

A's News Clips, Sunday, September 13, 2009

A powerfully pitched victory

By Adam Czech, Oakland Tribune correspondent

For the second consecutive day, an A's rookie starter baffled a potent Minnesota Twins lineup featuring the reigning American League batting champion and a former MVP. Brett Anderson hit the corners with his fastball and kept the Twins off-balance with a sharp breaking ball during an impressive 4-2 win Saturday at the Metrodome.

The lefty held Joe Mauer (the batting champ), Justin Morneau (the former MVP) and Jason Kubel — the heart of the Twins lineup — to just one hit in 10 at-bats.

"That's not going to happen very often," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That's quite a feat, especially for a young kid in his first time through the league."

Less than 24 hours after smacking a season-high five home runs, the A's used patience instead of power. They drew six walks and took the lead in the fifth inning without getting a hit.

Twins rookie Jeff Manship opened the inning with walks to Eric Patterson and Cliff Pennington. Twins manager Ron Gardenhire then replaced Manship with reliever Jesse Crain, and Crain walked Adam Kennedy to load the bases.

Rajai Davis and Kurt Suzuki followed with sacrifice flies to make it 4-2, and Anderson never let the Twins even think about coming back. He retired 11 of the final 12 he faced, going seven innings and giving up two runs on five hits.

Michael Wurtz pitched the eighth and Andrew Bailey notched his 24th save, setting an A's rookie record. Huston Street had 23 saves in 2005.

As for Anderson, he leads the A's with nine wins and all rookies with 129 strikeouts.

"It was probably one of the top five outings I had this season," Anderson said. "I threw strikes and didn't walk anybody, which is the key especially this late in the season. I got strikeouts when I needed to and limited damage when runners got on."

Anderson erased leadoff hits in the first and fifth by getting Mauer and Mike Redmond to ground into double plays.

Pennington had three hits, including an RBI double that gave the A's a 2-0 lead in the second. Sacrifice flies by the Twins in the third and fourth tied it before the A's took the lead for good.

The A's long have preached patience at the plate, so it wasn't tempting for A's hitters to try to top their power-packed performance from the night earlier.

"You're not going to hit home runs every game," Kennedy said. "Just getting those runs in any way you can will probably win you games more often than just hitting home runs."

The Twins still consider themselves in playoff contention but have lost the first two games of the series. Minnesota has failed to gain ground on the AL Central-leading Tigers despite playing the Indians, Blue Jays and A's — three of the worst teams in the American League — in the past week.

The A's haven't lost a series since Aug. 24-26 against Seattle and are enjoying their opportunity to put a dent in the playoff hopes of contending teams.

"We've got a lot of guys trying to prove themselves and a lot of guys trying to prove that we belong here," Pennington said. "It helps to be able to knock off some teams that are in the hunt."

Notes: The A's stole four bases and have 11 steals in their past four games. ... Starter Vin Mazzaro (sore shoulder) had another successful throwing session. He will have a light-throwing session today and throw again on the side Monday. "The goal is to get him back out there this season," Geren said. "It doesn't matter when or how many starts, just to get him back out there." ... Gio Gonzalez starts the series finale and hopes to fare better than he did last time he faced the

Twins. On July 20, Gonzalez allowed 11 runs and four home runs over 22/3 innings. "He's a lot different pitcher now," Geren said. "He's settled his outward emotions. We told him if you're going to get beat, get beat with hits."

Two A's starters on 2009 Lurie All-Rookie team

By Marty Lurie, Special to Oakland Tribune

One of the more anticipated postseason moments of the past was seeing which rookies made the All-Rookie team for that particular year.

Those chosen would be honored on the following season's baseball cards. When I grew up, Topps was the company that produced the long-awaited cards each spring sought by every young baseball fan in my hometown of Brooklyn, N.Y.

With the spirit of my long lost baseball cards in mind, here's my 2009 Lurie All-Rookie team with pertinent stats through Friday's games. As Casey Stengel once said as he made backstop Hobie Landrith the Mets' No. 1 pick in the 1961 expansion draft, "If you don't have a catcher, you'll have lots of passed balls."

With Casey's thought in mind, let's get it started:

Catcher: Matt Wieters, Baltimore: The former Georgia Tech star is batting .270 with 5 home runs and 26 RBI. Wieters will catch in Baltimore for a long time.

