

A's News Clips, Wednesday, September 2, 2009

Sixth starter strong, but A's hitters aren't

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's couldn't be sure how long Edgar Gonzalez might last in Tuesday's start against the Kansas City Royals.

He wound up being terrific for someone who hadn't faced a batter in 17 days.

As it turned out, the A's much bigger problem in a 4-3 defeat was cashing in against a Royals bullpen that seemed intent on giving away a victory.

Oakland ended the night 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position and left 11 men on base. That effort included a bases-loaded, no-out situation in the eighth in which they mustered just one run.

The A's put the first two runners aboard in the ninth against Joakim Soria, but Kurt Suzuki struck out swinging, Jack Cust watched a third strike go down the middle, and pinch-hitter Nomar Garciaparra flied out to center to end it.

"It was a game I think we should have won, obviously," manager Bob Geren said. "We had many opportunities and just couldn't get it done."

Kansas City burned through five relievers, who combined for six walks over the final three innings, but managed to nail down a victory for starter Kyle Davies (6-9).

For the second straight night at the Oakland Coliseum, attendance was announced at more than 10,000, but it appeared that maybe half of that actually showed up.

The Royals scored three runs in the sixth off relievers Jay Marshall (0-2) and Jeff Gray to break a 1-1 tie.

As for Gonzalez, the A's simply handed him the ball and made sure he remembered his way from the dugout to the mound.

He'd pitched in long relief for much of this season and hadn't appeared in a game at all since Aug. 15.

Tuesday was his first outing since joining the rotation as a sixth starter.

He more than held his own, lasting five innings and allowing three hits and one run. He struck out five and walked one.

Gonzalez relied more on his fastball than usual and said he focused on working at a quicker pace.

He struck out the side in a 1-2-3 first inning.

"After that first (inning), I surprised myself that everything was right there," Gonzalez said.

"He threw the ball really well and was aggressive," second baseman Mark Ellis said. "He's done a good job for us. I thought he was even more aggressive with his fastball in a starting role."

Gonzalez is needed in the rotation because Dallas Braden is likely out for the season with a "traumatized" nerve in his left foot.

Braden said doctors have given him simple orders — more rest.

"If it's getting better and I get back on the mound, so be it," Braden said. "If not, we'll look forward to next season."

The A's closed to within 4-3 in the eighth on Ellis' fielder's choice grounder with the bases loaded, but Daric Barton and Cliff Pennington both struck out to snuff that rally.

Rajai Davis, coming off a career month in August, got September going in style with a solo homer over the left field wall in the first to give the A's an early lead.

A's left fielder Scott Hairston aggravated his left quad injury while legging out an infield single in the eighth and left the game. He's unlikely to start in this afternoon's series finale.

A's notebook: Lefties called up to aid bullpen

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Left-handers called up to help out bullpen

The A's stayed true to their word and replenished their bullpen on Tuesday, calling up left-handers Jerry Blevins, Dana Eveland and Brad Kilby on the first day major league rosters could expand past 25.

Blevins and Eveland were on the Opening-Day roster, and each has had two previous stints with the big club this season.

Kilby, who needed to be added to a 40-man roster that still has one spot open, is making his major league debut at age 26.

The Elk Grove native and San Jose State product was a 29th- round draft pick in 2005 and was in his fifth minor league season.

"He's done a nice job in Sacramento," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's one of those guys, he's left-handed, but he doesn't have huge differences (statistically when facing lefties or righties). He's a local guy. He's aggressive and confident."

For his career, Kilby has racked up 339 strikeouts in 2952/3 innings.

Geren said he plans to use Kilby and Blevins as one-inning relievers.

Blevins, 25, had a 3.84 ERA in 45 appearances with Sacramento, striking out 62 and walking just 18.

Eveland's promotion could be considered a surprise if only because he was 0-4 with a 7.88 ERA over his last five starts with Sacramento.

But Geren said Eveland, 25, will fill the long relief role vacated by Edgar Gonzalez, who started Tuesday against Kansas City and is now

part of the A's six-man rotation. But the two could flip-flop roles depending on how Gonzalez fares, Geren said.

The A's still haven't revealed their timetable for calling up any position players.

The addition of three lefty relievers doesn't figure to lessen the workload of Craig Breslow, who entered Tuesday leading the American League with a career-high 66 appearances.

Geren said he'll continue looking first to his front-line relievers in tight games.

Leading the league in appearances is "something I take a lot of pride in, (because) I don't have to ask for a day off," Breslow said.

