Because the Indians made exceptional defensive plays in three of the last four innings on Friday night, they were able to hang on for ... the only win of the weekend series. Against the Royals. Who were coming off an 11-game losing streak before facing the Indians. In the B-List, Buff wonders if C.C. Sabathia will ever relinquish his trademark, whether Cliff Lee is out of pixie dust, and finally figures out what Scott Elarton is for.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (25-29)	1	0	0	0
Royals (21-34)	0	2	0	2

W: Lee (8-1) L: Tomko (2-7) S: Borowski (4)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (25-30)	0	0	1	0
Royals (22-34)	0	0	1	0

W: Davies (1-0) L: Sabathia (3-7) S: Soria (12)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (25-31) (	3rd 5 GB CHW	**)**	0	0
Royals (23-34)	0	1	3	0

W: Bannister (5-6) L: Byrd (2-5)

You have to believe that losing 2 of 3 to a team coming off an 11-game losing streak isn't all that encouraging.

1) Brought to you by the Inning of Crap™!

In 7 of C.C. Sabathia's innings, he had:

a) 3 perfect innings
b) 2 innings in which he faced the minimum by inducing ground balls to erase batters who had singled
c) 1 inning in which he faced 4 batters, one of whom singled
d) 1 inning in which he faced 4 batters, one of whom homered

In those 7 innings, Sabathia gave up 4 hits and 1 run, didn't walk anyone, and struck out two batters. He faced 23 batters. This is a very good start, and although the strikeouts were low, he was in total command except for one mistake that David DeJesus punished for a run. Given that start, with those 7 innings as consecutive, the Royals would likely have meekly slumped off the field with their 13th straight loss under their collective belts.

However, they were not consecutive. True, Sabathia retired the last eight men he faced (for nine outs because of a double play), including perfect 7th and 8th innings, and needed a mere 6 pitches to retire the side in the 7th. He threw 73 strikes in 102 pitches, a whopping fine number. But his 6th inning was pure **Inning of Crap™** material:

After getting ahead of Mark Teahen 0-2, he allowed an infield single
John Buck, who bats approximately .833 against Cleveland, doubled to center
He toyed with me by striking out Esteban German
He toyed with me by inducing a run-scoring groundout (hey, it's only 1 run)
He then allowed a first-pitch double to DeJesus, who had ALREADY HOMERED
After getting ahead 1-2 on Mark Grudzielanek, he allowed an RBI single
Then he struck out Alex Gordon on three pitches just to rub it in

In retrospect, there's not much to say here: he had Gathright 1-2, but Gathright fouled off the next pitch before hitting the RBI groundout. That's a little discouraging in that striking him out would have temporarily prevented that run. But giving up the double to DeJesus on the first pitch is just demoralizing: DeJesus is a good enough hitter, but that's a Really Big Out, and Sabathia couldn't get it. As a left-handed hitter, DeJesus has no business getting two extra-base hits off a May Sabathia (April's Sabathia could have given up anything to anyone).

Look, Sabathia pitched better than Lee had the previous night, and Lee won because the Indians actually scored more than two runs. Without the **Inning of Crap™**, Sabathia pitched a LOT better than Lee. But you don't get to eliminate Sabathia's trademark. Sabathia isn't the primary reason we lost that game, but he didn't help as much as he could have, either.

2) Inspired performance

Inspired by Sabathia's **Inning of Crap™**, the Cleveland offense spent the rest of Saturday's game practicing variations on the theme and produced **Innings of Crap™**. And a wonderful variety they were:

a) **The Ineffectual**: Shin-Soo Choo, allowed to faced the left-handed Ron Mahay, produced the

expected Shin-Soo Choo Facing Left-Hander result, a swinging K. Casey Blake grounded out. Mike Aubrey flew out. Ron Mahay checked his driver's license and verified that, yup, he's still Ron Mahay. (That inning gave him pause to doubt this.)

b) **The Frantinez**: as with last week's game against the White Sox in which we put a runner in scoring position for 3-hitter Ben Francisco and 4-hitter Victor Martinez, ostensibly our only real hitters in the ENTIRE FRIGGIN LINEUP, Francisco meekly fouled out and Martinez flew out to left to end the inning. By the way, the two baserunners had walked: Franklin Gutierrez because Mahay threw him super gunk, and Jamey Carroll, who fouled off 3 full-count pitches after being down 0-2 (seriously, that's a nice plate appearance).

c) **The Comic Relief**: after singling off ubercloser Joakim Soria, Jhonny Peralta took second on a passed ball by Buck. Choo flied out to pretty deep left, which is a pretty good showing against Soria. Casey Blake then hit a double that advanced Peralta all the way to third.

(This is a bit misleading: he hit a blooper that Jose Guillen and/or Tony Pena Jr. lost in the lights: Peralta could not have expected that ball to drop.)

Mike Aubrey drew a Mahayan five-pitch walk and Asdrubal Cabrera pinch-ran for him. With the bases loaded and one out, David Dellucci pinch-outed for Gutierrez (who had reached base all three times with a pair of hits and a walk) and one run scored. Then Grady

Sizemore popped out to shortstop.

d) **The Simple Wastrel**: Martinez' two-out single and advancement on a wild pitch were wasted when Peralta simply grounded out to end the game.

