Back from his root canal, Buff breaks down last nights pitchers duel between Brandon McCarthy and Fausto Carmona in todays edition of The B-List. Buff also hits on the relief efforts of Rafael Perez and Ferd Cabrera and the Indians inability to manufacture runs as we steamroll towards the end of the season.

When people tell you, "I'd rather have a root canal than (watch the Indians play defense, watch the Browns pass block, watch golf)," they're lying to you.

1) Dominant

Brandon McCarthy's outing wasn't as highly-rated as Sabathia's the other night, primarily because it only lasted 5 1/3 innings, but they were 5 1/3 innings the Indians would probably rather have back. In those 5 1/3, McCarthy struck out 8, walked 1, and gave up two hits: except for one mistake that Andy Marte hit out of the park, he was a fair impression of a right-handed Johan Santana.

McCarthy was pulled after 82 pitches: I infer that this was done as much because he hasn't started since May and the weather wasn't very pleasant as because he gave up a homer and a walk. Of course, it makes no sense to "push" a young guy the last week of September after you've been eliminated from the playoffs anyway. McCarthy had been on the Santana/Liriano/Earl Weaver "young guy starts career as long reliever" path, which seems to have worked out for all four men. It was actually working for Fausto Carmona before he was thrust into the closer's role. Although McCarthy has had his ups and downs this season (brilliant early, now sports a 4.68 ERA), it's hard to argue that his exposure to big-league pitching hasn't been a net positive for him and the Sox.

Nice quote, by the way: "I'm not sure if it shows, but I feel more comfortable (starting)."

Um, yeah. It showed.

2) Fausto.

We have to take away the exclamation point, but Fausto Carmona still had a very nice start that was overshadowed by McCarthy's masterful outing. Carmona went 6 somewhat inefficient innings, throwing 57 of 95 pitches for strikes: he gave up 6 hits, but three were long hits. He also walked two (one intentionally, the other disastrously) and struck out six.

I term the second walk (and they were back-to-back) "disastrous" because it basically lost the game: with a runner on second and one out, Carmona rather prudently walked

Jim Thome intentionally. Nothing wrong with that, don't let the ox beat you. Now with two on, Carmona produces the following pitch sequence:

Ball, Ball, Ball, Ball, T Iguchi walked.

This loaded the bases: the next hitter hit a sacrifice fly that gave Chicago a 2-0 lead, and the next batter (sub-.100-hitting Josh Fields) grounded out to end the inning. If Iguchi makes an out, the game ends 1-1 and we don't lose. (Of course, we probably don't bother making it up, either: it has no bearing on the playoffs, and Chicago's leaving town.) Now, Carmona has had some trouble with strikes this season, but not through the first five innings: through 5, he had given up 5 hits and ZERO walks, with 6 Ks. Walking Thome makes sense, but you can get so out of rhythm that you walk the next guy on FOUR PITCHES.

On the bright side, Carmona shook off a shaky first inning (homer, double) and leadoff double in the second to strand Alex Cintron at third after he got there with only 1 out. His 4th and 5th innings were perfect and included 3 Ks. So Carmona showed pretty much everything I ask of a starter: composure, stuff, and strikeouts. On the inexplicable side, he gave up the home run to Ross Gload, who is rumored to be made entirely of wax. Ross Gload? Come on.

3) Only YOU can prevent rally fires!

Let us count the Cleveland baserunners last night:

Andy Marte hit a home run. *Shin-Soo Choo reached on a error by Ross Gload.* *Grady Sizemore walked.*

Grady Sizemore singled

That's it. The whole kit and kaboodle (or, as I insisted as a child, Kitten Kaboodle). Not a terrific offensive showing.

So it makes sense that in an effort to try to manufacture something against McCarthy, we might send a runner or two. You know, shake things up, get someone in scoring position, something other than strike out some more. It's worth considering. Now, having Marte steal would be somewhat counterproductive, but the other three baserunners ALL attempted to steal second.

Choo made it. Sizemore did not. TWICE.

Now, as I said, McCarthy was terribly "on" and we needed to get someone in scoring position. Choo stole successfully in the second, so it's okay to try it in the third. After all, Sizemore has been a good basestealer this season. It's discouraging to make the last out of the inning on the basepaths, but it's not like Franklin Gutierrez is a threat to go for extra bases there. (In fact, Gutierrez wasn't a credible threat to touch the ball, going 0-for-3 with 3 Ks.) Tough break.

But boy howdy, here's the situation in the sixth: Marte has homered. Sizemore's walk has chased off McCarthy for *knuckleball pitcher* Charlie Haeger. Haeger strikes out Gutierrez for the second out, then starts Victor Martinez, at the end of a 13-game hit streak, with 2 straight

balls. Now, I understand that stealing off a knuckler should be easier, but this is your best hitter, your hottest hitter, a hitter with a 2-0 count, a hitter at the plate with the only thing resembling a positive crowd emotion all night, and you get thrown out for the last out of the inning. That just hurts my pancreas.

4) Mediocre hose!

Victor Martinez allowed two runners to steal second, although pointlessly. However, he did gun down Scott Podsednik, thereby eliminating nine-tenths of Podsednik's total value as a player.

5) Surely there's room for someone like this

Rafael Perez pitched to six batters last night in relief of Carmona. One reached on an error by Choo, one got a single, one was thrown out by Perez himself on a bunt attempt (is it just a created false memory, or our pitchers generally bad at this?), and the other three whiffed. All three strikeouts were swinging: Stewart (I don't know Chris Stewart from a ham sandwich) and Owens (I don't know Jerry Owens from a sand hamwich) required 7 pitches total. More importantly, the third strikeout was Jim Thome, suggesting visions of bringing a left-hander out of the bullpen to face David Ortiz or Justin Morneau or Jason Giambi someday. By the way, 17 of Perez' 23 pitches were for strikes. Have I mentioned that I like pitchers who throw strikes? If you read between the lines, you can get that impression:

line line line line line

6) I like pitchers who throw strikes!

line line line line line

Is he perfect? His 4.38 ERA suggests not. Would I strongly consider putting him in the 2007 bullpen? I would.

7) Hey, I know that guy!

Ferd Cabrera threw 14 pitches, and 5 were for strikes. He walked 2 of the 3 batters he faced (he struck out the other) to load the bases before the rain ended the game. One of these batters was Josh Fields, who was sent to the plate wielding a frying pan.

I don't know if the rain affected Cabrera's control. I don't know if Cabrera has control to affect. Wasn't good, though.

(Did I mention the wild pitch?)

8) Managerial Head Scratchers

Franklin Gutierrez in the 2 hole? Yeesh.