Indians - Yankees. It's starting to become more apparent by the day. For me, it brings back memories of the 1997 ALDS, and what a series that was. Indians dead to rights down two games to one, four outs away from being put away, Mariano Rivera in the game. Then Sandy took him yard. And Jaret Wright closed them out in game five. Paulie Cous is going to be all over Indians/Yankees for us, and he starts by reminding us all how easy this team is to hate.

As the regular season winds down and the playoff slotting is all but certain, it certainly has the look of a Tribe-Yankees ALDS; but don't tell that to the folks on the island, who somehow remain flippant about whom the Yankees will play in the playoffs.

Everyone around the country is aware that this is a COMPETITION and not simply a coronation for the Pinstripers, who have "overcome impossible odds" to work their way back into the playoffs (with a payroll close to the GDP of some small countries that didn't hurt), right?

Perhaps it's that the inferiority complex in Cleveland sports rivals the superiority complex in New York as we wait, cautiously, for the Yankees to come to town to play the role of the bully while Cleveland continues to fork over their lunch money as much as it is the unbearable obnoxiousness of Yankees fans and the New York media.

As much as Cleveland fans and media emit that knee-jerk reaction that the big, bad Bronx Bombers are coming in to take the steam out of the “Little Engine that Could”, the Evil Empire is just as quick to assume that the ALDS is merely a formality for what will become the latest chapter of the New York-Boston history.

The Los Angeles What…of Where?

To Yankees fans, the Indians are just a road bump on the way to their “inevitable” showdown with the Red Sox and to their birthright of another World Series title. The Indians could be one of any of their 28 potential opponents (not from Boston) – simply fodder for how the ALDS plays out.

If the Yankees win, it will be a glorious vindication of how they came back from adversity to re-establish themselves on their rightful throne and to bring order to the payroll universe (as, surely, a team with a payroll of nearly $200M can’t be beat by a $75M payroll team). The Indians will become an afterthought or an answer to a New York trivia question almost immediately after the final out is squeezed.

If the Yankees lose, nothing will be said of how they were beaten by a superior team or how the pitching of the Indians so vastly outclassed the New York rotation; instead, the focus will turn on what Joe Torre didn’t do or whether he’ll come back, how A-Rod is ill-equipped to handle the bright lights of Gotham, or how Mo Rivera has truly lost it and it’s Joba Time. All of the subplots and angles will be explored except for the performance

of the team that beat them.

By the time that everything settles down, Game 2 or 3 of the ALCS will be underway and the national media will remain entranced by A-Rod's opting out of his contract or what Free Agent the Yankees can bring to the money trough.

Not that anything's happened in the playoffs, obviously, but isn't it funny how Yankees fans always either say that their team "blew it" or that they "gave it away" when they lose, rather than conceding that they got "beat" by a superior team. It's almost as if the other team is window dressing and the actions of their team are the only thing that determines the outcome of the game.

Often, the phrase is heard that you "tip your cap" to the other team for an outstanding effort or performance that resulted in a loss for your club. Not on the East Coast, where the search for the goat or "what went wrong" far outweighs any contributions from the team in the opposing dugout. Obviously, the sensationalistic tabloids and back pages play into this approach to the news, but I'd be surprised if the prelude to the ALDS is covered in New York as if TWO teams are participating.

Is that Yankees hatred stirred up yet?

Or do you need more to work yourself up into a rabid lather in anticipation of the Bronx Bombers' attempt to trump our Pair of Aces?

No worries, there will be much more on the impending Yankees' series, with a breakdown of what both teams' rotations will look like and how the two teams match up (with some anti-Yankee rhetoric thrown in for good measure) as the best record in the AL race plays itself out, which should remain the focus of the Tribe right now…ahem JoeBo.