I have two directions in which I could go here: I could ask that the Indians try to make their infield defense MORE comical and advocate hiring someone with Comical Sports Experience, like Steven Colbert. Or I could go in the other direction, and advocate trying to make the infield defense LESS comical and advocate hiring someone with Actual Sports Experience.

In the meantime, we'll discuss Justin Masterson's Much Better Than It Appeared start, some home run heroics, and … oh, yeah, comical infield defense.

FINAL

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Mets (36-28)

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Indians (23-36)

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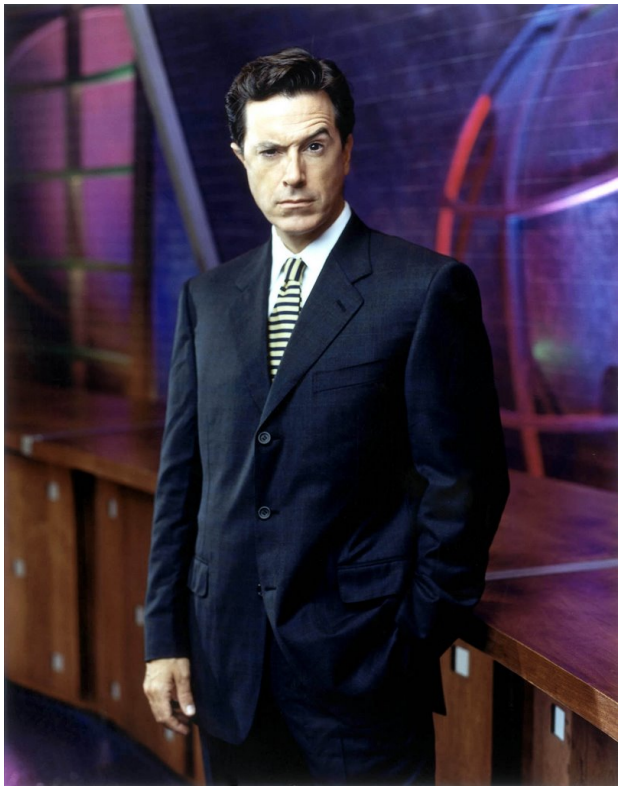
9

W: J. Santana (5-3) L: Masterson (2-6) “S”: F. Rodriguez (14)

Schmoes!



1) Administrative Note

As the blogosphere takes off, a number of people who AREN'T in their pajamas in their mother's collective basements are showing off their writing chops on the Interwebs. For example, ex-GM Paul DePodesta writes the popular "
It Might Be Dangerous … You Go First
" blog in which he's able to showcase not only his scouting and GM skills, but that he's a pretty entertaining writer as well.

Another person who has taken this tack is ex-Astros third baseman Morgan Ensberg . Big fans of Cleveland Indians Minutiae might remember that after a disastrous stint with the New York Yankees in 2008, Ensberg actually spent some time in Beefalo in the Indians' organization.

He is generally regarded as clever, insightful, and always looking to learn something more than he already knows.

Morgan and I disagreed via Twitter on the general tenor of media relations, and I won't bore you with the substance of that argument, except to say that I was obviously right. (In his defense, so was he. We kind of made different points.)

Anyway, when I made the offhand snide comment that he should have taught Jhonny Peralta to play better defense at third base, he said he would love the opportunity.

(I get the impression that Ensberg is interested in a career in baseball past his playing days, although he also was an announcer for the College World Series super regional in Fullerton this past weekend, so he may end up going in that direction instead.)

However, after the display of defense the Indians coughed up like so large a hairball last night, I have a new fervor behind my request. And thus, I would like to exhort everyone to join me in my crusade: as was evidenced by my ill-fated "Fire Eric Wedge" campaign, which showed exactly how much influence I wield in the Cleveland front office (somewhere comnfortably between "zero" and "the natural logarithm of 1"), it now falls to the masses.

Please take a moment and do one of these things:

a) Go to Twitter and tweet, “Help us, @MorganEnsberg, you are our only hope! #indians #tcf”
b) Set your Facebook status to this same string
c) Go anywhere else you can do this sort of thing

In order to avoid irritating Mr. Ensberg more than is necessary, please do NOT bombard him with email. Morgan Ensberg is 6’2” and 210 lb, and I am not. Bombarding Mark Shapiro with email is encouraged. But not Morgan Ensberg.

(You should prolly read his blog, though.)

2) Help us, @MorganEnsberg, you are our only hope!

Justin Masterson gave up 10 hits in 7 innings last night. One of the hits was certainly well-struck, a home run to dead center off the bat of Ike Davis.

This was the only extra-base hit.

Well, all right, you know, groundball pitchers sometimes give up hits. You know, seeing eye singles, sharp grounders through the hole: Jake does it, it's no big surprise.

Three ground balls made it to the outfield for singles.

If you're counting at home, that make four hits. Out of ten. So six hits … DID NOT LEAVE THE INFIELD.

This, too, is no big surprise: Cleveland HAS to lead the league in "infield singles." I don't know how to measure this, but I swear to Morgan Ensberg, this team gives up a LOT of infield singles. It plagues me.

It has for years.

Of course, I only THOROUGHLY follow the Indians, so I don't know how unusual this is.

But we give up a LOT of infield singles.

Two of the infield singles were BUNTS.

Now look: it is one thing to give up a bunt single. Chris Perez gave up the famous “bunt heard ‘round the world” to Howie Kendrick. Brett Butler used to bunt his way on a lot.

Bunt singles are not necessarily defensive miscues.

These were defensive miscues.

