

Here is where I have to write eighty words to show in the intro on the front page. Eighty words, eighty words ... such wonderful words, and eighty of them. It can be more, of course, it's just a formatting formality, but eighty of them ... well, it is hard to come up with eighty words. Do you know why it is hard to come up with eighty words? Because I can only think of about sixty-five synonyms for "suck."

FINAL

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The B-List: 4/30-5/2

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, May 03 2010 1:57 PM - Last Updated Monday, May 03 2010 2:06 PM

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The B-List: 4/30-5/2

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, May 03 2010 1:57 PM - Last Updated Monday, May 03 2010 2:06 PM

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Indians (9-13)

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The B-List: 4/30-5/2

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W: Slowey (3-2)

L: Carmona (3-1)

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Twins (15-9)

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Indians (10-13)

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W: J. Wright (1-1) L: A. Burnett (0-1)

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Twins (16-9)

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Indians (10-14)

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W: Liriano (4-0)

L: Huff (1-4)



The Indians have lost the last four series in a row 1-2. In six series not involving the Chicago White Sox, they have lost six of them with a total record of 5-13. In other news, I will be “chatting” on ESPN’s “BBTN Live” while drinking Scotch Ale. Guess which activity I am more likely to enjoy.

1) Man overboard!

David Huff pitched again, and once again, the promise of the first two starts melted into the reality of the last three. In his past two starts, he has yielded 9 baserunners in 6 innings, 13 baserunners in 5 1/3, and 12 baserunners in 5. For those counting at home, that’s a brisk WHIP of 2.08 over those three starts.

"David didn't have command at all," Acta said. "He threw a lot of balls right down the middle of the plate and they really hurt him."

Well, no [f&@#ing shit](#). You’re telling me the guy who gave up three homers and 10 hits in 5 innings didn’t have excellent location? Next time, we will learn that the guy who struck out

7 times in the three games is “having trouble making good contact.”

Okay, that’s not fair to Acta, who is simply relaying the fact: David Huff’s command was craptacular. He’s a flyball pitcher, and with neither location nor movement, some of those fly balls are going to end up in the bay, which is bad, because the game was played in Cleveland. And it’s not entirely fair to Huff, who hasn’t done anything more significant than make three consecutive starts with sub-zero command.

But look: in his first two starts, I saw a glimmer of a starter who could be not just effective, but GOOD, with the caveat that it required good command to do so. I suppose it would be one thing if he simply pitched poorly: some guys are simply not major-league pitchers. Tomo Ohka’s “stuff” last year, for example, was textbook Replacement Level Stuff. What you saw was what you got: there is no mystery behind the “collapse of Tomo Ohka.” He didn’t “collapse.” He just “pitched.”

But I have empirical evidence that Huff’s “stuff” will play in the majors. In fact, David Huff’s “stuff” will play at Pre-Meltdown Cliff Lee levels (pre-2008). Teach him a decent cutter and he can stay in the rotation ‘til he’s tired of doing it. But there is a prerequisite, that is “command.”

You can’t farm him out: he needs to develop this command Right Here, Right Now. And really, his start was far from disastrous: it may have been on the short side, but all his runs came on the homers. Two of the homers were solo shots, minimizing the damage. Sure, he also gave up a pair of doubles to Justin Morneau, but Morneau is hitting .349/.477/.663 and is glowing like a character on the old NBA Jam arcade game. But damn! Get me some command, pronto!

2) Principle of Parsimony Dept.

Fausto Carmona had his worst outing of the year, giving up 6 runs on 8 hits, including a two-run bomb from Justin Morneau, who is hitting .333/.507/.686 off right-handed pitchers and was able to score a goal for the Montreal Canadiens against the Pittsburgh Penguins by controlling the puck with his mind from 100 miles away. If you told me at this point that Justin Morneau could eat lead and poop gold, I would probably believe you.

Regardless, here's what I have to say about Fausto Carmona's outing: it wasn't a good outing. And I'm not especially concerned.

Basically, Fausto threw, for the most part, like Fausto: he has an 11-to-5 GO:FO ratio and the hitters generally said they felt lucky to get hits off him. There is always the possibility that the Twins were buttering him up, but really, his stuff looked fine, he just made a few more bad pitches than normal. He had an off day. I checked, and it turns out the sky is not in the process of losing its grip on the firmament.

