

A's News Clips, Monday, August 31, 2009

Anderson's mistake costly to A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ANAHEIM — A's manager Bob Geren talked before Sunday's game against the Los Angeles Angels about the on-the-job education his rookie starting pitchers are receiving.

Then Brett Anderson went out and learned a lesson about the dangers of missing location to Torii Hunter.

Anderson tried to bust Hunter with a pitch inside with two outs and two runners aboard in the fifth inning but instead left a fastball high and over the plate. Hunter smacked it for a three-

run homer that opened the floodgates to the Angels' 9-1 victory at Angel Stadium.

The A's were seeking a series victory in their four-game set against the American League West leaders and trailed 4-1 entering the eighth. Then the Angels roughed up reliever Jay Marshall in a five-run eighth inning that starred — who else? — Kendry Morales.

Morales stung Marshall for a three-run homer, capping a three-game stampede in which he went 9-for-13 (.692) with three home runs, two doubles, nine RBI and four runs scored. Morales finished August with 33 RBI, setting an Angels record for the most in August.

But Morales' home run wasn't as important as Hunter's.

"It was a game-changer," Anderson said. "... You would like to get out of it right there, but I couldn't do it."

Anderson's start was the 94th by an A's rookie this season, setting an Oakland record. It was the second time Anderson matched up against Angels ace John Lackey.

On July 19 in Oakland, Anderson took a perfect game into the seventh inning, but the A's lost 1-0 in 10 innings. Anderson allowed two hits over eight innings overall that day but was out-dueled by Lackey, who went nine innings and pocketed the victory.

Only Anderson's two-hit shutout of Boston ranks higher on his list of highlights so far in his rookie season, he said.

Lackey was dealing again, surrendering just one unearned run over eight innings to get his 100th career win. Anderson said his stuff was mediocre, emphasizing that his slider in particular wasn't working well against right-handers.

Still, Lackey has been impressed.

"The stuff definitely jumps out at you," Lackey said. "He's throwing 95 (mph) consistently with a good hammer for a guy that young."

The A's took the lead in the third, when Lackey tried to pick off Eric Patterson from second. Lackey's throw was mishandled by shortstop Erick Aybar, allowing Daric Barton to score from third.

The Angels tied the game in the fifth. But when the A's caught Jeff Mathis in a rundown between third and home for the second out, leaving runners on the corners, it looked as if Anderson might escape further damage.

Anderson had struck out Hunter with a fastball high and outside in the first inning, but this time, he tried to go inside and missed. Hunter drilled the pitch into the seats in right-center.

Such are the experiences that should make Anderson, 21, and the rest of his cohorts in the team's young rotation better in the future, Geren said.

"They're really getting some quality innings," he said. "When they go home, they're going to soak it all in and realize what they need to do to improve "... They're going to come back next year and take off."

Anderson was removed after 87 pitches and six innings, having allowed four runs. Geren has said he will be careful with his young starters over the season's final month, even going to a six-man rotation to reduce the wear.

Anaheim no Disneyland for A's

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brett Anderson was speaking about his performance, but he accurately summed up the entire day from Oakland's perspective, saying, "This was a blah game. No one is going to remember this one in a few months."

The A's had a chance to win the four-game series from the first-place Angels on Sunday, but instead took their fifth loss of the road trip, 9-1.

Oakland was in every game of the seven-game trip - at least until Sunday. And even Sunday, the score was 4-1 until Kendry Morales hit a three-run blast off Jay Marshall in the eighth. Morales' homer was his 30th of the year and he has 33 RBIs in August, establishing an Angels record.

He was a one-man wrecking crew against Oakland this week, going 9-for-16 with three homers and nine RBIs.

"He had a very good series," Geren said. "You have to reevaluate how you're pitching him, look at what he did ... and put it back together and try again."

"That's a really good ballclub, especially the way Morales is swinging the bat this series," Anderson said.

Geren noted that the team's young starters continue to make strides and gain experience. Anderson, 21, has been the best of the bunch, but after a rip-roaring start Sunday - the left-hander didn't allow a hit until the fourth - he had a hiccup in the fifth.

Anderson allowed four hits, including an RBI double by Chone Figgins and a three-run homer on the first pitch he threw to Torii Hunter. The pitch was supposed to be in, but it was over the plate and high - possibly out of the strike zone.

"That was the biggest point of the game, a game-changer," Anderson said.

Anderson has given up four runs or more only three times since mid-June, a span of 13 starts.

"He's going to be a force in this league," said Angels starter John Lackey, who didn't allow an earned run in eight innings and picked up career victory No. 100.

Oakland's run in the third came when, with Daric Barton at third, Lackey threw to second to try to get Eric Patterson. Shortstop Erick Aybar didn't wind up in a good position to throw home and Barton scooted across the plate.

Eleven times this season, Anderson has received no more than one run of support.

Kurt Suzuki, Oakland's RBI leader with 62, got the day off and Landon Powell was behind the plate. He recorded two hits. Scott Hairston also got a rest and Patterson played left, his first start since being recalled Friday. Patterson doubled and walked and he also made a nice catch at the wall in left-center to rob Aybar of extra bases.

"He looked great," Geren said. "He made a nice play and he smoked that ball for the double."

Oakland returns home to face Kansas City, a club that has dropped three of four to the A's this year. On Thursday, Seattle - which just swept Oakland - comes to town for four games. Though the A's are 3-9 against the Mariners, six of the games in the series have been decided by one run and all three last week by two.

The A's are guaranteed their fifth consecutive losing month this season. The team has not had a winning record in a month since June 2008.

Garciaparra is without contention

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Today is the last day players can be added to rosters to be eligible for the postseason, and there remains a small chance **Nomar Garciaparra** will go to a contender.

Garciaparra cleared waivers some time ago, according to sources, but he has drawn little interest, according to a team source. The Phillies, who talked to Garciaparra over the winter, scouted the series in Anaheim and are still looking to add bench help. Though healthy, Garciaparra did not play in the series.

