The Indians' best game of the three-game series against Kansas City came Friday, when they were rained out. In today's B-List, Buff touches on a second straight excellent performance by Aaron Laffey, the return of the Inning of Crap, and an offense even a mother would not love, but would consider leaving on a hilltop to die of exposure. Remember to mail Buff those contest entries as soon as you remember them.

FINAL SCORE				
Royals (13-16)	0	0	0	0
Indians (14-16)	0	0	0	1

W: Hochevar (2-1) L: Sabathia (1-5) S: Soria (7)

FINAL SCORE				
Royals (14-16)	0	0	0	0
Indians (14-17)	(4th		2.5 GB MIN)	0

W: Meche (2-4) L: Laffey (0-2) S: Soria (8)

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Swerbinsky on the birth of their second child and first daughter, Chloe Lynn Swerbinsky. I still think they missed an opportunity to name the child Erica Wedge Swerbinsky, but apparently they want the child to be liked or something, and felt that "LeBronna James Swerbinsky" would be too common, doing little to separate her from the other expected LeBronna Swerbinskies out there.

Special good wishes go to Mrs. Swerbinsky, as the child was at least a week overdue, very much like the Cleveland Indians' offense.

On an unrelated note, this is a reminder that the first contest of the year was announced Friday , and to show how big a success it's been thus far, if you submitted the following entry:

I once watched an Indians game.

You would be in fourth place.

1) Dateline Cleveland

CLEVELAND, OH (Disassociated Press) - Pitcher Aaron Laffey has filed suit in Cleveland Municipal Court today to sue his teammates for lack of support.

"I originally thought, damn, I'd be better off pitching in Beefalo," Laffey grumbled. "But on second thought, I think I'd be better off if I pitched in Cleveland and all of THEM went to Beefalo."

Laffey's proposal is to send everyone on the current Cleveland roster to Points Elsewhere, including but not limited to: Beefalo, Akron, Lake

County, Kinston, Nuuk, Ouagadougou, Wagga Wagga, and Neptune. He will keep catcher Victor Martinez, first baseman Ryan Garko, and center fielder Grady Sizemore. The plan is that Sizemore has sufficient speed to cover the entire outfield, and he will induce all ground balls to come back to him, whereby he will throw to Garko to record ground ball outs. The three men will bat in succession, simply recording six automatic outs for the remaining slots.

When it was pointed out that this would result in the absence of both a credible offense and a credible defense behind him, Laffey responded, "What's your point?"

A counter-suit filed by David Dellucci's beard is currently under review. When asked for comment, third baseman Willam Blake stood stock still and allowed the moment to pass by him.

After posting 5 no-hit innings against the New York Yankees in his first 2008 start, only to see it fall apart under a barrage of routine ground balls, particularly to the left side of the infield, Laffey's second start was worse in that he threw only 4 2/3 no-hit innings, only to see it fall apart under a barrage of one ground ball to the left side of the infield. To say that Laffey didn't "deserve" to lose the game is not entirely on point: with 4 singles and a walk balanced by 5 Ks in seven innings, Laffey's start was less "hard luck" and more "Cliff Lee." That's right, I invoked the L word. 7 innings is a career-high for Laffey, but look, which number do you want to focus on? The 70 strikes in 103 pitches? The 2.84 ERA, which is artificially inflated by two strange defensive decisions by Ryan Garko and inherited runs given up by Jensen Lewis? The fact that Laffey is actually pitching *bett er*

than the man he supposedly replaced, Jake Westbrook? Who was pitching really well before he was injured?

Now, look, I understand that Kansas City's offense isn't very good. Shutting down the Royals is not really that big a trick, although it certainly requires more effort than shutting down, say, the Cleveland Indians. But I would have a hard time accepting an argument that Aaron Laffey does not have the ability to be a major-league rotation member.

This isn't to say that I'm ready to dismiss a rotation member in favor of Laffey: if anything, I would rather err on the side of hoarding pitchers. I will feel no pang of distress if Laffey goes back to pitching every fifth day at Beefalo when Westbrook returns and we leave the rotation in tact. The man is twelve years old, for Pete's sake. But I'm sure not going to get a wincing feeling seeing his name as the Expected Starter, either.

2) The return of the Inning of Crap™!

Saturday night's game seemed like a close game that we blew late, but you look at the final stats and you wonder why we were in it at all. We got four hits. Four! Kansas City got *twelve*. Yes, we drew five walks to their one, but they stranded five guys in scoring position to our two, and both of those guys were actually slow runners on second.

