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Sloppy Times Writing

Today in the New York Times, Harvey Araton pulls no punches in blasting Terry Francona (beloved departed bench coach of the A's, and thus always in my heart) for leaving Pedro Martinez in to roast in the late innings of games, making the usual claim that Pedro needs to be babied because he's fragile these days.

As you'd expect from a sportswriter, there was no data to back any of this up. I, not knowing what to believe, but figuring, because of the overblown language Araton brought to bear against Francona, that his case might be overstated, I went and looked up Martinez's splits for the year.

Turns out that in the 98 batters Pedro faced with pitches 91-105, he allowed a .187/.248/.286 line. From pitches 106-120, he gave up .244/.279/.341 to 43 hitters. Both of those splits are better than his overall line for the year. If anything, Pedro should have been throwing more pitches by warming up in the bullpen longer: on pitches 1-15, he allowed a .333/.360/.657 line. Of course, that's facing the top-of-the-order hitters for the opposite team, but I don't know of anyone's 1-2 hitters with a .657 slugging percentage.

It really looks to me like Francona used Martinez quite judiciously this year. Pedro is getting older, he doesn't throw as hard, and he has been hurt, so maybe he is more delicate and shouldn't be stretched as often. However, with his upcoming free agency, the Red Sox could afford to pitch him in a way that might be harmful to his arm, but where the effects wouldn't be felt until next season, so long as he was still effective when he was stretched out. That appears to be exactly what Francona accomplished, Araton's lambasting aside.

Posted by jason in Baseball at 15:56