Jeremy Sowers is back. Or is he? In today's B-List, like always, we get analysis of Sowers' start right at the outset of the column. At the plate, the Indians hammered Jorge De La Blunderbuss (Buff's word's, not mine), who gave up nine runs on six hits in 4 1/3 innings because he also managed to walk seven and hit a guy. And the Tribe improbably drove in ALL TEN RUNS with two outs. Bring on the Motor City Kitties ...

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (28-17)	5	1	0	0
Royals (19-29)	0	0	1	0

W: Sowers (1-4) L: De La Rosa (4-4)

You know, normally when we score five runs in the first, I'm excited and relieved, but somehow, that didn't happen last night. I wonder if it had anything to do with Cliff Lee's Festival of Hits the night before.

1) No thanks, I've already got one

On the surface, it looks like Jeremy Sowers had a wonderful rebound start last night. It's certainly hard to argue with the results: 6 H in 7 IP, none for extra bases and two of them infield singles to Esteban German. He only struck out one batter, but only walked one and gave up a single run to win his first game of the year and lower his ERA from "chum" to "bait." The Royals spent most of the night popping the ball harmlessly to infielders or more stressfully to outfielders: Sowers recorded 5 ground ball outs and 15 fly outs, resulting in a

Lee-like 0.33 GB:FB ratio that would make Sowers the most extreme flyball pitcher in the league.

And this becomes a serious question: Lee established severe flyball tendencies last season, and although it hasn't been as extreme this season, he remains a guy with a sub-1.00 ratio and likely will into the future. That is his stuff. He strikes out a few more than Sowers, but so do most sentient bipeds. This is Sowers' fifth game in nine starts in which he'd recorded more fly outs than ground outs, although this was the first truly egregious ratio.

Now, to be fair, C.C. Sabathia has had three such starts as well, but Sabathia is a pretty neutral pitcher with good strikeout rates (not recently, but he has five games with eight or more Ks). Being a flyball pitcher doesn't make you ineffective in and of itself. But the combination of fly balls and no Ks is not a sustainable one, in my opinion, and the fact that Lee already does this means that the current rotation sports two very similar left-handed pitchers, neither of whom is actually doing anything I like with any regularity. To me, having two groundball clones in Westbrook and Carmona is a lot less troublesome than having two popup machines in Sowers and Lee. I suppose that with our infield defense I should be more concerned about the former, but I think the infielders have a better chance of improving (or at least Carmona and Westbrook getting by with what we have) than Lee and Sowers have of keeping all their fly balls inside the park.

Anyway, Sowers had a nice game: after three consecutive atrocious starts, it's easy to forget that four of his first five starts were Quality Starts that he kind of got ripped off on with respect to getting a bunch of no-decisions: with some offense and/or bullpen support, Sowers could easily be at least 4-4. But that still wouldn't make him Actually Good. We'll see. I'm still of the opinion that Lee has earned more benefit of the doubt than Sowers and Carmona has simply performed better, so Sowers is the one to hone his stuff in Beefalo when Westbrook comes back (all other things being the same).

2) The clutchiest team in the (Mid)west!

The Indians took advantage of some truly awful control by starter Jorge De La Blunderbuss, who gave up nine runs on six hits in 4 1/3 innings because he also managed to walk seven and hit a guy. Joel Peralta didn't help a lot by letting all three inherited runners score, but it was mostly De La Rosa's doing. Cleveland scored 10 runs in all, and although they ended with 11 hits, the 10 runs scored on only 7 hits.

But here's the thing that will shock the average Cleveland fan: **all ten runs were driven in with two outs**
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Yes! With two outs! It seems unusual that the Tribe manages to score ANY runs with two outs, and here we are scoring TEN of them! That's fantastic!

So, if I tell you that two players drove in three runs apiece, all with two outs, and that one of them did so by clearing the loaded bases with an extra-base hit, how far down the list do you get before guessing Jason Michaels and Casey Blake? I mean, I'd guess Blake before Andy Marte, and I'd guess Michaels before Mike Rouse, but that might be about it. Michaels hit his second home run of the season in the first, and had Blake's liner not been snared by Mark Grudzielanek to double off Grady Sizemore (leadoff walk), the Indians might have rolled through the order a couple times. Blake cleared the bases in the fifth with his second triple of the season after fouling off five consecutive pitches. This is pretty impressive, in that it shows some good hitting skill to ruin three two-strike pitches, and that De La Rosa was able to put six consecutive pitches somewhere near the strike zone on a night on which he threw 44 strikes in 98 pitches.

Other players with two-out RBI include Sizemore, who drew a bases-loaded walk, Victor Martinez, and Ryan Garko. That's just outstanding.

3) Walk this way

Included in the Festival of Walks last night was a pair each for Travis Hafner, Grady Sizemore, and Josh Barfield. Hafner's walks were notable in that he leads the league with an unconscionable 42 walks on the season: despite hitting .273, Hafner boasts a .433 OBP that ranks fifth in the AL.

Barfield's walks were notable in that with **those** two walks, he has now drawn **two** walks in his last ten games. (He also has a seven-game hitting streak: this is good, and he is hitting noticeably better since his very poor start, but mixing in a walk or two would really help me consider him a permanent solution at 2B.)

4) Um ... we're ready now ...

