

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

Ladies and gentlemen, your last place Cleveland Indians. Yes, this is what its come to. A four game sweep at the hands of the vaunted Oakland Athletics. Eight losses in a row. A 61-88 mark. And two victories still needed in their final 13 games to avoid losing 100 games this season. Buff checks in today to talk about the four losses against the A's, hitting specifically on the starts turned in by Carmona, Sowers, Huff, and Masterson. Buff also makes the argument for Lou Marson as the team's starting C in 2010, and calls Jamey Carroll "adorable" for the 874th time this season.

FINAL

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

R

H

E

Unathletics (61-85)

0

0

0

0

2

0

0

0

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

0

2

6

0

Athletics (68-78)

1

0

4

0

0

0

0

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

0

X

5

7

0

W: Mortensen? (2-2) L: Masterson (4-8) S: A. Bailey (25)

FINAL

1

2

3

4

5

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

6

7

8

9

R

H

E

Cloids (61-86)

0

0

0

0

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

0

0

0

0

1

1

6

0

Athletics (69-78)

0

0

2

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

0

0

0

0

0

X

2

7

0

W: B. Anderson (10-10)

L: Huff (10-8)

S: Ziegler (7)

FINAL

1

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

R

H

E

Oafs (61-87)

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

0

0

0

3

0

0

0

1

0

4

9

1

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

Athletics (70-78)

4

2

0

1

1

0

0

0

X

8

16

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -



W: Kilby?! (1-0)

L: Sowers (6-10)

S: Wuertz (4)

FINAL

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

R

H

E

Self-Immolators (61-88)

0

0

0

1

0

1

1

0

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

1

4

8

2

Athletics (71-78)

0

5

0

0

0

4

1

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

1

X

1

5

1

W: Eveland (2-3)

L: Carmona (3-12)



Ladies and gentlemen, your last-place Cleveland Indians!

1) Fausto Carmona and the Defense of No Help

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

A quick glance at the stat sheet shows that Fausto Carmona has not magically transmogrified into his formerly-effective self overnight, or even overweek. In fact, he was terrible and awful and also very bad, giving up a rather-incredible 9 runs (8 earned) in 5 2/3 IP.

The good news is that he only walked one batter and threw over 65% of his pitches for strikes.

The bad news is ... well, c'mon, he gave up 9 runs in 5 2/3 IP.

At least this raised his ERA.

But a more-careful look at Carmona's game shows that while he certainly could have pitched better, he certainly didn't deserve to get flambéd to the tune of nine freaking runs. Look at the second inning, for example:

Suzuki: HBP

Okay, that's pretty much Fausto's fault.

Cust: single to right

This was a bloop that looked like it may have been struck by a pre-ripened banana.

Ellis: single to "shallow right center";

Or, one might say, "deep second base." Ron Belliard playing his his customary position would have caught this ball.

Barton: sac fly

Hairston: single to center

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

ANOTHER bloop hit. I was almost encouraged at this point that Carmona has found a new way to induce weak contact. In a sense, it could be even more effective than his ground ball stuff in that it is a pitch in the strike zone a batter has to swing at, and it doesn't depend on our infielders making lots of defensive plays.

Well, I mean, SOMEONE has to make a play.

But this was not a well-hit ball, more of a "lunge job" that flared in front of the CF.

Pennington: error by LF Trevor Crowe

Really, now. We've seen the replay, and Crowe just botched the play. I'm not going to get on Crowe to any great degree here: he lost it in the sun, and he should have caught the ball, but to err is human and all that.

Kennedy: "single" to center

Although this would have been a tremendous catch by Crowe, I find myself wondering: you have just watched four guys hit weak bloop in front of outfielders: has it occurred to Mike Brantley or Crowe at this point that maybe shading Kennedy a few steps in (especially batting left-handed: Kennedy has some pop with 11 homers, but not opposite-field pop) might be in order?

Davis: single to right
Sweeney: groundout to pitcher, RBI

Davis' hit was solid, the first of the inning. Sweeney's ball ... I dunno, I'm not sure why with the bases loaded that produces one out. Carmona is not an intuitive fielder.

So, 5 runs, 4 of them earned ... and they got ONE SOLID HIT. One! Look, Carmona spun perfect innings in the 1st,

3
d

, and 5
th

: in the 4
th

, he allowed a double but retired the other three hitters.

He got ahead of guys in the count, threw first-pitch strikes to 20 of the 29 hitters he faced, and pretty much prevented solid contact through five innings.

It may only be in the Herm Edwards sense, but we can build on this.

The sixth ... well, the sixth was not good. After a one-out walk to Daric Barton, Carmona gave up a pair of doubles that were true doubles, each on the first pitch.

Why Carmona got to pitch after that is anyone's guess.

It would appear that Tony Sipp takes a long time to warm up, or Eric Wedge is a heavy sleeper, but Kennedy homered and Davis singled and Sipp let Davis score on a booming double of his own, and suddenly we're talking 9 runs instead of, say, 6.

Let Sipp face the left-handed Kennedy and who knows where this inning ends?