Kurt Suzuki was named the A's nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, giving annually to the major leaguer who best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and positive contribution to his team.

Suzuki and his wife, Renee, have helped raise more than \$61,000 for the Jon Wilhite Recovery Fund. Wilhite, a college teammate of Suzuki's, survived an April car crash that killed Angels pitcher Nick Adenhardt and two others.

First base prospect Chris Carter hit three homers and had seven RBI for Triple-A Sacramento on Monday. Recently promoted from Double-A Midland, Carter leads all of the minors with 174 hits and is second with 113 RBI.

Rest of team fails to back new starter

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Edgar Gonzalez took a page out of the Brett Tomko playbook and turned in a far better start than anticipated.

Oakland's bullpen and hitters didn't cooperate in the A's 4-3 loss to the Royals. A's relievers allowed three runs in the sixth, while A's hitters went 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position. The team left seven men on base in the final three innings.

"That was a tough one," A's manager Bob Geren said. "I thought we should have won. We had many opportunities."

Gonzalez had thrown one inning in the previous 23 days and hadn't started a game since late May, relegated to long relief most of the season. Added to the rotation as a sixth starter Tuesday, he worked five innings and allowed one run. He struck out the side in the first and needed just six pitches to get the first two men.

"I was joking after that inning that I was surprised with myself," said Gonzalez, who said a major key for him was working more quickly than usual.

Kansas City's only run off him came in the second, when Albert Callaspo singled, went to second on a groundout and scored on a base hit by Miguel Olivo. Gonzalez allowed three hits, walked one and struck out five.

"He surpassed all expectations," Geren said.

Jay Marshall took over for Gonzalez in the sixth and allowed two singles, then Jeff Gray walked Billy Butler. After a force at the plate, Callaspo delivered a two-run single, and Mark Teahen knocked a run-scoring single up the middle to make it 4-1.

Oakland scored one run in the seventh on Adam Kennedy's single, but the A's left the bases loaded that inning when Kurt Suzuki grounded to short against Kyle Farnsworth.

The A's loaded the bases with nobody out in the eighth but got just one run out of it, on Mark Ellis' RBI forceout. With runners at the corners, Joakim Soria struck out Daric Barton and Cliff Pennington to end the inning. Oakland's first two batters reached in the ninth, but Suzuki and cleanup hitter Jack Cust struck out and pinch-hitter Nomar Garciaparra flied out to center.

Suzuki is batting .218 at home, compared with .321 on the road. He's also batting .188 when batting third, a spot in the order that has bedeviled Oakland all year. A's No. 3 hitters have a combined .214 average, a major-league low. Since 1974, the lowest average by a team's No. 3 hitters is .217 by the 1976 Expos. The league average for the spot is .270.

Rajai Davis homered in the first inning, and Ellis had two hits and a walk.

A's left fielder Scott Hairston left in the eighth after running out an infield single. He has had a left quad injury for several weeks. Geren said Hairston is unlikely to play today.

The crowd was announced at 10,039, the smallest of the season, but the actual attendance appeared to be considerably smaller, with few fans sitting in the season-ticket holder areas. The team has drawn under 11,000 on 11 occasions this year.

Tomko was signed to a minor-league deal in early August after the Yankees dumped him in July. He is 2-0 with Oakland, and has allowed three runs in three starts. Though the A's initially planned to have him go today and Trevor Cahill on Thursday night, the two have been swapped because Tomko had some minor ribcage soreness after his last start.

Rehab made Braden's foot worse

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The nerve in **Dallas Braden's** left foot still has not healed, and considering it's September, that makes the left-hander's return this season nearly impossible.

Braden said that he must wait until the nerve regenerates, and all the rehab and treatment he was getting for an infection in his foot wound up creating the nerve problem. The nerve is described as "traumatized."

"Everything I was trying to do to get back was counterproductive," he said. "We didn't know it was as damaged as it is, so trying to rehab was a huge setback."

And there's no point in rushing back and risking further injury when the team is in last place and has a full pitching staff.

"That's the biggest issue," Braden said. "Does the risk outweigh what I might get out of pitching again this season?"

Manager **Bob Geren** acknowledged that Braden's season "is in jeopardy." Braden has been out for more than a month after an allergic reaction to his neoprene toe guard led to an infection and then the nerve damage.

Call-up time: The A's added left-handed relievers **Dana Eveland**, **Jerry Blevins** and **Brad Kilby** when rosters expanded. Kilby had to be added to the 40-man roster. The team still has one more opening on the 40-man, probably for a third catcher later this month.

