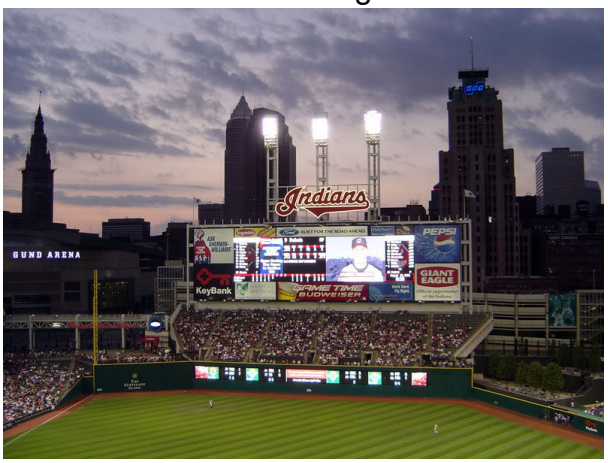
Baseball is back. The 2007 Major League Baseball season kicks off tonight when the St. Louis Cardinals and New York Mets play the season



"The Roundtable" is a regular weekly Sunday feature that will continue throughout the year covering hot topics surrounding the Browns, Buckeyes, Cavaliers, and Indians. One question. Several different answers from TheClevelandFan.com panel.

Baseball is back.

The 2007 Major League Baseball season kicks off tonight when the St. Louis Cardinals and New York Mets play the season's inaugural game at 8:05 p.m. EST tonight on ESPN2. The Indians and most the rest of baseball start the season tomorrow, and the Indians start things off with the Chicago White Sox at 2:05 p.m. EST in Chicago.

The national pundits have mostly all claimed the Indians are in for a big rebound season. But, is the national media making a good unbiased opinion of the team from a distance? Or, because they do not follow this organization everyday, are they missing things that the fans see?

TheClevelandFan.com writers share their thoughts on how they see the Indians season playing out, and also predict several of the year-end awards and how they see the playoffs setting up and playing out:

Rich Swerbinsky: I've got the Indians finishing 90-72 this season, which I sadly see as only being good enough for third place in the toughest division in baseball, and likely 3-5 games out of the playoffs. The things that failed this team last year still scare the hell out of me. Our defense is still shaky at SS and C with very young players at 2b and 3b. Our bullpen is reliant on aging vets and not quite ready for primetime youths. And our manager is still Eric Wedge (gulp). But come on, all that said, this is a good baseball team. The Indians are as good 1 through 7 in their rotation as anyone in baseball with Carmona and Miller in the wings. They

have a dynamic young core of superstars in the lineup. And their depth, both on the bench, and first ups from AAA ... is much better than last season. There's no reason to believe that, once again, this team won't be amongst the best in the league in runs scored and SP ERA.

American League (AL) Predictions:

AL East: New York Yankees
AL Central: Detroit Tigers
AL West: Oakland A's
AL Wildcard: Minnesota Twins
AL MVP: Alex Rodriguez, Yankees
AL CY Young: Johan Santana, Twins
AL Comeback Player of the Year (POY): Rich Harden, A's
AL Rookie of the Year (ROY): Phillip Hughes, Yankees
First manager to be fired: Mike Hargrove, Mariners

National League (NL) Predictions:

NL East: Atlanta Braves
NL Central: Milwaukee Brewers
NL West: Los Angeles Dodgers
NL Wildcard: San Diego Padres
NL MVP: Jose Reyes, Mets
NL CY Young: John Smoltz, Braves
NL Comeback POY: Derek Lee, Cubs
NL ROY: Troy Tulowitzki, Rockies
First manager to be fired: Charlie Manuel, Phillies

Playoff Predictions:

AL Divisional Series (ALDS): Yankees over Twins
AL Divisional Series (ALDS): Tigers over A's
NL Divisional Series (NLDS): Dodgers over Brewers
NL Divisional Series (NLDS): Braves over Padres
AL Championship Series (ALCS): Tigers over Yankees
NL Championship Series (NLCS): Dodgers over Braves
World Series: Dodgers over Tigers

Steve Buffum: The Indians have a lot of moving parts this season: some of it seems like prudent shopping while other things look like needless complication. The Indians don't need everything to go right, but have enough things that appear like they'll go "eh:" Trot Nixon, Casey Blake, Roberto Hernandez ... I have hopes for the team, but the fact is that Pythagorean underperformance or not, it's unusual for a team to gain 15 games from one season to the next. That leaves the Indians in the high-80's range if things go well, and that's a pretty narrow edge to be walking. I feel this is a good team, but not really a championship team. It should be noted that I didn't consider St. Louis or Detroit any better than

"good", either, though ...

