

A's News Clips, Tuesday, August 25, 2009

Griffey Jr. homers in win over Mazzaro, A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Vin Mazzaro's start at Safeco Field will make good story fodder when he plops a grandchild on his lap years down the road.

He can talk about how he plunked Ken Griffey Jr. with a 1-2 pitch the first time he faced the future Hall of Famer.

He also can relate how Griffey took him deep in the same game for career homer No. 625.

Down the road it will be quality entertainment. Right now, the facts of Monday's 3-1 loss to the Seattle Mariners can't seem too appealing.

Mazzaro filled up the stat sheet over five innings in a way the A's would rather not see.

Five hits, three earned runs, four walks, four strikeouts, two hit batsmen, two homers. All done over 99 pitches that should have taken him deeper into the game.

"The velocity was good on his fastball," A's manager Bob Geren said. "His command wasn't what it needed to be."

Overall, Geren wasn't too dissatisfied with Mazzaro (4-9). And it's worth noting that for the 13th time in his 16 big league starts, Mazzaro received three runs or less of support.

But the A's need more efficiency from the rookie, who hasn't completed six innings in eight of his past nine starts.

Mazzaro's main problem, besides his lack of command, was lighting a fire underneath Mariners Nos. 3-4 hitters Jose Lopez and Griffey.

Lopez launched a 2-0 pitch for a solo homer to left that put Seattle on the board in the third inning.

During Lopez's next at-bat, Mazzaro nailed him with the first pitch right in the hip. Lopez glared at Mazzaro for a moment before throwing his bat down hard and proceeding slowly to first base.

"I was just trying to get in on him," Mazzaro said. "It just got away from me a little bit."

Griffey was up next. In the first, Mazzaro got ahead of Griffey but lost the handle on a slider and hit him in the calf.

This time, Mazzaro left a two-seam fastball over the plate, and Griffey sent the 1-1 offering into orbit, his two-run homer easily clearing the wall in right-center.

Mazzaro said he wasn't overly worked up facing Griffey, who trails only Barry Bonds, Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth and Willie Mays on the all-time homer list.

"I didn't really think about that too much," Mazzaro said.

Griffey's homer put the Mariners ahead 3-0. That was enough for Seattle starter Ian Snell (2-1), who went six innings and didn't allow the A's first hit until the fifth.

Kurt Suzuki drove in the A's only run with a two-out single in the sixth.

It didn't help that the Mariners turned in some standout defense.

"We hit a lot of balls hard that got caught," A's designated hitter Landon Powell said.

Not the way the A's wanted to start a seven-game road trip. And they may continue it tonight without center fielder Rajai Davis.

X-rays revealed that Davis has a small fracture on the tip of his right thumb, stemming from a bunt attempt Sunday in which his thumb got nicked by the ball. He didn't start Monday, with Ryan Sweeney shifting over to center and Cust playing right.

The A's, who currently have just three position players on the bench, haven't decided yet whether to make a move to add another outfielder.

"He did swing the bat today," Geren said after the game. "If he can throw, he might be OK."

A's notebook: Hannahan settling in with M's amid familiar faces

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Hannahan settles in with M's amid familiar faces

SEATTLE — When Jack Hannahan got traded from the Detroit Tigers to the A's in August 2007, it was a golden opportunity to get major league playing time.

He's found himself in the same scenario since the A's shipped him to the Seattle Mariners on July 11 for right-hander Justin Souza. An injury to Seattle third baseman Adrian Beltre has landed Hannahan as the everyday man at third. On Monday, he made his first start against Oakland since being traded.

Hannahan said he couldn't be happier in his new surroundings, especially playing for Seattle manager Don Wakamatsu, who served under Bob Geren last year on the A's staff.

"It's been great playing for 'Wak'," Hannahan said. "He believes in his players, and any time you get that, it's easy to go out and play."

Hannahan is hitting .245 with six RBI in 29 games with Seattle. But as he showed with the A's, his value comes with his stellar defensive work.

He found familiar faces in Seattle, as Wakamatsu's bench coach is Ty Van Burkleo, who was the A's hitting coach from 2007-08.

Former Athletic Mike Sweeney also welcomed Hannahan with open arms — and a place to crash. Hannahan is staying in Sweeney's guest house in nearby Gig Harbor.

"No rent," Sweeney pointed out. "Let him save a couple bucks."

