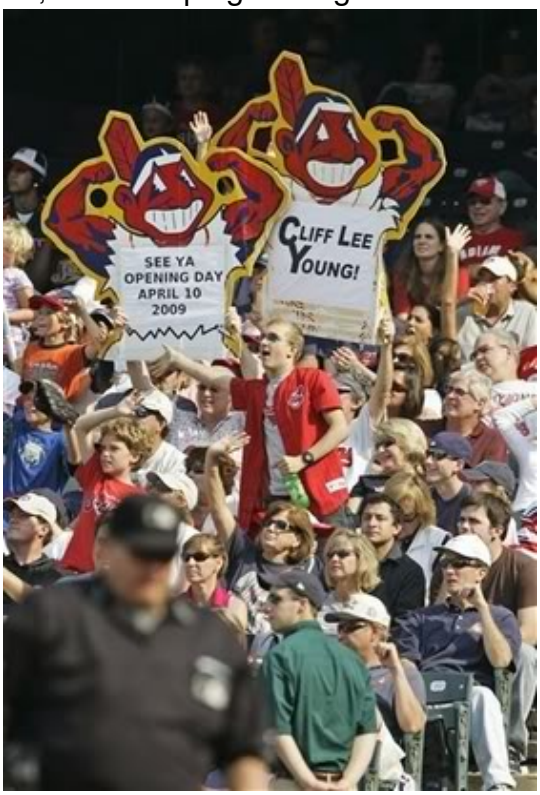
Well, it was nice to see that one of the Cleveland sports teams was interested in playing this weekend! In today's B-List, Buff highlights the Carmona-Sheffield flap, the continued hotness of Shin-Soo Choo, the outstanding weekend by Ryan Garko, and manages to drop a few hints here and there as to what he thought might have gone wrong with the Browns game on Sunday. Sweeping the Tigers is good, but sweeping the Tigers while making Gary Sheffield look like an ass might be even better.



FINAL	1	2	3	RE
Tigers (71-81)	0	0	0	2
Indians (76-77)	1	0	0	0

W: Perez (4-3) L: Dolsi (1-5)

FINAL	1	2	3	RE
Tigers (71-82)	1	0	0	0
Indians (77-77)	1	1	0	2

W: Sowers (4-8) L: Verlander (10-17) S: J. Lewis (11)

FINAL	1	2	3	RE
Tigers (71-83)	0	1	1	0
Indians (78-77)	3	0	3	2

W: S. Lewis (3-0) L: Willis (0-2)

We outhit the Tigers in every game, including the one in which Gary Sheffield charged the mound.

1) Fausto y los huevos grande

It was a bit of a "good news, bad news" start for Fausto Carmona: he only gave up 5 hits in 6 1/3 innings ... but two of them were home runs. He struck out 5 without walking anyone ... but three of hit hits went for extra bases. Really, although giving up 4 runs in 6 1/3 innings isn't actually good, the greatly-reduced number of walks is by far the most encouraging thing to come out of this start.

Well, actually, maybe that's the *second*-most encouraging thing.

The Indians have set an American League record for being hit with pitches this season, and although getting on base is generally a good thing, I'm not altogether thrilled with having that distinction. Now, Eric Wedge has gotten credit from many pundits for the fact that the Indians continue to play hard and haven't just rolled over to "play out the string." Whatever feelings I have about Wedge's suitability aside, the Indians have shown more professionalism and life than, say, the Pirates, Mariners, or Browns. So it's not like this team has been completely without fire or passion these past two months.

However, when Carmona let an 0-1 pitch to Gary Sheffield get away from him (and look: I'm no psychiatrist or behavior specialist, but his body language was all about, "Damn, that stupid pitch got away from me there!") to hit Sheffield, Sheffield began his patented WWE staredown routine while walking to first base *with the bat*. What are you gonna do there, sport? Take it out on Mike Aubrey? Sheffield, being a cartoonish paranoid at this point in his career, interpreted the plunking as retaliation for Miguel Cabrera's second home run of the game. There are a few problems with this theory:

a) Matt Joyce batted immediately before Sheffield and was not hit
b) Sheffield was hit with the second pitch
c) Carmona's aforementioned body language
d) Joyce is hitting .267, Sheffield .220. Normally, you hit a guy who doesn't abjectly *suck*.

So, here's Sheffield, fuming and sputtering at first base, when Carmona tries to pick him off after an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson. My interpretation of this is that Carmona believed that Sheffield's concentration might not be 100% on doing his job as a baserunner and thought he could catch him with a quick throw. Sure, it might also piss Sheffield off. This would be a bonus.

