

Buff takes a look at yesterdays heartbreaking 7-6 loss to the A's, and the rudderless suck of 70% of our bullpen. It seems like its something different every night that dooms this team, and they Buff wondering aloud if they have the ganas to live up to expectations in 2006.



A microcosm of the whole season in one neat package! Let's go to the videotape:

### **1) The Average News: Jake Westbrook is a mediocre pitcher with extreme ground ball tendencies, and walks spell trouble for him**

It's too bad my home/road split for Jake didn't hold up, but Jake pitched pretty well: he induced 16 ground ball outs (to 3 flies), he gave up fewer than a hit an inning, and kept the team in the game.

On the other hand, he walked more (3) than he struck out (1), and a guy he walked scored, which is a recurring theme for this staff. Walk guys, they score. How does an extreme ground-ball pitcher give up two homers, anyway? Well, Thomas is a known low-ball hitter. I can't say that I'd rather have Westbrook throwing strikes to Chavez (hitting .285, not toasty) than Thomas (hitting .230, quite toasty), but I would like to give up fewer runs with two outs (another recurring theme).

**2) The Good News: we have power, and we can hit left-handed pitching**

Don't look now, but Grady Sizemore has 11 home runs. He still hits righties way better than lefties, but he is improving his numbers against portsiders and has 3 homers against them this year. Travis Hafner, of course, can hit anyone, and hit his 16th home run. Note that both of Zito's homers were solo shots; while he walked only two guys, he threw 122 pitches (66 strikes) in seven innings. We certainly made him work, but the flip side is that he worked more carefully with runners on base.

### **3) The Good News: the bottom of the lineup contributes**

Last year, a bottom three of Broussard, Blake, and Boone could be counted on for double-digit outs and single-digit hits (where I mean “one finger” rather than a

number in the ones place).  
It was awful, and killed a  
lot of rallies.

This year, the lineup has  
shuttled around quite a  
bit, but the bottom of the  
order has become a  
consistent source of  
offense. Last night was

no exception: Blake had a hit and a run, Belliard had two run-scoring hits, and Boone had a hit and an RBI. How many teams sport 7-8-9 guys hitting .316-.280-.270?

## **4) The Bad News:**

# Jhonny Peralta does not

Peralta's 2005 season was, I thought, a harbinger of things to come. He's not Miguel

Tejada, but he was very productive last season. This season, not so much. Going 0-for-4 with 3 Ks out of the 6 hole (finally!) is indicative of a guy who really hasn't put together any



consistent hitting this season. (It only took two months for Inertia Man to pull him out of the THREE hole.)

## 5) The Good

# News: Raffy Betancourt throws strikes

16 strikes and 6  
balls in an inning  
of work. He struck

out two, which is good. He gave up a hit, which is not so good, since it was the game-winning RBI. But still, you build a pretty

damned long list  
of problems this  
team has before  
you get to Rafael  
Betancourt.

**6) The Bad  
News: Ferd  
Cabrera does  
not**

**Although**

Cabrera did not  
give up a hit nor  
a run, he did  
walk two guys  
and threw 14:14  
strikes and  
balls. I like

Cabrera, I really do, and he's been pitching very effectively since returning from the DL after a horrid

start. But I'll say  
this: game on  
the line, I'd  
rather see  
Betancourt.



# **7) The Bad News: Scott Sauerbeck is a one-batter pitcher**

Okay, it's easy  
to go back in  
hindsight and  
say this, that,  
or the other.  
But the facts  
are:

a) Scott  
Sauerbeck is  
not more  
effective  
against lefties  
than righties.

In fact, he  
has the most  
absurd  
REVERSE  
platoon split  
I've ever

seen:

.250/.419/.54

2 against

LEFTIES,

.136/.240/.22

7 against

# RIGHTIES.

b) Scott  
Sauerbeck is

not actually  
effective  
against lefties  
at all (see  
above)

c) Although  
Nick Swisher  
has a  
significant  
platoon split,  
Eric Chavez



does not

d) Scott

Sauerbeck is

a fungus

To protect a  
lead in the

8th inning,  
you must  
bring out at  
least your  
third-best  
relief pitcher,

if not your  
second-best.  
Scott  
Sauerbeck is  
not that  
person.

Inertia Man  
opened the  
book, saw  
the letter  
&quot;L,&qu  
ot; and

knee-jerked  
his way into  
a loss. Hey,  
Chavez is  
good: there's  
no guarantee

that  
Betancourt  
wouldn't  
have  
coughed up  
the exact

same homer.  
But we're  
talking about  
LIKELIHOOD  
here, and  
it is more



LIKELY that  
Betancourt  
would pitch  
well than  
Sauerbeck.  
Who is a

fungus.

Please bring  
up Lopez.

# 8) The Bad News: we play poor defense

And there it  
is, a  
snapshot  
Polaroid  
Moment:

Aaron  
Boone  
makes an  
error,  
putting the

go-ahead  
run on  
base. After  
something  
addressed

in (9), that  
runner  
scores and  
we lose.

We play  
worse  
defense  
than the  
all-rookie



Florida  
Marlins.  
We play  
worse  
defense

than the  
all-putrid  
Kansas  
City  
Royals.

Aaron  
Boone has  
nine errors,  
and it is  
June 7.

Jhonny  
Peralta isn't  
better, the  
outfield  
arms and

ranges are  
crummy,  
and our  
pitchers  
are

atrocious at  
fielding  
their  
position. It  
is what it is,

but  
moreover,  
it means  
we  
absolutely

CANNOT  
afford to  
put extra  
guys on  
base via



the walk,  
because  
we're as  
likely to  
give the

opponent a  
fourth out  
anyway.

# 9) The Bad News: Victor Martinez

**is not the  
best at  
throwing  
out  
basesteal**

ers

Remembe

r that error  
in (8)?  
Well, the  
next guy  
only hit a

single,  
and the  
next guy  
was out,  
so no

harm,  
right?



Except  
that  
Bobby  
Crosby  
stole

second  
base  
before the  
single.

Raffy  
wasn't  
much  
help (our

pitchers,  
aggregat  
ely, aren't  
good at

holding  
runners,  
another  
recurring

theme),  
but it's  
hard to  
argue

that  
Martinez  
or Laker  
is

anything  
close to  
adequate  
at



controllin  
g the  
running  
game.

# 10) The Bad News: we

**muster**

**little**

**offense**

**in the**

# last few frames

I haven't  
looked  
this up. I  
am

willing to

be

proven

wrong

here. But  
there  
seem to  
have

been a  
BUNCH  
of games  
where



the other  
team  
forges  
ahead

late, or

leads

late, and

the

margin is  
small,  
and our  
hitters

accompli  
sh  
exactly  
bupkis.

# Last night, Kiko Calero

and  
Houston  
Street  
each

threw a  
perfect  
inning.  
Calero

needed

12

itches,

making



him the  
less  
efficient  
(10 for

Street).

Street's

the

closer,

but  
Calero  
came in  
with an

ERA up  
around  
5. We  
just don't

hit in the  
8th and  
9th,  
unless

it's not  
necessar  
y. (Could  
just be

an  
impressi  
on borne  
of

frustratio  
n on my  
part, I'm  
not



certain.)

# 11) The Surprisi ng News:

**we  
didn't  
leave a  
bunch**

**of guys  
on  
base!**

Well, it's  
not a *pe*  
*rfect*  
microco

sm.