The Tribe is slumping. They've lost 14 of their last 23, and are 2-6 on this current homestand. And once again last night, they squandered another solid start, this one from Fausto Carmona. In today's B-List, Buff thinks aloud about just HOW good Carmona is and can be. Buff also celebrates The Return Of Eddie Moo, Take Four ... and repeatedly makes fun of how skinny Brandon McCarthy is.

FINAL SCORE				
Rangers (47-59)	0	0	0	0
Indians (60-46)	0	0	0	0

W: McCarthy (5-7) L: Carmona (13-5) S: C.J. Wilson (1)

Fer crine out loud, someone send Brandon McCarthy a sandwich. The man needs a sandwich. Or a pig. You just traded Mark Teixeira, surely you can afford a sandwich.

1) Ho Hum Dept.

At this point, it might be wise to simply accept that this is Fausto Carmona. The season's not over, there have been many players in the history of the league to have one great season and later fall flat (thank you, All-Star Ken Schrom), he's very young, blah blah blah. Fausto Carmona is *great*.

The question is, is it appropriate to evaluate Fausto along these lines? Is it reasonable to say, "All right, I've seen enough, I now consider your baseline to be that of a #1 or #2 starter, and giving up four runs is a bad night," as one might do for Sabathia or Santana or Beckett? Is he, in fact, That Good?

I think that's unfair at this point. I have high expectations for Carmona, certainly, and good pitching and bad pitching remain largely well-defined, independent of expectations. Giving up three home runs is simply terrible. Pitching a complete-game 4-hitter is simply excellent. In terms of what it's fair to ask Carmona to do, though, I think that he's still too raw and inexperienced to be expected to handle things like questionable defense or late-inning control lapses or other things I would insist Sabathia (for example) be able to fight through. I still feel confident seeing his name in the "Today's Starters" list, and would be fine giving him a playoff start.

Anyway, Carmona really did pitch a fine game, with a couple of exceptions that happen to all pitchers: he threw a pitch with too little movement too close to the center of the zone to Nelson Cruz (who isn't a true .208 hitter, in my opinion) and Cruz punished it to the tune of 440-plus feet. He had a combination of poor control and a bad hop doom him to two runs in the sixth when he sandwiched a single with a walk and a HBP, then Casey Blake got all Fred Lindstromed for a two-run error. You could certainly see Carmona possible getting out of that jam and leaving a 1-1 game after 7 innings, but frankly, the way the Indians were swinging the bat, it would simply have prolonged the agony and saved Carmona from being the Cleveland pitcher to absorb the inevitable loss.

All told, Carmona gave up 5 hits and a walk against 4 Ks in 7 full innings. As encouraging as anything, he got through the 7 innings in under 100 pitches, and struck out two of his last three batters swinging, showing plenty of oomph in the tank at the end.

2) A microcosm of frustration

There isn't a whole lot of analysis to be done on an offense that garners 4 hits off Brandon McCarthy, who weighs seventy-three pounds, and meekly wafts into the night with 1 run on four hits only because Ryan Garko hit one over the wall. However, in an effort to encapsulate the Indians' July, in which had they gone even .500 they would be in first place in the AL Central, I give you the 8th inning.

Josh Barfield is facing relief pitcher Frank Francisco. Francisco is a nice enough pitcher, sporting a 4.10 ERA on the season, although he is known more for his Bobby Knight impression than anything he's done throwing a baseball. Barfield takes a strike, which is good for Barfield, not exactly a patient hitter this season. How "not exactly?" Well, consider that Barfield sported a higher AVG than OBP in June, which is pretty hard to do. (It involves drawing zero walks in over 100 ABs). Barfield's July is more patient, but less effective: Barfield hit .207/.258/.256 in July, for a brisk .514 OPS. In case you're wondering, that's not good.

Barfield takes a ball high, then fouls off a pitch. After a second ball, he fouls off ball three. Ball three is not a good pitch, being nothing like a pitch he could hit, but it is fouled off regardless. This becomes important later.

