Clifton Phifer Lee. Simply amazing. 15-2 for a team that is 49-62. And the current frontrunner to give the Indians back to back AL Cy Young award winners. In today's B-List, Buff fawns over Cliffie, providing some absolutely eye-popping statistics on his season to our readers. Buff also chimes in with an episode of Terror on the Basepaths, talks about the disaster of a season Ryan Garko is having, and expresses his fears over the Tribe considering David Dellucci a major part of the 2009 team.

FINAL SCORE				
Indians (49-62)	0	1	1	0
Unobserved Rays (66-45)		0	0	2

W: Lee (15-2) L: Garza (9-7) S: Perez (2)

American League baseball: our DH is hitting .238, theirs .182. Our 1B is hitting .240, theirs .232. These are the prime offensive positions on a ballclub.

1) Ho Hum Dept.

It is sometimes said that the mark of a good pitcher is the ability to win without

one's best stuff. After two innings, it was pretty clear that Cliff Lee didn't have his A-game in his bag: the leadoff hitter singled and the second walked, and in the second inning, Lee allowed a pair of infield singles and another walk to load the bases. That he came through those inning with a shutout in tact was fairly amazing.

I expected to go look up Lee's splits with runners on base and with the bases empty and be able to report on a great insight into Lee's success, but the fact is, there's almost no split at all. With the bases empty, Lee holds the opposition to .240/.270/.343, and with runners on base, hitters post a .255/.270/.344. That means the difference betwee Lee from the windup and Lee from the stretch is .001 of slugging. He's a little more likely to walk someone if a runner is already one ... and that's hardly likely at all. A couple starts ago, we looked at how Paul Byrd managed to hold the Tigers to 0-for-11 with runners on base, which was completely out of character for him: Byrd's split is enormous, and in the wrong direction. Lee? Lee seems to barely notice the situation. "I get this guy out." Words to live by.

Glancing at Lee's other splits, something did pop up: going into last night's game, Lee allowed an OPS of .750 off a 3-0 count, 1.081 off a 3-1 count, and .878 off a 3-2 count. This isn't really surprising, except maybe the high number with a full count: 3-0 and 3-1 are "hitter's counts," and the .750 from the 3-0 count is actually all OBP. It is, in fact, due to the fact that of the four hitters to reach a 3-0 count against Lee, 3 walked on the next pitch.

Wait a minute. Let me repeat that.

Of the **FOUR HITTERS** to get to a 3-0 count. **FOUR**. Do you know how many batters had a 3-1 count against Lee? Twenty-one. Lee has faced about 600 hitters this season and **TWENTY-FIVE** have gotten either a 3-1 or 3-0 count. I don't know if this is really that amazing, but it sure sounds preposterous to me. That's nuts. (Actually, one of the guys

with a 3-1 count had a 3-0 count, so it's really twenty-four, which is 4% more nuts that it was.)

Anyway, in terms of this actual game, Lee had a miniature Inning of Crap™ in the 4th allowing a single-double-single combo for his only two runs. Other than that, three of his 8 hits never left the infield: he only struck out two, hit a batter, and uncorked a wild pitch, but after the 4th was never really threatened. One disturbing number: his GO:FO ratio was an Old Skool Lee-esque 4:15, but I'm tempted to treat this as a blip. And hey, he gave up two runs in seven innings, throwing 81 of his 115 pitches for strikes. His ERA went UP.

Wow.

2) The Perils of Matt Garza

One of the great talent-for-talent trades this offseason (probably surpassed only by the Josh Hamilton / Edison Volquez deal) was Tampa Bay sending talented outfielder Delmon Young to Minnesota for starting pitcher Matt Garza. (There were four other players in the deal, but it will likely be remembered as Young-for-Garza.) Garza was a solid starter for the Twins, who have pitching coming out of their ears, so they traded him for something they didn't have after Torii Hunter left via free agency: a right-handed outfielder who could hit.

Now, Garza isn't an exceptional pitcher, just a good young one. His K/9

rate hovers around 6, which is good but not great. (It was around 7 in Minnesota, but I'm not sure that's really significant.) His K/BB slides in just over 2, which is pretty good but not eye-popping. Really, his success this season is that he's simply less hittable: hitters are batting .245 against Garza this season, where they hit around .300 against him in his stints in Minnesota. Part of this is that Tampa's defense is exceptional at turning batted balls into outs: they lead the majors with a defensive efficiency of 72.1%. (In contrast, Minnesota's is 69.1%; Cleveland's is 69.5%.) Part of it may be luck. Garza doesn't have a super fastball or a killer change, just nice, major-league stuff.

