

The B-List: 7/7

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Thursday, July 08 2010 3:30 PM - Last Updated Monday, July 12 2010 3:03 PM

It's a big night for Cleveland sports: at 9 PM or so, we should have the answer to one of the biggest questions available: can the Indians beat the Rays in their own park? In the meantime, we talk a bit about losing the rubber match in Texas, including Mitch Talbot's uncontrollable changeup, Jason Donald's uncontrollable hands, and Manny Acta's uncontrollable hat. Seriously, I had no idea you could get tossed just for being bald. This is why my father cannot be a major-league manager.

FINAL	1	2	3
Indians (33-51)	0	0	0
Rangers (50-34)	1	0	0

W: C. Lewis (8-5) L: Talbot(8-8) S: Feliz (23)



Number of players in the Cleveland lineup with OBP > .324: 3. Hard to believe we only scored three runs.

1) Good news, bad news

Remember how I inferred that Mitch Talbot was able to hold left-handers to a low SLG because he had a pitch that faded away from them? That pitch turns out to be his changeup, a pitch that Rangers' radio guy Eric Naedele said once started at shoulder height in the middle of the plate and ended up knee-high outside to a left-handed hitter. (For what it's worth, a Keith Law scouting report refers to Talbot's fading change as well.)

This is a nice pitch to have. It is one of the pitches that made Greg Maddux so effective, because he could start it outside to a right-hander and have it act almost like a "back-door slider" from a left-handed pitcher, catching the outside corner too late to react. A lot of fans tend to think of a changeup as being effective because it comes in at an unexpected speed, but if the pitch has significant movement as well, then it's almost more like a second breaking ball with more deception, or (in this case) even a hard screwball.

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The problem, of course, is much the same as the problem Fausto Carmona has had with his sinker: a pitch that moves a lot is hard to hit, because you think it is heading in one trajectory into the strike zone and it ends up in a different place, usually after you've already committed to a particular swing stroke. By the same token, a pitch that moves a lot is hard to throw successfully, because it ends up out of the strike zone or you overcompensate and then it doesn't move as much and you end up with neck pain.

This isn't to infer that Talbot couldn't control his pitches: after all, he threw 71 strikes in 105 pitches, which is a nice percentage. On the other hand, he walked three guys, hit another, and elevated several pitches that ended up as extra-base hits, including one to a guy who slugs .335 with a .044 ISO and another to a guy hitting .228.

In a one-run game, the margin of error ends up being pretty small, and Talbot found himself on the wrong end of it, giving up a two-run opposite-field shot to Michael Young (his 12th: Young is hitting .306/.353/.491 on the season and his homer was wind-aided in Jet Stream Park) amongst his 4 runs allowed. He actually pitched pretty well, getting another stellar 11:2 GO:FO ratio for the game and giving up only 1 hit against 4 Ks (3 swinging) in the 2

nd

through 4

th

inning. When it came right down to it, though, he needed to retire the #9 hitter in the Texas lineup and could not, giving up a bouncer through the box for the game-winning single. Of course, there's no real reason to believe that the Indians were going to ever score another run, so that 4

th

run was not entirely the difference-maker, but consider this: of the 13 baserunners Texas got (7 H, 4 BB, 1 HBP, 1 Jason Donald), Talbot allowed 12 of them. In 5 2/3 innings, that's just too many guys.

I like Talbot's stuff in general and he's a valuable rotation member, but more in the Jake Westbrook mold than Staff Anchor.

Caveat: Talbot did induce 13 swings-and-misses last night: with a little more development, his peak could easily equal Jake's peak.

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2) Nix-onian!

Ho hum, another game, another home run for Jayson Nix.

Nix is now hitting .233/.324/.478 on the season, which would be something we'd take from Jhonny Peralta. (Peralta is actually hitting .248/.311/.388, which is something we'd rather ascribe to Triple A Johnson.)

As an Indian, Nix is hitting .317/.391/.756, which would be something we would take from ... Anyone.

Note: Nix has 5 homers in Cleveland ... and 8 RBI.

3) Ho Hum Dept.

Carlos Santana has 22 hits. 14 have been for extra bases. He has more doubles than singles. He has more walks than strikeouts. He has one fewer run scored than strikeouts.

Anyway, he hit a double last night and scored a run.

4) Dept. of Minor Concerns

Santana is hitting a paltry .167/.342/.333 against left-handed pitching.

This is the sound of me being Not Concerned.

5) Managerial Head-Scratchers

With two outs in the 6th inning, Talbot had put runners on first and second on a double to Matt Treanor and a five-pitch walk of Andres Blanco, who slugs .277 with an ISO of .031. (How did Justin Masterson give up a double to this guy?) This brought up Julio Borbon, who hits .297 off right-handers and .245 off lefties. (In fact, with 53 AB against lefties and 192 against righties, it looks very much like Borbon gets quasi-platooned.) And Talbot had thrown 103 pitches.

Borbon's not a terrific hitter against *anyone*. I understand the desire for Talbot to finish off the inning there, and his change acts like a left-handed pitch anyway.

But while part of the trouble same-handed batters face is the movement of the ball, another element is the angle of attack and visibility. I dunno, I really thought that was a good place to bring in a left-handed reliever.

As I said, it probably only accelerated the inevitable, but still.

6) Managerial Hat-Removers

Manny Acta was tossed last night for removing his hat in frustration when Jason Donald's check swing was called a strike. I mean, literally, he was ejected **WHILE STANDING ON THE DUGOUT STEPS**. Not for arguing. Not for running on the field. Not for kicking dirt. For **TAKING OFF HIS HAT**.

Three thoughts come to mind:

- a) That must be some seriously offensive baldness Manny Acta has going on there.
- b) Were I Manny Acta, I would rush out onto the field after the first pitch and remove my hat in

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order to be ejected and not have to watch these mooks.

c) What the f*#^?

7) The best part of the story

Jason Donald ultimately walked.

He may not have gotten sufficient “respect” on that check swing, but ... after all that Sooper Teapot Action ... he walked anyway.

8) Saving energy

After Shelley Duncan got a leadoff double in the sixth, Donald was the only hitter to reach base with two outs in the 9th. Texas pitchers retired 11 in a row after the double and 12 of 13 in 4 hitless innings of work.

9) Managerial Head-Scratchers II

After Duncan’s double in a tie game in which we were producing no offense and Trevor Crowe was at the plate with his Marvelous Array of Suck, Crowe was allowed to swing away, fouling off two pitches before watching strike three laugh heartily at him on the way by.

A bunt here would have been nice. I mean, I don’t like Smallball in principle and a hit would have scored a run, but ... did I mention it was Trevor Crowe? Followed by Andy Marte and Jason Donald?

Duncan, Crowe, and Donald each struck out three times.

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Marte lifted a fly ball for the second out, a fly ball that might have, you know, in theory, scored Duncan from third base, had he been bunted there.

Sure, this sounds like post hoc second-guessing, but I advocate Trevor Crowe (and Mike Brantley, for that matter) bunting because ... well ... he can't actually HIT very well.

10) Speaking of Mike Brantley

(Thumper Rule applied)

11) Worth mentioning

Tony Sipp threw 15 strikes in 23 pitches to finish two perfect innings of work with a pair of strikeouts.

In his last 6 outings, Sipp has pitched 6 scoreless innings and given up ONE hit. He has 10 scoreless outings (all with outs recorded) since the Horror Debacle against Washington June 13th

. He still walks more guys than he should, but he seems to be useful once again. (Thank goodness.)