Sheffield's interpretation was that Carmona was targeting him for further humiliation, messing with Sheffield's steroid-addled manhood, and/or blaming him for Kwame Kilpatrick's fall from grace. Who knows what Gary Sheffield is thinking at any given time? Certainly not me, and often not Gary Sheffield. Sheffield's thought process seems to be:

rage rage rage ***anger*** *rage* ***chicken sandwich*** *rage rage* ***indignity*** *coffee coffee coffee* ***coffee***
rage
madness
rage rage rage

Anyway, Sheffield, in a toxic mix of rage, anger, rage, indignity, chicken sandwich, and rage, angrily gestured for Carmona to throw a pitch rather than over to first. Derek Anderson threw an inaccurate pass, and Carmona appeared to say something like, "Here's an idea: shut the f^#* up." Sheffield then charged the mound, at which point Carmona, who is significantly larger and younger than Sheffield, blocked him, slapped on a headlock, and began his Nolan Ryan imitation. (It wasn't a great imitation: the noogies appeared less authoritative than Ryan's on Robin Ventura, but it evoked the image nonetheless.)

Here's why this was interesting: after an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, the team rushed out in various guises to support Carmona, and catcher Victor Martinez was ejected along with his starter. The team rallied around this incident. And in the bottom of the next inning, they began a comeback that resulted in a 6-5 win.

Now, I'm not trying to make light of violence on the ballfield, nor suggesting that had the Indians simply fought more often they would be in the playoff hunt. But the team really did seem sparked, and you have to consider the cause-and-effect nature of something like this: was the team unified because of the incident, or did the incident illustrate the unified nature of the team?

Anyway, I really liked how Carmona didn't walk anybody. But that's probably not what I'm going to remember about the game.

2) The Komeback Kids

After Eddie Moo was summoned to replace the ejected Carmona, he was able to get two outs in the 7th, then, after Derek Anderson fired an inaccurate pass, gave up a run in the 8th on a triple and a sac fly. Still, Mujica did strike out 3 of the six men he faced and generally looked like a major-league relief pitcher.

Even after an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, it looked doubtful that the Tribe would muster enough to overcome a three-run deficit, even against the Tigers' bullpen. However, after two quick outs and an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, Grady Sizemore doubled the other way off starter Armando Galarraga, and Ben Francisco pinch-hit for David Dellucci in response to left-hander Casey Fossum entering the game and an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson. Fossum, emulating

Derek Anderson, walked Franciso on four pitches.

This probably didn't bother Fossum so much: perhaps he was being careful against Francisco with first base open and a left-handed hitter scheduled to follow.

Unfortunately for Fossum, the left-handed hitter in question was Shin-Soo Choo, the hottest man on the planet.

Choo took a pitch for a ball, craned his neck to watch an inaccurate pass from Derek Anderson, then smashed Fossum's next offering over the wall in right center for the three-run clout that tied the game. Not only is Choo now hitting .310/.400/.554, but he is hitting .288/.356/.485 against left-handed pitching. The man still sports a sizable platoon split ... because he simply hits like Manny Ramirez against right-handers (.317/.412/.580).

After a shared perfect ninth by various Raffies, Kelly Shoppach led off the bottom of the 9th with a hit-by-pitch. Eric Wedge then called for a double-switch, having Josh Barfield pinch-run for Shoppach (he still had Sal Fasano on the bench) and having Derek Anderson throw a pass inaccurately. Bobby Seay then whiffed Travis Hafner, and things looked bleaker when Ryan Garko was greeted with right-handed reliever Gary Glover. However, Garko did not get the memo, and lined Glover's first pitch into right for a single that advanced Barfield to third.

With runners at the corners and one out, Barfield represented the winning run, so the Detroit outfield came in, figuring anything deep would be at least a sac fly. And Mighty Jamey Carroll, diminuative yet awesome, "singled" to deep right to end the game. Carroll was then crushed beneath the weight of the entire Indians team, except for Carmona and Martinez, who had been ejected and were inelligible to join the pile, and Derek Anderson, who celebrated by firing an inaccurate pass.

3) Is that all you got?

When the subject is Shin-Soo Choo, the answer is no.

Not only did Choo hit the three-run homer in the 8th, but he had started the scoring with a solo shot in the first. On Saturday, after a pair of inaccurate passes from Derek Anderson, Choo singled twice and walked twice in 5 trips to the plate. One of the singles came with the bases loaded and two outs, and drove in the last two runs Justin Verlander, my Favorite Player for Karmic Purposes, would allow.

Choo had a measly single and a walk on Sunday, but did

score two runs.

4) Anything you can do, I can't do as well, but still pretty well in any event

In the second inning of Saturday's game, Ryan Garko grounded out to first to advance the runner from second to third.

I bring this plate appearance to your attention because it represents the only time in 10 plate appearances that Garko got neither a hit nor a sacrifice fly to score a run.

