It was a big weekend for the Tribe, as they took three games from the D-Rays, all nailbiters. In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff looks back at the weekend trio of wins against Tampa, which featured two saves and one win from Joe Borowski. Buff also hits on encouraging starts from Jake and Cliff as well as Benny Francisco's walk off jobbie that won Friday nights game for us.

FINAL				**RHE**
Devil Rays (33-45)	0	1	0	0
Indians (47-32)	0	0	1	0

W: Borowski (1-3) L: Camp (0-2)

FINAL				**RHE**
Devil Rays (33-46)	0	0	0	0
Indians (48-32)	0	2	0	2

W: Sabathia (12-2) L: Howell (1-2) S: Borowski (23)

FINAL				**RHE**
Devil Rays (33-47)	0	1	0	0
Indians (49-32)	0	0	1	0

W: C. Lee (5-4) L: J. Shields (6-4) S: Borowski (24)

You know, it might be considered encouraging when the worst performance by a starting pitcher is put up by your Ace, who wins his Quality Start to lead the majors in wins.

1) My Favorite Player is Hot!

Cliff Lee techincally had a better game this season on May 8th, when he went the distance to 3-hit the Angels for his first win. It had more innings, fewer hits, the same number of runs, and didn't involve giving up a home run.

I still like this one better.

And I'll tell you why: because Lee was constantly ahead of batters, hit both sides of the plate with his fastball, and continued to be rewarded for trusting his curve ball. In the Angels game, it was more a case of guys hitting the ball to the defense. That's not a bad thing: at some point, a pitcher is going to need to use his defense, and inducing weak contact is a skill. However, Lee's flyball tendencies continue to scare me, especially coming into the hot weather of summer when the ball will start carrying a few extra feet.

In this game, Lee used his location and movement to get ahead of the Devil Rays batters, then finished off 9 of them with strike three. Lee struck out the side in the first (2 swinging), then two more in each of the 2nd, 4th, and 5th innings. His last K was the front half of a strike-em-out throw-em-out double play. After a solo shot by Carlos Pena in the 2nd, Lee allowed only one baserunner in each of the third through sixth innings (two walks, one infield single, one solid single) before a perfect five-pitch seventh. He allowed a double in the 8th, but the runner was stranded and Lee's day ended after 8 innings and 107 pitches.

Now, Lee is not really a strikeout pitcher, at least not like a Sabathia or Bedard. He doesn't throw that hard and, despite the undeniable quality of his curveball, doesn't really have what you'd consider a clear "out" pitch. However, when he uses both his normal and cut fastballs and can locate them, the curve becomes a pitch that batters have a hard time preparing for, since they still have to respect the quality fastballs Lee showed yesterday.

Homers are unlikely to disappear completely from Lee's repertoire, but the recipe for success has been established, and one hopes that it took this long for Lee to regain his "feel" for his pitches after the DL stint, because that would mean that we may reasonably expect more of the same in the months ahead.

2) Hey, it's *my* recipe, Lee just borrowed it

Yes, well, that's because your old recipe of a steady diet of ground balls was a pretty tasty one, Jake.

Although Westbrook had an unusual 7:7 GB:FB ratio Friday night, he also struck out 7 batters, relying mainly on a greatly-improved changeup that the Tampa batters simply

couldn't do anything with. It's not exactly the same recipe, as Westbrook "only" struck out 7 batters in "only" 7 innings, but on the other hand, it didn't have the bitter horseradishy feel of Home Run Surprise in it, either.

In fact, Westbrook's start looked a great deal more like Paul Byrd's latest outing, in which he gave up loads of baserunners in the first two innings, then settled down and stood on Tampa's throat for five more. However, after allowing three of the first four Rays to reach base on a pair of singles and a walk to the always-dangerous Greg Norton, Westbrook unveiled his changeup and got both Carlos Pena and Ty Wigginton swinging. (Truthfully, I am not certain which pitch struck them out, only that they looked terrible doing so.) In the second, getting the baserunners out of order (single-walk-single) resulted in Tampa's only run of the night, although Westbrook had a more customary trio of groundouts. After that, the only Devil Ray to reach base was Wigginton in the sixth.

I have not paid truly careful, scouting-type attention to Westbrook's Actual Pitches. To me, he generally throws a sinker that sinks and a sinker that sinks less: when he throws the former, he gets lots of outs, and when he throws the latter, he gives up many runs and looks like Kane Davis. Friday was different, as it looked like he "pulled the string" a number of times: if he can mix that pitch in with consistency and it doesn't hang up in the zone, Westbrook can be that much

more effective a starter in the months ahead.

3) Welcome to the bigs ... for real this time!

Ben Francisco didn't get much of a debut in his last trip to Cleveland: I think he got to pinch-run once, or maybe make a run to Starbuck's. It didn't involve a lot of playing time, that much I remember. Given a spot start Friday, Francisco got his first hit of his major-league career by lining a single to the opposite field in the 4th. Nice work, Ben!

Wait, there was something else ... lemme see ...

