For those who wrote and asked if the illness that kept Buff out last week was related to the Indians play, we can assure you that it was. After spending a week on the DL with an acute case of Inflamation of the Suck, the good soldier Buff marches on this afternoon with the Monday edition of the B-List. There were 27 innings this weekend. The Indians scored in two of them. My advice to you all is to start drinking heavily.

FINAL

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Tigers (15-13)

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Indians (11-19)

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W: Verlander (3-2) L: C. Lee (1-5)

FINAL

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Tigers (16-13)

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Indians (11-20)

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W: E. Jackson (2-2) L: Carmona (1-4)

FINAL

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Tigers (17-13)

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Indians (11-21) (7 GB)

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W: Porcello (3-3) L: A. Reyes (1-1)

That wasn't even full of sound and fury. It was a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing, all right, but it was more filled with garbage and ennui. Maybe marzipan and tofu.

"Highlights" magazine and hydrogen sulfide gas.

Guano and wax lips.

Who cares?

0) A note about last week's games

First off, let's note that Carl Pavano has now put up two very good starts in a row and three in his last four games. Nice work, Carl. And Aaron Laffey, instead of moping and brooding about being lifted from the rotation to try to shore up the bullpen, threw three scoreless innings in relief

of Pavano: this not only helped win the game, but prevented the rest of the bullpen from practicing its unique brand of hilarity at their own expense.

And so here, permit me a digression about humor. There are three "Classic" humorous things whose appeal has somehow escaped me more or less entirely.

I get a lot of sympathetic clucking in my direction when I mention these, but ever since I was a child, I have never seen real humor in any of them:

a) The Three Stooges
b) Tom & Jerry
c) I Love Lucy

(Most of my friends liked "The Honeymooners" more than I did, as well, but I do see more of the appeal there and watched "The Flintstones" with some regularity, so I can't get all self-righteous on that one. It will fit in the discussion, though.)

Now, part of this was that my father hated "The Three Stooges." It was one of the few shows I was not permitted to watch when I was little: I could watch "controversial" shows like "Barney Miller" and "Maude" and very very very stupid cartoons like "Speed Racer" and "Quick Draw McGraw," but not "The Three Stooges."

Later, I was deemed old enough to make the decision for myself, and watched the show.

I disliked the show. And the underlying reason is that Moe Howard was *mean*.

See, I have to make a distinction here: I loved Warner Brothers cartoons like Forghorn Leghorn, whose entire raison d'etre was to abuse the poor dog, and get abused back. There are few images that make me laugh harder than Foghorn popping up over a retaining wall, slamming a concertina down on top of the dog's head, and blaring out a few accordianeque notes, leaving the dog profoundly disoriented.

That's damned funny.

Eee-aww-eee-aww.

I smile just thinking about it.

If I ever invest in buying a cel from a cartoon, I'm getting Foghorn Leghorn playing the concertina on the dog's head.

But there was a sort of lightness to those cartoons, best explained by the legendary Chuck Jones, in which he explained his philosophy of a Bugs Bunny cartoon: in his cartoons, Bugs would generally be minding his own business, and then an antagonist would strike out at him (Giavanni Jones objected to him playing the banjo, the bull would strike him in the read end, etc.) and this would set Bugs into "Of course, you know, this means war" mode. Not all directors had this philosophy, but the cartoons were, well, cartoony, and it never seemed that anyone truly wanted to cause massive permanent harm to anyone else.

Moe Howard, however, struck his brothers in the face with a clawhammer. It was mean, it was brutal, and it was not funny.

It made me cringe.

Sure, there's some humor to be milked from the classic pratfalling: the clowns at the circus still get mileage from the old "carrying the long ladder/plank, turning rapidly, and knocking the hapless foil over" schtick.

But the Stooges were just flat-out cruel to each other.

It's not funny.

The fact that they're going to remake this into a movie with a dubious cast is something I will avoid at all costs.

I have taken my daughter to see the Zac Efron Movie and the Hannah Montana Movie, so this tells you something about my commitment to this principle.

Tom & Jerry was somewhat the same principle: both characters were unrepentant sadists. It was not sufficient to either eat the mouse nor prevent oneself from being eaten: there was a real perceived intent to
torture
the other character.

It made for uncomfortable television.

(Lucy simply wasn't funny. Why was this show popular? Was this from the days before humor was invented? Man, that's an unfunny show.)

And it is in this spirit that I consider the 10-6 loss to Toronto, in which Every Pitcher Known To Man came in to protect a 6-3 lead and left with the rimshot back-to-back homers off Tony Sipp that expressed themselves like nailgun blasts to the forehead, or the intensely unfunny 12-run outburst by the Boston Red Sox on Thursday, in which Jeremy Sowers and Masa Kobayashi were left out there to give hit after hit after hit after nailgun after clawhammer after meat cleaver after acid bath, providing the kind of humor that can now only be found in a a Tom Green movie or Zimbabwean Presidential campaign. There is no way to spin Simple Cruelty into Artful Humor. I will not watch this show.

