

Series Preview: Indians at Twins

Written by {ga=pup}

Thursday, August 02 2007 7:00 PM -

The Tribe comes off their worst homestand of the year today and heads to Minnesota for a big series with the Twins, who are just 6 games back of the Tigers and 5.5 games behind the Tribe.

The Indians will be looking for paybacks in the Twin Cities this weekend after the Twinkies came here and took two of three from us at the Jake last weekend. Cris Sykes previews the series for us.



OK, I am taking a pass on last weekend's preview, where I called for the end of the Twins run at a wild card and highlighted the match up of aces between C.C. Sabathia and Johan Santana.

With that out of the way, the Indians will be looking to end the Twins run at the wild card in a four game series highlighted by a match up of aces between C.C. Sabathia and Johan Santana.

Now, is when the baseball season really starts. We are two-thirds of the way into it, the trading deadline has come and gone and now we are to the point that every game is a playoff game.

While it is not exactly win or go home time, it is win or spend the rest of your evening watching scoreboards.

Friday, August 03rd, 8:05 PM

C.C. Sabathia (13-6, 3.58 Earned Run Average) vs. Johan Santana (11-8, 2.92 ERA)

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The Indians will begin the series with the American League in wins and innings pitched on the mound. I can't think of many scenarios that would be better.

Sabathia, who is also third in the AL in strikeouts, has been exactly what this team has needed from him all season long. Sure, there have been a couple of stinkers thrown in the mix, but those happen to everyone. What he has done is taken the ball every fifth day and pitched like a man intent on becoming one of the premier starting pitchers in baseball.

The best news for Sabathia is this game will be played in August, because July did not treat him very well. After dropping two decisions over the first three months of the season, C.C. was on the hook for four losses in July alone. He deserved two of those losses, getting ripped for 13 earned runs in back to back starts to begin the month.

The last two losses can hardly be pinned on him though, as he allowed a mere two earned runs and struck out 18 batters over 14 2/3 innings.

Sabathia will be making his 24th career start against the Twins. His eight and eight career mark against them has as much to do with bad timing as bad pitching, as his career ERA versus Minnesota is a half of a run lower than his career mark.

He has split a pair of decisions this year against Minnesota.

The first was a dominating eight innings of work when he allowed one run to cross the plate to get the win.

The second, just last week, was not as dominating even though he again allowed only one earned run in seven and two-thirds innings.

Some Indians played the eighth inning without their brains properly wired, leading to a pair of unearned runs.

Coupled with the offensive offense that could only muster one run and Sabathia was left searching for his 14

th
win.

If there is a better way to start a series than with C.C. Sabathia on the mound, Minnesota might

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posses it and they just happen to have him ready for this one.

Johan Santana is just about as good as it gets in Major League Baseball. Throw in the fact that he is pitching with a chip on his shoulder about; A) having already lost twice to the Indians this year, B) the Twins making the Indians look aggressive at the trade deadline or C) pitching with the weight of an entire city on his shoulders after the tragic results of the broken bridge that nearly led to this series being postponed.

Santana will bring his seven and four career mark against the Indians to the mound with him. He will also bring an impeccable mark of 46-12 with a 2.61 ERA in the second half of the season over his career.

Combine those numbers with a career 45-18 mark at the Metrodome and you realize C.C. is going to have to bring his best stuff to start this series out with a win.

Saturday August 4th, 3:55 PM

Aaron Laffey (MLB Debut) vs. Matt Garza (1-2, 1.37 ERA)

While Aaron Laffey has not necessarily been officially named the starting pitcher for Saturday's game, it is a pretty positive assumption that he will. Congratulations Aaron, for your big league debut you get to pitch a nationally televised afternoon affair in the middle of a pennant race.

Good luck with that.

Aaron Laffey is getting this opportunity based on a spectacular stretch of pitching in the Indians minor league system, where he went 11-4 with a 2.99 ERA in 19 starts between Double-A and Triple-A. Laffey is a groundball pitcher with a power sinker that he can throw to either side of

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the plate. He has shown the ability to get the strike out when needed averaging six and a half strikeouts per nine innings, while averaging two walks per nine innings.

