

A's News Clips, Sunday, August 16, 2009

Old friends rough up Gonzalez

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Gio Gonzalez tries to treat the Chicago White Sox like any other opponent, which is easier said than done.

Their lineup remains filled with veterans who took him by the hand when he was a hotshot Sox prospect. Those same hitters helped make life difficult for Gonzalez on Saturday in an 8-1 A's defeat, a speed bump for the lefty after a string of ultra-smooth starts.

Maybe Gonzalez's adrenaline flows a bit too strongly against Chicago. Or maybe he was due for a struggle. Whatever the case, he issued a career-high six walks and was tagged for six runs (five earned) in five-plus innings.

"It wasn't like I was missing the strike zone by a mile," Gonzalez said. —... There were times when I executed curveballs for strikes and they hit it. And there were curveballs where I wanted to (locate them off the plate), and they laid off."

Perhaps that's because the Sox know him so well. Gonzalez was drafted in 2004 by Chicago, which proceeded to trade him to Philadelphia in 2005, reacquire him from the Phillies in 2006, then deal him again to the A's in the Nick Swisher trade that followed the 2007 season.

Sox right-hander Jose Contreras remains tight with Gonzalez and his family, and veterans such as Jermaine Dye and Jim Thome also were an influence during his time in the organization.

"There are older guys that took care of me when I was 18, 19 years old," Gonzalez said. "It's good to see some old faces and some new faces."

A first-year Sox player did the most damage. Leadoff man Jayson Nix (three RBI) took Gonzalez deep for a two-run homer off the left-field foul pole in the third to break a scoreless tie.

Gonzalez breezed through the first two innings, but he walked three in the third to go along with Nix's homer. Consecutive singles by A.J. Pierzynski, Carlos Quentin and Alexei Ramirez contributed to Chicago's two-run fourth to make it 4-0.

Gonzalez was pulled in the sixth after consecutive walks to open the inning, and Santiago Casilla came on and allowed Gordon Beckham's two-run double (charged to Gonzalez) and Dye's RBI single to give the Sox a 7-1 lead.

Gonzalez (4-3) had won four straight decisions during which he showed the stuff that made him a top prospect when the A's acquired him along with Ryan Sweeney and right-hander Fautino De Los Santos for Swisher.

But Saturday, Gonzalez threw just 51 of his 96 pitches for strikes, and he admitted he called on catcher Kurt Suzuki to help calm his blood pressure a bit when he thought he got squeezed on a few calls.

Not to shirk all responsibility, Gonzalez added: "Six walks, you can't hide that."

"His strike percentage was down from his last few starts," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He seemed composed, he just was not locating as well as he had been."

Sox right-hander Gavin Floyd, who was part of that 2006 trade when the Sox got Gonzalez back from the Phillies, held the A's to one run over seven innings.

One hitter he couldn't tame was Adam Kennedy, who went 5-for-5 and joined Sal Bando as the only Oakland players to record two five-hit games in the same season. Kennedy had four singles and a double, taking all of his hits the opposite way to left.

"It's only half as much fun when you don't win," Kennedy said.

A setback for Duchscherer?

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's remain cautious in their discussion of right-hander Justin Duchscherer, who appears no sure thing to come off the disabled list and start Tuesday against the Yankees.

Duchscherer threw five shutout innings Thursday in an Arizona Rookie League game, which pitching coach Curt Young attended. Young said Duchscherer's "velocity was a little down" but that he otherwise showed his trademark command.

Manager Bob Geren maintains that the team is waiting to see how Duchscherer, a two-time All-Star, feels in the aftermath of that outing. He said Duchscherer was scheduled to throw a side session Saturday night and that there could be news today.

"We don't have a specific reason" for waiting to name Duchscherer as Tuesday's starter, Geren said after Saturday's 8-1 loss to the Chicago White Sox. "We're still deciding, basically."

The unclear picture suggests that perhaps Duchscherer hasn't felt OK since Thursday's outing. He's been on the DL all season while recovering from elbow surgery and, more recently, back trouble.

Geren said the A's would probably call up a pitcher from Triple-A Sacramento if Duchscherer can't start Tuesday.

Devine throws

Sidelined reliever Joey Devine, who's spending the homestand with the A's, played catch Saturday for the first time since having ligament-replacement surgery on his right elbow in April.

He made two sets of 15 throws from 35 feet. Nothing major, but a nice hurdle to clear for Devine, who's less than four months removed from his April 21 procedure.

Devine is hoping to be ready by spring training in February, and he was happy to set foot in the A's clubhouse for the first time in 2009.

"I've had a smile on my face ever since," said Devine.

He'll gradually increase his throwing distance, but there's no timetable for him to get on a mound.

Short hops

David Forst, the A's assistant GM, said negotiations with first-round draft pick Grant Green, fourth-rounder Max Stassi and seventh-rounder Ian Krol are likely to continue close to Monday's 9 p.m. deadline to sign picks. It was incorrectly reported in Saturday's editions that the deadline was midnight. "... White Sox slugger Jim Thome hit his 563rd homer Saturday, tying Reggie Jackson for 12th all time. "... Blue and white will be the dominant colors in the 1929 throwback uniforms the A's wear today for Turn Back The Clock Day. "... All three Yankees starters for the series that begins Monday at the Coliseum hold some intrigue — high-profile free agent signee A.J. Burnett goes Monday, Vallejo native CC Sabathia pitches Tuesday and former Athletic Chad Gaudin is scheduled Wednesday.

