

The B-List: 7/9 - 7/11

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, July 12 2010 1:38 PM - Last Updated Monday, July 12 2010 2:51 PM

And with that loss to the Rays, the Indians slouch into the All-Star break 20 games under .500 and trailing the Mediocre Three in the A.L. Central by an average of 14 1/6 games. You might say, "This is bad enough," but where the Tribe is concerned, enough is never enough. In an effort to prove this, the Indians have called up Chris Gimenez, which proves the adage, "A fungus in the hand is worth Tinactin on the feet," or something like that.

FINAL

1

2

3

Indians (34-52)

0

2

0

Indeterminate Rays (52-34)

0

1

W: Carmona (8-7) L: Shields (7-9)

FINAL

1

2

3

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Indians (34-53) 0 0 0

Unspecified Rays (53-34) 0 0

W: Garza (10-5) L: Laffey (1-3)

FINAL 1 2 3

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Indians (34-54)

3

0

0

Nondenominational Rays (54-34)

0

0

W: Sonnanstine (2-0) L: K. Wood (1-4)



This is going to have to be an abridged version due to “because I said so.”

0) Administrative Note

First off, I will be on vacation from July 15-20, so there will be no articles over that period, and one on the 21st is unlikely.

I was invited to collaborate on a Trade Deadline book project with the guys at TwinsCentric: the idea is that each blogger would write specifically about his own team and the final product would be assembled and edited by Seth and the guys. So although the Tribe might not be as active as we all would like (for example, there will still be players on the team on Thursday instead of gathering them all up in burlap sacks and tossing them into the canal), I'm still proud of my contribution and was impressed at flipping through the copy for the perspectives of all 29 other teams, in terms of what they perceived as needs and assets.

Included in the Trade Deadline Primer is a short essay about what has gone right and wrong, Report Cards for all players (Shin-Soo Choo got an A; Lou Marson got a Y-), a list of players I could see the Indians moving and what they might target, and essays from other bloggers about their teams. Here are a couple excerpts:

How would I describe the Cleveland Indians' 2010 season? I would probably start with the story of the three-run error.

Do you comprehend how badly you have to misplay a ball for it to be a THREE-run error? You have to bounce it off Jose Canseco's head. You have to have a fielder struck by a meteorite. You have to have a player eaten by wolves. Something must go terribly, terribly wrong for you to allow all three of the runners in a bases-loaded set to score on one play, and yet, this is what the Indians did in a game against Detroit. Which, by the way, they lost by three runs.

...

Mitch Talbot Starting Pitcher B

I would not have known Mitch Talbot from a fruit salad before we acquired him from the Rays for superfluous Kelly Shoppach. Clearly, Talbot doesn't have the same level of stuff as the real hotshots in Tampa, but Talbot's 4.08 ERA and 1.38 WHIP fit on any staff (at least in the A.L. Central). The problem is that these may not be sustainable, as he barely has a 1:1 K:BB ratio, sports a low K rate, and has been hit-lucky this season. Still, Talbot went from "competing for 5th starter" to "competing with Carmona for Staff Ace," which deserves a high mark. Also, he isn't David Huff.

...

Baltimore (Daniel Moroz):

What's Not Working?

When a team sets itself up to potentially challenge for the worst record of all time, with a good chance of setting the franchise record, you can bet that not a whole lot is working.

...

New York Mets (Joe Janish):

Big Picture

The first half of the 2010 Mets season can most effectively be described as a rollercoaster ride, replete with dramatic ascents and frightening falls. A team that looked lost, overmatched, and undermanned in mid-May (particularly away from home) suddenly went on a rampage, as several hitters got hot simultaneously and unknown hurlers pitched far beyond expectations.

Winning cures all ailments, but can also mask vulnerabilities. The Mets have a few people whose carriage to the ball could soon turn back to a pumpkin. At the same time, parity has overtaken the NL East, so as long as they can continue their dominance at home and beat the teams they're "supposed to" beat, a postseason appearance is not out of the question.

