Ah, Opening Day. The smell of the grass, the roar of the crowd, the crack of the bat. And the crack of the bat. And the crack of the bat. And the crack of the bat. And the crack of the bat. And … yep, Fausto's still pitching, so more crack of the bat. A new season of the B-List brings us Justin Masterson's groundball machine, the unlikely slugging tandem of Tofu Lou and Jack Hannahan, the K-Klub Bullpen, and … well … more cracks off more bats.

FINAL	1	2	3
White Sox (1-0)	2	0	4

Indians (0-1)	0	0	0

W: Buehrle (1-0) L: Carmona (0-1)

FINAL	1	2	3
White Sox (2-0)	1	4	0
Indians (0-2)	0	3	0

W: Ed. Jackson (1-0) L: Carrasco (0-1)

FINAL	1	2	3
White Sox (2-1)	0	0	1
Indians (1-2)	0	0	0

W: Masterson (0-1) L: Danks (0-1)

I'm not sure which was more exciting: the Indians turning a triple play, or me punching a hole through my monitor in the 4th inning on Friday.

1) CFL All-Star

One of the exciting things about the Canadian Football League is that there are only 3 downs. Instead of third-down conversions, there are second-down conversions, meaning that you really pretty much have to get 5 yards a play in order to move the ball. Other exciting things include 12 players per team, a wider, longer field, scoring points on tremendous punts, occasional yetis devouring unwary cornerbacks, and teams owned by Meat Loaf.

It takes some getting used to, though, realizing that an incomplete pass on second down pretty much means you have to punt, so the game is fast-paced, pass-oriented, and completely devoid of interest. Still, you could imagine this kind of innovation being carried over to baseball: you could see, for example, an effort to squeeze an entire baseball game into the 4 hours of daylight Canadians are rationed in Spring Training by going to 3 balls for a walk and 2 strikes for a strikeout. We'll call this sport Canadian Rules.

In Canadian Rules Baseball, Fausto Carmona was AWESOME.

Consider this: in the U.S., Carmona's 4-hit, 2-run first inning was what we might term "not very good," but in C.R.B., Carmona struck out six hitters in the first inning alone. I mean, that's really tremendous, right?

Consider this: Carmona faced a total of 21 hitters in 3-plus (the plus stands for Extra Fail!) innings, and collected thirteen "Canadian Strikeouts," also not known as "Kanadians." He

started Juan Pierre off with an 0-2 count … and gave up a single. He started Gord Beckham with a 1-2 count (a swinging Kanadian) … and gave up a double. He actually got Adam Dunn to conventionally strike out, which is akin to getting Patton Oswalt to yell. In fact, he got 2 strikes on 9 of the first 10 hitters over the first two innings, including 4 real strikeouts: only A.J. Pierzynski showed the patience of … well … A.J. Pierzynski … grounding out on a 1-0 pitch.

So there is some goodness to be had here. Carmona got 9 swinging strikes in 88 pitches, a pretty good ratio for him. He struck out 5 hitters in 3-plus (the plus stands for Exploding Spleen!) innings, balanced by only 1 walk. And he got at least two strikes on 13 of the first 18 hitters he faced, throwing 65% strikes (52 of 80) before completely derailing (walk Pierre, single Beckham, double Dunn, shower Carmona).

But look: the man gave up 7 hits with two strikes. The White Sox hit FIVE THIRTY EIGHT with two strikes on them. Five thirty eight! That's simply atrocious. I don't think there's a whole of analysis here: Carmona threw reasonably hard and was in the strike zone, but to be effective, his pitches must move more than eroding sandstone, and they did not. The Sox pounded Carmona, and that's the end of the thoughtful analysis.

Fun fact: according to the arcane and non-intuitive metric "Game Score," Fausto's performance was a 1. (50 is average. Carlos Carrasco was terrible … and he scored a 26. Fausto got a ONE.)

