Buff takes a look at the weekend series with the Mariners in the Monday edition of The B-List. Was the Indians pitching that good? Or do the Mariners hitters just suck? Buff will let you know.

Kind of a mixed bag from Seattle: the pitching performed well, but Seattle can't hit, so it's the thoroughly movable object against the somewhat resistable force. Not sure if any real paradigm shifts can be inferred from such a matchup, but it's nice to face the Mighty Royals on the heels of a 3-game series in which we yielded 7 earned runs ... total. It'd be more comforting were we not headed there on the heels of two games in which we got an aggregate 8 hits, and 7 came from three guys.

1) The Fundamental Theorem of Pitching

Pitching is a strange and arcane craft. You can pitch poorly and win (Paul Byrd is 4-2). You can pitch well and lose (Jarrod Washburn). You can pitch mediocrely and win (Westbrook) or lose (Lee) or neither (Moyer). There is only one immutable law of pitching: if you give up no runs, you cannot lose.

And that, my friends, would be your 2006 C.C. Sabathia.

To say that Sabathia pitched well seems redundant: there's hardly a measure in which it isn't obvious (although he did give up seven hits, all were singles). He had a ludicrous 75:30 strike-to-ball ratio, walked no hitters, and although two runners reached scoring position (and Suzuki stole a base), he wasn't ever really in trouble. It was simple, efficient (8 IP, 105 pitches), and beautiful. It also kept the bullpen out of the game, which this season seems like a Very Good Thing.

2) The continued revenge of the Karma Fairy

I'm pretty sure Cliff Lee isn't going to complain loudly that he pitched well enough to win on Saturday, but it hardly mattered as the bats were totally throttled by a man who can't even pronounce his own name. Joe-El Pineiro was as masterful Saturday as Sabathia was Sunday, the only difference being one of his four hits was non-singular. After giving up a leadoff homer, Pineiro settled in for 8 innings of three-hit, no-walk ball, striking out six and generally passing out collars to six Indians. He didn't really figure out Mighty Casey, but seeing that the three hitters following Blake were a brisk 0-for-9, it meant exactly bupkes.

Lee continues his pursuit of the lowest GB:FB ratio since the infamous Mined Infield Incident of 1932 in St. Louis, popping 14 up and dropping 5 down. That makes his season ratio an even 0.50: anything over 1.5 is considered a groundball pitcher, anything under 0.8 is a flyball pitcher, making Lee a preposterous pitcher. His only two wins have come when he fans at least one an inning: I wish I knew what to conclude from that.

3) Amazing Tales to Astound You

The bullpen was good.

I know, this is supposed to be non-fiction, or at least believable non-pulp fiction, but I tell you, it is true.

Friday: Davis 1 perfect inning (1 K), Mota 1 1-hit scoreless (16:7 strike-to-ball), Graves a 1-run inning
Saturday: Cabrera 1 1/3 perfect innings (1 K)
Sunday: Wickman with the patented 2-hit-plus-DP (scoreless) save

The real news is probably that the bullpen only had to throw 5 1/3 innings over three games, which is Really Cool, but it's also nice to see guys come in and mow 'em down. Again, this is a team with Willie Bloomquist in the 2-hole against lefties and 4-5-6 hitters sporting averages of .195, .231, and .212 (the latter two of which have gone UP against Lee and Sabathia), but it is nice nonetheless. Cabrera in particular has looked sharp twice in a row, and Mota threw what is rumored to be two consecutive strikes. Graves steadfastly remains Danny Graves despite all efforts to the contrary.

4) Hey, we had one of those!

When Jamie Moyer left the game after six innings, he left a 3-3 tie. Rafael Soriano was not so good in the seventh, giving up a run. However, this pales in comparison with what he, Sherrill, Green, and Woods managed in the eighth: walk the bases loaded, give up a one-run single, then HIT a batter two drive in a run, walk in ANOTHER run, then the ground-rule double for two more. For those of you scoring at home, that's five runs on TWO HITS. The last FOUR runs came with TWO OUTS. The player they hit was the nine-hole hitter: the player with the ground-rule double had a negative SLG-OBP coming into the game.

