Disappointing. After dropping the last two games of the Detroit series, the Tribe went on to lose two of three this weekend against the Blue Jays ... relinquishing their stronghold on first place in the AL Central to the Tigers. In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff recaps the weekend set with Toronto.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (51-35)	1	0	1	1
Blue Jays (42-43)	0	5	0	1

W: Halladay (10-3) L: C. Lee (5-5) S: Accardo (11)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (52-35)	1	5	0	2
Blue Jays (42-44)	0	0	0	0

W: Carmona (10-4) L: Marcum (1-2)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (52-36)	0	0	0	0
Blue Jays (43-44)	0	0	0	0

W: Accardo (2-3) L: Byrd (7-4)

If I'd told you that we would chase Roy Halladay away in the 6th inning after scoring 5 runs in one game, and that Paul Byrd would throw 8 shutout innings in

another, you'd probably feel pretty good about the weekend. So I'm not telling you. Because it wasn't good.

(Due to laptop death and deadlines, today's column will be truncated.)

1) Battle of the Titans!

I don't know any baseball fan who wasn't oozing anticipation at the mighty Josh Towers - Paul Byrd clash on Sunday. After all, Towers ERA was already under 6.00 (at 5.71), and Paul Byrd is still several years away from collecting Social Security.

Baseball's a funny game.

Towers, who had been relegated to the bullpen due to his lack of success as a starter earlier in the season, was called on to shore up the now-Burnettless rotation. Towers is not a particularly good pitcher: in the five starts since June 11, Towers only lasted as many as 90 pitches once, only made it to the sixth twice, and never gave up fewer than four runs (although a couple were unearned). However, with the wind blowing in at four thousand miles per hour and the sun's rays being redirected by a giant magnifying glass directly into the batter's boxes, Towers was ... okay, well, actually, neither of those things happened, but the Indians sure couldn't hit Josh Towers. They got their first baserunner in the sixth inning and three hits total, one in the ninth to chase Towers.

Paul Byrd pretty much matched Towers pitch-for-pitch, though: although he gave up a double to Royce Clayton, his 3 hits and no walks through 8 innings were just as impressive as Towers' 2 and zero. (In fact, Clayton had two of the four hits off Byrd, which is kind of like dominating the Tigers but allowing multiple hits to Neifi Perez.) Towers did strike out four to Byrd's two, but Byrd really did keep the Blue Jays from putting anything together. Byrd threw 70 strikes in 96 pitches, lowering his ERA to 4.41 on the season and posting his third Quality Start in his last four outings. Byrd has gone at least seven innings in each of his last three starts.

Unfortunately, Byrd misread his own defense, thinking that first baseman Victor Martinez was playing back. Because of this, he threw a pitch that Reed Johnson could jerk down the line, and since Martinez was playing in to prevent a bunt, the ball skipped past him for a double. The next batter singled to center off Raffy Betancourt and the game was over. This doesn't detract from the quality of Byrd's start, though: although I'm not going to expect this to be the norm over the second half of the season, he has had three good and one borderline start in the past three weeks, and the borderline start was 4 runs and 7 innings against the hot Tigers in Comerica.

2) Of all the traits to pick up from the veterans, "The Banana" isn't one to emulate

In Fausto Carmona's last start, Carmona sailed through six dominant shutout innings before giving up a pair of runs and leaving the bases loaded for Raffy Perez to come in and clean up. This start was much, much different, as he only had FIVE dominant shutout innings before giving up THREE runs and leaving the bases loaded for Raffy Perez to

clean up.

Through the first five innings, Carmona had given up four hits, but two were infield singles, and three (including one of the infielders) were in one inning in which he loaded the bases and escaped with no runs allowed. He did walk a pair of batters and hit Reed Johnson, but it was still a good, comfortable, shutout performance, especially after being spotted a six-run lead in the second that grew to nine in the fifth.

Then, after a leadoff groundout, Carmona gave up a single, single, double, five-pitch walk, single to John McDonald, and finally HIT Vernon Wells on an 0-1 pitch with the bases loaded to force in the third run. Mercifully, Eric Wedge had seen enough and Perez was ready, inducing an inning-ending double play on his second pitch to end the inning.

I'm not going to get too involved with the timing of the replacement here, but this sure looked familiar. Oh, yeah, it wasn't just the same as Carmona's last start, it was Every Cliff Lee Start in 2006.

