Buff is back with The B-List, recapping both weekend games, showing a strong preference for the one with the prominent insects. Buff hits on Fausto's performance and "Death From The Skies" from Friday night, then offers some more sobering analysis on game three. And yes, he does manage to call Aaron Fultz a fungus. Let's get it done tonight in game four! GO TRIBE!

FINAL SCORE				
Yankees (0-2)	0	0	1	0
Indians (2-0)	0	0	0	0

W: R. Perez (1-0) L: Vizcaino (0-1)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (2-1)	1	1	1	0
Yankees (1-2)	0	0	1	0

W: Hughes (1-0) L: Westbrook (0-1)

Did we pitch the wrong guy in Game One?

1) Fausto!™

Wow.

Although it looked for all the world like his performance might go to

waste due to one bad pitch to Melky Cabrera and some Very Serious Squander Ball, Fausto Carmona still put up one of the most dominant playoff starts on Friday, going nine complete innings while yielding only one run on three hits and two walks. Carmona struck out 5 hitters and induced a ludicrous eighteen ground ball outs. Obviously giving up no runs is better than giving up a run, but it's hard to argue that any Yankees fan felt like THIS would be the inning that they'd finally break through against Carmona. There was no such inning. They got one good swing. That was pretty much it. After that, it was more, "Geez, when does this guy leave so maybe we can score off the bullpen?" than any sort of donning rally caps or bribing health inspectors or whatever it is Yankees fans do.

Now, the Yankees did put a runner in scoring position in the 4th when Derek Jeter singled and advanced on a groundout, but Alex Rodriguez went down swinging and Hideki Matsui grounded out to first to end the pseudo-threat. And in the 9th, after Bobby Abreu beat out a ball to short and stole second, Carmona beat Rodriguez into submission with a marvelous 9-pitch swinging K to end the inning. To give you an idea of the tenor of Carmona's performance, there wasn't a single point at which I worried about Rodriguez getting a hit. I was worried that he'd foul off enough pitches to eventually draw a walk, but there simply wasn't any way he was going to hit the ball well off Carmona. Fausto was simply That Good.

This doesn't include the two double plays he induced, or the 77 strikes in 113 pitches, or the fact that he was still throwing 95 to Rodriguez in the 9th. (Actually, I take "95" with a grain of salt, given the inflationary nature of publicized radar

guns, but he was throwing hard.)

2) Death from the skies!

Dream: "He is suffering from delusionary insects."
Matthew: "Bugs. Yeah. I've been there."
-- Neil Gaiman, "Sandman: Brief Lives"

Well, it was more "Nuisance from the skies!" but who cries that?

Andy Pettitte was less-dominant than Fausto, but through his 6 1/3 innings had a better result, leaving the mound with a 1-0 lead in the 7th with men on first and second. Summoned to the mound was Wonder Boy Joba Chamberlain, who really is quite good if perhaps on the doughy side. I have heard other comparisons, but from a purely physical standpoint, he resembles no one as much as Chicago closer Bobby Jenks, if perhaps with a flatter brim and a less-homicidal demeanor. Chamberlain went

right after pinch-hitter Franklin Gutierrez and struck him out on three pitches, one of which was actually in the strike zone. After showing Casey Blake a strike, Blake flied out to right and the threat was over.

When Chamberlain next took the mound, though, a swarm of insects had descended on the infield. Having just hatched from the unseasonably-warm shores of Lake Erie, a collection of midges (Jobus Irritatus) came in and forced numerous Yankees to take refuge behind clouds of insect repellant. (In fairness, Kenny Lofton did stop play once to have a bug removed from his eye while playing left field.) Midges apparently do not bite, but they are attracted by sweet smells (insect repellant), sweat (Joba Chamberlain), and social injustice (New York Yankees in general). In any event, Chamberlain was rattled enough to walk Grady Sizemore on four pitches, wild pitch him to second, watch him be sacrificed to third, then wild-pitch him home. On the wild pitch, the ball actually careened back to catcher Jorge Posada, who flipped to Chamberlain, but Sizemore is both fast and unafraid of contact, and

upended Chamberlain on a slide that resulted in him being safe and a 4.3 tremor.

Chamberlain was able to regroup and recover his composure ... until his next pitch, when he hit Victor Martinez. He then struck out Jhonny Peralta, but that seems like crediting him for spelling his name properly.

3) More copyright infringement

Jake Westbrook looked very effective in his first four innings of work, inducing three double plays and giving up one run. The first two innings were each single, DP, groundout, and although Westbrook was rather hittable (the 4th was his first hitless inning), his signature pitch was working well and the Indians looked like they would cruise to the finish (having scored a run in each of the first three innings).

In the fifth inning, though, Westbrook decided to give New York a guided tour of a real, live **Inning of Crap**
TM

, and began elevating the ball. After Jason Giambi struck out, Westbrook allowed hits to the next four hitters, two for extra bases, and the last two on 2-0 counts on which he appeared to believe strongly that a fat belt-high strike is preferable to going 3-0 on a hitter (hint: it's not).

Now, Will Carroll at Baseball Prospectus writes the following:

*While watching the Indians game, I noticed that **Jake Westbrook** started to "push" the ball as he tired,*

almost a cross between
Tim Wakefield
's motion and the one that many pitching coaches call "dart throwing," a pitching pejorative. I waited to go back and look at the video, but what I saw was right. Check out the highlights and you'll see what I'm talking about.

I can't really speak to this. Westbrook ALWAYS looks like he's short-arming the ball to me , or at least he has this season. However, this is the sort of thing I really expect two people to notice:

a) Jake Westbrook

b) Carl Willis/Eric Wedge

(I believe it is acceptible for Wedge to defer to Willis' opinion here, but should also reserve the right to override a bad observation.)

