

A's News Clips, Monday, September 21, 2009

A's sweep Indians for their seventh straight victory

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

Dana Eveland had trouble mastering Triple-A lineups in his last nine starts with the Sacramento River Cats this season. But he didn't have many problems with the Cleveland Indians on Sunday.

In his first major league start in over two months, Eveland threw five innings and allowed one earned run as the A's completed their second straight series sweep with a 11-4 win over the Indians before an announced crowd of 15,430 at the Oakland Coliseum.

It was the A's first four-game sweep at home since they took four straight from Baltimore on Aug. 23-26, 2004.

"I threw probably eight off-speed pitches out of the 90 I threw. It was sinkers and cutters pretty much the entire game," Eveland said. "(The cutter) has been a savior. It's the missing link in a growing career, that's what I'm hoping for. ... I don't think I gave up a hit on it."

The A's, who have won seven straight games and 12 of their last 14, took a 5-0 lead in the bottom of the second inning as five batters found holes with shallow singles to the outfield. Another run came in on an error by Indians left fielder Trevor Crowe.

"For as many times as I've said that we hit the real ball hard, it evened out quite a bit today," A's manager Bob Geren said. "I've never seen that many (of those type of hits) — Texas-leaguers, bloopers, dorks, flares, whatever you want to call them. We had so many that you could probably name each one of them and not run out of names."

It was enough offense for Eveland, who allowed five hits and recorded his first major league victory since April 26 against Tampa Bay. Eveland hadn't started for the A's since July 7 against Boston, when he allowed four earned runs in 22/3 innings in a 5-2 Oakland loss.

Eveland was designated for assignment after the Boston game, and his results at Triple-A Sacramento since that point were mixed at best. He went 1-5 with a 6.79 ERA in nine starts.

He was recalled on Sept. 1 and likely will make one or two more starts before the season ends as he tries to leave an impression with the team before the start of spring training next year.

"We have a lot of pitchers on staff right now and I'm going to take advantage of every opportunity I can get," Eveland said. "I hope to start another game or two, that would be fantastic. And if I don't, so be it."

The A's added four runs in the bottom of the sixth, highlighted by a two-run homer from Adam Kennedy. Oakland outscored Cleveland 26-11 in the series.

Kennedy is making himself more valuable to the A's with each passing week. He's a career .283 hitter in September but is hitting .400 (26-for-65) this month with 11 multi-hit games. Kennedy is a free agent after the season but said he would like to return to the A's.

"I have no idea what their plans are, I haven't really discussed that with them," Kennedy said. "But I enjoy it here."

The A's (71-78) host Texas for four games before embarking on a six-game road trip through Anaheim and Seattle. They conclude the season with a three-game series at home against the Angels.

The A's still would need to go 11-2 in the final two weeks of the season to finish with their first winning record since 2006. But they'd need just six more wins for their best record under Geren, who took over before the start of the 2007 season. The A's won 76 games in 2007 and 75 last year.

A's notebook: Meloan debuts in style against his old teammates

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

Meloan debuts in style against his old teammates

A's reliever John Meloan said it felt a bit odd to face the Cleveland Indians on Sunday afternoon at the Oakland Coliseum. After all, he was teammates with several current members of the Tribe when he was with Triple-A Columbus earlier this year.

But it didn't prevent the right-hander from having a solid outing in his A's debut. Meloan retired the side in order in the eighth inning and allowed just one hit in the ninth as Oakland earned an 11-4 win.

Meloan finished with three strikeouts, including one against his former Columbus and University of Arizona teammate Trevor Crowe, Cleveland's left fielder.

"He's one of my best friends, so I had to make sure he got the strikeout," Meloan said of Crowe. "But it was good. You're pitching against a team you know and a team that in the past got rid of me. Couple months ago, they didn't want me. So now, here I am, pitching against them. It's a good feeling."

Meloan, 25, was dealt by the Indians to Tampa Bay for reliever Winston Abreu on July 2. He was claimed off waivers by Pittsburgh on Aug. 12 and the A's on Sept. 2. In four playoff games with Triple-A Sacramento, Meloan gave up one hit and didn't allow an earned run.