Briefly: **Chris Carter**, recently promoted to Triple-A Sacramento, hit three homers and drove in seven runs Monday night. ... Radio broadcaster **Ken Korach** will hold his second annual Winning for the Community Poker Challenge at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Warehouse Bar and Grill in Oakland. It's Texas Hold 'Em, with a \$35 buy-in and the option for two \$20 re-buys. There will be prizes awarded, and all proceeds will go to community charities. To enter, call (510) 451-3161 or e-mail radio@oaklandathletics.com.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser

Wednesday, September 2, 2009

Good works: Catcher Kurt Suzuki was nominated for the Roberto Clemente Award; the honor recognizes charitable efforts, among other things. Suzuki and his wife raised \$61,000 for Jon Wilhite's medical fund after Wilhite was injured in the crash that killed Angels starter Nick Adenhart.

Gonzalez strong, but 'pen slips in loss

Marshall and Gray allow Royals to take lead in sixth inning

By Adam Loberstein / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Edgar Gonzalez hadn't pitched in 16 days. He hadn't started a game in over three months. His past 19 appearances came in relief.

You wouldn't have known it Tuesday. Gonzalez went five strong innings, allowing only one run on three hits while striking out five.

It's what happened after his exit that was the problem.

Relievers Jay Marshall and Jeff Gray combined to give up three runs in the sixth, Oakland couldn't come up with the big hit with scoring opportunities in each of the final three innings and the A's fell to the Royals, 4-3.

"[Gonzalez] did everything we wanted him to do," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He surpassed all expectations. ... It's a game I think we should have won. We had many, many opportunities, but we couldn't come through."

Gonzalez went five innings for the first time since May 29, throwing 69 pitches.

"It's by far the most economical with his pitch count as he's been," Geren said.

"That was the focus," Gonzalez said. "I was pitching quicker. I had been taking too long between pitches."

The A's had their share of chances to get Gonzalez's relievers off the hook, loading the bases in the seventh and eighth innings, but the Kansas City bullpen had other ideas.

Oakland came within two in the seventh when Adam Kennedy's two-out single scored Mark Ellis and moved Daric Barton to second. After walking Rajai Davis, who hit a solo homer in the first, to load the bases, Royals reliever Kyle Farnsworth got Kurt Suzuki to ground to short to leave them loaded.

Jack Cust walked to open the eighth. Then Scott Hairston legged out an infield single to chase Farnsworth. Hairston removed himself from the game, telling Geren he didn't think he'd be able to score on a double because of his ailing right quad. Geren called Hairston "doubtful" for Wednesday's game.

Kansas City closer Joakim Soria entered and walked Ryan Sweeney to load the bases with none out. After Ellis scored Cust by grounding into a forceout at second, Soria struck out Barton and Cliff Pennington to end the threat.

"We just didn't take advantage of our opportunities today," Davis said. "Their bullpen has some pretty live arms. They did their jobs and we didn't do ours."

The A's tried rallying again in the ninth as Kennedy and Davis singled and walked, respectively, to get things under way. Soria then retired Suzuki, Cust and pinch-hitter Nomar Garciaparra in order to earn the six-out save.

The A's went 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position, stranding 11 on-base.

"It wasn't easy," acting Royals manager John Gibbons said. "You tip your hat to Soria. He's done that for us a few times this year now. That's why he's one of the elite closers in the game. He's got that knack."

Oakland's bullpen woes, meanwhile, came a day after Craig Breslow, Brad Ziegler, Michael Wuertz and Andrew Bailey combined to throw 3 2/3 innings of shutout ball in an 8-5 win on Monday.

"They've been great for us all season," Geren said following the win, "but we need someone other than those four to step up."

Oakland got something from someone else when Jerry Blevins entered in the eighth. Blevins, recalled from Triple-A Sacramento prior to the game as rosters expanded, allowed two hits in two shutout innings.

Learning process continues for Cahill

Oakland (58-74) vs. Kansas City (51-81), 12:35 p.m. PT

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Up and down, down and up. Rinse, repeat.

As expected, it's been that kind of rookie season for 21-year-old Trevor Cahill, whose education continues Wednesday afternoon when he takes on the visiting Royals in the finale of a three-game series at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Cahill, a right-hander considered by many Oakland's top pitching prospect after his meteoric rise through the farm system last season, posted a 5.40 ERA in four April starts. Since then, his monthly ERAs have been 3.89, 3.89, 6.66 and 4.23.

