After carrying a dominant two-hitter into the 7th inning, Jake Westbrook allowed a leadoff simgle before pulling out the Gophaire Ball Suprise™ and allowing the Yankees to win another game at Cleveland's expense. In today's column, Buff outlines the decision to pitch to Curtis Granderson, the incredible Vintage Baserunning, and the startling ability of the Tribe to translate five extra-base hits, including a homer, into a paltry two runs. And there's not really all that much more to say about that.

FINAL	1	2	3
Hoard (63-35)	0	0	0
Indians (41-58)	0	1	0

W: Vazquez (9-7) L: Westbrook (6-7) S: Rivera (21)

Yeah, I actually thought we were going to win that one.

1) Managerial Second-Guessers

"I wouldn't even think about taking out a guy who had a two-hitter in the eighth," Acta said. "I don't second-guess myself. I'm not flipping coins in the dugout."

While admirable, this sentiment concerns me as well. When I make a mistake, I may have had a perfectly rational reason for deciding to do what I did. The steak looks like it needed “one more minute,” so I’ll leave it on the fire a little longer. Updating the database should take about a half hour to prepare and execute, so I can start at 10:30 PM. I’m pretty tired, so another caffeinated soda before bedtime shouldn’t make a difference.

So when the steak gets dried out, or I’m up until 2 AM, or I find that I can’t go to sleep, it’s probably prudent to consider the decisions I’ve made and use that information when faced with a similar situation in the future.

In other words, I **LEARN**.

Now, I understand that “second-guessing” is a perjorative term in sports, and I also understand that just because a decision doesn’t work out doesn’t mean that it wasn’t a reasonable decision. In sports, where human beings are competing in ever-changing environments, the most you can ask is that a manager make a decision that can be supported by reasonable interpretations of meaningful data. The football coach went for it on fourth down: the fact that his team did not get a first down does not make this a bad decision in and of itself. Any sports play has a chance to succeed, and this chance of success can reasonably be estimated to be some number *strictly between* zero (complete failure: the chance of Joe Thomas being able to complete an 80-yard bomb) and one (complete success: the chance of sinking a one-millimeter putt). If you have a choice between two moves whose likely success rates are 0.45 and 0.60, I would have no problem with you picking the 0.45, because that is still a reasonable success rate, and there’s a lot of error inherent in those estimates. That is, the estimates are probably a lot more like (0.45 +/- 0.25) and (0.60 +/- 0.25), and now who’s to say the first isn’t actually more likely to succeed than the second? These numbers aren’t blinking out on the scoreboard, anyway.

But here, let me pose a hypothetical to you.

Consider this player:

2010 vs. LHP: .219/.257/.292
2010 vs. RHP: .267/.351/.515

2009 vs. LHP: .183/.245/.239
2009 vs. RHP: .275/.358/.539

2007-2009 vs. LHP: .202/.261/.309
2007-2009 vs. RHP: .301/.378/.562

One interesting feature: this player is actually regressing. It sure doesn’t look like acquiring this player at the expense of a talented youngster is the way to go. On the other hand, note that .515 would rate as the second-highest slugging percentage on the Cleveland Indians, and .562 would lead them by a wide margin.

(A second interesting feature: surprisingly, this player is not Grady Sizemore.)

Let us make this perfectly clear: **Curtis Granderson cannot hit left-handed pitching**.

This is not some esoteric split, like "on the road in the late innings against finesse pitchers at night" or "with runners on base and fewer than two outs against pitchers over 6'1" after the All-Star Break." This is pure, simple, repeatable, significant … Curtis Granderson … left-handed pitchers … plonk.

Now, was Jake Westbrook pitching well? Indisputably. He was pitching GREAT, arguably the best he's pitched in years. He had given up TWO HITS in seven complete innings, and struck out 5 guys. He retired the first ten batters he faced, including Granderson, whom he struck out swinging.

However, the SECOND time Granderson faced Westbrook, he *pounded* a ball all the way to the wall, and only the rocket arm or Shin-Soo Choo prevented this from being a double (Granderson was thrown out at second). And although Westbrook is a known groundball pitcher, suggesting that a double play (Posada at first) was a potential outcome, Westbrook gave up Posada's single on his 105th pitch, only 61 of which had been strikes, and Raffy Perez is a groundball pitcher as well. With his low delivery and sweeping slider, Perez is PRECISELY the kind of pitcher that Granderson has the MOST trouble with. Raffy's splits aren't good this season, but Granderson is by far the more-significant variable here. And if Perez wasn't ready, the question becomes: with a potential inning of Posada, Granderson, Cervelli, and Gardner (hitting 53 points lower against lefties) due in the 8th, well, why not?

