



SEATTLE MARINERS NEWS CLIPS

September 5, 2009



Early burst propels Mariners past A's

Rowland-Smith makes lead stick with eight solid innings

By Jane Lee / Special to MLB.com

09/05/09 2:04 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Ryan Rowland-Smith would rather forget about his first visit to Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum this year.

After all, it was in the confines of the A's ballpark on April 5 he was forced out by elbow pain after less than four innings of work.

Five days later, he was placed on the 15-day disabled list. And 15 days later, he was still sitting in the training room.

On June 23 -- 74 days later -- Smith was back on the mound, but not in The Show. He made five starts in Triple-A Tacoma, posting a 4-0 record, before finally being reintroduced to a Major League mound on July 24.

So when Rowland-Smith took the mound in Oakland on Friday for the first time since experiencing pain that would shake up his season, it's safe to say he was looking for anything but a little *déjà vu*.

No problem.

The Mariners lefty tossed eight strong innings -- scattering three runs on just four hits and one walk while striking out four -- and got just enough offensive support to lead Seattle to a 6-3 victory.

Although A's manager Bob Geren wasn't quick to commend the kid, saying his stuff "wasn't overly impressive," Rowland-Smith gladly let it be known he was proud of his own performance. Even more, he was beyond relieved to notch a victory in a place that's somewhat been haunting him since his first -- and brief -- start of the season.

"I was really stoked about tonight," he said. "The memories I have from here back from the beginning of the season are bad, so it was definitely good to go out and throw eight solid innings."

Rowland-Smith wasn't the only one pleased with his performance -- and for good reason. Manager Don Wakamatsu praised his pitcher not only for the numbers he posted against the A's on Friday but for the improvement he's noticed since coming full circle in Oakland.

"He was outstanding," the skipper said. "I'm awfully proud of players that go down to the Minors and develop in the way he has, and what he's done is amazing."

His numbers don't tell the whole story, though. In his first full season as a starter, Rowland-Smith is 3-2 with a 3.88 ERA in 10 starts. Yet in his previous two outings, the 26-year-old was 0-1 thanks to only one run of support in each of those games.

Luckily for the southpaw, the Mariners' offense utilized momentum from Thursday's 7-4 victory over the A's that included three two-run dingers. Only one homer came from Seattle on Friday -- a ninth-inning solo shot by Jose Lopez -- but plenty of hits made up for the decreased long-ball count.

Jack Wilson got things going in the second inning with two outs against A's starter Clayton Mortensen with a two-run single, which was followed by back-to-back RBI hits by Ichiro Suzuki -- now four hits shy of 2,000 hits for his Major League career -- and Franklin Gutierrez to make it a 4-0 game.

"The offense did a great job in the second inning," Wakamatsu said. "Four runs with two outs -- talk about manufacturing runs."

Needless to say, the Mariners quickly gave quite a welcome-back nod to Mortensen, who was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Friday to make his second start of the season. The right-handed pitcher, who replaced scheduled starter Vin Mazzaro, gave up four runs and six hits and struck out three in seven innings.

"I just started leaving balls up," Mortensen said of the four-run second inning. "And with these guys, you leave balls up, they hit 'em hard."

Seattle was not done for the night, though. The team got a sacrifice fly in the eighth from Kenji Johjima before Lopez knocked out his 21st homer of the year. By that time, Oakland had only mustered three runs off Rowland-Smith -- an RBI double by Adam Kennedy in the third and a two-run homer from Nomar Garciaparra in the seventh with a little help from center fielder Gutierrez, who went to grab the well-hit ball only to watch it bounce off his glove over the wall.

"It definitely went off his glove," Wakamatsu said. "But for us to get those extra runs there, it always gives you momentum."

Momentum is what the team seems to be riding these days. With the win, Seattle has won four straight games and nine of its past 12. The Mariners also improved their season record to 11-3 against Oakland, a team against which they have compiled a six-game winning streak.

Jane Lee is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

Wakamatsu enjoys return to Bay Area

Seattle (72-64) at Oakland (59-76), 6:05 p.m. PT

By Jane Lee / Special to MLB.com

09/05/09 1:12 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Don Wakamatsu never tires of coming to Oakland.

The skipper's 11-3 season record against the A's doesn't hurt. But the Mariners manager -- no matter how many times he is asked -- is also always more than happy to talk about his days as a resident of the Bay Area.

Wakamatsu, 46, became the first Asian-American to manage in the Major Leagues when he was called upon to take the reins in Seattle in November. But the former Oakland bench coach knows his time in an A's uniform last year enabled him to take such a leap.

"The good time I spent here last year with the Oakland A's allowed me to get this job," Wakamatsu said Friday. "The relationships I still have there and the respect I have for the organization is still off the charts."

So is his current team's performance against the A's -- which begs the question of whether his knowledge of the ballclub gives him an advantage.

"I don't know if it gives me an edge," he said, "but it gives me more of a comfort level that I know the players.

"I have a little insight to the ways they think and the styles of the manager. I think I have a comfort level, and the rest is to get the players to play as hard as they can, and play good baseball."

Wakamatsu's approach has seemingly worked thus far. The Mariners have a six-game winning streak against Oakland and have won 34 of 52 vs. the A's since the start of the 2007 season.

Seattle has the chance to extend that streak to seven Saturday when they take on the A's for the third of a four-game set at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Pitching matchup

SEA: LHP Luke French (4-4, 4.62 ERA)

Throwing strikes was a piece of cake for the left-hander in his last start. Of the 96 pitches he threw against the Angels, 66 of them were strikes. The downside of that, however, is that too many of the strikes got too much of

the strike zone and he was tagged for 10 hits and seven earned runs over five innings -- the most runs he has allowed since being acquired from the Tigers on July 31. French still needs to change speeds more, which keeps hitters guessing. The Angels were aggressive and French had no answer to get them off-balance. This will be his second start against the Athletics, having beaten them at Safeco Field on Aug. 26.

OAK: LHP Brett Anderson (7-10, 4.42 ERA)

Anderson pitched well early against the Angels on Sunday but had a rough fifth inning, when he allowed an RBI double to Chone Figgins and a three-run homer to Torii Hunter. In all, the rookie allowed four runs on seven hits over six innings in a loss to John Lackey. Anderson is 1-1 with a 3.32 ERA in three career starts against the Mariners.

Sea Scrolls

Carlos Silva, on the disabled list since May 7 with right shoulder inflammation, pitched one inning for Triple-A Tacoma on Thursday and gave up one hit and struck out two. Wakamatsu said Silva will throw again on Sunday and will rejoin the team in Anaheim on Tuesday if the Rainiers are eliminated from the playoffs. If they make the playoffs, though, Silva will have a few more outings with the Triple-A club. ... With the Bay Bridge closed for construction for the Labor Day weekend, the Mariners have been forced to get accustomed to BART, which provides train transportation throughout the Bay Area, in order to travel from Oakland to their hotel in San Francisco.

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Up next

- Sunday: Mariners (Doug Fister, 2-1, 2.94) at Athletics (Gio Gonzalez, 4-5, 6.07), 1:05 p.m. PT
- Monday: Off-day
- Tuesday: Mariners (Felix Hernandez, 14-5, 2.65) at Angels (Scott Kazmir, 8-8, 5.68), 7:05 p.m. PT

Jane Lee is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

Griffey scratched with aching left knee

Junior sits one day after returning from six-day absence

By Jane Lee / Special to MLB.com

09/04/09 9:18 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Just one day after returning to the starting lineup following six days of rest, Ken Griffey Jr. was a late scratch Friday with tendinitis in his left knee.

Manager Don Wakamatsu was well aware of Griffey's situation two hours before game time but appeared confident the veteran slugger would be able to play in the second of Seattle's four-game set against Oakland.

"We're going to watch him during batting practice," the skipper said. "I imagine he's going to play."

Less than one hour later, though, Griffey was replaced by Mike Sweeney in the designated hitter spot.

In Thursday's 7-4 win over the A's, Griffey grounded out three times and struck out once. The 39-year-old designated hitter underwent an MRI on his surgically repaired knee Tuesday, and Wakamatsu felt confident everything looked normal.

Jane Lee is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

Last updated September 4, 2009 10:26 p.m. PT

Two more hits for Ichiro as Mariners beat A's 6-3

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Very little seems to excite Seattle's Ichiro Suzuki, least of all his own accomplishments.

The Mariners right fielder moved one step closer to baseball history, picking up a pair of hits to move within four of 2,000 for his career during Seattle's 6-3 win over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night, then casually downplayed his impending milestone.

"We have a lot of games left to play, a lot of more baseball left in the season," Suzuki said. "If there were only four or five games then I would be naturally conscious about it, but as of now I'm not."

Suzuki is on pace to become the second-fastest player in major league history to reach the 2,000-hit plateau. Al Simmons did it in 1,390 games while Suzuki has played in 1,391. George Sisler is currently second on the list in 1,414 games.

The 35-year-old Suzuki also moved closer to becoming the first player to have 200 hits or more in nine straight seasons. With 191 hits this season, Suzuki needs only nine more to break the consecutive season mark he currently holds with Willie Keeler (1894-1901).

