It's playoff time. Indians/Yankees. Games one and two Thursday and Friday of this week at the Jake before the series goes back to The Big Apple for game three on Sunday. Aside from the great year on the field for the Indians, it's been another great year of Buff here at The Cleveland Fan, and not surprisingly ... The B-List has developed a very strong following. People love Buff like they love puppies and free beer, and today, he wraps up the final series of the regular season for us.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (95-65)	2	1	0	2
Royals (68-92)	0	2	1	0

W: Sabathia (19-7) L: Davies (3-7) S: Borowski (44)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (95-66)	0	0	2	0
Royals (69-92)	3	0	0	0

W: Soria (2-3) L: R. Perez (1-2)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (96-66)	0	0	2	1
Royals (69-93)	0	0	0	0

W: Laffey (4-2) L: Hochevar (0-1) S: Borowski (45)

A moment of silence for the New York Mets.

1) A modest proposal

Aaron Laffey won his fourth game of the season to produce Cleveland's 96th win on the season. 96 wins is more than I expected, possibly significantly so, so it's hard to view this season as anything short of very successful. Laffey lasted only 5 innings, but threw a tidy 58 pitches to do so: Tom Mastny was called in to face the right-handed slate of hitters in the 6th, but may have gotten the call as much to give him another outing before the playoffs. (In all likelihood, Mastny will be the 11th pitcher on the playoff roster to give Eric Wedge an alternative to Jensen Lewis in front of Various Raffies.)

Laffey finished with an uncharacteristically-low 8:5 GO:FO ratio, but he gave up only 4 hits and did not walk a batter, giving up 1 run and striking out two. His fifth inning might have had as much to do with him being pulled as getting Mastny work, as he gave up three of the four hits and the run in that one inning (as well as recording zero ground ball outs). But that means that through the first four innings, Laffey gave up two baserunners, and one of them was on an error. That's pretty good stuff.

Over the course of a 162-game season, it is important to get quality innings from your rotation: this is good in and of itself, insofar as Quality Is Good, but it also saves wear and tear on a bullpen over the course of the season. And Cleveland's starting pitchers absolutely accomplished that this season, racking up more innings than any other rotation in baseball. But in the playoffs, with the off days and the adrenaline and the do-or-die nature of the games, I have absolutely no qualms in taking a struggling starter out of a game in the middle innings. The name of

the game is Quality at this point, and there aren't a lot of "we'll get ‘em tomorrows" in a short series.

The Indians have home field advantage over the New York Yankees, and will pitch their best two starters at home in Sabathia and Carmona. This is not exactly Radical Strategy and really defies second-guessing. Throw the two top-five Cy Young pitchers in the first two games, verily, yes. After that, it becomes a Jean Arp Festival of Pitching with Westbrook and Byrd ostensibly matching up with various Yankees in Clown Suits in Mussina, Kennedy, and the ghost of Roger Clemens' Pharmacist.

Now, I think Westbrook will be okay, especially as a groundball pitcher. Not great, certainly with the capability of going Tibetan Monk on us, but also capable of getting through the lineup with minimal damage. Who knows? I feel better about him than Byrd, a guy prone to giving up fly balls, a guy prone to giving up home runs, in a park that is forgiving to left-handed hitters against a lineup with good left-handed hitters. (It also has good right-handed hitters: it is filled with good hitters.) And it should be pointed out that Aaron Laffey is not a good matchup with Alex Rodriguez and Derek Jeter, although it is hard to argue that Alex Rodriguez and Derek Jeter give a Rolling O who the heck is on the mound.

Anyway, the team seems to be shying away from the possibility of pitching Sabathia on three days' rest, and certainly if we lead 2-1, saving him for Game Five at home is perfectly prudent. But the argument that Byrd will give us a better chance than Laffey would be convoluted indeed. In any case, either way, it makes a lot of sense to "shadow" one with the other, figuring that either guy could

be great or could get into trouble, and at that point, the speed with which the "hook" is deployed should make the Hookee's head swim, if not simply pop of entirely.

(In short: left-handed supernaturally-composed extreme groundball pitcher in Yankee Stadium vs. Paul Byrd in the same locale: sign me up for the former.)

2) You call that an Inning of Crap™?!

