I was not one of the ones pressing the panic button about Westbrook and Lee a couple weeks ago, but I'm starting to get worried. Once again, the first inning was the Indians downfall last night, as the BoSox rode a four run first inning to a 6-2 victory over the good guys. In today's B-List, Buff analyzes the Westbrook start, makes fun of Manny, and compares Coco Crisp's plate discipline to that of a meth-user.

| **FINAL SCORE** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Red Sox (60-39)** | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Indians (58-41)** | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

*W: Lester (0-1)  L: Westbrook (1-6)  S: Delcarmen (1)*

Hey, did you know Jon Lester had cancer?

## 0) Item Zero

Author's Note: I am not making fun of cancer. Cancer is serious, and Jon Lester is a good story. He looks great and has worked hard to beat his disease. It is inspirational and heartwarming.

But great Poseidon's finger webbing, could ESPN have beaten that into the ground any more than they did? It was a topic all weekend. It was a topic all day.

It was a topic all night. I mean, I realize that no athlete ... well, okay, actually a bunch of athletes, but no baseball player ... well, okay, actually, a number of baseball players, but no active baseball player ... well, okay, actually, there are others, but no current Boston Red Sox player ... well, okay, actually, teammate Mike Lowell is a survivor as well, but no young white left-handed pitcher for a large-market team with his parents in the stands on national television under the age of 25 but over 6 feet tall has ever come back to pitch for a first-place team on a Monday before after receiving treatment for cancer.

You might have missed that on last night's broadcast. I just wanted to make sure you caught that.

**1) But it looked like such fun!**

Jake Westbrook pitched six innings yesterday while absorbing his 6th loss on the season. Yesterday, we noted that Cliff Lee pitched very well in innings 2 through 6, and Westbrook was not functionally different. He wasn't as pseudo-dominant as Lee was, and had an inverse GB:FB ratio (Lee 1:14 overall, Westbrook 15:1 overall), but the results were very similar: in innings 2-6, Westbrook gave up gave up 1 run on 6 hits and two walks. He induced a pair of double plays and was the pitcher when Kelly Shoppach caught Mike Lowell trying to steal. It was more the Nagy Method of scattering hits than being super efficient, but it represented a fair approximation of what you hope to get from a Jake Westbrook start.

Unlike Lee, Westbrook was not given a 7th inning to shoot himself in the foot.

**Exactly** like Lee, it hardly mattered because Westbrook leapt from the starting gate and immediately began defecating in

every direction.

Covelli Crisp, a man who displayed meth-user-like plate discipline with Cleveland, watched Westbrook's first four pitches before singling. Dustin Pedroia singled, and Kevin Youkilis walked on four pitches. Now, Youkilis is a stealth All-Star candidate, a man who hits .312 and has blossomed into a good regular ballplayer. Youkilis is not altogether dissimilar from our own Ryan Garko, an unathletic player who has worked hard on his defense and hits well enough to force himself into the team's plans. But the man has one over-hyped known-to-the-man-on-the-street skill, and that is walking. The man draws walks. And good for him! But to approach a guy who is known for taking pitches early in the count and not thrown him any strikes, that's just infuriating.

Then Manny doubled, because he is Manny. (See below for more Manniness.) Drew singled, the Tribe conceded a run on a double play, and Westbrook got through the first having given up a mere 0.8 Lees.

I like the ground balls, and Westbrook certainly kept the ball down (as well as in the park). Some ground balls are going to turn into hits by virtue of their being balls in play. But to fall behind 4-0 off the bat against a team like Boston, especially on the heels of such a frustrating outing by Lee, just makes it seem

like so much incompetent boobishness.

## 2) I have an idea

When a pitcher throws a fastball up around your eyes, don't swing at it.

It's just a suggestion.

It's a suggestion that would have helped Travis Hafner not strike out with a runner on first to end the third after Lester had given up a two-run blast to Grady Sizemore and appeared susceptible to losing his composure. It's a suggestion that would have helped Sizemore not end the next inning with the BASES LOADED looking like a lumberjack chopping at a pinata.

It's a very *good* suggestion.

## 3) Striking a balance

As bad as Sizemore looking whiffing with the bases loaded, he did hit the two-run blast the inning before. The home run is Sizemore's 18th on the season and gives him 54 RBI. Sizemore now owns the team HR lead by himself over Victor Martinez' 17; his RBI place him third on the team behind Martinez (77) and Hafner (64).

For afficianadoes of Fine Timing, the home run was hit as ESPN's Steve Phillips was interviewing Jon Lester's father in the stands.

**4) Gark smash!**

Well, it stayed in the ballpark, but the other extra-base hit off Lester was a double by Ryan Garko, his 17th on the season. Among players with at least 100 ABs, Garko's .522 slugging percentage is second behind Victor Martinez. It also extends his hiting streak to 16 games.

Garko also helped turn a nice 3-6-3 double play in the 5th.

# 5) The good, the bad, and the comical

Casey Blake had a nice night at the plate with a pair of singles and a walk batting in the 3 slot behind Jason Michaels.

Blake had a lesser night in the field, as his throwing error in the 9th led to Boston's most meaningless run.

However, my favorite Blake moment came on a pop foul straight up by Julio Lugo in the 8th, when Kelly Shoppach threw off his mask, wandered around, became distracted by a dancing bear or something, then Jason Stanford wandered around the plate for a while, until finally Blake sauntered up,

overran the ball, then arched back to finally retire Lugo. Jogging off the field, Blake smiled wryly and seemed to be saying, "Why was *I* the guy catching that one?"

## 6) Manny Being Manny

Manny Ramirez hit a hard shot off the wall in the fifth inning, except that he did not realize that the wall was as tall as it was and jogged to first, having to settle for the longest available single on the play. This is excusable because Manny doesn't usually face a wall that high in ... uh ... Boston ... um ... what I meant was,

he was unfamiliar with the dimensions of left at Jacobs Field because he ... er ... only spent years out there ... uh ... okay, I got nothin'. His head is meat. Deep-fried, dreadlocked meat.

The next hitter grounded into the aformentioned 3-6-3 double play.

## 7) Amateur Night

Jen Lewis was the first out of the ‘pen: he gave up a pair of hits, but they were more well-placed ground balls than solid

smashes. He escaped without giving up a run and threw acceptibly well.

Jason Stanford pitched a scoreless 8th before being victimized for an unearned run in the ninth and leaving to let Tom Mastny follow up. Mastny did not allow a ball in play, registering three strikeouts and a walk.

I appreciate the outings, and bully for Lewis for getting another scoreless inning under his belt, but these guys are pretty much walking advertisements for the principle of

# Bullpen Arms Are Fungible.