

## Series Preview: Braves at Indians

Written by {ga=pup}

Thursday, June 14 2007 7:00 PM -

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Fresh off their series win over the Florida Marlins, the Cleveland Indians World Series Revenge Tour wraps up this weekend, when the Braves enter Jacobs Field for a three game series. Sykes has the pitching matchups and breakdown for each game, and takes a deeper look into the Atlanta lineup and bullpen. Oh, and expect a big, well-deserved ovation from the fans for Bob Wickman this weekend when he takes the hill for the first time. Contrary to what media types in Chicago think, Cleveland fans do have a clue when to boo and applaud a player who left town.



I do not know what it is, but I really hate the Atlanta Braves. Maybe it is the unmatched regular seasons run of 15 straight division titles.

Maybe it is the calmness about them, no matter the situation.

Or the torture of having the choice of watching the Indians or the Braves play some pretty horrific baseball in the 1980's, while I was gaining my full appreciation of the game.

There were many a day spent flipping back and forth between the two teams as the Braves were infiltrating the national market on WTBS everyday. There were even some points where you were not real sure which team you were flipping away from and flipping to.

They both stunk.

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Errors on defense, walks by pitchers and strikeouts by the hitters were the norm for both organizations.

Of course, that all changed as we maneuvered into, through, then out of the 1990's. The highlight of the two teams came during the 1995 season, when the unmatched Braves starting pitching went head to head with the amazing lineup boated by the Indians in the World Series. We all know how well that turned out for the Indians, I mean who can hit a pitch six inches off the outside corner, which is probably the real reason I hate the Braves.

Now, 12 years later, the Cleveland Indians World Series Revenge Tour wraps up this weekend, when these Braves enter Jacobs Field for a three game series.

**Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007 7:05PM**

**C.C. Sabathia (9-1, 3.09 Earned Run Average) vs. Buddy Carlyle (1-1, 4.91 ERA)**

The good news is C.C. Sabathia will be looking to become the second 10 game winner in Major League Baseball when he takes the mound on Friday. The bad news is the game will be at Jacobs Field, so the Indians hottest hitter of late, C.C., will not be in the lineup.

Sabathia, long rumored to be the ace of a pitching staff, has

stepped into that role in a big way in 2007. Sabathia currently ranks first in innings pitched, second in strikeouts per walk, fourth in strikeouts, eighth in walk + hits per inning and ninth in ERA in the American League.

Run support has been an issue for Sabathia in his last two starts, almost to the point the word support should not be used. With friends like these, who needs enemies, right?

Sabathia has thrown back-to-back nine inning gems, without allowing a run, yet has nothing to show for it.

I guess the hitters are looking to even things out, since they won for him in his previous start despite Sabathia allowing five runs in seven and one third innings.

Set to face Sabathia will be Buddy Carlyle. Carlyle will be making his fifth appearance (fourth start) with the Braves this year.

After a shaky debut, when he allowed five earned runs in four innings, Carlyle has made a couple of quality starts his last two times out allowing a total of five earned runs in 13 1/3 innings.

Both starting pitchers will be making their first appearances against the opposition.

**Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 4:00 PM**

**Paul Byrd (6-2, 4.50 ERA) vs. John Smoltz (7-3, 2.83 ERA)**

Paul Byrd will take his turn in the rotation on Saturday, and will be making the start versus one of his former teams as well as good friend John Smoltz. Byrd has credited Smoltz with showing him the split-finger fastball that he has added this season. Wonder how Smoltz will feel if Byrd uses it to beat him?

For that to happen, Byrd will have to turn the clock back to April and May because June has not been so good to him. After taking just his second loss of the year two starts back, Byrd got off with a no decision even though he was banged around for seven earned runs over his four innings of work.

That disaster brought his June ERA to a Jason Johnson-like nine point nine.

John Smoltz has decided to Saturday was a much nicer day to return from his injured shoulder, instead of the original day, Friday. Notice he also did not push it back two days, to Sunday.

Given the choice of matching up against Sabathia, Byrd and Carmona, John Smoltz took the path of least resistance.

He is one smart cookie.

On the other hand, John Smoltz does not have to duck anyone. Smoltz has made 13 starts in 2007 and has given up more than two earned runs three times and more than three runs once.

Three different times, Smoltz has worked seven

innings and when he left the opponent has scored less than Eric Snow.

