Buff sums up yesterday's game perfectly in his intro to today's B-List when he says "I don't know whether to be encouraged by the never-give-up fighting quality of a team that is down 7-0 with only two hits through 4 innings and comes back to tie the game, or be disgusted by the never-come-through choking quality of a team that leaves 13 men on base in a one-run game and lets its closer lose the game in a role he's not suited for." Preach on brotha Buff!

FINAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**R**	**H**	**E**
Mariners (34-26)	1										0	4
Indians (37-25)	0										0	0

W: Morrow (3-0) L: Borowski (0-3)

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1) Through the Looking Glass

If Paul Byrd didn't have such a distinctive pitching motion, I could have sworn I was watching the game through a mirror. I mean, it's the LEFT-handed starters that give up multiple homers and more runs than innings pitched and get knocked out before the fifth, right? Wasn't that Sowers sneaking onto the mound in an effort to avoid being sent down? Lee, maybe?

No, it was vintage Paul Byrd, albeit a malodorous one reeking of vinegar and cork. Byrd clumped 11 hits and 7 runs in 4 innings of work, stirking out no one and walking none as well. Walks may have been a plus, especially with respect to Raul Ibanez, who clubbed a pair of two-run homers off Byrd. A third homer to Jose Lopez resulted in two more runs. I don't know, it may be just me, but I would figure that giving up two two-run homers in one inning and 9 hits through three would suggest that Byrd didn't have his "best stuff."

Pitching to Ibanez in the fourth seems almost inconceivable: left-handers tattoo Byrd to the tune of a .343 average and .900 OPS, while righties sport

still-gruesome-but-lower .301 and .815. After retiring Suzuki and Guillen around a single by Vidro, you have two choices:

a) pitch to Ibanez
b) throw nothing but low outside gunk to Ibanez and face Johjima instead

(Actually, I suppose (c) would be to bring in Rafael Perez. Unlikely.)

Granted, Johjima is hitting .330 and singled his first time up, and it wasn't clear in the 4th that Ibanez would have a super night, but still. Heck, even if Johjima got on, Ben Broussard was next. I don't know. Byrd pitched very poorly, but damn if he doesn't give up a lot of his home runs while actually AHEAD in the count (0-1 to Ibanez).

Byrd is going to give up a goodly number of hits: that's who he is at this point in his career. I appreciate trying to limit the walks, that's generally a very good strategy for a high-contact pitcher like Byrd. But giving up more than a tater a game, almost 1.6 per 9 IP, is simply a poor recipe. I think any ball Byrd throws in the middle third of the plate is a mistake at this point. At the risk of sending a mixed message, "Nibble."

2) Comeback Fuel: Fernando Cabrera

I wondered how Eric Wedge would approach absorbing the innings of an imminent 7-0 loss: at that point through four full innings, the Indians had managed two hits off starter Cha Seung Baek, and the third and fourth innings were perfect punctuated by three strikeouts. Baek had this same start against us in our previous matchup, although he ended up faltering before giving way to the bullpen. (This is called "foreshadowing," boys and girls.) We had loaded the bases in the first, but Ryan Garko flied out to end the inning. (This too, to my great chagrin, also constitutes foreshadowing.)

Ferd Cabrera was called out to stem the tide, and his first inning was very promising: a 1-2-3 job with a pair of groundouts and 9 strikes in 12 pitches. Each hitter was started with a first-pitch strike: each hitter was retired after a 1-2 count.

After the Indians finally broke through on Baek, Cabrera returned for a second inning. After giving up a hit (and an extra base on Trot Nixon's first error of the season), Cabrera struck out Suzuki, struck out Vidro on four pitches, and got Jose Guillen to ground out. This time, 11 strikes in 16 pitches.

The Indians scratched out another pair of runs and Cabrera came out for a third inning. At this point, Cabrera pretty much lost his command: a triple to Ibanez on a 2-2 pitch simply continued Ibanez' day, but Johjima flew out 1-0, Broussard was intentionally walked, and Beltre started 1-0 before lining into a double play to Casey Blake at third. None of the four hitters saw a first-pitch strike.

In all, Cabrera threw 42 pitches in three shutout innings, yielding two hits and an intentional walk while recording a pair of Ks. This brings up an interesting philosophical question with respect to Cabrera: do you value him or not? Sending him out for a third inning certainly saves bullpen arms, and he did fight his way through the inning. However, having him soak up that many innings in the Westbrook Injury Start is arguably what threw him out of whack in the first place. He clearly isn't a guy who can be aired out like Perez: why do that? If he's a sacrificial arm, then whatever, but … what if the guy is still a useful pitcher? Wouldn't it be better to try to maximize his contribution rather than pull him out of mothballs sporadically, only to overextend him? Ferd finally got through an appearance without walking somebody: his two innings against Detroit were very solid (albeit pointless) as well. He still has the best strikeout stuff on the roster: keep him in the strike zone and we have an actual *asset*.

3) Comeback Fuel: Travis Hafner

How bad has Travis Hafner been? Consider that his May, in which he hit .228, is miles ahead of his June. He is hitting .188/.333/.219 in June. That's just wretched. And although June is still young, May featured about 130 plate appearances. Hafner clearly isn't a .188 hitter … but he sure has been hitting .188. Not much in the way of positive spin available there.

With one out in the 5th, Baek apparently lost his edge: he gave up consecutive 0-1 singles to Kelly Shoppach, Grady Sizemore, and

Jason Michaels (back to the two slot because Eric Wedge hates my liver) to load the bases and prove how slow Kelly Shoppach is. Casey Blake followed with a poorly-hit ball that they couldn't turn a double play on, so they simply threw Shoppach out at home instead.