Garciaparra said he'd hope that if the A's think they don't need him anymore when the roster expands Tuesday that they would let him go before then, but he has no problem staying if he is still in Oakland's plans.

"After the deadline, if I'm here, I'll continue to help these guys do what they're doing," Garciaparra said. "Which is fine. There's nothing bad about it."

Garciaparra has started once in the past 12 games, getting most of his time as a pinch hitter. He is 0 for his past 14 pinch-hit at-bats.

The minimal playing time doesn't seem to bother Garciaparra. He played more than anticipated early in the season, and he said Sunday he understands the A's situation.

"I'm not saying, 'Wait a minute,' " Garciaparra said. "I know where we are in the standings, I know they want to see guys. I'm trying to help, and I'm doing what the organization signed me to do, filling a utility role."

Briefly: Edgar Gonzalez is listed as the probable starter for Tuesday. He has been in long relief since two May starts. ... **Brett Tomko** will go Wednesday, giving **Trevor Cahill** an extra day of rest. Cahill has thrown 1531/3 innings. His total combined in the minors last year was 1241/3. ... **Bobby Crosby** (calf) won't go on a rehab assignment before he is activated Wednesday.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle, 8/31/09

Wild man: In his last three games against the Angels, reliever Santiago Casilla has hit a batter; it's likely Kurt Suzuki was hit Thursday because of a past transgression. Casilla is "spinning off the ball," manager Bob Geren said. "He needs to get his mechanics right."

A's have to settle for split with Angels

Oakland lineup largely stymied by Halos' Lackey

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- After no-hitting the Angels for 7 2/3 innings in his previous start against them on July 19, A's left-hander Brett Anderson had a lot to live up to in his outing at Angel Stadium on Sunday.

Anderson, though, described Sunday's start as "blah," as the rookie tossed six solid innings but was hurt by a three-run homer by Torii Hunter in the fifth inning in Oakland's 9-1 loss in front of 38,018.

"It was kind of a blah game for me out there," Anderson said. "At the end of the year, I'm not going to remember this game much. My stuff was just OK."

Anderson was solid early, allowing just two hits through the first four innings, before running into some trouble in the fifth.

He allowed singles to Howard Kendrick and Jeff Mathis before Chone Figgins hit an RBI double that left runners on second and third. The A's got a break when Mathis was thrown out at home on a hard grounder to first baseman Daric Barton, but Hunter came to the plate with runners at first and third.

Hunter didn't waste any time, hitting the first pitch over the left-field fence to give the Angels a 4-1 lead that they would only build on later in the game, including a five-run eighth inning.

"The pitch was supposed to be inside, running in on him, but he left it up and over the plate," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "It might've even been a ball, but he got on top of it. Torii Hunter is a good player, and that's his strength right there."

The homer came on a high fastball, which was the same pitch Anderson struck Hunter out on in the first inning.

"That was the pitch of the game. [It was] the game-changer right there, not executing that pitch," Anderson said of the homer. "In the at-bat before that, I struck him out on a pitch higher than that."

The long ball gave the Angels all the offense they needed behind right-hander John Lackey, who won his 100th game and continued his dominance of the A's in his career.

Lackey allowed just one unearned run on five hits over eight innings to improve to 16-4 lifetime against Oakland.

"He pitched a good game," Barton said. "He battled and threw his offspeed stuff for strikes, too. So if you're looking for a certain thing, he mixes it up real well."

Lackey, who also pitched when Anderson nearly had his no-hitter against the Angels, again was impressed by the 21-year-old lefty's stuff.

"His stuff jumps out at you," Lackey said. "He's over 95 [mph] with a hammer. He's gonna be a good one, no doubt about it. Last time we faced him, in Oakland, he was tough. Kid's got good stuff."

The A's got on the board first, plating a run against Lackey in the third inning. Barton singled and Eric Patterson doubled, putting runners at second and third. Lackey then threw to shortstop Erick Aybar in an attempt to pick off Patterson, but the throw was bobbled, allowing Barton to score.

That was the only run of the game for the A's, who went 0-for-4 with runners in scoring position.

"We didn't get a whole lot off him," Geren said of Lackey. "We had a couple hits, but even when we scored, it was on an error. He threw the ball well."

The Angels later blew the game open with a five-run eighth inning powered by a three-run homer by Kendry Morales off reliever Jay Marshall. It was Morales' 30th homer of the season and his third in the series.

"He had a very good series," Geren said. "We'll have to reevaluate him and how we're pitching him to see if it's the pitches he's seeing or if they're mistakes."

Marshall was hit hard in the eighth, allowing five straight hits with two outs before being relieved by Santiago Casilla. Casilla then hit Jeff Mathis with a pitch before allowing an RBI single to Figgins to make it seven straight Angels reaching base in the inning with two outs. Casilla got Aybar to ground out to end the inning, but the damage was done.

Despite the loss, the A's could take some solace in earning a split against the first-place Angels in a four-game series at Angel Stadium.

"We battled pretty good, so we can take that to the end of the season and progress with that," Anderson said. "Any time you play a team of that caliber and you split with them, it's going to be a good series."

A's to add pitchers when rosters expand

Reineke, Mortensen and Blevins could be called up

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- With a young starting rotation and a bullpen that has thrown the fourth-most innings in the Major Leagues, the A's are looking for some pitching reinforcement come Tuesday, the day Major League rosters expand.

A's manager Bob Geren said his club has a plan in place for which players will be recalled, and he said it'll likely be only pitchers getting called up in the first wave.

"We'll definitely have some pitching primarily," Geren said on Sunday. "We're talking about pitching 99 percent right now."

Geren, though, said he hasn't ruled out bringing up an outfielder such as Travis Buck or Aaron Cunningham, even though Eric Patterson was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Friday.

"I don't have a need for anything but pitching right now, but I'm not saying we won't," said Geren of bringing up an outfielder.

The A's plan on only calling up pitchers already on the 40-man roster, meaning Chad Reineke, Clayton Mortensen, and Jerry Blevins are candidates.

All three have appeared with the A's at various points this season. Blevins has made five appearances, while Reineke and Mortensen made one start each for Oakland.

