

**Tomko is sharp in 100th career victory**

By Drew Davison, Correspondent Bay Area News Group

Brett Tomko's 100th career victory Monday won't land him in Cooperstown. But it might help him land a contract this winter.

Tomko reached the milestone in dominating fashion Monday night, throwing a five-hitter for his first complete game since 2005 and leading the A's to a 9-0 series-opening victory over the Texas Rangers at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington.

"It's a good way to do it, if you're going to do it," said Tomko, who improved to 5-3 with a 3.77 ERA this season, including 4-1, 2.95 in six starts with the A's. "I definitely knew about it, but I never thought I'd get to do it this year because I was coming out of the bullpen in New York. But I got some quick victories here and it became a reality."

While the 100-win plateau isn't a Hall of Fame marker, it's certainly a nice accomplishment for the 13-year veteran. Tomko said he would keep the game ball and likely would frame his cleats and jersey, too.

Relying on his curveball more than usual, Tomko dominated from the start. The right-hander retired the first five batters and allowed only one Rangers runner to get into scoring position all game.

That happened in the second inning with two outs, when Texas slugger Nelson Cruz doubled to left-center. Tomko responded by striking out Ivan Rodriguez.

Tomko then gave up leadoff singles in the fifth, sixth and seventh, but he escaped all of those threats when the A's defense converted inning-ending double plays. In the end, Tomko faced only two batters over the minimum.

A's catcher Kurt Suzuki "did a great job calling the game behind the plate and we were on the same page all night," Tomko said.

The A's offense came through for Tomko, too.

The A's built a 3-0 lead in the sixth off Rangers starter Scott Feldman. Daric Barton led off with a double and scored on an RBI single from Adam Kennedy. Ryan Sweeney and Suzuki followed Kennedy with RBI hits later in the inning.

That's all Tomko would need, but the A's cushioned their lead with four more runs in the seventh. The first came on a Rajai Davis RBI single and three more on a bases-loaded double to left-center by Sweeney.

Kennedy's two-run single in the eighth made it 9-0.

"When we got the lead, he didn't give in," Oakland manager Bob Geren said of Tomko. "What I mean is, he pitched like it was a 1-0 game, instead of a 9-0 game. I was going to let him go for the shutout and give him a big pitch count. I planned on giving him every opportunity to finish it, as long as the game wasn't in jeopardy."

Tomko, 36, also has 102 losses in his 13 seasons, and must prove he still has the stuff to get major league hitters out if he harbors hopes of signing a free-agent contract this offseason.

"It's a huge deal for me now (to finish the season strong) and hopefully we'll talk here about a deal," Tomko said. "But it's definitely important because you want to set yourself up going into free agency."

The news regarding another A's starter wasn't so good. Rookie right-hander Vin Mazzaro, sidelined with right shoulder tendinitis, might be done for the season. Asked if Mazzaro, who hasn't pitched since Aug. 29, could be shut down for the season after a below-average bullpen session Sunday in Minnesota, Geren said: "It's a consideration. It's a possibility."

Geren said the team would re-evaluate Mazzaro today and then make a decision.

Notes: Geren said infielder Bobby Crosby has shown an extra dimension this year, playing every infield position. "He made some nice plays at third base this past weekend in Minnesota and you can definitely add versatility to his resume,"

Geren said. "... The A's announced that right-hander Edgar Gonzalez will start today's contest. Righties Trevor Cahill and Clay Mortensen will pitch the final two games of the series. "... Triple-A Sacramento begins its best-of-five Pacific Coast League championship series today against the Memphis Redbirds. The River Cats are seeking their third straight PCL title after knocking off Tacoma in the semifinals.

## **A's erupt to send Tomko to 100th victory**

### **Right-hander shuts out Rangers behind bevy of support**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- As the line of zeros grew longer, Brett Tomko's focus grew sharper.

Even after his teammates gave him three, then seven, then nine runs of padding, Tomko didn't change a thing.

Career victory No. 100 was there to be had, and he wanted to do it in style.

No machine-gunning fastballs down Main Street, using the nine-run lead as Kevlar in the event of violent reprisal. No laying it in there, sitting comfortably atop the cushion.

No, Tomko decided. Stick with what's working. Breaking balls on the corners, lots of 'em. Paintball heaters, here and there. Just keep the shutout intact.

"If you're going to do it, you might as well do it right," Tomko said. "Really make it memorable."