Honorable mention: Alex Avila, Detroit: The son of the Tigers executive, this kid can hit. He's batting .295 with 4 home runs and 12 RBI.

First Base: Garrett Jones, Pittsburgh. A long-time minor leaguer with Minnesota, Jones broke through with the bat as soon as he came up in July. In 62 games this lefty swinger has hit 19 home runs, while driving in 38 runs with a .977 OPS.

Honorable mention: Travis Ishikawa, San Francisco: .254, 9 home runs and 35 RBI.

Second base: Luis Valbuena, Cleveland: Getting better each month, Valbuena has shown power with 8 home runs and 25 RBI while batting .245.

Honorable mention: Chris Getz, Chicago White Sox. Speedster has stolen 22 bases while being caught twice. Getz is hitting .267 with 2 home runs and 31 RBI.

Shortstop: Elvis Andrus, Texas: Rangers are in playoff contention with a rookie shortstop and that says it all. In addition, Andrus has hit .277 with 14 doubles, 6 home runs, 32 RBI, and 26 stolen bases.

Honorable mention: Everth Cabrera San Diego: Rule V pick from Colorado Cabrera has stolen 23 bases while batting .264 with 15 doubles and 7 triples to go with a .354 on-base percentage.

Cliff Pennington, Oakland: Pennington has shown surprising power with 4 home runs and 6 doubles. Pennington has settled down in the field while displaying a powerful throwing arm.

Third base: Gordon Beckham, Chicago White Sox: First-round pick from the University of Georgia has a .452 slugging percentage, based upon 10 home runs and 23 doubles.

Honorable mention: Jake Fox Chicago Cubs: Fox can hit and has played adequately in the field. Fox has 10 home runs, 39 RBI, and 12 doubles filling in for injured players Aramis Ramirez, Milton Bradley and Derek Lee during the season.

Casey McGehee Milwaukee: Came over from the Cubs and has excelled while filling in for Rickie Weeks and Bill Hall this year. McGehee is hitting .297 with 13 home runs, 16 doubles, with .858 OPS. Brewers need to find a spot for him in 2010.

Outfield: Chris Coghlan Florida: A former infielder, Coghlan is hitting .304 with a .380 on-base percentage. Coghlan, the Marlins' leadoff hitter, has scored 69 runs. He has 9 home runs, 40 RBI with 21 doubles.

Andrew McCutchen, Pittsburgh: Former Mr. Baseball as a high school senior in talent-rich Florida, McCutchen is hitting .275 with 11 home runs, 21 doubles and 47 RBI in just 86 games. McCutcheon can run, stealing 16 bases while being caught four times.

Nolan Reimold, Baltimore: Scouts think he has a long swing, but Reimold has adjusted to big league pitching very well hitting, .273 with 14 home runs and 44 RBI with a .456 slugging percentage.

Honorable mention: Julio Borbon, Texas: In a short time (23 games), Borbon has shown he belongs with this year's best outfielders. Borbon has stolen 13 bases, having been caught once. The center fielder is hitting .320 with a .386 on-base percentage.

Dexter Fowler, Colorado: Rockies leadoff hitter for much of the year, Fowler has scored 62 runs while batting .270 with 27 doubles, 9 triples, and 26 stolen bases.

Colby Rasmus, St. Louis: The Cards' center fielder has shown power with 14 home runs while driving in 46 runs. Rasmus hitting .256 has scored 63 runs and stolen 20 bases.

Starting Pitchers: Brett Anderson, Oakland: The lefty won his ninth game Saturday (9-10), beating the Twins in Minnesota 4-2. Anderson has made 27 starts and is a fixture in the A's future rotations.

Rick Porcello, Detroit: The 20 year-old is 12-8 with a 4.26 ERA over 26 starts. The numbers are outstanding for a pitcher his age.

Jeff Niemann, Tampa Bay: The former Rice All-American blossomed this season for the Rays (12-5). The league is hitting .256 against the tall right-hander. Niemann has been Tampa's most reliable starting pitcher (3.57 ERA).

JA Happ, Philadelphia: Until his recent oblique strain Happ was Philadelphia's most consistent starting pitcher (10-4, 2.77 ERA). The lefty has thrown 149 innings, proving his performance is no fluke.