A's Breslow aiming to attend medical school

By Mark Emmons, Mercury News

It's not every day a pro athlete stops by the Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute, so doctors and scientists were excited when A's pitcher Craig Breslow recently visited.

But Breslow really impressed them — and not because he leads the American League in relief appearances. He explained how, as a Yale student who majored in molecular biophysics and biochemistry, his own laboratory work included protein purifications and DNA sequencing.

"Well," said Dr. Bert Lubin, the research institute's president, "we've certainly never had a baseball player who could speak our language."

There's a reason the Wall Street Journal anointed Breslow "The Smartest Man in Baseball."

Whenever his career ends, Breslow hopes to attend medical school with the goal of doing research to help eradicate pediatric cancer. That passion was born in the traumatic childhood experience of watching his older sister fight thyroid cancer.

That plan has been delayed because, well, this baseball thing is working out for an unlikely major leaguer whose contract once sold for \$1. He has become a surprising workhorse in the Oakland bullpen after being claimed on waivers in May.

Breslow also has used his unexpected baseball platform to create the nonprofit Strike 3 Foundation to raise money for cancer research.

"This is a cause where it's easy to get people to rally around it," he said. "Cancer is so non-discriminating in kids. It's race-blind. It's ethnicity-blind. It's blind to how much money your family has. It crosses every boundary."

At age 12, he saw that firsthand.

Heartbreaking news

Breslow, 29, remembers his upset father picking him up from a friend's house and breaking the news. His 14-year-old sister, Lesley, had cancer.

"My parents tried to shelter me because I was so young," he said. "But when you're 12 and you hear someone has cancer, you just think: 'She's going to die.'"

But Lesley underwent successful surgery and has been cancer-free for 15 years.

"It was a meaningful experience that showed me the value of what research can do," added Breslow, a Connecticut native. "Even then I realized that someone had spent hours and hours in a lab to come up with treatments that helped my sister."

That, Breslow decided, is what he would do.

Breslow attended Yale as an aspiring doctor, not a pitching prospect. But he also was an all-Ivy League pitcher who once struck out 16 batters in a game. He decided to give pro ball a shot after Milwaukee drafted him in the 26th round in 2002.

When he was released two years later, and ended up playing Independent League baseball, he applied to New York University's medical school and appeared ready to get on with his "real" life. But San Diego bought his contract for that \$1, and serendipity took over.

He was going to be the last guy cut from the Padres' Double-A team in spring 2005 when a roster spot suddenly became available. When the Padres needed an emergency left-hander during an East Coast trip, Breslow got called up and did well.

His vagabond career took him to Boston, where he earned a 2007 World Series ring for being on the postseason roster, and he split time last season with Cleveland and Minnesota.

When the A's claimed him from the Twins, his new teammates knew little about him. But soon they realized Breslow knew everything. He became the clubhouse expert on any topic: history, science, the weather, crossword puzzle answers.

"Everybody just assumes that he's going to be right," said former A's reliever Russ Springer. "So he could be just making up stuff and the rest of us would still believe him because we're so gullible."

This may be a forgettable season in Oakland, but Breslow is enjoying his best year. He has posted a 5-6 record with a 4.22 ERA in 59 appearances. And since joining the A's, he has a 3.38 ERA in 42 outings.

"On a good day I might touch 92," Breslow said of his fastball. "I was never 6-foot-5, throwing 100 mph. So this has been very gratifying."

Blending right in

Actually, Breslow is about 5-foot-11 and looks much like the unassuming researchers he met on the hospital tour. The only thing giving away his athlete status was the baseball cuff links on his sleeves.

In the bustling lab of Dr. Julie Saba, a senior scientist, Breslow listened intently as she explained her work in unlocking the molecular mechanisms of cancer cells. Saba had a previous brush with fame when actress Juliette Binoche shadowed her while preparing for her researcher role in the 2005 film "The Bee Season." But on this day, she talked to Breslow as if he were a colleague.

"Eighty-five percent of children diagnosed with leukemia have long-term cures," Saba said. "And there's been tremendous improvement in treatment of solid tumors."

Much more needs to be done, she added. Breslow understands this, which is why he started his nonprofit that raised \$100,000 at its November launch. Though he can see himself one day in a lab, Breslow said the problem-solving skills required in science are different from those needed in his current job.

"When you're in a lab, you're always following a protocol," he said. "There's a structure. But on the mound, everything is reactive and spontaneous. The first pitch goes awry and then you have to improvise. There's no recipe to follow out there."

As the tour ended, Saba suggested he could get an early start to his next career.

"Maybe you can put in a few hours of lab work before you go to the stadium," she joked.

But he had a busy schedule that night.

Back at stadium

A few hours later, before a game against Texas in Oakland, Breslow chaperoned 13-year-old cancer survivor Hudson Davis of Lafayette around the clubhouse, introducing the wide-eyed teen to A's players. He showed off his locker — the one where someone had taped drawings of Albert Einstein and a complicated algebraic formula.

