Unlike fans of a lot of teams, there is a shining light for Tribe fans when the team miserably underperforms: the B-List just gets funnier and funnier by the day. Now in it's fourth season on this site, this is one of the better B-List's I can remember reading (no offense to Shapetto). In it, Buff talks about Highlights childrens magazine, the Indians inability to produce with ducks on the pond, Choo in the two hole, and breaks out the "Department of the Unlikely" for the first time this season. Enjoy.

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It's the same old season!

1) A Lesson from "Highlights"

If you're of a certain age, you'll remember reading "Highlights" magazine in the

waiting room of the doctor's office, and the reason for this is that "Highlights" magazine exists nowhere else but in the waiting room of doctors' offices. And the reason for this is that "Highlights" magazine is one of the most pointless uses of ink and paper products known to man along with Milli Vanilli posters and comic book treatments of "Finnegan's Wake."

There is so little redeeming value to a "Highlights" magazine that it has never been seen outside of captivity.
The only things I really remember about "Highlights" are a wretched cartoon-like substance called "The Timbertoes," in which a family of unfortunately-shaped humanoids wandered about with bulbous bodies and oafish handlike appendages and I'll be damned if I remember the point of a single one of them.

Dad wore glasses.

Timmy was an idiot.

Hell, they were all idiots.

Their heads were made of wood.

They may have been puppets.

I could hardly be bothered to care less.

I just remember the rage and frustration that someone had gone to the trouble of making something LOOK like a cartoon (and hence, something of value) without including any of the actual intrinsic characteristics that made a cartoon "cartoony" (i.e., humor, plot, point).

"Highlights" magazine was chock full of this sort of thing: hidden picture puzzles, stories about children doing things no child on Earth has ever been interested in doing at any point in human history ever, riddles that caused more bewilderment than mirth ...

... you know, it occurs to me that this introduction might be construed as avoiding the topic at hand. This can be simply explained by the admission that I am trying to avoid the topic at hand.

In any event, one of the recurring features in "Highlights" was the continuing life experiences of two brothers, Goofus and Gallant. This, too, was drawn in a style that suggested cartoony goodness, while lacking all such value.

"Highlights" was a vaguely Christian publication, and tended to try to teach lessons to young people who were about to be injected with crippled diseases, which makes for a less-than-enthusiastic audience.

Still, you can't blame them for trying.

Putting aside the question of the parent (Christian or otherwise) who is allowed to name his child "Goofus" (I mean, really: Frank Zappa was prevented from naming his son "Dweezil," despite the fact that the child then legally changed his name to this moniker later in life: you're telling me that some hospital staff member found "Dweezil" to be sufficiently damaging but let "Goofus" fly past unaltered?

"Gallant" is bad enough, a virtual invitation for regular elementary school beatings, but "Goofus" suggests a certain ...)

You're still waiting for me to get to the point, aren't you? To quote the eminent legal scholar Jennifer M. Blanchard, "Sigh!"

Goofus, of course, was an ethically-challenged individual with a bad haircut, and would do things like steal from acquaintances and shave the dog periodically. Gallant, sporting a more aethetically-pleasing coif (so that you knew that he was good, something you might not have been able to discern from his F*#^ING NAME ... his brother was GOOFUS, for crying out loud, how hard is this to figure out?!

"Daddy, should I be more Gallant, or would it be better to be more of a Goofus?"

I mean, put aside they three-penny moralizing that made up the rest of the magazine and consider just how mentally disabled a child has to be to think ...)

Okay, okay. You people are really linear, you know that?

Anyway, the lessons were pretty straightforward: help the lady next door, don't push her down and sell her prescription drugs to kindergarteners on the playground. Help your mother dry the dishes, don't run to the garage after dinner to huff paint thinner.

The lessons were pretty broad.
The point was, Goofus illustrated bevavior that was NOT encouraged, while Gallant, the impossible child that Does Not Exist, made you feel inadequate and then you'd flip to the Timbertoes and it would suck and so you'd try to look at the hidden picutres and look at the list of things to find and realize you had no idea what a "spatula" was because you were six years old and the doctor's waiting room was a brisk fifty-nine degrees and you had a lot of excess energy and you were going to get a shot and maybe if you made a run for it now, you might make it at least to the vending machine, except you didn't have any money because you were six.

Man, "Highlights" magazine sucked.

But the POINT was (and, truly, I did at one juncture have an actual point), I was going to write a big insightful piece about how much better Fausto Carmona pitched with the bases empty than he did with runners on base and how this was going to suggest a mechanical adjustment and even came up with a very clever nickname for the Goofus version of Carmona, "Faustodious."

Except ... well ... it turned out not to be true.

I mean, look, of COURSE Carmona's ERA with runners on base is a lot higher than his ERA with the bases empty. EVERYONE'S ERA is. That's kind of what "ERA" and "runners on base" MEAN. The only way to have a non-zero ERA with the bases empty is to give up a home run (cf. Jacobs, M.).

There are LOTS of ways to give up runs with runners on base.

That's kind of the point of baseball.

Anyway, there was a bit of a difference:

Bases empty: 11 PA, 2 H, 2 BB, 1 K, 5 GO, 1 FO
Runner(s) on: 12* PA, 3 H, 2 BB, 2 K, 2 GO, 3 FO

The asterisk is because he started a guy with a runner on base, but he was caught stealing and the batter eventually grounded out.

The only thing I can see here is that Carmona was a lot more Carmony with the bases empty, posting a spiffy 5:1 GO:FO ratio that you like from Carmona. But is 2-for-11 quantitatively different from 3-for-12? Not really. He was equally likely to walk someone.

2 Ks vs. 1 K isn't significant.

He was pretty much the same guy: a bloody blunderbuss with too much movement.

I got nothin'.