On the first bunt, Russell Branyan cleverly ran to the EXACT SPOT where he would provide the LEAST VALUE, halfway between first and home, where he could neither field the ball now catch the throw. That was awesome. And Luis Valbuena … well, Lord knows what Luis Valbuena was thinking on that play. Venezuela is not in the World Cup. Vuvuzela is in the World Cup, but Luis Valbuena was not born in a cheap plastic horn.

(While I am here, let me point out that Luis Valbuena, hitting .174/.280/.254, is owned in 0.3% of ESPN Fantasy Leagues. This is down from last week’s 0.4%. This boggles my mind. What on EARTH is possessing you to own Luis Valbuena in a FANTASY LEAGUE?

Is it for his one steal?)

Anyway, Valbuena did not cover first in time and C.B. Bucknor called sixty-year-old Alex Cora safe at first.

And then we played a bunt WORSE than that.

Justin Masterson took Jose Reyes' bunt and … went insane. I am thinking, "That crafty Jose Reyes, he has coated the ball with dimethylmercury, and now Masterson's brain is turning to Swiss cheese!" Then I recalled that this controlled substance would have splashed onto Reyes himself, and … well, frankly, I am at a loss. M asterson did not throw to third base.

He did not throw the ball to first base.

Instead, he LOOKED at third base, then THREW to NO base.

This was a "single."

And an "error."

Also "heartburn."

But wait, there's more!

David Wright followed with a ground ball up the middle to J. Useless Donald. Donald made an acrobatic sliding play on a ball that Asdrubal Cabrera would have simply fielded.

He then threw late to first base.

And Jose Reyes scored from second.

From second!

I know Jose Reyes is fast.

I know this.

I watched Kenny Lofton score from second on a wild pitch in the 1995 playoffs.

I know fast.

But really now.

This is insanely bad defense.

But wait, there's more!

Not only did J. Useless give up THREE … count 'em … THREE infield singles on balls hit to him (and who is the official scorer at this point? The ghost of Fred Rogers?) … he made two errors and refused to turn an inning-ending double play to avoid a 7th run … IN A 7-6 GAME!

Listen, here is what I want you to think about: the most sure-handed, attentive, on-the-ball defender in the Cleveland infield last night was Jhonny Peralta.

IT WAS JHONNY PERALTA!

So … here's what I'm thinking: f*$% f*$% f*$%ity f*$% f*$% f*$%. That's what I'm thinking. To day.

Fifteen hours later.

Imagine what I was thinking THEN.

3) Not faultless, but ripped off nonetheless

Lost in all of this was Justin Masterson's performance, which looks terrible on paper: 10 hits, 7 runs, 6 earned. But really: it's an earned run when no one covers first on a bunt? When no one catches a guy going from second to home on a ground ball to short?

When no one turns a double play with one out?

Masterson posted a terrific 14:4 GO:FO ratio (and an inconceivable 23 ground balls to 6 in the air altogether). Nine of the ten hits were singles. He gave up a run in the first on a walk, stolen base, runner-advancing groundout, and infield single.

His first nine outs were recorded via groundout, and his tenth was a strikeout.

If there's anything to complain about, it's that Masterson only struck out two hitters, well below his norm.

Well, that and the 405-foot homer.

4) Femtoball

"Smallball" doesn't really do the Indians' fourth run justice: Jhonny Peralta drew a 10-pitch walk from Johan Santana, then was picked off on a surprise steal attempt, except his attempt so shocked Santana that he balked instead. He advanced to third on a groundout, and scored on a J. Useless single.

5) Pronk smash!

Not only did Travis Hafner hit his 3rd homer in 4 games and 4th homer in 6 games, he has hit two of those four homers off elite left-handed pitchers, and a third off Steven Strasburg.

Now … the unspoken subtext here is that his homers are all dead-pull jobs, hit off either inside fastballs or mistakes. After this huge power surge, Hafner is still slugging .437. But let's be serious: four homers, all VERY well-struck (no "long pop flies" here), is VERY encouraging.

6) Dunk smash!

Pinch-hitting for J. Useless in the 9th, Shelley Duncan already made one contribution in that J. Useless was now out of the game. Huzzah!

More importantly, he also hit the second pitch he saw for a two-run two-out shot that brought the game to 7-6, just in time for Travor Crowe to make the last out. But hey, he hit a homer!

(And leads the team in SLG.)

7) But wait, there's more!

Wait, I only talked about J.; Useless Donald's foibles in the field!

With one out in the bottom of the second, a walk and two singles loaded the bases for J. Useless.

J. Useless chose to lay down a bunt.

Did he choose the first-base line? Or perhaps the third-base line? Maybe he pushed it past the mound like Kendrick?
Or poked it over the head of the first baseman down the line like Phil Rizzuto used to do?

No. He bunted it into his own rib cage.

This is known as “batter’s interference.” It is recorded as an “out.” Also a “furious exploding spleen.”

8) Trevor Clutch

Kudos to Trevor Crowe for lining a two-run single to left with two outs after the J. Useless Bunt debacle. If Crowe purchased some depth perception for the field, he’d be unbeatable.

9) Lying statistics

The box score tells you that Jensen Lewis pitched a scoreless one-hit eighth. Excellent!

You EYES tell you that three lineouts to the warning track is no way to run a railroad, much less a bullpen. Jensen Lewis scares the bejeebers out of me.

10) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

The game log will say that Luis Valbuena struck out looking in the 9th on a full count, but I am telling you, that was no strike.

What a horrendous call.

You stay patient, Luis.