Clubhouses aren't always the most enlightened places and smart ballplayers have been known to "dumb-down" in order to fit in among teammates. The Wall Street Journal story on Breslow's big brain had noted that just 26 major league players and managers have college degrees.

But Breslow said he is accepted because he's no different from guys who signed right out of high school or who grew up in the Dominican Republic. They're all just trying to win.

"I've got friends who are in med school and on Wall Street, and those guys don't even know what the weather is like outside," he added. "I love coming to the yard, being the first guy here, staying late and being part of the camaraderie."

Breslow would catch the ceremonial first pitch tossed by Davis. Later, he tossed a perfect ninth inning, closing out a 6-0 A's victory.

Yes, Breslow's research future will have to wait a little longer.

Lurie: Here are some changes that could improve baseball

By Marty Lurie, Special to the Oakland Tribune

If you had Bud Selig's job as Major League Baseball's commissioner, what changes... (Paul Sakuma/AP)

During the dog days of August the conversation in the press box among those who watch the game on a daily basis often turns to matters other than the pennant races.

The hottest topic this week was trying to answer the question, "If you were baseball commissioner for the day, how would you change baseball?"

Here are some of the suggestions made by those folks who make their living within the game of baseball:

1. Have a set amount of money a first-round draft pick would receive.

This is something that would have to be collectively bargained between the Players Association and Major League Baseball. Instead of holding out for \$25 million dollars, the Nationals' No. 1 pick Stephen Strasburg would receive a predetermined amount for being selected first overall in the draft, in the same fashion as the NBA handles its draft picks.

If it's true that the agents control the game, then this concept will never come to pass as mega-agent Scott Boras and others won't pass up a lucrative commission for representing untried prospects.

The idea would give the weaker clubs the security of knowing that they will sign their top picks, thus hastening their return to respectability. Baseball could even allow teams to trade draft picks, a system that might -- with good player evaluations -- allow the weaker teams to improve more quickly.

2. Allow a club to place a player back in the game even after he has been removed during the game.

This is a novel idea and would lead to many exciting strategic moments. I would go for this if the player had to return in the same spot in the lineup. The Giants could remove slow-footed Bengie Molina for a pinch runner, then bring Molina back when his turn came up again in the batting order.

3. Enshrine "Shoeless Joe" Jackson in the Hall of Fame.

Since Jackson's ban was for life, now that he is no longer living, Jackson should be eligible for the Hall.

A well-respected baseball man suggested this idea to me. Not a bad thought. This rationale also would let Pete Rose know his day in Cooperstown will be forthcoming. Unfortunately, like Shoeless Joe, Pete won't be there to celebrate the moment.

4. Allow one player to be a designated fielder.

This is a good idea. If you have an outstanding defensive player who is slumping on offense, let him play in the field and have another player hit for him. The consequence is the game will now have two designated hitters since one is already in place for the pitcher.

5. Simplify the balk rule so those attending the game can actually see the balk occurring.

A mere flinch by the pitcher unseen by all except the most diligent umpires causes a balk these days. Unless a pitcher fakes a throw to first base, let the pitcher fidget all he wants on the mound. Only call the obvious moves that deceive the runners.

6. Return the identities of the American League and National League.

Baseball has lost the uniqueness of the two leagues when it combined the league offices under MLB. The NL and the AL used to have a ferocious rivalry before the changes were made.

Please allow the NL and the AL the right to employ their own umpires. Give control of the league back to its president. If discipline has to be meted out, let the presidents police their own leagues. Is the present system really better for baseball?

7. Play a balanced schedule.

Every team should play every other team in its league the same amount of times. If you want a true champion after the long six-month marathon of a season, let every club play each other the same amount of games. The best team will win, fair and square.

8. No more interleague play.

Interleague play has watered down the All-Star Game. Interleague play has cheapened the World Series. Having 15-18 games against teams not in your league changes the pennant races unfairly. The game thrives on legitimate pennant races; don't skew them with unequal interleague matchups.

9. Have the DH in the NL.

It's unfair to have the DH only in the American League, especially when the teams meet in the World Series where an AL team might not be able to use its best hitter in its most meaningful games.

10. Allow instant replay.

If the manager disputes a call on the bases, let him have a chance to ask for instant replay. Yes, the game would slow down, but if you showed the play in the park while the umpires reviewed the tape, then the fans would be in on the action while the decision is being made.

11. Shorten spring training and end the regular season one week earlier.

The season should end the last week of September. There is no good reason why spring training has to extend from late February until early April. No matter how much spring work a player gets, the muscle pulls still occur once the regular season is underway.

If the season ended earlier, then the division series could easily be extended to a more realistic seven games. More importantly, then there wouldn't be World Series games in November.

12. Ban all multi-use stadiums.

Only in Florida, Minnesota and Oakland do the ballclubs share stadiums with a football team. In Minnesota, this is the last year that will take place as the Twins move into their new baseball only park in 2010.

If you've seen the condition of the field in the Oakland Coliseum after a Raiders game, you know the problems the A's have. It is simply unacceptable that a major league game has to occur under those circumstances.

13. Play at least one weekday World Series game.

Whether you were in school or at work listening to a weekday Series game, it was a memorable experience. Also, please allow the club's broadcaster to do the game instead of national TV announcers.