[Click here](#) to purchase a book in PDF format for \$9.95. It's a pretty good deal, and a good way to support your local blogger. (That would be me.) As a caveat, note that the contributions for the book were submitted in early or mid June, so that (for example) the evaluation of Matt LaPorta looks pretty damn foolish in retrospect. Still, it's well-written and well-presented and worth the read, IMO.

1) Matters of degree

Through 3 innings, Fausto Carmona had given up 1 run on 3 hits, including 2 doubles, and 2 walks. He had gotten out of a jam in the 1st by getting a shallowish fly out and a groundout with runners on 1st and 2nd with one out.

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Through 3 innings, Aaron Laffey had given up 0 runs on 2 hits, both infield singles, and 2 walks; a fifth player reached base on the ever-popular “catcher’s interference.” He got out of that jam by inducing a double play with runners on 1st and 2nd with one out.

Through 3 innings, Justin Masterson had given up 1 run on 3 hits, two of them infield singles, and 1 walk. He had gotten out of a jam in the first by inducing a double play with runners on 1st and 2nd

with one out. The run had scored because Masterson athletically speared a potential double play grounder and turned it into a farcical aquatic ceremony, catching the runner at third in a rundown, throwing it to Andy Marte, and having Marte throw it to the Lady in the Lake in a failed attempt to acquire Excalibur. (Although this is technically not true, any explanation of what Marte was ACTUALLY accomplishing on the play will bear no greater resemblance to Good Baseball.)

The point is, through three innings, each pitcher looked pretty darned effective: were you to try to predict which would end up having the worst game, it would probably have been Carmona, who had at least given up multiple extra-base hits. Sure, Masterson had uncorked a wild pitch and fielded his position like an Epsilon Semi-Moron*, but the elements for success were in each man’s performance, as well as the seeds of failure. It would be pretty hard to pinpoint which was having the best day just from the first times through the order.

Consider these plays from later in the game:

Guy One:

Leadoff 4-pitch walk

2-out HBP

Lineout to left

One-out single

One-out single

6-3 double play

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Guy Two:

Two-out full count walk☐

Ground rule double☐

Two-run single

Two-out double☐

RBI single

Guy Three:

Two-out double☐

RBI single

Single☐

K swinging☐

Double☐

IBB☐

Sac fly

What is the functional difference between the first, an inning-ending but solidly-hit out, and the third, a slightly-less-solidly-hit two-run single? Not much. Basically, the first guy put runners in scoring position, but was able to record the big out when he needed it, while the second and third guys gave up “clutch hits.” Hey, sometimes the other team’s hitter is just good.

On the other hand, sometimes your guy is just kinda fortunate. I am happy and pleased for Shiny All-Star Guy One, but I’m gonna stop short of attributing any sort of Super Excellence to him that Guys Two (Laffey) and Three (Masterson) lack in any fundamental way.

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Bottom line: Masterson gave up too many hits (8) and walks (3) in too few innings (5) to have been considered anything but lousy (lousy). Three of the hits were infield jobbies, but the two-run homer was not exactly a cheap shot. Laffey, too, gave up 7 hits and had a putrid K:BB ratio of 1:3. His 3 runs in 5 2/3 was nearly a Quality Start. And Fausto went deeper, giving up only 5 hits in 6 2/3 IP, but he walked 4 and threw only 64 of his 116 pitches for strikes. In short, Masterson got a bit unlucky, Laffey got kind of what he deserved, and Carmona was a bit lucky. The three guys very nearly pitched the same damn game, while the results ran the gamut from Very Good (Carmona won, giving up 2 runs) to the Average (Laffey) to the Crummy (Masterson).

** actually an excellent play in terms of fielding the ball, but a double play would have ended the inning, and allowing Andy Marte to decide your fate can only be described as "ill-advised."*

2) While I'm on the topic

Familiarity breeds contempt as far as major-league hitters go: in general, the more times a hitter faces a pitcher over the course of the game, the more likely it is for the pitcher to fail. This makes a certain amount of intuitive sense: the pitcher tires, the hitter has a better idea of what the pitcher is doing well that day, etc. It's interesting to see Justin Masterson's inning-by-inning splits, for example, in that they start to climb up before dropping dramatically in the 6th and 7th, but part of this is Selection Bias: he only GETS to the 6

th

and 7

th

innings of games if he's pitching really, really well, whereas he's ALWAYS out there in the 3

rd

and 4

th

no matter how dreadfully things are going.

