Nice win for the Tribe yesterday. Cliff Lee became the AL's first ten game winner, the team jumped all over Dontrelle Willis early, and they managed to leave the Motor City with a split ... giving the glass half full group hope that this team can turn things around quickly before it gets too late. In today's B-List, Buff hits on the win, The Return of Garko, The Department of Raffies, and the possibility of the Indians dealing Franklin Gutierrez to a team that needs a center fielder.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (29-35)	(3rd		8.5 GB CHW)	3
Tigers (26-37)	0	0	0	2

W: Lee (10-1) L: Willis (0-1)

Admit it: when the rain came down in the fifth inning with the Tribe up 8-2, you were **convinced** that the game would be cancelled.

1) Triumph of the Ordinary

Cliff Lee became the AL's first ten-game winner by being called back

out after an hour-long rain delay to get in his fifth inning of work necessary to accomplish such a thing. I don't mind the decision: he was able to stay loose, it was only an hour, he pitched fine when he came back (logging his only 1-2-3 inning of the night, in fact), and it saved an extra inning on the bullpen. I don't think it was an unnecessary risk and although the "cookie" (getting the win) doesn't seem like that big a payoff to me, it's not a bad thing to go after.

This having been said, I would feel better if Lee had actually pitched well to earn the win: although his final numbers look squarely within the range of "pretty good:" 6 hits in 5 innings, a pair of walks and 5 Ks. Only one of the hits was for extra bases, but three of the hits and one walk came in an **Inning of Crap™** that resulted in giving up two runs.

More interesting to me was the fact that Lee reverted in a sense to the Old Skool Cliff Lee, yielding 8 flyball outs and only 2 on the ground. Two of Lee's five innings featured multiple baserunners: the Tigers' lineup is fearsomely right-handed, but underperforming at a level rivalling ours. One thing about Lee is that pitching from the windup, with no runners on base, he holds opposing hitters to a paltry .216/.253/.286 batting line. With runners on base, these numbers rise to .277/.292/.426. He's better at limiting his walks (admittedly, he's still awfully good with no one on this season), but the propensity giving up hits goes up quite a lot, and extra-base hits are that much more again more common. (It should be noted that Lee has almost twice as many batters faced with the bases empty (185:101), pointing out just how effective he's been this season overall: in

contrast, Sabathia is at 177:144, and Fausto's actually pitched more often with runners on base at 106:107. Paul Byrd, ironically, is at 186:90. Home runs are not your friend.)

I would imagine this isn't terribly uncommon: starting pitchers pitch better from the windup. But after sawing through April with a 32:2 K:BB ratio, May featured 8 walks in 5 starts, and Lee has 4 walks in two starts in June. Since Lee is much better at pitching without guys on base, it behooves him to sharpen up his command and prevent putting a couple extra guys on base via the free pass. I mean, this is hardly earthshattering news ("Put fewer guys on base! Stop the presses!"), but it does help explain why Lee hasn't had the same success since April that he did when he looked historic.

2) How Not To Productions Presents: The Fact Hypnotist!

Most hypnotists will try to make you act like a chicken, but I'm here to lull you ONLY WITH FACTS!

Me: You are getting sleepy ...
You: Yes, I am watching the Cleveland offense ...
Me: I am going to try to make you feel good about the offense ...

You: Yeah, good luck there, sport.
Me: The Indians scored three runs in the first inning ...
You: All right, that's a good start ...
Me: The Indians scored more runs in the second inning ...
You: Cool, maybe they're snapping out of it.
Me: They hit two home runs ...
You: Well, yeah, they hit home runs. Did they do anything else?
Me: With runners on base ...
You: Oh, so one wasn't by Jhonny Peralta?
Me: Multi-run homers! These are good!
You: I admit, that is good.
Me: They loaded the bases ... and scored two runs!
You: Now that IS something!
Me: Jhonny Peralta got a hit with the bases loaded ...
You: That's neat!
Me: Ryan Garko hit another home run ...
You: The return of slugging percentage! All right, I admit, this is sounding good.
Me: And they scored all 8 runs on 4 hits, hardly needing the other two hits they got in the next 7 2/3 innings ...
You: Yeah, I ... wait, what was that?
Me: Thank you, you've been a lovely audience!
You: Wait! Come back! Four hits? What the hell is that? Wait! You bastard! You were supposed to make me feel *better*, not the *same*! Come back here, you ...

3) The intersection of irrational fandom and human compassion

Listen, obviously I want opposing players to fail when they play the Indians. This is a zero-sum game. Every time an opponent gets a positive result, that is by definition a negative result for the Indians. Sure, a guy could hit a triple and not score and ultimately he and I both got positive results out of it, but generally speaking, for the Indians to win, I need the opponent to lose. (Wait, that's not general, that's tautological. What I mean is, for the opponent to lose, I generally need the opponent to do something that results in the Indians scoring and the opponents not scoring.)

