After an ugly weekend series with the Mariners that brought an abrupt halt to the teams ten game winning streak, the Tribe got things back on track in the spoiler rol this week with two nice wins over the White Sox. Monday's game saw Cliff Lee get his 20th win with a five hit shutout. And yesterday, the good guys banged out 13 hits and got five solid innings from Fausto en route to a 9-3 win. In today's B-List, Buff talks about these games, and also how burnt out he is from covering this team all season for us.

FINAL SCORE				
White Sox (77-60)	0	0	0	0
Indians (66-70)	0	1	1	2

W: C. Lee (20-2) L: C. Richard (2-3)

FINAL SCORE				
White Sox (77-61)	0	0	0	0
Indians (67-70)	0	2	0	2

W: Carmona (8-5) L: Danks (10-8)

I am having a hard time expressing how burnt out I am. Imagine John Hnat running a marathon before medical treatment wearing plate mail smoking 12 cigarettes bound together with duct tape into a 40-mph headwind listening to John Tesh on his headphones while carrying a live colossal squid.

1) Twenty

Cliff Lee became the first Cleveland pitcher to win 20 games since Gaylord Perry in 1974: like Perry, Lee pitches for a mediocre sub-.500 team on which he is the only starting pitcher posting a notable performance, supported by a sporadic offense. Unlike Perry, he has hair.

In an interview, Perry expressed some surprise that with all the pitchers Cleveland has had over the years, none has won 20 games. Frankly, I was surprised that anyone could come up with a pitcher who could possibly have won 20 games for the Cleveland Indians since Gaylord Perry. In actuality, Perry's surprise is more warranted: there have been some very good pitchers in Cleveland in the past 30-odd years. It's just that the Indians tend to have pitching OR offense, rarely both. Bert Blyleven was obviously capable of winning 20 games ... but not for the mid-80s Indians. C.C. Sabathia was a fine pitcher, but with **Innings of Crap™** here and there, was denied a 20th win. And, of course, 20 is kind of an artificial number, based largely on philangelical count: Sabathia won the Cy Young, after all, so it would be hard to argue that he didn't have a "good enough year." Perry seemed more relieved that he didn't have to talk about it any more than anything else.

Still, it's a pretty honest 20 wins: looking for a "cheap" win, I found one win in which he gave up 6 runs in 5 innings, and another of 4 runs in 6 innings. But that's about it. And this doesn't count no-decisions in a 9 shutout inning performance, a no-decision in a pair of 1-run outings (8 IP and 7 1/3 IP), and a 2-run no-decision in 6 1/3. (He got a no-decision for a 6 runs in 5 innings affair, but that ostensibly affects his loss total, not his win total.)

After such a ludicrous, hard-to-believe first four starts in which he won four games and gave up 1 earned run in 31 2/3 innings (ERA 0.28, WHIP 0.41), the argument was that this was simply an astonishing stretch by an ordinary pitcher. Well, the Labor Day start against the

ChiSox would have slotted right in with any of those starts: his 5 hits allowed would have been his highest total of the five, but it was nine shutout innings with nary a walk. After giving up a pair of soft singles in the first, Lee didn't allow another BASERUNNER until the 8th inning. His 77 strikes in 109 pitches was actually one of the lower strike percentages he's posted this season, but by one measure, this was Lee's fourth-best start of the season (behind 3 of the first 4, mostly by virtue of only striking out 4 Chicago hitters). Instead of fading after a hit start, Lee's August ERA of 1.86 was actually his second-best month (after April), and his September is off to a pretty awesome start.

I would imagine that at this point, Lee will continue to take the ball every fifth day: he certainly isn't showing signs of overt fatigue, he just turned 30 (well past a youngster's "injury nexus"), and he's only thrice thrown more than 115 pitches in a start, with a high of 120 ... in April. More to the point, Lee's tremendous control and command have limited high-pitch single innings to a bare minimum, so the stress factor is virtually absent. I guess now that Lee has his 20 and is quite likely to hold off Roy Halladay for the Cy Young, there is some incentive to back off maybe his last start or two, but really, unless he shows me something that suggests he's wearing down, I don't see why he couldn't pitch at least three more games. He's at 194 1/3 innings for the season: I might draw the artificial line at 220, but again, this is more about Lee's physical signs than any round base-ten number.

2) The Banana Shift

A couple years ago, I claimed that Cliff Lee was a banana: he was capable of sawing through an order without much incident for four-to-six innings, but once he starting losing his ability to get quick outs, he became soft and gooey at an alarming rate and booked a one-way trip on Handbasket Express ("When it absolutely, positively has to go to Hell!"). Lee has since completely shed the banana label (unless one suddenly begins manufacturing bananas from tempered steel or something): although he did give up 40% of his baserunners in Monday's game in his final inning (and 60% in his final two), that was hardly anything to gnash teeth over.

In contrast, Fausto Carmona caused my teeth to grind into a fine powder with his performance in the 6th inning last night.

Through five complete innings, Carmona allowed 2 hits, 1 walk, and a hit batsman to shut the White Sox out. Both hits were singles, and one was of the infield variety. In addition, the player hit was A.J. Pierzynski, so it was a successful five innings indeed.