I think the presence on the roster of C.C. Sabathia has an enormous positive impact on a young guy like Laffey. He's still young enough to relate, but old enough to have pitched on Cleveland's last playoff team. He is left-handed and can speak to matchups and pitching strategies. And while Laffey's fifth inning was certainly not any good, it is worth seeing the Master of the **Inning of Crap™** in action, just to pick up some pointers for the future.

Really, Sabathia's **IoC™** was not devastatingly bad. Sabathia gave up 8 hits in 7 innings, and only two of them were in the second. He walked a batter in the game, but not in the second. And although he did give up 2 of his three runs in the second, 2 is not a lot of runs.

Still, I believe that if you give up a home run to Esteban German, especially after giving up an infield single to Emil Brown, one has no choice but to use the **IoC™** designation.

The rest of Sabathia's outing was moderately uneventful, featuring 4 strikeouts, a run-scoring double by Emil Brown (Emil Brown!), and 61 strikes in a fairly efficient 96 pitches over 7 innings. Sabathia's 19th win doesn't guarantee him the Cy Young over Josh Beckett, but combined with Beckett's horrendous last outing might be enough to tip the scales. Well, that and the 40 extra innings on the season.

3) You call THAT an Inning of Crap™?!

Jake Westbrook hit the first batter he faced, then proceded to give up a single, a run-scoring double, a K, an IBB, a run-scoring wild pitch, and a sac fly that scored a guy who advanced on the wild pitch, before striking out John Buck to end the inning.

In the next 5 innings, Westbrook gave up zero runs on 5 hits without walking a batter.

Westbrook finished with a fine 11:2 GO:FO ratio, and had it not been for Simple Preposterous Ineptitude in the first, might have gotten the win. It was

sort of an encouraging way to head into the playoffs, except for the preposterous ineptitude.

4) Pronk smash!

Travis Hafner began the scoring on Friday with a two-run homer off Kyle Davies, finishing that night 1-for-2 with a pair of walks. He then collected two hits in four trips to the plate Saturday, and ended his regular season with a two-run double off Luke Hochevar on Sunday. The double off Hochevar came with two outs as well, and produced Hafner's 100th

RBI of the season.

Hafner finished September hitting .316 for the month, including a .556 slugging percentage. Given a choice, most Indians Analysts would tell you that having Hafner hit is preferable to having Hafner not hit.

5) Captains Clutch

Casey Blake and Asdrubal Cabrera each had two-out RBI on Saturday,

both in the 2-run 4th that changed the 3-3 game into the eventual final score of 5-3.

Victor Martinez drove in all three of Cleveland's runs Saturday on a pair of two-out hits.

Hafner and Ben Francisco drove in three of Cleveland's four runs Sunday. These three runs were driven in with two outs.

After playing Serious Squander Ball against the Mariners (and doing a fair approximation Saturday, losing a 1-run game by leaving 8 on base, including 3 in scoring position), it is an encouraging sign to see two-out RBI becoming a more normal occurrence and less of a "blue moon"sort of affair as it was earlier this summer.

6) A less-modest proposal

Please tell me David Dellucci is not being considered for the playoff roster.

7) Dept. of Raffies

It would be hard to pitch better than Raffy Betancourt did on Friday in support of C.C. Sabathia, throwing a perfect 13-pitch inning with a pair of strikeouts.

And on Saturday, Raffy Perez came in with one out and a man on third and escaped with no runs scored in the 7th, admittedly on the strength of a Jhonny Peralta throw home on a ground ball. However, his second inning was not so pristine, as he gave up a pair of singles and was charged with a run and a loss when Jensen Lewis was unable to finish off the inning. (He struck out the first batter, but Joey Gathright's single through the box was well-hit.)

We'll need both players against the Yankees: it is hard to feel supremely confident about Perez right now, but Betancourt is pitching very, very well.

8) Six Pitch Tom, now 17% off!

Tom Mastny's first inning of work was a scoreless inning in which three of the four hitters swung at the first pitch. In all, he gave up a

leadoff double and got three outs on four pitches.

9) Roster Churn Report

Andy Marte got a double. So did Josh Barfield. So did Ben Francsico. Chris Gomez drove in a run. Luis Rivas scored a run but made an error.

The fewer times we hear these names in the post-season, the better it is for the Indians.

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro replaced Willie Randolph with a wax replica from Madame Toussault's. Okay, actually, I don't know for

CERTAIN that this is false, but it probably wasn't Mark Shapiro who was responsible, so I'll go ahead and say it is. Fire Eric Wedge.