Too little too late? Or not? Regardless, the Indians have won seven of their last eight, and went into Anaheim last night and beat the 60-38 Angels in their own crib with All-Star pitcher Ervin Santana on the bump. In today's B-List, Buff talks about the dominance we saw from Raffie Perez and Masa Kobayashi, the smokin' hot July Jhonny Peralta is having, and lists five things he enjoys more than watching FranKlin Gutierrez hit.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (44-54)	0	1	0	1
Angels (60-39)	0	1	0	0

W: Byrd (4-10) L: E. Santana (11-4) S: Kobayashi (6)

Although it's certainly gratifying to beat the titular "best team in baseball" in their own house, consider that if the Indians win their next nine games in a row, they will still be a bad team.

1) Strange things are afoot at the Circle A

Paul Byrd is certainly no stranger to pitching in Anaheim, having been an Angel for a year immediately before signing with Cleveland. During his tenure there, the thing that Byrd seemed to learn more than anything was the dimensions of the park, because he tested them rather thoroughly last night.

Consider this: through two innings, Byrd gave up five hits, committed a throwing error, and walked a man. By doing this, he lowered his ERA on the season. His

next inning, he gave up 650 feet of outs to Vlad Guerrero and Torii Hunter: after the subsequent groundout, his perfect inning represented what passes for "dominance" from Paul Byrd.

Now, this is a bit flip: in fact, the run he gave up in the second was the only one he allowed in 5 1/3 innings, and he struck out 5 hitters, four of them swinging, including two in the 4th with a runner in scoring position. He made some very good pitches, or at least pitches that looked very good but proved to be *just slightly* unpoundable, and his fourth win of the season was a pretty good outing. And getting out of the bases-loaded jam in the second, after going 3-0 to the "hitter" ... well, that almost defied belief.

But 9 hits and 2 walks gives him a WHIP of over 2.00 for the game, far above his 1.39 on the season. The real game-saver was the fact that instead of further chasing Bert Blyleven, Byrd allowed just one of those nine hits to be for extra bases, sprinkling 8 singles around the yard without being hurt by a big inning. Of course, he got 8 fly ball outs, and I'm a-tellin' a-you, some of those fly ball outs were not significantly discernable from booming shots that would have ended Byrd's night But Quick.

I would like to point out one feature about this game I liked very much: in a previous column (or nine) I have suggested that "familiarity breeds contempt" with Byrd. That is, give a guy a second look at Byrd, Byrd's got something up his sleeve (insert foreign substance joke here) to show him something different. Give a guy a third look, and he's got to make a decision. But after that third look, the hitter comes to the realization that Byrd has thirty-one flavors of Nothing Ball and is drooling in Pavlovian fashion at the idea of facing him a fourth time. If Paul Byrd gets a 4th pass through the lineup, this is virtually

axiomatically a Bad Thing.

So, after a reasonably uneventful fifth (only *two* singles!), the hue and cry went up to stop pushing our collective luck and get Byrd out: I thought that it would be fine to call him out for the 6th, as long as he faced no more than the 7-8-9 hitters due up. If he sawed through ‘em, great. If he only got two of ‘em, I don't care. Pull him anyway.

And to Eric Wedge's great credit (remember: the definition of a "good move" is something the manager does that a) you would have done and b) works), Byrd was lifted in favor of Raffy Perez. Now, it may have been that Wedge wanted Perez to face switch-hitter Chone Figgins, pushing Figgins to the right side where he'd be a step slower and easier to double up, and lefty Casey Kotchman followed Figgins in the order. But I'd like to secretly believe that Wedge thought, as I was, "Boy, three times through the order seems like the Optimal Strategy."

2) A tactical advantage used tactically

Raffy Perez may have seemed an odd choice to bring into the game in the 6th inning, since he is normally considered one of our best relievers and nominally a "setup man." Under normal circumstances, this is a player who pitches the 7th or 8th inning. This is a concept that sometimes frustrates statheads, in that there is no guarantee that the important situations of a ballgame will graciously wait until these late innings to occur, but one thing I've embraced over the years is the concept of role-enhanced comfort.

In truth, few reliever choices take place for a single factor: handedness plays a role, as do baserunners, speed, inning, weather, usage patterns, all that sort of thing. So it's simplistic to say that any one factor was dominant in choosing Perez, but here are some reasons I thought of at the time:

a) Perez hadn't pitched over the weekend, and thus not since before the All-Star break

b) Perez is capable of going multiple innings, so he wouldn't be "burned out early:" he could go two-plus if needed
c) Kotchman historically has a sizable platoon split, although in 2008 it's reverse. (I didn't know that until I looked it up: at the time, it seemed "obvious")
d) Perez' best stuff (evil slider) is the most likely in the bullpen to induce a ground ball
e) Historically, Perez has been a good pitcher with runners on because he throws strikes. This year, not as much, but when he's on, this is true.

