In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff examines the weekend set with the hated White Sox that saw the Tribe drop two of three to the defending champs. Buff also pays some special attention to the streaky nature of Victor Martinez's season thus far, and the Indians woes at shortstop.

The Indians blew two prime opportunities this weekend: with a decent showing by the bullpen, they'd have swept Chicago and been within 4 games of the White Sox; with just a little more shittiness, they could have blown three straight games in increasingly painful ways and would have forfeited the right to play any more home games this season as fan sentiment would have run somewhere between "beheading" and "flaying." After all, few remember the (for example) 1978 Cleveland Indians, but everyone remembers the 1899 Cleveland Spiders.

1) My Favorite Player appears to have extracted his cranium!

Was Cliff Lee's performance Friday night masterful? Hardly. It was pretty good, though, giving him back-to-back solid outings after a downward spiral whose nadir came against these same White Sox on May 29th. Lee was around the plat (5 Ks, 1 BB) and posted a sub-1 WHIP (6 H, 7 2/3 IP). He only made two mistakes, really: he gave up a big fly to Jermaine Dye (at least the bases were empty), and he walked Jim Thome with two outs in the eighth. Ordinarily, walking Thome with two outs would not be much of a mistake (yes, the pitch was close, but it's Jim Thome, known for his 100-walk seasons, at home), but this weekend, letting the bullpen play a role in the decision was a Big Mistake *a priori*.

Lee returned to his troubling extreme flyball ways, with a

GB:FB ratio of 5:13 ... blech.

2) The importance of efficient efficiency

After all, efficiency is more valuable when it is, in fact, actually efficient. C.C. Sabathia threw a very nice outing (4 H, 7 K, 1 R), but a dreadfully roundabout one (6 IP, 110 pitches, 3 BB, 58% strikes). Yes, it's impressive he worked out of a bases-loaded no-out jam by inducing a run-scoring double play and no further damage. Yes, 1 run in 6 innings is quite valuable. The problem: that leaves (at least) 3 innings for the bullpen, which is approximately 2.99 too many. It's a trmendous improvement over his loss to the Angels, but an Ace has to not only shut the opposing offense down, but he has to take them deep into the game. 6 innings is not "deep;" 6 innings I'll take from Jason Johnson. Sabathia's last three outings have been 6, 5, and 6 innings: the culprit against the Angels was pure badness, but Chicago has made him work up to the 110-pitch mark in just six innings. Since two of the walks went to Chris Widger, Chicago's answer to Tim Laker,

this is more on Sabathia than it is on any brilliant plate discipline by the ChiSox.

3) Look out below!

Although it seems largely inconceivable to give up a home run to Alex Cintron (and, as it was his 2nd on the season, it certainly would appear to be difficult as well), most of Jake Westbrook's pitches ended up damaging a variety of moles, worms, and other subterranean creatures. (The pitch to Cintron was almost comically bad: it reminds me of the story about Sam McDowell throwing inside changeups in Terry Pluto's "Curse of Rocky Colavito.") A GB:FB ratio of 16:4 helps yield the kind of numbers Westbrook is capable of: 6 H and 1 BB in 8 IP, 2 R (only 4 K, that's not his game). It wasn't his best outing (heck, it wasn't his best outing

against the White Sox in the last two weeks), but it's near the top end of what you can ask of Jake. This was to be expected, as it was the upswing of the yo-yo ride that has been Jake's last 10 starts: 8, 2, 4, 2, 7, 0, 7, 0, 4, 2 earned runs. Bet the "over" in his next start.

4) Grasping at straws

How to explain Victor Martinez' performance at the plate thus far? After hitting .398 (1.134 OPS) in April, Martinez struggled to a .165 May (.452 (!) OPS). In June, thus far, he is hitting .400 (1.250+ OPS), including smoking 3 home runs in the last two games, two right-handed. I think the obvious

culprits are the paucity of letters in the month "May" (which bodes well for the rest of the season), or perhaps the proportion of vowels in its name (which bodes ill for August), or maybe the stressful buildup to the World Cup, finally releasing with the start this weekend.

Maybe not. I'm still glad May is over.

5) I see your liquid nitrogen and raise you a liquid helium!

It would be hard to argue that Jhonny Peralta has been playing well. He followed a

putrid April with a decent Map, hitting .270/.387/.390. This isn't much in the SLG department, but it's okay for a shortstop.

However, there are few players that can put up a .221 OPS in June and have it be considered anything but "execrable." Hitting .086 with a slugging percentage to match, Peralta was given the night off in favor of Ramon

Vazquez, which gives you a rough idea of how bad "execrable" is. Vazquez, not willing to sit idly by while Peralta attempts to usurp his dual thrones as Most Painful Player to Watch and Most Pitiable Middle Infielder, went 0-for-5 with a strikeout, ending one inning with a man in scoring position, and

committing three (three!) errors in the field. The fact that these were Vazquez' first three errors of the season does nothing to assuage my fears that he is, in fact, an evil double agent placed on the Cleveland roster by a Chicago-Detroit braintrust. Or, that he really, really sucks. Occam has a vote.

6) Ducks on the pond!

Javier Vazquez struck out nine Indians, and a cursory glance would suggest that he was dominant. However, he gave up seven hits and a walk in under 6 IP, and was generally Not Sharp. With Cotts and McCarthy adding naphtha to Vazquez' kerosene, the Indians

were poised to score about 8 runs ... have they not left an inconceivable 14 men on base, including 6 in scoring position. You can talk about Betancourt's implosion in the eighth, but the fact is, 12 hits, 2 walks, and 3 hit batsmen simply have to translate into

more than 4 runs ... and Hafner had to come up clutch to make it as high as that lofty four. Without a two-out three-run homer, the Indians were in real danger of looking so inept that ... well, I don't know: was this really a different level of ineptitude than they've

achieved any number of times already this season? I'm guessing, "No."

7) I am mighty and large and wield an iron fist!

Or an iron glove, I suppose, but Travis Hafner is loudly having a very fine season,

clubbing a pair of home runs in the series (including the three-run shot that should have been Friday's game-winner) and going 6-for-12 with 2 walks. Moving Hafner to 3 and Martinez to 4 has proven to be an

excellent move, and only much too late instead of much, much too late. In contrast, Chicago's answer to iron-gloved mightiness, Jim Thome, went 1-for-12 with a walk.

8) The moon looks

more colorless Martinez' plate prowess may be bleeding into his defensive game, as he threw out another baserunner, catching Pablo Ozuna trying to steal second Saturday night. Woo

woo!

9) Roget speaks

bad *adjective:*

a. Below a standard of quality: *a really bad book*.

Syns

: bum, deficient, unsatisfactory,

below par, not up to scratch

...

f. Impaired because of decay: *a bad apple*

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Syns

: decayed,

decomposed, putrid, rotten, spoiled.

Near-syns

: moldy, rusty, rancid, worm-eaten, putrefied, turned, stale.

This is "Roget's II," 1988 Houghton Mifflin. I find this unsatisfying, and thus continue to describe the

Cleveland bullpen's performance:execrable, lousy, lame, gunky, awful, crummy, crappy, despicable, vile,

worthless, mewling, festering, egregious, pathetic, poor, lamentable, unspeakable, wretched, ugly,

pitiful, no good, terrible, horrible, horrific, putrescent, vomitous.

I'm sure I have missed some, even some that

aren't profane. Feel free to write suggestions: my guess is, I'll need them before the season is out. Before the month is out. Before

Wednesday.