What a start to the season! 20 runs scored, key taters in each game by Grady (this just in ... he's good), and two big wins over the hated division rival White Sox. In today's B-List, Buff relives yesterday's thrilling 8-7 win, examining Jake's first start of the year and why Casey Freaking Blake is in the five hole of the lineup, amongst other things. We're 2-0. The B-List is back. I'm giddy.

FINAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**R**	**H**	**E**
Indians (2-0)					0					4		0
White Sox (0-2)					3					0		0

W: Fultz (1-0) L: Thornton (0-1) S: Borowski (1)

This team doesn't have that "I wonder how they'll come back?" vibe yet, so the first hit of the game felt quite a lot like a kick to the midsection. If you're old enough, you'll remember Joe Tait proclaiming that it was "a beautiful day (or night) for baseball." Had he announced this game, he would have been lying. A lot.

1) Hey, we had one of those!

And now we still do! Let's get this out of the way: they did NOT shave Really Big Bob, put him on a diet, force him into a short toupee', and print "Borowski" on his uniform. Wickman's in Atlanta. He got the save in Philadelphia. It's true.

But great googly moogly, the French are right so infrequently that it really sticks out when they are: the more things change, the more Joe Borowski corrodes the lining of my stomach. Hey, he got Jim Thome and Jermaine Dye on swinging strikeouts: I can't remember RBB doing that very often against two legit sluggers. And technically, Borowski threw a hitless ninth to earn his first save of the season. But there's "hitless" and there's "Gil-Mota-with-double-vision-wearing-oven-mitts." Twelve strikes and fifteen balls later, Borowski induced Joe Crede to Not Quite Homer to end the game after walking Erstad and Konerko. Oh, and Erstad stole second during the walk to Konerko, putting him in scoring position (for what would have been the tying run) with one out, and to the sub-trained eye, it didn't look much like Vic's fault.

I have enough of an idea about the balls and strikes to mention it later, but for those of you who say, "Who cares, as long as he gets the save," please have some sympathy for those of us whose digestive systems still produce acid. Really Big Bob made me feel cool and collected compared to JoBo.

2) In retrospect, perhaps urinating on oneself during the big interview isn't the best plan

This is the final year of Jake Westbrook's current contract, and depending on your general predisposition toward such things, you're wondering either how much it will take to re-sign him or what he can fetch in a deadline deal. Well, Jake's opening hand in the high-stakes poker game that is impending free agency was about a Nine High. Sure, he only gave up one hit in the first inning … a three-run jack to Thome. And, spotted a lead, he did manage to throw two scoreless innings before immolating himself in the 4th and 5th. The final line for Westbrook: 5 innings, 7 hits, 7 runs, 3 walks, a pair of bombs (the other to noted slugger Tad Iguchi), and a GB:FB ratio of 4:5.

Since the wind was blowing out, the home runs bother me less than usual (and Thome can hit ANYTHING out), and the temperature and wind seemed to bother everyone's control on the mound, but when Jake Westbrook gives up more fly balls than ground balls, something has gone seriously wrong. Given the weather, I'm inclined to chalk this up to a bad day at the office … but bad it most certainly was.

By the way, the White Sox swung at exactly one of Westbrook's first 11 pitches. It landed 400 feet away.

3) How to tell control is going to be a problem

Well, it could be the 3-ball count by Jon Garland to Sizemore to lead off the game, followed by eight pitches worth of walks to Hafner and Martinez back-to-back. Or it could be the back-to-back walks yielded by Westbrook in his half of the inning. It could be the fact that of the five Chicago pitchers, each walked at least one batter and three had at least as many balls as strikes, or the 374 pitches that both teams needed to get through a regulation nine-inning game. Really, now, poor Travis Hafner walked *four times* and they intentionally walked *Casey Blake*. Casey Blake! Who left fifty-three men on base!

But to me, the telling stat is that Tom Mastny and Raffy Betancourt EACH only had one more strike than ball. When *neither* of these guys is on target, it's a tough day to throw strikes. (Neither man gave up a hit or run, but I have high expectations for control from those two.)

4) So much for Spring Training numbers

Matt Thornton came in to face Grady Sizemore with a man on first and two outs. He threw two pitches in the seventh inning. The second got Trot Nixon to fly out to center.

The first was not as successful.

The inning before, Ozzie Guillen had brought in Andy Sisco, the mammoth left-handed relief blunderbuss previously from Kansas City, and Sizemore was able to single up the middle. This time, the left-handed Matt Thornton (previously from Seattle, and also previously with an ERA under 27) gave up a two-run homer to Sizemore on his first pitch (which appeared to be approximately eye-high, if that low). For those of you counting at home, the two runs made it 8-7, making it the game-winning blow; for those counting even more carefully, Grady Sizemore went 2-for-6, and both hits were off left-handed pitchers. (He's still considered "pretty good," although I believe he actually scared Jason Michaels empty-bowelled when "congratulating" him for the game-ending catch.)