Blevins is 5-3 with a 3.77 ERA in 44 appearances with Sacramento this season. He had a 12.46 ERA in five appearances in the big leagues this year.

Reineke is 8-4 with a 4.49 ERA in 28 games, including 20 starts, with the River Cats. He made a start with the A's on Aug. 5 against the Rangers, allowing four runs on seven hits over five innings.

Mortensen, who was part of the trade that sent Matt Holliday to the Cardinals, has been used exclusively as a starter in Triple-A. Mortensen has a 9-8 record and a 4.39 ERA in 23 games. He also started for Oakland on Aug. 8, when he allowed eight runs on eight hits over four innings against Kansas City.

Athletics happy to head home

Oakland (57-73) vs. Kansas City (50-80), 7:05 p.m. PT

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- After going 2-5 on a seven-game road trip, the A's will be happy to be back at home at the Coliseum when they host the Royals in a three-game series beginning Monday.

But as manager Bob Geren noted, outside of their 9-1 loss Sunday, they weren't out of any of the other games they lost during the trip. Their second-worst loss came by four runs in a game in which Oakland led by four runs in the seventh inning against the Angels on Friday.

"The record on the road trip is not what we want, but we were in every game we were in," Geren said. "I think we're playing some good baseball. The idea that we're right there in every game is encouraging, especially for our young pitchers."

Another one of those young pitchers is set to start on Monday, as left-hander Gio Gonzalez will toe the rubber against fellow rookie Luke Hochevar.

Gonzalez has started to figure it out at the Major League level. He has a 3.57 ERA over his past seven starts, with 44 strikeouts and just 16 walks in 40 1/3 innings.

But Gonzalez now will be part of a six-man rotation that is designed to limit the innings of the team's younger pitchers, such as Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill.

Gonzalez threw 157 innings last season while splitting time with Triple-A Sacramento and the A's, and he's thrown 128 frames this year between those two spots, so his innings have not been as much of a problem.

But Geren doesn't want to chance overworking young pitchers, such as Gonzalez, who are set to be part of the A's rebuilding plans.

"They're really getting great experience for next year," Geren said. "If you think about what's going to happen after the season, they're going to go home and let it all sink in and realize what they have to do to improve. They're going to come back next year and take off."

Pitching matchup

OAK: LHP Gio Gonzalez (4-5, 5.88 ERA)

Gonzalez, a 23-year-old rookie, carried a 3.06 ERA over his previous six starts into his Wednesday outing in Seattle, but he took a small step backward by allowing four runs on seven hits and three walks over five innings while losing his third straight start. Equipped with a plus curveball and a low-90s fastball, Gonzalez has had a hard time getting deep into games of late, working a total of 15 2/3 innings over his past three times out. He has not faced the Royals this year, and he gave up three earned runs in four innings against them last season.




KC: RHP Luke Hochevar (6-7, 5.52 ERA)

Hochevar had a frustrating outing against Cleveland in his last start. Hochevar threw the ball well, but he took the loss after allowing four runs in 6 1/3 innings. The Indians capitalized on two walks, an error and a wild pitch, and Hochevar lost for a fourth straight time. Hochevar hasn't won since July 25 against Texas -- a game in which he allowed two earned runs in seven innings. After starting the season at Triple-A Omaha, Hochevar made his 2009 debut in Oakland on May 12. He lasted just two innings after giving up eight earned runs. He fared a little better on Aug. 8, surrendering four runs in seven frames.

Tidbits

Geren said it's unlikely left-hander Dallas Braden will return to the club this season after being placed on the disabled list on Aug. 1 with a rash on his left foot. ... Catcher Kurt Suzuki and outfielder Scott Hairston both had the day off on Sunday. ... The A's are 4-1 against the Royals this season.

Up next

- Tuesday: Athletics (Edgar Gonzalez, 0-1, 5.24) vs. Royals (Kyle Davies, 5-9, 5.94), 7:05 p.m. PT 
- Wednesday: Athletics (Trevor Cahill, 7-12, 4.64) vs. Royals (Brian Bannister, 7-11, 4.60), 12:35 p.m. PT 
- Thursday: Athletics (Brett Tomko, 3-2, 3.62) vs. Mariners (TBD), 7:05 p.m. PT 

A's will employ six-man rotation

E. Gonzalez to get the start for Oakland on Tuesday

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- A's manager Bob Geren named right-hander Edgar Gonzalez the starter for Tuesday's game against the Royals, meaning the club will employ a six-man rotation down the stretch.

Geren said the move was made to limit the innings of his young pitching staff, which includes rookie right-handers Trevor Cahill and Vin Mazzaro and rookie lefties Brett Anderson and Gio Gonzalez.

"It'll give everybody some extra rest," Geren said. "We'll go that avenue through September with an extra pitcher and some off-days to give some of our young guys some rest."

The right-handed Gonzalez has come out of the bullpen in his past 19 appearances with the A's, and he has a 5.20 ERA in those outings. Gonzalez made two starts in May after beginning the season in Triple-A, and he was 0-1 with a 5.40 ERA in those games.

The move also shuffles the A's scheduled rotation, as Gonzalez will start Tuesday, followed by veteran Brett Tomko, Cahill, Mazzaro, Anderson and Gio Gonzalez.

But Geren said the order is subject to change based on how the pitchers are feeling, given the flexibility of a six-man rotation.

"We've put three or four models together, which is nice," Geren said. "It gives us flexibility to give these guys the amount of innings we'd like and for them to finish strong."

A's expect to activate Crosby soon

Versatile veteran was dealing with strained left calf

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Utility man Bobby Crosby, who has been on the disabled list since Aug. 18 with a strained left calf, is expected to be activated on Wednesday, A's manager Bob Geren said Sunday.

Crosby ran the bases Saturday and came out of it well, so he'll be activated the same day he's available to come off the DL.

"He's fine," Geren said. "He's doing great. It looks like he'll be ready to join us when his DL term comes to a close."