Along with Jeff Gray, Meloan gives the A's another right-handed middle relief option out of the bullpen.

"At the time (of the trade to Tampa Bay, the Indians) needed some major league bullpen help and I wasn't doing my job in Triple-A," Meloan said. "I guess they had an opportunity to get someone who was more ready at the time. I wish they would have waited around a little bit to let me figure it out, but it worked out for the best and I'm happy here in Oakland."

A's pitcher Brett Tomko has seen a neurologist about the nerve damage in his right arm, but the results won't be known for another day or two, A's manager Bob Geren said. The chances of Tomko pitching again this season are slim, but Geren left the door open for his return if he starts to feel better this week.

Left fielder Scott Hairston, who was hitting .178 (18-for-101) over his last 24 games before Sunday, hit eighth in the A's lineup and was 2-for-3 with two runs and an RBI. ... Outfielder Ryan Sweeney returned after missing the last two games with sore knees and went 2-for-5 with two RBI. ... Matt Carson picked up his first major league RBI with a single to left-center that scored Rajai Davis from second base. Carson had his first big-league hit on Saturday.

Editorial: San Jose's economic analysis of A's stadium is preliminary but promising

Mercury News Editorial 9/21/09

A new report estimating the financial benefits of a downtown baseball stadium gives San Jose's effort to lure the A's a nice boost. But it shouldn't be a surprise to learn that a ballpark will generate millions of dollars of spending and tax revenue. We knew that from the difference the HP Pavilion and the San Jose Sharks have made.

The tax revenue — estimated at about \$5 million a year — would be a net gain for the city and county budgets that pay for public services such as police and firefighting. No general fund money from San Jose will go into construction of the stadium. And that's in addition to about \$86 million in new annual spending from out-of-town ballpark visitors that would help create thousands of jobs.

But the cost-benefit analysis that will count for voters, who'll need to approve the ballpark, is still pending. Before it can be done, a full deal with A's owner Lew Wolff has to be negotiated — including what he'll pay for the land next to Diridon Station that the Redevelopment Agency is purchasing as a site for the stadium. Those talks won't even begin unless baseball owners and Commissioner Bud Selig give permission for the team to move into Santa Clara County, which now is designated as Giants territory.

The purchase or lease price will need to be significant. Despite the tremendous local and regional benefits of a ballpark, the days when cities can just give away land are over.

San Jose officials seem to understand that. Mayor Chuck Reed is a ballpark booster, but baseball has never been his top priority. He's going to want a good overall return on any city investment. And Wolff knows the site is a good one. He wouldn't be considering building his 32,000-seat stadium here if it wouldn't add significantly to the value of the A's franchise.

Besides, Wolff and local baseball boosters know that their chances of gaining voter approval will be slim if the deal is perceived as a giveaway.

That doesn't mean the Redevelopment Agency should contribute nothing to a ballpark project. One of the agency's primary goals is to make investments that will generate revenue for the city's general fund — which an A's ballpark clearly would do. The agency has helped pay for parking and other improvements connected with office developments to bring jobs downtown. The cost-benefit calculation for a ballpark would be similar.

There are still many innings to play before a ballot measure goes to voters, which right now seems likely to happen in November 2010.

So what's next? Major League Baseball has to approve the move, ending the arbitrary designation of San Jose as Giants territory. If that happens — as it should — Wolff and the city will need to negotiate a deal that includes compensation for the land. Only then can the city conduct a more complete economic analysis.

The recent economic benefit study on a ballpark was promising because it used conservative assumptions about future attendance and spending at A's games. But to make an educated decision on a ballpark plan, voters will need to understand all the costs.

A September to remember for A's

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

September is the one month of 2009 that the A's might want to remember.

After an 11-4 victory over the Indians, completing a four-game sweep, Oakland is 13-5 for the month, tied with Boston for the best mark in the majors. The A's seven-game winning streak matches their longest of the season, and for the first time since June 22, the team is seven games below .500.

During the seven-game roll, Oakland has outscored its opponents 45-12. On Sunday, Adam Kennedy had three hits, including a double and a two-run homer, and he drove in three runs.

