

## The B-List: 8/12

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Friday, August 13 2010 1:21 PM -

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*The Indians avoid the sweep at the hands of the lowly Orioles with a 4-1 win, and today's B-List examines the continued success of Jeanmar Gomez, the return of The Real Raffy Perez, and Chris Perez' most boring (and hence, most satisfying) save yet. In a game in which Trev Crowe and Mike Brantley were the hitting heroes, it probably makes more sense to talk more about the pitching, which is not to take anything away from Crowe and Brantley, but ... which do YOU think is more likely to be replicated?*

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W: Gomez (3-0)

L: Millwood (2-12)

S: C. Perez (14)

It's funny: the Orioles manager has probably seen the Indians' starter last night pitch more times than most Indians fans.

### 1) The line between Cautious and Pessimistic

What do you want from a starting pitcher?

Well, I think the obvious first answer is run prevention. Forget HOW the runs are prevented: a guy who doesn't give up any runs can't lose. Everything else is getting into the art and science of predicting future success: the #1 RESULT you want is run prevention. Jeanmar Gomez has started four games for the Cleveland Indians and has given up four earned runs. He has never given up more than two runs in his major-league career. (Okay, it's four games, it just looks neat to write that.) So as far as "preventing runs" is concerned, Gomez has been quite good at it, and there are numbers to express this: his ERA is 1.54, and his RA is 2.31, both outstanding.

Now, in looking at predictors for whether this kind of thing can be sustained (and make no mistake, it can't, not at a 1.54 ERA level), you'd like to have the pitcher keep people off the basepaths. Runs are either the product of home runs or runners on base coming around to score: keep runners off base, and you keep the scoring down. Here, too, there are numbers to express Gomez' success in this department thus far: a 1.07 WHIP, giving up 7.71 H/9 (fewer than a hit an inning) and a successful enough 1.92 BB/9.

The second part of this would be to limit home runs, and Gomez has given up 1 in his 23 1/3 IP. That's very low ... probably even unsustainably low, but it's a good performance, certainly.

After that, you start looking at factors like K-rate, and here Gomez is pretty ordinary: he's struck

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out 12 in 23 1/3 IP, barely half a K an inning, which is not very good. On the other hand, it's right in the same range as Mitch Talbot, Jake Westbrook, Josh Tomlin, Fausto Carmona, and even Frank Herrmann. Hm, I'm not sure that made the point I wanted it to make. Forget I said anything.

*(Except you might want to note that right-handed setup men should strike out at least 6 per 9 IP, and that this might say more about Frank than the starters.)*

Last night, Gomez faced the minimum through 4 innings, erasing his single baserunner (a clean single to center) on a strikeout-thrown-out double play to end the first. Given a second pass, the Orioles put together a pair of singles in the 5<sup>th</sup> before finally breaking through for a run in the 6<sup>th</sup> on a leadoff double and a 2-out single. But generally speaking, the Orioles did not do anything of import against Gomez, who struck out three and didn't walk anyone for the first time in his four major-league starts.

Is it being too curmudgeonly to warn people about getting too amped up for Gomez' success? Rationally, no, of course not. Any number of young pitchers have had four very good starts in a row. On the other hand, Gomez shows good poise on the mound, appears to attack hitters with a plan (although how much of that is Gomez and how much Marson/Belcher/Acta is necessarily unclear), and has produced excellent results. He hasn't gone very deep into games yet, but he's only 22 and there's no need to beat on the guy.

I guess I'll leave you with this thought: after their respective first starts, I thought that Gomez had a nice but probably unsustainable outing and that Tomlin was the more likely candidate for earlier success based on his command. After four starts for each player, I've come to the opposite conclusion (largely because of the 3 homers Tomlin has allowed and the number of outfield flies that suggests there are more to come).

## 2) Fear of dropping shoes

Raffy Perez threw two perfect innings last night, throwing 20 strikes in 24 pitches and striking out one hitter.

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In April and May, Perez gave up 12 runs on 24 hits and 10 walks in 15 innings. There isn't a single number there that's any good: not the ERA of 7.20, nor the 1.6 H/9, nor the WHIP over 2.00, nor even the 15 innings (he should be effective enough to be used more often). That's just terrible.

In June, Perez quietly posted a 0.00 ERA, giving up 10 hits and 2 walks in 10 2/3 IP.

In July, he posted a 1.50 ERA, giving up 11 hits and 5 BB in 12 IP.

And in August thus far, one bad game in his last ten has resulted in a fattened ERA of ... 2.70. He's given up 5 hits and ZERO BB in 6 2/3 IP.

His season WHIP is still much too high at 1.51, but his ERA has come down to 3.25, and a lot of this is simply commanding his stuff in the strike zone. 5 walks in 12 innings isn't great, but it beats 5 walks in 7 (April) or 8 (May) innings. And 7 walks in 28 1/3 innings from June on is not bad at all.

Full disclosure: I called for Raffy to be DFA'd to send him down to the minors, thinking it unlikely that he'd be claimed. In retrospect, with the sublimely-bad quality of, say, the Arizona bullpen, he probably WOULD have been claimed. But more to the point, he didn't need to get instructional time in the minors, either. Is this his best season? No, of course not. But he's more like the useful pitcher we've had in previous seasons than he was, and he (and the coaching staff) deserve a lot of credit for that.

(My prognostication skills have already been proven entirely worthless, so there's no point belaboring *that*.)

### 3) While I'm here

Of the nine pitches Chris Perez threw in his perfect inning, eight were strikes.

#### **4) Did you really need more evidence?**

Mike Brantley produced his first four-hit game of his major-league career, which is a bit like saying Jeanmar Gomez produced his first 0-walk game, but still, four hits is four hits. He also stole a base and scored a run.

Brantley is now hitting a preposterous .375/.444/.583 in August. He is likely to be sent down soon in favor of Travis Hafner. I am no longer in favor of this. (Send Crowe ... or Herrmann ... or Valbuena ... or expose Hafner to pneumonia ... or something ...)

The lesson, of course, is that I'm a kneejerking idiot. (That's fandom!)

#### **5) Things I did not know**

Trevor Crowe has 18 doubles this season. Eighteen! That's about ... I dunno ... fifteen more than I would have guessed.

Andy Marte has TWO doubles this season. Two! I would actually have believed that Marte had more doubles than Crowe.

(Crowe has 303 AB, Marte only 100. I didn't realize Crowe had played that much. That's more than Austin Kearns had for Cleveland, fer crine out loud!)

The Indians had more .400+ SLG players in the lineup (3) than players slugging under .300 (2). We're on our way!

**6) Nice hose!**

Lou Marson caught Nick Markakis trying to steal. For whatever else I have said about Tofu Lou, I have always pointed out that he catches would-be stealers well, and this season is no exception: he has caught 18 of 44 guys for a rate over 40% for the second straight year. That's good.

**7) Consider my breath held**

Shin-Soo Choo was hit on the hand.

"It's fine," he says.

"We're Cleveland," I say.

We'll see who's right.