Caught in the throes of High School Graduation Weekend, Buff still had time to catch some baseball action, which is bad for him, but good for you, because this edition of the B-List is more fun to read than it was for Buff to watch. This is pretty much guaranteed even if you think reading the column is a waste of time, because it sure beats the intestinal beating the series gave Buff's constitution. He briefly addresses things like Carlos Carrasco falling apart, Tony Sipp's incredibly bad sense of timing, and an offense not even a mother could love.

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W: C. Wilson (6-3) L: Talbot (2-2) S: Feliz (13)

Boy, wasn't it lucky that the Tribe was playing the Rangers so all the games were locally televised here!

1) A quick voice of reason

On May 30, the Philadelphia Phillies started a three-game series with the Washington Nationals, and Roy Halladay was able to muscle through a subpar (for him) outing for a 5-4 win.

After that, the Phillies lost twice to Washington, then travalled to Pittsburgh, where they promptly dropped the first two games of their series with the Pirates.

Washington and Pittsburgh are considered lousy teams.

The Phillies scored a grand total of 7 runs over these four games, including one game that went 12 innings.

Because of two of the losses, Roy Oswalt now has a 3-3 record, and Cliff Lee sports a 4-5 mark.

The Phillies did not score more than three runs in any of the four games, although they were not shut out (they did have two games in which they scored a single run).

Now, the Phillies were supposed to benefit greatly from the return of arguably their best player, Chase Utley, a left-handed hitter whose all-out style of play both endears him to fans and drives

trainers crazy. They still have another player on the DL, though, and their offense has in recent days been downright bad. However, the Phillies are still considered a very good team, and they're still in first place in their division, albeit by less than they'd like.

They have 24 losses on the season.

Why is this interesting? Because the Texas Rangers are a lot better than the Nationals and the Pirates, and while the Phillies' rotation is indisputably stronger than the Indians', the Indians did not necessarily lose four games because their rotation failed. (One, perhaps.)

Chase Utley is, objectively, a better offensive player than Grady Sizemore (although Travis Hafner is, at least in 2011, better than Shance Victorino).

The Indians are in first place, albeit by fewer games than they'd like to be, and have lost 24 games on the season.

What you think about these four-game losing streaks is probably colored by your perception of the teams going INTO to the season. You thought Philadelphia would be a 100-win juggernaut, and this is a bit of a hard-to-explain hiccup, but hey, it's a long season, and they'll be fine.

You thought Cleveland would be a 90-loss schmuckernaut, and this is the long-awaited anvil drop return to expected form, and the euphoric gork is over, and now they're toast. Truthfully, there's probably a bit of accuracy to both outlooks: the cold, hard fact is that the Phillies have earned a lot more benefit of the doubt based on recent years than the Indians have.

Roy Halladay is better than Justin Masterson.

Jimmy Rollins is better than Orly Cabrera.

The N.L. East is better than the A.L. Central.

Jayson Stark is more famous than Brian McPeek.

These things happen.

But I think that if you look yourself in the proverbial eye and ask what this weekend MEANS, the only REAL, wholly ACCURATE thing we can say is that the Cleveland Indians (and, truthfully, ANY good team) are capable of playing a short stretch of really, really atrocious baseball.

So, with that bit of sober analysis out of the way, let's begin the hysterical ranting!

2) Faster than the trigger

Through four innings, Carlos Carrasco looked great. He retired the side in the first on six pitches, then got three groundouts in a perfect second.

Carrasco is at his best when flashing groundball stuff, and ended the game with a nice 12:6 GO:FO ratio.

Still, you could sense trouble brewing in the third inning, as Mitch Moreland drew a four-pitch walk, and although the only hit of the inning was an infield single, Carrasco escaped unharmed.

However, two of the outs were actually clobbered balls on a line, one to right, and a second to first base.

This is hardly the stuff of domination.

He appeared to right the ship with three more groundouts in the fourth. Still, it bears mentioning that through this point, Carrasco had generated a grand total of TWO swings and misses.

When Nelson Cruz doubled to start the 5th, it might have been time to wonder how much Carrasco had left in the Trick Bag Dept.