Eat more Wheaties. Sleep in a hyperbaric chamber. Do something, for Pete's sake, you're 23 years old: you're supposed to have more stamina than Paul Byrd.

3) Free advice

Dear Mr. Baseball,

I have a problem giving up a bunch of runs in an inning! My shortstop should have made a play, but did walk the next guy, gave up a pair of singles, and finally a two-run double, so there's something more to it. What could it be?

CL

Dear CL,

Here are some handy tips to help you in the future:

a) Do not go to 3-2 against .235-hitting Greg Zaun, the Perfect Backup Catcher.
b) Do not go 3-2 to each of the next two hitters, either
c) Do not walk .228-hitting Royce Clayton: he is a fungus
d) Do not groove the next pitch to John McDonald, who can hit nothing else, just because you walked a fungus
e) Consider throwing your curveball for strikes

Hope this helps!

4) The comeback kids!

Because it fits better on the T-shirt than "Sisyphusian schmoes." On Friday, Lee's Inning of Crap put the Indians in a 5-1 hole: after crawling back to 5-3, then 6-5, Ferd Cabrera gave up two more runs to bounce the deficit back up to a demoralizing three runs.

However, the Tribe scorched a pair of liners in the 8th, and in the 9th, Casey Blake doubled after a walk to pinch-hitter Jason Michaels. Victor Martinez followed with a shot to left that Reed Johnson made a nice catch on: had he not caught the ball, both runners would have scored easily and the deficit would have been back down to 1. As it was, Michaels was able to tag up, but Travis Hafner grounded out to end the game.

On Sunday, the Indians got a second hit by Josh Barfield in the ninth, followed by a pointless bunt by Grady Sizemore (Barfield was thrown out at 2nd) before Casey Blake reached on an error. Martinez looked TERRIBLE striking out on three pitches, but Hafner walked to load the bases. Jhonny Peralta watched the count go to 3-0, prudently took strike one, imprudently swung at ball four, and finally struck out swinging to end the inning.

I really do appreciate that this team never seems to roll over: they really do claw their way back into games, even when the bullpen makes this a moving negative target on occasion, but boy howdy, it sure seems like we get *just close enough*

to make Squander Ball that much more painful significantly too often.

5) Managerial Head Scratchers

The bunt by Sizemore was such a knee-jerk by-the-book reaction that it totally misses the fact that Sizemore has grounded into four double plays ... EVER. Sizemore's OBP is around .400, even better against right-handers, and he's not going to hit into a double play. I love when Mike Rouse bunts, because if he's going to make an out, at least we get something out of it, but Grady Sizemore is an All-Star. (It wasn't a good bunt, which is Sizemore's fault, not Wedge's.)

I don't know how long Rafael Perez takes to warm up, but Fausto was sure out there for a looooooong time before Perez came in.

Trot Nixon played in all three games. You gotta be kidding me.

Betancourt for Byrd is not a head-scratcher: he just gave up a hit. He's our best pitcher, of course you bring him in.

6) Random Hammering

Casey Blake hit a home run off Roy Halladay: he also doubled in the 9th with a man on to extend the game to a point where it would hurt more when we lost. Blake also pounded a double and a 3-run homer off Shaun Marcum in the game we won.

Travis Hafner had at least one hit in each game, going 5-for-13 with a walk and zero strikeouts over the weekend.

Grady Sizemore had a pair of hits on each of Friday and Saturday, including a pair of doubles and a solo shot. Sizemore has 15 homers and 17 doubles on

the season. (By the way: Blake has 14 and 21.)

Josh Barfield had over 66% of our hits Sunday. He also stole a base, his 9th on the season.

7) Terror Behind the Plate

Victor Martinez left Saturday's game after being hit on the knee. However, it was just bruised and he played 1B on Sunday. I would like to believe that Martinez will not catch in the All-Star game, being a pinch-hitter instead, but we'll have to see.

8) Trot Nixon Toast Watch

Nixon hit his third home run of the season Saturday; he also doubled off Roy Halladay, showing that my contention that he is physically incapable of getting an extra-base hit is false. It also shows that Halladay was not sharp. Overall, Nixon played in all three games, going an aggregate 2-for-10 with a walk. The color code is "golden," with a consistency rating of "crunchy surfaced."