Crosby is not expected to play in rehab games to get ready for his return. He has been taking batting practice instead, and his calf hasn't hindered his swing.

"He doesn't feel like he needs to [go on a rehab assignment], and feels really good swinging the bat," Geren said. "As of yesterday, he didn't feel like he needed to or wanted to."

In a game against the Yankees on Aug. 17, Crosby exited in the sixth inning with tightness in his left calf.

Before the injury, Crosby was batting .223 with six home runs and 27 RBIs in 87 games, while playing first base, third base, second base and right field.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Wallace wins it for Sacramento

By Andrew Hazard, rivercats.com

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. - River Cats faithful got quite the treat on Fan Appreciation Day.

Third baseman Brett Wallace hit a game-winning single in the bottom of the ninth inning to give the River Cats a 5-4 victory over the rival Fresno Grizzlies.

The winning run, Aaron Cunningham, was not even scheduled to play until right fielder Travis Buck was removed from the game after colliding with Chris Denorfia while chasing down a fly ball one pitch into the game. Second baseman Matt Downs hit a rope to right-center as Denorfia and Buck both went at the ball. Denorfia went low, Buck went high, and they collided in mid air. Downs was able to advance to third on the play for a triple.

Buck stayed down for a while, but left under his own power before being replaced by Cunningham in right field. Two batters later, the always-dangerous Buster Posey hit a blooper to center. Denorfia, still a bit gimpy from the collision, was unable to make a play on the ball and Downs scored easily for a 1-0 lead.

Newly acquired Sacramento pitcher Chris Gissell had another tough inning in the second. He walked left fielder John Bowker before Joe Borchard hit an infield single at Wallace. Wallace hurried his throw to Jeff Baisley on first as the ball went soaring over Baisley's head, and Bowker moved to third on the throwing error.

The next batter, Ben Copeland, had one thing on his mind: bring home the runner on third. He did that by flying out to Denorfia. After walking another batter, Gissell made a web gem to get out of the inning. He caught a Clay Timpner bullet, tossed the ball to shortstop Gregorio Petit, who threw to Baisley to complete the double play.

The highlight of the fourth inning came when designated hitter Tommy Everidge hit a broken-bat line drive straight at third baseman Jake Wald. Wald calmly avoided the broken lumber, caught the ball and threw to first for the out.

Denorfia shook out all of the cobwebs from his first inning collision in the fourth. He was able to get good wood on a Ramon Ortiz pitch. All Timpner could do was look up and watch the ball fly over the center field wall to cut the deficit to 2-1.

Fresno responded in the seventh with a run, but Sacramento answered quickly. Anthony Recker hit a home run that just cleared the left-center field wall. Ryan Sadowski then gave up a single to Petit and walked Cunningham before Adrian Cardenas advanced both runners on a sacrifice bunt. Everidge then reached on a fielder's choice, as the second baseman Downs was unable to throw out Petit at the plate. Sadowski then struck out Wallace before Chris Carter smoked the ball to left field to score Cunningham and give Sacramento a 4-3 lead.

Blevins made an amazing behind-the-back grab and throw to retire Copeland to begin the ninth. After walking Jake Wald, the wind worked in favor of the Grizzlies when Cunningham couldn't get under a fly ball to right that hopped over the fence for a double.

Sam Demel then replaced Blevins. After a quick snag from Wallace to retire Downs, Demel walked Frandsen to load the bases for Posey. Demel got to two strikes on Posey before throwing a wild pitch, allowing Wald to score from third and tie the game.

Geno Espineli came in to close the game for the Grizzlies in the bottom of the inning, when the River Cats gave a great example of station-to-station hitting. Cunningham opened with a single and was moved to second by an Everidge single, setting the stage for Wallace. He hit a hard shot to right field. DeFrancesco was not waving home Cunningham, but Copeland bobbled the ball long enough to allow Cunningham to come around and score the game-winning run.

Demel (2-2) pitched two-thirds of an inning, struck out one and walked one in the victory. It was also the second save of the season he has blown. Cunningham took advantage of his opportunity to play. Not only did he score on the game-winning hit, but he went 2-for-4, scored twice and manufactured a walk.

The River Cats (84-51) finish the regular season with an eight-game road trip. They play at the Reno Aces on Monday at 7:05 p.m.

RockHounds Leave Too Many On Base In Loss

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

One big Frisco inning and 14 stranded RockHounds added up to a 4-2 RoughRiders win in the opener of a key, 3-game series between the clubs Saturday night at Dr Pepper Ballpark in Frisco.

With the win, Frisco draws to within two games of the RockHounds in the Texas League South with nine (9) games remaining in the 2009 Texas League regular season.

After retiring the first seven batters he faced, RockHounds starter Graham Godfrey walked light-hitting Frisco shortstop Renny Osuna in the third inning. Marcus Lemon singled to left on the next pitch and Craig Gentry followed with a 2-run triple. With Gentry at third with one out and the infield playing in, former University of Texas star Dustin Majewski sent a high pop up to shallow center. The ball dropped fewer than 20 feet onto the outfield grass for an RBI double, extending the inning, and Frisco capped the 4-4un inning with an RBI ground out. The RoughRiders did not score again, collecting just one hit and one walk over the last five innings.

The RockHounds out-hit Frisco, 12-4, but could not take advantage. Frisco starter Omar Poveda had runners at first and third with no outs in the second, but struck out three consecutive batters to escape. The 'Hounds scored twice against Poveda in the sixth on RBI from Jemile Weeks (who walked to extend his on-base streak to 13 games) and Matt Sulentic. The RockHounds later loaded the bases in the eighth and ninth innings, but could not take advantage of the opportunities, leaving 14 runners on base in the game.

Texas League South

The RockHounds lead Frisco by two games with nine to go, with the 'Hounds and RoughRiders going head-to-head Sunday and Monday in Frisco. The RockHounds then host San Antonio in a 4-game set and wrap up the regular season with a 3-game showdown with Frisco at Citibank Ballpark.