It is to C.C. Sabathia's credit that the game was a 2-0 Cleveland lead in the top of the 7th: Sabathia was not entirely sharp, but six shutout innings is six shutout innings. He had to make an excellent play on a ground ball to his right (so that he had no leverage on the throw home, but did a good, athletic job to do so anyway), gave up multiple hits in two innings, a hit and a walk in another, and two of the six hits he'd allowed in those first six innings were doubles (and not cheap ones, either). Sabathia was around the plate (72 strikes in 104 pitches total, 4 Ks to 1 BB), but the Royals were hitting the strikes: he did induce 10 swings and misses, but two of those came before Miguel Olivo doubled, and another was by Tony Pena, Jr., who is a fungus.

But for those of you who missed the Old C.C., we got him Saturday, under the auspices of a true **Inning of Crap™**. In the 7th, the wheels disintegrated, as Sabathia gave up a leadoff double to John Buck's Evil Twin, allowed Pena to bunt his way on (which is virtually inconceivable), gave up an RBI single to the left-handed David DeJesus, and after a sacrifice, gave up ANOTHER RBI single to the EQUALLY left-handed Alex Gordon. That finished Sabathia's night, although not his scoring, as Masa Kobayashi was unable to concentrate after believing that his 1-2 pitch struck out Billy Butler (it was a ball, Koba has to do a better job than

that), and Raffy Perez refused to Not Suck.

You know, W-L record is not a reliable method for determining a pitcher's performance. After all, Aaron Laffey is 0-2. But sometimes it is. Sabathia has EARNED his 1-5 record, primarily by Pitching Poorly. There were good things about Saturday's performance, and his last three games are obviously better than his first four. Certainly you could say that Sabathia's outing against the Yanks "deserved" a win. Great, so he should be 2-4. Big whoop.

He's pitching better, and that's good ... but 10 hits is simply bad.

3) Gark Waste His Time!

Of the four hits Cleveland got Sunday, two were by Ryan Garko. They were both mere singles, but the first was hit very well on a line.

The only real reason I mention this is because he had been hitting so spectacularly poorly over the past two weeks: any contribution we can get from Garko is going to be important to putting up some semblance of an offense, and Garko has the track record to suggest that he's actually a quality hitter. After six straight hitless games, Garko has collected a pair of hits in two of the last three games: although the sample size is obviously laughable, as I said, Garko's history suggests that he is capable of sustaining improvement.

As an aside, I believe the decision to field Alex Gordon's ground ball with a honey-glazed ham was really short-sighted. Since the next player grounded into a double play, this did not have a serious impact on the game, but despite their delicious

nature, hams are simply poor substitutes for real leather gloves.

4) The most pointless hitting streak ever

Victor Martinez extended his hitting streak to 15 games with a single on Sunday. Had he not done this, his hitting streak would have ended at 14 games. There was no other consequence.

He also singled Saturday, which just barely missed coming within an astronomical unit of making up for his grounding into a double play and whiffing twice.

(Look, I love Vic, and he's clearly our best hitter ... but I would like an extra-base hit, or an RBI, or a run scored, or something else sprinkled in here and there.)

5) Is there such a thing as a "deserved cheap shot?"

You can't spell "Blake" without a K ***and*** *an E. Even then, all you're left with is "bla."*
-- offhand cheap shot destined to become best-selling T-shirt

I value Casey Blake as a player. He can play multiple positions. He has power and speed. He is never going to compete for a batting title or slug .600 or win a Gold Glove, but he can run and hit and field: he's just not all that *consistent* in doing any of these things properly. He's not a .202 hitter any more than Ryan Garko is a .242 hitter or Jhonny Peralta is a .216 hitter, and he's certainly not the only Cleveland Indian to be struggling right now.

But great googly moogly, he sure is playing poorly.

On Saturday, Blake twice came to the plate with two outs and runners on first and second. The first time, he watched a borderline pitch at 2-2 get called a ball, so gambled that it would be called again and got rung up. That pitch is TOO CLOSE TO TAKE. The second time, he simply grounded out to first. The Indians left two men on base in scoring position Saturday. Those of you capable of counting to two are now appalled.

On Sunday, Aaron Laffey recorded two quick outs (groundouts to the pitcher) before allowing a solid single to Miguel Olivo. It was well-hit, and good for him. Buck worked a walk after being down 1-2 and then fouling off a 3-2 pitch. Oh, well, move along. After all, the next hitter is Fungal Pena.

Well, Pena hit a ground ball to Blake, who cleanly

threw the ball into right field to allow the only run Laffey would allow. It reminded me of Adrian Beltre's throw last week, except with less insouciance and more inaccuracy. It was awful.

