The Indians prevented the Red Sox from clinching a playoff spot because their closer came through in Fenway Park. That's a lot to comprehend at one time, but in the B-List, you'll discover how Zach Jackson used an umpire to win his first game as an Indian, how Josh Beckett should consider pitching with his eyes open, and how Jensen Lewis is a seriously hoopy frood.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (79-77)	0	1	0	0
Red Sox (91-65)	0	0	1	0

W: Z. Jackson (1-3) L: Beckett (12-10) S: J. Lewis (12)

One of the best things about this game was that I was spared the Jon Papelbon Crapping Face.

1) One in the win column

Zach Jackson was 0-3 as an A.L. starter, not solely due to poor run support, but more due to poor actual pitching. I mean, he'd had a few decent starts, two of which were actually Quality, but he'd never given up fewer than 3 runs or reached the 8th inning. Of all the things he doesn't do well, giving up too many hits is one (61 in 47 2/3 innings as an Indian, as are all stats to follow). His WHIP is high (1.49), his ERA is high (6.04), and his K rate is ordinary (if not outright lame) at 4.91 per 9 IP. He's a guy.

So when the matchup was announced, Jackson vs. Josh Beckett, it was

hard not to think that this was a mismatch of USC-Idaho St. proportions. Beckett is one of the best pitchers in the league despite his 12-9 record coming in, and Jackson ... isn't. He pretty much earned that 0-3 record through sweat, toil, and Zach Jacksonness.

And truthfully, Jackson's stats don't give you much of a Beckett-beating vibe: 6 hits and 4 walks in 6 innings isn't good. 55 strikes in 95 pitches isn't good. A homer, also not good. 4 Ks is pretty good, but nothing special. And for a groundballish pitcher, a 7:6 ratio and no double plays is definitely not good.

But here's the thing: he twice struck out Jason Bay with a runner or two in scoring position, and generally picked his spots. Sure, he gave up a long bomb to David Ortiz, and Kevin Youkilis hit a ball so high off the Green Monster it came down with ice crystals on it, but except for those two pitches, the Sox hit almost nothing else truly hard. Jackson's ability to pitch with guys on base might bode well for him taking over the Julian Tavarez Commemorative swingman role in the future. (He's probably not really even a fifth starter, more like a stopgap if a guy is out for 15 days.)

Now, with two outs in the bottom of the 6th, Jackson got truly lucky when Jeff Bailey's shot down the line with runners on first and second hit the umpire, died at the edge of the infield, and was converted into an out by alert third baseman Jamey Carroll. (It looks funny in the game log to see Jason Bay trying to score from second on an "infield single," but that's because it wasn't.) But it was a good performance overall, and congrats to Jackson for his first win as an A.L. starter.

2) Mystique my ass

Some of the most brutal losses the Indians have suffered over the past couple years have come with a lead in the 9th inning in Fenway Park. Fausto Carmona, before he was Fausto! TM, blew two well-publicized games in one series in 2006, and Joe Borowski capped off his pre-DL stint with a heroic three-run blowup on national television that caused me to call people on my cell phone to release him before he made it back to the dugout. Bad things happen to Cleveland closers in Fenway Park.

Unless they are Jensen Lewis.

Although the final stats will say that Lewis struggled mightily in Wickmanesque fashion, that's not how it looked. Lewis was one pitch away from sawing through the Boston lineup in seven pitches: he struck out Dustin Pedroia on three pitches (looking, looking, swinging), then got David Ortiz to hit a harmless fly on the first pitch. Youkilis then watched a strike, missed a second, and then, showing why Kevin Youkilis is actually a very good hitter, singled to right center on the third pitch.

Lewis then allowed a big double to Jason Bay, but off the Monster, Youkilis was only able to make it to third.

So here we are: prepared to lose again in excruciating fashion, waiting for the other shoe to drop, expecting to scar the psyche of yet another pretend closer, and then ... Lewis fired a strike past Jed Lowrie. Lowrie fouled off the next pitch. And Lewis pumped the third pitch past Lowrie's ineffectual swing, ending the game.

