There's a scene in "The Last Boy Scout" in which Bruce Willis is sitting in a chair and a nameless bad guy offers to light his cigarette. As Willis leans forward, the guy hits him in the face. Ho ho! High comedy! Well, that's how last night's loss felt: after coming back to tie the game with three runs in the bottom of the ninth, the Indians end up losing by FOUR in eleven innings. Can September callups get here fast enough?

FINAL	1	2	3
White Jerx (71-60)	2	3	0
Indians (53-78)	0	0	0

W: Linebrink (2-1) L: R. Perez (4-1)

Look, did we deserve to win that game? No, we did not deserve to win that game. But we should have won that game.

1) Today's physics lesson: the internal combustion engine

To keep things simple, we will only consider the more basic types of internal combustion engines. With all due respect to Mr. Wankel and his rotary version, or impractical version such as steam or jet engines, the main three types of internal combustion engines are the four-stroke, two-stroke, and zero-stroke engines.

In the basic four-stroke model, the piston is attached to a crankshaft, and the piston has two paths for air to either enter or escape. First, the piston moves up to expand the space in the chamber, and air and combustible material (in most cases, gasoline) are brought into the chamber in a phase known as **Intake**. Second, the piston moves downward to squeeze the materials together, a process known as **Compression**. At this point, the mixture is ignited, and the pressure of the contained miniature explosion drives the piston up with great force. (It is this force that enabled the beginning of the cycle, as it lasts through two entire rotations of the cylinder around the crankshaft.) This is, unsurprisingly, called
Combustion
. Finally, the piston comes back down to push the cooled combustion products out of the

cylinder through another valve in a process known as
Exhaust
. A four-stroke engine is efficient and durable, although it has less power than the two-stroke engine because it gets only one power stroke (combustion) for each
two
rotations of the crankshaft. In baseball terms, an example of this would be Mark Buehrle, an efficient and durable (if mostly unspectacular) starting pitcher.

In the two-stroke model, there is no dedicated intake or exhaust stroke. Instead, combustible materials are drawn in when the chamber is fully open, then the ignition takes place at the point of maximal compression. The exhaust is driven out through a valve as the piston is driven downward, and fresh combustibles are pulled in the other valve at the bottom of the stroke. This is a more efficient method of powering a vehicle, in that each turn of the crankshaft has a power stroke (as opposed to one every *other* turn in a four-stroke engine), but generally two-stroke engines are much louder and more polluting than their four-stroke brethren. In baseball terms, this would correspond to Chris Perez, who uses flammable hair gel to fuel the ignition process and requires nine-tenths of his body mass to hurl the ball.

In a zero-stroke model, all fuel is drained from the system. The pistons are then removed and replaced with cranberry muffins which have been left exposed to air for five days to reach a proper level of staleness. (In a pinch, blueberry muffins will suffice, but banana nut muffins are not recommended, because of their high potassium content. Also, banana nut muffins are *foul*.) Finally, each chamber is filled with room-temperatute chocolate pudding. With this configuration, no power whatsoever is transferred from anything to anything else, resulting in the characteristic “zero-stroke” lack of functioning. In baseball terms, this would be Mitch Talbot since late July.

2) Twice as good!

Actually, Talbot’s start was, in one measure, fully TWICE as good as his previous start.

It took him TWO innings to give up five runs instead of just ONE.

(Thank you, I’ll be here all week.)

Seriously, man, the guy hasn't thrown a good game since July 17th. He looks gassed. Or filled with chocolate pudding. Either way, it isn't any good. 140 IP doesn't seem like a lot of innings, but the results … great Hera's uterus, the results are poor.

3) Human after all

With a two-out solo shot, Alex Rios proved Justin Germano to be not perfect after all. It was Germano's first earned run as a Cleveland Indian, and proved costly, in that the game went to extra innings. Overall, Germano gave up three hits in 1 2/3 innings, striking out two batters. He remains one of the bright spots on the Cleveland staff.

4) Multiple kudos for blandness

Frank Herrmann got out of Germano's mess in the 7th and pitched a scoreless frame of his own.

Joe Smiff allowed two hits, but threw 7 strikes in 11 pitches in his scoreless inning of work.

Hector Ambriz was the most effective Cleveland pitcher, throwing 1/3 perfect inning.

