

The B-List: 4/12

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Tuesday, April 13 2010 12:17 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, April 14 2010 8:14 AM

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FINAL

1

2

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Rangers (4-3)

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0

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Indians (2-5)

1

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W: F. Francisco (2-2) L: J. Wright (0-1) S: N. Feliz (1)



Where is Nicholas Swerbinsky when you need him?

1) A reasonable step forward

I'm not ready to break out the ¡Fausto! moniker yet, but Carmona clearly looks better this season than last. Sure, there is still room for improvement, but it's hard to argue that he isn't throwing well thus far.

Consider the first three innings: in each inning, Carmona recorded a swinging K, at least one groundout, and only two baserunners on a walk and single total. The swinging Ks may actually be more encouraging than the groundouts: for the game, Carmona's GB:FB ratio wasn't really very good, but at the start of the game, he was clearly hitting hit spots low, and two of the other outs were harmless infield popups (one foul).

In the 4th, he made a mistake to Nelson Cruz, and although it's possible that left fielder Austin Kearns could have made a fine catch on the ball at the wall (the ball appeared to hit the webbing of his glove, but it would have been a very good catch), the resulting triple was a

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well-hit ball. Kearns DID make a fine play on a diving catch at the line on Chris Davis' subsequent fly down the line, but that ball wasn't hit nearly as well (had it been a hit, it would have been more due to location than any Super Whacking). On the other hand, despite the outfield shots, Carmona got through the 4th in only 7 pitches, putting him at a very manageable 51 through 4.

The 5th inning ended up being the only damage done to Carmona, and it is illustrative to see whether the damage is something we can live with or not. Joaquin Arias reached on an infield single and stole second. After getting Taylor Teagarden swinging for his 4th K, Carmona then lost focus and walked Elvis Andrus on 5 pitches. So to this point, Carmona has had a bit of bad fortune and a self-inflicted wound.

Julio Borbon flied out, but Mike Young smacked a solid RBI single up the middle while the speedy Andrus took third. And then with a 1-1 count to Josh Hamilton, Carmona uncorked a wild pitch that resulted in a second run. All told, there's one solid hit, one infield hit, and two lapses of control.

(Note: had Mike Redmond not been hit three times earlier in the inning on bunt attempts, he may well have at least blocked the pitch. But it wasn't a good pitch, either.)

To his credit, Carmona worked three more innings, erasing an HBP with a DP in the 6th, stranding two in the 7th, and bracketing a walk with three routine outs in the 8th. All told, it was a fine start.

The good news, of course, is that Carmona only allowed 5 hits and 2 were infield singles. He allowed two runs in 8 innings for his second Quality Start. He made a nice fielding play to turn a 1-6-3 double play. And he got 4 swinging Ks, suggesting some real Plus Stuff. The bad news is that he put up 6 Witt Points (4 BB, 1 WP, 1 HBP) and now sports a backwards 5:10 K:BB ratio for the season. 4 walks is still too many walks. 69 strikes in 111 pitches isn't bad (62%), but that's still five guys who get on base without a hit.

The absurd news is that Vladimir Guerrero, a man with no knees and the plate discipline of a root hog, both DREW A WALK and STOLE A BASE off Carmona. That Daily Double would have won you \$53,000 on a \$100 bet in Las Vegas.

2) A running leap backward while wearing a jet pack with a gale force tailwind being flung from a catapult through a hypergravity spacetime anomaly

Chris Perez.

3) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Look, the man completely ran out of gas THE DAY BEFORE. I understand “putting him back on the horse” and “restoring his confidence” and “at least he’s not Joe Smiff,” but great googly moogly: what made you think it was a good idea to run him back out there THE DAY AFTER he completely loosened his bowels DUE TO FATIGUE? Am I missing something here?

Anyway, C-Pez faced three hitters. After starting 3-0 to Arias, C-Pez got two strikes looking, a foul, and yielded a double. Those represented 4 of the 5 strikes he threw in 12 pitches.

Taylor Teagarden tried to be out. He DEMANDED that C-Pez convert him into an out. “I want to make an out!” he exclaimed. “Out or bust!” He bunted to C-Pez. He ran down the first base line, happily chirping, “Out! Out! Out! Out! Out!” C-Pez is no better at throwing the ball to first base than he is to the plate. Teagarden was not out. He briefly considered charging the mound at being thwarted in his INSISTENCE that he be out, but thought better of it when confronted with an insane man with an ur-mullet.

Then Andrus walked on four pitches and Redmond set C-Pez on fire.

4) Jamey Wright giveth!

With the bases loaded a NO ONE OUT, Tony Sipp was called out. See, you can call out Tony Sipp with the bases loaded. Even Tony Sipp will throw a strike on occasion. He got Ryan

Garko to pop out, much the the Not Surprise of most Cleveland fans.

