What a finish to a three-game set! The Indians take two of three from second-place Detroit with another game in which Joe Borowski is forced to do something Indians fans aren't comfortable seeing him do. Buff recaps the 3-1 10-inning win by introducing a new term and questioning the reasoning powers of the Tigers' third baseman. Bring on the Royals!

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (70-56)	0	0	0	0
Tigers (68-59)	0	0	0	0

W: Perez (1-1) L: Zumaya (1-2) S: Borowski (36)

For sale: one used stomach lining. Shows significant wear. Good, hard-working lining, but no longer adequate for my needs. Inquire within.

1) If you work hard and persevere, you may be almost as good as Nate Robertson!

Actually, that's entirely unfair, as Jake Westbrook's poor comparison to Robertson had a lot more to do with Robertson and our offense than any performance lapse by Westbrook. Jake spun a gem yesterday, and needed every facet of it as the two struggling squads traded zeroes until both starters had left the bump. Through 8 complete innings, Westbrook gave up 5 singles and walked two men,

striking out 3. And he really pounded the strike zone, in that one of the walks was unintentional, and removing it from the counts yields 70 strikes in 100 pitches. Of course, he also pounded the batter's box, hitting both Matt Rabelo and Brandon Inge, but hey.

Westbrook didn't have his customary "ground or bust" stuff working yesterday, getting 8 fly ball outs to go with 13 grounders, and didn't induce any GIDPs. Still, four of the 8 innings ended with groundouts that could aruably have been double plays had there not been two outs already: in each of the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 8th innings, a batter grounded out with a runner on first and two outs to finish the frame. Westbrook pitched around significantly more trouble than Robertson, having a runner stranded in scoring position four times and getting a fortuitous baserunning gaffe by Inge in a fifth inning: the Tigers ended up stranded 12 runners in the game, compared to Cleveland's four.

Still, all five of the Tigers' hits off Jake were singles (in other words, nothing for extra bases), and when he really needed a groundout to defuse a scoring opportunity, he was able to get one. He spread his hits around, not giving up more than one hit to any individual Detroit batter. But really, the single most important thing he did was match Robertson zero-for-zero: on a day when the Cleveland offense was again hitting on one cylinder with a spark plug made from aluminum foil, there wasn't much margin for error. (In fact, the size of the margin could be measured by the length of Franklin Gutierrez' glove.)

Does this mean that Jake Westbrook has some hard-to-measure Super Clutchness Quality that nominal Aces like Carmona or Sabathia lack? I find that a pretty hard pill to swallow. The simpler explanation was that Westbrook got slightly more fortunate than either of those two, and that baseball is a game often played right on the margins. It does suggest

that during this hot streak of Westbrook's, though, that the gap amongst the three pitchers is really not as large as it might look on paper or through lay eyes. Consider this: since getting hit hard against Boston, in six starts Jake is 3-1 with a 1.67 ERA, a 0.86 WHIP, and is averaging over 7 IP per start. If I have one complaint about Westbrook, it is that he has walked at least two men in four of these six starts: for a guy with a poor K rate, this is playing too close to the margin for my taste. But that ERA and WHIP compare with any six-game stretch Carmona or Sabathia has posted, and as of Right This Minute, I feel pretty confident giving Jake the ball.

2) Dept. of Raffies, Role Reversal Subdivision

On Wednesday, Rafael Perez was able to bail out starter Paul Byrd, but got into trouble of his own by putting two men on base. Fortunately, Rafael Betancourt was able to smash his way out of that jam by slamming the door, eventually giving way to Last Inning Shenanigans™ .

So on Thursday, when Betancourt was not his customary near-perfect self (tipoff: walking Brandon "Hole Bat" Inge), Perez was called in to face lefty Curtis Granderson with runners on first and second and two outs. He calmly got Granderson to strike out swinging: in all, Granderson swung and missed at three of the four strikes (in 6 pitches) Perez threw.

Actually, the strikeout pitch gives some insight as to both Perez' effectiveness and his generally high strike-to-ball ratio: he threw a nasty slider that appeared to ultimately wander out of the zone, but Granderson couldn't lay off it with two strikes (nor could he reach it, being forced to use a baseball bat instead of a boat oar).

And then there were Last Inning Shenanigans™, so the symmetry was complete. Huzzah!

3) Let's hear it for the old guys!

Though still younger than me, Kenny Lofton and Chris Gomez are still on my side of 35, with Lofton on my side of 40. These are not necessarily the guys you are expecting to come through in a tight game with run-producing hits. However, with the bases loaded and two outs, Lofton pinch-hit for Worthless J. Michaels and guided a Joel Zumaya pitch up the middle for the game's first run. Technically, it was an "infield single" in that shortstop Ramon Santiago kept the ball from rolling into center with a fine diving stop, but the fact that he couldn't force the runner at second while lying 10 feet

from the bag tells you just how "infield" it was. (It certainly saved a run, as Asdrubal Cabrera was on second when the ball was hit and is reasonably fast.)

Chris Gomez took a strike and, apparently having timed Zumaya sufficiently, shortened his stroke and guided another ball through the middle, this one eluding second baseman Potato Head Polanco and producing the expected two runs.

