

The B-List 7/24

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Sunday, July 23 2006 7:00 PM -

Does Jeremy Sowers translate to a Major League stud or dud? How great can a starter be while only working 5 innings? Is there anything worse than a Twin reliever? How good would it be to change lives with Grady Sizemore? Today's B-List touches on each of these and even offers a fun new game to be tried by the Indian's infielders.



Boy, that Floyd Landis is some athlete, isn't he? What an impressive comeback!

1) The Rod Nichols Commemorative Shutout

Jeremy Sowers had the kind of outing Saturday that many fans have been hoping for since he began racking up impressive numbers in Beefalo. Not only did he manage to keep the ball in the ballpark (for the first time in a major-league start), but he went the distance in 104 pitches, 75 strikes, and allowing only 5 baserunners (4 H, 1 BB), one of whom was erased on a double

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play. The only batter to see ball three walked. He only struck out 4, but that is not Sowers' game as far as I can tell. In short, it was a beautiful outing.

I guess the thing that concerned me most about Sowers was the propensity to give up home runs: he had given up at least one in every start and 7 total in fewer than 23 innings, nearly a HR/9 rate of 3. (Anything over 1.4 is very bad.) And the reason I'm fixated on that is that it is the one stat I wanted to see translate from AAA to the majors: Sowers is never going to have double-digit K rates or Brandon Webb's ground balls. He is going to change speeds, hit spots, and annoy people in the Glavine/Tudor/Maddux/McGregor mold. (I know Maddux is right-handed, bear with me here.) One indicator of whether the spots are good enough or the speed changes are good enough is taterosity: you might get away with a few misses in Toledo or Rochester, but not Chicago or New York. It's only been five starts, so I'd be loathe to draw any sweeping global conclusions either from a 4-hit shutout or from more gophers than a Whac-A-Mole game at the arcade, but Sowers' ceiling isn't real high, he'd better be close to it, or his value is virtually nil.

2) You can't "dominate" a game you play half of!

Yes, Francisco Liriano is terrific. Hoo boy, yes. And striking out 10 guys in 5 innings while giving up only 1 run is really impressive. But it was FIVE INNINGS! The man left his bullpen to clean up four full innings. It was a very good outing, to be sure, but I am bloody tired of reading that Liriano was Super Nifty and the Main Reason the Twins won Sunday. Okay, he was Super Nifty. He pitched **half the game**. And if Cleveland could play a lick of defense, he would have lost 1-0.

3) Have I mentioned that I hate the Minnesota bullpen?

Look, which is more impressive: 5 IP, 4 H, 3 BB, 1 ER, 10 K or 4 IP, 2 H, 0 BB, 0 R, 7 K? Do you really want to trade that extra strikeout for four baserunners and a run? The bullpen was better than Liriano was. They just weren't as "sexy."

Here are the ERAs of the four relief pitchers Minnesota used: 0.00, 1.38, 2.03, 1.54. I realize that Some Guy Neshek has a very low sample size and is not a 0.00 pitcher (since no one is), but that's just sick.

4) Have I mentioned that I hate infield singles?

I should have. Because I do.

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Look, when you give up your first run by virtue of two bunts and a somewhat-routine ground ball to short, that really, really sucks. Sure, Westbrook would have had to make a nice play to snag the first bunt. But two bunt hits in one inning is really crappy, and Peralta's play on the ground ball was just poor. If Peralta makes that play, we cruise to a 1-0 win; if Victor Martinez holds the damned ball on a nice throw by Casey Blake, we go to extras (where, given their bullpen vs. ours, we lose anyway, but hey).

Here's a Gestalt Experiment: let's say you buy a really good Super Soaker, one with a range of at least 150 feet. You fill the chamber with bromine, and strip the Cleveland infield (including Westbrook) to their shorts. Give them each a glove and tell them they can't leave the dirt but can try to block the bromine stream with their gloves. Spray them until you're tired of it. The question: would this make you feel better?

(I think so.)

5) The hidden gem!

Sure, I spoke ill of Brian Sikorski last time, but that's because he gave up a homer right away. We already have relief pitchers who can accomplish this, although in his defense, they usually walk a guy first. He did strike out two guys, but it's a small sample, nu?

In his last seven outings with San Diego, Brian Sikorski pitched 7 innings and struck out 7 guys: in only one outing did he strike out zero. In his three outings with Cleveland, he has recorded 3, 4, and 3 outs, 2, 2, and 3 of which were via the punchout. That translates into an 18.9 K/9 rate. I don't know what Brian Sikorski throws, but the man can strike people out. I like that in a relief pitcher.

6) Managerial Head Scratchers

There is no argument on Earth that would convince me that pinch-hitting Ramon Vazquez for Kelly Shoppach is anything but a terrible, terrible idea. Shoppach is right-handed and so is Joe Nathan. So what? Kelly Shoppach can hit and Ramon Vazquez cannot. That's just a bad, bad decision.

7) Invoking the Thumper Rule

C.C. Sabathia pitched on Friday, and the defense was on the field with him. Thumper's mother's advice prevents me from elaborating.

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8) Hey, we had one of those!

And now we do again: Jason Davis was the King of Beefalo as the closer, powering his stuff past guys like Jeff Manto and Uncle Mort From Kalamazoo. In Minnesota, eh, not so good. 5 hits, 1 walk, 4 outs. See, this is what I'm talking about with Sowers: I'm just worried that the stuff that gets Clippers and Mud Hens out doesn't necessarily work as well against Twins and White Sox and Tigers.

Oh, by the way, I think Beefalo needs a closer. I have a guy in mind.

(I should point out that Eddie Moo wasn't any better, but I have not been annoyed by him for years as I have with certain other Beefalo closers.)

9) My life is good

Grady Sizemore had an off day yesterday: he only reached base three times out of five (he did steal a base, though). Prior to this, Sizemore went 3-for-4 with 2 walks (one double) and 3-for-4 with one walk (three doubles). He is also featured in ESPN the Magazine and turns down roughly nine thousand marriage proposals per week. It would not suck to be Grady Sizemore.

10) Joltin' Joe!

Getting on Joe Inglett's case for going hitless with a K yesterday seems petty, since he had plenty of company (of the twelve hitters to make an appearance, only pinch-hitter Ben Broussard did not whiff). He did have a hit and a sacrifice Friday and three more hits Saturday (including a triple, the most exciting play in baseball not involving Cleveland trying to field a ground ball): he is probably not truly a .303 hitter at the major-league level, but the man can play in a Joe McEwing kind of way. I'd take that, especially if it comes at the expense of anyone whose name rhymes with Shamon Schmazquez.