Honorable mention: David Price, Tampa: The lefty has shown moments of brilliance (7-7, 4.65 ERA), while adjusting to a starting role in Tampa. The league is hitting .251 over his 19 starts.

Trevor Cahill, Oakland: The sinker baller has taken the ball for 29 starts, compiling a 8-12 mark with a 4.74 ERA. When he keeps the ball down, Cahill can be dominant. Anderson and Cahill will be the A's 1-2 punch in 2010.

Derek Holland, Texas: The sweet lefty is 7-10 with a 5.93 ERA. He has been untouchable at times. Holland was pressed into the shaky Texas rotation (before he was ready) making 17 starts.

Ricky Romero, Toronto: The lefty from Cal State Fullerton was a pleasant surprise during the Jays' dismal season (12-7, 4.14 ERA). Romero struck out 115 batters while issuing only 25 free passes (very similar to Brett Anderson).

Setup Relievers: Neftali Feliz, Texas. This righty is simply untouchable. Feliz has thrown 23.3 innings striking out 29 batters while walking 2 with a 0.76 ERA. The league is hitting .101 against his high 90 mph fastballs. If Texas makes the playoffs Feliz will be one of the major reasons for the team's success.

Daniel Bard, Boston: Another hard-thrower, Bard has struck out 49 batters in only 43 1/3 innings. The league is hitting .217 against the righty over 40 games. Bard is a future closer.

Luke Gregersen, San Diego: The Padres can close the game. Gregersen is a main reason why this club has played so well lately. The righty holds right-handed batters well under .200. Gregersen is durable, having appearing in 61 games with a 2.91 ERA.

Closer: Andrew Bailey, Oakland: Bailey has converted 24 saves (19 straight), an Oakland rookie record. An All-Star in 2009, Bailey has held the opposition to a .181 batting mark to go along with a 2.06 ERA.

This is an excellent class of rookies. With the financial landscape of baseball reflecting the country's economic belt-tightening one should expect even more rookies will get their major league opportunities next season.

This will not be a profitable off-season for mid-range veteran free agents. They will find teams turning to young players, just as they did in 2009. The old Topps baseball cards were beautiful. I can just see the baseball card from the 1950's and 1960's with their Topps all rookie team designation. The memory fades over the years, but it seems the symbol for first-year excellence was a trophy on the lower front portion of the card.

This class can stand with the best of all-time.

Anderson is victor in small-ball duel

Associated Press

For the last few years, the Minnesota Twins have been known for promising young pitching and playing small ball.

On Saturday, those things did the Twins in and further dimmed their chances for catching Detroit in the AL Central.

Brett Anderson threw seven sharp innings and Cliff Pennington had three hits with an RBI as the A's won for the fifth time in six games, beating the Twins 4-2.

Less than 24 hours after routing Minnesota with a season-high five home runs, the A's showed the Twins their own style of small ball by making the most of a relatively quiet day at the plate. They drew walks, stole bases, advanced runners and scored on sacrifice flies.

Anderson (9-10) retired 18 of 24 batters, including the final eight he faced, and didn't allow a walk for the fourth time this season to win his second consecutive start.

"He was fantastic," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's had a few really good outings this year. This is in the top two or three, that's for sure."

Michael Wuertz pitched a scoreless eighth for Oakland and Andrew Bailey pitched the ninth for his 24th save in 28 chances.

Oakland held Minnesota's two best hitters - AL batting leader Joe Mauer and Justin Morneau - to one hit in seven at-bats.

"Any time you hold those guys to one hit, it limits their offense," Anderson said. "So I feel pretty good about that."

Twins rookie Jeff Manship (0-1) lasted four innings in his third career start, charged with four runs on three hits and three walks.

Pennington was the only one to drive in a run with a hit when his double in the second inning scored Daric Barton to give Oakland a 2-0 lead.

Despite the relatively quiet day at the plate, the A's made the most of their chances; three of their six walks eventually scored, and their five stolen bases tied a season high.

For the second straight game, a young Oakland pitcher rendered Minnesota's lineup harmless.

The Twins evened the game at 2-2 with runs in the third and fourth, but Oakland regained the lead for good by scoring two runs in the fifth without a hit.