2) The Jason Davis Commemorative Wazoo

Long, long ago in a galaxy … well, about four cubes over, I've moved, but … back in 2006 I wrote that the long-man-slash-swing roll might not be well-suited to Jason Davis. I mean, one of the first articles I ever wrote for theclevelandfan.com was about how Jason Davis irritated the excrement out of me, but the fact was, Davis wasn't good enough to start (not with the mighty Paul Byrd on the roster!) and wasn't really good enough to be a setup guy (that was really independent of the roster), so if he wanted to be on the roster, he had to be able to thrive in the oddball "swing" role where you get to sit for a long time and then come in when Jake Westbrook gets gout in the second inning or what have you and come out and throw multiple innings before a series of assorted Raffies were able to finish off the game. It wasn't the case of that role being the best for Davis' skill set, necessarily, but more the case that this was the role we needed a pitcher to do, and if Davis couldn't do it, then he was not useful to the team.

It turned out that Jason Davis could not do it and was not useful to the team. Or, in fact, any team.

Anyway, Justin Germano did not give up a single run in spring training. He showed flashes of brilliance and long stretches of adequacy in the last couple of months of the 2010 season. He is not a complete putz. But the fact remains: this is the role we have, and the role we need someone to be able to execute. He was able to execute in this role for stretches last season, as as a guy who has started some in the past, he should ostensibly be suited for this role.

Friday's incarnation was about as badly as someone could possibly execute this role.

3) In all, or at least some, fairness

Actually, Germano was fine in the fifth and sixth, pitching two scoreless, hitless innings with one walk. But he was really amazingly bad in the 4th inning.

The other thing, of course, is that Justin Germano is almost completely irrelevant to the Cleveland Indians' success in 2011. If he is pitching, it is a bad game. How he pitches is almost beside the point.

He sure was bad, though.

4) Silver Lining Dept.

Let's get this out of the way: Carlos Carrasco's second inning was awful. His command wasn't very sharp, and he gave up every one of the four runs he allowed. He wasn't any good.

This having been said, consider his third through sixth innings. Carrasco is most effective when he is throwing groundball stuff with some swing-and-miss mixed in. In these four innings, Carrasco was able to settle down and posted a 6:3 GO:FO ratio with two swinging Ks (the other out was on the basepaths). He walked one hitter (Adam Dunn, largely prudent leading off the inning) and gave up a pair of singles in the 6th after three hitless innings. He even got two quick outs in the 7th before allowing a single on his 103rd pitch to end his day.

(Before we get any further, I think it was perfectly fine to give him the 7th: you could argue that he was running out of gas and 6-3 is still a winnable game, but this argument requies a bit of hindsight in my opinion, and didn't have much impact in the grand scheme of things.)

You can't simply dismiss the abysmal nature of his first two innings: making small sample sizes smaller has no inherent value. All I'm saying is that I'm not going to dismiss Carlos Carrasco as a viable starting pitcher because his first two innings of the season were lousy. I saw enough in the 3rd through 6th to make me think that Carrasco has enough talent two warrant an entire season in the rotation, especially in a season that isn't likely to have a lot more intrinsic meaning than an episode of "Flapjack."

5) Crushed Velvet Speedbump

Justin Masterson's first pitch was a strike. His second pitch was also a strike. His third pitch was a ground ball out.

Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

Unlike Carrasco or Carmona, Masterson had good command with good movement, throwing 17 first-pitch strikes and 63 of 98 overall. More importantly for Masterson's long-term success, he induced an ungodly 16 groundball outs to just 3 in the air. It might be a little worrying to note that he didn't strike out a single batter, especially since he was the only starter in the rotation last season who had anything approaching a decent K-rate, but frankly, if you're going to complain about zero strikeouts in a 7-inning 1-run outing in which he held the Sox to 1-for-9 with runners in scoring position and gave up one extra-base hit (a double), you're going to get more

give-and-take from some other column.

Note that also he didn't record a strikeout, he did get 7 swings-and-misses, so his stuff is still quite fine. He is still going to have to find a way to be more effective against lefties, as 5 of the 7 hits came off port-siders for a brisk .455 AVG against, but … did I mention the sixteen groundball outs?

6) Nostradamus Weeps

I had someone approach me on Twitter asking what the over/under date would be on when I proclaimed Jack Hannahan a "fungus." For those of you who aren't familiar with the term, you might consider looking in the archives.

