Our best starter was Carl Pavano. Our best reliever was Masa Kobayashi. Our best hitter was David Dellucci. If that doesn't sum up this weekend series, I'm not sure what would. In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff says this Indians team doesn't have one do exceptionally poorly. He says they seem to play with a fair amount of effort and passion. But they just suck the life out of him, and he resents it.

FINAL

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Indians (9-14)

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Tigers (11-11)

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W: Pavano (1-3) L: Galarraga (3-1) S: K. Wood (5)

FINAL

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Indians (9-15)

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Tigers (12-11)

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W: Zumaya (1-0) L: Betancourt (0-1) S: Rodney (5)

FINAL

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Indians (9-16) (5 GB)

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Tigers (13-11)

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X

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12

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W: Verlander (2-2) L: C. Lee (1-4) S: Rodney (6)

Our best starter was Carl Pavano. Our best reliever was Masa Kobayashi. Our best hitter was David Dellucci. Th
at might not seem like the best formula for a winning series, but appearances can be deceiving.

They aren't in this case, but I thought I'd point it out anyway.

0) Administrative note

I was sick yesterday and don't feel great today, so the insights are somewhat sparse. In

addition, though, this team is making me feel foolish for investing heavily in their success.

There's no one thing they do exceptionally poorly.

They seem to play with a fair amount of effort and passion.

They just suck the life out of me, and I resent it.

I want to love this team. I do not.

1) Who was that guy in the Carl Pavano suit?

I felt pretty good coming into the weekend: the first game would be a disaster, with Carl Pavano matched up with Indians-killer Andres Galarraga, but Aaron Laffey and Cliff Lee are probably our best two starting pitchers, the Detroit bullpen isn't any better than ours, and Zach Miner is a schmoe. So, of course, Miner made us look ridiculous for a long time, the Detroit bullpen was quite good, and both Lee and Laffey got hit. The only saving grace from the pitching side of the equation (besides the fact that Lee actually pitched pretty well, just not as well as Justin Verlander) was that Carl Pavano was ... superb.

Yes. Carl Pavano. Superb. It's the truth.

Well, okay, maybe not with a Capital T Truth or anything. Pavano wasn't exactly dominant. He only struck out three hitters in 7 1/3 innings.

He got tagged for a pair of doubles in the 8th, and each hitter scored (one because the bullpen let him in).

He recorded 8 of his outs in the air, and several of those were line drives that happened to be hit at fielders.

But look: Pavano's first baserunner wasn't until the third inning when Victor Martinez botched a ground ball.

He didn't give up his first hit until the 4

th

.

He followed this with a 5th in which he induced a routine groundout and struck out the next two hitters swinging.

In the 6th he got three Detroit hitters to pound the ball into the ground for routine outs.

And he made a solid defensive play in the 7th to face the minimum by turning a 3-6-1 double play after a leadoff single.

Yes, he gave up the two doubles in the 8th: Pavano was absolutely *cruising* at that point with only 92 pitches through 7 innings, so with a 5-0 lead, there's no question that you send him out to face the bottom of the order.

He threw a wonderful 64 strikes in 97 pitches overall and didn't walk anyone.

More than anything, Pavano generally threw pitches in the strike zone with some late movement and stayed aggressive after being staked to a lead in the second inning.

This is the same basic approach that helped Cliff Lee enjoy so much success last season: not that Pavano was flashing Cy Young stuff or anything, but it marks his second Quality Start in five tries.

His overall numbers are still dreadful because it will take a long time to overcome a 1-inning 9-run start.

But look: his first two starts were marred by three basic problems:

a) "negative" GB:FB ratios (actually sub-unit, not negative, but you know what I mean)
b) taters (3 in 2 games, 7 IP)
c) walks (3 in those 7 IP)

In his past three starts (two good, one still bad), he's given up 1 homer, 2 walks, and sported "positive" GB:FB ratios. Yes, the loss to Minnesota was a bad start, but the KIND of

pitching he's been giving the Tribe over those three starts is generally positive.

I think that Pavano's days as a credible FRONT-of-the-rotation starter are behind him (he's 33 already, and even with a 6'5" 240 lb frame is simply not going to strike out a lot of guys, the KC start notwithstanding), but in terms of filling out a rotation, Pavano is doing a decent enough job.

A couple interesting early-season splits on Pavano thus far: he boasts an incredible negative platoon split, holding lefties to a paltry .214/.262/.339 line, but allowing righties to pound him for .431/.444/.725. You can't survive in this league as a starter letting righties hit .431 off you. May be Pavano should be shifted to the bullpen as a matchup LOOGY who isn't L.

And the apparent key for Pavano is Strike One: after going 0-1, hitters hit a preposterously-bad .184/.196/.286 against Pavano.

If they start 1-0?

.426/.481/.723.

I mean, that's just sick.

Now, Joe Posnanski recently wrote a piece about counts in which he notes that ANY pitcher does better after 0-1 than 1-0.

I mean, that just stands to reason.

I'm not trying to make this sound like something unique to Carl Pavano.

But ... dude ... four-twenty-six?

Are you serious?

That's just astonishingly bad.

Throw strike one!

(Note: even after getting to 1-1, hitters pound Pavano to the tune of .371/.405/.543. Throw strike one ... AND strike two!)

2) The problem of being ordinary

For six innings, Cliff Lee matched scoring numbers with Justin Verlander in a 1-1 tie ballgame. Of course, those were about the only numbers he was matching: while Verlander was striking out 10 through 5 innings and 11 overall, Lee posted a more pedestrian 4 Ks.

