

## A's News Clips, Thursday, September 10, 2009

### A's get little relief, fall to White Sox

By Jack McCarthy, Bay Area News Group

With a well-rested bullpen and a day off ahead, A's manager Bob Geren had no qualms about a short stint for starting pitcher Trevor Cahill and spreading some work around on Wednesday.

As it turned out, the bullpen had all the work it could handle.

The eighth A's pitcher of the night — right-hander Edgar Gonzalez — gave up a game-winning double to Chicago catcher A.J. Pierzynski to score Alexei Gonzalez in the 13th inning for a 4-3 White Sox victory in the finale of a two-game series at U.S. Cellular Field.

Gonzalez, who pitched 12/3 innings, took the loss and is now 0-2. Chicago reliever Octavio Dotel improved to 3-3 after three scoreless innings of work.

Cahill, meanwhile, pitched just three innings as the first in a parade of pitchers.

"I felt like we had enough pitching to go nine, 10 or 11 innings, and I was right," said Geren. "We threw zeros all the way into the 13th." Geren used four pitchers through the first six innings, including right-hander Brad Ziegler. He got an inning-ending called third strike on Paul Konerko when Chicago threatened to pad its lead with runners on first and second.

Chicago starter Freddy Garcia worked the same span and surrendered two runs on five hits before he was relieved. Garcia walked three and struck out five.

Making a team record 100th start of the season by an A's rookie, Cahill gave up three earned runs on five hits in his short outing. He escaped being tagged for a loss when the A's tied the game in the eighth.

"I didn't have any set goal (for Cahill)," said Geren. "He could have gone six or seven (innings)."

For the second straight night, the A's grabbed the early lead as left fielder Scott Hairston lined a one-out, first-inning single to score Rajai Davis.

But the 1-0 lead didn't last the opening inning as Chicago tied the game when Ramirez hit into a fielder's choice that scored Scott Podsednik.

The White Sox jumped ahead in the second as Podsednik's ground-rule double brought home Chris Getz.

Ramirez helped again when he reached on an Adam Kennedy throwing error, scoring No. 9 batter Jason Nix for a 3-1 lead.

The A's got one run back in their next at-bat. No. 3 batter Ryan Sweeney, who had four hits on Tuesday, continued his hot hitting with a two-out double that scored Cliff Pennington.

The A's tied the game in the eighth, but missed an opportunity to take the lead. Davis led off with a single, but was caught while trying to steal second, wasting a subsequent two-out double off the wall by Hairston that would have likely resulted in a run.

Hairston scored on Kurt Suzuki's single to center to force a 3-3 tie.

The A's had Davis at third and Sweeney on first with one out in the 10th, but came up empty when Hairston popped out and Suzuki lined out to center.

The White Sox had the bases loaded in the bottom of the 11th, but reliever Edgar Gonzalez coaxed Jermaine Dye to hit a grounder to A's second baseman Mark Ellis, who threw to Pennington for a force at second.

Notes: The Sacramento RiverCats, the A's Triple-A affiliate, beat Tacoma (Mariners) 8-2 in Game 1 of the PCL Championship Series. Tommy Everidge drove in three runs and Chris Carter added a two-run home run. Game 2 is tonight in Tacoma. ... ESPN reported the A's have interest in Rodrigo Lopez, a 34-year-old right-handed pitcher who was just released by Philadelphia. Right-hander Clayton Mortensen (0-2, 9.82 ERA) is scheduled to pitch Friday when the A's open a three-game weekend series at Minnesota. Left-handers Brett Anderson and Gio Gonzalez will throw Saturday and Sunday, respectively. The eight-game road trip continues with three at Texas starting next Monday. "... The 20 hits the A's collected in Tuesday's 11-3 victory were the most they've had in Chicago since the 1939 Philadelphia A's pounded out 22. It was also the third time this season with 20 or more hits. "... Geren said the six-man rotation he installed in early September will continue through the balance of the season. "... Entering Wednesday, the A's were 51-26 against Chicago (.622) since 2001, better than any other American League team.

## **Experts question San Jose's ballpark analysis**

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News

Does a major-league baseball park in San Jose make economic sense?

A recent analysis commissioned by the city — part of San Jose's renewed quest to land the A's — offers a rosy picture of the financial benefits such a stadium would bring.

But experts who study the economics of ballparks reviewed the numbers for the Mercury News and raised plenty of concerns. Chief among them: The cost for the city land the ballpark would be built upon is significant, they said. With three more parcels to buy, acquiring the land for the stadium over the years could amount to at least \$42 million, according to a Mercury News analysis.

"You can't come out saying that this doesn't have a cost if all we're supplying them (the A's) is the land," said Victor Matheson, associate professor of economics at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. "The land is very valuable real estate."

Sports economists also say the city's analysis is overly optimistic on the stadium's projected number of jobs, the ripple effect on the local economy created by direct spending, and the impact of the teams' salaries in the area.

A few of the experts concluded that an alternative in the report — offices or retail — seem the better opportunity for San Jose going forward, despite the city's glut of about 2 million square feet of unoccupied downtown office space.

