

In typical 2006 Indians fashion, the Tribe beat the Twins and prized rookie hurler Francisco Liriano on Thursday night, then proceeded to drop the final three games of the series over the weekend. Steve Buffum takes an especially biting look at the weekend action in his customary Monday edition of The B-List.



Anemic (adj.): 1. Of, relating to, or suffering from anemia 2. Listless and weak; pallid

3. Cleveland Indians offense

1) How many seams are there on a beachball?

I admit to not knowing a whole lot about Jeremy Sowers' repertoire. He has been described as one of those left-handers that "knows how to pitch" and "hits his spots," which is euphemistic for "has no stuff." This isn't entirely true, of course: you have your John Tudors and your Jamie Moyers and at the top end your Tom Glavines. Of course, you also have your Dave Ottos and your Glendon Rusches and your Chris Nabholz.

At what point can I become concerned that Sowers' major-league goal seems to be to try and kick Bert Blyleven's ass in the Home Runs Allowed department? With three more (admittedly solo) shots Sunday, Sowers has now given up seven home runs in his last four starts, including at least one every game. He gave up a leadoff homer to Luis Castillo, which is virtually impossible to do (his last was in 2000, and has fewer career leadoff homers than Mighty David Eckstein). He gave up a home run to Rondell White, which in 2006 had BEEN impossible to do (it was his first). Without the Todd Hollandworth River Blindness Show, he would have given up 3 runs in a very economical 7 innings (only 81 pitches), but the man has a 7.15 ERA and is Totally Taterific.

He did induce 4 double plays and 14 ground outs, which is nigh magical. That's real cool, I admit. And he didn't walk anyone, which is also good. I am not asking for his removal from the rotation because this is the time to see what he's got, but by golly, one thing I have seen quite enough of is the split-fingered gopher ball. Great googly moogly.

2) Silver Lining Dept.

C.C. Sabathia tossed a complete game, which is really good in the sense that "complete" means that the game is over.

There are elements of a good game hiding in there. 7 Ks and 0 BBs is very nice, I admit (84 strikes in 115 pitches). A 12:5 GB:FB ratio is cool, if a bit out of character. 13 hits and 6 runs (4 earned), eh, not so good.

The half-full/half-empty dichotomy took place right up front, as Broussard's butchery and Belliard's blunderbussery led to two unearned runs right off the bat. The pessimist would point to the "give up" game where he lost his composure, in that he was clearly frustrated after the sac fly and hit Cuddyer on an 0-2 pitch. The optimist points out that he settled down and didn't give up another run until the 4th: in fact, through seven full, Sabathia only gave up 2 earned runs. I'm leaning toward the optimist here, but facing Johan Santana, the margin for error shrinks considerably.

3) Department of Inefficiency Department

You look at Paul Byrd's line and see 75 strikes in 102 pitches; that looks very good. And heck, it wasn't a bad result, with 7 hits, 2 runs, and only 1 walk. Then you look up and see 5 1/3 IP and you wonder, "How the hell does somebody throw 100 pitches in 5 innings when he's pitching well?"

Part of the answer can be seen in Torii Hunter's second-inning strikeout:

Strike (looking), Strike (foul), Foul, Foul, Foul, Foul, Ball, Foul, Foul, Strike (swinging), **T Hunter struck out swinging**

Great Scott, that's a lot of pitches for a punchout. Eyeballing the game log, it looks like Byrd walked that invisible line between "eminently hittable" and "frustrating them off balance." With a pitcher of Byrd' calibre, staying on that line doesn't get you a whole lot, just a trip to the showers in the sixth inning.

4) It's a bird! It's a plane! It's ...

... well, hell, I have no bloody idea what it is. - T. Hollandsworth

Hey, getting on Hollandsworth's case for losing a ball in the Metrodome ceiling is like getting all self-righteous when your spouse spills a drink. You've spilled a drink. I've spilled a drink. We all have, so welcome to the club. Hollandsworth becomes roughly the nine billionth person to lose a ball in the Metrodome ceiling since it first opened, which still puts it behind the old Astrodome.

On the other hand, it happened with two outs and yielded Sowers' only non-homer runs, so I had to mention it.

5) I am Trade Asset, hear me roar!

Hollandsworth: 0-for-8, 3 Ks, 0 BB Boone: 0-for-7, 1 K, 0 BB Broussard: 1-for-11, 2 K, 0 BB

Hey, Gil Mota threw 2/3 of an inning and only walked *one* guy.

6) We're bad as hell and we're not going to take it any more!

Wait, did I type "bad?" Freudian slip.

They're **mad!** **Mad**, I tell you! And at 3-for-8 with a walk and three runs scored, Joe Inglett

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Sunday, July 16 2006 7:00 PM -

and Ramon Vazquez formed the most consistently-productive lineup slot over the course of the weekend.

Which, by the way, does not say good things about the lineup.

7) Bullpen fever!

Except for Eddie Moo, the bullpen was pretty darned good, tossing 4 scoreless innings behind Byrd Friday and another perfect (if completely pointless) inning Sunday. Describing Rafael Perez' outing (wild pitch, intentional walk) in a positive light is too great a challenge for this writer, but Betancourt, Carmona, Mota, and Cabrera approximated a power-righty bullpen that conjured up images of Eric Plunk, Paul Shuey, and Teddy the Wonder Lizard.

Mujica had been fantabulous (0.00 ERA coming in), until he wasn't. And he sure wasn't. Ptui!

8) Obligatory mentions

Travis Hafner is really good, hitting another home run off another lefty who is considered to be "pretty good" (in the way that Denali is considered "pretty tall";).

Casey Blake gathered up three hits and a walk in two games, including one in the two-hole against Santana. If he stays hot, perhaps we'll see less of Belliard et al in front of Hafner and Martinez.

Victor Martinez caught Nick Punto stealing third. This appeared to make Punto unhappy, but I'm not sure; maybe someone can clear that up for me. Ron Gardenhire was also "nonplussed";