No. You can try to sell me on the fact that you thought Westbrook was pitching So Very Well that he simply could not be stopped, but the fact is, there are not many opportunities that call this strongly for a matchup to be exploited: Curtis Granderson affords you *exactly* that opportunity. This was a bad decision, and while I'm not asking Acta to get all apologetic about missing the opportunity in the PAST, I DO want him to LEARN from this and USE this

information in the FUTURE.

2) Well-auditioned

None of this should take away from what was an excellent performance by Jake Westbrook. As stated, Westbrook allowed only two hits (a solo shot and Granderson's "long single") through 7 innings and more than matched Javier Vazquez pitch-for-pitch until the 8th. In fact, to understand part of Acta's thought process, dwell not on the "retired the first ten in a row," but rather his last two innings before the 8th:

6th: lineout, 2 swinging Ks
7th: 3 groundouts

The only potential chink in the proverbial armor was that each of the hitters in the 7th started with a 2-1 count, suggesting that Jake was not locating his pitches very well. Although he walked only 2 hitters, his strike percentage of 58.1% before Granderson's homer (59.1% for the game) was pretty lousy. Still, it should be noted that after the homer by Granderson, Westbrook then retired Cervelli, Gardner, and Jeter on consecutive ground ball outs. It's not like Westbrook was completely out of gas: he still had his stuff. It was a very good performance, and I hope it catches the attention of clubs still in the playoff hunt who need a rotation solidifier.

3) Ducks on the pond!

How do you turn four doubles into one run?

You go 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position! Woo hoo!

Jhonny Peralta hit his 23rd (!) double of the season, only to stranded when Matt LaPorta flied

out to right, then Trevor Crowe bounced out on a 2-0 pitch. Remember what Manny was saying about "a bad approach?" Yeah, that's kind of what he meant.

Jason Donald hit his 16th double of the season: did you realize that Donald now has one fewer double on the year than Shin-Soo Choo? Astounding. He … well, he gets his own heading.

Choo hit an RBI double but was left stranded when Carlos Santana whiffed. By the way, Carlos Santana in July: .208/.381/.347 with 18 strikeouts in 72 AB and 6 XBH out of 15.

And finally, after LaPorta doubled (huzzah! No whiff!), he went to third on a wild pitch, Crowe coaxed a walk, and … Donald bounced out to third.

The Tribe also hit into two double plays, although one was a liner to first that doubled off Asdrubal Cabrera and was a nice play by Mark Teixeira.

4) Sotto voce

Carlos Santana vs. RHP (111 PA): .330/.461/.614
Carlos Santana vs. LHP (53 PA): .143/.315/.286

5) 2006 revisited

One of the memes from the first official season of The B-List (check the archives) was "bad baserunning." Wow, we were bad baserunners in 2006. It seemed like every game featured some guy getting thrown out going from second to third on a ground ball to *third*, or getting doubled off because he thought there were two outs when there was only one, or getting picked off on the ol' "fake to third throw to first" play that had, until that point, never ever worked in the history of professional baseball. We had slow guys getting caught stealing and guys getting tagged out halfway from one base to another with no discernable goal in mind and Jhonny Peralta. It was tortuous.

And so, we consider Jason Donald, who, after doubling, watched Mike Brantley's grounder get stabbed by pitcher Javier Vazquez, and, wandering in the manner of a man in a bus station late at night wearing only pajama bottoms, was thrown out somewhere in the vicinity of nothing whatsoever. We consider him … a boob.

(Admittedly, the play made no real difference, as if Choo hit a run-scoring double: had he shown sentience, Vazquez would have thrown out Brantley and Donald would have scored, which is the same net result as what happened. But it caused several thousand of by nerve fibers to short out.)

6) Pronk smash!

Cleveland struck first in the game on a solo shot by Travis Hafner, his fifth consecutive hit (going back to his 4-for-4 performance the day before). Hafner is quietly hitting .309/.367/.436 in July and .423/.464/.654 since the All-Star Break.

7) Sotto voce II

Travis Hafner vs. LHP: .226/.298/.298.

8) Minor concern

Chris Perez threw 11 strikes in 21 pitches in a scoreless ninth. Admittedly, 4 of those pitches were an intentional walk, so the strike percentage and walk total (2 in 1 IP) look worse than they might on the surface, but … dude. Throw strikes.

9) Nice hose!

Choo gunned down Granderson at second on a ball off the wall, which shows a mighty good arm. But he wasn't the only outfielder with an assist last night, as Trevor Crowe's diving catch in left caught Teixeira rounding second (from first), and Teixeira was easily doubled off.

10) Sotto voce III

Crowe did not catch the ball.

11) This just in

Mike Brantley still can't hit and should bat ninth. Or eleventh.