Thanks to the longball heroics of Grady Sizemore and Victor Martinez, the Tribe was able to withstand a Full Bullpen Death Meltdown to survive the pesky Royals 8-7. Buff talks about what you should be doing when Cleveland relievers are on the mound, touches on Aaron Laffey's excellent start, and wonders why Sidney Ponson gets to wear a major-league uniform.

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Royals (7-6)	1	0	0	0
Indians (5-9) (2.5 GB)	8	0	1	4

W: Laffey (1-0) L: Ponson (0-2) S: K. Wood (2)

In Little League, this would have been a thoroughly enjoyable game, because they play 7 innings.

1) The Home Repair Show!

I'm painting our smaller bathroom this week. We got the shower replaced for the second time because the first shower pan leaked and the meatball who replaced it did it wrong, so it leaked again. It's nice: new tile, higher shower head, a door instead of a curtain, but it led my wife to be inspired to paint the walls for the third time in 6 years.

See, the first time I painted it myself: I'm no professional, but I can paint a room well enough to have it look properly-painted. I've learned to tape better than my first try. Ceilings are still a pain in the rear. But I painted it, and it was fine.

Then we got work done on the room and removed the horrible original white panelling, so we got the guy who did it to repaint. "Pick a color with a little more green in it," my wife said. Okay, fine. I don't care much what color the little bathroom is. I'm red-green colorblind, for Pete's sake. You know how I pick a color at Home Depot? I ask random strangers. "Does this look greener than that to you?" You can't go by the name of the color: they're all named "Starbreath McGillicuddy" and "Postman's Revenge" and things of that ilk. We painted the bathroom.

It was "too green."

Lesson: do not send the colorblind man to pick a color if the color is actually important to you.

So I'm painting it again, and of course, the new color is lighter than the old color, so I have to put two coats of primer on it. Shoot, the whole room is about three square feet. This is not a big deal. But I bring it up because I was painting while following the game, and it occurred to me that painting my bathroom, which boasts the twin features of being hot and sweaty with paint fumes in a very small space, was a lot more enjoyable than watching the Cleveland Indians bullpen pitch.

With this in mind, here are recommended Home Repair Jobs that you should consider taking care of whenever a Cleveland reliever comes into the game:

Joe Smiff: Smiff can be very inefficient, walking 4 men in 3.2 innings across 6 appearances. Last night, he faced three hitters and retired exactly zero of them.

He gave up a half-cycle and walked the third batter. Because Smiff tends to face few hitters per game, being treated more like a ROOGY than anything else, I recommend **changing your air-conditioner filter**.

Masa Kobayashi: in contrast to Smiff, Kobayashi tends to be very efficient indeed, allowing batters to clobber the ball early in the count. Last night, Kobayashi allowed a pair of singles in only 4 pitches and was charged with a run when a sac fly scored his first batter. On the season, Koba has superficially-decent stats with a 1.35 WHIP and a 2.70 ERA, but has walked 4 batters and struck out ZERO in 6 2/3 innings over 6 appearances. Because he is an extreme Feast of Famine pitcher, he either retires the side on few pitches or is blasted from the game in few pitches. His motion is pretty painful to watch, though, and I recommend **resetting your toilets**.

Jen Lewis: there is virtually no statistic that puts Lewis' early season in a positive light, with only a 9.39 K/9 rate saving him from complete ignominy. But he has given up an unfathomable 12 hits and 4 walks in under 8 innings and pretty much deserves the 7.04 ERA he's sporting (if not higher). Lewis was superior last night, allowing the sac fly to damage Kobayashi's ERA instead of his own, but then inducing a nifty 1-6-3 DP that effectively saved the game. Easily his best outing. Lewis tends to get stretched into a second inning on occasion, and goes deep into counts, allowing you to **replace your garbage disposal** in the time it normally takes him to waft through an outing.

Kerry Wood: Wood has been pretty excellent, really: his 9 Ks in 4 1/3 innings is simply sick. He has 2 saves and 0 blown, so he's done his primary job. However, he entered with a 3-run lead and left with a 1-run win, suggesting a certain lack of aplomb in the form of a home run on the first pitch to David DeJesus. I actually think you should watch Wood pitch, so **fold laundry** instead.

