Now that's the way to start the season off. By taking a pair from the hated White Sox as the "vaunted" Tiger offense gets completely shut down in back to back losses to the Royals. As he will be every weekday around lunch time this Indians season, Buff checks in with our most popular column, The B-List, which has attracted a massive cult following over the last three years. Buff is back!!!! **FINAL SCORE**

White Sox (0-2)	0	0	0	0
Indians (2-0) (T 1st KC)			0	2

W: Carmona (1-0) L: Vazquez (0-1)

It was hard to believe Monday that the ground had been frozen just a few days before. It was less hard to believe last night.

1) ¡Fausto!™

Years ago, a friend of mine went to see a performance by the late Graham Chapman, the Monty Python troupe member who played King Arthur in "Holy Grail." It wasn't really stand-up comedy: Chapman wasn't a comedian per se, but more of a spoken word piece along the lines of Spalding Gray

or someone of that ilk. Chapman was a notorious drinker back in the day, and told a story of hanging out with Keith Moon, who imbibed an alcoholic beverage or two in his time. (This sort of establishes Chapman's credentials as a drinker, in that he was hanging out with KEITH MOON.) Anyway, in telling the story of Moon trying to get a transistor radio from a next-door hotel room by climbing out on the balcony, Chapman started each new thought with, "And then I had another lager..." My friend didn't think much of it at the time (except insofar as it established the Chapman and Moon were drinking), except that when he went back to recount the story, he realized that Chapman said this no fewer than sixteen times. That's kind of a lot of lager.

I bring this up because Fausto Carmona fought with his control a bit last night and didn't always look really "on:" he ended up issuing 4 walks, uncorked a wild pitch that led to his only run allowed, and although he settled in in the later innings, did have a relatively mediocre 65:43 strike-to-ball ratio in completing seven innings. Except, as with Chapman, one kept saying, "And then he induced another ground ball out."

Now, this is hardly earth-shattering news: Fausto Carmona sported one of the best GB% in the majors, and is known for his "power sinker," which appears to be the term for any pitch that breaks downward at over 90 mph. He threw other

pitches as well, but when all was said and done, Carmona retired a total of 21 White Sox, four with swinging strikeouts. In the sixth inning, Jim Thome, apparently so excited to bat with the bases empty so that he could not ground into a THIRD double play, lifted a fly ball to right field for a routine out.

I mention this because it was the only fair ball that did not strike the infield grass.

Carmona recorded 16 ground ball outs, although three of the outs were not so much ground balls as they were guys running from first to Not Quite Second ... during a ground ball out. In fact, Carmona pulled off the relatively difficult task of inducing two double plays in one inning, except that noted speedster A.J. Pierzynski apparently beat the relay on a potential 3-6-1 in the second. (I would think more seriously about complaining had it not been for Joe Crede being called out to end the 7th.) He also issued four singles, which, not surprisingly, were ground balls.

It is entirely possible that Carmona will show ill effects of the large number of innings he pitched last season, but initial indications are that he is, in fact, pretty good after all.

2) Top-heavy

Through six innings, the Indians had scored 6 runs on 8 hits. Grady Sizemore had three hits and three RBI. Asdrubal Cabrera, getting the 2 slot from the left side against Vazquez, had three hits and two RBI. This means that roughly ... er ... *all* of the Tribe's offense was generated by its first two batters.

Sizemore reached base one more time and scored after being plunked by Matt Thornton, and the first of Cabrera's hits, a double into the right field corner, was actually completely unproductive (he was stranded at third in a scoreless first). But it would be pretty foolish to argue that the first two guys didn't pretty much carry the offense last night.

As a quick contrast, Sizemore showed excellent speed in legging out a triple to right center, while Cabrera showed an exceptional absence of baserunning form trying to stretch a single into a double in the 6th. I'm not saying he was slow or it was a clearly bad decision (it was a pretty

close play, in fact), but he was clearly chop-stepping his approach into second and had slowed before sliding, which was pretty bad technique. Also, I am not sure I like the tilt of the nose on da Vinci's "Mona Lisa." (It's a silly thing to complain about.)

3) Pronk bip!

In Travis Hafner's first two plate appearances, he showed the remarkable diversity of offensive tools that have allowed him to become the hitter he is today. Frozen by a Vazquez 2-2 offering in the first, he struck out meekly looking, but he came back in the 3rd with a preposterously ugly swing to strike out more heroically (albeit humiliatingly). This meant that in Hafner's first six plate appearances, he had struck out four times, making Jack Cust jealous.

However, Hafner recovered a bit and shook these off, lining a sharp single into left center in

his next at-bat, and grounding a second single to the right of second base in the 8th off the left-handed Thornton. For this, he was rewarded with zero runs scored and zero RBI, but it would be a huge help to the long-term health of the offense if Hafner can continue to make contact and use the whole field.

