

In Buff's latest, he notes Westbrook's continued struggles in keeping people off the bases, asks what took the Indians so long to give lefty reliever Juan Lara a shot, give props to the return of Matt Miller, notes how stolen bases are not that important, and more.



I can't believe winning two games counts as a "sweep"; I guess if you're the Royals, you take any solace you can.

### **1) Somewhere between "bowling ball" and "balloon";**

Jake Westbrook was not sharp, giving up 11 hits and a walk in 6 innings to maintain the tremendous 2.00 WHIP he's been posting recently. The good news is, only one of the 11 hits was for extra bases, he induced a double play, posted a nifty 12:1 GB:FB ratio (high even for Jake) and only gave up 4 runs. The bad news is, that's still bad.

For all the abuse heaped on the Royals (and Lord knows, much of it is deserved), they actually have some hitters. The first six guys in the lineup go .294, .330, .294, .294, .270, .306. Sure, the bottom three slots approximate Frank Duffy, Rusty Torres, and Dave Duncan, but for point of reference, those first 6 are better than ours, and would be approximately equal in terms of AVG if Hafner were in there instead of Peralta or Kouzmanoff. DeJesus is a legitimate major-league hitter, and although I strongly suspect Sandy Alomar put Esteban German in touch with Mephistopheles, .330 is .330, while Mark Grudzielanek and Emil Brown are experienced hitters. Costa appears a bit fraudulent, but Virtual GM Steve tried to acquire Ryan Shealy from Colorado, so I'm not surprised by his performance to date (one of KC's better moves, IMO, along with snagging De La Rosa, last night's winning pitcher).

None of this excuses an 11-hit outing, but this isn't Tampa Bay or Seattle we're talking about

here.

## **2) Well, I can certainly see why we waited until September**

Juan Lara threw 1 1/3 perfect innings, inducing 2 swinging strikeouts.

Now, I'm not saying Lara would have made up 20 games in the standings, but weren't there a couple points earlier in the season when it might have been nice to have a left-handed relief pitcher as an option? Perez had a stint, but as stints go, it was a bit too stinty. Now Lara comes up and ... hey, he can actually pitch. Left-handed! Boy, that's neat.

Dorks.

Can we at least see him in major-league Spring Training camp?

## **3) Return of the return**

Matt Miller threw nine pitches in a hitless ninth inning. Nine of them were for strikes. He induced three ground balls (one butchered by Garko) and struck out Emil Brown swinging.

Unlike Lara, it's perfectly obvious why Miller was not on the roster: let's hope his return from elbow problems is longer-lived than that of Francisco Liriano, who "sproinged" last night. I don't know what plans we've got for next season, but there's certainly no reason to not consider Miller for the bullpen.

## **4) It's the 21st century, now baseball is a game of millimeters**

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Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

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With the bases loaded in the third, Casey Blake was presented with a hanging pitch that KC manager Buddy Bell could not identify as being a breaking pitch or not. It was slow and did not break, that's all he could tell. Perhaps Blake gave De La Rosa too much credit for the break, but in any event, he got a little too much underside of the ball and turned it into a sacrifice fly instead of a grand slam. Alas.

### 5) Nice hose!

On the other hand, Blake's arm was even more valuable than his bat: Blake threw out Esteban German at third trying to stretch a double into a triple, then later in the *same inning*, threw out Mark Grudzielanek trying to score from second on a single. If you were wondering how someone could give up 11 hits and only 4 runs while inducing only one DP, you need plays like this.

### 6) A lack of sustenance

Casey Blake was the only Cleveland hitter not to get a hit last night. That means eight Cleveland batters got a hit.

Cleveland got eight hits.

You gotta figure the odds of scoring a lot of runs when the hits are sprinkled through the game like that are pretty low: sure enough, the only runs were on the aforementioned sac fly and St. Grady's solo shot.

### 7) Speaking of Tolstoy

Thanks to loyal reader C.B. (Hi, Dad!), I received a clipping from the New York Times that pointed out that Grady Sizemore is the fifth batter in major league history to have 50 doubles, 20 homers, and 10 triples in the same season. This was before Sizemore's 24th of the season

last night, which was especially notable in that it came off the lefty De La Rosa, which is Spanish for &quot;of the pink.&quot; No word as to whether the other Royals call him &quot;Pinky.&quot;

### 8) The invisible weapon!

The stolen base is an insidious weapon indeed: it can sap your will, bury your pitcher, cause massive dissent, and accelerate tooth decay. Or at least, listening to announcers like &quot;Piglike Wails&quot; Harrelson and Joe Morgan tell it. Stolen bases will absolutely crush you!

Unless, of course, they don't. Kansas City stole four bases last night, their high on the season. This includes a nifty double-steal of second and third to put two runners in scoring position. However, Westbrook proceeded to strike out German and get Grudzielanek to ground back to the mound, so neither runner scored. In the first, German stole second, induced a bad throw by Martinez to get to third, and watched helplessly as Grudzielanek struck out and Brown grounded out. Shane Costa stole a base in the 7th against Lara to get into scoring position for Paul Bako, which is like setting up Herve Villechaize for a volleyball spike. Bako backs up John Buck, for Pete's sake. He struck out swinging.

Not to be outdone, Jason Michaels stole second and third in the third inning, which was very useful ... in getting a better vantage point to watch the hitter walk. He stole two bases he would have been *forced to take*.

In all, six stolen bases created exactly zero runs. I am not saying this is expected or even common, but I'm saying, stolen bases, eh, I don't see it on my Top Five Things To Worry About.

### 9) That's just weird

Andy Blanco grounded into the ever-popular 3-2 double play, where Ryan Garko stepped on first before firing home to catch Ryan Shealy trying to score from third. I gotta think that's not

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common.

### **10) The data points, they just keep pouring in!**

Andy Marte doubled. At home.

What is the Vegas line for Kevin Kouzmanoff going 1-for-4 in his next game? He's done it in four of his six appearances.

### **11) In the interest of fairness**

Raffy Betancourt was bad. I talk him up enough that I should admit when this happens.