

The throttling of the Indians offense continued yesterday, as the Rangers polished off a series win by beating the Indians 4-1. Scott Feldman was his normal workmanlike above-average self, but what really got Buff's attention was the spectacular two-inning performance of Neftali Feliz, who struck out the first five hitters he faced and has been simply amazing in his 21-batter major-league career. Buff also points out how inefficient the offense was, notes the unpredictability of the identity of the hitter who actually made contact off Feliz, and tries valiantly to say something interesting about Jeremy Sowers. Tries. **FINAL** 1

<b>Rangers (64-49)</b>	0	0	2	1
<b>Indians (49-65)</b>	1	0	0	0

W: Feldman (12-4) L: Sowers (4-8) S: F. Francisco (16)

Can we scotch all that &quot;miraculous comeback&quot; talk now?

## 1) Truth and Beauty

Again, I usually reserve the first slot for the analysis of the Cleveland starter, but that can't be the case today, as we first must consider the Sliced Bread Department: namely, one Mr. Neftali Feliz.

Redonkulous.

Mr. Feliz has now faced 21 hitters in his major-league career. One hitter clubbed a home run off him. That is a shame.

The other 20 hitters made outs.

13 of those hitters were struck out.

This gives Feliz a 13:0 K:BB ratio, a 0.15 WHIP, and a 17.55 K/9. He holds right-handed hitters to a ZERO POINT ZERO OPS.

But these stats are mere video game stuff, small-sample gorks that don't tell a complete picture. I mean, 6 2/3 IP is simply not enough to draw a lot of conclusions from.

But watching him pitch, I have drawn a conclusion: Neftali Feliz is preposterous.

Look, it is one thing to say that Feliz throws in the upper 90s. He does this, and has apparently touched 101. Okay, that's fine. Matt Anderson and Kyle Farnsworth threw hard. Upper 90s is good but hardly sufficient. Heck, Chris Perez threw nearly as hard yesterday.

But this points out one difference: Chris Perez throws in the upper 90s because he involves every muscle in his body except his pyloric sphincter. Chris Perez throws hard because he TRIES to throw hard. He WORKS to throw hard.

Neftali Feliz looks like he is playing catch.

In addition, Chris Perez has walked 20 hitters in 37 2/3 innings because of this max-effort sort of delivery. Perez can throw one inning at a time, and sometimes the ball does not go where he wants it to go. Neftali Feliz has walked zero hitters because he appears to be able to bisect mealworms with his pitches. Yes, Feliz threw 9 balls in 28 pitches, but at least a couple of those appeared to be "purpose balls" to get a hitter to try to swing at an unhittable pitch.

The other thing about Feliz' uncanny command is that the umpire yesterday was giving all pitchers the outside pitch. I don't mean outside corner: I mean outside

pitch. And Feliz took advantage of this, striking out a couple hitters on pitches that were probably not really strikes in the book sense. But on the other hand, if you are getting that pitch, why not THROW that pitch? Feliz did, and he was rewarded for it.

Another factor in Feliz' repertoire was the mythical "90-mph changeup"; it seems ludicrous to talk about a 90-mph pitch being a changeup, even in comparison to a 100-mph fastball, but the fact is, the pitch was not notable so much for its speed difference but for the amazing amount of late movement it had. He threw one pitch to a left-handed hitter that started in the middle of the plate and ended up over the outside corner. It moved like a Mariano Rivera cutter. In fact, because of his grip, I'm not sure it's really a true "changeup," but more of a split/cut hybrid I couldn't adequately identify. All I know is that the pitch was a little slower and moved a LOT more. And it was a strike.

(He also threw a "slider" that I couldn't distinguish from Tommy Hunter's curve on Wednesday: it went about 78, and again, it hardly matters what I CALL it, except "strike two.")

Neftali Feliz is 21 years old and is likely to pitch in the bullpen for the rest of the year, but he's been a starter in the minors, and that's probably where he'll return if the Rangers brain trust has any smarts. Given that Hunter, Nippert, and Holland have looked good in the rotation at points and Scott Feldman has blossomed into a FOR starter, I would have to believe they do.

By the way, Feliz struck out the first FIVE Indians he faced.

## 2) The humor of the cosmos

The only player to hit a fair ball off Neftali Feliz was Jhonny Peralta, who is second

on the team with 94 Ks on the season.

### **3) Contractural obligation**

Here is where I struggle for something interesting to say about Jeremy Sowers' outing. He gave up 8 hits, including 4 for extra bases, two from left-handed Josh Hamilton. In his defense, Hamilton is very, very hot right now.

Otherwise, he gave up 4 runs in 5 1/3 innings and walked only one batter. He struck out the same number of hitters as Jess Todd, who did not pitch, Doug Jones, who is retired, Lemmy Kilmister, who is not a professional baseball player, and Woodrow Wilson, who is dead.

And thus I fail.

### **4) Ducks on the pond!**

The first three hitters in the Cleveland lineup did a good job of setting the table: Grady Sizemore hammered out two singles, Jamey Carroll poked two singles into right and drew a walk, and Asdrubal Cabrera laced a single to right and laid down a sacrifice bunt. For the game, the three hitters were 5-for-10 with a .500 OBP (6-for-12).

Because the next two hitters were a combined 0-for-7 with 3 Ks and a sac fly, they scored a total of one run.

The 6 & 7 hitters got into the act, going a combined 3-for-6 with a walk and a HBP, combining for an astonishing .625 OBP. Because the next two hitters

showed the skill normally associated with parasite-infected killifish, they scored a total of zero runs. Trevor Crowe and Chris Gimenez may not have gotten any hits in their 8 trips to the plate, but they did strike out only 4 times and grounded into only one double play.

Actually, this is mostly Gimenez: 3 whiffs and a GIDP. Huzzah! (He plays FIRST BASE, a position from which you normally expect ... well ... OFFENSE.)

The Indians batted 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position, although, of course, they did get the one sacrifice fly.

## **5) Modest request**

In the off-season, I would like Joe Smiff to have cosmetic surgery to remove some of his chin, then grow a sad, wispy moustache. Then he needs to wear elevator shoes on the mound.

At that point, you could not tell he was not Jeff Nelson.

## **6) Silver Lining Dept.**

Raffy Perez only gave up two hits in one inning to lower his WHIP.

Because he did not give up a run, his ERA is now down to 9.00.

Chris Perez threw twice as many strikes as balls. The fact that only one of his

four hitters saw a first-pitch strike will not be mentioned, as it conflicts with the heading title.

## **7) Stop the madness!**

Please! No more stolen base attempts for Grady Sizemore in 2009! I'm begging you! Getting caught 8 times in 18 tries is beyond awful. Stop doing it. I know he's been good in his career (successful on 73.5% of his tries before 2009), but he isn't this season, so please ... just stop. Think of the children!

## **8) Nice hose!**

Kelly Shoppach gunned down Marlon Byrd to end the 9<sup>th</sup> inning. Sure, Byrd had stolen a base off him earlier in the game, but it was still a nice peg.

## **9) Schadenfreude update**

For the second consecutive day, the White Sox failed to score a run.