That, my friends, is some bad "relief" pitching.

Oh, cool stat: GB:FB ratios: Soriano 0:0 (two Ks, one caught stealing). Sherrill 0:0 (K). Green 0:0 (K). Pitch 'em where they ain't.

5) Check that man's breakfast cereal

Have you seen the Kurt Russell movie "The World's Strongest Man?" The heading makes little sense if you haven't.

Anyway, Jason Michaels, he of the four extra-base hits, all doubles, smacked a ground-rule double (above) AND hit his first home run since the invention of the sousaphone. Yes, Jamie Moyer throws roughly 12 MPH, but that makes it all the more difficult, as you get no help from the incoming velocity.

6) Managerial head-scratchers

Jamie Moyer is left-handed, so Todd Hollandsworth gives Casey Blake the night off (going 1-for-5, but the one was a triple, which is neat). Blake returns to face the right-handed Pineiro (and goes 2-for-3 out of the six hole). Pineiro's start is also the night chosen to rest Travis Hafner, so he can face the two lefties bracketing Pineiro, Moyer and Washburn. Explain to me this right-left thing to me again? You rest Hafner against the tough ... righty? Bring Hollandsworth in to face the ... left-hander? Leaving Hollandsworth on the bench against Pineiro because Peralta was the DH so you could play Vazquez? Why not simply let Hollandsworth DH, leave Peralta at short, and give Vazquez bad directions to Safeco so he ends up in Vancouver instead? (Yes, he took the collar)

There may have been something else driving these decisions, but it sure looked weird in the box scores.

7) Inexplicable confidence

Really Big Bob saved Sunday's game. I knew he would. He certainly did it the RBB Way (tm), but he did it nonetheless.

It's hard to explain. I am a stathead by nature. I believe things like Closers Are Overrated and looking at WHIPs and K rates and ERAs and such. Objectively, there is little reason to think that Wickman employs a sinker rather than dry ice, a fan, and some reflective surfaces.

But when Bob Wickman enters a game with a save opportunity, I know he will save the game. It doesn't matter how many guys he puts on base, or how many are in scoring position with fewer than two outs, or the wind or the hitter or the moon. I find myself awash with a feeling a relieved confidence that Really Big Bob will simply handle the matter and the game is In The Bag.

Does this mean I enjoy watching him? Heavens, no. I don't watch him at all. I leave the room and go smoke cigarettes. I'm too old to actually watch him PITCH. What, are you crazy?

By the way, congratulations to Wickman for becoming the Indians' all-time saves leader, passing the inimitable Doug Jones. Jones still trumps Wickman in the moustache department, but no longer in saves.

8) The End of an Era

Victor Martinez did not reach base Sunday. Can the Kelly Shoppach Era be far behind?

(Hint: yes.)

9) What are you guys waiting for?

Joe-El Pineiro pretty much baffled the Indians Saturday, but not Casey Blake, who was so non-plussed at being on base that he stole his second bag of the season. Likewise, Jarrod Washburn largely scoobied the Tribe on Sunday, but not Ron Belliard, who got two hits and figured in both runs (driving in Hafner with a two-out

double and scoring on a sac fly); Blake also had a hit and a walk. Blake reached base four times in six plate appearances over the two games: the rest of the Indians managed to get on base 8 times in 57 plate appearances. Without Belliard's Sunday, that becomes 6 times in 54, and brisk 0.111 OBP, meaning that trading for Bronson Arroyo seems that much more atttractive (he could double as DH).

10) Planning Ahead

Our worst three starters face KC's best three to polish off a stretch of three hundred sixteen consecutive games. I regret missing Joe Mays, but we do get to say hello to Scott Elarton. Of course, they know Paul Byrd.