You know how it is: Johan Santana may be a great player and inspiring to watch, but against the Tribe, you want him to give up some runs. It sure is marvelous from a pure fan perspective to see Josh Hamilton hit a towering home run ... but not against the Indians, okay? Go hit those against the Angels or something. I mean, at some level, you're rooting for the other guy to fail in order for the Indians to win. You can talk about it being the Indians' hitters or pitchers overcoming the opponent's great performance, but the result is that The Bad Guys fail.

Failing is one thing. This was something else entirely.

Now, look, most of the time, the opponent is just a guy in a uniform. You may have strong feelings about one player or another, but most of the time it's Bobby Abreu or Mike Napoli or Alexi Casilla and who the heck cares? It's a guy. There are some players you may feel actual personal animosity for or attraction to, but most baseball players are numbers on shirts.

I happen to like Dontrelle Willis as a guy. He is delightful and courteous and respectful and genuine. He is accountable and available to the media and has played the game with the kind of energy and enthusiasm rarely seen. He was fun to watch pitch for the Florida Marlins, and is a generous supporter of some good causes.

Last night resembled Rick Ankiel driving a train into another train driven by the injured Joe Borowski while he was shaking hands with Steve Blass.

Here is the operative section of the first inning:

Ben Francisco: Ball, Ball, Ball Ball
Victor Martinez: Ball, Ball, Ball, Strike (looking), Ball
Ryan Garko: Ball, Strike (looking), Ball, Ball, homer to left

Basically, Willis could not locate a fastball AT ALL. It was a ball or in the exact center of the strike zone. He threw breaking ball after breaking ball to Victor Martinez in the second because he could get it over the plate. It was **horrifying**.

Ironically, Denny Bautista's *first pitch* relieving Willis ... with the bases loaded ... **hit** Ryan Garko.

4) Gark smash!

Ryan Garko certainly had the right approach to facing Willis in the first: after a guy walks two batters on nine pitches, you look for Your Favorite Pitch and take everything else until he proves he can throw something other than a Ball or Your Favorite Pitch.

He threw Garko his Favorite Pitch.

This having been said, after a lousy .224/.356/.353 April and a similarly-putrid .232/.284/.377 (fewer walks, slightly more slugging), Garko has a ridiculous .438/.486/.531 line in June (admittedly not a significant sample size). Garko has hits in 8 of

his 9 games and 15 in 35 AB: this homer is already his second of the month after getting only 2 in each of the first two months.

He is now slugging over .400 for the first time since April 26. Huzzah!

5) Sydney or the bush!

Kelly Shoppach can swing the bat really hard.

When he does this and makes contact with a belt-high fastball, it is a two-run homer.

The other three plate appearances where he missed the ball entirely ... not quite as productive.

6) Dept. of Blunderraffies

Or is that Raffibusses?

Raffy Perez struck out the first batter he faced, then walked the next two batters on nine pitches. Fortunately, he found the strike zone (or at least pitches close enough for Edgar Renteria) and induced him to bounce into a double play to end the 6th.

In the 7th, after hitting Placido Polanco on the foot, the umpire refused to acknowledge this and Polanco grounded a single to right instead. Perez then got Magglio Ordonez to ground into a double play after inducing a pop out to Marcus Thames.

Raffy Betancourt came in and looked pretty good, but did manage to walk Brandon Inge in the process. I was pleasantly surprised by Betancourt's command, although he couldn't actually throw a breaking pitch.

7) Dee-fense!

Franklin Gutierrez got the start in center field to give Grady Sizemore the night off. Betancourt's first batter, Miguel Cabrera, drove a deep drive to left center that looked like it might get out of the park, but Gutierrez ran a long way, never slowing down, and back-handed the ball at the yellow railing to save an extra-base hit (possibly a homer, at least a double, depending on where the ball would have hit). It should be noted that I expect Grady Sizemore would have made the play as well, perhaps a little easier in that he is left-handed, but it would have taken the same kind of long run to get there and would have been a very fine play no matter what.

Here's something to consider: Gutierrez is actually a plus defender in center field, a rare and valuable commodity. His bat actually plays better in center than it does in right. At some point, it may serve the organization well to consider him as an asset rather than a core player: he would be a more valuable player as a center fielder, and we don't need that. Some other team might be willing to part with a

lesser defensive outfielder who can hit considerably better. I'm not saying that Gutierrez sucks and must be unloaded right away, but rather am pointing out that he might be more valuable to another team than he is to ours, and might fetch a player who is more valuable to us than he is right now (or is likely to be).

Not to be outdone ... well, wait, yeah, he was *totally* outdone ... but still, Casey Blake made an excellent long-distance dead-run sliding catch of a foul ball in the 9th to help preserve Masa Kobayashi's perfect inning.

8) Welcome back!

Josh Barfield was called up to replace Asdrubal Cabrera. He ... um ... he wasn't any good. (He

was the only Indian not to reach base last night.)

The primary purpose of this move is to get Cabrera's bat back on track with a stint in Beefalo. Anything else that results from it would involve surprising me a really, really large amount.