

## The B-List: 4/7

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Friday, April 08 2011 1:08 PM -

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*The Indians finish off the sweep of the Red Sox with a 1-0 nailbiter, and the winning record drives the crowd into five figures for the second time this season. In today's B-List, Buff looks at as good a rebound outing from Fausto Carmona as could reasonably have been expected, some nifty fielding around the mound, and the first game-winning bunt of the year.*

*He will probably not talk very much about the hitting, except to point out that when Adam Everett is the offensive star, the offense is not very ... er ... ANY ... good.*

**FINAL**

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**Indians (4-2)**

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W: R. Perez (2-0)

L: D. Bard (0-1)

S: C. Perez (2)

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At the beginning of the year, had you told me we'd be 4-2 after playing Chicago and Boston, I'd have taken that. After the first four innings of Game One, I would have been pretty pleasantly surprised that the team had not all been sold to a cosmetics firm for scientific experimentation.

### 1) ¡Fausto!

What a difference a week makes.

Granted, I'm pretty sure no one out there thought that Fausto Carmona was a 30.00 ERA pitcher, or that Opening Day was anything but an exaggerated pratfall by the nominal Ace, but I'm equally sure that yesterday's performance was not something many fans would have laid serious money on, either. All Carmona did yesterday was:

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- a) Held the Red Sox to 2 hits over 7 innings
- b) Allowed only 4 baserunners total
- c) Posted four 1-2-3 innings
- d) Allowed more than one baserunner in an inning one time

Carmona certainly wasn't flawless: he threw too many balls and too many overall pitches to get through 7 innings. He walked two more hitters and only posted a 9:8 GO:FO ratio, which is very low for Fausto. He had nine three-ball counts before he retired his first batter in the 6<sup>th</sup> inning. And he was the beneficiary of a couple of fine defensive plays, notably a catch of a Youkilis liner by Orly Cabrera in the top of the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

On the other hand, with Jon Lester spinning what was arguably an even BETTER performance on the other side of the ledger, Carmona matched him inning-for-inning, and this after coughing up 10 runs in 3-plus (the plus stands for extra ulcers!) innings in his first outing. He showed much better movement on all his pitches: not just his sinker, but his "other" fastball and slider as well. I did not notice a great changeup, but I admit I don't have the best eye for that sort of thing.

It was pretty obvious that he had a better feel for the ball than he did in the opener, though.

Here's an open question: let's say Carmona believes that his third baseman is likely to catch the ball and subsequently throw it to his first baseman. Let's further speculate that he thinks his shortstop will show some range, and that his second baseman will have more armstrength than a blancmange. Is this likely to influence Carmona's confidence to pound the strikezone a little harder?

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Thus far, there is little evidence of this.

However, a handful of outings like this one would go a long way toward producing a very effective season for Fausto.

Underrated point: the Red Sox were waiting for Carmona to struggle with his control. Through the first four innings, a span of 15 hitters, only Jacoby Ellsbury in his second plate appearance swung at the first pitch.

Carmona responded by throwing first-pitch strikes to 18 of the 25 hitters he faced, including the first three, 6 of the first 7, and 9 of the first 10.

## 2) Smallball glory

There are very few strategies in baseball that are universally bad. Joe Posnanski hates the intentional walk, but admits that there are times where he can at least understand its use.

Stealing bases may be overrated, but it's hardly a skill with no intrinsic value.

Heck, if you successfully steal home, it's by definition a run-scoring event, although the risk usually dwarfs the reward.

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So while I'm on the record many (many) times as saying that in GENERAL I dislike (loathe) the sacrifice bunt as a (fungus) strategy, there are times when using it will increase your team's chance of winning. This is not only intuitively clear, but can be supported by using the widely-accepted Run Expectancy Charts floating around the Interwebs.

Now, it is one thing to apply this to, say, Austin Kearns in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning. With a runner on second and no outs in a 0-0 game in which offense is dribbling through a very clogged pipe indeed, it makes some sense to attempt to move the runner to third with one out.

The 7<sup>th</sup>

inning is still a little sketchy for me in a tie game, and the fact remains that there are other ways to move the runner over that don't involve bunting (hitting a ground ball to the right side, or getting a bloody hit, or letting Dennys Reyes pitch).

Anyway, Kearns tried to bunt, failed rather spectacularly, and the Indians did not score.

(An interesting piece of post hoc analysis asks what would have happened had Duncan made it to third with one out. Matt LaPorta followed with a ground ball to third: *probably* not a run-scoring play anyway.)

But the 8<sup>th</sup> inning ... the 8<sup>th</sup> inning is what Smallball is all about.

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Adam Everett, who had earlier in the game already exceeded my predicted hit total for the season, started the inning against fireballing Dannyboy Bard. Now, listen: I got to watch Adam Everett not hit many times when he was in Houston.

This was in 2003-2007.

