Where's the offense? It was completely MIA this weekend as the Tribe scored just one run in the Saturday and Sunday games against the Twins, dropping both contests to lose the series to Minnesota after a masterpiece on Friday night by Clifton Phifer Lee. In the Monday B-List, Buff channels previous versions of himself, fawns over Cliffie, and unleases some Managerial Head Scratchers on the unsuspecting public. Off day today, three in KC to follow ...

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (7-10)	0	2	0	0
Twins (7-10)	0	0	0	0

W: Lee (3-0) L: Liriano (0-2)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (7-11)	0	0	0	0
Twins (8-10)	2	1	0	0

W: Blackburn (1-1) L: Westbrook (1-2) S: Nathan (6)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (7-12) (	4	th	4.5 GB CHW	**)**
Twins (9-10)	0	0	1	0

W: Guerrier (1-1) L: Perez (0-1)

[illegible]

1) Diversionary Tactic: Time Machine Summit

To gain some insight into Friday's game, I called up versions of myself from 2005, 2006, and 2007 to discuss what things were foreseeable and what things were a product of an unpredictable timeline.

2008: Well, we beat the Twins Friday.
2005: All right! Those guys are tough.
2006: Yeah, whenever you think you can count them out, they come back on you.
2007: No, they don't. The Twins blow, man. Who was pitching?
2008: Cliff Lee vs. Francisco Liriano.
2005: I can never keep track of those guys. Great K rate, but very hittable.
2006: Liriano is bloody brilliant, man. You should see him now.
2005: Did he learn the change from Santana?
2007: No, but he learned the UCL Blowout from Balfour and Crain.
2006: Yeah, kind of a shame.
2007: Well, I didn't miss him.

2008: He's back this year, but it's his first stint post-surgery.
2007: So, with Lee and a post-surgery Liriano, what was it, about 12-11?
2006: The Twins? Scoring 11? Surely you jest.
2007: Never underestimate the taterosity of Cliff Lee.
2005: Oh, you just don't like his GB:FB ratio.
2007: I just don't like all the balls flying over the fence!
2006: Lee did look pretty hittable my year.
2005: Hey, I know he's not great, but he is our Favorite Player.
2007: Not any more. I fired him.
2008: Brilliant foresight there.
2007: Thank you.
2008: I'm being facetious.
Unison: Shocking!
2005: Well, what happened to Lee? He looked good when I saw him. I mean, his record was inflated, but ...
2006: He stopped locating his curve well.
2007: And then he started spotting his fastball.
2005: That doesn't sound bad.
2007: The spot was belt-high in the middle of the plate.
2006: His command was never that great.
2008: His command is pretty great now.
2007: Has he hit a different spot?
2008: He hit a lot of different spots. And he has three fastballs now, including a cutter.
2005: Has he developed a ground ball pitch?
Unison: (laughter)
2008: He doesn't need it.
2006: Well, I mean, he still *needs* it.
2008: He doesn't need it.
2007: What do you mean, he doesn't need it, of course he needs it. You can't just throw fastball after fastball.
2005: Well, his defense helped, right?
2006: Defense?! Great googly moogly, tell me he's not depending on

the DEFENSE!
2007: The defense was better, but more work is available to be done.
2008: The defense was largely irrelevant.
2005: Well, now I'm intrigued. Let me guess: 7 innings, 6 hits, 3 walks, 1 run.
2006: From Cliff Lee? Dream on. He turns into a banana after the 6th. 6 innings, 8 hits, 3 runs.
2007: From Cliff Lee? Dream on. He turns into Cliff Lee after the 1st. He got the win?
2008: Oh, yeah.
2007: 5 1/3, 6 hits, 4 walks, 1 HBP, 1 throwing error, 1 Victor Martinez head slap, 5 runs.
2008: We won 4-0.
2005: Wow, 7 shutout innings!
2006: You mean 6.
2007: You mean 5.
2008: I mean 8.
2007: Wedge let him throw 159 pitches?
2008: 109. 74 for strikes.
2007: No way!
2006: Geez, that's lots better command than I saw.
2005: Um ... I'm surprised.
2008: 8 Ks, 1 walk.
2007: Well, Blind Squirrel Theory strikes again.
2006: It is unusual, but hey, it is the Twins.
2008: Lee now has 3 starts under his belt. 4 hits + 1 walk in 6 2/3, 2 hits + 0 walks in 8, 2 hits + 1 walk in 8. His WHIP/9 is 3.97. His ERA is 0.40. His K/9 is 7.94.
Unison: Outrageous!
2008: But we still might have lost the game if it hadn't been for the 3 clutch RBIs driven in by Casey Blake.