Popcorn, Peanuts, Fresh Cut Grass

The RockHounds return to Citibank Ballpark Tuesday to begin a critical, 7-game stand hosting San Antonio and Frisco (September 1-7).

Game times: Games in the final home stand of the regular season begin at 6:30 p.m., with two exceptions: Friday, September 4th at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday, September 6th at 6:00 p.m.

For tickets, groups, picnics, youth teams of the night and more ... call the RockHounds office at 520-2255. The Citibank Ballpark box office will be open all day, and through the games, each night of the home stand.

RockHounds Radio

The 'Hounds' new radio home is Jack-FM (102.1-FM). RockHounds broadcasts are also available online. Look for the link to Jack-FM on the RockHounds' web site ... then click "Jack On The Box." Broadcast time from Dr Pepper Ballpark in Frisco Sunday evening is 5:50.

Base-Running Blunders Cost Ports In 4-3 Loss

RANCHO CUCAMONGA, Calif. - In the final road game of the 2009 season for the Stockton Ports, it was mistakes on the base paths that proved to be the downfall on Sunday for the Boys of Banner Island. Three key base-running mistakes factored directly into a 4-3 loss to the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes at The Epicenter, allowing the Quakes to take three of four in the final road series of the year. With the loss, the Ports wrap up their road record at 29-41, and drop five of seven on their final seven game road trip.

For the first time in the series, it was the Quakes who drew first blood and they did so in the third against Ports starter Julio Ramos (0-1). Ramos, who was promoted from Vancouver on Saturday and making his Ports debut, gave up a leadoff double to Carlos Colmenares. Two batters later, P.J. Phillips singled to left, the Hector Estrella walked to load the bases. Ramos then gave up a two-run single to Abel Nieves to make it 2-0. With Estrella at third and one away, cleanup hitter Jeremy Moore executed a suicide squeeze bunt with Estrella running down the line, putting the Quakes up 3-0.

As it turned out, the third was the only poor inning for Ramos who pitched decently in his Ports debut. The lefty wound up with the loss, going five innings and allowing just the three runs on six hits while striking out two.

Quakes starter Manuel Flores (2-2) was helped out in the third inning by the first of Stockton's three base-running mistakes. After back-to-back singles from Gabriel Ortiz and Michael Richard started the inning, Ortiz ended up being

picked off second by catcher Alberto Rosario. The pick-off killed what might've been a rally, as Flores would induce two ground ball outs to end the inning.

Flores gave up a hit in each of the five innings he worked, but didn't allow a run in that span and would be credited with the win.

The Ports brought their first run across in the sixth. With Steven Gelz in the game out of the Quakes bullpen, Shane Keough and Steve Kleen knocked back-to-back doubles to start the inning and put the Ports on the board at 3-1. Kleen, however, would be caught too far off the bag when Todd Johnson hit a flare to shallow left that was caught by the shortstop Colmenares. Colmenares would turn around after making the nifty grab and fire the ball to second in time to double off Kleen.

The Quakes, however, would get the run right back in the bottom half of the inning. Ports reliever Lance Sewell was greeted with a solo homer from Jay Brossman to put the Quakes lead back to three runs at 4-1. It was the only run Sewell would allow in his lone inning of work, but a run that would go on to prove the difference in the ballgame.

Arguably, Stockton's largest miscue came in the eighth. Kevin Nabors started the inning for the Quakes out of the 'pen and after a single from Richard, a walk to Jermaine Mitchell and an error committed at third on a ball hit by Keough, the Ports had the bases loaded with nobody out. Nabors then walked Kleen to bring in a run, cutting the Quakes lead to 4-2. Taylor Wilding (SV, 3) was summoned from the 'pen to face Johnson, who hit a ball deep to center and off the wall by the 400-foot marker. Keough, the runner at second, misread the ball and stayed tagged up at the bag. Mitchell scored from third, but because Keough got a late break, he didn't score and nobody else could move up, leaving Johnson with just an RBI single and a game that still wasn't tied. With Stockton trailing 4-3, the bases loaded and still nobody out, Wilding got a strikeout of Frank Martinez, and then got Matt Smith to hit into his second double play of the night to end the inning and the final Ports threat.

Wilding pitched a perfect ninth to notch his third save of the year for the Quakes.

For Stockton, Ben Hornbeck pitched a scoreless inning-and-two-thirds, and Jason Ray, after walking the first batter he faced, recorded the final out of the eighth for a scoreless third-of-an-inning.

Following an off-day on Monday, the Ports return to Banner Island Ballpark for a season-ending seven-game homestand beginning on Tuesday when they welcome the Bakersfield Blaze to town for three games. In a battle of southpaws, Anthony Capra (2-0, 3.18 ERA) will toe the rubber for Stockton, opposed by Tim Murphy (9-10, 7.24 ERA) for Bakersfield. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Cougars Rally for another Walk-Off Win

Kane County now 6-1 on 8-game homestand, looks to sweep Rattlers

GENEVA, III. – The Kane County Cougars continued their recent dominance over the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers with a 6-5, 10-inning victory Sunday afternoon at Elfstrom Stadium. The Cougars rallied with four runs in the bottom of the ninth to tie it, and Conner Crumbliss got hit by a pitch with the bases loaded in the 10th to win it. The Cougars won their ninth straight game against Wisconsin and improved to 6-1 on their eight-game homestand.

The Cougars trailed 5-1 entering the bottom of the ninth. Then Tyler Ladendord walked with the bases loaded, Dusty Napoleon hit a sacrifice fly, Chris Berroa scored on an error and Steve Parker nailed a sacrifice fly to make it 5-5. The Cougars loaded the bases again in the 10th against Liam Ohlmann (3-4), and Rigoberto Almonte entered and plunked Crumbliss to end the game. It was the Cougars' third walk-off win of the homestand and their 11th of the season.

Josue Selenis (5-1) logged the top of the 10th and picked up the victory. Starter Shawn Haviland gave up four runs -- three earned -- over six innings in a quality start and was taken off the hook for a loss with the ninth-inning rally. A.J. Huttenlocker gave up one run in three innings before Selenis came in to work the 10th.

