Both officially and unofficially, I think Josh Tomlin has given up just one run all spring. That's impressive.

He's only logged eight official Cactus League innings, due to various reasons that include weather (say what?) and a log jam of pitchers needing innings. But he's probably thrown the most out of anyone outside of Fausto Carmona this spring. He was a starter for one of the intrasquad games, he's made numerous appearances in 'B' games and minor league contests...and he's been great.

And that in the end is the reason he not only won the final spot in Cleveland's rotation, but likely won it from the very beginning.

He followed up a rained out start against the Royals with five perfect, yes perfect, innings against Tribe minor league hitters. He's walked very few and really been the golden child for Manny Acta in his crusade to get his pitchers to do one thing.

Throw strikes!

If there's one thing that Josh Tomlin has done throughout his career, it would be just that. He's a strike thrower. He's a pitcher who doesn't mess around and try and overpower you with a top-flight fastball or a ridiculous breaking pitch.

He throws strikes and forces a hitter to earn what they get. According to FanGraphs, Tomlin's BB/9 last year was 2.34. So for every nine innings, or one complete baseball game, Tomlin walks just over two hitters. If you want a comparison, that number puts him right in the middle with some of the best. The kings, who both reside in Philadelphia now, are clearly Cliff Lee and Roy Halladay, they are on another planet.

But the good pitchers all average the range that Tomlin is in. He's in good company.

And that's a number that he's maintained throughout his career in the minor leagues. Only once did he go over 3 and that was in 2007 with a stint in Kinston where he started just five games. Over the course of his entire professional career, Tomlin's BB/9 is 1.93, just under two walks per nine innings.

Pitchers like Tomlin always stick around in the major leagues. They find ways to. If it isn't with one team, it's with another. If it isn't in the rotation, they find a way into the bullpen. Ultimately managers love a pitcher who throws strikes; because it's less hair they are pulling out of their scalp when their pitchers are getting into unnecessary trouble by clogging the base paths.

Manny Acta must have pulled out enough hair in Washington to just go with the fully bald look. In 2007 his Nationals were fifth highest in walks in the majors and in 2008 they were eighth highest, but only had eight more walks than in 2007. The Nationals led the majors with 629 in 2009 and had amassed 335 pre-All-Star break, a time in which Acta was their leader before getting canned. Minnesota had all of 383 last year in a full-season.

So maybe you can understand a little better why Acta detests pitchers who don't throw strikes a little more than most. It happened against last year with Cleveland as they ranked fifth with 572 walks in 2010. His biggest culprits were Justin Masterson, David Huff, and Mitch Talbot. Masterson's BB/9 was 3.65, Huff's was 3.84, and Talbot's was 3.90.

All of that amounts as enough to give Tomlin the job without spring performance. If we're basing the decision as to who should get the fifth starter's job without playing games in the spring, Tomlin would likely get the nod based off how much better he pitched than Huff and Gomez last season at both Triple-A and in Cleveland. But 2011 is a new year and all three pitchers came into spring with an equal opportunity.

But they didn't.

It goes back to Manny Acta's preference. Does Acta have a problem with David Huff? Is Huff in the doghouse? Possibly, but it doesn't matter because Huff was already at a disadvantage. It's his own doing for not throwing strikes like he should, but Tomlin is just that much better at it.

From the very beginning of his professional career, Tomlin never had superior stuff, so he's been a pitcher his whole career that's been, well, a pitcher. You often equate the real "pitchers" rather than the "throwers," to guys like Greg Maddux. It wasn't until Kevin Millwood came along that CC Sabathia started to evolve from a thrower to a pitcher. Throwers are the guys with stuff who can get by on striking someone out, but ultimately fail the test of time when hitters catch up to the idea that their dominating curveball isn't going to get called a strike.

That is if a pitcher can't throw it for a strike. Daniel Cabrera is a fantastic example.

Cabrera was a strikeout machine for the Baltimore Orioles some years ago. But he also issued a lot of walks, then walks started increasing and the strikeouts started decreasing. He also started hitting people like it was his job, like he had a bonus incentive for hitting batters.

Cabrera never became and probably never will become a pitcher. He'll always be a thrower. He relies heavily on his fastball (74% of the time in his career according to his FanGraphs

numbers) and if it isn't a fastball, he's trying to throw his slider.

If you take a look at his O-Swing% numbers, which tells you how often hitters are swinging at Cabrera's pitches outside the zone, it went from around 21-to-22 percent of the time through 2005 to 2007 to 18-to-19 percent of the time in 2008 and 2009. Hitters wised up and stopped giving in to his pitches that were not going to land in the zone.

So now we have Tomlin, someone who throws strikes because he wants to, not because he has to. When you have to throw strikes, you are usually going to throw a strike that is going to get deposited into the left field bleachers. When you want to throw strikes, you have the advantage over the hitter because they are likely in a position where they have to guess.

It's a 1-2 count, is this guy going to get me to swing at something outside the zone? Is he going to try and paint a corner? What will he throw? He can throw anything, a fastball, a curveball, a slider, there really is no restriction. Maybe he goes to his best pitch, but maybe that's what he wants me to think.

Okay, these are basics of baseball, something that anyone can conduct on their own.

But really Josh Tomlin is just a pitcher of basics. He can control all of his pitches and that in the end is a lot more important than being able to throw a curveball that you have no clue where its final destination may be. Will his slider blow anyone away? No, but he can throw it for a strike on the outside corner and it is just as effective.

And effective is exactly what Tomlin has been this spring. Last year the open competition for multiple rotation spots bred the incredible performance that Mitch Talbot gave early on. He came in focused and clearly was putting everything in to winning a rotation spot, because if not, he'd probably be out of the organization.

Tomlin isn't exactly facing the same circumstances but he's producing the same results with the same mentality. The spot is on the line and he needs to produce as best as he can. The difference is he's tailor-made to produce, in any situation. Maybe he did something before

spring to sharpen his command, maybe he has just worked so hard at it, that he's that good. Look how far Cliff Lee has come. Sure he was out of his mind in-th-zone his Cy Young year in Cleveland, but ever since he's been the gold standard.

It probably isn't as simple as flipping a switch for Tomlin, but it may be pretty darn close. He comes in and is ready to compete because he can throw strikes and command all his pitches. If you've paid attention to the entire organization and every note that comes through, you may have noticed Bryce Stowell's struggles.

Sure he can ramp it up near tripe digits, but the kid has no clue where his fastball is going to end up. It may take some time and I'm sure once the season gets underway and he can consistently pitch in games and get his routine down, everything will be fine. But right now, he's struggling to get his command.

The point is, Tomlin has his command and there isn't much he needs to do to find it.

I said it earlier, he's Acta's golden child. I picked the starting rotation's final member before the competition began and I picked Josh Tomlin and that pick more than any other was filled with the most logic, but perhaps I didn't fully realize it at the time.

This was over from the time Tomlin was included into the rotation battle. Unofficially it was over when Acta said he'd narrow it down, but never did because Gomez and Huff both deflated their balloons. Now it is official and Tomlin deserves it, both in momentum, reasoning, logic, and performance.

But in a true sense, it was over when Acta came in a year ago and said he wants pitchers who throw strikes. That's what Acta wants so that is what Acta will look for.

And the guy who is throwing and can throw strikes better than most of them, is Josh Tomlin.

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You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he tweets bad jokes about Jesse English/Javier Spanish. You should also follow his blog on Facebook so you can feel really good about doing something for the sake of humanity and Jack Hannahan's future.