A's equipment manager Steve Vucinich has worked for the A's since the club moved to Oakland in 1968, and there were just two A's players during that time that he's never met.

One was Mariners outfielder Ryan Langerhans, and Vucinich introduced himself Monday and checked Langerhans off the list.

Langerhans spent three days with the A's in 2007. He was obtained April 29 of that season from Atlanta and dealt May 2 to Washington. The A's played a two-game series at Boston in that span, but Vucinich attended his mother's funeral May 1 and wasn't there.

"I've gotta keep it up," Vucinich said. "I know everybody that's played in an Oakland uniform." The only other player he hasn't met is pitcher Clayton Mortensen, who started Aug. 8 at Kansas City before the A's sent him right back to the minors.

Vucinich didn't make that road trip, but he figures he'll meet Mortensen at some point.

Landon Powell started at DH for the A's on Monday, a rare chance to play two days in a row after hitting a three-run homer Sunday. "... The biggest attraction during batting practice was David Cook, the 2008 "American Idol" champion.

He was scheduled to play a nearby concert Monday night. The lefty also threw out the first pitch and showed a pretty good fastball.

Mazzaro's mistakes doom Oakland

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Vin Mazzaro drew a lot of boos when he hit Jose Lopez on the hip with the first pitch in the fifth inning Monday night.

Lopez had doubled in the first and he had homered deep to left in the third, so home-plate umpire Marty Foster issued warnings to both benches. The Safeco Field crowd switched from disapproval to applause moments later, because Ken Griffey Jr. - himself a victim of Mazzaro's wildness earlier - launched a homer to right.

Those swings by Lopez and Griffey were the sum total of Seattle's scoring in a 3-1 victory over the A's. Oakland, the AL West's last-place team, is 8 1/2 games behind the third-place Mariners.

Asked if he thought Mazzaro had hit him intentionally, Lopez said, "Maybe yes, maybe no. It looked bad. I hit a home run the time before. I don't like that."

Mazzaro said he was just trying to go inside and the pitch got away. Supporting that contention, his control was off much of the evening; he'd walked three of the previous five men he'd faced.

Griffey, fifth on the all-time homer list, also was hit by a pitch and singled. He said he didn't have either hit-by-pitch on his mind when he went deep.

"I was just trying to drive the ball," he said. "Those things happen in the course of a game, and you may or may not like it."

Mazzaro had thrown Griffey a changeup away, then tried to go up and in, but, he said, "It was a two-seamer that ran across the plate, right into his wheelhouse, as they would say."

Mazzaro has shown a real flair for limiting damage when he gets into trouble the past few weeks, but nonetheless, the rookie is still getting into too many jams. He swerved out of bases-loaded situations twice with groundballs, including a double-play bouncer by Russell Branyan in the fourth, and Mazzaro stranded two men in the second as well.

Four walks and the two hit batters helped ratchet up Mazzaro's pitch count. He has only made it into the sixth twice since July 4. He said the main thing he needs to do to change that is to throw more first-pitch strikes. Lopez's homer came on a 2-0 pitch, and as Oakland manager Bob Geren said, "That's what happens."

The A's have scored no more than three runs for him in 13 of Mazzaro's 16 starts, and he is 0-8 in 10 starts with run support of two runs or fewer. With three runs or more, he's 4-1. Monday, Oakland didn't record a hit against Seattle starter Ian Snell until Daric Barton singled up the middle with two outs in the fifth.

The following inning, Oakland cobbled together a run with three hits, including an RBI single by Kurt Suzuki that sent Mark Ellis in from second.

That was the only run allowed by Snell, who was making his first career start against the A's. He was part of the Aug. 20 trade with the Pirates that also brought Jack Wilson to Seattle.

"I felt like we were on him. I really did," Geren said of his team's effort against Snell. "The ones we squared up were caught and the ones we should have hit we missed."

A day after hitting a three-run homer, Landon Powell was back in the lineup at designated hitter. Now that Barton is back from the disabled list, he can catch on an emergency basis, making Geren more comfortable about putting both catchers in the lineup occasionally.

The Mariners were without All-Star outfielder Ichiro Suzuki, who had calf tightness.

A's beat: Thumbs down for hurt Davis

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Rajai Davis was not in the lineup on Monday night because of a sore right thumb, but he said he hopes to be able to play today.

