It's the Monday edition of *The B-List*, and in it ... Buff breaks down the weekend series win against the hated Pale Hoes. Buff hits on C.C.'s dominance, Paul Byrd's resurgence, Wedge's handling of the bullpen, and the Tribe being able to win on Sunday with only one hit.

| **FINAL** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | **R** | **H** | **E** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **White Sox (5-4)** | | | | | 0 | | | | | | 1 | 0 |
| **Indians (4-3)** | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 0 | 0 |

*W: J. Vazquez (2-0) L: S. Carmona (0-1) S: Jenks (3)*

| **FINAL** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | **R** | **H** | **E** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **White Sox (5-5)** | | | | 0 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 |
| **Indians (5-3)** | | | | 0 | | | | | | | 2 | 0 |

*W: Byrd (1-0) L: S. Danks (0-2) S: Borowski (4)*

| **FINAL** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | **R** | **H** | **E** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **White Sox (5-6)** | | | | 0 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 |
| **Indians (6-3)** | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 |

*W: Sabathia (3-0) L: Contreras (1-2) S: Borowski (5)*

I am a middle-aged white man, well-educated and making a pretty good salary. The first major-league player I really remember is Bob Gibson. I can't sit here and say anything truly insightful about Jackie Robinson. I have read some truly moving pieces in the last week, however, and whether you find the wearing of #42 to be a moving tribute or a cheap stunt, I think that anything that brings more awareness or even curiosity to the legacy of Mr. Robinson is well worth the effort. (Among other pieces, Rob Neyer's piece for ESPN (for subscribers, so unlinked) drives home the sometimes-overlooked fact that Robinson was not just a pioneer and had enormous strength of character, but he was a damned good baseball player.)

**1) Ace in your Face**

C.C. Sabathia is now 3-0 for a team that has played 9 games. His ERA is 2.14, and his worst start was his first, which took place just days after having been struck with a line drive. Sabathia pitched his best game of the young season Sunday, giving up 1 run on 5 hits in 8 innings of work, during which his teammates supported him with a massive one hit. Fortunately for the Sabathia and the rest of the Indians, this hit, coupled with some very poor accuracy by Jose Contreras, was enough to earn Sabathia the win. He walked three, but struck out 10 while throwing 72 strikes in 110 pitches, so the walks were more "worked" than "given."

However, Sabathia hasn't even been the top-performing starter on his own staff on a batter-by-batter basis: although it didn't count, Paul Byrd did pitch 4 2/3 hitless innings in his first appearance, and in the followup, conjured up 6 innings of 5-hit shutout ball to earn his first victory of the season. (Note: I am not saying that Paul Byrd is a better pitcher than C.C. Sabathia, a fact that is obvious to anyone with functioning retinas.) Byrd threw a wide variety of

whatever it is Paul Byrd throws (I saw much of it: I am simply at a loss to describe it) en route to a 5-K, 2-BB, 89-pitch outing that kept the White Sox off balance enough to hand the bullpen a 2-run lead, which they preserved for him (more below). Byrd himself attributed much of his success to his newfound "splitter," which he had also mentioned in Spring Training: frankly, you could probably have restrained me like Alex in "Clockwork Orange" and forced me to watch every Paul Byrd pitch and I could not have identified which were splitters, fastballs, offspeed pitches, gunkballs, spitballs, super gunkballs, or peeled potatoes. This having been said, Paul Byrd appears to be having an odd-numbered year (check his career stats), which is very good news for the Indians.

**2) Ducks on the pond!**

I haven't had to use this heading this season, but great Kraken's beak, Friday night's game put an end to that. In the only game of the three-game series in which the Indians out-hit the White Sox, the Indians lost because they hit 3-for-20 with runners in scoring position, left a barely-conceivable 9 runners stranded in scoring position at the ends of innings, and stranded 13 runners overall. Trot Nixon and Travis Hafner had consecutive strikeouts with the bases loaded in the 4th inning, an inning in which Andy Marte (of the .167 batting average at the time) drove in a run, but no one else could. Space and the health of my digestive system prevent me from cataloguing the entire litany of woe. Suffice it to say, it was tripleplus ungood.

Lest you think this was an isolated incident, note that although everyone is all joyously falling all over themselves mentioning that the Tribe is one of the unusual teams to win a game in which it got a single hit, no one mentions that they got one hit and left EIGHT MEN ON BASE. Yes, they drew six walks and were the beneficiaries of 3 Chicago errors, but they left EIGHT MEN ON BASE, **SIX** of them in **SCORING POSITION**! That's SUPER NONGOOD.

**3) Subjectively brilliant**

I thought Eric Wedge's management of the bullpen Saturday was brilliant, where "brilliant" is defined as "doing what I would have done" combined with "and it worked." Wedge had aired out

Ferd Cabrera and Chinless Davis on Friday, trying to hold on after Fausto Carmona looked about as inept as Byrd and Sabathia looked masterful, so they were, unless something dire happened, unavailable. After Byrd finished the sixth inning, Wedge decided not to push his luck and called for Tom Mastny to start the seventh. Mastny apparently has an innovative contract provision paying him a bonus for every pitch he does not throw, recording two outs in six pitches, a fairly typical outing for him. With the left-handed trio of Podsednik, Erstad, and Thome coming up (each with a pronounced platoon split, Aaron Fultz was summoned. Fultz retired the schmucks before walking Thome, bringing up the right-handed trio of Konerko, Dye, and Crede.

