The Battle of Ohio came to a close as the Reds took two of three from the Indians this weekend. With the glaring exception of C.C. Sabathia's brilliant outing Friday, the Indians looked about as pointless as a Police Academy sequel, and Buff addresses the various degrees of pointlessnessosity in the B-List, including an unusual look at backup catchers and too many Rick Bauer sightings.

FINAL SCORE				
Reds (36-45)	0	0	0	0
Indians (37-43)	0	0	0	0

W: Sabathia (3-5) L: D. Thompson (0-1)

FINAL SCORE				
Reds (37-45)	1	0	0	3
Indians (37-44)	0	0	0	0

W: Cueto (6-8) L: Byrd (3-9)

FINAL SCORE				
Reds (38-45)	0	0	0	0
Indians (37-45) (	T4th 9.5 GB CHW	**)**	0	0

W: Arroyo (5-7) L: Laffey (4-5)

You know, when your team is shut down by Barry Zito and Bronson Arroyo in consecutive series, that's a pretty good indication that you CAN'T F*#&ING HIT AS A TEAM, isn't it? I'd ask when pitchers and catchers next report, but I don't

even know who they ARE.

1) Game-changing play, or small numbers in action

Paul Bako is a career backup catcher, which is normally shorthand for "man who can catch but not hit." More succinctly, Paul Bako is a schmoe. At age 36, he has yet to be the recipient of a seven-figure salary. In his 11-year career, Bako has played for 10 different teams, and only once did he play consecutive years exclusively for the same team. He averages about 65 games a season. His career line of .232/.305/.321 normally scotches cries of "Free Paul Bako!" He is the NL version of Gregg Zaun, in those years in which Gregg Zaun himself is not. (When Zaun is traded to the NL, Bako must be traded to the AL to preserve the Zaun-to-Bako ratio between leagues.) Now, this is not a terrible thing: Paul Bako's salary dwarfs mine, he gets to play baseball for a living, and he really is a serviceable backup catcher. But he's a schmoe. Be serious.

Sal Fasano is a career backup catcher who once had the shine of prospectitude but has settled down in to a more Bakonian career arc. Fasano is not so much a schmoe as he is a visitor from the planet Follicula, a form of sentient moustache seen in surprisingly many walks of life. (Other Folliculans include Doug Jones, actor Wilford Brimley, and U.N. representative John Bolton.) Fasano actually posted an .890 OPS for Kansas City in 1999, but this was in 60 AB and his career line of .220/.294/.394 suggests nothing so much as "Not Actually Good."

In Saturday's game, in the bottom of the 2nd, Jhonny Peralta beat out an infield hit and, after a popout, Casey Blake singled to left. After a passed ball by Bako, Ryan Garko began his historic night of squandering by lining out to second (aww!), and Franklin Gutierrez shrewdly struck the ball with his body to load the bases.

However, with two outs, Fasano was overpowered by Johnny Cueto and ended the inning by striking out. Hey, he's a schmoe. What are you going to do?

In the top of the 4th, the Reds loaded the bases with one out on a pair of singles and a walk. Paul Byrd was able to induce poor hitter Corey Patterson to ground out to him, getting the force at home, but unable to turn two to end the inning. Paul Bako then followed with a bases-clearing three-run double to left that effectively ended the game. Hey, even a blind schmoe and all that. (Clarification: Bako, though a schmoe, is not blind.)

Now, Fasano actually ended the night going 2-for-3 with a walk. And Bako ended the night 1-for-4 with a K. In other words, except for the one hit listed above, Bako never did anything else right, and except for the one out listed above, Fasano never did anything else wrong. In the aggregate battle of the schmoes, Fasano came out on top by a wide margin, especially considering his defensive contributions in the second inning. But in a game between equally-inept teams (see the records), sometimes it comes down to which number gets rolled on the schmoe-sided dice: had Fasano hit the double and Bako struck out, Cleveland actually wins the game 3-2 instead of another dispiriting 5-0 loss.

The conclusion, of course, is that while baseball at large may be a Game of Inches, baseball in Cleveland is more accurately

described as a Game of Schmoes.

2) Sore thumb

C.C. Sabathia: not a schmoe.

4 hits. All singles. 2 walks. 11 Ks. 8 shutout innings. Good night now!

3) Taking over for the master

With Sabathia unable to muster his trademark **Inning of Crap™**, the two pitchers that followed did their best to fill the void: Byrd coughed up the three-run special described above, but Aaron Laffey was more than up to the task himself, following four shutout innings (two of them perfect) with a 5-run bombing that included a pair of doubles, a two-run homer, and a wild pitch thrown in for good measure.

Laffey actually flirted with **Crap™** in the previous inning, allowing a pair of singles before inducing a double play to Brandon Phillips, then walking the next batter after getting ahead 1-2 and hitting Adam Dunn (for the second time: the 275-pound Dunn had to be reminded to take his base because he hadn't felt the blow), also on a 1-2 pitch. With the bases loaded, Leffy induced another double play ball, although it was counted as a single out because Laffey's petition to allow a fourth out to carry over to the next inning has not yet been arbitrated by the league office.