4) The long-term *what*?

It's interesting to complain about the offense that to this point averages 8 ½ runs per game, but it's kind of a weird 17 runs to have scored. There was one explosive inning Monday, one big bases-loaded hit, and then last night a collection of 2-run innings that never really felt like a sustained offense. And then, like Graham Chapman,

you look up and you have a six-run lead and you're not entirely sure it FEELS like you've been six runs better than the opponent.

A great part of the success thus far has been a willingness to work the pitchers: it was kind of a given that Mike MacDougal would blunderbuss his way through as many innings as one would give him (3 walks in 2 innings, roughly approximating his rate of Nine Thousand last season), but the Tribe drew four more walks off Vazquez, a huge factor in knocking him out after only five innings. The Indians managed to leave 11 men on base, 6 in scoring position, but they also scored four of their seven runs with two outs, including one by Franklin Gutierrez on one of Vazquez' walks.

5) Quantum Leap

Speaking of Gutierrez' walk, that would not have happened last season. Two of Vazquez' errant pitches were hard-to-resist high fastballs, and the 2-2 pitch was a nasty little curve that dropped out of the zone away, a pitch that Gutierrez would have swung at (and missed: you couldn't have hit that pitch with a boat oar) last season.

(Of course, Jhonny Peralta will still swing at that pitch.)

Gutierrez didn't have the best night at the plate, being held hitless at whiffing twice.

Actually, that's a pretty crummy night at the plate. But he got the big blow Monday, and his performance on the run-scoring walk suggests that Gutierrez is ready to be an everyday player in the bigs. (He has to hit a right-handed pitcher, though.)

6) The only tool in the bag

When your (arguably) best player is plunked and you are a teammate batting later in the inning, how do you plot your revenge? Do you consider charging the mound? Conk A.J. Pierzynski on the head with your bat? (Hm, what's the downside there? Let me think.)

Well, if you are Ryan Garko, you carefully saw a thin line in your bat so that when you hit the ball, the barrel of the bat flies out to strike the pitcher. Okay, actually, Garko almost certainly didn't saw his bat. After all, this would totally eliminate the effectiveness of the "conking Pierzynski" option, which I think you have to at least leave open. But he did get sawed off to enough of an extent that Thornton tried to field Garko's bat instead of the ball.

It is worth mentioning that after the ball got through Thornton and took approximately a minute-and-a-half to bounce sixty-seven times before Juan Uribe could field it, Garko would still have been out at first had Uribe's throw not handcuffed first baseman Paul Konerko. This is not a fast man.

7) Welcome to the bigs!

Masa Kobayashi made his major-league debut last night. I was told about his "weird, funky delivery" and was severely disappointed. Jensen Lewis looks more convoluted than Kobayashi does.

Anyway, Kobayashi struggled with his command, got a gift strikeout when Nick Swisher couldn't hold up on a 3-2 garbanzo ball (splitter? shuuto? red-throated warbler?), and gave up two singles, one of whch was actually hit well. It wasn't a great first outing, but he broke 90 without much effort and appears to be a potential asset. I'll need more data to say much more,

except that he looks like he's wearing eyeliner.

8) Encouraging mean-spiritedness

Raffy Perez came in to face Thome with two runners on, and although he was unable to get Thome to ground into a third double play, he did produce the following pitch sequence:

Low and away (ball)
Low and away (bad swing)
Lower and awayer (ball)
Low and away (borderline strike)
Lowest and awayest (ball)

Inner half slider (strike three)

After walking Konerko, Perez went 3-2 to Jermaine Dye (with a couple fouls) before getting him swinging that that unhittable slider that almost hits the batter in the back foot.

Now, 9 strikes in 19 pitches is pretty crummy, but two Ks with runners in scoring position (the bases were loaded for Dye, after all) is really quite excellent.

9) Speaking of Tolstoy

I will say that Jorge Julio throws hard and has "stuff," but I would rather change the subject.

10) Managerial back-patters

I really liked the bullpen decisions last night: there isn't a more advantageous debut scenario than "at home late with a largish lead," so bringing out Kobayashi to get his feet wet (and, after all, start contributing in that role) made a lot of sense. So did pulling him with two on and Thome at the plate.

I liked bringing in Perez instead of Breslow

for reasons that are more or less self-evident.

And I liked giving Julio the 9th, not simply because Perez had thrown 19 pitches, but because, again, this guy is going to have to contribute in this kind of role, why not now? Big lead, at home, sixty-two below zero ... just right!

Also, this saved Betancourt. Nice plan all around.

11) Honorable Mention

David Dellucci drew a pair of walks and scored a run.

Kelly Shoppach hit a double off the wall much in the same place that Blake's three-run shot hit Monday. He later scored.

Everyone in the lineup from 4-9 drew at least one walk.

Jhonny Peralta fielded his position much more professionally.