

Series Preview: Tigers at Indians

Written by {ga=pup}

Wednesday, May 30 2007 7:00 PM -

Talk about an excellent sports weekend. We've got Jack's Tournament, star studded as always, a couple hours south outside Columbus. Cavs/Pistons game six downtown at The Q Saturday night. And the Indians host the division rival Tigers Thursday through Sunday at Jacobs Field. Cris Sykes previews the series between the two AL Central behemoths for us here at TCF.



What a weekend we have in store for us in Northeast Ohio! It all starts Thursday night and when the dust settles we will have driven the city of Detroit back under the rock it crawled out of.

Hopefully the Indians and Cavaliers can follow the lead of The Ohio State University and finish that whole state off, sent spiraling back to the cesspool it was born from.

See, Cleveland is the "re-birth" city of the Midwest. Somehow, Detroit has come along and become somewhat of a media darling, but that was supposed to be us. When the Indians made their run in the 90's, it was a Renaissance Period for Cleveland, but the Browns were gone, and the Cavs stunk, so it never took hold for long. Times are a changing though! By Sunday, Cleveland could hold a six and a half game lead over Detroit in the American League Central and the Cavaliers could be on their way to their first ever trip to the NBA Finals, and Detroit will be back to nothing more than responsible for giving us Kid Rock.

Of course, the Tigers will be looking for revenge after the Indians went into their house and swept the first series of the year between the teams, last weekend. The Indians got wins by each of their starting pitchers in that series, and Joe

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Borowski saved all three games.

Detroit was unable to muster much offense against the top three Indian starters. They managed to push across 10 runs in the series, but they had been averaging over eight runs per game in their two series prior to the Indians sweep.

Both teams will enter game one of the series having dropped two of three. The Indians were handled in their two losses by the top starting pitching duo in the AL and the Boston Red Sox, while Detroit was losing a series to the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Thursday, May 31st, 7:05 PM

C.C. Sabathia (7-1, 3.54 Earned Run Average) vs. Justin Verlander (5-1, 2.71)

Round two of the heavyweight fight between Sabathia and Verlander will kick off the series Thursday night. Sabathia won the first round, as the Indian's hitters wore down Verlander and got into the Tiger bullpen in the seventh inning.

C.C. won for the seventh time on the season by allowing three earned runs in seven innings last Saturday. Sabathia struck out six while giving up six hits in the contest. That victory also improved the Indians ace to 11-7 in his career against Detroit. He will also look to remain unbeaten at Jacobs Field, where he has four wins and two no decisions on the season with a 2.70 ERA.

Verlander will come into the game with a couple of trends working in his favor. The first would be he has yet to drop a decision on the road in four starts and has posted an earned run average of one point three in four road starts. Equally impressive, in five starts at night, Verlander has yet to take a loss and only allowed seven earned runs in over 33 innings.

Justin pitched well against the Tribe on Saturday, but was forced to

throw a lot of pitches to get through his six innings. In what is becoming a trademark of this Indians team, they are willing to work deep into counts and take a walk. Verlander fell victim to that patience and walked four Indians. He only gave up three hits in the game, but one of them was a two-run homer by Victor Martinez, which followed a walk to Grady Sizemore leading off the third inning.

Friday, June 1st, 7:05 PM

Fausto Carmona (6-1, 2.89 ERA) vs. Mike Maroth (3-2, 5.04 ERA)

Rematch number two in this series will come Friday night as Fausto Carmona will look to continue his mastery of the AL, and be opposed once again by Mike Maroth trying to continue his mastery of the Cleveland Indians.

Carmona was not quite as dominant in his start against the Tigers as he had been lately, but still managed to give the Indians seven solid innings. The Tigers were able to find a couple of holes in the third inning and those ground ball outs become RBI singles. Carmona was able to get back on track after that third inning, when he gave up all three runs and four of his nine hits.

Mike Maroth gave the Tigers a fantastic effort on Sunday night, once he got the first inning completed. Evidently someone forgot to tell Ryan Garko that we are not allowed to hit the ball against Maroth, because his three-run home run in the first inning was the difference in the game. After the Indians put four runs on the board in the first inning, the real Mike Maroth

showed up and limited the Indians to a Casey Blake solo homer and a Grady Sizemore single over the next seven innings. By taking the loss, Maroth saw his record against the Indians fall to eight and four.