After watching two strikes go by, Hafner fouled off the 1-2 pitch before singling to left to drive in two runs. This represents the first time in five games that Hafner had driven in a run with a hit. An offensive contribution from Hafner is going to be really important this summer, so hopefully his 2-for-4 night with 2 RBI isn't an isolated event.

4) Comeback Fuel: Catchers

Kelly Shoppach got the start to be Paul Byrd's personal catcher. I know the team insists this is not the case. I don't think they are "lying," *per se*, unless you define "lying" as "deliberately communicating information you know to be false," in which case, well, yeah, they're lying. Anyway, in that role, Shoppach was a tremendous failure, in that Paul Byrd stunk and Shoppach never *once* went out to the mound to pummel him with his shin guards. This is the team of the Tony Pena Head Slap, for Pete's sake.

Respect tradition!

At the plate, however, Shoppach had a brilliant day: 3-for-3 with a double, a run, and an RBI. He was lifted for pinch-hitter Victor Martinez in the bottom of the 8th. Shoppach is now hitting .386 on the season, but more interesting to me, hit the right-handed Baek solidly, meaning a straight left-right platoon would hardly be necessary. In fact, you could see Shoppach playing some DH with Vic behind the plate.

And, of course, Martinez is the reason that a .386 bat sits on the bench: Shoppach isn't really a .386 hitter, but Martinez really is a .325 one. Well, .325 is a little high, even for Martinez, but remember that except for the truly jaw-droppingly bad May last season, that's about what Vic hit. Martinez collected two hits in two trips to the plate, scoring in the 8th on Casey Blake's double. I don't know a lot about the psyche of the team, but giving Martinez some more time at first and Shoppach some more plate appearances at the expense of Hafner and/or Garko might be a good short-term approach.

5) Comeback Extinguisher: Ryan Garko

Ryan Garko stranded eight runners last night in an 0-for-5 performance he would probably like to forget. He made the last out of the first inning with the bases loaded. He made the last out of the 8th inning with the bases loaded. Hey made the last out of the 5th inning with runners on first and second. The out in the 8th came on a swinging strikeout that was a really ordinary pitch on which he simply swung in the wrong place. It looked like he had to physically exert himself to miss the ball.

Garko is mired in a 1-for-25 slump and could not look worse at the plate if he were Mike

Rouse. No, wait, that's not true. But he looks bad. It's a blip, long season, win one for the Gipper, I snort the nose, Lucifer, but damn, stranding 8 guys with 5 in scoring position, twice with the bases loaded is almost historically awful. Stop doing that.

6) Comeback Extinguishers: Cornering the Market

The Indians collected 16 hits last night and drew five walks. Three players got neither a hit, nor a walk: Ryan Garko, David Dellucci, and Trot Nixon.

Now, Dellucci only got two plate appearances. However, he was slotted into the two hole to replace the 1-for-4 Michaels, so he was able to make the first out of the 8th AND the last out of the game with runners on first and second. On the first pitch. Against a setup man used to throwing one inning in his second inning of work. At 38 pitches (previous six outings: 16, 19, 18, 20, 28, 8). Who had started the first two hitters out with a pitch out of the zone. You know what, Dave? You're hitting .238. If you're hitting .325 like Victor, you can swing at the first pitch. Until then, how about you show some @#%*ing patience, okay? Your OBP is .294. You slug .388. You're a CORNER OUTFIELDER, and you're @#%*ING PLATOONED to face ONLY THE PITCHING YOU CAN NATURALLY HIT. Good Lord, man, stop sucking!

Oh, by the way, stop getting thrown out at home, ‘kay?

Nixon, hitting .251/.337/.349, at least …

Wait a minute, .349? Three forty-nine? What does Josh Barfield slug … huh, .348. Congratulations, Trot, you are outslugging a young middle infielder getting used to AL pitching who hit .162/.195/.230 in April. Nixon is hitting .125 in June. I am concerned that Nixon may be suffering complications from his back problems: namely, that the fork sticking out of it is really hurting him.

Unless I read about Shin-Soo Choo's terrible issues with Satan Worshipping and Puppy Frying, I am going to be very upset.

7) Comeback Extinguisher: Joe Borowski

Lord Joedemort has one skill. One. It is not throwing a fastball. It is not throwing a curveball. It is probably not macrame. It is to show the composure and presence necessary to record three outs with a lead of 1 to 3 runs. That's it. I don't know how he does it, but I do admit he does. Anything else, and he pretty much totally

blows.

Why is Joe Borowski pitching to Raul Ibanez in the 9th inning? Are you insane? The man has two homers and a triple to this point and bats left-handed. Bring in Fultz. Bring in Perez. Walk the mother@#%*er. If he hadn't been thrown out at home, Borowski's already-terrible 3 hits and 1 run in 1 IP would have ballooned into something truly putrid.

8) Because good things happened too

Casey Blake extended his hitting streak with a nice 3-for-5 night out of the three slot, driving in a pair of runs and scoring once. He also made a nice reaction play at third to record the double play.

Josh Barfield collected a pair of hits and scored twice. After hitting a respectable .278 in May, Barfield is hitting a scorching .359 in June, albeit still with no power or patience (two doubles, zero walks).

Grady Sizemore had a pair of hits AND

a pair of walks. After a slow start, Sizemore is hitting .289/.405/.484.

Oldberto Hernandez threw a perfect 8th, striking out Suzuki in a tenacious 11-pitch at-bat.

9) Completely True Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro signed Trot Nixon and David Dellucci to free-agent contracts and allowed them to be *de facto* everyday players. I couldn't think of a false statement that would embarrass Shapiro more than this true one. Fire Eric Wedge.