The Metrodome has eaten up its share of groundball pitchers, so this is not exactly a great assignment for his first career start. One of his best attributes is his toughness, so this should be a good first test.

Laffey will be matching up with Matt Garza, who just happens to be the Twin who matched up with C.C. in his last start and held his own.

Garza, who will be making his fifth start of the year, set a career high in strikeouts in that match up with the Indians in only six innings of work. He has limited opponents to a .225 batting average and has allowed only four earned runs in his 24 innings this year.

In his two career starts against the Indians, he has the no decision from one week ago and he took a loss last September. In 11 innings, he has allowed four earned runs with 16 strikeouts and five walks.

Sunday, August 5th, 2:10 PM

Fausto Carmona (13-5, 3.27 ERA) vs. Scott Baker (5-4, 4.88 ERA)

As happy as Sabathia was for July to end, Carmona is equally upset. For the month, Carmona made six starts and allowed eight earned runs.

The only thing that kept him from a six-win month was the ineptitude of the Tribe's offense in Texas in his last start.

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Carmona, currently tied with Sabathia for the AL lead in wins, will look to continue his domination of the Twins. He has already beaten them in both starts this year and has done so without leaving much of a doubt. In 16 2/3 innings, Fausto has allowed 10 hits, four walks and two earned runs.

In his second start versus Minnesota, Carmona threw his first complete game, shutting out the Twins on four hits.

Scott Baker gets the unenviable task of matching up with Carmona on Sunday. Baker has been up to the challenge on most days this year, making for another potential great pitching match up in this series.

In his 13 starts, Baker has allowed three earned runs or less in eight of them. He has been touched up a few times, so it appears that if he is off he is way off.

In his four "Cliff Lee starts", he has an ERA of 11.61.

In his other nine starts, his ERA is 3.59.

The sun seems to be bad news for Mr. Baker and his 10.10 daytime ERA bodes well for the Indians on Sunday afternoon.

Baker has made five previous starts against the Indians, winning once and losing three times. In 26 1/3 innings, Baker has given up five home runs, 16 earned runs, walked eight and struck out 17.

Monday, August 6th, 8:10 PM

Paul Byrd (9-4, 4.43 ERA) vs. Carlos Silva (9-11, 4.61 ERA)

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Welcome to the hit fest! This is a match up of the pitchers who have allowed the fourth and fifth most hits in the American League. I am guessing the guys will have their bats ready to go on Monday afternoon, for both sides.

Paul Byrd is still winning. It still isn't pretty, but it is effective. I am not naïve enough to count on him to continue to dance around 1.26 hits per inning.

I am naïve enough to think the solution will involve him giving up less hits per inning, because the alternative is he begins to surrender more runs, which equals more losses.

More losses is not something the Indians can afford.

Byrd has won both of his starts against Minnesota in 2007. In both games, he managed his way through seven innings of work, allowing five runs the first time and four the second.

In typical Byrd fashion, he has allowed 17 hits in those 14 innings but has been supported with double digit runs scored in both contests.

For his career, Byrd is eight and three against Minnesota, including a five and one mark at the Metrodome. In his eight starts at Minnesota, Byrd has allowed less than a hit per inning, which is very noteworthy. He has limited the Twins to 15 earned runs on 50 hits in 55 innings at the Metrodome.

Carlos Silva is Paul Byrd, without the run support. He doesn't strike anyone out. He walks very few hitters.

He does give up almost as many hits per inning as Paul Byrd.

Carlos Silva does not like to see the Cleveland Indians. His career ERA against

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the Indians is over five.

He gives up about 12 hits and a home run per nine innings against Cleveland.

He has won four of eight decisions, so it is not all bad.

This will be his third start of the year against the Indians. In his first, he took a no decision and limited the Indians to three runs in five innings and is one of about 532 pitchers to set a season high in strikeouts against them with six.

His was touched with a loss in his second start, when he allowed five earned runs in six innings.

Up Next: Three with the White Sox