It was that and then some. Tomko, who arrived in Oakland affixed with the unflattering "journeyman" label, looked like anything but -- again -- while arriving at his first significant milestone.

Win No. 100? How's a five-hit shutout without a walk against the playoff-hopeful Rangers grab you?

"Awesome," said A's reliever Jeff Gray, barely able to stop grinning after the 9-0 victory in the opener of a three-game series at Rangers Ballpark was in the books. "I'm just glad I was here to see it, be a small part of it.

"Unbelievable."

What Tomko has done over the past six weeks or so stretches the limits of feasibility, too. He was released by the Yankees, who used him exclusively out of the bullpen, on July 29. Signed by the A's on the cheap, he is 4-1 with a 2.95 ERA in six starts in green and gold, and he should be 5-1; he left his no-decision with a five-run lead.

A free-agent-to-be, Tomko might not be in youth-loaded Oakland's plans for 2010, but it's likely he's opening some eyes among the 29 other teams for which he might be auditioning.

"Brett's throwing in the low- to mid-90s, he's winning games, and he's going deep into games," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's going to be an attractive guy [in free agency]."

Careful to say the right things about the opportunity afforded him by the A's, with whom he said he expects to at least have a conversation about coming back, Tomko conceded that his resurgence is coming at a prime time.

"This has been a huge deal for me," he said.

The 100th win was pretty big as well. He got the game ball and the original lineup card, and he suggested that his cleats and game jersey might someday be on display at home.

"It's not like I'm gonna win 300," said Tomko, who will be 37 next April.

Monday's gem marked Tomko's second career shutout, the first being a four-hitter while with the Giants in 2004, at Florida.

"The timing couldn't have been better," he said.

Tomko teased Texas by allowing leadoff singles in the fifth, sixth and seventh innings, but each time he got out of the frame with a double-play ball -- two on routine grounders, one of a line drive to second baseman Mark Ellis, who doubled rookie Elvin Andrus off at first base.

One of the better offensive clubs in the American League for years, Texas got all of one runner past first base and was held to five hits. Tomko threw a season-high 114 pitches

"We didn't swing the bats well," Rangers second baseman Ian Kinsler offered, "but give the guy credit for throwing a complete-game shutout."

If Kinsler's quote appears begrudging, perhaps it's because he and the Rangers are tiring of this Ryan Sweeney character. When he's not stealing doubles and home runs, he's driving runs in.

Sweeney, whose Gold Glove-caliber defensive skills were moved to right field when Rajai Davis blossomed into the everyday center fielder, continued his own late-season bloom on Monday night with a spectacular all-around performance.

Having already opened the eyes of Texas by robbing Kinsler of home runs with wall-scaling grabs earlier in the season, Sweeney stole at least two bases from Marlon Byrd with a diving catch of a sinking liner in the second inning.

"He's a pretty good outfielder," understated Rangers manager Ron Washington. "When it was I hit, I was hoping he dove to soon. ... He had him played perfectly. He needed to be playing that one perfectly."

Sweeney didn't do much wrong with the bat, either. In the sixth, he doubled in a run off 16-game winner Scott Feldman. In the seventh, he cleared the bases with a three-run double to turn the game into a classroom frog dissection. And just for the heck of it, he drilled another double to open the ninth.

Still just 24 years old despite having played in parts of four big league seasons, Sweeney, who has been endorsed as a future All-Star by likely Hall of Famer Frank Thomas, is batting .336 with 18 extra-base hits -- 13 doubles, two triples and three home runs -- over his past 33 games.

"He's splitting the gap against some pretty good fastball pitchers," Geren said. "He's been very consistent."

Feldman was pretty consistent himself in the early going, retiring 15 of the first 16 batters he faced. But the A's sent 17 men to the plate over the next two frames to break the game open.

Daric Barton opened the sixth with a double and scored on Adam Kennedy's infield single, after which Sweeney and Kurt Suzuki spanked RBI doubles.

In the seventh, Feldman hit two batters and gave up a single to load the bases before Davis greeted reliever Jason Grilli with an RBI single to right before Sweeney cleared the bases.

Kennedy added a two-run single in the eighth for the final margin.

"It's nice to have a bunch of runs, but I wanted [the shutout]," Tomko said. "Sometimes all of the stars line up right."

## **Crosby thriving in unfamiliar role**

### **Oakland (65-78) at Texas (80-63), 5:05 p.m. PT**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Until this season, if Bobby Crosby was healthy when he walked into the A's clubhouse, he didn't even have to look at the lineup card. He knew he was on it, starting at shortstop.

