

The B-List: 6/22

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}
Wednesday, June 23 2010 1:30 PM -

The Phillies scored twice in the bottom of the first, and the Indians answered with a run in the top of the second. And then nothing ... else ... happened. Jamie Moyer gave up the 505th home run of his career, but nothing else of note, and the Phillies stifled the Indians last night. In today's B-List, we look at just how similar the outings of America's Darling and Who's That Guy were, and the crucial points in which they differed.

FINAL

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8

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[9]

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[E]

[Indians (26-43)]

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Phillies (36-32)

[2]

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W: Moyer (8-6)

L: Talbot (7-6)

S: Lidge (5)



Today, thousands of children in American hospitals are being christened “Landon,” while thousands more are being named “Donovan.” Not so many are being named “Coulibaly.”

1) Compare

Most of the national press will be devoted to telling you how amazing Jamie Moyer is. And let's take nothing away from the man: he is an astonishing story, a man who can still pitch credibly at 47, who has as many years in the big leagues as Lou Marson has *years*. He was great last night, too: no "lucky with superior run support" for Moyer. He gave up two hits and a walk in 8 full innings of work, giving up only one run on the aforementioned blast by Russ Branyan. He was never in trouble and kept the Indians off the scoreboard except for the one inning.

On the other hand, consider Mitch Talbot's performance. He wasn't QUITE as dominating, giving up two runs on four hits in only 7 full innings. One more run, two more hits, and one fewer inning. Still, after a rough first inning in which he gave up a pair of runs, Talbot didn't give up anything else, holding the Phillies scoreless through the next six frames.

2) Contrast

One thing that Moyer definitely DID do better than Talbot was hit his spots. More than once, you could see the plot of the locations of Moyer's pitches to a hitter and marvel at their severe grouping. Somewhat counterintuitively for a man with no actual "fastball," Moyer worked INSIDE to right-handed hitters a lot of the time, inducing weak contact and nibbling at the corner. Moyer was rewarded with 5 strikeouts against only one walk.

Mitch Talbot ... did not do this. Mitch Talbot's groupings would look more at home in an amateur archery contest ... of seven-year-olds. I cannot tell you what Talbot's strategy here was, but I will say this: I think we can officially say that Tim Belcher's innovative "hand-buttering method" has been proven to be unsuccessful, and I highly recommend we stop using it.

This isn't to say that Talbot was a complete blunderbuss: Moyer threw 66 strikes in 107 pitches,

while Talbot threw 57 in 103. That's not super different. What was different was the result: Talbot ended up walking three hitters and striking out three as opposed to Moyer's 1:5 ratio. That made a big difference, as we'll see later.

3) Compare

By pounding the inside part of the plate and adding a little bit of late sink on his "changeup" and his "other changeup," Moyer was able to induce either weak contact or get the Indians' hitters to pound the ball into the ground. Because of this, he gave up only the two hits, but also faced only one situation in which the Indians had a runner in scoring position for a plate appearance. Because it came with two outs, Carlos Santana's fly ball to deep left was simply the third out and the Indians went 0-for-1 with runners in scoring position.

Talbot, in a sense, was only slightly worse, in that the Phillies went 1-for-1 with runners in scoring position. The problem was, that hit scored a run, and the subsequent sacrifice fly that followed doesn't count as an "at-bat." Talbot's deep fly came with one out instead of two, so a run scored, and that was the ballgame.

Talbot actually held the Phillies to fewer total bases than Moyer held the Indians to, 4 to 5. But well-hit balls were in short supply for both teams last night.

4) Contrast

The thing is, that "weak contact" and "ground pounding" was used to much better effect by Moyer. The first two innings involved six groundouts, and through 4 innings, Moyer had allowed exactly two balls to make it out of the infield (a homer and a harmless flyout). Along with his 5 Ks, Moyer got 14 ground ball outs against 5 flies (all to the outfield), one in each of the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th innings.

Talbot was a bit more hit-fortunate, inducing 9 groundouts and 9 flies, 8 of which went to the outfield. He wasn't really in danger of giving up a homer, but the Phillies were making better contact than the Indians were, and Talbot was the beneficiary of two double plays. One double play was ordinary, but the other prevented a run from scoring when the umpire ruled that Raul Ibanez interfered by going out of the baseline on his way to second with runners on the corners. Cholly Manual was ejected for arguing this, and frankly, I wouldn't have thought anything of it had the umpire simply not made that call.

5) Compare

Moyer batted twice and struck out once in two hitless plate appearances.

Talbot batter twice and struck out once in two hitless plate appearances.

6) Contrast

One batter.

That is the difference between Mitch Talbot winning a 1-0 game and losing 2-1, and not because someone got a key hit or a homer or the Indians missed a scoring opportunity (they barely HAD a scoring opportunity). No, the key batter came in the first inning: with a runner on first and one out, Talbot faced Chase Utley, who is hitting .264, probably not 100% healthy, and went 0-for-2 with a strikeout off Talbot after the first.

Talbot walked him on five pitches, no two of which were within a foot of each other.

See, if Talbot gets Utley there, there are two outs and a man on first for Ryan Howard. He singled, bringing up Ultra Beard. Werth's sac fly now becomes the third out (just as Moyer's

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long fly to Santana did not produce a run), and Talbot wins the game.

When Moyer had to throw strikes, he threw quality strikes. When Talbot had to throw any strike whatsoever, he tossed the ball around the yard like so much heated potato flesh.

There's your contrast.

7) Compare

Ross Gload, a career journeyman who probably has no place on a major-league roster and is on the wrong side of 30, pinch-hit for the pitcher and promptly struck out.

Shelley Duncan, a career journeyman who probably has no place on a major-league roster but has the advantage of being on the Indians' roster instead and is on the wrong side of 30, pinch-hit for the pitcher and promptly struck out.

8) Contrast

The Phillies had three legitimate scoring opportunities:

1st and 2nd, one out (1st inning): single, run

1st and 3rd, one out (1st inning): sac fly, run

1st and 3rd, one out (4th inning): dubious double play, no run

The Indians had three legitimate scoring opportunities:

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1st and 3rd, two outs (6th inning): fly out, no runs

1st and 3rd, one out (9th inning): K, no runs

1st and 3rd, two outs (9th inning): K, no runs

9) Compare

The previously-hurt previously-considered-washed-up right-handed closer came in for Philadelphia and retired every hitter he faced in his team's last inning.

The previously-hurt previously-considered-washed-up right-handed closer came in for Cleveland and retired every hitter he faced in his team's last inning.

10) Contrast

When the Phillies had their best scoring opportunities, they had their best hitters, the heart of their lineup, come to the plate, and they produced two runs.

When the Indians had their best scoring opportunities, they had their best hitters, the heart of their lineup, come to the plate, and they did not even put the ball in play (BB, K, K, end of game).

11) Managerial Second-Guessing

Against Brad Lidge, with a killer slider, facing right-handed hitter Jhonny Peralta, whose main weakness through his career is the willingness to swing at every low-and-away slider ever offered, wouldn't sending Travis Hafner up there and worrying about the infield defense (presumably Hernandez to 3B, Donald to SS, Valbuena to 2B) later?