Justin Masterson recorded his first career shutout by throttling the … wait a minute, what? Masterson allowed only two hits, but more inconceivably, walked only two hit… hold on a sec, are you sure? He walked two RED SOX? He needed only 110 pitches to pitch a complete … what? You mean get through the fifth, right? No? And the offense came through with 11 runs … all right, now you're just toying with me. And Travis Hafner hit a grand slam … well, come on. At least TRY to be credible here.

FINAL	1	2	3
Red Sox (35-26)	0	0	0
Indians (22-36)	1	0	1

W: Masterson (2-5) L: Buchholz (8-4)

Seller's remorse!

1) This won't hurt a bit

Easy headline. MASTER-FUL
-- Jim Margalus, @SoxMachine

With all due respect to Jim, who roots for an odious team, the sentiment is hardly out of place. Consider: the Red Sox batted zero for zero with runners in scoring position. Two of the four baserunners they achieved were erased on double plays. Kevin Youkilis, one of the most patient hitters in baseball, saw 10 pitches in 3 plate appearances: one of them was a walk, and another was a whiff. Five of Masterson's six strikeouts were swinging. Before the ninth inning, Masterson allowed one putout by an outfielder. Boston as a team posted an ISO of zero point zero.

If you want to look at something that might encourage you beyond the obvious quality of a complete game 2-hit shutout, consider these factors:

a) Masterson recorded 17 ground ball outs to 4 in the air

In addition, two of the air outs came in the 9th, after Masterson had sat through the Indians'

offensive "explosion" that took roughly an episode of "Glee" to complete. Granted, there are two "extra" ground ball outs hidden in there, in that there were two GIDP, but … are we going to start complaining about inducing double plays? "I'm sorry, the corner of this hundred dollar bill is folded over, I will not accept it." Be serious. After all, a potential inning-ending double play wasn't turned in the second, it's not like Masterson got
lucky
here.

It's not that there is a one-to-one correspondence between ground ball outs and success, but it is a key element of *Masterson's* game. It shows good movement and a heavy ball.

b) Five of Masterson's six strikeouts came against left-handed hitters

This is Issue Number One, as John McLaughlin used to say: Masterson's left-right splits will always be an issue for him, but last night, he got David Ortiz swinging twice and Jeremy Hermida twice (once swinging, once looking) as well. Granted, the fifth K was against Josh Reddick, who is raw, a bad hitter, and possibly Justin Bieber, but he does hit left-handed.

Also granted is that both singles came from left-handed hitters: Victor Martinez and J.D. Drew. Of course, Martinez is hitting .298 and is a fine hitter, and Drew has a career .891 OPS, so these are not schmoes at the plate.

The highlight of a K against a lefty features a slung ball that seems to fade AWAY from the hitter, much like Westbrook's ball during his most successful outing. Is this a repeatable skill? (Heck, is it even TRUE? The camera angle is awkward.) As long as he can get lefties out, he does well enough against righties that he should be capable of deep outings.

c) Masterson threw 75 strikes and 35 balls

Walks have been eating Masterson alive, with four or more walks in five of his last ten starts. Although 2 walks isn't entirely awesome, it's a far sight better than the SIX from his last start, and the 6 Ks return Masterson to his calling card skill as well.

Consider this: Masterson threw two more pitches last night in 9 innings than he threw in his last start, in which he was pulled in the SIXTH INNING (5 2/3 IP). It was 4 more than the 5-inning stint against KC, and two FEWER than the 5 1/3 inning outing against Bal'mer.

Strikes are good.

2) The Paper Cut Offense

The Indians scored their first run on a single, two walks, and a sac fly. It was the only RBI the Indians would have in their first seven innings.

The second run scored when Trevor Crowe tripled, Shin-Soo Choo walked, and Austin Kearns grounded into a double play. The Indians grounded into TWO run-scoring double plays. This is the mark of only the most powerful offenses. Or most feeble. It's hard to keep these things straight.

The third run scored when Jhonny Peralta hit an infield single (yes, Jhonny Peralta! Yes, an INFIELD single!), took second base on a wild pitch, went to third on a groundout to first, and scored on a wild pitch. For those counting at home, that would be zero balls leaving the infield.

That … that's not Smallball. That's "Noneball." Maybe "Hairball." It's not something I think an offense can depend on: "Okay, Jhonny, just hit the ball weakly, then keep running whenever something ridiculous happens." Sure, that worked for my Dairy Queen club back in fourth grade, but let's face it: our opponents were pretty distractable. Well, so is Jhonny Peralta, I guess. I take it back: this is a TERRIFIC strategy! Let's go, DQ!

3) Look, that baby has candy!

Boof Bonser remains the best pitcher in the major leagues named after a sound effect, having surpassed Boing Karlsen of the Providence Grays in 1886 and Skidoosh Peterborough of the old Phiadelphia Athletics.

Last night was not his finest performance.

Upon entering the game in relief of starter Clay Buchholz, Bonser proceeded to throw four straight balls to Trevor Crowe, a fifth straight ball to Shin-Soo Choo on which Crowe stole second, a sixth straight ball, and then finally a strike that Choo laced to center for a single. He then walked Austin Kearns and gave up a mammoth single to Russ Branyan. Okay, actually a broken-bat blooper. It drove in a run, though. Bonser's ERA this season is now infinite.

Joe Nelson came in. Joe is roughly the twenty-third best "Nelson" ever to pitch in the majors, behind such luminaries as Jeff Nelson of the "Frisbee slider," No-thumbs Nelson of the 1934 Pirates, and Charles Nelson Reilly. After a second broken-bat RBI single, Nelson threw the most awfullest pitch in the history of Nelsons, begging Travis Hafner to pull it over the wall, which Hafner obligingly did for his first grand slam since he had connective tissue in his shoulder.

Nelson was not finished, though, as he allowed a single to Luis Valbuena and Anderson Hernandez' first extra-base hit … verily, his first major-league hit since he was a Washington National … of the season. He then walked Tofu Lou Marson, gave up a run-scoring double play, and RE-LOADED THE BASES AGAIN with two more walks. After an infield single by Russ Branyan (two RBI singles in the inning, hit collectively with the force of a thrown Circus Peanut) drove in a run, Nelson finally got out of the inning by whiffing Jhonny Peralta, who was thinking of ice cream.

Consider this: Nelson came in with the bases loaded. He gave up a hit, which left the bases loaded. He then allowed a grand slam and then RE-loaded the bases. And after getting a double play to leave a runner at third only, he RE-RE-loaded the bases.

That's pretty much the definition of "not awesome." His ERA is inifintely lower than Boof Bonser's.

4) Left out in the cold!

The Indians scored 8 runs in the 8th inning. Every player scored at least once, except poor Tofu Lou, who was on the front end of the double play.

5) Everybody gets on base!

The two Cleveland hitters that did not get a hit each walked twice (Marson, Kearns).

Trevor Crowe scored all three times he got on base.

The Indians had more runs than hits, more hits than walks, more walks than RBI, and more RBI than men left on base.

Only two Indians struck out: one because he was thinking of ice cream, and the other because he is Russ Branyan.

6) Not the best stat

The Indians scored 11 runs but had 1 two-out RBI.

7) Worth mentioning

Shin-Soo Choo got on base 4 times in 5 PAs. He scored one run.

Anderson Hernandez now leads the team in slugging.