

## A's News Clips, Friday, September 11, 2009

### A's stockpiling hitters' arsenal

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Things hardly have gone as planned this season for the A's, but the emergence of several young pitchers has been a bright spot.

Now the A's hope their farm system produces a wave of hitters to complement that pitching. Whether Oakland climbs the standings in 2010 could depend on how quickly their top young hitters start contributing in the major leagues.

Here's a glance at some of the A's best hitting prospects, and a prediction on when they'll arrive in the majors. Brett Wallace headlines the group, but the A's are optimistic about several others.

3B Brett Wallace: Since coming over in the Matt Holliday trade July 24, he hasn't disappointed. Wallace, who hits left-handed, batted .302 with nine homers and 28 RBI in 44 games for Triple-A Sacramento, which is currently in the Pacific Coast League playoffs.

The A's see him as a middle-of-the-order presence. The question is whether he can handle third base in the majors. Wallace, a Sonoma native who grew up idolizing Eric Chavez, is determined to show third is where he belongs. Word is he's already made strides working with A's roving infield instructor Juan Navarrete.

The A's are unsettled at third as Chavez is trying to rebound from his second back surgery, and it's unknown if Adam Kennedy will be re-signed. But the A's will be patient with Wallace.

General manager Billy Beane points out that Wallace, 23, is completing just his first full professional season. He was drafted 13th overall by St. Louis in 2008 and was the key in the three-player package the A's received in exchange for Holliday.

"Usually people judge (a player's) bat against his glove, and it's the glove that may come first," Beane said. "With Brett, it's possible that the reverse is true. We're going to give him a chance (to play third) until he proves that that's not his best position."

One scout said he wouldn't be surprised to see Wallace starting at first base for the A's in 2010, adding: "He's definitely a pure hitter who uses the whole field. He does have holes (on) inside (pitches) with breaking stuff that he's got to make adjustments on. (But) his bat's gonna carry him."

Major league ETA: 2010.

1B Chris Carter: His right-handed power was no secret. But Carter, 22, surprised everyone by challenging for the triple crown in the Double-A Texas League with a .337 batting average, 24 homers and 101 RBI for Midland. He then had a three-homer game after being promoted to Sacramento on Aug. 26.

After Carter hit just .259 for Single-A Stockton in 2008, the A's were thrilled with his meteoric jump in batting average. One scout is skeptical about whether he'll hit for a high average in the majors but noted: "He's as dangerous as they come (with) the long ball."

Carter, listed at 6-foot-4 and 225 pounds, played some left field in recent weeks, and the A's hope he'll get more outfield time while playing winter ball in Mexico.

First base is his best position, but the A's are deep there. It'd serve them best if Carter can become an adequate left fielder.

Major league ETA: 2010.

IF Adrian Cardenas: Keith Lieppman, the A's director of player development, compares Cardenas to Kennedy as a hitter.

"A gap-to-gap kind of guy. Good contact, moves the ball around," Lieppman said.

Cardenas, 21, hit .326 with Midland in 79 games and got promoted to Sacramento.

The A's think his best position is second base, but they like the way he's adapted to third in some exposure there. That versatility could bode well for Cardenas in the future.

Major league ETA: 2010.

2B Jemile Weeks: The A's drafted Weeks 12th overall in 2008 — one spot ahead of Wallace. He missed the early part of this season recovering from a hip flexor injury but got off to a great start with Stockton and showed surprising pop at the plate.

He was promoted to Midland, where he hit just .238 in 30 games to close the regular season. Lieppman said Weeks, 22, has shown improvement with the glove. His defensive development should determine whether he's the heir apparent at second to Mark Ellis, who's signed through 2010 (with a club option for 2011).

Major league ETA: 2011.

C Josh Donaldson: An under-the-radar acquisition in last year's Rich Harden trade, Donaldson, 23, had 91 RBI for Midland this season. He converted to catcher in college and has improved greatly behind the plate. But Kurt Suzuki, just 25, is entrenched as the A's major league starter, so Donaldson must practice patience.

Major league ETA: 2011.

