

The Roundtable: ALCS Predictions

Written by {ga=consigliere}

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Holy Homerville Batman! We gathered the roundtable back together to talk a little ALCS, and well ... let's just say that all the writers at TCF are thinking along the same lines. The Indians are underdogs in Vegas, but for a variety of reasons, the posse here at TCF is feeling really, really good about the Indians chances to go back to the World Series. It's been 59 years since we won one, with losses in '54, '95, and '97. Can the Tribe get back? Our writers opine.



After a thrilling first round series against the hated Yankees, the Indians get things rolling again tonight with Game One of the American League Championship Series (ALCS) against the Boston Red Sox. On paper, this series looks like a great matchup, pitting the American League's (AL) two best teams up against each other for the right to go to the World Series. Neither team looks to have one decided advantage over the other as both teams have excellent starting pitching, deep bullpens, and good offenses.

Like we did with the Yankees series, we gathered the thoughts of several of the Tribe writers here at TheClevelandFan.com to get their opinions and predictions on how they see things shaking out this series:

[Tony Lastoria](#): ☐ Wow, what a series this is going to be. When you look up and down the roster and coaching staffs for both teams, there just is no clear weakness between the two teams. The one decided advantage may be at closer, where Boston has Papelbon and the Indians have Borowski.

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That said, this series will be decided more on what happens from innings one through eight than what happens in inning number nine. It should be a heavyweight fight the first two games with aces C.C. Sabathia and Josh Beckett taking the to the hill in Game One, followed by another pair of aces in Fausto Carmona and Curt Schilling in Game Two. In both those games, it could be one mistake (two-run or three-run homer) or a lucky bounce that is the difference.

If the Indians can split in Fenway, I feel confident they will come home and win two out of three before they have to go back to Boston to win one game. They do it in dramatic fashion, winning Game Seven late in an instant classic and head back to the World Series for the first time since 1997 where they meet another Team of Destiny the Colorado Rockies.

[Rich Swerbinsky](#) : I've been saying it's going to be an Indians/Rockies World Series from the beginning, and I sure as hell am not going to back off that prediction after both teams looked dominant in dispatching of their first round foes.

With the Tribe, I just think it's their year. The year they end the 43 year drought without a professional sports title in this town. Everything is just coming together for them. They're playing their best ball at the right time. They have two elite starting pitchers, who will throw four of the first six games in this series. The chemistry, the intangibles, the production in clutch situations down the stretch ... it all to me points to one thing. A World Series title.

Indians lose tonight. Win four straight after that. Tribe in five.

[Paul Cousineau](#): The Indians find themselves looking into a mirror facing the Red Sox in the ALCS as the two best teams in baseball lock horns. Both teams boast top-of-the-rotation studs, decent (if not great) depth to fill out the rotation, a solid bullpen, and a patient and balanced offense. All the way down the line, the Red Sox have an answer for the Indians...but before that Cleveland inferiority complex seeps in, realize that the Indians also have an answer for the Red Sox.

The teams are evenly matched enough that this series feels like it might come down to the way the ball bounces, an arbitrary play that turns out to be huge, or even a controversial or momentous moment that swings

the tide in favor of one or the other team. When it's all said and done, though, the playoffs are all about pitching and against any other team, the Indians quality and depth gives them a huge advantage. But the Red Sox have Beckett, Schilling, and Papelbon at their disposal - players worthy of the high praise bestowed upon them - to counter C.C., Fausto, and the Raffies.

Assuming that the projected pitching match-ups hold up, I see Beckett and C.C. splitting home and home and the Indians and Red Sox splitting the Westbrook/Dice-K and Byrd/Wakefield starts. The ace in the hole for the Indians remains Carmona, who will beat Schilling (ironically by playing the same role that Schilling did for the 2001 D-Backs) twice and being the difference in the series.

Get your dancing shoes on Cleveland...it's Indians in six.

[Erik Cassano](#): □ The Yankee cheerleaders in the national media (I'm looking at you, Chip Caray) can mutter under their breath all they want, but this is the ALCS that should have happened: The two best teams in the American League squaring off for the pennant.

The pitching matchups in Games 1 and 2 are epic, though my personal preference would have been Fausto Carmona taking the mound in Game 3, putting him on pace to start a Game 7. As of now, Jake Westbrook's spot comes up for a possible Game 7. The way his command of his sinker has faded in and out this year, that makes me a bit nervous.

