The good news is, C.C. Sabathia pitched quite well yesterday. The bad news is, he still pitches for the Cleveland Indians, where "quite well" is hardly good enough to win. The Tribe collected half their hits and all their runs in one inning in which the ball travelled an aggregate 300 feet. In today's B-List, Buff has some thoughts about Travis Hafner (bad), Jensen Lewis (bad), and David Dellucci (bad), while casually tossing jokes in the direction of the Cleveland offense. (They don't hit them.)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (22-23)	(3rd		2.5 GB CHW)	0
White Sox (24-20)		1	0	0

W: Contreras (5-3) L: Sabathia (3-6) S: Jenks (11)

Okay, listen, if you were a Cleveland Indian, you were out-hit by Alexei Ramirez. Isn't that reason enough to simply keel over from embarrassment?

1) Stealth, good and bad

In a sense, C.C. Sabathia put together a start that through one lens can look tremendously good with hidden putridity, and through another can

look like a pretty ordinary start with hidden dominance. The only universally-true aspect of the start was its inherent futility given that Sabathia pitches for the Cleveland Indians, who do not bat.

The start certainly got off to an auspicious enough start, with Sabathia striking out both Orly Cabrera and A.J. Pierzynski. Both strikeouts were swinging, suggesting superior stuff. Both strikeouts consisted of five pitches and came on 1-2 counts which themselves came after 0-2 counts. He was pounding the strike zone, locating well, and had enough to finish off two pretty good hitters. (Cabrera is off to a lousy start at .219, but is a better hitter than that historically, and Pierzynski is hitting .308 thus far.)

Then after a ball, he threw a mistake to Carlos Quentin that was POUNDED over the dead center field wall. Boy, I resent not pursuing Quentin (and have said so for three years.) But Jermaine Dye suffered a four-pitch strikeout, again swinging, again on 1-2 after Sabathia leapt ahead 0-2. So really, that's a very good inning except for one bad pitch, which is kind of like having a really excellent car except for the exploding alternator.

The first pitch ... the *first pitch* ... to Jim Thome in the next inning effectively ended the game, as Thome snuck a fly over the left field wall for a 2-0 lead. Now, Thome is a fine hitter and Sabathia actually threw a decent enough pitch, but does anyone remember what happened the last time Thome faced Sabathia? The two-homer game? Isn't this a good time to entice Thome to do something else, like rub his elbow in pain or chuckle heartily as the pitch bounces in front of the plate? Okay, look, I'm being a little facetious here, but I hate losing a game because C.C. Sabathia gave up a home run to Jim Thome. It's a

personal thing.

Anyway, this inning represented the closest thing Sabathia would get to an **Inning of Crap™**, as Paul Konerko lined the *next* pitch into center for a single. Sabathia would give up a third hit in the inning, a barely-conceivable infield single to Alexei Ramirez, a homeless waif the White Sox are carrying on their roster as either a publicity stunt, reality show, or double-dog dare, but after going 3-0 to Cabrera to threaten **Real Crapitude™**, Sabathia escaped without allowing a third run.

And then Sabathia essentially destroyed the White Sox from then on. His next three innings were hitless, with a full-count walk to Konerko the only blemish. In the 6th, he gave up an infield single to Dye in the middle of three more swinging Ks (Quentin, Thome, Konerko). And the 7th did feature two singles, but one was another infield single and the other shattered poor Ramirez' bat while landing about nine feet past second base.

Look at the hits: yes, there were seven of them in seven innings, but after the single to Konerko in the second, you have three infield singles and an exploding bat by a guy who can lay comfortably in the gutter of a bowling lane.

Sabathia struck out 8 guys, and 6 of them were swinging. He walked one and threw 70 strikes in 110 pitches. I mean, the pitch to Quentin, that's a bad pitch, but Thome hit one the other way: that's more good hitting than bad pitching. It seems disingenuous to say "other than the home runs," because, well, home runs are pretty freaking bad, but really, Sabathia had a very strong start last night. In terms of winning the game, not so much, but in terms of encouraging me for future outings, I'll happily concede that I'm encouraged.

2) Joke of the Day

The Cleveland Indians offense! *Ho ho!*

3) Femtoball

"Smallball" does not do the Indians' run in the third inning justice. After Casey Blake singled on a blistering shot all the way to ... the shortstop, Jamey Carroll took a ball, took a strike, took a strike, then

hammered a guided missile all the way to ... the shortstop for another single. Asdrubal Cabrera wisely bunted the runners over (this was wise because Asdrubal Cabrera cannot, in fact, **hit**), and Grady Sizemore rocketed a screamer all the way to ... the first baseman to score the run.

So not only did the Indians score all their runs and garnered half their hits in this sequence, they did so **with out hitting the ball out of the infield**
. Somewhere, Christy Mathewson and Pud Galvin are holding a discussion about the reintroduction of the mushball to the major leagues.

4) A questionable approach

And what I mean by this is, "It is questionable to allow Travis Hafner to approach the plate with a piece of wood."