Look, this could be Simple Badness. It is Jake Westbrook. Jake Westbrook is what he is, he's perfectly capable of sucking for short periods. The double to Cano was actually a pretty good pitch, at least in terms of having movement and being on the outside corner: it was elevated, too, but I didn't think much of it at the time (direct quote: "Shit!"). But if there's something that a fan recognizes (although,

admittedly, Will Carroll knows a heckuva lot more about pitching mechanics than the average fan: still, he shouldn't know more about Westbrook's mechanics than Carl Freaking Willis, right?), isn't it paramount that our staff be at least as observant?

By the way, after a tremendously bad four-run inning that included giving up a HOME RUN TO JOHNNY DAMON, who at this point can barely reach the wall off a tee, Westbrook STARTED THE SIXTH INNING. We'll get to that.

4) Ducks on the pond!

The stories on Friday were, in order of importance:

a) Fausto!™
b) Bugs!
c) Can we leave any more f&#$ing runners on base?!

In order of annoyance, these are reversed.

In Game One of the series, the Indians got 4 hits and 2 walks in their first six opportunities with a runner in scoring position. That's obviously tremendous,

but also unsustainable. Nobody gets a hit every time with a runner in scoring position. Heck, games would never end.

However, leaving SEVEN men in scoring position is really just Crap Deluxe. Leaving fourteen men on overall, even in eleven innings, is just unspeakably bad. Jhonny Peralta struck out looking to end the 8th with two men on ... then topped that by striking out swinging with THREE men on to end the 10th. Hey, Mariano Rivera is still good, but ... bloody hell! That's still awfully annoying!

Although Peralta's 3 Ks and 6 men left

on (4 in scoring position to end innings!) takes the Sharp Stick in the Eye, Asdrubal Cabrera's 6 (1 in scoring position to end an inning) and Casey Blake's 4 (1) get Dishonorable Mention.

5) Youth will be served

But it will also be young and inexperienced. After looking so poised and professional in the second half of the season, Asdrubal Cabrera had his first real "My God, I'm barely legal to drink and I'm in the

motherf&@%ing playoffs!" moments in Game Two, jumping on the second pitch he saw from Pettitte to ground into a double play, and later the first pitch he saw in the sixth with Sizemore on third and zero outs. Finally, with the bases loaded and one out in the 11th, Drooby Doo popped out, leaving the heroics to Travis Hafner. He also made an error in the field on a routine ground ball.

He did get a hit in Game Three and scored a run, but also struck out twice. Someone needs to teach this man some breathing exercises.

6) Our secret weapon

Trot Nixon!

Okay, raise your hand if you thought starting him in right was a good idea against Roger Clemens? From this subset, how many believed he would hit a home run? From that subset, how many believed he would later bang a run-scoring double over the head of the center fielder? Anyone with

their hand still up? Yes, there, on the left ... nice to meet you, Mrs. Nixon.

Really, it's defensible to put Nixon out there in Yankee Stadium because of the short porch in right: there is less ground to cover, and a couple of those warning-track fly balls sneak over the fence. And it really couldn't have worked out better, with Nixon going 2-for-4, both hits for extra bases, and a pair of RBI.

Well, until he had to catch the ball, of course.

Still, it's Trot Nixon! (Well, *I* was surprised.)

7) Bullpen Follies

After going a debated two innings with a large lead in Game One, Raffy Perez returned for Game Two to show few ill effects, going two

more innings. He threw 17 strikes in 23 pitches to finish two perfect innings and get the win.

Jensen Lewis had to wait until Game Three to get his second appearance. After a perfect inning in Game One, Lewis faced three batters on Sunday and struck all three out.

Joe Borowski got his first taste of the post-season with a "I

need the work" hitless 8th against the Yankees in Game Three. He threw 11 strikes in 20 pitches and walked two batters, including Hideki Matsui on four pitches. I would like to attribute this to clever pitching around the left-handed hitter, but Occam suggests I'm grasping a bit at that one.

Aaron Fultz was a fungus.

On the lighter side, Chamberlain proved to be humanly hittable on Sunday, as he gave up a run on three hits in his home park. Chamberlain will be unavailable for Game Four, as will Phil Hughes, who pitched very well and probably should have simply started in the first place. The nice thing about this is that the Yankees' bullpen quickly becomes Mook City after Hughes and Chamberlain, but before Rivera, so if Wang can be knocked out of the box before the 6th or 7th, the Indians should be

very productive.

8) Terror on the basepaths!

Jhonny Peralta was thrown out at home by Melky Cabrera. This is due to three factors: the height of the ball when caught, the nice throw from Cabrera, and the excessive Jhonny Peraltaness of Jhonny Peralta.

Peralta did steal a base, but Kenny Lofton was caught stealing third.

In Sunday's game, Grady Sizemore stole second off Roger Clemens.

9) Smallball Update

The Indians successfully sacrifice-bunted four times in Game Two, by Jason Michaels, Casey Blake, and Asdrubal Cabrera (twice).

The most successful inning was the one in which Franklin Gutierrez tried to sacrifice, *failed*, and simply **got a hit** instead. Admittedly, Blake then

sacrificed the runners to second and third, which is a great move in the bottom of the 11th with the top of the order coming up.

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro is an accomplished nanotechnologist and engineered the "midges" in his mother's basement: the bugs were not actually living creatures, but finely-tuned instruments of annoyance. This would be prohibitively expensive, but I suppose we'll find out in a future game how false this statement is. Fire Eric Wedge.