



What the Oakland Athletics have done this season is nothing short of amazing. They hold the worst team batting average in the American League, have a bunch of pitchers nobody's heard of, and yet they're a game ahead of the Angels and their ridiculous payroll. If the playoffs started today, Oakland would just be on the outside looking in, but they're still having a terrific season. With the lowly Indians in town, it's a big series for the Athletics and a tough spot for the Indians.

This past week in Anaheim, the Indians did what they have done best this season. They won the first game of the series and lost the next two. The Indians are 25-15 in series openers this season, making them a combined 29-49 in the other games in a series. They've lost 12 of their last 13 home games by an average of 4.9 runs per game. Because of the horrible stretch of road play, the Indians have now fallen below the Colorado Rockies in run differential and have the second-worst mark in the Major Leagues at -111. They trail only the epically-pathetic Houston Astros who are -152.

The Athletics begin this series 1.5 games behind the Rays and Orioles in the wild card hunt, but do have a game in hand. Oakland began the year just 22-29 through May and by the end of July, they were 56-47. They went 19-5 in July and held the opposition to 83 runs in 24 games. Young pitching and timely hitting has been the recipe for success for Oakland this season, just like it always is with the cash-strapped Moneyballers.

It's a big weekend series for the A's and another chance to play spoiler for the Tribe this weekend in Oakland. Here are the pitching matchups:



Friday August 17, 10:05 p.m. ET; Zach McAllister (5-4, 3.46) v. Tommy Milone (9-9, 3.91)

Zach McAllister bounced back in his last start to defeat the Boston Red Sox and exorcise the demons of his previous two outings. After giving up 14 runs in 7.2 innings in his first two August starts, McAllister held the Red Sox to two runs on just three hits last Saturday in Cleveland. In 10 of McAllister's 13 starts, he's walked two or fewer batters. The final month-and-a-half of the season is big for McAllister, as he's pitching for his position in the rotation. If healthy, he will undoubtedly be in the rotation, but could be as high as the #2 starter with how awful the other starters have been.

Tomaso Milone is an 88 mph lefty who the Indians have never seen, so this is a terrible matchup for them. Milone, in his first full season in the Majors, came over in the Gio Gonzalez trade this past December. He's pitched well for the A's and has been especially good at home, where he has a 2.13 ERA in 71.2 innings of work, taking advantage of the pitcher-friendly confines of Oakland Coliseum.

McAllister has never faced the A's and Milone has never faced the Indians. Both pitchers have good control and so two offenses with low batting averages will have to string hits together to score runs. McAllister has allowed just nine home runs in 74.2 innings and Milone has allowed just two home runs at home this season.