In all, Laffey finished with a pretty lousy line of 8 hits in 5 innings, allowing 5 runs with 1 walk and 2 Ks. Of course, through 4 innings, Laffey's line was a more-typical 0 runs on 3 hits and 0 walks. Laffey did finish with a brisk 10:2 GO:FO ratio, but really, one **Inning of Crap™** is worth several thousand words. Just not by me.

Byrd, on the other hand, finished with a nearly-respectable line of 4 runs on 6 hits in 6

innings: his customary home run allowed was a solo shot (by Adam Dunn, who will hit a pitch a long way now and again), and he settled down after his Crapitude to retire 7 of his last 8 batters, including 3 swinging strikeouts, with the only baserunner on a full count walk. Byrd did walk 3 batters on the day, uncharacteristically high for Byrd, but that was a nice finish to pretend to keep the Indians in the game.

4) Nice hose!

Of course, Byrd might have had a much shorter night had it not been for the steely gaze of Sal Fasano looking disaster in the eye and blinking nary a once. After Joey Votto doubled, Byrd cleverly hit Jeff Keppinger on an 0-2 pitch (surely he was not expecting that! Mwah hah hah!). After ball one to Super Jay Bruce,

Fasano caught Votto a bit too far off second base and gunned him down like the Cincinnati Red he is. Keppinger did manage to get to second on the ensuing rundown, and Bruce singled to put runners at the corners for Corey Patterson, who cannot hit.

Patterson came through in the klutz with a brilliant swinging strikeout, but on the 3-2 pitch, Bruce decided to test Fasano's arm once again. Or perhaps he forgot and thought Kelly Shoppach was behind the plate. Or perhaps he counted incorrectly to two (outs). Anyway, he ran on the pitch, and ...

... was smoked! Take that! Cowabunga! I snort the nose, Lucifer!

I had forgotten what an accurate-throwing catcher looked like since Victor Martinez was put on the DL.

5) Nice noodle!

How slow is Adam Dunn?

Well, it's worth mentioning that Dunn was recruited by the University of Texas to play quarterback. Dunn may look like a lumbering behemoth, but he is surprisingly athletic for a man his size (9 feet, 365 pounds). He is not a spry outfielder (in the way that the Sears Tower is not "spry"), but he is more athletic than you'd think.

But he was thrown out at home by David Dellucci. So he's pretty damned slow.

6) A demand for the end of an era

Well, not really an "era:" eras are long, protracted things.

But I want Ryan Garko to take a break.

Ryan Garko came to the plate four times on Saturday. In his first plate appearance, there were two men on base. In his second plate appearance, there were two men on base. In his third plate appearance, there were two men on base. And in his fourth plate appearance,

there was but a single runner on base.

Garko got zero hits. He advanced one runner (on what used to be called a sac fly). He ended two innings.

On Friday, he drew a walk and scored a run and only stranded one in scoring position to end an inning.

On Sunday, he did not play.

Look, Ben Francisco "personally stranded" 14 baserunners in the three games. Garko was far from alone in performing like a schmuck. But at least Francisco mixed in

a couple of hits here and there: Garko was completely pointless. He's in one of those patented Ryan Garko Stretches in which he's hitting 4-for-34. The season is over. Let's see someone else.

7) I beg to differ

Franklin Gutierrez also did not play Sunday, because he is in a 2-for-30 stretch. He is wondering what he has to do to patent his own Stretch.

(You need another year under your belt, Frank. Preferably with the Marlins.)

8) Blue Moon Special

David Dellucci got a hit!

9) George Santayana and Lesson Identification

The other roster sported a player many have waxed poetic and gnashed countless teeth over: Brandon Phillips, who was traded to Cincinnati for a variety of reasons, some even having to do with baseball. But Phillips' blossoming into a valuable player has caused many to believe that the Indians' brain trust is gunshy of trading a young player, lest he develop into a valuable player for some other team.

Listen, this is a valuable lesson. Many young players struggle at first. There are countless examples of players having trouble producing at the major-league level, then blooming into a real asset. And cheap, young players need to be the lifeblood of a lower-revenue team like Cleveland, so it must be especially careful about abandoning such resources.

Here's what I want you to do, though:

Look at Brandon Phillips.
Now look at Andy Marte.

These are not similar players, in that Phillips can play baseball and Marte cannot.

QED.

10 Managerial Head-Scratchers

Rick Bauer pitching to Adam Dunn with two on and two out?

Rick Bauer?

Really?

My stomach hurts.

11) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Casey Blake pounded three singles Saturday before getting pounded himself (by a Johnny Cueto pitch). On Friday, he went 2-for-4 with a run and an RBI, and collected a hit and two walks in the 2 slot on Sunday.

Grady Sizemore pounded his 18th homer of the season Friday, and collected 5 hits in the series, including at least one in each game. He also made a nice leaping catch at the wall to protect Sabathia's shutout and stole his 19th base of the season off Bronson Arroyo and his Amazing Leg.

Jamey Caroll briefly crested the .300 mark with three hits on Friday before an o-fer on Saturday brought him back to .297.

Jose Velandia got his first two hits as a Cleveland Indian Suday.

Rick Bauer needed two full innings to give up his customary 3 runs. By giving up 3 runs in 2 innings, Bauer's ERA did not change one iota.

Eddie Moo lowered his ERA from 9.00 to 7.36 with a pair of scoreless innings.