

The B-List: 7/1

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, July 02 2010 2:14 PM - Last Updated Friday, July 02 2010 2:25 PM

The Magic of No Russ Branyan continues as the Indians plow through the Blue Jays once more, sweeping a 4-game set for the first time since Sir Edmund Hillary led England to a 2-0 win over Nepal. Today we will consider truly shocking contentions, like “throwing strikes is good,” “home runs are valuable,” and “Trevor Crowe had three hits.” Remember: if the Tribe extends its win streak to twenty-one, it will be a .500 team. Almost a fourth of the way there!

FINAL

1

2

3

Blue Jays (40-40)

0

0

0

Indians (31-47)

0

0

0

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W: Masterson (3-7) L: Marcum(7-4) S?!: Herrmann (1)



Except for one inning, Cleveland shut out its opponent ... and so did Toronto.

0) Administrative Note

Paul had a nice piece about how Russ Branyan was treated as a "whipping boy" by Cleveland fans. [Here is a post](#) I made on the topic.

1) Revisiting the Corner

When we have previously considered the Justin Masterson Starter Experiment, it became obvious that the Experiment began in a "good news, bad news" fashion:

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Masterson struck out a lot of guys ... but walked too many as well.
Masterson was death on right-handers ... but left-handers ate him for lunch.

As the season has worn on, Masterson appears to have found a little bit of something, as his monthly ERA have started to turn in the right direction:

April: 5.68

May: 5.97

June: 4.13

July: 1.08

Okay, July is one start. But June is clearly better than May, right?

Well, yes and no. If anything, it would appear than Masterson might have gotten a little lucky in June: in May, he struck out a robust 30 in 34 2/3 IP, but gave up a .308 AVG; in June, he only struck out 18 in 32 2/3 IP, yet the AVG plummeted to .235. Each month featured 2 homers, so a lot of this just becomes BABIP: as a groundball pitcher in general, a lot of the variance there isn't really within Masterson's control. In April, his BABIP was an absurd .436. In May, a still-ridiculous .378. In June, a more-pedestrian .263. .263 is a bit low and lucky. .378 is a LOT high and VERY unlucky.

(One interesting split: with Tofu Lou Marson as his catcher, hitters batted .287/.381/.392 off Masterson. With Santana, it's .269/.313/.324. The samples (especially Santana's FOUR games) aren't meaningful, but it's something to watch in terms of framing pitches, providing a target, and calling a game. Right now, Santana is better for Masterson.)

And the K:BB ratio was AWFUL in June: 18:15. That's lame, almost Laffeyesque. How can a guy do worse in terms of "stuff" but better in terms of "results?"

At least part of it is that is that he's doing slightly better in terms of approaching left-handed

hitters. I can't find month-to-month splits, but I know that his current line of .314/.393/.423, as bad as that looks, is MUCH better (especially from a SLG standpoint) than it was earlier in the season.

Anyway, Masterson limited the Blue Jays to 5 hits through 8 innings, shutting out Toronto with 5 Ks and no walks at all. He did give up three hits and a run in the 9th, but the Tribe was up 6-0 at the time and there wasn't much harm in letting him try to finish the game. The zero walks makes me especially happy.

2) The save rule: unintended consequences

Masterson left the game with the bases loaded and one out, leading 6-1. Frank Herrmann came in, threw 5 pitches, and got Jae Ho Molina to ground into a double play (and really, is there anything sadder than seeing a Molina try to beat out a double play relay?) to end the game.

By my calculations, if Herrmann had given up a grand slam there, he would *still be leading the game 6-5*. Sure, he'd still need to get two outs, but HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP A GRAND SLAM AND WOULD STILL BE LEADING THE GAME.

Anyway, congratulations to Frank Herrmann, who does get his first major-league save, and I understand it's well within the definition of the Save Rule, but that's still stupid.

3) Hey, we had one of those!

Congratulations to Brian Tallet, who gave up two hits and two walks but no runs in his two innings of work for a brisk 2.00 WHIP for the game and lowered his ERA to 5.70.

Just think: if we had only kept Tallet, we would have lost him again trying to sneak him through

waivers. Or maybe not. We still have Jeremy Sowers, after all. What is Mike Bacsik doing these days?

4) Twelfth-round rally

After being pummelled for eleven rounds and being behind on the judges' scorecards 110-95, Trevor Crowe drove in a run with a bloop single and collected three hits yesterday to raise his line to .253/.307/.343. When Mike Brantley gets called up after the Break, Crowe will drop back into his customary slot of "Just Some Guy," but it was a nice game nonetheless.

Fun fact: Crowe is owned in 0.3% of all ESPN Fantasy Leagues, down 0.1% from last week. I want one of these people to email me so that I can call you a mook. If you drafted him for his 10 steals, I will still call you a mook, but may add an adjective modifier for no extra cost.

After a .319 OBP in May, Crowe posted a .287 OBP in June, primarily hitting leadoff. I appreciate Crowe's ability to take a punch and all, but ... does anyone have a towel on 'em they can throw?

5) Back to back jack!

I will not waste everyone's time further fawning over Matt LaPorta's surge. LaPorta hit a homer for the third game in a row, but it was a pitch a right-handed power hitter simply must hit out, as a "challenge" inside high fastball that was neither inside nor high enough to be less fat than a bag of pork rinds. To his credit, he hit it out, but ... I mean, Jhonny Peralta hits that pitch out, too. He did drive in three runs and broke the game open.

And then Shelley Duncan did largely the same thing, proving that Shawn Marcum has a very tiny head. Duncan also drew a pair of walks and was hit by a pitch, so reached base 4 times in 4 PA yesterday: he is hitting .268/.359/.518 on the season, which is not really his true level, but makes for a fine part-time player and makes the trade of Russ Branyan that much more overdue.

6) Take me out, coach

Carlos Santana started his umpteenth game in a row. It was a day game after a night game. He reached base twice on a pair of walks and scored a run, but it was a silly thing to do.

7) By the way

If anyone wanted to trade Mike Redmond to Boston because their catchers are all hurt, that'd be okay. Apparently he's dead, so how much of a loss could it be?

8) Ducks on the pond!

C'mon, we won 6-1. Who cares?