

The B-List: 4/21

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Thursday, April 22 2010 12:07 PM - Last Updated Thursday, April 22 2010 7:49 PM

The Indians were thoroughly flummoxed by Francisco Liriano, and David Huff was thoroughly flummoxed by the radical task of throwing strikes. In today's B-List, Buff recaps the game in all its glory, which takes about one sentence, then discusses the other less glorious aspects of the game, which takes about three pages. Actually, the write-up is kind of short, but look: how much detail do you want of THAT? They were good. We were bad. Lettuce is good. Peeps aren't food. End scene.

FINAL	1	2	3
Indians (6-8)	0	0	0
Twins (11-4)	0	3	0

W: Liriano (2-0) L: Huff (1-2)



We need a Team Optometrist.

1) Credit Where Credit is Due

I'm not going to go into as much detail about Francisco Liriano's start as I did with Slowey. There are a few reasons for this: first, I am less confident that Liriano's performance is sustainable. Second, I thought Slowey actually pitched a better game (not results-wise, but in terms of predicting future results). Finally, I thought Liriano got some help in establishing a strike zone that was, to my eye, observably below the knee.

To Liriano's credit (or Joe Mauer's), once it was established that he was going to get that low strike, he pounded those spots. For the first few innings, Liriano had a stretch in which no Cleveland hitter hit a low pitch solidly, but every high pitch was roped with authority. This is the one part of the performance I feel comfortable talking about: if Liriano is able to pitch low in the zone (both because those are strikes and because he can hit those spot), I don't see how you would beat the guy. His stuff is nasty. It moves and is hard to do anything with. And let's be

explicit: Liriano did a good job commanding and locating his stuff last night. He did.

The final factor, though, is that I don't believe the Cleveland Indians offense offers you an opportunity to correctly evaluate a pitcher. It is like defeating a four-year-old in wrestling, or a drunken eel in a footrace. To say that Francisco Liriano shut down the Cleveland Indians is to say the sun was able to defeat the gravitational pull of Halley's Comet. Yes, it was. What did we learn from this? That a supermassive ball of plasma has more gravitational influence than a hunk of ice and rock. This is news?

2) Don't bail now, you're going to want that seat

David Huff's start was not good. When you walk 6 guys in 6 innings, toss out a wild pitch, and give up a solo shot to the opposite field, you haven't pitched very well. In addition, Huff only generated 2 swings-and-misses in 102 pitches, which is more like the Old David Huff, which, of course, was a Pretty Bad David Huff.

And I don't mean to spin this into saying, "But he only gave up three hits!" or anything. I'm aware of the whole "Other than that, how did you like the play, Mrs. Lincoln?" meme. The four runs were earned, although one of them was due to the wild pitch (Brendan Harris scored from second on a single to center; the next batter made an out). Do you know how you give up three runs on two hits? You walk two guys and throw a wild pitch. That's on Huff.

However, look: I'm not willing to abandon Huff after a bad start. He still had the same kind of STUFF he flashed in his first two starts. He retired the Big Two of Joe Mauer and Justin Morneau 3 times each in 3 PAs each (0-for-6 with a GIDP by Mauer). Yeah, a 7:10 GO:FO concerns me a bit, because some of those flies were pretty deep and Target seems to be playing large to this point. Crank up the heat to July and move the park to Arlington or the Bronx and we could be talking about Huff challenging Bert Blyleven's gopher record.

But while Huff didn't have his best (read: ANY) control, he did throw pitches that were not entirely fat. And everyone has a bad start, except Roy Halladay. Anyway, I still think this is going to be a good year from Huff. This game, not so much.

3) The Worst Plate Appearance in the World

The Indians had one chance to score multiple runs last night: in the top of the 5th. Mark Grudzielanek led off with a single to left, then Jhonny Peralta coaxed an absolutely HEROIC walk from Liriano. Look at this plate appearance:

Strike (looking), Strike (looking), Ball, Foul, Foul, Ball, Foul, Foul, Ball, Ball

Wait for a pitch you can drive, even if it means falling behind. Don't swing at a ball, even with two strikes. Ruin good two-strike pitches ... FOUR of them. Take your base.

Then Matt LaPorta struck out swinging, which is pretty bad, but I don't want Matt LaPorta bunting there. I do not have faith in Matt LaPorta's ability to bunt, and at some point, he needs to be the guy driving men in with extra-base hits. More reps, please.

Then Mike Redmond comes to the plate. Redmond is an ex-Twin, and Minnesota fans in a chat last night opined that at some point a pitcher would plunk him. Also, he can neither hit nor run. He is outstanding at being struck with baseballs, but otherwise, has no discernable baseball skills.

Redmond hit an infield single.

I want you to think about this for a moment. Redmond is ninety-seven years old and has been a catcher since the age of four. His knees sound like crumpled wax paper. If you input "Redmond" into the internet English-to-Spanish translator, it comes back "Molina."

Mike Redmond hit an INFIELD SINGLE.

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Now, consider this inning to this point. Grudzielanek hit a 2-1 pitch. Peralta forced Liriano to throw 10 pitches. Redmond hit his "single" on the 21st pitch of the inning.

And Asdrubal Cabrera hits the first pitch ... an outside half pitch ... *pulling* it ... into a 5-4-3 double play.

Combined with his wicket error yesterday, I'm thinking Cabrera might be Minnesota's Player of the Series.

4) Ducks on the Pond!

You know that infield single I mentioned? It was especially notable because it marked the hit Cleveland got with a runner in scoring position. Yes, singular. The Tribe went 1-for-6, and the one hit did not score a run because it's hard to score from second on a ground ball hit halfway to the third baseman. The Indians left 7 men on base in all.

5) Grasping at straws

You know what was really encouraging? Both Austin Kearns and Travis Hafner belted opposite field doubles. It's really ... um ... it's ... good when your power hitters ... I mean, not really all the way out of the park or anything, but ... you know ... going the other way ... taking what's available ... extra bases ... opposite ... power ...

... aw, hell. This really IS grasping at straws.

6) Actual encouragement

Tony Sipp threw a perfect inning. Sure, he threw 13 strikes and 8 balls and went to a full count

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on two of the hitters, but he didn't lose either of them, and struck out Brendan Harris. Hey, it beats walking two guys an inning. An effective Tony Sipp would go a long way toward keeping those 4-0 games from becoming 6-0 games.

7) That's what Aaron Laffey is for

Okay, yeah, Mauer and Morneau are good hitters, and Mike Cuddyer is hot (hitting .344/.373/.557, leading the Twins in SLG). But you really want to do something other than give up a hit to EACH of them.

8) Quote of the Night

I've known [Bob Collins](#) for a long time from the pre-web days, and he got off a line I warned him I was going to steal. I suppose I am not stealing it, technically, but hey.

"I fear that Grady has to improve a little bit to get to the point where he legitimately can be called the most overrated player in baseball."

Damn, that's gonna leave a mark.

9) Hopeful hope

Jhonny Peralta reached base in each of his first three trips to the plate, getting a single and a pair of walks.

The Indians out-hit the Twins 7-6.

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No one swallowed his tongue.

10) I am ready

For Matt LaPorta to stop sucking now.