouch. Komminsk and Hill both said that the strike zone was "huge" in the game for Carmona, and Komminsk said he thought that Carlos Santana framed the ball well enough behind the plate to get Carmona a number of borderline pitches that shouldn't have been called strikes.

Komminsk seemed almost frustrated with Carmona's outing. He said that Carmona was one of the best pitchers he has coached, and can't understand why he has gotten away from the power pitching mentality that made him so successful. McCall closed our conversation by telling me that he thought Carmona was better when he saw him pitch for the K-Tribe several years ago in Kinston than he was last night.

Tremendous stuff from Al, but...oof.



As for another pitcher who brings up very emotional reactions, can we all just agree that Chris Perez's first outing went just about as poorly as one can imagine and move on from there?

Let's hold off on sending the package with the Ricky Vaughn glasses down to the corner of Carnegie and Ontario to his attention because of a lousy inning of wildness and let's hold off on dubbing him a "bust" after one outing.

Perez is still, as [Christina Kahrl of Baseball Prospectus says](#) , "as blue as blue-chip relief prospects get";

and while that may not say much about relief prospects, Perez's standing as a potential future closer is almost universal in the baseball community. Beyond looking simply at him, Kahrl has (in the

[same piece](#)

) a tremendous take on the acquisition of Chris Perez in the greater sense of what could be called a seismic shift in organizational thought pertaining to bullpen "philosophy":

Now, perhaps acquiring Perez, as blue as blue-chip relief prospects get without getting overly oxymoronic, reflects something of an adaptation, as the Indians forgo the indignities of employing roster nomads of various price points, and just go get somebody who's young and can deal mid-90s heat.

After watching the last few years of relievers, is anyone else ready for an "adaptation" in acquiring bullpen arms?



As for the other bullpen arms that may be following suit in that "adaptation", [FOX Sports's Jon Paul Morosi was the first to report two of the alleged names on the PTBNL list from the Cardinals](#), Jess Todd and Francisco Samuel.

The first name on the list is that of [RHP Jess Todd](#), who was ranked as the [#5 prospect in the Cards's organization going into this year by Baseball Prospectus](#)

(Chris Perez was #3) who has posted a career MiLB 2.80 ERA, 1.04 WHIP with a high 9.1 K/9, a manageable 2.4 BB/9 since being a 2nd round pick out of Arkansas in 2007. While those numbers are certainly good, his performance this year as a 23-year-old in AAA certainly represents his best effort to date, posting 45 K to 9 BB in 36 IP while compiling a 2.50 ERA and a 1.02 WHIP.

The fact that this season is the best that Todd has put together is relevant because this is the first year that Todd has been used exclusively out of the bullpen and his response to that transition (he's finished 24 out of the 30 games he's pitched in AAA with improvements across the board) is what has put him on the prospect map and resulted in him getting a taste (albeit a brief one with one

appearance on June 5th) of MLB about a month ago.

The transition to the bullpen for Todd is detailed quite nicely [here with the piece stating that he throws a low-90's fastball and commands his slider very well](#) and presupposes that the two-pitch mix will play well out of the bullpen, which it obviously has in Memphis.

Todd would look to be a pretty safe bet to be able to contribute right away and the fact that he was not simply chosen as the PTBNL leads me to believe that the Indians are waiting to see what happens with the other name purported to be on the list, [Francisco Samuel](#) .

Samuel is the 22-year-old closer for the Cards' AA affiliate whose K/9 rate of 11.1 this year shows that he definitely has the ability to miss bats but (not unlike Perez) sometimes he's missing bats because the ball ends up outside the strike zone, as his otherworldly 8.0 BB/9 rate this year attests. He's currently sitting on a 4.55 ERA and a 1.58 WHIP portends that he may still be harnessing the 94 MPH to 95 MPH "stuff" that [FutureRedbirds.com said last September is the key to his development](#) :

"You also have to wonder if he will add even more to his 94-98 MPH fastball as he fills out. There's a lot to dream on with Samuel, you just hope that he gets his control to at least a passable level."

While the other name (or names) remains a mystery (and the Indians have until September 1st to make a decision), the two names listed give you the idea that the Indians are rightfully looking to stack their upper levels with bullpen arms and Todd represents a close-to-MLB-ready choice that may never develop into a true "back-end" type of reliever but could be the steady presence that the Indians have lacked while Samuel is a pitcher that they can watch to see if his control improves to add another viably electric arm to the bullpen mix.

If you're asking me, without knowing who those names are...just go on and take Todd already - he's an upgrade over what the Tribe has in the system and he could help tomorrow.

But that's me, sitting up in the Mezz wanting for this madness to end.

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~~By the way, I'm not sure if you can see the video I linked to [here](#) and~~

I was going to embed the video, but it's just too painful.

You want the death knell for the season?

There it is in living color and moving pictures...Wedge's Waterloo, out there for everyone to witness as the bullpen meltdown punctuated by Prince's Granny has put the Indians into a 2-15 tailspin, providing the final nail for the 2009 coffin.

Have I mentioned that next Monday is the next off day after today's off day and that the All-Star Break begins a week after that?

Also, have I mentioned that off days are good days to make changes?