The Indians may have squandered a very solid outing by Carl Pavano ... they may have squandered a pair of ninth-inning homers ... they may have caused Eric Wedge to burst several capillaries in his eyeballs ... but the 6/29 game will heretofore be remember as Chris Perez' Cleveland Debut Game. That ... was ... AWESOME!!! in the B-List, Buff shifts his salesmanship away from Mark DeRosa, talks about why Ryan Garko's timing stinks, and wonders why people are surprised when Jhonny Peralta plays in a Jhonny Peralta fashion.

				FINAL
White Sox (38-38)	1	1	0	0
Indians (31-47)	0	0	0	0

W: Floyd (6-5) L: Pavano (6-7)

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Chris Perez Show!

1) Shifting Focus

Carl Pavano's first two innings were not much to write home about. The first was an exercise in autopedisurculum, in which Pavano gave up a run on three balls that didn't leave the infield and a stolen base. The second was punctuated by the ridiculous sight of Chris Getz garnering an extra-base hit. In these two innings, Pavano gave up two runs on four hits and didn't strike anyone out, requiring 33 pitches to record six outs (5 groundouts, 1 caught stealing).

Over the next five innings, Pavano was just shy of brilliant.

Consider: Pavano allowed exactly one baserunner on a single. He struck out 6 hitters in 5 innings, and 5 of the Ks were swinging. 4 of the 5 innings were 1-2-3 affairs. And he required only 67 pitches to saw through those five innings (16 batters).

There was a lot to like about this start: unlike several starts ago, when Pavano was elevating the ball and paying for it, he had good movement on balls that dove

low into (or dropping out of) the strike zone, keeping the White Sox from making good contact (or, in the case of 6 of the 16 batters after the second, ANY contact) and producing an excellent 11:3 GO:FO ratio. Getz' double was the only extra-base hit, and it was more of a corner shot than anything threatening to go over the wall. Two of the hits were caught by infielders.

Pavano had been rolling through a great stretch before his neck and shoulder began bothering him, possibly because this is the first time he's made three months of regular rotation turns in quite a while. After three poor outings against Kansas City, Milwaukee, and Pittsburgh, Pavano seems to have found his "mound legs" once again. And I'm not just saying this because I'm trying to incorporate the data I like at the expense of those I don't: they WAY that Pavano got 11 ground ball outs and gave up 5 baserunners in 7 full innings (69 strikes in 100 pitches) was indicative of a guy getting back into synch.

It's interesting: Pavano somehow posts a weird home/away split, in which he's allowed opponents to hit .328 with a 6.38 ERA (7 homers in 42 1/3 innings) at home, while holding them to a more-palatable .279 average with a 4.86 ERA and 4 HR in 50 IP on the road. Considering that 3 of those home runs came in his first two road starts, you could argue that Pavano, in stadia other than Not Jacobs' Field, has been a pretty good pitcher.

Consider: I know we've talked about this before, but that first start really skews things so horribly. But if you excise that start, Pavano has made 8 road starts, pitching 49 innings and giving up 18 earned runs, only once yielding more than 3 earned runs. This translates into a road ERA of 3.31, with a WHIP of 1.20 and striking out 7.71 guys per 9 innings. You don't want to necessarily put a huge stock into 8 starts, but ... I mean, those are pretty good numbers.

Consider this: Antonio Bastardo has gone on the DL. Brett Myers is already there. The Philadelphia rotation now consists of a guy older than me with a 6.05 ERA, a really fat guy with a 5.06 ERA, the ill-advised usage of Chan Ho Park (5.94 ERA), and two lefties, one excellent (Cole Hamels) and one who has been

more of a pleasant surprise (J.A. Happ). The A.L. just completed another global waxing of the N.L. in interleague play. And Carl Pavano pitching anywhere besides Cleveland has a 3.31 ERA after his opening Disaster Start.

One other thing should be mentioned here: Pavano has a 68:18 K:BB ratio, meaning he doesn't put extra guys on base very often. He's only given up one home run on the road since April 15 in 43 innings. And his last two starts show a real command of a sinker that is working very well, with 12:6 and 13:7 GB:FB ratios, something that would come in very handy in Philadelphia, where fly balls turn into runs.

So ... if the Phillies had a forward-thinking GM, a guy who wasn't afraid to take a little heat for trading for a guy who was a punchline in New York but has had a good comeback year now that he's healthier ... well, I'm just saying. Chan Ho Park. Think about it.

2) That ... was ... AWESOME!!!

Chris Perez!!! Derp, derp, derp!!!

3) The importance of timing

Ryan Garko smashed his 8th home run of the season off setup man Octavio Dotel, no small feat: Dotel has a sharp 3.23 ERA and had only given up two home runs in 30 innings this season. Dotel's WHIP is kind of high because he has taken the Cleveland Indians Control Correspondence Course, walking 21 batters in 30 2/3 innings, but he strikes out 11.45 guys per nine innings and is an ex-closer, so he's got something on the ball. Better yet, there were two outs at the time, so this was a last-gasp sort of blow that kept the game alive in the bottom of the ninth.

Of course, this was when the score was 6-1 and one runner was on base. When the score was 2-0 and THREE runners were on base, Garko had possibly the worst plate appearance of all time.

After walking two of the previous three batters and giving up a single to Jhonny Peralta on a 1-2 pitch after starting him 0-2, it was paramount that Garko get a good pitch to hit. Pavano may have had his sinker working, but Floyd was simply otherwordly: Peralta's lineout double play to center in the second was the ONLY out recorded in the air. Floyd struck out 5, but recorded a preposterous 16 ground ball outs for a 16:1 GO:FO ratio.