If the Dodgers were in the Series, I knew I would hear Vin Scully calling the game. If Detroit was in the Series, Ernie Harwell described the action. If Seattle gets there, I want to hear Dave Niehaus on the radio.

Also, the current reality of having midnight finishes for the Series on the East Coast is ludicrous.

14. Get rid of the loud music played between Innings.

Many wish for the return of organ music at the ballpark entertaining the fans as the teams change sides. This won't happen very soon as the baseball entertainment directors are convinced that music wins out over conversation between innings.

15. Move the fences back at Yankee Stadium.

Baseball should have a rule requiring the same minimum distance to the fences. One can make the barrier longer than the minimum, but allowing the cash-happy Yankees to have an inviting porch in right field gives New York an unfair advantage as they stock their team with strong left-handed hitters.

Because of the dimensions of the new park, the Yankees are poised to set a new Yankee Stadium home run record.

16. Eliminate or cap the expanding rosters in September.

Baseball is the only sport that allows a team to expand its rosters during the most pivotal time of the race to the playoffs. Some teams often add up to 10 players from their 40-man rosters, filling up the dugouts with pinch runners, pinch hitters and additional pitchers. Other teams prefer to play the players who brought the club to September, without cluttering the clubhouse with those extra players.

I can see limiting the amount of players brought up in September to five, thereby leveling the playing field for all the teams.

17. Shorten the time between innings. Make the pitcher deliver the ball within 15 seconds.

Both are good suggestions. From the earliest days of little league, players are encouraged to get on and off the field quickly. Why can't major leaguers do the same thing? The rhythm of the game would be much smoother if the pitcher didn't stand on the mound studying the catcher's signals for an extended period of time.

18. Release the list of the players who failed baseball's drug tests in 2003.

Probably not going to happen, and rightly so, because of the agreed confidentiality of the list. The real answer is to prosecute the person who has leaked the names one-by-one, in violation of the court's order.

19. Put Olympic-style drug testing into Major League Baseball.

If baseball and the union agreed to this, then no one could say baseball isn't doing everything in its power to curb illegal performance-enhancing drug use.

20. Bring back the annual Hall of Fame game to Cooperstown.

Baseball scrapped the idea because of the travel issues for the teams getting to upstate New York for the game. Cooperstown is baseball's shrine. A major league game should be played there each year, no matter what, to celebrate the origin of baseball. Baseball players travel in the most luxurious fashion imaginable. They can handle the flight to the Hall of Fame.

21. Bring back doubleheaders.

There is nothing more exciting to a fan than a doubleheader -- two games for the price of one -- on a Sunday afternoon. I always enjoyed looking at the standings on Monday morning after a weekend twinbill; so much can change in 24 hours.

22. Have uniform starting times for games.

Baseball players are creatures of habit. Start all night games at 7:05 p.m., start all day games at 1:05 p.m. This way a player stays in his routine. You might actually see a better performance from the player.

23. Players should wear their uniforms in a standard style.

Ask the players to keep their pants leg at the knee. Players should show their colorful team stockings. No more back pockets hanging out. The NFL enforces this rule for its players' uniforms and I like it.

Remember these are suggestions are from people who watch the game in the park every day. Perhaps the best suggestion may be, "Just don't change anything about the game, it's fine the way it is."

What would you do if you were baseball commissioner for the day?

Gonzalez struggles against his old team

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The new and improved Gio Gonzalez was supposed to present his old employers a better challenge.

The first time he faced the White Sox, 364 days ago, he seemed a lost cause. It was his third big-league start, and if he wasn't issuing walks (five), he was surrendering home runs (three). Yielding seven earned runs in 31/3 innings was no way to make his former organization regret trading him.

A year later, Gonzalez got another chance.

But the A's lost 8-1 on Saturday, giving them their first two-game skid since Aug. 1-2, and Gonzalez's winning streak - the only one of his career - ended at four. The lefty, coming off two scoreless starts, walked a career-high six batters and was charged with six runs, five earned.

"I might've rushed a little bit," Gonzalez said. "It happens. Not everyone will go out there and pitch seven shutout innings. It wasn't like I was missing the strike zone by a mile. Maybe by a hair. They just laid off it."

One day before the A's honor the 1929 champion Philadelphia A's by wearing throwback uniforms and convincing Bob Geren to dress like Connie Mack, a couple of champs from another A's era were part of the storyline.

Jim Thome homered in the ninth inning to tie Reggie Jackson - in the House that Reggie Rocked - for 12th on the all-time list, both with 563. And Adam Kennedy went 5-for-5 to become the second Oakland player with two five-hit games in one season, the other being Sal Bando.

"It's very humbling," said Thome, who chatted with Jackson two weeks ago when the Yankees visited Chicago. "He's one of the all-time greats, and what he's done in the game, to be part of that and tie him is very neat."

Kennedy entered with one hit in his past 35 at-bats against the White Sox, dating to April 30, 2006, and swatted four singles and a double, all to the opposite field. He said he watched video from Friday's 0-for-5 and made adjustments.

"They were a lot of the same pitches I swung through yesterday," Kennedy said. "The numbers weren't pretty going into today. Good pitching by them. Bad timing by me. . . . It's only half as much fun if you don't win."

