



With Sunday's loss, the Indians officially went an entire month without winning a series. It'll be incredibly difficult to buck that trend with the Oakland Athletics in town for a four-game series this week. The A's are coming off the extremely rare scheduled day off on Sunday, the first time that has happened in the Major Leagues since 1995. With a day to get their bearings after flying up from Tampa Bay, the A's should be well-rested when the series begins on Monday night.

The Indians and Athletics just met the weekend of August 17-19 and the A's swept the Tribe right out of California, scoring 21 runs in three games. Saturday's winner, Bartolo Colon, was suspended this past week when a random test popped positive for testosterone. Oakland is coming off a critical series victory over the Rays this past weekend, putting themselves in a three-way tie for the two wild card spots.

With Oakland having a lot to play for, the Indians are playing out the string of a lost season. They're now just 5-19 in the month of August have been outscored by 62 runs. For an offense that has managed just 82 runs in 24 games, a pitching-rich team like Oakland is not a matchup to look forward to. With that in mind, here are the pitching matchups for this weekday set.



Monday August 27, 7:05 p.m. ET; Brett Anderson (1-0, 1.29) v. Roberto Hernandez (0-2, 6.75)

Brett Anderson takes the mound for the second time this season, looking to get back into his pre-injury groove. The left handed Texas native made just 13 starts in 2011 before being shut down and undergoing Tommy John surgery. He made his return to the bigs on August 22 and threw seven great innings against the Minnesota Twins to win for the first time since May 26, 2011.

Roberto Hernandez will make his home debut with his new name and it will be his third start of the season. He's given up 12 runs in 12 innings so far this season and has allowed three home runs. His first two starts of the 2012 season came in Anaheim and in Seattle, and he walked two and struck out in those two starts combined.

Anderson, like most lefties, has had success against the Tribe in his career. In three starts, he's 1-0 with a 1.29 ERA, scattering 14 hits and striking out 20 in 21 innings of work. It will be his first road start of the season. Hernandez has struggled against the A's in his career, posting a 4.91 ERA in 12 appearances, 11 of them as the starting pitcher.

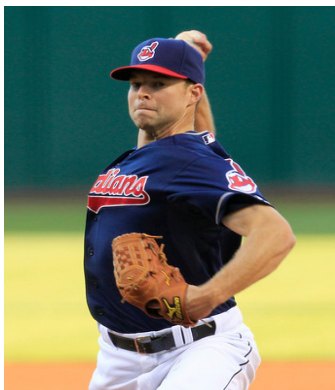


Tuesday August 28, 7:05 p.m. ET; Tommy Milone (10-9, 3.87) v. Zach McAllister (5-4, 3.50)

In a rematch of the August 17 series opener in Oakland, the Indians will get another shot at southpaw Tommy Milone. Milone gave up four runs on a Shelley Duncan grand slam, but that was all the Indians could muster in Milone's five innings. Milone has not walked more than one batter in a game since June 13, a span of 11 starts. The California native was acquired in the Gio Gonzalez trade with Washington last December.

Zach McAllister gets another crack at the A's, a team against which he probably wishes he could have his last start back. McAllister was staked to a 4-0 lead on the aforementioned Duncan grand slam, but immediately gave back three of those runs in the bottom of the fourth and got a no decision after giving up the tying run in the fifth. McAllister threw six solid innings in his last start on a getaway day in Seattle, but took a no decision, allowing just one run over six innings.

Milone will be facing the Indians for the second time and McAllister will get his second crack at Oakland. Milone has really struggled on the road, posting a 5.77 ERA away from the friendly confines of Oakland Coliseum. He has a .206 batting average against at home, but that number jumps to .313 on the road. McAllister has pitched well at home, with a 3.21 ERA over nine starts.



Wednesday August 29, 7:05 p.m. ET; Jarrod Parker (8-7, 3.52) v. Corey Kluber (0-2, 5.32)

Jarrod Parker, who shut the Indians out over eight innings in his last start, will take the mound against them again on Wednesday night. The tables will hopefully turn in this outing as Parker, like Milone, struggles on the road. In his last four road starts, he's allowed 18 runs over 21.2 innings of work. It's been an impressive first full season in the Majors for Parker, who was acquired last December in the Trevor Cahill trade with Arizona.

Corey Kluber is still looking for his first Major League victory, but there are some signs of improvement. In his last outing, he held the Yankees to one run over five innings and struck out six, a career high. Kluber has shown swing-and-miss stuff, with 19 punchouts in 23.1 innings of work, but he has also given up 20 runs. Oakland scored four unearned runs off of him on August 18 in an 8-5 Tribe loss.

Parker and Kluber will both be getting their second chance against their opponent. Parker has been knocked around a bit on the road, posting a 5.04 ERA in 10 starts. Three of Kluber's five starts have come at home and he has a 5.02 ERA in those outings.



Thursday August 30, 12:05 p.m. ET; Brandon McCarthy (7-5, 3.12) v. Justin Masterson 10-11, 4.60)

On a getaway day in Cleveland, Brandon McCarthy will take the hill for the A's. McCarthy has made four starts since coming off the disabled list on August 10. In those four starts, he's posted a 5.09 ERA. He'll be coming off the best of those four starts, a series winning effort in Tampa on Saturday, where he went seven innings and allowed just two runs on four hits.

Justin Masterson has been the winning pitcher in 60% of the Tribe's August victories. In those three wins, he has a 1.37 ERA. In the other start, he gave up seven runs to the Oakland Athletics. Masterson will get another shot at the A's in the series finale and will be looking to get to .500 on the season for the first time this season.

McCarthy, the former Chicago White Sock, has faced the Indians quite a bit in his career, with 17 appearances, nine starts, against the Tribe with a 6-4 record and a 4.38 ERA. Masterson has not had much success against the A's, allowing 11 runs in two starts this season and a 1-4 record with a 6.89 lifetime ERA against the A's in nine appearances.

Keys to the Series:

1. Spoiler Alert – Though the Indians aren't playing for anything, they can certainly ruin somebody else's season. A series loss to the Tribe would be a pretty big pill for the A's to swallow.

2. Well, For Starters... – Based on how the A's starters historically pitch against the Indians, the Tribe's starting four will have to keep their team in the game. Any early deficit may be too much for the Indians and their sluggish offense to overcome.

3. End August on a Positive Note – The Indians are flirting with one of the worst months in franchise history. With five games left in the month, they have the chance to avoid history, but it would probably take winning four of five.

Player(s) to Watch:

The players to watch for this series are the starting pitchers. For Hernandez, it's important that he gives the Indians a reason to keep him around. He'll turn 32 on Thursday, which is a big deal considering he used to be 28. For Kluber, he's auditioning for a job next season. For McAllister, he's auditioning for his place on the rotation hierarchy. For Masterson, he has to show that he can be a consistent, top of the rotation starter. One start won't change all of these opinions, but they each have about five or six starts left to show something to the front office.

Wishful Thinking:

Just get a split.

Central Focus:

Chicago travels to Baltimore, Detroit heads to Kansas City, and Minnesota entertains Seattle.

One Last Thing...:

I got nothing. Just win some damn games.