The Indians win the series with the Diamondbacks after Arizona returned the unlikely late-inning heroics back on Orly and the gang, and today's B-List features elements of both Tuesday's and Wednesday's games. Buff wonders why he likes one pitcher so much more than another, why Orly Cabrera hits second, why it works so well, why Tony Sipp threw strikes to Wile E. Mo Pena, why Mike Brantley has turned into Billy Butler, and why Josh Tomlin leads the team in slugging percentage.

FINAL

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Indians (41-37)

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Diamondbacks (44-37)

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W: A. Castillo (1-0) L: Sipp (3-1)

FINAL

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Indians (42-37)

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Diamondbacks (44-38)

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W: Carrasco (8-4) L: Duke (1-3)

Back in first place …

1) An Admission by the Author

I am biased.

This is a function of many things: emotional attachment, preconceived notions, but frankly, all humans have bias. It's one of the coping mechanisms our brains use against the barrage of information available to us. Our brains like to save time by anticipating that certain events will fit a particular class of events that have already happened, which is why you don't notice things on your desk at work unless they move.

A certain degree of bias is to be expected.

And, of course, emotional baseball fans form biases as well based on rational things ("Victor Martinez hits well" or "Ryan Garko's range is poor") and irrational things ("John Axford has an awesome mustache!" or "I hate Alex Rodriguez' centaur painting!"). We like this guy or that guy, and we can't always form coherent explanations as to why we do so.

So it's with real sincerity and not a small amount of confusion that I admit that I am biased against Josh Tomlin. Let's admit that up front. I can try to justify this, but it comes across as rationalization rather than justification. Some of it is rational.

Some of it is irrational.

All of it is bias, and most of it is
against
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This having been put on the table, let me try to use this constructively. What can we predict about my future biases against perfectly reasonable future baseball players by looking at my bias against Josh Tomlin?

Well, for one thing, we know that I like ground balls much more than I like fly balls (when it comes to the type of trajectories allowed by a pitcher). I've certainly said that often enough. I quote the GO:FO and GB:FB rates way too often, as if it were more meaningful than it probably is.

I think you CAN learn something about a pitcher from his ground ball rates, but probably not as much as you'd thinik from reading me blathering on about them.

I hated Scott Elarton.

I agonized over My Favorite Player (at the time) Cliff Lee giving up so many air outs that I thought he was doing it to intentionally drive me crazy.

I hate when David Huff does it, and I hate that Josh Tomlin does it.

So there's the start of this.

Sure enough, Tomlin allowed 11 air outs to 5 on the ground, a number of which were pretty loud in the thin Phoenix air, and 4 of the 5 hits he allowed were for extra bases.

So, that's perfectly rational, right?

Except … I was perfectly happy with Carlos Carrasco's performance, and he allowed two homers to Tomlin's one and 3 of HIS 4 hits were for extra bases.

Now, another thing I like to the point of irrationality is strike-throwing. In this regard, I ought to be completely gaga over Josh Tomlin, whose strike percentage is in the top 5 in AL for starters.

He is super efficient, HYPER efficient, and needed only 88 pitches to complete 7 innings of work.

Carrasco also completeld 8 innings, but needed 106 pitches to do so.

But I *don't* go nuts over this: instead, I nod slightly and tell you it is nice, but the fact is that I SAY I value this trait, but EMOTIONALLY, I apparently DON'T.

(Of course, for relief pitchers, I'm pretty consistent there.)

Tomlin gave up 5 hits and 0 walks in 7 innings. Carrasco gave up 4 hits and 0 walks, but hit 2 batters. They each went 7, each gave up 2 runs, and each have an ERA under 4.00 on the season.

They are, performance-wise, functionally equivalent outings by functionally equivalent pitchers, with the added bonus that Tomlin got two hits and an RBI while Carrasco generally looked like a sack of meat with a bat.

But I think the real point of disconnection for me comes from what I expect to happen in the

future. I think this is Josh Tomlin's ceiling. I think Josh Tomline can pitch Exactly This Well. He may have some differences based on chance fluctuations, but I think Tomlin is a Finished Product.

His pitches are what they are, and they're pretty good (his curve seems advanced for his age, for example).

His command of them could hardly be better.

He doesn't walk anyone.

I suppose it is always possible that he picks up a Cliff Lee Cutter or a Curt Schilling Splitter and morphs into an entirely new pitcher, but that does not seem likely.

What seems likely is that this is Josh Tomlin for the rest of his career.

Now, this is a pretty damned good Josh Tomlin to have for a career. His ERA is under 4.00. His WHIP is low.

He keeps hitters off balance, routinely works deep into ballgames, should stay healthy due to good mechanics and low pitch counts, eats innings, and wins games.

Tell me what the unattractive part of that is.

In contrast, Carlos Carrasco has noticeably improved before our eyes. He no longer depends only on a plus fastball to get him out of trouble.

His last five starts have been remarkable, including a pair of 1-0 wins.

And for whatever reason, rational or not, it just FEELS like Carrasco has just scratched the surface of his abilities.

His slider could be a little sharper.

His offspeed pitches could have more separation.

He could locate better on a more consistent bases.

Basically, the fact that Carrasco can hump it up in the mid-90s with movement gives him almost by fiat a higher ceiling than Tomlin.