Both teams collected 11 hits and stranded 10 runners, but the White Sox hit two home runs and added three hits with runners in scoring position. The A's had zero on both fronts. Their only run came in the fourth inning on Mark Ellis' two-out double that scored Ryan Sweeney.

Gonzalez, acquired from the White Sox (along with Sweeney and Rautino De Los Santos) in the January 2008 Nick Swisher trade, began his demise in the third when he walked Alexei Ramirez (whose 10th-inning homer won Friday's game) and surrendered Jayson Nix's two-run shot off the left-field foul pole. Gonzalez walked five of his next 16 batters, including his final two leading off the sixth. Gordon Beckham singled both in.

Gonzalez said he wasn't jittery facing the White Sox. He recalled being one of their top prospects and in spring training looking up to Jose Contreras, Jermaine Dye and Thome, and manager Ozzie Guillen.

"They took care of me when I was 18, 19 years old," Gonzalez said. "That team was always respectful to me."

Gonzalez, 3-0 with a 3.74 ERA on the road, is 1-3 with a 9.00 ERA at the Coliseum.

Hairstons' 1st AL meeting

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The Hairston brothers, whose National League teams have faced each other a few times, will come together as American Leaguers for the first time during the A's-Yankees series, beginning Monday.

Shortly after **Scott Hairston**, 29, was dealt from the Padres to the A's (July 5), the Yankees acquired his older brother, **Jerry Hairston**, 33, from Cincinnati (July 31).

"It's a lot of fun, man, seeing your older brother on the field," Scott Hairston said. "It's something we talked about growing up. I'm proud of him and what he's done. He's been in the big leagues for 10 years now. Time flies."

Because of the four-year difference, the brothers never were on the same team until this year, when they played for Mexico (birthplace of their mother, Esperanza) in the World Baseball Classic.

While Scott is an everyday player on a rebuilding team, Jerry is a role player on the team with the best record. He's hitting .364 with a .440 on-base percentage in 13 games, and Scott said, "This is his first time with a contender. He's a really good fit for that team. He can play every position but pitcher, catcher and maybe first base and can give a lot of players on that team a breather down the stretch."

Meantime, Scott's team is looking beyond 2009.

"I'm pleased with the direction of the franchise - good young pitchers, a lot of up-and-coming players," he said. "I'm glad to be a part of that."

Briefly: Geren said the A's are "still deciding" whether **Justin Duchscherer** will make his 2009 debut Tuesday. The pitcher was to throw a side session on Saturday, Geren said. ... **Gavin Floyd** is 2-0 with a 1.66 ERA in four starts against the A's. ... In the crowd: A former employee from the **Charlie Finley** days, **Stanley Burrell**, a.k.a. MC Hammer.

A's leading off

John Shea

Sunday, August 16, 2009

Intervention: For the first time since Tommy John surgery in April, Joey Devine played catch - two sets of 15 throws at 35 feet. He'll do it again Monday and move to 45 feet in a week. "I've been looking to this day since I left spring training," he said. "Very good day."

Walks come back to hurt Gonzalez, A's

Three of lefty's six free passes score in five-plus innings

By Adam Loberstein / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Gio Gonzalez was keeping his mind loose. He wasn't worrying about the names of hitters, just hitters in general. He was only focusing on things he could control.

Gonzalez let that control get away a bit on Saturday.

The 23-year-old rookie surrendered a season-high six walks -- three of which went on to score -- in an 8-1 loss to the White Sox that saw infielder Adam Kennedy snap a nine at-bat hitless streak by tying an Oakland record with five hits.

"Six walks -- you can't hide that," Gonzalez said. "It wasn't like I was missing by a mile. I was missing by a hair. It was one of those days. You can't do anything about it."

Gonzalez (4-3) allowed six runs (five earned) in five-plus innings. He took the hill on the heels of an impressive four-start stretch against the Yankees, Red Sox, Rangers and Orioles in which he went 3-0 with a 1.46 ERA.

"It was a good little run," Gonzalez said. "I hit a little wall. I need to move over it, move forward and get ready for the next game."

Gonzalez has been working on managing his emotions. He thinks he dealt with them well and was able to identify when they got him into trouble.

"Sometimes they got away," he said, "but I'd call [Kurt] Suzuki out and tell him to keep me composed."

"I think Gio will help them in the future," White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said. "He's from Miami, so I root for him. He looked better than he did the last time we saw him. This kid is good."

Cruising through two innings, Gonzalez hit a roadblock in the third when Jayson Nix hit a two-run homer off the left-field foul pole. Gonzalez went on to walk five of the next 16 batters he faced.

"It could be a coincidence," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Or he was trying to be too careful. ... He needs to stay aggressive."

More trouble came Gonzalez's way the following inning. A.J. Pierzynski singled, then Carlos Quentin did the same to move him to third and Quentin took second on a throwing error by Ryan Sweeney. Alexei Ramirez singled home Pierzynski and Nix's sacrifice fly scored Quentin to put the White Sox up, 4-0.

Gonzalez was removed after walking Pierzynski and Quentin to open the sixth.