"It's amazing, the amount of weapons he has to get that," Seattle manager Don Wakamatsu said. "He has such a feel for the ball and what he can do with his body and motion never ceases to amaze us. I watched him for a number of years and I'm glad I'm going to be a part of that."

Jose Lopez homered, Ryan Rowland-Smith pitched eight innings for his first win since Aug. 9 and the Mariners moved eight games over .500 for the first time since 2007.

Nomar Garciaparra homered for the A's, who have lost six straight to the Mariners and dropped a season-high 17 games under .500.

Seattle scored four in the second against Oakland rookie Clayton Mortensen (0-2), who was called up from the minors earlier in the day to make only his second start in the majors.

"I started getting my balls up and they hit them hard," Mortensen said. "I fell behind in the count and I had to try to focus afterward on throwing my sinker down in the strike zone. I just lost my rhythm and had to take a step back and figure out how to make quality pitches."

Jack Wilson hit a bases-loaded single to make it 2-0 before Suzuki chased a pitch out of the strike zone and singled to left for another run. Franklin Gutierrez followed with an RBI single to make it 4-0.

Rowland-Smith (3-2), who had gone four straight starts without a win, made it hold up.

The lefty allowed four hits, striking out four and walking one while going eight innings for the second straight start. He gave up a RBI double to Ryan Sweeney in the third and a two-run home run to Garciaparra in the seventh on a ball that glanced off center fielder Gutierrez's glove before going over the fence, but was otherwise solid.

"That's probably the funnest thing about the last couple outings is just getting deep into the game," Rowland-Smith said. "Tonight is just felt good to go out and go a full solid eight innings and just go full circle from where I was back in April."

Mark Lowe pitched the ninth for his second save in eight chances, completing the five-hitter.

Mortensen was strong after digging a four-run hole in the second inning.

Oakland's young right-hander, who was acquired from St. Louis as part of the Matt Holliday trade on July 24, allowed only six hits and struck out one but walked three, two of which scored. Mortensen settled down to retire 16 of the final 20 batters he faced.

Lopez hit his 21st home run of the season in the ninth off Oakland reliever Jeff Gray.

The Mariners played without designated hitter Ken Griffey Jr., who was a late scratch after originally being penciled in at the cleanup spot. Griffey, who missed six straight games before going hitless in four at-bats Thursday, was in the original lineup submitted by Wakamatsu but was pulled out after batting practice due to a sore knee.

Mike Sweeney replaced Griffey and went 1-for-5.

Notes: Wakamatsu was encouraged by RHP Carlos Silva's 15-pitch outing for Triple-A Tacoma on Thursday and said the veteran pitcher could rejoin the Mariners on Tuesday in Anaheim if Tacoma is eliminated from the playoff race. If not, Silva will remain in the minors for at least one more appearance. ... The A's have now started a rookie pitcher in 97 games this season, an Oakland record and the most in the majors since Florida had 124 in 1998, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. ... Garciaparra's homer was only his third of the season. The veteran DH also singled in the ninth.

Last updated September 4, 2009 6:16 p.m. PT

Mariners pull Griffey from lineup

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr. was a late scratch for the Mariners due to soreness in his left knee before their game against the Oakland Athletics.

Friday night was the seventh time in eight games the 39-year-old Griffey has been unable to play because of his knee. He was in the Mariners' lineup Thursday, going 0 for 4 with a strikeout, and was penciled into the cleanup spot as Seattle's designated hitter on Friday before being pulled.

Seattle manager Don Wakamatsu spoke optimistically prior to the game about Griffey's chances of playing but wanted to watch the slugger take batting practice before being certain.

Mike Sweeney replaced Griffey in the Mariners' lineup.

Griffey is batting .218 with 14 home runs and 43 RBIs this season and told The Associated Press earlier this week he hasn't ruled out playing in 2010.

Wilson, Rowland-Smith carry Mariners to victory

Mariners: Jack Wilson produces early lead, and lefty throws eight tough innings as Mariners beat Oakland, 6-3

LARRY LARUE; The Tacoma News Tribune

Published: 09/05/09 2:27 am | Updated: 09/05/09 12:22 am

OAKLAND - One month into his American League experience, his transition from being a Pittsburgh Pirate for life to a Seattle Mariner for 23 games, Jack Wilson got a telephone call from his agent.

"He asked if I was on a suicide watch yet," Wilson said.

Coming into the game Friday, the shortstop was batting .203 with his new team, but his two-out, two-run second-inning single gave Seattle an early lead it never lost, helping Ryan Rowland-Smith and the Mariners beat the Oakland Athletics, 6-3.

“I knew the transition would be tough - new ballparks, all new pitchers, new everything,” Wilson said. “I’d be lying if I said I hadn’t been struggling. I’ve been trying to pull everything.

“Today I worked in batting practice on going up the middle. That at-bat in the second inning, same thing, and it was refreshing to have a little success.”

Aside from a two-run home run late in a blowout game, this was the first two-RBI game Wilson’s had in Seattle. Like the team he plays for, this has been a journey of baby steps.

Behind Rowland-Smith’s eight innings and a tenacious offense, the Mariners took a man-sized leap with this win - it put them, at 72-64, eight games over .500 for the first time since 2007.

Before he could beat the Athletics this time out, Rowland-Smith first had to exorcise the demons of his April 10 start here - where he didn’t get through the fourth inning, was injured and sent to Tacoma for what became a 31/2-month stay.

“Yeah, the memories here weren’t good, and in the first inning I couldn’t get comfortable,” he said. “I felt like I was throwing from the top of a mountain. It was the same thing in Kansas City and Detroit. It takes me about 15-20 pitches to get comfortable.”

After walking the first man he faced, Rowland-Smith retired the next six.

“It’s been a pleasure to see a guy go down to the minors and continue his development,” Don Wakamatsu said. “He didn’t have great command in the first inning, but he battled through that and kept going out there.

“We didn’t have David Aardsma or Sean White tonight, so Ryan giving us eight strong innings saved us.”

“That’s the most fun aspect of pitching, getting deep into the game,” Rowland-Smith said. “When I came out after seven, no one said anything, so I just went back to the mound. When I came out after eight, I didn’t even get the chance to ask - Wak just shook my hand and said ‘You’re done.’ ”

Over eight innings and 106 pitches, Rowland-Smith allowed four hits, one of them a two-run home run in the seventh, a Nomar Garciaparra drive that tipped off the glove of Franklin Gutierrez as it cleared the fence.

“I should have had it, I jumped just a little too soon,” Gutierrez said. “I had one more step ...”

By that time, the Mariners had a 4-3 lead, built on Wilson’s two-run single and two-out RBI singles by Ichiro Suzuki and Gutierrez - with Ichiro’s hit coming on a pitch over his head.

“He came into the dugout and said he was Vladimir Guerrero,” Wakamatsu said. “He told us he could hit any pitch, anywhere.”

Late in their win Thursday, Wakamatsu had used a squeeze bunt to add on to Seattle’s lead. On Friday, he went another direction.

Bill Hall singled with one out and Wakamatsu called for a hit-and-run, which rookie Mike Carp delivered beautifully with a hard-hit single to right field. From third base, Hall scored on a Kenji Johjima sacrifice fly.

In the ninth, the Mariners added one more run - this one on the 21st home run of the season for Jose Lopez.

From there, Rowland-Smith watched as Mark Lowe filled in for Aardsma in the ninth inning.

“I did it once this season in Boston, and, yeah, the ninth inning is different than the eighth,” Lowe said. “But here, it’s a little different. There were - what - 9,000 people in the stands? A three-run lead let me relax and go right after them.

“Tomorrow night, the job is David’s again.”

Did a save feel better than a hold?

“A win is a win, and that’s what all of us play for,” he said.

With 26 games left, the Mariners have 72 wins and need 10 more to finish above .500 for the season. They're not looking that far ahead.

Rainiers close in on division lead

Rainiers: Good news from the league was followed by 9-6 victory over Colorado Springs

GRANT CLARK; For The Tacoma News Tribune

Published: 09/05/09 2:26 am | Updated: 09/05/09 2:26 am

The Tacoma Rainiers got the news they wanted prior to the game and the hits they needed during it.

The result was the Rainiers basically making up two games in the standings.

Chris Shelton hammered his 15th home run, Bryan LaHair drove in three runs and Tacoma trimmed Colorado Springs' lead in the Pacific Coast League Pacific North Division to a single game with a 9-6 victory over the visiting Sky Sox Friday at Cheney Stadium.

Three games remain in the regular season for Tacoma - all against Colorado Springs.

The Rainiers (72-69) started the day believing they had to sweep the Sky Sox in order to claim their first division crown since 2005, but received some positive news to the contrary prior to the start of the game.

The PCL clarified playoff rules Friday saying the Rainiers can win the Pacific North Division with three wins in their final four games against the Sky Sox instead of a four-game sweep.