Anyway, you can't really claim that Carmona pitched WELL, but really, he didn't pitch ABYSMALLY. He sure pitched a lot better than the stat sheet ended up.

2) Simple, yet effective ...

... and putrid.

You think I'm going to make the same kind of argument for Jeremy Sowers? Are you out of your mind? The
first hit he allowed was a HOMER.

In OAKLAND.

This isn't the Baker Bowl or New Yankees Stadium.

Ellis hit the ball HARD.

As did Suzuki, reaching the wall for a double.

Yeah, Barton had a bloop, and Pennington beat out an infield hit, but ... no, that was a pretty sound four-run first inning.

To Wedge's credit, given an inning to hit the snooze button, he pulled the plug on Sowers after a four-pitch walk and a pair of sharp singles in the second. And then Tomo Ohka, apparently seething at being passed over for Jeremy Sowers, allowed two runners to score on a wild pitch and a grounder to short ("See?

I was trying to get them out, really!

The runs got charged to you?

Snicker!").

But really, now, how much analysis do you need to tell you that giving up 6 runs on 9 hits and a walk in ONE INNING PITCHED is a bad outing? Go look up [Carl Pavano's first start](#) .

(For the record, Pavano's Game Score was 3. Sowers' was 11, so he was almost four times as ... aw hell, who am I kidding? It sucked. Suck is suck.)

3) The Bert Blyleven Commemorative Unsupported Start

Don't look now, but David Huff appears to have figured something out.

Over his past four starts, each of which was a Quality Start, Huff has lowered his ERA by nearly a full run (6.80 to 5.98 ... okay, that's still bad, but look, once you start with a 6.80, improving it by a run is all that can reasonably be requested), going at least 6 full innings each time out. Yeah, 6 innings is not a superlative number of innings, but it is a Quality Start number of innings.

Once again, Huff produced good results by limiting the opponents' hard hits (1 of 7 hits was for extra-bases, a double), pitching well with runners on base (Oakland hit 2-for-10 with runners in scoring position off Huff), and building on his ability to miss bats (8 swinging strikes, including 3 swinging strikeouts).

In fact, the A's really only threatened once: it was their ability to make good on the threat that doomed Huff, as Nomar Garciaparra laced an RBI double that set up the second run as well. Well, that and the fact that the Indians offense offered roughly the same level of support as the Maginot Line did to Belgium.

Poor Belgium.

They even have the same colors in their flag in the same proportions as Germany, and the Germans ran 'em over anyway.

That's just rude.

And so is giving David Huff zero runs of support.

Over Huff's last four starts, he has these aggregate stats:

25 IP
23 H
8 BB
13 K
8 R
0 HR

That's a 2.88 ERA: the K rate is still too low and the BB rate is still too high, but the homerless outings are crucial to Huff's long-term success. I mean, he doesn't need to give up zero homers over 200 innings to be successful, but he has to hold hitters under the .500 SLG he has allowed over the season at large, and he's been doing that.

4) It's the white pentagonal thing!

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

Great Scott, does Justin Masterson begin throwing strikes at some point? Consider this:

8/14 @ MIN: 3 1/3 IP, 5 BB

8/20 LAA: 6 1/3 IP, 4 BB

8/25 @KC: 6 IP, 2 BB

8/30 @BAL: 5 2/3 IP, 4 BB

9/5 MIN: 6 IP, 5 BB

9/11 KC: 6 IP, 4 BB

9/17 @OAK: 4 IP, 4 BB

Are you kidding me? The KC game stands out with only 2 walks ... and the Royals rank next-to-last in the AL in unintentional (and total) walks (to the Mariners)!

The Royals almost CAN'T walk, so only walking them twice is like walking any other team four times, making seven straight Royal-adjusted games of 4 or more walks for Masterson!

I mean, look: Masterson has stuff, he strikes out some guys, he didn't pitch well in Oakland, blah blah blah.

If he can't cut the walks down, he has no place in the rotation.

It's that simple.

He struck out 6 in 4 innings and I barely care.

Strike out 6 and walk 4 and you end up throwing 93 pitches before the fifth inning starts.

Unless Masterson gets stretched out to throw 180 pitches a game, this is not a sustainable recipe for success.

I'll say this: I've been discussing offline who goes into the starting rotation next season, and I'm not writing Justin Masterson's name in pen. Throw strikes!

5) Super Happy Clutchness Action!

Thursday: 1-for-8 with RISP (Marson)

Friday: 1-for-6 with RISP (LaPorta)

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

Saturday: 1-for-12 with RISP (Carroll)

Sunday: 1-for-12 with RISP (Hafner)

Don't be concerned! That's still two outs shy of falling to .100! Who wouldn't take .105, after all?

Really, now. Guys. Please. Yes, some people are still watching. Please stop phoning this shit in. I'm dyin' out here.

6) Around the bullpen

Jensen Lewis was quite excellent, giving up 2 hits and a walk in 3 scoreless innings with 5 Ks. His Thursday appearance was particularly strong, with 1 hit and 0 walks in 2 IP with 3 Ks.