Wednesday marks the first start of the last month of his first season in the Majors, and Cahill will carry with him a modicum of momentum. Having settled into a comfortable arm slot that makes his delivery more repeatable, Cahill is 1-1 with a 2.33 ERA in his past four starts, including a dominant showing last Thursday in Anaheim.

After walking the first two Angels he faced, Cahill didn't issue another free pass through seven shutout innings of two-hit work on the way to a 2-0 victory.

Cahill's command of his full arsenal, which is highlighted by a two-seam fastball with hard sink, left Angels outfielder Torii Hunter gushing.

"He had the slider, the changeup and his two-seamer moving both ways," Hunter said. "Half the time, when we swung the bat, we hit it on the ground. We couldn't get anything going offensively."

Pitching matchup

OAK: RHP Trevor Cahill (7-12, 4.64 ERA)

Cahill has allowed a club-rookie-record 25 home runs this year, but he hasn't been taken deep at all over his past four starts. He was the winning pitcher in his only start of the season against the Royals; he gave up two runs on seven hits and two walks over six innings at home on May 12.




KC: RHP Brian Bannister (7-11, 4.60 ERA)

Still without a victory since Aug. 2, Bannister lost Friday night at Seattle as he gave up six runs -- five earned -- in 6 2/3 innings. In his past five starts, he's 0-4 with one no-decision. And in those games, he's surrendered 29 earned runs for an 8.80 ERA. That's taken his season mark up more than one run, from 3.59 to 4.60. Bannister faced Oakland once in that span and was banged for seven runs in four innings, but earlier in the season, he held the A's to two runs in 5 2/3 innings, though he lost.

Dribblers ...

Chris Carter, recently promoted from Double-A Midland to Triple-A Sacramento, hit a club-record-tying three homers and drove in seven runs for the River Cats on Monday, bumping his batting average to .321 (9-for-28) with 12 RBIs in six games since joining the team. ... A's infielder Bobby Crosby, on the disabled list since Aug. 8 with a strained left calf, will be activated Wednesday and likely see most of his playing time the rest of the way against left-handed starters. He'll also spot third baseman Adam Kennedy at some point soon, according to manager Bob Geren. ... Righty Brett Tomko was originally slated to pitch Wednesday, but Geren moved him back a day so Cahill can work on five days of rest instead of six. ... Geren said he'll probably skip the sixth starter's spot once this month, but he didn't say who'll be skipped. Edgar Gonzalez seems the most likely candidate.

Up next

- Thursday: Athletics (Brett Tomko, 3-2, 3.62) vs. Mariners (Ian Snell, 5-9, 5.29), 7:05 p.m. PT 
- Friday: Athletics (Vin Mazzaro, 4-9, 5.32) vs. Mariners (Ryan Rowland-Smith, 2-2, 3.95), 7:05 p.m. PT 
- Saturday: Athletics (Brett Anderson, 7-10, 4.42) vs. Mariners (Luke French, 4-4, 4.62), 6:05 p.m. PT 

A's add to pitching staff with callups

Blevins, Eveland and Kilby join Major League team

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- As expected, the first wave of September callups for the A's featured pitching, pitching and more pitching.

In conjunction with the expansion of rosters throughout the Majors on Tuesday, Oakland summoned left-handers Jerry Blevins, Dana Eveland and Brad Kilby from Triple-A Sacramento before the second game of a three-game series against the visiting Royals.

"It's nice to be back," said Eveland, who was a member of the A's starting rotation for much of last season but has spent all of seven games with Sacramento this year. "I kind of had a feeling it was coming, but the feeling's the same. It's always good to be in the big leagues."

Eveland, who has been up with the big club twice before this year and posted a 1-3 record with an 8.00 ERA while making six starts and appearing out of the bullpen once, was 8-6 with a 4.94 ERA and .273 opponents' batting average in 21 starts with the River Cats.

He went 0-4 with a 7.88 ERA over his final five starts for Sacramento, but Eveland, 25, suggested the numbers aren't reflective of how he's felt on the mound.

"I've actually been throwing pretty well," he said, noting that he's added a cut fastball to his arsenal. "The results aren't what I've wanted, but I've had some tough luck. Hopefully I can turn that around up here."

Having moved long reliever Edgar Gonzalez into what's now a six-man rotation, A's manager Bob Geren said Eveland will work out of the bullpen for the time being. If Gonzalez struggles, Eveland might get a start or two.

