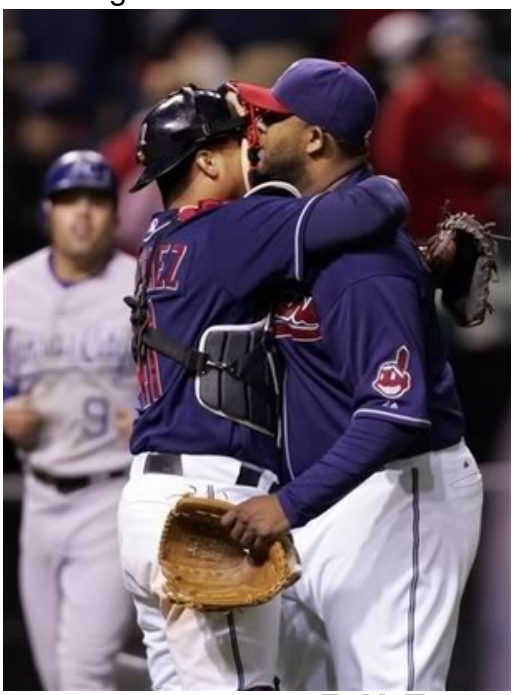
To quote Buff ... "Huzzah!" The big man was large and in charge last night, hurling a five hit shutout to run his win-loss record to 9-1 on the season, and also to move the Indians to an astounding 20-6 when playing in the friendly confines of Jacobs Field. The lone Indians run came on a solo shot from the recently promoted Franklin Gutierrez, and Victor's solid season throwing out runners continued. It's the best daily Indians column in existence. It's The B-List.



FINAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**R**	**H**	**E**
Royals (21-38)	0									0		0
Indians (35-21)	0									1		

W: Sabathia (9-1) L: De La Rosa (4-6)

This is the easiest column to write, ever:

Every pitcher was great, especially Sabathia, and every batter stunk, except Victor Martinez and Mike Sweeney, and Franklin Gutierrez, who was a blind squirrel. The end.

1) Timing is everything

Jorge De La Rosa's last start against the Indians was not good. In fact, it was pitiful. A great deal of the pity was generated by the fact that he walked 7 men and recorded 13 outs, which is a pretty bad ratio. He "only" gave up 6 hits, but with the walks and such, gave up 9 runs and lost pretty handily.

De La Rosa pitched better this time.

He didn't just pitch *better*, he pitched ***great***. De La Rosa gave up 5 hits and 2 walks while striking out 7 in 7 1/3 innings, getting lifted only after throwing 71 strikes in 116 pitches and being largely in control the whole game. He really only had two problems, one of which was Blind Squirrel Gutierrez.

The other was C.C. Sabathia.

Sabathia gave up 5 hits and NO walks in NINE innings, striking out 8 while throwing 77 strikes in 111 pitches. According to Mike Sweeney (who would know better than I would), Sabathia was living away from the middle of the plate, throwing a great percentage of his pitches on the edges of the strike zone. Sabathia got a couple of nice assists from Victor Martinez and Franklin Gutierrez (in the field), but for the most part, this was the C.C. and Friends Show, except without any Friends.

I noted last time that Sabathia's strikeout rate had fallen off from his very good rate early in the season, but what I failed to mention was that Sabathia has been drinking from the Fountain of Byrd, walking no more than one hitter in any of his last ten starts. Through the first six innings, only 5 Royals got a first-pitch ball. Although this occasionally results in a longball or two (or three, against Toronto), it certainly keeps runners off the basepaths, and Sabathia's ERA and WHIP have fallen to 3.40 and 1.19 respectively. All five of the Royals' hits were singles: only one man reached second base successfully. The Royals stranded 3 baserunners, one in scoring position. They got nothing, and liked it. Huzzah!

2) Hey, look, a right-handed platoon partner!

The Indians have experimented with some interesting roster alignments since a few everyday players missed time with injuries, notably Andy Marte. Marte's lameness … er, injury … caused Casey Blake to step into the starting lineup at third base, meaning that right fielder Trot Nixon was largely without a platoon partner. This is bad, because Trot Nixon hits lefties poorly. The 13-man pitching staff was an idea whose time has come and, thankfully, gone. (What the heck was that, anyway?)

Ben Francisco and Franklin Gutierrez have been hitting very well in Beefalo, and

each bats right-handed. The identity of the Man Who Gets Called Up To Not Play has been rather whimsical to this point, but this week it is Franklin Gutierrez.

This turned out to be a Very Good Thing.

Leading off the third inning, De La Rosa made a mistake on a 1-1 count, and Gutierrez hammered it over the left-center field wall for the game's offense. If you were in the bathroom during the #9 hitter's first appearance, you missed every meaningful at-bat in the game. Gutierrez later made a nice sliding catch in foul territory to retire a Royal in the ninth.

I am on record as not being Franklin Gutierrez' biggest fan, but he sure came up big last night.

3) Nice hose!

Or possibly, nice improved footwork. Actually, I have little idea: I am not much for the mechanics of catching, but I have read numerous times that Victor Martinez' previous problems with throwing out baserunners was the result of poor footwork rather than poor armstrength. I cannot tell you how true those sentiments are: ostensibly Eric Wedge can, but I can't. What I can tell you is that two men tried to steal second base last night, and both were thrown out by Martinez.