But city officials stand by the \$130,000 analysis from Conventions, Sports & Leisure International. They acknowledge that the office/retail scenario would generate more and higher paying jobs than a baseball stadium — 2,663 jobs, of which 1,973 would be net new jobs, compared with 2,100 full-, part-time and seasonal jobs at the ballpark, of which 980 would be net new jobs. However, given the city's current unoccupied office space, building more at the ballpark site is unrealistic, they say.

"If we hold out for offices, we would wait for 10, 15, 20 years and not have anything, no benefit," said John Weis, assistant executive director of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. "A stadium gives us a much greater opportunity for economic growth."

None of this, of course, will happen unless baseball officials make the San Francisco Giants give up their territorial claims to Santa Clara County and allow the A's to come to San Jose.

The city's analysis envisions a 32,000-seat stadium hosting 81 games and three non-MLB events annually. It predicts that the economic impact of a 14-acre park near Diridon Station would lead to \$130 million in annual spending throughout the local economy and \$2.9 billion over a 30-year-period.

Under the current proposal, the A's — not taxpayers — would be responsible for financing and building the stadium, estimated to cost \$489 million. The city would lease the land to the A's, and the report says the only costs to the city's general fund would be for city services for the three nongame events, which would total \$46,000 annually.

But the analysis doesn't mention the cost of the land needed for a ballpark, nor the cost of infrastructure — upgrading the adjacent intersections around the site, for example. Weis said those figures will be included in a future cost-benefit report.

"You can't really say that a ballpark is privately financed because those leases have a tendency to provide a sweetheart deal to the owner," said Paul Staudohar, professor emeritus of business administration at California State University-East Bay. "If they (San Jose) turn around and lease it on very favorable terms to the ballclub, public money is going to the ballclub. It depends on the terms of the lease."

According to Weis, the city so far has acquired nine parcels of land equaling 211,258 square feet for about \$26 million. Three outstanding properties the agency is hoping to acquire would complete more than half the ballpark's footprint, including 199,000 square feet owned by AT&T and a family-owned 25,700 square-foot parcel. The third piece of land — 57,479 square feet — encompasses a Pacific Gas & Electric substation.

Weis would not discuss the price of the three parcels under negotiation. However, Andre Walewski of Collier's Parrish International commercial real estate estimated the land value in the area to be \$40 to \$50 a square foot. That means the rest of the land to be acquired could cost the city between \$16 million and \$20 million.

PG&E has estimated the city would have to pay \$30.8 million to move the substation to make way for the ballpark. But Weis said the city isn't certain that it needs to move the substation after all.

Weis said that the majority of the taxes that pay for the land does not come from residential neighborhoods but from the city's three industrial areas, and downtown. And while the city has yet to negotiate any lease with Oakland A's owner Lew Wolff, he said, "this agency, of which the mayor is the chair, will not expose the city to a lot of downside" in that lease.

Other issues in the analysis concerned the experts.

Staudohar said the estimated \$130 million a year in revenue seems on the high side, and the predicted \$2.9 billion generated by spending related to the ballpark's operations over a 30-year period appears, he said, to be "wildly optimistic."

The estimated 350 construction jobs that would occur annually for the three years of stadium construction from 2011 to 2013 appears overstated, said Roger Noll, an economist at Stanford University who follows the business of professional sports and stadiums. He said construction costs are not a benefit. "One could derive exactly the same 'benefits' from building anything: a pyramid, for example," he wrote in an e-mail. "The relevant issue is whether the operating benefits from a baseball stadium exceed the benefits of anything else one could build."

## **Tough way to end game for Hairston, A's**

### **Pair of baserunning gaffes in 13th inning cost Oakland**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Scott Hairston's thoughts on his 13th-inning adventure on the bases will have to be heard Friday in Minnesota.

He was called into the manager's office about 20 minutes after Wednesday's game in the Windy City, and he still was behind that closed door when most everyone else in the visitors' clubhouse at U.S. Cellular Field was dressed and ready to leave town.

The thoughts of Hairston's manager, A's skipper Bob Geren, were made very clear before the meeting, which included bench coach Tye Waller.

Addressing a small media gathering in his office, Geren was asked which was worse: Hairston failing to run hard on a routine fly ball to center field that was dropped by Alex Rios, leaving him at first base with one out instead of in scoring position, or that Hairston, trying to make amends by stealing second, got deked by Chicago's middle infielders on a popup and slid into second before being doubled off first?

"Both," Geren huffed. "Tied."

*Did you say something to Hairston?*

"I said something by taking him out of the game," came the terse reply.

Eric Patterson replaced Hairston in left field in the bottom of the 13th, but he wasn't out there long. A.J. Pierzynski spoiled an outstanding night from the A's bullpen by drilling a walk-off double that gave the White Sox a 4-3 victory in the finale of a two-game set.

"We should have won the game," Geren said.

It wasn't all Hairston's fault, of course -- far from it.

Rookie right-hander Trevor Cahill had his shortest outing since April, allowing three runs on five hits and two walks while throwing 74 pitches over three innings.

"I felt good," said Cahill, who also made an error but was taken off the hook for his 13th loss when Kurt Suzuki slapped a game-tying RBI single with two outs in the eighth. "I was just all over the place -- with everything. I just couldn't find it."