The Cougars (31-32, 72-61) and Timber Rattlers (23-39, 57-75) conclude the four-game series Monday night at 6:30 CT. Murphy Smith (1-2, 4.94) will oppose Trey Watten (5-13, 4.58). Then the Cougars are off Tuesday before a trip to Peoria on Wednesday night.

Whatd'ya mean no runs?

By Rob Fai / Vancouver Canadians

(Nat Bailey Stadium - Vancouver, BC) - Revenge is a dish best served cold, and on Sunday the Eugene Emeralds exacted some revenge on the Canadians with a 4-0 shutout victory.

The Emeralds were shutout by Vancouver back on Thursday night falling 1-0 out at Civic Stadium in front of one of their largest crowds of the 2009 season. On Sunday, Eugene returned the favour in front of 5,075 sun soaked fans out at Nat Bailey Stadium.

The Emeralds got to Canadians **RHP Ronny Morla** in the top of the 2nd inning when C Griffin Benedict hit a double (6) to left field and scored on a line drive off the bat of RF Ty Wright that was dropped by Canadians CF Tyreece House. House was charged with an error on the play that gave Eugene a 1-0 lead.

Eugene scored a pair in the top of the 7th inning off of Canadians **LHP Ian Krol** who was making his professional debut at the age of 18. After giving up singles to RF Ty Wright and 2B Joey Railey, CF Jason Codiroli hit a single to left that scored Wright. SS Dean Anna then hit a sacrifice fly to left field scoring Railey to extend the Eugene lead to 3-0.

The finishing touches offensively for Eugene came in the top of the 9th inning when Canadians **RHP Kyle Christensen** walked both 3B Brayden Drake and 2B Joey Railey before giving up a double (9) to SS Dean Anna that scored Drake to give the Emeralds a 4-0 lead.

The Canadians offense was largely held in check by Eugene starter RHP Jorge Reyes who went five scoreless innings, scattering two hits while striking out six Canadians hitters. Eugene's bullpen was strong as well as they shut down Vancouver with RHP David Erickson pitching a scoreless 6th inning and LHP Nick Greenwood who went the final three innings giving up just two hits.

For a complete box score from Sunday afternoon's 4-0 loss to Eugene, please visit the link at the top of this page.

The Canadians (33-36) will wrap up this three game series on Monday, August 31st at 7:05pm vs. the Eugene Emeralds (32-37) with **RHP Jonathan Joseph** (0-1 4.53) getting the call for the Vancouver.

The BC Sports Hall of Fame presents *Bill 'Spaceman' Lee* as the final of four Superstar Series appearances set for Monday night. Tickets are available by calling 604.872.5232 or by clicking on the link at the top of this story.

Canadians Rewind - LHP Fabian Gomez

By Jeremy Knight - special to canadiansbaseball.com / Vancouver Canadians

(Vancouver, BC) - **Fabian Gomez** could be considered a Canadians veteran, having pitched in 37 games over two Northwest League campaigns, in 2007 and 2008. The 'master' of the pick-off move, Gomez dazzled fans and teammates alike when he dominated opposing base runners for two summers at Nat Bailey Stadium, catching 16 over the two seasons.

Gomez sported a 5-3 record and a 6.92 ERA as a Canadian, and only gave up three home runs over 37 appearances, 35 of which were relief stints.

Talking from Rockford, Illinois, where Gomez is now a starter for the Frontier League (Independent) Rockford Riverhawks, Gomez was upbeat about his time in a C's uniform, but it was the antics off the field that he will always remember fondly as well.

"A good memory is Kevin. He was my biggest fan there. He had down syndrome and I got him to throw out the first pitch at a game and I caught it. That was a very good memory", explains Gomez.

Oakland's 31st round choice in 2007, Fabian was drafted out of Las Cruces, New Mexico, a city where he honed his craft at picking off runners before heading to Rockford College.

In his last three seasons between Vancouver and Rockford, Fabian has had 23 successful pickoffs, which has gained attention from scouts who are interested in his services for their respective organizations. Yet, you don't need to look any farther than Vancouver, British Columbia to find out where most of the credit is due.

"Lefty has helped me out a lot", when referencing C's Pitching Coach Craig Lefferts who worked with Gomez in Extended Spring Training at Papago Park in 2008.

"Things he taught me, I carried over here and continued to work on everything he told me in Extended. I learned a lot from him."

Whatever it was Lefty worked on with Gomez it looks like it's working, with the young lefty garnering the attention of scouts thanks to his play in Rockford, where he is 4-3 despite a few Disabled List appearances. His seven pickoffs are just part of the package this year, but there was one moment in '09 when he realized how feared he is.

"Earlier in the year, I picked off two guys against the Washington Wild Things, and then when we went to their place I started the second game of the series. The first baserunner that got on base was standing on first base and took a softball lead on me [his foot was touching first base the whole time]. I was shocked, I came set and didn't even notice until I looked over there, when I had to step off the rubber because I wanted to laugh."

It is moments like those that wouldn't have been possible without his two years in Vancouver, where C's broadcaster Rob Fai even made a song about Gomez picking off runners near the end of 2008.

Nat Bailey Stadium is a pitchers park says Gomez, but he says it didn't faze him because he pitches his game at every park no matter what the circumstances.

When it comes to the future, Gomez knows he wants to get back into affiliated baseball, and then in the future hopefully a job in coaching.

"I'm planning to be around baseball all my life whether it's on the field as a player, or on the bench coaching."

Maybe one day, Gomez can make an impact on a pitcher's game, as much as Lefty made an impact on his own.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Shawn Haviland, SP

David Malamut
OaklandClubhouse.com

Aug 31, 2009

Right-hander Shawn Haviland made a strong first impression on the Oakland A's last season when he posted a 3.48 ERA for short-season Vancouver after being selected in the 33rd round of the draft out of Harvard University. Haviland is continuing to show promise in 2009 with Low-A Kane County. David Malamut spoke with the right-hander over the weekend...