... oh, yeah, there was that GAME-WINNING WALKOFF HOME RUN. Yeah, I knew I was forgetting something. Francisco led off the ninth inning after the Ray's Edwin Jackson had finally tired and given way to the Tampa bullpen. Since the score was only tied, Al Reyes remained in the bullpen sipping green tea while Shawn Camp was serving up Le Gravied Meatball Surprise. Camp's slider was up in the zone, but major-league players still miss bad pitches, and Francisco didn't. He

hammered the ball onto the home run porch in left, and the Indians seized the momentum from the Rays that they'd keep through the weekend.

Francisco also doubled off the tough James Shields Sunday to lead to Cleveland's third run, which turned out to be the game-winner.

4) A man of singular skill

I have certainly given Joe Borowski enough grief this season, although it should be pointed out that Joe Borowski has certainly given me enough grief this season, too. I am not sure why Really Big Bob's brand of Tightrope Save was considered charming while Joe's is more enamel-disintegrating, but the man has certainly had his share of "put runners on before getting the save" moments this season.

On Friday, Borowski was actually summoned to pitch the ninth of a tie game. I'm not entirely sure what the thought

process here was: Rafael Betancourt had finished a hitless 1-K inning of work. However, perhaps Wedge didn't want to burn Betancourt out. Maybe he figured that with the top of the order facing a lesser pitcher (the way Jackson threw, anyone in Tampa's pen would have been lesser) would result in a run in short order. In any event, Borowski gave up his customary hit but got three outs and his first win of the season.

And Sunday, Borowski actually gave up a pair of hits and a run before nailing down his 24th save of the season. In fact, if not for a nice sweep-tag by Jhonny Peralta on a stolen base attempt, he may not have done that. However, saves are saves, and we did win the game.

For my money, though, Borowski earned his money Saturday night: after Rafael Perez threw a wonderful 8th inning, he imploded in the 9th and gave up back-to-back homers to bring Tampa to within 8-6. Borowski, who probably didn't expect to pitch in such a non-save (8-3 entering the ninth) situation, simply strolled in, threw 5 strikes in 6 pitches, and dispatched the two Rays he faced to

earn his 23
rd
save.

In Borowski's last 11 games, only 3 were hitless and 6 included multiple hits by the opponent. However, he has become a master at stranding his own baserunners, giving up hits in only 3 of those outings. In two of the three outings in which he gave up a run, he earned the save anyway, meaning he was given slack and used it and so what?

A relief pitcher who gives up multi-hit innings more than half the time is not particularly good. In fact, that's pretty bad. On the other hand, a ninth-inning reliever who gives up a lead exactly zero times in 11 tries is pretty much the definition of the guy doing his job. In May,

Borowski had ten outings and gave up runs in exactly one of them; in June, Borowski lost one game by giving up a run and had a poor mopup inning in a 9-2 loss to Detroit, but otherwise earned six saves and a win. Could a pitcher pitch better than Joe Borowski? Heck, yeah. Could a pitcher have better results than Joe Borowski? Um ... no.

5) Now pitching for the American League, C.C. Afterthought

Sabathia didn't unveil a new pitch, because he doesn't need one. Sabathia is awfully good and deserves to go to the All-Star Game. (Actually, as of this writing, he hasn't been announced, but ... c'mon, he's going, right?)

However, his Inning of Crap took place in the fifth Saturday night, as after sailing through four innings allowing only one baserunner (a single by Raul Cassanova, who apparently has risen from the uninteresting), Sabathia took his fresh 4-0 lead and unleashed his IoC on it, yielding a pair of singles, a sacrifice fly, and a third single to cut the lead in half. He was not helped by his defense, which allowed two singlers to take an extra base on poor, ill-advised, or unfortunate throws, but other than a third run on a double and single in the sixth, that was pretty much all Tampa did offensively. (Sabathia induced two swinging Ks in a perfect seventh.)

Anyway, the game lacked the lack of offense that made Westbrook's and Lee's great one-run outings so necessary, so the drama was missing until the ninth, but Sabathia's three-run seven-inning affair smacked of the ordinary, despite the 8 Ks and 0 walks. Call it the Burden

of Heightened Expectations. I'm weary of the Inning of Crap, though.

6) Disturbing Quote

"I was throwing a lot of cut fastballs," Shields said. "They weren't making any adjustments on it so I kept throwing it."

Sweet!

7) Encouraging signs

Francisco's single showed a willingness and ability to go the other way; his homer and double showed power as well.

Travis Hafner hit another home run this weekend, a solo shot of left-hander J.P. Howell.

Jhonny Peralta homered off Shields on a day when most of the team was striking out instead.

Ryan Garko had two hits both Saturday and Sunday: he has hit safely in five of his last six and 8 of his last 10 games.

Kelly Shoppach threw out both baserunners who tried to steal Sunday, including Dustan Mohr in the ninth and Jonny Gomes on the aforementioned double play.

(Also see #9)

8) Less encouraging signs

Shoppach made three trips to the plate and walked back to the dugout after each trip, striking out thrice. He did break his back with elan on the third, though.

Travis Hafner was thrown out trying to steal second. That ... um ... that's an interesting

tactical decision right there. I ... I'm kind of at a loss for words there. Here's an idea: let's not do that again.

9) Trot Nixon Toast Watch

Nixon had two hits in three at-bats Friday, also drawing a walk, making him 25% of Cleveland's baserunners all by himself. As such, the current Color Code is White, with a consistency of Raw Bread. (He did not face the lefty Howell and Francisco got the call against changeup artist Shields.) Nice game, Trot.