Anyway, Perez came in, went 2-2 on Figgins, and induced the double play. He then sawed through a perfect 7th and got the first two hitters of the 8th before allowing a solo shot to Howie Kendrick.

Perez isn't quite the pitcher he was last year, but who is? Go look at some of his splits: last year, with runners on base, he held opponents

to hit .191/.237/.281. Runners in scoring position: .164/.203/.236. Bases loaded (9 times, so obviously tiny sample, but it's the one I remember because it was so awesome): .125/.111/.125. I mean, those were some sick, sick numbers. This year he's been Merely Good: his 6 HR and 16 BB in 45 1/3 innings are both higher than I expected, and his WHIP of 1.26 is no longer Super Awesome. And he pitches better with no one on than with guys on base this year. But his stuff is still quite nasty, and he's had only two truly bad outings in the past two months (out of 17). That's encouraging stuff.

3) Boom boom, out go the lights

Masa Kobayashi threw the most unhittable stuff I've seen him throw this season in striking out

the side for his 6th save. I don't know if he's young enough or consistent enough to be considered an obvious solution over the next couple of years, but boy howdy, that was just mean. Somebody make a video of that one and have him watch that whenever he feels he needs a mechanical adjustment. "Here, do that." Yeah.

4) Boom boom, out goes the ball

Of Cleveland's five runs, four were the result of home runs.

Andy Marte got the 3-1 pitch he expected to break the 1-1 tie with a solo shot to left,

while Casey Blake followed Casey Sizemore's booming double with a more-booming two-run homer. Jhonny Peralta completed the Cleveland scoring portion of the program with a first-pitch shot to left center off Justin Speier.

I'm not drawin' any massive conclusions about the Cleveland offense one way or the other here, but those balls were not cheap home runs.

5) Speaking of Peralta

If I told you that 8 of the 9 Cleveland hitters struck out at least once, how many guesses

would it have taken you to get to Jhonny Peralta as the one who didn't?

How well is Jhonny Peralta seeing the ball? Consider that his home run might have had the third-most velocity off the bat of his four plate appearances. (And it might have had the first: I didn't measure them, and don't care enough.) His first ball was smoked on a like right at right fielder Gary Matthews Jr., who cleverly did not catch it for a two-base error. (Cleveland's first run scored with a hit: Peralta went to third on a wild pitch and scored on a sac fly.) His second ball was a line shot with two on that Torii Hunter caught in center, and his third was a blistering ball to short that My Sir Izturis made a nice play on. Tired of this, Peralta simply hit his fourth ball where no fielder in

play could catch it.

Consider Peralta's July to date: .298/.328/.632. Six thirty two! That's almost grotesque. Since June 15, Peralta is 41-for-118 (.347), and 23 of those hits (over half!) have been for extra bases. Sure, he's only walked 5 times, but ... hey, the man is **hitting**. I'm not sure I feel like arguing that he's taking a bad approach. (Now, if you want to argue *unsustainable* with me, you prolly have a case.) By the way, his hitting streak is now 11.

6) In stark contrast

Here are some things I enjoy more than watching Franklin Gutierrez hit:

Stubbing my toe
Eating a mushy apple
Reading Rod McKuen
100 degree heat
E-mail spam

I have a dream in which Franklin Gutierrez does not strike out on a slider low and away and thoroughly out of the strike zone. This dream can partially be explained by the fact that Jhonny Peralta does this less frequently than he once did. Also because I am having a complete psychotic break at the time. It is not a realistic dream. It is

less believable than the one in which I am able to speak to gorillas, for example.

I am invoking the Global Thumper Rule on Franklin Gutierrez for the remainder of the season. He is dead to me, Fredo. I will fight no more forever. Que suck sera. Ptui!

7) Along these lines

Asdrubal Cabrera is younger and less experienced than Franklin Gutierrez, and I have not been worn down by him to date.

But if there is a player with a worse-looking approach at the plate than Asdrubal Cabrera, I want him to play for the Chicago White Sox.

(In his defense, he gave a nice jolt to a ball to dead center, but he just *looks* terrible.)

8) It should be noted

Lineup slots 1-7 last night went 9-for-28 with a double and three homers. Every player got at least one hit, including 2 each by Blake and Marte.

The team went 9-for-36 with a double and three homers.