It was nice to see that one team from Cleveland was interested in playing professionally last night. Behind eight strong innings from C.C., the Tribe beat the Twins 7-1 last night ... securing a series win and moving their record to 23-14 on the season. In today's B-List, Buff hits on the strong efforts from Sabathia and Trot Nixon, as well as continued slumpbusting efforts from Grady. And Buff also gives his thoughts on who would be the best internal closer candidate if Borowski were to implode.

FINAL SCORE				
Twins (18-21)	0	1	0	0
Indians (23-14)	2	0	1	0

W: Sabathia (6-1) L: Silva (2-4)

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1) The "one inning of crap" must have been the ninth

C.C. Sabathia was able to break the string of outings in which a fine start was largely (or, in at least one case, completely) undone because of one atrocious inning. Each of the eight innings Sabathia pitched last night was quite good, with the one-run second the only blemish on the otherwise dominant performance. Sabathia allowed three baserunners in the second, allowing a run on a walk and a pair of singles: in the other seven innings, he allowed three hits, zero walks, zero

runs, and struck out four. (He also struck out a batter in the second.) Those seven innings are obviously excellent: only one of the hits was for extra bases (a double by Jason Bartlett in the first), and the Twins never really threatened to do anything but flop around like so many mullet on the deck of a rowboat.

The second inning was close to being one of those Really Crappy Innings, though: had backup catcher Chris Heintz not been so excited at the prospect of Actually Being On Base (collecting his first hit of the season and sixth of his major-league career at age 32) and overestimated his blazing speed in getting thrown out by Trot Nixon trying to get to third on a single to right, the inning had a lot more potential to be Real Bad. After all, Sabathia had just allowed back-to-back singles to two fairly preposterous hitters, and would have faced the top of the order with a pair on base. It was exactly the kind of setup Sabathia has used as a springboard into the abyss. Fortunately, Nixon's throw got Heintz, and Sabathia reverted to his customary pattern of shaking off the bad inning and becoming completely unhittable, so the game eventually became a cakewalk, but it isn't that hard to imagine it going pretty bloody awry.

This having been said, innings three through eight featured only two hits and a hit batsman, and four of the innings were of the 1-2-3 variety, including the last three. Whether Sabathia "got stronger" or the Twins "rolled over," it's hard to argue with that kind of success, which included 71 strikes in a fairly economical 103 pitches. At one point, Sabathia had an uncharacteristically high 7:2 GB:FB ratio, but ended with a more typical 10:8 ratio when all was said and done.

2) The man of the match

Although Sabathia's performance was obviously a primary factor in the Indians' 7-1 victory, it could be argued that Trot Nixon's night may have influenced the result just as much. Nixon didn't have a terrific night at the plate, going 1-for-3 with a single, but the single was with the bases loaded (a Cleveland bugaboo until recently) and drove in two runs, and another plate appearance was a sacrifice fly.

Combined with the outfield assist in preventing the Big Hairy Inning mentioned above, and Nixon arguably influenced half the runs in the game. He did leave a guy in scoring position, but it was still a nice result set overall.

3) Smallball comes to Cleveland

Cleveland's third run was of the type that detractors tell me they're incapable of producing: Sizemore drew a walk, stole second, advanced to third on a wild pitch, and scored on a sacrifice fly by Travis Hafner. Hafner, in fact, drove in runs in each of his first two plate appearances without getting a hit either time: he would later score a run without getting a hit by drawing one of his two walks.

Admittedly, Casey Blake's groundout to third with Sizemore on second was not in keeping with the smallball theme: had that ground ball been to the right side instead of the left, the speedy Sizemore may have advanced to third without requiring the services of Carlos Silva to propel him there. Blake had fouled off the 0-1 and 0-2 pitches, though, and some pitches are hard to push the opposite way. Okay, so maybe we still have a little work to do in the "manufacturing runs" department. It's still cool to score an earned run without getting a hit.

4) Hey, I remember that shit! Didn't we decide that was bad?

With the bases loaded, Trot Nixon lifted a fly ball to right field that was deep enough to allow Casey Blake to score. However, for Lord knows what reason, Travis Hafner decided that it would be a good time to try out his radical new "second-and-a-half base" plan, tagging up and making it easily to a spot equidistant from second and third bases. Unfortunately, the commissioner did not rule favorably on Hafner's proposal to define a "safe area" at 2.5th base, and Hafner was turned into the second out of the inning.

Honestly, I have no idea what was going through Trav's mind there. Anyway, it reminded me of the baserunning we did back in 2006, and as such, acted much like Ipecac. We've actually done a much much much much better job of looking like Actual Professionals on the basepaths in 2007 (meaning, "not horrendously frightening"), so it was a bit jarring to see.

