Buff does not do justice to Cliff Lee in today's B-List, because no one can. However, he does discuss how the Indians can actually score runs, how relief pitchers named Raffy are handy, and addresses a topic no man should have to: Travis Hafner and the Worst Plate Appearance in the World. The Indians go for the sweep today in the Battle of the Old: go Tribe!

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (16-17)	(2nd		1.5 GB MIN)	1
Counts Olaf (17-18)		0	0	0

W: Lee (6-0) L: Wang (6-1) S: Betancourt (4)

Chuck Norris would hit a triple off Cliff Lee. However, he'd be stranded at third.

1) Beocliff

(lines 782-824, originally translated by Michael Alexander)

Fear entered into
the listening North Coasters, as that noise rose up again
strange and strident. It shrilled terror
to the ears that heard it through the stadium's ancient walls,
the grisly plaint of Cleveland's enemy,
their song of odious success, the sobs of the damned Yankees
bewailing their pain. They were pinioned there
by the man of all Cleveland living
in this world's estate the strongest of his hands.

Not for anything would the Indians' guardian
let his deadly guest score runs:
he did not count their American League success
of the least use to anyone. The players ran
to defend the person of their famous prince;
they drew their balsawood bats to bring
what aid they could to their captain, Beocliff.
They were ignorant of this, when they entered the game,
boldly-intentioned teammates,
to hew at the Yankees, hunt their pitching
on every side - that no bat on earth,
not the hardest maple nor ash, could touch their assailant;
for by a deal with the Devil they had dispossessed all
bat of their bite on Chien-Ming Wang.

A bitter parting
from victory was that day destined for them;
the eldritch spirit was sent off on their
far faring into the fiends' domain, and into a tie for fourth place.

It was then that these monsters, who, moved by spite
against Cleveland kind, had caused so much harm
-- so feuding with Ohioans - found at last
that flesh and bone and plate discipline were to fail them in the end;
for Wedge's great-hearted rotation stalwart
had them by the hand; and hateful to each
was the run-scoring of the other.
A breach in the giant
flesh-frame showed then, shoulder-muscles
sprang apart, Hrothlucci and Blakelaf hewed RBI singles, there was a snapping of tendons,
bone-locks burst, harmless outs recorded. To Beocliff the glory
of this fight was granted; the Yankees' lot
to flee the slopes fen-ward with flagging heart and mounting losses,
to a den where they knew there could be no relief,
no refuge for a team at its very last stage,
whose surrender-day had dawned. The Cleveland hopes
in this nationally-televised game had found their answer.

2) For the record

Lee gave up 5 singles and a double (over the third base bag by Shelley Duncan). He struck out 7 and walked zero. He threw 76 strikes in 103 pitches. He went 2-0 on two of 27 hitters. He could have struck an insect squarely with a fastball last night. He made several batters look ridiculous trying to hit his slow curve. Seven shutout innings only lowered his ERA by 0.15. This represented over 15% of his ERA. He has struck out 39 hitters in 44 2/3 innings. His K/BB ratio is nineteen-and-a-half. His WHIP is 0.60. If he shaved his head he would lose 1% of his body mass.

3) Had Cliff Lee not been on the mound, this inning would have killed me

Grady Sizemore took advantage of some early command problems by normally-excellent Yankees starter Chien-Ming Wang (beat Cleveland 1-0 in his previous start against us) to spoil a pair of 2-2 pitches and draw an eight-pitch walk. Ben Francisco followed with an 0-2 single to left that prevented Sizemore from advancing to third.

To the plate strides David Dellucci, hitting better of late, who then ropes the 1-0 pitch on one hop to right fielder Bobby Abreu to load the ...

... er, hold on a second. He actually hit the ball so hard and so directly to Abreu that Francisco was forced out at second. The game log says:

D Dellucci grounded into fielder's choice to right

After a sacrifice fly and a fly out, the Indians went from potentially bases-loaded with no outs to scoring one run and ending the inning.

Fortunately, a second run would prove profligate, but damn, that sucked.

4) The worst plate appearance in the world

In the ninth inning, Jhonny Peralta led off with a single, and Asdrubal Cabrera drew a walk. As poorly as Cabrera is hitting, it is astonishing that pitchers will walk him. However, reliever Jonathan Albaladejo was not especially sharp, and after Casey Blake dutifully sacrificed both men over a base, Kelly Shoppach worked a walk of his own.

Trying to instill some confidence in his struggling DH, Eric Wedge summoned Travis Hafner to the plate to pinch-hit for Andy Marte. This made a certain amount of sense, in that Albaladejo is right-handed and even a routine out could score a run, giving Hafner an RBI and a sense of accomplishment.

And then ... uh ... then ... er ... I'm sorry, I've been rendered speechless. Let's try this again later.

