In his Monday edition of The B-List, Buff looks back at the weekend set with the Tigers. The Tribe dropped the games Friday and Saturday night, and came back with a 9-0 shutout win on Sunday. Buff takes yet another look at the Indians baserunning follies, and wonders aloud if this teams average record is simply a biproduct of them being ... well, an average team.

It is time to consider the likelihood that this team's mediocre record is the result of its mediocrity.

1) Stranger things have happened

Paul Byrd lost, and it's hard to understand why the earned run rule allows a home run to be unearned under any circumstances (it's a home run: that is your fault), but the fact is Good Paul (78% strikes) went seven innings, gave up six hits with no walks, and struck out six without giving up an earned run. Certainly it would be hard to argue he didn't live up to expectations there. Jason Johnson won, throwing a similar game without the strikeouts, defense, or lack of run support. Any time you give up at most a hit an innings and don't walk anybody, that bodes well, as Johnson's six shutout innings attest. It still bothers me that he can strike out virtually no one and be effective, but it was said that he threw sinkers that actually stayed low, a bit of a novel concept for Johnson, who has given up roughly twenty-six thousand runs in his last four starts.

Here's the point: to be effective, Paul Byrd must throw strikes. He did, and he was. To be effective, Jason Johnson must keep the ball down in the zone and hit corners: he did, and he was. Sometimes the game is simple.

2) Sometimes the game is simple, but bad

To be effective, Jake Westbrook must throw a bloody strike. He did not, and he was not.

Look, Jake wasn't bad until the sixth. He wasn't exactly mowin' 'em down or anything, but he'd given up three runs in five innings and we got two back off Nate Robertson (whose ERA is 3.02 ... Nate Robertson! What the hell happened? Did Bill and Ted get Rufus to loan him their phone booth so he could go back in time and learn how to pitch? This is the same guy who posted nearly-identical lines in 2004 and 2005, neither of which resembled a 3.02 pitcher, right? I say the next time he's interviewed, someone asks him to play Van Halen, and if he can, that's proof enough for me.). This is a close game at this point, and a little more patience probably waits Robertson out (54:37 strike-to-ball ratio, only 2 Ks). And then Westbrook becomes positively profligate with the walks (two walks to load the bases, one more to load them AGAIN after a sac fly) and watches Jason Davis essentially gift-wrap Nate's fifth win.

See, the ironic thing is, with the bases loaded and one out and a weak-hitting Ramon Santiago at the plate, you really want your best ground-ball pitcher on the mound to induce the inning-ending double play. Westbrook's GB:FB ratio this game: 11:3. Westbrook's strike-to-ball ratio to Santiago: 0:4. Zero!

3) Hi, I'm Cleveland, and I'm a bad baserunner

Hi, Cleveland! It's good to see you here tonight. You know, the first step toward solving your problem is admitting you have a problem.

For those of you unfamiliar with 12-step programs, step one is to fire everyone. Every one of them. Everyone.

Grady Sizemore hit an impressive double off a left-hander (raising up to an OPS of .659, which raises him from "putrid" to "wretched" ... still, did you realize he has over a 1.000 OPS against right-handed pitching? Wow.), then got chucked out at third base. The first out at third base!

Casey Blake was picked off first: this may not have hurt so much had it not come against Justin Verlander, who was giving up nothing else, or if he'd had a goddam hit all weekend (he did not). Or if it hadn't be the third out of the first inning (it was).

Aaron Boone was caught stealing by Ivan Rodriguez. This is not exactly embarrassing, but it was with a five-run lead and he scored the other two times he got a hit. (Three hits by Boone! He's hitting .278, with 5 hits in his last two

games! Blind Squirrel Theory, or Look Out For Frog Rain?)

We grounded into three double plays, which is not really a baserunning error, but is pretty annoying nonetheless. We did have Belliard doubled off by Verlander on a line shot, but it didn't approach the other gaffes.

You know, I suppose the baserunning wasn't egregious this weekend, but I sure seem to mention it a lot, so forgive me if it sticks out when we do something wrong. Since it's every night and all.

4) The spleen of the order

The heart of the order is ostensibly 3-4-5: these are the guys that make hay. Your first two guys get on base, and these guys are your best hitters, driving them home.

So a little below the heart, we have the spleen of the order: while the 8 & 9 hitters (Boone and Tim Laker, fer crine out loud) went 5-for 9 and everyone in the top four got on base at least twice Sunday, the spleen took a massive 0-for-13 collar.

On Saturday, the spleen was only 5 & 6 (with a side order of 8: Belliard at 7 got three of our nine hits). On Friday, it was a split-spleen of 4/5 and 7/8, going a magical 0-for-13 amongst four players this time.

It's hard to sustain much of a rally that way.

5) The richest Trifecta ever!

If you picked "Jason Johnson scoreless outing," you probably made a fair chunk of change.
If you picked "Tim Laker two-run double," you probably made a killing.

But if you paired those up with "Jason Michaels grand slam," you are probably reading this column from your own private Caribbean island. The only thing less likely than Michaels hitting a bomb would be him hitting one with the bases loaded. The man has RAISED his slugging to .368, for Pete's sake.

6) The danger of a heart attack from Not Surprise

I was going to be impressed that Travis Hafner hit his 14th home run off a left-hander, until I looked it up.

Hafner against righties: .308/.443/.615/1.059
Hafner against lefties: .308/.426/.603/1.029

(These stats are before yesterday's game, where he went 2-for-3 with 2 walks and helps explain how he can hit .308 against lefties, .308 against righties, and .314 overall. I was wondering what third-handed pitcher he'd has such good numbers against before I worked it out.)

One could argue that this was called a "negligible platoon split." (Or Really Goddam Scary if you're a pitcher.)

7) Box Score Follies

Things you don't see every day:

The pitcher who gave up the two most damaging hits, both for extra bases, on which four runs scored, was charged with zero earned runs (Davis).
Gil Mota throwing 6 strikes in seven pitches.
Fausto Carmona striking out two hitters in one inning's work.
Merely Big Bob inducing three ... fly ball outs?

Things you do:

Scott Sauerbeck faced one hitter (he walked).
Rafael Betancourt threw strikes (3 in 3 pitches).
Lou Merloni and Todd Hollandsworth were fungi..

8) Credit Where Credit Is Due Dept.

Tim Laker had a pretty nice debut: all he did was go 2-for-4 with 2 ribs, a run scored, and picked Tuberculosis Guillen off first. Welcome back, Timmy.

Grady Sizemore has a nine-game hitting streak in which he is hitting ... just barely above his average (12-for-39, or .307, compared to .299). Weird.

Eduardo Perez hit another homer to raise his SLG to .716. Is that any good?

(Hint: yes.)