Davis injured the thumb on a bunt attempt Sunday; the ball hit the bat and the thumb at the same time. He stayed in the game, but Monday, he was wearing a guard on the thumb and he was available only in the event of emergency, according to manager **Bob Geren**.

After the game, Geren said that X-rays showed a small fracture on the top of the thumb. Davis will be re-evaluated today because he can swing a bat already. If he can throw, he'll be cleared to play.

If Davis can't go tonight, though the A's might have to consider making a move, though they don't want to put Davis on the disabled list if he'll be out only a few days.

Because of their eight-man bullpen, they have a three-man bench, which meant that on Monday, they were down to two, **Nomar Garciaparra** and **Tommy Everidge**. So the team could send out a reliever and bring in an extra outfielder.

Davis has been a major catalyst for Oakland's offense in the past month, hitting .340 in his past 26 games.

More medical: **Bobby Crosby** said his left calf is improving. He did some on-field workouts and he has resumed hitting. Crosby expects to be ready to come off the DL when eligible on Sept. 2.

Dallas Braden is not on the road trip; he remained in Stockton for physical therapy for the inflamed nerve in his left foot.

Briefly: Geren said that Garciaparra is likely to start at first tonight and that Everidge probably will be there Wednesday. **Daric Barton** was at first Monday. ... Third baseman **Eric Chavez** is likely to be in Seattle tonight to visit the team. He's

been out most of the season following back surgery. ... Catcher **Max Stassi**, the A's fourth-round pick this June, went 1-for-2 in his debut with Class-A Vancouver.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser

Music man: American Idol's David Cook, who was hanging out with ex-A's first baseman Mike Sweeney on Monday, worked in the suites at Kauffman Stadium for five years. "I watched Sweeney tear it up all the time, so this is a trip," Cook said.

Mazzaro outdueled by Snell in opener

Righty allows pair of homers; offense held silent in loss

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Typically effusive in his praise for his own players and opponents alike, A's manager Bob Geren was in no such mood on Monday night.

Mariners right-hander Ian Snell held the A's hitless into the fifth inning and worked six solid innings as Seattle rolled to a 3-1 victory in the opener of a three-game series at Safeco Field, but Geren wasn't the slightest bit impressed.

"We had five, six, seven hard outs, and there were some popups we just missed," said the skipper. "I really felt we were going to get some runs; we were on him. But obviously we didn't."

As for his own hurler, Geren begrudgingly acknowledged that rookie righty Vin Mazzaro did a nice job getting out of the early jams into which he pitched himself. But when asked about the outing as a whole, Geren went as close to crushing one of his prized young arms as he has all year.

"Not a great outing," Geren said. "Pretty much an average outing."

Average for Mazzaro, anyway. He gave up three runs on five hits, four walks and two hit batters in five innings of work, and in his previous three outings he'd allowed two runs in five innings on Aug. 18, three runs in 5 1/3 innings on Aug. 12, and three runs in five innings on Aug. 7.

Perhaps that explains why Mazzaro's opinion of his night differed dramatically from Geren's tepid evaluation. Mazzaro seems to have accepted that he's going to take some lumps in his first big league season, while Geren seems to be looking for steady improvement.

"I thought I did a pretty good job tonight," said Mazzaro, who lost for the ninth time in his past 11 decisions and saw his ERA tick up to 5.32. "I just have to stay away from the middle of the plate."

That would be a swell place to start. Mazzaro flirted with disaster in the early innings, stranding five runners in the first two frames after allowing a double, two singles, a walk and hitting a batter, so Seattle went the quick-strike route thereafter.

Jose Lopez lined a leadoff homer to left on a 2-0 pitch in the bottom of the third inning, and he was hit by a pitch -- prompting a warning to both benches from home plate umpire Marty Foster -- ahead of Ken Griffey Jr.'s line drive into the right-field seats with nobody out in the fifth.

"I was trying to go up and in with a two-seamer and left it out over the plate," Mazzaro said. "Right in his wheelhouse, as they would say."

Whoever "they" are, they probably also said Foster's warning was a bit overzealous. Mazzaro's command was such that if he'd been trying to drill Lopez, who had doubled earlier in the game, he likely would have missed him.

"He was a bit off in his location," Geren said. "His pitch count ran up pretty fast."

Mazzaro said he was just trying to get inside on Lopez, who reacted angrily to Mazzaro's plunking of his left side.

