

Top 10: October Magic at the Jake & the Prog

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Saturday, October 01 2011 11:00 PM - Last Updated Sunday, October 02 2011 6:19 AM



On fall days like these, with the leaves changing, a chill wind whipping and postseason baseball on the tube, the absence of the Indians from October evokes pangs. Not too long ago Tribe fans considered the postseason a virtual birthright, with their team playing playoff baseball six times in seven years around the turn of the century and again in 2007.

There have been a lot of great moments in those seven postseason appearances since 1995- six series wins, four trips to the ALCS and two American League pennants. Many of those moments have come on the road. Five of those six series were wrapped up on enemy soil, along with some of the iconic sequences- [Kenny Lofton's mad dash](#) in Game Six of the 1995 ALCS, the [Tony](#)

[Fernandez bomb](#)

to win the 1997 pennant and Paul Byrd's courageous effort to close out the Yankees in the 2007 Division Series, to name a few.

But this story is about October at Jacobs Field/Progressive Park. The Indians are 21-13 in postseason games at the corner of Carnegie and Ontario, six of those wins coming on Cleveland's last at-bat. The park has seen its share of playoff defeats- the two home World Series losses to Florida still rankle almost as much as the Game Seven defeat in Miami; the Tribe should have wrapped that series up in Cleveland- but more often than not the Jacobs Field Magic has been alive and well in October.

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Here are the ten best Tribe postseason games at home since 1995 (in Yours Truly's opinion, of course):

10.) 1999 ALDS Game One: Cleveland 3, Boston 2

[Box Score](#)

Cleveland caught a huge break in this series opener when forearm trouble forced Red Sox ace and Tribe nemesis Pedro Martinez out of the after the fourth inning with Boston holding a 2-0 lead. With Bartolo Colon handcuffing Red Sox batters, Jim Thome belted a two-run homer off Derek Lowe to tie the score in the sixth. Travis Fryman ended it in the ninth with an RBI single off Rich Garces, putting the Indians one game up in the series. They would go two up before the pitching collapsed, as Boston scored 41 runs in its last nineteen innings and swept the final three games, including the Game Five Jacobs Field clincher.



9.) 2007 ALCS Game Three: Cleveland 4, Boston 2

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It was Cleveland's first home Championship Series game since 1998 and one of the biggest heroes was, appropriately enough, a blast from the past. Kenny Lofton put the Tribe ahead to stay with a two-out, two-run home run off Daisuke Matsuzaka in the bottom of the second and that, along with a pair of insurance runs in the fifth, was enough to give Cleveland the victory and the 2-1 series lead. Jake Westbrook got the win with six-and-two-thirds innings of solid work. The Indians would win again the following night to take a 3-1 series lead only to fold in the final three games.

8.) 1995 World Series Game Three: Cleveland 7, Atlanta 6 (11)

[Box Score](#)

Cleveland came home desperate for a victory after dropping the first two games of the World Series in Fulton County Stadium and stormed out to an early 4-1 lead, knocking John Smoltz out of the box in the third inning. Atlanta rallied against Charles Nagy, taking a 6-5 lead in the eighth and threatening to take a 3-0 series bulge and set up a 1954-like sweep. But Sandy Alomar's RBI double tied the game in the bottom of the inning, and [Eddie Murray's line single to center](#) scored Alvaro Espinoza and won it in the eleventh. It was the Tribe's first home win in the World Series since Game Four of the 1948 Classic, when they knocked off the then-Boston Braves in Municipal Stadium.

7.) 1997 ALCS Game Four: Cleveland 8, Baltimore 7

[Box Score](#)

Sandy Alomar's ninth-inning RBI single to the wall in left gave the Tribe the win and a 3-1 series advantage in a wild game in which the lead changed hands six times. Cleveland trailed 5-2 before rallying back with a run in the fourth and four in the fifth to take a 7-5 lead. Baltimore chipped away, tying the game on Rafael Palmeiro's run-scoring single off Jose Mesa in the

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ninth. The teams combined for five home runs in this hard-hitting game, a radical departure from the low-scoring thrillers that characterized Cleveland's run through the '97 American League playoffs.

6.) 1995 ALCS Game Five: Cleveland 3, Seattle 2

[Box Score](#)

With the series tied 2-2 the Indians needed a win before going back to the Kingdome- where the Mariners were practically unbeatable- but they trailed 2-1 going into the bottom of the sixth. After Eddie Murray hit a one-out double, Jim Thome blasted a two-run shot deep into the right-field seats off Chris Bosio to give the Indians the lead. The bullpen took over from there with three scoreless innings, Paul Assenmacher and Eric Plunk working out of jams in the seventh and eighth and Jose Mesa nailing it down with a one-two-three ninth. Two nights later in the Kingdome, [the Indians defeated Seattle](#) 4-0 to secure the franchise's first pennant since 1954.