Oakland seemed all over the place in general at times, particularly late.

Adam Kennedy, who made an error of his own, couldn't get a sacrifice bunt down after Cliff Pennington's leadoff single in the 12th.

Pennington then was thrown out by Pierzynski, Chicago's catcher, while trying to steal -- just as Mark Ellis had done an inning earlier (though replays appeared to show that Ellis was safe).

Pierzynski, Geren noted, is not the best man at stopping a running game, averaging about 13 percent as a success rate. But he was 2-for-2 when it counted, and he came up with the big blow at the plate.

White Sox starter Freddy Garcia wasn't much sharper than Cahill at the outset, giving up runs in the first and third. Rajai Davis doubled and stole third base in the first before scoring on a single by Hairston. Ryan Sweeney then drilled an RBI double to make it 3-2.

Oakland's parade of seven relievers was considerably more successful, throwing a game's worth of zeros until Alexei Ramirez set up Pierzynski's heroics with a one-out single off Edgar Gonzalez.

"Excellent, every one of them," Geren said of his relievers. "I can't speak highly enough of what they did."

As if for effect, and possibly as a primer for the impending sit-down with Hairston, he repeated his earlier claim.

"We should have won the game."

## **Fans can make final push for Braden**

### **A's lefty up for the Marvin Miller Man of the Year Award**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- A's left-hander Dallas Braden isn't traveling with the club on its swing through the Windy City, the Twin Cities and Arlington, instead he is tending to the nerve damage in his left foot that cut short what was shaping up as a breakthrough season.

Oakland's Opening Night starter in his first full year on the big league roster, Braden posted a 3.89 ERA over 22 starts before being placed on the disabled list with a rash that became an infection and eventually forced him to concede that his season was over.

Regardless, it was a good year on the field for Braden, who emerged as the leader of the youngest starting rotation in the Majors. For months, he was the oldest member -- at 25.

It's what Braden has done off the field, however, that keeps his name in circulation even as the A's play out the final weeks of the season without him.

In recognition of his community work in his hometown of Stockton, Calif., Braden was named by his teammates as Oakland's nominee for the MLB Players Association's 2009 Marvin Miller Man of the Year Award.

"Nobody does stuff like this to get recognized," Braden said earlier this year. "That's not what it's about, obviously. And I'm certainly not alone on this team in helping people. But if someone hears about what I'm doing [through the recognition I get for it] and decides, 'Hey, I want to help out, too,' then awesome."

Raised in a single-parent household, Braden has made it his goal to assist young children in similar circumstances. Each season, starting this year, he'll sponsor at least one Little Leaguer being raised by a single mom in Stockton. He's sponsoring a pair of brothers this year.

In June, he hosted every player from his former Little League, Hoover Tyler, at an A's game.

During Thanksgiving, Braden does his best to make sure that Stockton's needy enjoy a hot meal. In the weeks leading up to the day, he visits area restaurants, seeking -- then matching -- food donations. With his help, more than 845 pounds of food was served at St. Mary's Interfaith Services on Thanksgiving Eve.

"I know it's cliché, but it's true: If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

A's fans looking to boost Braden's chances of winning the award can vote for him online at MLBPLAYERS.com through Sunday. Michael Young of the Rangers was the recipient of the 2008 Man of the Year Award. Young serves as an ambassador for Wipe Out Kids Cancer, an organization committed to eradicating pediatric cancer by funding innovative research, education and treatment. He also is an active member of the Major League Baseball Players Trust's Action Team national youth volunteer program.

Past winners of the award, named for the legendary baseball union leader, include Torii Hunter, Albert Pujols, Jim Thome, John Smoltz, Mike Sweeney, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Eric Davis and Paul Molitor.

## **Suzuki's value appreciated by A's**

### **Oakland (62-77) at Minnesota (70-69), 5:10 p.m. PT**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- As Kurt Suzuki's number of starts behind the plate approached 100 last year, A's manager Bob Geren said backup catcher Rob Bowen would see a lot more playing time in the season's final couple of months.

Geren said the same thing about Landon Powell this year.

Suzuki, however, has been every bit as difficult to leave out of the lineup as was his predecessor, Jason Kendall. Suzuki led American League catchers in starts last season (136) and is doing so again (114). Kendall did it in 2005 and '06.

When Kendall was traded two summers ago, Oakland's pitchers lamented the loss, praising his presence and game calling as a key to their success.

These days, Suzuki gets the same kind of verbal bouquets -- particularly from the team's many rookie starters.

When 24-year-old right-hander Clayton Mortensen gets the ball on Friday in the opener of a three-game series against the Twins at the Metrodome, it will mark the 101st time the A's have sent out a rookie starter.

"Suzuki's been great behind the dish," Mortensen said. "My last time out, when I was struggling, he came out and said, 'Hey, you've got great stuff. Let's pound these guys and get ahead. Let's work fast.'"

Mortensen finished that outing by throwing five shutout innings.

"It's just been really nice to have him back there," he said.

It's not bad having Suzuki in the batter's box, either, especially on the road. He entered Wednesday's finale of a two-game set at Chicago batting .320 away from Oakland, and his 68 RBIs were tops on the team.