But who am I to question Eric Wedge after the masterful job he did in managing the Indians past the Yankees? And I'm not being sarcastic when I say that.

I think the standard rules apply here, straight from the "How to Win a Best-of-Seven Series When You Don't Have Homefield

Advantage" manual: Split the first two on the road, then come home and take two-of-three, then take Game 6 or 7 to close it out.

It worked against Seattle in 1995 and Baltimore in 1997. Those series ended in six games, and I'm taking the same here: Fausto has the honor of pitching the Indians to their sixth AL pennant at Fenway Park.

Indians in six.

Todd Dery: □ So, I said Tribe in five against the Yankees. I'm glad to say I was wrong...by a game. This time around, it will be different. The difference here is that the Indians will be facing a team with a solid rotation and bullpen, two things the Indians had easily over the Yankees. With speed at the bottom (Crisp, Lugo) and power in the middle (Ortiz, Ramirez, and Lowell), the Sox are loaded.

Who will be big? Ryan Garko will get every pitch he wants as Boston will pitch around Victor Martinez every chance they can. Kenny Lofton will continue his stellar October play. The bullpen will again come up large, with Jenson Lewis seeing more time than we expect. On the downside, the Tribe won't be able to stop David Ortiz.

When everything on paper tells you one thing, I tend to go the other way. While Josh Beckett and "Red Light" Curt Schilling are a power pair at the top, the Tribe will take Game Two in Fenway behind Fausto Carmona before returning to the Jake. There, Jake Westbrook's sinker will stay down and he will feed off of the raucous Cleveland crowd to take a 2-1 lead. Desperate, the Sox will turn to Beckett on three days rest to take Game Four over Paul Byrd. Game Five will go to the Tribe behind a dominating performance from C.C. Sabathia. Back to Fenway we will go where the Fausto-express will roll on. The Sox would have Beckett on full rest for a potential Game Seven. Except there won't be one. Tribe in six. Can you say Team of Destiny?

Brian McPeck: This series doesn't scare me like the Yankees series did. I still believe the Tribe maintains an edge in starting pitching and there is not the urgency in a 7-game series that there is in a 5-game match-up. On top of that, you have a Red Sox lineup that, while dangerous in spots, is not a one-through-nine meat grinder and whose key parts (David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez) haven't always been healthy or productive this season.

Josh Beckett is a tough night. In fact, there is a chance that he could be three tough nights with the way the series is scheduled to be played. But the Indians have shown the ability to make difficult pitchers work hard (see Johan Santana) and the cumulative effect that has on Beckett could come into play as the series proceeds. A key for the Tribe will be to get a win in a game that either Paul Byrd or Jake Westbrook starts. That would take the pressure off the Big Two and go a long way toward putting the Indians into the World Series.

My heart told me the Indians would win in four games against the Yankees while my head told me it would be a five game Yankee victory. My heart and my head are on the same page in this series. The Indians starting pitching is the difference as they win in six games.

Dennis Nosco: □ Besides all the normal side stories (Manny being Manny, JoBo being JoBo) I look for this series to be an instant classic:

Games: 7

Winner: Cleveland

MVPs: Carmona, Sizemore

I think we split in Boston, take two out of three in Cleveland and, obviously, they take game six and we win Game Seven in a very wild and entertaining game which will have not one but TWO unexpected heroes.

Both of these teams have weaknesses that the other teams will exploit, but both have strengths that will show through including more of our one through nine approach that really showed up in the Yankees series.

I think you will see a more loose Indians team, if that is possible. Oh, and if you thought the fans were into it in the first series, this second series will REALLY knock your socks off. Cleveland fans will be as loud and raucous as you could ever imagine them being.

Jarad Regano: □ For whatever reason, I have been more optimistic about this team since clinching the Central than most of the teams of the '90's. I guess that is what starting pitching will do for the psyche.

The Indians are not going to face a battered rotation as they did in the Yankees series. However, I think it should be noted that they also won't go against a tough lefty the likes of Andy Pettitte. The Tribe will be able to put their best offensive and defensive lineups on the field for every game against right handed pitching, which is something they could not do against the pinstripers.

The series has a chance to be a great one, and may leave us kicking ourselves for resting starters in Seattle and not try to secure home field advantage. Three out of the four potential games in Boston will feature one of our aces, though, and that may help the Indians more than had the Tribe hosted Games One and Two. I think the Indians are going back to the series, and they'll do it in six games.