Talk about owning a city over the course of a weekend. Not only did the Cavs lay the smack down on the Pistons on Sunday night, but the Indians swept the Tigers ... seizing control of the AL Central in the process. Buff breaks down the weekend series for us in his latest B-List.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (29-17)	2	0	0	2
Tigers (29-18)	0	1	0	0

W: Byrd (5-1) L: N. Robertson (4-4) S: Borowski (15)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (30-17)	0	0	2	0
Tigers (29-19)	0	1	0	1

W: Sabathia (7-1) L: Grilli (2-2) S: Borowski (16)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (31-17)	4	0	0	0
Tigers (29-20)	0	0	3	0

W: Carmona (6-1) L: Maroth (3-2) S: Borowski (17)

I thought the weekend series deserved to be separated from the Monday game. Call me nutty.

1) Department of Efficiency Dept.

I touched on the fact that Paul Byrd had been throwing a lot of strikes, walking very few batters and riding this accuracy to some degree of success. Nothing much changed this weekend, as Byrd threw another strike-filled walk-free game to win his fifth game on the season, holding the Tigers to 4 runs in 6 1/3 IP.

In fact, Byrd's strike percentage was nearly unbelievable: 60 strikes in 73 pitches. This percentage may turn out to be unmanageably high, not because Paul Byrd isn't capable of throwing strikes, but because if every pitch is in the strike zone, eventually the opponent starts auguring in on your stuff: since Byrd's "stuff" is not entirely fearsome, this can turn out to be a problem. Through 5 innings, Byrd had given up 1 run on 4 hits, one for extra bases, and threw 52 pitches with 41 strikes and 11 balls. This is a high percentage, to be sure, but in the next two innings, he threw 21 pitches with a 19:2 ratio, and it caught up to him, as the Tigers whaled on him for five hits, three for extra bases, and three runs to only four outs.

Byrd himself said that he was getting too much of the plate with pitches when ahead in the count. I'm not sure any pitching coach feels comfortable telling his starter to go mix in some lousy pitches, but in Byrd's case, at least keeping them out of the middle of the zone seems warranted.

2) Annoying pitchers for fun and profit

Saturday's game featured the much-anticipated matchup of C.C. Sabathia and Justin Verlander. As good as Sabathia has been this season, Verlander has been better, cruising into the game with a 5-1 record, a 2.68 ERA, and a WHIP under 1.20. And statistically, Verlander outpitched Sabathia, giving up only 2 runs in innings on only three hits.

The problem with Verlander's outing was that the Indians' patient team offensive approach goaded him into four walks and a hit batsman. More importantly, with the Detroit bullpen further depleted by an injury to Ferd Rodney and the signing of

Jose Mesa, Verlander was able to complete only six innings (in 105 pitches). This led to Bobby Seay and Jason Grilli being called on to bridge the gap to closer Todd Jones, a gap they could not bridge, and Cleveland went on to win with four more runs scored against the 'pen.

Sabathia's start was more functional than outstanding: he gave up only six hits and a walk in seven full innings, but three of the hits were doubles and one was a solo shot to Marcus Thames. Sabathia struck out six and followed Byrd's example of pounding the strike zone, throwing 75 strikes in 110 pitches. He also endured a pair of errors by the left side of the Cleveland infield. I suppose it is a measure of just how great expectations on Sabathia are that 3 runs in 7 innings with a WHIP of 1.00 and nearly a K an inning is considered a "pretty good start," but such is the life of a #1 starter. Sabathia improved to 7-1 on the season: this marks the sixth time in his past ten starts that Sabathia has finished the seventh inning.

