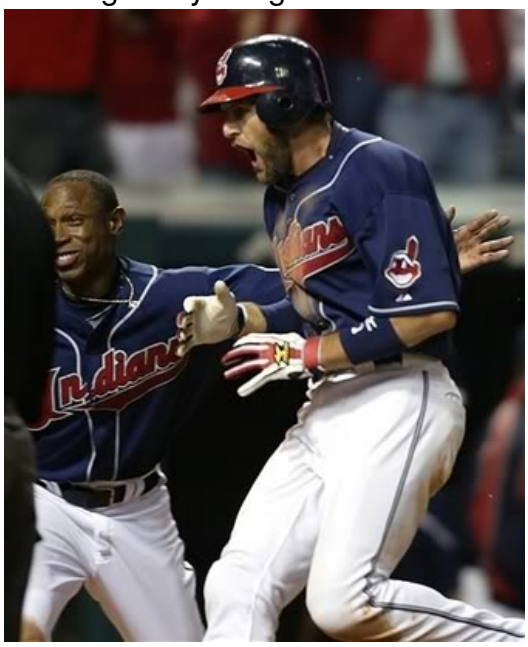
What a freaking baseball game last night. Honny Peralta came through huge with three walks and two homers ... including one in the 8th inning that tied the game at 5-5. And then Casey Blake, for the second time in four nights, caps a huge win with a extra inning walk off job. The Tribe now leads the Tigers by 5.5 games with 12 left to play. Buff writes about the big win in today's B-List.



FINAL				
Tigers (83-68)	0	1	1	3
Indians (88-62)	1	0	0	1

W: Betancourt (5-1) L: Miner (3-4)

This is not 2005 ... because we have Casey Blake.

Yeah, I hard a hard time *writing* it, too.

1) Copyright infringement

One of the more quaint customs of professional sports is the concept of the "Kangaroo Court" in which camaraderie and humor are maintained over a long season with a series of mock trials for such offenses as not advancing a runner or not buying the right kind of doughnuts. The "fines" levied

aren't really something you can avoid even with the most persuasive arguments, as all decisions are made before the trial begins.

So I imagine the scene in which Paul Byrd is hauled before the Court in order to explain why he has stolen his staff leader's most recognizable feature: the **Inning of Crap™**. "Look, I was throwing **Innings of Crap™** back when you were a little boy!" Byrd would say. Of course, it is debatable as to whether C.C. Sabathia was ever actually "little." But the facts speak for themselves: on a night on which Byrd gave up 10 hits, four came in the 4th; he gave up 5 runs, but 3 were in that inning. No other inning featured more than two hits or one run, the last two were perfect, and the last three featured the minimum number of hitters, thanks to a double play.

It was clearly an **IoC™**, and I think Byrd owes Sabathia an apology, or at least a pizza.

Now, this having been said, there are two things to note about last night's performance. First, Byrd had significant help in the Crap Production Dept. in the 4th inning, as Peralta's error extended the inning and was just Plain Olde Butchery, and Michaels' error gave an extra base to a man who then scored on a bunt single (and was also Simple Vintage Butchery). But four hits in five batters is four hits, and only a tremendous surplus of Brandon Inge-ness got Byrd out of the inning.

But secondly, Byrd showed both remarkable poise as well as some sort of Actual Talent to take a breath after falling behind on a night on which the Indians' offense once again chose to "kick" like a miler rather than "produce runs" like an offense, then come back with three strong innings to get into the 8th. Where, frankly, he was not good, but hey, he got to the 8th. Ultimately, it wasn't a good line, but a rather Nagyesque one, and sufficient for our purposes at this point.

2) Delayed replay

If the time lag between showings of an event is three days, it hardly seems appropriate to call it "instant." However, it was, as Yogi Berra might opine, *déjà vu* all over again. After the Indians fought back to tie the game in the 8th, Casey Blake strode to the plate in a later inning and drove a pitch over the left-center wall for a

game-ending solo shot for his only hit of the game ... exactly as happened on Friday. (Well, "exactly" is a bit strong a word, not to mention an inaccurate one, in that the inning and out situation and count and opponent and uniform color were all different, but it was similar enough in invoke Yogi.)

I don't really want to talk about the Super Intangible Clutchness Factor of Casey Blake, or to talk about his dichotomy between bases-empty and bases-occupied hitting: these things have been addressed enough times in various places. But I will say this: Casey Blake must be one strong mofo to hit that pitch out, because it was a nasty pitch. It was probably out of the strike zone low, and arguably wide outside, and snapped down at least 18 inches on the way ... and Blake somehow *pulled* that ball over the
wall

. There might be adrenaline involved, it may be the Power of the Beard, but even Ivan Rodriguez acknowledged afterwards, that was pretty much the pitch he and Zach Miner wanted Miner to throw, and Blake hit it out. If Vlad Guerrero hits one off his shoetops, you don't blame the pitcher: here, it wasn't just not a bad pitch, it was a
good
pitch, and Blake just did a nearly-unbelievable job.