And then Jamey Wright was called in.

Now, I have to admit: I was listening on the radio at this point, transporting my son home from an appointment. "Jamey Wright?" I asked my radio plaintively. And the Rangers guys said, "Wright is one of the most extreme groundball pitchers in the majors."

Did you know that? I did not know that. Largest ears, perhaps. Most likely to impersonate Lee Westwood, sure. Extreme groundball stuff? I did not know that. Of course, it isn't actually true, but the guys can't be blamed too much because he posted a great 1.73 GB:FB ratio in his last season as a Ranger. Anyway, he has groundball stuff.

One pitch. Ground ball. Double play. Huzzah!

5) Jamey Wright taketh away!

And then he sucked.

6) Nice hose, you bastard!

Casual fans may have wondered why Travis Hafner was sent home from second on a routine single to center field. Rangers fans did not wonder, because Julio Borbon sported a Damonesque arm in the outfield last season as a rookie. It was a bad arm, one redolent of easily-detected parabolas and not a small amount of polite chuckling.

Borbon has apparently worked in the off-season developing his arm, because the throw was excellent, and Hafner was out. From the replay, it is not clear that Hafner could not have

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hook-slid around Teagarden instead of trying to play Strong Safety, but ... you know, if asked, I would probably have guessed that Hafner's skill lies more in the Strong Safety arena than in the Hook Sliding one.

7) You gotta be kidding me

The Indians were unable to convert their 2-through-5 hitters or a double by Shin-Soo Choo into a run against Darren Oliver because he STRUCK OUT THE SIDE. Darren Oliver! Who is thirty-nine! I remember seeing him pitch for the Rangers before ... IN NINETEEN NINETY-FOUR! (I did not see his debut the year before.)

The Indians were unable to score a run in the bottom of the ninth off Frank Francisco, which ... well, geez, have you seen Frank Francisco this season? In his previous two outings, Francisco gave up three runs in 1/3 IP to SEATTLE, which has the offense of a Cherrystone clam, and 3 runs in 2/3 IP to Toronto, who employs John McDonald. In the Indians' defense, Matt LaPorta SMOKED a ball that Andrus snared with a fine play, and Luis Valbuena hit a ball to fairly deep right, but ... guys. Please. Francisco came into the game with an ERA of 27.00 and a WHIP of 5.00. A WHIP of FIVE! Goodness.

8) Back on track

After homering the day before, Shin-Soo Choo gave the Indians an early lead in the first with his second home run. On the day, Choo went 3-for-3 with a walk, scoring twice and also hitting a double. His line has skyrocketed up to .250/.419/.542. And now, perhaps we should consider putting Not Mike Brantley in the 2 hole.

9) Top-light

The opposite of top-heavy, this refers to the top two slots in the order, where Asdrubal Cabrera sports a .281 OBP and Mike Brantley sports a .208 OBP.

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Sadly, there's no much in the way of options here: Sizemore is still recovering from a back strain (but should return soon), and my other choice for the 2 slot would have been Valbuena, who took an 0-for-4 collar and has a .304 OBP anyway. In retrospect, putting Kearns in the second slot might have worked, but ... well, I wouldn't have given that a lot of consideration before the game, frankly.

10) Terror on the Basepaths!

It is one thing to give up a stolen base to Vlad Guerrero. Hey, I saw Boog Powell steal a base. As a Cleveland Indian.

It is a second thing to give up another stolen base to Wock Arias. He's pretty fast, sure.

It is not a good thing at all to give up a THIRD stolen base ... in the 10th ... when your reliever is ostensibly out there to get a double play.

Now, it is a good thing when your best hitter, Shin-Soo Choo, is able to steal THIRD base, his second successful theft of 3rd this season.

But it is NOT a good thing when you best hitter cannot count to "two" and takes off running on a routine fly ball with one out and gets so doubled off first he might as well have Germany Schaeffered and tried to steal home from first. Where is the first base coach on this play? Where is Choo's cerebral cortex? Where is the damn crowd? Forty thousand people and none of you could get his attention?

(That's just a brain-free play right there.)

11) Small Sample Size Follies

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Choo has a 3.333 OPS at home.

Mike Redmond is slugging .273. His OPS is 273 points higher than that of the other catcher, Tofu Lou Marson.

Austin Kearns leads the team in doubles and batting average.

The Indians have 6 pitchers with an ERA under 3.25. They also have 6 pitchers with an ERA over 6.20. There is no middle ground.

Each Perez has a WHIP of 3.00 and an ERA of 9.00. Each is still better than Frank Francisco.

12) Mea culpa

I thought signing Austin Kearns was a bad idea. He's been valuable to this point. Let's see what happens when Branyan arrives, though.