### Pitching matchup

#### **OAK: RHP Clayton Mortensen (0-2, 9.00 ERA)**

Mortensen, one of three prospects acquired in the July trade that sent Matt Holliday to the Cardinals, was called up from Triple-A Sacramento on Friday to start against the visiting Mariners. He shook off a shaky second frame on the way to a career-high seven innings of six-hit work. Mortensen retired the first five batters he faced, but he gave up four runs on four hits and two walks before getting out of the third. Sacrificing velocity for location thereafter, Mortensen held Seattle scoreless on two hits and a walk over his final five frames. Mortensen has never faced the Twins.




#### **MIN: RHP Nick Blackburn (9-10, 4.16 ERA)**

In his previous start, Blackburn pitched well for a second successive outing, but he was unable to secure a win. He breezed through the Indians' lineup for most of the game, but he couldn't get out of some two-out trouble in the seventh. He went 6 2/3 innings, giving up three runs on seven hits while striking out three and walking one. Blackburn has pitched much better in his past four starts, and he will look to keep that streak going against the A's. Blackburn is 0-1 with a 5.06 ERA in four career starts against Oakland.

### **Dribblers ...**

Rookie righty Vin Mazzaro, who'll miss his second consecutive start Friday while dealing with shoulder tendinitis, did some throwing Wednesday and said he felt fine. He'll take Thursday off and do more flat-ground throwing Friday and Saturday in Minnesota. If that goes well, he'll throw in the bullpen on Sunday with an eye toward a return to the rotation the following Wednesday or Thursday at home. "Everything has to go really well at each step," Geren said, "but that's the best-case scenario." ... A's bullpen catcher Casey Chavez will miss the Minnesota series while attending a family funeral. Minor League strength and conditioning coach Judd Hawkins will fill in. Geren said Hawkins, who already was scheduled to be with the A's on the trip to apprentice under strength and conditioning coach Bob Alejo, catches a lot of Oakland's young pitchers at the team's Minor League complex in Phoenix during the winter, "so it worked out perfectly that he's here now." ... Only one catcher in A's history has led the team in RBIs: Frankie Hayes knocked in 78 runs for Philadelphia in 1944.

### Up next

- Saturday: Athletics (Brett Anderson, 8-10, 4.45) at Twins (Jeff Manship, 0-0, 4.41), 10:10 a.m. PT 
- Sunday: Athletics (Gio Gonzalez, 5-5, 5.76) at Twins (Brian Duensing, 2-1, 3.94), 11:10 a.m. PT 
- Monday: Athletics (Brett Tomko, 4-3, 4.47) at Rangers (Brandon McCarthy, 7-2, 4.81), 5:05 p.m. PT 

### All-timers (2001-present, anyway)

Mychael Urban, mlb.com blog 9/10/09

CHICAGO, Sept. 9, 2009 -- I've been covering the A's for nearly a decade now, and seeing Mark Kotsay in a White Sox uniform today before the game led my mind to wander a little.

Where that led me was to was team made up of the best Oakland players -- one at each position -- that I've covered while on the beat.

Self-indulgent? Yeah. Isn't virtually every blog? But hey, there's debatable stuff in here, too. Feel free to chime in. We're talking 2001-present only here. Enjoy.

1B Jason Giambi. In his prime, of course. Or in a Rockies uniform. Whatever. PEDs or no PEDs, the man was a joy to watch. The first guy who made me realize that sometimes the hitters are setting the pitchers up; it's not the other way around all the time.

2B Mark Ellis. Still a crime that he doesn't have a Gold Glove of three. He's the epitome of the guy you have to watch on a daily basis to fully appreciate.

3B Eric Chavez. Duh. On defense alone. But when he was healthy and on one of his second-half hitting tears, you just knew he was going to drill something high off something far, far away. From 2001-2005 in particular, he was a flat beast.

SS Miguel Tejada. Another duh. He's the only player I've covered who had a visceral effect on his team. Miggy's teammates felt his joy, felt his passion, felt his intensity. And they turned it up a notch in hopes of keeping up with him.

C Kurt Suzuki. Tough call, and I might be jumping the gun here. But he throws and hits better than Jason Kendall did with the A's, and he does both about as well as Ramon Hernandez did. What gives him the nod over Ramon? He's caught 100 games started by rookies this year. That's like taking an big league version of the SAT every single night. Ramon had the Big Three. That's a pop quiz on current events the day after Obama's election.

LF Nick Swisher. Another toughie. Swish wasn't in left a lot, for one thing, and Johnny Damon and Matt Holliday both have manned the position during my time on the beat. But this list is about who played well WHILE IN OAKLAND, and Nick played better than anyone else on the list.

CF Mark Kotsay. No Johnny Damon? Nope. Again, this is about who got the job done in green and gold. Over the past nine seasons, nobody had better years than Kotsay. He handled the bat well, he led, he was unselfish, he had a little pop and speed, and he was an underrated genius in the field.

RF Jermaine Dye. Best technical defensive outfielder I've ever seen. Watch him walk around and he doesn't look like much of an athlete, feet splayed out and a little odd-looking. But when the ball was in the air or on the way to the plate, he flipped the switch and became incredible. Got to every ball, had a hose, and could rake. Full package.

