

The B-List: 4/13

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Thursday, April 14 2011 2:00 PM - Last Updated Sunday, April 17 2011 7:28 AM

Well, it had to happen eventually. It is one thing to lose a game because your starting pitcher got hammered. It's certainly no shame to lose to a guy throwing a one-hitter and looking like an artist.

But eventually every team has one of those losses which makes the fan base go, "Gah!"

In a game of Squander Ball and plays you don't see every day, the B-List claims that this was one of those.

Also, "Gah!"

At the very least.

FINAL

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Indians (8-3)

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Angels (6-5)

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W: Takahashi (1-0)

L: Durbin (0-1)

So much squandering ... such bursts of "Gah!" ...

0) Administrative Note

This is one of those times when Real Life intervenes: between a work rush and having to run my son home from school with a fever, this column will be shorter than normal.

1) Hopeful Hope, or One Bad Pitch II

As with Fausto Carmona, Carlos Carrasco's first start was a Thing of Not Beauty. I will stop short of calling it Ugly, insofar as Carmona's set the standard so inachievably "high," but it sure wasn't any good.

Carrasco returned with a wonderful outing against the Mariners, although the 10-run outburst from the offense coupled with the truly astonishing ineptitude of the Mariners' offense made it rather difficult to effectively evaluate his performance.

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He had good stuff, and he had good results: beyond that, well ... the saying is that if you have two watches that say different times, you don't actually know what time it is.

You had to figure he wasn't as bad as his first start (based on his late-2010 run of moderate success), but past that, you didn't know.

Well, really, except for one pitch, there is virtually nothing to complain about from last night's start.

Do you like ground balls? I do, and I was rewarded with quite a few. I am not certain if Carrasco's fastball is a true "sinker" or perhaps just a two-seamer with late movement, but Carrasco garnered a brisk 11:5 GO:FO ratio, including a pair of induced double plays to erase a couple of the low number of baserunners he allowed.

While two of his five hits allowed were for extra bases (and ended up scoring runs of one form or another), most of the rest of the time the Angels were unable to square up well on anything Carrasco threw.

Do you like control? Carrasco pumped 59 strikes in 90 pitches, getting 5 strikeouts against a pair of walks. This includes 11 swinging strikes. In one nice sequence, Carrasco put a runner in scoring position with a solid single and a sacrifice (the most valuable use of Brandon Wood at this point in his career).

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He then struck out Peter Bourjos swinging and got a groundout to end the inning.

Neither hitter got to ball three, and each saw at least three strikes (Howie Kendrick fouled a couple off).

This represented the SUM TOTAL of the Angels batting with runners in scoring position (0-for-2) until the 12th inning.

Do you like efficiency? I'm a little confused by Manny Acta's decision tree for when a pitcher will be sent out after the 7th inning, but Carrasco is significantly younger and less experienced (not to mention smaller) than Mitch Talbot or Fausto Carmona.

Still, 90 pitches for 7th innings is quite nice, and each of the 6th and 7th were 9-pitch affairs.

Now, you can't fully cover Carrasco's outing without mentioning the hanging, gravy-dripping, minty-fresh slider he threw to Torii Hunter. Christina Kahrl tweeted last night that it was possible that Carrasco lost his focus after Asdrubal Cabrera immolated himself in short left field to produce Calieheimgeles' first run. While purely speculative, there might be something to this, especially given that he'd just walked Bobby Abreu on five pitches (immediately between the Cabrermolation and the *self*-immolation).

Anyway, it was horrifying.

Put that pitch in the "Do Not Use" bag.

2) Party Like It's 2008, 2009, or 2010!

Leading off the bottom of the 4th, Howie Kendrick smoked a breaking pitch over Mike Brantley's head for a clear double. Brantley relayed the ball to Asdrubal Cabrera.

At this point, accounts differ.

There are some who say that Cabrera tried to overthrow the ball, reaching back for a little something "extra" in order to make a superhuman throw to second base. There are some who say that perhaps he lost his footing, or was hindered by snacking on something deep-fried between pitches. A select few will try to convince you that because the game was played within driving distance of Los Angeles that a drug-addled alien seeped out of the earth and temporarily possessed poor Asdrubal for just a split second.

I cannot tell you exactly what happened, but hear me out. The throw by Cabrera was so atrocious that is skipped by everyone and Kendrick SCORED.

From SECOND.

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On a throw that was GENERALLY HEADING TOWARD HOME PLATE.

For this reason, I feel more confident than ever that it was Jhonny Peralta's fault.

3) Party Like It's 2008, 2009, or 2010 Redux!

I do not want to belabor the point that the Indians hit 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position, but look: when you have a runner on third base with fewer than two outs, you really ought to score a run. Should you score a run every time? No, that's unreasonable to expect. But it sure seems like a wasted opportunity if you don't score.

And truthfully, the Indians scored two of their three runs from exactly this setup: Shin-Soo Choo's sacrifice fly in the first, and his RBI groundout in the 8th

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But there were THREE MORE TIMES this was true, and we DID NOT SCORE.

