This is how the season ends, not with a bang, but with a Michael Bay thirty-car flame-spewing apocalyptic combination car wreck and tire fire. In 2009's final B-List, Buff looks at The Worst Inning in the World, a contender for the crown, and gets in the season's final cheap shots at Jeremy Sowers and Mike Gosling. He looks to the future with four players under the age of 25, presents the Most Valuable Indian award to Shin-Soo Choo, and waves farewell to Eric Wedge, whom he secretly envies, because Wedge doesn't have to watch the team any more.

				FINAL
Indians (65-95)	0	0	0	0
Red Sox (93-67)	1	0	3	0

W: Matsuzaka (4-6) L: Sowers (6-11)

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Indians (65-96)	2	2	0	0
Red Sox (94-67)	1	7	2	0

W: Beckett (17-6) L: Laffey (7-9)

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Indians (65-97)	1	0	5	0
Red Sox (95-67)	3	1	0	1

W: Bowden (1-1) L: Ohka (1-5)

Talk about your feel-good endings!

No, please, talk about your feel-good endings. I certainly didn't have one. Please. There's got to be a feel-good ending out there somewhere.

1) The Worst Inning in the World

The best part of 2009's Worst Inning in the World is that it came with a warmup act: in the 5th inning of the final game, Tomo Ohka struck out Jacboy Ellsbury ... on a wild pitch ... allowing Ellsbury to reach first base. Apparently Ellsbury hurt himself in the process or something, and Joey Gathright pinch-ran for him, or

rather, pinch-trotted, because Ohka then served up *Gophaire Ball* *Suprise* to Dustin Pedroia, meaning that the game-tying *homaire* was really the go-ahead *homaire* and the Indians were down 7-6.

But this was just the appetizer for the 6th inning, in which Raffy Perez allowed a solo shot to J.D. Drew, who had dozed off at the plate and watched the first five pitches to fill the count before delivering his blast. Perez settled down sufficiently to strike out Casey Kotchman, then got Alex Gonzalez to bite 2-0 to fly out to center.

To the plate strides Joey Gathright with two outs, making the Red Sox lament the substitution of Ellsbury even more. Now, Joey Gathright is simply hilarious. He has putrid numbers this season, because he has not played, because he is mind-bogglingly bad. Over the last three years 2006-2008, Gathright hit .261/.331/.299, one of the few players in the Tyner Zone to not even manage a .300 SLG. He posted 28 extra-base hits in 890 AB and was hit by 14 pitches, giving him a HBP:XBH ratio of 0.50, one of the highest in ... well, the entire universe. And as a lefty hitting against lefties, Gathright hit .249/.335/.275 for a sparkling .610 OPS. So Gathright spoils a few two-strike pitches off Perez, hits a soft grounder to third, and beats it out for his 8th hit of the season.

George Kottaras follows with a single to center: Kottaras is hitting .237 on the season and is better-known for being Not As Good as Jason Varitek, which at this juncture in Varitek's career is Damning with No Praise. And then, Jason Varitek himself comes to the plate.

Now, Varitek is hitting much better from the right side this season: .226. Two twenty six is the HIGH END of Jason Varitek's production. Yes, he has 6 homers in 106 AB to spiff up his SLG into usefulness, but ... look, let's be clear about this: Jason ... Varitek ... Is ... Done. D-U-N done. And on 1-2, Perez proceeds to throw ball two ... a foul ball ... ball three ... and ... ball four.

Now, look: you cannot walk Jason Varitek there. You just can't. Jason Varitek has the slowest bat this side of anyone who hasn't been severely ethered. So Raffy Perez gets the wazoo, and out to the mound: Chris Perez!

Listen: Jed Lowrie is adorable. It is heartwarming that the Red Sox are allowing a super-talented

twelve-year-old play shortstop for the big-league club. I can only assume that this is one of those Make A Wish Foundation things, because Jed Lowrie came into the game hitting .138/.205/.215, which is really very good for a twelve-year-old who weighs 135 pounds. But it looks like the tailwind of a Chris Perez fastball will catch Lowrie in its wake and knock him off balance. I mean, really now. And after a couple of fouls on a 1-2 count, Lowrie cranks a ball over the right-field fence for a grand slam.