If you'd like, I'll put together a rotation, bullpen and bench next time. Or come up with your own.

That's it for now. Peace, Chicago-style pizza and Will Smith's "Switch" to all ...

## **Pierzynski leads White Sox past Athletics**

Associated Press

Octavio Dotel put the game on his shoulders, and A.J. Pierzynski sent him home with a win.

Dotel pitched three scoreless innings, Pierzynski hit a game-ending RBI double in the 13th inning and the Chicago White Sox beat the Oakland Athletics 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Alexei Ramirez singled with one out in the 13th against Edgar Gonzalez (0-2) and Pierzynski followed with a double off the wall in left-center.

Dotel (3-3) allowed two hits and struck out two, giving Chicago's bullpen some rest one night after the White Sox used five relievers in an 11-3 loss to Oakland.

"I just wanted to win or lose the game," Dotel said. "I just said give me one more, give me one more."

Ramirez drove in two runs for the White Sox, who have won six of eight and moved within 6 1/2 games of AL Central-leading Detroit.

"All we can do is try to win games and try to forget about Detroit," Dotel said. "Hopefully they lose, but don't worry about them, just think about ourselves and do our best. That's the only thing we can do now."

Chicago nearly handed Oakland a run in the top half of the 13th when center fielder Alex Rios dropped Scott Hairston's routine fly with one out. Hairston wasn't running hard and only made it to first. He then made another baserunning blunder when he was doubled off on Kurt Suzuki's high infield popup.

Oakland manager Bob Geren replaced left fielder Hairston with Eric Patterson in the bottom of the 13th.

"I just took him out of the game," said Geren, who had a chat with Hairston after the loss.

Chicago led 3-2 before Oakland rallied in the eighth. Tony Pena entered with the bases empty and two outs, and surrendered a double to Hairston and Suzuki's tying RBI single.

Oakland's bullpen allowed one run in 9 1-3 innings but the A's still lost their three-game winning streak.

"They did a hell of a job, especially all the new guys," Oakland starter Trevor Cahill said. "Guys you bring up in September and get their feet wet, slammed the door."

Freddy Garcia, making his fifth start since being called up from Triple-A Charlotte on Aug. 18, allowed two runs and five hits in six innings for the White Sox.

Chicago pushed across two runs in the second to take a 3-1 lead. Scott Podsednik, who finished with four hits, doubled in Chris Getz and Jayson Nix scored on third baseman Adam Kennedy's throwing error allowing Ramirez to reach.

Ryan Sweeney doubled in a run in the third for Oakland.

NOTES: White Sox RHP Jake Peavy threw an intense side session before the game that was somewhere between 50-60 pitches, but Peavy is still uncertain if a start in the majors is his next step. "I have no idea what the plans are," he said. "I did what I was asked to do today and I was excited to do that." ... Oakland RHP Vin Mazzaro, who has tendinitis in his pitching shoulder, threw a side session. There is no timetable for the rookie's next start. ... Oakland had a season-high five stolen bases. They were 5 for 8 on the night. ... Rookie 3B Gordon Beckham missed his fourth straight game with a strained right oblique. He is expected back in the lineup on Friday when Chicago begins a West Coast trip against the Los Angeles Angels. ... White Sox OF Jermaine Dye grounded out in the 11th with bases loaded. He was 0 for 6 and is in an 8-for-63 slump. ... Cahill allowed three runs in three innings.

## **Oakland A's performance shows that 'moneyball' doesn't always pay off**

The use of statistical analysis to identify underappreciated players may lead to periods of success, but the concept has never been a panacea for the problems of a low-budget team.

Michael Hiltzik, Los Angeles Times, 9/10/09

If anybody out there happens to be interested, the Oakland Athletics are on track to turn in their worst performance on the baseball field in more than 10 years.

Normally, the travails of a losing ballclub wouldn't be of much note outside its hometown. But the A's aren't just any faltering ballclub.

Over the last decade or so, the team and its general manager, Billy Beane, have been the leading exponents of a style of



major league management known as "moneyball," after the title of [Michael Lewis' 2003 book](#) about the franchise.

Moneyball, in Lewis' formulation, meant the use of sophisticated statistical analysis to identify underappreciated -- and therefore underpriced -- players and assemble them into a successful team.

This is a powerful concept in a sport where have-nots face the challenge of competing, on the field and in business, with permanent haves such as the [New York Yankees](#). The A's, not exactly a small-market but certainly a low-budget organization, employed it to stay competitive for years at a time, reaching the playoffs five times since 1999 despite a payroll consistently ranking among the lowest in the game.

This won't be one of those years. The team's [won-lost mark of 62-76](#) as of Tuesday night was tied for fourth worst in the American League.

The A's performance presents an interesting question. Does it show the limitations of moneyball -- do the immutable economics of Major League Baseball, in which the rich get richer and leave the other teams in the dust, trump even the best statistical analysis? Or to put it another way, does it actually confirm the utility of moneyball -- are the A's behind the eight ball in part because every other team in the league is now using the same methods?

