

The B-List: 8/22

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Buff has The Fever, and the only prescription is less Brian Sikorski. In today's B-List, buff rants about Bullpen Melt #64 on the season, this one courtesy of Andrew Brown and the aforementioned Sikorski. Also, we get a new version of Buff's famous "Managerial Head Scratchers", and more analysis of the Royals Teahenning of the Tribe last night.



I have The Fever, and the only prescription is Less Brian Sikorski.

1) Storm clouds brewing

With the emergence of Tom Mastny, someone I latched onto when we traded Pokey John McDonald for him, Cliff Lee is in serious danger of losing his Favorite Player designation.

This having been said, Lee pitched pretty well: yes, he lost, yes, he gave up a tater to the formerly-powerless Mark Teahen, yes, he needed 105 pitches to get through 6 innings, but he only gave up 5 hits, walked 2, and struck out 5. It's Quality Start material, although that's about all it is.

The good news was that of the 5 strikeouts, 4 were of the "swinging" variety. That's encouraging for a flyball pitcher, because missing bats means fewer of those fly balls make their way over the wall. The bad news is that those are about the only bats he missed: the Royals only had 13 swinging strikes, compared to 32 pitches that they fouled off (although one was caught for an out). 75 strikes in 105 pitches is very good, but it seemed that Lee was eminently hittable, as evidenced by the fact that four of the five hits were for extra bases and so many at-bats were extended by two-strike foul balls. Lee needs to finish those guys off more efficiently. Inducing a ground ball double play was nice, especially for the extreme flyball Lee.

2) Not a bad day at the office

Mark Teahen was going to fail. He couldn't hit for power, and stubbornly clung to the inside-out line drive stroke that precluded him from being anything but a destitute man's Mark Grace. For a corner infielder, he just didn't hit well enough. Plus he had that whole "Moneyball" thing going against him, and we all know that all "Moneyball" players fail.

And he sure started the season like that was proper analysis: hitting under the Mendoza Line, Teahen was sent to Omaha (which is a worthy AAA affiliate for the Royals, in that they stink and

have few league-average players) to refine his stroke or simply go away (it did not seem at the time like the Royals "brain" trust cared much which happened).

Now, Teahen is slugging .540 on the season with 16 HRs and 21 doubles and hitting cleanup for the Men in Blue. Not only did Teahen hit the two-run homer in the first, he smacked two doubles, a single, stole both second and third bases (in different innings, not back-to-back), scored twice, and drove in two runs. Had Joe Nelson struggled in the ninth, I have no doubt that he would have closed out the game. The Royals had seven hits and 4 RBI (one run scored on a throwing error), and Teahen had at least half of each.

Cleveland third basemen on the season have been ... less productive.

3) Anything you can do, I can do in a similar if somewhat lesser fashion

Travis Hafner had a pretty good day at the plate, too, going 3-for-4 with a pair of doubles off the ostensibly-left-handed Odalis Perez. All that was missing was the homer ... and the stolen bases ... and any RBI ... and any runs scored.

Obviously, some of this is not Hafner's fault: had Hector Luna not tried to steal in the first, he would likely have been driven in by Hafner's first double. Had Jason Michaels shown more speed than, say, Travis Hafner, he would have scored on at least one of the doubles. And had anyone after Hafner in the lineup gotten anything resembling a hit (both Cleveland runs were driven in by outs), he would have scored once or twice. Alas.

4) Quick, my blunderbuss needs reloading!

Andrew Brown sure throws "stuff." His seventh inning was pretty sharp, with a swinging K of Shealy and a double play ground ball after a single.

His eighth inning was ... less sharp. A five-pitch walk to DeJesus preceded the following sequence:

Strike (looking), Strike (bunted foul), Foul, Foul, M. Grudzielanek hit by pitch

I got him, I got him, I ... damn! In Brown's defense, Grudzielanek fouled off fifty-three pitches last night, but damn, hitting a guy on 0-2 sucks bad.

5) The aforementioned prescription

The box score will insist that Brown gave up two runs while Brian Sikorski was "clean." Except for the hit. And the wild pitch. And the general badness.

Look, the runners belonged to Brown, no question. And Teahen's single probably would have scored DeJesus even if Sweeney's fly ball was harmless instead of a run-scoring sac fly. But you bring a guy in with two on, you're asking him to prevent at least ONE of them from scoring. That's just poor.

In Sikorski's defense, I will say ... wait a minute, why am I defending this guy? Forget it! Give me Eddie Moo! Give me Mastny! I've had enough.

By the way, Wild Andy Brown threw 12 strikes in 20 pitches, which is not very good. Sikorski, in contrast, threw 12 strikes in 20 pitches. Big difference.

6) Managerial Head Scratchers

Hector Luna leading off? Look, I know that St. Grady was a late scratch, but is Luna really the best choice we have there? Is Odalis Perez' left-handedness so scary that Joe Inglett couldn't be tabbed instead? (Hm, seeing as though Inglett went 1-for-3, maybe it was scary.) I dunno, I know all about sample sizes and recent performance and stuff, but it sure looks funny to see .224 next to your leadoff hitter.

7) Player Head Scratchers

Why is Hector Luna trying to steal on an 0-2 count? I assume that was a botched hit-and-run. Which, of course, just moves this one up to (6). Since it cost us a run (Michaels singled, Hafner doubled), I'd like to know the thought process here.

8) Nice hose!

Victor Martinez would *definitely* have thrown out Mark Teahen had he been trying to steal short left field.