With Tuesday's 4 p.m. trade deadline ominously looming, the Indians are going in reverse. They were swept by the lowly Minnesota Twins this past weekend and had a day off to collect themselves before shuffling off to Kansas City to open a three-game set against the equally lowly Royals. The Royals, who had high expectations entering the season are now 2.5 games below the Twins for last place in the AL Central. They've lost five in a row and hold the league's worst home record at 17-30.

Things are tough in the American League right now as Oakland and Seattle have won eight of ten, but most teams have been around .500 over their last 10 games. If the Indians were playing well, they could be making up some ground on the teams ahead of them, both in the AL Central and in the wild card, but they've lost seven of ten. What looked like a monumental turning point in the season last Thursday night coming from behind against Justin Verlander has now become nothing more than a memory for the fans. The team has likely forgotten about it after falling five games back. They picked up a half game while off on Monday night because Chicago lost to Minnesota.

The Indians are desperately hoping that the Royals are the cure for what ails them. Over the last two years, in 12 games at Kauffman Stadium, the Indians have scored 91 runs. Earlier this year, when the Indians were just 1-4, they started their road schedule in Kansas City. They swept the Royals, scoring 32 runs in three games, started a fight, and kicked off a stretch where they won eight of ten to move to 9-6.

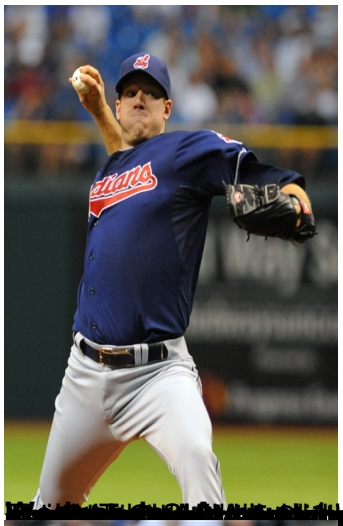
Just 6-11 since the All-Star break, the season is spiraling around the drain and with what looks like no help coming from the trade deadline, the guys in the clubhouse will have to get it together and try to make a big push back into the race. Here are the pitching matchups for the mid-week series:

Tuesday July 31, 8:10 p.m. ET; Derek Lowe (8-9, 5.09) v. Luke Hochevar (6-9, 5.26)

If you like high-scoring baseball games, this might be the game for you. Derek Lowe has posted a 7.91 ERA over his last nine starts and has looked about as bad as that sounds. Twenty starts and 116.2 innings into the season, Lowe has still walked more hitters (43) than he's struck out (40). His WHIP is an astonishingly bad 1.64, meaning he's allowing, on average, 1.64 baserunners per inning. Lowe has thrown four "quality starts" in those nine outings, but the base definition of a quality start is six innings pitched and three or fewer earned runs. A start of three earned runs over six innings is a 4.50 ERA, which is hardly quality.

Luke Hochevar hasn't pitched all that terribly of late, however the Indians have had phenomenal success against him. Hochevar has shaved a full run off of his ERA since June 14, even though 5.26 is nothing to be thrilled about. In terms of the Indians success against him, Shin-Soo Choo is 15-for-25, Michael Brantley is 7-for-17, Asdrubal Cabrera is 9-for-24, and Jack Hannahan is 7-for-16.

Lowe continues to struggle on the road with a 5.81 ERA, 1.76 WHIP, and .323 opponent's batting average. He is 1-6 in his last nine starts and just seems to be out of gas. He beat the Royals this season, way back on April 13. Hochevar has a 5.57 career ERA against the Indians, although he beat them in his last start, back on April 25. Hochevar has a 5.72 ERA at home this season.



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