It is true that had Matt LaPorta handled the potential double-play grounder, he would have escaped the 2nd inning without giving up any runs. It is also true that there were two outs when he gave up a two-run single to Orly Cabrera. Some things are still your fault.

3) The Hershiser Principle

I remember Orel Hershiser once saying off-handedly that he liked pitching on short rest because it made his ball sink more when he threw a little tired. I can't find the quote and it may be apocryphal: I know I'VE attributed this quote to him at least six times, so at this point, I might be quoting me, who is not the most reliable source.

Anyway, clever reader Don Saverno alerted me to something about Masterson's outing: in the first couple of innings, his pitches were flat and straight, while in the later innings, he didn't seem to be throwing as hard (according to the Prog's gun: who knows about Objective Reality?), and his pitches has great movement and the Twins looked largely helpless. Is this something the Principle of Parsimony should apply to as well? Heck if I know. I do know that Masterson is at his best when his pitches have movement. Whatever it takes to get there should be done. (For example, perhaps Mike Scott could show Masterson where to scuff the ... I mean, how to throw a splitter. Yeah, that's what I meant.)

Certainly giving up a homer to Denard Span in the 2nd suggests a lack of one's best stuff, as well as an 80-mph tailwind and Christopher Lloyd with wings. Giving up a homer to Denard Span is the equivalent of letting Mo Williams dunk on your sorry ass, Paul Pierce. Wait, did I say that out loud? Excuse me. Suffice it to say that Denard Span entered the game with a .278 SLG and a .067 ISO. This man considers Jason Tyner a role model. Later, though, it's just a

solo shot to Justin Morneau, which is the equivalent of having your red blood cells carry oxygen.

One of the more impressive stats about Masterson's outing was that he threw 82 strikes in 117 pitches: in a related note, Masterson only walked one hitter and struck out seven.

4) Welcome to the club!

Hector "Chip" Ambriz made his debut for the Indians on Friday at the expense of Joe "Joe" Smiff, who was sent down because ... well, really now, because he's Joe Smiff. Rocket science, this is not. Ambriz is a Rule 5 pick from Arizona, meaning that he'll have to stick on the major-league roster (he was hurt to this point) or Arizona will likely take him back. Relief pitchers are fungible, but they are not infinite, and if Ambriz can pitch, it's not like he's blocking a lot of Super Awesome Guys in Akron and Columbus.

On Friday, Ambriz flashed some power stuff: although being taken to the wall by Del Young for a loud out on his second pitch, he sandwiched a single between a pair of groundouts for a scoreless inning.

On Sunday, the results were less spectacular, which is to say, "shitty." Four straight hits produced a pair of runs, although the second was "unearned" because Lou Marson couldn't handle a force throw home. However, he did get Morneau, who was feeling merciful by this point, to foul out, and struck out Alexi Casilla and Young swinging on four pitches each.

For the most part, Ambriz throws strikes and looks to have strikeout material. He had a preposterous 15:1 K:BB ratio in 8 IP in Columbus. I wouldn't know him if he sawed my legs off, although I'd probably be pretty annoyed if he did. I'd say he reminded me of Raffy Betancourt if, in fact, he did. I'm pretty sure I'm going to like him more than Smiff, though.

5) We'll just start calling them "GIJW"

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In 2007, Jamey Wright induced 15 double plays (“GIDP”) in 77 IP.

In 2008, he induced 13 GIDP in 84 1/3 IP

In 2009, he induced 11 GIDP in 79 IP

In 2010, he has induced 3 GIDP in 11 IP.

Wright bailed out Raffy Perez’ sorry ass with a double play with the bases loaded and one out. Sure, he was bad in the next inning, but hey. You need a double play, you know what to do. (Aaron Laffey has 2 in 14 IP as well.)

Oh, BTW, he also pitched in relief of Aaron Laffey on Saturday. Laffey had walked two hitters. Wright gave up an infield single. The next hitter grounded into a Jamey Wright.

6) Dept. of Fredo Corleone

Raffy Perez.

7) Process v. Results

On the surface, it would appear that Grady Sizemore had a fine series: sure, he couldn’t do anything with Frank Liriano, but we (almost) all knew that was going to happen. In the other two games against right-handed starters, Sizemore went 2-for-5 with a run scored and an RBI.

One thing, though: of the 10 outs Sizemore made, SEVEN of them came via the strikeout.