5) Captain Clutch, with an assist

Casey Blake had a terrific second at-bat against Wang, taking a strike and missing another before using a good approach to line a single on a pitch away out to Abreu in right field. Jhonny Peralta, who had singled and advanced to second because he was running on the pitch when Asdrubal Cabrera grounded into what would have been a double play, rumbled around third and executed a nice wide slide to get a hand on the plate and score Cleveland's second (and first profligate) run.

Now, this was really a good piece of hitting by Blake, and although somewhat short of "artful," the slide by Peralta was

functional. But you have to wonder: what the bloody hell was catcher Jose Molina thinking on that one? He moved a good four feet in front of the plate to field Abreu's throw, which, although not Rick Ankiel Quality, was a decent enough throw. Don't you have to be somewhere near the plate when you field a ball in order to try to tag someone out ... well ... near the plate? I'll take it, but that seemed like a pretty bad play.

6) I have an idea

Let's stop trying to steal bases on Jose Molina.

7) Okay, let's try again

In the ninth inning, with the bases loaded and no one out, Travis Hafner came to the plate to face a struggling Jonathan Albaladejo. Albaladejo had just finished walking his second batter of the inning, so you pretty much have two possible approaches here:

a) He's going to try to groove a strike, so hit that pitch
b) He's all over the place, make him throw a strike

Now, admittedly, I am generally in favor of approach (b). I do say "generally," but it does drive me crazy when a guy walks a couple hitters and the next guy gets retired swinging at the first pitch. I guess the point is, if you're going to swing at the first pitch, it better be

The Very Pitch You Expected, something you can drive.

But here, let me say this: Hafner has been so, so, so, so, so very bad lately, I almost BEG him to swing at the first pitch, because he normally takes it, and pitchers have begun grooving the first pitch to Hafner with this knowledge in their pocket. I am at the point where I want Hafner to swing at a pitch he can hit, and we've got a decent body of evidence over the past week or so that the first pitch is going to be such a pitch.

Anyway, the first pitch was such a pitch. He did not swing.

Well, that's only strike one: later in the at-bat, Hafner ... er ... Haf ... um ... nope, I'm speechless again. I'll have to get back to you.

8) Climbing over the Rouse Line

Andy Marte lined a sharp single to left off Wang to raise his average to .105 on the season. Actually, Marte didn't look half bad on the night: his first out was a K, but his third AB ended in a fly ball to center that was hit pretty well.

9) Small Sample Size Theater

Ben Francisco leads the Indians with a .357 batting average after a

2-for-4 night.

Blake's RBI extended his team-leading total to 20. His was the only RBI to come with 2 outs. He is hitting .206.

10) Okay, this time we mean it

Hafner's second pitch was a pitch that apparently fooled him a bit, in that it was a baseball and not a Palm Pilot, I guess, and he harmlessly fouled it off without having the least bit of strong balance whatsoever. Bartolo Colon looked more comfortable at the plate in his interleague appearances, where he set a new major league record for posting a K:AB ratio over 1.00. Colon once struck out three times in one plate appearance. In retrospect, he was probably more comfortable because he had no perceived stake in the outcome: he was going to strike out, why get all stressed out about it?

And, think about it: if Hafner simply whiffs there, it's a bad outcome, but hey, it's only the second out of the inning, and the top of the lineup is coming up. Sizemore hadn't had a hit, but he's a solid hitter and Albaladejo isn't like Mariano Rivera or anything.

So, with the third pitch of the at-bat ... the ... uh ... third pitch ... um ... er ... ubba grubbin forbit schmendrick. I'm sorry, I'm having trouble forming a coherent thought as I replay that at-bat in my mind. I need a moment to compose myself.

11) Department of Raffies

Raffy Perez threw nine strikes in ten pitches, and although one was hit by a double by left-handed Bobby Abreu, Abreu is damned good and Perez got the next hitter to end the scoreless inning anyway.

Raffy Betancourt continued his insistence that hitters hit the pitches he wants them to hit, so despite allowing seven foul balls to push his pitch count to 22 (15 strikes), he retired the side in order to earn his 4th save.

I have to say, I kind of like this approach by Betancourt. It would be better if he were overwhelming guys with untouchable stuff, but at least the stuff they're making contact with is stuff they aren't doing much with. I assume he's unavailable for today's (day) game, though.

12) All right, dammit, just spit it out!

Travis Hafner looked so helpless, so preposterous, so cartoonishly bad in lunging at a curve ball, grounding in six femtometers in front of the plate, and ending the inning with a "step on the plate, throw to first" double play that I not only don't want Hafner to pinch-hit for ONE-OH-FIVE HITTING Andy Marte, I want ONE-OH-FIVE HITTING Andy

Marte to pinch-hit for Travis Hafner. His body control embarrassed Chris Andersen. He looked like Tony Horton trying to hit Dave LoRoche's eephus pitch. He looked like Bill Irwin as Mr. Noodle from "Sesame Street."

I will now file the enamel off my teeth.

13) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Mark Shapiro advised Bryhtnoth at the Battle of Maldon to stand and fight. Since this would make Shapiro approximately 1300 years old, it is untrue. Fire Travis Hafner.