In today's B-List, Buff mentions all the positive things about last night's game. Then in the second sentence, he begins talking about the rest of the 10-3 loss to possible playoff opponent, the Anaheimish Angels. It may not have been fun, but at least it lacked enjoyment.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (81-59)	0	0	1	0
Angels (83-57)	0	0	1	0

W: K. Escobar (16-7) L: Byrd (14-6)

Short column: I'm starting to rethink this "three kids in three different schools with the same back-to-school night and the marching band and the theater program and the football game and the interview new applicants and work on the other side of town from my house" thing.

1) One bad pitch

Hey, you're not going to get me to say that the difference in a 10-3 game is one pitch. Although not inconceivable, it's also not very likely. (I'm not talking about a seven-run homer, but rather the beginning of a really bad chain.)

However, when Paul Byrd hit light-hitting catcher Jeff Mathis with the first pitch of the 5th inning, you could argue that the HBP was a major contributor to Byrd's downfall, and it was the decent-sized deficit that caused Eric Wedge to use

secondary relievers instead of primary ones. Byrd was actually sailing along pretty nicely: he had given up 4 hits and 1 run to that point, where one of the hits was an infield single, and didn't allow anyone to reach scoring position in three of the four innings he pitched. The Angels are not a very patient offense, Vlad Guerrero was sitting out, and Mathis had been retired on the first pitch of the 3rd inning, establishing a precedent (along with his .248 average) for being more likely to be out than get a hit off Byrd.

The reason I mention this is because all of the damage in the fifth inning came with two outs: after hitting Mathis, Byrd got a groundout, an infield single, and a swinging K. Had Mathis been out, Byrd's first five innings would actually have been considered quite good. Instead, Byrd lost his concentration or mojo or Jobu's rum or whatever he was using, because a pair of singles, a walk, and a two-run double later, Byrd was standing under the running water wondering what the hell happened.

Byrd struck out 5 hitters, walking only 1, but the 8 hits in 4 2/3 innings were simply too much to overcome, so, perhaps by definition, he did not overcome them.

2) "Let's see: that's a curse on you, a curse on you, and a curse on you."
-- Gary Larson, "The Far Side"

After Jensen Lewis was called in to finish the fifth (and did admirably, striking out wunderkind Howie Kendrick with runners on second and third), he came back out for the sixth and gave up a double to Mathis, potentially invalidating my original point, but not with so much potential

that I actually want to reconsider it. Lewis got Reggie Willits, then gave way to lefty Aaron Fultz because Gary Matthews Jr., technically a switch-hitter, has one of the more preposterous platoon splits you'll ever see, especially for a leadoff hitter. He hits .179 with an OPS of .560 against lefties! That's really crappy! Anyway, Fultz got him out.

However, Orlando Cabrera is not left-handed, is less preposterous, and singled home a run. Garret Anderson is left-handed with a REVERSE platoon split (although this is a career fluke), but Fultz got him out.

Undaunted, Fultz came out for another inning, got a K, but then gave up a 5-pitch walk and a double. Eddie Mujica came in, gave up two hits in three batters, and gave way to Juan Lara. Lara gave up a two-run bomb and everyone went home.

Fultz was not technically *awful*, but he certainly wasn't very good. E-Moo *was* techincally awful, and Lara was only slightly better in that he struck out two guys. At least two of these men will not be on the playoff roster. I don't have any real complaints about how the bullpen was handled, and would certainly rather let Lara pitch the 8th than bring in a Raffy down 8-3: at some point, players have to execute. These did not. I'm not all that concerned.

3) Everybody hits!

Everyone except Grady Sizemore, who managed to take a 4-PA collar with a pair of whiffs. Everyone else got at least one hit, including Franklin Gutierrez, whose single almost offset him being thrown out stealing second to end the 7th inning. Four of the hits went for extra bases, including Gutierrez' 11th homer of the season and doubles by Kenny Lofton, Kelly Shoppach and Travis Hafner. This marks the fourth consecutive game and fifth in his last six that Hafner has had an extra-base hit. Odd split of the week: Hafner's road OPS is over 100 points higher than at home.

4) Terror on the basepaths!

Gutierrez' caught stealing was his first on the season: earlier in the game, Josh Barfield pointlessly stole his 14th base on the season. Barfield, who went 1-for-3, shocked most casual observers by not completely sucking, although he did make his 14th error of the season dropping a fly ball in foul territory. The batter was subsequently out, reducing the Suck Coefficient.

5) He was who we thought he was, and we let him off the hook

After Kelly Shoppach doubled Kenny Lofton home with the game's first run, the Indians put Cy Young candidate Kelvim Escobar on the ropes with a pair of 5-pitch walks by Gutierrez and Hafner to bring up Victor Martinez. Martinez fouled off a pair of pitches, but finally succumbed via swinging strikeout to end the threat.

In retrospect, this may have made a bigger difference than Byrd hitting Mathis: Escobar was forced to leave after 5 2/3 IP after throwing 109 pitches (8 K, 3 BB, 8 H). Had Martinez been able to extend the lead there, Escobar would have been forced out that much earlier and Byrd would have had a larger cushion to play with. Of course, the Angels' bullpen throttled the Cleveland offense, allowing one single by Darren Oliver, but runs plus less Escobar still seems like a positive combination

to me.

6) "Let's see: that's a curse on you, a curse on you, and a curse on you."
-- Gary Larson, "The Far Side"

Wedge emptied the bench in the 9th, bringing in three consecutive worthless pinch-hitters: Luis Rivas, who fouled out, Andy Marte, who watched strike three, and Ben Francisco, who whiffed at a Scot Shields third strike. Rivas' very appearance befuddles me, as he offers nothing that any other sentient biped couldn't offer more of. Marte remains an enigma to me, and although Francisco showed flashes of promise in Cleveland and put up some good numbers in Beefalo, I still expect none of these three men to be on the post-season roster, either.

7) Today's double take

Darren Oliver?

8) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro moonlights as the defensive coordinator for the University of Louisville. This is clearly false, as the Cardinals obviously do not employ a defensive coordinator. Fire Eric Wedge.