It's the column that put us on the map, and the following grows by the day. It's The B-List. Today, Buff breaks down yesterday's thrilling 4-2 series clinching win over the Halos. He examines the bright future of Jeremy Sowers, the luck of Aaron Fultz, the prowess of Grady and Pronk, and also hits on the Westbrook extension. Enjoy!

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

W: Fultz (2-0) L: S. Shields (0-1) S: Borowski (3)

Early vote for Luckiest Player of the Year: Aaron Fultz, who won last night's game by throwing one strike. Second-luckiest: Jason Davis, who gets paid actual money.

1) The Stealth Ace

Jeremy Sowers has started two games: in each, he has a Quality Start, allowed 6 baserunners, posted WHIPs of no more than 1.00, and left without a decision.

Although the last game featured only 1 hit, I actually liked this one much better: the six hits were more than offset by the zero walks. Granted, it's harder to walk Angels than White Sox, but I greatly prefer pitchers who keep guys off the basepaths through more traditional means. Some early-season low-sample numbers for Sowers:

Left-handers are hitting .067 and post a .243 OPS

His .159 BAA and WHIP of 0.92 both rank 6th in the AL

Of his 7 hits allowed, only 1 was for extra bases (Only Cabrera's double)

Now, he has 4 Ks in 13 innings and isn't going to make anyone forget Johan Santana (or C.C. Sabathia, for that matter). However, it's pretty hard to argue with the fact that, at least statistically, Sowers is our best starter right now (Paul Byrd's ersatz no-hitter notwithstanding).

I'm going to stop short of saying I'm completely sanguine seeing him listed as the scheduled starter, but I've certainly got no problem with it.

2) The Elephant in the Room

Let's get this out of the way: I do not want to see Oldberto Hernandez pitch meaningful innings any time soon. You can check the message boards for my insightful post, " **No no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no!**
"
It is a visceral, knee-jerk reaction to seeing Hernandez being brought into the tie game, and I'm certainly not going to apologize for having that reaction.

This having been said, Oldberto did not pitch poorly. He got two quick strikes on Matthews before inducing a lineout. He then gave up an "infield single" to Blake at third, who then stretched the credibility of the word "throw" by launching the ball into an acoustic-checking orbit within the closed Miller Park. He intentionally walked Vlad Guerrero, then induced the inning-ending double play to Garrett Anderson … except that Jhonny Peralta's casual flip to first was over the enormous Hernandez' head (that is to say, Hernandez is enormous and the throw was over his head: his head is not disproportionally large) and Cabrera was able to score on the subsequent error (charged to Oldberto, but the replay suggests that wasn't entirely fair: the throw was atrocious, although admittedly, he shouldn't have dropped it, either).

To add injury to injury, poor Hernandez was spiked on the play.

Now, I am absolutely tired of Oldberto being used as the Default First Important Reliever. He has been used too frequently for my tastes. I would much rather have seen Fultz be called out to face Garrett Anderson, the only significant left-handed hitter playing for Califanaheigeles. I still prefer any of Mastny, Betancourt, and Cabrera to Hernandez, although admittedly Cabrera went two innings the previous night. And my reaction to seeing him enter the game isn't likely to change any time soon. But he certainly wasn't Danny Graves or anything yesterday.

3) Timing is everything

How would you like this job: you are the only left-handed reliever on the staff, but you aren't called on to face the opponent's best left-handed hitter. Instead, you come into the game to face My Sir Izturis, miss the strike zone twice, then get him to fly out. For this, you are rewarded with your second win, as Travis Hafner Travis Hafners in the bottom of the inning.

Right now, I envision these stats:

C.C. Sabathia, 200 IP, 5-3

Jeremy Sowers, 185 IP, 3-1

Paul Byrd, 175 IP, 4-2

Aaron Fultz, 35 1/3 IP, 35-2

Denny McClain, eat your heart out.

4) A void spot in the brightness

News has just been reported that Jake Westbrook has signed a three-year extension. This is good news for Indians fans, as Westbrook is a fine pitcher who eats innings and has stretches of very goodness.

