Today's B-List celebrates the return of the Cleveland Indians' offense with the return of something long absent from the B-List. Yesterday's 11-8 win included pounding Justin Verlander, but also some very fine pitching by Raffy Betancourt and Joe Borowski, which Buff commemorates with some very false statements. Hooray!

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (69-56)	1	0	0	4
Tigers (68-58)	3	0	0	0

W: Byrd (12-5) L: Verlander (13-5) S: Borowski (35)

I almost feel bad about the last item.

1) Pay no attention to the weeping

It's just C.C. Sabathia and Fausto Carmona over in the corner of the clubhouse, wondering why the offense hates them so much.

Normally, I would start the column with a review of the starting pitcher's performance, but in this case, the starting pitcher was almost superfluous. The real story was that the Indians' offense came out of its collective stupor and pounded four Detroit pitchers, including New B-List Favorite Player For Karmic Purposes Justin Verlander, to the tune of 11 runs on 16 hits. It was their

highest-scoring output of the entire second half, and the first time they hit double-digits since July 27th against Minnesota. The winning pitcher for Cleveland that day? Paul Byrd.

It wasn't just getting 16 hits, it was getting 16 hits and scoring more runs than leaving men on base. It was scoring 11 runs, but only 3 of them as the result of home runs. It was scoring 11 runs, but 6 of them coming with two outs. We scored more runs with two outs than we scored with fewer than two outs. One of the two-out RBIs was from a raw rookie, two from the slumping backup catcher, and one from Casey Blake. Verlander was knocked out of the game after giving up two hits to start the fifth inning, lasting only 4+ and giving up 7 runs (all earned, albeit two because of Zach Miner) and TEN hits.

There are more things to say about the offense, but I'll address some of those points individually. For now, I will simply revel in the outburst and hope it represents something more than the baseball version of pyrite.

2) Run support is your friend

There are statistics more misleading than a pitcher's won-lost record. For example, the save. Wes Littleton, a Texas Rangers pitcher who was called on to preserve Texas' tenuous 14-3 lead for Kason Gabbard, earned a save last night. Admittedly, Littleton pitched pretty well, shutting out the Orioles for three innings and meeting the book criteria for a "save." However, the fact that the Rangers scored 16 more runs in the last two frames (including 9 in the 9th off poor ex-Tribesman Paul "The Groin" Shuey) meant that Littleton

was called on to prevent the O's from scoring 27 runs in three innings. I am not sure how he stood up to the enormous pressure.

Paul Byrd is one of those pitchers that seems to get more run support than your average bear: in the first month or so of 2006, Byrd had a winning record despite a terrible ERA for just this reason. Whether it be his self-effacing interview style or his resemblance to one of our football columnists, Byrd seems to Live Right, as his 12-5 record and 4.61 ERA attest.

Byrd actually pitched well in spurts: he got two quick outs, then gave up three quick runs on a homer. Then he retired 10 straight (including 1-2-3 innings in the 3rd through 5th), then he gave up two more jacks. Byrd's 2:10 GB:FB ratio suggested he was playing with fire all night, but on the other hand, Comerica is a pretty good place to do that in general, and he did retire 10 in a row on a series of not-solid-enough flies and a few swinging Ks.

It's hard to argue that a pitcher who gives up more runs than innings pitched did a Good Job, but on the other hand, we won the game, so I'm not going to get all "Byrd Must Go!" on everybody.

3) What do we have for our contestant, Johnny?

Paul Byrd got the win, so he can't have that. And Joe Borowski got the save by retiring the potential tying run twice, so he can't have that, either.

What, then, do we give to Rafael Betancourt, who arguably pitched better than either one of them? (He didn't necessarily pitch "better" than Borowski: perfect is perfect, but he did it for significantly longer; I think the entire Byrd Clan would admit that Betancourt pitched better than Byrd did.) After bailing Byrd out of the 6th, Rafael Perez got into some trouble of his own by bracketing a strikeout with a walk and a single. Betancourt then fought Magglio Ordonez to the death and struck out Carlos Guillen swinging. In the next inning, Betancourt got Ivan Rodriguez to whiff looking, induced a fly out, and popped up Brandon Inge.

That's five batters, two Ks, no baserunners, and a smooth path to the ninth. With most other pitchers struggling on the day, Raffy showed everyone how

it was supposed to be done. (He did get his 24th "hold," one of the few stats less meaningful than a win, a save, or a Shonen Knife song.)