OF Grant Desme: Desme, 23, made a splash by posting a 30-40 season — he hit .288 with 31 homers, 89 RBI and 40 stolen bases split between low Single-A Kane County and Stockton. Not bad for a guy who was sidelined for virtually the entire 2008 season with wrist and shoulder injuries. He'll play in the Arizona Fall League, as will Weeks.

Major league ETA: 2012.

Note: The Tacoma Rainiers defeated Sacramento 5-2 at Tacoma's Cheney Stadium to even their PCL playoff series at one game apiece. Carter and Eric Munson homered for the River Cats. Game 3 of the best-of-five series is tonight in Sacramento. Games 4 and 5 (if necessary) also would be at Raley Field on Saturday and Sunday.

Now batting ... in 2012

Here's how the A's lineup could look in 2012:

1. Jemile Weeks 2B
2. Adrian Cardenas 3B
3. Brett Wallace 1B
4. Chris Carter DH
5. Kurt Suzuki C
6. Grant Desme LF
7. Ryan Sweeney CF
8. Grant Green SS
9. Aaron Cunningham RF

## **Q's with A's: Clayton Mortensen**

### **Rookie starter on getting traded, shelled and better**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

It's been a circuitous route to the big leagues for right-hander Clayton Mortensen, the newest rookie member of Oakland's starting rotation. A 24-year-old from Rexburg, Idaho, he attended a community college in Oregon before starring on the mound at Gonzaga University and signing with the Cardinals, who picked him 36th overall in the 2007 First-Year Player Draft.

Then came the standard Minor League stops. Batavia. Quad Cities. Springfield. Memphis. And thanks to the July trade that sent Matt Holliday to the Cards, for whom he made his big league debut in June, Mortensen has added to his list of pro ball homes in the past couple months.

Assigned to Triple-A Sacramento after the four-player deal, he was called up to the A's in early August for a spot start in Kansas City, sent back to Sacramento, and called back up last week for another go-'round. This time he's here ... for at least another few days.

Filling in for injured righty Vin Mazzaro, he'll make his second start for Oakland on Friday in Minnesota. On Wednesday, he sat down with MLB.com in Chicago for the latest installment of oaklandathletics.com's getting-to-know-you feature, "Q's with A's."

MLB.com: What was your initial reaction to being traded to Oakland?

Mortensen: I was definitely shocked by it. I had no idea I was even on the trading block, so when I got the call, I was absolutely shocked. I knew there was interest [on St. Louis' part] in Holliday, but I didn't know if they were actually pursuing it or how seriously. Then one day I wake for a bus ride to New Orleans and they tell me, "You're going to the A's." And I was like, "All right. Cool."

MLB.com: Did you know the A's were in the middle of rebuilding?

Mortensen: I knew the team was really young, a lot of young pitchers up here especially, and I figured it was a great opportunity. [Getting called up to face the Royals] definitely happened a lot faster than I was expecting, but it was a great opportunity to finally get to start in the big leagues and see how it goes.

MLB.com: You gave up eight runs in four innings against the Royals. Your next time up, you went seven innings, with six zeros, against the Mariners. What was the difference?

Mortensen: There was a lot different. After that first one was over, I came out of it and knew I could have been a lot better. I was kind of pitching timid, pitching away from contact. You know, afraid of the big league hitters. Last time out, I was like, "You know what? I'm just going to go out there, let 'em hit the ball and see what happens." That's what I normally do, and I got a lot more ground balls in my second outing, and after that, I just felt comfortable. I knew I could get some of these guys out. I felt good about it.

MLB.com: Have you had that "Welcome to the big leagues" moment on the mound yet, where somebody just crushes a good pitch?

Mortensen: Well, it wasn't really a good pitch, but it definitely got crushed. It was Juan Uribe of the Giants, in my [Cardinals] debut. I'd given up four runs in my first inning off an error that we had, and the first guy in my second inning hit a double, and then Uribe hit a 2-2 fastball into Big Mac Land [at Busch Stadium], about 15 rows up. I was just like, "Wow. These guys hit the ball hard."

MLB.com: Do you feel comfortable in this clubhouse yet?