Certainly the latter phenomenon is a real one. "Every team today has a guy doing this sort of analysis," Kevin Goldstein, a writer for the website [Baseball Prospectus](#), told me recently. "Oakland originally was getting more bang for the buck, but players today are more properly valued as a whole. So it's harder to find diamonds in the rough."

The [Boston Red Sox](#) went to the extent of adding [Bill James](#), baseball's godfather of statistical analysis (whose annual 1982-88 [Baseball Abstracts](#) still occupy an honored place on my bookshelf), to their front office in 2003. He helped the Red Sox build the team that won the World Series in 2004, their first championship in 86 years, and again in 2007. The statistics-based insights popularized by James and his followers and absorbed by other teams included the importance of on-base percentage, the costliness of unsuccessful stolen-base attempts and the need to assess defensive skills in new ways.

These concepts contributed, directly or indirectly, to the success of poverty-row teams like the [Tampa Bay Rays](#), a gang of unheralded youngsters that snagged the American League pennant last year.

The Rays' opening-day 2008 payroll, \$43.8 million, ranked 29th among the 30 major league clubs and came to about 21% of the top spending club, the Yankees, who didn't make it into the playoffs.

Many teams have gotten better at using statistical analysis to counterbalance the prevailing economic realities of the sport.

Consider that the most important inflection point in the relationship between a young player and his club comes three years after his rookie year, when he becomes eligible for salary arbitration and his price can skyrocket -- as happened when an arbitrator jacked up the salary of Philadelphia Phillies slugger Ryan Howard to \$10 million from \$900,000 in 2008. (A player can become a free agent three years after that.)

That means that if you can identify a promising talent ahead of your rivals and lock him into a long-term contract that moves the arbitration deadline off by a year or two, you can develop young players and keep your payroll under control for a long time.

It's no mystery why there's been a surge in rich contracts for untested prospects -- Exhibit A being the four-year, \$15-million contract the Washington Nationals gave their No. 1 draft pick this year, a 21-year-old fireballer from San Diego State named [Stephen Strasburg](#).

The deal will still give Strasburg two years of eligibility for salary arbitration, but the Nationals get four years to make him the centerpiece of their pitching rotation before an arbitrator gets a crack at him. "He's still a bargain if he's as good as they say," Goldstein says.

Making such deals with amateurs puts a premium on high-grade analysis, though it has to be integrated with more traditional skills.

"Moneyball works in giving you another set of tools," says Maury Brown, a veteran baseball analyst and founder of the [Biz of Baseball](#) website. "But you still need good scouting, and luck -- you have to draft well and get everyone hitting at the same time."

Moneyball has never been a panacea for all the problems of a low-budget team. Its limitations were evident in Lewis' book, which made clear that although one can analyze a player's past performance, the very act of measuring, followed by laying the expectation on a player that he will continue to live up to or even surpass that measurement, affects his performance in unpredictable ways.

The best example of that was Jeremy Brown, an A's first-round draft choice in 2002, who was so emblematic of Beane's quest for underappreciated talent that he got his own chapter in "Moneyball." Brown's major league career ultimately spanned all of five games in 2006. Shipped back to the minors and possibly undone by all the attention he'd received, he retired in 2008.

The truth is that in baseball, as in any field with an infinite number of variables, sometimes it seems like you don't know nothin'. This year the Yankees, whose \$201-million payroll outdistanced the second-highest spender by about 35%, rest securely atop the American League East. But the runner-up, the New York Mets (with a \$149-million payroll), are 17 games out of first place in the National League East (as of Tuesday night). Their playoff chances are effectively zero.

The Chicago Cubs, ranked third in payroll, aren't a postseason factor this year. The Dodgers (No. 9 in payroll) are in first place in the National League West, but are feeling the hot breath of the surging Colorado Rockies (18th). In the American League West, the Angels (sixth in overall payroll), are struggling to hold off the Texas Rangers (22nd).

As for the A's, whose \$62-million opening-day payroll was fifth-stingiest in the league this year, no one expects them to remain doormats permanently, or even for much longer. The skill of Beane's staff at identifying young talent and drafting wisely has yielded a widely admired farm system, which could make the major league club a contender again very soon. On the other side of the coin, not even the Cubs' lavish payroll in recent years -- ranked ninth or better every year since 2004 -- has enabled them to win their first World Series since 1908 or first pennant since 1945.

The performance of such small-market teams as the Rays, Rangers, Minnesota Twins and Florida Marlins, which are all making the most of limited resources this year, validates the premise of moneyball as a sound one. There's a lesson here that has had to be relearned periodically ever since David beat Goliath, which is that the key to winning a test of strength in which you're hopelessly outweighed is to be brainier than the other guy.

But there may be less uplifting lesson in the long-term success, whether on the field or at the turnstiles, of the dominant teams in baseball. In a contest of resources, the rich sometimes outlast the poor.

The fate of teams dependent on moneyball may be limited to at best brief spells of success interspersed with periods of drought; teams with the determination to spend vast wads of cash have a much better chance of staying in the running pretty much all the time, as the Yankees, Red Sox and Angels prove. (Even the Mets, the free-spending sad sacks of 2009, placed first or second in their division in five of the previous 10 seasons.)