1) Our very own Gaylord Perry

When I was young, Cleveland's best pitcher was indisputably Gaylord Perry. Perry would pitch more or less a complete game every time out, and would either browbeat his punchless offense into scoring a run or two or not, willing his team into a low-scoring win or low-scoring loss.

In three seasons from 1972 to 1974, Perry posted ERAs of 1.92, 3.38, and 2.51, going 24-16, 19-19, and 21-13 for his troubles.

(He put up numbers unfathomable in today's game: 342 2/3 IP, 344 IP, 322 1/3 IP, with 234, 238, and 216 strikeouts.)

The game was a lot different in those days, but the formula was pretty well-established: Perry would pitch lots and lots, and he would be very good, and his team, which stunk, would lose almost as often as it won.

Because it stunk.

Cliff Lee's 8-inning outing on Friday night wasn't his best game of the season, which says quite a bit: his 8 shutout innings against Boston were better, although, of course, we lost that game, too (Lee's only No Decision of the season). In that game he gave up only 5 hits, struck out 5, and walked no one, while Detroit managed 7 hits and two walks.

He also gave up a run, but it was only the charitability of the scorekeeper that made the run earned.

With a runner on third and two outs in the 8th inning, Lee induced a slow grounder to second baseman Luis Valbuena, who septuple-clutched the ball from his glove and could not throw out the runner, allowing the runner on third to score the game's only run.

Let's not lost sight of the fact that the Indians were being completely throttled by Justin Verlander at the time: at no point in the first 8 innings did the Indians look like they would score a single run (or, in fact, like a professional baseball team). Verlander was dominant in a way that Lee was not, but this only adds to Lee's performance, in my opinion: on a night in which it was perfectly obvious that Lee was going to need to throw a shutout just to keep Cleveland in the damn game, that's exactly what he did.

He was far from perfect: although only one hit was for extra bases, he did give up 7 hits in 8 innings.

He needed a pair of double plays, including a K-CS combo with Kelly Shoppach.

The Tigers stranded 3 runners in scoring position.

(Cleveland stranded two runners on a basepaths TOTAL.)

But on a night when Lee had to spin a series of zeroes, he came within a quintuple-clutch (really, had Valbuena merely *double*-clutched, he would have made the play) of doing exactly that.

2) A game of inches, Part I

One series of inches were those wrought by Valbuena, but a second set on Friday came courtesy of Curtis Granderson, who timed his leap at the wall perfectly and grabbed Grady Sizemore's blast a significant number of inches over the wall. Had he missed that ball,

Sizemore's "fly out to center" would have been the walkoff two-run homer that would have given Lee ... well, a no-decision, actually.

But it would have won the game.

3) The overuse of the "Mind That Bird Strategy"

The Kaintucky Derby produced a thrilling finish when unheralded Mind That Bird came from the very back of the pack to simply run past everyone. It was fairly astonishing: it was like a suspension of disbelief movie ending, or as if there were a rocket pack on the horse.

I just haven't seen one horse run That Much Faster then EVERY OTHER HORSE for a stretch since Secretariat, except Secretariat did it from the beginning of the race and MTB waited until the very end.

Through 8 innings on Friday, the Cleveland offense produced Bupkus on a Stick, but Sizemore's blast made it a very exciting (if ultimately disappointing) finish.

Through 8 innings on Saturday, the Cleveland offense produced Garbage in a Pail, except for a couple of doubles and some very bad baserunning. In the 9th, though, Victor Martinez led off with a single and Mark DeRosa drew a one-out walk, meaning the Indians would send the tying run to the plate in the inning. Of course, they got a swinging K from David Dellucci and a routine groundout from Ryan Garko, but there was entertainment-like substance available.

A run-scoring single in the 2nd prevented True Nothingness, although it was the first run scored since Thursday. This was dampened by the fact that Anthony Reyes had already given up 4 runs in the top of the frame.

However, with the game mostly over, the Indians again mounted a furious ninth inning, producing two runs and putting the tying run on base for Shin-Soo Choo.

He failed, of course, but this hardly distinguishes Choo from Any Other Indian.

But here's the point: DO SOMETHING BEFORE THE F*#&ING NINTH INNING, YOU USELESS SACKS OF OFFAL! AAAH! AAAH! AAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

4) Anthony Reyes: Mook or Schmoe?

I'm leanin' schmoe.

5) Too flippant?

No, seriously, is there anything that Anthony Reyes actually does WELL? Really. I'm all ears. Let me know.