Vinnie Chulk: A 2.00 WHIP with a 3.60 ERA suggests that ERA isn't the best measure for relievers. His 1:4 K:BB ratio is ... third-worst on the team! Great googly moogly! With the added bonus that you don't have to watch him play

defense, the HRS recommends **installing a ceiling fan**, as the drilling should drown out the screams of pain from the home crowd.

Zach Jackson: take a break. Have a soda. No repair necessary, as Jackson has received his first wazoo of the season. If you are in Columbus, Jackson is a long man, giving you time to **paint your garage**.

Raffy Betancourt: Raffy ... Betancourt ... takes ... a ... long ... time ... to ... do ... anything. Five ... walks ... in ... 7 1/3 ... innings ... is ... terrible ... and ... even ... his ... outs ... take ... a ... long ... time. **Install ... laminate ... flooring ... in ... your ... kitchen**
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Raffy Perez: **build a new house from scratch**.

2) Slighted again!

First he gets left off the roster. Then he has to start on three days' rest. Now he gets bumped from the customary #1 slot usually devoted to the starting pitcher. In my defense, the bullpen was really really really really bad last night.

Aaron Laffey first inning was certainly nothing to get excited about: a leadoff double by Covelli Crisp, who stole third, and two more baserunners later in the inning (walk to Billy Butler after starting 1-2, RBI single to Mark Teahen) didn't really get properly offset by a pair of swinging Ks. But after that, he was very solid, allowing no more runs and inducing a fantastic 14 ground ball outs.

Of course, it was really only 8 ground balls.

Laffey was helped immeasurably by inducing ground-ball double plays in EACH of his last FIVE INNINGS. Now, inducing double plays is a valuable, if not entirely repeatable, skill. It's great to erase two guys with one pitch. And Laffey has shown exceptional groundball stuff in the past, at least in his first incarnation with the Tribe. The downside of this, of course, is that you can't induce a double play unless you first put someone on base, which is exactly what Laffey did: of his seven innings, exactly none of them were 1-2-3 perfect affairs.

Still, this is a bit of flaw-finding: overall, Laffey's stats are quite nice. He only struck out one batter after the first, but he completed his 7 innings in a reasonable 104 pitches and lowered his early-season ERA to 2.19. He still walks too many guys (nearly one every other inning), and it didn't help that he hit a guy and Jhonny Peralta threw a ball away, but when you have a guy give up 1 run in 7 innings, you take that every time.

Interestingly enough, had he induced only one groundout in the second before yielding a single to Willie the Q, Crisp's grounder to short might have been a sixth Laffey-induced DP.

I think Laffey really benefitted psychologically from the early DPs, enabling him to keep throwing "his stuff" rather than trying to nibble or press: Laffey used to have a severe problem making it a third time through the order, and in fact did give up 3 of his 7 hits (1 of his 2 doubles) and 1 of his 3 walks in his third pass through the order. However, with all the DPs, he didn't seem to change his approach with men on base, even late in the game, and got out of a one-out bases-loaded jam in his last inning of work without visibly wilting.

3) Let's turn two!

Certainly Laffey's pitching style played a big role in the Indians' SIX double plays, recorded in six consecutive innings. I have no idea if that's a record, but it's gotta be close. But I think it bears mentioning that the six ran the gamut: there were

two 4-6-3s, a 5-4-3, a 6-4-3, a 5-3, and a 1-6-3. Jhonny Peralta in particular seemed to do a good job as the middle man of three of the DPs, showing uncharacteristic good timing and his normal strong arm. In fact, Peralta made an error in the third, and turned the next play into one of these accurate relay throws, so I give him credit for shaking that bad throw off and making several good ones thereafter. The fact that the nominally-speedy Covelli Crisp was two of the six victims bodes very well for the defense indeed.