In retrospect, I love how the AP writeup describes this as "Lowrie's first career grand slam." I mean, yes, this is interesting with respect to Victor Martinez, who has over 100 career homers but finally hit HIS first career grand slam Saturday: that's a neat thing. But this is Lowrie's fourth career HOMER of ANY KIND. The man has a .475 OPS. First career grand slam? No shit! The man can barely hit! Are we expecting lots and lots more grand slams from Jed Freaking Lowrie? Come on!

Anyway, then Chris Perez struck out David Ortiz swinging. Nice timing there, Ace! Phbt!

2) The Inning That Might Have Been The Worst, But Fell Short, Although it was Still Pretty Freaking Bad

Aaron Laffey got off to a pretty nice start: sure, he gave up a leadoff homer to Pedroia, but the next three hitters were all right-handers with excellent pop (Jason Bay, Victor Martinez, Kevin Youkilis), and he struck all three of them out. The last two were swinging Ks, so Laffey appears to have something on the ball at this point. The Indians give him two runs in the first and another pair on the second, so he has a 4-1 lead going into the bottom of the second.

He gives up a double to Ortiz, then walks Lowrie on five pitches after a first-pitch strike. This is pretty bad. Kotchman singles, but Ortiz is sluglike and holds at third. Fortunately, Brian Anderson and Joey Gathright are the next two hitters, and a big inning looks avoidable.

Now, Brian Anderson is horrific at the plate. He came into the game hitting .231/.313/.322, which is right in line with the absurd numbers he posted in Chicago as their

"center fielder of the future," .238/.322/.319 last season. Anderson plays terrific defense in center, a valuable skill (just ask Frank Gutierrez), but the man hits like an intoxicated beaver. On the first pitch, he takes Laffey the other way for a run-scoring single, but with Shin-Soo Choo's arm in right, this is a one-run play. There is still the opportunity for redemption and escape here.

And Gathright certainly plays his role, striking out swinging, but not before Laffey BALKS IN A RUN. A balk! You lead 4-2! Joey Gathright can't hit! Worry about the hitter, not Lowrie's twelve-year-old antics at third! Great Shiva's knitting needles!

So Laffey intentionally walks Pedroia to set up the double play, except then Bay singles in a run.

It is here that Tofu Lou Marson displays his inexperience: where the clearly-mandated Experienced Catching Rule is to stride purposefully to the mound, douse your pitcher with sangria, and attempt to light him on fire, Marson

forgets this Cardinal Rule and allows Laffey to pitch to Victor Martinez, who hits his first career grand slam and effectively ends the game.

It should be noted that whereas the Worst Inning in the World featured a hysterical precursor, this one featured more of the delicious after-dinner mint, when Jensen Lewis allowed Anderson to paste a two-run homer off him as the second batter of the third inning.

3) Also, Jeremy Sowers

Look, Sowers' 3-inning 4-run start didn't feature any homers or balks. It was the best performance by a Cleveland starter in the three games. Lay off.

Sure, it was terrible, but ... aw, shit, I got nothin'.

It is here that I must mention the terrible pun perpetrated

on me by loyal reader My Dad™, in which he suggests that bad pitches by Jeremy Sowers are hereby denoted "Sowerballs." As Bill Simmons would say, "Done and done."

4) The Unbearable Lightweightness of Tomo Ohka

I'm not going to get into some logic-twisting argument that Tomo Ohka was hugely successful or crucial to the Indians' success this season. I could probably construct an argument that Ohka stood between the Indians and 100 losses, but really, who the hell cares? We were terrible, and Ohka wasn't very good, and that's enough of that.

Still, there were multiple occasions in which it really helped to have a veteran strike-thrower on the staff to pick up inconvenient frayed ends, like going 5 innings in relief of a lousy starter or picking up a

spot start here and there. It wasn't a very tasty gig, and to Ohka's credit, he did it without complaint and with some flash of skill. Ohka's biggest problem (and yea, verily, it was an enormous problem) was that he managed to give up an astonishing 18 taters in just 71 innings: pro-rated over a season's worth of starting, and you're talking about erasing Bert Blyleven from the history books.

Still, his WHIP was 1.35, which is pretty decent, although his ERA of 5.96 was clearly not. Again, though, it was a pretty thankless role, and Ohka filled it, so best wishes to Tomo and godspeed. He deserves an invite by someone next spring: I recommend Washington, which is plainly awful and for whom he posted a brisk 4-3 record with a 3.33 ERA in 9 starts in 2005, or San Diego, where taters go to die.

(The subtext here is that if Ohka is a 2010 Cleveland Indian, this would have to be considered

GM Fail.)