Should the Rainiers take three out of four in their final regular season series against Colorado Springs (72-67), Tacoma and the Sky Sox would have an identical winning percentage therefore going to the next tiebreaker rule: "won-loss percentage vs. division opponents."

The Rainiers in this scenario would have a better divisional winning percentage than Colorado Springs and win the division title.

This scenario exists because Colorado Springs has had two games rained out this season that it was not able to make up.

However, if the Rainiers continue to hit the ball the way they did in the opening game of the series they might just register the sweep anyway.

Tacoma scored two runs in the first and five in the third as they pounded out 17 hits, including six extra-base hits, in defeating the Sky Sox for the fourth consecutive game at home.

Jerry Owens had four hits and scored twice for the Rainiers, while teammate Oswaldo Navarro continued to swing a hot bat, finishing with three hits.

Owens led things off with a triple, his team-leading ninth, before being knocked home by Matt Tuiasosopo.

Shelton followed with his blast to left-center field, pushing the advantage to 2-0.

The Sky Sox got runs in the second and the third to tie the game.

LaHair improved his RBI total to 81 with a two-run double in the fifth and a run-scoring double in the eighth.

Tacoma starter Chris Seddon gave up two runs on eight hits in five innings to improve his record to 9-8.

The game was the longest nine-inning game this season for the Rainiers, clocking in at 3 hours, 28 minutes.

On Tap

Tacoma continues its series with Colorado Springs today at 7 p.m. **Garrett Olson** (2-3, 4.79 ERA) gets the start for the Rainiers, while the Sky Sox goes with **Adam Eaton** (4-3, 2.95).

His hustle puts Griffey back on Seattle bench

Mariners: Junior hits first base too hard after routine grounder

LARRY LARUE; The Tacoma News Tribune

Published: 09/05/09 12:05 am

OAKLAND - Ken Griffey Jr. was in the original Seattle lineup on Friday, though it was more out of optimism than conviction.

The 39-year-old designated hitter hurt himself hustling Thursday, on a fifth-inning play few would have given a second thought, let alone remembered.

Junior checked his swing on a Brett Tomko fastball, and the ball hit his bat and rolled slowly down the third-base line. Griffey could have jogged to first - there were two outs and no one on base - and probably have been forgiven.

After all, he just missed a handful of games with inflammation in his surgically repaired left knee.

Instead, Junior tried to beat the play, running hard and straining to reach the bag, which he hit hard with his left leg.

"He hyperextended his knee," trainer Rick Griffin said.

Griffey stayed in the game, but needed treatment afterward. When he limped into the clubhouse Friday, he wanted to play. The Mariners said he could, if he could take batting practice and jog around the bases for them.

He couldn't, at least not well enough in manager Don Wakamatsu's judgment.

"We're not going to let anyone get hurt trying to play when they shouldn't," Wakamatsu said.

Mike Sweeney replaced Griffey in the lineup, and will start the next two games, when Oakland is scheduled to start left-handed pitchers. That, along with the scheduled off day Monday, should give Griffey three full days to rest the knee.

Squeeze to please

Why try a squeeze bunt in the ninth inning with a two-run lead, the bases loaded, one out, and your No. 2 hitter in the lineup at the plate?

That was the situation Thursday, when Wakamatsu put the squeeze sign on and Franklin Gutierrez - who had homered earlier in the game - dropped a perfect one to put Seattle three runs up.

Why not play for the big inning and a blowout?

"We thought it was important to get one more run on the board, give (closer) David Aardsma just a little more breathing room," Wakamatsu said. "We had a man at the plate who leads the league in sacrifice bunts. We played for an extra run and got it."

Short hops

According to the Elias Sports Bureau, Seattle is tied for the major league lead in games in which only one run is scored through the first five innings - meaning one team or the other leads, 1-0, after five. The Mariners have been involved in 26 such games this season. ... With 34 saves, Aardsma now has the fifth-highest single-season total in franchise history. Next up: **Eddie Guardado** and **J.J. Putz** each had 36-save seasons. The team record is 45, by **Kazuhiro Sasaki** in 2001 - the year the Mariners won 116 games. ... **Ichiro Suzuki** finished the night with 191 hits, trying to reach 200 for the ninth consecutive season. Over the years, Ichiro has collected hit No. 200 as early as the Mariners 126th game (2004) and as late as their 160th game (2005).

On tap

Seattle continues its series in Oakland with a 6:10 p.m. game today that will be televised on FSN. Probable starting pitchers: **Luke French** (4-4, 4.62 ERA) vs. **Brett Anderson** (7-10, 4.42).

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A hustle play that cost Junior a start

Posted By Larry LaRue on September 4, 2009 at 6:13 pm

It was an unmemorable play in a game the Mariners won on Thursday, a fifth-inning checked swing ground ball off the bat of Ken Griffey Jr.

It rolled to the third baseman, and Griffey hustled down the line to first, straining to beat a throw - and landed hard on the bag with his left leg.

That's the one where the surgically repaired knee lives, and Junior hyper-extended it on the play.

He finished the game, needed treatment afterward. And tonight, he was penciled into the lineup, dependent upon how he felt in batting practice.

He took his swings and was scratched in favor of Mike Sweeney.

With left-handers starting for Oakland the next two days and an off-day Monday, Griffey will now have three days to rest his knee and get treatment.

That's why he's not in the game tonight, and why his teammates love him. On an excuse-me ground ball, he maxxed out his effort and paid for it, then never said a word to the media.

Recap: Oakland vs. Seattle

By Sports Network; The Sports Network

Published: 09/04/09 10:18 pm | Updated: 09/04/09 11:07 pm

Ryan Rowland-Smith tossed eight strong innings and Ichiro Suzuki moved closer to 2,000 career hits, as the Seattle Mariners doubled up Oakland, 6-3, in the second of four games with the Athletics.

Suzuki went 2-for-5 with a run batted in and upped his career total to 1,996. He also increased his number of hits this season to 191, and with nine more hits will become the first player in major league history to have nine consecutive seasons with at least 200.

"He has such a feel for the ball, and what he can do with his body in motion never ceases to amaze me," Mariners first-year manager Don Wakamatsu said of Suzuki. "It's a credit to how fast he's got there. I've watched him for a number of years and I'm glad I'm going to be a part of that."

Rowland-Smith (3-2) got the win after limiting Oakland to three runs on four hits and a walk. He also struck out four for the Mariners, who have won four in a row.

Jose Lopez homered, while Bill Hall was 2-for-4 for Seattle.

Clayton Mortensen (0-2), who was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento earlier Friday, made his second career start but took the loss after giving up four runs on six hits and three walks in seven innings. All his runs allowed came in the second inning.

Mortensen started in place of Vin Mazzaro, who is suffering from tendinitis in his pitching shoulder.

"I love the opportunity they're giving me to come out here and just keep working and keep showing them what I have," Mortensen said. "So, I really appreciate the opportunity. Whatever happens, happens, you've just got to roll with it."

Nomar Garciaparra was 2-for-4 with a two-run homer for Oakland, which has lost three of four to start September.

Seattle got the jump on Oakland with a two-out rally in the second inning. Hall doubled before Mike Carp and Kenji Johjima walked to load the bases. Jack Wilson then smacked a two-run single to center, and Suzuki followed with a run-scoring base hit of his own. Franklin Gutierrez then singled to bring in Wilson for a 4-0 lead, though Lopez lined out to end the frame.

Adam Kennedy's RBI double got Oakland on the board in the third inning, and the A's tacked on two more runs in the seventh when Scott Hairston singled and Garciaparra homered to center.

However, Seattle got one of the runs back in the eighth on Johjima's sacrifice fly, and Lopez's two-out solo shot in the ninth made it a 6-3 game.

Mark Lowe pitched the final inning for his second save.

Originally published Friday, September 4, 2009 at 9:48 PM

Mariners' Ryan Rowland-Smith finally gets an easy opponent

Seattle scores four runs off AAA call-up Clayton Mortensen in the second to help Rowland-Smith defeat Oakland, 6-3

By Geoff Baker

Seattle Times staff reporter

OAKLAND, Calif. - Even the best prizefighters need a patsy or two to pad their record and Ryan Rowland-Smith finally got his.

Rowland-Smith (3-2) has steadily turned in some solid outings for the Mariners since being recalled from Class AAA Tacoma six weeks ago, but up until this 6-3 win over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night has had the misfortune of opposing some of baseball's better arms. As a result, his record isn't nearly what it could be because his team hadn't scored many runs against the likes of Zack Greinke, Roy Halladay, Andy Pettitte, Scott Kazmir and Brett Anderson, to name a few.

But Rowland-Smith was given his patsy this time around in the form of Clayton Mortensen, a last-minute injury replacement from Class AAA. Mortensen let the Mariners tee off on him for a second-inning rally that produced four runs and Rowland-Smith took care of the rest.

He went on to match his career high with an eight-inning effort, yielding just three runs on four hits for his first win in nearly a month. Mark Lowe came on to finish off the ninth as the Mariners won for fourth straight time.

