

The B-List: 7/8

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, July 09 2010 1:42 PM - Last Updated Monday, July 12 2010 2:23 PM

*Well, there's no way to sugar-coat it: Cleveland fans once again had their hearts ripped out last night as the former wunderkind who had been with the team since he was a teenager ended up destroying their hopes. We've stuck with him through good times and not-so-good times, but when the chips were down, he showed his true colors. He is in Florida now, helping another team win. Yes, **Jhonny Peralta** flew out with two men on in the 8th and we lost by three.*

FINAL

1

2

3

Indians (33-52)

1

1

0

Unspecified Rays (52-33)

0

3

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W: W. Davis (6-9) L: Westbrook (5-5) S: Wheeler (1)



I root for Jhonny Peralta because he is a Cleveland Indian, not because he is Jhonny Peralta. This sentiment extends universally, as far as I'm concerned.

1) Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln ...

Jake Westbrook showed flashes of remarkable control last night. He threw 70 strikes in 113 pitches, struck out 7 hitters, and didn't walk anyone. He got 15 swings-and-misses against only 14 foul balls, a fairly noteworthy accomplishment. Six of his seven strikeouts were swinging, and across the first and second inning, he struck out 4 men (all swinging) consecutively. Sure, three of those men are hitting .201, .182, and .226, but they do bat 4th, 6th, and 7th in Tampa's order. He boasted a positive 7:4 GO:FO ratio and induced a double play, and only one run off him came with two outs.

On the other hand, he was behind 2-1 after the first two batters he faced, and fell behind 5-2 in the third inning because he'd given up a pair of two-run homers to Carl Crawford and a solo shot to Carlos Pena, the batter with the .201 AVG mentioned above.

I guess with the benefit of hindsight, the thing that makes this a bit more infuriating (because, you know, I have to look so hard for things that infuriate me about Cleveland sports) is that Carl Crawford is one of two power threats in the Tampa lineup. He slugs .516, which is excellent, and just slightly higher than Evan Longoria's .514.

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Of course, Crawford is a left-handed hitter, hitting .365/.417/.567 against right-handed pitching. (He's not very good against lefties, but Jake Westbrook is even lousier throwing with his left hand, so this wasn't a plausible option.) He hit .297/.352/.441 in May, .296/.380/.481 in June, and is hitting a small-sample .405/.421/.730 in July. In other words, he has been getting hotter, is peaking right now, and is stronger against right-handed pitching.

Longoria is obviously an excellent hitter, one of the league's finest, and is a tremendous all-around player. He hits .287/.353/.502 off right-handers, with barely any platoon split. However, he hits better with the bases empty than with runners on, and for my money, .287 is lower than .365. Especially on the second Crawford homer, Bluto Zobrist was standing on second base after a double. Throwing Crawford a drivable ball (nay, a STRIKE) seems especially foolish in retrospect. Pitching around Crawford to get to EVAN LONGORIA sounds like a bad joke, but then, could it have gone worse than pitching to Crawford did?

I was impressed by Jake's 7:0 K:BB ratio, and after the third inning, Westbrook didn't give up any runs. But he lost again, and not because he lacked run support, but rather because he lacked ... enough *goodness*.

2) Signs of the Apocalypse, I

Michael Brantley hit his first career homer to lead off the game.

(He did nothing else the entire game, but he did hit a home run.)

3) Signs of the Apocalypse, II

Andy Marte hit his second home run of the season the very next inning.

(He also drew a walk and did not injure any of his teammates.)

4) Signs of the Apocalypse, III

Jason Donald did not make any errors at shortstop.

5) Signs of the Apocalypse, IV

Carlos Santana's sole base hit came on a BUNT single.

6) Signs that the Apocalypse isn't coming after all

The Indians did not get any more extra-base hits, nor did they score any runs.

Raffy Perez walked two hitters (on intentionally) and Kerry Wood walked one.

The Indians went 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position and left 9 men on base.

7) Anatomy of a Squander: the bandwagon thins

I would be remiss if I did not take special notice of some of the 0-for-7s.

In the second inning, Jason Donald drew a walk, one of three times he got on base last night. Brantley was able to advance him on a groundout (and I said he didn't accomplish anything ... shame on me!), putting a runner in scoring position for Local Hero Jayson Nix with two outs.

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("Local" in this sense means "temporally," not "spatially.")

Nix struck out swinging on three pitches.

Later, in the 7th inning, Donald reached on an infield single and Brantley advanced him to second on a groundout to bring up Nix with two outs.

Nix flied out to right on an 0-1 count.

In the 9th inning, Donald singled to center, Brantley flew out to no positive result, Donald wandered to second because no one cared.

Nix struck out looking to end the game.

Ultimately, Jayson Nix is better in July of 2010 than Anderson Hernandez or Luis Valbuena. But this does not make him anything approaching "great." And before you object about small samples and even good players having off nights, note that two of the outs were made against a pitcher who had given up home runs to MICHAEL BRANTLEY and ANDY MARTE.

In retrospect, perhaps the universe was resisting allowing Nix to hit in order to avoid some sort of point singularity.

8) Anatomy of a Squander: A Game of Inches

Lance Cormier relieved Wade Davis and promptly allowed a bunt single (!!!) to Santana, then a 1-out single to Austin Kearns. This brought Jhonny Peralta to the plate.

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Peralta responded to a 1-0 offering by flying out to deep enough center field to allow Santana to tag and go to third.

So if he swings earlier (to pull it) or later (to drive it) or higher (to cut down the height of the flight path), in units of milliseconds or millimeters, this could very well have been the game-tying blow.

Sigh.

9) Administrative Note

Trevor Crowe was the next hitter, so any discussion of “potential” or “plausible” is rendered absurd. We avoid this level of absurdity here, preferring to draw the line at “polar bears eating outfielders” and “coked-up Gila Monsters in Hector Ambriz’ pants.”

10) I don't have the heart

I can't keep up the Mark DeRosa Commemorative Sales Job, but if you are a GM for another major-league baseball team, please trade for Kerry Wood.

11) Completely True Statement for the Google Search Engine

LeBron James is a bastard.