

The Indians got extra national exposure this weekend, being both the featured game on ESPN Radio on Saturday and Sunday Night Baseball on ... well ... Sunday night. The starting pitchers made quite a show of it, collecting three Quality Starts and generally comporting themselves with grace and power.

The offense celebrated by stuffing itself into a chloroformed bag and tossing it off a bridge like so many unwanted kittens.

Note: the author thinks this is cruel to do. To kittens.

FINAL

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The B-List: 6/24 - 6/26

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Monday, June 27 2011 3:02 PM - Last Updated Monday, June 27 2011 3:23 PM

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Indians (40-34)

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Giants (42-34)

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W: Casilla (1-1)

L: Carrasco (7-4)

S: B. Wilson (22)

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Indians (40-35)

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Giants (43-34)

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W: Cain (7-4)

L: Masterson (5-6)

S: B. Wilson (23)

FINAL

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Indians (40-36)

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Giants (44-34)

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W: Bumgarner (4-9) L: Carmona (4-10) S: Affeldt (2)

I hate baseball.



0) Administrative Note

This column is short due to time constraints, but also because it hurts to write about this weekend's games.

1) Application Accepted

I think it's officially time to consider Carlos Carrasco a front-of-the-rotation starter. Not necessarily a True #1, but certainly something better than league average.

A quick word here: why NOT a True #1? Well, because I have been swayed by various arguments I've seen that these animals are actually quite rare.

Not every team has one.

It's not simply the best pitcher on a staff, and it's not simply one of the Top Thirty starters in the majors.

It's an argument for another time and place, but let's just say that Carrasco needs a LOT more of a track record before he can be considered such a thing.

Carrasco pitched very well, did so in a hostile environment, gave up no more than 1 earned run in his fourth straight start, pitched well in a very tight ballgame in which mistakes would essentially lose the game, and kept his composure through one of the worse defensive innings ever played.

While Carrasco wasn't entirely flawless, consider that five of his six hits allowed were singles, he gave up fewer than one baserunner an inning (6 in 8), he didn't walk anyone, and went 8 full innings. His one mistake resulted in a solo homer to Andres Torres: his runs allowed in the 3-run sixth came on an ground ball error and two sacrifice flies. Beyond this, watching him pitch made me excited to see his next start.

That may not be the definition of a true #1 starter, but it's still meant to be pretty high praise.

2) Toe to Toe

Matt Cain certainly made the Indians offense look silly in his 7 shutout innings, striking out 6 and giving up only 4 hits. There were a couple of times I was hopeful the Tribe would scratch out a run, but never a time I was EXPECTANT.

Faced with this opposition, Justin Masterson responded with a dominating outing of his own. Through 6 2/3 innings, Masterson too allowed only 4 hits and struck out 5, throwing 70 of his 111 pitches for strikes.

He lowered his season ERA below 3.00 to 2.98 and threw several pitches the Giants' hitters had no answer for, either watching them for strikes three or waving ineffectually at them.

In addition, Masterson was back to his old groundball self, generating 9 groundouts to 5 in the air.

Sadly, Cord Phelps and Tony Sipp conspired to keep Masterson from ending his long winless streak.

3) Credit Where Credit is Due Dept.

Infuriausto Carmona threw a Quality Start, giving up 3 runs in 6 innings of work. He induced 11 groundball outs and struck out 4.

He also walked three and gave up a two-run double to a man who RAISED his slash line to .171/.256/.229, so it didn't FEEL a lot like a Quality Start, but if I'm going to yell about results, well, the results were pretty good, and Carmona deserves credit for posting them and maintaining his composure pretty well. I think with the optional nature of his contract to come, he could be a sneaky-good acquisition for a clever team who can look past his bad-luck-inflated ERA ...

4) The Soreset Thumb in the World

No, this is not about Shin-Soo Choo, who probably has the literal version of this heading. No, this is about the bullpen.

In all, the bullpen was it's usual stellar self, with Vinnie Pestano and Raffy Perez chipping in a perfect inning each, and Joe Smiff adding a hitless, scoreless one, although somehow he STILL managed to put two guys on base before getting out of the inning.

The other pitcher ... was less stellar.

With two men on and two outs in the 7th inning, Tony Sipp came in to face Andres Torres. While it is true that Torres did an admirable job fouling off pitches to work a full count walk off Sipp, it should also be noted that Torres is 2-for-22 with 7 whiffs as a right-handed hitter (he is nominally a switch hitter, but not *functionally* so).

Throw him strikes!

And then, with the bases loaded, Sipp moved his arm, was called for a balk, and the game was effectively over.

Now, let me say this about the balk call: I could be shown a tape of 100 potential balks and get two-thirds of them wrong. I understand the balk in the same terms that I understand arsenic poisoning: I can repeat the words, and I can understand the basic premise, but it doesn't really click at any real level of clarity.

interview that he accepted this as a balk.

Sipp sounded in the postgame

I cannot seriously fathom what POSSIBLE advantage he could even POTENTIALLY have gotten from that little arm swing, which I thought was the entire PREMISE of the balk rule, but I will accept that this was a balk.

It might have been the least-satisfying way for Justin Masterson to lose that game ever.

5) Partners in Clang

Do you know why the bases were loaded for Sipp's balk? Well, Sipp walked Torres, yes. But before that, Miguel Tejada reached because Cord Phelps channeled his Inner Jayson Nix and tossed a rotten throw on a playable grounder.

Then, after a popup, pitcher (pitcher!) Matt Cain grounded into an inning-ending fielder's choice ... or, that is, he WOULD have, had Phelps not channeled his Inner Luis Valbuena and tossed the ball to ... NOBODY.

And Phelps would certainly have been the biggest goat of the weekend had it not been for the Ryan Garko Commemorative Defense played by Carlos Santana Friday night, whose TWO errors led to THREE unearned runs. Not all unearned runs are really all that unearned. I've talked about homers after potential third outs and such.

Nope, these were really, really unearned runs.

The Tribe also made two errors on Sunday, but no one really cared.

6) Terror on the Basepaths!

Oh. My. Lord.

I suppose my Very Favorite Play was when Adam Everett, who, contrary to his own apparent belief is Not Actually Fast, got caught in a rundown between third and home on a grounder to third. This is not by itself a bad baserunning play. If this is the ol' "contact play," then, y'know, sometimes you get hung out to dry.

But when Mike Brantley is on second, and does not advance to third, and then the pitcher uncorks a wild pitch ... well ... that seems like bad baserunning.

As does getting caught stealing third (Grady).

As does getting picked off first when you're CARLOS SANTANA.

Of course, none of these was actually the worst baserunning of the weekend, which goes to Nate Schierholz for his tripe to right-center. It, like the word "tripe," was one part short of being a complete "triple."

7) The shot heard round the Choo family

Shin-Soo Choo took a ball off his left thumb to go onto the DL.

Here's the thing about this: I understand getting hit in your "off" hand. Jeff Bagwell, a right-handed hitter, used to get hit in the left hand all the time.

He got a hamate removed and all that stuff and wore a pad on it.

"It" being the LEFT hand.

How does a LEFT-handed hitter get hit in his LEFT thumb? I mean, I saw it, I know how, but ... that's just not optimal use of your reflexes or something.

Anyway, he is G-O-N-E gone for quite a while.

8) Mook, meet mook

Shelley Duncan, Austin Kearns.

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Austin Kearns, Shelley Duncan.

This is your past, Austin. This is your future, Shelley. You each have none here. Please accept these lovely parting gifts.

9) Feeling left out

Yes, Adam, I agree, you belong in the discussion.