Well, if there were any glass half full people still out there, clinging to hopes of a second half Tribe revival, this weekend's sweep at the hands of the Twins, followed by the trade of C.C. ... well, let's just say it's tough to be optimistic about '08 at this point. In the Monday B-List, Buff relives the weekend set in the Twin Cities, talks about Paul Byrd's assault on Bert Blyleven's record for most HR's allowed in a season, and hits on the new look Tribe bullpen.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (37-49)	0	0	2	0
Twins (48-38)	1	1	3	0

W: L. Hernandez (9-5) L: Byrd (3-10)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (37-50)	1	0	0	3
Twins (49-38)	0	0	0	0

W: Slowey (6-6) L: Mastny (0-2) S: Nathan (24)

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (37-51)	0	1	0	0
Twins (50-38)	0	0	0	0

W: Perkins (5-2) L: Lee (11-2) S: Nathan (25)

I will miss the **Inning of Crap™** in its trademarked form. Sadly, I am likely to see numerous imitations thereof.

1) Administrative note

I will not comment in this space on either of the big transactions here: Joe Borowski is gone, and I will miss him as editorial cartoonists missed Dan Quayle, and C.C. Sabathia is gone, and I will miss him in the manner of Greg Swindell and the Big Bats of the Nineties. But the B-List is about the games, not roster moves, and frankly, I wouldn't know most of the Milwaukee players from a random set of male University of Wisconsin student council members. (I could probably suss them out from the females.)

I had considered writing this column purely from the perspective of addressing only players who are likely to be part of future success, but I found this too limiting, so abandoned the idea.

Also, given the choice amongst rooting for Chicago, Minnesota, or Detroit to win the Division in Cleveland's stead, I chose the sharp stick in the eye (Minnesota) over the lacerated kidneys (Detroit) or the whole-body formic acid immersion (Chicago).

2) Bert's Excellent Adventure

Paul Byrd is on an impressive run: in each of his last nine starts, he has given up a home run, and in four of his last seven, two batters have homered. Thirteen home runs in nine games is nothing to sneeze at. That almost defies belief, although not as much as the fact that Byrd won one of the two-homer games (they were the only runs allowed, aided in part by Comerica's dimensions with 11 fly ball outs).

Consider this, though: at this pace, if Byrd somehow got 36 starts on the season (very unusual in the five-man rotation era), he would give up a massive 52 home runs ... which would only break Bert Blyleven's major-league record by two. Take away two starts, which would still give him an impractical 34 starts on the season, and Byrd falls one short at 49.

This is pretty incredible. What on Earth was Bert Blyleven doing that season? Coating the ball with Flubber? Inflating it with helium? Fifty home runs is a lot (a LOT) of home runs. I'm damned impressed.

And I'm impressed, because I simply have trouble wrapping my head around the concept of a major-league pitcher, a Hall of Famer*, a guy who pitched well enough to take his regular turn every time around the horn, looking more taterrific and hittable than Paul Freaking Byrd.

There's a problem here, of course, in that Blyleven WASN'T as hittable as Byrd: that's partly why he got to stay in the rotation. And the fact that a bunch of Byrd homers are solo shots doesn't detract from the point that Byrd is really just having a very poor season: his ERA has bloated from 3.61 on May 13 to 5.53 today, lowering after a game only once

(the win against Detroit) along the way. Byrd is just looking far too much like vintage Even Year Byrd. Left-handers hit .332/.366/.607 against Byrd. Three thirty-two! Hey, the OBP-AVG is very good: he's only walked 12 left-handed hitters. But ask yourself: why, as a left-handed pitcher, would I allow Paul Byrd to walk me? Reach out and foul that ball four pitch off: odds are, if you get a couple more whacks at him, you'll get something you can pound. How much of a pounding? They slug SIX OH SEVEN! .607! That's twelve doubles and fourteen homers in 196 AB. In those 196 AB, he's struck out 14 left-handed hitters. You have a one-third shot at getting a hit, and if you get a hit, there's a 40% chance that you'll get extra bases out of it. With those numbers, it's hard to believe that there are only 34 RBI involved.

Which is, in a sense, part of the aesthetic of Paul Byrd: if you give up 65 hits, including 12 doubles and 14 homers, walk 12 guys, and play in front of the right side of the Cleveland infield, you sure expect more than 34 runs out of it. Byrd's 8 hits Friday included a trio of doubles and a pair of homers, and somehow he made enough timely pitches that it only added up to 6 runs. Because he gave up a three-run homer to Delmon Young. He also gave up a solo shot to Nick Punto.

Wait: let me say that again: he gave up a home run to NICK PUNTO.

Really, I've now flabbered myself. I have nothing coherent to say after noting that Paul Byrd gave up a home run to Nick Punto. Bloobit. Fobin grubbler. Zernadercize!

** not really, but he should be*

3) The Inning of Papercuts

With Sabathia in the Land of Cheese and Fausto Carmona will sidelined with a hip injury, Cliff Lee has become the de facto Ace of the staff. Actually, even with those two aboard he was the best-performing starter on the staff, but now, he's kind of the only-performing starter on the staff, so it's important for him to pitch well to end losing streaks and not suck and that sort of thing. Lee has been named to the All-Star team, and may even get the nod to start the game, a remarkable resurgence for a guy who was so crummy last season due to injuries and raw sewagitude that he spent much of the year in Beefalo and did not make the playoff roster.

(Excuse me, the voice of Jim Mora is ringing in my ear.)