Unison: No *@#&in' way!

2) More serious exposition

It's almost enough to quote the raw numbers for Lee: 8 IP, 2 H (both singles), 1 BB, 8 K. One single was of the infield variety, and each single was erased on a double play ground ball. The man who walked got to second on a wild pitch, which constituted a "threat" by Minnesota. Five of eight innings were 1-2-3, and because of the double plays, Lee faced 25 batters in 8 innings.

Now, Lee's numbers are not only unsustainable, they are completely preposterous. No starter sports a WHIP of 0.44. Oakland and Minnesota each have significant offensive holes. But this dangerously minimizes Lee's actual contribution to the numbers: there were several batters Friday night that he simply challenged, saying in effect, "Mene mene tekel upharsin." ***I have thrown my fastball and found you wanting***. It's not so much that Lee fell in love with an unhittable pitch, but took more of a practical Riveran approach: I threw the pitch in a good location for me, and until I see some indication that it can be hit solidly, I see no reason to get real complicated.

This isn't to say that he threw 109 consecutive fastballs: there were still some of the nice curveballs you like to see (especially over the long haul), and the fastballs had at least three different kinds of late movement (the cutter in particular looks a lot more polished this season). But as encouraging as anything else I saw, Lee threw some pitches just on or off the black, and though some were called balls, they still suggested a real degree of command that has been missing in Lee's work since ... well ... *ever*.

My conscience prevents me from trying to re-adopt Lee as Favorite Player, so I will simply have to stick with Justin Verlander.

3) One bad pitch

And, to be clear, I am talking about a pretty flamingly bad pitch. However, it was only one, and with no one on base, caused as little damage as such a pitch can.

Paul Byrd's last start featured 6 hits and an unearned run in 6 innings of work. Byrd had only thrown 78 pitches in those 6 innings and since the game was bollixed out from under him, it was debatable that he should have bene removed. As a

reward, Byrd was allowed a 7th inning against Minnesota, and was rewarded with another no-decision that his bullpen blew in a more genteel way.

Byrd ended up throwing a mere 85 pitches, 62 for strikes, but had made it through his third trip through the order and pulling him this time seemed a lot more secure a decision. Of the six hits, the last was for extra bases (a double), and he didn't walk anyone while striking out 3. His only real error came in throwing a 2-0 meatball to Brendan Harris that became a solo shot for Minnesota's only run "in regulation." Anyway, I no longer cringe uncontrollably at the thought of Byrd starting a game. I mean, those two starts are about as good as anyone Not Lee have put up.

4) Slow starter

After sandwiching a pair of ground ball outs around an opposite-field single, Jake Westbrook got two quick strikes on Justin Morneau (the second swinging). He tried to punch him out, but Morneau fouled it off. He tried to punch him out again, but Morneau fouled it off. He

nibbled for a ball. He nibbled for a ball. And then Morneau homered to right, effectively ending the game (of Cleveland's five runs over the weekend, zero of them came Saturday).

Actually, the second wasn't much better, as Westbrook was fortunate to have Jason Kubel caught stealing after a leadoff single, or else the three singles and a walk would have yielded more than one run. However, after this, Westbrook gave up three more hits, no more runs, and struck out 4 hitters in 5 innings of work. It wasn't a great start, but it was a Quality Start, and of all the guys on this staff to be 1-2, Jake's luck is amongst the poorest. (Technically, C.C. Sabathia doesn't deserve to be 1-2, either, but that is because of the "1.")

5) Psychology Today: Attribution Theory

Part of the Sports Fan Lexicon is the principle that your team controls its own outcomes: if your pitcher works out of a jam, it's because he buckled down and threw a great pitch, or possibly a fielder made a great play. When their

pitcher works out of a jam, it's because our batter failed to come through. When our team scores a run or produces a rally, it's because our batter put together a superior at-bat; when their team scores, it's due to a failure on the part of our pitcher. Sometimes you have to remember that the other team is making the exact opposite attribution of HIS players, who are CLEARLY the ones who control the result.

