Here it is Tribe fans. The patented meaningless second half surge to save Eric Wedge's job. But still, that was a fun one last night if you stayed up to watch the end. And just like that, we've won five in a row. In today's B-List, Buff talks about Carl Pavano officially slaughtering any trade value he had, hits on the Indians 20-hit attack and the torrid 11-19 hot streak from Jhonny Peralta, wonders how Jose Veras pitched two scoreless innings, and reminds us of his distaste for the bunt.

FINAL

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Indians (42-58)

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Angels (58-40)

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W: Veras (4-1) L: Feuntes (1-3) S: K. Wood (14)

More likely: Victor Martinez hits a three-run homer off the opponent's closer, or Jose Veras pitches two scoreless innings?

1) Anti-marketing

Not only did Carl Pavano skip the punchless Mariners AGAIN (although this time made more

sense, since he is on normal rest), he got to pitch against a much better offensive team in a better offensive ballpark under better offensive conditions. Also, he was forced to remain Carl Pavano.

Here's the problem with skipping Pavano for the first Mariners series: you end up with Pavano missing BOTH Mariners series', including one in Safeco. The Mariners scored a grand total of 7 runs in four games in Cleveland, and 6 runs in 3 games in Seattle.

Now, look me in the eye: do you honestly believe that the Most Important Factor in those numbers was the CLEVELAND PITCHING?

Let's take a look: which team has the Very Worst Team ERA In All Of Major-League Baseball?

That would be Cleveland.

We just waxed the Mariners over the course of two entire series' in which we pitched like great guns afire, and we are STILL the WORST.

By a significant amount, I should add.

At 5.21, this is not just 0.84 runs greater than the average A.L. team ... not just AN ENTIRE RUN worse than the AVERAGE N.L. team ... it is more than two-tenths of a run PER GAME worse than the WASHINGTON NATIONALS.

Six teams have a team ERA under four.

ONE has a team ERA over FIVE.

That would be us.

And Seattle couldn't hit us.

Because Seattle is lame-assed on offense.

Anyway, to harp on Pavano's bland badness hardly seems worth the effort, although it is special when you can give up back-to-back-to-back home runs to an opponent, I suppose. And since I

got to see those highlights quite a few times, I will give you my non-scout non-scouting on the pitches: they weren't very good.

Okay, well, I suppose that's kind of an empirical question, but more to the point, I wondered from the text description if Pavano was leaving the ball up in the zone, and actually, he wasn't. The radar gun was reading 93 on the pitch I could read the stadium gun on: that's pretty decent.

If you throw a pitch at 93 with downward movement, that ought to be a plenty valuable pitch.

But from my non-scouty perception of the non-scout without actual scouting skills, Pavano's pitches looked like they were "rolling" in the lay parlance. The ball moved down, yes, but not in a sharp or unpredictable fashion.

They just sort of ... rolled over.

This looks like a pretty hittable pitch, and yes, I know, plenty of hindsight going on there, thanks: "The three consecutive guys hitting the ball 400 feet might have been the tipoff there, Steve.

Yeah, very insightful."

I understand this.

I'm just saying that, y'know, under other circumstances, I could have understood someone saying with a straight face that Carl Pavano was throwing pretty well last night.

Of course, it is fairly nonsensical to tell someone four homers later that they had pretty good stuff, but Pavano did strike out 4, walked no one, and threw 70 strikes in 102 pitches. He seemed to have the right IDEA about pitching, just not that last five feet worth of OOMPH.

Ten hits in 6 innings is pretty bad, too, though. I'll say this: each of the four homers was a solo shot, which helps a lot. The Angels only took 6 cuts with a runner in scoring position, so he wasn't completely helpless out there.

But damn, if he throws that game against Seattle, as long as he stays away from Branyan, he doesn't give up ANY homers and we can trade him for someone reasonably valuable.

Now, I would bet strongly on Carl Pavano finishing the season in a Tribe uniform, although I

could honestly see him getting claimed on waivers (his deal's pretty inexpensive) and Shapiro simply Randy Myersing him.

(I could also see this not happening, hence the strong bet.)

2) Everybody hits!

In a 20-hit attack, there better not be many people slacking, or the four guys with five hits each are going to be mighty pissed. Indeed, each Cleveland hitter had at least one hit, and only two of them had only one. One of the hitters with a single base knock was Victor Martinez, who only hit a 9th-inning three-run homer to essentially win the game.

Special mention goes to Shin-Soo Choo, who not only laced 4 hits in 4 AB, but drew a walk in his other plate appearance to reach base all five times. His only extra-base hit, a double, came off nominal left-hander Darren Oliver, who posted a nice 3.42 in his first full season ... which was interrupted by the players' strike in 1994.

