Talk about a buzzkiller. After winning game one of the series in dramatic fashion in eleven innings, the Motor City Kitties came back and dropped 20 runs on us in games two and three, making minced meat of our pitching staff en route to a series win. The Indians still lead the division by one game, and go into the break with three in Toronto ... a series Cris Sykes will preview for us in a couple hours here. Buff revisits yesterday's 12-3 loss in today's B-List.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (51-34)	1	1	0	0
Tigers (49-34)	1	0	4	2

W: Verlander (10-3) L: Sabathia (12-3)

"Don't think it hasn't been a little slice of heaven ... 'cause it hasn't."

--- Bugs Bunny

1) The power of archives!

Wait, wait, I think I've written about this somewhere before ... let me see ... oh yes, here it is:

C.C. Sabathia was bad.

2) Insightful insight

Sabathia simply had no command of his pitches. The blow that really sunk the ship was the three-run homer to Carlos Guillen in the third: Guillen is a fine hitter, and I still regret missing out on him when Omar Vizquel failed his physical, but the fact is that Sabathia threw a fastball in the dead center of the strike zone on an 0-2 count. There's simply no way Sabathia intended that pitch go there, certainly not on 0-2. In fact, much of the praise for Sabathia to this point is how well he's been working off the center of the plate, working the corners and changing the batter's eye level and inside-out focus. A grooved 0-2 fastball is not a good example of that.

The ironic thing for me was that Sabathia was doing a decent enough job of missing bats, inducing a pair of swinging strikeouts to Ivan Rodriguez and generally keeping his miss-to-foul ratio acceptably high. In a sense, that's an encouraging sign that Sabathia can still throw impressive stuff, even if someone removed his cochlea and buttered his hands. Other than that, I mean, if you give up three homers AND three doubles in 4 innings, yielding 7 runs on 10 hits overall, you're basically throwing beachballs and need to go home post fucking haste.

(Scary stat: Magglio Ordonez hit his THIRTY-FIFTH DOUBLE off Sabathia. That's sick! If the Tigers make the playoffs, I'm not sure you can make a compelling argument that Ordonez, hitting .370/.448/.613 with half his games in Comerica, is not the MVP. The man's only notable split with an OPS of under 1.000 is "on turf/in domes," which is really the same sample ... of 38 at-bats ... where his OPS is "only" .979.)

3) So long, farewell, auf wiedersehn, you suck

Thus endeth the Eddie Moo Era for the Indians, as Mujica gave up 4 runs on three hits and a walk while recording one out.

Okay, there are actually a couple of mitigating factors here:

a) Two of the runs were allowed by Jason Stanford
b) It doesn't *really* end Mujica's stint, I just *want* it to be so

Really, is there anyone else itching to give this man more opportunities? Yes, yes, small sample size, blah blah blah ... the man has made five appearances and ONE was scoreless. He gave up multiple runs in 3 of his 5 outings, not one of which was longer than 2 1/3 innings! His ERA is 10.57 and his WHIP is 1.70. I've been pimping E-Moo for a couple of years now, but his stats in Beefalo weren't nearly as good this year as last, and his stats in Cleveland are simply dreadful. I'm not advocating giving him the Oldberto Treatment yet, but that's only because we don't have to: he has options left. If he didn't, he would have to go. I have to assume that Mujica will sit superglued to his bullpen chair until Aaron Fultz comes off the DL, at which point he will be shipped, chair and all, back to Beefalo. But I think counting on Mujica to bloom into an effective reliever in 2007 is simply chimerical.

4) Another data point crystallizes a plan

Jason Stanford was called in to bail E-Moo out of a first-and-third jam with one out in the 6th inning. He did no such thing, giving up a two-run double to Sean Casey,

but he did come in and pitch.

Really, Stanford's line isn't bad: he gave up two more hits, one of which drove Casey in, to yield 1 run in 2 2/3 innings. He didn't strike out or walk anybody, and largely threw strikes (21 in 29 pitches), but letting the two inherited runners score is a pretty ugly blemish that doesn't show up in the box score.

Along with his "relief" of Carmona (same link as used in (1)), we have two instances in which Stanford:

a) came into a game with men on base
b) allowed all the men on base to score
c) pitched quite well for the next couple-three innings after that

This leads to two pretty natural conclusions:

i) when Stanford starts innings, the first time through an order, he's pretty effective

ii) but you don't really want him coming in with runners on base

Item (ii) really sort of rules out Stanford being a very flexible relief pitcher. If you have the luxury of carrying a reliever who only starts innings, I suppose Stanford could be that guy (although his WHIP and other peripheral suggest an extreme ordinariness), but if you don't, he's not really more useful than Blowout Innings Sponge. On the other hand, looking up and down the roster, both in Cleveland and the minors, I have a hard time seeing which starter he would definitely displace as a fixture in a future rotation. (I mean, it seems unassailable that he's

not a part of the 2007 rotation, barring injury.)

Add this all up, and I think Jason Stanford will have to be traded or Guthried. It doesn't have to be now, it doesn't even have to be before the trading deadline, but ... the man's 30 and not compellingly good. I think he's got Washington National written all over him (although he'd be fine as a Padre if Maddux and/or Wells get bored enough to retire, I suppose).

5) I like our catchers

Victor Martinez hit a solo shot with two outs in the first to dent the invincible veneer Justin Verlander carried into the game. He later doubled and drove in a second run and is hitting .326.

Kelly Shoppach replaced him when the game got out of hand and singled in his trip to the plate. This was a nice recovery after the bat-breaking strikeout show of his last outing. He is hitting .363.

6) A continued drive toward respectability

Tom Mastny pitched a scoreless inning, giving up a single and a walk while striking out two. This is notable in that it drives his ERA under 5.00 (to 4.91) for the third time since June 3. (There are not a lot of interesting things to say about a 12-3 shellacking.)

7) Because I should say something nice

Casey Blake and Josh Barfield each doubled. Blake scored on Martinez' subsequent double, while Barfield got to have a nice discussion with Placido Polanco about why Polanco's head has such an odd shape.

8) Poking Readers with a Stick Dept.

No, really, was Jake short-arming the ball Wednesday? Someone who knows mechanics or has video skills convince me I was wrong there. I honestly want to know.

9) Trot Nixon Toast Watch

Nixon went 0-for-4 with one of the feebler ground balls ever hit to second, a swinging strikeout to complete a 3-whiff 4th by the Indians, a routine flyout to center with runners on first and second to end the 6th (when it was still arguably a ballgame at 7-3), and a second flyout to center on a 2-0 pitch. The color code is "coffee, with streaks of black," and the Consistency Rating is "crispy."