3) Flashes of brilliance, punctuated by sharp, stabbing pains

Fausto Carmona is clearly not the bewildered young fawn that struggled so famously in tight spots last summer. He has become a dependable starter, and threw another Quality Start Sunday, going seven full innings and giving up three runs on nine hits and two walks. It was not Carmona's best outing, but on the other hand, four of the singles were infield singles and a couple of the regular ones were simply ground balls between infielders. When Carmona threw the infamous high-movement sinker, a ground ball was the most common result (12:6 GB:FB out ratio). However, it seemed watching him that he either didn't feel like throwing it early in the game or couldn't throw it well, because there were a number of frighteningly-straight 92-mph thigh-high fastballs that the Tigers simply didn't take advantage of. Now, I'm not saying that a 92-mph fastball is a trivial thing to hit, but it sure looked easier to hit than the anvils he finally got around to throwing.

Carmona induced a pair of double plays, including a 3-6-1 in which he was waiting

for the throw at first rather than the typical mincing toward the bag you often see from less athletic or more disinterested pitchers. Carmona has the same kind of Roger Clemens/Livan Hernandez gigantic butt-n-thigh combo that give him an excellent power base: both men have used this to translate into speed early and longevity late, so for Carmona to combine that with that sort of athleticism bodes well for his career.

By the way, it bears mentioning that the infield singles weren't the result of poor defense, but rather a Keeleresque combination of fielder positioning and ball placement: at least one was actually a nice stop by Josh Barfield ranging to his right, but he was on the shortstop side of the bag by the time he threw. Another was functionally a swinging bunt to a deep-playing Casey Blake: with a runner on first and Ivan Rodriguez at the plate, playing close in would have been strategically (you want a double play there) and personally (you would rather let Blake live through the season rather than take a line shot off the bean) unsound.

4) A hero in goat's clothing

I have not spoken particularly kindly of David Dellucci recently, but his two-run blast off Grilli in the 8th inning of Saturday's game was instrumental in completing the comeback and giving the bullpen a little breathing room heading into the final two frames. With left-handers starting both Friday and Sunday, Dellucci only got the one game to show his skills, but did so impressively with a triple (his first on the season) and the home run to finish the day 2-for-4 with a walk. Although his production numbers remain weak (in 137 plate appearances, he has but 2 HR and 9 RBI), his eye is still pretty good (OBP-AVG of .064), and his ISO of .143 is headed in the right direction. Combined with Monday's game against Boston, Dellucci has a modest three-game hitting streak, but according to reports, also has a more relaxed, less-pressing approach at the plate. I would like to attribute his lame hitting thus far to "pressing," but note quietly that he is also 33 and spent a year in the Philadelphia Suckzone. We'll see.

5) Guns and butter

At the beginning of the season, one of the big garment-rending topics was whether Casey Blake would take a significant number of plate appearances away from Ryan Garko, and whether Garko had actually proven anything in his short sample last season to deserve playing time over a "proven vet" like Blake. With a couple of injuries to outfielders and Andy Marte, it turned out that the question was moot, as both players became fixtures in the lineup.

As we noted last weekend, Blake's performance in May has been pretty darned good, largely coinciding with both regular play at third and being moved to the 2 slot between Sizemore and Hafner. Blake has raised his season numbers to .267/.359/.494, including .297/.368/.564 from the 2-hole. (Actually, Blake was hitting an unsustainable .391/.481/.739 as a right fielder, but this is in 27 plate appearances.) All Blake did this weekend was get a hit and drive in a run in each game, including home runs off each left-handed starter and a double off Bobby Seay Saturday, and drew four walks, including 3 Friday night. Blake finished the weekend going 3-for-10 with four walks, four runs, and three RBI. He had a tougher time against Verlander (and, in fact, did not get a hit off a right-handed pitcher), but getting on base 7 times in 14 plate appearances is not exactly chopped liver. Blake's run-scoring double off Seay in the 7th was actually the game-tying blow, setting up Dellucci's heroics in the 8th.