Now, this doesn't count the second, in which we stranded runners at 1st and 2nd, or the third, when two walks and a single loaded the bases for an over-excited Choo, who grounded out on the FIRST BLOODY PITCH, or the fourth and fifth, when we stranded single runners. In all, the Tribe stranded 12 runners, an incomprehensible SEVEN in scoring position.

If you get Kyle Davies on the hill ... and Ron

Mahay throwing half his pitches out of the strike zone (11 in 22) ... and Joel Peralta and his magic 6 ERA ... and catch Soria on an off night in which he allows two baserunners an inning ... you gotta score more than two runs. You just gotta. That's inconceivably bad.

3) Long ball fever!

The Indians won Friday night because they scored five runs.

Of those five runs, five were driven in by home runs.

This is kind of an unreliable way to run an offense, but it worked, and huzzahs all around for Grady Sizemore (2 HR) and Casey Blake (1 HR).

4) Simple Lameness

Cleveland's offense Sunday.

5) Paul Byrd was bad

Yep.

6) Regression to the Mean

Cliff Lee's outing was superbly mediocre: it was the Old Skool "scattered ten hits" sort of Charles Nagy win in which his biggest problem was that John Buck's deal with Mephistopheles extends only to those plate appearances he has against Cleveland pitching. Beyond Buck's pair of doubles, the only other extra-base hit was a triple by Mark Teahen: Lee still pounded the strike zone (70 strikes in 101 pitches) and had a nice 9:5 GO:FO ratio. Lee was also the beneficiary of a combination strong throw/egregious blunder when Ben Francisco caught David DeJesus rounding second base too generously after a single that would have scored the tying run had DeJesus not channeled Jhonny Peralta.

After a ridiculous stretch of 6 outrageous starts in his first seven, Lee has looked pretty pedestrian, giving up 10 hits twice and walking 4 in his other start. His season WHIP of 0.96 hides the fact that his WHIP in his last three games is 1.80, which isn't just not so good, it's downright crummy. Oddly enough, his GB:FB ratio for May (54:29) is much "better" than his more-even 45:39 in April: I put "better" in quotation marks because, although I prefer ground balls to fly balls, Lee's April was clearly better than his May (0.96 ERA to 2.88).

Lee is still having a fine season, one that merits serious consideration for the All-Star staff (especially given that no other Indian really deserves a slot right now), but these

last three starts suggest that Lee is running short of whatever pixie dust he was using earlier in the year.

7) So THAT'S what he's for!

Although I am still no fan of Scott Elarton, I should point out that he had a fine outing in relief of Paul Byrd, absorbing the final 3 2/3 innings after Byrd debacled. Not only did he save the rest of the bullpen, but he actually pitched quite well, racking up 5 strikeouts and allowing only 2 hits (although with 2 walks) in those innings, which were scoreless. Elarton also allowed an unheard-of 5:1 GO:FO ratio: at least this is unheard-of in the same sentence as

"Scott Elarton," who was once the most extreme flyball pitcher in the league.

I still hope he's being showcased.

8) Ho Hum Dept.

Joe Borowski's three outs in his 4th save of the season were:

a) a fly ball to deep right
b) a fly ball to deep left
c) a fly ball to deep left center that

Sizemore caught while face-planting into the wall

Between (a) and (b), Esteban German hit a double the hit less than a foot from the top of the wall.

9) Dee-fense!

Although German and Jose Guillen (who hit the face-planter) nearly tied the game in the 9th, the Royals' best chance to forge a tie was actually in the 7th, when Mark Teahen hit a sinking liner to

right with Guillen on second base and two outs. Only an excellent diving catch by Franklin Gutierrez prevented a run from scoring: for my money, despite Sizemore's catch being played ad nauseum in the highlights, Gutierrez' was the better defensive play.

Ben Francisco made the nice pinpoint throw that caught DeJesus off second in the 6th. This was good in two respects: it was an excellent throw that got the runner, but also showed some savvy, because there was no way he could have caught the speedy Joey Gathright at the plate.

10) Managerial Head-Scratchers

Why are you pinch-hitting David Dellucci, who hit .181 in May, for Franklin Gutierrez, who finally looked locked-in at the plate? Yes, Dellucci has a few hits recently, but so does Gutierrez: in fact, after a long stretch of pointlessness in May, Gutierrez had 6 hits in his previous 15 AB, including TWO IN THAT GAME. Including a triple! Off a righty!

Look, Soria is a superior pitcher and Gutierrez is anything BUT superior at hitting right-handers in his career. But Soria was obviously not on top of his game, already giving up two hits to right-handed hitters (Peralta, Blake), throwing a 5-pitch walk and a passed ball (which is not techincally his fault, but it wasn't anything like a good pitch). Gutierrez is locked in, and Dellucci is coming in cold. I'm not saying that Dellucci is a terrible pinch-hitter (he's gotten a few knocks this season as the ol' "seasoned veteran"), but ... I hated that decision as soon

as it was announced, and the result (RBI groundout: at least it wasn't a GIDP, which I expected) was lousy, too.

11) Dept. of Raffies

They were good. Perez moreso than Betancourt, but two scoreless innings to bridge from Lee to Borowski was reminiscent of last season.

12) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Larry Dolan thinks that the David Glass Model of Team Ownership is something to aspire to. I don't believe any sane person has ever expressed this sentiment about anyone, and the statement cannot be true. Fire Mark Shapiro.