Buff's opening paragraph says it all: "You know, it's really great to see the Indians on primetime national TV, because it makes one's heart swell with pride to see the professionalism, concentration, effort, and precise execution we all love about this incarnation of the team. Hey, if anyone lives near Austin, Texas, would you do me a favor? The next time the Indians are on national TV, come on over to my house. I'll give you directions. Just come on over, make sure you get there before the first pitch, and JAM TWO SHARPENED #2 PENCILS INTO MY EYES. It'll hurt about the same, but take a whole lot less time."

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1) My Favorite Player doesn't totally suck!

Kind of a weird outing for Lee Saturday, in that he kept the ball on the ground (11:6 GB:FB) and didn't strike many out (4 in 7 IP). To this point in the season, he'd seemed more interested in taking Scott Elarton's place as Most Extreme Flyball Pitcher Without Actually Having The Stuff For It. Keeping the ball down in the zone (to most hitters: you have to bounce it to Vlad Guerrero) seems to have made a good one-game impact. He wasn't particularly accurate (only 2 walks, but a pretty bad 64.7% strike ratio), but giving up only 5 singles and a double is a nice surprise. Going seven was surprising as well: after the

double to Anderson, I figured The Banana had become soft and squishy, but he fought through another inning before handing the reins to Carmona. Since the double tied the game in the sixth, it was encouraging to see him keep the team in it until they could explode in the bottom half.

2) Channelling Judith Viorst

It's pretty easy to chalk up C.C. Sabathia's performance to simply having a bad outing: he's earned that benefit of the doubt since he's been the only pitcher this season to string together good starts (depending on how you feel about Lee's early starts). It's also a bit misleading to consider the outing "bad," since there are so many other adjectives one can use, including terrible, horrible, no good, and very bad. There are more, trust me. (I did not know it was possible to give up a home run to Chone Figgins.)

3) Channelling Chevy Chase as Gerald Ford

I suppose if you're going to embarrass yourself on national TV, there's no point in doing it halfway. Let's put it this way: combing the box score for positives about Sunday's game, I found that Victor Martinez game up only 17% as many stolen bases as

Tim Laker did Friday, and Scott Sauerbeck got an out.

Let us be serious for a moment: I read a lot of things written about the Indians. People talk about the finances, and the trades, and the young players, and the bullpen, and the rotation, and the coaching, and it's all very well and good to have discussions like this about the elements that make up a baseball team. But join me in a balloon ride up to a high level to look down at this team to determine if there are any overarching concerns that influence the outcomes they produce. From up here, we see:

This team **plays bad baseball**.

It's that simple. It does little good to talk about the role of this guy or replacing that guy or homina

homina homina: the fact is, the team **plays poorly.** Until that changes, I'm not sure changing cogs will amount to anything.

4) Flabber, meet gast

Jason Johnson was upset at reporters after his outing Friday.

Um ... Jason ... you're the fifth starter. You have an ERA of 5.92. You gave up more walks than hits, lasting just 5 innings ... again. You are, in the pecking order of major league pitchers, chum.

Dross. Flotsam. We're not "putting you under the microscope." We're casually observing you "pitching like a dog."

The strange thing is, Friday's outing wasn't truly awful. He was inducing ground balls as he needs to (7:4), and even struck out four guys. The problem is, without much, much, much, much better control, it's not

going to work. Jason Johnson is not a guy who can get away with sticking a couple extra guys on the basepaths. He's going to be hurt by extra baserunners, and by golly, that's what happened. Again, analysis is 10% deductive skill, 10% inferential ability, and 80% just plain WATCHING YOU SUCK.

5) A new *cause celebre*

Danny Graves may be enjoying his time in Beefalo: I know I am enjoying his time there, because it is not time in Cleveland. (The "Beefalo" part is not as important as the "not Cleveland" part.) Guillermo Mota must join him. Again, focus on the

"not Cleveland" part instead of the "Beefalo" part.

He must go. He is awful. Go. Go, go, go. You can go by horse. You can go by cow. But Marvin K. Mota, will you PLEASE GO

NOW?!

(apologies to Ted Geisel)

6) An old *cause celebre*

Yeah, well, Davis isn't much better.

7) Happy Birthday!

Travis Hafner his a

grand slam on his birthday to help the Indians bury the Angels for good on Saturday. Hooray for us.

8) I will not buy this record, it is scratched

Fausto Carmona came in with an 8-run lead. Sure, it's easier to challenge hitters with an 8-run lead. On the other hand, it's pretty easy to challenge

hitters down twelve, too. Anyway, Carmona threw strikes (gasp!) and was effective (double gasp!). Why bother harping on this? Is this

surprising to anyone any more?

Oh, the exception to the rule: Jason Davis throws strikes, but sucks. It doesn't matter where he throws

it.

9) Clearly an ulterior motive

Showing the mettle the distinguishes the career backup catcher from the

philodendron, Tim Laker came up to replace Kelly Shoppach because of his all-important ability to make Victor Martinez

feel good about himself. In a truly life-affirming performance, Laker managed to allow the Angels to steal six bases Friday

night, thus making Victor Martinez believe that he is, in fact, not clam-like at throwing out basestealers.

I have heard

that he makes an excellent cup of coffee as well. (The secret is in the grind.)