For that matter, they scored less than Mike Brown, but I think you get the drift (if not, here is the drift, they did not score against Smoltz).

**Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007, 1:05 PM**  
**Fausto Carmona (7-2, 3.17 ERA) vs.**  
**Kyle Davies (3-5, 5.70 ERA)**

Sorry Fausto, I know better to mention any kind of streak when talking about a pitcher, especially one you like, but I did it.

In my preview of the Marlins series I said

you had won seven in a row, and that abruptly ended.

An unfortunate combination of the offense being stuck in Florida mud, one bad inning and my stupid keyboard cost you your streak.

I am sorry.

Did anyone hear Carmona has lost one in a row?

Fausto is as much the reason for the Indians current position and now that the Cavs are done maybe we will take time to notice that they are in first place as any

other player. He has come out of nowhere (unless you count Peter Gammons saying he was the best pitcher in spring training as somewhere) to stabilize a rotation that has not lived up to expectations as a whole.

Fausto, deciding he had not been doing enough, has added the strikeout to his arsenal. He has struck out 16 in his last 20 innings. Prior to this stretch, Carmona had 17 punch-outs in 52 innings.

Kyle Davies will get the start for the Braves on Sunday. Davies was once a prized prospect in the Braves organization. They

had visions of him taking the reigns from John Smoltz and leading the pitching staff into the next decade.

Then, Kyle Davies reached the big leagues and has not been so good. In three starts this month, Davies has allowed 11 runs in 15  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings and that includes a seven inning one run performance against the Cubs.

I guess that means that if his stuff is right on any day, he can shut someone down.

It might just mean the Cubs offense was downright pathetic, too busy running away from Lou Pinella to concentrate on hitting.

A big plus for the patient Tribe will be the fact that Davies is very unlike most Braves pitchers as he walks as many guys as he strikes out. He has allowed four runs or more in eight of his twelve starts this season.

## Braves Lineup

The Braves will come into the series as the 12<sup>th</sup> highest scoring team in Major League Baseball to go along with hitting the 10<sup>th</sup> most home runs. They

are currently hitting .265 as a team (8<sup>th</sup>), with an on base percentage of .332 (12<sup>th</sup>) and a slugging percentage of .425 (10<sup>th</sup>).

Atlanta is led by shortstop Edgar Renteria, who is hitting .320 with nine home runs and 33 RBI. Chipper Jones, when healthy, and his .313, 12 home run and 27 RBI aid him.

Unfortunately for the Braves, Chipper is not amongst the games iron men and he has only played in 44 of their 67

games.

Other Braves to be concerned with are Jeff Francoeur, who is yet to see a pitch he does not think he can hit and catcher Brian McCann.

The Braves, obviously very impressed with Mark Shapiro as a General Manager have employed a left field platoon, and it is slightly more successful than the Indians version. Willis Harries and Matt Diaz have combined to hit .359 with five home runs, 34 runs scored, 24 runs batted in

and 10 stolen bases.

That leaves us with Andrew Jones. To say Andrew Jones is off to a slow start is not fair to slow starts.

If Travis Hafner is in a funk, Andrew Jones developed the strand of funk Hafner is in.

Ready for this?

Andrew Jones, the All-World center fielder is hitting two-fifteen.

That is right, barely better than the super baby produced by matching the

## DNA of Mike Fischlin and Jerry Dybzinski.

Of course, when contact is made, Jones can hit the ball as far as anyone, so this does not mean the right idea is to serve him meatballs all weekend (you listening to me Byrd?).

## **Braves Bullpen**

Welcome back Robert. I am so excited for the Really Big Bob portion of Monday's B-List.

Steve, please advance me a copy as soon as possible, I will not be able to wait until Monday afternoon!

Bob is still Bob. He puts runners on base (34 in 21 innings), doesn't really strike anyone out (14), but gets the job done about 80% of the time.

Leading up to Wickman is Rafael Soriano, whom the Braves stole from

Seattle in exchange for Horatio Sanz, whoops, Heracio Rameriz. Soriano is five for five in save situations has won his only decision and sports a 2.20 ERA. Next time Wickman needs a few days on the disabled list, it might be his last few days closing for the Braves.

When the Braves need to get a left handed hitter out, they normally call on Macay McBride and he normally gets the job done. Left handed hitters are hitting .174 agasint McBride, so Pronk and Grady should probably start checking him out because they will see him at some point.

# **Up Next: Vs. Phillies, June 18-20**