After making a late summer surge behind a wave of new callups, the Tribe is once again starting to flounder. Last night, they were befuddled by Kirk Freaking Saarloos at the dish, and could not throw strikes when on the mound. Buff hits on those points, applauds the team for finally playing Kouzmanoff in the field, and even mentions to quote Ross Perot in todays B-List.

What, did we leave the iron doughnuts on the bats?

1) Sa-WING, battah!

Kirk Saarloos, whom I watched many times be sub-mediocre as an Astro, struck out 11 Cleveland Indians in 5 innings. This raises his K/9 from 3.13 to 3.825 on the season. Let's put this in perspective: C-M Wang of the Yankees roundly confuses statheads by being an effecitve pitcher with a ridiculously low K rate of 2.99. This is considered absurd. Saarloos in his previous 9 outings struck out 2, 1, 3, 1, 1, 2, 1, 0, and 1, although the last two outings were relief outings of 2 and 1 innings respectively. In his previous 29 starts, Saarloos' high strikeout total was 5. **Five**. We struck out more than twice an inning against a guy who throws such gunk he gives up 1.275 HR/9, which is Elartonesque.

Once the Tribe's rhythm was established, five Oakland relievers combined to strike out 6 more batters in the final 4 frames. Through five innings, the Oakland defense recorded 4 putouts. The Indians stranded 10 runners in those 5 innings, as Saarloos gave up 8 hits and 4 walks, meaning that he was, for all intents and purposes, still Kirk Saarloos, despite the gale force winds generated by contact-free Cleveland bats. Shin-Soo Choo got the Golden Sombrero with four swinging strikeouts (and a walk, meaning Choo put the ball into player exactly nonce), including one to end the first inning with the bases loaded and one to end the third with runners on 2nd and 3rd.

Choo gets singled out because, well, he was horrific (what moron was demanding more playing time for this mook?! Oh, yeah, that was me.). However, every starter struck out at least once, and Casey Blake took three Ks with him in the three slot, while Hector Luna, Grady Sizemore, and Jhonny Peralta (as I die of Not Surprise) had a pair each. Now, Blake did have two hits, as did Luna, but geez.

2) Ducks choke the pond!

Cleveland managed to get 13 hits, draw five walks, and didn't ground into any double plays. Two of the hits were doubles, and both Kevin Kouzmanoff and Hector Luna drove in a run with 2 outs.

All of this translated into a massive 3 runs, because Cleveland left fourteen men on base, TEN of them in SCORING POSITION. Along with the four left by Choo as he missed pitch after pitch, Blake and Franklin Gutierrez left two each as well. Blake watched (watched!) strike three go by on a 1-2 count with runners on 2nd and 3rd, while Gutierrez lined out to second with the

bases loaded in the fifth.

To quote H. Ross Perot before he went insane, "Now, see, that's just sad."

3) Chumpus Maximus!

Cliff Lee retired the first eight batters, losing his perfect game in the third inning. However, he managed to follow this single with a walk, a wild pitch, and another walk before retiring Milton Bradley to end the third.

He lost his shutout in the 4th on a solo shot to lefty Eric Chavez, who hits lefties at a .212 clip this season. Oh, well, Chavez is pretty good.

He then apparently reversed the pumpkinization process with a 1-2-3 5th inning. And then ... well, then with runners on first and third with two outs, he goes 3-2 to Nick Swisher, who strikes out at an impressive 31.8% clip this season ... and hits him.

The next batter homered, and the game was pretty much over. Seriously, if Lee gets Swisher to make an out there instead of hitting him, he turns the game over to the bullpen, Kielty faces a righty, and Lopez is probably not entrusted with the 8th, at which point we could arguably have been trying to close out a 3-1 win instead of trying to scratch 4 more runs out to TIE. Lee only gave up 4 hits, but he walked 5, threw a wild pitch, hit a guy, and watched two balls leave the yard. Bleah.

4) The common sense approach is sometimes only the former

It made perfect sense to me that Choo should get more playing time against right-handed starters, especially those as lame as Carlos Silva and Kirk Saarloos. This bit of "common sense" was certainly *common* , but apparently wasn't very **sensible**.

So when I suggested a couple weeks ago that Victor Martinez should get more time off in the last month of the season, that appears to have been more common than sense as well, in that Martinez went 3-for-4 with an intentional walk. With Hafner out, Martinez is getting some ABs in the cleanup spot; in his last 10 games, Martinez has 14 hits and 9 walks (5 Ks) in 34 official at-bats, and in only one of those games was he held hitless.

So, basically, I'll shut up now.

(Sign language: I wonder if Kelly Shoppach is any good?)

5) Blue Moon Special

Kevin Kouzmanoff did NOT go 1-for-4! (He actually went 3-for-4 with a walk, a double, and two RBI.)

But more interesting to me, he PLAYED THIRD BASE! Great googly moogly! The man owns a glove! Stop the presses!

6) Well, SOME common sense makes sense

Franklin Gutierrez is a valuable bench player because he can play all three outfield positions. Well, I mean, he'd be more valuable with a .300 OBP. Let's not get carried away. But the fact that he can spell Sizemore in center is a Good Thing, and he did so credibly last night, relegating Sizemore to DH. Eric Wedge made it sound like Sizemore then proceeded to stalk around the dugout between innings like my son at bedtime, but even a yoot can use a day not roaming center field. By the way, with respect to Gutierrez, I'm just not feelin' it. He may lack plate discipline, but at least he has no power. Combined with the error the other night, what else is there? A mean bubble hat?

7) Box Score Follies

Ferd Cabrera pitched a perfect 1/3 of an inning by retiring exactly no one.

Batters faced: F Cabrera: 0

Ferd was in the process of walking Jason Kendall when Marco Scutaro was caught stealing

second. Then they brought in Davis to start the 7th.

(By the way, nice catch by Victor there.)

8) Buckshot

Lee had the aforementioned errant night, throwing 56 strikes and 49 balls, making him ... the **most accurate**
Cleveland pitcher on the night. Cabrera went 1 strike in 3 pitches, Davis managed to record three outs by throwing 5 strikes and 8 balls, and Raffy Perez threw 9 strikes in 17 pitches (one of the strikes slugged over the wall for a two-run job).

By the way, it was nice to see Perez face some more hitters, including righties, but the homer to Swisher was bad.

9) Home Field Advantage

With Sizemore taking off for second, Nick Swisher went into the stands to catch a foul pop off the bat of Jason Michaels. The fans then yelled and pointed to Swisher, noting that Sizemore had taken off from first, so Swisher calmly threw to pitcher Chad Gaudin to complete the oddball 3-1 double play.

(Thanks to Jim of Starprobe for pointing this out last night)