

## The B-List: 7/15 - 7/17

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}  
Monday, July 18 2011 1:53 PM -

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*While the Glass Half Full contingent will tell you that we split a road series with an A.L. East opponent, the B-List claims that this contingent is a bunch of ninnies. The Orioles are a bad team, and the Tribe dropped two in a row because they were throttled by journeymen and schmoes. In today's column, Buff notes that this weekend pitching "as well as Josh Tomlin" should not go on your resume if you want to stay in the majors.*

**FINAL**

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**Indians (49-42)**

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**Orioles (36-54)**

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W: Tomlin (11-4)

L: Jim Johnson (5-3)

S: C. Perez (22)

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Indians (49-43)

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### Oracles (37-54)

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W: Simon (2-2)

L: Carrasco (8-7)

S: M. Gonzalez (1)

**FINAL**

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**Indians (49-44)**

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**Oracles (38-54)**

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W: Hendrickson (1-0)

L: J. Gomez (0-2)

This weekend was like a Baskin-Robbins where 28 of the flavors are bad.



1) Today (day day day), I consider myself (elf elf elf) the luckiest man (an an an) in the rotation (ation ation ation )

After so many injuries to the starting rotation, it was a little bit concerning Friday night when Justin Masterson began beating Josh Tomlin about the head and shoulders with a bat for winning a game solely because of 6 runs worth of support, but fortunately cooler heads prevailed, and it turned out the Masterson was using a Nerf™ bat. Still, the frustration was easy to understand.

I think we've pretty well established that I'm not particularly well-suited to telling you why Josh Tomlin was successful, so this puts a damper on my credibility in telling you why he was not. I mean, it does not take a great deal of analytical savvy to point out that giving up three home runs in a game or a run an inning is largely counterproductive, and Tomlin did both.

Clearly this is not very good, although falls short of the "doubleplus ungood" threshold by several hit batsman and a balk.

If I were to come up with the recipe for success for a starter, though, I'm pretty sure "allow three home runs" is not going to be on the list.

The problem here is not analyzing the results, but rather the process by which the results were attained. I've seen the home runs several times on replay, and although one looked rather meaty, there was not a lot to distinguish these pitches from others Tomlin made that resulted in routine outs. I grant my ability to distinguish a great Tomlin pitch from a poor one is not significantly better than would be achieved by Chicken Bingo. Still, Adam Jones worked the count full before hitting what looked much like a quality pitch, so it's possible that Jones simply beat Tomlin there and let the hat-tipping commence.

Still, there are not a lot of ways to cut these data to make them look like they belong to an 11-4 pitcher with a sub-4.00 ERA. (In fact, they don't, as Tomlin's ERA stands at 4.03 after the game.) If this is simply a case of Tomlin's margin of error being small, that doesn't seem to say something that I'm necessarily excited about hearing.

If this is a case of the Orioles having an uncharacteristically good day at the plate, I have to wonder about real, solid offenses like those Cleveland would likely see in important late-season games.

And if this simply represents a subpar outing by Tomlin, it's distressing that there's no obvious thing that stands out to distinguish it from his more-successful starts, except in the post-hoc results.

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I am not all that keen on relying on the quality of the final outcome to tell me whether Tomlin is pitching well or is likely to pitch well in the future.

I'd feel more comfortable if I had something to latch onto to say, "Well, he located that fastball with this movement to that spot, I can tell that he's going to have a successful day."

Telling you that you can tell that the results are bad because they are bad results does not strike me as valuable analysis.

At the risk of giving you valueless analysis, Josh Tomlin's results were bad.

## 2) Flash-frozen

Let's get this out of the way up front: I think Jeanmar Gomez is Just Some Guy, and while I wish him the best while he wears a Cleveland uniform, I expect very ordinary results from him unless something significant changes.

This having been said, Gomez certainly shows that he has the stuff to get major-league hitters out, as he rolled through four high-quality innings allowing only one run on a pair of hits. One hit was a bloomed single who was immediately erased on a double-play grounder: the other, unfortunately, was a solo bomb, but things happen.

Saying a pitcher is bad because he's given up a home run is to say that all pitchers are bad.

And there were a number of things to like about the WAY Gomez was pitching: 5 of his first 6 outs and 9 of his first 12 were the result of ground balls. Gomez struck out a batter and did not walk any. Had these been four innings of, say, a Carlos Carrasco or Justin Masterson start, I would have felt confident and calm about the team's fortunes and start thinking about the appropriate level of praise to use in the write-up.

Unfortunately, major-league games are now more than 4 innings long, and Gomez turned a pair of singles into a three-run homer and essentially lost the game in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning, as the Cleveland offense pumpkinized in record time after putting up a three-spot in the first.

Gomez also allowed one last solo pop before exiting the game for good.

With the ground ball tendencies (which I've been told he has in the minors so was no fluky outcome), it surprised me that Gomez would yield a pair of homers, especially one to a guy slugging .324 with a .065 ISO. I mean, that's some kind of atrocious. Anyway, Gomez pitched very well until he didn't, and then he pitched very poorly indeed.