"He'll probably go into Edgar's slot for now," Geren said of Eveland.

Blevins, who was on Oakland's Opening Day roster, joins the A's for the third time this year, having compiled a 12.46 ERA in five relief appearances over his first two stints. He has a 5-3 record with two saves and a 3.84 ERA in 45 relief appearances with Sacramento, striking out 62 batters in 63 1/3 innings.

"I've been feeling great," said Blevins, who also is throwing a cutter and recently ironed out some mechanical issues that brought his fastball velocity back into the low- to mid-90s neighborhood, in which he lived while posting a 3.11 ERA in 36 appearances with the A's last season.

Kilby, 26, is looking to make his Major League debut after five seasons in the Minors. He was 4-2 with two saves, a 2.13 ERA and .179 opponents' batting average in 45 relief appearances with Sacramento this year, striking out 77 in 63 1/3 innings. A 29th-round pick in the 2005 First-Year Player Draft out of San Jose State University, Kilby, a Northern California (Elk Grove) native, has 339 strikeouts in 295 2/3 career Minor League innings, an average of 10.3 per nine innings.

"He's definitely thrilled to be here," Geren said. "He threw [Monday] night, but I'd like to get him in there as soon as possible."

Geren said the additional relievers won't have much of an impact on the respective workloads of bullpen mainstays such as Craig Breslow, Brad Ziegler, Michael Wuertz and Andrew Bailey, but lesser lights such as Santiago Casilla might get less work from here on out.

Braden not optimistic on return in '09

Southpaw's injured toe not healing quickly enough

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Geren said "time is running out" regarding left-hander Dallas Braden's potential return to action this season.

Braden, on the disabled list since Aug. 1 with what's morphed from a rash near his left big toe into an infection and, finally, into nerve damage, took it a step further with an hourglass analogy.

"Not looking good, bro," Braden said Tuesday before the second game of a three-game series against the visiting Royals at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum. "The sand is at the bottom."

A neurologist visit last week brought to light the seriousness of Braden's situation: A nerve has been severely "traumatized," essentially extinguishing his long-held hope that he'll pitch again this season.

"It's still attached; that's the good news," he said of his foot. "The bad news is that whatever good I might get out of pitching any time soon is far outweighed by the pain I'd feel and the potential damage I could do. I'm not even throwing at all right now, and I won't for a while.

"So do the math. It's just not going to happen."

Oakland's Opening Day starter, Braden, 26, emerged as a consistent performer and a strong, colorful clubhouse presence in his first full season in the Majors. He went 8-9 with a 3.89 ERA in 22 starts despite ranking near the bottom of the American League in run support per nine innings for much of the first half.

"It stinks, but what can you do?" he said. "It's not like it's something I could have prevented. I got an allergic reaction from a [neoprene] sleeve I wear to protect the toe when I drag it, and it just kept getting worse and worse to the point that we're at right now.

"Better to let it calm down, take care of it during the winter and, hopefully, come back next spring good as new."

K.C. finally wins at Coliseum

Royals' first victory in four tries in Oakland; Davis hits HR in first, but A's lead is short-lived

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND— Alberto Callaspo hit a go-ahead two-run single in the sixth, Kyle Davies struck out six and won consecutive starts for the first time all season and the Kansas City Royals beat the Oakland Athletics 4-3 on Tuesday night.

Callaspo also had an earlier single to help the Royals bounce back a night after a sloppy 8-5 loss in which they led 4-0 early.

Kansas City captured its first victory in four tries this year at the Coliseum.

Rajai Davis homered in the first to put the A's ahead, but Miguel Olivo's RBI single in the top of the second tied it.

Billy Butler hit the Royals' majors-best 43rd triple in the second, his first since Aug. 30, 2007, against Detroit in Kansas City — a span of 1,030 at-bats and 278 games.

Kansas City loaded the bases with no outs in the sixth. Loser Jay Marshall (0-2) allowed back-to-back singles to start the inning then Jeff Gray relieved and walked Butler. First baseman Daric Barton fielded Mike Jacobs' grounder and threw out David DeJesus at home to save a run, but Callaspo followed with his single.

Davies (6-9) again looked sharp after beating the Seattle Mariners at Safeco Field on Aug. 27. The right-hander, making his sixth start since being recalled from Triple-A Omaha on Aug. 5, struck out five or more for the fourth time in five starts — four of those on the road. Davies allowed one run and four hits in six innings and walked two.

Kansas City won for only the second time in five games, but used four of its six pitchers in the seventh to help secure this one.