Clearly his second was the most crucial of the night: with all due apologies to Laffey for getting Crisp to end the 7th on his second GIDP, the 8th inning was a nightmare of 2006 Bullpen of Death proportions. Smiff had been worthless, and Koba equally so, and Lewis faced Miguel Olivo with the tying run on base and only 1 out. For him to turn that 1-6-3 (which is by no means a simple or ordinary play) there, even on the catcher, was just flat-out enormous. I've certainly given Jenny Lew his share of abuse this season, but those 6 pitches (and three outs) were tremendous.

4) I wonder if he's really healthy?

In the 6th inning, facing the fake pitcher Horacio Ramirez, Victor Martinez flied out to right on a 2-1 pitch.

I mention this because this was unusual for Martinez. He made an out.

In his other four plate appearances, Martinez simply laced three singles and a two-run bomb in the 8th that made the score 8-5.

This turned out to be a pretty important blow, as Kerry Wood came up with some blowing of his own.

Is Victor Martinez doing okay this season? Consider this: not only is he hitting .397/.463/.707 (seven oh seven!) on the seaseon, not only does he have more walks than strikeouts, not only does he have 5 home runs (career high: 25), but he has EIGHT multi-hit games in FOURTEEN PLAYED. He has ONE game in which he didn't reach base, and only TWO in which he reached only once. In 14 games, he has reached base at least two times in ELEVEN of them.

He has nine RBI. He has driven in Victor Martinez more often than Everyone Else Combined. Here's a tip: GET ON BASE IN FRONT OF VICTOR MARTINEZ!

(In case you were wondering, this is no Vintage Casey Blake situation: coming into the game, Martinez was hitting .323/.382/.645 with none on ... and .409/.500/.636 with runners on base. Yes, he's been worse with runners in scoring position, but the sample size is puny. I think it's okay to say that Victor Martinez can hit.)

5) Everybody h ... um ... walks!

Actually, there was a player who did not draw a base on balls last night, but since it was 4-for-5 Victor Martinez, I don't consider that very important.

Every other Cleveland hitter drew a walk, including a pair by Mark DeRosa. To put this in perspective, Mark DeRosa got one hit and scored three runs. Three of the Indians' runs were scored by players who had walked. On a night where the Tribe was out-hit 13-9, the game was a near-blowout until the 8th because the Indians were walking while the Royals were grounding into double plays.

6) Efficient efficiency

Of Cleveland's 8 runs, 5 scored on home runs.

One scored on a groundout.

Two scored on pitches that ended up at the screen.

In other words, the Indians scored 8 runs on TWO run-scoring hits.

7) Questionable call

Well, really, the first questionable call is to put Sir Sidney Ponson in a major-league uniform. That's really bloody questionable. Sid's not good. No, sir.

But the Indians scored a run in the first when Sid walked Grady Sizemore, gave up a single, then coughed up this brilliant sequence:

Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball (Hafner walked), Strike, Strike, Excrement (Grady Sizemore scored)

Now, look, the box score says "passed ball by Miguel Olivo." That is how it will go into the record books. But I am here to tell you, that pitch missed by at least a foot and a half. Maybe even three. Patrick Roy would not have stopped that ball with oversized pads. I don't know how Olivo was supposed to stop that one, it was one heckuva pitch.

8) Anything you can do, I can do more comically

Robinson Tejeda is a menace. He sure has some neat stuff, but if he doesn't reconsider his decision to throw exclusively with his eyes closed, he is going to hurt someone.

Tejeda threw 13 strikes in 31 pitches, for a strike percentage of crap-point-piffle. Yeah, he struck out three guys, but he walked a pair and gave up his own run on a seven-foot-high rising fastball that Olivo could not prevent from hitting the screen on a fly. That was a bad pitch, boy howdy.

I got to see a bunch of Tejeda when he was a Texas Ranger. This is pretty much Robinson Tejeda.

9) Ducks on the Pond

Despite scoring 8 runs, the Tribe still left 9 men on base, including 5 in scoring position. That's not Truly Awful, and it sure beats grounding into double plays in six consecutive innings, but it's still not very good.