While Verlander stifled the Indians on only two hits (although 3 walks and a hit batsman), Lee coughed up a Nagyesque 12 hits (although with only 1 walk, and 9 of the hits were singles).

And while Verlander wafted through his 7th inning unscathed, Lee allowed his final two runs in the 7th to take the loss.

Really, there's not much to say here: on a day on which Lee didn't have his A-plus stuff, he battled with the Tigers and kept them off the board until the end. Instead of trying to be "too fine" in a game where the Indians' offense was so very absent, Lee stayed in the strike zone and didn't give the Tigers much to hit really well.

The exceptions ended up killing him: Brandon Inge powered one over the wall, and it was back-to-back doubles to lead off the 7th that ended up costing him the game.

The other 9 hits were singles, and Lee pitched very well with runners on base until the end.

Ultimately, Lee can (and has) pitch(ed) better. Even more ultimately, he shouldn't have to for the Indians to win.

3) Hey, doofus, strikes are good

Aaron Laffey has now walked 15 hitters in 18 2/3 innings, including a terrible 5 in 3 1/3 on Saturday. That's just putrescent.

Look, I am not asking Laffey to strike out a lot of guys. It would help, but it's not a crucial component to his success. I **am** asking Aaron Laffey to stop walking so many guys.

Humorously enough (in a Ricky Gervais sort of way), three of those walks came back-to-back-to-back in one inning ... in which the Tigers did not score.

So you can't really say that the walks killed Laffey, although he did walk in a run in his execrable 4th inning.

However, he walked in that run by going 3-0 to Ryan Raburn, who started the year in AAA. After wafting a strike over the plate, he walked Raburn on the next pitch.

And then he started Adam Everett 3-0!

Now, Adam Everett cannot hit. I watched lots and lots of Adam Everett in Houston, and here are the OPSs I saw: .524 (in 40 games), .700, .702, .654, .642, .599.

In the National League.

In the JUICE BOX.

Adam Everett cannot hit.

(His OPS with Minnesota last season: .601).

So if you're going 3-0 on Adam Everett, it is because you cannot find the plate with high-powered binoculars and a laser sight.

If you give up a GRAND SLAM to Adam Everett, it is because you threw the suckiest pitch that ever sucked suck. That sucked. Yeah, he jerked it down the line. It still sucked.

By the way: extra-base hits by Adam Everett against teams other than Cleveland: 3 (doubles). Extra-base hits by Adam Everett against Cleveland: 2 (1 2B, 1 HR).

Oh, by the way, after the grand slam, Laffey walked Curtis Granderson. Phbt!

4) Tales of the Unlikely

What, more unlikely than Carl Pavano?

Arguably, yes: Jhonny Peralta ended an 0-for-2009 streak with his first homer of the year to give Cleveland the 5-0 they would sort of not relinquish (they would have relinquished a 5-0 lead, but theyy scored a 6th run before they could do so). He also made a couple of excellent defensive plays at short to preserve Pavano's performance.

But the real offensive star Friday night was David Dellucci, who banged out 4 hits, including a pair of doubles, in 5 trips to the plate. Yes, THAT David Dellucci. Sure, he struck out 3 times and drew a walk in a hitless performance Sunday, but geez, Verlander struck EVERYONE out (except, oddly enough, Kelly Shoppach, who can strike out while eating a ham sandwich) and the whole team got three hits.

Dellucci was tremendous Friday, and huzzahs all around.

Masa Kobayashi pitched a perfect inning with 2 Ks.

Vinnie Chulk posted his third straight quality multi-inning bailout: he gave up a run and walked a couple guys, but really, he bailed Laffey out. His ERA is now 2.25 despite having a redonkulous 4:9 K:BB ratio.

5) Tales of the Too Bloody Likely

Raffy Perez: terrible

Jensen Lewis: execrable

Raffy Betancourt: excellent for one hitter Friday, yutzian on Sunday

Tony Sipp: not good enough, not long enough, and supremely inaccurate (3 strikes, 6 balls)

Toads. Toads, toads, toads, toads, toads.

6) So what?

Kerry Wood posted a dominant save in which two batted balls made it all the way to infielders (one of them him) and the other guy struck out. Yes, yes, fifth save. Very nice. Not enough yet.

7) Welcome to the bigs!

Matt LaPorta and Luis Valbuena were called up from AAA to get some playing time, and both started on Sunday. Welcome, guys, here's Justin Verlander!

(whiff)
(whiff)
(whiff)

Thanks for coming!

Now, it does bear mentioning that Valbuena drew a walk. Huzzah! But LaPorta ... dude ... it's okay to swing the friggin' bat, man!

His first plate appearance he saw five pitches and swung at NONE of them.

There's plate discipline, and there's being struck out looking on five pitches with a man on first and no outs.

Damn!

8) Squander Ball in Practice and Practice

In the 9th inning Saturday against closer Ferd Rodney, the Indians put runners on the corners with 1 out with a pair of singles (and a fly out). Mark DeRosa: swinging K. Jhonny Peralta: swinging K.

Thanks for playing!

But this pales in comparison to the 7th on Sunday, when a walk by Shin-Soo Choo and a double by DeRosa led to an intentional walk of David Dellucci. Yes, an intentional walk of a man who had to that point whiffed twice.

I am not making this up.

Kelly Shoppach then flew out on the first pitch, but not deep enough to score a run.

Matt LaPorta then surprised everyone by striking out looking at a 2-2 pitch. Well, I mean, it surprised everyone who didn't watch him do it in the 3rd.

He did foul off three pitches.
Woo woo.

And Valbuena grounded out on an 0-2 pitch.

Ladies and gentlemen, don't forget to tip your waiter!