Harvard University isn't usually known for producing top baseball talent, but Crimson alum [Shawn Haviland](#) is hoping to change that perception. The Oakland A's 2008 33rd round pick has put together a solid first season-and-a-half in pro baseball, posting a 3.48 ERA for Vancouver last season and earning a spot on the Midwest League All-Star team in 2009.

Although Haviland's performance in the second half of the 2009 season hasn't been as strong as his first half (he had a 3.66 ERA before the break and a 5.30 ERA after the break), he still feels strong. He will be counted on to be a strong contributor to the Kane County Cougars' post-season rotation in September.

David Malamut spoke with Haviland over the weekend...

David Malamut: How does your arm feel?

Shawn Haviland: Feeling great, probably the most innings I've thrown since high school, so I'm surprised at how good my arm feels. I tribute that to our throwing program and making sure we take care of ourselves.

DM: In high school you threw a lot of innings?

SH: My junior and senior year in high school I probably threw around 175 innings each year, so I guess this is cake compared to that.

DM: Is that during the high school season or the season plus in the summer?

SH: High school and summer combined because I played for a couple of teams in the summer and got a lot of innings from there.

DM: How much of that is from what you do in the off-season conditioning program?

SH: A larger part of it is I really went after it this off-season and lost about 15 pounds and got stronger. I think that right now and towards the end of the year is where it is beginning to pay off. I feel good where other people are starting to

tire a little bit.

DM: What pitches do you throw?

SH: Fastball, curveball, cutter, splitter and a changeup.

DM: What do you want those pitches to ultimately do?

SH: I love to pitch to contact with my fastball, and get some groundballs. The rest I would like to get some swing and misses, if you can get some swing and misses you're going to have a lot of success.

DM: Going into Harvard what was your experience and what had you learned?

SH: Harvard was awesome, I got to meet so many interesting people, every person there has something that they are really good at. I kind of just learned that you should work on the one thing, everyone is good at one thing, and everyone should work on that, and see how far that will take you.

DM: In 2005, you played for Wareham (Cape Cod). What did you learn from pitching against wood bats?

SH: It's a lot different than pitching to metal. You can pitch to contact more, the coolest part about playing there is I got to play with a couple of guys who are in the majors right now, Dustin Mattison, Daniel Bard and I got to play against Evan Longoria. He actually hit a homerun off of me, then I beamed him the next time. It was cool to pick those guys' brains, pick the coaches' brains. I picked up my changeup there.

DM: In college you threw 12 complete games. How gratifying were those?

SH: It is great anytime. Even now, in pro ball, even though it never really happens, you try to get on the mound and finish what you started. Anytime you can get that last out, the catcher comes out and gives you the ball it's a pretty cool thing.

DM: You were signed by former Cougar Marc Sauer. What was that all like, being scouted and signed?

SH: The scouting process is interesting for a guy who is maybe not a top five round pick because you never know who is interested you never know who is there. Marc called me a few days before the draft and goes, "We're thinking about picking you up later in the draft, do you want to play?" and I said yeah you give me a shot I'll sign for whatever money you want. I just want to play baseball, I just want to play pro ball. I'm glad to have gotten the shot I keep in touch with Marc. Probably about once a month I give him a call.

DM: Marc Sauer spent two years in Kane County?

SH: He said he loved it, he says he talks to Max (Akerman) his host dad probably every week and this is a special place to play. You get huge crowds, the city is awesome, the ownership is great and the fans are into it there. Probably isn't too many better places to play in minor league baseball.

DM: What was draft day like?

SH: Pretty stressful. It was actually the day after I graduated from college too, so I was moving out of my dorm and saying goodbye to all of my friends for the past four years. I was unsure I was going to get drafted. I hoped I would have the chance, so it started out pretty stressful and then turned into a great day because I heard my name called and my lifetime dream is fulfilled.

DM: Were you listening online?

SH: We were unpacking. We had it online and really loud. All of my roommates were there and my name didn't get called until I drove away from the school and about 30 minutes from home and I got a call from Marc. He was like "alright you got your shot. I wish they could've called me earlier in the morning to say ok we are going to get you but that's not how it happens."

DM: What did you learn from playing in Vancouver last year?

SH: That was great, the coaching in pro ball is just so different. You can really take the time to work on every little nuance of your mechanics and working with [pitching coach Jimmy Escalante was awesome. You also just learn about what the day-to-day grind of minor league baseball is and that it can maybe not be unbelievable every once in awhile, but if you can be good every day that can take you a long way.

DM: What was your off-season program like?

SH: I worked out four times a week with this guy Erik Kressy right outside of Boston. I live in Boston during the off-season. I started throwing after Thanksgiving and got on the mound around January first. I wanted to show up to spring training ready because I felt I needed to prove myself to make sure I got to Kane County.

DM: Did you get to throw outside at all?

SH: There is a bubble over the Harvard football stadium and they have a turf field so you can throw. When I was at Harvard you could play full games out there, they can get you up on the mound there and I could face the hitters at Harvard which is nice.

DM: Going into this year what were your expectations and do you think you have met them?

SH: My expectations were: 1. Out of spring training I wanted to make Kane County and if I could be in the starting rotation, which I was lucky enough to be, that would be great to as far as that goes. I was happy. Another goal was I wanted to make the All-Star team and I was able to accomplish that. I really want to focus on finishing the second half of the season strong and not tailing off. My numbers haven't been what I would like them to be but I feel like I'm executing my pitches. I feel healthy and my velocity has stayed up and in that sense I'm pretty happy.

DM: You have that one bad inning.

SH: Yeah I don't know what that is. I talked to my dad on the phone the other day. It seems like it is quick too. It's over in like 10-15 pitches and bam four runs then I can settle it down and shut it down. It happened in Cedar Rapids the other day. It's something that me and Jimmy have been talking about. Maybe once the guy gets on maybe just slow the game down a little bit and take our time and not let it get downhill momentum on me. It has been frustrating. It would be one thing if I was throwing the ball badly and they were hitting it, but I was throwing the ball well and it seems like they get a bleeder here or there then the big hit when they need it. I am pretty confident that come playoff time and my next start I will be able to make the big pitches when I need to.