Now, he has no clue each day, not only as to whether he'll play, but also as to where.

"It's definitely different," is how he describes his situation. "Weird."

Stripped of his shortstop job during Spring Training, Crosby was turned into a utility player despite having never played anywhere *but* shortstop since his sophomore year of high school.

Entering Tuesday's second game of a three-game series against the host Rangers, Crosby has played in 53 games at first base, 36 at third base, six at shortstop, five at second base and one in right field.

"It's been a challenge," Crosby said. "It's been fun learning new things, but it's not easy."

A's manager Bob Geren suggested that Crosby has, for the most part, made it look easy.

"He's made some nice plays," Geren said. "For a guy that's played shortstop his entire career, I think he's done a real nice job. ... It'll add some versatility to his resume."

Crosby, who will be a free agent this winter and isn't expected back, isn't particularly thrilled to have anything on his resume other than "shortstop."

"Who knows if I'll get a chance somewhere else, but that's how I see myself," he said. "I'm a shortstop, and that's how I'll always think of myself."

### **Pitching matchup**

#### **OAK: RHP Edgar Gonzalez (0-2, 4.92 ERA)**

Gonzalez, who has pitched in long relief for most of the season, is now part of a six-man rotation designed to reduce the workload of Oakland's young staff. Formerly a swing man for the D-backs, Gonzalez has been slightly more effective as a starter with the A's, posting a 4.20 ERA in three nods, but he rarely gets deep into games, as he's worked 15 innings on those starts. Gonzalez has faced the Rangers once this season, as a starter, and allowed five runs on eight hits and three walks over five innings.




#### **TEX: RHP Brandon McCarthy (7-2, 4.81 ERA)**

McCarthy is 2-0 with a 4.26 ERA in two starts since coming off the disabled list. He missed three months with a stress fracture in his right shoulder blade. In 12 2/3 innings since he returned with new mechanics, he has allowed eight hits, four walks and six strikeouts. He is 4-0 with a 3.31 ERA in seven starts at home this season and 7-4 with a 4.00 ERA in 20 starts over the past three years at the Ballpark in Arlington. He is 1-3 with an 8.15 ERA in six career games, including four starts, against the Athletics -- his highest ERA against any opponent.

### **Dribblers ...**

The Triple-A Sacramento River Cats, who beat Tacoma three games to one in the first round of the Pacific Coast League playoffs, open the PCL Championship Series on Tuesday against the Memphis Redbirds, the Cardinals' Triple-A affiliate. Chris Carter hit four home runs in the first round to tie the club record for homers in the playoffs. ... The Double-A Midland Rock Hounds are chasing a title, too. They open the Texas League Championship Series on Tuesday at home against Northwest Arkansas. Jemile Weeks, Oakland's top pick in the 2008 First-Year Player Draft, went 2-for-4 with a three-run homer in Midland's first-round series clincher. ... Clayton Mortensen, Sam Demel, James Simmons and Justin Friend will be the pitchers representing the A's in the 2009 Arizona Fall League. ... Crosby is the first A's player to make at least five starts at all four infield positions since Ernie Riles in 1991.

### **Up next**

- Wednesday: Athletics (Clay Mortensen, 1-2, 6.75) at Rangers (Dustin Nippert, 5-2, 3.95), 5:05 p.m. PT 
- Thursday: Athletics (Brett Anderson, 9-10, 4.37) vs. Indians (Justin Masterson, 4-7, 4.25), 7:05 p.m. PT 
- Friday: Athletics (Gio Gonzalez, 5-6, 6.31) vs. Indians (David Huff, 10-7, 6.14), 7:05 p.m. PT 

## **Inbox: Is Suzuki's rep well-earned?**

### **A's beat reporter Mychael Urban fields fans' questions**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

**I love Kurt Suzuki's arm and his bat, but I don't understand why he gets so much credit for his game calling. If he was that good at it, wouldn't the young pitchers have better numbers?**

**-- Jim R., Danville, Calif.**

Andrew Bailey's a young pitcher. He has good numbers. Why? Because he hits his spots.

On the other hand, you have young pitchers such as Trevor Cahill, who frequently misses his spots. That's why he's allowed 26 homers this year.