Let's pause here for a moment. There are many ways to make a lineup, and Ozzie Guillen clearly knows more about baseball when unconscious than I do after snorting a pound of gingko biloba, but doesn't this strike one as either "suboptimal" or "asinine?" Just checking.

Anyway, Raffy came in, threw 11 strikes in 15 pitches (the most predictable feature of a Betancourt outing), and got out of the eighth unscathed. Then, since it was a non-save situation, Wedge let Betancourt go back out for the ninth, where he wasn't particularly effective (although, again, 13 strikes in 17 pitches), and Lord Joe was called in to get the Very Cheapest Save Ever Recorded. (Seriously, had he given up a three-run homer to Erstad, we would have … *still been in the lead*. The Save Rule escapes me sometimes.)

Now, I'm not on board with the "don't bring the closer out because it's not a save situation" conventional wisdom, but I am on the "let the effective reliever continue to be effective if it's no skin of anybody's nose" train. With Sabathia starting the next day and others (notably Six Pitch Tom) available had he faltered, why not air Raffy out a little? As long as you aren't with him Hell or High Water, that seems like a great way to handle that.

**4) Speaking of Ferd**

Wow!

Seriously, Ferd Cabrera came in and …

Wow!

No, really, I can be perfectly objective here. He has 8 K and 2 BB in 4 2/3 innings, striking out 5 White Sox in …

Wow!

Okay, no, I can't. I love Ferd Cabrera. Bother me not with your petty "logic" and "history." I love this man.

**5) In the interest of fairness**

Jason Davis threw two hitless innings.

Fortunately, I am *not* interested in fairness and can still consider him an Ordinary Schmoe.

However, I can be objective enough to point out that Joe Borowski not only picked up the cheap save on Saturday, but he got a damned good one on Sunday, striking out two White Sox

(Iguchi and pinch-hitter Pierzynski) in a one-run game in which Cleveland was clearly not hitting. Borowski now has 5 saves, but as importantly, has settled into the role enough to establish the rest of the bullpen as well. Additionally, he is not Oldberto Hernandez, which is a plus.

**6) Gark smash!**

Well, on Friday, it was more like “Gark poke,” but Ryan Garko did have a career-high 4 hits before hitting a solo shot on Saturday. He didn’t get any hits Sunday, but then, neither did 8 of his teammates. Even with an 0-for-4 Sunday, Garko is hitting .381, percentage points behind second-place Jason Michaels, showing that small sample sizes yield bullshit results. Still, .381 is good, and suggests that we’re okay with Garko in the four slot in Victor’s absence. We might even be okay with Garko out there instead of Casey Blake’s .194 at first base. Just a thought.

**7) Pronk swish!**

Travis Hafner went 0-for-11 with 1 walk, 1 RBI (a sac fly), and a strikeout in each game of the series. After a torrid start, Hafner is now hitting .212. Is it too early to worry about Hafner?

Well, duh. Yes, it is. But 0-for-11 is still crummy.

**8) Forget smallball, we prefer nonball**

Grady Sizemore led off Saturday’s game with a double off Jose Contreras, and to date, the Cleveland Indians have never gotten another hit. Still, Sizemore was able to score on the strength of a passed ball by Gibby Molina and Trot Nixon’s uncanny ability to ground out to

shortstop.

Not to be outdone, Sizemore drove in the second run of the game by NOT grounding out to shortstop, or doing anything else with his bat for that matter. The Indians' second run scored when Blake walked (fouling off 2 two-strike pitches to do it, very nice work there), Peralta induced an error on Crede, Kelly Shoppach cleverly did not swing at any of the four terrible pitches he was thrown, and then Sizemore heroically did not swing at ball four to force in the run. (Nixon followed by not swinging just as heroically, but sadly, his pitch was strike three, showing the thin line between "heroism" and "swing the #$%&ing bat, you moron.")

**9) Mike Rouse sighting!**

Mike Rouse got the spot start Sunday as Josh Barfield was exhausted from his two-hit performance Saturday. Although Rouse did not get a hit … or score a run … or produce any offense … he did draw a walk and stole his first base of the season, showing that we have a valuable bench weapon as long as striking the ball with a bat is not part of the need set at the time.

**10) Box Score Follies**

Chicago's starting lineup Sunday featured 7 hitters batting under .250, 6 under .225. Fortunately, they were able to replace one with .143-hitting Rob mACKowiACK, a second with .147-hitting A.J. Pierzynski, and still had enough to put .111-hitting Alex Cintron on as a pinch-runner for glacial Jim Thome.

The bottom third of the Cleveland batting order went .138, .167, .167 Friday, .182, .179, .143 Saturday, and .290, .000, .125 Sunday. The .290 was Peralta, who batted seventh to allow Casey Blake's .194 to hit sixth because Eric Wedge lost a bet. (I dunno, you got a better

explanation?)

Cleveland's first three pitchers Saturday had 0.00 ERAs.

Joe Borowski threw more strikes than balls in consecutive appearances, lowering his ERA from "shitty" to "bad."

Kelly Shoppach drew walks in each of the weekend games despite not convincing anyone that he can actually hit baseballs.

Jason Michaels' triple Saturday gives him a team-leading 1.275 OPS.

Dave Aardsma struck out 2 men in 1 inning Friday, then 4 men in 2 innings Sunday. He was a K/9 rate of 13.5 and sub-1.00 WHIP and ERA. His K/9 rate is still lower than Ferd's 15.43, and his photo still makes him look insane. However, he does make the Cubs look like idiots, which admittedly is not that hard to do.