In the first inning, neither Sizemore nor Ben Francisco

looked much like major-league hitters against Jose Contreras. However, Hafner began what looked like a terrific plate appearance: he took two balls (one pretty close), fouled off the 2-0 (okay, he's swinging at a hittable pitch instead of watching it sail by, I appreciate the effort to change the default "headlight deer" approach), took a strike, then fouled off the two-strike pitch. Hey, way to protect the plate. Now he gets ball three, this is what you work for. Another foul, probably out of the zone, but hey, there's two strikes. Another foul, possibly out of the zone, but hey, there's two strikes. A watched strike three on a **GRAVY-DRIPPING PITCH RIGHT THROUGH THE CENTER OF THE ZONE**. Great Paul Prudhomme's gumbo-encrusted beard, what the hell are you thinking there?! Did I mention there were two strikes?!

I'm not sure there was anything more infuriating than that in the entire rest of the game. Not Dellucci on the basepaths. Not Lewis on the mound. Not the 1-6-3 double play. Nothing. In Hafner's defense, he took the first five pitches next time to go 3-2 before grounding out feebly, then swung out swinging at the 3-2 pitch, then popped out weakly to short in the ninth in order to get back to the hotel in good time.

Wait, that's not really "in his defense."

Well, screw that, then. Travis Hafner is terrible. I hate saying that. But not as much as I hate saying it *accuratel y* .

5) Okay, well, that was pretty infuriating, too

The knee-jerk reaction of seeing David Dellucci remain in the game after a leadoff single by Ryan Garko in the 7th inning after the left-handed reliever Matt Thornton was summoned from the ‘pen was shock and dismay, but really, it was a fine percentage play. Thornton isn't really a LOOGY (left-handed one out guy, coined by John Sickels, I think) and actually sports a negative platoon split this season, allowing lefties to hit him better than righties. The same size is miniscule, but his three-year splits from 2005-2007 have the same bent (although 2006 was a classical "better against lefties" season for Thornton). Don't think of Thornton as a left-handed reliever, just as "a reliever."

So although it made sense for Dellucci to remain in the game at that point, my mental anguish didn't so much dissipate as it did shift focus: let's say for sake of argument they'd brought in an extreme LOOGY, like a Mike Myers or Brian Shouse. Someone horrible, someone left-handers hit .050 against and right-handers hit at a.400+ clip. At this point you'd bring in ... whom? Kelly Shoppach? Geez, he's hitting .236 with a .627 OPS, that's pretty bad. Plus it requires some defensive shenanigans ... how about ... uh ... Franklin Gutierrez? Yikes, he's ice cold. He's hitting .132/.154/.184 in May. I know it's just May, but ... dude, May is two-thirds over. We cut Jason Michaels for this. Um ... Andy Marte? The good news is, his OPS in May is higher than Gutierrez'. The bad news is, it's .368. His **OPS**! Not a
component
, the
WHOLE FRIGGIN' THING
!

So much for right-handed pinch-hitting. Let Dellucci

hit, I guess.

Yes, into a sweet 1-6-3 double play. Huzzah!

6) Joke of the Day Bonus Edition

Okay, a real joke this time: a guy walks into a bar holding a duck, a fishing pole, and a 16-inch wheel of cheese. He sets the duck down on the bar, leans the fishing pole up against the railing, and sets the cheese on the stool next to him.

"Say," says the bartender. "We don't get many guys like you in here. What's your name?"

"I'm the Cleveland Indians' offense," said

the man.

So the bartender hit him in the face and everyone in the bar proceeded to urinate on him.

Ha ha!

7) The Immolator!

Jensen Lewis was terrible. On the other hand, I think the characterization of him as a useless flake is just flat-out misguided. He's had seven outings this month, and five were quite good. Lewis' problems generally stem from his poor command: he gets in trouble when he's walking guys. He was a rookie last year and he's 24. I'm just not that concerned.

Here, look: his ERA in April was 2.76. His terrible, terrible May has an ERA of ... 3.24. Hey, he's not Sliced Bread. He's A Guy. I think he'll be valuable this year and for years to come.

But he ceratinly was terrible.

8) Okay, well, that was pretty infuriating, too

David Dellucci hit the first pitch of the 5th inning for a double, the only extra-base hit for the Indians all game. In fact, it was the only hit the Indians got that LEFT THE INFIELD. Casey Blake then did not practice femtoball or even nanoball and did not bunt (hey, he's our best hitter with runners in scoring position, right?), instead grounding the ball back to the pitcher ...

... who threw *Dellucci* out. Argh!

Later, Cabrera reached on an error to put ANOTHER runner in scoring position, first and second with two outs, for Grady Sizemore ...

... who struck out swinging. Argh!

9) Today's Guest Joke-Teller: Eric Wedge

Um. Well. Um. Even keel. Well. You know. Keep plugging. Um. Away. Stay the course. A thousand points of light. I like pudding. Yes. Well. Get after it. Exactly. Um. Well. Um.

Hee hee!

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro tried out for "Groomer Has It," but they rejected his artistry with shaving chickens. Not true! Fire **me.**