It's extremely difficult for anyone on the outside -- i.e., fans and media -- to effectively critique a catcher's ability to call a game. We don't know exactly what Suzuki is calling, or where he's asking the pitch to be. And it's certainly not his fault if a pitcher makes a location mistake.

Thus, on such matters I always defer to the pitchers themselves, and they seem to think Suzuki calls a very good game.

**You recently blogged about a potential lineup for 2010, and it didn't include Scott Hairston because he's eligible for arbitration. You don't really think they'd non-tender him, do you? They gave up three pitchers for the guy, and he's still pretty young and relatively inexpensive.**

**-- Alex C, Portland, Ore.**

I don't think they'll non-tender him, no. And I think he's a pretty good player. I'm just not convinced he fits into the grand scheme of things, so I wouldn't be surprised if he got moved in the offseason.

He'd be a nice complementary player on a team looking for a solid, versatile outfielder to help get it over the top, and with a strong finishing kick this season, Hairston might fetch even better prospects than the pitchers the A's gave up to get him.

**I noticed that Travis Buck wasn't in your prospective 2010 lineup. I thought you were high on him. Have you changed your mind?**

**-- Jill T., Oakland**

Not at all. I still think Travis is going to be an above-average big league outfielder. But based on what we've seen this year in terms of the club's apparent attitude toward him, I left him out of the lineup. He's another guy who could be moved, and I think he'd bring decent value.

Buck might need a change of scenery. Something has fractured the relationship here, and it might not be something either side is wild about mending.

**Will Ryan Sweeney win a Gold Glove this year?**

**-- Donald M., Sunnyvale, Calif.**

He deserves one, but I doubt it. He's on a bad team, and he's on a West Coast team. That's a tough couple of hurdles to climb on the way to national recognition. Just ask Mark Ellis.

**Is Daric Barton ever going to be a quality Major Leaguer?**

**-- Benjamin A., Lafayette, Calif.**

I guess that depends on your definition of "quality." He's already an above-average defensive first baseman, and I've seen some baby steps of progress offensively since he came off the disabled list. So I'll say yes. Not All-Star quality, but not a "Quadruple-A" guy, either.

## **A's Mazzaro may be done for season**

## **Rookie righty's shoulder tendinitis continues to linger**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Sidelined with shoulder tendinitis, A's rookie right-hander Vin Mazzaro hasn't pitched in a game since Aug. 29.

He might not pitch again this year.

Oakland manager Bob Geren on Monday said that Mazzaro's most recent throwing session, Sunday in Minnesota, "didn't go as good as we'd have liked; below average."

Asked if the idea of shutting down Mazzaro has been discussed, Geren quickly nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Yes," Geren said before the scheduled opener of a three-game series against the Rangers. "It's a consideration. It's a possibility."

Mazzaro, 22, has been touted -- along with 21-year-old rookies Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill -- as a potential frontline starter on which the A's might be able to rely for years.

He did nothing to quiet such talk when he was called up to Oakland in early June after a stellar showing at Triple-A Sacramento, dominating in his first two big league starts (two wins, zero earned runs). Since then, however, he's suffered far more downs than ups; his record is 4-9 with a 5.32 ERA.

In five July starts, Mazzaro's ERA was 8.51. In August, his only start among six that lasted longer than five innings was a 5 1/3-inning outing.

"We'll reevaluate him tomorrow and go from there," Geren said. "But as far as him [joining the rotation soon], no. That's not going to happen."

## **Brett Tomko pitches Oakland past Rangers 9-0**

By DAVID JIMENEZ, Associated Press Writer

Brett Tomko earned his 100th major league victory in style.

The right-hander pitched a five-hitter for his milestone win and the Oakland Athletics dealt a blow to Texas' playoff hopes, routing the Rangers 9-0 on Monday night.

"If you're going to do it, do it the right way," said Tomko, who threw 114 pitches in his second career shutout. "That makes it more memorable."

Released by the New York Yankees on July 29, Tomko (5-3) struck out three and didn't walk a batter in his 13th career complete game. He outpitched Scott Feldman, snapping the right-hander's seven-game winning streak.

Tomko retired the first two batters in the ninth inning before Julio Borbon singled to left. The 36-year-old journeyman finished things off by retiring Elvis Andrus on a grounder to shortstop.

"We were going to let him go," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "Obviously, his pitch count wasn't high. We were going to give him every opportunity to finish as long as the game wasn't in jeopardy."