Joakim Soria pitched two innings for his 21st save in 24 opportunities, recovering after allowing the first two batters to reach.

Adam Kennedy singled in a run in the seventh for Oakland but that was it, then the A's added another in the eighth on Mark Ellis' fielder's choice.

Royals manager Trey Hillman missed his second straight game to be in Texas following the death of his father-in-law. Hillman will rejoin the club back home in Kansas City. Bench coach John Gibbons has been handling the team.

Edgar Gonzalez made his first start since May for the A's and just his third of the year. He hung tough, giving up three hits and one run in five innings, with five strikeouts and a walk.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Reno clips Cats 8-6

Sacramento Bee, 9/2/09

Turning point: During a five-run Reno second, former River Cats outfielder Eric Byrnes doubled in a run. Byrnes has not played for the Arizona Diamondbacks since June 25 (broken left hand).

Take two bows: Tommy Everidge hit two solo home runs for the River Cats.

Aces high: The Aces improved to 8-6 this season against the River Cats, the best record of any Pacific Coast League team against the defending champions. The Aces are in their first season in Reno since relocating from Tucson.

Oh, that Matt Carson: When the River Cats defeated Scranton Wilkes-Barre in last season's Bricktown Showdown for their second consecutive Triple A championship, current Cats outfielder Matt Carson was a member of the Barons.

Conference maul: The River Cats are 26-6 against American Conference teams this season. They are 4-0 against Nashville and 3-1 against Albuquerque, the American South champion. They are also 3-1 against Memphis and Iowa, teams still contending for playoff spots.

Upcoming: Tonight, River Cats RHP Jerome Williams (4-6, 5.66 ERA) vs. Reno RHP Daniel Cabrera (0-1, 7.45), 7:05, Aces Ballpark, Reno.

Valdez Triples Twice As Hounds Win

By Greg Bergman / Midland RockHounds

After playing 17-of-their-last-23 games on the road, the RockHounds returned to Citibank Ballpark Tuesday to begin the final week of the regular season. The 'Hounds escaped two early jams nearly unscathed, then put up seven unanswered runs, building a 7-1 lead and going on to defeat the San Antonio Missions, 8-4.

The RockHounds then got some (perhaps unexpected) help from the Corpus Christi Hooks, who downed the RoughRiders, 6-1, at Frisco.

The RockHounds win and Frisco's loss gives the 'Hounds a 3-game lead in the Texas League South with six to play. The RockHounds host first half champion San Antonio Wednesday, Thursday & Friday ... followed by a 3-game series against Frisco, Saturday, Sunday & Labor Day.

Alex Valdez led the RockHounds with a pair of 2-run triples, the first of those giving the RockHounds their first lead (2-1) in the second inning. Archie Gilbert went 3-for-3, plus a walk and a stolen base ... Corey Brown extended his hit streak to six games, going 2-for-4 with two runs and an RBI .. and Josh Horton wubusted out of a slump going 2-for-4 with a double, a run and an RBI.

Corey Wimberly added the RockHounds' third triple of the game, driving in a run in the fourth as the 'Hounds built the 7-1 advantage, but Corey made an even bigger impact in the field at second base. With two on and no outs in the second (and San Antonio leading, 1-0), Wimberly let Anthony Contreras' looper drop, instead of catching it in the air, turning it into a 4-6-3 double play. With runners at second and third ... still in the second inning ... Wimberly tagged base runner Eric Sogard just before he reached second base on a chopper (and otherwise sure base hit) by speedy Luis Durango, ending the inning and the threat.

Kyle Middleton didn't have his "A" stuff, but pitched out of a first inning jam by allowing just one run and went on to his fifth win (5-1, 2.60). The bullpen of Mickey Storey and Jon Hunton pitched three-and-two-thirds scoreless innings to close the game, with "Big Jon" earning his third save.

Corpus Christi surprised the RoughRiders, 6-1, at Dr Pepper Ballpark in Frisco, in the first of the 4-game series between those two clubs. The Hooks play in Frisco through Friday before the RoughRiders come to Citibank Ballpark for the final three games of the regular season.

Congratulations!!! Adrian Cardenas, Graham Godfrey & Chris Carter have been named to the 2009 Texas League Post-Season All-Star Team, with Carter named the Texas League's Player of the Year. Darren Bush has been named the league's Manager of the Year.

The player-manager co-winners mark the second occurrence in franchise history: Andre Ethier & Von Hayes did it with the 2005 Texas League champion RockHounds.

