What a freaking baseball game last night. It just don't get any better than that. No one breaks down pitcher performance better than Buff, and he has some fun dissecting Fausto's gem from last night in today's B-List. Buff also hits on Victor's superb defense this year, Hafner's continued woes, and the most underappreciated closer in Indians history.

FINAL SCORE				
Red Sox (61-40)	0	0	0	0
Indians (59-42)	0	0	1	0

W: Carmona (13-4) L: Beckett (13-4) S: Borowski (29)

I loved the highlights of this game, because they consisted exclusively of people Not Scoring.

1) Turnabout, meet fair play

Tuesday night, we lost because in the middle of a dominating start by C.C. Sabathia, he gave up one pitch that was lofted to left field and a single run scored. The Indians had a couple opportunities, but couldn't break through against a very good pitcher and a termemndous shutdown bullpen. The losing starter actually outpitched the winning one, except for the one pitch the produced the game's only run.

If that script sounds familiar, it's because it happened again last night.

All things considered, Josh Beckett arguably pitched better than Fausto Carmona: he gave up the same number of hits in the same number of innings while striking out more and walking (and hitting) fewer. He threw more strikes and the Indians ended up leaving fewer on base than the Red Sox did. However, the ball hit to left wasn't a botched routine fly that turned into a run-scoring single, it was a solo home run to Franklin Gutierrez, so the sympathy ends there.

Carmona, on the other hand, gave up no extra-base hits and shut out the powerful Boston lineup on 4 hits (6 K, 2 BB) in 8 innings. And Beckett had already given up three hits and the run by the time Carmona's no-hit bid was ruined by an infield single by Covelli Crisp in the sixth. A perfect game bid was already out of the question, as Carmona walked Manny in the second and hit Dustin Pedroia in the 4th, but Carmona had legitimate no-hit stuff last night, and carried it through to the end.

Crisp's single was legit: Jhonny Peralta made a diving stop on the ball, and Crisp is fast enough that it didn't matter whether Peralta's throw was terrible or excellent (it happened to be terrible, but hey). David Ortiz hit a two-out single to "shallow center," but that's only because that's where Josh Barfield happened to be playing: it was another glorified infield hit. We won't address what happened next because it deserves its own heading.

Jason Varitek had a solid single in the 8th, but Alex Cora's was another infield job, meaning that Carmona gave up four hits, and three were well-placed ground balls caught by infielders in awkward positions. Carmona had some help from his catcher, but all things considered, especially coming off the heels of a frustrating 1-0 loss AND up against

a tremendous performance by Josh Beckett, Fausto could hardly have done a better, more impressive, or more encouraging job.

I would give this man the ball in the playoffs. Verily, yes.

2) Thank goodness we had the defensive catcher in

Victor Martinez has deserved quite a bit of the negative press he's received in his career as a poor defensive catcher. Not nearly all of it, but these things are hardly cut from whole cloth: Martinez really has been fairly bad at throwing out basestealers, the most-obvious aspect of defensive catching, or at least the easiest to measure with an eyeball and a piece of paper. I've read reports that say he calls a good game and that pitchers trust him, which is probably more important than a caught-stealing percentage, but I'll admit right now that I'm not a good evaluator of catching defense and leave it at that.

What I do know about catching defense is that when you position yourself fantastically to get a throw and tag out the tying run at the plate, then gun down two basestealers in the 8th inning, that probably counts as being acceptibly good.

After Crisp reached on his infield single in the 6th, he got to second on a one-out groundout by Pedroia. Ortiz' ground ball was deep enough, not only to be considered "erstaz center," but also to guarantee a hit: Barfield simply had no chance to throw him out, and he knew it. However, instead of rushing the throw, Barfield took a moment to look around and saw that Crisp was trying to make it home after rounding third. His throw to Martinez was not very good: it was good from a velocity and height standpoint, but it was on the first-base side of the plate. Martinez got the throw, slid over to block the plate, and tagged Crisp out in a fluid motion rivalling any I've seen: it might not be Gary Carter in the All-Star Game, but it was awfully good. And here, of course, I'm defining "good" as "Crisp was out, which is about as deeply into aesthetics as I care to get."

Now ... pet peeve of mine ... I still don't understand why that's not "interference." He blocked the plate. That's interfering, no? I mean, that play is never ever ever never called, and that's what catchers do, and thank goodness Vic did it, but ... technically, that's illegal, right?

But amongst that play and the other caught stealings (including pinch-runner Julio Lugo to end the 8th with Crisp at the plate), Martinez was studly.

(In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that Pedroia advanced to second on a passed ball by Martinez, but Carmona struck out Ortiz and Manny back-to-back to end the inning, so it made no difference.)

3) Streak-enders

Ryan Garko's hit streak ended with an 0-for-3 night in which he grounded into a double play.

Travis Hafner's string of 0-for-4's was ended by

virtue of him only getting three plate appearances.

Jhonny Peralta did not strike out. (Actually, he had one of Cleveland's four hits.)

Casey Blake did not strand any runners in scoring position (see Travis Hafner). (He did strike out before Grady Sizemore was caught stealing, which is not good, either, but Beckett was really good and it seems cheap to get upset by something like that.)

4) Hey, I know that guy from somewhere

In the top of the ninth, Cleveland brought in a

relief pitcher who looked kind of familiar. Big guy, intense yet calm ... I dunno, I can't put my finger on it, but he sure looked like a guy I've seen on the mound before.

He pitched a lot better than the guy I remember: he struck out Crisp swinging, then struck out Pedroia looking, and arguably struck out David Ortiz, but ultimately got him on a weak popup to third (well, to short, but that's where Casey Blake was standing in the shift) to earn his 29th save of the season.

I was a little surprised to see that: you would think I'd remember a guy with 29 saves. But I thought most of our saves were by that guy who sucked and got lucky, not this guy. This guy looked pretty

damned good. Wish I could think of his name.

5) Wait a minute, what was that?

... but Carmona struck out Ortiz and Manny back-to-back to end the inning ...

I told you, he was really good.

6) Neener Neener Dept.

We held Kevin Youkilis hitless and walkless!

I dunno, prob'ly not that big a deal, but boy howdy he sure seems to get on base a lot against us.

7) This is what a hundred million buys?

One of Boston's utility guys (a "four corner" guy who can play both infield and outfield corners, like Casey Blake) started last night at first base for Boston: Eric Hinske.

Hinske is hitting .205 on the season, including .159 away from Fenway.

I mean, we have Mike Rouse on the team, who am I to laugh, but ... aren't you the f#%*ing Red Sox? Why on earth are you f#%*ing around with Eric Hinske? Good grief.