

In the Monday edition of The B-List, Buff recaps the weekend series with the Reds, which provided less scoring than the World Cup games played over the same stretch. Buff also gives his unadulterated thoughts on Jeremy Sowers, Brandon Phillips, and the Broussard benching. Buff also attempts to make sense of his Rafael Perez Man Love (tm), which is starting to reach uncomfortable levels.



It's sobering to realize that the reason the Reds won this weekend's series is most likely because they'll better than the Indians. It's been a while since I've had to admit that.

### **1) The arm is very good, but the mouth still malfunctions**

Boy, Paul Byrd sure pitched a great game Saturday night. He threw almost 72% strikes and walked nobody. He struck out only 4, but offset that by only allowing 5 hits, only one of which was for extra bases (Ryan Freel's double). His GB:FB ratio look like something from the Cliff Lee Handbook (4 GB, 16 FB), but it's hard to look more &quot;in control&quot; that Paul Byrd did in his 8 shutout innings.

And then he has to say something like this: &quot;I think we can get on a roll. We have the type of team that can win 16 of 17. We can do that.&quot;

If I admit I chopped off the front and the back of the quote (which is in the AP writeup if you think I've

butchered the context, which I haven't), will you admit this is a pretty asinine thing to say? Paul, your win &quot;raised&quot; us to 33-40. We play bad baseball. We have crummy defense, half the team is likely to get traded, and rookies like Franklin Gutierrez have looked so impressive they let Joe Inglett start for him. The last time we heard from Mr. Byrd, he was taking full blame for a game that he was not responsible for losing. While I admire the attempt at leadership (in that case taking accountability, something Ben Broussard could learn about; in this case, positive reinforcement and encouragement), it doesn't count as inspiration unless it is vaguely plausible. The gaping mouths you saw at the press conference from people who have followed the team all you would be your tipoff that, in terms of plausibility, your statement fell somewhere in the &quot;the CIA is listening to my conversations through bugging my fillings&quot; range.

## **2) Welcome to the bigs, kid!**

Jeremy Sowers' debut was not the stuff of dreams, but it did look like the stuff of pretty goodness, which is a step up from the stuff

of Jason Johnson. He certainly sailed through the first three innings, giving up one hit and striking out two. In fact, after three outs in the air in the first, the next six outs came either on the ground or in the catcher's mitt, so perhaps he made an adjustment. (Or perhaps we're talking about molecular sample size.)

And then Sowers learned two powerful lessons:

a) Please try not to walk guys in front of the power hitters  
b) Lefty-righty splits are not interesting to fellows who can hit mistakes a really long way

There's no point in harping on it: the fact that Dunn was swinging 3-0 was kind of encouraging, in that he believed Sowers would be around

the plate, and he didn't believe he was going to get more than one or two hittable pitches in the plate appearance. But falling behind to a man the size of Charles Oakley is not really a good career move. Anyway, he pitched well enough that I consider him a fixture in the rotation at this point.

### **3) Hey, we had one of those!**

Brandon Phillips got on base in each of the three games, banging out a pair of hits and scoring on Griffey's shot after walking. He also had a nifty play doubling Sizemore off

second on a line shot and laid down a sacrifice, which distinguished him from nine-tenths of the Cleveland roster. He is now hitting .310. When your manager cannot get along with a ballplayer, it is often the case that the ballplayer must be moved. There is another option, though, which, in retrospect, I would have liked to have explored: namely, the opposite course.

## **4) Offensive explosion at the Jake!**

The three games ended up 3-0, 4-0, and 4-2, meaning watching Germany in the World Cup provided a more interesting offensive show (although Vic's foul ball on Sunday could be considered the moral equivalent of striking the crossbar, something the Dutch did with aplomb

yesterday). Sure, I love a good pitcher's duel as much as the next guy, but ... shouldn't ONE game feature more than 6 aggregate runs? Oh, by the way, of the thirteen runs scored, seven were driven in by home runs. That's kind of like bowling a 130 with five strikes: it's certainly possible, but not a particularly satisfying use

of resources.

## **5) Cliff Lee is safe ... for now**

I really like Rafael Perez.

I really, REALLY like Rafael Perez. I would not know Rafael Perez if he shaved my head in a taxicab, but I very much enjoy seeing Rafael Perez' name in the box score, because it's

always accompanied by  
all this little round things.  
Boy, I like Rafael Perez.

**6) Who are you, and  
what have you done  
with Rafael  
Betancourt?**

It wasn't that long ago  
(wait ... maybe it was.  
This season is going

by very slowly.) that I would refer in an offhand way to the fact that of the N pitches Betancourt threw, N-2 of them were for strikes. Death, taxes, Carrot Top not funny, Betancourt throws strikes. So naturally, given a shot at

showing the setup  
form he had earlier in  
the year, he spews  
forth an outing in  
which 19 strikes and  
17 balls come out.  
There wasn't any  
damage, but 2 walks  
and a hit in 2 innings  
of work is dangerously  
close to Guillermo

Mota territory. Let's  
nip this in the bud,  
please.

(In the interests of  
fairness, the  
Cleveland bullpen  
pitched 8 scoreless  
innings over the  
series, which is really  
very nice. |

appreciate it, guys.)

**7) Who are you,  
and what have you  
done with Really  
Big Bob?**

A perfect inning?

What the hell is  
that? Does it even  
count as Bob  
Wickman if it

doesn't involve  
needless  
baserunners? Or is  
that only in save  
situations?

**8) Hey!□ It's like  
this, you turkeys!**  
I can imagine  
Grady Sizemore

and Travis Hafner  
saying this to their  
anemic  
teammates, as  
they had at least  
one hit in all three  
of the games.  
Sizemore clocked  
a homer and a

double, while  
Hafner was  
&quot;limited&quot;  
; to 4 singles and a  
double.

One guy that was  
listening? Jhonny  
Peralta, also with  
at least one hit in

each game.

One guy not  
listening?

Please. Do I  
have to pick only  
**one**

? Consider that  
when Franklin

Gutierrez  
pinch-hit for Joe  
Inglett, his batting  
average was 115  
points higher, but  
barely half of  
Kelly Shoppach's,  
which is terrible.

And higher than  
Todd  
Hollandsworth's.  
Did you ever  
think you would  
say, "Well,  
of course the  
offense is

struggling, we  
really miss

Casey

Blake.&quot;

Ever?

**9) Blood on the  
sand!**

Ben Broussard

has been  
benched,  
ostensibly to let  
Shoppach catch  
and Martinez  
play more first  
base.

I smell a wazoo coming. They better handle this one better than Phillips, that's all I can say.