Everyone knows it's silly to call a season over after one loss. You wait until *two* losses, obviously. Okay, that's flippant as well, but I can't help but think that yesterday's win over Chicago showed me a
*little*
more than how to count to one. Nice "character win" by the Tribe, and any sporting event featuring A. J. Pierzynski being forced to sit down and shut up is always worthwhile.

**1) What have you done with Aaron Boone, and who's that wearing his jersey?**

Remember when I said his third-inning hit looked really good Sunday night? How nice does *four* hits look, including a double, a tater, and four RBI? Oh, yeah, he also stole a base and later did something that made me smile broadly (see #8). It's two games, he's not going to hit .556 this season, yadda yadda yadda, but it sure is easier to relax and play hitting .550 than .100. I have to think there might be something to that "injury recovery" thing. Or maybe it's green tea. Who the heck cares?

## 2) While you're looking, please say "Hi" to Casey Blake, wherever you've stashed him (but keep him there, we like this guy better)

One of my pet projects this season was to watch Blake's walk rate, because without raising his OBP significantly, he wasn't going to be a useful corner outfielder. I was very encouraged by what I saw Sunday, laying off tough pitches and taking a walk off Buehrle. Well, how does three more walks and a spiffy .875 OBP grab you? Sure, his SLG is lower than his OBP, but hey. Slugging .750 is okay, too. (One walk was intentional: I'm still encouraged.)

## 3) However, we *would* like the real Grady Sizemore back

Runners left in scoring position, 2 out: 3
Runners left on base, total: 7
Ending Batting average: .100
Ending OBP: .100
They intentionally walked Casey Blake to face Grady Sizemore. Think about how absurd that would have sounded in 2005. Walk Blake ... to

face Sizemore ... And it was exactly the right decision, really: rookie lefty with 9 femtoinnings over A ball can face hot, brutally patient right-hander, or cold young left-hander? It's early, and I was encouraged that he fouled some off and took some balls (as opposed to the first-pitch fist job against Buehrle), but ... hey, I'm greedy.

## 4) That would be a quality start, Alex

Buehrle didn't throw one. Sabathia didn't throw one. Freddy Garcia sure as hell didn't

throw one. That would be Jake Westbrook with the nice start. One mistake to Thome (but a nice follow-up; I thought the pitch to Crede was actually pretty good), but a crisp outing nonetheless. Only a 2:1 GB/FB ratio, low for Jake, but Chicago is a flyball-hitting team. Oh, by the way? Johan Santana? Ten hits and four runs in 5 2/3. Kenny Rogers had a nice start for Dee-troit, but if it's against Kansas City, does it really count? (Kudos to Scott Elarton for a nice game: no hard feelings, sport.)

# 5) Oh, the PENTAGONAL white thing! I thought you said *Pentacostal,* so I threw it to Thome!

Raffy Betancourt: 11 pitches, 8 strikes, 5 outs, no baserunners. One inherited run allowed, but hardly a problem.Gil Mota: 10 pitches, 6 strikes, 3 outs, no baserunners. Could have looked sharper, maybe, oh, keep the ball in the bloody

infield next time? No w THAT'S a bullpen. In fact, the last four Indians relievers have thrown at least one full perfect inning. Sweet.

## 6) Quiet brilliance

It's hard to look good hitting a double in a blowout loss, or stand out much hitting a homer in a

blowout win and not having a profanity as a middle name, but Victor Martinez is looking very sharp with an extra-base hit in each game. He might even have more than two RBI if ...

# 7) The incredible inverted batting order!

Best hitter: 9 holeSecond-best hitter: 8 hole
Worst hitter: leadoff
Second-worst hitter: 4 slot
Obviously "best" and "worst" don't mean talent or likelihood of future

success or anything. It just looks funny in the box score. Any lobbying to move Blake and Boone up in the order now is seriously misguided. But it would be okay for a runner to be on base when Victor

bats.

# 8) Beep beep! Comin' through!

After Boone stole second, Blake patiently took a strike, then singled to left. With A. J.

Pierzynski in front of the plate, Aaron Boone (the new hero of many a Cleveland fan) rammed his shoulder into Pierzynski's chest, bowling him over,

and scoring the run. Is there *any* catcher in baseball you'd rather see run over than A. J. Pierzynski? *Anyone*? Maybe if John Elway, Kim Jong Il,

or Myron Cope learned to catch? Nah, it's Pierzynski.

**9) *This* is your dominant rotation?**

Let's hope

# Contreras is as impressive as Buehrle and Garcia before him.