Garko made only one plate appearance on Friday, detailed above, but on Saturday went 3-for-4 with three singles and a run scored, and on Sunday produced a huge 4-for-4 day with the sac fly. Two of the hits were for extra bases: one three-run "triple" and a run-scoring double. Distracted by an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, the official scorer gave Garko credit for the triple even though it was really a double that he

advanced to third on when they tried to get equally-slow Victor Martinez at the plate. On the double, Garko got what was euphemistically called a "rundown" between second and third to allow Martinez to score from first a second time. With Garko, it was more of a "walkdown" or "foolish decision," but after an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, Garko was tagged out to end the inning.

Garko has been hitting much better in the back half of the season than the front half, showing the form that made some believe he was a legitimate .300 hitter. And, sure enough, he hit .292 in August and is hitting .400 in September, with a great .600 SLG. However, the SLG in August was a paltry .406, not good for a corner infielder. On the other hand, after not playing August 6, Garko drove in at least one run in 15 of his 20 games and scored 24 runs in that stretch, so he has that mythical "run producer" thing going for him. I still think Garko is a better guy than baseball player, but it's nice to see some life from his bat.

5) Sotto voce

Replacing Magglio Ordonez with a right fielder would have cut Cleveland's scoring on Sunday down by at least 30%.

6) Reducto ad locatum

Scott Lewis was touched up for his first major-league runs on Sunday, and ended up pitching a game with thoroughly mediocre numbers: 8 hits and 3 runs in 5 innings, walking 3, striking out 6, watching 3 inaccurate passes from Derek Anderson, and giving up a homer. He had a wrong-way GO:FO ratio of 5:6 and generally wasn't as "sharp" as he had been.

Jeremy Sowers, on the other hand, had a pretty nice start: although 3 of his 5 hits were doubles, he kept the ball in the park and gave up 1 run in 6 innings, walking a pair, striking out three, and observing only 1 inaccurate pass from Derek Anderson. His GO:FO ratio of 9:6 was pretty decent, especially after his dreadful start against the Royals last time out.

By no real objective measure could you say that Lewis pitched better than Sowers, or that Derek Anderson threw an accurate pass. Yet somehow, I still see Lewis as a more interesting pitcher than Sowers. Surely some of this is Lewis' Shiny New Thingness: after all, it was only two years ago that Sowers was being penned into the next year's rotation on the strength of his first trip through the A.L. But I honestly think there's more to it than that, and I think the answer is hidden in the K:BB numbers.

Sure, Sowers had a terrific start a couple games ago when he struck out 7 and walked 1. That's excellent. But even in his rookie year, Sowers walked a few more guys than you'd like an struck out way fewer than you want, ending the year with three games in five of walking at least three guys, while ending with a 35:20 K:BB ratio in over 88 innings. This season, the ratio is a decent-enough 63:36, but in 115 innings. The walks are trending in the wrong direction, even as the ratio stays (exactly!) the same. Combined with Sowers' career-long battle with tateritis (18 in 115 innings, virtually Byrdian), this looks like a pitcher who must be very very very very very very very fine with his stuff to be successful.

Lewis is not immune to this: he looks like a distinct flyball pitcher, and I'm concerned that some of those high pitches that are missed for Ks today become tomorrow's circuit clouts. But Lewis has 14 Ks and 5 walks in 19 innings and has the single (solo shot) homer on his record. Right NOW, Lewis looks like a guy with simply better command of his stuff, however close to marginal it happens to be.

Anyway, they both won, and Derek Anderson threw an inaccurate pass.

7) Around the bullpen

Eddie Moo followed up his 3-K 5-out outing with a perfect inning of work Sunday. The radar made him look like a real hard thrower. I refuse to be taken in by such things.

Jon Meloan continued his fine season of being used either once or nonce a week. He walked one in a hitless inning of relief.

Brendan Donnelly threw 12 strikes in 15 pitches sandwiched around an inaccurate pass from Derek Anderson to pitch a scoreless inning in relief of Sowers.

Juan Rincon remains Juan Rincon.

8) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Asdrubal Cabrera had four hits, including a double, in Saturday's and Sunday's games combined. He also drove in three runs, but was caught stealing.

Grady Sizemore lifted a solo shot Friday and had a pair of hits Saturday.

Victor Martinez reached base four times Sunday on a pair of walks, an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, a single, an inaccurate pass by Derek Anderson, and a double.

Andy Marte stroked a pair of singles Sunday without being lifted for a pinch-hitter.

The Indians drew more walks in the Saturday and Sunday games combined than Derek Anderson completed passes.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Phil Savage maintains his boyish good looks (he is actually 162 years old, a little-known falsehood) by draining the life force from blind orphans. This statement is as true as Derek Anderson's passes are accurate. Fire Romeo Crennel.