Griffey didn't say whether he thought the pitch had a purpose; he was just looking to get the Mariners out of their early funk. He did, with his 14th home run of the year and No. 625 -- fifth all-time -- for his career.

"Hey, I got hit in the first inning, but I guess that don't count," Griffey said with a laugh. "You always try to make guys pay, but it wasn't one of those things where I was looking to go up there and hit a home run. It just happened. I was trying to get on base.

"It was a 1-0 game and I was trying to start something and happened to hit it out. That was it. It wasn't about going up there and having any kind of revenge. It just happened that I got a good pitch and I hit it out."

Daric Barton got the first hit off Snell with two out in the top of the fifth, and Adam Kennedy's leadoff single in the sixth helped the A's get on the scoreboard. Jack Cust also singled in the inning, setting up an RBI single by Kurt Suzuki.

Oakland had a shot at tying the game with nobody out in the top of the ninth inning after Cust bounced a double into the bleacher in right-center field off Mariners righty David Aardsma, but Suzuki flew out to right, Ryan Sweeney flew out to left, and Landon Powell struck out to end the game.

'Mt. Everidge' making name for himself

Oakland (55-69) at Seattle (64-61), 7:10 p.m. PT

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- A's manager Bob Geren suggested that he might have three different starting first basemen in the three-game series against the Mariners that opened on Monday at Safeco Field.

Daric Barton, a left-handed hitter, got the nod on Monday against Seattle right-hander Ian Snell. The Mariners are starting southpaws Tuesday and Wednesday, and Nomar Garciaparra and rookie Tommy Everidge, both righty swingers, are each expected to start at first base in one of those games.

Whichever of the two games Everidge gets to start -- he could serve as designated hitter in one of them -- will give his growing fan base another opportunity to celebrate "Tommy Time."

That's just one of the hulking rookie's nicknames, and it's represented on a banner that's been flapping at Oakland -- Alameda County Coliseum from time to time since the Sonoma State product was called up to make his big league debut on July 28.

Geren, who first noticed the banner Sunday, casually referred to Everidge, 26, as "Tank."

"He told me that one," Geren said. "I guess that's been his nickname for a while. 'Tommy the Tank.' It's a compliment, right? Big, strong, powerful, durable."

The latest moniker to come to Everidge's attention is a tad more creative: "Mt. Everidge." And it meets the man-mountain's approval.

"Yeah, that's pretty good," Everidge said while watching a Little League World Series game in the visitors' clubhouse at Safeco. "I like it."

Geren on Monday used another big-boned rookie, Landon Powell, at DH on Monday and said he might use Powell, who hit a three-run homer Sunday, and regular catcher Kurt Suzuki in the lineup together more often in the season's final five weeks.

That will be less of a risk once rosters expand Sept. 1, assuming the A's promote a third catcher. Eric Munson, who has big league experience, is having a solid season at Triple-A Sacramento, batting .278 with 13 homers with 64 RBIs and a .367 on-base percentage in 90 games through Sunday.

Barton is currently Oakland's emergency catcher, having played the position in his first two years as a pro. Asked who his emergency catcher was when Barton was on the disabled list July 27-Aug. 20, Geren said such a situation might have merited a little 'Tommy Time.'

Pitching matchup

OAK: LHP Brett Anderson (7-9, 4.51 ERA)

Anderson threw seven impressive innings Wednesday but surrendered a two-run homer to Mark Teixeira that proved to be the difference in a 3-2 loss to the Yankees. A 21-year-old rookie, Anderson allowed three runs on six hits and struck out six. Anderson is 4-2 with a 3.20 ERA in 64 2/3 innings over his past 10 starts. After giving up five runs in six innings against Seattle in his Major League debut on April 10, Anderson held the Mariners to one run in six innings on May 25.




SEA: LHP Ryan Rowland-Smith (2-1, 4.24 ERA)

The Australia native had mixed results in his previous outing. He was impressive in the first three innings while retiring nine of the 10 batters he faced, and not-so-good over the next 2 1/3 innings, surrendering a pair of solo home runs, four walks and a double. All three of the runners he left on base when he departed in the sixth inning scored, which hiked his ERA over the 4.00 mark. Opponents are 3-for-23 against him in the first inning. He appears to be a homebody, posting a 2-1 record and 3.25 ERA at Safeco Field this season and is 0-0 with a 6.39 ERA on the road.

