Going into the D-Ray series, almost all of us said taking two of three was the modus operandi for the weekend. And that's exactly what we did. However, to have that sweep in our hands, only to have it viciously ripped away from us Sunday afternoon ... it left Tribe fans with a bad taste in their mouth heading into Detroit tomorrow. Buff recaps the weekend set with the D-Rays in the Monday edition of The B-List.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (67-54)	1	1	0	0
Devil Rays (46-75)	0	0	0	0

W: Byrd (11-5) L: E. Jackson (3-12) S: Borowski (34)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (68-54)	0	3	0	0
Devil Rays (46-76)	0	0	0	0

W: Westbrook (4-7) L: Hammel (1-3)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (68-55)	1	0	0	1
Devil Rays (47-76)	0	0	0	1

W: Dohmann (2-0) L: R. Perez (0-1)

I dunno: Buster Olney describes Sunday's loss as "getting their guts ripped out," but after winning the other two games, watching Detroit flounder, and

taking into account the performances of the starters, it seems more like not being able to take a good nap because someone in the neighborhood was mowing their lawn. It was annoying, and you'll probably be crabby the rest of the evening, but really, a good night's sleep and you'll get over it.

1) *This* guy I'd give an extension to

It wasn't that long ago that the eight-figure extension given to Jake Westbrook looked like a colossally bad idea. Before his injury, Westbrook was posting horrific numbers, and even after it, it was hard to see how his numbers translated into a deal you would have associated with a frontline starter. However, in four of his past five outings, Westbrook has given up less than a hit an inning, won three of his four games on the season, and given up 2, 0, 1, and 1 runs. There was a very average start against the Yankees sandwiched in there, in which the longball was his primary problem, but around that start are a pair of two-hit outings that rank amongst the top tier of those produced by Cleveland starters this season.

Now, it bears mentioning that three (and arguably four) of those four outings were against offenses that are either Simply Putrid (Minnesota, Chicago) or Badly Slumping (Tampa, Texas) or a combination of the two (Tampa is more Complex Putridity in that the hitters are good while the offense is not). But look: in those four games, Westbrook has given up 13 hits and 4 runs in 28 innings. That's Virtual Ace Territory.

Westbrook did walk two batters, the second of whom scored Tampa's only run Saturday, and has 6 walks in those four games. On the season, his K:BB ratio is still a dismal 55:37, and a guy depending on inducing ground balls without striking out many hitters really can't afford a lot of walks. But c'mon, the man gave up TWO HITS. That's great! It's pretty simple for Westbrook: keep the ball in the yard and get stingy with the free passes, and he'll pretty much throttle the opposition.

2) Blast from the never

When was the last time Paul Byrd had two outings in which he followed up a shutout with a 1-run jam job? Actually, I'm not sure Byrd has *ever* been anything like "dominating," but Byrd did for 6 innings what Westbrook did for 7, except with more suspense. Byrd scattered 8 hits and walked 1, but still held the Rays to 1 run while striking out 5. Now, the fact that Byrd's fine performance Friday was separated from his shutout by a 7-run debacle against the Yankees is a salient point: this is not necessarily a guy you want facing a top offense, especially one that can punish mistakes. The Yankees pounded a pair of doubles and a homer off Byrd, while Minnesota and Tampa each managed only one double. Byrd can certainly get nickel-and-dimed to death, having given up 179 hits in 143 innings, but his low walk rate helps keep him in ball games, as long as a high percentage of those hits are singles.

One troublesome feature of Byrd's outing was that his low strike percentage (62 in 98 pitches) combined with his relatively high strikeout total (5) meant he was visiting Wazoo City by the end of the 6th. This in and of itself isn't a terrible thing: you don't really want an opponent to make a fourth trip through the order against Byrd. Heck, a third trip is sometimes asking for trouble. In a sense, Tampa's offense matches up well with Byrd's skill set: they manage to generate few runs with a lot of hits, and Byrd manages to give up a lot of hits without yielding a lot of runs.

Byrd's ERA stands at 4.41 on the season, right in line with his career totals. However, Byrd is

a lot more hittable this season, at .302 AVG allowed vs. .274 in years past. I don't think this

is a feature of Byrd getting exceptionally unlucky, but rather a feature of him being exceptionally Paul Byrd. It bears mentioning that his walk rate is about half his career rate, so that's good, but it's real hard to draw a three-run walk, so it'd still be nice to keep a few of those batted balls in the "weakly hit" column of the ledger.

3) And some other guy

All C.C. Sabathia did was retire the first 11 batters, then retired the next four after giving up a hit. He didn't give up a third hit until the seventh inning.

Here's the problem with that: the first hit was a home run. And the third hit was a home run.

Absolutely Sabathia's performance should be lumped in with the rest of the Hard Luck Song, the one with the verses about a lack of offensive support and saying the right things and boy, he must be frustrated feel to it that plays over and over on the Jeff Kent Baseball Country Music Show, but it needs to be whispered a bit more fiercely that in the middle of a dominating 5-hit 0-walk 6-K 8-inning outing, two of the hits were solo shots, and the one that prevented him from leaving the game with the lead came off a left-handed hitter.