However, the answer is certainly NOT April 4th.

Early-season stats are obviously filled with hilarity, as the sample sizes are laughable and you end up with Shelley Duncan sporting a 2.000 OPS because he singled in his only plate appearance. Shelley Duncan is not going to finish the year with a 2.000 OPS unless he leaves the team tonight to pursue a career in terraforming. Orlando Cabrera is not going to lead the team in RBI, and Shin-Soo Choo is not going to slug .083 for the year.

It's still fun to look at the small-sample numbers, though, because they yield gems like:

a) Cleveland has SIX hitters slugging over SIX HUNDRED … and three of them are Orly Cabrera, Tofu Lou Marson, and Jack Hannahan.
b) Cleveland has SEVEN hitters hitting at least .333, and this includes Mike Brantley.
c) The Indians have SIX hitters with an OBP at least FOUR HUNDRED, and this includes Austin Kearns, who is hitting .000.

But let's face it: the huge surprise thus far is that Hannahan not only has 4 hits in 11 AB … not

only has 3 RBI and is hitting .364/.417/.636 … but he leads the team in homers! Okay, it's with one, but team lead is team lead.

Yeah, he made an error. Ask me if I miss Jayson Nix.

7) Dept. of Explicit Responses

(I do not.)

8) Power super, super power

Tony Sipp: 7 strikes in 9 pitches, 2 Ks, perfect inning.
Chris Perez: 9 strikes in 12 pitches, perfect inning.
Frank Herrman: 23 strikes in 29 pitches, 5 Ks in 2 innnings.
Vinnie Pestano: 11 strikes in 14 pitches, 3 Ks in 1 scoreless inning.

Raffy Perez also struck out a hitter in a hitless, scoreless inning, but he walked two guys, pumped 9 of 18 pitches for strikes, and hit Slider.

Sure, Herrmann gave up a run, but … I could TOTALLY embrace this kind of relief pitching. That was FUN!

9) Welcome to the club!

Chad Durbin: not as much fun.

Handy tip from the Amateur Pitching Coach: throw strikes! Walking your first hitter on four pitches is a lousy way to make a first impression, man.

10) Pronk smash!

Am I excited that Travis Hafner jerked a homer over the right-field wall? Shoot, I might be more excited that he played three games in a row without requiring surgery.

But … hey, why try to hide it? Heck yeah, I'm excited! Woo hoo! I mean, he's no Jack Hannahan, but hey.

11) Let's turn three

With no outs and men on first and second, Weather Vane Ramirez tried to lay down a bunt with a 1-0 lead. This is reasonable sensible: Masterson is a groundball pitcher, you certainly don't want a double play, it puts two men in scoring position (albeit with Omar Vizquel and Juan Pierre coming up, but hey), and Ramirez is a decent-enough bunter. It's the "obvious" play, although I am on record as comparing bunting to performing enemas on strangers for charity.

Ramirez fouled off the first pitch, but with ersatz first baseman Carlos Santana charging on the 0-1 pitch, Ramirez tried again, this time with the runners going.

Santana made an excellent diving grab, certainly not looking like a novice first baseman. Should he have thrown to second? Yeah, he probably should have thrown to second. He ended up blooping a lollipop to first, and then Orly tossed a meatball to second, but this is how far gone the baserunners were. Had Santana run to the dugout, grabbed a pogo stick, and hopped his way to first and second while the remaining Cleveland players performed the "Electric Slide," it would STILL have been a triple play.

Was I amused? Yeah, I was pretty amused.

12) As if that weren't enough

By the way, Santana wenre 6-for-13 over the weekend, including a homer, 2 runs, and 3 RBI. He currently leads the team in every offensive category except "sucking," in which he is dead last.

13) Sotto voce

Shin-Soo Choo has a higher OPS against left-handed pitching than right-handed pitching … at .311. He wears a handsome Golden Sombrero from his performance against Ed Jackson and Chris Sale. He has six strikeouts in 12 AB. He has fewer hits than Lou Marson or Matt LaPorta.