After a couple of early gork years, he settled into the .230/.285/.325 groove we all know and love.

And then his skills deteriorated.

Think about this for a moment.

Okay, stop thinking about it. No sense giving yourself Bell's Palsy or anything.

He "hit" .185/.221/.247 last season in Detroit, necessitating the acquisition of Jhonny Peralta. Think about THAT for a moment.

I suppose what I'm trying to get across here is that Adam Everett cannot hit.

Thankfully, he did not have to: Bard walked him on five pitches.

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With a 2-0 count on Orly Cabrera, Everett stole second off Jarrod Streptolocuccus. This was somewhat bold, but Bard doesn't hold runners on well, Strepty doesn't throw very well (despite catching Carlos Santana earlier in the game), and Everett still has a bit of speed.

It was a good play, and huzzahs all around.

And then Cabrera laid down a sacrifice to move Everett to 3<sup>rd</sup>

, which is like Kearns' move in the 7<sup>th</sup>

except that it was the 8<sup>th</sup>

and Everett runs better than Shelley Duncan and Orly Cabrera can actually bunt and it was actually successful.

Otherwise, it was déjà vu all over again.

At this point, Bard is somehow reading from the Book of Zumaya and just blasting pitches all over God's Green Earth. Seriously, at this point, Bard had thrown 9 pitches. One was a called strike. One was fouled off by Everett.

One was bunted.

Six were scattershot elsewhere to Points Unknown.

Dan Bard is not on top of his game at this point.

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His first pitch to Asdrubal Cabrera misses the strike zone.

His second pitch to Asdrubal Cabrera misses the strike zone.

The 2-0 pitch was fouled off.

In retrospect, that foul ball set up the winning (in fact, only) run. Had Drooby shown something there, Bard at least might have figured something was coming.

As it was, Bard threw yet another pitch out of the strike zone, but with Everett running on the pitch, Cabrera was able to focus, reach out, and lay a fine bunt down the third base line.

Everett scored easily without a throw home.

So, for those of you scoring at home, that's one run on no hits, one stolen base, and two sacrifice bunts. I consider a sac bunt to be "smaller" than a sac fly, and also "smaller" than a stolen base, so I literally cannot imagine a run smaller than that one that doesn't involve defensive errors or a team whose coach takes them to Dairy Queen after the game.

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Was it awesome? Sure, it was awesome. Do I want to see again real soon? No, not real soon.

### 3) In the interest of full disclosure

Not only did Everett have one of the three hits the Tribe collected off Jon Lester, but three players reached base yesterday. One was Marcos Scutaro. One was Jacoby Ellsbury, who was rejected from “The Weakest Link” to take part in a pilot production of “The Feeblest Link.” And the other was Adam Everett.

So, in terms of an offensive show, the overall game was somewhere between “Plan 9 From Outer Space” and “Dougal.”

### 4) The Dangers of GameDay Revisited

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The final out of the game was originally recorded in ESPN's GameDay application as:

*J Drew infield single to third, D. McDonald thrown out at third.*

This is some mental image, is it not? With Darnell McDonald on first base (pinch-running for Poly Ortiz with two outs), J.D. Drew hits the ball to ... third base?

Where Adam Everett scoops it up and ... waits for Darnell McDonald to run into him?

What the heck kind of play is that?

As it turns out, Drew actually hit the ball soundly up the middle, where it struck pitcher Chris Perez and caromed off in the general direction of Everett. McDonald, having rounded second, alertly fell down, and Everett's throw to second beat him back to the bag for the final out.

It was kind of [hilarious](#) .

### **5) A quick public service announcement for Chad Durbin**

Strikes are good.

### **6) Now leading the A.L. in wins: Raffy Perez**

Yeah, pitcher wins aren't the most-meaningful statistic. Are you seriously going to tell me that Raffy's two outs had anything approaching the value of Fausto's twenty-one?

Raffy gets the win because Adam Everett wandered around the basepaths while the Indians collected multiple Not Hits?

This having been said, for the second consecutive game, Raffy Perez followed up Chad Durbin with a runner in scoring position and completely throttled the opposition. He actually recorded three outs, having struck Dustin Pedroia out on the pitch before Pedroia grounded out to Perez, who made an athletic play on a ball topped out to the left side of the mound (his right).

I think Perez' body consists of 85% "limbs."

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After the game, Perez said, “ .” I think that about sums it up.

### 7) Offense Roundtable

Matt LaPorta got a hit.

Shelley Duncan doubled.

Both teams drew four walks.

The end.

## **8) Guest Commentator Snidely Whiplash**

Do you wonder why the Tribe put on the bold play to have Asdrubal Cabrera squeeze bunt in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning? Might it have had something to do with the fact that in his previous three trips to the plate, he had struck out three times?

*(Author's note: probably not. Those three times were all hitting right-handed against Lester. He was batting lefty against Bard, and he's not as good a hitter from the right side.)*