Remember when we used to be the ones that did that to our opponents? Walk off homers off Troy Percival. The flair for the dramatic. Now it keeps happening to us. In today's B-List, Buff breaks down the weekend set with the A's that saw us sandwich another Carmona win with losses to Fat Joe Blanton on Friday night and The Legend of Jack Cust on Sunday. Bartender!!!!

FINAL				RHE
Indians (20-13)	0	0	0	0
Athletics (18-16)	0	0	0	0

W: Blanton (4-1) L: Sabathia (5-1)

FINAL				RHE
Indians (21-13)	0	1	0	3
Athletics (18-17)	3	0	0	0

W: Carmona (4-1) L: Braden (1-2) S: Borowski (12)

FINAL				RHE
Indians (21-14)	0	1	4	0
Athletics (19-17)	0	1	2	1

W: Witasick (1-0) L: Borowski (0-2)

Last weekend I wrote:

Something tells me that giving up an average of 13 hits a game is going to be a counter-productive strategy for the pitching staff. I recommend we stop doing it.

So, although not technically a "validation" of this theory, we do have more supporting data. And a spleen injury. Ow. Ow. Stop it. Ow.

1) I gleefully attach too much significance to a tiny amount of data because I like the result!

To say that Fausto Carmona has a rough start to Saturday's game is to severely underplay the peril: had Chavez' pop-fly double-play been a few feet harder and fallen for a Texas Leaguer, we're talking about at least a five-run inning, and a serious chance of Carmona being yanked from the game. As it was, Carmona gave up a walk, three hits (two for extra bases, including the obligatory home run to Jack Cust), and three runs, and was fortunate to "escape" with only that damage.

Over the next six innings, Carmona gave up three more hits, three more walks, and zero more runs. He struck out four more (he struck out Crosby to end the first), and retained his worm-burning abilities by inducing 12 ground ball outs to only 4 in the air, including two double plays. He looked in complete command out there, and although his ERA has now risen over 3.00 (to 3.12), Carmona remains one of the real stalwarts of the rotation. After a lousy debut start, Carmona has now given up 2, 2, 1, 0, and 3 earned runs, and the first of these (his season start) was the only one in which he did not complete the seventh inning. And to warm the stathead's heart, he has thrown 97, 96, 104, 105, and 100 pitches, meaning he is both efficient and nothing like overworked.

There are chinks in the armor: his K-rate is still a paltry 3.57 per 9 IP, and his K:BB ratio is a kind-o-lousy 16:12. For a groundball pitcher of Carmona's calibre, 5 HR allowed is kind of a lot (1 in each of three of the five good starts). But his GB:FB ratio is completely insane, and the fact is, one could make a credible argument that Carmona has been our best starting pitcher. (To be fair, there are credible argument against this, too.)

However, I would like to believe that the six shutout innings after the one awful inning point to a certain maturity and composure that was missing from Carmona last season, which is hardly surprising since he is thirteen years old. (Okay, he's actually 23: I am hoping you don't know a lot of 6'4" 220-lb 13-year-olds.) Is this true? Well, it's only one start, and you have to take into account that ...

... aw, screw all that, of **course** it's true! Because I **want** it to be true! I ignore your petty, small-minded (i.e., rational) complaints! Fausto rulez! Woo woo!

2) I gleefully attach little or no significance to a tiny amount of data because I dislike the result!

I'm sorry to disappoint those of you who arrived to read an incoherent rant about the ridiculous blowup the Indians had in choking away Sunday's game. It's pretty indisuptable that giving up five runs in the bottom of the ninth is pretty bad performance, and it's even worse to do so with two outs and a 0-2 count to the third batter. I mean, we went from needing one strike to get the win to needing oxygen masks to keep our heads from exploding. It was really, really, really, really bad.

But here's the thing: Oakland just beat us. I mean, did Lord Joedemort do a good job? No, pretty hard to argue for that. But is this because he is a talentless schmoe? I'm not sure you can really go there. He's not the greatest, but Danys Baez and Chris Ray had an even more impressive meltdown yesterday against the Red Sox, and it wasn't like Borowski gave up back-to-back-to-back homers or anything. Yes, closers should close out, and he didn't, and my reaction is a lot more "heavy sigh" than "rending garments." I mean, he saved Saturday's game with a perfect 1-K ninth.

More discouraging for me was the fact that the guy I would have said was the clearly better choice to Borowski for closing, Ferd Cabrera, was the one to give up the game-winning blow to the ubiquitous Cust. I thought Wedge did a good job

managing that inning, but at some point, you have to get the other guy out. Now, it could be argued that you go ahead and walk Cust there: he is unearthly hot, but also unearthly slow, and Mark Ellis is not hitting particularly well. Given a choice between pitching to Cust with two on and pitching to Ellis with the bags juiced, I'd have gone with Ellis. But it's awfully hard to ask a guy's first four pitches to be balls and then have him attack the next guy ... I dunno, I'm willing to cede the second-guessing here. Cust did well. Our pitchers did not. Let's move on.

Well, after I note that we have one left-handed relief pitcher on the roster. Okay, now we can move on.

3) I am not gleeful about having more data to support my contention

Last weekend, I wrote about C.C. Sabathia:

... he just seems to have one inning's worth of crap to get out of his system.