Dribblers ...

With lefty Dallas Braden (left foot) expected to be out for at least another three weeks, talk of a six-man starting rotation has cooled for the time being. ... Bobby Crosby (left calf) is on the trip and did some hitting on Monday. He's expecting to be ready to come off the disabled list as soon as he's eligible on Sept. 2. ... Heading into the Seattle series, right-handed reliever Michael Wuertz had 47 strikeouts in his previous 29 2/3 innings and led all American League relievers with 77 strikeouts in 60 1/3 innings. ... Former American Idol champion David Cook, a lefty, threw out the ceremonial first pitch to former A's first baseman/DH Mike Sweeney. Cook is in town for a tour stop.

Up next

- Wednesday: Athletics (Gio Gonzalez, 4-4, 5.78) at Mariners (Luke French, 3-3, 3.83), 7:10 p.m. PT 
- Thursday: Athletics (Trevor Cahill, 6-12, 4.86) at Angels (Ervin Santana, 7-6, 6.13), 7:25 p.m. PT 
- Friday: Athletics (Brett Tomko, 3-2, 3.69) at Angels (Trevor Bell, 1-1, 9.49), 7:05 p.m. PT 

Davis has fractured thumb, is day-to-day

Outfielder could be back Tuesday; Braden won't return soon

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- The A's tied an Oakland record by using the disabled list 22 times in 2007, and last season they eclipsed the mark by three.

The number for 2009 stands at 16, with Bobby Crosby (strained left calf) the latest placed on the shelf, but with rosters set to expand in about a week, the A's are unlikely to set another new standard.

That doesn't mean the list of walking wounded hasn't been crowded, though, and the list grew by one on Sunday when red-hot outfielder Rajai Davis suffered a bruised right thumb while attempting to bunt in the finale of a three-game series against the visiting Tigers.

Davis stayed in the game after the pitch in question hit the tip of his thumb and the bat at the same time, but he was held out of the starting lineup Monday's 3-1 loss to the Mariners at Safeco Field.

After the game it was learned that Davis has a fracture in the tip of the thumb. He said he'll be fine, and manager Bob Geren said there's no immediate plan to put Davis on the DL.

"He hit and threw a little in the cage today," Geren said after the loss. "We want to see how he does tomorrow morning; he's day-to-day. ... The good news is we're close to [Triple-A Sacramento] if I need somebody."

"I played through it; it's not that bad," Davis said before the game. "But we decided to take a day, make sure it's 100 percent."

Davis added that he'd have been able to play if asked, and Geren before the game suggested that it was about time for his center fielder to get a bit of a rest, anyway.

"Rajai's been playing a lot of games for us for a while now, and he's obviously done a great job," said the skipper. "It's late August, though, and he's probably going to play quite a bit the rest of the way.

"Hopefully he'll be back in there tomorrow."

Davis has hit safely in 24 of his past 26 games, batting .340 with 18 runs, 10 doubles, two triples, 17 RBIs and 14 stolen bases over that span.

"I like to play," he said. "I'm sure it's a one-day thing. I'm good."

Not so good: Dallas Braden, on the DL since Aug. 1 with an infected left foot. He's not on the road trip, which takes the A's to Anaheim for a four-game series against the Angels starting Thursday, and he hasn't done much throwing of any kind since being sidelined.

Braden is in his hometown of Stockton, Calif., for physical therapy.

"He won't be on the mound any time soon," Geren said.

Inbox: Are top prospects on their way?

Beat reporter Mychael Urban answers A's fans questions

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

**I read a column in one of the local newspapers suggesting that we'll see Brett Wallace and Chris Carter when the rosters expand Sept. 1. Have you heard anything to substantiate that?
-- Terry J., Rockin, Calif.**

Nope. As exciting as the notion of seeing these two high-profile prospects might be for fans, neither guy is on the 40-man roster, and to call them up for September would force the A's to leave other players unprotected -- i.e., vulnerable to the Rule 5 Draft -- this offseason. Once a player is placed on the 40-man, he has to stay there.

Carter hasn't even played at Triple-A yet, remember, and Daric Barton and Tommy Everidge are essentially sharing time at first base in the bigs as it is. Wallace is a nice name, in part because he came over in the Matt Holliday trade with the Cardinals, and he's at Triple-A now, but the River Cats are going to the playoffs and the A's seem to like their young players getting that kind of experience.