The Mariners had scored only one run of support for Rowland-Smith his previous two outings, a big reason his last win came on Aug. 9 despite three quality starts of at least six innings and three earned runs or fewer allowed. But the Mariners did away with that drought in a hurry with their two-out rally in the second, launched by a Bill Hall double and then consecutive walks that loaded the bases.

Jack Wilson followed with a two-run single up the middle, while Ichiro and Franklin Gutierrez added run-scoring singles after that for a 4-0 lead. Ichiro would later add another single to move to within four hits of 2,000 for his career and nine hits of his ninth straight 200-hit season.

The crowd of 11,738 fans was booing Mortensen noticeably in that second inning and imploring A's manager Bob Geren to remove the nervous-looking Mortensen, acquired from the Cardinals in the Matt Holliday trade in July. Mortensen had been roughed up by the Royals in his only previous major-league start and entered the night with an earned-run average of 18.00.

But that number was whittled down considerably over the innings that followed as the Mariners swung into quick outs and allowed Mortensen to gain some footing. That meant Rowland-Smith had to be at the top of his game and he was for the most part, once he survived a scare in third inning.

That's when doubles by Ryan Sweeney and Adam Kennedy got the A's on the board and had them threatening more damage. But Rowland-Smith was bailed out of further trouble by two sharp defensive plays, from first baseman Mike Carp in snagging a screaming liner by Rajai Davis and then second baseman Jose Lopez ranging deep to his right for a Kurt Suzuki grounder before throwing him out.

Rowland-Smith then got himself into quite a groove.

He retired 11 in a row before yielding a leadoff single to Scott Hairston in the seventh. Nomar Garciaparra then followed with a somewhat bizarre home run that deflected off the glove of leaping center fielder Franklin Gutierrez and dropped beyond the wall to cut Seattle's lead to 4-3.

But the Mariners got a huge run back in the eighth after Hall went from first to third on a single to right by Carp. That put Hall in position to tag up and score on a sacrifice fly to center by Kenji Johjima off reliever Michael Wuertz, who replaced Mortensen to start the eighth.

Lopez then added a solo home run, his 21st, off Jeff Gray in the ninth.

Rowland-Smith mowed down the A's in order in the bottom of the eighth. With his pitch count at 106, he might have come back for more.

But Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu opted to go with Lowe. David Aardsma had closed out three games in four nights and had the night off.

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Read his daily blog at www.seattletimes.com/ <http://www.seattletimes.com/>

Mariners

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Johjima dealing with less playtime

Kenji Johjima broke a toe in Oakland on a play at the plate May 25. His season hasn't been the same since.

By Geoff Baker

Seattle Times staff reporter

OAKLAND, Calif. - Kenji Johjima broke a toe in Oakland on a play at the plate May 25. His season hasn't been the same since.

Johjima was the team's starting catcher when he went down and his .722 on-base-plus-slugging percentage that month - while hardly lighting up the scoreboard - was the best he had produced in any monthly period.

In the first half-dozen games after his return in late June, Johjima started four of them - as the team insisted he would since he was still the No. 1 guy. But that didn't last long. Johjima, as many had expected, was gradually eased out of the No. 1 role. He appeared in three of the next six games after that, and then two out of the next six, then one out of the six following.

He's on pace for about 200 fewer at-bats than he had in 2007, the last season he was the team's undisputed No. 1 guy.

"In baseball, it doesn't matter what situation you're in," Johjima said through an interpreter. "It's difficult no matter what. So, as ballplayers, what we have to do is produce in a way like nobody else can in difficult circumstances. That's our job and no matter what the circumstances, it's difficult."

Johjima said he wants to wait until the season is over before assessing his 2009 campaign.

Griffey scratched

Ken Griffey Jr. was scratched from Friday night's game with soreness in his knee. Griffey had missed most of the past week with knee soreness, then played Thursday night and is now out again.

Griffey was given a shot at playing depending on what he did in batting practice. Manager Don Wakamatsu had been optimistic.

Geoff Baker: 206-464-8286 or gbaker@seattletimes.com <mailto:gbaker@seattletimes.com>

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September 4, 2009 at 9:31 PM

Mariners 6, Athletics 3: Ryan Rowland-Smith rides early lead to victory

Posted by Geoff Baker

Seattle Times Blog

Ryan Rowland-Smith didn't get to finish what he started after all. He'd thrown 106 pitches in eight innings to match his career high and that was it. So, manager Don Wakamatsu, knowing David Aardsma had closed three of the last four contests, went instead to Mark Lowe and got the save he needed.

That later home run by Jose Lopez and sacrifice fly an inning earlier by Kenji Johjima made things a bit easier on Lowe in this 6-3 win than they looked like they might be after Nomar Garciaparra's home run.

But a solid outing by Rowland-Smith, who yielded only four hits. He struck out four and walked one, but otherwise got through the night by pitching-to-contact. That's his game and when he's on, he usually generates good results with the excellent fielders behind him.

September 4, 2009 at 6:10 PM

Kenji Johjima battles on despite diminished playing time

Posted by Geoff Baker

Seattle Times Blog

Just some quick news here that Ken Griffey Jr. has been scratched from tonight's game with soreness in his knee. Griffey had missed most of the past week with knee soreness, then played last night and is now out again. They gave him a shot at being in there depending on what he did in batting practice. Manager Don Wakamatsu had been optimistic Griffey would make it in, but BP is over and he's out.

On to the topic of our pre-game post.

Back in late-May, Kenji Johjima broke a toe here in Oakland on a play at the plate. His season hasn't been the same since. Johjima was the team's starting catcher when he went down on May 25 and his .722 on-base-plus-slugging percentage that month -- while hardly lighting up the scoreboard -- was the best he'd produce in any monthly period.

In the first half-dozen games after his return in late June, Johjima started four of them -- as the team insisted he would since he was still the No. 1 guy. But that didn't last long. Johjima, as many had expected, was gradually eased out of the No. 1 role. He appeared in three of the next six games after that, and then two out of the next six, then one out of the six following.

He's on pace for about 200 fewer at-bats than he had in 2007, the last season he was the team's undisputed No. 1 guy.

So, I decided that, after his home run and two hit game on Thursday -- which helped earn him a start again tonight -- I'd ask him what it's like trying to improve his game while getting fewer opportunities, I also asked him whether his season indeed took a definitive turn after that toe injury, which enabled Rob Johnson to take over as the everyday catcher for the first time in his absence.

First, Johjima claimed, through an interpreter, that he hadn't even remembered that Thursday was his first game back in Oakland since he broke his toe. Then, he said all the right things about liking the team, his teammates and manager Wakamatsu. And then, as if in resignation, he shrugged and said "I don't know what you expect me to say."

Then, he added: "In baseball, it doesn't matter what situation you're in. It's difficult no matter what. So, as ballplayers, what we have to do is produce in a way like nobody else can in difficult circumstances. That's our job and no matter what the circumstances, it's difficult."

Johjima says he wants to wait until the season is over before assessing his 2009 campaign as a whole. So, that's where things are. It hasn't been easy. But he's working at it and trying to stay positive.

For those of you who are interested, and I know many are, I asked Wakamatsu about his decision to use the bunt in last night's ninth inning with the bases loaded and only one out. The Oakland Athletics were down by two and had just walked Ichiro to set up the double-play. Some of you wanted the Mariners to let Franklin Gutierrez swing away and knock in more than one run.

Others were satisfied with the Mariners getting simply one run in that situation and turning a two-run lead into three.

"You take some chances sometimes and even if he makes an out there you've still got possibly second and third with (Jose) Lopez coming up," Wakamatsu said. "You just want to get on the board. You want to get that run in and give your bullpen a little bit of cushion. It's not always a conventional situation but they're going to walk Ichiro to get in a double-play situation and we're trying to take it out of their hands."

"But having a guy that's leading the lead or right up there in sacrifice bunts, you have a belief system that he can get the bunt down, even against a guy like (Jeff) Gray."

Gutierrez had no idea Wakamatsu was going to try to bunt in that situation.

"Normally you don't expect that with two or more men on," he said. "I wasn't thinking bunt, but I saw the sign and knew we were going to do something different. Normally, it doesn't happen, but it doesn't matter. My job is to get the bunt down and score the run and that's what I did."

September 4, 2009 at 11:30 AM

The legend of Franklin Gutierrez should be forming right now

Posted by Geoff Baker

Seattle Times Blog

Quick question for all of you still arguing a meaningless bunt strategy point from last night: which of the three guys in the photo above would you pick to start a brand new team with? If your answer was the guy on the left, Bill Hall, then you misunderstood the question, I didn't ask who you could use to fill every position on your team. I asked who you would start it with.

The guy in the middle, Adrian Beltre, isn't too shabby. But that's also the wrong answer.

There actually aren't too many players in all of baseball right now who you would pick over the guy on the right, Franklin Gutierrez. He has done it all on both sides of the equation -- offensive and defensive -- all season. Last night, we saw him club his 15th home run, then squeeze bunt home Jack Hannahan from third base in the ninth.

