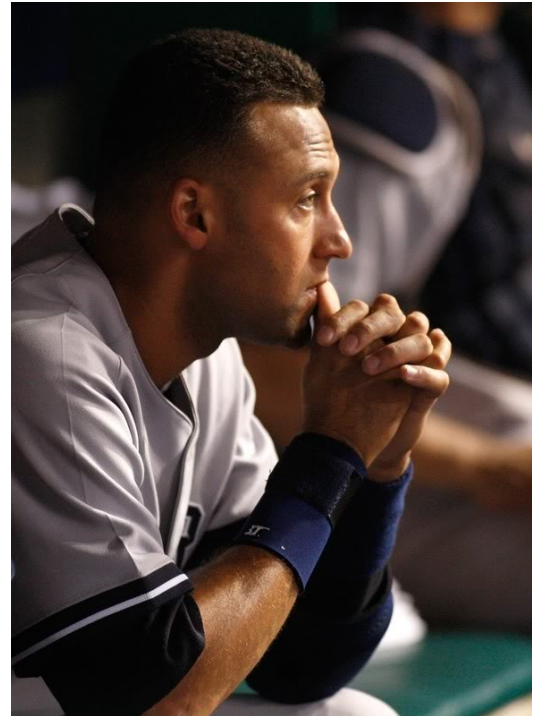


Box of No Doz to keep Joe Torre awake in the dugout - \$6. Designer towel to absorb the tears of Derek Jeter - \$28. A-Rod hair frosting kit - \$38. Beating Wang into submission - PRICELESS. I'm a little jacked up this morning ... if you couldn't tell. So is Papa Cass, but he warns us, this is only one win. And a loss today would put the Yankees back in charge with the series heading back to The Big Apple. LETS GO FAUSTO!!!!!!



Some thoughts from Thursday's 12-3 Game 1 win over the Yankees...

1. It's only one game. Repeat: It's only one game. The Yankees, I'm nearly positive, realize this. The burden is on the inexperienced Indians to realize that they aren't going to be able to toss their gloves on the field and win this series just because the final score of Game 1 indicates a rout.

2. To that end, I echo the statistical anomaly noted by TBS and ESPN announcers last night: In each of the last seven division series involving the Yankees, the team that won the first game lost the series. Last year, the Yankees pounded the Tigers 8-4 in Game 1, then lost the next three.

3. However, trends can be spotted, and if Game 1 is any indication, the starting pitching discrepancy between these two teams is larger than anyone imagined. Chien

-Ming Wang, New York's top starter, looked unsure of how to stop the bleeding once the Tribe's offense started rolling. The Taiwanese sinkerballer

left pitches up in the zone all night, and the result was predictable as the Indians ran him out of the game in the fifth inning.

4. C.C. Sabathia, on the other hand, gave one of the guttiest bend-but-don't-break performances in recent memory. After letting the Indians fall behind on a Johnny Damon leadoff homer in the first inning, then walking Bobby Abreu and Alex Rodriguez, he came back to strike out Jorge Posada and induce Hideki Matsui to pop up. He did the same thing in the fifth inning with the bases loaded, the Tribe clinging to a 4-3 lead and the Yankees poised for the big rally we all feared would come.

All told, it took 114 pitches for Sabathia to get through five innings, but it worked. However, one has to now wonder about his ability to pitch effectively on short rest in Game 4 if needed.

5. I was concerned that the Yankees would get into the front end of the Indians' bullpen in the middle innings of games and have a field day against guys like Jensen Lewis and Aaron Fultz.

Thursday, the Indians did exactly that to the Yankees. After chasing Wang, rookie Ross Ohlendorf came in and kept the cheeseballs coming as the Indians put the game out of reach. To stop the landslide, potential Game 4 starter Phil Hughes had to come in and pitch the final two innings.

I wonder if Joe Torre now regrets heading into the postseason without a lefty in the bullpen.

6. Kenny Lofton wasn't the blockbuster acquisition we were all hoping for at the trade deadline. But sometimes big things come in skinny packages.

The fact that the veteran leadership on this team now includes an able-bodied Loft on is crucial. Not only does he had a lot of experience in these situations, he can back up that experience with his play, unlike some of the Trot Nixons and David Delluccis

on the roster.

Lofton went 3-for-4 last night with four RBI. No one is expecting that out of Lofton every night, but his presence contributes to an Indians lineup that can produce one-through-nine.

7. I never thought I'd hear myself saying this, but shame on you, LeBron James. It's a free country, and I don't care what baseball team you root for. Some Indians fans think you are a turncoat because you root for the Yankees, but as long as you remain a loyal Cavs fan, it's no concern of mine.

But you might have taken things a bit too far last night, showing up at Jacobs Field with your Yankees cap on, sitting out in the open and agreeing to an interview with TBS where you said you were "representing for the Yankees."

I'll be honest, LeBron. It felt like you were rubbing our faces in it. It felt like you were showing up at the game specifically to flaunt your Yankee cap in front of all the Cleveland fans in attendance, like you were saying, "I'm rooting against your team. What are you going to do about it?"

Maybe you think Cleveland fans are too touchy about these kinds of things. You might be right. But to have the most beloved superstar in Ohio show up at the game just to side with opposition seems like it builds unnecessary animosity with the fans who passionately root for you from November through June. Don't your handlers generally coach you to stay away from controversy?

I know this much: The next time the Pistons come to The Q, I fully encourage Bob Feller to sit right behind the Cavs bench wearing a Pistons cap. Maybe throw on a Chauncey Billups jersey for good measure.