4) This flaky red stuff, it's very distracting

With all the fine, completish-game starting pitching and tight games that require Maximal Raffy Exposure, the rest of the bullpen does not get a lot of regular work. Part of this is because Eddie Mujica is really an elaborate hoax foisted on an unsuspecting fan base much in the manner of Sidd Finch, but pitchers like Jensen Lewis and Tom Mastny simply haven't heard the phone ring much for them recently.

Lewis was called on to protect the 5-run lead

and save Borowski, something he was uniquely unable to do. The good news is that Lewis worked well within the strike zone: a couple months of watching Betancourt has taught the young man well. The bad news is that of the 15 strikes in 20 pitches, four of them were hit for singles and he recorded but one actual out.

Now, I'm inclined to cut Lewis a break here, if for no other reasons than that he came into the game with a sub-3 ERA and a super-9 K/9 rate. He's been an effective reliever, and the Tigers are a pretty good-hitting club.

But boy, he looked rusty last night.

5) One of the few non-cheap three-run saves

Usually I am wont to make some sort of snide comment when Joe Borowski pitches an inning with a three-run lead to record the cheap save. However, despite the final three-run margin, last night's save was anything but "cheap." Coming in with runners on 1st and 2nd after an RBI single, Borowski quickly started 2-0 to Guillen before finding the zone and getting Guillen to curse the dimensions of his home park on a long fly out. After starting Ivan Rodriguez 3-1, He got Pudge to foul off Ball Four, then swing through Ball Five to end the game. (In Rodriguez' defense, the 3-2 pitch was close enough to have to swing, and really, it's a Joe Borowski "fastball," how can you resist?)

It wasn't a pretty end to the game, but it did end the game, and for that I was grateful.

6) Mea Culpa Dept.

After disparaging Kenny Lofton as a leadoff hitter for the Tribe, Lofton has apparently finally found his stride and went 2-for-3 with a walk. One of the hits was a two-out single to extend the 4-run fourth inning off Verlander, and Lofton also scored twice.

In addition, after being replaced by right-hander Jason Michaels when lefty Tim Byrdak came in, Lofton could only watch as his replacement went 0-for-2, the only Cleveland player not to get a hit, get on base, or neither score nor drive in a run. I'm not sure one should have schadenfreude about one's own teammates, though.

7) Everybody hits!

With the exception of Michaels, though, the offense clicked on many cylinders indeed: everyone had at least one hit, and everyone except Kelly Shoppach scored a run. Only Jhonny Peralta and Lofton did not have an RBI. In fact, with the four walks drawn by the Indians, Shoppach was the only player besides Michaels not to reach base at least TWICE.

Notable highlights include two hits for Travis Hafner, including a double off the lefty Byrdak, the three-run homer by Gutierrez to stretch the lead out to 8-3, the two-out RBIs by Asdrubal Cabrera, Blake, and Sizemore,

and the two-out, two-run single by Shoppach to make a 1-for-5 2-K, 1 SB allowed night a bit more palatable.

8) The trouble with tight games

While Wedge had the luxury of knocking a layer of rust off Jensen Lewis, couterpart Jim Leyland had a similar call to make for a different reason. Joel Zumaya really needs to be babied after his DL stint, and he pitched last night, as did Ferd Rodney. Todd Jones isn't actually a good relief pitcher, being more of the Joe Borowski School of Closing. This meant that when Hafner doubled off Byrdak to stretch the lead to 9-6, Leyland felt it advisable to call

out ex-starter Chad Durbin as his righty out of the pen, which meant that instead of facing Zumaya's absurd heat of Rodney's nasty stuff, Shoppach got to face Durbin in a run-producing opportunity.

Durbin had a decent night ... but c'mon, Chad Durbin is not Joel Zumaya.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

There are those that tell me that the Indians were 6-6 before I began this feature, then 31-30 after I stopped it, meaning that the great majority of Cleveland's

games-over-.500 can be logically attributed to this feature. This shows two things: we are not above a little superstitious behavior (or bad statistical inference), and my readers have a strange idea of good ways to spend their free time.

By popular demand, I felt obligated to try to kick-start the team into the playoffs.

Mark Shapiro placed giant fans around Findlay, OH , then seeded the clouds with silver iodide, causing the massive flooding there. The sheer implausibility of this shouldn't detract from the fact that this statement is false. Fire Eric Wedge.