In todays B-List, Buff unveils another contest, attempting to piggyback off of the wild popularity of the Eric Wedge Haiku contest. And speaking of haikus, Buff has one for the departed Todd Hollandsworth today. All regular B-List readers know of Buff's affinity with Hollandsworth. Buff also hits on his growing man crush on Shin Soo Choo, Jake Westbrook neutralizing the flamable Tribe bullpen, and the beginning of The Garko Era.

I'll say this, a Jake Westbrook start is rarely dull.

Contest time! No one wants more Eric Wedge Haiku (least of all Eric Wedge), but send me a short (50 words is a guide, but write whatever you want) description of the one player the Cleveland Indians misused most egregiously this season. Entries can be serious ("I think putting Fausto Carmona in the position to fail was ...") or snide ("Ramon Vazquez is a fungus") or anything in between. The best entry, as judged by our crack panel of me, will receive whatever I can talk Rich into donating. As a bonus, the player receiving the most votes will receive the most scathing profanity-laced tirade I can conjure up on his behalf and sent to the winner's choice of Mark Shapiro, Larry Dolan, Eric Wedge, or Bob Ney.

The contest will close on ... oh, let's say August 15. Unless it doesn't.

1) First things first

Since yesterday's column wasn't really a "list," I thought I'd mention a few things about Tuesday's game:

a) Tom Mastny, my pet project from before the season, threw eight pitches. The first three struck out a batter. The next three struck out a batter. The next two were strikes, although the second was grounded to an infielder for a routine out. A couple things come to mind: first, it is good to throw strikes. Second, WHERE IN THE NAME OF HERBERT HOOVER HAS THIS GUY BEEN?!

b) It was nice to see a 4-run comeback to tie the game. A futile comeback, to be sure, but a comeback nonetheless. The guys haven't totally rolled over, I'll give them that.

c) Jeremy Sowers' success at the major-league level now seems ENTIRELY dictated by his ability to keep the ball in the park.

d) Rafael Betancourt hurt my eye.

2) Vintage Jake

In the first inning, Jake Westbrook gave up three hits, all singles, but because Westbrook picked off My Sir Izturis (as ESPN points out, the first player in Angels history whose last name starts with an "I"! Why don't I have this job? I wonder if he's also the first player in Angels history whose SECOND letter of his last name is a "Z" ...), no runs scored.

In the second inning, Jake Westbrook gave up two hits, both singles, but induced a double play and got through the inning unscathed.
In the third inning, Jake Westbrook gave up two hits, both singles, but gave up no runs.

At this point I was really thinking that the all-time record for hits in a shutout (thanks to Evan Ruff, I know this number to be 14, in 1928) was in serious danger. After all, the pace at this point was 21 hits. However, Jake settled down considerably, and after giving up two more harmless singles in the fifth, didn't allow any BASERUNNERS until walking a guy in the 8th. Whom he erased on a double play. In all, Jake induced 14 ground ball outs and struck out 7 to go the distance. I wonder aloud whether Wedge was "rewarding" Westbrook by letting him go out for the ninth, or if he realized that his bullpen is carved out of bear feces. By the way, noted free swingers Vlad Guerrero and Garret Anderson each retired themselves on the first pitch. Facing a guy who's annoyed you all night but has thrown over 100 pitches, and knowing the strength of the Cleveland bullpen is in its absence, how is this good strategy?

3) Plate discipline revisited
In the first seven innings, 30 Indians came to the plate.
SIX swung at the first pitch. Single, foul (eventual single), foul (eventual walk), single, foul (eventual K), groundout. Grady Sizemore and Hector Luna pulled the trick twice each; Shin-Soo Choo and Victor Martinez had the singles. Lest you think the Angels' hurlers were simply wild, SIXTEEN batters took a called first strike.
I'm not sure there's any great Little League Edict going on here, but John Lackey was forced out after six innings with 104 pitches and 3 walks, and we drew 4 walks and pounded out 10 hits.
(In the 8th, everyone wanted to go home and three of the four batters fouled off the first pitch. Luna did work an 0-2 count to 3-2 before lining out to center on the 10th pitch, though.)

4) The continued love affair
Shin-Soo Choo went 3-for-4, scored a run, drove in a run, and stole a base. Choo is now batting .310/.408/.580 on the season, but .387/.472/.677 as a Cleveland Indian.
For some reason, I like him more than Todd Hollandsworth. Call me nutty.
5) Missed opportunities for squandering
We loaded the bases with no outs twice in the first four innings ... and scored both times! Woo woo! Stop the presses!

Of course, one of the three runs was unearned, but hey, it wasn't the Squanderama I'm used to. Mighty Joe Inglett drove in a run ... by walking. (This is about as "mighty" as Joe Inglett gets.)
6) The joy of burning worms
One of the big plusses of throwing a very good sinker (as Westbrook does) is the potential for inducing double plays. That means that even if one of the ground balls sneaks through for a hit, the next crisp ground ball can set the team right back to ground zero. Of course, this requires

the defense to actually TURN the double plays, and Cleveland's did, to the tune of 3, two from My Sir. Given an infield that has played roughly zero games together (Marte, Peralta, Luna, Garko), this is pretty good stuff.

7) Yes, I belong

Ryan Garko has now gotten a hit in each of the two games since being called back up, 3 in 3 if you count the 7/1 game against Cincinnati. Apparently, the man can hit. Who knew? (Hint: anyone who followed the farm system.)

Note that since OBP calculations count sacrifices as plate appearances and AVG calucluations do not, Garko is a member of the non-coveted "AVG higher than OBP" club at .333/.300/.444. (Bran Phillips was there early in the year) This means he has more sacrifices (in this case, sac flies) than walks (in this case, zilch). The sample size of ten plate appearances makes this something to not worry about, but it's something you don't see every day.

8) I ... well ... I ... San Dimas High School football rules!

Andy Marte was the only Indian to not reach base. He is hitting .115. I am still happy he is playing instead of Aaron Boone.

9) A belated farewell

Todd Hollandsworth was traded to Cincinnati for Nothing To Be Named Later. I will miss him, unless a neuron fires.

O, Todd Hollandsworth, Your play inspired us to write, "When will that guy leave?!"