

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

Fausto Carmona pitched an excellent game, then Kyle Davies gave up a home run. However, Fausto had a couple stretches in which he appeared to lose his focus, and Kyle Davies gave up another home run.

In the meantime, Jack Hannahan came within one RBI of the team lead, and Kyle Davies gave up another home run.

Tony Sipp found the strike zone, and Frank Herrmann apparently returned, and then Kyle Davies gave up another home run.

I like facing Kyle Davies.

FINAL

1

2

3

4

5

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

[6

[7

[8

[9

[R

[H

[E

Royals (12-13)

[0

[0

[0

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

0

0

0

2

0

0

2

6

0

Indians (16-8)

2

0

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

1

5

0

0

0

0

X

8

10

0

W: Carmona (2-3)

L: Davies (1-3)



Kyle Davies is not good at baseball.

1) Above all else, the ability to concentrate and focus is of ... look, a shiny object!

Over the course of a long season, the vast majority of starting pitchers will have good outings and bad outings, days on which their stuff is better than others. There are a huge number of variables that go into a starting performance, with 100 different pitches thrown on dozens of days with different weather and opponents in different stadiums.

There are days on which the pitcher feels energized and others when he's fighting off a mild virus; days on which the pitcher slept well the night before and others that require strong coffee to "get going," days that are cold or windy or searing or the flight was delayed or he got bitten by a mosquito or reacts to pollen or a particularly endearing drawing of an octopus wearing a top hat by a three-year-old child.

Professional athletes are remarkable not only for their physical gifts, but also for their ability to perform at a consistently high level given all the distractions and the huge collection of

individually-minor but collectively-notable daily challenges.

Although it's quite reasonable for the lay fan to ask for "more consistency" from a professional athlete, it's only reasonable because that athlete has passed through the ranks of the "talented" through "excellent" up to the "elite" that make up the highest ranks of his or her sport. You don't make it all the way to the majors without showing that you've got way,

way

more than the average guy and really, significantly more than other guys who are "merely amazing."

I make this point every so often that the worst guy in the majors is almost certainly (depending on your personal experience) far better than anyone you've ever played with recreationally: the fact that Roy Halladay can make him look ridiculous doesn't mean you could strike him out.

But while

"consistency" remains a bugbear for any number of players, it bears mentioning that it's not something you can reasonably expect a guy to just go out and get.

You can lift weights and get stronger.

You can't take a "consistency pill" and become a machine.

So while it's perfectly understandable that Indians fans can look at Fausto Carmona and wail about his up-and-down performances, it's hardly something you can use as justification for calling for his head. In six starts, Carmona has two awful clunkers (10 R in 3 IP, 6 R in 5 IP) and four excellent starts. Yesterday's start was his 4th in which he went at least 7 innings and gave up no more than 2 runs, and in fact, it looked like a shutout in the making until the 7th inning.

If there is a long-term concern from yesterday's start, it is that over his last two starts covering 12 innings, Carmona has a paltry 3 strikeouts.

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

He's never going to be a K-an-inning guy, but 1 and 2 strikeouts is pretty lousy, even for a groundball pitcher.

We'll keep an eye on that.

But my point about consistency wasn't actually borne from looking at his season stats, but rather at short stretches of the game in which Carmona seemed to "wander off." After a five-pitch first in which he threw only 1 ball, Carmona came out for the second, staked to a 2-run lead, and promptly tossed four straight balls to Billy Butler.

Now, Butler is a good hitter with a discerning eye, and maybe it's good strategy to work carefully, but four straight balls is just bad.

Is it mechanical?

I don't think so: Carmona threw 60 strikes in 86 pitches overall.

I think he just lost his concentration on the mound, further supported by the fact that he started Jeff Francoeur (a noted free swinger) with two MORE balls, for 6 in all.

He got Francoeur to ground into a double play, and well done and all that, but those six pitches suggest a pitcher who isn't absolutely "locked in" to what he's doing.

I had originally considered the back-to-back hits by horrific hitters Matt Treanor and Al Escobar to be a lapse, but that's probably more Blind Squirrel territory than Carmona's fault. Treanor's ball wasn't exactly "smoked."

Consider this, though: after Escobar's double, Carmona produced the following sequence:

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

Started Dyson with 2 strikes (he put the second in play, made an out)

Started Melky Cabrera with 2 strikes

Started Gordon with 2 strikes

Started Butler with 2 strikes

Started Francoeur with 2 strikes

Started Betemit with a strike he put in play (out)

Started Aviles with 2 strikes (second in play, out)

Started Treanor with 2 strikes

Started Escobar with 2 strikes

Started Dyson with 2 strikes

Started Cabrera with a strike he put in play (out)

Started Gordon with 1 strike (then ball, then 2 strikes for the K)

I mean, that's a remarkable string. Quite impressive. Carmona is really, definitely, CLEARLY
"locked in" now!

You bet! Go get 'em!

Roll Tide!

