

A New Sheriff In Town

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
Monday, September 03 2007 7:00 PM -

Two times in the past five days, C.C. Sabathia and Johan Santana have gone toe to toe ... with The Crooked Cap besting Johan in both contests. Paulie Cous says that we have witnessed a changing of the guard in regards to the top starter in the AL Central, and possibly in all of the American League. Paul breaks down C.C.'s last ten starts, and his season as a whole in his latest column for us.



Twice in the past five days, C.C. and The Great Santana have squared off against each other, with the Crooked Cap besting the Cy Young winner both times, winning 4-3 last Wednesday and 5-0 Monday afternoon. Perhaps in the last week, we have all witnessed a changing of the guard in regards to the top starter in the AL Central, and possibly in all of the American League.

Before the cries of blasphemy and homerism start, consider the numbers of C.C. over his past 10 starts:

2.16 ERA, 1.08 WHIP, 4.25 K for every BB (51 K to 12 BB)

Did I mention that he hasn't given up more than 2 ER in any of those 10 starts with 8 of the 10 being 7 innings or longer, all coming with the Indians making a giant push for the playoffs?

C.C. is now tied for the AL lead in Wins with 16, leads the AL in Innings Pitched

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with 211, is 6th in the AL in ERA at 3.24, and is 4th in the AL in K with 182. Granted, Santana comes in above the Hefty Lefty in ERA and K; but with the Indians in the pennant race, C.C. has put the team on his back and has given the Indians a chance to win every game he has started (assuming they can score 3 runs, which is no given) over the last month and a half.

Santana now sits at 0-5 against the Tribe, sitting on a 4.38 ERA and a 1.15 WHIP in 6 starts against the Featherheads. Obviously, some of the onus falls on the Twins' offense for not getting Santana a W, but the Indians' hitters (Jhonny Peralta excluded) seem to have figured out the once-unhittable Johan.

But that's bound to happen anytime a pitcher logs 5 decisions against a team in one year, right? The hitters get a chance to see how a pitcher approaches different situations, have seen the arsenal of pitches, and can adjust to the idiosyncrasies of the pitcher.

If that's the case, explain how C.C. is now 4-1 against the boys from the Land of 10,000 Lakes with a 1.51 ERA and a 1.07 WHIP. Again, some of that falls on the hitters for the Twinkies, but it shows how C.C. has embraced the adjustments that the elite pitchers in the league have mastered. While the Twins have seen the aCCe in 5 starts, they either have yet to make the proper adjustments to hit him or C.C. has stayed a step ahead of them, mixing his pitches and keeping hitters off-balance.

Whatever the case is, confidence in the Tribe ace grew as the games wore on in both Sabathia-Santana match-ups and the feeling that the Indians used to face (utter hopelessness) when drawing the Johan straw from the Minnesota pool settled into the Minnesota dugout.

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That feeling of hopelessness found in the Twins' clubhouse cannot be unique to the AL Central rivals though as it must be the same feeling that permeates AL lineups when the 290 pounds (plus about...oh...35 pounds) that is C.C. strides to the mound this year.

C.C. may not have a chance to go for 20 wins this year, depending upon how the last week of the season shakes out and how the Indians want to (fingers double-crossed) set up their playoff rotation. But Sabathia has undeniably taken the step that we've been waiting for.

He's an ace. And a homegrown one at that.

Save all of the talk about contracts and trades and MTV Cribs for a while.

The Indians are in a pennant race (sitting pretty at 6 games up) and their aCCe is making a statement throughout the league every time he takes the ball.