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There are few things in life I hate more than the Chicago White Sox and Ozzie Guillen. In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff looks at the weekend set that saw the Tribe steal two from the ChiSox, who are now 1.5 games behind the Twins for the final AL playoff spot. Buff hits on CC's 6th complete game, Danys Carmona's shaky return to the rotation, and Tom Mastny no longer being his favorite player. And look out ... Buff has a new whipping boy, and his name is Brian Slocum.



I take it as a positive sign that the Indians produced two terrific comebacks that fell just short, rationalizing that it says good things about "character" and "explosiveness." I have to. It beats rooting for the Browns.

### **1) Ho Hum Dept.**

One bad pitch.

One bad pitch is all that separated C.C. Sabathia from a complete game, three-hit shutout. As it was, the first two hitters scored on Tad Iguchi's home run, and then the White Sox accomplished exactly squat, getting two more hits, two walks, and zero runs the rest of the way. Sabathia pounded the strike zone (85 strikes in 118 pitches, 9 Ks) and made the Sox look silly (Thome 3 Ks, Thome and Konerko and combined 0-for-8) in a complete-game 4-hit win that ranks as one of his ten best starts this season. Sabathia stretched his majors-leading number of complete games and looked as strong in the ninth as in the second (I'd say "first," but giving up a two-run homer to the second batter doesn't speak of "strength").

After demoralizing losses in which comebacks fell just short, Sabathia's gem ended the split 4-game series on a high note.

Also, no one stole a base, which was unusual for a ChiSox-Cleveland tilt.

### **2) Yes, we remember you, rest assured**

Fausto Carmona, recast as a starting pitcher in order to wash away the tastes of failure as a closer, turns out to be Fausto Carmona in any role. Not only was the outing poor (7 hits, 5 runs, and 2 walks in 3 innings, including a pair of homers), but it followed the Carmona playbook: get two outs, lose concentration, give up runs. With two outs in the first, Carmona walked Thome and gave up the three-run tater to Konerko. With two quick outs and no one on in the 2nd, Carmona was lucky to escape with only 1 run because Dye's double with Iguchi on first was a

ground rule double. And in the third, after inducing a double play, Juan Uribe got the solo shot to complete the scoring. In other words, all five runs were given up with two outs.

Carmona looked good early in the season in a mid-late relief role, but his chronic inability to finish an inning (at least two of his blown saves came with two outs) make me wonder if he'll even be on the major-league roster in 2007.

### **3) No, we'd *forgotten* you, but man, you *suck***

Let me put this succinctly: Brian Slocum as a pitcher is worthless and lacks redeeming qualities.

If you try to sneak this man off the 40-man roster, do you honestly think anyone would grab him? Okay, maybe so: young arms always get someone to bite on 'em. But I'll tell you, if there's a roster crunch and we need to make room, this is the guy who goes. The man threw one inning in which he gave up two hits ... and that was his BEST inning (no one scored). In the previous inning, with two outs, he went double, triple, single, wild pitch, single, pop out. In the inning after the scoreless one, he went tater, walk, tater, showers. Total damage: 2 IP, \*9\* hits, 5 runs, a walk, no Ks, and a pair of home runs.

In three of his five outings, he gave up at least as many runs as innings pitched and walked at least one batter. His WHIP is 3, and that includes the two scoreless one-inning stints in April. The average Brian Slocum inning consists of two hits, at least one for extra bases, and a walk. Obviously the sample size is puny, but so what? Do you want to see *more* of this? I sure don't.

### **4) Around the bullpen**

Eddie Moo made a triumphant return by pitching only merely crummily: 2 singles but two Ks in a scoreless inning. I'll take that.

Matt Miller made an actual triumphant return with a perfect inning of work, including a pair of groundouts and a foulout on the third base side to Jim Thome, which is notable in that people tend to be concerned about Miller's sidearm delivery against left-handers. Not many left-handers hit righties better than Jim Thome. If nothing else, it's tremendous to see Miller return from elbow surgery within the same season: that seems unusual for someone experiencing the Chad Fox Commemorative Sproing.

Ferd Cabrera remains a great choice to throw strikes when your team is already behind, throwing 11 in 15 pitches and striking out two in a perfect inning.

We brought in two guys who have this weird delivery where they wrap their arms all the way around their bodies, looking almost as if they throw from the other side. Wait, that's throwing left-handed? I thought only starters were allowed to do that. Rafael Perez walked the guy he faced and Juan Lara bailed Sikorski out with a lineout and a double play before being victimized

by an error after a single to give up an unearned run when Andrew Brown couldn't retire Cintron. I know virtually nothing about Juan Lara, but he throws left-handed and gets people out, and I'm all for it. Look me in the eye and tell me he'd be worse than Slocum.

Sikorski and Brown were moderately effective without actually being helpful or good.

And then, there was ...

**5) Cliff, I apologize, you're the man, really you are!**

Tom Mastny, I forsake you!

