An old friend came back to town yesterday, as Omar Vizquel returned to Cleveland for the first time since the Indians decided not to resign him following the 2004 season. After recieving multiple standing ovations, Omar proceeded to break Indians fans hearts, perfectly executing a suicide squeeze to produce the deciding run in a 3-2 Indians loss. Buff hits on the loss, and Omar's return to Cleveland in today's B-List.

FINAL SCORE				
Giants (33-44)	0	0	0	0
Indians (35-42)	(4	th	7.5 GB CHW)	0

W: J. Sanchez (7-4) L: Betancourt (2-4) S: B. Wilson (20)

1) Aaron Laffey and the Inning of Crumpled Paper

Aaron Laffey got off to a good start with a brisk 1-2-3 first inning. In fact, most of Laffey's innings were brisk, in that he retired the side in order in the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th innings as well. I mean, five perfect innings out of six is damned good, even against the Giants.

You know, for all the wailing and gnashing about how terrible the Giants were going to be this year, and with their rather poor 317 runs scored on the season duly noted, the Giants aren't exactly completely inept at the plate. Their first six hitters in the lineup last night sported batting averages over .285: while this isn't necessarily indicative of any great tremendousness (I mean, 317 runs is 317 runs), it bears mentioning that our entire lineup sported one such player.

Anyway, Laffey was very good last night ... again ... with the sort of Aaron Laffeytude one expects from Aaron Laffey. He induced a moderate 12:7 GO:FO ratio, but this included 2 double plays. He only struck out one batter, but also allowed only 4 hits, and the only one for extra bases was in the aborted seventh when he ran out of command. (He walked the next two batters on 9 pitches total, suggesting a rather quick descent into "losing it.") Two of those four hits were in the 7th, and though he walked three, two of those were the parenthetical guys, and none of those four baserunners scored (thanks to a double play and Omar Vizquel being finished as a major-league hitter).

The reference to "crumpled paper" above was that Laffey did give up a run in the 2nd inning, but it hardly reached the depth of a Sabathian

Inning of Crap

TM

, featuring a single, HBP, DP, and an RBI single. One could argue that without the plunking of Aaron Rowand (on a 1-2 pitch; argh!), Laffey would have left the game without allowing a run.

Now, in one regard, this is a rousing success, in that Laffey kept the ball in the park (the Giants are not really known for their aggregate power, collecting 50 HR against the opponents' 72). This has been a major concern recently, not so much in the Paul Byrd sense, but in the "ground ball pitchers should not get undone by homers" sense. In another, though, while it is possible to have some good success at the major-league level with a low K rate (Wang, Westbrook), it's hard to be successful as a guy with a negative (well, sub-unit, really) K:BB ratio. It's one thing to strike out 30 batters in 70 innings; it's quite another if you're going to walk as many (actually 19) as you whiff. After some good ratios early in the season, Laffey has gone through his last six starts at 0:2, 2:2, 2:2, 4:1, 1:3, and 1:3, for a total of 10:11. That's not good.

Interestingly enough, Laffey faced 26 hitters on the night and TWO swung at the first pitch. TWO! And they were both Fred Lewis! And why would they? Laffey threw a first-pitch strike to fewer than half the batters he faced (11). I like Aaron Laffey a lot, but ... those are two things to keep an eye on.

2) Omar, Omar, Omar

Look, I don't have to tell anyone here what Omar Vizquel meant to the Cleveland Indians. Not only is he a tremendous play in Proper Name Scrabble, but he was a premier defensive shortstop who molded himself into an offensive asset in his time in a Tribe uniform. A terrifically valuable and durable player, Vizquel may yet be enshrined into the Hall of Fame and can still play defense very, very well. His defensive metrics, such as they are, include an eye-popping Zone Rating and a very high fielding percentage, and his play on Dellucci's ground ball to the hole in the bottom of the ninth arguably won the

game for the Giants.

But I am telling you, Omar Vizquel can no longer hit.

Vizquel sports a horrific .167/.252/.194 batting line that would have looked terrible in 1968. That's just bad, bad, and also bad. He has three extra-base hits on the season, all doubles. He's been injured. And he can't hit, even a little tiny bit.

In Vizquel's previous plate appearance, he made the third out of the 7th inning with the bases loaded. He was 0-for-3 at the time. And, in case I have not been explicit enough, Omar Vizquel can no longer hit.