"Without a high-priced payroll, you can't be expected to win year in, year out," baseball analyst Brown says.

Or as Goldstein put it when I asked him what it would take for a small-market team to build a dynasty that would stand for years: "You better be stocked with geniuses."

## MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

### Gissell delivers Game 1 victory for River Cats

[rivercats.com](http://rivercats.com)

**Tacoma, Wash.** - Power was expected. After all, Brett Wallace and Chris Carter are two of baseball's top slugging prospects.

A stellar pitching performance from Chris Gissell? Now that came out of ... well ... Taiwan.

The veteran right-hander returned from a season playing in the Far East to deliver a gem in the River Cats' 8-2 victory over the Rainiers in Game 1 of the PCL Pacific Conference Championship Series.

**Shown:** *Chris Gissell led the River Cats to a Game 1 victory Wednesday night.*

Gissell, who didn't throw more than 4.2 innings in either of his two starts with Sacramento during the regular season, allowed two runs and seven hits over 5.0 innings Wednesday to give Sacramento a 1-0 series lead over Tacoma.

After compiling a 7-3 record and 3.43 ERA with Sacramento in 2008, Gissell chose to play for the Uni-President Lions of the Chinese Professional Baseball League in 2009. However, in need of some starting pitching help, Sacramento signed Gissell as a free agent on August 30 for the stretch run.

The 31-year-old kept Tacoma scoreless through three innings and finished with six strikeouts.

Sacramento's bats pounced early, as Tommy Everidge drove in Matt Carson with a first-inning single before Carter blasted a two-run homer for a 3-0 lead. The River Cats added two more in the second when Chris Denorfia recorded an RBI on a fielder's choice and Carson doubled home Gregorio Petit. Third baseman Brett Wallace slugged a solo homer in the fifth and Tommy Everidge capped Sacramento's scoring with a two-run single in the seventh.

Four Sacramento relievers (Scott Patterson, Henry Rodriguez, John Meloan and Kevin Cameron) combined to throw four hitless innings of relief to close out the game.

Sacramento will send right-hander Chad Reineke (9-4, 4.75) to the mound Thursday night, when he will face Tacoma left-hander Garrett Olson (2-3, 4.94). The series then comes to Sacramento where the River Cats will host games 3 (Friday, 7:05 p.m.), 4 (Saturday, 7:05 p.m.) and 5 (Sunday, 1:05 p.m.). Games 4 and 5 will be played if necessary.

The series is a rematch of the two teams' 2005 playoff series, which Tacoma won 3-games-to-1 and marks the last playoff series the River Cats lost.

Tacoma finished an improbable comeback in the Pacific Coast League North Division race, rallying from 7.5 games back entering August 22 to clinch a playoff berth Monday with the victory over the Colorado Springs. Colorado Springs went 5-11 since August 22 while Tacoma went 13-4 to catch the Sky Sox and host the River Cats in Game 1 of the PCL playoffs' first round Wednesday night.

Sacramento won the South Division easily, clinching more than a week before the season ended.

## **Hounds Take Game One In Dramatic Fashion**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Wednesday night marked the opener of the eighth trip to the Texas League playoffs in franchise history. Finding a better ... or more dramatic ... game in the first seven playoff appearances by the Cubs, Angels or RockHounds would be one tough task.

The RockHounds defeated the San Antonio Missions, 1-0, in 11 innings on a combined 2-hitter, taking a 1-0 lead in the (best-of-5) Texas League South Division Championship Series.

Five innings into the opener of the series, the line score for EACH club was: 0 runs, 0 hits, 0 errors.

After 10 innings, the game was still scoreless, with each team getting its first hit in the sixth inning. The 'Hounds had four hits in those 10 innings; the Missions one.

With two out in the 11th, Josh Horton singled to right field. Two pitches later, Josh Donaldson drove a double into the gap in right-center, bringing Horton home with the game's first run.

Donaldson then helped turn his double into the game-winning RBI, making the game's biggest defensive play. Eric Sogard walked to open the Missions' 11th inning. On a pitch in the dirt, he tried to move up, but Donaldson blocked the pitch, keeping it in front of him. He then threw a laster to second base, where Horton was waiting for the catch-and-tag, with Sogard out at second base. Moments later, Cedric Hunter doubled to deep center field, a hit which would have easily scored Sogard with the tying run. Hunter had both of San Antonio's hits, each a double.

After Logan Forsythe walked, putting runners at first and second, Jared Lansford threw two perfect strikes to Craig Cooper (the Texas League's third-leading hitter). On the 0-2 pitch, Cooper grounded into a 6-4-3 double play ending the remarkable, 2-hit shutout and giving the 'Hounds a 1-0 lead in the division championship series.

Starters Ernesto Frieri and Graham Godfrey were brilliant. Frieri went 7.0 shutout innings, allowing two hits and one walk with six strikeouts. Godfrey allowed one hit in 6-and-two-thirds innings, walking three and whiffing five. Mickey Storey faced and retired four batters in relief and Jon Hunton pitched the ninth and the first two outs of the 10th. Lansford got the last out of the 10th, on a key play at third base by Corey Wimberly, and earned the win with the 11th inning dramatics.