Much has or will be written about how the guys "didn't try to do too much" or "shortened their strokes" or such stuff (heck, I did in in the previous paragraph: it's a valid point), but the fact that we got two run-producing hits with two outs off a good relief pitcher (Zumaya spent too long on the DL and has been back too little to be considered "elite" as he was in 2006) shouldn't be obscured by such hoary feel-good rhetoric. They got real, major-league hits. Between Tuesday and Thursday, that made them pretty unusual Cleveland Indians.

4) Hidden hustle

Lofton and Gomez may not have gotten to the plate in the 10th had it not been for the speed ... yes, speed ... of Ryan Garko.

I am not putting you on.

After a beautiful opening double by Victor Martinez (who was immediately replaced by the much much much muchity much faster Josh Barfield), Zumaya intentionally walked Travis Hafner. Now, in previous years, this would have been a complete no-brainer, but even with Hafner's struggles this season, it was a pretty obvious move: it put the DP in play for the excruciatingly-slow Garko, and Hafner is a pretty strong pull hitter. He doesn't pull every single pitch, but they play The Shift on him because he pulls a lot, and a ground ball to the right side (or a deepish fly to right) would potentially put

the go-ahead run on third with one out. Fans who follow the Indians closely realize that this is no guarantee and in fact might actually decrease our scoring chances, but it's a good percentage play.

And Garko followed with what could have passed for a tailor-made (if you have a very poor tailor) double play to the bag side of shortstop. However, Garko was hustling out of the box and beat the relay throw to put runners on the corners with only ONE out. This meant that after Zumaya inexplicably went blind and walked Jhonny Peralta on four pitches, only two of which were in the strike zone, that Franklin Gutierrez' Extreme Windmill Action was only the second out and gave Lofton and Gomez their chances.

Now, it should be pointed out that Garko was also replaced at first by the muchity faster Drooby Doo, but he was probably winded from the effort anyway.

5) One of the very cheap three-run saves

Usually I am wont to make some sort of snide comment when Joe Borowski pitches an inning with a three-run lead to record the cheap save. And here is today's: you call THAT a SAVE?!

Great googly moogly. After two quick outs, Joe Borowski gave up a booming double, a bunt single (which was really a very nice bunt by Carlos Guillen: Borowski slipped fielding it, but I don't think he had a shot even if he'd fielded it cleanly), and another double to Marcus Thames (who kills the Indians for some reason). With the winning run at the plate in the form of Ivan Rodriguez, Borowski went to two of his three least-devastating weapons:

a) The ball
b) The hanging meatball curve

Now, Rodriguez is not having his finest season. One might say, in fact, that he is having a putrid season. The man's OBP is .288. Two eighty-eight! That's piss-poor! He is hitting .278, which looks reasonable, but ... two eighty-eight! That's lousy. (He's slugging .426, which isn't that bad: ‘t'isn't good, but it's not terrible.)

Rodriguez simply missed the meatball, possibly distracted by the thick, gooey tomato sauce dripping from the seams. He flew out on the next pitch.

That's a bad save.

6) Flashing the leather!

With all due respect to Westbrook's heroics and the Value of the Old in the tenth, the game was saved

in the fifth inning when after Brandon Inge was plunked and sacrificed to second, Curtis Granderson hit a deep drive to right that would easily score Inge.

Unless, of course, it wasn't actually a *hit*.

Gutierrez ranged to the wall, quickly covering a lot of ground, and made a nice catch for the second out. Meanwhile, Inge, showing the baserunning acumen of a Gila monster dipped in peyote, had already rounded third and was easily doubled off second to end the frame.

If you take one thing from this item, it should be that Gutierrez made a fine play and preserved the scoreless tie in an important game the Indians eventually won. However, I have to ask: what the holy hell was going through Inge's mind there? It was a drive to the wall: if it hit, you're going to score

from second if you somersault all the way. Go halfway to third, check it out, and start jogging one way or the other. Were you hit in the head? Were you suffering heatstroke-induced dementia? Great Scott, man, you're hitting .238 and are *Brandon Inge* : this is not the best career-lengthening strategy, son.

7) Encouraging signs

Facing a lefty, Grady Sizemore got two of the Indians' four hits off Robertson, including a double. Jhonny Peralta also has a double to the wall, although he had grounded into a double play to end the second and popped out to end the 5th.

8) The four-man weave

In the 10th, Eric Wedge used his bench to good effect by pinch-running for two very slow baserunners (Barfield for Martinez, Cabrera for Garko), pinch-hitting for a clod (Lofton for Michaels), and shuffling his defense seamlessly (Shoppach for Martinez, Cabrera for Gomez, Gomez for Garko, Lofton for Michaels). It's nice to have options, and nice when the options are used to good effect.

By the way, after a blistering .182/.229/.205 July, Michaels has recovered to hit .212/.250/.364 in August, meaning that by December, he should be an adequate corner outfielder again.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro's pen name is Kitty Kelly, and he will be releasing an unauthorized biography of Bob Feller in which he claims Feller used performance-enhancing drugs, LSD, and Sterno. I have no comment about the claims about Feller, but I have seen Kitty Kelly and she looks nothing like Mark Shapiro, rendering this statement falacious. Fire Eric Wedge.