

Forget the snow, bring on the brats

by Andy Call

CLEVELAND - Beer, brats and baseball - it sure beats blizzards. Major League Baseball took "road trip" to a new level Monday evening when the Indians boarded a flight to Milwaukee ... for Cleveland's official home opener ... against the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.

We're not making this up.

And, hey, the "Cleveland Indians of Milwaukee" does have a nice ring.

More than 8 inches of snow sat atop the Jacobs Field outfield Monday afternoon, hours before the Tribe was to have begun a doubleheader against Seattle. A chilling wind drove scattered snowflakes through the stands as workers shoveled snow into bins attached to the back of vehicles normally utilized for manicuring the ballpark's lawn. A front-end loader pushed snow into foul territory, as did lawn mowers with plows attached to them.

"We're kind of off the charts now," Indians' manager Eric Wedge said. "We're rolling with it and trying to make the best of the situation. It's nothing we should complain about. It's something we should be excited about, because we get to play."

The scheduled three-game home series against the Angels was shifted to Miller Park's retractable-roof venue because of the uncertainty of field conditions in Cleveland during the next three days. The Indians and Seattle hadn't been able to take the field since Friday, when the Tribe's home opener was called because of heavy snow with two out in the fifth inning.

The games in Milwaukee will take place Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:05 p.m., and Thursday afternoon at 1:05. Wedge said the Indians also considered playing the games in Anaheim or Houston. Brewers officials

were contacted Monday morning.

"We told (the Indians) we had no hesitation in accommodating their request," Milwaukee Executive Vice President for Business Operations Rick Schlesinger said in a press release.

The Brewers said all tickets will be \$10 and will be available through the team's Web site and at the ballpark. Seating will be limited to the lower deck unless the number of fans attending requires more space.

Indians' Vice President for Public Relations Bob DiBiasio said the three teams have not yet determined how the (likely meager) gate receipts will be split.

This was to be Anaheim's only visit to Cleveland this season. "Considering the combination of the playing field conditions at Jacobs Field, fan comfort issues and a concern about the integrity of the 162-game schedule, a change of venue for this three-game series is the most logical option," Indians' President Paul Dolan said.

The Indians are scheduled to host Chicago for three games this weekend. The forecast for those games is a bit more optimistic. "We're just rolling with the punches," veteran right-hander Roberto Hernandez said. "I've never seen anything like this. "We can't do anything about it. But, maybe down the road, MLB will get the idea that actually getting the games played is a better idea than taking a chance on Mother Nature."

Indians' pitching coach Carl Willis said most of the relief pitchers have been able to throw regular bullpen sessions in the indoor batting cages, but the starting pitchers have been forced to wait because they were actually scheduled to be pitching in a game that day.

"We're doing all we can to keep them ready," Willis said. "It's our job to make the best of it."

No. 5 starter Fausto Carmona's first turn in the rotation was pushed back. He will make his 2007 debut Friday against Chicago. It's the first time weather has forced a series to be moved since the Florida Marlins played the Montreal Expos on Sept. 13-14, 2004, in Chicago's U.S. Cellular Field because of Hurricane Ivan. The last time a series of more than two games was postponed by weather, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, was Sept. 3-5, 2004, when the Chicago Cubs and Florida Marlins were washed out by Hurricane Frances.

All four games against Seattle have been postponed until a later date. Wedge said it is possible one or two of those games may instead take place in Seattle when the Indians travel there in September.

Cleveland fans who purchased tickets for the Seattle series can exchange them for any other home game this season or use them for admission to a rescheduled game against the Mariners. Fans who purchased tickets for the Angels series only can exchange them for another home game this season.

MARTINEZ IS TBA

The Indians will not decide until Tuesday whether to put catcher and cleanup hitter Victor Martinez (strained left quad) on the disabled list. Triple-A Buffalo catcher Mike Rose will travel to Milwaukee just in case, and first baseman and former catcher Ryan Garko has been catching some pitchers during their bullpen sessions while the Indians have been idle. "We may decide to go a player short for a day or two," Wedge said.

LEE TO KINSTON

Left-hander Cliff Lee's injury-rehabilitation start Tuesday will take place at Single-A Kinston instead of

Double-A Akron. Lee is scheduled to throw two innings for Kinston in its Carolina League game against Wilmington.

INDIANS SIGN HAAD

The Indians signed catcher Yamid Haad to a minor-league contract Monday and assigned him to Triple-A Buffalo. He has played in 18 big-league games with San Francisco and Pittsburgh and was in camp with Tampa Bay this spring. His career minor-league batting average is .250.

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