Lee could hardly have looked more impressive Sunday: his first five innings featured two baserunners, one who reached on a bunt single and the other on an infield single to short. He struck out four men and retired three others on foul balls. Three of the innings were perfect, and neither man who singled got as far as second base.

In the sixth, Denard Span led off with a triple and scored on a groundout, illustrating a fundamental difference between Minnesota and Cleveland, but Lee struck out the other two hitters of the inning and was cruising in his own inimitable style.

Then the wheels caught fire, sold crystal meth to small children, and

rigged an election in a populous African nation: after a groundout, Lee walked Craig Monroe, who will swing at virtually anything spherical, on five pitches. Delmon Young reached on an infield single after fouling off a pair of 0-2 pitches. Brendan Harris got a Real Single, as did Nick Punto, then Lee walked in the tying run in the guise of Denard Span on 5 pitches. One groundout later, Lee had lost the game.

I'm not going to get real upset that Lee blew the game: he lost his command after six excellent innings. It happens. The first five innings were as good as anything Lee's conjured up this season, so I'm more inclined to shrug it off. It did suck, though.

4) Given my choice of one skill, I'd say "not sucking" would be high on the list

Aaron Laffey's first inning was one to forget: after a pair of groundouts, he tried a variety of approaches. Throwing the ball out of the strike zone was suboptimal, as he walked one of his four batters on the day. Throwing the ball into the batter didn't work so well, as he hit Justin Morneau. And then throwing a meatball was not the best idea he's ever had, as the subsequent two-run double to Craig Monroe resulted in two of the four runs he allowed on the day.

He settled down a bit, and only gave up 5 hits in 5 innings with 4 Ks. But four walks is bad, as is giving up a solo shot to left-handed Joe Mauer, who, though a fine hitter, has the power of Victor Martinez. And any game in which you have a HBP, a wild pitch, AND a balk simply can't be considered any better than "cringeworthy."

5) Adventures in relief pitching, or how numbers don't tell the whole story

Tom Mastny's numbers are certainly appalling Sunday: of the five batters he faced, more walked (2) and more got a hit (2) than he got out (1). All four of the hitters who reached base scored, rocketing Mastny's Game ERA up to a level the Romans didn't bother assigning a letter to expressing (actually CVIII). His ERA on the season now stands at 17.05, and of all the ex-Favorite Players on the squad, Mastny is performing the worst.

But look: Mastny got a groundout then blunderbussed his way through a five-pitch walk. He then bollixed a bunt for a "bunt single." His subsequent double was certainly bad, but he was asked to intentionally walk the next hitter to prepare for Raffy Perez. So really, other than the blunderbussery, he threw one bad pitch.

Perez then came in and began defecating in all directions: a walk to load the bases, a wild pitch to score a run, and a two-strike two-run single to Brendan Harris later, and it's Mastny who looks like the King Schlub, especially since Perez retired the first two hitters of the seventh in order, including a whiff, before yielding to Raffy Betancourt.

Mastny wasn't actually good, but he really wasn't as bad as all that.

Similarly, focusing on Jensen Lewis' bad second inning of work obscures the fact that he struck out the last two hitters of the sixth

Friday swinging with runners on first and third, and even struck out the second hitter of the 7th swinging after a leadoff walk. His body of work wasn't that good, either, but it wasn't that bad.

6) In direct contrast

Brian Slocum wasn't "that bad," either. He was much worse.

7) A master of timing

Hey, Raffy Betancourt! The season started in March!

Really, Betancourt looked masterful in two pointless outings, giving him three scoreless pointless outings in July thus far. He's actually looked pretty good since two wretched outings June 5th and 7th, but ... too little too late, dude.

8) Nice hose!

Ben Francisco prevented Perez' terrible outing from completely getting away from him by catching Craig Monroe running the bases like Craig Monroe and pegging him out trying to ... well, frankly, I can't tell you what he was trying to do there. He was sure out, though.

Kelly Shoppach gunned down Denard Span trying to steal second.

9) Lessons in pointless behavior

Jhonny Peralta belted a two-run homer, meaning there was a runner on base. Huzzah! It gave Cleveland a 3-0 lead in the 6th inning. Huzzah! We lost anyway. Feh.

Grady Sizemore led off Saturday's game with a triple. Huzzah! There he stood as the next three players made unproductive outs and we did not score. Feh. Given the opportunity in the 2nd, with

two men on, Sizemore decided not to leave matters to chance (or, in the case of his Cleveland teammates, not to leave matters to "suck") and blasted his 22nd home run to give Cleveland a lead they would not relinquish for several more innings. Huzzah! And feh!

Kelly Shoppach had hits in each of the three games, including a 3-for-3 night Friday (including a 2-run homer) in which he was pinch-hit for by Jose Velandia. That ... that's mind-boggling. (It was because Jesse Crain is right-handed and really good and we were down 12-3 at the time ... not only that, but Velandia DOUBLED ... but that's still pretty boggling.)

10 Blue Moon Special

Andy Marte hit his second double of the season.

Off Joe Nathan. (!!!)

He got two hits, scored a run, and collected his first RBI of the season.

Anyone who had July 5th in the "Andy Marte RBI Pool" is ... well, deluded. What the heck are you doing in an "Andy Marte RBI Pool?" Who the hell cares?

11) Eddie Moo sighting!

Another perfect 2/3 of an inning. Five strikes in six pitches and a whiff. Look out, American League!