The Rangers have lost three of their first four on a nine-game homestand, falling 4 1/2 games behind Boston for the AL wild card. It's the farthest Texas has been out of a playoff spot all season.

Texas was shut out for the second consecutive game and has not scored in 19 innings.

"It's frustrating," Ian Kinsler said. "We didn't have a good night. We've had a rough couple games."

Feldman (16-5) came into the game on the best run of his career.

Over his previous four starts, the right-hander allowed only earned run in 26 1-3 innings for a 0.34 ERA. He added five more scoreless innings before the A's finally touched him up.

Feldman, tied for second in the AL in wins, gave up six runs and six hits in 6 1-3 innings. The right-hander lost for the first time since July 29.

"We want to put ourselves in as good a position as possible and we haven't done that the last two days," Feldman said. "Regardless, we're still in this thing. We just need to show the character we've shown all year and move on."

Ryan Sweeney had four RBIs and Adam Kennedy added three more as last-place Oakland won for the sixth time in eight games.

Feldman allowed a second-inning double to Scott Hairston, then retired his next 10 batters. The A's finally broke through with three runs in the sixth and four in the seventh.

Daric Barton doubled leading off the sixth and advanced to third on a fielder's choice.

Kennedy hit a roller between the mound and first that Chris Davis fielded, but the first baseman's throw home was late and Barton scored on the infield single to break the scoreless tie.

Sweeney and Kurt Suzuki each had two-out RBI doubles to extend Oakland's lead to 3-0.

"I didn't execute my pitches or throw the ball where I wanted to," Feldman said.

Tomko, who has a 100-102 career record, allowed one hit through four innings. He gave up leadoff singles in the fifth, sixth and seventh, but all three runners were erased by double plays to end the scoring threats.

His only other shutout was Aug. 26, 2004, with San Francisco against Florida. His previous complete game came in 2005 for the Giants.

"It was easy to fall into a good pace," Tomko said. "Once we got some runs and built a lead, I could smell it a little bit."

Feldman was removed in favor of Jason Grilli after loading the bases in the seventh. Grilli gave up an RBI single to Rajai Davis and a three-run double to Sweeney.

Kennedy added a two-run single in the eighth.

NOTES: Texas 3B Michael Young is still rehabbing a strained hamstring. Young said he'll know on Thursday, an off day, when he'll be able to return to the lineup. ... Oakland RHP Vin Mazzaro, who has missed his last two starts due to right shoulder tendinitis, had another bullpen session. The team is trying to decide whether to shut down Mazzaro for the rest of the season. ... Andrus singled in the seventh to extend his hitting streak to 16 games, a Rangers rookie record.

# MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

## **River Cats, Memphis carry momentum**

John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

Brett Wallace spent nearly half of this season trying to help the Memphis Redbirds move into position for a run at a Pacific Coast League championship.

The River Cats' third baseman's job now, though, is to stop his old team from reaching its goal.

So who better to assess the Memphis-Sacramento PCL title showdown, which is set to begin tonight in Memphis, than the guy who's played for both sides this season?

"They're playing really well," said Wallace, who joined the River Cats on July 25 after being traded. "It's going to be a good series.

"They're a very talented team. They've kind of hit their stride lately."

The Redbirds, 77-67 in the regular season, have won nine of their last 11 games, including a three-game sweep of Albuquerque in the first round of the playoffs.

But the River Cats are on a bit of a roll, too, winning four of their last five games, including a 3-1 first-round series victory over Tacoma.

And history beckons. Sacramento, a league-best 86-57 in the regular season, seeks its third consecutive PCL title and its fifth league crown in the last seven years. Albuquerque (1980-82) was the last team to win three consecutive PCL championships.

Wallace, who started the season at Double-A Springfield, hit .293 with six home runs and 19 RBIs in 62 games for Memphis and .302 with nine homers and 28 RBIs in 44 games for Sacramento.

He said he'd love to keep the River Cats' winning tradition going.

"It would mean a lot," Wallace said. "Look at all the great players that have played for Sacramento. If we can go out and get a third, that's something special to be a part of."

Right-hander Chris Gissell is scheduled to start tonight for Sacramento against left-hander Jaime García. Game 2 is set for Wednesday night in Memphis, where thunderstorms are forecast for the next two days.

River Cats manager Tony DeFrancesco said he considers AutoZone Park a hitter's park, with relatively short porches in left field (319 feet) and right field (322 feet).