Thus with runners on first and third and one out

in the top of the ninth, with the Giants clinging to a 1-run lead, it surprised exactly NOT ONE PERSON that Vizquel (who is, truthfully, an excellent bunter) laid down a glorious suicide squeeze bunt to score the third run. The fact that Casey Blake was unable to handle the bunt cleanly to throw out Vizquel at first is completely irrelevant: no one else scored that inning, and Blake wasn't getting Rich Aurilia at the plate, which was the only valid positive outcome on the play.

Why do I say this surprised no one? Well, for one thing, Blake was playing in, and charged the ball well. Unless he has a tachyon reaction time, Blake at least knew the bunt was a possibility. And the STO announcers certainly had an inkling that it was coming, as they noted on the broadcast.

Here is my question, then: why are you throwing strikes to Omar Vizquel on the first three pitches?

Look, if you fall behind Vizquel, it's not like Fred Lewis or Ray Durham had gotten a hit to that point. Lewis looked terrible all night. And if you fall behind Vizquel, it's not like OMAR VIZQUEL was going to get a hit. Throw him a 3-0 fastball. Throw him a 3-1 fastball. He can't hit. I don't care if you're behind. He. Can't. Hit.

But more obviously, a suicide squeeze normally takes place on the first couple of pitches. And that was the only arrow in Vizquel's quiver. Take it away from him, dammit.

3) This having been said

His backhand-stop-whirl-throw to second to force out Jhonny Peralta was a play I've seen him make countless times before, and it's still a very fine play. Good on you, mate.

4) THIS having been said

Why is Jhonny Peralta executing a bent-leg slide into second instead of charging as hard as he can not to be forced out there? I've seen second-guessing that perhaps Verlandia should have been pinch-running for Peralta there, but that smacks of much post hoc analysis, and I don't know that Verlandia is actually faster than Peralta. I just wish Peralta had beaten that throw, and it's frustrating that he didn't seem to consider it very important to do so.

5) When did Kelly Shoppach turn into Mackey Sasser?

Has Kelly Shoppach made a good throw to catch a base stealing attempt since Victor Martinez went on the DL? Had he before that? At least he didn't have a passed ball, but wasn't part of the point of Kelly Shoppach that he could play a superior brand of defense behind the plate?

This just in: he doesn't.

(By the way, Carroll really has to get in front of the bag on that play. It was a wretched throw, to be sure, but Carroll could have done a better job, too: the man on third who scored the second Giants run didn't leave until the ball got

past Carroll.)

6) A nice piece of hitting

Ryan Garko singled in Cleveland's first run with two outs in the first. It was a well-hit ball to right center, and I'm a sucker for that sort of opposite-field power (even though he only got a single on it because he is Ryan Garko), especially with two outs.

David Dellucci finally had a pinch-hitting appearance in which he didn't simply whiff. His other-way ball to the hole between short and third would have been an RBI single against most non-Vizquel shortstops, and was a nice plate appearance, especially with two strikes.

7) An execrable approach to hitting

With two men on in the bottom of the ninth, Ryan Garko appeared to make the command decision that nothing less than a game-winning extra-base hit would do. Ryan, a simple f*#&ing OUT would score a run! Just hit the f*#&ing ball!

(He didn't.)

Kelly Shoppach, with the TYING RUN IN SCORING POSITION, also appeared to believe that his place in history depended on his ability to hit the ball further than any other human not named Mark McGwire. Kelly, just hit the f*#&ing ball!

(He didn't.)

8) Guest Commentary

The rest of the Cleveland offense I leave to my colleague, Mr. Nicholas Swerbinsky.

The batters were poopy.

Also, if you feel sad, try eating a cookie. Yay!

Also, the shortstop looks like Uniqua from "Backyardigans."

9) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Casey Blake pinch-hit for Andy Marte and smacked a double that missed being the game-tying home run by about six inches. That really was a nice piece of hitting and not at all poopy.

Grady Sizemore stole his 18th base of the season.

Kelly Shoppach and Andy Marte combined to have one plate appearance in six which did not end in a strikeout.

10) Sobering Thought

Jonathan Sanchez, pitching for a terrible offensive team, sporting a 3.98 ERA, is 7-4.

Aaron Laffey, pitching for a team with a positive run differential, sporting an ERA of 2.83, is 4-4.

11) Department of Corrections Dept.

The rabbit in "Max & Ruby" is obviously named Ruby, not Lucy.

It is Brobee that has inherited Steven Baker's collection of green-striped shirts, not Plex.