5) "Two-stroke" does not refer to the number of strokes you cause me to have watching you pitch

I love Chris Perez, I really do, but great Neptune's flesh-eating bacteria, throwing 10 strikes in TWENTY-SEVEN pitches, walking THREE batters (one intentionally, but still), putting FOUR guys on base, and needing a double play and a deepish fly to get out of the scoreless inning … well, look, son. To paraphrase Jack Torrance from "The Shining," "All work and no strikes makes you Joe Borowski." Stop it.

6) Guest commentary: Joseph Conrad watches Raffy Perez' 11th inning

The horror … the horror …

7) And yet, we should still have won the game

Look, was the three-run rally in the bottom of the 9th off Fat Bobby J a thing of beauty, or even thoroughly deserved? It was not. Shin-Soo Choo scored the first run because they didn't care about him: he walked, "stole" second, and scored on a bloop single. The force of Chicago's collective yawning actually knocked over poor Omar Vizquel at third base, although admittedly, its impressive for a 60-year-old man to remain attentive through 9 innings. Then Travis Hafner whacked his THIRD double of the game, which is clearly very nice, but the only well-struck ball in the entire inning.

And then Luis Valbuena's Baltimore Chop over the mound out toward second base was butchered with great authority by Brett Lillibridge, whose bare-handed throw to first brought up fond memories of Garo Ypremian, or perhaps my catcher in the 8-year-old Little League trying in vain to throw the ball all the way to second base while forgetting to take his mask off and being pretty bloody uncoordinated in the first place. (He was the only player on the team to wear size nine shoes. He was a good kid. He was bad at baseball.)

But see, this is the point: Valbuena was awarded second base as Ypremian's throw bounded into the dugout. And, if you'll note carefully, you'll see:

Choo: not out
Duncan: also not out
Hafner: still not out
Valbuena: especially not out

So, of all the hitters in the inning, a relatively low number of them were out, where that number

can be expressed through the ancient Arabic concept of “zero.” And so, with FBJ on the ropes, having walked one hitter and going 2-1 on Luis Friggin Valbuena, who hits like a pterosaur in a Snuggie™, a runner on second, and NO BODY OUT, Andy Marte, who to this point has a double AND A WALK, needing only to advance the runner to third, grounds out to shortstop on the FIRST PITCH.

By this point, you know my philosophy on hitting the first pitch: drive it, or you suck.

The next hitter DID advance the runner to third … but see, that’s not QUITE as valuable because NOW THERE ARE TWO OUTS.

And Trevor Crowe makes an out, although, in his defense, he did … um … foul off a 1-2 pitch. Okay, not so much “defense” as “rationalization.” Or maybe “weak sauce.”

Anyway, that sucked.

8) Pronk Quasi-smash!

Travis Hafner didn’t hit a homer, but he DID have four hits (and a walk) on the night, three of which were doubles. Hafner has lifted his SLG on the season to .452: before the season, I would have accepted a .450+ SLG from a late-stage Hafner. I mean, sure, I’d prefer .500+, and this doesn’t justify his contract number, and blah blah blah. The fact is, he’s on the team, and as such, if he adds value, then he adds value.

Hafner is hitting .282/.380/.452; EACH of those numbers is valuable.

9) Nixed

Jayson Nix hit his 12 homer of the season. At this point, it's probably a fait accompli that he'll get first crack at third base in the Spring: his .284/.322/.531 August is a pretty good month, and he now has a .200 ISO on the season, suggesting real, legitimate power. Of course, some of this is coming at a cost: Nix struck out 23 times in July and has K'd 23 more in August in about 100 and 90 PA each. Given everyday playing time, this would end up significantly over 100 Ks on the season. Still, I stand by my Casey Blake comparison, except Nix isn't as athletic or tall, and Blake played better D at 3B (at least partially due to Nix' inexperience there).

But he also got tossed for arguing the last strike of the 7th inning. Don't get tossed, man. Who are you, Manny Ramirez?

10) Nice hose!

Tofu Lou caught Juan Pierre trying to steal third.

11) Ducks of all varieties

Sure, the Indians left 12 guys on base, but the ChiSox left SIXTEEN. They got twenty-one hits and drew seven walks, man! Shee-it. We had 18 hits-plus-walks, and they had TWENTY-EIGHT. We were kinda fortunate we were even in the GAME.