The Indians have run into a buzzsaw in the Bronx the last two games. Buff touches on Sowers awful start last night, the Indians questionable approach at the plate, Mastny's effective long relief outing, Wedge's questionable bullpen approach, Hafner's re-surgence, and more. This is the best daily Indians column on the web.

FINAL	1	2	3
Indians (6-5)	0	0	
Yankees (7-6)	1	0	

W: Igawa (1-0) L: Sowers (0-1)

Put that thing back where it came from,
Or so help me,
So help me!
So help me!
And cut.
-- Mike Wozowski, "Monsters, Inc."

1) Simple badness

Jeremy Sowers had two good starts to begin the season, but nothing to show for it.

Well, now he has something to show for it.

I'm not sure there's a real interesting back-story here: Sowers didn't have his best control, but it wasn't horrific. He wasn't particularly squeezed by the umpire. He walked one and struck out Alex Rodriguez, had roughly equal numbers of groundouts and flyouts ... really, had it not been for the FIVE SINGLES AND TWO DOUBLES IN ONE INNING, it would have been a pretty uneventful, mundane start.

Really, Sowers' problem was that he threw stuff and they hit it. They're good. Sowers was not. QED.

2) A laudable approach

On the first pitch of the game, Grady Sizemore took a strike. He was followed by Jason Michaels (took a strike), Travis Hafner (took a strike), and Ryan Garko (took a strike). In the second inning, Casey Blake took a strike, Jhonny Peralta watched a ball, and David Dellucci took a strike. Travis Hafner was the first player to swing at the first pitch in the Indians' 13th plate appearance: in all, the Indians came to the plate 33 times and
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swung at the first pitch.

Now, part of this is Kei Igawa: this is the first time the Indians have seen him, and he throws a variety of stuff that simply doesn't look that hard to hit. Although he struck out 5 in 6 innings, his fine 2-run performance lowered his ERA to 6.06, and I don't think he hit 93 on the gun. He just throws "stuff" (although he mixes locations well and throws little down the heart of the plate), so it's worth taking a look to see how he's approaching the at-bat. But this carried over to the relievers as well (although Proctor started three guys off with pitches out of the zone and Britton wasn't exactly "pinpoint"), suggesting that the Indians as a team have a philosophy of patience and discipline at the plate that should serve them well as the season goes on.

On the other hand, it could be argued that with 10 hits in the past 2 games combined, a different approach involving "hitting the damned ball" might be more productive. Still, I like plate discipline. And grasping at straws.

3) Forty Pitch Tom

With a second straight starter turning into a newt by the third inning, the bullpen got a good airing out, and instead of nominal long man Jason Davis, it was erstwhile Tom Mastny getting the first call last night. Where Mastny is usually used in the Scott Sauerbeck Commemorative "throw a pitch to the guy, he grounds out, go sit down" manner, Mastny pitched 3 full innings and was pretty darned effective except for one pitch to Alex Rodriguez. Truthfully, that was a terrible pitch. Not as in, "Boy, he just grooved that pitch, that's terrible," but rather, "Wow, that pitch almost bounced, what a terrible pitch." I have no idea how Rodriguez hit that pitch out of the park. If the game's on the line and there aren't three balls, I have no problem with Mastny throwing that pitch again.

Anyway, he was lacking his usual uncanny strike-throwing command, but Mastny did strike out a pair (including Rodriguez in his previous appearance) and didn't walk anybody. Although I like the idea of Mastny being more a back-end guy than Swing Man, it's nice to know that he can air it out if requested.

4) And Mastny was the long man because Jas ... um, wait a minute

Davis was used as the long man the previous night, maybe he was worn out and ... well, no, he pitched the 8th. I will no longer pretend to understand the Cleveland bullpen usage patterns. Anyway, Davis turned back into a scattershot guy, walking two in one hitless inning that taught me absolutely nothing other than, "Boy, I really don't trust Jason Davis with high-leverage innings."

5) Re-resurgence

Travis Hafner appears to be back locked in after a short slump, garnering 3 of Cleveland's 5 hits and driving in one of the two runs. Since Victor Martinez did not play, I'm pulling out the Razor and suggesting that it was more Hafner than who was following him in the lineup.

6) Thank God for Small Favors

We didn't strand anyone in scoring position!

Of course, neither did the Texas Rangers (see below).

7) Heavy on the "situational"

"Situational hitting" is two words. It is not enough to get into the situation. You have to actually hit after that.

Ryan Garko and Casey Blake both grounded into double plays last night. Is Blake trying out a new Jeff Bagwell Tribute Stance? He doesn't look comfortable up there. I'm not sure what he's worried about, he's hitting 40 points better than the other third baseman on the roster. (Phbt!)

Grady Sizemore took another collar, but did score a run after being plunked by Igawa. Still, he looked bad pulling a low outside pitch in the 5th.

When your second and third best offensive performers are Kelly Shoppach (hitting ninth at .158) and Jason Michaels (playing right field like Will Ferrell on rollerblades), your team is having a tough time.

8) Because I'm here

Aaron Fultz pitched, striking out two but giving up a home run to Jason Giambi, the left-handed hitter he is ostensibly here to prevent from hitting a home run. Still, Fultz has been good this season.

9) Around the division

Mark Buehrle walked Sammy Sosa, which is the only thing that prevented the moon-faced left-hander from throwing a perfect game against the Rangers last night. It was the White Sox' first no-hitter since Wilson Alvarez in 1991, and completely ruins my Hacking Mass team at the earliest juncture in Hacking Mass history.

Detroit's Todd Jones pitched the exact same way he always does, except the Royals figured this out while he was doing it rather than after the fact and tied the game en route to upsetting the Tigers 4-3.

Minnesota beat the Mariners 5-4 because Mike Hargrove hates me.