

## The B-List: 8/1

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Tuesday, August 01 2006 7:00 PM -

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In today's B-List, Buff waxes poetic about last night's 6-3 win over the BoSox, and the terrific performance from C.C. Sabathia. Buff also hits on Joe Inglett slugging .544 on the year, Grady Sizemore's huge season, Casey Blake's triumphant return from the DL, and the enigma that is Fernando Cabrera.



Funny, I didn't see as many highlights of *this* game...

### **1) It may not be a recipe, but it appears to be an ingredient**

Remember last time I lamented the fact that C.C. Sabathia didn't seem to throw a "missable" ball? The Tigers seemed to foul off every strike they couldn't hit into fair territory. It was maddening, extended at-bats, and suggested a certain degree of ineffectiveness, even for a guy chucking 95 mph.

Through the first 2 innings, Sabathia had 3 foul balls and NINE swinging strikes.

Through 7 innings, the total was 7 fouls and 16 swinging strikes. In the 8th (Sabathia's last), the BoSox caught up with him or he started running out of gas, and there were 8 fouls to 3 swinging strikes.

Now, let's be serious: I'm not going to do a big sabermetric study about the correlation between miss-to-foul ratios and effectiveness or anything like that. Pitchers are different, and foul balls aren't in and of themselves bad things. And although Sabathia struck out 8, walked only 1 (Ortiz, not a terrible move) and gave up 1 run (on a solo shot to a non-power-hitter, Mark Loretta) in 8 full innings, he did give up 10 hits, including 2 doubles to the Big Guns (Ortiz and Manny Ramirez) and needed a double play and a runner gunned out at home (allegedly) to maintain the 1-run outing. He was not Super Nifty.

He was, however, Quite Good.

Look, it's a casual observation of something noticed more in frustration (at the Detroit outing) than any New Paradigm, but it would seem relatively intuitive that Sabathia is more effective when strikes are missed rather than fouled off. Although I kind of assume this applies to a lot of pitchers, I wouldn't be surprised if it were especially indicative in Sabathia's case, especially given the data point of the 8th inning signalling the End of the Line.

By the way, 81 of Sabathia's 111 pitches were for strikes. That's nice.

### **2) Hey, we had one of those!**

And one of those, and one of those, and ... heck, Boston is LOADED with ex-Indians. Even Rudy Seanez might ring a bell if you're old and obsessive enough: Rudy managed the

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impressive feat of averaging roughly one strikeout per inning in his Cleveland stint ('89-'91) ... and roughly one walk for every strikeout ... and roughly one run for every walk. Hard to believe we let him go.

Anyway, the top of the first inning was interesting to watch. Here are the first pitches to each batter:

Sizemore: Strike (looking)      Michaels: Strike (looking)      Hafner: Ball      Martinez: Strike  
(looking)      Bla  
ke: Strike (looking)

Choo: Strike (looking)

Peralta: Ball

Inglett: Ball

In fact, only TWO of the EIGHT hitters swung at the SECOND pitch (Martinez singled, Hafner fouled one off). Now, it's possible that Jason Johnson was throwing the ball with exceptional movement and location, nipping the corners with ... Wait, no it's not. It's JASON JOHNSON. I've seen this act before. It's more likely the hitters were distracted by the gravy dripping off the ball.

When I was in Little League, one coach had a philosophy: take strike one. Didn't matter if it was the first pitch or the fourth, take a strike. See what he's got. Since the pitchers in our league tended to have "accuracy problems," this was more to keep us from swinging at bad pitches and try to relax at the plate. Here, I imagine a conversation like this:

WEDGE: Okay, take a strike.      BATTER: But what if I fall behind in the count?      WEDGE:  
It's JASON JOHNSON.

BATTER: Oh, yeah. No sweat.

Don't believe me? Count the number of first-pitch swings in the SECOND inning. (That would be &quot;zero.&quot;)

Anyway, Johnson was really, really mediocre, with a WHIP around 2.00 but kept his team in the game by almost throwing a Quality Start (3 runs in 5 2/3, 1 out shy). Been there, done that.

### 3) Joltin' Joe!

Another home run for Joe Inglett! A mighty, titanic blast that ... was a golfed, jerked inside fastball that somehow made it to the Pesky Pole. Hey, he's a tiny middle infielder.

He's also slugging .544, including .800 in his past 7 games. Although this is clearly Small Sample Size Theater, it's pretty neat.

### 4) What, no gravy?

In the first inning, Casey Blake struck out looking.

I bring this up because he never made another out. He walked twice, scored once, and had two run-producing hits, including a home run off Johnson that landed with ice crystals on it. It is possible that striking out against Jason Johnson acted as the catalyst for this performance: I'm sure the ribbing was terrible.

### 5) Ho Hum Dept.

Grady Sizemore had three hits, including his 34th (34!) double of the season and stole second, which directly set up the first run and indirectly set up the second. (That is, Michaels took second while Grady was scoring, so that he could score on Martinez' single.) When your leadoff man sports an OBP over .380 and still slugs over .520, is that any good?

### 6) Adventures in Peeving My Pet

Ferd Cabrera trotted out to polish off the game. He was spotted a 5-run lead and faced the bottom of the order.

Now, frankly, at the beginning of the season, I thought of Ferd as the Most Likely Future Closer on the roster. His stuff is nasty, and his face has no movable muscles. He certainly could have gotten off the year with a better start (what, an ERA of 18.00 is not advantageous?), but his minor-league track record is one of a back-end bullpen guy. I know that Carmona has been given the first shot at the job, and as others have pointed out, it makes no sense to jerk him out of there after a couple bad outings. That would be worse than watching him fail, frankly: at least this way he gets a chance to show how he comes back from a bad outing. But it wouldn't surprise me terribly if Ferd's the closer at some point in the next couple years.

At which point I hope he STOPS WALKING THE GODDAM LEADOFF GUY.

All right, it wasn't the leadoff guy, Crisp made the first out, but damn. Gabe Kapler is a putz, and if he hits a home run, so what, they're &quot;only&quot; down 6-2? Come on, man, throw some bloody strikes!

Now, I know the next guy hit a home run, but it was a TWO-run home run because Cabrera couldn't throw a strike.

### 7) Game Log Follies

Things that are hard to fathom:

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Bottom of the 5th: David Ortiz reached on an infield single to pitcher. That must have been quite a sight. Bottom of the 9th: Mark Loretta made the last out of the game on a bunt to the pitcher. That's some strategy.

Doug Mirabelli, whose only mission in life to this point has been to catch Tim Wakefield's knuckleball, allowed a passed ball. Somewhere Josh Bard is chuckling.

### **8) Nice hose!**

Jason Michaels threw out Kevin Youkilis at home ... allegedly. Other than the bad location of the throw and the "tag," this was a brilliant defensive play.