It has only been 12 saves in 12 opportunities since being named closer, but I am telling you: Jensen Lewis has shown me at least as much as the closer for the Cleveland Indians since ... Mike Jackson? Maybe Wickman. Wickman was around longer than I'd remembered. But Lewis ... is ... good.

Elite? Nah. But pay attention to what "elite" means. There aren't many "elite" closers by definition. Now, could Adam Miller or Jeff Stevens or Matt Capps or Huston Street or someone else realistically-acquirable do a better job? It's possible. I'm

gettin' a bird-in-the-hand vibe from Lewis, though. It's kinda neat.

3) Good eye (hip, arm, leg)!

I'm all for the occasional Smallball run here and there, but Cleveland's first run was simply ridiculous. After retiring the first five hitters, Josh Beckett's command attached itself to an unladen swallow and sailed off to Capistrano: he gave up a ground rule double to Ben Francisco on a 2-1 pitch, then hit Ryan Garko on a 1-2 and hit Kelly Shoppach as well on an 0-1. Loading the bases on one hit and two ... er ... "hits" is pretty special. But it takes truly rotten command to the walk the next hitter on five pitches to drive in the run.

I would give credit to Asdrubal Cabrera for drawing the RBI walk, but I expect he was more concerned with simply not being hit with an errant offering than anything else.

4) Rally time!

Cleveland's other scoring inning was simply the old-fashioned strung-hits variety: the runner-advancing groundout and wild pitch (did I mention Beckett didn't have his best command?) were kind of red herrings. When you string together three singles and a double, you ought to score a couple runs, and Cleveland did. (They got a third on an RBI groundout by Travis Hafner, a wonderful display of Only Sucking Quite a Bit rather than the Abject Sucking we've grown accustomed to.)

Beckett did manage to hit another batter (Ben Francisco, who had doubled in his previous two Abs against Beckett) before ending the inning, but the damage was done, and against the Mighty Zach Jackson, Beckett had already lost the game.

5) Dept. of Raffies

Raffy Perez wasn't really very good: one of his two hits

allowed was an infield single, but it was two singles in three batters nonetheless and he gave way to Raffy Betancourt.

This looked like a poor move when Youkilis blasted another Monster double on Betancourt's third pitch, but after walking Jay Bay intentionally, Betancourt struck out Jed Lowrie (who is eleven) and retired Mark Kotsay (which, at this point, Gila monsters and large moths could do) to end the threat with the bases loaded.

Buoyed by this success, Betancourt sawed through the 8th

by striking out the fetid husk of Jason Varitek, giving up a pinch-hit single to Sean Casey, and inducing Jacoby Ellsbury to ground into a 6-3 double play that showed why it's nice to have Jhonny Peralta's arm at short. Ellsbury is fast, and Peralta gunned him down without a second (or, some might argue, first) thought.

I'm thinking of next year's bullpen, and I see Perez, Betancourt, Lewis, and Kobayashi's contract. After

that ... it's anybody's guess. Sure, there are lots of CANDIDATES, but there were for the Democratic nomination, too: Dennis Kucinic had as much chance of winning that nomination as he has of being the closer for the Tribe. (Come to think of it, why not give him an NRI?) Eddie Moo looks reasonable, and I like what I've seen from Jon Meloan, but after that ... I don't know if Rich Rundles is really ready or if Wedge would use him anyway. Jeff Stevens? Adam Miller? Weird Harold? This promises to be the most interesting part of Spring Training.

(Do not suggest Juan Rincon or Brendan Donnelly to me.)

6) Ho Hum Dept.

Shin-Soo Choo had an RBI single.

Kelly Shoppach struck out twice.

7) Wait, what did you say?

Asdrubal Cabrera not only drove in a run with his eye (as it were), but collected two singles and scored a run. He is hitting .424/.461/.591 in September and both his hits last night came as a left-handed batter ... off Josh F^@%ing Beckett.

Woo woo!

8) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Jhonny Peralta banged out his 40th and 41st doubles.

Jamey Carroll had an RBI single and scored a run.

Some guy named Jeff Bailey played first base for the Red Sox.