The Tribe heads north of the border to "America's Hat" to finish off the first half with a three game set with the power hitting Toronto Blue Jays. The Tribe holds a precarious one game lead in the division over the Tigers, who host the Red Sox to finish out the first half. Hey ay. Let's go play some baseball in Canada, ay? Cris Sykes previews the series for us.

You say we are going to Canada, ay? I guess the most related topic in the news for this series would be whether or not the players need passports? If they are flying in, I believe they do. If they take the bus from Detroit though, I believe they can cross with just a birth certificate. One more thing, if any of the players read this, or any fans head up for the trip, I just finished off the last of my Captain Morgan on the 4th of July so stop in to the duty free and hook me up, ay?

The Cleveland Indians will have a slight limp in their step when they head into the Rogers Centre (Center). After taking the first game of their series with the Tigers and building their division lead to three games, the starting pitchers must have left early for Canada. Wonder if they were heading to "The Sundowner"? The Staff Ace and Mr. Contract Extension could not get things done, giving up a total of 20 hits and 12 earned runs over 10 innings of work to drop the final two games of the series. Their lead in the Central Division has been cut to a single game with three to go before the All-Star break.

The Blue Jays will not exactly enter the series having lit the world on fire lately. They have dropped five of their last seven, on the heels of a four game winning streak. They did get some good news, as Frank Thomas returned to one of his old haunts and hit career home run number 500 at the Metrodome off Carlos Silva on June 28. Congratulations Frank, now get on the disabled list where you belong.

Friday, July 6th, 7:07 PM

Cliff Lee (5-4, 4.90 Earned Run Average) vs. Roy Halladay (9-3, 4.27 ERA)

Cliff Lee has started to turn the corner on his 2007 campaign, and not a moment too soon for the Tribe. Cliff has become a man of streaks, both good and bad so far and currently finds himself in the midst of a good one. Lee's season has broken down into three significant stretches, and hopefully the latest good one lasts for a little longer. Over his first four starts, Lee went two and zero with a 4.15 ERA. Then things went Rosie O'Donnel ugly on him, losing four consecutive starts and allowing 19 earned runs over 19 1/3 innings. Now we are back to good Cliff, where he has won his last three decisions (four starts) limiting the opposition to eight earned runs in 26 innings. Since his ERA peaked at 6.35 on June 2nd, Lee has not allowed more than three earned runs in any of his last five starts.

Unfortunately for Cliff, Toronto is not a team he has fared well against in the past. Lee has made four starts against Toronto in his career and has beaten them as often as I have. He has lost both of his starts in Canada, giving up 10 runs (six earned) in only seven and one third innings.

To make matters worse for Lee, Roy Halladay will oppose him in the series opener. Roy is not exactly pitching as well as he has in years past, but he is still a very tough draw. The 2003 American League Cy Young winner has won five of his last six decisions and allowed more than three runs in two of them.

Don't be fooled by his ERA being amore than one half of a run higher than his career mark, most of that damage came in a two game stretch in early May. Following those two starts, in which Halladay allowed 16 earned runs in 10 innings, he immediately went on the disabled list and has been his old self since. He has made 15 starts this year, been terrific in 11 of them, decent in one and horrible in three so let's hope the horrible one shows up.

Ummmm, that is pretty unlikely though. "Doc" has never lost to the Indians, winning all four decisions, including two complete games and one shutout. His 3.33 career ERA against the Indians is a direct result of him only allowing one home run in his 54 innings against the Tribe.

So, Cliff Lee has never beaten Toronto and Roy Halladay has never lost to the Indians. Let's go Red Sox!

Saturday, July 7th, 1:07 PM

Fausto Carmona (9-4, 3.78 ERA) vs. Shaun Marcum (4-2, 2.86 ERA)

Phew. I was a little scared the luster had come off the star of Fausto Carmona after the beating he took two starts ago. Showing an ability to rebound, which was a concern for him after his 2006 season, Carmona rebounded from back-to-back losses to win his last time out.

Getting back to his groundball ways against Tampa Bay and introducing the strikeout to his arsenal with a career high eight enabled him to limit the D-Rays to one earned run over six innings. Control has

begun to be a slight concern for Fausto, as he has allowed two walks in each of his last four starts. Not coincidentally, two of his four losses have come in that stretch.

Saturday will be the first appearance for Fausto against Toronto. Fausto has been very good on the road in 2007. He has been victorious in four of his six decisions away from Jacobs Field and his ERA is over a full run lower on the road. In his only appearance on turf and in a dome this year, Fausto threw seven and two-thirds innings and allowed two runs in picking up a victory.