I wouldn't count on seeing either of them real soon unless you're planning to hit the Arizona Fall League. Otherwise, you'll probably have to wait for Spring Training 2010.

**With all of the promising rookie pitchers coming along, what should we expect our rotation to look like heading into 2010? There is a bit of a jam with six starters.
-- Connor A., Alameda, Calif.**

To start the year, I have to think it'll be Dallas Braden, Trevor Cahill, Brett Anderson, Vin Mazzaro and Gio Gonzalez. Eventually, Josh Outman will get his job back, and when he does, that's a pretty nice rotation.

Next spring is a long way away, though, and we all know Billy Beane will move anyone at any time. He's got plenty of pitching depth from which to deal, and maybe he'll do that to try to add offense and bring back Brett Tomko. Or Mark Mulder. Former No. 1 pick James Simmons could be in the mix, too. But for now, I'll go with the first five I mentioned.

**Did the Justin Duchscherer news surprise you?
-- Sal R., Phoenix**

Of course. It had to surprise everyone. I hadn't been in contact with Duchscherer for a good long time until the day after the announcement was made, and he's always been really good about getting back to me, so I knew something serious was going on. I had no idea what it was, though, and I give the A's a lot of credit for making sure nothing went public until Duchscherer himself -- through his agent and the team -- decided to do it.

I'm pretty sure Duchscherer is the first big league baseball player to be sidelined by depression, and this was an awfully courageous thing to do in the macho world of pro sports. I've gotten some pretty sickening e-mails from people saying

he's making millions to play a game so he should suck it up and play, but that's just pitifully short-sighted. This is a legitimate illness we're talking about. Baseball is irrelevant to Duchscherec right now, and it should be.

Can you tell me what Mark Ellis' contract status is? I know he signed a new deal last season, but I can't remember if there was an option or not. I sure would like to see him be one of those rare players to stay with the same team his whole Major League career.

-- Feeney D., Millbrae, Calif.

Ellis is signed through next year, with a non-vesting club option for 2011. "Non-vesting" means he can't make the option kick in with x-number of at-bats or games played or whatever. It'll be strictly the club's decision, and that decision could very well be determined by the development of Jemile Weeks.

What's been your favorite moment of the 2009 season?

-- Horace B., Boston

I have a few. Rickey Henderson's induction ceremony in Cooperstown is one, Brett Anderson's two-hitter in your neck of the woods was another, and both times Kurt Suzuki went deep after being thrown at are two more. All for different reasons, all very dramatic and sublime.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats fall, magic number remains at three

By Jordan Moore, rivercats.com

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. - The Portland Beavers came out swinging Monday night to steal their third consecutive win at Raley Field, knocking off the River Cats 7-4.

Portland, which is 12.5 games back in the Pacific Northern Division, has now outscored the River Cats 19-11 in these last three games. With Reno's win against Colorado Springs, Sacramento's magic number remains at three.

The Beavers offense started early as they grabbed six runs, two at a time, by the fifth inning. The Beavers hit four extra base hits with three doubles and a two-run homer by Eliezer Alfonzo that travelled an estimated 475 feet and landed on the clubhouse roof.

Sean Kazmar counted two RBIs for the Beavers in the second inning off a line drive to center field that scored Drew Macias and Valentino Pascucci. Sacramento got two of their own in the same inning when Portland failed to turn back-to-back double plays, allowing Aaron Cunningham and Eric Munson to score.

The Beavers added two more in the fourth when former River Cat Danny Putnam and Sean Kazmar hit back to back RBIs. Eliezer Alfonzo made it tougher for the Cats in the fifth when he hit a two-run bomb, his 13th of the season, which nearly cleared the clubhouse beyond the left-field fence.

In the bottom of the fifth, Aaron Cunningham hit his 11th homer of the season, with Brett Wallace on base, to bring the Cats back within two.

The game would see only one more run in the eighth, when Jerry Blevins took over and walked three consecutive batters to force home Drew Macias from third for the final run of the night.

Sacramento starter Clayton Mortensen (8-8, 4.42) threw 4.1 innings, allowing eight hits and six runs with only two strikeouts. Left-hander Aaron Poreda allowed four runs on four hits in the first 4.1 innings for the Beavers. Right-hander Walter Silva earned his seventh win on the season with a perfect 3.2 innings.

