

## Series Preview: Red Sox at Indians

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The Indians begin a ten game homestand tonight in the first of four games with the Red Sox that will feature the return of Manny Ramirez to Jacobs Field, and also the season debut of Red Sox starter Jon Lester. Games two and three will feature CC vs Dice K and Carmona vs Beckett. The Tribe is a game and a half behind the Tigers in the Central and lead the Mariners by two games in the wild card standings. Cris Sykes previews the Red Sox series for us.



I was trolling around my usual information gathering sites looking for some stuff to pass on to the readers that might make some think I'm pretty smart.

Unfortunately, I believe I failed miserably. Instead, I found a piece of information that made me kind of mad. I do not like parity. I never have, never will. It gives people that are not ordinarily good at their jobs the opportunity to succeed. Even if you still do not assemble the right teams, odds are other teams have taken enough talent to water the whole stinking league down, allowing almost anyone to compete. Right now, 23 of 32 teams in Major League Baseball have gone either six and four; five and five; or four and six in there last ten games. I find that terribly boring.

What I do not find boring is a match-up of two of the top three teams in the Major Leagues for a four game series at Jacobs Field. In a series that will have a little bit of everything, the closest match up might be between the managers. Both are around because of friendships more than in game skills. Both are more frat brothers than inspirational leader. Of course, both are sitting at or near the top of the standings, so maybe whatever it is they are doing is working.

This is also another opportunity for Manny Ramirez to return to the stadium that was home to so many great moments for him that it's hard to recall them all. My personal favorite, the home run off Dennis Eckersley, followed by "the reaction" by "The Eck". For anyone who has a problem with Indians fans because of our treatment of Jim Thome when he shows his ugly mug

around here, pay attention. Manny will not be booed. We do not hate players for leaving for more money; we hate them for stabbing us in the back.

**Monday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:05 PM**

**Jake Westbrook (1-5, 6.07 Earned Run Average) vs. Jon Lester (season debut)**

I do not believe this is what Mark Shapiro had in mind when he gave Jake Westbrook his three-year contract extension.

Jake has begun to make strides, and is as close to his prior form as he has been all year, so maybe a good old battle with the Red Sox is what he needs. In his five starts since being activated from the disabled list, Jake has lost all three decisions, but his ERA is right on his career mark.

Jake made two starts against the Red Sox in 2006, picking up a win in a start at Fenway Park in August. Westbrook managed to scatter 15 hits in eight innings of work, but "held" Boston to six runs in the seven to six Tribe victory.

Westbrook will be making his sixth career start versus the Red Sox. In winning three of his four decisions, Jake has averaged a little over five innings, with a 4.23 earned run average. At Jacob Field, Jake has won both decisions limiting the Red Sox to three earned runs in 17 innings

covering three starts.

Jon Lester will be making his 2007 season debut at Jacobs Field on Monday night. This will be his first big league start since August 23<sup>rd</sup> of last year. After that start, Lester was diagnosed with lymphoma. He has battled his way back through the disease and is a real positive story in a world of sports seriously lacking feel good stories right now.

Lester made 15 starts with Boston last year, going seven and two with a 4.76 ERA. Lester took a no decision in his lone start against the Indians last year. He held the Indians to three runs on eight hits in six innings of work on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Tuesday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:05 PM**

**C.C. Sabathia (13-4, 3.81 ERA) vs. Daisuke Matsuzaka (11-7, 3.99 ERA)**

If the pitching match up that is going to take place on Tuesday evening at Jacobs Field isn't enough to

get fans to "The Jake", I don't know what will do it.

The Indians will send Carsten Charles Sabathia to the hump on Tuesday. Yes, I am using his full name, much like I am sure his mother did when he didn't take out the garbage, or some other boyhood chore he may have blown off. I use it because his new chore is to be the ace of the Indians, and he has been blowing that off lately.

His numbers from his last start looked better, but C.C. was not really that much better than the guy that had given up more than a run per inning in the month of July. Some great defensive work by Josh Barfield and Grady Sizemore kept Sabathia in the game, enabling him to pick up his Major League leading 13<sup>th</sup> win.

Sabathia has struggled in his career against the Red Sox, losing three times and winning only twice in six career starts. One of those wins did come in his last start against Boston, when he held the Red Sox to one run in eight innings, striking out eight in the process.

Squaring off with the Big Lefty will be Boston's big free agent acquisition last winter, "Dice-K". Matsuzaka came with a lot of hype, but he has managed to live up to just about everything that was said about him.