By the way, I'm not sure what all the discussion has been about over that bunt. No, it's not a very rewarding move to squeeze home a guy with the bases loaded under normal circumstances. But these circumstances weren't normal. The Mariners had a two-run lead in the ninth. Any added runs -- whether three more or just one more -- were going to go a long way towards putting the game out of reach. Just out of curiosity (and please, let's not hijack the discussion thread with this all day) what does Ton Tango's book say about a team's increased

odds of winning when a team heads to the bottom of the ninth with a three-run lead as opposed to just two? For me, those are the odds a manager has to consider above all others.

Back to Gutierrez. The website Fangraphs.com has an interesting set of numbers that look at a player's value. One of them is called WIns Above Replacement Level (WAR) and it assigns a number to a player's combined offensive and defensive totals.

Guess who checks in at No. 16 in all of major league baseball in this category?

Yes, that's right. It is Mr. Gutierrez.

So far, his WAR total is 4.8. That means he gives the Mariners nearly five additional wins above what a "replacement level" player would offer if he, say, went down to injury, or took off on a vacation to Belize or something.

For comparison, Ichiro is at 4.3, which is still excellent. But you might want to consider the salary cost differential between the two. Look, you can't get 4-win players as cheaply as Gutierrez's \$400,000 every day. There just aren't that many of them to be had. So, you have to spend on some. And teams with a handful of such guys usually wind up going places.

There are only four outfielders in all of baseball putting up a higher WAR score than Gutierrez right now. The only American Leaguer is Ben Zobrist of the Tampa Bay Rays, checking in at an astounding 6.5. The only center fielder in baseball with a higher WAR is Matt Kemp of the Dodgers at 5.6.

I can tell you that you won't find Adam Jones anywhere near the top of that list. Jones is still a very good player, but has cooled off -- as most expected he would -- after his hot start and now appears lost for the season with an injury.

Some of you don't like it when I compare Jones and Gutierrez. But there's a reason I do it and it has nothing to do with "winning" or "losing" the Erik Bedard trade. Once again, I admit that the trade has not worked out for the Mariners. OK? Got it? Some of you need the same thing said a hundred different times in five languages before you start to pay attention. And if that sounds condescending, well, it's meant to be.

Now, the reason I bring up Jones vs. Gutierrez is because of all the dire predictions of catastrophe I was hearing when the trade first went down. That if the Mariners didn't "get it right" they would cripple the franchise for years to come because Jones was going to be a once-in-a-decade type of superstar. Hey, he very well may be someday.

But so may Gutierrez. And he's looking like one right now. And that's the point. Teams make mistakes in baseball. They get it wrong from time to time. But it doesn't mean life as we know it has to end every time it happens. In the case of center field, the Mariners replaced their "once in a decade" center fielder with a guy who, so far, is even better than Jones. And it took them one off-season to do it.

Catastrophe didn't strike. In fact, the M's might be better off now than they would have been with Jones. And no, you would never have had a situation with Jones playing left and Gutierrez center, or vice-versa, on this team. Had the team kept Jones, it's highly unlikely it would have made a deal for Gutierrez. Or even hired Jack Zduriencik as GM in the first place.,

I can already hear the screaming about Chris Tillman and how he was also part of that deal. Yes he was, and as I said, the 5-for-1 deal didn't work out for Seattle. We'll see how Tillman pans out. If he indeed becomes a top-

of-the-rotation guy. If not, should he tumble more towards the middle, the Mariners already have a guy who projects as that type of arm in Ian Snell -- also acquired for very little.

As for the other guys, yeah, the M's got rid of George Sherrill. But they also picked up a 34-save (so far) closer in David Aardsma for next to nothing. The other two guys? The fact that Kam Mickolio has made the majors is good for him, but do you know what? Jason Vargas and Garrett Olson, two minor acquisitions by the M's this past winter, have also made the majors this year. So, what does that prove?

Look, no one is saying the Mariners should go out and repeat the Bedard deal, which has become Exhibit A of what teams should not be looking to do in deals -- unless you're the guy selling the one player.

But all of the doom and gloom forecasts I've heard over the past year and a half really haven't come to fruition. Much of that has to do with Zduriencik's shrewd deals. And yes, second baseman Luis Valbuena looks like he might amount to something with Cleveland, so Gutierrez didn't exactly come to the M's for free. But the addition of Gutierrez has indeed soothed the sting of the impact the Bedard deal might have had on this team long-term.

For all the Superman tales of Jones we were hearing back in April, right now, he comes across as Gutierrez Lite. And that's something Mariners fans should be celebrating big time.

The players Gutierrez rates higher than right now? Well, he's tied with Miguel Cabrera, which says plenty about his value. And he's higher than Carl Crawford, Dustin Pedroia, Mark Teixeira, Michael Young, Troy Tulowitzski, and Ryan Howard.

Adam Jones is No. 101 on the list as a 1.9 win player. Hey, I wish him well in his career -- he was a nice guy and all -- but it should be obvious right now that he was someone who could be replaced. It should be clear that it's time for fans here to move on. Or, they can keep griping about the past. Whatever. I've put up these numbers today to show you what is what on this subject. Let's complain about other stuff. Like the catching situation now that Adam Moore is pushing on the major league door.

Life has indeed moved on for the M's, at least where dealing Jones is concerned.

I've been all for criticizing the past moves made by this team. But in this case, it really is time to look ahead and not backwards. When it comes to center field, M's fans are indeed witnessing the birth of a legend, as they'd hoped to do two years ago. Only this one has begun better than the one they'd hoped to see.

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September 4, 2009 at 2:42 PM

The Seattle sports scene is overflowing with Josh Wilsons

Posted by Larry Stone

Seattle Time Blog

When I was working in San Francisco, I once did a fun story on the oddity of having two prominent sports figures in town both named Roger Craig. The manager by that name had just led the Giants into the World Series, while the running back had three Super Bowl rings with the 49ers. Each was an admirer of the other, and they told great stories about receiving each other's mail, even getting a paycheck meant for the other, if I recall.

It struck me recently that Seattle has a similar situation, although not quite at such a lofty scale, with their pro pair of Josh Wilsons. The Mariners' shortstop by that name is the ultimate journeyman, having played for Arizona, San Diego and the Mariners already this season, on top of stints with Florida, Washington and Tampa

Bay. A third-round pick by Florida in 1999, he's also been in the Pittsburgh, Colorado and Boston organizations.

The Seahawks' defensive back by that name is in the team's cornerback rotation after being drafted by Seattle in the second round out of Maryland in 2007. He's listed as No. 1 on the depth chart at left corner while Marcus Trufant is out with an injury.

Josh Wilson the Mariner is 28 years old (born March 26, 1981 in Pittsburgh, Penn), 6-feet-0, 175 pounds. He wears No. 16.

Josh Wilson the Seahawk is 24 years old (born March 11, 1985 in Houston, Texas), 5-feet-9, 192 pounds. He wears No. 26.

Josh Wilson the Mariner has 94 hits in his three MLB seasons. Josh Wilson the Seahawk has 76 hits (tackles) in his two NFL seasons (including the one pictured above that felled Brett Favre).

Josh Wilson the Mariner's claim to fame is pitching for three different teams in his career, including two mound stints this year. Josh Wilson the Seahawk's claim to fame is an 89-yard kickoff return for a touchdown against the Rams in Week 12 of 2007. Last year, he ran back an interception 75 yards for a TD against the 49ers. His father, Tim Wilson, played in the NFL as the blocking back for Earl Campbell with the Houston Oilers.

I asked Josh Wilson the Mariner the other day if he had heard of Josh Wilson the Seahawk.

"Oh, yeah," he said. "I know they have a guy over there. A couple of my buddies, sports fans, informed me of it. I remember seeing his name when he got over there (to the Seahawks), that they had a Josh Wilson. It's nice to know I've got a namesake out there doing some good stuff in the sports world."

So far, the two haven't met. Josh the M has not gotten any mail aimed for Josh the S, nor any of his paychecks. Considering that Josh the M is no doubt making the MLB minimum salary (\$400,000), while Josh the S is listed by USA Today as having earned \$914,160 last year, the baseballer would get the better of that exchange.

Josh Wilson the Mariner said he never played any organized football. "I was more just a baseball guy."

He hopes to have finally found a home in Seattle, having shown some pop in his bat during extended playing time recently while Jack Wilson (no relation; nor is either Josh Wilson any relation to Jack Wilson, mayor of Prescott, Ariz.) was injured. Mariner manager Don Wakamatsu said recently that he's mulled over giving Josh Wilson a chance to pitch this year so he can become the first player in history to pitch for three teams in one season. Wakamatsu bypassed a golden opportunity last Monday when the Angels pulled ahead 10-0.

"If the opportunity arises, or it's late in the season and they want to throw me out there, I'd absolutely be open to it," Josh Wilson said. "But any time you're losing a game like that and there's talk of a position player going in, those are the times it's not really fun."

Boston's Nick Green did the fraternity proud last week by working two scoreless innings in the Red Sox's 9-5 loss to the White Sox.

"I tell you, those shortstops get on the mound, they threw pretty good," Wilson said.