Anderson's seven strong leads Athletics

Oakland's three sacrifice flies enough to get past Twins

By Tyler Mason / MLB.com

MINNEAPOLIS -- Oakland pitcher Brett Anderson watched fellow rookie starter Clayton Mortensen hold the Minnesota Twins to just one run in six innings in Friday's 12-5 victory.

Less than 24 hours later, it was the left-handed Anderson looking every bit like a seasoned veteran. The 21-year-old went seven strong innings and allowed just two runs in the A's 4-2 victory Saturday. Anderson's second consecutive win helped clinch the series for Oakland, who has not lost a series since Aug. 24-26 against Seattle.

"Brett Anderson was fantastic," A's manager Bob Geren said. "They've got a really good lineup up and down. To hold them to that kind of run [total] is a pretty good feat, especially for a young kid 21 years old."

Anderson contained Minnesota's big left-handed bats of Joe Mauer, Justin Morneau and Jason Kubel to just one hit -- a double down the left-field line by Mauer in the fourth that ultimately turned into one of the Twins' two runs on the day.

"The one that Mauer hit couldn't have been any closer to the line," Anderson said. "Any time you hold those guys to one hit, it kind of limits your offense. I felt pretty good about it."

While Anderson was limiting Minnesota's bats, the A's offense took advantage of control issues by Twins starter Jeff Manship (0-1), who walked three batters and also hit Rajai Davis before leaving in the fourth with two runners on.

With the game knotted at 2, Manship's final two walks in the top of the fifth proved to be costly. Eric Patterson led off the inning with a walk and later stole second. Cliff Pennington followed Patterson with a walk, ending Manship's day.

Adam Kennedy then walked to load the bases, and back-to-back sacrifice flies by Davis and Kurt Suzuki brought in Patterson and Pennington to give Oakland a 4-2 lead.

The patience at the plate was certainly a change from Friday's home run derby, but the end result was the same for the A's.

"You're not going to hit homers all the time," said Kennedy, who singled and walked twice. "Getting those runs in is going to win you games more than the long ball, probably."

"The way this game is, the night before is long gone by the time you come to the park the next day," Pennington said. "You just try and have a good approach every at-bat. Some days you get hits, some days you get walked."

It was Pennington's double off Manship in the second that gave the A's an early 2-0 lead. After a Patterson sac fly scored Mark Ellis, Pennington doubled to right to score Daric Barton, who had a two-bagger of his own earlier in the inning.

Pennington, who played against Manship as a high schooler in Texas, reached base in all four of his at-bats on a walk and three hits, one night after homering and walking twice.

"Pennington is doing a tremendous job," Geren said. "He's had an opportunity to play every day. He's making the most of it, for sure."

Anderson (9-10) finished the day with four strikeouts and two runs on five hits. He faced the minimum number of batters in five of the seven innings he pitched.

"We're pretty confident with Brett on the hill every time he's out there," Kennedy said.

"I got some strikeouts when I needed to and limited the damage," Anderson said. "It's a pretty good day for me."

Having now taken two consecutive games from the Twins, the A's have played the role of spoiler by beating a Minnesota team struggling to stay alive in the American League Central. They'll have that same opportunity next series when they head to Arlington to take on the Texas Rangers, a team chasing the Boston Red Sox in the AL Wild Card race.

"We've got a lot of young guys on this team that are trying to prove themselves," Pennington said. "We're trying to prove that we belong here. I think that and the combination of the chance to knock off some teams that are in the postseason hunt, builds confidence in our young team being able to play with these guys."

Gonzalez looks for revenge vs. Minnesota

Oakland (64-77) at Minnesota (70-72), 11:10 a.m. PT

By Tyler Mason / MLB.com

MINNEAPOLIS -- By now, Oakland starter Gio Gonzalez has put his last outing against the Twins far behind him.

It certainly was a start he'd like to forget. Gonzalez was shelled for 11 runs on 10 hits, including four Minnesota home runs, and lasted just 2 2/3 innings on July 20. After that outing, his ERA ballooned to 9.33.

When he takes to the hill Sunday to face the Twins again, he'll get a shot at redemption.

"It's gone. It's a new start," Gonzalez said of his previous outing vs. Minnesota."

For as poorly as Gonzalez pitched in that game, he managed to avoid picking up a loss. The A's were able to mount a rally and come back from a 10-run deficit to win 14-13.