Shaun Marcum will take the mound against the Indians on Saturday afternoon. Since moving into the Blue Jay rotation, Marcum has been nearly untouchable. In 10 starts, Marcum has a 2.02 ERA while holding opponents to a .188 batting average. In his 10 starts, he has allowed only 14 earned runs in 62 innings. Over his 13 relief appearances

covering 16 innings, he allowed 11.

Marcum made two relief appearances in an earlier series against the Indians this year. He was touched up for a loss, allowing a Travis Hafner double to drive in David Delucci in the bottom of the eleventh inning of a game at Jacobs Field. He rebounded to come back the next night and pitch two scoreless innings, allowing one hit.

Marcum took a pair of back-to-back no decisions against the Indians near the end of 2006. He limited the Tribe to three earned runs in his 11 innings over those starts.

Sunday, July 8th, 1:07 PM

Paul Byrd (7-3, 4.71 ERA) vs. Josh Towers

(4-5, 5.71 ERA)

At least I get to talk about Paul Byrd's impeccable control without worrying about being the jinx. Byrd finally allowed an unintentional walk in his last start, ending a streak of 77 innings without one. It is too bad I have not been able to end his streak of making me a nervous freak on the days of his starts by not mentioning it.

Over his last six starts, Byrd has only managed to put one mark in the win column while losing twice. Over that period, his ERA has climbed more than one full run. On the bright side, Byrd has managed to give the Indians seven innings of work in his last two starts. In his last start, the only game the Indians managed to win against Detroit, Byrd threw more than 100

pitches for only the second time this year. Last time, he responded with one of his better starts of the year, so we got that going for us.

Byrd will be making his sixth career start against Toronto, his third on the road. Byrd has pitched his way to a decision in each of his previous five starts, winning three times. Not to be a grinch, but both of his losses have come in Toronto, where he has allowed eight earned runs in 11 innings.

Josh Towers could be exactly what the Indians need heading into the break. He throws a fine assortment of meatballs, hanging breaking balls and fat changeups. In his previous appearance against the Tribe this year, Towers gave up four runs in two plus innings of work, including a three-run home run to Jhonny Peralta.

Towers will be making his fourth start versus the Tribe, and they usually end up being good days for the Indians. Towers has beaten Cleveland once and lost twice prior to 2006. In 24 innings pitched, including a couple other relief appearances, Towers has given up 27 hits and 17 runs.

Blue Jays Lineup

The Blue Jays do one thing on offense, and they do it quite well. They hit baseballs to and over fences as good as anyone in the American League, with 168 doubles and 100 home runs ... both good for third in AL.

That is all they do well on offense though. They are 13th in batting average, 14th in

stolen bases and 12th in on-base percentage. All those combine to cause a team that hits a lot of home runs and doubles, but is only in the middle of the pack in runs scored.

Of course the Indians may be getting them at just the wrong time, as four of their regular players are as hot as they have been all season. They have been led by Matt Stairs; yes I said Matt Stairs, and his .389 batting average over

the last week.

Alex Rios has been their top offensive threat in 2007, leading Toronto in all three Triple Crown categories with a .295 average, 17 home runs and 50 runs batted in.

Vernon Wells is normally the centerpiece of the Blue Jay attack, but has struggled though much of the season, batting only .255. He has also been pretty ineffective

against the Indians throughout his career, posting only a .230 batting average, his lowest mark against any American League team.

A pleasant surprise for Toronto this year has been the play of former Indians John McDonald. The career .240 hitter is on his way to a career high in plate appearances and is hitting .290 for the year.

Blue Jay Bullpen

Even with the loss of closer BJ Ryan, the bullpen has

been an area of strength for Toronto. The Blue Jays boast four different pitchers (Scott Downs and Brian Tallet from the left side, Jeremy Accardo and Casey Janssen from the right) who have made more than 26 appearances and have an ERA under three.

Left-hander Scott Downs has led that group, with a 2.51 ERA over 42 appearances covering 32 innings. He has

held left handed batters to a .181 batting average, recording 21 strikeouts and only allowing nine hits. Downs has not been charged with a run over his last 15 appearances. For the entire month of June, Downs allowed only six base hits in 13 games.

Jeremy Accardo has taken

over the closer duties over the last month, but has not been as effective as he was in the set-up role. Accardo is 10-12 in save oppurtunies, but has an ERA of 7.56 over the last 30 days. Part of the problem is he has only had four save chances in the last month.

On Deck: Victor, Grady and C.C. go to San Francisco

for the All-Star Game.

Everyone else gets four days off before getting back at it with a series with the Kansas City Royals at Jacobs Field. Lets do our part as fans and start to pack "The Jake" right out of the gates and show our players the support they deserve. Who knows, maybe it will be

enough to convince our owner and GM to add a piece to the puzzle and get this team over the hump!