DM: Going into your first start what was going through your mind?

SH: We were facing a Peoria team that rakes. They had Josh Vitters and a couple of other first rounders. Josh Harrison is a good player. I faced them five times in Instructs and four times in spring training, so it was a team I knew well and they knew me well. I just wanted to go in and get the season started off right and see if I could get through the fifth or sixth inning and keep the team in the game. I think I was able to do that.

DM: Did the pitch count hinder you that early in the season?

SH: I was always that guy, and maybe I'm a little stubborn, that once I'm out there I want to throw 200 pitches until the game is over. It's not realistic but early in the year we were right around 80 pitches. It was frustrating I had to come out with two outs and a guy at third base which is when I want to stay in there and battle but the pitch count is for our own good.

DM: What has been the highlight of the year so far?

SH: There has been a lot of them. Playing in the All-Star game was awesome, the July 3rd game we had against the Cubs where it was 15,000 fans with a couple of big leaguers here was pretty cool. I pitched on a Saturday night in Dayton which was really cool. Their fans are really into the games, packed house and they are screaming and yelling at me. That is the kind of stuff you live for.

DM: How have the road trips been?

SH: It's better than the Northwest League. Two road trips ago it was a tough one. We had to go from Cedar Rapids to Michigan to Wisconsin. I'm the kind of guy that just sit on my laptop and mess around and time goes by quickly or read a book or something.

DM: What has been your favorite town to play in this year?

SH: I liked West Michigan. They had a nice stadium and I pitched well there so that kind of helped my opinion. Wisconsin is great because the hotel is right near a lot of stuff, so you can go over and demo a driver in the middle of the day. Normally there is a lot of downtime and not really anything by the hotel but they have a mall there, which is cool.

DM: Favorite stadium?

SH: I like our stadium but I think the best ones are either Dayton or Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne is brand new and they have that huge Jumbotron. I didn't get to pitch there unfortunately, there's is pretty nice.

DM: I love the food there. I went there a weekend ago and it's the only play park I've been to that has ribs.

SH: I think the best concessions in the league is Quad City. You get tacos, pasta and they have like the whole range of food.

DM: With your major being government studies, what is your take on the government?

SH: It looks like we are starting to turn it around. I don't really follow the stock market that much but I look on my phone every once in awhile and it's been trending back up. It's nice that we could get someone in there with some fresh ideas. Whether or not you agree with his ideas, he was elected and he is certainly doing his best to change it.

DM: Before you pitch you always draw something in the dirt on the back of the mound, what are you doing?

SH: My good friend passed away when we were in seventh grade. He drowned when an ATV flipped over on him. I write his initials and his number as just kind of a way to remember. I played baseball with him and he was a good friend of mine.

DM: Your father and your grandfather played baseball in college. How much has their experience helped you?

SH: I think it has been invaluable. My dad, ever since I was a little kid knew that if I wanted to play college baseball -- which I always did -- what I needed to do. Both him and my grandfather taught me the right way to play the game. You play hard, you prepare yourself. My father was a shortstop, so in high school he was great with that. My grandfather was a pitcher so he kind of talked about how to set hitters up. I guess he had a good curveball back in the day.

DM: What was it like being on the mound in your first Elfstrom Stadium start and getting the win?

SH: You always want to pitch well when you are in front of the home crowd for the first time any time you can get the team a win it is great but I think I pitched pretty well that night and I was pretty fired up there were a good amount of fans in the stands.

DM: What was it like being named to the All-Star team?

SH: That was a great great honor as someone who coming into the season I wasn't a first round pick. I didn't go to a traditional baseball school so to get that kind of honor and be out there with the guys who made it from our team and the guys who made it across the league who are good players and big prospects it was a great honor. It was really cool to meet all of them and see them they are all good guys they are all going through the same thing we are.

DM: If you were not playing baseball what would you be doing?

SH: I don't really want to think about that. I just really love baseball so I think I would try to coach and maybe try to be in the front office somewhere or a scout or something like that. If you can get paid to do or be a part of something you love, you are pretty lucky.

DM: How do you prepare yourself mentally and physically to pitch during pregame?

SH: I take notes the day before on maybe what their weaknesses are and what their tendencies are, so I'll go over them with the catcher before the game and I like to get in there and get stretched, get some music going about 45 minutes to an hour before hand and just take that into the game.

DM: What's your mentality on the mound?

SH: I want to go right after the guys and force contact. Make them hit me. Nothing drives me crazier than walking a guy. It is hard enough for them to hit, you can't give them free passes like that.

DM: How has working with Jimmy Escalante last year helped you this year?

SH: It has been great because we are really comfortable with each other now. With me there are a certain couple of keys, if I'm rushing out, I'm going to struggle a little bit with my command and having a full year with him and now a second year, he can --within five pitches in the bullpen -- say "hey you're rushing out a little bit." He picks it up right away so having a guy for a second year is great.

DM: Is this season physically what you expected your first pro season to be like?

SH: Everyone always says it is a grind in August and that you are going to start to feel tired. Maybe it just that I'm a starter and I only have to go every fifth day but it really hasn't hit me quite yet. Knock on some wood but I thought it

was going to be a bit more of a grind for me. It's fun to come out here every day and shag batting practice, throw your bullpens and stuff like that. It has been great since I've been so happy it hasn't taken a physical toll on me quite yet.

DM: What are your top five artists on your iPod?

SH: I like Matchbox 20, The Killers, Kings of Leon, Deathcab for Cutie. Maybe only those four. I don't listen to a lot of music.

DM: What other sports do you play besides baseball in the off-season?

SH: I love to golf. I played a good amount of squash last year with one of my college roommates and it's actually a lot of fun. In high school I played hockey but I really don't get to do that as much anymore.

DM: What did you play?

SH: I played center. In high school I played junior hockey and then my senior year I kind of had to make a decision whether I wanted to go full bore in hockey or baseball, and I picked baseball, as it is kind of my true love.