Look, the numbers speak quite loudly: Sabathia has given up no more than 2 earned runs in any of his past six outings, has only one game in which he allowed more hits than innings, had only one game in which

he didn't finish the 7th (same game), and has one win to show for it. Sure, that's lame support, it sure is. It's sad and bad and go ask your Dad. In the pressure of a division race, Sabathia has pitched very, very well, and I think that not only speaks well of him, but should give fans confidence looking toward September that the Really Big Man is, if not entirely on top of his game, at least well-situated to put the team in a position to win every time out.

But a game in which you give up a solo shot to a same-hander (lefties hit .222 with a .596 OPS off Sabathia on the season) in the 7th inning of a 1-run game is not a "gem."

4) The act grows stale

How meaningful is the "save" statistic? Consider this: against the next opponent, the Detroit Tigers, Joe Borowski has pitched 6 1/3 innings in 7 games. He has given up 11 hits and 6 runs (all earned) for an ERA of 8.53 and a batting average allowed of .367. He is 0-1.

In 5 save opportunities, he has 5 saves.

There's not any real new data to add to the argument at this point: he has a lot of saves, he gets the save most of the time, getting saves is a valuable skill as evidenced by the past few seasons, and he gives up a lot of hits and a signficant number of runs. According to the latest orthodoxy from Nate Silver at Baseball Prospectus, Cleveland's lack of a dominating closer will ultimately make their chances of winning the World Series shrink significantly. He got the save Friday because a deep fly ball was caught, and blew the save Sunday because he gave up a walk and two hits. My daughter's day care has taught here a catchy slogan in an effort to cut down the volume, length, and frequency of complaining: "You get what you get and you don't throw a fit." (In a Texas accent, this rhymes.)

Let me just say this: walking Dioner Navarro with two outs is simply inexcusable. He is a very very very very very very very extremely very extraordinarily very very very awfully very bad hitter. He has 5 HR in 288 AB and hits .205/.263/.316. If you blow a lead by giving up a home run to Dioner Navarro, you will absorb some ridicule. But if you blow a game because you WALKED Dioner Navarro because you couldn't throw him a strike (and make no mistake: Navarro swung at exactly zero of the six pitches thrown), you are the object of disgust.

Quoth me not how "borderline" the 3-2 pitch was: he is DIONER NAVARRO! THROW STRIKES!

(Borowski had struck out the previous two hitters, one of who was an actual major-leaguer, swinging.)

5) Duck, duck, gack

The Indians got 12 hits and drew 5 walks off Edwin Jackson and his supporting cast of mooks on Friday. They left an unfathomable 14 men on base (in 9 innings!), including 6 in scoring position.

The Indians got 9 hits, drew 3 walks, and had a hit batsman Sunday off a very good James Shields but an equally mookish support group. They left a Merely Dreadful 10 on base, including 6 in scoring position, albeit in 12 innings.

On Saturday, they scored 8 runs. I had forgotten what that looked like.

6) I like this guy!

In 7 games as a Cleveland Indian, Asdrubal Cabrera has gotten a hit in 5 of them, including a pair in each of the last two. His three-run clout off Jackson was his first, but helped buoy his slugging percentage to .522. Three of Cabrera's seven hits have gone for extra bases, and he has scored 6 runs. He drew his first walk Sunday, and has only struck out 3 times in 25 plate appearances. He also appears to be holding his own in the field as well, having supplanted Josh Barfield at second but also looking capable at short and third.

It's a shame we had to DFW Mike Rouse for this, but I think it might pay off. I don't know what we're going to do with the extra 100 points of OBP over Barfield, though.

7) Drawing no conclusions, but appreciating the

process

I'll be frank: I don't know what to make of Jensen Lewis. I like much of what he brings (18 K in 13 1/3 IP, an ERA of 2.70) and cringe at much of what he brings (6 BB in 13 1/3 IP and a WHIP of 1.58). Sometimes he looks eminently hittable (Detroit, 8/14, 3 H in 2/3 IP), and sometimes he looks completely unhittable (Chicago, 8/9, 2 K in 1 1/3 perfect innings).

I'll say this: if you want a positive mention in the B-List, throwing 13 strikes in 15 pitches to complete a scoreless inning of relief is a nice effort.

8) Flashing the leather / Nice hose!

Grady Sizemore doubled off Aki Iwamura on a sinking liner to center, which had a lot more to do with his diving catch than it did his arm. Still, it was a beautiful play to avoid more damage in a 1-run game: hard to argue with that.

Raffy Betancourt helped turn a 1-6-3 double play. This appeared to surprise no one more than Betancourt himself.

9) A point turned?

Victor Martinez followed a 3-for-4 Friday with another hit on Saturday and a hit with 2 RBI Sunday. This gives Martinez hits in 9 of his last 10 games: although his August numbers trail his season average (still only .286/.356/.397), the team produces a lot better when Martinez is getting hits in the middle of the lineup.