The Indians have the sixth best interleague record of American League teams (93-82), including a 26-19 mark against the Reds ... and are coming off a series sweep of division rival Minnesota, seeing their bats wake up with the return to Jacobs Field. The Reds will make the trip up I-71 losers of four out of five and eight out of ten. Cris Sykes previews "The Battle of Ohio".

Ten years? Has it really been ten years of this interleague garbage Major League Baseball has been sticking us watching? I always figured this thing was no more than a five year fad, but to my surprise, it has already lasted double that.

The Cleveland Indians have amassed the sixth best record of American League teams (93-82), including a 26-19 mark against the Bengals, errr, Reds. The Indians will be coming off a series sweep of division rival Minnesota, seeing their bats wake up with the return to Jacobs Field.

The Reds will make the trip up I-71 losers of four out of five and eight out of ten.

Surprisingly, seeing as the Reds employ about 6 designated hitters on their team, they have really struggled during Interleague, losing 78 times while only winning 61.

Pitching Matchups

Game 1 - Friday May 18, 2007 7:05 PM

If I were a betting man, I would have to seriously consider taking the over for runs scored in the first game of the series. C liff Lee will start for the Tribe and he has beaten the Reds in two out of three starts, plus a no decision... that is nice.

He also has a SEVEN POINT ZERO FOUR earned run average against Cincinnati... that is not so nice.

Most of that damage came in his first start against the Reds, when he didn't make it out of fourth inning before giving up seven runs.

Lee will be making his fourth start since coming off the disabled list and will be looking for win number two. Lee has either been exceptional (complete game win) or not very good (eleven innings, nine earned runs in other two starts)

over his first three starts.

You want the real reason to bet the over in this game? The Reds starter, Kyle Lohse, has worse number against the Indians than Lee does against the Reds.

Lohse signed with Cincinnati for two reasons, they were the only team that wanted him and he figured he would not have to make any more appearances at Jacobs Field, where he has only won two games in eight decisions and is sporting a nifty 7.31 ERA.

Lohse is coming off a pretty good spanking at the hands of the LA Dodgers, being tagged for six earned runs in four innings. One of Lohse biggest faults is the lack of any type of reliable out pitch as he has needed an average of 102 pitches to get through six innings of work.

Game 2 - Saturday May 19, 2007 7:05 PM

For the middle game of the series, the Indians will send Jeremy Sowers to the hill. Sowers, coming off a very good rookie season for the Indians has struggled so far in 2007, failing to complete the third inning twice in his last five starts.

Sowers has yet to earn the victory in a start this year and the Tribe is just two and five in his seven starts.

With Jake Westbrook getting closer to his return and the rest of the rotation pitching well, Sowers is down to a couple more starts before going down to Buffalo to figure things out.

Sowers made his major league debut in 2006 against the Cincinnati Reds, allowing four earned runs via two long home runs, in five innings of work. The Reds first got to Sowers the second time through the lineup and that trend has held true so far in 2007. Sowers has been brutal the second time through the lineup this year, allowing an absolutely staggering 20 hits and 15 earned runs in 12 innings pitched.

Matt Belisle will oppose Sowers on Saturday, bringing his three and three record with a four plus earned run average with him. Belisle has been the definition of hot and cold in his first eight starts, which should put him in line to be pretty good this time out.

Belisle has gone two very good starts, two very bad starts and then alternated good and bad over his last four.

His last time out, Belisle allowed seven earned runs in five innings against the San Diego Padres.

Belisle made two appearances against the Indians out of the bullpen in 2006. He gave up two runs on three hits in the first and one run on two hits in his second, each in one inning of work.

Game 3, Sunday May 20, 2007 1:05 PM

In the finale of the three game set, Manager Eric Wedge will send Paul Byrd to the middle of the diamond to face the Reds. Byrd has been the Indians best starter to date, not named Fausto, winning three times and losing only once.

Byrd also has two no decisions when the Indians offense went to sleep for a couple games and cost Byrd a win both times.

In the no decisions, Byrd allowed a total of three runs in thirteen and two thirds innings.

Paul Byrd has had good success against the Reds in his career, beating them three times in six starts, posting a 2.91 ERA. In two starts versus Cincinnati in 2006, Byrd worked 14 innings without allowing a run.

Aaron Harang is tentatively scheduled to battle Byrd on Sunday, but was recently placed on the bereavement list so he could stay behind and take care of his ailing grandfather. While that is terrible for the Harang family and the Reds, it is good news for the Tribe.

Harang has beaten the Indians three times in five starts, without tasting defeat.

Harang has an impressive 1.89 ERA in 33 1/3 innings against the Tribe.

Candidates to replace Harang in the rotation would include Bronson Arroyo, who would be on short rest; prospect Bobby Livingston, who they Reds have yo-yo'ed back and forth between Cincinnati and AAA Louisville; and of course the bread and butter of their farm system, Homer Bailey.

Reds Offense

I guess it all starts with Ken Griffey Jr, when talking about the Reds offense. Griffey has managed to stay healthy enough to appear in 35 of the Reds 41 games and leads them in batting average with a .311 average. Griffey is second to Adam "Branyan" Dunn on the Reds in home runs (11-8) and they are tied with a team high 25 RBI.

The Reds have a second baseman named Brandon Philips, but I was unable to obtain any information on him. According to the error report when I search for Philips, it appears Mark Shapiro snuck into my Internet and disabled the find former Indians who have made me look really stupid search capability.

The Reds also employ the feel good story of the 2007 season in Josh Hamilton. It appears he is no longer hooked on crack and he has returned to hitting baseballs really well.

Good job Josh!

Reds Bullpen

For those of you curious about how the Indians plan on getting by with Joe Borowski closing baseball games, let me introduce you to David Weathers. Weathers would struggle to break a plane of glass with his fastball. He is

also seven for eight in save chances and holds a 1.89 ERA.

Other than Weathers, the Reds bullpen has been pretty much full of gasoline cans.

The bullpen earned run average is close to five earned runs.

Want to know how bad the bullpen is?

The Reds are eagerly awaiting the return of Eddie Guardado.