However, in the 6th, Carmona basically upgraded his Handbasket to the Deluxe Model, walking Jermaine Dye on four straight balls after starting him 0-2, giving up a

single to Jim Thome, and wild-pitching Dye home. He then allowed another single, a sac fly on a 2-0 count, hit Alexei Ramirez (which, given his body width of 8.4", is quite difficult), and allowed a booming double to Juan Uribe, who is hitting .241. Enough, in this case, was in fact much too much, and Carmona left the game.

I am past the point of having a very clear conception of what to expect from Fausto Carmona any more: clearly his command has been what we statistical analysts call "piss-poor" this season. Before the injury, after the injury, what have you: the man has a 45:62 K:BB ratio. Sixty-two! In 101 2/3 innings! I mean, that's just incredibly bad. Not Jason Neighborgall bad or anything, but still astonishingly bad. 45 strikeouts doesn't actually bother me as much as sixty-two f%^#ing walks. That's awful.

So ... was it the big increase in innings last season? Was last season simply a stone cold fluke? Is this a tempest in a teapot for a guy who's only 24? Hell

if I know. I will say that Carmona's build (listed at 6'4", 230, approximately 27% of which is rear end) seems condicive to workload in the Livan Hernandez/C.C. Sabathia mold ... but Roger Clemens got hurt with that build, too. Who knows? I sure as hell don't.

Anyway, Carmona is clearly one of our most talented pitchers and should be expected to be in the 2009 rotation. Where he will pitch ... some. Adverbly. Not a clue. Better than Jeremy Sowers. Past that, no idea.

3) Vic smash!

Victor Martinez collected his first home run of the season yesterday. He also went 1-for-5, left four men on base, and struck out once, but it certainly looks like he's healed up a bit better than he was in April and May.

It bears mentioning that his home run came batting right-handed.

4) Doubles Power

Shin-Soo Choo has 236 AB and about 270 PA this season and has already hit 24 doubles. He went 3-for-4 Monday and drove in a key run off Switchblade Boone Logan Tuesday by cleverly not swinging at four pitches out of the strike zone (and one in the strike zone, but hey).

Jhonny Peralta's 37 doubles actually lead the team: he collected 2 hits and an RBI yesterday on a single that helped break open the game in the 7th.

Ben Francisco collected his 27th double yesterday and is third on the team.

Kelly Shoppach has augmented his surprising 17 homers with 23 doubles. He has also beaten out two infield hits in the last week, which is pretty surprising from a catcher.

The right fielder collected HIS 23rd double of the season Monday, and again on Tuesday. Okay, I guess I don't understand how to read ESPN's box scores. But in any event, he has 33 extra-base hits on the season, and his two-run blow in the 4th gave the Indians enough cushion that they could withstand Carmona's bananification in the 6th.

Asdrubal Cabrera hit his 15th double, but ... well, that's not really that impressive. Wake me when he lifts himself out of the Jason Tyner Zone (OBP > SLG).

5) Everybody hits!

Not quite true Tuesday, as Ryan Garko took a collar, but he did walk and score. Everyone else with an AB got a hit, though, including a pair each from Grady Sizemore and Jhonny Peralta, and a wonderful slump-breaking 3 from Cabrera, unless it isn't a slump-breaker, in

which case ... hey, it's three hits from your nine-hole hitter! Stop being so greedy!

Not quite true Monday, either, although the two players without a hit (Jamey Carroll, Peralta) each drew a walk, and Carroll stole his 7th base on the season. Choo's three hits led the way, and Garko had a pair of singles and a run scored.

6) Dept. of Raffies

Raffy Betancourt gave us a glimpse of the past when he strode in with runners at 2nd and 3rd with two outs after Carmona's implosion. He calmly (I assume: reading Betancourt's facial expressions is kind of like identifying constellations ... the stars shift position imperceptably, so you can infer whatever you want given enough time and imagination) struck Jerry Owens on four pitches, the last a swing and a miss. He did walk Orly Cabrera to start the 7th, but retired the next two hitters before yielding to ...

... Raffy Perez, who got Jim Thome to end the 7th. He then gave up a harmless double in the 8th sandwiched between a pair of groundouts and a swinging K by Alexei Ramirez.

7) Right place, right time

Brendan Donnelly gave up a hit and a walk, but no runs with a

6-run cushion to close out Tuesday's game.

Juan Rincon had another Job Well Done from his super-nifty vantage point of Not On The Mound.

8) Good news, bad news

Andy Marte drew a walk and smashed a single in three trips to the plate Tuesday. For this, he was pinch-hit for in the 7th inning. Now, this case at least made more sense than Jamey Carroll replacing him: the left-handed Choo was sent up to face the right-handed Dotel. Even though it turned into Choo v. Logan, Logan is worse than Dotel, and Choo is hitting .284 while Andy Marte is ... not. (Seventy-four points worth of "not," in fact.) He

committed his 5th error on a bad throw on Konerko's infield single, though.

I will no longer pretend to know either what Andy Marte is capable of, what he is likely to do in 2009 and beyond, or what the Indians plan on doing with him. He has ... aw, hell, I have no idea what he

has. I've seen good things and bad things and refuse to get worked up one way or t'other. Whoomp, there he is.

9) A word about the weekend series with Seattle

Shitty.