Wilson said he threw nothing but fastballs in his first two outings on the mound. On June 8, 2007, while with the Rays, he pitched one scoreless inning in a 14-8 loss to the Marlins, giving up one hit and one walk. On May

11, 2009, while with Arizona, he worked another scoreless inning, this time against Cincinnati, in a 13-5 Diamondbacks' loss, giving up no hits and one walk.

But on June 7, having moved from Arizona to San Diego via waiver claim -- and pitching against the Diamondbacks -- things got a little more serious for Wilson. With the Padres out of pitchers, manager Bud Black turned to Wilson in the 18th inning of a 6-6 tie.

"I was throwing fastballs, curve balls and changeups," Wilson said. "I was throwing everything at 'em. We had to try to win. I was doing whatever we could."

Wilson gave up a leadoff single to Felipe Lopez, who moved up on a sacrifice. Wilson walked the next batter, but got Stephen Drew on a popup to the catcher for the second out. That brought up slugger Mark Reynolds. Wilson actually got ahead of Reynolds 0-2, then went to a full count before Reynolds hit a three-run homer, hanging a tough loss on Wilson.

Considering that Reynolds now has 40 homers, "It wasn't a bad guy to give it up do," Josh Wilson said.

Perhaps the Seahawks' Josh Wilson will show similar versatility this season by playing quarterback.

(Mariners' Josh Wilson photo by Associated Press; Seahawks' Josh Wilson photo by Jim Bates of the Seattle Times).

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September 4, 2009 at 11:19 AM

Sad news: Ernie Harwell has incurable cancer

Posted by Larry Stone

Seattle Times Blog

wrote yesterday about broadcasters, but I wish I didn't have to write this one: the legendary Ernie Harwell, voice of the Tigers for 42 years, has incurable cancer.

Harwell is 91. The grace and strength with which he is responding to this news is staggering, but not surprising. I have had the pleasure of knowing Harwell a little bit through the years, and he is one of the finest people I have ever met in baseball. When I wrote a story about broadcasters last year, I was thrilled to receive an e-mail from Harwell telling me he liked the piece.

You might remember that in the early 1990s, then-Tigers president Bo Schembechler (the old Michigan football coach) made the unfortunate decision to force Harwell out of his job calling the Tigers. His replacement with the thankless task of replacing Ernie Harwell was none other than Rick Rizzs. He did it from 1992-94 but was never quite accepted in Detroit. Through it all, however, one of Rizzs's biggest champions was Harwell, and Rick still loves him for it. Harwell returned to Tigers television in 1993 and eventually to the radio, while Rizzs landed back in Seattle in 1995.

Until this illness, Harwell was still going strong in his 90s, writing a column for the Detroit Free Press, exercising daily, and enjoying life with his wife of 68 years, Lulu. That's Ernie and Lulu pictured in a 2002 ceremony honoring Harwell's 55 years in the broadcast business.

In the Free Press story, Harwell says of his illness, which has manifested itself with an inoperable tumor in the area of the bile duct: "We don't know how long this lasts. It could be a year, it could be much less than a year, much less than a half a year. Who knows?"

"Whatever's in store, I'm ready for a new adventure. That's the way I look at it."

May his remaining days be happy ones.

The Tigers-related website Bless You Boys published this address for sending cards and letters to Harwell:

Ernie Harwell
c/o S. Gary Spicer Sr.
Attorney at Law
16845 Kercheval Ave.,
Suite 5
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(Associated Press photo)

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Published: Saturday, September 5, 2009

AquaSox defeat Canadians 8-4

Herald staff

VANCOUVER, B.C. - Chris Kirkland overcame a shaky first inning to pitch six innings and pick up the win for the Everett AquaSox as the Sox defeated the Vancouver Canadians 8-4 Friday night.

Kirkland walked two batters, threw a wild pitch and gave up two singles in the first inning, but then gave up just one run pitching out of a bases-loaded jam with no outs.

The relief pitching nailed down the victory for Everett. Eric Valdez and Chad Cordero combined to pitch three innings, giving up no runs and just one hit to the Canadians.

Mariners first-round pick Nick Franklin picked up his first triple for the AquaSox (38-36). Wellington Dotel also batted 3-for-5 with two triples for Everett, who had seven extra-base hits.

Last updated September 5, 2009 2:34 a.m. PT

No 'Halladay' for Yankees as ace pitches 1-hitter

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO -- Roy Halladay turned around a recent rough stretch by turning up his aggression. Halladay pitched a one-hitter to snap a three-start losing streak and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Yankees 6-0, ending New York's winning streak at seven games.

"We were only able to muster one hit and that just tells you how good he was," said Yankees manager Joe Girardi, whose team was shut out for the fifth time this season and the second time since June 23.

The 2003 AL Cy Young Award winner, Halladay acknowledged feeling "a little bit tentative" after losing his past three starts, matching a career-high losing streak. He resolved to do things differently against the Yankees and succeeded, striking out nine and walking three to win the first time since Aug. 14 at Tampa Bay.

"That's something that's a big focus for me is going out and, you know, you just put it on the line," Halladay said. "Especially when things are going hard, that makes it tougher because you're trying to be so careful. You just need to get the mindset where you go out and you put it out there and I felt like we did that."

Aaron Hill doubled twice and had two RBIs and Adam Lind had three hits for the Blue Jays, who won for the first time in five games.

The AL East-leading Yankees lost for the first time on their current seven-game road trip. New York has won 14 of 18 away from home.

The complete game was the sixth of the season for Halladay (14-8), tying him with Kansas City's Zack Greinke for the major league lead, and the 46th of his career.

"He's just a cut above a lot of other people," Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston said.

It was Halladay's second one-hitter; he also did it in his second career start, Sept. 27, 1998, against Detroit.

Halladay was sharp from the get-go in this one. The right-hander was perfect through the first 4 2-3 before walking Jorge Posada on a 3-2 pitch in the fifth. Unbothered, Halladay struck out Robinson Cano to end the inning.

Shortstop Ramiro Pena broke up Halladay's no-hit bid in the sixth, doubling into the right field corner on an 0-1 curveball.

"I thought it was a decent pitch early in the count," Halladay said. "It was down. You can second guess yourself on things like that. Knowing he's going to be aggressive you can probably be down with it even more."

New York right-hander Joba Chamberlain (8-5) allowed three runs and six hits in three innings and has not won in five starts. He threw 59 pitches, walked two and struck out two.

Rangers 5, Orioles 1

In Baltimore, Scott Feldman matched the Texas club record for road wins in a season, earning No. 11 with a dominant performance.

Feldman (15-4) gave up one run and four hits in 6 2-3 innings to improve to 11-1 on the road. Nelson Cruz hit his 31st home run for the Rangers, who have won four straight.

Tigers 4, Rays 3

In St. Petersburg, Fla., Justin Verlander got his 16th win, Adam Everett hit a tiebreaking RBI single during a three-run ninth and AL Central-leading Detroit beat Tampa Bay.

Verlander (16-7) tied New York Yankees left-hander CC Sabathia for the AL lead in victories after allowing one run and four hits over eight innings. He has won three consecutive starts.

Detroit closer Fernando Rodney allowed two runs in the ninth before nailing down his 32nd save.

White Sox 12, Red Sox 2

In Chicago, Mark Kotsay homered and had three RBIs against his former team, Chris Getz went 4 for 5 and Chicago had 20 hits to rout Boston.

The White Sox batted around in the third and fourth innings, scoring five runs in each, to take a 12-1 lead. Chicago had 16 hits by the end of the fourth.

Freddy Garcia (1-2), in his fourth start since rejoining the rotation last month, allowed seven hits and a run over six innings as the White Sox won their third straight. It was Garcia's first win since Sept. 17 of last season, when he beat Texas while pitching for Detroit.

Paul Byrd (1-1) was driven out after 2 1-3 innings in his second start for Boston.

Indians 5, Twins 2

In Cleveland, Jeremy Sowers pitched six strong innings, rookie Michael Brantley had two hits and his first career RBI, and Cleveland took advantage of Minnesota's season-high four errors.

Sowers (6-9) allowed two runs, six hits and didn't walk a batter. The left-hander is 4-2 with a 3.62 ERA in his last eight starts. Kerry Wood pitched the ninth for his 18th save in 23 chances.

Carl Pavano (11-11), traded by the Indians to the Twins last month, allowed four runs in six innings, including a three-run third. The right-hander is 2-3 in six starts with Minnesota.

Angels 2, Royals 1

In Kansas City, Mo., Vladimir Guerrero got the Angels' third hit - a two-run single in the eighth inning off Kansas City's beleaguered bullpen.

Jered Weaver (14-5) kept it close early against Royals fill-in starter Robinson Tejeda, scattering nine hits.

Robinson Tejeda allowed a hit in 5 1-3 scoreless innings, then had to watch another bullpen meltdown.

The Royals walked eight in three innings - three by Jamey Wright (1-5) - and dodged two jams before Guerrero came through with the run-scoring single in the eighth. Kansas City had 11 hits.

