How sweep it is! The Indians defended their home turf against the in-state rival Cincinnati Reds by taking out their brooms and doing exactly what the Reds did to them last week in Cincinnati. On the strength of an 8-1 win at Progressive Field on Wednesday night, the Indians split the season series and got the revenge that they were looking for.

Right from the start, Justin Masterson (4-6) looked locked in. Six of the Reds first nine outs came via the ground ball, two were strikeouts, and one, the leadoff batter of the game, flew out. Masterson pounded the strike zone with exclusively sinkers, not throwing a slider in any of the first three innings. The only blemish for Masterson was a hit by pitch to Chris Heisey in the first inning, but instantly erased that baserunner by inducing an inning-ending double play from Joey Votto.

His offense, meanwhile, wasted some opportunities early in the ballgame. Shin-Soo Choo led off the game with a double, advanced to third on a one-out grounder by Michael Brantley, batting in the #3 spot in the order with Jason Kipnis getting a day off, and was stranded there when Carlos Santana flew out to right.

In the second inning, the Indians collected a couple of two-out singles from Johnny Damon and Lonnie Chisenhall, but Lou Marson failed to drive in a run. In the third inning, Choo again doubled leading off an inning. Asdrubal Cabrera flew out to center before Brantley reached on an infield single. With one out and men on the corners, Carlos Santana, who has been struggling mightily at the plate, had his struggles continue, bouncing into an inning-ending 4-6-3 twin killing.

Despite the Indians having five hits through three innings and no runs to show for it, Masterson was unfazed. After retiring Zack Cosart to lead off the fourth, Heisey singled for the first hit allowed by Masterson. Heisey's time on the basepaths was short-lived as Lou Marson threw him out on a steal attempt during Votto's at bat. For Marson, that was just his fourth caught stealing of the season in 21 attempts. Votto harmlessly grounded out to end the inning.

With Masterson in cruise control, the Indians offense decided it was time to make Bronson Arroyo (3-5), who gave up 46 home runs last season, pay for all the baserunners. After Jose Lopez flew out to start the fifth, Casey Kotchman put a good swing on the ball and singled to left. Johnny Damon, who is starting to get the extra base stroke going, mashed a two-run homer to right. Chisenhall drew his first walk of the season, which may be a more impressive accomplishment than Damon homering. After Marson flew out, Arroyo appeared to pitch around Choo, who entered the game 6-for-12 in his career off Arroyo and had two doubles in two earlier at bats. With the two walks at first and second, Asdrubal Cabrera cleaned the bases on a 1-2 mistake from Arroyo that landed just over the wall in right center for a 5-0 lead.

Five runs was more than enough for Masterson. He mowed the Reds down 1-2-3 in the fifth and got the Indians right back to the dish. In the bottom half of the fifth, Jose Lopez doubled with one out and Damon walked with two outs, but the Indians didn't drive either guy in. Masterson mowed down the Reds again in the sixth and in the seventh.

The Tribe removed all doubt in the seventh, thanks to a blown call by 2B umpire Jim Wolf. After Brantley led off the inning with a ground out, Carlos Santana put a terrific swing on the ball for a knock to left. Jose Lopez flew out to center and then Wolf opened the door. Kotchman chopped a ground ball to Votto who, inexplicably, threw to second base for the inning-ending force play instead of simply running to the first base bag. The throw was to the third base side of second and nearly went into left field. Cosart picked the ball and appeared to stay on the base, but Wolf said the throw pulled him off the bag. On replay, Santana should have been called out. Instead, the inning continued. Alfredo Simon then walked Damon. Chisenhall stepped to the plate with the bases loaded and yanked a double into right field to plate three and put the game away.

An Asdrubal Cabrera error kept Justin Masterson from a shutout. Jay Bruce led off the eighth with a routine chopper that Cabrera booted at short. After Scott Rolen struck out, Todd Frazier hooked a double down the left field line and Bruce stopped at third. Willie Harris softly hit a ball into the hole between first and second and was retired by Masterson who covered the bag to take Lopez's throw. The run scored, but it was unearned. Masterson struck out Ryan Hanigan to end the inning and strand Frazier at third.

The Tribe went quickly in the eighth and Masterson came back out to finish off his masterpiece. He put an exclamation point on his start in the ninth. Masterson faced the top of the Reds order and struck Cosart out swinging, Heisey swinging, and Votto looking to polish off a complete game and a sweep of the Cincinnati Reds.

If you’re one of the twelve people who concern yourself with the Ohio Cup, the Indians, by virtue of their sweep over the Reds, evened up the season series at 3-3.

The Indians, now at 36-32, maintained a half-game lead over the White Sox who won 7-0 to salvage the finale of their interleague rivalry series. The Tigers dropped to three games back after having a complete game win by Jake Westbrook thrown against them and the Royals kept pace in the AL Central by beating the Astros 2-1.

**Stats of the Night:** All about Masterson. Reds hitters against Justin Masterson were 0-for-12 in 0-2 and 1-2 counts on the night. Masterson struck out nine on the night and now has 35 strikeouts to just six walks in his last five starts. Masterson recorded 24 of the 27 outs via strikeout or ground ball. His June ERA, with one start left this month next week at Yankee Stadium, now sits at 1.24. Masterson faced just three batters over the minimum as he was in control all night long.

**Player of the Game:** Is there any doubt? It’s Justin Masterson. Just like Josh Tomlin on Tuesday night, the Indians need to start getting some consistency from their starting rotation. They also need Masterson to pitch like an ace if they want to stay in this division race until the very end.

**Tomorrow’s Game:** The good guys are idle tomorrow to travel to Houston to end the interleague portion of the schedule with a three-game weekend set at Minute Maid Park a.k.a., “The Juice Box”.

Great series all around for the Indians, winning in every way possible. They won a one-run game with the bullpen shutting the door, won in walk-off fashion, and then enjoyed an old-fashioned beating. Should be a fun plane ride to Houston for the Wahoos.