3) To have a better night, he would have had to cheat

Again, I suppose pedantically, Jhonny Peralta could have hit five home runs in his five trips to the plate. As it was, Peralta did reach base all five times on the strength of a measly *two* home

runs and three walks. The first homer was a solo shot that made Kenny Rogers visibly slump, as it got out to the deepest part of center field and reminded Rogers that he is old. It also came as Peralta was the first batter after the **Inning of Crap**
TM

ended. The second was off uber setup man Joel Zumaya, and was sent out to right with a man on base to tie the score at 5 in the bottom of the 8
th

. Peralta now has 20 homers and 71 RBI on the season. His head is still perfectly spherical.

4) Terror on the basepaths!

It was not a good night for either side on the

bases, as Gary Sheffield managed to be gunned down on the front half of a double steal for an inning-ending K-CS double play, while Ramon Santiago was picked off by noted craftsman Paul Byrd. Cleveland, however, managed to have Josh Barfield caught stealing on their OWN inning-ending K-CS double play, magnified by virtue of it being the 10th, and Jason Michaels was picked off by Kenny Rogers, who allegedly did not balk.

But this wasn't even the best baserunning blunder of the night: let us revisit a column long ago, a column from deep in the archives, a column written as far back as ... yesterday:

But another thing that should not happen is for you to be on second base, and have a ground ball hit IN FRONT OF YOU to the SHORTSTOP and have you get thrown out at third. That just can't happen. You need to have a CAT scan after making that play. The blood supply is just not making it all the way uphill if that happens.

Cameron Maybin ... welcome to the Josh Barfield Commemorative List of Bad Baserunners!

(It should be noted that Maybin did successfully steal second immediately

before refusing to transport oxygen into his cranial cavity.)

5) Revisiting a topic

Grady Sizemore had no hits from the leadoff position, but drew a walk and scored a run.

6) Yes, by golly, I think he IS better than Josh Barfield!

Asdrubal Cabrera scored the game's first run after tripling ... to LEFT. How do you triple to LEFT? Anyway, then he scored on a wild pitch.

In the 8th, it was his single that sent Sizemore to third, where he could score on a groundout. Now, Cabrera also advanced on each of the two groundouts: although he was driven in by a home run and the extra bases were superfluous, it's still good, smart baserunning, and as such, sticks out like Placido Polanco's head.

7) Lest you think I am picking on

Josh

There is a perfectly logical explanation for this: it is that I am picking on Josh.

Now, I don't want to get into an argument about whether he should be written off or sent to Beefalo next year or given an open audition or told to shave his head. I don't care about any of those things yet. What I am talking about is the immediate, 2007-style present, and in my world, Josh Barfield has nothing positive to

contribute to this team as configured right here and now. Nothing. He can't field. He can't hit. And, as illustrated by the past week or so, he can't run the bases either. He may not be a fungus, but he isn't as useful as, say, a cup of coffee.

Let's say, for sake of argument, that you were building a 14-11 playoff roster. (I would argue for 10 pitchers, but I need a place to start, and don't know how the roster is currently configured or what decisions are available: bear with me here.) You have 11 pitchers, whomever they are,

very nice.

Your 14 position players are the everyday starters: Martinez, Garko, Cabrera, Peralta, Blake, Hafner, Lofton, Sizemore, and Gutierrez. Michaels platoons with Lofton, that's 10. Nixon throws pies, that's 11. Gomez is the UI, that's 12. Shoppach backs up Martinez, that's 13.

Now, you can argue with me about Nixon, but I am telling you that in the absence of an unreported injury, rendering him a de facto bench

coach, Trot Nixon is on this playoff roster. He just is. I don't like it any more than you do. But he is. This means that the 14th bench player needs to be a stick. Your choices are Ben Francisco, David Dellucci, Josh Barfield, and potentially someone who escapes my memory like Luis Rivas or something.

I don't see how you pick Barfield.

8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

In an effort to boost attendance, Mark Shapiro started a rumor that under one seat at tonight's game is a set of keys that will start Larry Dolan's car with the title in the glove compartment. This would cause pandemonium and Shapiro would lose his job, so the statement's Truth Quotient hovers stably at zero. Fire Eric Wedge.