As it turned out, not so much: after a pair of groundouts, Carrasco went:

Single
Walk (lost him after a 1-2 count)
Single
Single
Fly out (end of 5th)
Ground out
Double (on 3-0 count, to Cruz again)
Single
Sac fly (0-2 went to 3-2 before sac fly)
Triple

Now, it's admittedly second-guessing to say that Carrasco should have been pulled in the fifth. His first four innings were very effective, and the bottom of the lineup hurt him.

But I'm not sure it isn't perfectly defensible to have been calling for someone else to come in to start the sixth, or face Nel Cruz, or slow down the hot-hitting Mitch Moreland.

I guess ultimately, Carrasco struck out zero batters on the strength of generating FOUR swings and misses, with TWENTY-SIX balls put into play in six innings, meaning … well, that's DEFINITELY not Carrasco flashing his "best stuff."

3) Good until he's not

Justin Masterson's outing on Friday was actually pretty good, until it wasn't, and he had plenty of help in that regard. I'm not that concerned.

I will say this: my Mom was in town for my son's graduation, and she's a Nationals fan. Every time they hit a ground ball past Orly Cabrera, she'd say, "Wow, I didn't realize how bad the defense was in the American League: everyone I've seen would have gotten that ball."

It's not the whole American League, Mom.

4) Summing up the offense

From the AP write-up:

The Indians went 2 for 12 with runners in scoring position, twice making three straight outs with two runners on base.

No, wait, maybe this helps:

O Cabrera grounded into double play, second to shortstop to first, M Brantley out at second.
O Cabrera grounded into double play, third to second to first, M Brantley out at second.

No, wait, I've got it:

Cleveland hit 2-for-12 on Thursday with runners in scoring position. In the next three games, they combined to go 0-for-12.

Combined.

All together.

Zero.

For TWELVE.

Look, Al Ogando is a great story with a live arm. I tried to trade for C.J. Wilson before he was converted back to starting (I wanted to … convert him back to starting).

The Rangers have some good pitching.

But the offense this weekend went WAY beyond Merely Feeble.

It was JAW-DROPPINGLY feeble.

5) Things you miss unless you watch

Al Ogando threw Matt LaPorta a slider low and away. It bent out of the strike zone. Matt LaPorta swung at it and missed it entirely.

After this, Ogando threw no other pitch to LaPorta. And LaPorta took no other action. It was horrifying.

On Friday, Shin-Soo Choo gunned down Mike Napoli trying to score on a “double” down the right field line. Choo’s throw and the relay home beat Napoli by about 10 yards. And then Napoli was actually really, truly, INCREDIBLY safe, even after executing the worst, most awkward slide I’ve ever seen a player not wearing the black and gold of the Polish American Club at Patterson Park in Akron, Ohio execute.

Carlos Santana did not tag him out, and in fact did nothing whatsoever to impersonate a catcher on the play.

Very, very, very bad by Napoli, who has only half as many “very”s as Santana, and one-fifth of those of the umpire.

6) Too little MUCH too late

Tony Sipp sawed through the Texas lineup on Sunday, duplicating Vinnie Pestano's feat of striking out three hitters with 9 strikes. This was great!

Except that his previous outing was about as thoroughly worthless as any in a long time. When you have Josh Hamilton down 0-2 with two runners on base, I can only IMAGINE the circumstances under which you throw him a high fastball down the middle of the plate instead of a slider away.

Great Pluto Nash's dailies, that ball spent 0.003 seconds in fair territory before going over the wall.

And then he gave up two more runs.

7) The only blemishes were pretty noticeable

Fausto Carmona and Mitch Talbot actually pitched quite well: Talbot in particular kept the Rangers off balance and gave up only 2 runs in 6 innings despite 8 hits and 3 walks. Okay, maybe that's not very "particular."

2 runs is good, right?

Of course, Talbot's two runs came via solo shots by Mitch Moreland and Elvis Andrus. He was only matching Carmona in this regard, though, in that all of Carmona's FOUR runs came on a pair of two-run homers.

(Carmona did throw 61 strikes in 94 pitches and only walked one batter, which I consider a modical success this season.)

8) What we have learned

Adam Everett is not actually any good at hitting.

Tofu Lou still can't hit.

Orly Cabrera is not someone you want hitting second.

Shelley Duncan is overexposed playing every day. Or every other day. Or every Nth day.

Austin Kearns is teaching Shelley Duncan how to hit.

It may be time to consider swapping experience for youth in the lineup.