MLB Predictions: Chicago Cubs vs Houston Astros

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MLB Predictions …With 85 wins in the books and another three weeks to go in the MLB regular season, it will be hard to deny the Chicago Cubs in the NL Central Division. However, the Wild Card race is definitely worth keeping an eye on as it’s become a crowded hunting ground. The Houston Astros, after sweeping a series from the St. Louis Cardinals over the weekend and then taking the first game of their current series with the Cubs, are trying to throw their names in the hat. Today, the Astros will attempt to get a series win against the Cubs on the road at Wrigley Field that would solidify their position as a WC contender. It will be no easy task beating the Cubs as the Chicago clubs sends its ace righthander Carlos Zambrano to the mound. Zambrano is 13-5 with a 3.53 ERA this season. The Astros will pin their hopes on Brandon Backe. The righthander is 9-12 with a 5.42 ERA in 2008.

MLB Predictions Betting Line …Online oddsmakers at Sportsbook.com has the Cubs listed as -200 money line odds favorites with a betting total of 9-runs. Astros backers are getting +185 money line odds as a road underdog.

The Cubs tweaked their rotation to give Zambrano extra time because of a tired arm. He had been scheduled to start Sunday. Big Z is 7-1 in 14 starts at Wrigley Field. His velocity had dropped in August, and the Cubs are hoping an extra day or two will help. He did throw a short side session on Sunday.

Backe strung together two consecutive successful outings with a 3-2 series finale win over the Reds, something that has eluded the right-hander this season. Backe has suffered from inconsistency but is solid when he can keep his pitches low in the zone. He gave up two runs over 6 2/3 innings against Cincinnati, throwing 64 pitches and allowing three hits in six shutout frames. He gave up two in the seventh before being pulled. Backe has lost two of three against the Cubs this season, recording a no-decision in the third. He gave up 11 runs on nine hits over 3 1/3 in his last visit to Wrigley Field, walking six as two Chicago players went deep.

Roy Oswalt threw 8 1-3 scoreless innings to get the win, as the Astros blanked the Cubs 3-0 on Monday. Houston upset Chicago as +110 road underdogs as the teams played under the 8.5-run total listed by sportsbooks.

Hunter Pence was 2-for-3 with a run batted in for the Astros, who also got an RBI from Geoff Blum in the victory. Jason Marquis surrendered two runs over six innings to take the defeat for Chicago, which managed only four hits on the day.

MLB Prediction …The Astros are red-hot but a little bit of Zambrano will probably slow them down today. The Astros are the pick here -200 on the money line. Checkout our live MLB Point- Spreads showcasing real time odds of the world's top online sportsbooks all in one easy to use location. Get line movements in real time and find out who has the best college football betting odds.

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