What do you get when you combine the worst pitch with the worst defensive decision and the worst managerial substitution? You probably get something like the 4-3 loss the Indians suffered at the hands of The Mighty Royals last night. Buff summarizes the gruesome details in today's B-List, just in case you were growing weary of the Cavs today.

FINAL SCORE				
Royals (22-38)	0	0	2	1
Indians (35-22)	0	0	0	0

W: B. Bannister (2-3) L: Byrd (6-2) S: Dotel (2)

Gonna keep it short, as some people are considering other topics today. (Besides, the game sucked.)

1) The streak ends, and a modest request

Paul Byrd's streak of consecutive innings without a walk ended last night on an intentional walk to David DeJesus with a runner on second and one out. This turned out to be a terrific play, since the next batter lined out to Josh Barfield and DeJesus was doubled off first base, but it's a little sad to see the streak end, anyway.

However, if the streak's ending gets Paul Byrd to stop throwing meatballs, I am all for it.

Look, I'm not certain that the streak made Byrd throw too many pitches too close to the center of the strike zone: correlation does not imply causation, as my statistician wife tells me. But Byrd gave up three run-scoring hits and a run-scoring groundout, and one of the hits came on an 0-2 count and another came on 0-1. The home run pitch to Ryan Shealy (hitting .215 and capable of hitting exactly two pitches: fastball in and hanging curve) was not just fat, it was *o bese*
. Go look at the replay on the web. It is the Worst Curveball Ever Thrown, and as a Cleveland fan, I've seen some bad curveballs.

Byrd gave up 10 hits and 4 runs in 6 innings, which is pretty mediocre stuff in the Chuck Nagy mold. He struck out 4 and threw 72 strikes in 96 pitches, but really, the one thing Byrd could do differently (other than Never Throw That Curveball Again) would be to try to entice a hitter to fish for something a little off the plate when ahead in the count. Heck, Mark Grudzielanek fouled off ball four once: Byrd has earned enough of a reputation as a strike-thrower that he might get guys to swing at stuff that's harder to hit.

2) That underbelly is too soft, I will attack the ribcage instead

Brian Bannister pitched a fine game last night, giving up a single unearned run in seven innings. He only struck out two, but repeatedly got the Indians to hit the ball sub-solidly and gave up only 5 hits without walking anyone. Through five innings, he had only thrown about 60 pitches, so the Indians' calling card of patiently working the starter to get to the middle relievers wasn't working well. Bannister finally threw a bunch of pitches in the 6th and 7th, and yielded the mound to wunderkind Zach Greinke.

Greinke walked Kelly Shoppach on a 3-2 pitch, then struck out Grady Sizemore before allowing a single to Casey Blake. Hafner-killer Jimmy Gobble was summoned, but gave up a flare the other way to load the bases. Representing the tying run, Hafner was replaced by Franklin

Gutierrez, ostensibly in case Victor Martinez doubled. (More on that later.) Martinez hit a sacrifice fly to bring the score to 4-2. Not wanting to have Trot Nixon face Gobble, Ryan Garko was summoned, which summoned David Riske, who summoned a 3-pitch strikeout, which summoned a gag reflex.

Riske, exhausted from his three-pitch outing, gave way to faux closer Octavio Dotel, furiously being showcased for no discernable reason. (At this point, I would rather trade for Riske, but understand the reticence to use him in a save situation.) Dotel's first pitch was driven forcefully all the way to shortstop as Jhonny Peralta reached on a single. David Dellucci singled, and Josh Barfield bunted the runners into scoring position.

So, let's recap: one out, runners on 2nd and 3rd, down two runs, and in steps ... the #9 hitter, Shoppach, who grounds out. Grady Sizemore was intentionally walked, because Buddy Bell is nothing if not a manager capable of repeating the egregious mistakes of others (in this case, Jim Leyland last Friday). This is a pretty good strategy, because Casey Blake hits negative three thousand with runners in scoring position and two outs.

Dotel hit Blake with a 1-2 pitch to drive in the third run.

And this is fantastic, because now the bases are still loaded, and our #3 hitter, our RBI machine, our fearsome DH, our ...

... Franklin Gutierrez, comes to the plate. Yes, Franklin Gutierrez. He grounded out.