Matsuzaka is fifth in the AL in wins and third in strikeouts. He is another one of those right-handed starting pitchers with a reverse split. Left-handed batters are only hitting .210 against and slugging .663, as opposed to right-handers who are at .273 and .750.

The "gyroball" appears to be less effective against the Indians than other teams though. In his one start against Cleveland, Daisuke surrendered a season high six runs in only five and two thirds innings pitched. Grady Sizemore finished him off with a two-run home run that sent Dice-K to the showers.

**Wednesday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 7:05 PM**

**Fausto Carmona (12-4, 3.52 ERA) vs.  
Josh Beckett (13-3, 3.41 ERA)**

Well, if the Tuesday pitching match up does not tickle your appetite, maybe Wednesday will do the trick.

How is this for getting back on track? Fausto made a start against Oakland that he would prefer not be brought up, but I will anyway. He allowed eight runs in one inning of work. That is really bad, even if your name is Cliff Westbrook. Since that start, all Fausto has managed to go 26 1/3 innings and only allow six earned runs. In his last outing, Carmona held the Texas Rangers off the scoreboard in eight stellar innings.

Of course, Boston does not bring back the fondest of memories for Fausto. I am quite sure we all remember the Boston Massacre that ended the "Hey maybe Fausto can close" experiment. I can think of worse outcomes, though. Instead of pitching the ninth inning for the Indians he

pitches most of the first eight each time out. Chalk this failed experiment up right next to Alexander Flemin and his discovery of some drug called penicillin.

Opposing Carmona will be the front-runner for the AL Cy Young Award, Josh Beckett. Beckett was Boston's big acquisition prior to the 2006 season, but it has taken him a full season to adjust to the American League. Now that the adjustment has been made though, he has been as good as a guy can be.

Beckett will be making his second start of the season against the Indians. In the first, Beckett was his usual dominant self, limiting

the Indians to two runs on three hits in seven innings of work. Beckett struck out seven Indians on the day, leading Boston to four to two victory.

Beckett also made two starts against the Tribe in 2006. Those did not go as well for Josh. In those starts, Beckett was torched for 15 earned runs in nine and two thirds innings. In his only appearance at Jacobs Field, the Indians lit him up for 9 runs in only three and two thirds innings.

**Thursday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:05 PM**

## **Cliff Lee (5-7, 5.95 ERA) vs. (Kason Gabbard, 4-0, 2.97 ERA)**

It sure does put a lot of pressure on the middle two games when you are book ending a series with a pair of guys with earned run averages close to six.

Cliff Lee will be looking to build of the best five-inning performance of his season his last time out. It was really too bad the five innings immediately followed a five run first inning and were followed by a three run seventh. All it took in the middle was Victor Martinez threatening to go Michael Barrett on his

ass. Maybe he needs to challenge Cliff's manhood in between every inning.

Consistency has been somewhat of an issue for Cliff this year. He was actually on a really good roll up until his last start before the all-star break. He had not allowed more than three runs in five straight starts before giving up five in only four innings in his last start before the break. In to starts since the break, Lee has allowed seven runs in each covering a total of 12 innings.

The Red Sox are actually one of Cliff's better match ups in the AL, even though

the wins are not there to show it. He has made six starts in his career versus Boston, winning twice and losing twice. His ERA is almost three quarters of a run lower against the Red Sox than his career mark, and he has averaged one strikeout per inning against Boston in his career. Earlier in the year, Cliff held the Red Sox to three earned runs in five innings, but took the loss, five to three.

Kason Gabbard will be making his seventh start of the season for Boston. Gabbard is an Ohio native, hailing from Oxford, the Home of Miami University.

Gabbard is a soft tossing lefty who mixes pitches well and changes speeds. In other words, he is what Jeromy Sowers was supposed to be for the Indians. Since being called up to replace Curt Schilling in the rotation, Gabbard has won all three of his decisions in four starts. He has pitched a total 28 innings in those four starts and allowed six earned runs. He has allowed exactly three base hits in each of the four starts,

This will be Kason's first career appearance versus the Indians. The good news for the Tribe is Gabbard has been an entirely different pitcher away from Fenway Park thus far. In home

games, Gabbard has won all five decisions with a 1.63 ERA. Away from Fenway though, and his numbers turn back into a pumpkin. On the road, Gabbard has yet to get a win in five starts and three relief appearances to go along with his 5.33 ERA. The bad news is the Indians tend to struggle, that is putting it mildly, against young, left handed starting pitchers over the last whole lot of years.

**Up Next: Hosting the Twins for three games this weekend**