"When we got the last out, it was a really exciting comeback," Gonzalez said. "We took that positive and kept going with it."

The A's used that comeback to eventually take the series from the Twins. For Gonzalez, though, that night has since become a distant memory.

"I think that his previous start is probably way out of his mind," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's had some pretty good success since then. He turned the corner right after that. He really did."

That success began in Gonzalez's very next start. He was able to put all memories of the 11-run night behind him and earn a win against the Yankees, allowing just one run on two hits in 6 2/3 innings.

"He's a competitor," Oakland catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "Instead of pouting about his start against Minnesota, he came back mentally stronger. He just went out there knowing that what happened last time is not going to happen again. He made sure of that."

Since getting hit around by the Twins earlier this summer in Oakland, Gonzalez is 4-3 in nine starts, with a 3.93 ERA in those games to lower his season ERA to 5.76. He'll be looking for his second consecutive win Sunday after earning the victory against Seattle last week.

"Sometimes it takes hitting rock bottom before you have to make changes," Geren said. "He's a lot different pitcher now than he was then. He's really narrowed his focus on what he's trying to do on the mound."

"I think he's had a little bit of success," Suzuki said. "He's got a little bit more confidence. He's attacking the strike zone a lot more, attacking hitters, getting ahead early in the counts. It shows."

Pitching matchup

OAK: LHP Gio Gonzalez (5-5, 5.76 ERA)

Gonzalez was in command from the get-go in his last start. The lefty used a steady diet of fastballs and curveballs to go with a new four-seam changeup to keep the Mariners at bay. Gonzalez went seven innings, allowing just two runs on six hits, while striking out three. According to Geren, Gonzalez's changeup could make a huge difference down the stretch. Gonzalez now has three pitches he can turn to when he's in a jam and is gaining more confidence with every start.




MIN: LHP Brian Duensing (2-1, 3.94 ERA)

Duensing maneuvered through the first five innings of his last start at Toronto with relative ease, allowing just four hits and one walk. But the rookie southpaw couldn't continue the success into the sixth, when he loaded the bases with no outs. All of the runs would eventually score as Duensing was charged with three runs on six hits in his five-plus innings to pick up the no-decision. In his three previous starts, Duensing had posted an ERA of 1.42, allowing just three earned runs in 19 innings. He'll see if he can get back to that form when he makes his first start against the A's. In two relief appearances vs. Oakland this season, Duensing is 0-0 with a 9.00 ERA.

Tidbits

A's pitcher Vin Mazzaro threw again on Saturday, and Geren said Mazzaro felt better than he did Friday. Mazzaro was originally expected to throw a side session Sunday, but Geren said the right-hander will instead take part in a light throwing session Sunday and a side session Monday. ... A's pitcher Andrew Bailey recorded his 24th save of the season with a scoreless ninth inning Saturday. He leads all rookie pitchers with saves and now holds the record for most saves by an Oakland rookie. The previous mark was held by Huston Street, who had 23 in 2005. ... With a win Sunday, Oakland would complete just its third series sweep of the year. The last time the A's turned the trick was June 5-7 against Baltimore.

Up next

- Monday: Athletics (Brett Tomko, 4-3, 4.47) at Rangers (Scott Feldman, 16-4, 3.46), 5:05 p.m. PT 
- Tuesday: Athletics (Trevor Cahill, 8-12, 4.74) at Rangers (Brandon McCarthy, 7-2, 4.81), 5:05 p.m. PT 
- Wednesday: Athletics (Clay Mortensen, 1-2, 6.75) at Rangers (TBD), 5:05 p.m. PT 

River Cats advance to PCL Championship Series

John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

They were loose in the dugout before the game, dancing and bumping and high-fiving their way into the right frame of mind for a playoff contest.

The River Cats appeared in a pretty good mood, too, after a 13-8 victory over Tacoma on Saturday night at Raley Field that sent them into the Pacific Coast League championship series.

In between, though, there was plenty of tension to endure in Game 4 of the PCL first-round series. Sacramento built a 7-0 lead, then held on as the Rainiers stormed back to keep an announced crowd of 7,432 entertained.

But a six-run seventh inning, highlighted by two-run doubles from Tommy Everidge and Aaron Cunningham, gave the River Cats a 13-5 cushion and sent them to a showdown against Memphis for the PCL title.