Look, ultimately, Jhonny Peralta struggled and got to sit for a while while Carroll played. Jason Michaels struggled and got to watch Ben Francisco for a couple games. Ryan Garko struggled and got to watch Vic lumber around first in his stead while Kelly Shoppach practiced his passed ball technique. When Casey Blake struggles, he gets to ... play some more.

Now, I'm no big Andy Marte fan. I'm on record as writing him off. In my opinion, Marte is far less The Next Bran Phillips than he is The Next Mark Lewis. But look me in the eye and tell me Andy Marte would perform worse than Bill Blake.

Can't happen.

6) St. Grady update

Five of Grady Sizemore's last six hits have been for extra bases. Without his solo shot Saturday, the Indians would have been quadrupled instead of only doubled.

Okay, the outcome was bad, but Sizemore only has ten extra-base hits on the season, and five have come in the part five games. If his power has returned (rather than this being a quick gork on the way back to Victor Martinez Land), that'd be good.

7) Bullpen update

Kobayashi and Perez were bad on Saturday and good on Sunday. Jensen Lewis was very good. Raffy Betancourt was very bad. I'm having a hard time gettin' real excited by any of that.

8) Managerial Second-Guesser

This isn't even a fair head-scratcher, but I thought I'd bring it up as a discussion point. In the bottom of the sixth inning Sunday, behind by the seemingly-insurmountable score of 1-0, Grady Sizemore led off the inning with a single to right. Franklin Gutierrez then squared to bunt.

To his credit, he took the first two pitches for balls one and two. As Rick Manning is fond of saying (really, really fond: he says it a LOT): "Bunt strikes." (There are no exclamation points in Rick Manning.) He bunted the next pitch too hard down the first base line, getting Sizemore to

second, but being thrown out by a fair distance. In other words, a "pure" sacrifice.

Never mind that Gutierrez has bunted for a hit this season, and that Kansas City's "big inning" Saturday was fueled as much as anything by the fact that Tony Pena, Jr. was able to beat out his bunt for a hit. If it wasn't a high-quality bunt, it did serve a purpose, and that's on Gutierrez anyway.

No, the point is, I totally understand the strategy here. It is so excruciating to watch the Cleveland "offense" right now that playing for one run makes a certain amount of sense. You are trying to make something happen here. And Gutierrez is a capable bunter, Sizemore is fast, and in scoring position, he'd only need a single of virtually any flavor to tie the game.

However, with the count 2-0, I'd rather turn Gutierrez, a much better fastball hitter than any other pitch, have a whack at a late-inning Gil Meche at that point. Better still, with Meche needing a strike, have Sizemore (7 SB, 1 CS) take off on his own. Buck's pretty good, but Sizemore is better. And I'm much rather have THREE whacks at scoring than TWO. Put on the hit-and-run. Put on the straight steal. I don't know: I understood the bunt sign at the beginning of the AB, but after 2-0 ... man, I would have considered taking it off.

(As an aside, I was shocked and temporarily thrilled that Meche pitched to Victor Martinez instead of walking him to face windmill Jhonny Peralta. But Martinez was out and nobody cared.)

9) A Modest Proposal

When Mark McGwire was in the midst of his

magical 70-HR season, the topic came up as to whether it would be better to simply walk him every time, a topic revisited by Barry Bonds' even-more-preposterous season later. If a guy has an OPS over 1.200, maybe just walking him is better than taking a chance on getting him out. As I recall, I think the ultimate analysis was that even with their PlayStation numbers, it was still better (in general) to pitch to them.

When teams played the shift on Barry Bonds (or Ted Williams, for that matter), neither man took the "free" single by bunting to the left side. Part of the reason was certainly pride and/or ego, but another part of ot was that both men were such marvelous hitters that they had a significant chance of doing something BETTER than a single, so took that chance. Look, when you slug .600+, a single looks like a lesser option.

Travis Hafner. You are slugging .345. Your

on-base percentage is .305. You have nine extra-base hits (fewer than I make fun of Grady Sizemore for having ... **leadoff hitter** Grady Sizemore) and have struck out thirty times. You are a very, very poor hitter right now (.209/.305/.345).

TAKE THE F&$^ING BUNT SINGLE! TAKE IT! TAKE IT! AAAH AAAH AAAAAAAAAH!!!

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro is considering resigning as GM to pursue a rap career. Although I would like to see Mark Shapiro rap, a quick search of YouTube shows this is not true. Fire Derek Shelton.