I'm somehow managed to miss it.

Admittedly, this is hugely colored by the fact that I've been touting Reyes as a good pickup and a guy who could really make a positive contribution: I'm tremendously disappointed in my ability to correctly identify pitching talent.

I feel burned.

But does he have ONE "plus pitch?"

Anything?

What am I missing here?

6) Baby steps

Fausto Carmona's lasst three starts have been very encouraging, really: he's gotten into the 7th inning each time, and twice gave up fewer hits than innings pitched.

He hasn't given up a tater in any of those starts, and has lowered his ERA from 7.36 to 5.57, posting a 3.60 ERA over that time (8 runs in 20 innings).

His groundball stuff returned on Saturday, generating 11 groundouts to 4 flies and 12:6 overall.

His big problem was with the base on balls, walking nearly a guy an inning.

In fact, that was the entire "rally" the Tigers put up in the 7th: he walked each of the first two hitters, gave up a sacrifice bunt, and allowed a run to score on a groundout.

Had he gotten the next ground ball to do something other than nutmeg him for a single through the box, he would have given up 1 run in the cheapest way imaginable.

Really, through 6 innings, Carmona was rarely threatened: he let a guy get to second in the first, but induced a trio of groundouts. His first walk was thrown out stealing, and he struck out Brandon Inge to end the second. He alternated walks with ground balls in the third, got a double play in the 4th, and struck out three of the next six guys in recording back-to-back 1-2-3 innings.

The 7th was awful, in that it not only featured a pair of 5-pitch walks, but the second was Jeff Larish, who came into the game with a sub-.200 OBP. Not AVG, but OBP. Walking Jeff Larish there is tantamount to lining up the spot in the direct center of your foot before pulling the trigger. That's a very, very bad plate appearance for Carmona.

Still, right after Lee matched zeroes with Verlander and the offense clearly baffled by everything from Edwin Jackson's fastball to putting on their uniform pants one leg at a time, Carmona did an admirable job and appears to have turned the corner, if not in Lee-like fashion, then at least in capable form. On the other hand, it doesn't seem unwarranted to ask the pitcher who has WALKED THE MOST BATTERS IN THE ENTIRE AMERICAN LEAGUE to THROW MORE STRIKES. Verily, yes. Sound advice.

7) Open Question I

Why is David Dellucci on this team? Why is he playing every day?

After going 4-for-5 in his debut with a pair of doubles (huzzah!) and following this up with a 2-for-4 game, Dellucci is 2-for-21 with one walk and 8 Ks. His inability to lay down a bunt led to a lineout to third that caught Shin-Soo Choo checking his Jhonny Peralta Baserunning Tips Handbook to get doubled off second, taking a first and second with no outs into a first with two outs in the blink of Jhonny Peralta's Eye (two-thirds slower than most human's blink, but still faster than Raffy Betancourt pitches).

I am going to go out on a limb here and suggest that when presented with two datasets, 6-for-9 and 2-for-21, it is the former that is the statistical gork.

Enough already.

8) Open Question II

Why is Matt LaPorta on this team?

No, really, I mean ... why? If he can't hit right-handed pitching, doesn't that make him a pretty worthless schmoe? Or Ty Wigginton? If he can, shouldn't he play?

And if he can't, shouldn't he play until he can?

Whether that's in Cleveland or Columbus doesn't even make that much difference to me.

I mean, look, you have three cases:

a) LaPorta plays in Cleveland, develops against major-league pitching
b) LaPorta plays in Columbus, develops against minor-league pitching
c) LaPorta doesn't play, develops no relevant baseball skills

Isn't case (c) the only one that has no possible payoff?

9) Open Question III

If you still want Dellucci in the lineup, ostensibly because you have some severe mental block or have some cerebral spongiform malady, isn't Matt LaPorta at least as valuable as Ben Francisco RIGHT NOW, with the potential to be better? Whereas Ben Francisco is very unlikely to be any less Ben Francisco than he already is?

10) Minor Huzzahing

Kelly Shoppach threw out a pair of would-be basestealers, and came Really Bloody Close to gunning down Curtis Granderson a second time as well.

Asdrubal Cabrera and Victor Martinez had hits against Justin Verlander. They are the Cleveland Indians with batting averages over .300.

Martinez has drawn 20 walks this season; Cabrera, 14.

They look very good in the 2-3 slots in the lineup, especially as switch-hitters.

Jhonny Peralta went 3-for-4. He led the team in hits for the three-game series, despite playing in only one game.

Jen Lewis, Matt Herges, and Tony Sipp pitched four scoreless innings of relief on Sunday.

The Indians have not been asked to leave major-league baseball, although I'm sure a petition is circulating as I write this.