Of course, he's been hurt a couple times and has been known to handle adversity poorly in the past: he could flame out or newtify or Carmonify or something else.

But there just seems to be another gear available to Carrasco in the years to come that doesn't exist for Tomlin.

Now, is it fair to have a bias against a thoroughly successful and talented pitcher like Josh Tomlin just because there's a shinier car on the lot in Carlos Carrasco? Probably not. Is the flyball stuff enough to refuse to embrace the results?

I doubt it.

Am I likely to change the way I FEEL about Tomlin?

I am not.

In conclusion, I didn't learn a damned thing, and you probably didn't either. Both guys pitched well in Arizona, though.

2) The shot heard for nearly half an inning!

Down by two runs in the top of the ninth against the D'backs' nominal closer J.J. Schmuck, Orly Cabrera coaxed a 4-pitch walk to lead off the inning. Given Orly's propensity to swing at most pitches, this showed both remarkable restraint and a lack of stuff by Schmuck.

And then after a flyout and ball one, Carlos Santana lifted a moon shot down the right field line for tha game-tying blast.

This was so exciting, I wa still crafting my "Neener neener" letter to my friend who had given up on the game in the 8th when the Indians subsequently blew the game.

3) Relief Pitcher Angst

After a very long stretch of very good pitching, the bullpen has taken some lumps recently. The game-losing balk in San Francisco was pretty excruciating, and part of that was the thoroughly unnecessary walk issued to load the bases to get there.

Vinnie Pestano finally gave up a run to blow Mitch Talbot's win on Monday.

And then there was Tuesday.

It was bad enough for Raffy Perez to cough up a 2-2 game to give up a run to make it 3-2, but at least he handed a two-out inning to Joe Smiff. Sadly, Smiff immediately gave up a pair of hits and reverted from being A Guy I Lauded to The Regular Two-Baserunner Joe Smiff.

This gave up a 4th run, meaning that Santana's blast only TIED the game, meaning you didn't get to see Chris Perez in the 9th.

Instead, Tony Sipp and his Magic Walk Machine started up again. I will tell you this: Tony needs some sort of aversion therapy applied to him walking hitters.

I hate, hate, hate, hate, hate this.

Hate it.

And then the way he holds runners on is … non-existent.

Ryan Roberts waltzed to second, sashayed to third, and was there with one out for Willie the Q.

Fortunately, Willie still can't hit and flew out to Not Deep Enough RF.

This brings up Wily Mo Pena. Now, Wily Mo is the Andy Marte of yesteryear. Throw him a fastball in and watch the fireworks.

Away, he might hit it.

Breaking stuff, he will not hit.

So Sipp prudently threw breaking stuff, except that Sipp is left-handed and Wily Mo was looking

for it and that's all she wrote.

Here's a question, though: why are you throwing Wily Mo ANYTHING? I mean, yes, he's bad, and Sipp is ostensibly good, but Kelly Johnson hits .215/.250/.338 off lefties.

Throw Wily Mo pitches about six inches off the outside corner, and if he walks, he walks.

First base was open.

Heck, second base was open.

Anyway, Wily Mo made Sipp look bad on that one.

The bullpen was back to normal last night, as Pestano and C-Pez each threw a scoreless inning.

4) The Machine

The double-play machine, I mean.

What is it with Mike Brantley and the double plays? He's already grounded into 6 this season: for point of reference, Grady Sizemore hasn't grounded into that many double plays since 2005, and that includes three 750-PA seasons.
Nothing kills a rally faster than a double play.

Well, I guess a triple play.

And an earthquake.

That's about it.

5) Ducks on the Pond!

Well, not Tuesday: there were barely any ducks to be had. But on Wednesday, the Tribe left FIFTEEN runners on base despite hitting 6-for-21 (twenty-one!) with runners in scoring position.

A lot of this was late in the game, and we won handily anyway, but great googly moogly, that's a lot of runners left on base.

6) Ageless wonder

Orly Cabrera banged out a 4-for-6 night Wednesday, including his 12th double. His 11th double actually came the night before off Dan Hudson, who wasn't giving up much of anything.

In addition, Cabrera stole second to get himself into scoring position in the ill-fated 9th, although in retrospect, that might have been more indifference than blazing speed.

Also, his glove doesn't clang when you hit it, unlike some of the Cord Phelpses I've seen.

7) A surgence to note

With Shin-Soo Choo going down for quite a while, the "other" left-handed-hitting outfielder is Travis Buck. Buck didn't start against the theoretically left-handed Zach Duke, but came into the game later and banged out a pair of hits. This makes him 6-for-19 since his latest yo-yo bounce back into the majors, with three of those hits for extra bases (all doubles).

No, I'm still not CONFIDENT of Buck, but I no longer cringe when I see his name in the lineup.

8) Blue Moon Special

Austin Kearns got a hit!

9) Terror on the basepaths!

Why was Asdrubal Cabrera trying to steal third at the end of Carlos Santana's walk?.

10) Stats Corner

Josh Tomlin sports an OPS of 2.000. Both of his hits came with a runner in scoring position. T he Indians went 3-for-9 with RISP on Tuesday; position players went 1-for-7.