"I think that's going to be to our advantage," said DeFrancesco, whose power-hitting lineup includes Wallace, first baseman Chris Carter (four home runs in the four-game Tacoma playoff series), designated hitter Tommy Everidge (12 home runs and 41 RBIs in 52 games) and center fielder Matt Carson (25 homers and 77 RBIs in 118 games).

Wallace, though, said he doesn't consider AutoZone Park hitter-friendly.

"I think it's a pitcher's park," he said.

## **PCL Playoffs: Sacramento, Memphis square off for PCL title**

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

**WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif.** - Three wins is all that separates the Sacramento River Cats from a third consecutive Pacific Coast League championship.



After toppling the Tacoma Rainiers in the playoffs' first round, Sacramento will take on the Memphis Redbirds in the PCL Championship Series starting Tuesday night in Memphis. The River Cats are attempting to become the first team to win three consecutive PCL titles since Albuquerque did it from 1980-82.

**Shown:** *Brett Wallace and the River Cats will take on the Memphis Redbirds for the PCL title. Earlier this season, Wallace was traded from Memphis to Sacramento.*

Games 1 and 2 of the Championship Series will be played at Memphis (both 5:05 p.m. starts) before the series returns to Raley Field for games 3 (Friday, 7:05 p.m.), 4 (Saturday, 7:05 p.m., if necessary) and 5 (Sunday, 1:05 p.m., if necessary).

Right-hander Chris Gissell will start for Sacramento in Game 1. He will be followed by fellow right-handers Chad Reineke (Game 2), Jerome Williams (Game 3), Shawn Chacon (Game 4) and James Simmons (Game 5). Gissell, who was acquired as a free agent by Sacramento in late August after playing the majority of the season in Taiwan, also started Game 1 in Sacramento's first-round series victory over the Tacoma Rainiers. In that start, Gissell allowed two runs and struck out six batters over 5.0 innings to earn the victory and set the tone for a 3-games-to-1 series win.

Sacramento slugger Chris Carter already has four home runs in these playoffs – one in each game of the Tacoma series – and one more Carter bomb will set a River cats record for most home runs in a single postseason.

Sacramento has never faced Memphis in the postseason, but holds a 30-18 all-time regular season record over the Redbirds. The River Cats went 3-1 against Memphis this season (August 14-17), with all four games being played in Memphis' AutoZone Park .

The Championship Series marks the postseason return of River Cats slugger Brett Wallace to Memphis. Wallace was traded from Memphis (the St. Louis Cardinals' Triple-A affiliate) to Sacramento (the Oakland A's Triple-A affiliate) on July 25 in a deal that sent All-Star slugger Matt Holliday from Oakland to St. Louis. Wallace hit .467 with two homers in his regular season return to Memphis during a four-game road trip in August.

### **Refocused pitching staff leads Hounds into TL title series**

By Shawn Shroyer Midland Reporter Telegram

By the end of July, the RockHounds pitching staff's ERA had risen for the third straight month, from 4.60 in April to 5.04.

It was a season-long trend that didn't bode well for the 'Hounds in August as they attempted to nail down the second half championship. The odds of the trend reversing seemed slim. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, the RockHounds' staff posted a 3.73 ERA in August, helping guide the club to the postseason. The staff didn't let up in the RockHounds' Division Series victory against the San Antonio Missions.

"They did an outstanding job," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "We were in every single game to win. I believe (San Antonio) only had the lead on us four innings the entire series. We put up runs and our pitching responded by getting us quick outs and getting us back in the dugout."

Against the Missions, the 'Hounds posted a 2.19 ERA, winning three of the four games. Only Travis Banwart went fewer than six innings and allowed more than two runs among RockHounds starters. The other three starters — Graham Godfrey, Kyle Middleton and Tyson Ross — combined to allow only two earned runs in 19 innings. Godfrey even took a no-hitter into the sixth inning of Game 1.

Not until Game 3 did the Missions score their first run off the RockHounds' bullpen as Mickey Storey and Jon Hunton were dominant in the late innings. It's the kind of all-around pitching RockHounds pitching coach Scott Emerson has known his staff was capable of all season.

"I can't say enough how hard these guys have worked over the course of the season," Emerson said. "You want them peaking in August and they peaked pretty good. It's been fun to watch."

While Godfrey, Middleton and Ross carried the 'Hounds against the Missions, Bush made a somewhat surprising decision

in handing Arnold Leon (2-3, 3.51) the ball for the first game of the Texas League Championship. First pitch for today's series opener with Northwest Arkansas is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. at Citibank Ballpark.