Now, the fact that C.C. Sabathia is a left-hander likely plays some role here: probably not a huge one, but I wouldn't be surprised if it had some small

significance. The other game in which Martinez caught two basestealers was when left-hander Jeremy Sowers was on the hill. But Mark Teahen was caught stealing on a 3-2 count to end the top of the 4th, and Angel Berroa, who had just entered the game as a pinch runner, ostensibly to be faster than Mike Sweeney (meaning he has *two* legs), was caught on the back end of a strike-'em-out-throw-'em-out double play to end the top of the 7th. You can't blame Buddy Bell for trying to manufacture something (especially given how well Sabathia was pitching, and how well De La Rosa was pitching as well: one run would have made a big difference), but it was tremendous to see Vic come through like that, not once but twice.

4) Ducks on the pond!

Lost in the excitement of Sabathia's dominant outing that made scoring runs seem needlessly profligate was the fact that the Indians stranded seven men on base, four of whom were in scoring position. Now, that may not seem like a lot, mostly because it isn't a lot, but in a 1-run game in which you have already demonstrated that one bad pitch to the lamest opposing hitter could result in a run, *somebody* has to get a hit with a man in scoring position. Trust me, had we managed to botch this game (say Grudzielanek hits a two-run shot instead of popping out to end the game), this would be a huge deal.

The culprits run the gamut, from the bad (Barfield) to the average (Michaels) to the good (Peralta, Garko). Victor Martinez got on base three times (two singles, one walk) and wasted his time on the basepaths entirely.

5) The stacked lineup

Gutierrez' appearance in the lineup gave the Indians its most right-handed look of the season, with only leadoff hitter Grady Sizemore and DH Travis Hafner batting from the left side. Sizemore would nominally be replaced by Gutierrez (which would put Nixon in the lineup) or Michaels (which would put Dellucci in the lineup), so there's no need to mess with that slot. Hafner would be lifted for … uh … Kelly Shoppach, I guess? I don't think so. (Shoppach will be catching Paul Byrd tomorrow, and having your backup catcher DH invites all kinds of lineup trouble later: besides, Hafner doesn't really have a platoon split.)

Right-handed batters went 5-for-20 with three walks and a HBP. Admittedly, one of the walks was against left-handed reliever Jimmy Gobble instead of De La Rosa, and it was intentional (to Martinez) after Gobble uncorked a wild pitch to advance Casey Blake to second.

Left-handed batters went 0-for-8 with 4 Ks. One of the Ks was by Gobble instead of De La Rosa, but he's still left-handed.

I'm not drawing any big conclusions from this: remember, this game did not feature a whole lot of Actual Events.

6) For your consideration

Kansas City will be starting Brian Bannister Wednesday. Bannister is considered kind of a Mets cast-off, although he has pitched well this season. De La Rosa solidified his hold on the #2 starter mantle, lowering his ERA to 4.60, while free agent signing Gil Meche has actually been terrific as the #1 (albeit pointlessly so). Their other starters include Scott Elarton, whose ERA is 7.36, Odalis Perez with a 5.74, and Random Guy Drawn From A Hat (Greinke, Duckworth, Hudson). You could argue that Kansas City could use a starting pitcher. (I don't know who they've got in Omaha or Doofusburg or wherever the heck their other affiliates are: I think Luke Hochevar is somewhere wandering around, but that's about all I can think of.) Heck, a Jason Stanford or other lesser light in the Cleveland system would probably represent an improvement, at least for the long term. (Of course, KC's left fielder hits .224, their 1B hits .214, and they have both Angel Berroa and Tony Pena Jr. on the active big-league roster, so this is not a team without holes.)

Jimmy Gobble threw 1/3 of an inning, striking out Travis Hafner. Despite a ghastly 1.74 WHIP, Gobble has a 2.57 ERA and strikes out nearly 7 per 9 IP.

David Riske threw 1/3 of an inning, striking out Jhonny Peralta. Although he has blown a couple saves as ersatz closer (tell me what Indians fan would tell you that David Riske closing is a good idea), he does sport a 2.81 ERA with a more-respectable 1.30 WHIP. His walks

are kind of high at 10 in 25-plus innings, but he strikes out a decent 6.39 per 9 IP and gives up fewer than a hit an inning. He's not a closer, and probably not really even a setup guy, but he's a reliable relief pitcher at this point in his career.

I'm just sayin'.

7) Around the Division

Nate Robertson gave up 6 runs in the first inning, including a grand slam by Victor Diaz, as the Tigers fell to Texas 7-4.

Kelvim Escobar tossed a three-hit complete game at the Twins to beat Minnesota 5-1.

Mark Buehrle lost his third game against 2 wins as the Yankees beat Chicago 7-3.

In other words, it was a good night.

8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro became a Hare Krishna and was arrested at the airport trying to sell daisies to passers-by. Does this even happen any more? Is anyone else old enough to remember this? It was in the movie “Airplane!”, it must really have happened. Well, I mean, not to Mark Shapiro: that’s just nonsense. Fire Eric Wedge.