5) A bright spot in The Void

After the hilarity of the Worst Inning in the World, Jess Todd managed a scoreless inning on Sunday, giving up a single and a walk but striking out a batter and tossing 14 strikes in 21 pitches. On Friday, he threw an astonishing 23 strikes in 27 pitches, and although he allowed three singles, he didn't allow any walks, extra-base hits, or runs (or, for that matter BALKS WITH THE BASES LOADED) in two innings of scoreless relief behind Jeremy Sowers.

Todd ends the season with mind-bendingly bad overall numbers: a 7.66 ERA and a 1.93 WHIP. On the other hand, after a pair of disastrous outings in early-mid September, Todd posted six straight scoreless outings, yielding 4 hits and 1 walk against

4 Ks in 7 IP. This produces a much more palatable 0.714 WHIP to go with a 0.00 ERA, and although it's a very small sample, it at least gives one a positive note heading into 2010.

6) A Mike Gosling in The Void

Well, yeah. This isn't wholly unexpected. Or unwarranted. He's a guy.

7) The Youth of America

After a couple of collars to end September, Mike Brantley got back on his horse and got at least one hit in each of the four games in Boston to end his rookie season hitting .313/.358/.348. Although a .707 OPS is a far cry from what you'd consider adequate for a corner outfielder (which is what

Brantley would be on the 2010 Cleveland Indians, since I don't see them moving Grady Sizemore to a corner this early in his career), Brantley has shown enough bat control and on-base ability to be seriously considered for a roster spot. If I had a guess right now, I would hardly be surprised to see the 22-year-old open the season in Columbus in an effort to jump-start his nascent power potential, but it's hardly an unfounded claim to say that Mike Brantley can hit major-league pitching.

Luis Valbuena pounded out six hits in the weekend series, including a triple and a home run to go .375/.375/.688 in a laughable October sample of four games. Still, Valbuena ended up hitting .272/.316/.437 after the All-Star break and is looking like an everyday player. The 26 walks in nearly 400 plate appearances looks to be a problem, but the man won't be 24 until November and has a nice middle-infield chemistry with fellow Venezuelan Asdrubal Cabrera.

Cabrera confounded dire pre-season predictions and ended up hitting .308/.361/.438 this season, hitting over .300 from both sides of the plate and settling in at shortstop. His season ended prematurely as he strained a hamstring in Chicago, but got one game in in which he went 2-for-4 with a single, double, and walk with two runs scored on Saturday.

Tofu Lou Marson ended the season with a modest three-game hitting streak, pounding a double in each of his two games against Boston to finish the season at .246/.347/.361. Marson looks to be the favorite to be the Opening Day catcher, as the Tribe will give wunderkind Carlos Santana some time in Columbus to further develop his skills and further delay the development of his wallet. At 23, it's awfully premature to put Marson on the Gregg Zaun development path, but ... um ... Marson's on the Gregg Zaun development path.

8) MVI

Shin-Soo Choo pounded his 20th homer of the season off ersatz ex-Tribesman Paul Byrd to give him a 20/20 (HR/SB) season and a .300 season-ending average. Although he fell a few (well, 6) points short of the magic .400 OBP mark, and a few more short of .500 SLG, Choo's season was clearly the best by any everyday player on the roster. He led the team in homers, RBI, runs, OBP, SLG, and (by definition) OPS, discounting the small-sample (20 AB) .400 AVG/OBP posted by Josh Barfield, who is a figment. His 156 games played also leads the team. Choo hit .275/.369/.456 off left-handed pitching, which I hope scotches any suggestion of him as a "platoon player" once and for all.

One odd split from Choo: he hit .240/.340/.409 during the day and .333/.425/.533 at night. More night games for my friend Choo!

9) The End of an Era

I have not said anything about the firing of Eric Wedge. For me, this is more of a relief than a victory. I spent much of 2007 (ironically) calling for Wedge to be fired, although a great portion of that was a superstitious exercise (the team won more games when I printed a Completely False Statement, so it was my version of Lucky Socks). Wedge did any number of well-documented things that made me less likely to support him, and I won't rehash them here. I will say this: he was universally respected and obviously hard-working and a man of character, and I wish him the best. But it was certainly time for a change, and if anything, I'm happy that he doesn't have to struggle with this team any longer. In that vein ...

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Rich Swerbinsky dresses his son Nicholas in Michigan Wolverines sleepwear and has taught him all thirty-seven verses of "Hail to the Victors." Fire Steve Buffum.