Choo also stole a base off left-hander Joe Saunders, his 14th on the season.

3) The man of the match

How hot is Jhonny Peralta? Consider that after going 1-for-3 with a walk against Toronto, he raised his average from .252 to .253. I mean, it's only 3 AB in a 100-game season, of course it isn't going to have much effect.

Well, four games later, Jhonny Peralta is hitting .271.

Do you know how hot you have to get to raise your average 18 points in LATE JULY? Here's how hot:

Fri: 3-for-5
Sat: 2-for-5
Sun: 2-for-4
Mon: 4-for-5

That's a brisk little 11-for-19 string, including a double, 2 homers, 10 RBI, and 6 runs scored.

Jhonny Peralta came to the plate five times yesterday: twice, with the bases empty, he got a hit and scored a run (once on a homer). Twice, with a man on base, he drove in a run with a hit. He drove in a run with a single, a run with a double, and a run with a homer, falling short of the RBI Cycle.

4) Blue Moon Special

Jose Veras pitched two hitless innings of relief, walking one batter and striking out two. The efficacy of the Win as a stat is evidenced by the fact that Jose Veras is 4-1, while Cliff Lee is 7-9.

5) An argument for bunting

Some of you have been with me long enough to understand my position on bunting. For the less-experienced readers, my position is generally thus:

Aaaaaah! Aaaaaah! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

Thank you. I'll be here all week. Try the veal.

I completely understand that bunting has a role in today's game, as it did in yesterday's game,

but I think most teams bunt more often than they should, and Eric Wedge in particular bunts more often than he should.

However, I will say this: bunting is preferable to grounding into FOUR double plays. The Indians got 20 hits and scored only 8 runs, but only left NINE men on base because FOUR DIFFERENT players got in on the act, and Ben Fungusco got caught stealing.

As a bit of macabre aesthetics, the Indians grounded into four different KINDS of double play: 4-6-3, 6-4-3, 5-4-3, and 6-3. Hard to do.

6) Lineup Effects

Each of the 6-through-9 hitters for the Tribe got a pair of hits. This is a lot more than you expect from the bottom of your order, especially seeing that one of the hitters is a lefty who is normally helpless against lefties, one is a rookie 25th-man playing out of position in left field, and one has a batting average under the Mendoza Line.

Our leadoff hitter got on base once, on a single. He grounded into a double play and saw a total of 13 pitches in 5 plate appearances.

Our cleanup hitter got one hit in 5 trips to the plate.

I mean, these things happen, but you ought to think that the two guys who should be able to produce something are the 1 & 4.

7) Inefficiency in Efficiency's Clothing

You could glance at the stats and note that the Tribe hit 6-for-14 with runners in scoring position, which is really quite good: that's over .400.

Except that two of the hits were singles that advanced the runner on second to third, and did not produce a run. And then were erased on the aforementioned double plays.

I mean, really. Twenty hits is a LOT of hits. It should produce a better result than requiring a three-run jack off the closer to win the game.

8) Fond Farewells

One of the things about writing this column in real-time is that it tries to convey sort of the current-time feeling of being a Tribe fan. That is, I find it interesting to look back at previous seasons to see times when I thought Cliff Lee was beyond hope or that Ferd Cabrera would be the Closer of the Future. These columns are meant in an archeological record sense as well as a recap of last night's game.

It is with some reasonable amount of pride that I was lobbying for increased playing time for Ryan Garko and Raffy Betancourt in 2006, when the column began: both players certainly had rough patches, and I don't want to make it sound like I have always been extremely nice (or, truthfully, particularly fair) to both players. I have tried to be true to the spirit of the fan in that Ryan Garko CAN be an enormously frustrating player (he is a streaky hitter, and his cold streaks are really Antarctic, if not Titanian) and Raffy Betancourt really IS part monitor lizard.

But with the departure of each player, I will say that these are the first players that I have written about for more than three years to shuffle off the virtual coil, and thus I feel some connection to them that I never did about the DeRosas and Byrds of the world. Even Sabathia was a full year ago, and was never someone I felt I had to lobby for anyway.

Garko and Betancourt, rather, are talented but flawed players whom I've felt were more like the typical major-leaguer, capable of great things (Betancourt 2007 remains one of the finest non-closer relief seasons in recent memory) and "WTF?!" things (Garko striking a runner with a throw while seated on his buttocks).

I always liked each player probably more than either's stats would support (except for Raffy's 2007).

There is even a femtosliver of an attochance that Ryan Garko has read the column.

In that (admittedly Planckian)
chance, I'd like to take the opportunity to wish both the best, and hope their teams have playoff success in the National League.