"With a 7-0 lead, you think you've got an easy game," River Cats manager Tony DeFrancesco said. "But they've got a great hitting team.

"To get back again (to the PCL finals), it's an accomplishment for the players, the organization, the front office and the fans. I'm excited to be a part of it."

The River Cats struck for six runs in the bottom of the first inning off Tacoma starter Gaby Hernandez.

Brett Wallace's two-run triple off the top of the center-field wall, which Jerry Owens nearly caught, scored Chris Denorfia and Adrian Cardenas. After Everidge singled home Wallace, Chris Carter's two-run home run to left field gave the Cats a 5-0 cushion.

But they weren't done. Matt Carson doubled into the left-field corner, advanced to third on Cunningham's fly ball to center and scored on Anthony Recker's grounder to second baseman Matt Tuiasosopo.

Tacoma pulled within 7-3 on Chris Shelton's three-run homer to left center in the third. Shawn Chacon escaped a jam in the fourth, retiring Tuiasosopo on a called strike with two outs and two runners on.

The Rainiers, though, closed to within 7-5 on Tuiasosopo's two-run homer to left off Sacramento reliever Scott Patterson in the sixth. Carter's homer was his fourth in this series, tying Daric Barton's team record from last season for most home runs in a playoff series.

The first hurdle safely behind them, the River Cats can sharpen their focus on a bigger prize: a third consecutive PCL title.

The River Cats are scheduled to open the PCL championship series at Memphis on Tuesday night. Game 2 is set for Memphis on Wednesday, with the series returning to Sacramento on Friday for Game 3. Games 4 and 5, if necessary, would be played next Saturday night and Sunday at Raley Field.

Sacramento went 3-1 this season against Memphis, with all four games played in Memphis, Tenn. The Redbirds, 77-67 in the regular season, won the PCL American South Division by two games over Nashville before sweeping Albuquerque 3-0 in the first round of the playoffs.

Memphis is making its first appearance in the PCL finals since winning the league crown in 2000.

The PCL champion is scheduled to face the International League winner for the Triple-A title Sept. 22 in Oklahoma City.

PCL Playoffs: Cats advance to Championship Series

By Andrew Hazard, www.rivercats.com

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. - The Sacramento River Cats were men amongst boys, on a mission to close out the series against the Tacoma Rainiers on Saturday night.

With a convincing 13-8 victory at Raley Field, the River Cats won the series 3-1 and advance to the Pacific Coast League Championship Series against the Memphis Redbirds. The Championship Series opens with Tuesday and Wednesday games in Memphis (both 5:05 p.m. starts) before returning to Sacramento for games on Friday (7:05 p.m.), Saturday (7:05 p.m., if necessary) and Sunday (1:05 p.m., if necessary). Sacramento will be aiming for its third consecutive PCL title.

Shown: *Manager Tony DeFrancesco and the River Cats moved one step closer to a third consecutive PCL title by knocking off the Tacoma Rainiers on Saturday night.*

A two-run triple from third baseman Brett Wallace and a two-run home run of the bat of first baseman Chris Carter gave Sacramento an early 6-0 lead. With the score 7-5 in favor of the River Cats, Sacramento had another six-run inning in the seventh. This time it was designated hitter Tommy Everidge and left fielder Aaron Cunningham who did the damage with a two-run double each to make the score 13-5. For the second night in a row it was lucky number 13 for the River Cats as they defeated the Rainiers 13-8.

With the roar of thunder sticks in the background, the River Cats' outpour of runs from Friday night's 13-2 victory continued into Game 4. The recently hot Gaby Hernandez cooled down in a hurry for Tacoma as 10 batters came to the plate, leading to six hits for Sacramento in the first inning.

Chris Denorfia led off the inning with a double down the left-field corner. Two batters later, third baseman Brett Wallace hit a shot to center field. Jerry Owens almost made an amazing web gem to rob Wallace, but the ball bounced off the top of the wall and back in play for a bases-clearing triple.

Carter's magical first-round success continued when he took Hernandez deep to left. The blast was Carter's fourth of the series, matching a River Cats record for most home runs during a single postseason.

Denny Stark replaced Hernandez with two outs and quickly ended the inning as he picked off catcher Anthony Recker on second.

