

Six game winning streak - meet Johan Santana. In today's B-List, Buff makes the argument that Santana could easily be working on a third straight Cy Young award, and that Jake Westbrook has had some pretty bad luck this season. Buff also hits on Kelly Shoppach's throwing arm, and Grady Sizemore as a leadoff hitter.



Hey, you know, if Liriano doesn't make it back for the Twins, this young guy Santana may pan out to be pretty good!

As a reminder, send me a brief description of the player you think was most misused by the Indians this season. Right now The Entry is running neck-and-neck with The Other Entry.

Apologies for the brevity of this column, but there's just not a lot to say that doesn't involve the phrase, "and then Santana made him look silly."

1) And then Santana made him look silly

I was being facetious above, of course: you could make a strong argument that this should be Johan Santana's third consecutive Cy Young season. The man gave up three hits and a walk in eight innings, striking out 9 Indians along the way. Of course, with a tough lefty on the mound, you should try to put right-handers in there to avoid that slider, right? Well, possibly ... except that right-handed hitters Jhonny Peralta and Kelly Shoppach each took the Party Hat (I don't know what a step down from Golden Sombrero is, but they each K'd thrice). In all, the only guy with something resembling a clue was Hector Luna with two singles and a drive to the warning track. (Ryan Garko came close, but so what?) The only other men to reach base were the left-handed Sizemore (walk) and the switch-hitting Martinez (single). The best strategy against Santana remains hiring the cab driver to drive him to a different stadium, especially in August (18-1 in 21 starts in August 2002-2006) in the Metrodome (12-0 in 19 starts since Aug 2, 2005).

2) Irrelevant interjection: the power of Google

I use Google's "gmail" as my mail client. They try not to be evil, what can I say? Anyway, there are sponsored links to the right of my message, trying to be relevant to what I'm looking at. Since I've written about Johan Santana being left-handed, I am offered Carlos

Santana shoes and a scholarship for being left-handed (which I am not). Carlos Santana? Shoes? Kevin, if you're reading this, you need to poke someone down the hall, dude.

I didn't have any idea that Carlos Santana made shoes.

3) The master of bad timing

When Jake Westbrook comes to the Metrodome, the schedule sure doesn't do him any favors. Last time, it was Liriano (beating him 3-1). This time, Santana.

Still, through seven innings, Westbrook was pretty darned good. He'd given up 5 hits and a walk in seven innings to yield one paltry run. He got the first guy in the 8th to bounce out, gave up a single, then induced another groundout. (14 in all, pretty typical Westbrook Style.) I've already been in a couple discussions this morning about why Westbrook was left out there to give up three runs in the eighth, but as far as I can tell, the answer is simply that he was pitching very well.

Now, you could say he was gassed. You could say that they were timing his pitches the fourth time through the order. You could say that Michael Cuddyer is such a fearsome cleanup hitter that there was no way you'd allow Westbrook to face him with runners on base. (You'd be wrong, Mike Cuddyer is not fearsome, but as Voltaire would say, I defend your right to say ridiculous things about Mike Cuddyer.) But having followed this bullpen this season, I cannot tell you that I believe there was one man out there who was significantly more likely to retire Cuddyer than Westbrook was last night. Well, I'd say Tom Mastny, but I'm biased.

Anyway, the wheels fell off, newts all around, let's move on.

4) In baseball, you're still good if you fail 70% of the time!

Although Jim Baker of Baseball Prospectus points out that this isn't really true (when it comes to OBP), throwing out basestealers is hardly a 50-50 proposition. Anyone who catches even half of the available basestealers is considered a catching wizard. Kelly Shoppach has caught 8 of 18 basestealers, a 44% clip, and is considered Very Good for this.

Which means that it's not terribly unexpected that the Twins were able to pull off a double steal in the 8th inning last night, which directly led to Cuddyer's hit being a 2-run single instead of a 1-run job. Still, stealing third is supposed to be harder than stealing second, and Shoppach is supposed to be better than your average bear. So although it's not unexpected, it still hurt a lot, and serves as a good reminder that Shoppach is still a regular ballplayer, not a Molina of some sort.

5) Silver Lining Dept.

Grady Sizemore came into the season with a career history of hitting left-handed pitching in much the same way as housecats swim: they *can*, but not well, and they look bad doing it. He's still struggling, hitting .222/.298/.395, which is very bad for your leadoff hitter. Of course, the .693 OPS kicks butt on the three-year average from 2003-2005 of .624, although that's almost entirely due to smacking some extra-base hits off lefties this season.

So it's nice that, given the toughest left-hander in the league, Sizemore was able to work him

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for Santana's only walk.

6) Nice hose!

Jason Michaels gunned out Justin Morneau trying to get from first to third on Torii Hunter's run-scoring single in the 8th, which was likely the only reason this was a 4-1 game instead of a 4-1 game. Still, I'll take *anything* defensively at this point.

7) Plate discipline update

8 of the 32 hitters Cleveland sent to the plate swung at the first pitch; 11 watched strike one go by (13 saw a ball). We are not the Tigers. (Unfortunately, that's the only way in which it's good not to be the Tigers.)