Until August 1, when Leon pitched the first three innings of a combined, seven-inning no-hitter against Corpus Christi, he'd always been a reliever. He hasn't even pitched since his Sept. 4 start against San Antonio, which lasted only 3 1/3 innings.

"(Leon) was set to start Game 5 and he's had a great year," Bush said. "I could have gone with Graham, but Arnold deserves an opportunity to show what he can do. He's worked hard all year."

Leon takes Banwart's place in the rotation, making Banwart's role for the series a bit uncertain. Bush said Banwart would be available to pitch in either Game 1 or Game 2 and, depending on how the first few games go, he could start Game 5.

It will be interesting to see how deep Leon will go into today's game after such a long layoff, but there's no question he's been effective in short spurts as a starter. In his first six starts, he allowed just two earned runs in 27 1/3 innings. The only problem is that averaged out to fewer than five innings per start.

Nevertheless, Emerson credits Leon for part of the staff's turnaround and is confident he'll be up to the challenge. Should the series go to five games, Leon would be in line to take the ball again and today's start could go a long way toward determining whether or not he will.

Leon knew well in advance he might be called upon to open the series and has kept himself fresh during his layoff.

"Bush told me last week that if we got out of the series with San Antonio before the fifth game I might go (today)," Leon said. "I'm excited. I feel ready. I feel good."

**MORE ON ROCKHOUNDS PITCHING:** Although the RockHounds pitching staff's ERA went up each month from April to July, that isn't the only factor the coaching staff takes into judging a staff's effectiveness.

"The ERA might have been climbing, but the shut down innings were getting better and when we had a lead we kept the lead," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "They made a lot of good adjustments, all the way around, in the rotation and the bullpen. These guys went out there with a different mentality."

Also, the staff's batting average against contrasted its ERA.

Despite a 4.60 ERA in April, opposing hitters batted .318, which was the highest average against in any month for the 'Hounds. With a similar ERA in May (4.67), the staff held hitters to a .288 average, 30 points lower than April's mark. Since opponents hit .294 in June, opponents' averages have dropped every month to .284 in July, .271 in August and .259 in September.

September was obviously a small sample size, but that .259 average against contradicted the staff's 5.14 ERA the final seven games of the regular season. During that stretch, the RockHounds clinched a playoff berth, so it just goes to show that numbers don't always tell the whole story.

"When you talk about ERA, for me, ERA is not much of an indication of the pitching staff to the degree of winning ballgames," pitching coach Scott Emerson said. "We did have an ERA, but we also outpitched every team we played against because we had the best record in the league. To me, ERA doesn't really mean anything. Wins and losses, how to pitch and win games is more important."

**'HOUNDS STILL WITHOUT HERNANDEZ:** The RockHounds will be without reliever Carlos Hernandez today as he serves the final game of a three-game suspension for throwing at Missions catcher Mitch Canham in Game 2 of the Division Series.

**SPENCER SNAPS OUT OF SLUMP:** RockHounds outfielder Matt Spencer struggled at the plate down the stretch for the

'Hounds, but he bounced back in a big way against the Missions. In four games he went 7-for-15 with two home runs, two RBI, five runs and two walks. Even after the "Hounds clinched a playoff spot, Spencer stayed in the lineup and his persistence finally paid off.

"I'm just trying to make adjustments and I'm seeing the ball well," Spencer said. "Bush asked how I was feeling and I just had to see some more pitches."

BACK OF THE BULLPEN: Mickey Storey and Jon Hunton shut down the Missions out of the bullpen, with Storey earning a hold and Hunton recording two saves.

The two combined to pitch 8 1/3 innings of scoreless relief. Storey struck out five and allowed three hits in 4 2/3 innings, an impressive showing from a pitcher in his first full season of professional baseball.

"He's done a great job in his first full season," Bush said. "He's eating up innings where you need him to eat up innings. He's doing a great job on top of it."

## **A's Sending 36 Prospects To Instructs**

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OaklandClubhouse.com

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Although the minor league regular season has come to an end, September is a very important month in the area of player development around baseball. The annual Instructional Leagues begin mid-month, and it is a time for many young prospects to get a lot of personal coaching instruction. The Oakland A's will start their Instructional League camp on September 16, sending 36 prospects to Phoenix.

