It's funny. It's snide. It's analytical. It's The B-List. And it's the best daily Cleveland Indians column on the net. Or in existence for that matter. Today, Buff breaks down yesterday's 7-6 win over the Halos ... paying special attention to C.C.'s start, Kelly Shoppach's bat and throwing arm, and the trainwreck affectionately known as "Oldberto" Hernandez.

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

W: Sabathia (2-0) L: E. Santana (1-1) S: Borowski (2)

A big shout out to the fans in Milwaukee who took advantage of an absurd situation to see a pretty darned good game. Note that Cleveland played in Milwaukee because of bad weather in Cleveland … and Milwaukee's game in Florida was suspended in the 10th inning because of … bad weather.

1) If I had a Hammer, I'd use it on the Angels

C.C. Sabathia won his second game, giving up one earned run and striking out 7 in 7 innings of work. He also gave up two unearned runs and 10 hits overall, so he was not entirely dominant, but it was still a very effective start and lowers his early-season ERA to 2.77.

Last season, I talked about my Pet Theory (at least the one I'll admit to) in which I suggested Sabathia's success correlated with his ability to get batters to swing and miss. Intuitively, this was obvious: analytically, this was something else altogether. That something else was "completely unsubstantiated hot air." This surprised exactly no one. However, Sabathia's first win was due more to Cleveland pounding the bejeezus out of Jose Contreras than by any innate brilliance by Sabathia, while this win was a lot more comfortable because he really was That Effective. I wonder why? Consider that Sabathia had 19 pitches fouled off while inducing 16 swinging strikes. But more interesting to me, seven of these swinging strikes were Strike Three. For those counting at home, that means of Sabathia's seven strikeouts, ALL SEVEN were *swinging* Ks. That's pretty sweet.

In all, Sabathia threw 108 pitches and 75 were strikes. Even considering that he got to pitch to Vlad Guerrero, who turns virtually any pitch that stays in the stadium into a strike, four times, that's pretty darned good. Ten hits … not so good, but two guys were erased on double plays, which was nice. (Only the first inning was hitless.) Sabathia has a 9:5 GB:FB ratio, which helped on a night when the ball was apparently carrying pretty well.

2) Smallball my ass

Of the 10 hits the Indians banged out, four were for extra bases, and those four hits drove in six of the seven total runs. Casey Blake made his debut in the cleanup slot, which was obviously a terrible, terrible idea until it wasn't. Blake had two hits, including a solo shot that came close to denting Bernie Brewer's slide in left. Not to be outdone, nine-hole hitter Kelly Shoppach hit a two-run blast the other way, while ex-niner Andy Marte had a pair of doubles that drove in three runs. (The other run was on a sacrifice fly: I'm not sure if that is considered "small" or not, being that the ball travelled a good distance, but wasn't actually a *hit*.) Although I'm more interested in Shoppach being Not Matt LeCroy than any sort of Victor Martinez Replacement, it's nice to see he's not a total Tim Laker with the stick.

(I've always liked Marte's patient approach at the plate, and it's nice to see a pair of productive extra-base hits, but I'm going to have to wait before annointing him anything more than "not putrid.")

3) Although pointless, the gesture is appreciated

Stop the presses! Grady Sizemore did not hit a home run! What a piker.

He did, however, draw three walks and stole second off Mike LeCroy … er, Napoli. Although nary a one did any good whatsoever, it's nice to know this tool's in the box. (Frankly, the walks interest me more than the SBs, but I'm not going to tell you stolen bases are *bad*, either.)

4) Have I mentioned the relationship between "Smallball" and "my ass?"

Lord Joedemort (He Who Should Not Be Named Closer) gamely scuffled through his second save, putting the tying run on base in the form of Casey Kotchman, whose single drove in

indifferent baserunner Garrett Anderson to close the game to 7-6. Kotchman was replaced by the form of an ice fungus, dressed in Eric Aybar's uniform, and on a 2-1 count (Joedemort's strike-to-ball ratio was a brisk 11:9 at that point) tried to steal second base.