Consider Sunday's game, which required an extra inning to break a 1-1 tie: we can talk about Victor Martinez grounding into an inning-ending double play or four different batters stranding men in scoring position. But Twins fans can generally make the same sorts of laments: Delmon Young struck out with runners on first and third in the first inning, squandering an opportunity to get to Byrd early, and the 8th ended with Justin Morneau striking out with runners on 1st and 2nd. Or consider Saturday's tilt, where Cleveland fans will doubtlessly focus on the FOUR double plays, two by David Dellucci, while Minnesota fans will simply laud the groundball tendencies of Nick Blackburn, who induced 14 ground ball outs in his 7 2/3 innings. Sometimes it's

worth keeping in mind that Epic Failure from one viewpoint simply looks like Good Execution from the other.

6) The Judy Show

Now without any Punch!

This having been said, the Cleveland offense was simply pathetic all weekend. The Indians collected a grand total of five runs on nineteen hits over THREE GAMES. We won the game in which we outhit the Twins FIVE TO THREE. Victor Martinez got four hits in the three games, including at least one in each game, making him one of one players to do so. Martinez is hitting .360 on the season ... but sports a .400 SLG that would be more at home in Jason Tyner's batting line. Ryan Garko is the only other player producing offense, although his season-long on-base streak ended with a 0-for-4

collar on Sunday. Everyone else is a piker, including ... well, everyone. The Indians hit .235/.326/.352 as a team. As a TEAM! The team's OPS is about what you'd expect from Josh Barfield. The Indians have given 45 or more plate appearances to four players with **sub-.600** OPSs, and three of those qualify for the batting title (which, unsurprisingly, they are not favored to win).

That's very, very, very, very bad.

Now we go to Kansas City ... where they hit .259/.313/.353. The over/under on aggregate runs scored in the three-game series is ... what, twelve? I'm poised on my seat edge.

7) Mighty Casey

It requires mentioning that with the bases loaded in the second inning of Friday's game, Casey Blake lined a two-run single in which the second run may even have been safe. Later, after watching a Juan Rincon pitch sail behind him, Blake hammered a solo shot to finish the scoring. The 3 RBI give Blake 10 on the season, good for third-most on the team.

As Blake is hitting .179/.279/.286 on the season, this is virtually inconceivable.

8) Managerial Head-Scratcher

After bailing Masa Kobayashi out of a jam in the 8th, Raffy Perez pitched a nice 9th to send the game to extra innings. Perez had been given the 9th inning of the Cliff Lee Masterpiece as well, striking

out two in an inning of work. On Saturday, Jorge Julio was allowed to mop up after Westbrook's outing because it was a largely pointless inning and he could use the work.

The one name I don't see mentioned anywhere is Raffy Betancourt.

Now, having three starters average 7 1/3 innings is generally great news: you get starters to go that deep into games, you're doing a good job. But here are the scheduled hitters in the 10th for the Twins:

Nick Punto, a switch-hitter, meaning that he can made prodigious outs from either side of the plate

Carlos Gomez, a right-handed hitter
Brendan Harris, a right-handed hitter

Now, after this are a pair of dangerous lefties, but ... look, if you get the righties out, you don't have to worry about the lefties. And Betancourt didn't pitch Friday, didn't pitch Saturday, and won't pitch Monday because there is no game. Why not give him the 10th?

This is all a bit of navel contemplation, as you DO generally want Perez to face the tough lefties, and he did, and he got hit. This happens. Still, Kubel singled on Perez' 30th pitch, and Morneau won the game on his 34th; if

Betancourt fails to record the first three outs, you can:

a) either leave him out to face the lefties, because if he's going to be the damned closer, he'd better be able to, you know, &*@$ing **close**
b) bring Breslow in, who's been our better left-handed reliever statistically anyway

Anyway, it was more a case of "good on you, mate" for the Twins hitters than anything else, but ... man, that's a long layoff for

Betancourt.

9) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro owns a majority share in a watercress farm in California and is working to replace Dollar Hot Dog Night with Dollar Watercress Sandwich Night. I doubt the folks at Progressive Field would be interested in serving Actual Food for only a dollar and this statement is completely fabricated. Fire Derek Shelton.