To recap, we loaded the bases in each of the last two innings and scored two runs on a sac fly and a HBP. And we lost by one.

3) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Pinch-running Gutierrez for Hafner was unspeakably misguided, if not simply retarded. What is more likely, that Martinez hits a double (because virtually nothing else would make a difference), or that Hafner would come to the plate in the ninth? If Hafner doesn't come up in the ninth, we're probably going to lose anyway, right? And KC has one left-handed relief pitcher, meaning that it's pretty much righties all the way down as to whom the 3-slot would be facing then.

Now, I'm not going to get all weepy one way or the other about Barfield sacrificing the runners in the 9th. I happen to think it was a nice play (and we found out Barfield can bunt, which is a plus on this team), because a single ties the game and Barfield is a poor hitter. But let me throw this out: on the replay of Gutierrez grounding into a force at second, the third baseman

was well behind the bag. Ostensibly Gutierrez is fast, or he wouldn't have pinch-run. And backup Jason LaRue was behind the plate, displaying roughly the same agility as the Chrysler Building. I suppose that Gutierrez is a professional hitter, once with a chance to get a hit off the opponent's closer, but laying down a bunt toward third would have been a pretty neat play there.

4) A new *cause celebre*

Rafael Perez relieved Paul Byrd and pitched 2 1/3 scoreless innings, giving up one hit and a pair of walks while striking out one. Perez' first inning was a 10-pitch 1-2-3 job, while he issued a walk in a four-batter 8th. He appeared to lose his sharpness in his third inning, yielding a single, got a swinging K, but then walked left-hander Mark Teahen (Perez is left-handed as well) on four pitches.

His strike-to-ball ratio ended up a lousy 22:18, but overall Perez looked thoroughly in control until his third inning. I'd say he was stretched out too far, but

that's probably not true, since he started in winter ball and has started some in Beefalo. Still, not only is it nice to have a second lefty in the pen, but it's nice to have a 0.00 ERA on the staff, even if a bit of an inaccurate one. Perez now replaces Tom Mastny as my favorite bullpen pitcher who is somewhat unknown: Betancourt is still my favorite to see in the box score, although I loathe waiting for him to actually throw the ball.

5) I can do that!

With two runners on in the ninth, Oldberto Hernandez was summoned from the pen, chasing me away from my computer. He struck out the batter he faced (Mike Sweeney) on a full-count pitch.

With two runners on in the ninth, Aaron Fultz was summoned from the pen, chasing me away from the

computer I had just returned to. He struck out the batter he faced (Alex Gordon) on a full-count pitch.

Had the Royals been given more than three outs, there is the very real possibility that more relievers would have been able to keep this up, although my stomach would certainly have prevented me from watching any of them.

6) It may have been a bad decision, but at least it was executed poorly

Kansas City's fourth (and ultimately game-winning) run was a "earned run" scored on the "third out" of the inning. Someday, I would like to understand the official scoring algorithms. However, with two on and two out, Ryan Shealy hit a ground ball up the middle that Jhonny Peralta fielded going to his left. His choices were:

a) throw Shealy out
b) beat the runner to second with a crisp throw

Peralta chose (c), flip the ball backhand with the velocity of a hermit crab to Josh Barfield. Noted speedster Mark Teahen beat the crab to the bag, everyone was safe, and Mark Grudzielanek scored.

That's just crappy.

7) Accomplishment sans actual performance

Grady Sizemore, Travis Hafner, and David Dellucci each collected a pair of hits, and Sizemore also walked once (he was also caught stealing in the first). These hits combined to score no runs and drive in one. Casey Blake drove in as many runs with his body as these men did with their bats. The

Indians scored three runs, one of which was driven in with a hit. Kelly Shoppach scored twice despite being hitless (he drew a walk and reached on an error: it should be noted that his slide under the first-baseman's blind sweep-tag on the errant throw from Gordon was a wonderful play, though).

Cleveland stranded nine runners, six in scoring position. That, too, was crappy.

8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro has revealed the plot to the seventh "Harry Potter" book on a pseudonymous website. My guess is that Shapiro does not have time to read a lot of "Harry Potter" books; in any event, this statement is completely fabricated. Fire Eric Wedge.