Sacramento, which has not been swept in 116 consecutive series, must win Tuesday night to extend the streak. The last time the River Cats were swept was in 2006, when Salt Lake took three in a row from Sacramento from July 7-9. They have not been swept in a four-game series since June 3-6 of that same 2006 season.

The Portland-Sacramento series concludes Tuesday night, with right-hander Shawn Chacon (7-4) facing right-hander Josh Greer (2-3).

Carter Wins POW And Pursues Triple Crown

By Greg Bergman / Midland RockHounds

Chris Carter took home Texas League player of the week honors for the third time in a month on Monday. Carter continues to torch Texas League pitching and has helped the RockHounds climb into the top spot in the South Division.

From August 17th thru August 23rd, Carter hit .474 with a home run (23) and four RBI.

Carter is currently tied for first in batting average (.335), second in home runs (23) and third in RBI (98) in the Texas League. The final 15 games will determine Carter's chances at the elusive Triple Crown.

Texas League Leaders

BATTING AVERAGE

Chris Carter (MID) - .335

Andrew Locke (CC) - .335

Adrian Cardenas (MID) - .326

HOME RUNS

Chad Tracy (FRI) - 24

Chris Carter (MID) - 23

Ryan Harvey (TUL) - 21

RUNS BATTED IN

Andrew Locke (CC) - 103

Chad Tracy (FRI) - 99

Chris Carter (MID) - 98

Gordon Gets Winning Hit, Is Winning Pitcher In 14-Inning Classic

08/24/2009 11:45 PM ET

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - Regardless of the season's final outcome, it will be a long while before members of the 2009 Stockton Ports forget Monday night's win at Sam Lynn Ballpark. In a game that went 14 innings and featured 46 combined strikeouts, Ports reliever Derrick Gordon (5-5) delivered the clutch game-winning hit with two outs in the bottom of the 14th and was also the game's winning pitcher in Stockton's epic 2-1 win over the Bakersfield Blaze. With the win, the Ports find themselves within seven games of the Blaze for the final wild card playoff spot with 13 left to play in the regular season.

Bakersfield scored their first and only run in the bottom of the first inning. David Paisano led off with a double that ricocheted off the back of the shoe of Ports starter Scott Hodsdon. Jake Kaase followed with a sacrifice bunt that was mishandled by catcher Yusuf Carter, allowing Kaase to reach and putting runners at the corners with nobody out. Hodsdon would then get Joey Butler to hit into a 6-4-3 double play on which Paisano scored and gave the Blaze a 1-0 lead.

After allowing the run in the first, Hodsdon would go on to pitch the best game of his season. Stockton's right-hander scattered just two more hits after the first inning as part of a season-long 7.2 inning effort. Hodsdon at no point worked with more than one baserunner aboard, and struck out a season-high 10 in receiving a no-decision.

Hodsdon would be matched nearly pitch-for-pitch by Blaze starter Ryan Tatusko. Tatusko allowed just one hit over his first four innings. In the top of the fifth, however, Kala Ka'aihue led off and launched a solo home run over the left field wall to tie the game at one. Tatusko went on to strike out the side after Ka'aihue's home run, then strike out two of the three batters he faced in the sixth to end the inning and his outing.

Tatusko went six solid innings and also received a no-decision, allowing just the one run on three hits while striking out a career-high 11.

Both team's bullpens were masterful upon taking over. Dustin Brader took over for the Blaze in the seventh and pitched three scoreless frames, allowing just one hit while walking two and striking out five.

Mickey Storey took over for Hodsdon with two down and the bases empty in the seventh and struck out Matt Lawson to end the frame. Storey pitched a scoreless ninth and pitched around a two-out error committed by Dusty Coleman to send the game to extra innings.

Bakersfield went with lefty reliever Ryan Falcon (2-2) to start the 10th, and Ports manager Aaron Nieckula, with DH Christian Vitters due up, elected to pinch-hit with right-handed hitting Matt Smith, who popped out to second as part of a scoreless inning.

Heading into the bottom of the 10th, Ben Hornbeck came on to start the inning from the Ports 'pen. While Hornbeck was warming up on the mound, Carter caught a ball awkwardly in his catcher's mitt. After having his left middle finger examined, Carter had to be taken out of the game and Smith, who had been inserted as the new DH the inning prior, came in to catch. Because Carter left the game and Smith entered as the new catcher, the fifth spot (Carter's spot) in the batting order became the spot in which the pitcher had to hit.