Mortensen: Definitely. All these guys have really warmed up to me and seem excited that I'm here. So it's been good; really relaxed. You just go out and play baseball. A lot of people have gone out of their way for me, telling me things here and there, what to do and what not to do, what to expect.

MLB.com: How do you go from growing up in Idaho to playing JC ball in Oregon to playing D-1 ball in Washington state?

Mortensen: It was a crazy route. I always wanted to play pro ball, and out of high school there was only one school, Treasure Valley [Community College], just outside of Idaho, that offered me a scholarship. So I was like, "Let's go see what college ball's all about and see what happens." And that's where I really fell in love with it. You're playing with guys who just love to play the game, and love to work, and it just brought a new light to baseball for me. I decided, "Hey, I'm going to keep pursuing this."

MLB.com: Did you think, at the time, that you were good enough to make it this far?

Mortensen: I found out my sophomore year there that I was actually pretty good at this and wanted to see where it could take me. I ended up getting drafted in the 25th round by the Rays in 2005, but I just didn't feel like I was ready to go yet. I was still a little young. Still immature. I wanted to see what I could do at the next level first, and that was D-1.

MLB.com: And that took you to Gonzaga.

Mortensen: Well, first I signed to go to BYU, but a month before the school year started, BYU's head coach called me up and told me I didn't get accepted. And I said, "You're the head coach. Can't you pull some strings or something?" And he

said, "At any other school, probably. Not at BYU." So now I'm out of a place to play, but I was playing summer ball at the time, and a teammate of mine was playing up at Gonzaga, and he said, "Let me call my coach. Let's get you out there." And I had started to really blossom in that league, was doing really well, so the coach came and watched me. And then it came down to Gonzaga or Oklahoma State, and Gonzaga just had a better offer. It was closer to home, and I knew a bunch of people who were going to be there. So, OK, let's go see what Gonzaga's all about.

MLB.com: You going back to Idaho in the offseason?

Mortensen: Probably a little bit, but I'm playing in the Arizona Fall League, and that's going to be good. I'm excited about that. Once that's over, more than likely I'll just stay down there and work out at the [Minor League] complex [in Phoenix] and get ready for Spring Training."

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **PCL Playoffs: Cats return to Raley Field with series split**

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

Tacoma, Wash. – Throughout the regular season, the Sacramento River Cats thrived in close games.

Now we'll see how they fare in a tight playoff series.

Tacoma grabbed an early 3-0 lead and never looked back Thursday night at Cheney Stadium, toppling the River Cats 5-2 to tie the best-of-5 series at 1-1. The PCL Pacific Conference Championship has now essentially become a best-of-3 series, meaning the teams will play at least two games (Friday and Saturday) at Raley Field this weekend.

Shown: Chris Denorfia and the River Cats return to Raley Field with a split series.

The River Cats went a staggering 25-13 in one-run games this season, and have shown a knack for performing well under pressure. Right-hander Jerome Williams (5-6, 5.58) will take the mound at Raley Field on Friday against Tacoma right-hander Andy Baldwin (6-11, 4.57).

On Thursday night, Sacramento could only muster solo home runs from Chris Carter and Eric Munson in the loss. Carter's blast to right-center was his second of the series. Sacramento starter Chad Reineke battled through some jams, allowing three runs on seven hits and four walks over 5.0 innings. Right-hander Chris Schroder allowed two runs in relief.

Chris Shelton hit a sacrifice fly in the first inning and Mike Wilson belted a two-run home run in the second to put the Rainiers up 3-0. Carter homered in the third to make it 3-1, but Tacoma added two insurance runs in the sixth inning. Munson smashed his home run in the eighth inning.

The River Cats struggled to capitalize on offensive opportunities throughout the game, stranding 11 runners on base on the night. Sacramento was a combined 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position, and the team's 2-3-4 hitters (Matt Carson, Brett Wallace and Tommy Everidge) went a combined 0-for-14.

### **Bats fail River Cats in loss to Tacoma**

Grant Clark, Sacramento Bee

TACOMA, Wash. – It had been nearly a decade since the Tacoma Rainiers celebrated a playoff victory at home.