5) The bottom of the order to the rescue!

After falling behind 3-0, with the 6-7-8 hitters coming up (because Casey Blake managed to make the last out of the previous inning with runners on base: remember this, because it is a recurring theme), the game had the appearance of a Long Day. However, David Dellucci got his first official hit as an Indian (a double), which was followed by a great piece of hitting by Peralta for a triple, a first-pitch RBI single by Josh Barfield, and a two-run, two-strike home run by Andy Marte. Just like that, the bottom of the order had hit for the cycle and regained the lead, 4-3. Many huzzahs all around!

6) Small sample size to the rescue!

And then they reverted to being the bottom of the order and *never got another hit*. Not one. Jhonny Peralta struck out FOUR TIMES to get the Golden Sombrero. Josh Barfield earned the Tinfoil Hat by only whiffing *thrice*. David Dellucci only whiffed once, but managed to do so after Casey Blake had worked a difficult walk to load the bases with two outs. Not to be outdone, his replacement, Jason Michaels, whiffed with the bases loaded and NO outs … followed by Peralta whiffing … followed by Barfield whiffing. Andy Marte drew a walk. No one contracted scarlet fever. Other than that, it was not so productive.

7) Casey Blake Dept.

Generally speaking, you are not going to draw a lot of magnificent (or at least significant) conclusions from two games. Grady Sizemore is not going to hit 162 home runs. David Aardsma is not going to end the year with a K/9 of 20-plus. It's two games. Big whoop.

But the exception to this is if a player has established a track record in the past, and then does something to reinforce this record. Casey Blake has been lousy at hitting with runners in scoring position, especially with two outs. He just has. You can argue sample size and variance and significance and chi-squares and whatever the hell else you feel like pulling out of your CASEY BLAKE DEFENDING ANAL CANAL, but GREAT SCOTT, this is a man who **CAN NOT HIT WITH RUNNERS IN SCORING POSITION**! AHH! AHH! AAAAAAAAAAAHHH! I don't care if this is a rational response. I don't care if this flushes my credibility as an analyst down the tubes. I don't, I don't, I don't. I just want this man out of the 5 hole batting behind Travis Hafner and Victor Martinez. I must have this. I will not sleep until this is so.

Okay, actually I will, but I will continue to complain. It's not so much a Bully Pulpit as a … I dunno, a Mildly Abrasive Podium. Or something. But get this man out of the five slot. Please. I'm begging you.

In the interest of fairness, the walk he worked in the sixth was really good. But the man left five men stranded in scoring position. Do you know how hard that is? That's unfathomably bad. Blake can be useful in certain roles, like starting something out of the seven or eight hole, or even batting second in FRONT of guys like Hafner and Martinez. But for the love of Mike, please not fifth.

8) My kingdom for a strike!

Travis Hafner's first three plate appearances: a four-pitch walk, a five-pitch walk (first pitch taken strike), and a four-pitch intentional walk. Hafner finished the day 1-for-2 (the hit was a double off the aforementioned and aforelefthanded Thornton) with four walks (the fourth was also intentional).

9) Actually, that strategy is working for *me*

Victor Martinez, batting with Hafner on base most of the time, went 4-for-4 (1 double) with a pair of walks. He hit lefties, righties, and even a pitch Thornton tried to sneak by him by blowing it out of his nose. This just in: Victor Martinez can hit.

10) Blue Moon Special

He can also throw out a baserunner! In fact, not just any baserunner, by Scott Podsednik, who once stole sixteen bases in a game against Cleveland in 2005 or 2006, once while playing "Fire Emblem" on a Gameboy Advance. Yeah, Erstad stole two, but the second was off Borowski more than Martinez, and hey, did I mention it was Scott Podsexpletive? You can take that one off the board! Woot!

11) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Is the second game of a 2-0 season too early to second-guess Eric Wedge? Of course not! Surely that was rhetorical.

On the other hand, we're 2-0 and no decision beyond batting Blake 5th completely lacks justification, so I just thought I'd mention that seeing Westbrook stay in and give up "just a couple more runs" while "finishing just one more inning" reminded me of something … what was it … wait, it'll come to me … oh yeah, EVERY FREAKING JAKE WESTBROOK START IN THE FIRST PART OF 2006. Yeah, that was it. I'm gonna have to wait and see with this outfield rotation plan we appear to have going, though.

12) Because I should mention it

Trot Nixon had two more hits.

Oldberto Hernandez threw a scoreless inning and had the highest strike-to-ball ratio of anyone in the game by a whole lot.

Aaron Fultz won even though he did nothing as well as either Mastny or Betancourt.

David Aardsma has the scariest thumbnail photo of any baseball player since Kent Tekulve. I truly believe he is going to eat the photographer.

Jason Michaels' catch was more "fun" than "good," but I'll take "fun."