

After trading away their best pitcher and best hitter, the Indians positioned themselves to phone in the rest of the season, allowing the fortified Detroit Tigers to ... well, now, wait a minute. The Tribe looked like the team with more heart as the Trevor Crowes and Tomo Ohkas of the world took two of three from the Tigers, and Buff has a shortish recap of the weekend's action between stints pinch-hitting for Rob Neyer's blog on ESPN. If you read between the lines, you may find out how he feels about Jose Veras. **FINAL**

			1	2
Tigers (53-48)	2	0	0	0
Indians (43-60)	0	2	0	1

W: Ohka (1-4) L: Fien (0-1)

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Tigers (54-48)	0	0	0	0
Indians (43-61)	1	0	0	0

W: Seay (2-2) L: Veras (4-2) S: Miner (1)

FINAL	1	2	3	4
Tigers (54-49)	0	0	0	0
Indians (44-61)	1	0	0	5

W: Pavano (9-8) L: Galarraga (5-10)

This will be exceptionally short as I pinch-hit for Rob Neyer's "SweetSpot" blog on ESPN.com today. Where I still managed to be mean to Mark Shapiro.

1) Completely Accurate Phrases You Never Thought You'd Read

We won on Friday because of the strong pitching of Tomo Ohka.

Now, the thing is, Ohka has had other strong performances for the Tribe. Really, that turned out to be one of the more fortuitous flyer-signings in 2009. You can make an argument for Pavano, or one of the bullpen arms in small doses (Matt

Herges had a terrific run before the tank didn't simply empty, but rather burst into flames, consuming Herges and Greg Aquino in the process), but Ohka's made some good starts without much to show for it. Friday was his **THIRD relief** appearance of at least **FOUR** innings. Not a lot of guys can do that, and it suggests that the now-canonical staff structure (five starters, two middle guys, two matchup guys, two setup, closer) isn't cut as deeply into stone as many teams appear to think. If you have a guy who can pick up a bad start, tandem in for a long stretch, and pick up the ends of blowouts or extra innings, doesn't that suggest that you can go back to an 11-man staff, or at **LEAST** as 12-man staff? These 13-man staffs hurt my eye: the 12s already pain my gall bladder.

Anyway, Ohka wasn't entirely brilliant: he did give up 4 hits in 4 innings, but they were shutout innings, and he whiffed four guys along the way. There wasn't much to suggest he couldn't have kept doing it as long as the Tigs were willing to flail away, either: it took him 49 pitches for those 4 innings, and with two 100-pitch outings under his belt thus far in 2009, whose to say he wouldn't have been out there in the 17th?

I still don't want him starting, but if they're going to transition Justin Masterson into a starting role, why not have Masterson go 4 or 5 then bring in Ohka? I hope he gets a decent paycheck next year, as he's shown me something this season. (That paycheck should not be signed by the Cleveland Indians, but I still like the guy.)

2) Oh, and that other guy pitched, too

The big story from Friday **SHOULD** have been the return of Fausto Carmona, and to some extent, it was reasonably successful. Carmona gave up 2 runs on 4 hits in 5 innings, but walked four guys and posted a 6:7 GO:FO ratio. The low run count is worth it: the high walks (and 101

pitches to get through 5 innings) were not encouraging at all.

I liked how Carmona settled down and successfully battled after falling behind immediately (first five hitters: single, groundout, walk, single, single). After that poor start, he only gave up one more hit. At least 50% of what I'm worried about with Carmona involves axons and neurons, so that was an encouraging sign. Just about nothing else was, though. We'll have to reserve judgement to see if he can build on this, or if he's just become our fifth fifth starter.

3) Passing the baton

In a 9-inning "tandem start," Jeremy Sowers and Justin Masterson combined to give up 2 runs on 6 hits, 5 BB, and 7 K. The fact that 4 of the walks were Sowers' and 4 of the Ks were Masterson's in a 6-to-3 inning split will suggest to you which pitcher I am more encouraged by in the long term.