A solid pitching effort by Garrett Olson, combined with a Mike Wilson home run, helped put an end to the drought as Tacoma evened its best-of-five Pacific Coast League Pacific Conference series with a 5-1 victory over the River Cats on Thursday at Cheney Stadium.

"Those first five innings were tough for us," said Sacramento manager Tony DeFrancesco. "We got down early and then never were able to get that big hit when we had runners on base."

Tacoma, which tied the series 1-1, had not won a playoff game at home since 2001, when it defeated the River Cats.

The Rainiers jumped out to leads of 3-0 after two innings and 5-1 after the sixth, getting two hits each from Matt Tuiasosopo, Prentice Redman and Wilson.

Both of Sacramento's runs came on solo homers, with Chris Carter hitting his second of the series in the third inning and Eric Munson going deep in the eighth.

Olson, who was 0-1 with a 6.48 ERA in two starts against the River Cats during the regular season, got the win, giving up one run on five hits with six strikeouts in six innings.

The series returns to Raley Field for Game 3 tonight at 7 p.m.

The River Cats will start Jerome Williams (5-6, 5.58 ERA). Williams has made one start against the Rainiers this season, picking up a loss in Tacoma on July 22 after giving up seven runs on nine hits in just 2 1/3 innings of work.

Andy Baldwin (6-11, 4.57) takes the mound for the Rainiers.

"We came in wanting to at least get a split, and we were able to do that," DeFrancesco said. "We've been on the road for quite a while now, 11 or 12 days. It will be nice to get back home and play in front of our home crowd."

The Rainiers scored a run in the first inning and got a two-run home run from Wilson to take a 3-0 lead.

The River Cats had several scoring opportunities early, but unlike the first game of the series when they were able to take a 5-0 lead through two innings, this time around they walked away empty-handed.

Sacramento put runners on first and third in the first inning, loaded the bases in the second and had runners on first and second in the fourth.

In each situation, the River Cats only had one out.

Olson, however, worked his way out of each jam, picking up key strikeouts and forcing Sacramento into routine groundouts to keep the game close.

With runners on first and second and two outs in the sixth inning, a blooper to shallow left field by Adrian Cardenas looked as if might help the River Cats finally cut into the deficit, but a diving catch from Tacoma second baseman Oswaldo Navarro ended the threat.

Unfortunately for the River Cats, aside from Munson's blast, they didn't get many more chances after that.

The Rainiers added two more runs in the sixth inning, pushing the lead to 5-1.

## **Game Two Goes To The Missions**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The Texas League South Division Championship Series is now a best-of-3 series, and the division title will be decided this weekend at Citibank Ballpark.

San Antonio captured what was, for all intents and purposes, a must-win game Thursday, erasing a 2-0 deficit to defeat the RockHounds, 4-2, at Nelson Wolff Stadium. The Missions' win evened the series at 1-1.

Archie Gilbert tripled home Matt Spencer with the game's first run in the second inning, and Josh Donaldson's solo home run in the third gave the RockHounds a 2-0 lead.

Missions DH Anthony Contreras had two hits, scoring one run and driving in another ... former UT Longhorn Seth Johnston had an RBI double and also scored ... and Cedric Hunter continued a hot series (he had San Antonio's only two hits Wednesday) with a solo home run.

Tempers flared ... and the benches emptied ... twice in the game, with Donaldson and San Antonio catcher Mitch Canham exchanging words after Donaldson's sixth inning strikeout. Canham then took a Carlos Hernandez pitch high and tight in the last of the sixth, with Hernandez and RockHounds manager Darren Bush ejected.

San Antonio's win means the RockHounds will host games 3 and 4 Friday and Saturday, with a possible fifth and deciding game Sunday, all at Citibank Ballpark.

## **Cougars' Season Comes to a Close**

### **Kane County ends 19<sup>th</sup> season with quick playoff exit**

BURLINGTON, Iowa – After suffering a two-game playoff sweep at the hands of the Burlington Bees, the Kane County Cougars' 19th season of baseball came to an end Thursday night at Elfstrom Stadium with a 4-0 loss in Game 2 of their opening round best-of-three playoff series.