American League (AL) Predictions:

AL East: New York Yankees
AL Central: Minnesota Twins
AL West: Los Angeles
AL Wildcard: Cleveland Indians
AL MVP: Vlad Guerrero, Angels
AL CY Young: Johan Santana, Twins
AL Comeback Player of the Year (POY): Carl Pavano, Yankees
AL Rookie of the Year (ROY): Alex Gordon, Royals
First manager to be fired: Mike Hargrove, Mariners

National League (NL) Predictions:

NL East: Philadelphia Phillies
NL Central: Milwaukee Brewers
NL West: San Diego Padres
NL Wildcard: New York Mets
NL MVP: Jose Reyes, Mets
NL CY Young: Roy Oswalt, Astros
NL Comeback POY: Oliver Perez, Mets
NL ROY: Chris Young, Diamondbacks
First manager to be fired: none

Playoff Predictions:

AL Divisional Series (ALDS): Yankees over Indians
AL Divisional Series (ALDS): Twins over Angels
NL Divisional Series (NLDS): Mets over Padres
NL Divisional Series (NLDS): Phillies over Brewers
AL Championship Series (ALCS): Twins over Yankees
NL Championship Series (NLCS): Mets over Phillies
World Series: Twins over Yankees

Tony Lastoria: Earlier in the week, I was going to put the Indians down in second place in the division behind the Detroit Tigers, finishing a game or two out. But, after Kenny Rogers was shelved until at least after the All-Star break, I think this is enough for the Indians to catapult ahead of the Tigers and win the division in a thrilling finish. Sizemore and Hafner will be like Mauer and Morneau for Minnesota last year, leading their teams to the playoffs and being the top MVP choices in the league. Peralta bounces and has a good year, Westbrook wins 17 games in his free agent year, and Sowers continues to improve. On the negative side, the bullpen still struggles but is league average and the Indians fix the issues with a mid-season trade. Also, Nixon and Marte struggle offensively. In the end, the Indians do more than enough good and finish 91-71.

American League (AL) Predictions:

AL East: Boston Red Sox
AL Central: Cleveland Indians
AL West: Oakland Athletics
AL Wildcard: Chicago White Sox
AL MVP: Grady Sizemore, Indians
AL CY Young: Johan Santana, Twins
AL Comeback Player of the Year (POY): Gary Sheffield, Tigers
AL Rookie of the Year (ROY): Daisuke Matsuzaka, Red Sox
First manager to be fired: Mike Hargrove, Mariners

National League (NL) Predictions:

NL East: Philadelphia Phillies
NL Central: St. Louis Cardinals
NL West: Los Angeles Dodgers
NL Wildcard: New York Mets
NL MVP: Jose Reyes, Mets
NL CY Young: Brandon Webb, Diamondbacks
NL Comeback POY: Derrek Lee, Cubs
NL ROY: Chris Ianetta, Rockies
First manager to be fired: none

Playoff Predictions:

ALDS: Indians over Oakland
ALDS: Red Sox over White Sox
NLDS: Phillies over Cardinals
NLDS: Dodgers over Mets
ALCS: Red Sox over Indians
NLCS: Dodgers over Phillies
World Series: Dodgers over Red Sox in seven

Jeff Rickel: Once and a while most everything seems to go well. The Indians have an abundance of talent and I believe the defense and the bullpen will improve leading to an AL Central Division crown. Both Westbrook and Byrd will be traded by the end of July as Adam Miller and Fausto Carmona pitch their way into the rotation. Ryan Garko will be entrenched at 1B by June and contribute to MLB's most prolific offense this year. Jhonny Peralta will rebound and Grady Sizemore will continue to develop, receiving more notice nationally this year. This IS the year where the Indians prove good internal organization building trumps big bucks. The Tribe will finish 97-65 and win their first World Series since 1948, beating the Chicago Cubs in six games.

