

The B-List: 8/2

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Tuesday, August 03 2010 3:56 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, August 03 2010 4:45 PM

The Indians beat the Red Sox last night 6-5, but the outcome of the game was not close to being the most important result last night.□ Carlos Santana suffered what at first looked to be a catastrophic knee injury on a play at the plate, which has since been upgraded to “merely serious,” and Indians fans everywhere lost their collective breath.□ Chris Perez finished off the game with his third straight one-run save, and Jayson Nix drew three walks, easily the most absurd thing on the night.

FINAL	1	2	3
Indians (45-61)	0	0	0
Red Sox (60-46)	0	1	0

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W: Carmona (11-8) L: Lackey (10-6) S: C. Perez (13)



Horrifying.

1) The Play

I am not going to go into a great deal of detail about the play in which Carlos Santana tagged out Ryan Kalish at the plate and suffered his injury: I have seen quite enough other sites discussing it in sordid detail, including a video I shall never watch. Suffice it to say that it seemed perfectly plausible at the time that Santana had both torn ligaments AND fractured his leg. It appears that there is no fracture, and the degree of the other damage is unclear (to me) for now.

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And I don't especially want to get into a whole diatribe about blocking the plate: I had enough of those discussions last night and they tend to be the same people saying the same things in the same way anyway. I don't like home plate collisions as a rule, perhaps because Ray Fosse's injury was one of my first baseball memories. I wish "obstruction" were called more often than it is, but this was more "one of those things" than anything else.

Instead, let's talk a moment about what this means, and what it does not mean. In the long-term, of course, a career-threatening injury to Santana would spell dark days for the Indians. Tofu Lou Marson (called up today to replace Travis Hafner's Shoulder on the roster) does not appear to be a catcher I would be confident seeing play every day. Chris Gimenez is a wonderful guy, but was passed up by Marson in the pecking order. Magic Mike Oldmond is long gone. Anyone else is either an X-Treme Roster Filler or young enough to wonder if he should start shaving soon.

If Santana is out for 2011, for example, you probably have to think about acquiring another catcher, one that can play in the majors. Whether this is someone from the Oldmond/Zaun school of serviceable backups or a Jeff Mathis no-stick type or the long-lost eighth Molina, Zippy, you are talking about "how far below average would he be," not "will he be below average?" If, on the other hand, he will miss, say, six months, well, six months from now is the beginning of February. Heck, that's ready for Spring Training (although it would mean limited winter conditioning work and some rust). Anything less, and you don't really have to change the plan. Anything more than 12 months ("ACL plus!"), and you probably have to think about packaging a couple young arms with a spare second baseman to get a decent young catcher from another organization.

However, as for what it means right now, in August of 2010, well, it's tempting to remember Santana as the guy who scorched through the minors, or the Santana that hit a ridiculous .345/.458/.707 in June. However, in July, Santana hit .209/.366/.326 with 6 extra-base hits in 110 or so trips to the plate. His K:BB ratio remained astonishing, but the fact is, Santana was not hitting well when he got hurt. And he seemed to be losing some of his patience, making 3 first-pitch outs in 4 trips to the plate a few nights ago. (He was 1-for-6 in August with 2 walks.)

In the IMMEDIATE future, like, for the next few series, we're probably not going to do a lot worse. I would venture to say that if you look at losing the cleanup hitter, and thinking he's been a straight .868 OPS guy all along, that you'd expect the offense to collapse, but the fact is, for over a month now, he's been a sub-.700 OPS guy, and the offense will probably only remain poor.

Still, to be explicit: if Carlos Santana does not make a full recovery in a relatively short amount of time (defined as “six months”), it would be a very bad thing for the franchise.

2) ¡Fausto!

Well, now THAT's more LIKE it.

Was Carmona dominating? Not really. He threw strikes, 72 in 104 pitches, which was very good, especially against a team as patient as the Red Sox. He struck out 5 and walked 1, which is a much better ratio, and in 7 IP, even looks like a good K rate. He gave up 2 runs: one on a solo shot in his 7th inning of work, and 1 unearned run early in the game. He posted a nice 10:4 GO:FO ratio and generally controlled the game.

On the other hand, he required TWO outs to be made by outfielders pegging out runners at the plate, and weaseled out of one jam with a double play with runners on the corners. After all, his problem in the Disaster Start wasn't throwing strikes, it was giving up umpteen hits. Carmona ended up giving up 3 extra base hits out of 8 hits overall. And the Red Sox aren't posting the same lineup you remember wearing out pitchers: Kevin Youkilis made one plate appearance before yielding to Kevin Cash and Jed Lowrie, and guys like Kalish, Dan Nava, and Eric Patterson each made at least two plate appearances.

Still, it was a nice outing, and impressive that he bounced back from such a horrible start. And 7 innings was a real boon to the 'pen, which has been worked pretty hard lately.

3) Captains Clutch!

The Indians went 5-for-14 with runners in scoring position.

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Let me say that again.

THE INDIANS WENT FIVE-FOR-FOURTEEN WITH RUNNERS IN SCORING POSITION!

After going 6 for 77 over the last week or so, Shin-Soo Shoo drove in two runs with a single, Shelley Duncan drove in two with a double, and Trevor Crowe drove in a run with a ... walk. Hey, it drove in a run.

Duncan actually went 2-for-2 with RISP en route to a nice 4-for-5 night. Jason Donald and Asdrubal Cabrera also had hit with RISP.

4) Death by Mullet!

Chris Perez had saved each of the previous two games with scant 1-run leads, and after Adrian Beltre's three-run shot made it 6-5, he was called out to do it again.

And he did.

Sure, he put a guy on base, as he had in each of the other saves, but that just makes him the legitimate heir to the Really Big Bob/Lord Joedemort crown after the pretender Kerry Wood was sent to New York.

Perez sports a 2.08 ERA and a 1.25 WHIP. Not only has he become a decent option at closer, he's actually become ... well ... *good*.

5) In contrast

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Raffy Perez' stint was a little unlucky: Lowrie beat out an infield single to second base, and David Ortiz fought off a two-strike offering to hit an opposite-field single. Not the best performance, but hey, the other guys are professionals, too.

Frank Herrmann impresses me with his fearlessness.

Herrmann threw first-pitch strikes to each of the four hitters he faced. With two men on, he did not back down from the challenge of facing a resurgent Adrian Beltre, who is hitting .336/.374/.567 this season and had homered an inning before.

He failed in the challenge, of course, and gave up 2 hits in 2/3 IP. But I admire his fearlessness.

6) First hit follies

Jordan Brown collected his first major-league hit, a "double" that was a ball hit down the line then touched by a fan. He also drew a walk and scored two runs. That's more like it, Jord!

7) Worth a mention

Matt LaPorta had a pair of hits, including a double.

Jayson Nix drew THREE walks in four trips to the plate after I disparaged his approach at the plate. Proving, of course, that I am a ninny.

Andy Marte was brought in as a defensive replacement for Nix. I think that tells you something about the long-term viability of Nix at third base.

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