Kelly Shoppach made this appear to be one of the worst decisions since … **THE LAST TIME AYBAR DID IT, GETTING THROWN OUT FOR THE LAST OUT OF THE ANGELS' LOSS TO OAKLAND** .

There is something to be said for getting yourself in scoring position when you represent the tying run, but there is also something to be said for letting Howie Kendrick, who was FOUR-FOR-FOUR to that point on the evening, **swing the @#$*ing bat** against Lord Joe, who sports a 9.00 ERA and has earned (so to speak) every ounce of that 9.00. Let's recap:

Borowski: very bad

Kendrick: very good

Kendrick's last AB: double off Oldberto Hernandez

Aybar's last steal attempt with 2 outs in 9th: very bad

Shoppach's arm: very good

Aybar's decision: unfathomably, inexplicably, inconceivably, jaw-droppingly bad

I think that about covers it.

5) Dee-fense!

The Tribe turned two more double plays, the second of which was a nice backhand slide-stop by Barfield (completed nicely by Peralta). It should also be said that although Aybar's decision to run was, shall we say, "suboptimal (*)," Shoppach did make a tremendous quick-release throw to get him.

The error on Peralta that led to Sabathia's two unearned runs was obviously not good, but the play that enticed Kendrick to go to second on his "infield single" was pretty bloody awful as well. (The subsequent two-run double by Cabrera wasn't cheap, BTW.)

6) Optimal usage patterns

Raffy Betancourt has shown in the past that although he can be used in back-to-back appearances sometimes, using him three days in a row really cuts his effectiveness. This makes him a bad choice for closer, but the man can still pitch and be a valuable member of the bullpen: you just have to use him properly.

Similarly, I have a recommendation for a change in the usage pattern for Oldberto Hernandez. Specifically, STOP @#%*ING USING OLDBERTO HERNANDEZ.

(The man threw four strikes in fifteen pitches, and one of the four was laced to the center field wall! That's just shitty.)

7) Non-usage patterns

Mastny, Davis, and Cabrera are on the roster, right?

8) Managerial Head-Scratchers

The aforementioned players make up the first MHS: if a four-run lead in the 8th inning is not safe enough to get Davis or Ferd his first appearance, I'm not sure they deserve roster spots. Or shoes.

I understand, in a sense, where Wedge is coming from: Oldberto is considered an important part of the pen, and his last outing left a pretty bad taste in everyone's mouth. Putting him "back on the horse" is one way in which a manager can show confidence in a player and give him the chance to get back to a place where he's going to be a valuable contributor. Hey, it's not a bad idea in theory. It's pretty @#%*ing lousy in practice, but hey.

And the same kind of logic dictates that Lord Joedemort comes out of the pen to "save" the game: it's a relatively low-pressure situation (2-run lead, starting the inning, winning run would have to come from the bottom of the lineup), and he's the Closer With A Capital C. If the season is going to be successul, we're going to need the guy with the Capital C to be a Capital C Closer, so we'd better either determine that he is and let him develop that C, or find out he's not (which you can only do by having him, well, *not*). So it's kind of a no-brainer that Borowski starts the ninth.

Of course, sometimes a no-brainer involves using no brain: Raffy Betancourt had thrown three pitches in the eighth with two men on to whiff Orly Cabrera. One could argue that he was "locked in" and that giving him the save opportunity would not have hurt Lord Joedemort's feelings. I can understand the decision … but I don't have to *like* it.

9) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

David Dellucci had a pair of hits and scored a run. Of course, he was also thrown out at second and left 2 guys in scoring position while ending innings, but he did hit the ball.

Trot Nixon's legs are still attached to his body.

10) Misleading Statistics Dept.

Aaron Fultz' ERA is 0.00, leading you to believe that he is a tremendously effective relief pitcher. Oldberto's ERA would argue with you there.

Josh Barfield and Andy Marte are each hitting .176, leading you to believe that … no, wait, that's not misleading. (In fairness, it should be noted that Marte leads the team with 5 RBI.)

(*) no, we shall say, "shitty"