Good pitching beats good hitting. If you don't believe me, just pop in your 1995 World Series highlight tape. And right now, the Indians starting rotation is as good as any team in baseball. In Paul Cousineau's latest piece, he takes a closer look at the Indians top four starters, and how they stack up against the rotations of the Indians potential American League playoff opponents.

Good pitching beats good hitting.

At least that's what has been said for years, whether it be 1995 as the Braves' Three Aces shut down the historically great Tribe lineup, or watching the D-Backs ride Schilling and the Big Unit to a 2001 championship over a stacked Yankees' lineup, or even the Cardinals' riding a suddenly, and inexplicably, hot rotation to a 2006 World Series Championship.

Conventional wisdom dictates that a team receiving consistent, and consistently excellent, starting pitching puts the aforementioned team in a position to win most games, regardless of offensive output in the regular season and particularly in the playoffs.

So, if strong starting pitching truly is what carries a team into the postseason and dictates the postseason success of that team, how do the Tribe starters stack up against the rest of the AL contenders' rotations?

Considering that much of pitching is recent performance (to wit, Jake Westbrook is 5-7 on the season, but is the hottest pitcher in MLB), the August statistics for the top 4 starters on contending teams in the AL with more than 20 IP in the month break down like this:

Cleveland

Jake Westbrook - 1.90 ERA, 0.98 WHIP

C.C. Sabathia - 2.50 ERA, 1.08 WHIP

Fausto Carmona - 2.75 ERA, 1.08 WHIP

Paul Byrd - 5.35 ERA, 1.49 WHIP

Boston

Josh Beckett - 2.25 ERA, 1.21 WHIP

Tim Wakefield - 2.45 ERA, 0.97 WHIP

Curt Schilling - 3.75 ERA, 1.08 WHIP

Daisuke Matsuzaka - 4.45 ERA, 1.30 WHIP

Los Angeles

Kelvim Escobar - 2.38 ERA, 1.12 WHIP

John Lackey - 3.63 ERA, 1.47 WHIP

Joe Saunders - 4.22 ERA, 1.38 WHIP

Jared Weaver - 4.85 ERA, 1.38 WHIP

Seattle

Jeff Weaver - 3.82 ERA, 1.18 WHIP

Felix Hernandez - 4.09 ERA, 1.18 WHIP

Jared Washburn - 4.22 ERA, 1.28 WHIP

Horacio Ramirez - 7.00 ERA, 1.78 WHIP

New York

Andy Pettitte - 2.36 ERA, 1.14 WHIP

Chien-Ming Wang - 5.46 ERA, 1.55 WHIP

Phil Hughes - 6.11 ERA, 1.29 WHIP

Mike Mussina - 8.87 ERA, 2.01 WHIP

* Roger Clemens does not make the cut for the qualifications having pitched less than 20 IP in his 4 starts in August averaging less than 5 IP per start, but is sitting on a 5.79 ERA with a 1.66 WHIP in those 4 starts.

Detroit

Nate Robertson - 4.93 ERA, 1.43 WHIP

Justin Verlander - 5.08 ERA, 1.48 WHIP

Chad Durbin - 6.53 ERA, 1.60 WHIP

Jeremy Bonderman - 7.11 ERA, 1.71 WHIP

Not too surprising that Boston's talented rotation is the class of the AL in terms of how deep the quality of starters goes, but the Tribe's Big 3 of C.C., Carmona, and Jake compares extremely favorably against all of these teams.

Out West, it looks like the Angels have a deeper rotation with more consistency

than Seattle, but the Mariners' rotation looks like the Tribe teams of the early 1950's compared to what their Wild Card rivals New York and Detroit have been trotting out to the mound in the past few weeks.

Looking at the numbers for the Yankees and Tigers, both of those teams appear to be banking on bludgeoning their way into the postseason because of the dearth of quality or consistency in their rotations.

Back to the Tribe though, as throwing Carmona, Sabathia, and Westbrook (in that order, to break up the RHP and the sinkerballers with a pretty vicious LHP) would have to be seen as a distinct advantage in any playoff series. Whether the Tribe went with a 3-man rotation in the playoffs (the games are very spaced out and sinkerballers have historically been better on short rest) or they added the Byrdman (who had great playoff success with the Angels in the 2005 ALCS) or hoped that Aaron Laffey channeled his inner Jaret Wright (circa 1997, not 2007) as part of a 4-man rotation, one would have to like the Indians' chances in the playoffs, based on their starting pitching.

Of course, getting to the playoffs is the focus right now as it doesn't matter how well your starting pitchers are going if they're sitting at home or on the golf course when the playoffs start.

But, the way the rotation is going, where the "weak link" (Paul Byrd) is 4-1 in the month of August, the Indians have momentum going and a legitimate shot to go on a sustained run to pull away in the AL Central. That momentum could carry into the playoffs, due to the phenomenal performances of the Tribe starters, for this team that seems to be cresting at the right time.