Gordon Beckham brought both runners home with a double off Santiago Casilla before scoring on a single by Jermaine Dye as Chicago pushed its lead to 7-1.

Jim Thome gave the White Sox their final run, hitting a solo home run off Edgar Gonzalez to left to open the ninth. The homer was the 563rd of his career, tying Reggie Jackson for 12th all-time.

It was the first home run Gonzalez allowed in 45 1/3 innings this season, which was the second-most innings pitched in the Majors without giving up a homer.

White Sox starter Gavin Floyd struck out eight in seven innings to improve to 10-7.

"He pitched very well," Geren said. "He had his two-seam and a cutter going. Slider, curve -- he commanded all his pitches well."

Oakland had its share of chances against Floyd, though.

The A's tried piecing a two-out rally together in the third. Kennedy started the effort with an opposite-field single, then Rajai Davis stretched a single into a double before Suzuki walked to load the bases.

Scott Hairston then sent a 1-2 curveball to deep left-center but only had warning-track power as Alex Rios came up with it in front of the 388-foot marker.

Oakland had another opportunity in the fifth. Kennedy and Davis delivered back-to-back singles to open the frame. Suzuki lined to right before Hairston grounded into a 6-4-3 double play.

Mark Ellis went 2-for-4, driving home Oakland's only run with a two-out double in the fourth. He's hit safely in 18 of his past 19 games, batting .394 over that span.

Davis went 2-for-5, extending his hitting streak to a career-best 10 games.

Cahill bouncing back from tough July

Oakland (51-65) vs. Chicago (60-57), 1:05 p.m. PT

By Adam Loberstein / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Trevor Cahill has had his share of ups and downs this season.

After allowing three runs or fewer 11 times in a 12-start stretch from May 2 through June 22 (2.97 ERA in 69 2/3 innings), the 21-year-old rookie then surrendered four-plus runs six times in eight chances (8.19 ERA over 40 2/3) entering his Aug. 11 start in Baltimore.

That's where Cahill, who will start Sunday's series finale against the White Sox, got back on the upswing. He went seven strong innings, holding the Orioles to three runs.

"I was happy I was able to go seven," Cahill said after the start. He had gone 5 1/3 innings or fewer in seven of his previous eight. "That's what I've been trying to do, is go deep in the game."

"I was also happy I didn't walk anybody. That's how I've been struggling this year."

Manager Bob Geren said Cahill is back to commanding the strike zone. Cahill, a sinkerballer by trade, had been leaving the ball up and over the plate, surrendering a slew of home runs in the process. He's given up 25 homers this season, an Oakland rookie record.

No one went deep off Cahill at Camden Yards, though. It was the first time he held an opponent homerless since his June 17 start at Dodger Stadium.

"He was our pitcher of the month in June," Geren said, "then he struggled a bit in July. ... It looks like he's bouncing back."

Pitching matchup

OAK: RHP Trevor Cahill (6-12, 5.06 ERA)

Cahill suffered his 12th loss of the season despite his strong showing in Baltimore. He allowed eight hits and recorded four strikeouts. Cahill had a no-decision in his only career appearance against Chicago, a 6-2 A's loss on June 1. He did his part, though, giving up two runs on three hits in 5 2/3 innings.


CWS: LHP John Danks (10-8, 4.04 ERA)

Danks broke out of a recent mini-slump with one of his best outings of the season, allowing one run in eight innings against the Mariners. He was efficient, throwing 98 pitches, and struck out eight batters in the process. The start was especially important because Chicago starters had struggled the last time through the rotation. Danks is 4-0 lifetime against Oakland with a 1.38 ERA.


Tidbits


Reliever Joey Devine, who had right elbow surgery in April, is in town for the homestand to work out with the team. "We want to get him off on the right foot here," Geren said. "He's ready to start his throwing program. It'll be good to see him throw a baseball again." Devine will return to Georgia following the homestand. ... Geren said there was no update on Justin Duchscherer, who could potentially rejoin the A's to start Tuesday. ... Mark Ellis leads all American League hitters in August with 17 RBIs entering Sunday. ... Edgar Gonzalez hasn't allowed a home run in 45 1/3 innings this season. That's the second-most innings pitched without surrendering a homer in the Majors. ... Chris Carter hit a game-winning RBI double in the ninth for Double-A Midland on Friday. He's hit safely in 27 of his past 28 games, batting .444 in 108 at-bats over that span. ... Shane Peterson, acquired in the Matt Holliday trade, went 3-for-5 on Friday. He's batting .320 in 19 games with Midland.

Tickets

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On television

- CSNCA-HD

On radio

- KTRB 860, KDYA 1190 (Español)

Up next

- Monday: Athletics (Vin Mazzaro, 4-8, 5.54) vs. Yankees (A.J. Burnett, 10-5, 3.71), 7:05 p.m. PT **T**
- Tuesday: Athletics (TBD) vs. Yankees (CC Sabathia, 13-7, 3.64), 7:05 p.m. PT **T**
- Wednesday: Athletics (Brett Anderson, 7-8, 4.55) vs. Yankees (Chad Gaudin, 5-10, 5.03), 7:05 p.m. PT **T**

Oakland Coliseum field conditions more suited for football, Peavy postscript

By Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune, 8/15/09

OAKLAND - Oakland Coliseum stadium workers are laboring feverishly to transform the playing field to baseball less than 24 hours after the Raiders beat the Dallas Cowboys in the first exhibition game here.