5.) 2007 ALDS Game Two: Cleveland 2, New York 1 (11)

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On an unseasonably warm 80-degree night by the lake, it took a force of nature- literally- to save the Tribe's bacon and secure a 2-0 series lead. New York led 1-0 going into the bottom of the eighth and had rookie setup sensation Joba Chamberlain on the mound when Progressive Field was inundated with midges swarming in off Lake Erie. Unnerved by the buggy influx, Chamberlain gave up the tying run without surrendering a hit, Grady Sizemore racing home on a two-out wild pitch. Travis Hafner won it in the eleventh with a single to right. Fausto Carmona pitched perhaps his best game that night, allowing three hits in nine innings. Cleveland went on to clinch the series in four, taking the finale in Yankee Stadium.

4.) 1997 ALDS Game Four: Cleveland 3, New York 2

[Box Score](#)

The Yankees were four outs away from wrapping up the series when [Sandy Alomar blasted a Mariano Rivera fastball](#) into the right-field seats to tie the score at 2-2. One inning later Omar Vizquel ricocheted a single off Ramiro Mendoza into left-center, plating the game-winning run and completing one of the most stunning rallies in Jacobs Field history. Cleveland completed its comeback the next night with a 4-3 Game Five victory, sending the heavily favored defending World Champions home for the autumn and moving on to the ALCS.

3.) 1997 ALCS Game Three: Cleveland 2, Baltimore 1 (12)

[Box Score](#)

After coming from behind to tie the series in Game Two the Indians came home and took control with a victory that made one wonder if something supernatural wasn't willing the Tribe toward a fate unexpected and magical. Mike Mussina struck out fifteen in seven innings, yet

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Cleveland led 1-0 going into the ninth on a David Justice RBI single. Marquis Grissom's loss in the lights of a Brady Anderson fly ball played the tying run in the ninth. With Grissom on third and one out in the bottom of the eleventh Randy Myers uncorked a wild pitch that may or may not have grazed Omar Vizquel's bat. The umpires said it didn't and Grissom scored the game-winner.

2.) 1997 ALDS Game Five: Cleveland 4, New York 3

[Box Score](#)

On a pulsating night in Cleveland the Indians won a postseason series at home for the first time since 1920, and [completed a near-miracle comeback](#) in the process. Four outs away from a series defeat in Game Four, the Indians finished off the Yankees the next night, with Jaret Wright holding off the New York lineup while his teammates made every clutch play. From 1996 through the 2001 postseason, the Yankees won fourteen postseason series against one loss - this one. Cleveland's upset of the defending and future World Champions set in motion a run that carried the Indians within two outs of their own title.



1995 ALDS Game One: Cleveland 5, Boston 4 (13)

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It was the first Indians postseason game since Game Four of 1954 and as it turned out, it may have been the most dramatic in franchise playoff history- a five-hour, back-and-forth gut-churner that saw both teams- and the nervous Jacobs Field crowd- careen from the brink of victory to the brink of defeat, and back again.

After a forty-minute rain delay the Red Sox scored first, John Valentin rapping a two-run homer off Dennis Martinez in the third. Roger Clemens muffed the Tribe for five innings but was touched for three two-out runs in the sixth, Eddie Murray putting Cleveland ahead 3-2 with an RBI hit. Luis Alicea led off the eighth with a solo shot off Julian Tavaréz to tie the game and when Mike Stanton struck out Paul Sorrento with two outs in the ninth the teams moved into extra innings.

Boston's third home run of the night, a solo shot by Tim Lincecum, put the Red Sox up 4-3 in the top of the eleventh. Albert Belle promptly tied the score with his own home run leading off the bottom of the inning. When Red Sox manager Kevin Kennedy had Belle's bat confiscated to search for cork, Belle showed the Boston dugout a flexed forearm, showing them where the real source of his power was. Belle's flex became the Che poster, the enduring image of the 1995 Indians. But there was still baseball to be played on this night.

When the end finally came with two outs in the bottom of the thirteenth, it came courtesy of an unexpected weapon in Cleveland's cannonading lineup. After Tony Peña ran the count to three-and-oh against Zane Smith he got a take sign from third-base coach Jeff Newman. Missing- or ignoring- the sign, the 38-year old backup catcher got into a fastball and drove it high, deep and gone into the left-field bleachers, sending the remaining fans into a two AM frenzy and sending the Indians home with a 5-4 victory. After 47 years without a postseason win, the Tribe was off the schneid. They swamped the Sox by a combined score of 12-2 in the next two games and celebrated the sweep on the diamond at Fenway Park, just like they had in 1948.