Raffy Perez managed to give up two hits in 1 inning. Juan Veras managed to walk 2 guys in 1 1/3 innings. Neither man should pitch an important inning for the remainder of the season, which is a problem, since there will *be* no more important innings for the Cleveland Indians in 2009.

Jess Todd flashed the form that made people think he can be an effective major-league reliever, striking out two of the three hitters he faced in a perfect inning. He **lowered** his ERA to 9.77.

Chris Perez had a nice perfect inning. So did Kerry Wood, which inflamed my liver.

Tomo Ohka ate innings. Tony Sipp wasn't very good.

Apparently we still have this thing called "Mike Gosling."

7) Look! A handful of straws!

Lou Marson is looking more and more like a viable candidate to start the season as Cleveland's starting catcher in 2010. Yes, Carlos Santana is more talented, but he just finished the year at AA and could arguably use some time in Columbus. (He also could arguably be thrown into the deep end of the pool, but there are valid points on each side of the ledger.) Yes, Kelly Shoppach is more experienced and has more power, but he's probably going to get number-crunched by the arbitration process.

Yes, Wyatt Toregas ... wait, no, that has no bearing on the argument whatsoever.

Wyatt Toregas is a schmoe.

Forget I mentioned him.

Anyway, Marson had a nice 3-for-4 night on Thursday, on a night when the rest of the team combined to go 3-fo-28. He hit his second double of the season off otherwise-excellent closer Andrew Bailey and scored Cleveland's first run. Yeah, he took a 3-AB collar the next night with a pair of whiffaroonies, but the man looks like he can hit major-league pitching, despite allowing 3 of 4 would-be basestealers to reach successfully.

Matt LaPorta has quietly collected 12 hits in his last 10 games, including a two-out RBI double Friday night off righty-eater Brad Ziegler. Four of the 12 hits have been for extra bases, and LaPorta is slugging .514 since the All-Star break. La Porta's puny total of 8 walks in 165 PA does not bode particularly well for long-term success, but it doesn't take a lot of projection to think that LaPorta is trying very hard to cram a lot of hitting into the severely limited sample the Indians have allowed him this season, and that a more-regular walk rate might be expected if the team just PUT HIM IN THE LINEUP EARLY IN THE SEASON AND LET HIM HIT INSTEAD OF WASTING TIME WITH LOW-POWER SCHMOES.

8) The swan is warming up

Kelly Shoppach may not have a long-term role on the team, but I haven't heard a single negative thing attributed to him regarding his greatly-decreased playing time, and he's actually

The B-List: 9/17-9/20

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Monday, September 21 2009 7:00 PM -

hitting very well recently. He has four multi-hit games this month, including one Friday night, and is hitting .333/.412/.567 in September and .257/.369/.446 since the All-Star break.

I don't know what the tendering/trading rules are for a player like Shoppach: can you trade him before the arbitration-offering deadline?

If you offer and he accepts, can you trade his rights?

If you sign him to a one-year deal, can you move him in the spring?

My point is, I can understand not wanting to pay Shoppach what an arbitrator is likely to give him: he has limitations as a player, he'll be 30 in April, and we have Marson and Santana in the catching pipe.

But the man certainly has VALUE, and I certainly wouldn't cast him off for NOTHING.

By the way, if a team could ever afford to platoon catchers, Shoppach is hitting .327/.446/.673 against left-handers this season. In the three years before this one (2006-8), he hit .298/.376/.621 against left-handed pitching. Heck with catching, you would take that as Big Papi's or Jim Thome's platoon partner at DESIGNATED HITTER. I mean ... that's good.

(Caveat: the samples are not large.)

9) The continued case for Grady Sizemore, #3 hitter

Michael Brantley reached base in each of the four games, going 1-for-5 with an RBI, 2-for-4, 0-for-3 with 2 walks, and 3-for-4 with a walk. Sunday's performance was particularly notable in that it came off erstwhile left-handed starter Dana Eveland and Brantley is ostensibly left-handed. Oddly enough, in MINISCULE sample sizes, Brantley is actually hitting lefties at a preposterous .579/.636/.684 clip.

(Sadly, his .578 OPS against righties is less inspirational.)

Sure, Brantley still lives in the Tyner Zone and doesn't appear to have the instinctual defense of Sizemore in center, but I'm not necessarily advocating he take over defensively. I just want him in the leadoff slot next season.

His OBP is .395 and hasn't been below .359 at any point in his embryonic career.

It would look funny to have a powerless left fielder, but really now: we've had powerless left fielders for a while now, and we still score runs.

Plunk Brantley in left, LaPorta at 1B, and forget about it.

10) Of note

Crowe may have had his adventures in left field, but the man hit two triples in the four-game set.

That's pretty cool.

(I still prefer Brantley, but Crowe can be a 4th

OF at this stage of his career.

Or, in fact, for the remainder of his career.

I am not a big Trevor Crowe believer.

But two triples in 4 games is still neat.)

11) Pointless nonsense

Niuman Romero. Andy Marte. To a lesser extent, Adorable J. Carroll.