Ish kabibble!

And then ...

... he walked Billy Butler on 4 straight.

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

And then he gave up two consecutive RBI doubles and the 7th was his last inning despite throwing only 86 pitches.

The doubles don't bother me by themselves: Francoeur and Betemit are hot hitters, one of whom is actually good. The other guys are pros, too. No-hitters are extremely rare. But I can't help thinking that, after such a long string of pounding the zone, after such a dominant stretch of being excellent, that the walk to Butler marked a sort of "mental wandering," especially insofar as it was FOUR STRAIGHT PITCHES.

Take away those two Butler plate appearances, and Carmona threw an astonishing 60 strikes in 78 pitches, giving up 5 hits and 0 walks in 7 innings.

And I suppose that more than anything else is what infuriates the more emotional fans among us here about Fausto: he is clearly CAPABLE of SUCH a high level of performance. See, very few (if any) of us are blessed with the physical ability and work ethic to allow us to throw a pitch in the mid-90s.

We simply and literally CAN'T do it.

But MOST of us can CONCENTRATE.

This is a skill we all think WE have, and WE are ORDINARY GUYS.

If an ORDINARY guy can do it, well, look, he's a SPECIAL guy, HE ought to be able to do it!

Well, yes and no. I'm actually pretty lousy at concentrating for a long time. I am very distractable.
good stretches, but they don't normally last super long.

I have

What you miss here is that Fausto DID go through a LONG stretch of EXCELLENT

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

concentration.

In that stretch above, exactly once guy reached base ... on an infield single.

He was awesome.

That's fantastic.

And then he lost it for a moment, and gave up two runs ... and then GOT IT BACK, retiring the next three guys.

(Listen: when I lost my concentration, I often don't just "get it back.")

Anyway, Carmona may never become super awesome Ace material because I don't think it's likely that he'll ever wipe ALL his lapses away. I doubt there ARE a lot of guys who can actually do that. It's just that Carmona's talent and ability make them more glaring. He's good, though.

2) Welcome back!

I like the version of Tony Sipp who throws strikes.

3) Welcome back II!

I have been told that Frank Herrmann has returned to the team.

4) Boom, boom, out go the baseballs

Hitting home runs off Kyle Davies is no mean feat. Kyle Davies is actually pretty bad for a major-league pitcher. One expects that when one of the Sooper Yoots is deemed “ready” or “seasoned” or “no longer Super Two,” Kyle Davis will get the wazoo.

Unless DJ Junky Jeff goes first.

Anyway, Davies isn't good.

But it's still a lot of fun when a Cleveland Indian hits a home run, and in varying degrees, each was encouraging.

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

Shin-Soo Choo is normally good for 20 bombs a year, so to see him with 4 in the April cold despite getting off to such a horrific start is very nice. Choo's blast went close to straightaway center, over 400 feet (listed at 410).

Carlos Santana has to actually HIT at some point, so to see him take one out is a good sign. His blast didn't quite make it to 400, but it passed 390, and that gets out of almost every park in almost every direction.

Grady Sizemore's comeback continues to exceed expectations: with a double, he now has THREE TIMES as many EXTRA-base hits as SINGLES. He is hitting .390, so this is not insignificant. He has as many homers as singles and twice as many doubles as homers.

His homer also went close to dead center, so these are not simple pure-pull guess jobs.

He is hitting extraordinarily well.

His SLG is EIGHT SEVENTY-EIGHT.

His ISO (isolated power, which is SLG – AVG) of .498 is higher than the raw SLG of Choo, Santana, and Matt LaPorta.

It is fifteen points lower than Al Escobar's
OPS

.

That's just absurd.

He is tied for the team lead in homers.

He has played in 10 games.

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

The other players have played in 21, 20, 24, and 24 games.

Shelley Duncan hit a homer off a righty. Well, Kyle Davies, but a righty nonetheless.

5) Joltin' Jack

Not only did Jack Hannahan reach base three times in four trips to the plate, his two-run double gave him 14 RBI on the season, which is one fewer than the team leaders. He hits NINTH.

Here's all you need to know: when Hannahan came to the plate with runners on 1st and 2nd in the 4th

inning, I *expected* him to drive in a run.

Yes, I did.

I am now officially completely insane.

6) Well, never mind, I guess

And on a day in which he saw a paltry 11 pitches in 4 trips to the plate, Orly Cabrera lashed two singles.

7) Dept. of Completeness

Mike Brantley drew a pair of walks. He is second on the team with 13, and the only player on the roster with more walks than strikeouts.

Justin Germano threw a quality ninth inning to lower his ERA to 4.00.

Matt LaPorta was the only starter not to reach base. He has as many doubles and homers over his last seven games as Grady Sizemore had ... yesterday.

The B-List: 4/28

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Friday, April 29 2011 2:25 PM - Last Updated Saturday, April 30 2011 9:52 AM

I would rather have Shelley Duncan on the roster than Austin Kearns.