I'm not sure if Jake watched last night's game before making this decision, though: the Indians made the aforementioned two errors yesterday on two ground balls to the infield, and before anyone gets uppity about how Blake is not the "real" third baseman, note that Andy Marte didn't play the position appreciably better the previous night. Jhonny Peralta has now made crummy plays in consecutive games. And Westbrook isn't any taller than Hernandez.

It's too early to claim that this is the Same Old Indians Defense that plagued much of 2006, but on the other hand, if someone or something has a long track record, the onus is on them to show they've changed for the better. *More* bad data points are simply thrown in the hopper as corroborating evidence, not treated as their *own* small sample…

5) The quality of the plan is not solely dependent on its result

The Indians presented Eric Wedge with an opportunity to manage in the bottom of the seventh when Casey Blake walked and Jhonny Peralta's routine ground ball was bollixed by Howie Kendrick. With two runners on and nobody out, against a team with a dominant bullpen, with the bottom of the order coming up, Wedge took steps to play for a better chance of scoring the single run at the expense of the big(ger) inning.

To this end, Josh Barfield sacrificed (well), and Wedge brought in the previously-productive-with-runners-on Ryan Garko to hit for the largely-offensively-inept Andy Marte. This made a certain amount of sense, as Garko was very productive last season, and Marte is hitting .136. Besides, Garko could then play first and Blake third, and everything is very well set-up.

Except that Garko had possibly the worst plate appearance in Milwaukee's short stint as Cleveland's home field, and Shoppach fouled out on the very first pitch. To compound matters, Blake made an error at third and Garko's throw to Peralta wasn't particularly good, either.

Not having Victor Martinez available really hamstrung Wedge here: both Dellucci and Nixon were in the starting lineup, and the only other left-handed hitter is Mike Rouse, who offensively is barely discernable from pine tar and doesn't play third particularly well to boot. So using Garko in that situation was probably as best as he could do there. I think arguments about weakening two defensive positions ring hollow here: if Blake and Garko can't play those positions, we've set up the roster poorly.

This having been said, Garko was pretty cold and Marte had gotten two hits the night before, but this smacks of second-guessing just for the sake of complaining. The bottom line is that Garko has to do better there, like, say, hitting the goddam ball, or leaning out over the plate Pierzynski-style.

6) Managerial Head-Scratchers

On the flip side, bringing in Oldberto hurt my spleen, not bringing in Fultz to face Anderson was seriously addled, setting up the lineup with Dellucci at cleanup meant the lineup was L-L-L-L-R-R-R-R-R, and bringing in Lord Joedemort smacked of serious Handbook Rigidity.

7) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Speaking of Lord Joe, he did a good job yesterday. Yeah, he walked Aybar, but I think he wanted to see if Aybar would try to get gunned down stealing for a third time. I'd rather see

something better than a 9:9 strike-to-ball ratio from my closer (say what you want about Really Big Bob, the man threw strikes), but none of the Angels particularly threatened Borowski, and Willits looked downright bad striking out to end the game.

8) St. Grady Dept.

Grady Sizemore smashed his team-leading 4th homer in the bottom of the sixth to tie the game after Sowers faltered in the top of the frame. He also drew a 7-pitch walk, fouling off the first 3-2 offering from All-Star calibre reliever Scot Shields, to set up Hafner's heroics in the 8th. Sizemore will also be wearing #42 to honor Jackie Robinson, along with Sabathia and Josh Barfield. He still lags behind in his efforts to cure cancer, but the season is still pretty young.

9) Pronk smash!

Travis Hafner hit his first home run of the season to win the game. Frankly, the fact that Shields threw him a strike is pretty astonishing, given that Dellucci "protected" him by going 1-for-4, which *raised* his batting average (to .235). (Would you rather face Hafner with two on or Dellucci with the bases loaded? Me too.) Hafner also had a single, meaning that this is the first time since the opener that Hafner has had more hits than walks. His OBP is .464. (He's pretty good.)

10) Pet Stat Dept.

The Indians have drawn 30 walks in 6 games for an average of 5 a game. They have more doubles, triples, and homers than their opponents. They have five players with an OPS over 1.000. Travis Hafner's OPS of .964 is seventh on the team. (I do not expect that to last long, seeing that two of the players ahead of him are Jason Michaels and Kelly Shoppach.)

Opponents are slugging .369 off Cleveland pitching.