A 162-game season is a long one indeed. Baseball fans are treated to all sorts of interesting and unusual sights over the course of such a long haul. Let's hope we don't see defense played quite like that played last night for quite some time to come. In today's B-List, Buff recaps a second consecutive loss to the Royals, with special mentions of his favorite player and his favorite amphibian.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (27-17)	3	0	0	0
Royals (19-28)	2	5	0	0

W: Duckworth (2-3) L: C. Lee (2-1)

Remember when we stormed into Kansas City last year and completely dominated them because we were the vastly superior team and they were a bunch of schmoes? Yeah, neither do I (primarily because it Did Not Happen).

1) A step-by-step analysis

Step One: Click Here .
Step Two: Scroll the the last paragraph.
Step Three: Mea culpa.

2) Self-flagellation is not analysis!

Oh, all right. How much analysis do you need? There is no way to spin 10 hits in 4 1/3 innings as anything good. That's almost a 1-to-1 hit-to-out ratio. That's simply poor. There is no way to spin 3 home runs into anything good. What, at least they didn't strike any little old ladies on the head? There is no way to spin giving up two run-scoring hits, including a tater, to .195-hitting strikeout machine Alex Gordon, who bats left-handed ... when you're a left-handed pitcher! There was nothing really notable about Cliff Lee's performance, no uncharacteristic wildness, no weird tendencies, just a flat-out heapin' helpin' of Suck on a Stick.

Now, the first inning was kind of amusing in a Keystone Kops sort of way, what with two runners being thrown out at home on ground balls. This is notable for two reasons: it shows some good defense and/or bad baserunning, and Cliff Lee induced two ground balls, which is kind of his quota for an entire game. But the second inning went homer, bunt out, single, double, single, homer, who cares what comes after that, that's five runs in six batters, and that's even with considering Tony Pena Jr. a batter!

Now, I give some credit to Lee for getting two swinging strikeouts in a scoreless third, and after the Indians bollixed the 4th by getting four baserunners and no runs (which is hard to do and featured a whiff with the bases loaded), Lee had the quintessential "F*$% you!" inning:

Strike (looking), Strike (foul), groundout
Strike (swinging), Strike (foul), fly out
Strike (foul), Strike (foul), Strike (swinging)

For those of you counting at home, that's nine strikes in nine pitches. You're

down 7-3, you've pitched like shit, you might as well throw strikes, right?

Of course, Alex Gordon hit the aforementioned home run in the fifth on a 3-0 pitch. Apparently Lee has only so much "F*$% you!" in him.

By the way, Lee might want to think about taking some fielding practice. Ptui!

3) Speaking of "F*$% you!"

Mike Koplove made his first appearance as a Cleveland Indian in relief of Cliff Lee. He promptly gave up back-to-back doubles to right-hander Ryan Shealy (hitting a brisk .218) and right-hander John Buck (on the Sandy Alomar Mephistopheles Plan) to give up a ninth run. I mention this because Mike Koplove throws sidearm and is ostensibly there to GET RIGHT-HANDED HITTERS OUT, OR AT LEAST ANNOY THEM. Shealy hit the first pitch!

Koplove subsequently settled down and retired the next five hitters, including a pair of Ks. However, as is the way of the relief pitcher, the one run inflates his ERA to an unsightly 5.40.

Which represented the Best Cleveland Pitcher on the evening. Lee's ERA is now 5.93. And the third Cleveland pitcher, Ferd Cabrera, has simply turned into a newt. No, an olm . Ferd Cabrera is an olm. Cabrera's ERA passed Koplove's to reach 5.59 on the season on the "strength" of a two-run shot by noted power hitter Mark Grudzielanek (it was his second on the season). It might have been worse, but Tony Pena Jr. had been caught stealing on the previous pitch. Grudzielanek had a 1-2 count on him, having swung and missed at the first and

third pitches from Cabrera. In Cabrera's defense, he did have a perfect 7th. Perhaps Ferd should not go more than one inning.

I should say that at least Koplove was in the zone: 19 of his 25 pitches went for strikes. Cabrera, not so much (16 strikes, 16 balls).

4) Everybody hits!

And I mean *everybody*. .219 hitter Emil Brown? One hit. .195 hitter Alex Gordon? Already covered. Fungal shortstop Tony Pena Jr.? One hit. Every Cleveland hitter had at least one hit, and Trot Nixon (single, double) was the only Indian to neither score nor drive in a run. It is hard to argue that scoring 7 runs on 12 hits, 4 walks, 1 HBP, and a wild pitch by Scott Elarton is "not enough to win the game."