Hornbeck, despite allowing the leadoff man to reach in each of the first two innings of work, would go on to pitch three scoreless innings while striking out seven batters. In his only plate appearance, Hornbeck would strike out looking.

Falcon, despite ending up the game's losing pitcher, had an absolutely terrific run in extra frames. Falcon retired the first 14 batters he faced, taking him up until there were two outs in the top of the 14th. With two down, Grant Desme reached on a single to center and subsequently stole second, getting into scoring position for Gordon who'd just pitched a perfect 13th inning. Gordon, on a 2-1 pitch, hit a ball into the gap in right-center field for a double, scoring Desme and putting the Ports up 2-1. It was Gordon's first professional hit, and ultimately one that won the game for both himself and the team. Falcon gave up a single to Frank Martinez to put runners at second and third, but escaped further trouble by getting Ka'aihue to fly to right.

Falcon, despite retiring the first 14 batters he faced, would take the loss, allowing the go-ahead run on three hits while striking out six.

With Jason Ray warming in the bullpen, Gordon came out and warmed up in preparation to start the bottom of the 14th. Ports skipper Nieckula came out prior to Gordon facing the first batter and attempted to bring in Ray. The umpires told Nieckula that the rules stated Gordon had to face at least one batter after warming up prior to an inning. After the umpires' ruling, Gordon recorded back-to-back strikeouts of Paisano and Kaase to start the inning. Joey Butler, however, would keep the inning going with a single to right. After Butler's single, Ray was summoned from the bullpen to face Mauro Gomez, who doubled down the left field line to put the tying run at third and winning run at second. Ray would get Doug Hogan to strike out, however, to end what was a thrilling ballgame.

Stockton and Bakersfield combined for 46 strikeouts in the game, falling seven shy of matching a Cal-League record for an extra-inning game set on August 31, 1966 in a game between Lodi and Reno, a game that went 23 innings. Both teams set season-high totals in strikeouts. Every pitcher in the game had at least one strikeout. Seven players struck out four times or more. Every batter in the starting lineups struck out at least once with the exception of Jermaine Mitchell, who went 0-for-4 with two walks.

In what will be a tough act to follow, the Ports and Blaze will play the second game of their three-game set on Tuesday at Sam Lynn Ballpark. Left-hander Carlos Hernandez (9-6, 4.09 ERA) will head to the bump for the Ports, opposed by right-hander Tanner Roark (7-0, 3.11 ERA) for the Blaze. First pitch is set for 7:15 p.m. PDT.

Cougars Win Homestand Opener in 10

Gil delivers game-winning hit as Kane County knocks off Beloit

GENEVA, III. – Leonardo Gil delivered a bases-loaded game-winning RBI single in the bottom of the 10th inning Monday night to lift the Kane County Cougars to a 4-3 victory over the Beloit Snappers in front of 6,493 at Elfstrom Stadium. It was the Cougars' ninth walk-off victory of the season and their second win in a row. It was also the start of an eight-game homestand after the Cougars went 2-6 on an eight-game, nine-day road swing.

The Cougars saw three different leads evaporate before they ultimately won the game. Down 1-0 in the fifth, the Cougars tied the game when Juan Nunez scored on a wild pitch. Then they took the lead on a bases-loaded walk to Mike Spina. After Beloit tied the game in the seventh with an unearned run off Josue Selenis, Jeremy Barfield scored on an error in the eighth to make it 3-2.

Beloit answered with a run in the top of the ninth against Justin Murray, which set up Gil in the 10th. Dusty Napoleon and Nino Leyja singled, Conner Crumbliss was hit by pitch, and Gil hit the first pitch he saw from Steve Blevins (3-5) into left center for the game-winner.

Cougars starter Mathieu Leblanc-Poirier gave up one unearned run in five innings. He left in line for a win but took a no-decision. Selenis gave up an unearned run in 1 2/3 innings, A.J. Huttenlocker retired the four batters he faced and Murray (4-1) ended up with the win.

The Cougars (26-31, 67-60) and Snappers (24-33, 51-76), who are playing eight games in a row against each other, continue their second four-game set Tuesday night at 6:30 CT. Shawn Haviland (6-10, 4.35) is scheduled to face Bruce Pugh (3-4, 3.04).