It's interesting, though, that Masterson yields a .287/.344/.367 line his first pass through the lineup, and .310/.385/.444 his second. His K:BB ratio plummets from 3.50 to 1.56.

Aaron Laffey's lines go like this, all as a starter only:

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1st pass: .097/.222/.194, K:BB 1.80

2nd pass: .333/.429/.481, K:BB 0.33

3rd pass: .500/.524/.600, K:BB 3:0 (infinite)

I guess what I'm saying is that I want Laffey to start, get pulled in the third, and let Masterson finish the game.

(Note: hitters are batting .095 on balls in play against Laffey during the first pass as a starter, and the sample is dinky anyway, but it's still a neat line. For reference, batters hit .278/.366/.371 off Laffey in their first crack at him as a reliever.)

3) Places I would be happy to see Andy Marte

Door-to-door vuvuzela salesman

Handing out sushi samples at my local grocery store*

As a contestant on "Wipeout"

Guest judge on "Top Chef" (He looks like he knows something about food)

Cleaning the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico

** Admittedly, I would accept my store's sushi sample from the ghost of Pol Pot. They're really good.*

4) Place I no longer want to see Andy Marte

On a baseball diamond wearing a Cleveland Indians uniform.

I am reminded of Terry Bozzio's thoughtful advice to ugly people in Frank Zappa's outtake song, "I'm So Cute."

5) Baserunners Unanimous

Austin Kearns, Carlos Santana, and Matt LaPorta each reached base in each of the three games. Kearns had two hits in two of the games, and a double in the third; LaPorta clubbed a double in two of the three games, and Santana reached base at least twice in each game, drawing a walk and an HBP in his only hitless affair.

Jhonny Peralta got a hit in each of the games he played, including a three-run homer in Cleveland's lone win for his third hit of the evening.

6) Stretching the limits of the Posnanski Treatise

I would like Michael Brantley to flourish into a valuable major-league leadoff hitter.

I understand the compulsion to slot him in at leadoff in order for him to develop the skill.

Resist this compulsion.

Brantley took a SIZE FOURTEEN collar this weekend, going completely hitless, gormless, pointless, and worthless for the entire series.

Play Brantley every day if you must. Nothing teaches you to face major-league pitching like facing major-league pitching. But bat him 9th until he can actually strike the ball in a forceful manner. Let Donald lead off. Or Nix. Or Teddy the Wonder Lizard. Anyone but Brantley. His badness nauseates me. I hate it. Please make it stop.

7) All or absolutely nothing

Speaking of Nix, while duly impressed that he hit his 7th home run of the season and 6th as a Cleveland Indian, I would like it if he mixed in something other than homers and X-Treme Outmaking.

8) Welcome back again!

Mike Redmond was roused from his nap to be given his limping papers, and he rides off (on a scooter) into the sunset having given us All-Star Fausto Carmona and a rare 9-3 groundout. In his place, Chris Gimenez was called up, because Tofu Lou Marson is still ... Tofu Lou, and Wyatt Toregas is mad and the Cleveland organization for making him (remain) terrible.

Gimenez is now hitting .250/.250/.250 on the season, making him roughly twice as good as Tofu Lou.

9) Enough with the hand-buttering!

Chris Perez threw a total of 45 pitches in 1 1/3 innings of work and 21 of them were strikes. He walked FIVE BATTERS, including a third that forced in Carmona's second run. He walked more than half of the nine batters he FACED. Also, his head sports the hair equivalent of a vuvuzela: loud, ugly, and completely unnecessary.

Hector Ambriz impressed Justin Masterson by working out of a no-outs, bases-loaded jam in the 9th inning of a ten-inning loss. I was less impressed by the fact that HECTOR AMBRIZ LOADED THE BASES WITHOUT RECORDING AN OUT. Note: two of the three batters were walked as Ambriz threw 10 strikes in 21 pitches.

When Andy Marte chooses a new profession, I want the bullpen coach to be his colleague.