What a debut season for Jeremy Sowers. It's a debut season that likely ended last night, as the Tribe will shut Sowers down for the rest of the year. The rationale is twofold. One, Sowers has pitched close to 200 IP already this year. Two, they need room in the rotation for Fausto Carmona, recast once again as a starter. Buff takes an in depth look at Sowers season, as well as other items from last nights win in todays edition of The B-List.

This game had so many familiar elements to it: the bullpen imploding, baserunners stealing at will, infield hits, questionable managerial choices ... I'm just used to the INDIANS doing all these things; this time it was the OPPONENT.

1) Cue the swelling music, dim the lights

"... and Jeremy Sowers, having vanquished the evil Canadians, went home, secure in the knowledge that he would return next season, and lived happily ever after."

Or, at least, this is what I am hoping. The Brain Trust declared that their original plan was to air Carmona out in the minors to prepare to take Sowers' slot in the rotation because he's hit a career high in innings (now 180+) and there's no point in forcing the issue. I like this plan and heartily endorse it. In the words of Jean-Luc Picard, make it so.

What are we to make of Sowers' debut season? Well, if I'm right and this was his last start, he finishes the season with sick numbers in Beefalo and damned respectable ones in the bigs: a 7-3 record and a 3.35 ERA, made all the more impressive by the fact that his ERA after his first

couple of starts was about forty-nine. His WHIP is 1.14, quite respectable (for reference, Sabathia's is 1.19). Although he averaged only 91.3 pitches per start, this is not a bad idea for a yoot. In his last nine starts, he gave up 0 runs three times (including two complete games), 2 runs five times, and four (three earned) once.

Three things bear watching for me: generally speaking, a pitcher gives up a "batting average on balls in play" (that is, balls hit that aren't home runs) in the .300 range. There's some variance, and the research is incomplete, but basically variance in this is as much luck as anything else. There are some other factors: Jason Johnson's poor .356 was probably not helped by the "range" of the Cleveland infielders, and Scott Sauerbeck's .212 is mostly a product of miniscule sample size. Anyway, **Sowers' BABIP is .249**, which is significantly low. It is possible that he is a pitcher who can induce weakly-hit balls, but it's much more likely that this number will be quite a bit higher in 2007.

The number I hope is LOWER in 2007 is the HR rate: the man gave up **10 HR in 83 1/3 innings**. That's 1.08 per 9 IP, or about 1 an outing. In his defense, in those last nine starts I mentioned, he only gave up 3 (including a solo shot last night). And solo shots aren't that big a deal. Still, Sowers has to maintain this ability to keep the ball in the park, because ...

... **he struck out 33 guys in those 83 1/3 innings**. That's 3.56 per 9 IP, which is basically poor. He's not an extreme groundball guy like Westbrook. It's possible to be an effective pitcher with that kind of K rate (cf. Wang, C-M) ... but t'ain't likely.

In any event, Sowers was much more than a placeholder fifth starter this season: he's clearly earned a slot in next year's rotation, and shows great composure and sense of timing and placement. Kudos all around! Now shut him down.

2) Blind Squirrel Theory!

Hey, it's easier and probably more accurate to chalk up the walk to Joe Inglett to simple

badness on Jeremy Accardo's part, but with two outs, I imagine he felt okay about walking the .282 hitter to get to the .204 hitter (who was 0-for-3 to that point, and had botched a bases-loaded plate appearance last night). Still, Andy Marte hit the first pitch he saw from Accardo over the wall in center, turning a tie game into a 6-2 laugher with neener, neeners all around.

By the way, it's hard to express just how worthless Accardo was last night: the first batter he faced doubled, the second hit an infield single, and the third hit the ball back to him, which he promptly turned into zero outs. Hector Luna hangs his head in shame at making an out.

3) Terror on the basepaths!

Normally this would mean one of two things:

a) The opponent terrorized us with stolen bases and extra bases taken on hits

b) The Indians' baserunning caused terror in small children coast-to-coast

In this case, however, on Opposite Day (a Canadian tradition, I infer), it was the Indians who terrorized the opponent by stealing three bases off nominally-good catcher Bengie Molina (there are too many Molinas for me to know if this one is very good or not), one by the recently-chided Shin-Soo Choo. Choo's stolen base led directly to a run (the previously-disgraced Hector Luna singled him home on the next pitch). In addition, Frank Gutierrez beat Accardo's throw home on the come-backer to score the tying run in the eighth, Joe Inglett beat out a bunt single, and Choo reached on an infield single to first. I don't know if any of this translates into Actual Team Speed (Choo is faster than Michaels, for example, but so what?), but it's nice to see some manifestations of it, no matter how transitory. And I liked trying to put guys in scoring position against Halladay, who is Evil.

4) Managerial Back Slappers

I really like how Eric Wedge managed the game yesterday. As I said, sending runners against Halladay is a calculated risk: you aren't going to get a lot of them, so you better make them count. This means you have to weigh the cost of an out (high) against the benefit of putting a runner in scoring position (higher against a Halladay than an Accardo, IMO). Since both guys made it (Choo's stolen base was off the reliever Romero), I have to say it was nicely done (albeit pointlessly done, in that neither guy scored, but hey).

I also liked the decision to pinch-run Gutierrez for Garko, figuring in the 8th there wasn't much chance that Garko's bat would be missed unless we got lots of hits, in which case it wouldn't hurt anyway. I suppose we could have just tied and gone to extra innings, but that's still not worth "saving" Garko over. That decision also led to a run, as Garko would be pretty unlikely to have scored on the ball Gutierrez did.

5) Managerial Head Scratchers

I have a question, though: when the big 8th rolled through a SECOND loading of the bases, Wedge sent Kelly Shoppach up to hit for Gutierrez. This certainly made sense defensively, but you could do that flop after the inning was over. Shoppach does have the higher OBP (bad instead of awful) and SLG (non-trivial instead of paltry), but Gutierrez has the higher AVG ... they're both right-handed ... I just didn't understand the *point* is all.

On the other side of the ledger, the right-handed Accardo gives up the slam ... then pitches to the left-handed Sizemore (who is terrible against lefties) ... and then is replaced by the left-handed Tallet, in time to face ... right-handed Jason Michaels, switch-hitting Victor Martinez, and right-handed Franklin Gutierrez (who became right-handed Kelly Shoppach). I ... uh ... hey, how 'bout that play from John McDonald, huh?

6) It still looks wrong

Just like Joe Namath in a Rams uniform, John Unitas as a Charger, Hank Aaron as a Brewer, it just looks wrong to see:

C Blake intentionally walked

This LOADED THE BASES. For Hector Luna, yes, but it *loaded* the *bases*. And Halladay was pitching. Halladay ... concerned about Casey Blake's ability to hit ... with runners in scoring position and two out (think about this in 2005) ... walked Blake intentionally. Yes, first base was open, but ... it's *Casey Blake*. Still looks odd, that's all.

7) Obligatory mention

Rafael Betancourt threw 9 strikes in 13 pitches, recording 2 Ks in a one perfect inning.

Tom Mastny recovered from his last "save" to throw a shutout inning, although he did walk a batter after going 1-2 to him. The next batter bounced into a double play, so that's enough of that.

Jason Michaels walked once. Since he was the only Cleveland batter not to have a hit, this takes the "better than nothing" award.

8) Ducks on the pond!

We left 11 guys on base, including a ridiculous SEVEN in scoring position. Hector Luna and Kelly Shoppach each left the bases loaded, and Jason Michaels managed to botch runners on second twice. Of course it didn't matter, but it still induces a raspberry. Phbt!