Mariners 6, Athletics 3

In Oakland, Calif., Ichiro Suzuki took another step toward baseball history, getting two hits to get within four of 2,000 in his career.

He's likely to become the second-fastest player in history to reach that plateau. Al Simmons did it in 1,390 games while Suzuki has played in 1,391. George Sisler is second in 1,414 games.

Ryan Rowland-Smith (3-2) pitched eight innings for his first win since Aug. 9 and the Mariners moved eight games over .500 for the first time since 2007.

Last updated September 5, 2009 2:31 a.m. PT

Giambi's RBI single in 8th lifts Rockies to win

By PAT GRAHAM
AP SPORTS WRITER

DENVER -- The Colorado Rockies brought Jason Giambi aboard for his big-hit capability.

So far, the veteran slugger is definitely delivering.

Giambi again came through in a tight situation, rescuing the Rockies with a pinch-hit RBI single in the eighth during a 5-4 win over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday night.

He's now 2-for-2 with a walk and four RBIs in three pinch-hit appearances since joining the team earlier this week.

"We know what (Giambi) can do. He's definitely a professional hitter," Yorvit Torrealba said. "He's a good guy to have around. He's a good guy to have on your team."

Giambi better be wary, though. The expectations are mounting.

"He's digging himself a hole. If he ever happens to get out, we're all going to be mad at him," Seth Smith said, smiling. "He's helping us win games."

Not to mention keep pace with San Francisco in the NL wild-card race. The win kept Rockies a game ahead of the Giants, who beat the Milwaukee Brewers earlier Friday.

Too early to start scoreboard watching?

"I don't worry about it," Smith said. "Obviously, it would be best for us if they lost. But there's nothing we can do about it."

After Torrealba singled in the eighth and was bunted over to second by Clint Barmes, Giambi was brought in off the bench.

Giambi lined a pitch from Blaine Boyer (0-2) into left-center, easily scoring Torrealba. After reaching first, Giambi clapped his hands in excitement as the crowd followed suit.

On Wednesday, Giambi had a pinch-hit, two-run single in a win over the New York Mets. He also drew a bases loaded walk the night before.

"He's come up with some big hits for them," Diamondbacks manager A.J. Hinch said. "Obviously, this one tonight hurts us ... That's what he's getting paid to do over there and that's his role."

With Giambi's left-handed bat available on the bench, Smith has been getting more regular playing time. He had a career-best four hits on Friday, including two doubles that produced three runs.

Rafael Betancourt (1-1) got Chris Young to ground out to end the eighth to earn the win. Franklin Morales, filling in for the injured Huston Street, pitched the ninth for his second save in three chances.

After giving up a run in each of the first two innings, Dan Haren settled in and stymied the Rockies. He scattered seven hits over six innings and struck out eight against a team he typically torments. Haren has a 2.86 lifetime ERA against Colorado.

"I had probably my worst stuff of the year," Haren said. "I was able to battle through and give us a shot."

Jason Hammel lasted six innings, giving up five hits and four runs (three earned).

Ian Stewart hit a solo homer for the second straight game, sending an 0-1 pitch from Haren into the second deck in right-center. His homer in the second inning was his 21st of the season.

Torrealba's single in the eighth extended his hitting streak to 13 games. He's one away from tying Joe Girardi's mark for longest streak by a Rockies catcher.

Giants 3, Brewers 2

In Milwaukee, Bengie Molina homered on the first pitch of the eighth inning keep up the pressure in the NL wild-card race.

The Giants, who've lost 14 of 18 in Miller Park, scored two unearned runs before Molina's shot to deep center field and worked around 10 walks, the most they've allowed in a nine-inning game this year.

Prince Fielder drove in his 121st run, tops in the majors, and Jeff Suppan took a no-hitter into the fifth, but Milwaukee unraveled on an error in the sixth before Todd Coffey (4-4) allowed Molina's homer.

Cardinals 14, Pirates

In Pittsburgh, Ryan Ludwick homered twice, Adam Wainwright became the majors' first 17-game winner, and St. Louis got its 10th win in 12 games.

Last-place Pittsburgh lost its eighth straight despite a six-run fifth against Wainwright (17-7) that briefly gave it the lead after trailing 5-0 - only to watch Albert Pujols give St. Louis the lead again with a three-run homer, his major league-leading 43rd.

Ludwick went 5 for 5 with five RBIs, and he and Matt Holliday hit back-to-back solo home runs.

Astros 7, Phillies 0

In Houston, Cliff Lee (5-2) struggled for the second straight start after his eight-game winning streak ended.

He lasted only three innings, giving up six runs and nine hits.

Wandy Rodriguez (13-9) struck out seven in seven innings and drove in two runs with a double.

Padres 2, Dodgers 0

In Los Angeles, rookie Wade LeBlanc pitched two-hit ball over six innings, and San Diego scratched out a pair of early runs against the luckless Clayton Kershaw to beat Los Angeles.

LeBlanc (1-1) struck out two, walked three and retired his final nine batters in his fourth start of the season and eighth in the big leagues.

Reds 3, Braves 1

In Atlanta, Bronson Arroyo gave up one run in seven innings and Cincinnati beat Atlanta for its fifth straight win, matching a season high.

Arroyo (12-12) gave up six hits and one run in seven innings and beat Derek Lowe (13-9), who gave up seven hits and three runs in seven innings. The Braves have lost three straight.

Atlanta manager Bobby Cox was ejected for the seventh time this season, and the second time in two games, to extend his major league record to 150.

Mets 6, Cubs 2

In New York, Cory Sullivan homered and made a diving catch in left field and Bobby Parnell made a stellar start for the Mets.

The rookie right-hander pitched seven shutout innings in the longest outing of his career.

Pinch-hitter Fernando Tatis came through with a tiebreaking single that triggered a five-run eighth inning.

Marlins 9, Nationals 6

In Washington, John Baker homered and matched a career high with four RBIs, Jorge Cantu also connected and Florida dealt Washington its seventh consecutive loss and officially eliminated the Nationals from postseason contention.

Cantu and Hanley Ramirez had two RBIs each in Florida's third straight victory.

Last updated September 4, 2009 4:52 p.m. PT

Indians' Sizemore to miss rest of season

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEVELAND -- Cleveland Indians center fielder Grady Sizemore will miss the remainder of the season because of soreness in his left elbow that will require arthroscopic surgery.

The procedure will take place next week at the Cleveland Clinic.

Sizemore has been bothered by the elbow since early May. He was on the disabled list from May 31-June 23 and has played through the pain since.

Indians head athletic trainer Lonnie Soloff said Sizemore will also undergo lower abdominal surgery a week after the elbow operation. Sizemore said it's the same groin injury that forced him out of the World Baseball Classic in March. He has played with the injury all season.

Sizemore expects to be fully recovered when he reports to spring training in February.

"I should be in good shape by the start of camp," he said.

Convincing Sizemore to shut it down wasn't easy. He played in 162 games in both the 2006 and 2007 seasons and appeared in 157 games last season.

"If he had his way, he'd play all the way through," Indians manager Eric Wedge said. "This is the right time to do it. This way we're not taking any chances on next year."

The injuries affected the three-time All-Star. A .279 career hitter going into the season, Sizemore was batting .248 with 18 home runs and 64 RBIs. He had 13 stolen bases after swiping 33 in 2007 and 38 last season.

"I knew going into the season it was going to be a tough year," Sizemore said. "You'd like to be injury free. I knew it was going to be a battle."

The Indians waited to make the decision even though they fell out of contention in the AL Central early in the season.

"He was a little bit banged up," Wedge said. "He wants to play. We're a better team with him out there. We took it as far as we felt we could."

Losing Sizemore is yet another down note in what has been a disappointing season for a team that had high expectations. The Indians stumbled to a slow start and never recovered, leading to several trades that dramatically cut the team's payroll.

Left-hander Cliff Lee, last season's Cy Young Award winner, and catcher Victor Martinez were traded in July. Third baseman Mark DeRosa, first baseman Ryan Garko, left fielder Ben Francisco and reliever Rafael Betancourt were also dealt.

Rookie Michael Brantley, acquired last season in the trade that sent ace pitcher CC Sabathia to Milwaukee, played center field and batted leadoff Friday night against Minnesota. Trevor Crowe, who has been out with a strained oblique, was activated from the disabled list prior to the game.

The Indians also purchased the contract of left-hander Mike Gosling from Triple-A Columbus on Friday. He had no record with a 6.75 ERA in seven appearances earlier this season.

Last updated September 4, 2009 5:16 p.m. PT

Tigers longtime announcer Harwell, 91, has cancer

By DAVID N. GOODMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DETROIT -- Ernie Harwell, the 91-year-old Baseball Hall of Fame honoree and longtime broadcaster for the Detroit Tigers, said Friday that he has inoperable cancer.

Harwell told The Associated Press he knows he'll go through some painful days, but is in good spirits and appreciates the good wishes he's received from hundreds of fans.

"I guess they (listeners) got used to me, good or bad," Harwell said in a telephone interview from his home in suburban Novi. "It's a great honor to be part of the family like that. ... So-called fame is fleeting."