It's not uncommon for the Coliseum field to look tattered in September, but fans watching Friday night's game between the White Sox and Oakland Athletics should not change change the color on their television sets.

Yes, the field looks that discolored.

In addition to the field still chalked (complete with hash marks), the grass in the power alleys is discolored to a lighter shade of green. That stems from the seats that are installed for football and cover the deeper parts of the outfield.

On a brighter note, a scouting report on Jake Peavy's performance Thursday night revealed that his fastball was clocked from 89 to 94 mph, averaging at 91. His slider was clocked at 82, his change-up at 84 and cut fastball at 85.

Peavy threw first-pitch strikes to five of the 10 batters he faced. He threw his third and final inning out of the stretch.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Patterson shows MVP form in victory

If Eric Patterson wants to break this stolen bases record, he might want to stop smacking home runs.

The River Cats lead-off man, who is tied for the franchise's single-season stolen bases record, smacked his third homer in eight games to lead off Saturday night's 7-4 victory over the host Memphis Redbirds.

It's tough to swipe bags when you're taking 360-foot trots around the bases. Patterson has been stuck at 39 stolen bases since Sunday, when he tied the franchise mark that Bo Porter first set in 2000. The MVP candidate's first-inning homer Saturday was his 12th of the season, and his sixth to lead off the River Cats' half of the first inning this season.

Sacramento starter Shawn Chacon (6-4, 6.12) made the early lead hold, allowing five hits and two runs (one earned) over 7.2 innings to earn his fourth victory in his last six starts. Left-hander Jerry Blevins earned his first save of the season despite allowing two runs over 1.1 innings.

Catcher Eric Munson, who finished with three RBIs, slugged a two-run homer to put Sacramento on top 4-0 in the fourth inning. The River Cats added two in the seventh and one in the ninth for insurance.

Patterson is now batting .324 on the season (fifth in the PCL), and making a strong case for the league's MVP title. His main competition seems to be Eric Young Jr., a second baseman for Colorado Springs, and Randy Ruiz, a first baseman for Las Vegas.

Patterson (85 runs, fourth in PCL; 39 steals, third; 50 RBIs) has the best average of the three (Ruiz .320, Young .306) and plays for the best team (Sacramento 74-46, Colorado Springs 63-57, Las Vegas (58-62).

However, it's tough to ignore Ruiz's 25 homers and 106 RBIs, and Young's 55 steals and astonishing 109 runs scored. Patterson would like voting media members to take a close look at the River Cats' 24-11 record in one-run games, which magnifies the importance of Patterson's productivity.

With Saturday night's victory and Fresno's loss in Nashville, the River Cats now hold a 10.5-game lead over the second-place Grizzlies in the PCL South Division. Sacramento's magic number to clinch the division is now 13.

Texas League: 'Hounds improve division standing with another win

TULSA, Okla. — The Midland RockHounds took the lead for good with a five-run fourth inning Saturday to strengthen their grip on the Texas League's South Division lead.

Alex Valdes hit a two-run double to give the 'Hounds a lead they never relinquished, as they rolled to a 7-4 victory over the Tulsa Drillers to open a three-game road series.

Tulsa had scored a run in each of the first two innings off Midland starter Travis Banwart (9-5) to take a 2-0 lead into the fourth before the 'Hounds got to Tulsa starter Ching Lung Lo. After Lo gave up a walk and two singles to load the bases, he walked Josh Horton to force in Midland's first run of the game.

One batter later, Valdez doubled to center to drive home two runs and give the 'Hounds a 3-2 lead and knock Lo out of the game. Matthew Sulentic's sacrifice fly and Corey Wimberly's single brought home the final two runs of the inning.

Wimberly was 4-for-5 and drove in two runs for the 'Hounds while Sulentic also drove in two runs.

Ford's Walk-Off Double Dooms Ports In 3-2 Loss

08/15/2009 10:30 PM ET

SAN JOSE, Calif. - Saturday night's contest between the Stockton Ports and San Jose Giants literally came down to the game's final pitch. Down to their final strike, the Giants got a two-run double from Darren Ford in the bottom of the ninth to hand the Boys of Banner Island a gut-wrenching 3-2 defeat at Municipal Stadium. Following a six-game winning streak, the Ports have now dropped three straight and hope to salvage the series finale on Sunday.

For the third straight game, it was the Ports who scored first. Grant Desme led off the second with a solo home run off Giants starter Clayton Tanner. Desme is now tied for fourth in all of minor league baseball in home runs, and his opposite-field blast put the Ports up 1-0.

San Jose tied it in the bottom of the fourth. With one out, Roger Kieschnick singled to right. Two batters later, Connor Gillaspie doubled to right-center with two down to knot the score at one apiece.

The run in the fourth was the only one allowed by Ports starter Anthony Capra. The southpaw needed help to escape the seventh without allowing a run, and by night's end would receive a no-decision, going 6.1 innings and allowing just the one run on four hits while matching a season-high with 10 strikeouts.