Now, I happen to be one of those “stat nerds” who believes there is little intrinsically wrong with striking out. There are absolutely times in which a strikeout is damaging, but over the course of a season, a strikeout is pretty much an out.

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But one of the reasons the strikeout doesn't seem like that big a deal when talking about players like Adam Dunn and Jim Thome is that they MASH. You may consider it an "all-or-nothing" approach, but by golly, at least there's an "all." If there's not power involved, then striking out just suggests that you can't hit the damned ball.

Grady Sizemore is slugging .310 with an ISO of .103.

I am perfectly willing to believe that there's something physically wrong that he's compensating for. I'm perfectly cognizant of the concept of the Small Sample and this could just be a tough start.

But Grady Sizemore does not LOOK like an effective batter. His swings are not good. His balance is not good. And the results are most CERTAINLY not "good."

I am concerned.

Here's the thing: Sizemore is hitting .294/.351/.471 against righties. Hey, that's pretty good. I will take that guy. I will even bat him second. But he is hitting .207/.271/.310 overall. What does this tell me? Two things:

- a) He cannot hit lefties: I mean, like, he TOTALLY can't hit lefties
- b) He is getting ENTIRELY too many PAs against lefties.

Way, way, way, way too many. A negative number would be preferable.

8) Managerial Head-Scratchers

I am not sure what it would take to stop putting the .271 OBP guy in the 2 hole, but I will tell you

this: putting the guy hitting .083/.154/.083 against left-handed pitching who has historically had trouble with left-handed pitching up against the resurgent Francisco Liriano is just self-mutilating. That boggles my mind. Also, I hate it.

9) The upside of “streaky hitter”

Since hitting his nadir at .143/.295/.245 after a Size 4 Collar in Oakland, Jhonny Peralta has gone 10-for-26 with 3 doubles, 1 triple (!!!), and a homer. He single-handedly ... well, okay, not SINGLE-handedly, but his hand was bigger than most ... kept us in the game we won, mashing a solo shot and igniting the game-winning rally with a double after a leadoff walk.

Strangely, Peralta has a severe REVERSE platoon split to date: .265/.345/.490 against righties, .154/.353/.231 against lefties. At least he's getting on base: in fact, at the beginning of the season, I would have taken a .348 OBP and .173 ISO from Peralta. The problem is that he's hitting .227. On the other hand, he's a notorious bad-April guy, so maybe this is the hot streak that lifts him into useful territory. Heck, his .748 OPS is **FOURTH-BEST ON THE TEAM**.

Oy.

10) Time for a new nickname?

Hey, I like the moniker “Tofu Lou,” but maybe we should start calling him “Diamond Lou” after a stretch like this: in Marson's last 4 games, he has gotten two hits in each game and produced all three of his extra-base hits (all doubles). He actually has a nice inside-out power-lite stroke on those doubles to right-center, a sort of Derek Jeter Junior swing that can be very serviceable.

Okay, his overall numbers are still terrible, but there's the off chance that Marson has actually settled down in his first major-league April and has figured something out. At the very least, this is the first stretch in which you could honestly say that Carlos Santana would not almost certainly have been more productive at the plate. Hey, he has a 1.181 OPS in May!

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11) Nah

It's four game. Also, I'm not giving up Tofu Lou that easily.

12) Take my Mark Grudzielanek ... *please*

It's not fair
I don't care
Mark Grudzielanek
Nothing rhymes with Grudzielanek

One more month, I guess. Jason Donald and Cord Phelps and Jason Kipnis are all not Mark Grudzielanek, so I prefer them.

13) Ducks on the pond, giving you the finger

Sunday: 1-for-10, with 2 GIDP. Sizemore 0-for-3. Spleen 1-for-1 w.r.t. exploding.

On Friday, we managed to go 4-for-13, which isn't bad. Except ... look, the Twins had 12 hits, we had 12 hits. The Twins had 5 walks, we had 3 walks. The Twins had 2 extra-base hits, we had 3 extra-base hits. The Twins grounded into two double plays, we grounded into 2 double plays. The Twins went 5-for-17 with RISP, we went 4-for-13. So how the hell did THEY score NINE runs, and WE scored THREE?!

14) Nice hose!

Shin-Soo Choo gunned down Justin Morneau at the plate.

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Mike Cuddyer gunned down Grady Sizemore at the plate.

I liked one better than the other.