Popcorn, Peanuts, Fresh Cut Grass

The RockHounds are home at Citibank Ballpark through Labor Day, in the regular season's final home stand. The RockHounds host San Antonio Wednesday, Thursday & Friday ... Frisco comes to town for a possible pennant showdown Saturday, Sunday & Labor Day.

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 Citibank Ballpark Wednesday and Thursday evenings is 6:15.

Tuesday, September 1st - RockHounds 8 San Antonio 4

RockHounds beat Missions, extend lead to three games

Midland Telegram Reporter, 9/2/09

Alex Valdez hit two triples and drove in four runs to help the Midland RockHounds to an 8-4 victory over the San Antonio Missions Tuesday night at Citibank Ballpark.

With the victory and Frisco losing at home to Corpus Christi, the RockHounds (38-26) extended their lead in the Texas League South Division to three games over the RoughRiders with six games remaining in the regular season.

After San Antonio got a run in the first inning against Midland starter Kyle Middleton (5-1), the RockHounds took the lead for good with two runs in the second inning as Valdez hit a two-run triple off Nathan Culp (7-9) to center field.

The RockHounds then put the game away with a five-run fourth inning on six hits, an error, a wild pitch and a passed ball. Also, after a Corey Brown RBI single, Culp left the game with an injured hand or wrist. With Matt Buschmann on the mound, Valdez struck again with another two-run triple to center field to give Midland a 5-0 lead. Later in the inning, Valdez scored on a wild pitch and Corey Wimberly added an RBI triple for a 7-0 lead.

That was enough of a cushion for Middleton, the reigning Texas League Pitcher of the Week, who lasted 5 1/3 innings, scattered six hits, allowed five earned runs, walked none and struck out none.

Jon Hunton picked up his third save of the season by pitching two innings of one-hit ball.

Ports Offense Struggles in 3-1 Loss

Bakersfield Blaze win series opener against Stockton

STOCKTON, Calif.— The Stockton Ports (58-76) offense struggled in Tuesday's game, as the Ports collected just four hits and stranded 10 runners on base, including leaving the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth. The Ports lost to the Bakersfield Blaze (70-64), 3-1, at Banner Island Ballpark in the series opener.

The Ports took a 1-0 lead in the first, and their offense remained fairly quiet the rest of the game. The Ports collected just two hits in the last eight innings. The Ports were walked seven times in the game, but none of the base runners came home to score. The Ports were also picked off twice in the game, also hurting their scoring chances.

Ports starter Anthony Capra had a good outing, but picked up his first loss for Stockton. He allowed two runs (both solo home runs) on three hits with six strikeouts in 6.1 innings. Daniel Sattler pitched 1.2 scoreless innings, and Leonardo Espinal allowed a run on two hits in the last frame. Glenn Swanson won the game for the Blaze and Evan Reed collected his 23rd save.

In the first inning, center fielder Jermaine Mitchell led off with a single, and stole second base. He came home to score the only Ports run on a single by first baseman Steve Kleen. The Ports would load the bases as Todd Johnson reached on an error by Bakersfield third baseman Tommy Mendonca and Shane Keough walked. Catcher Matt Smith hit into a fielder's choice to end the inning as Mendonca stepped on third base for the force out.

In the top of the third, Bakersfield evened the score. First baseman Ian Gac led off with a solo home run which dropped into the visitor's bullpen. It was his 19th home run of the season.

The Blaze would take a 2-1 lead in the seventh, as designated hitter Mauro Gomez slammed his 25th home run of the season to start off the inning. The ball bounced off the roof of the Jackson Rancheria Back Porch.

In the top of the ninth, Gac knocked an RBI double to score left fielder Mike Bianucci to pad the Bakersfield lead. The Ports loaded the bases in the bottom of the ninth with two out, on two walks and their fourth single, but shortstop Michael Richard flew out to end the game. The Ports have now lost four straight games.

The Ports will look to even the series in a 7:05 p.m. game on Wednesday. RHP Hector Garcia will make his Stockton Ports debut, while RHP Kennil Gomez (7-10, 5.51) will start for Bakersfield.

FRUSTRATIONS CONTINUE AS PORTS MISS CHANCES

STOCKTON - What was promised to be an entertaining final homestand of the season turned into another disappointment for the Ports on Tuesday.

Stockton struggled on offense - collecting four hits, stranding 10 baserunners and leaving the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth inning - in a 3-1 loss to Bakersfield at Stockton Ballpark. It was Stockton's fourth loss in a row.