AL Predictions:

AL East: Boston Red Sox
AL Central: Cleveland Indians
AL West: Oakland Athletics
AL Wildcard: Minnesota Twins
AL MVP: Grady Sizemore, Indians
AL CY Young: Johan Santana, Twins
AL Comeback POY: Jhonny Peralta, Indians
AL ROY: Delmon Young, Devil Rays
First manager to be fired: Joe Torre, Yankees

NL Predictions:

NL East: Philadelphia Phillies
NL Central: Chicago Cubs
NL West: Los Angeles Dodgers
NL Wildcard: New York Mets
NL MVP: Alfonso Soriano, Cubs
NL CY Young: Dontrelle Willis, Marlins
NL Comeback POY: Cliff Floyd, Mets
NL ROY: Kevin Kouzmanoff, Padres
First manager to be fired: Ned Yost, Brewers

Playoff Predictions:

ALDS: Indians over Athletics
ALDS: Twins over Red Sox
NLDS: Cubs over Mets
NLDS: Phillies over Dodgers
ALCS: Indians over Twins
NLCS: Cubs over Phillies
World Series: Indians over Cubs in six.

Cris Sykes: Welcome to the 2007 Cleveland Indians! As you might notice they look a lot like the 2006 Cleveland Indians. Sure Jeremy Sowers is here for a full season, so we get saved from any more Jason Johnson nightmares. Overall, the biggest need the Indians had was the bullpen, and we brought in three new guys who look nearly identical to the three old guys. You say Joe Borowski, I say Bob Wickman. You say Aaron Fultz, I say Scott Sauresuck. You say Roberto Hernandez, I say Guillermo Mota. So we spent some money to replace a shitty bullpen with a shitty bullpen with different names, sounds like a plan. I predict the Cleveland Indians will finish 81-81, good for a third place finish in the AL Central. That is a three game improvement, which is accounted for with the Sowers over Johnson start of the season. Bright spots? Travis Hafner will hit 50 homers. Grady will have 100 extra base hits.

Jhonny Peralta will look interested. The first time you will hear someone mention how good we are based on the Pythcrapola Theory – May 13th.

AL Predictions:

AL East: Boston Red Sox
AL Central: Detroit Tigers
AL West: Oakland A's
AL Wild Card: New York Yankees
AL MVP: Alex Rodriguez, Yankees
AL Cy Young: Rich Harden, A's
AL Comeback POY: Coco Crisp, Red Sox
AL ROY: Philip Hughes, Yankees
First Manager to be Fired: Mike Hargrove, Mariners

NL Predictions:

NL East: Philadelphia Phillies
NL Central: St. Louis Cardinals
NL West: San Francisco Giants
NL Wild Card: New York Mets
NL MVP: Jimmy Rollins, Phillies
NL Cy Young: Brett Myers, Phillies
NL Comeback POY: Derek Lee, Cubs
NL ROY: Troy Tulowitski, Rockies
First Manager to be Fired: Clint Hurdle, Rockies

Playoff Predictions:

ALDS: Yankees over Tigers
ALDS: A's over Red Sox
NLDS: Cardinal over Mets
NLDS: Phillies over Giants
ALCS: Yankees over A's
NLCS: Phillies over Cardinals
World Series: Phillies over Yankees

Erik Cassano: Indians finish: 85-77, fourth place

Being in the uber-tough AL Central is going to hurt the Tribe's record. The only division rival the Indians will win the season series against is the Royals.

The bullpen is still going to be a weakness, with the Indians once again finishing among the

bottom-feeders in saves and reliever ERA. The offense will likely backslide a bit after a feast-or-famine 2006. I think Grady Sizemore and Travis Hafner will regress after monster seasons a year ago.

The true strength of this team is the starting rotation, which should be one-through-five one of baseball's best. But the offense, bullpen and defense are going to frequently fail them.