Really, Sowers pitched pretty well, but his nibbling walkitude is simply going to drive me to distraction. Yes, all 4 of his hits were singles. Yes, 2 R in 6 IP is a Quality Start. No, I don't see anything from this start that makes me go, "Well, then Sowers has a slot in next year's rotation, that makes me feel all warm and cozy." He's a guy. I could be wrong. I want to be wrong. I don't think I'm wrong.

Masterson, meanwhile, looked better than I remembered. Part of this might have been the lineup he was facing, having been set up for the

lefty Sowers. Masterson's delivery looks like it would have severe difficulties with left-handed hitters, and sure enough, lefties have pounded Masterson to the tune of .311/.367/.477 this season thus far (.238/.365/.422 before this year, still a very pronounced platoon split). I don't know if this can change enough for him to transition back into starting the way the front office has announced they want him to. But for one night, at least, he looked like a real quality pitcher.

4) Excellent timing, you bastard

Of COURSE Carl Pavano pitches 8 innings of 1-run ball with no extra-base hits and 4 Ks ... the day AFTER the non-waiver trade deadline. After two of the worst games of the season BEFORE the deadline. Of COURSE.

Hey, Carl, you think you're not making it through waivers? Of course you are, you mealy clay-footed dorkus malorkus. We're trading you to the first team with guts and a need.

Nice game, though.

5) I am ready

For Kerry Wood to stop blowing ballgames.

Tomo Ohka doesn't even get up Friday if not for Wood's sub-heroics. He had a nice 10th Saturday, but so what?

6) I am past the point of readiness

Jo-se Ver-as!

(clap, clap, clap-clap-clap)

Jo-se Ver-as!

(clap, clap, clap-clap-clap)

Go a way now!

(clap, clap, clap-clap-clap)

Or I'll cry now!

(clap, clap, clap-clap-clap)

Hey, a good inning (2 Ks) Friday. Not *quite* as good Saturday. Marvin K. Veras, will you please go now?

7) Welcome back!

Jensen Lewis: 1 IP, 1 BB, 2 K. Hey, he's no Winston Abreu, but then, who is?

8) Winston Abreu, that's who

Yeah, well, the Bungee Reliever is gone. And so is Mike Gosling. Huzzah!

9) Matt LaWho?

Look, I have been reasonably clear in my desire to see Matt LoPorta begin his major-league career in earnest and a certain perplexitude as to why he has not, but let's take a moment to appreciate Trevor Crowe's fine weekend:

Friday: 3-for-6, 3 R, 1 triple

Saturday: 2-for-5, 1 double

Sunday: 1-for-4, 1 R, 2 RBI, 1 double

Three games, three extra-base hits, a brisk .400/.400/.667 batting line, and no hitless games. That's a very nice weekend, so well done.

10) I'm not sure I can tell the players WITH a scorecard

Wyatt Toregas went 1-for-5 with an RBI. Apparently he is a catcher of some sort. Since Chris Gimenez caught Friday and Kelly Shoppach caught Sunday, I have to infer that ... well ... no, I got no inference here. He got a hit, though.

Andy Marte continued to play first base, taking an 0-for-6 collar Friday but had a fine 1-for-3 on Sunday with a walk, two runs scored, and 2 RBI. The hit was a double, Marte's first in the majors in 2009. He is not playing his natural position of third base because ... well ... I mean, Jhonny Peralta ... Travis Hafner ... crossing month lines ... I got nothin'. He is apparently to be Ryan Garko. I guess.

Chris Gimenez appeared in all three games, although he did not bat in the third. He got a double and a walk. He is ... no, I can't tell you the point of Chris Gimenez, either.

At least we got Lou Marson, or we'd be down to our last three catchers. Well, until Carlos Santana is ready.

Um ... yeah.

11) Hits galore!

Asdrubal Cabrera had 7 hits this weekend, including two homers and a triple. Jhonny Peralta had 5 hits. Grady Sizemore smashed a homer amongst his four hits. Shin-Soo Choo had 5 hits.

We left 16 men on base Friday. Hard to believe we went 2-for-14 with RISP, or that we lost the game in which we went 1-for-9 with RISP.

12) Jamey Carroll: still adorable

Huzzah!