The Ports (58-76 overall, 33-31 second half) started quickly. Jermaine Mitchell opened the bottom of the first inning with a single and stole second base. He scored on a single by Steve Kleen.

But Stockton gave a hint of what was to come when it loaded the bases on an error and a walk only to strand all three runners when Matt Smith grounded into a forceout.

The Ports wasted a strong outing by starter Anthony Capra, who suffered his first loss by allowing two solo home runs among three hits.

The big blows for Bakersfield were provided by Ian Gac, who hit his 19th homer leading off the third, and Mauro Gomez, whose 25th bomb led off the seventh.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Stephen Parker, IF

Justin Marks battling a groin injury, fifth-round pick Stephen Parker has been the highest A's 2009 draft pick to get significant playing time this season. David Malamut caught-up with Parker over the weekend.

The Oakland A's selected BYU third baseman Stephen Parker with their fifth-round pick in 2009, and they wasted little time putting Parker into the fire. After only three games with the A's Rookie League team, Parker was sent to one of the A's full-season affiliates, Low-A Kane County.

Parker has had his ups-and-downs offensively with the Cougars. In 63 games, he has a .232 average with five homeruns and 36 RBIs. In addition to learning about playing professional baseball, Parker has had to adjust to a new defensive position. With Michael Spina manning third base for the Cougars, Parker has found a home at first with Kane County.

David Malamut spoke with Parker over the weekend...

David Malamut: How do you feel physically at this point in the season?

Stephen Parker: I feel great. I feel good, healthy.

DM: What's your mentality at the plate?

SP: I try to stay within myself not do too much. I look for base hits up the middle, and am not trying to do too much with the pitch. I never think of taking it deep. I try to just think of line drives up the middle. Homeruns come.

DM: How has the transition been to first base from third base?

SP: It's been fine. I'm feeling more comfortable with it everyday. It's been good so far.

DM: What did you learn from playing at American Fork HS?

SP: I learned a lot. I had great coaches. I became a better hitter in high school and I took it into college and now into pro ball.

DM: How was college at BYU?

SP: It was great. I loved it. I had a great coaching staff that taught me what I needed to know to take my game to the next level.

DM: How much did you learn from BYU coach Vance Law?

SP: I learned a lot. Him being an infielder and him playing professional baseball, he definitely taught me a lot.

DM: What advice did he give you when you decided to sign with Oakland?

SP: Play hard and keep doing the things I did in college and take the coaches' advice and keep grinding.

DM: What did you learn on the field at BYU?

SP: More of being a complete player and trying to have a better approach at the plate. Overall, I became a better player.

DM: You've played 115 games this year between BYU and the pros. Is that the most you've played in a year?

SP: Yeah definitely.

DM: Has that taken its toll on you mentally?

SP: You've got to take it one at-bat and one game at a time. If you have a bad day, you can't think about it the next day, so you've really got to focus on taking it one at-bat at a time.

DM: Are you going back to finish your degree and what was your major?

SP: Yeah eventually I will. I was Exercise Science.

DM: How was being scouted?

SP: It was good. Playing my season finishing my junior year, it was good knowing I had a chance to play pro ball.

DM: How was draft day?

SP: Stressful. I was at my parents house and I watched it online.

DM: What were your thoughts when you played your first pro games in Arizona?

SP: I was excited and a little nervous but the nerves passed and it was great.

DM: How was the transition after the draft to wood bats?

SP: It's definitely a little different type of swing and a different type of feel. You definitely have to get used to it, it took a few games to get used to it. I had used it before in the college summer league in New England.

DM: What are your thoughts on the Midwest League?

SP: It's a great league a great place to play. I love Kane County, great stadium, good coaches great place to be.

DM: Your average has gone up each month as a pro. What kind of adjustments have you made in your approach and your swing?

SP: I have adjusted to better pitching by trying to stay within my own swing and trying not to do too much.

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

SP: Finishing my degree and possibly going to dental school.

DM: What is your off-season like, training-wise?

SP: I have worked hard. I like to train hard. I like to get in the weight room and definitely do a lot of running. Conditioning is a big part of staying healthy. I work on conditioning my body for each part of baseball.

DM: In the off-season what other things do you like to do besides baseball?

SP: I like to just hang out with my friends and go up into the mountains to ski and snowboard.

DM: Top 5 artists in your iPod?

SP: I listen to a lot of different stuff. I like the Beatles. I like hip hop. I don't like country that much. I couldn't really do top five. I wouldn't know where to start.