AL Predictions:

AL East: Ney York Yankees
AL Central: Minnesota Twins
AL West: Los Angeles Angels
AL Wildcard: Boston Red Sox
AL MVP: Alex Rodriguez, Yankees
AL CY Young: Justin Verlander, Tigers
AL Comeback POY: Adrian Beltre, Mariners
AL ROY: Daisuke Matsuzaka, Red Sox
First manager to be fired: Buddy Bell, Royals

NL Predictions:

NL East: Atlanta Braves
NL Central: St. Louis Cardinals
NL West: Arizona Diamondbacks
NL Wildcard: New York Mets
NL MVP: Albert Pujols, Cardinals
NL CY Young: Barry Zito, Giants
NL Comeback POY: Khalil Greene, Padres
NL ROY: Chris Young, Diamondbacks
First manager to be fired: Clint Hurdle, Rockies

Playoff Predictions:

ALDS: Twins over Yankees
ALDS: Red Sox over Angels
NLDS: Cardinals over Braves
NLDS: Mets over Diamondbacks
ALCS: Twins over Red Sox
NLCS: Mets over Cardinals
World Series: Twins over Mets

Todd Dery: The 2007 Indians will be a very interesting team to watch. I enter April with a lot of optimism, but it is tempered. I see big years from C.C. Sabathia, Jake Westbrook, and a breakout season from Jeremy Sowers. The rotation's strength will keep this team in contention through September. Trot Nixon will be a bench player by July - he may be finished. Andy Marte will flame and Casey Blake will be at third by June 1, giving Ryan Garko the first base

job he rightfully deserves. Joe Borowski does one stint on the DL. The problem is the strength of the AL Central. All of that will add up to a 90-72 record, and a second place finish to the Detroit Tigers.

AL Predictions:

AL East: Boston Red Sox
AL Central: Detroit Tigers
AL West: Los Angeles Angels
AL Wildcard: New York Yankees
AL MVP: David Oritz, Red Sox
AL CY Young: Johan Santana , Twins
AL Comeback POY: Gary Sheffield, Tigers
AL ROY: Daisuke Matsuzaka, Red Sox
First manager to be fired: Mike Hargrove, Mariners

NL Predictions:

NL East: New York Mets
NL Central: Milwaukee Brewers
NL West: Los Angeles Dodgers
NL Wildcard: San Francisco Giants
NL MVP: David Wright, Mets
NL CY Young: Matt Cain, Giants
NL Comeback POY: ????
NL ROY: Troy Tulowitski, Rockies
First manager to be fired: Charlie Manuel, Phillies

Playoff Predictions:

ALDS: Red Sox over Angels
ALDS: Tigers over Yankees
NLDS: Dodgers over Brewers
NLDS: Mets over Giants
ALCS: Red Sox over Yankees
NLCS: Dodgers over Giants
World Series: Red Sox over Dodgers

Jarad Regano: 2007 Cleveland Indians: 84-78, 3rd Place AL Central

The Indians were victimized by a poor bullpen and let's face it, a little bit of bad luck last year. All indicators show that they should have had a better won/loss record in 2006. There is making note of this fact, and then there is putting all of your eggs in the Sabermetrics Easter basket. I think the Indians are doing the latter. While middle-of-the-road bullpen arms were added, the Indians once again chose not to add a power bat to protect Travis Hafner in the order. The Tribe should pass Minnesota based on their losses this year, but does anyone

really think Dave Dellucci and Roberto Hernandez makes up the 18 games out of first the Tribe finished last year?

AL Predictions:

AL East: Boston Red Sox
AL Central: Detroit Tigers
AL West: Los Angeles Angels
AL Wildcard: New York Yankees
AL MVP: Alex Rodriguez, Yankees
AL CY Young: Johan Santana, Twins
AL Comeback POY: Rich Harden, A's
AL ROY: Daisuke Matsuzaka, Red Sox
First manager to be fired: Joe Maddon, Devil Rays

NL Predictions:

NL East: Philadelphia Phillies
NL Central: St. Louis Cardinals
NL West: Los Angeles Dodgers
NL Wildcard: Atlanta Braves
NL MVP: Albert Pujols, Cardinals
NL CY Young: Victor Zambrano, Cubs
NL Comeback POY: Jake Peavy, Padres
NL ROY: Troy Tulowitski, Rockies
First manager to be fired: none

Playoff Predictions:

ALDS: Red Sox over Angels
ALDS: Tigers over Yankees
NLDS: Cardinals over Phillies
NLDS: Dodgers over Braves
ALCS: Red Sox over Tigers
NLCS: Dodgers over Cardinals
World Series: Red Sox over Dodgers