Mind you, the blunder meant the difference between, say, a 9-1 win and a mere 7-1 win, so it passed pretty quickly. But don't do that.

5) The return of St. Grady!

Grady Sizemore continued his hot streak to two games with a 2-for-4 night, drawing a walk and scoring three runs. A significant contributing factor to the run scoring was Sizemore's continuation of his stolen base string, collecting his 13th and 14th steals while still waiting to be caught for the first time. Because it would be that much better for the team if Sizemore were really on his way to becoming the .300/.400/.500 hitter he's capable of becoming, I declare it to be obviously so.

By the way, looking a Sizemore's player card on ESPN, he is owned in 99.9% of ESPN AL-only fantasy leagues. Think about this for a moment. Somewhere, somehow, there is a fantasy league in which no one owns Grady Sizemore. You could join that league and pick up Grady Sizemore on waivers. What is this, the League of Dolts? An empty teamless league? What kind of fantasy league would contain an entire slew of players,

NONE of which want Grady Sizemore? That's really, really hard to imagine.

6) Almost everybody hits!

Of the two players not to collect a hit last night, one was Hafner, who was able to contribute the aforementioned pair of walks, pair of RBI, and a run. Josh Barfield, on the other hand, was able to contribute a trio of strikeouts in an 0-for-4 performance that he probably is busily using self-hypnosis to forget as I type this. The Indians collected 10 hits and 6 walks ... and three strikeouts. If **Carlos Silva** strikes you out **twice**, you are a seriously confused young man. (Silva had 20 Ks in 42 innings coming into the game.)

Notable positive performances include Casey Blake's 3-for-5 night with a double, an RBI, and 2 runs scored, and Victor Martinez' 1-for-2 night with a pair of walks and a run. Blake has 6 multi-hit games in his past 10, and 7 games in the past 10 in which he reached base at least twice. In those ten games, he has struck out a total of five times. This is actually a better ten-game stretch than Martinez', but since Martinez is hitting .330 on the season to Blake's .265, one is tempted to cut Vic a little slack here.

7) If you were looking for composure

Tom Mastny came in to pitch the ninth since there was no compelling reason to send Sabathia out to complete the game. On a two-strike pitch, Mastny got got Morneau to ground out. On his next two-strike pitch, he threw a ball, then gave up a single to Torii Hunter. Jeff Cirillo, who is the answer to the trivia question, "Hey, is Jeff Cirillo still in the majors?", doubled on Mastny's next pitch to put runners at second and third with one out.

Then Garrett Jones struck out swinging.

Then Jason Kubel struck out swinging.

Now, look, Mastny doesn't have overpowering double-digit K stuff. This isn't going to happen every night, and after a good successful string last season, Mastny tired and turned into a newt in the closer's role. He's not the greatest thing since sliced bread, and objectively putting guys on second and third is not the most efficient way to close out a game.

But Mastny showed me two things last night: the first he shows

most nights he pitches, namely, he throws strikes (14 in 20 pitches). But the second is, guys on base and other stressors don't seem to bother him much. Since it is the latter skill that appears to be the entire suite of Useful Closer Skills possessed by Lord Joedemort, one has to wonder aloud if perhaps Mastny can't be at least a back-end or high-leverage reliever, if not a Capital-C Closer.

8) Who the hell is this guy?

J DePaula pitched the bottom of the eighth for Minnesota. He struck out Barfield, gave up a single to Sizemore, then induced two ground ball outs. He threw 10 strikes in 12 pitches to throw one shutout inning. Here is what ESPN says about J DePaula:

(null)

Well, okay, maybe he was just called up, let's see what Baseball Prospectus says, they even know about minor-league guys:

(null)

Well, maybe FOX Sports, hey, at least they have a player ID for the guy ...

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Now, I remember *Sean* DePaula. Heck, he was an Indian. But J DePaula ... I can't even tell what the damned "J" stands for. Who the flaming hell is this guy? And why is another no-name guy showing up in the Minnesota bullpen and pitching lights out? Doesn't the law of averages say that eventually one of these guys they grow in the hydroponic chamber has to suck? Eventually? Just one? Is this some sort of cosmic "neener neener" thumbing its nose at me because I root for a team built on the principle of the Exploding Bullpen? Can I get my money back?

(Seriously: if you know who the @#%* "J DePaula" is, write me. Seriously.)

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro snuck into the Cavs' locker room yesterday

afternoon and replaced all the electrolyte-replacing sports drinks with plastic bottles full of water containing salt, sugar, and three thousand Sea Monkeys ™. Although this seems perfectly plausible given the Cavs' performance last night, this statement is completely untrue. Fire Eric Wedge.