

Six in a row! Thank heavens for the Kansas City Royals. In today's B-List, Buff takes a closer look at Travis Hafner's record breaking season, Good Jeremy and Bad Jeremy, Kelly Shoppach beginning to establish himself as the team's 2007 backstop, and provides a plethora of good Ramon Vasquez jokes. The Indians fan in me wanted Vasquez gone. The B-List fan in me knows I will now be deprived of all the hysterical smack that Buff ran at "the guy who cost us Brandon Phillips".



I almost didn't recognize the Indians out there, until I realized that they must be wearing Kansas City's uniforms as a goof. Good one, guys!

1) The most exciting play in baseball

It's not the suicide squeeze, it's not the fake-to-third-catch-the-Cleveland-Indian-baserunner-off-first pickoff, it's the bases-loaded walkoff *triple*. As has been pointed out, there was no reason for Grady to leg out a triple on the ball that bounced oddly in the corner (heck, in hindsight, he didn't even need to be SAFE), but triples are still a helluva lot of fun to watch. When they clear the bases in the bottom of the ninth with your team down by two runs, that could be considered an exciting play.

Mind you, it's not a Casey Blake inside-the-park homer, but the circumstances put it over the top.

ESPN points out that this has been the fifth walkoff bases-loaded triple in the last 40 years, which is actually more frequent than I would have thought. Any time you can make a list that features Juan Beniquez AND Dave Collins, though, you know you've done something unusual.

2) Hafner, party of four, your table is ready

How good has Travis Hafner been with the bases loaded this season? After tying the major-league record with his sixth grand slam this season, Hafner is batting 8-for-13 with 29 RBI. Twenty-nine! That means if you walk him intentionally, you have, on the average, saved yourself a run.

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My guess is, he will not hit a seventh grand slam. Who wants to be that guy? If he can hit one off a short-hop like Vlad Guerrero, more power to him, but I am expecting the number of heart-of-the-plate strikes to be relatively low.

3) A contrast in styles

Two young recent call-up pitchers named Jeremy started this weekend. One threw 54 strikes in 104 pitches and walked six men. One threw 64 strikes in 94 pitches and walked 1 man. Guess which pitcher was more effective?

Sowers kept the ball in the ballpark, strengthening my belief that this is the key to his future success. Hey, it's going to be hard to argue with 6 shutout innings with an in-game WHIP of 1.00. It's obviously less stressful to pitch with an 11-run lead after the first inning, but to Sowers' credit, he hit spots, changed speeds, and has quietly lowered his season ERA to 3.53.

Guthrie was, well, putrid. I thought I liked watching him in short-mid relief earlier in the season, but watching him start is still excruciating. He loaded the bases TWICE for Ryan Shealy, each time WITHOUT GIVING UP A HIT. That just hurts my spleen. Dreadful.

4) Oh, by the way, he's still good

C.C. Sabathia did not get the win Friday night because of a tremendously inept "closing" performance, but 8 innings, 10 Ks, 5 H, and 1 BB adding up to 1 R is a terrific start. Sabathia's ERA on the year is now 3.29, which is in Actual Ace territory: he has not shown that he can be tremendous 30 starts in a row or necessarily be that "stopper" who prevents losing streaks, but 3.29 is 3.29. Sabathia has 2 of the top 10 "Game Scores" in the AL this season (John Lackey is the only other pitcher with two), and this game wasn't one of them. By the way, Sabathia induced 10 ground ball outs against 4 in the air: I don't know if this was a one-game wobble or a new bit of movement, but it would be even more impressive if it carried over.

5) Hey, we had one of those!

I'm sure every Indians fan had a flash of recognition as Addlepate Birdgo came into the ninth inning Friday night and proceeded to blow the game thoroughly out his wazoo. What followers of Fausto Carmona need to know is that Burpo has been blowing games like this ALL SEASON: this was his ELEVENTH blown save. (Check out robneyer.com for some interesting exposition on the topic: they may actually hate Buddy Bell more than we hate Eric Wedge.)

Not to be outdone, newly-minted Jason Davis, fresh off his one-save-in-a-row streak blew a game out HIS wazoo before Travis Hafner (and Raffy Betancourt) bailed him out. Okay, we've tried Plan B, and now Plan C stinks ... are we, like Sheldon Plankton in the SpongeBob movie, waiting for Plan Z to take us to higher ground?

On the other hand, over the course of the weekend, I got to see Brian Sikorski NOT give up a home run, Tom Mastny pitch 3 effective innings, Fausto come up with a hitless ninth, and newcomer Andrew Brown throw 17 strikes in 22 pitches to saw through 2 scoreless innings worth of Royals. So, basically, the new strategy is, "Go with the hot hand." Or maybe the "warm hand." The "pretty cold, but the fingers still have feeling" hand. Guys ... guys ... Casey Stengel would have hated you.

6) Do you feel lucky, punk?

Four players tried to take an extra base that was not rightfully theirs in Saturday's second game, or at least, that was the opinion of one Kelly Shoppach. Although DeJesus managed to steal second, Reggie Sanders and Joey Gathright were thrown out trying to steal, and Gathright wasn't particularly close to making it, either. For good measure, Shoppach chased down a pitch that bounced away from him and pegged out Gathright *again*.

In case anyone wondered if Shoppach is simply a defensive replacement, he banged out a three-run homer as well. He's now hitting .261/.320/.464 on the season, which is not exactly *terrific*

, but anything over .750 from the catcher nowadays, especially one with a gun, is pretty darned good.

7) Taking criticism to heart

Jason Michaels, tired of being called "inadequate" as a corner outfielder with the pop of nine-day-old soda, banged out two doubles Friday off Bernero and a two-run homer off Odalis Perez, who to that point had made the Indians look pretty damn silly. Although the other two games weren't much to write home about, it did raise his SLG over .400, so good on you, mate.

Ferd Cabrera came into a close game in the ninth and threw 8 pitches, six for strikes, an whiffed one in a perfect ninth before Sizemore ripped Herbhose's heart out.

Paul Byrd threw some strikes and ... grunt ... zzzz ... nope, can't pretend to be interested in Paul Byrd any more.

8) The columnist's nightmare

Ramon Vazquez has been designated for assignment.

Gil Mota has been designated for assignment.

Unless they call up Danny Graves, I no longer have guaranteed material.

9) One last time, for old time's sake

Ironically, without Ramon Vazquez' contribution, Sizemore may not have been as heroic: in his last at-bat as a Cleveland Indian (please, I beg of you), Vazquez hit a single to keep the inning going. After the game, he was DFW'd, which apparently came as a great shock to exactly one person in the entire history of the spacetime continuum. As one reader pointed out, Ramon Vazquez' problem was that his skill set did not mesh well with the Indians' requirements this season. This is true, of course, in that the Indians needed a professional baseball player, and Ramon Vazquez provided nothing more than growth by means of decaying plant matter.

By the way, Aaron Boone pinch-hit for Andy Marte TWICE in the last inning this weekend. He walked to load the bases for Sizemore, and managed to get a two-strike bunt down. For all the grief I've given Boone, I have to admit that he has taken his demotion with a seriously good attitude, and kudos to him all around. (I still don't want him to play, though.)

10) Thank God for small favors

Joe Inglett is okay! Hooray!

The B-List: 8/11-8/13

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Someone buy Hector Luna a glove made of *leather*, though. The stainless steel one is very distracting.

11) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept

Franklin Gutierrez hit a home run!

Jhonny Peralta has a 26-game errorless streak.

Jason Davis did not ingest the rosin bag.