The Oakland A's Instructional League is an annual event held every fall at the A's minor league complex at Papago Park in Phoenix, Arizona. Director of Player Development Keith Lieppman oversees the camp, which this season will be attended by 36 of the A's promising young minor league prospects. Generally, "Instructs" is intended for first- or second-year minor league players who are still getting acclimated to professional baseball. A good portion of the camp is spent in the classroom, where A's prospects learn about different aspects of the game.

A's prospects also get to spend a lot of time receiving one-on-one coaching attention from the organization's minor league instructional staff. Minor league hitting coordinator Greg Sparks, roving defensive coordinator Juan Navarette and pitching coordinator Gil Patterson are on-hand to work with players on mechanical adjustments and adding new elements to their games. For example, last season during Instructs, Patterson helped A's left-handed starting prospect [Anthony Capra](#) alter his change-up, something Capra carried over into a successful 2009 minor league season. A's minor league coaches [Tim Garland](#), [Marcus Jensen](#), [Casey Myers](#), [Haas Pratt](#) and Juan Dilone will also be on-hand to serve as instructors.

Although there is a heavy emphasis on instruction during this camp, there is also a game schedule element. Oakland prospects will be led by Steve Scarsons, who was the Kane County Cougars' manager in 2009 and will act in the same capacity at Instructs. Garvin Alston, the A's minor league rehab coordinator, will act as pitching coach.

Some of the A's brightest – and newest – prospects will be on-hand at Instructs, including 2009 first-round pick [Grant Green](#) and 2009 high school picks [Max Stassi](#), [Royce Consigli](#), [Ian Krol](#) and [Josh Leyland](#). [Michael Ynoa](#), one of the A's top prospects, missed the Arizona Rookie League season with an elbow injury, but the A's are hopeful that he will see some game action towards the middle of Instructs. Another top pitching prospect, Fautino De Los Santos, is expected to participate in the full camp after making only a handful of starts for the A's Rookie League team in 2009. De Los Santos is finishing his recovery from Tommy John surgery, which he had in 2008.

There are a few notable absences from camp, mostly due to injuries, including A's 2009 third-round pick [Justin Marks](#) (groin injury), shortstop [Dusty Coleman](#) (wrist fracture), catcher [Yusuf Carter](#) (broken finger) and third-baseman [Jason Christian](#) (shoulder separation). Some injured players may join camp midway through if their health allows it. Other rehabbing veteran A's prospects, such as first-baseman/outfielder [Sean Doolittle](#), may get some at-bats in Instructs games, as well.

### **Instructs By The Numbers**

**Youngest Player In Camp:** Michael Ynoa, born September 24, 1991

**Oldest Player In Camp:** [Nick Walters](#), born September 30, 1985

**Player To Have Reached Highest Level:** [Mickey Storey](#) and [Justin Souza](#). Both have pitched briefly at Triple-A

**Number Of 2009 Draft Picks:** 19

**Number Of Pitchers:** 22

**Number Of Catchers:** 5

**Number Of Infielders:** 8

**Number Of Outfielders:** 6

Below is the roster of 36 players scheduled to participate in the camp:

**Pitchers:**

Anthony Capra  
Fautino De Los Santos  
[Robert Gilliam](#)  
[Connor Hoehn](#)  
[Ben Hornbeck](#)  
[Brett Hunter](#)  
[Jonathan Joseph](#)  
Ian Krol  
[Chris Mederos](#)  
[Argenis Paez](#)  
[Max Peterson](#)  
[Ryan Quigley](#)  
[Julio Ramos](#)  
[Murphy Smith](#)  
Paul Smyth  
Justin Souza  
[Daniel Straily](#)  
Mickey Storey  
[Daniel Tenholder](#)  
[Daniel Thomas](#)  
Nick Walters  
Michael Ynoa

**Catchers:**

[Chris Affinito](#)  
Josh Leyland  
[Ryan Ortiz](#)  
[Petey Paramore](#)  
Max Stassi

**Infielders:**

[Anthony Aliotti](#)  
[Conner Crumbliss](#)  
[Michael Gilmartin](#)  
Grant Green  
[Tyler Ladendorf](#)  
[Nino Leyja](#)  
[Stephen Parker](#)  
[Jeremy Wells](#)

**Outfielders:**

[Jeremy Barfield](#)  
[Chris Berroa](#)  
Royce Consigli  
[Rashun Dixon](#)  
[Myrio Richard](#)  
[Robin Rosario](#)