## **Texas League baseball: RockHounds get ready for a little playoff fun**

BY WILLIE BANS, Odessa American, 9/9/09

**MIDLAND** Like many Double-A teams this time of year, the Midland RockHounds of today are not the Midland RockHounds of Opening Day.

Gone are Tommy Everidge and Chris Carter and Adrian Cardenas.

Of the Opening Day 25-man roster, nine remain.

Yet the RockHounds weathered the changes, survived a first-half Texas League South division race in which it came up short, and finished with the league's best overall record (78-62) and a second-half division title with a 41-29 mark after the midway point.

Today, Midland begins a best-of-five division playoff series against the San Antonio Missions, the South's first-half winner, with Game 1 at 7:05 p.m. at Nelson Wolff Stadium.

As RockHounds manager Darren Bush composes the lineup, he will shuffle new and familiar names, but he is confident in all.

"These guys have been here before," said Bush, named the league's Manager of the Year. "It's not their first time doing this. It's going to take good pitching, good defense. When you've got good pitching and good defense, you've got a chance. And the offense is just whatever it is. We'll push them across somehow, someway. Somebody will. If we play fundamental baseball, we'll be fine."

The RockHounds have their season's bookends, players who've been here since Day 1 and those who joined during a late-season playoff push that ended with Saturday's playoff-clinching win over Frisco at Citibank Ballpark.

Catcher Josh Donaldson has quietly put up impressive numbers. After Monday's 3-0 win over Frisco in the regular-season finale, he finished second in the league in doubles (37), tied for third in walks (80), fifth in RBIs (91) and ninth in on-base percentage (.372).

In the season opener, Donaldson batted eighth in the lineup, seemingly far, far away from the 2-3-4 punch of Cardenas, now at Triple-A Sacramento; Chris Carter, named the league's Player of the Year and also at Triple-A; and Everidge, with the Oakland A's from July 28-Aug. 28.

In Saturday's big win, Donaldson batted third, went 2-for-4 with two RBIs and a game-tying solo home run in the sixth.

"It's totally different," Donaldson said. "We have some guys with some pop, but our lineup was more power-oriented earlier and now it's, get on base, get them in. It's just something you have to adjust with the personnel you have."

Pitchers Graham Godfrey (11-8, 3.50 ERA) and Travis Banwart (10-5, 4.89) are scheduled to start Games 1 and 2, respectively, of the playoff series and have been cogs in the staff since the season opener.

But in the story of the RockHounds' regular season, right-hander Kyle Middleton was an important part toward the end of it.

Acquired from an Independent League team on July 21, the 6-foot-6, 230-pound senior member the RockHounds — at 29, he is the oldest — has gone 5-2 with a 2.69 ERA in nine starts.

As Midland lost its offensive stars, Middleton became an important injection to the rotation. He will likely start Game 3 at 6:30 p.m. Friday at Citibank Ballpark.

### **MIDLAND ROCKHOUNDS vs. SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS**

#### **Texas League South Division best-of-five series.**

>> Game 1: 7:05 p.m. today, Nelson Wolff Stadium

- >> Game 2: 7:05 p.m. Thursday, Nelson Wolff Stadium
- >> Game 3: 6:30 p.m. Friday, Citibank Ballpark
- >> Game 4: \*-6:30 p.m. Saturday, Citibank Ballpark
- >> Game 5: \*-6:30 p.m. Sunday, Citibank Ballpark
- >> Radio: 102.1-FM
- >> Tickets: Available at Citibank Ballpark or at [midlandrockhounds.org](http://midlandrockhounds.org)

## **Cougars' Rally Falls Short in Game 1**

### **Kane County drops playoff opener after digging early hole**

**BURLINGTON, Iowa** – The Kane County Cougars fell behind early Wednesday night in their playoff opener and never recovered. They lost, 12-7, to the Burlington Bees at Community Field to fall behind one game to none in the best-of-three opening-round series. Kenny Smalley suffered the loss, and Burlington scored in six of its eight offensive frames. The Cougars must win Thursday night to force a Game 3 for Friday.

Smalley (0-1) gave up six runs on seven hits in 1 1/3 innings in the loss. Josue Selenis yielded three runs in 2 2/3 innings, and Shawn Haviland allowed two runs in his two innings, as the Cougars trailed 11-2 after six innings.

After getting two unearned runs against Ivor Hodgson (1-0) in the first six innings, the Cougars showed some life with a five-run seventh-inning rally against the Burlington bullpen. Franklin Hernandez poked a two-run double, Leonardo Gil nailed a two-run triple and Mike Spina belted an RBI single to make it 11-7. The Cougars also had two men on base with no outs in the eighth but could not score, and they loaded the bases in the ninth with one out but did not manage a run. A.J. Huttenlocker gave up a run to the Bees in the bottom of the eighth to account for the 12-7 final.

The Cougars (0-1) and Bees (1-0) battle again Thursday night at 6:30 CT with the series shifting to Elfstrom Stadium. Murphy Smith (2-2, 4.75\*) will face Tim Melville (7-7, 3.79\*) in a game the Cougars have to win to avoid elimination.