

Series Preview: Twins at Indians

Written by {ga=pup}

Thursday, July 26 2007 7:00 PM -

Can Kenny Lofton add some fuel to the Indians fire? Do the Twins have enough to make another second half run at a playoff spot? We should find out the answer to both of these questions during the three game series at Jacobs Field this weekend. Cris Sykes once again previews the series for us here at The Cleveland Fan.



Who ever thought we would miss the days of Scott Elarton finishing off our rotation?

The Indians will be limping into a critical three game series with the Minnesota Twins after dropping three out of four to the Boston Red Sox. At least we won't be seeing Cliff Lee this weekend!

The Twins are not exactly the hottest team in baseball right now, so I am not sure who is entering the series as the wounded animal.

The Indians will start play seven and a one half games ahead of the Twins for second place in the American League Central and wild card race despite being only winning seven of their 14 games since the All-Star break. Good thing the Twins have dropped seven of their last nine, or it would be time to start looking over our shoulder.

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This series is for one of two things. Start to panic, or leave Minnesota in the dust.

With a series sweep, the Indians can build the lead to double digits.

Get swept and a whole lot of ugly scenarios come into play.

Did I mention the good fortune of not having a Cliff Lee start scheduled for this series?

Friday, July 27th, 7:05 PM

Paul Byrd (8-4, 4.43 Earned Run Average) vs. Boof Bonser (5-6, 4.53 ERA)

Paul Byrd might take more flack for having twice as many wins as losses as any starting pitcher in the big leagues. All he really does is take the ball every five days and give the Indian an opportunity to win games. He isn't sexy, he doesn't wow anyone with his stuff, he just pitches and he does it better than most starting pitchers in the league.

Two times all season he has been bad enough to allow a run per inning in a start. Twice. Three times he has allowed more than four runs in a start. The Indians have won 11 of his 18 starts, that is a .610 winning percentage. In case you are wondering, the Indians as a team only win 54% of the time.

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Byrd made one start this year against the Twins, getting picked up in one of his bad starts and collecting a win, 15-7. Byrd pitched seven innings and allowed five earned runs.

Three if the runs came in the sixth and seventh innings, after the Indians had built a seven and then a twelve run lead, so forgive me for not being worried.

Byrd also struck out a season high seven batters on the day, without a walk (shocking).

Byrd will be making career start number 14 against the Twinkies Friday night. He has won seven and only lost three times, with a 3.95 ERA.

Facing Byrd will be Boof Bonser. Seriously? Boof Bonser. Someone named his or her son Boof Bonser?

My folks and I, not exactly on speaking terms with that kind of name.

OK, so his name is actually John Paul Bonser and somehow decided it was better to go with Boof?

What did he have a crush on the Teen Wolf chick or something?

Mrs. Teen Wolf has been on quite a roll of late, losing his last four decisions. There are two things Bonser has learned to do well, walk hitters and give up home runs. Which is nice, if you aren't from the Twin Cities.

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This is Bonser's second start against the Indians. He got a no decision in a start on September 14th

of last year in a 9-4 Twins victory at Jacobs Field.

Boof held the Tribe to three runs in five and two thirds innings, allowing five hits while striking out six and walking 3.

Saturday, July 28th, 7:05 PM

Jake Westbrook (1-6, 6.20 ERA) vs. Matt Garza (1-2, 1.33 ERA)

For all the (well deserved) flak being sent Cliff Lee's way, Jake Westbrook has not been much better. The only difference between the two is really the amount of attitude they appear to have towards teammates and fans. While

Lee looks like a crybaby during his last couple of appearances, Westbrook looks to be upset with his own performance.

Jake has not recorded a victory for the Indians since way back on April 27. Since that time, he has spent time on the disabled list, seen a teammate get a contract extension, watched his manager get a contract extension, and watched Fausto and C.C. win like a hundred times. Let's hope we don't have to wait until they get to 200 before Jake wins again.

Since being activated from the DL on June 24th, Westbrook has lost four times in six starts.

Part of the problem is, in those six starts Cleveland has managed to score 15 runs.

The bigger part of the problem is Jake has allowed 21 runs while averaging just over six innings per start.

Westbrook is only six and eight in 20 appearances against Minnesota, but he does carry an ERA of 3.65 against them. So he does pitch well against them, he just does not get the results.

Most of the damage has been done to him in the

Metrodome, which is the place sinkerballers go to die.

At Jacobs Field, Westrbook has won five of his seven decisions with a 2.56 ERA.

Matt Garza falls into the pile of bad luck pitchers. He has made three starts for Minnesota since being recalled on July 2, and has allowed an earned run in one of them.

Yet, he has lost two of them.

He took one loss without allowing an earned run when an unearned run accounted for all the scoring in a loss to Detroit.

Then he had the gall to expect a chance to win a game that he allowed three runs in against Anaheim.

Matt, look at your teams lineup and you tell me how you can have that kind of expectation.

Garza has made one start against the Indians previously, taking the loss after allowing, you guessed it, three runs.

Garza has allowed eight home runs in his 70 career innings. He does have flyball tendencies, so the ability to limit the opposing baserunners is what gets him by when he does give up the long ball.

Unfortunately for him, the opposition is hitting .280 against him and he walks a guy every other inning in his career.

Sunday, July 29th, 1:05 PM

C.C. Sabathia (13-5, 3.70 ERA) vs. Johan Santana (11-8, 2.94 ERA)

Yes. This is a baseball game in the making. If the pair of 1-0 games last week didn't fulfill your pitcher's duel fix, we got another on the way!

C.C. Sabathia will take the mound Sunday, hopefully looking to bury the Twins for good. Sabathia leads the Majors in wins, and twice this year he has been on the wrong end of 1-0 games.

He is also second in the AL in innings pitched, and fifth in strikeouts.

He has been as much of an ace for a team that has been desperately looking for one since the 1960's as one could be.

This will be Sabathia's second start of the year against Minnesota. In the first, he picked up

the victory by holding the Twins to one run in eight innings of work.

It will be his 23rd career start against the Twins and he is eight and seven in the previous 22.

He has three complete games and one shutout on his resume versus them.

At Jacobs Field, he is two and two with a 2.88 ERA.

The gold standard of left-handed pitching will take the mound against Sabathia and the Indians on Sunday. Johan Santana, the two time AL Cy Young winner, sees his name peppered all over the AL leaderboard, ranking in the top 10 of six different

categories, including innings, strikeouts, ERA, WHIP, wins and complete games.

He will be coming off one of the worst starts in his career, where he allowed four home runs for the first time ever, so you know he is going to be sharp.

This will be Johan's third start of the year versus Cleveland, and he has taken the loss in each of the first two. We have managed to touch him up for six runs in 14 innings of work, most of which came as the result of the long ball.

The first time it was a Travis Hafner home run that unraveled him, and the second it was back to back homers by Victor Martinez and Ryan Garko that accounted for all the

scoring in a 2-0 Indians victory.

Santana is seven and four in 26 prior appearances versus Cleveland with a 3.18 ERA. In 130 career innings, he has more strikeouts (141) than baserunners (138).

The good news is, we do hit our share of home runs against him, 17, which is the second most of any team in baseball.

***□ The Minnesota Twins changed their rotation after the completion of this article.□ Johan Santana will now start Saturday versus Jake Westbrook and Matt Garza will be bumped to the Sunday affair versus C.C. Sabathia.□ Too bad,**

**there is nothing better in my opinion
than watching two aces do battle**

**Up Next: The Texas Rangers invade
"The Jake", concluding the
Indians longest homestand of the
season.**