This start was better than his last one. It was still pretty bad.

2) Asset Management

Raffy Betancourt made a real leap forward to look more like the 2007 version than the 2008 version, striking out the side in the 6th inning after a leadoff walk. He started each of the four hitters off with a strike (three looking, so they were strike-zone strikes and not foolish swings) and threw 18 strikes in 26 pitches to retire the side.

One disturbing factor was that 10 of his pitches were fouled off while only 3 were swung at and missed, but the end result was that he was thoroughly unhittable, even if two of the "hitters" were Miguel Olivo and Tony Pena, Jr., a man whose skill with the bat is anecdotal at best.

At first glance, though, you might consider a 26-pitch inning to be pretty stressful: studies suggest that raw inning counts or even raw pitch counts are not necessarily the best indicator of injury risk, but rather an arcane mix of counting innings and pitches with their distribution. Throwing 120 pitches by posting 8 15-pitch innings is intuitively less wearing than 5 innings of 24 pitches apiece.

26 pitches in one inning is kind of a lot, so it was a little eyebrow-raising to see Betancourt come

out for a second inning of work.

Compounding this was the fact that the Indians currently sport a ridiculous EIGHT-man bullpen: with Scott Lewis having been sent down for reliever Vinnie Chulk, the Indians 12-man staff (still a grating development) has only four starters. Surely with EIGHT relievers at your disposal, you don't have to risk sending a guy out for a second inning after a 26-pitch slog, even if it was very effective.

Except that somehow, the Indians, with EIGHT relievers ... were kind of out of relievers.

Zach Jackson needs to be saved for tonight's Carl Pavano Experience. Kerry Wood just pitched Sunday and the game was still within reach.

Jen Lewis went 1 2/3 innings, although he needed only 15 pitches to do it.

Raffy Perez and Joe Smiff have been questionable, and Smiff threw 31 pitches in 1 2/3 innings Saturday; Chulk threw 29 in 2 1/3 innings in the same game.

Masa Kobayashi was warming up.

Now, it could be argued that one night off should have been enough for Smiff of Chulk to recover, but was either really that much better an option than Betancourt at that point?

Anyway, Betancourt ended up throwing another 16 pitches and left the game after a 10-pitch 5-foul battle with Mike Aviles. Kobayashi only needed 10 pitches to record his four outs, but that was hardly a given and only valuable in hindsight.

(It should be noted that Kobayashi's 1 1/3 innings were perfect. I am not necessarily sanguine about Masa, but he sure has been an asset to this point.)

3) Ducks on the Pond!

Surely the Indians could never be as bad as they were last week when they went 1-for-16 with runners in scoring position.

True. And 4-for-13 doesn't sound that bad, right? I mean, that's a .308 average. You gotta take that, right?

Except ...

THREE of the hits were singles that advanced a runner from second to third. Only 1 drove in a run (from third) ... and it ALSO advanced a runner only from second to third.

More to the point, you ended up with these marvelous sequences last night:

1st inning:
runners on 2nd and 3rd, K, GO*

3rd inning:
runners on 1st and 2nd, K
bases loaded, K swinging, K swinging

4th inning:
runners on 2nd and 3rd, K swinging

9th inning:
runners on 2nd and 3rd: K swinging (in a PA involving a wild pitch), 1-3 GO, K looking

Not only is that a lot of ducks left in prime pond position, but SIX of the outs were Windmill Specials. That's just infuriating.

* *Peralta's shot up the middle looked for all the world like it would be an RBI single, but Tony Pena Jr. made an outstanding play on it. He gets the gold star for that one.*

4) The end of the perfect correlation

Trevor Crowe got a hit (and scored the Tribe's first run) and we still lost. Alas.

5) You look good there

Mark DeRosa was given the night off, so Shin-Soo Choo replaced him in the 2 slot. This is a pretty wise decision, as not only is Choo hitting .364, but he's a guy who will take a walk (4 thus far this season, OBP-AVG of .117 thus far) and has good speed.

It's not necessarily the greatest long-term solution as both Sizemore (entrenched at leadoff) and Choo have historically sported large platoon splits, but against a good right-handed starter like Zack Greinke, it's a good load-up.

Choo rewarded the decision by stroking two hits, including a double off Greinke and an RBI single in the 9th.

One interesting fact: although Choo has been prone to strike out some in the past (his major-league career is 165 games and 531 AB, almost a perfect single season, and he has 139 K), he has only 2 Ks this season against those 4 BB. I don't think this is something to depend on: he's still fundamentally a power guy and will strike out his fair share, but he's been an absence of fresh air for a team that tends to miss the ball a lot.

6) Vega, Betelguese, Victor Martinez, Sol

Listed in order of hotness.

Okay, Martinez has one o-fer this season (4/11), but he did walk in that game, meaning he's reached base in each game this season. He has multi-hit games more often than he doesn't have multiple hits (4 of 7): he has walked almost as often as he's struck out (4 to 5).

He has 3 RBI.

7) (error: Argument list too long.)

The list of things colder than Victor Martinez is long, but you have to go a looooong way to find these players:

Travis Hafner's Tinfoil Hat came one K shy of a Golden Sombrero in 5 AB.

Jhonny Peralta was robbed of a hit, but his other outs were very out-y. He did walk, but a hit would have come in real handy several different times.

Tony Graffanino is on the roster.

8) Feast or Famine revisited

Asdrubal Cabrera has reached base 10 times on the young season, with 5 hits and 5 BB.

4 of the hits and 3 of the walks have come in two games. (Last night's 2-for-3 with a walk was one of the good ones.)

9) Dept. of the Unlikely

Covelli Crisp walked two times. In the same game!

Kyle Farnsworth pitched a hitless inning, but Joakim Soria did not.

Tony Graffanino is on the roster.