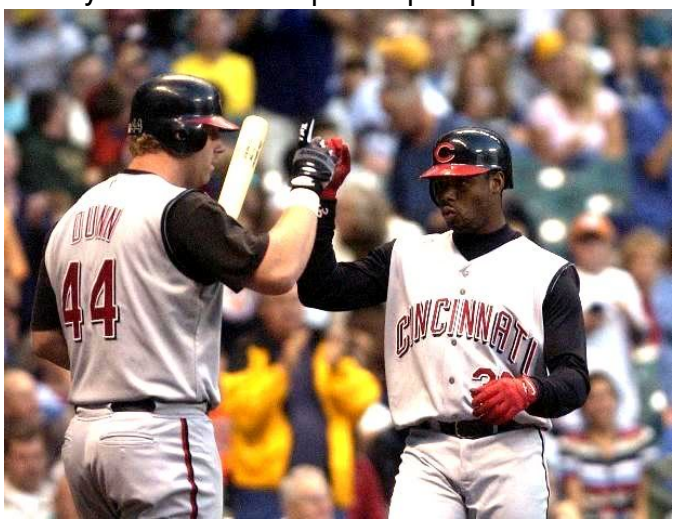
It's The Battle of Ohio, take two this weekend down in the Queen City ... and as always, Cris Sykes checks in to preview the series for us. The Reds are having a miserable season, but they can hit the long ball, and are tops in the NL with 79 HR's on the season. However, their pitching is another story, and they will send their prized prospect Homer Bailey to the mound tonight for his MLB debut.



It is time for installment number two of the Battle of Ohio. I hear the excitement building all the way up here from Cincinnati. The rivalry to end all rivalries. Interleague baseball...gotta love it.

Or not.

The Indians will travel to Great American Home Run Derby Park over the weekend to take on the traveling Dhes and their cast of softball teammates. The Tribe will come in to this series with a tremendous disadvantage, as it is time for the "Lolipop Lefty" portion of the rotation for games one and two.

On the bright side, the Reds whole team bats left handed, so maybe we can salvage one of those two games.

Friday, June 08, 7:05 PM

Cliff Lee (2-3, 6.35 ERA) vs. Homer Bailey (MLB debut)

Cliff Lee, loser of his last three starts, will pitch the opener of the series for the Indians. It has been a struggle for Lee so far this year, who has not won a game since May 18th and has been down right awful in all three starts since. Cliff has allowed 16 earned runs, in only 13 2/3 innings. Since throwing his complete game on May 8, Lee has only made it into the sixth inning in one of five starts.

The good news? The last time Cliff Lee was the winning pitcher for the

Indians he beat the Reds. Lee improved to two and zero that day, by limiting the Reds to two earned runs in six innings of work. Lee has won both of his decision against the Reds despite an alarming 7.04 ERA, a result of giving up seven earned runs in three and two thirds innings in his first start against them.

The Indians will be on hand for the Major League debut of the Reds super prospect, Homer Bailey. Bailey was six and one with an ERA under two and a half in Triple A Louisville. Homer comes with as much hype as any starting pitcher in the minors, and with and Indians team that has long appeared to struggle when seeing someone for the first time, this could be the perfect spot for the Reds to go with the kid.

Saturday, June 9, 7:10 PM

Jeremy Sowers (1-6, 6.63 ERA) vs. Matt Belisle (5-4, 4.48 ERA)

Jeremy Sowers will start game two for the Indians. My mother taught me if I can't say something nice, I shouldn't say anything at all.

Matt Belisle will make the start for the Reds and will be looking to beat the Indians for the second time this season. Belisle must have done something right in his previous life, because both of his starts against the Indians this year will be against Sowers. Belisle gave up four earned runs on a couple of home runs balls (Hafner and Peralta) and a two run single by Victor Martinez in his five and two thirds innings of work.

Sunday, June 10, 1:05 PM

C.C. Sabathia (9-1, 3.40 ERA) vs. Aaron Harang (6-2, 4.24 ERA)

Odds are, this is where your ace makes his money. The Indians could very easily be looking to avoid a sweep in game three, and will need

Sabathia to step up and put an end to any start of a losing streak.

C.C. has not been as good on the road as at home so far in 2007, but he has still been pretty good away from "The Jake", winning three of his four decisions.

Sabathia will be making his fifth start against Cincinnati over the last three years and his third in Cincinnati. C.C. has allowed 10 earned runs over 22 innings of work against the Reds. This will be one of his favorite starts of the year because of the opportunity to swing a bat. Sabathia is a .265 career hitter in 34 at bats, and actually hit a home run against the Reds in Cincinnati in 2005.

Matching up with Sabathia will be Aaron Harang, the Reds ace. Harang got off to a fast start this year, winning all four of his decisions in the month of April. He has come back to the field a little though, only winning twice in his last seven starts.

One of those starts was at Jacobs Field, when the Tribe got to him for five runs during his five innings of pitching. The Indians scored four of the five runs in the fourth inning of that contest, with a Jhonny Peralta home run starting the inning.

Prior to that start, Harang had dominated the Tribe, winning both decisions and only allowing five earned runs in his four starts covering 28 innings.

Reds Lineup

The Reds lineup can hit definitely hit the home run, as they lead the National League with 79 round trippers on the year. They have the fourth best scoring offense in the NL, with 277 runs scored in 61 games.

Edwin Encarnacion has recently been recalled from Triple A and has

been swinging the bat very well since his return hitting .522 over six games. Also swinging a hot bat for the Reds has been Brandon Philips. Philips enjoyed his return to Jacobs Field, where he collected four hits and two home runs in the three game series.

Reds Bullpen

Outside of David Weathers, the Reds bullpen only provides relief for the opposing club. David Weathers has a 3.86 ERA, and has converted 11 of 13 save chances. Nobody else in the pen has an ERA under 4.50 and they have combines to save zero games in five opportunities. Gary Majewski, who was one of the major reasons they traded Felipe Lopez and Austin Kearns last year, has finally returned to the Reds pen, but has already allowed five runs in four innings of work. The only thing that would be better for the Indians this weekend is if the Reds signed Jose Mesa for the weekend.

Up Next: @ Florida June 12-14 (After making up another of the Seattle games on Monday at Jacobs Field)