One thing Matt Garza does NOT have is the ability to blow a high fastball past a guy. And I know this because I watched Asdrubal Cabrera turn one of these, which started in an ran back over the plate about chest high, into his third homer of the season. Cabrera has the power of petrified wood, slugging .294 on the season as a Jason Tyner All-Star (OBP > SLG). And later, with two outs and a man on base, David Dellucci pulled out the flannel shirt and earflaps necessary to lumberjack a chin-high offering over the right field wall in largely the same place.

Really, without those two pitches (and Cabrera's came at 2-2, after Garza had gotten ahead 0-2; Dellucci's was a 1-0 Dead Red Fastball), Garza pitched 5 innings of 1-run ball with 5 hits and 4 Ks; with them, he departed after the fifth inning with his 7th loss of the season.

I would probably recommend not throwing that pitch again.

3) Terror on the Basepaths!

Once a B-List staple, the Terror hasn't made many appearances this season, although there have certainly been some frightening moments, most involving botched hit-and-runs or Joel Skinner sending runners home to their death. In this game, it looked like Skinner might have been up to his old tricks, sending the medium-slow-footed Jhonny Peralta around third on a double to the left-field corner by Kelly Shoppach. Left fielder Will Aybar chose the Bob Uecker Method of Knuckleball Catching (wait until it stops rolling, then pick it up) to field the ball off the wall, so Skinner felt Peralta could make it home. In fact, he was safe on a play that wasn't even particularly close, executing a nice slide-by-the-plate touch-with-your-hand maneuver that only seemed to hurt a lot.

Encouraged by this, Peralta attempted to steal second on in the 8th after a two-out five-pitch walk. Whether he had a good jump or not proved immaterial, as Dioner Navarro's throw was mammothly incompetent, and Peralta reached third on the error. Shoppach then drove him in on a single to center that probably would not have scored Peralta from second.

To recap: Jhonny Peralta scored two runs ... because of his **good baserunning**.

I have to lie down now.

4) The deepening black hole of suck

I want to like Ryan Garko. I really do. I read too much into his hot streaks for the express reason that I want him to be a valuable player. He is witty, smart, and shows great effort. He has improved his defense at first base, not his original position, significantly, and showed power and patience last season.

This season, he sucks.

I am looking for reasons not to write off Andy Marte as a schmoe. What was once the Crisp-for-Marte deal is now the Crisp-for-Shoppach deal. Marte has flashes of adequacy, but so did Charlie Spikes. His three home runs in July suggested that he might be getting more comfortable against major-league pitching with regular playing time, and six of his 15 hits were for extra bases. Perhaps he is turning the proverbial corner.

No. He hit .224/.278/.403 in July ... his best month ... which sucks.

Garko took his second 4-PA collar in three games, while Marte too his fourth consecutive collar and sixth in seven games. I am not telling anyone to give up on either player and that each is a hopeless lost cause, but I am telling you that they were terrible last night in being the only batters not to reach base at all and that watching them play is increasingly frustrating and painful.

5) That man Lee is a profligate spendthrift

Raffy Perez entered the game in the 8th inning after Lee used his 115th pitch to end the 7th. Perez retired the side in order, recording a five-pitch (one ball) swinging strikeout of Willy Aybar and a three-pitch swinging strikeout of pinch-hitter Shawn Riggans. Jonny Gomes grounded out on the first pitch he saw.

Realizing the inherent inefficiency of the strikeout as a weapon, Perez then mowed down the Rays in order in the 9th on six pitches.

In all, Perez threw 12 strikes in 15 pitches to complete two innings. At this pace, a complete game would take 68 pitches. Perez' ERA dipped below 3.00 since April 7th. He has struck out 52 hitters in 54 2/3 innings, and his GO:FO ratio of 82:35 is better than Aaron Laffey or Fausto Carmona. He picked up his second save of the season. He weighs sixty-four pounds.

6) Open question

Does a single and a walk overcome an

egregiously terrible error in the field if none of the plays result in any runs for anyone?

If you know the answer, please contact Ben Francisco at bfran@ironglove.com.

7) Completely False Statement for the Google Search Engine

Eric Wedge, as a child actor, played Chris on "The Partridge Family." This is easily proven false with an Internet search, and Wedge appears to have no rhythm as well, a detriment to playing the drum-playing member of the Family. Do not play David Dellucci.

8) What was that?

Yes, I know Dellucci hit a home run. I am concerned that the team will consider Dellucci a major part of the 2009 Indians, when he should not be. No, no, a thousand times no. In the words John Paul Jones might have uttered had he cared about the Cleveland Indians and capable of seeing 250 years into the future, "I have not begun to hurl false statements about Eric Wedge in an effort to jettison David Dellucci from the team's future plans! Also, buy Microsoft at 14! Trust me on this one!"