Garko did *not* get a good pitch to hit. He got a *lousy* pitch to hit, and he hit it *lousily*. Now, I understand all the wailing and foofraw about how the umpires did not do a good job of officiating that play (Garko's weak roller was picked up by Floyd at the foul line: Floyd threw him out, despite some argument over whether the ball was fair or foul. Replays showed it was fair.). The umpires did NOT do a good job of officiating that play.

But compared to Garko's execution in the given circumstance, the umpires were Ultimate Super Happy Excellent Professional Standard-Setting Awesome Umpires. That "swing" *transcended* "piss-poor" and moved to the little-used "bile-encrusted feebleness."

4) Speaking of Awesome ...

What a debut! Woot, there it is! Chris Perez in the hizzouse! Derp, derp!

5) Message (temporarily) received

Since being benched for Being Jhonny Peralta, Jhonny Peralta has responded with 15 hits in his past 11 games, including 6 games with two hits. 3 of the hits were doubles, and two were home runs. He has also drawn 5 walks over that span, and has struck out only 5 times. This translates into a .348/.417/.558 line that is not only impressive for the raw hit count, but also for a semblance of power that has been missing from Peralta's game for quite some time.

Look, is this Definitely A New Jhonny Peralta, You Betcha? Of course not. This is the same old Happy Wanderer that we've seen since 2005. He's still Jhonny Peralta. You get these stretches, in which Peralta is one of the most valuable guys on the team because of his ability to hit and play a up-spectrum defensive position, and you get stretches like ... well ... April, in which with a little more hard work and dedication, Peralta would have **elevated** his game to "Worthless Schmoe."

Well, at least can we say that Eric Wedge Got Through To Jhonny Peralta For Sure This Time, Once And For All? Of course not. Have I mentioned he's still Jhonny Peralta? He's still Jhonny Peralta. Sometimes we forget he's still only 27 years old. And largely clueless. Okay, actually, most of us don't really forget that, but no, this marks no Significant State Change in the relationship between the square-jawed

master of no lips and the spherically-headed master of blank stares.

Well, then, can we say that at least this is indicative of the reason that Jhonny Peralta can be considered a Net Asset? Sure, this we can say. We could ask him to be more consistent, but we could also ask for maple syrup to come out of the pipes of the guest bathroom. Quantum mechanics tells us these things are possible, yet somehow, I am not holding my breath in anticipation of their eminent arrival.

He seems to be playing better at third than I thought he would, although, admittedly, I thought that he would have been struck in the face by multiple line drives by this point in the season, so this is not an entirely-meaningful measuring stick. He's playing like a third baseman and hitting like a third baseman, and I'll take that for now. Wedge really does need to invest in some lips, though.

6) Speaking of struck by multiple line drives ...

Okay, actually, that's in poor taste.

7) Double-check the elbow

No, not Grady Sizemore's: Shin-Soo Choo's.

Choo had a pair of hits last night, including a homer off a left-handed relief pitcher, Matt Thornton. This is good: Choo is actually hitting lefties at a .244/.371/.397 clip, which is a big improvement over the perceived past. (Actually, from 2006-2008, Choo hit .276/.343/.408 against lefties: I'm not sure where he got this "platoon guy" tag, but it doesn't appear to have come from, y'know, anything like DATA.) Anyway, that's good.

Except that he needed that homer to lift his June SLG all the way to ... .418.

With all the streakiness and collapsing and injuries and everything else, to this point, Choo has been the one Rock of Steadiness. He hit .274/.409/.479 in April. He hit .311/.414/.472 in May. The average is different, but the OBP and SLG are virtually identical. In June, he is hitting .296, right in the middle of April and May, and his June OBP of .395 is within sight of the low-.400s he was putting up before.

But he is slugging .418.

In April, Shoo had 9 extra-base hits: 6 doubles and 3 homers. In May, 8 XBH: 3 doubles, a triple, and 4 homers. In June, only 6 (3 doubles, 3 homers). These are not huge numbers, and you turn a couple singles into doubles and you wonder what my point is. But the trend is going the wrong way: hopefully, this is just a slow month for Choo's power (you want small-sample discouragement, check out Victor Martinez' month-by-month batting averages).

Hopefully.

8) Welcome to the club, you'll fit right in!

Here was Chris Perez' debut:

He hit the first hitter in the head. In all seriousness, all due wishes for a speedy and full recovery for Alexei Ramirez. Very bad.

He hit Jermaine Dye with a pitch that would have hit the shorter Ramirez in the head again. Very, *very* bad.

He walked Jim Thome, but this is merely bad. A lot of people have walked Jim Thome.

He got a popup, which was good.

And then, on the inning-ending double play ball to first, Perez ... did not cover first base. Would this DEFINITELY have been a double play? I don't know about DEFINITELY. But it DEFINITELY was NOT a double play without Perez covering the bag, and a run scored.

And then he simply went insane, giving up a double to Getz, a wild pitch, and a run-scoring single.

And here's the kicker: had he covered first base and we had turned the double play ... WE WOULD HAVE WON THE DAMN GAME 3-2! (Okay, you can't technically say that: Jenks may have come out, or Dotel might have pitched more carefully, or what have you, but coming back from 2-0 is certainly a lit different from having to come back from 6-0.)

9) Lost in the shuffle

Chris Gimenez had a pair of hits and is now hitting .276/.382/.517 in an extremely small sample. But I kinda like this guy, even if he doesn't actually catch.