The Ports took the lead back in the fifth on a mental mistake made by Giants second baseman Nick Noonan. With two down and runners at the corners, Dusty Coleman hit a bouncing ball to second. Instead of fielding the ball and taking it to the bag himself, Noonan fielded the ball and flipped to shortstop Brian Bocoock who was late to cover the bag. Frank Martinez, who was going from first to second, slid into second ahead of Bocoock's arrival at the bag, allowing Kala Ka'aihue to score and putting the Ports up 2-1.

Tanner, like Capra, would also need help from his bullpen to be spared of allowing runs in the seventh, but when all was said and done, Tanner received a no-decision, going 6.1 innings and allowing two runs on five hits while striking out seven.

Stockton got terrific relief work turned in by Jason Ray. Ray came into the ballgame with the Ports clinging to a 2-1 lead in the seventh with runners at second and third and one out. Ray struck out pinch-hitter Ryan Lormand, then hit Tyler Graham to load the bases. Ray would get Ford to fly to right, however, to end the inning and escape the bases-loaded quandary.

Ray yielded a leadoff single to Noonan to start the eighth, but retired the next three batters in order to preserve Stockton's lead.

Daniel Turpen (4-2) came into the game for San Jose with two on and one out in the seventh as well, and Turpen recorded back-to-back strikeouts of Coleman and Todd Johnson to end the inning. After yielding a leadoff walk to Steve Kleen in the eighth, Turpen retired the next three batters in order to end the inning.

The Ports kept their one-run lead intact until the last possible moment-with two down and two strikes on San Jose's final hitter in the bottom of the ninth. Mickey Storey (1-1) came on to try and save the game for Capra. Storey struck out Skyler Stromsmoe to start the inning, then gave up a single to Bocock. Bocock was subsequently picked off first, emptying the bases with two down. With two out, Aaron Lowenstein singled to center to keep the game alive in his first at-bat of the night. Graham followed by coaxing a walk, putting runners at first and second with two down. After taking the second strike to fall into an 0-2 hole, Ford, with the tying run at second and winning run at first, lost his contact lens in the hitter's circle. After taking about three minutes to find the lens and put a new one in, Ford lined an 0-2 curveball from Storey down the left field line and two the wall, allowing the tying and winning runs to score and giving the Giants a 3-2 victory. It was Storey's first blown save since coming from Kane County.

Turpen, who pitched 2.2 scoreless frames for the Giants, was credited with the win.

In losing, the Ports fall five games back of the Giants for first place in the North Division. The Ports also fall five games behind Bakersfield for the final wild-card spot, as the Blaze beat the Lancaster JetHawks to earn their eighth straight win.

The Ports and Giants will play the finale of their three-game set on Sunday at Municipal Stadium. Left-hander Daniel Haigwood (2-0, 1.93 ERA) will head to the mound for Stockton, opposed by fellow southpaw Paul Oseguera (3-6, 4.11 ERA) for San Jose. First pitch is set for 5 p.m. PDT.

SAN JOSE GIANTS DOUBLE THEIR PLEASURE

By The Record

Darren Ford hit a two-run double with two outs in the ninth inning to give the San Jose Giants a 3-2 victory over the Stockton Ports on Saturday before a crowd of 5,419 at Municipal Stadium.

The Ports led 2-1 entering the ninth, but with two outs Aaron Lowenstein singled, Tyler Graham walked and Ford doubled to left field to help the Giants extend their lead in the California League's North Division. San Jose (34-15 second half, 76-43 overall) now leads the Ports (29-20, 54-65) by five games in the second-half standings.

The loss spoiled a stellar performance by Ports starter Anthony Capra, who held the Giants to one run on four hits while striking out 10 in 61/3 innings. Ports reliever Mickey Storey earned a blown save and the loss after giving up both runs in the ninth.

The Ports will conclude a three-game series against the Giants at 5 p.m. today before opening a six-game homestand against Modesto at 7:05 p.m. Tuesday at Stockton Ballpark.

Cougars Stung Bees to Open Trip

Kane County never enjoys lead in opener of eight-game road trip

BURLINGTON, Iowa – The Kane County Cougars began an eight-game road trip Saturday night in Burlington but suffered a lopsided 8-1 loss in front of 2,005 at Community Field in Iowa. Petey Paramore went 3-for-3, and Trey Barham pitched two more scoreless relief innings, but the Bees knocked out 17 hits and never went 1-2-3. The Cougars fell to 10-5 against the Bees this season.

Starter Murphy Smith (0-2), who tossed a quality start in his previous outing, gave up six runs on 11 hits in the loss. He walked three and struck out three. Matt Fitts yielded the other two Burlington runs before Barham logged the seventh and eighth innings.

The Cougars managed their only run in the top of the sixth, an unearned tally off Manauris Baez (6-5). Tyler Ladendorf reached on an error, took third on a grounder by Steve Parker and scored on a sacrifice fly by Mike Spina. The Cougars went in order just once but also stranded eight and made a couple of mistakes on the bases that hurt their chances. James Thompson pitched three scoreless to record his sixth save for Burlington.

The Cougars (23-26, 64-55) and Bees (21-27, 50-68) continue the four-game set Sunday afternoon at 2 CT. Kenny Smalley (9-5, 2.34) will face Ivor Hodgson (2-1, 4.84)