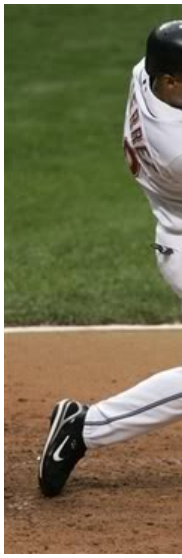
The Indians managed to salvage a split with the Tigers because Fausto Carmona is really, really good. Buff recaps the win while trying to figure out what it was the Indians got with a runner in scoring position. It's on the tip of his tongue, but he hadn't seen one in a while ...



FINAL SCORE				
Tigers (66-54)	0	1	0	0
Indians (66-54)	0	2	1	0

W: Carmona (14-7) L: Jurrjens (0-1) S: Borowski (33)

I love the fact that Jair Jurrjens is listed in the box scores as "J. Jurrjens," to separate him out from the all the other Jurrjenseseseses.

1) I think he's starting to get the hang of this

To say that Fausto Carmona was great is less insightful than it is true: it was equally obvious to the lay fan as it was to the Detroit Tigers. Carmona needed 104 pitches to get through 8 complete innings of work, largely because of the extra pitches needed to record a career-high 10 strikeouts, his first venture into double digits in the majors. Actually, Carmona was never much of a strikeout pitcher in the minors, depending more on getting people to pound the ball into the ground: he still does this, of course, but has added enough je ne sai quoi to add strikeouts to the repertoire. This is probably either as extra movement (and this varies from start to start: it is consistently good but sometimes, like last night, truly excellent) or increased velocity (I don't recall him throwing 95-96 in the minors).

At age 23, it's not inconceivable that Carmona is simply bigger and more powerful than he was a couple years ago. In any event, consider these (admittedly artificial but easy to access) data, split as before and after the All-Star Break:

Before: 3.85 ERA, .277 AVG, 1.078 H/IP, 1.347 WHIP, 5.099 K/9
After: 1.73 ERA, .204 AVG, 0.712 H/IP, 1.019 WHIP, 6.577 K/9

I'm actually a little surprised the K/9 isn't even higher after the break, but part of that is weighed down by his previous start against the Yankees where he traded strikeouts for ground balls (striking out 2 but inducing 16 grounders). But that's ... well, that's a lot better is what it is. He has gone at least 7 innings in each of his past 8 starts, and only twice given up as many hits as innings (8 H in 7 IP twice). He has lowered his ERA from 3.85 to 3.16 over that span and gave up a total of 10 earned runs (in 52 IP).

Anyway, Carmona actually had a two-hitter before giving up a pair of hits in the 8th, including a run-producing triple to Curtis Granderson. His first run was unearned, although he probably shouldn't be doing a lot of complaining since he made an error of his own the next inning. His 1st, 4th, 6th, and 7th innings were 1-2-3: he walked a batter in the 5th.

Now, it bears mentioning that he didn't pitch appreciably better (fewer walks and more strikeouts, but he gave up more runs) than the 8/5 start

in which he lost. And he didn't give up any fewer runs than Sabathia did the night before. But all things considered, I'd have to consider 8 innings of 4-hit 10-K ball to be pretty damned awesome. At nearly 160 innings, it is worth watching for signs of fatigue, but ... 8 innings of 4-hit 10-K ball doesn't sound like one of those signs.

2) Indescribable

Travis Hafner did this thing where he swung the bat, hit the ball, ran to first base, and then *kept running until he got to second base*. It was pretty incredible. I don't know exactly what it's called, but he's actually done it three other times in just his past ten games, which I guess explains how he SLG this season is all the way up to .437.

Ryan Garko flew out, then Jhonny Peralta struck out swinging. I actually have a very good set of data to draw on in describing these events. Peralta's strikeout was Type 43-B, The One Where He Fouls Off An 0-2 Pitch Only To Thoroughly Miss The Next One.

So with two outs and a man in scoring position, Franklin Gutierrez did this thing where he **didn't make an out**. I've been told by Yankees fans that this is, in fact, a legal play, and often results in these things being counted up on the scoreboard. I'll have to get back to you as to exactly what terminology describes such actions.

The Indians did leave four men on base, but none were in scoring position when innings ended.