To this point, we have seen Francisco's repertoire: fastball about 93, breaking ball around 79 or so. He's a two-pitch pitcher. At 2-2, Francisco reaches back and unleashes a 96-mph fastball on the low outside corner that is simply a terrific pitch. Completely unhittable unless you're gassed up for it. Barfield is not: his swing is late and he strikes out.

Now, had Barfield been at 3-2 instead of 2-2, would Francisco have had the nerve to paint the corner like that? Debatable. Maybe so. He's a professional. But Barfield is completely overmatched, and that's enough of that.

Grady Sizemore lopes to the plate, and Ron Washington calls for his secret weapon, left-hander C.J. Wilson. Wilson is famous with Cleveland fans as the man who broke Travis Hafner's hand last season, but he should be famous for being really pretty damned good. Wilson can pitch, and according to Will Carroll actually throws the mysterious "gyro ball." I'm not in a position to say, but Wilson sports a 2.45 ERA with a WHIP of 1.11: all batters hit .183 off him, but left-handers have particular trouble, hitting .095 off him with an OPS of .322. Yes, three twenty-two. The man can pitch.

Sizemore fouls off two pitches, each of which was probably a strike but hardly the kind of pitch Sizemore could drive anywhere. Still, Wilson's good and that might be what you get. The problem is, falling behind 0-2 makes you susceptible to pitches you're not looking for.

However, Sizemore does a good job, watching two pitches out of the zone and holding a check swing (called "no swing" by the 3rd-base umpire) on a ball in the dirt. So he's worked it up to 3-2, which is good. Except that Wilson unleashes some sort of cut fastball on Sizemore that goes 90-plus while wafting away from him, and Sizemore is called out on strikes after trying to fake the umpire into giving him a walk. (He knew he was out.) Damned good pitch.

Because Wilson gives up a more-human .256 to right-handed hitters, Eric Wedge calls in Jason Michaels, who hits lefties at a .290 clip. Washington trusts Wilson, so Michaels will get his chance, replacing Lofton, who was a worthless 0-for-3 against McCarthy, leaving three on base, including one in scoring position to end an inning. Michaels shows remarkable patience, but no actual hitting ability, and swings at none of the three strikes that eventually send him back to the bench. The last one was inexcusable, being a nice pitch but very obviously a strike.

Now, this isn't entirely representative of the Indians' troubles. There were no runners left on base. There were no weak popups. But in the 8th inning of a two-run game, the Indians brought the top of the order to the plate and accomplished absolutely nothing whatsoever.

Which pretty much sums up July.

3) Gark smash!

Yes, yes, very nice.

4) I'm ready for my closeup, Mr. DeVille

And I'm ready for Travis Hafner to stop sucking. Slugging .438 on the season is simply lame for an eight-figure DH.

5) One Borowski is enough, thank you

Jensen Lewis is a nice bullpen arm. His motion is still very weird, where his initial movement is toward home plate instead of rocking back to push forward. I don't know how he gets enough lower-body momentum to generate the 90-plus he can throw.

This having been said, the man's 2.16 ERA is incompatible with his 1.56 WHIP. At some point this is going to burn you. Lewis stayed on the tightrope last night, giving up a pair of singles and a walk before getting Brad Wilkerson to Brad Wilkerson, but only two of Lewis' seven outings have not involved a baserunner, and although his K rate of 12.96 per 9 IP is tremendous, I

would still churn a bunch of stomach acid giving him the ball in a tight game.

6) Welcome back!

Eddie Moo pitched a scoreless inning!

Enjoy it while you can, as Mujica will be back on the Yo Yo Special when a starter is called up to fill Lee's slot (likely Aaron Laffey).

7) Fairness Dept.

Trot Nixon got one of the Indians' four hits, as did Casey Blake. I would have traded Casey's hit for fielding the ground ball.