Saturday, June 2nd, 7:05 PM

Cliff Lee (2-2, 5.86 ERA) vs. Chad Durbin (4-1, 4.39 ERA)

Dr. Jekyll, or Mr. Hyde? Which Cliff Lee will show up Saturday afternoon? Will it be the guy who has allowed six earned runs in 20 innings, which is every other start? Or will he be the in between guy who has allowed 17 earned runs in 15 1/3 innings? He is due for a stinker, so maybe it will be a good night to find something else on the TV. If anyone knows of any other sporting event on Saturday night, feel free to e-mail me and let me know.

Lee is just one and four over the last three years at Jacobs Field against the Tigers. The Tigers have been very good against left-handed pitching thus far in 2007, with a .301/.499/.860 (batting average/on-base percentage/slugging) line.

Opposing Lee will be former Indian Chad Durbin. Durbin spent parts of the 2003 and 2004 seasons with the Indians, making nine starts. He will be making his 11th

start of the season for the Tigers, as a replacement for the cheating, scuffing the ball, and camera throwing Kenny Rogers. In the month of May, Durbin has been effective, winning three of his six starts without a loss. He never gave up more than three runs in his May starts, so maybe it is a good thing the calendar now reads June.

Sunday, June 3rd, 1:05 PM

Jeremy Sowers (1-5, 6.29 ERA) vs. Jeremy Bonderman (4-0, 3.34 ERA)

Jeremy Sowers will be called upon to finish off the Tigers on Sunday. Sowers has been a little better of late, but is still just keeping a spot in the rotation warm for Jake Westbrook. There is no Indian more ready for June to begin than Sowers, who went one and four with an ERA over eight in May. During the month, Sowers faced 118 batters, and managed to strike out six of them. He also gave up 6 home runs. I don't think a one to one strikeout to homer ratio is quite what the Indians have in mind from one of their starters.

Sowers did hold the Tigers homer-less in his lone start against them, but that was last year when we saw totally different results from the southpaw.

Squaring off with Sowers will be Jeremy Bonderman, making his third start since coming off the disabled list. Bonderman had a rough time of it in his three starts preceding his DL trip, allowing almost a run per inning, though he did get the victory in two of those starts.

Bonderman started the season pitching very well, only allowing seven earned runs in his first four starts, but came away with four no decisions as well. In his first two starts since coming off the disable list, he has pitched 14 1/3 innings and allowed only two runs.

Over the last three seasons, Bonderman has enjoyed tremendous run support against the Indians, allowing him to be six and six despite an ERA over six. He has actually pitched better

at Jacobs Field in that time than his home stadium. At "The Jake", Bonderman is five and three, and his ERA is 4.94.

Tigers Hitting

Detroit will come into this series with a noticeable limp. They will probably start the series without shortstop Carlos Guillen, who strained his groin in the final game of the Tampa series, as well as third baseman Brandon Inge who broke a bone in his left big toe.

The Tigers will still be able to boast a lineup that feature AL MVP front-runner Maglio Ordonez, Pudge Rodriguez, and Gary Sheffield. Let's not feel too sorry for them. Marcus Thames has turned it up over the last seven days for the Tigers, hitting .462 over that stretch. The Tigers, as a team, are hitting .319, so they are still clicking on all cylinders. Gary Sheffield has led the Tigers with four home runs

and eight RBI, while Magglio Ordonez has gone seven games without a home run.

Tiger Bullpen

The Tigers continue to search for ways to get the ball to closer Todd Jones. The starters are currently 21-9 on the season, while the bullpen has accounted for 11 losses and a 5.30 ERA.

Only Tim Byrd currently has an ERA of under four in the Tiger bullpen, but they do have four guys with one over five. Once again, the montra for the Indians will be to work the starting pitchers deep into counts and force Jim Leyland to go into that bullpen as early as possible.

Up Next: Kansas City, June 5-7