One of these is reasonably harmless: desperate to tie the score in the 8th, Adam Everett stood on third base with another runner at first.

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In this situation, you have to make kind of a snap decision whether to “go on contact” or not.

Everett ran in on a ground ball to third, but it was handled cleanly and he ended up in a rundown.

I mean, it wasn't even something that would make a close play at the plate.

He got beat.

Annoying from a fan standpoint, but not fundamentally bad baseball.

One of these is pretty loathesome: with no outs and men on the corners, Travis Hafner can do just about anything on Earth and it would score a run. With Choo on third, a ground ball would probably be treated as a double play opportunity rather than a chance at the plate (it was 1-0 in the top of the 4th). A fly ball is a run. A hit, a HBP, a watercress sandwich ... pretty much anything but a strikeout.

Hafner struck out.

Okay, well, then there's another opportunity with Orly Cabrera at the plate, as long as he doesn't hit into a double play.

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Orly hit into a double play.

But it was the THIRD opportunity that brought back nightmares of Seasons Past. Given a second shot at driving in Choo from third with one out, Hafner knows that all he has to do is make contact.

He struck out the time before, and this resulted in great dishonor on him, dishonor on his family, and dishonor on his cow.

As long as he made contact, everything would be fine.

Everything was not fine.

On a 2-2 pitch, Hafner struck out swinging. And then Choo went completely insane, temporarily channeling the spirit of ... I don't know, Mr. Magoo?

Gibby from "iCarly"?

Bullwinkle Moose?

Anyway, Congressman Hank Conger picks him off third and the inning is over.

Again, the implication is clear: I blame Jhonny Peralta.

4) Death by Bullpen

This has two connotations: the first type is the kind we enjoy. Vinnie Pestano entered the game in the 8th, struck out two of the hitters he faced (including a very bewildered Peter Bourjos), and completed a perfect inning of work. Tony Sipp continued his early-season dominance, and then Acta used what I thought was good, prudent, and somewhat off-book judgement by bringing in Chris Perez in a tie game.

Texas just lost two games because they would not bring their closer in in a non-save situation (tie game), so I'm grateful and impressed that Acta doesn't fall victim to that particular brand of orthodoxy.

Perez used 11 pitches to retire 4 hitters and finished the 11th

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And then Chad Durbin came in.

Now, it's far too early to write off Chad Durbin. He had success last season, and relievers have

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notorious performance swings because of the low samples they get.

But I will tell you this: in his four-pitch walk of Alberto Collapse-O, not ONE of the pitches bore any resemblance at all to something that might penetrate the strike zone.

And then on a 1-1 pitch to Mark Trumbo, he uncorked a wild pitch that put men on second and third: while the next two balls were intentional to load the bases with one out, his 8:11 strike-to-ball ratio was not entirely undeserved.

And then he allowed the game-winning sacrifice fly to be hit by Jeff Mathis, a hitter so feeble that he often strides to the plate with a stuffed bear and a blanket instead of a bat.

So that wasn't any good.

5) A Word on Expectations

Jordan Bastian is the new MLB "beat writer" for the Cleveland Indians. I follow him on Twitter at @MLBastian, and he's a good read.

I hesitate to compare him to Anthony Castrovince because I'm much more familiar with the latter, but I recommend him without hesitation.

Still, he [Tweeted](#) something last night:

I see the negative reaction I'm getting after this Indians loss as a positive. Team went 4-2 on road and people are upset? That's progress.

In one sense, he's got a point. People expected little of the Indians this season, and I think most credible predictions had them winning about 70 games or so (maybe a range from 67 to 75). This is, without extraordinary developments, not a playoff team. The talent it has is young and inexperienced, and the rotation had greatly outperformed reasonable projections.

For fans to be upset about a 4-2 West Coast road trip suggests that Cleveland fans are not simply resigned to another Lost Season.

But here is what he is missing, in my opinion: we have seen this many times before. Not the 4-2 road trip, but the nonsensical behavior, the abject pratfalling, the baserunning acumen of tasered frogs.

Mr. Bastian comes from Toronto, where the games consisted primarily of bursts of pitching greatness punctuated by Jose Bautista home runs and John McDonald hitting in the manner of a Pantomime Queen Elizabeth.

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It may be that he is unaware of the Legend of the Three-Run Error, or the Getting Tagged Out Exactly Halfway Between Second and Third, or the Twelve Men Left on Base, or any number of mind-addling mental and/or physical gaffes that have defined Cleveland Baseball from the death throes of the Eric Wedge Era to the start of the Manny Acta Tenure over the past five or so years.

In short, the negative reaction is not because we lost, but because we lost in precisely the manner in which we lost some hundred-odd other games over the past few years.

We have seen this show, Mr. Bastian. It is not a good show. In fact, it has rendered most of us spleenless. As you still have a spleen, we both envy and pity you.

Enjoy it while you can.