

Series Preview: Indians at A's

Written by {ga=pup}

Thursday, May 10 2007 7:00 PM -

Like the Angels, Oakland has been beset by injuries and is in a tight battle for AL West supremacy. Unlike the Angels, who feature a nasty bullpen and team speed, the A's rely on their AL best starting rotation and "walk, walk, homer" approach at the plate to win ball games. Losers of two straight, the Indians stay out west and look to right the ship against Oakland. Cris Sykes previews the series for us.



The Cleveland Indians will begin their seventh road series of the season tonight when they take on the Oakland Athletics. The Indians have won three of their six road series, lost two and split with the Orioles at the front end of this ten game road trip. This will be the A's seventh home series, getting two wins, dropping two and splitting the other.

The Indians will enter the series as losers of two straight, including being shutout for the first time this season last night in Anaheim by Kelvim Escobar. They will be looking to C.C. Sabathia, to end their skid in the opener this evening. Tonight's game is one of those games where you need your ace to go out and get the job done and close out a losing streak before it really gets going. C.C. will be looking to win for the fifth time on the season, and the second time this week. Of course, the last time he pitched he was out trying to end... a two-game losing streak. In that game, C.C. gave the Indians seven innings, allowing three runs and picking up the victory. He struck out nine, and now leads the league in that category.

Sabathia does not have very good career numbers against Oakland. He has gone one and four, allowing nearly six and a half runs per nine innings against them. Of this year's Athletics, Jason Kendall (6-12) and Marcus Scutaro (4-8) are both lifetime .500 hitters against CC. Nick Swisher has collected hits in three of his five at bats with Sabathia on the mound. Eric Chavez (2-13), Mark Ellis (3-16), and Shannon Stewart (7-31) are the Athletics that have not figured out Sabathia in his career.

Coming off scoring a season-high 17 run effort on Thursday, Oakland will actually travel farther to get home than the Indians by coming in from Kansas City. The A's will be sending "portly" right-hander Joe Blanton to the mound. Blanton, (3-1, 3.61 ERA) is coming off a start where he

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scattered 11 hits over seven and one third innings, allowing two earned runs. His only loss was also his best start of the season when he allowed two earned runs in a complete game loss at the hands of the Seattle Mariners. In his lone start against the Indians in 2006, Blanton was blasted around for six earned runs in five innings. But Blanton is off to a good start after a disappointing 2006 campaign.

For game two of the weekend series, the Indians will send Fausto Carmona to the mound. Carmona has been a big part of the early success of the Indians, first replacing Cliff Lee in the rotation, now subbing for a hobbled Jake Westbrook. If he can continue to be this effective, he shouldn't need another injury to remain in the rotation. He will be making his second career start against Oakland. In 2006, Carmona shut the A's down, only allowing two earned runs in eight innings pitched, but settled for a no decision. In that game, the only current Athletic who had more than one hit was Marcus Scutaro. Bobby Crosby, Nick Swisher and Jason Kendall all managed to scratch out singles in one or two at bats versus Carmona.

Carmona will be facing rookie Dallas Braden (1-1, 5.23 ERA), who will be making his third career start. In his first start, Braden held the Baltimore Orioles to one run on three hits over six innings. After getting beat up by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays (five earned runs in four and one third innings), Braden was sent back to AAA. Braden made two starts at AAA Sacramento without a decision in spite of a 0.75 ERA. The left-handed starter is replacing the injured Rich Harden in the A's rotation.

Cliff Lee is scheduled to make the Sunday afternoon start for the final game of the Indians ten-game road trip. Lee is five days removed from one of his best career starts, throwing a three hitter and allowing one earned run against Anaheim. During his career, Lee has made four starts against the A's winning twice against one defeat. In 25 innings against Oakland, Lee has maintained a very tidy 2.16 ERA. In limited action, the best A's hitters versus Cliff Lee are Marcus Scutaro (3-9), Nick Swisher (1-3), Shannon Stewart (7-18). On the flip side, Eric Chavez (2-13), Bobby Crosby (0-4), Mark Ellis (0-2) and Jason Kendall (1-5) have yet to figure out Lee.

Taking the mound for the Athletics will be right-hander Chad Gaudin (2-1, 2.40). Gaudin has yet to allow more than three earned runs in any of his eight starts in 2007 and is coming off an eight inning, one earned run eight strikeout performance against the Kansas City Royals.

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The A's offense has been paced by the return of Nick Swisher and the arrival of two acquisitions, Jack Cust and Chris Snelling, by the their high profile GM Billy Beane.

Since returning from a one-week hiatus, Swisher has been hitting anything thrown his way, getting eight hits in his last 17 at bats. Swisher, a former Buckeye, has hit two home runs and driven in eight over his last four games.

In three games with Oakland, Jack Cust has gotten four hits in eleven at bats and three of the hits have been good for home runs, driving in five runs.

Chris Snelling, acquired from Washington just less than one week ago had his first hitless game as an Athletic on Thursday. Snelling has hits in seven of his twenty at bats as an Athletic.