Number of times reaching base by hit, walk, or HBP:

Sizemore: 3
Blake: 2
Hafner: 2
Martinez: 2
Peralta: 2
Garko: 3
Michaels: 3
Barfield: 3
Marte: **ZERO**

On a night when De La Rosa is firing pitches off low-flying aircraft and the Indians are collecting six extra-base hits and Tony Pena Jr. is playing shortstop, Andy Marte took an 0-for-5 collar, including popping out on 3-2 and 2-0 counts and fouling out with the bases loaded in the fifth. Marte is now hitting suck sucky-suck on the season. I like that Marte has some patience at the plate, but at some point, you have to hit the ball solidly, and Marte simply doesn't. It is hard to spin a .208 OBP as anything but soul-destroyingly bad.

5) Managerial head-scratchers

Once a prominent and frequent feature of ***The B-List***, managerial head-scratchers have been proven to be twice as likely when Buddy Bell is involved. There haven't been many truly overt cases this season, but I have to ask:

a) Why is left-hander Mike Rouse, a poor hitter, pinch-hitting for Jhonny Peralta against left-handed reliever Jimmy Gobble? It's one thing to use Rouse as a defensive replacement, and I guess it's nice to get him a plate appearance, but why there?

b) Why is left-hander Aaron Fultz being called on the face right-hander Ryan Shealy with the bases loaded? There's something to be said for getting him "back on the horse" or whatever, seeing as though he walked a guy on four pitches the last time. Admittedly, in the tiny sample available, Shealy has a preposterous reverse platoon split, hitting .077 against left-handed pitching. But with Shealy, Buck, and Pena (all right-handed) coming up, Fultz seemed like a bad choice.

Now, this shows the effects of wearing down a bullpen: Mastny and Betancourt had pitched Tuesday and are ostensibly being saved for the big upcoming series against Detroit. Cabrera turned into an olm the night before, and Koplove had just pitched. Oldberto was immolating himself on the mound (he's the reason the bases were loaded), and Lord Joedemort is the Capital-C Closer who isn't going to come into a game in the 8th inning, no way. (I think it's carved into rock in the clubhouse.) Now, you could argue that Mastny's 13 pitches two nights before weren't that strenuous, or that Koplove should be able to go two nights in a row (in fact, he did, after all), or even that Inertia Man should consider Borowski there, but once Hernandez started throwing beachballs, there wasn't an obvious "out" for Wedge to use. I still maintain that the LEAST obvious out was Fultz.

By the way, Fultz walked the batter on four pitches. It's Ryan Shealy! Throw him a strike! Maybe Fultz is hurt and not telling anyone. Or hallucinating. Or insane. I know what he wasn't: *good*.

c) After a double by Jhonny Peralta in the fifth, Buddy Bell had a decision to make. 6-1 is a large deficit, but not an insurmountable one: you want to avoid a big inning there. Coming to the plate: Ryan Garko, hitting .336, with a two-RBI single in his pocket from the first innning. De La Rosa pitches to Garko and gets him to strike out. Huzzah!

Next batter, the mighty Jason Michaels. Admittedly, Michaels had a home run in the first, but it was his second on the season. It appears very much like Blind Squirrel Theory to the lay fan. After that, the speedy Josh Barfield. So Bell *intentionally* walks Michaels.

Now, this is flabbering on several levels. First, Michaels just isn't that fearsome a hitter. Cerrtainly not more fearsome than Garko. If you are avoiding a hitter, choosing Michaels over Garko is a weird call. Okay, well, maybe you're setting up the double play. Except which player looks faster (hence more able to avoid a DP) to you: Barney Rubble or Josh Barfield? Just a weird decision. And having De La Rosa, who has thrown roughly nine strikes up to that point, throw four intentional wide ones ... well, here's how well that worked: Barfield, the next hitter, walked after going 0-2.

Here's a tip: intentionally walking batters in the 5th inning is a questionable call in the first place, but Jason Michaels? Really? Are we wondering why Buddy Bell's career record as a manager is

five-and-umptymillion?

6) Channelling Casey Stengel

Called on to "protect" a 10-1 lead, Oldberto Hernandez promptly gave up three hits and a walk to allow a run: he was charged with a second run when Fultz came out and De La Rosa'd. Hernandez did strike out two batters, but that's just bad. By the way, his first hit was an infield single to Esteban German, his third on the evening. I saw a pattern emerging there. The infield single was to ... the pitcher.

Thankfully, Mike Koplove was able to induce John Buckistopheles to line out to left to end the quasi-threat. But I was still reminded of Stengel's line, "Can't anyone here play this game?"

By the way, Koplove pitched a scoreless ninth, but not before hitting the first batter.

7) Department of Corrections Dept.

I meant to mention yesterday that the four ground balls induced by Cliff Lee represented the sum total of ground ball outs recorded by Cleveland pitchers yesterday. Think about this. This means that in eight innings:

a) The Royals only grounded out four times
b) Cliff Lee was the Cleveland pitcher with the highest GB:FB ratio: 0.667.

In fact, Lee's 0.667 ratio was 0.667 higher than those of Mike Koplove and Olm Cabrera.

8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro phoned Gore Verbinski during the filming of "Pirates of the Caribbean 3" and assured him that, in fact, audiences would like him to be MORE self-indulgent. Thankfully, this did not actually happen. Or, actually, apparently it *did*, but I'm pretty sure it *wasn't* Mark Shapiro. I think it was Johnny Depp. Fire Eric Wedge.