Series Preview: Indians at Angels

Written by {ga=pup}
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In a rematch of the strange series played in Milwaukee in early April, the Tribe heads west for a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday set with the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim. At 17-15, the Angels hold a slim lead in the AL West, and have been battling injuries all season. Cris Sykes previews the series for us.

The Cleveland Indians will begin their second series of the year against the Lost Angels of Anaheim by way of Los Angeles. The first series was in Cleveland North (Milwaukee, which is Algonquin for "the good land"), which is fitting for a team that plays its home games in one city, but uses another city's name for its team name. Confused? Don't worry. The Indians are playing the Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim, marking the first time the two teams have played both of their series in a city that is not represented on the front of ether teams' road jerseys.

Pitching Matchups

Game 1, Tuesday May 8, 2007 10:05 PM

Ervin Santana (2-4, 5.50 ERA) has struggled to regain his form from his very impressive 2006 season. Ervin has either been very good; three earned runs in 14 innings for his two victories, or very bad, 18 earned runs in 20 innings for his four defeats. Santana has one appearance against the Indians this year, and it was a good day to be an Indian. The Indians pounded him for seven hits and six runs, sending him to the clubhouse without getting out of the fifth inning. Two of the hits were home runs, and Santana remains the only pitcher in MLB history to allow home runs to both Kelly Shoppach and Casey Blake (OK, I don't know if that is true, but it should be). For his career, Santana is now 0-2 with a 13+ ERA in three appearances against Cleveland.

In the series opener, Cliff Lee (0-0, 7.50) will have the responsibility of holding down an Angels offense averaging just over four runs per game. Lee is making his second start of the year following a stint on the disabled list with an oblique injury. Lee took a no decision in his first start, allowing five earned runs in six innings. In 2006, Lee faced the Angels three times, with a 2-1 record. Lee was on the positive side of two 14-2 victories by the Indians. For the three

games, Lee pitched 19 innings, allowing nine earned runs.

Game 2, Wednesday May 9, 2007 10:05 PM

Young phenom Jered Weaver (1-3, 5.12) will take the mound for the Angels. Weaver is another right-handed starter attempting to find his way back to regaining his 2006 form. Jered has yet to make it into the seventh inning of any of his four starts, since starting the season on the disabled list with bicep tendonitis. In 2006, Weaver made two starts against the Indians, getting a win and a no decision. He beat the Indians in his second start of his career, allowing two earned runs over 6 1/3 innings. Later in the year, the Tribe touched him up for four earned runs in 5 2/3 innings.

Matching up with Weaver in game 2 of the series will be former Angel Paul Byrd (2-1, 2.92). The man with the old school windup faced the Angels one time in 2006, collecting a win while scattering ten hits through his six innings of work and allowing three earned runs in the 6-4 Indians win. Byrd is unbeaten in his career against Anaheim, going 3-0 in five starts.

Game 3, Thursday May 10, 2007 3:35 PM

In the finale of the three game set, the Angels will send right-hander Kelvim Escobar (3-1, 2.84) to the mound. Escobar has been very good early on this year and has been very effective in his career against the Indians, going 5-3 with a 3.78 ERA. In his only appearance against Cleveland in 2006, Escobar took the loss in a 14-2 Indians win. He allowed eight of the runs (two earned) in 5 2/3 innings of work.

Opposing Escobar will be Jeremy Sowers (0-2, 5.87). The young lefty has struggled to find his control during the early part of 2007 and has dropped both of his decisions thus far. His best start of this season did come in a match up with the Angels, as he allowed one earned run in seven innings of work. He took a no decision in the only start he made against Anaheim in 2006, going seven innings and allowing three earned runs.

Angel Offense

The Angels are led by one of the top right-handed bats in baseball, Vladimir Guerrero. Vlad "The Impaler" is currently second in the American League in average (.363), home runs (9) and runs batted in (30). Key free agent acquisition Gary Matthews is the only other Angel to start 30 games in the 2007 season as Manager Mike Scioscia's team battles injuries. Mathews is off to a .295 start, homering twice, driving in ten runs while scoring 22. The Angels offense attempts to make up for its lack of power (they are currently 13 [th] in the American League in home runs) with their overall team speed that has them third in the AL in stolen bases. Anaheim ranks tenth in the AL in runs scored, fifth in doubles and third in team average.

Angel Pitching

Anaheim currently ranks third in the American League with a 3.70 ERA and second in strikeouts with 232 in 280 innings pitched. The bullpen is lead by a couple of power-armed

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right-handers, Fransisco Rodriquez and Scott Shields. Rodriquez is 10-11 in save chances and has 25 strikeouts in 15 innings. "K-Rod" recorded the save in the Angles earlier victory over the Tribe with a perfect 9 th inning, striking out one. He made two appearances against the Indians in 2006, recording one save, without a strikeout. Shields, in two appearances in the first series recorded one hold and took a loss. In the loss, Shields allowed Travis Hafner to hit a ball that still has not landed for a game winning three run homer. Prior to this season Shields has been very good against the Indians, allowing three earned runs in 14 innings and striking out 13. He has also recorded two saves for the Angels versus Cleveland while filling in for an injured Rodriquez.

Up Next: Oakland A's