3) Digging to a deep depth

Oh, I see why there weren't people in scoring position with two outs: because we hit into FOUR DOUBLE PLAYS, including one in which Victor Martinez was doubled off first ... by the shortstop ... on a fly ball to LEFT FIELD. (I'm havin' a hard time visualizing that one.)

Hafner turned a first-and-third with no one out into a run ... and two out. Drooby Doo hit into an inning-ender in the 7th, and pinch-hitter Chris Gomez managed to ground into an inning-ender with one out and the BASES LOADED in the bottom of the 8th, for which Joe Borowski bought him a case of beer because it kept the game within 3 runs and allowed Borowski to get his 33rd save.

4) Power at the ballyard

The Indians managed a paltry 6 hits, 5 of which were off the rookie Jurrjens making his first major-league start. To put this into perspective, the Akron Aeros got EIGHT hits off Jurrjens a couple weeks ago, chasing him before he finished the sixth. (He completed 7 innings against the Indians.) Admittedly, Akron is ... er, Toledo's defense ... um ... the 7 mph wind ... uh ... San Dimas High School Football Rules!

Anyway, at least the hits were impressive and practical: 4 of the six were for extra bases, and three of those scored runs (Hafner and Gutierrez on Gutierrez' ... "thing" ... whatever that's called, and Sizemore scoring after his triple on Hafner's aforementioned DP). Casey Blake's ground rule double off Bobby Seay was of second-order importance, forcing the walked Jason Michaels to third where he could be forced in on a walk to Hafner later, but it was a nice hit nonetheless.

Blake now has 28 doubles on the season, giving him a .442 SLG. In other words, simultaneously "not very good" (lower than last year's .479, barely above his lost season of 2005's .438) and "higher than Travis Hafner."

5) Back on the horse

The one really impressive skill Joe Borowski has as a closer is his ability to rebound from a bad performance. Although Borowski did give up a single to Sean Casey, he also got two swinging Ks and gave up no other baserunners to close out the game without allowing a run. Borowski now has 43 strikeouts in 47 innings, just shy of the magic 1 per inning mark, and sports a fine 43:12 K:BB ratio (don't go mucking about, you're the closer, throw strikes).

Here's the thing about looking good getting back on the horse, though: it means you *fell off the horse*. Stay **on** the bloody horse.

6) A modest proposal

Eric Wedge's recent comments about Josh Barfield suggest that this is already in the works, but I thought I'd go ahead and say it out loud: when a starter is called up at the end of next week to get back into the five-man rotation (Lee, Laffey, or Sowers, and frankly, I will be shocked beyond coherence if it isn't Lee, as long as he doesn't completely implode; by all reports, he's pitched well in Beefalo), send down Barfield for a week and keep Asdrubal Cabrera in Cleveland. It's not actually that Cabrera is clearly better than Barfield: Cabrera has 12 ABs, we know squat about how good he is. He was good in the minors, and that's very nice, but not entirely relevant.

No, the more salient point is that the assignment is only for a week: you can bring up whomever is sent down on Sept. 1 when the rosters expand. Or you can do some other sort of last-minute shuffling involving Eddie Moo riding a cab back and forth until he gets carsick. Whatever. It's just that if you send Drooby Doo down, you burn an option on a 21-year-old guy who may or may not be ready for the bigs. That would be pretty bad roster management. Besides, Barfield has been awful,

both locally and globally. If we'd had Chris Gomez instead of Mike Rouse from the beginning of the season, this point would have been driven home with greater force and he'd have been sent down already. I like some of the things I see from the fellow, but great googly moogly, he's hitting .243/.271/.325, and that's after he hit .278 in May and .317 in June. His July numbers are ghastly (.207/.258/.256), and his August numbers truly Lohanesque (.171/.194/.314). I'm searching for a reason we'd miss that.

7) I am ready

For Kenny Lofton to get a hit.

8) Managerial Head Scratcher Explained!

Why on earth would you pinch-hit Chris Gomez (a right-handed hitter) for Ryan Garko (a right-handed hitter) with the bases loaded against a right-handed reliever?

Well, because Garko had a strained groin muscle.

Now, why you couldn't have gotten Nixon a cut there is simple conjecture. It would have taken some serious defensive shenanigans ... or just replacing Nixon with Gomez, but that's still thinking ahead ... but at least it explains why Garko was replaced.