The Indians ended their six game losing streak last night thanks to a Hafner walk off, and as a result, The B-List has a slightly more pleasant tone to it today. In today's column, Buff is clearly happy about the return of Rafael Betancourt, examines Jhonny Peralta, and continues his thesis on "Good Paul" versus "Bad Paul".

It's hard to describe the emotional investment this team has sucked me into. Unfortunately, with raised expectations, the losses cause a lot more anxious depression than the wins yield elation. But when the Indians lose, it's all I can do to just open the sports section in the morning: I dread looking at it. I hate visiting my favorite websites. I get a periodic gnaw in my stomach. When we win, I can't read enough articles. It's hard to describe.

To non-Indians fans, that is.

1) Smallball, my ass

Four of the Tribe's six runs came via the longball: solo shots by Blake and Sizemore, and the two-run game-winner from Hafner. We had zero 2-out RBI, despite leaving nine on base, including four in scoring position.

I couldn't possibly care less.

It seems like a really long time ago since we won a game after being down in the ninth. Oh, yeah, that's because we've squandered a *season's* worth of opportunities in the last
week
! How silly of me! (If it seems like a really long time since Hafner had a walk-off homer, that's because it's been roughly ... forever. This was his first.) To finally break through really, really feels good. It's only the Royals, you say? How many times does a team have to kick your ass before it feels good to beat them? I'd say five in a row is plenty, wouldn't you?

2) The crafty old veteran

Jhonny Peralta walked 8 times in April. This isn't an extraordinary number of walks, but it's pretty nice: it boosted his OBP 52 points over his AVG, which isn't insignificant.

Now that he's in the same month as his 24th birthday, however, Jhonny Peralta has walked 22 times. In MAY. That's good for an OBP-AVG of .132 in May, or .083 overall. You can't extrapolate two weeks of baseball (you get some 100-HR guys that way), but 22 walks in a half-month projects to about 264 over a season. I will go on record as saying that Jhonny Peralta will not finish with even 200 walks (look up how many have), but I'll say this: a guy who gets on base at a .500 clip (over the last 8 games or so) or even .455 (in May) in front of Hafner, Martinez, and Broussard/Perez/Blake is a pretty valuable commodity. Not only are you on base (duh), but you're also not out. This may seem like another "duh," but it's really the crucial aspect of OBP: it gives your team another shot at a guy.

Oh, by the way, he scored on Hafner's bomb.

3) The less crafty but somewhat older veteran

Good Paul (71% strikes) made an appearance Tuesday ... sort of. He gave up seven hits and zero walks in 6 innings: yeoman's work. He even struck out 5 guys, which is nice for a non-strikeout guy like Byrd. And heck, two of the hits were infield singles, hardly shots off the wall.

The problem is, Byrd managed to string four of the hits together in the first inning: sandwiched around an RBI groundout, they turned into a quick 3-0 deficit. To Byrd's credit, he looked really sharp the rest of the way, except for two pitches to Matt Stairs.

Riddle me this, Batman: after the first inning, you give up exactly one rocket to the designated "professional hitter" in the lineup. Since he's followed by Emil Brown, Tony Graffanino, Angel Berroa, and The Real John Buck And Not His Evil Twin We Saw In Kansas City, would it be too much to ask that Matt Stairs get something other than the Charles Nagy Gravy Dripping Gopher Ball Express? Just asking.

(For those wondering, Wedge gets a total pass sending a pre-90-pitch Byrd out for the sixth after cruising since the second. He looked good.)

4) Not exactly what I had in mind

Cleveland turned two double plays in the game, although instead of the expected permutation of Peralta, Belliard, and Broussard, instead I get:

Michaels-Martinez
Broussard

Which looks pretty weird in print. However ...

5) Nice hose!

... it looks good in person, as one of the double plays featured Jason Michaels pegging out Tony "Not Going To Be Confused With Balco Clients" Graffanino on a fly to shallowish left field. I'm not sure if the book on Michaels is that he has the kind of noodle normally associated with luminaries such as Kenny Lofton, Bernie Williams, and Jonathan Lipnicki, but that was not a ball I would have recommended tagging up on. Still, you have to make them regret that decision, and the combination of Michaels' mediocre throw with Victor's nice tag was enough to earn Honorable Mention on ESPN's Web Gems, the current Pewter Standard for defensive prowess.

Ben Broussard's reflexes help illustrate that while I played third base in Little League one year, were I to do so in the major leagues, I'd be dead.

6) Why, yes, a night off *is* available!

Victor Martinez is now batting .056 in his last seven games and took a collar, leaving five guys on and three in scoring position as the inning(s) ended. I am not calling for the Kelly Shoppach Era to begin (I am not sure I will EVER call for the Kelly Shoppach Era), but I would like to see the beginning of the Two-Game Stretch In Which Kelly Shoppach Catches. Is he a major leaguer? Yes? Then can he actually catch a few? Martinez has played catcher in 36 games. The Indians have played 39. Obviously, our manager can't be expected to understand the rigors of catching ... um ... er ... well, he doesn't understand the rigors of catching every night in the big leagues, I guess. Come to think of it, Wedge was a bit more Shoppachy in his stint ...

Night off. Verily, yes. Make it so.

7) Welcome back!

Rafael Betancourt: 1 IP, 6 strikes, 2 balls. An eight-pitch perfect inning. I love this guy.

8) He inspires us all!

Gil Mota: twice as many strikes as balls, no walks, 1 K and 1 H in an inning. Jason Davis: nothing resembling control, but overcame a walk to throw a hitless and scoreless ninth.

I'm telling you, with Betancourt back and Cabrera no longer The Gift That Keeps On Giving, we have a handful of guys I'd throw out there for an inning or two at a time for the first time this season. Sauerbeck is still a wanker and one of Carmona and Davis is likely to give me heartburn in any given performance, but I feel virtually sanguine about the bullpen at this point.

By the way, Inertia Man's use of Davis in the ninth was an interesting choice: not Wickman to give him some work (you can't get a save in a game you enter the ninth behind, he wasn't being saved for that), not Davis first then Raffy and Gil, but Davis. My stomach gurgles at the thought of Davis at the back end of the pen (Carmona has better stuff, while Raffy and Cabrera have better perfformance records (and stuff)), but maybe Wedge was throwing him out there to play for one run and go extras. (Thank you, Grady, for sending Archaeopteryx Bergman's pitch over the wall so we didn't have to play for one run, which is excruciating and not particularly effective.) Maybe Davis really is seen as a back-end reliever. Maybe I'm reading too much into this. Bears watching, though.

9) Thank God for small favors

We didn't bunt.