Unless, of course, you look at the fact that the Indians stranded nine men on base, a shocking EIGHT of whom were stranded in SCORING POSITION. (The ninth was stranded at first when Casey Blake struck out with the bases loaded.) Holy cow! That really blows! In contrast, KC stranded 4, 2 of whom were in scoring position.

Think about this for a moment: the Royals had 16 baserunners, we had 17. If we get two more hits with guys in scoring position, we could have tied or led that game. Now, none of this excuses the lame-assed pitching we got last night, but it sure is squanderrific in its own right.

By the way, NINE of Cleveland's 12 hits were for extra bases. (Of course, seven of KC's were, too.)

5) Nice hose!

Victor Martinez threw out Tony Pena on the front end of a double steal in the 8th inning. Now, I'm not sure I want to endorse the thought process of Buddy Bell issuing a double steal in the 8th inning leading 9-5, but hey, the Indians can score some runs and the KC bullpen can be troublesome. Actually, the Royals' relievers have been on kind of a roll recently, pitching quite well: Brandon Duckworth earned the win in relief of Fly Ball Elarton with 3 innings of 1-run ball, and Jimmy Gobble got Grazy Sizemore to whiff with a runner in scoring position. Each of them now has an ERA of 2.50 or lower. But he was going to bring in Octavio Dotel, fresh off the DL, so maybe a cushion was important.

Anyway, Martinez has caught 8 of 31 basestealers this season for a 25.8% catch rate: this would actually be his highest career percentage in a full season (he caught 31% in 2003 in 40 games) and a significant improvement over last season's 18%. In fact, it's better than Kelly Shoppach's 21.4% (admittedly with a much smaller sample of 14 would-be basestealers), and above the line where most people consider a catcher to be a real detriment (somewhere between 20 and 25%: 25% would translate to a 75% success rate for stealers, which is around the "break-even" point in the American League). In any event, it's better, and that's good.

6) Who was that masked man?

To make room for Koplove on the major-league roster, Eddie Mujica was optioned back to Beefalo.

Now, I simply can't explain this. Mujica pitched a massive four innings in two appearances, amassing a 4.50 ERA, which in Relief Speak means he had one good performance and one crappy performance. Big deal. I like Mujica because he:

a) Throws strikes
b) Has a closer's attitude
c) Throws strikes
d) Has been very successful at Beefalo
e) Throws strikes

Now, I can't argue against Koplove *per se*. Koplove may be the greatest thing since sliced bread. He also throws strikes, and I appreciate this. But why him instead of Eddie Moo? More to the point, what does it take to get Eddie Moo some of, say, Oldberto Hernandez' or Ferd Cabrera's innings? If you don't trust the guy, at this point in his career, just f*$%ing cut him. Trade him for some socks. I'd rather actually USE the guy, but I am nowhere near the Grand Evaluator of Talent that Eric Wedge and Company are. But for cryin' out loud, this is a pretty raw deal for the Moo Man.

7) Funny, it worked in rehearsal ...

I love the television show "House." I love Hugh Laurie as an actor, and he does a terrific job with the character of a brilliant diagnostician who is a serious misanthrope. Patients are puzzles to him, and the fact that they are living, feeling human beings is kind of an annoying side effect that sometimes gets in the way of

solving a cool puzzle. Anyway, every so often, a patient will have some weird condition where a bacterial or other kind of infection "hides out" (say, in a poorly-healed broken jaw, or in some fat cells waiting to be burned), and when released, causes the patient to see things that are not there or act erratically, as if responding to some unseen stimuli. It's interesting to try to determine what the patient is experiencing since it happens entirely within the perception of the patient.

And this is the only explanation I have for Ryan Garko hitting a runner in the back with a throw while sitting on his rear end.

8) Noting the noteworthy

Grady Sizemore and Casey Blake opened the game off Home Run Scott Elarton with back-to-back homers, reminding Cleveland fans of Elarton's brief stint with the Indians. The Indians last accomplished this in July 2002, also against the Royals in Kansas City. Surprisingly, Scott Elarton was not involved.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro signed Ramon Vazquez to a five-year, 30-million dollar deal after he was Designated For Wazoo by the Texas Rangers. Thankfully, this did not actually happen. Fire Eric Wedge.