The Rainiers put the fans at Raley Field on edge in the third. Chris Shelton went yard to left-center field to decrease Sacramento's lead to 7-3. Second baseman Adrian Cardenas made a great sliding catch and throw on his knees to get out designated hitter Brad Nelson for the final out of the inning.

Tacoma continued to put the pressure on the River Cats in the fourth. Shortstop Oswaldo Navarro and Owens hit back-to-back singles with two outs. Chacon found the strike zone again and struck out second baseman Matt Tuiasosopo to escape from the jam still leading 7-3.

Chacon valiantly pitched into sixth. With his pitch count rising, Chacon gave up a lead-off single to catcher Adam Moore, and walked Navarro before being replaced with Scott Patterson. The River Cats' infield picked up Patterson with a 6-4-3 double play. The excitement of the double play was quickly gone as Tuiasosopo hit a full-count, two-run home run into left to close within 7-5.

The left-field corner turned into a black hole again for the Tacoma bullpen in the seventh. With two runners on, designated hitter Tommy Everidge hit a rope that bounced over third base and into the gap in left. The Rainiers thought the ball went foul and Redman got a late jump on the ball. Everidge hustled his way to second as Denorfia and Cardenas scored. Three batters later, left fielder Aaron Cunningham found a gap in the left-field corner for another two-run double. Mike Koplove came in for Thomas and did not fare better. Koplove threw a wild pitch that allowed Carson to score and Cunningham move to third. Sacramento exploded with another six-run inning to make the score 13-5 in favor of the

home team.

The success of the River Cats' rotating bullpen was put in the hands of Henry Rodriguez in the ninth. With a big lead to play with, Rodriguez tested the corners of the strike zone. Rodriguez walked three of the four batters he faced being replaced by Sam Demel. He gave up back-to-back RBI singles to Navarro and Owens as the Rainiers were slowly climbing back in the game. Demel finally ended the game and Tacoma's season when he struck out Tuiasosopo.

Chacon gave up eight hits, four walks, four earned runs and struck out four in 5.0 innings for the series-clinching victory. Everidge went 2-for-5 on the night with two runs scored and three RBIs to lead Sacramento.

PCL Playoffs: Williams dominant in Game 3 rout

rivercats.com

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Jerome Williams picked the right time for his most dominating start of the season.

The River Cats right-hander allowed only one run over 7.0 innings to lift Sacramento to a 13-2 pounding of the Tacoma Rainiers in Game 3 of the PCL Pacific Conference Championship Series. The former San Francisco Giant struck out eight and allowed only seven hits Friday night before 11,894 fans at Raley Field.

Shown: If Chris Carter wants to stay dry, he better stop hitting homers. The River Cats slugger hit his third of the series Friday night and lifted Sacramento to a resounding Game 3 victory.

The River Cats now have two chances to close out the series at home (Saturday, 7:05 p.m.; Sunday, 1:05 p.m., if necessary). The winner of this series will advance to play the Memphis RedBirds, who finished off a three-game sweep of the Albuquerque Isotopes on Friday night in the American Conference Championship Series.

"Tonight was a great win," River Cats manager Tony DeFrancesco said. "The Raley Field crowd was electric and that gave us a huge lift. Hopefully fans will come out again on Saturday."

Williams had an up and down regular season for Sacramento, posting a 5-6 record and 5.58 ERA. He won four of his last six decisions to close out the season, but never displayed a performance like this. His only run allowed Friday came on a fielder's choice in the fourth.

Meanwhile, Sacramento's offense gave Williams more than enough support.

Chris Carter smacked his third homer of the season in the third inning, a towering blast that barely cleared the left-field wall to give Sacramento a 6-0 lead. Matt Carson added a two-run homer in the seventh and Brett Wallace smacked a three-run shot in the eighth. Carter has now homered in each of the three games in this series.

The River Cats' first three batters (Chris Denorfia, Adrian Cardenas and Wallace) combined to go 8-for 15, score six runs and drive in nine. Every Sacramento starter besides catcher Anthony Recker recorded a hit, and he even walked twice and scored twice. The River Cats finished with 15 hits, six for extra bases.

Right-hander Shawn Chacon (8-4, 6.29) will get the start for Sacramento on Saturday night, as the River Cats continue their quest for a third consecutive Pacific Coast League championship. Chacon will face right-hander Gaby Hernandez (10-9, 5.23).