Harwell said he began feeling ill this summer. He had surgery last month for an obstructed bile duct. Doctors found a cancerous tumor and several days ago advised him against further surgery.

"They told us what the situation was," he said. "We trusted their judgment."

Before going out to lunch with his wife and daughter, Harwell said he feels well for now and plans to continue work on a book and other projects.

"As always, Ernie takes the positive side of it," Detroit manager Jim Leyland said before the start of the Tigers game at Tampa Bay on Friday evening.

"We're all thinking of him. We all wish him well."

The Tigers organization said in a statement that Harwell and his family will be "in our thoughts and prayers as he faces a courageous battle against a serious illness."

The team said Harwell "continues to be a big part of Tigers history, and we look forward to him sharing in the 25th anniversary celebration of the 1984 World Series Championship team later this month."

Besides spinning yarns about baseball legends from Ty Cobb to Mark McGwire, Harwell brought a bit of flair to calling the games. "He stood there like the house by the side of the road," he might say of a batter taking a called third strike.

Foul balls into the stands were always, "Caught by a man from (whatever small town came to mind)." A home run was, "Long gone!"

Harwell spent 42 of his 55 years as a broadcaster calling Tigers games, from 1960 to 2002. He said he has been "flattered" to hear so many people tell him about the role his voice played in their lives.

Harwell laughed about women who told him they fell asleep to his voice, saying it showed his ability to "cure insomnia."

"Yeah, they went to sleep with me, but they woke up with J.P. McCarthy," a longtime WJR-AM morning host, Harwell said.

Harwell was born Jan. 25, 1918, in Washington, Ga., and began his broadcasting career in 1940 as a sports commentator for WSB radio in Atlanta.

After serving in the Marine Corps in 1942-46, Harwell was the minor league Atlanta Crackers' radio voice in 1946-48 and went to the Brooklyn Dodgers after the team's radio broadcaster, Red Barber, fell ill in 1948.

Harwell was honored by the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981 and the Sportscasters and Sportswriters Hall of Fame in 1989.

He recently helped lead unsuccessful efforts to save Tiger Stadium, home of the team until it left for Comerica Park after the 1999 season. Demolition began in 2008 and is expected to finish this fall.

As much as anything, the outpouring of support following news of his illness is a sign of the magic that radio sports still has for so many people, Harwell said.

"I think this response is an example of the impact of baseball and of the Tigers," he said, adding whatever talent he may have, "God put me here."

"Whatever happens, I'm ready to face it," he said. "I have a great faith in God and Jesus."

Last updated September 4, 2009 4:11 p.m. PT

Hillman to return in 2010

By JOHN MARSHALL
AP SPORTS WRITER

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Kansas City manager Trey Hillman hasn't put a whole lot of thought into job security, certainly hasn't lost any sleep over it. He's been too busy trying to get the Royals headed in the right direction.

But when general manager Dayton Moore said Hillman would be back in 2010 despite the team's struggles this season, well, that was definitely good news.

"It's very nice to have a boss that believes in you, believes in your track record, believes in what you do regardless of what the record is this season," Hillman said before Friday's game against the Los Angeles Angels.

Hillman wasn't with the team most of the week. His father-in-law died on Monday and he had been with family before rejoining the team before Friday's game.

While he was gone, Moore told The Kansas City Star that he believed in Hillman despite the team's first-to-worst spiral, saying injuries and subpar seasons by key players were more to blame than anything the manager did in the dugout. Hillman didn't find out about Moore's comments until a few minutes before his pregame meeting with reporters.

"I don't make any excuses, I take accountability for records, I take accountability for criticisms are thrown, but it's nice when you've got a boss who believes in what you do," Hillman said Friday. "It's nice of him to speak out the way that he did."

Kansas City opened the season 18-11, led the AL Central by three games. A rapid decent down the standings came next, leaving the Royals with the AL's worst record (51-82) headed into Friday's game.

Hillman has taken plenty of criticism for the free fall, from the way he's handled the bullpen to the high pitch counts some of the starters have had.

Much of what happened to the Royals, though, was out of his control.

Injuries certainly hurt. Third baseman Alex Gordon had hip surgery in April, missed three months, then struggled when he got back. Shortstop Mike Aviles and center fielder Coco Crisp had season-ending injuries. All-Star closer Joakim Soria and right fielder Jose Guillen, one of the team's top run producers, spent time on the DL.

The players on the field didn't produce like the Royals had hoped, either. Proven starters faltered, big bats failed to come through and the bullpen, supposedly a strength, seemingly found a new way to struggle each day.

Through it all, Hillman kept grinding, controlling what he could, letting everything else play itself out.

"Nobody likes to be fired, nobody likes to be let go, but it's just something I don't lose a lot of sleep over," Hillman said. "I come to work, try to do the best job I can every day and control the things I can. Unfortunately, in this position there are a lot of things you can't control."

Last updated September 4, 2009 5:01 p.m. PT

Cubs OF Soriano out indefinitely with sore knee

By MIKE FITZPATRICK
AP BASEBALL WRITER

NEW YORK -- Chicago Cubs left fielder Alfonso Soriano is out indefinitely with a sore left knee.

Cubs manager Lou Piniella said Friday the team plans to hold Soriano out of the lineup for a while, giving him time to rest and treat his ailing knee. Piniella said at some point the club will "revisit" the situation, but he's not sure when.

"There's no timetable," Piniella said.

Asked whether Soriano could miss the rest of the season, Piniella said he wouldn't go that far. The Cubs were six games behind NL wild-card leader Colorado heading into Friday night's game against the New York Mets.

Piniella said he spoke with Soriano before the game and explained the situation.

"He's agreeable to that, yeah. I told him, I said, 'Sori, I mean, I really appreciate the fact that you're toughing this thing out and wanting to play and not complaining. But boy, I mean, it's hard enough when you're feeling full strength as opposed to when you're not,'" Piniella said.

Sam Fuld started in left field Friday night in place of Soriano.

"The crux of it is, his knee is not strong. He's having trouble playing on it, hitting on it," Piniella said. "You can't move, you can't push off without your legs."

Trying to play through the injury, Soriano has struggled on offense and defense. He missed a fly ball for an error Thursday during a 5-0 loss to the Chicago White Sox and was booed loudly by the Wrigley Field crowd when he struck out to end the game.

"This is the right approach," Piniella said. "I thought about this long and hard yesterday on the airplane trip from Chicago to here, and all last night I vacillated. This morning, I still felt the same way. This is the best thing to do for this young man and I stick to it."

Soriano had a cortisone injection in his knee Sunday and missed three games during the week. He said doctors told him he might need minor surgery after the season to clean out his knee, something he'd rather avoid because he's never had an operation, he said.

"If they're going to make my knee better, I have no choice," he said. "It's getting worse."

Soriano, who made seven straight All-Star games before missing out this year, is batting .241 with 20 homers and 55 RBIs. He has nine stolen bases and 11 errors, plus a paltry .303 on-base percentage.

Piniella said Soriano could be available to pinch hit, but he'd like to stay away from that for a while.

"For now, we're just going to rest him and give him a chance to get this thing stronger and hopefully he can come back and play the way he's fully capable of," the manager said.

Soriano, who has eight consecutive 20-homer seasons, is 10 for 61 (.164) with six RBIs in his last 17 games, though he did hit a decisive, three-run homer against the Mets last Friday at Wrigley Field to cap a 3-for-3 day at the plate.

In other news, first baseman Derrek Lee missed his second consecutive game to be with his wife, who gave birth to their second child early Thursday morning. Piniella said he expected Lee back on Saturday.

"I hope he remembers it's a day game," Piniella said, laughing.

Micah Hoffpauir started at first base against the Mets.

The Cubs also recalled infielder Bobby Scales from Triple-A Iowa and claimed right-hander Thomas Diamond off waivers from Texas.

Scales batted .241 with three homers and seven RBIs in two previous stints with Chicago this season, appearing in 25 games. He was available off the bench Friday night.

The 31-year-old Scales played in 1,013 minor league games before making his major league debut this year.

Diamond was assigned to Iowa. Selected 10th overall by the Rangers in the June 2004 draft, the 26-year-old pitcher was 2-3 with a 4.20 ERA and one save in 38 games with Double-A Frisco and Triple-A Oklahoma City this season. He missed the 2007 season following elbow ligament replacement surgery.

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Ohio boy, 4, hit by foul ball has skull fracture

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AKRON, Ohio -- Doctors in northeast Ohio say a 4-year-old boy who was struck in the head by a foul ball at a minor league baseball game is in critical condition with a fractured skull.

Doctors say it may take five days for the swelling in Luke Holko's brain to subside. It's unclear how well he'll recover.

Holko and his family had front-row seats near first base for Wednesday's doubleheader at the home of the Mahoning Valley Scrappers, a short-season Class A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians.

Holko was hit as he sat in his father's lap and talked to his mother. Paramedics took him to a local hospital.

During a news conference Friday, the boy's mother, Nicole Holko of North Bloomfield, said her son loves baseball and the accident won't stop the family from attending games.