Garko did not play Friday, as Andy Marte got the start against Nate Robertson, but followed Saturday's double off Grilli (he subsequently scored the 6th run) with a three-run clout off Indians nemesis Mike Maroth and his Magic 80-mph Fastball. Garko harmlessly walked twice more in the game, which is a

positive sign for a player whose OBP-AVG is a kind-of-lousy .044. However, the homer off Maroth grew in importance as Maroth settled down and largely throttled the Indians' offense through 8 complete innings: the only other score after the first was a solo home run ... by Casey Blake. Garko is now hitting .333/.387/.539 on the season, and after a pretty crummy April of .255/.328/.382, his .390/.433/.659 May makes him look much, much more like a corner infielder and much less like a middle infielder or David Dellucci.

He still makes the occasional weird decision at first (throwing the ball to No Fausto Carmona, hitting Kansas City Royals in the back), but his range and catching abilities are clearly improved, and I think it's reasonable to consider him an adequate first baseman. (It should be noted that each of those weird decisions came after nice long-ranged stops: he just needs to take that extra half-second and engage his brain before throwing the ball.) His throw to the wide side of second on the 3-6-1 DP was very well executed, for example.

6) Everybody hits!

Friday's game featured every Cleveland player getting at least one hit. This includes Kelly Shoppach, still shaking off ice crystals from non-use, going 2-for-3 with a walk, and a hit by Andy Marte that may or may not have coincided with a comet's return. (It does not happen often.) Marte was rewarded for his performance by getting sent back to Beefalo to bring up Rafael Perez so that the bullpen could be fortified with another pitcher who will not be used. I can understand the thinking here: Fultz walked his last two hitters on four straight pitches, and with a series against Boston in which Cliff Lee and Jeremy Sowers get the first two starts, it behooves the Indians to have a left-handed option in the bullpen.

Also, Andy Marte is hitting very poorly, arguably very, *very*
poorly.

One of the other hits was Travis Hafner's first triple of the season, a two-run homer by Josh Barfield, and two hits by leadoff hitter Grady Sizemore.

On Saturday, only Hafner and Trot Nixon did not get a hit, and Hafner did draw a walk, one of seven by the Indians. The Indians were actually out-hit by the Tigers for the series 30-27, but the Indians drew 17 walks over the series, while the free-swinging Tigers drew a grand total of ***four***.

7) Paul Byrd is an inaccurate schmoe

Rafael Betancourt throws strikes. How often does Rafael Betancourt throw strikes? On Friday, in relief of Paul Byrd, Betancourt threw 16 pitches, 15 of which were strikes. The one ball was to Ivan Rodriguez (which is really hard to do) ... the pitch before he induced Pudge to ground into an inning-ending double play.

On Sunday, he was not quite as accurate, throwing 13 strikes in 14 pitches. Two of the strikes were stroked for hits, including a double by Sean Casey, who may be the slowest man in major league baseball. Watching him running to third on Omar Infante's single was like watching a manatee run the 400-meter hurdles.

Wowzers.

Anyway, Betancourt's ERA is now 1.74 on the season. He has a WHIP of 0.87 and a K:BB ratio of 17:1. Personally, that works for me.

8) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Joe Borowski pitched the ninth inning of all three games, getting his 15th, 16th, and 17th saves with three shutout innings. The game log will tell you that he got Gary Sheffield to "foul out to first," but this is the danger of depending on game logs: Sheffield checked his swing to such a degree that if he'd missed the ball, the first-base umpire would have ruled it "no swing;" the fact that the ball travelled the way it did makes me fear Gary Sheffield even that much more.

9) Ho Hum Dept.

Victor Martinez had home runs Friday and Saturday, one from each side of the plate. He represented the sum total of run-producing offense against Justin Verlander. Kelly Shoppach is hitting .326 and may never play again: he is probably feeling a bit like a cross between the Maytag repairman and Cal Ripken's backup.

10) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro washed the Cavaliers' home white uniforms in hot water with their road wine-colored ones, forcing the Cavs to wear pink uniforms in their playoff game against the Pistons. John Hnat would probably have noticed that even without his wife's help, so it's likelihood is very, very low. Fire Eric Wedge.