Okay, maybe not. But of all the players to give up the two-run homer that blows the save and loses the game, A.J. Pierzynski remains one of the most painful. On an 0-2 pitch, even. I think my liver is swelling.

**6) How Not To Productions Presents: Your Bullpen In Action!**

You can't really blame Ozzie Guillen for being insane, but the fact is, Ozzie Guillen is insane. Of course, he had some help arriving there: his titular closer, Bobby Jenks, managed to give up four consecutive doubles (including ones to Andy Marte and Powerless Jason Michaels) in SEVEN PITCHES to blow a 5-3 lead in the top of the ninth. Had Wedge decided to pinch-hit Kouzmanoff for Shin-Soo Choo against Matt Thornton, who knows what he would have done? In Sunday's game, Jon Garland left after six excellent innings with a 10-1 lead: one helping of Boone Logan (1 out, 3 runs), Brandon McCarthy (0 outs, 3 runs), and Dustin Hermanson (2 outs, 1 run on the three-run blast by Kouzmanoff) later, and Ozzie was left to bring out a failed Kansas City closer (MacDougal) and waiver pickup (Thornton) to close out a close game. The media speculated as to why he didn't bring out Jenks. Are they serious? "My testicles were on fire, so I chose to cover them with sand instead of napalm, yes, is there a question there in the back?"

But the ninth inning of Sunday's game takes the cake: apparently slightly jumpy at his bullpen's "performance" in the other two games, Guillen used FIVE pitchers in ONE INNING to close out the 5-2 loss: McCarthy, who was terrible again, then Cotts, Riske, Logan, and Tracey. Riske gave up a run-scoring single, then after a K, Logan came in to walk his batter, Tracey came in to throw a wild pitch and walk HIS hitter, then walked Sizemore to force in a run, then finally got out of the inning by retiring Michaels.

It is rumored that after the game, Ozzie uttered an expletive. As hard as this is to believe, I have to take it seriously.

**7) Things you have to read twice, just to make sure**

*Now hitting for Grady Sizemore, Franklin Gutierrez!      Franklin Gutierrez singled to right*

The lefty Logan was pitching, so it was a reasonable move, but it still looks bizarre.

*Now hitting for Victor Martinez, Kelly Shoppach!      Kelly Shoppach walked*

I don't know about this one.

*Now hitting for (anyone), Casey Blake!      Casey Blake doubled*

In 2006, this is a great move. In 2005, this would have seemed like suicide.

*Your starting infield in all three games: Garko, Inglett, Luna, Marte*

Luna is getting a workout at short to see if he can handle it, but none of these players were on the Opening Day roster.

*Players who scored in all three games: Andy Marte, Casey Blake*

Martinez, Garko, and Blake got hits in all three games as well; Choo reached base in each

game by drawing a walk Sunday.

**8) Remind me: which guy is the defensive replacement?**

Friday night, the White Sox stole four bases off Kelly Shoppach and were caught zero times. Podsednik got two, with Uribe and Cintron chipping in.

Saturday night, the White Sox stole two bases off Victor Martinez and were caught zero times. Podsednik got one, as did Iguchi.

Sunday, C.C. Sabathia didn't let anyone get on base and the catcher was irrelevant.

If Victor Martinez' throwing woes are our biggest problem, it can be argued that we haven't done anything to address it by acquiring Shoppach.

**9) Triple your pleasure**

Grady Sizemore hit his 10th and 11th triples this weekend. You hit two triples in three games, that's pretty neat. It would appear that Mr. Sizemore is not worn out by the grind of the long season and still has some wheels.

Since Sizemore was not able to triple in Saturday's game (he struck out in each of his three plate appearances, which may have been another reason to pinch-hit for him above and beyond his struggles with lefties), Shin-Soo Choo did it for him. This is Choo's third triple in 36 games (118 AB), making him also an ostensible double-digit threat, and this doesn't even include the ersatz "triple"; he hit earlier in the season.

In all, the Indians pounded out 12 extra-base hits over the three games. I'm beginning to think this team can hit.

**10) Ruining a perfectly good Rob Deer impression**

Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled in he 7th inning off Dustin Hermanson Saturday night.

This is notable in that it was not a home run: Kouzmanoff has 5 hits in his 20 plate appearances, and three are home runs. This was Kouzmanoff's first multi-hit game (because he also ... well ... homered), but his line of .250/.250/.750 is still a thing of cleanliness. I would like to see a walk, but ... look, the man is slugging .750. With a few fewer singles and a few more walks, he could be the mirror image of ... well ... Russ Branyan.

Forget I mentioned it.

**11) Irrelevant comment**

Congratulations to the Mighty Akron Zips for defeating N.C. State Saturday, especially going for the TD run on the final play rather than kicking the tying field goal. The win makes Akron arguably the state's second-best football team behind Ohio State, but ahead of the Cleveland Browns.