Here's a confession. Steve Buffum is my favorite writer. Any genre. From Dean Koontz to Tom Clancy to Terry Pluto to Bill Simmons ... there is no one I'd rather read. Like many of our readers, I live and die through Buff each weekday, and knowing that there's no more B-Lists to read this season is one of the saddest biproducts of last night's loss. Along with Tony and Mitch, Buff's one of the guys that goes back to our very first day in cyberspace, and today ... he goes into exile for a little while with this walk off effort. THANK YOU BUFF!

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (3-3)	0	1	0	0
Red Sox (3-3)	4	0	6	0

W: Schilling (2-0) L: Carmona (0-1)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (3-4)	0	0	0	1
Red Sox (4-3)	1	1	1	0

W: Matsuzaka (1-1) L: Westbrook (1-2) S: Papelbon (1)

I cannot write this column.

The difference between writing something for publication (book, journal article, etc.) and writing for assignment is that you can take the time necessary to ensure that what you're writing ends up saying what you want it to say. If you write a chapter of a book, and it comes out in a way you're unhappy with, you simply set it aside, take a break, and return to it when you have enough fresh perspective and fertile idea space to mold it into the shape you desire. You can edit what you've writted, or you can abandon the idea for a new direction, but ultimately, you don't

have to print that which you did not mean to say. Frankly, it bothers me to go through the motions. I have enough of a standard set for myself that I bristle at the idea of submitting something poor. Such is the unavoidable lot of the writer on a deadline, I suppose: to learn to muscle past the "gag reflex" and build something from inadequate verbal tools to meet a time constraint, even if self-imposed.

I could probably come up with some semblance of an entertaining rant about the disappearance of the windmill-like nature of Joel Skinner, a stream of vitriol for Travis Hafner's Compleat Ineptitude, or some kind words for Aaron Laffey, but part of what I've been trying to capture in this column this season is the real-time up-and-down nature of being a fan of a particular team. For example, last season, for a short time, you could find me singling out Gil Mota ... for *praise*. This year, Oldberto Hernandez received a similar treatment. And that was because, at the time, Hernandez had put together a few appearances that, when viewed through the lenses of hope, desire, need, and small sample size, Oldberto Hernandez could have been considered in that particular light cone as being a useful member of the Cleveland Indians. Only later did the lens of hope fog over, the lens of desire rolled under the dresser, the lens of need cracked, and the lens of small sample size was eaten by lizards. At that point, Hernandez became not so much a player whose contributions were limited to a
cause celebre'
for being removed from the squad at any price. He wasn't as good as I said he was before, and he wasn't as good as I said he was after. It is possible to retain perspective as a fan, but it isn't very, well, "fanny." That's not what it FEELS like.

You can go back and look a the season statistics and get a feel for how much or how little a player accomplished. It is hard to look at Victor Martinez' stats from any angle that does not reveal him to have been a wonderful player. It is equally hard to look at Mike Rouse's contribution and consider it from an angle that removes his fundamental woefulness. It is intended, then, for you to be able to flip through the pages (virtual or otherwise) of The B-List and say, "Yes, I remember how frustrated I was with Player X at this point in the season." (Or, I should hasten to add, "Yes, I remember how encouraged I was by This Guy, even though, with the benefit of hindsight, it's hard to remember what a

gibbering moron I must have been.")

Some of my favorite things to do on the Internet include looking at various sports sites. In a positive season like this, I devour any morsel I can extract, reading chat transcripts from writers I don't know well to reading about other teams to see how they would match up in the future. I read about players I've never heard of on teams I've never seen in leagues I do not follow, on the off chance that something will be said about one that may potentially become a Cleveland Indian, or will be compared to a Cleveland Indians, or that I could imagine raising a son to be a Cleveland Indian decades from now. I really am a baseball fan, and during the season will watch parts of a random game between uninteresting teams with terrible commentators because I enjoy the sport. But everything ultimately gets filtered through my personal, unchanging lens of a Cleveland Indians fan.

I cannot open the sports section this morning, because I may inadvertently catch a glimpse of a grinning Dustin Pedroia, or read the "wisdom" of Manny Ramirez, or be buffeted with a photo of smugly delirious Red Sox fans dancing and waving and generally being more obnoxious than most sentient bipeds. I cannot visit ESPN, or Baseball Prospectus, or even a message board. I certainly would not consider listening to sports talk radio. That part of my life has been eliminated in the short term, because I do not want to be accosted by those images that remind me that the Indians had a 3-1 lead with their Ace on the mound at home, and managed to not simply lose the series to the Red Sox, but to look so thoroughly inept, overmatched, and graceless as to bring to question why there were even there in the first place. And if this is not a fair reaction (and I have received numerous emails reminding me that it is not), it is the reaction I have. I am distraught and actually nauseated, and whether this is fair or warranted or reasonable does not matter: it is how I *feel*.

I do not want to wax poetic on the nature of The Cleveland Experience, or to acknowledge the fickle essence of the short series. I want to give credit to the Red Sox, and I congratulate the Indians on a fine season, but I do not *feel* these things. I
feel
like my team, and I say my team intentionally, as if I have an organic attachment

to them even while acknowledging logically and objectively that no such thing exists ... that
my team
was presented with an opportunity to succeed in a situation in which NONE of MY TEAMS has EVER SUCCEEDED ... never ... not once ...
ever
... and not only did not succeed, but almost went out of their way to NOT succeed. And this is not simply a lamentation of opportunities missed or any sort of attribution of character (here I will be explicit and rational: the men who make up the Cleveland Indians were not weak or cowardly or otherwise deficient, but rather should be applauded for their fine play this season: I have
this
much perspective) or anything, but rather something that is hard to express. I wanted this championship. I wanted it very badly. It had nothing to do with me, and I still feel emotionally bereft. It isn't rational. It isn't reasonable. It is how I
feel
.

I apologize for those of you who have read the column this year and were hoping for one last blast of entertainment to close the season: I do not have that in me today. Perhaps I will muster such a thing for a season-in-review or something. I do not have that in me today. What I do have is a deep appreciation for anyone who enjoyed reading the column this season: I treasure the feedback I've received, positive or negative (I treasure positive more, if you're wondering which to provide), and am happy that someone found the column worth reading. I printed last season's columns into a book form, and would be willing to do so again if there is interest. In the interest of full disclosure, the columns were significantly longer this season, and the time cost of self-printing last year was prohibitive, so the cost would be greater this season. If anyone is interested, let me know.

Congratulations to the Cleveland Indians, AL Central Champions, co-owners of the best record in major-league baseball, and winners of three games in the American League Champeenship Series. Thanks to everyone who made the season possible. Even Mike Rouse.

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