### **3) Back on track without the result**

Carlos Carrasco ended the first half with two disastrous outings that made fans wonder if his improvements in 2011 were merely illusory, or at least transient. So it was good to see him rebound with a Quality Start, even if he ended up saddled with the loss because the Cleveland offense behaved like so many bags of gelatinous prunes.

To say that Carrasco's start was the best of the weekend is damning with very faint praise indeed, but his WHIP was low (5 H, 2 BB in 7 IP), his runs were adequate (3 R in 7 IP), and he posted nice K:BB and K/9 marks (6:2, 6\*9/7).

If there is a cause for concern, it is that fully four of the five hits Carrasco allowed were of the extra-base variety. The Orioles may not have hit Carrasco often, but they certainly did hit him HARD. Occam suggests that Carrasco is a younger pitcher who is still refining his command of above-average stuff, and so I'll go with that for now.

#### **4) Of the two, I'm rather partial to the Jekyll fellow**

On Friday night, after Josh Tomlin gave up his five runs in five innings, the bullpen trotted out and did what the bullpen has done many times this season:

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Chad Durbin, 2/3 IP, 0 H, 1 BB, 0 R  
Raffy Perez, 1/3 IP, 0 H, 0 BB, 0 R  
Joe Smiff, 1 IP, 0 H, 1 BB, 2 K, 0 R  
Vinnie Pestano, 1 IP, 0 H, 0 BB, 2 K, 0 R  
Chris Perez, 1 IP, 0 H, 1 BB, 0 R

For those of you counting at home, that's four hitless innings of scoreless baseball. We won that game.

### **5) No, seriously, I did not invite that Hyde fellow to the party**

In the other two games, the bullpen behaved generally as a boorish guest at a party, except instead of dancing drunkenly with a lampshade on his head, he poured sulfuric acid on the linoleum and began hurling his own excrement at passersby.

And while I admit to being somewhat of a Raffy Perez Apologist, the fact is that the Worst Pitch of the Weekend was not Gomez' to Andrino or even Frank Herrmann's to Felix Pie, but rather the 3-2 pitch thrown by Herrmann to Mark Reynolds.

A bit of history is required here.

Here are 20 plate appearances taken from a random point in Mark Reynolds' career:

strikeout, strikeout, single, strikeout, strikeout, strikeout, strikeout, walk, strikeout, homer, strikeout, strikeout, homer, strikeout, HBP, strikeout, strikeout, strikeout, strikeout, strikeout

Mark Reynolds strikes out. A lot. Like, more than anyone else ever. Ever! If you have \$20 to bet on the outcome of a Mark Reynolds plate appearance, bet it on "strikeout."

(Try to get 3-to-1 odds.)

And the frustrating thing is, Frank Herrmann's Number One Skill is throwing strikes. He is normally especially good at throwing the ball in the strike zone.

Yes, it gets hit quite a bit.

But at least the pitches are strikes.

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Not this time. (In fact, rarely in this outing: in a huge out-of-character performance, Herrmann threw 10 strikes in 22 pitches, well below his normal strike percentage of Every Pitch.)

Reynolds walked, Pie drove in two runs, we lost, boo and hiss.

In the other game, Joe Smiff finally gave up a run (actually two).

**6) Lloyd's of London called: they said, "No."**

At this point, what would the insurance premiums on Grady Sizemore be? Ecuador? New Zealand?

It'd be a lot.

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Sizemore tweaked his knee on a double in the first inning of Sunday's game. He is not playing in the day game today.

### **7) Nice hose!**

Carrasco gave up only three runs at least partially because Zeq Carrera ran down a double and relayed a throw in that caught Derrek Lee trying to score from first. Granted D-Lee is not the fastest guy on the roster any more, but it was a play I do not recall recent center fielders (Sizemore, Brantley, Dishrag) making.

### **8) Captain Clutch!**

I will say this about Orly Cabrera: if he fails in a clutch situation, it's purely because he's not a very good hitter. It certainly isn't because he "feels the pressure." If anything, I might rather see Orly up with runners on late than I would see him with the bases empty early in the game.

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With two outs in the top of the 9<sup>th</sup> innin Saturday, the Tribe loaded the bases off “closer” Kevin Gregg. Orly then stroked a bases-clearing double to bring a 6-2 game up to 6-5.

And then we lost, of course, but still, it was pretty neat.

### 9) Chicks dug the first inning only

The Indians started Sunday’s game by pinatating poor Mitch Atkins, showing that this is not a good year for journeyman starters named “Mitch.” After two quick outs, the Indians went:

Travis Hafner: homer  
Carlos Santana: homer  
Grady Sizemore: double  
Matt LaPorta: HBP  
Travis Buck: RBI single

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The Indians ended the game with three runs. I will let you theorize on how I felt about the Cleveland offense over the rest of the course of the game.

### 10) Quick stroll through the weekend's offense

Travis Hafner drew at least one walk in each game, four overall.

Mike Brantley collected five hits in two games, including a double.

Lonnie Chisenhall drove in the winning run Friday night with a single in a two-hit night.

Luis Valbuena chipped in a pair of hits Sunday afternoon.

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No Cleveland hitter got a hit in each of the three games.