The marathon has been reduced to a final jog to the finish line. With 159 games in the books, just three remain before the Indians pack up their lockers and head their separate ways until mid-February. This series could mark the final time Shin-Soo Choo, Chris Perez, Justin Masterson, and various others don an Indians uniform. Will this be the final series that Sandy Alomar Jr. manages in the third base dugout at Progressive Field? A lot of uncertainty lies ahead for the players who will be taking the field for this series against the Chicago White Sox.

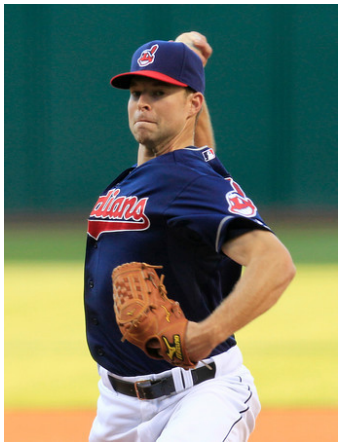
In the present, however, the Indians still have three games left to play and a chance to end the White Sox season. Trailing by three games with three games to play, a White Sox loss or a Tigers win will decide the American League Central Division champion. The White Sox would need to sweep the Indians and the Tigers would have to be swept by the Royals for there to be a one-game playoff. With the Tigers/Royals series opener beginning at 8:10 p.m. ET, the Indians could end the White Sox season as early as Monday night.

The image of Ozzie Guillen holding his hands to his throat during the Indians' 2005 choke job during the final week of the season still sticks in the mind of fans, even though very few players from that Indians team are still around and Guillen has moved on to Miami. In any event, there has to be some level of satisfaction for preventing a division foe from going to the playoffs.

Perhaps more than that, the Indians just want to ride this mini-wave of momentum into the offseason. They have won back-to-back series for the first time since June 28-July 4 and some positive vibes after August's epic collapse would be good for the psyche. After going 5-24 in August, the Indians can finish off a .500 September/October if they sweep the White Sox. It may sound pretty impossible, but the White Sox have nothing left to play for if they lose on Monday night.

While the Indians are playing as good as they have played in a couple of months, the White Sox are freefalling. After winning five straight to open their lead up to push their lead to three games on September 18, the White Sox have lost 10 of 12. It puts the Indians collapse in perspective. At least they didn't fall apart when it really mattered.

Here are the pitching matchups for the final series of the 2012 season:



Monday October 1, 7:05 p.m. ET; TBD v. Corey Kluber (2-4, 5.02)

As of Monday morning, the White Sox had not named a starter for the series opener. Some sources are listing Hector Santiago, though that was dependent on their position in the playoff picture. The White Sox have yet to make a formal announcement of who will start. With Monday an absolute must-win, it's hard to say who will start for the Sox. It will likely be either Hector Santiago or Francisco Liriano.

Corey Kluber takes the mound for the final time in 2012, looking to build off being the winning pitcher in his last start against the White Sox. It was the best start of Kluber's career, going seven innings and allowing just two runs in a 4-3 victory. Kluber has pitched his way into serious consideration for this rotation in 2013 based on his performance. He'll have one final shot to impress.

Kluber is 0-3 in six home starts this season with a 5.17 ERA. He has faced the White Sox twice in his career, once in 2011 in relief, and his last start on September 25.

Tuesday October 2, 7:05 p.m. ET; Jake Peavy (11-12, 3.37) v. Justin Masterson (11-15, 5.03)

Jake Peavy reasserted himself as a very good starting pitcher this season after battling a lot of injuries in recent years. The White Sox have already said that they will decline Peavy's $22M option for 2013 and he may be available on the free agent market. Showing the ability to throw over 200 innings and post a very respectable ERA in a ballpark not favorable to pitchers, Peavy will be trying to finish the year with a .500 record, though it should be a lot better. He is just 4-7 with a 4.05 ERA since the All-Star break, showing some signs of wear, but this could be his final start in the black and white.

Justin Masterson's nightmare season will come to an end on Tuesday night. After taking steps toward becoming an ace in 2011, Masterson has been battered more often than not in 2012, as evidenced by his 5.03 ERA and 1.47 WHIP. One of the biggest anomalies in Masterson's season was his home/road split. With a home ERA of 3.75 and a road ERA of 6.40, it really has been a frustrating year for the big righty. He'll try to end the season on a good note against a team he has had success against.

Peavy is 4-3 with a 4.32 ERA in nine career starts against the Indians. In four starts at Progressive Field, Peavy is 2-1 with a 4.05 ERA. Masterson is just 4-5 in 18 appearances, 14 starts, against the White Sox, but with a 2.77 ERA. This season, Masterson hasn't been very good, allowing the White Sox to bat .330 off of him and with as many walks as strikeouts.

[redacted]