



Now, as it turned out, the Giants did score a run on a feeble Texas Leaguer after a booming double: the double to Aaron Rowand was arguably one of two bad pitches Lee made, coming on an 0-2 count. (The other bad pitch was turned into a nice catch at the wall by Ben Francisco.) Otherwise, Lee threw 79 strikes in 111 pitches, struck out a career-high 11 batters, walked 1 (inexplicably on 4 pitches), and gave up 4 hits in 8 complete innings of work. Three of the four hits were singles. One was pretty bogus. Four of Lee's 8 innings were perfect, and a fifth featured the minimum number of hitters thanks to a double play an out after the 4-pitch walk.

Twice in 8 innings did Lee face exactly three men, each of whom struck out. He struck out the side TWICE. And his first EIGHT strikeouts (9 overall) were SWINGING. It was an entire game of "Neener neener."

Lee also featured a nice 8:5 GO:FO ratio, including getting all three men to ground out in the third ... after striking out the side in the second. He struck out five in a row in the sixth and seventh, and was touching 94 on the gun (admittedly of unknown calibration).

Lee leads the majors in wins and leads the AL in ERA.

## 2) A sobering reflection

It bears mentioning, however, that had Lee had this dominating, excellent, sparkling performance on Tuesday, he would not have won.

He would have left the game with a no-decision, although we may have gone to extra innings as he would have left his bullpen 4 fewer outs with which to give up more runs.

Had Lee had this dominating, excellent, sparkling performance on Wednesday, he would not have won. He would have left the game with a no-decision, although we may have gone to extra innings as he would have left his bullpen 3 fewer outs with which to give up more runs.

Listen, I can't seriously tell you that Aaron Laffey and Jeremy Sowers pitched just as well as Cliff Lee: they didn't. Laffey walked too many guys, Sowers gave up too many hits, and neither had the strikeout power (or strike zone accuracy) of Lee. But from a practical standpoint, a *scoreboard* standpoint, what did Lee do that Laffey didn't? Pitch an extra inning? Hey, with the "quality" of the Cleveland bullpen, that's a valuable skill, but the fact is, Cliff Lee wins because he pitches very well on days when the Cleveland offense actually pulls its collective head out of its collective butt.

This isn't a universal rule: there was the 9 innings of shutout ball he threw in a No Decision. I get that. All I'm saying is, although Cliff Lee is pitching very, very well, pitching very, very well is not necessarily enough to win a lot of ball games.

### **3) But it's all about the pitching!**

No, it's not.

When the Indians pushed across a fourth run in the bottom of the 4<sup>th</sup> inning, it marked the 40<sup>th</sup>

time this season the Indians have scored more than 3 runs. This is an important milestone, in that it pushes our rate of scoring more than 3 runs over 50%.

We have scored 3 or fewer runs 39 times in 79 games.

#### **4) Musings on run support**

Remember when Cliff Lee went 18-5, but clever folks warned us that this record was largely a product of ungodly run support? Cliff Lee wasn't really "18-5 good," and his peripherals didn't support that record. Well, he really is "11-1 good" this season, as his peripherals are tremendous, but he's STILL been the beneficiary of what counts as ungodly run support for this team: almost 6 runs a game, good for 8<sup>th</sup> in the AL. He hasn't REQUIRED it, but he's GOTTEN it.

I was wondering if maybe there was something about how Cliff Lee pitches that engenders increased support: maybe because he works quickly, or has short innings, or

keeps his fielders involved, or doles out ice cream (it's good) between innings ... I don't know. I mean, it has a certain intuitive sense to it, right? Work quickly, keep your fielders involved in the game, maybe they concentrate better at the plate?

Except that Aaron Laffey probably does this even better than Lee, at least with his infielders: since he doesn't strike anyone out and induces fifty-jillion ground balls, you'd think that they'd be right there in terms of being involved in the game. And Aaron Laffey gets the run support of a Brazilian tree frog. C.C. Sabathia strikes out a bunch of guys and only has an **Inning of Crap™** here and there and he gets lousy run support, too.

So it's probably just a coincidence that Lee is getting great support in this season the same way he got in 2005. Or he really is handing out ice cream. The team oughta look into it either way.

## 5) A fungus among us

With one heroic stroke, David Dellucci was able to make contact with a pitch to such a degree as to require it to be fielded by a defender. Well, the catcher. In foul ground. But a defender, nonetheless.

In his other three plate appearances, Dellucci struck out to such a degree as to make small children weep. Weep, I tell you. Think of the children!

David Dellucci is mired in a 1-for-20 slump that includes racking up strikeouts at a rate that makes Russell Branyan send fruit baskets in admiration: 14 in his last 25 at-bats.

Now, this is simply preposterous. I understand that some of these are pinch-hitting appearances, so they are coming in cold against potentially a high-end reliever. Frankly, I don't care enough to sift the game logs to investigate the quality of the

pitchers. 14 Ks in 25 AB is simply atrocious. There is no earthly reason for David Dellucci to swing one more bat until after the All-Star Break.

Earlier in the season, I wrote in Swiftian fashion that I wanted Paul Byrd to use steroids. Well, I want David Dellucci to use them, too. And the reason is that he would be suspended and he would not suck one more plate appearance out of this team.

## **6) Department of Corrections Dept.**

I mistakenly claimed that Dellucci had replaced his flesh arm with one made of "fettucine." As alert reader Jason Laurianti (as well as alert father Dad) pointed out that there is no such thing. Instead of fettucine, which is not a word, I meant fettuccine, which is a pasta. What made this particularly galling was that it was in the very same sentence as "Dellucci," which should

have been a pretty good tip at the correct spelling.

By the way, "Dellucci" is neither a word nor a pasta, but rather a fungus.

## **7) The unbearable lightness of Jamey Carroll**

Without the diminutive second baseman, the Indians would have had tremendous trouble scoring runs last night: not only did he fire his third (!) triple of the season off the left-field wall to score Kelly Shoppach, but his single up the middle in the 4<sup>th</sup> scored Shoppach again and gave Ben Francisco a chance to strand not one but two players in scoring position, which he did with aplomb on a three-pitch K looking.

Carroll now leads the team with a .293 batting

average: I don't consider this sustainable, but it bears mentioning that, while signed as a simple utility infielder better than Mike Rouse, Carroll has actually put together a valuable season, especially given the horrendous struggles of Asdrubal Cabrera and the injury-badness combo of Josh Barfield.

## **8) Credit Where Credit is Due Dept.**

Jhonny Peralta hit a glorified deep fly ball off the scoreboard to score two runs.

Shoppach was on base to be driven in because he got two hits, the only player other than Carroll to do so.

Joe Borowski threw a pitch in the strike zone that was not hit. (His four others were.) He earned his sixth save with a hitless, walkless inning of work and scared the hell out of every sentient Indians fan.

The Indians only grounded into two double plays.