I'll hand it to Sabathia: he doesn't get cheated when it comes to having an inning's worth of crap. He can jam an entire game's worth of crap into the small space between the beginning and end of an inning.

Through six innings, Sabathia was locked into a pitcher's duel with Fat Joe Blanton. He gave up four hits and zero walks, striking out four and giving up only one run on a solo shot in the fifth. He had thrown 71 pitches. I mean, that's a heckuva start: efficient, clean, and at points dominant. And then the seventh inning comes, and he goes K, double, lineout, homer, walk, single, double, single, kidney failure. That's a seriously bad inning. He went from, "I hope we can score a second run off Blanton" to "I wonder what's on the Backgammon Channel" in about four minutes.

And again, I'm not sure there's any real earth-shattering analysis to be done: the first six innings were as good as the seventh was bad. There may be something to the conjecture that Sabathia was pressing after the first hit or two in front of his hometown. He may have a problem with focus and/or concentration. I'm not writing him off as a #1 starter (primarily because I would hate to thrust Carmona into the role, and Paul Byrd is not suited for it), but in the words of Mater the Tow Truck, "Dad gum!"

4) Gark smash!

Ryan Garko hit his fourth home run of the season Friday to go with his second double and a single in a 3-for-4 night with a run and 2 RBI. Saturday he was 2-for-5 with an RBI and a run, and Sunday he added a pair of singles and his third double.

First off, I was taken aback at the idea that Ryan Garko had only one double coming into the series. To put this in perspective, he had that many *triples*. Garko is now hitting .307/.360/.475, which is right in line with his "career" numbers (the massive 79-game career he has racked up). Maybe this is the start of something more powerful for Garko: a first baseman should certainly post an ISO of more than .138, and his SLG through Thursday was a paltry .402. Garko is a lot more valuable as a corner infielder when he hits like a corner infielder: comparing his April OPS of .710 to his May OPS of .987 seems like a step in the right direction. I will ask for more doubles at the expense of future, largely-theoretical triples.

5) Hey, what about me?

It was plainly ridiculous for Casey Blake to be hitting in the two hole on May 3. (I'm picking May 3rd because it enhances my point: he did not actually play May 3rd.) On May 3

rd

, Blake was hitting .202, and although he was posting a non-preposterous OBP of .301, his OPS was still only .649, a number normally reserved for backup catchers, utility infielders, and Ramon Vazquez.

Casey Blake went 1-for-4 on Friday, then 2-for-2 with 2 walks, 3 runs, and an RBI Saturday, then 2-for-5 with a run and an RBI, including his first triple. He also stole his second base Saturday and induced a throwing error by Jason Kendall. Blake is now hitting .252/.347/.417 on the season, but a pretty robust .304/.396/.478 in May: the former are credible numbers for a third baseman, which Blake has become, while the latter are actually acceptible for a corner outfielder, which he was previously.

It's hard to remember through all the (sometimes justifiable) bashing fans have done on the subject of Mr. Blake what kind of trouble we'd be in this season without him. After Andy Marte went on the DL, Blake stepped in a third base, and although he is not going to win a Gold Glove any time soon, he has played the position (which he hadn't done regularly for over two years) credibly. He has also begun to produce like an everyday ballplayer, to the point where dropping him into the two slot seems more like a reason for comfort than nails on a chalkboard. Now, a team more closely resembles a championship team when Blake is more of a "super sub" than an everyday player, but it would take one whale of an argument to convince me that the Indians are worse off over the past month because Casey Blake is playing regularly.

6) Are we allowed to notice the emperor's bare legs?

Grady Sizemore is great. He is terrific, tremendous, and really very good. In 13 games in May, Sizemore has gotten a hit in ten of them, and has drawn five walks as well. One of the skills he had no special affinity for as a leadoff man was drawing walks, and he drew 21 in April, surpassing the 20 hits he got. Even while hitting .253, his .433 OBP was fantastic, just what you want out of the leadoff slot, and his five home runs showed he had power as well as speed and a practiced batting eye.

In May, Grady Sizemore is hitting .218/.295/.255. Yes, two fifty-five. He has two doubles for his only extra-base hits in May. Is he pressing? Is he tired? Is he conerned about Larry Hughes' ability to hit a clutch jumper in the waning seconds? I have no idea. But it would take an even better argument than the one used with respect to Blake to convince me that Sizemore's May hasn't been thoroughly dreadful.

7) Terror on the basepaths

Casey Blake and Jason Michaels each stole a base Saturday, and Jason Kendall made a throwing error on each of them. Meanwhile, Victor Martinez caught one of the two basestealers this weekend, raising the "neener neener coefficient" to 0.75.

8) For completeness' sake

Cliff Lee pitched a lot more like an ordinary pitcher Sunday, giving up 4 runs on 7 hits and 3 walks in five mundane innings. With a strike

percentage under 60%, it looked like Lee just didn't have his best stuff more than the A's looked like any sort of world-beaters. (Until the ninth, at least.)

9) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Aaron Fultz recorded four outs on a grand total of 14 pitches (9 strikes). With a season ERA of 2.19, it could be argued that Fultz was the best bullpen OR free agent acquisition of the off-season.

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro secretly sabotaged the lower control arm of my minivan so that the bushing wore away the hole and necessitated replacement. This false story did not fool my insurance company, so it should not fool you. Fire Eric Wedge.