

"It's my house Eddie. You know what it is ... you don't like it ... you get the @#%\* out." That classic line from "Eddie Murphy: Raw" (back when he was funny) was what kept going through my head as we ball batted the Tigers right out of the playoffs with a left, right, left combo these past three days. Buff is getting jacked for the playoffs, showin' all kinds of man-love for C.C., Casey, and the back end of the bullie in todays capper of yesterday afternoons BIG win.



**FINAL SCORE**

<b>Tigers (83-70)</b>	0	0	2	0
<b>Indians (90-62)</b>	0	0	1	0

*W: Sabathia (18-7) L: N. Robertson (8-12) S: Borowski (42)*

You know, I think all things considered, I like Jim Leyland more than Ozzie Guillen.

**1) Reclaiming what is his**

C.C. Sabathia professes to not care about the Cy Young race, as long as the Indians make the playoffs. I believe him: I appreciate the sentiment, although I think he cares as a competitive professional athlete, but knows that he controls what he controls and has learned to accept the vagaries of what he can't. If he pitches well, the Cy Young consideration will come as a natural result, not as the

achievement of a primary goal.

Much in the same way, Sabathia sent a strong message to the rest of the starters: "I invented the **Inning of Crap™**, and you may do whatever you wish to emulate it, but I am its definer, and all others merely pretenders to the throne." (This is not a direct quote.)

Of course, the first thing to mention about Sabathia's performance yesterday is that he won and pitched very well overall, scattering only 5 hits and a walk across seven full innings of work. He threw 76 strikes in 109 pitches and struck out 7 batters to lower his season ERA to 3.19. And he won his 18<sup>th</sup> game, making it entirely plausible that Cleveland will have its first 20-game winner since Oog Groont in 38,415 B.C. (although that was all the more impressive as it was a glacier-shortened season).

However, consider this: in the third inning, Sabathia gave up 3 hits (including a double) and a walk, meaning that in the grand scheme of things, Sabathia yielded 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of his total allotment of baserunners, 60% of the hits, 50% of the extra-base hits, and all of the runs in one inning. Continuing a theme on the season, the first two innings were excellent (1-2-3, in fact), and the last two innings were excellent (1-2-3, in fact), so Sabathia started strong and finished stronger (3 Ks in the 6

th

and 7

th

, only 1 in the first two innings). But somewhere in the middle,

the  
**loC**  
TM

reared its ugly head, and only the fact that my standards for Sabathia are impossibly high renders this contention completely ridiculous.

Hey, I gotta say *somethin'*. He was Real Good. Again. Verily, yes.

## 2) Mr. Versatile

Casey Blake tattooed a Nate Robertson offering into the bleachers for his 18<sup>th</sup> home run, but just as encouraging for afficianadoes of Playoff Smallball, he stole his 4<sup>th</sup>

base on the season off the lefty Robertson.

Did you know that Casey Blake has 73 RBI on the season? That doesn't seem possible. How do you drive in 55 other baserunners without ever getting a

hit with any of them in scoring position, or even on base? I'm at a loss here.

By the way, the place in which a stolen base is as encouraging as a home run is Planet Meathead. I lied. But it's nice to see Blake show off his wheels.

### **3) Role Reversal**

The Indians used two relief pitchers, Rafael Betancourt and Joe Borowski.

One pitcher gave up two hits and a walk and induced a long fly out with the bases loaded to end the scoreless inning.

One pitcher threw 8 strikes in 12 pitches to retire the

side in order.

Had I known only the stats and not followed the game, I would have misattributed them.

#### **4) The return of the Doughnut Batting Order**

Leadoff man Grady Sizemore and #2 hitter Asdrubal Cabrera each had a single in yesterday's game, Cabrera's driving in Cleveland's fourth run.

The bottom third of the order (Blake, Franklin Gutierrez, and Jason Michaels) each chipped in a hit (each for extra bases), an RBI, at least one run scored (Blake scored twice), and even a pair of walks.

The 3-4-5 hitters managed to draw a single walk in 11 trips to the plate. Nary a hit was collected.

## 5) Flex!

Franklin Gutierrez' double in the three-run fifth drove in a run, but also allowed him to maintain his SLG of over .500 (.502). Since starting to play regularly (not everyday, just regularly) in June, Gutierrez has posted a super-.500 SLG in three of the four months. In August, the only month slugging under .500, he still collected ten extra-base hits, including six doubles and two triples. On the season, almost half (23 of 47) of his hits have travelled for extra bases.

Since a near-total loss of power after arriving from Los Angeles' system was what initially soured me of Gutierrez, this is all very encouraging stuff. His OBP of .323 is still awfully low for a corner

outfielder, and he has a severe platoon split (.337/.368/.573 against lefties, .234/.298/.461 against righties), but the power is sustained and real, plus he is fast (including 8 steals in 10 attempts) and plays good (at least above-average, as far as I can tell) defense.

At 24, I think this qualifies as a breakout season for Gutierrez: he is far from elite at this point on his development curve, but he's been a real boon.

## 6) Playing catch-up

I forgot to mention in yesterday's column that the play over the weekend which I ridiculed Josh Barfield for ... that happened again on Monday and I ridiculed Cameron Maybin for ... happened again on Tuesday! In this case, Gary Sheffield, on second base, tried to get to third ... on a ground ball to SHORTSTOP.

Look, you are not Vince Coleman. You are not Jose Reyes. You are not even Cameron Maybin! You are Gary Sheffield! You know better than that! Use your allegedly-steroid-addled brain! Gracious!

## **7) Ducks off the pond!**

The Indians scored more runs (4) than they left on base (3). Of course, part of this can be attributed to grounding into THREE inning-ending double plays. Each of the double plays had an additional man on base in scoring position: twice, the man was on third (with, necessarily by definition, only one out). So what might look on the surface like efficiency is actually a pretty sizable hunka hunka burnin' Squander Ball.

Squander Ball is a bit more palatable in the midst of a three-game sweep somehow.

## 8) Game Log Follies

Victor Martinez advanced to second base after drawing a walk when Nate Robertson uncorked a wild pitch. Given Victor's speed, this must have been quite a wild pitch indeed.

Why do I poke fun at Victor's speed? Because on the subsequent single to center by Jhonny Peralta, Victor advanced from second base to ... second base. Zero bases! Huzzah!

(Actually, this was because the umpire originally ruled that center fielder Not Curtis Granderson caught the ball, then was correctly overruled, and because the original call was out, they sent Victor back to second.)

## **9) For the parents of the center fielder**

(It was Ryan Raburn in center. Granderson can't hit lefties.)

## **10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine**

Mark Shapiro invented the popup ad. I believe the perpetrator of this monstrosity has been drawn and quartered by angry mobs (sixteenthed?), so this cannot be true, as Shapiro, at last report, still possessed all his limbs. Fire Eric Wedge.