Murphy Smith (0-1) gave the Cougars a quality start but ended up with a loss after allowing two unearned runs -- in the second inning -- over 6 2/3 frames. He gave up six hits, walked one and fanned four. Trey Barham gave up one run in 2/3 of an inning, and Paul Smyth gave up the Bees' fourth run in the ninth.

Offensively the Cougars managed just three hits and five walks against Burlington's Tim Melville (1-0), Cole White and Blaine Hardy. Conner Crumbliss and Petey Paramore were the only Cougars who reached multiple times.

The Cougars (76-64) will take the field again April 8, 2010, when they open their 20th season of baseball.

## **Oakland A's MLN: 'Hounds, River Cats Strike**

Melissa Lockard  
OaklandClubhouse.com

Sep 10, 2009

The Sacramento River Cats and the Midland Rockhounds earned Game One wins, but they went about it in two very different ways. The Kane County Cougars faltered, however, in their first playoff game, and now they will need a win in Game Two to stay alive.

### **Sacramento Slugs Its Way To Game One Win**

The Sacramento River Cats put their powerful line-up on display in Game One of their Pacific Coast League semi-final series. [Chris Carter](#) and [Brett Wallace](#) both homered, while [Matt Carson](#) doubled twice and Sacramento pounded out 10 hits and eight runs in their 8-2 victory over Tacoma.

The River Cats jumped all over Tacoma starter [Chris Seddon](#) early. Sacramento scored three times in the first inning, with the big blow coming off of the bat of Carter, who hit a two-run blast with two-outs in the inning. Sacramento would tack on two more runs in the second to take a commanding early 5-0 lead.

The Rainiers would be quiet on offense against Sacramento starter [Chris Gissell](#) until the fourth inning, when they scored their first run. Sacramento answered in the top of the fifth when Wallace crushed a solo homerun. Tacoma would score again in the bottom of the fifth, but that was all of the offense they would muster.

Gissell allowed two runs in five innings with six strike-outs and one walk. He gave way to a quartet of River Cats' relievers ([Scott Patterson](#), [Henry Rodriguez](#), [John Meloan](#) and [Kevin Cameron](#)), who combined to allow only one base-runner (a walk) over four innings.

Sacramento will look to build a big two-game lead against Tacoma tomorrow.

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### **Midland Pitches Way To Victory**

The normally potent Midland Rockhounds' offense was silent for much of Wednesday night, but their pitching staff wouldn't let them lose Game One versus San Antonio.

Graham Godfrey led a team of four Midland pitchers who combined to toss 11 scoreless innings in the thrilling 1-0 win over the Missions. Godfrey didn't allow his first hit until the sixth inning. It would be the only hit he would allow in 6.2 brilliant innings.

Mickey Storey followed Godfrey with 1.1 perfect innings. He was followed by Jonathan Hunton, who worked around two walks in 1.2 hitless innings to get the game into the 10th inning.

With the game knotted at zero in the top of the 11th, the Rockhounds put together a two-out rally to score the game's only run. Josh Horton singled and then he came around to score on Josh Donaldson's double to right.

Jared Lansford took over for Hunton with two-outs in the 10th and got the final out of the inning. When the Rockhounds scored in the top of the 11th to finally break the scoreless tie, Lansford would get the chance to earn a win. He allowed the first three hitters to reach base, but benefited when the first batter of the inning, Eric Sogard, was thrown out at second base after being hit by a pitch. With two-on and one-out, Lansford got Craig Cooper to hit into a game-ending double-play.

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### Kane County Can't Overcome Early Deficit

The Kane County Cougars couldn't maintain their late-season momentum in Game One of their best-of-three game series. The Cougars were winners of 11 of their last 15 games to end the season, but they struggled on Wednesday versus Burlington.

The Cougars fell behind early, as starter Kenneth Smalley allowed six runs in 1.1 innings. Kane County would fall behind by a score of 11-2 before mounting a five-run rally in the top of the seventh inning to pull within four runs. That would be all the Cougars would score, and they fell to Burlington 12-7.

Leonardo Gil, Stephen Parker and Tyler Ladendorf each had two hits in the loss.