"We're having fun," Kennedy said. "Guys are getting on base and we're playing hard all the way through."

Pitching has carried the day; Oakland has allowed only nine earned runs in the past seven games, and it doesn't seem to matter which names are plugged into the six-man rotation. On Sunday, it was Dana Eveland's turn, as he replaced Brett Tomko, out with a nerve problem in his right arm.

Eveland, making his seventh start of the season for Oakland and his first since July 7, went five innings and allowed one run on five hits with two walks. He also made good use of his new cutter, which he has had just a month or so after learning it from minor-league instructor Gil Patterson.

"That's been a savior," said Eveland, who struck out two. "That's the missing link. ... I've thrown it the last three starts and got a ton of outs."

Another pitcher, John Meloan, made his A's debut and he worked the final two innings and allowed a hit and a walk and an unearned run while striking out three. The right-hander, acquired on waivers from Pittsburgh on Sept. 2, started the year with Cleveland before going to Tampa Bay; Oakland is his fourth organization this season.

"It was kind of weird - I played with half of that team for half this year when I was in (Triple-A) Columbus," Meloan said. "A team that didn't want me a couple of months ago and got rid of me and now I'm pitching against them, it's a good feeling."

Meloan was particularly pleased to strike out his former Columbus and University of Arizona teammate Trevor Crowe, who's one of his best friends.

Kennedy hadn't played the previous two games and he joked before the game that he was "excited and nervous" to see his name in the lineup. The time off didn't hurt, as he extended his hitting streak to seven games by providing one of the A's parade of soft hits in the second. The inning began when Indians starter Fausto Carmona plunked Kurt Suzuki on the left shoulder, and the rest of the inning was a series of dinks and bloopers that led to five runs.

"For as many times as I've said, 'We hit the ball hard today with no luck,' it evened out a lot today," Oakland manager Bob Geren said with a laugh.

The A's also got the benefit of an error by Crowe on a flare to left by Cliff Pennington. Crowe had to deal with a tough sun, but he told reporters "even if you're struck by lightning," the play should still be made.

Scott Hairston, batting eighth for the first time this season, had a double, a single and a sacrifice fly and he scored two runs.

Matt Carson, who recorded his first two big-league hits the day before, had his first big-league RBI Sunday with a pinch-hit single in the eighth.

Cust wants to return in 2010

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Jack Cust said he'd like to be back next year, but he looks around and sees the many young outfielders and hears of the up-and-coming designated-hitter types and he knows that the team might be looking in another direction.

"Maybe, I don't know," he said. "It's looking more like it. ... I hope I'm back, but it's not my decision and I know they have some things to think about, if they want to spend that money on me or someone else. There are a lot of guys I'm sure they want to look at. They've showed they want to go young."

Cust, 30, is arbitration eligible again, and he's making \$2.8 million this season. **Landon Powell** could be a DH candidate; so could **Eric Chavez** if he is not able to play third regularly after his second back surgery.

Several of the team's most promising prospects play first or the outfield, and the DH spot could handle the overflow should **Daric Barton**, **Chris Carter** and **Sean Doolittle** all join the roster next year.

Cust didn't play Friday or Saturday when the A's used right-handed-heavy lineups. He was back in Sunday and had two hits.

"We know what Jack can do," assistant general manager **David Forst** said. "That doesn't mean Jack is not in our plans. We want to find out what some of these other guys are capable of. Jack has been the best hitter on our team for a while, even though he's scuffled a bit of late, especially against left-handers.

"We have a lot of question marks (for next year). There are some guys at Triple-A we think can play here, and **Rajai Davis, Ryan Sweeney** and **Scott Hairston** have done a good job in the outfield, but there are no sure things."

Briefly: Manager **Bob Geren** said it's unlikely **Brett Tomko** will pitch again this year. ... Oakland's six-game home winning streak is its longest in three years.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser

Payback on their minds? Texas comes to the Coliseum for four games starting tonight after getting swept by Oakland last week, dimming the Rangers' playoff hopes. A's manager Bob Geren said: "They'll be coming in hard."

A's sweep Tribe, on seven-game roll

Eveland delivers a solid start backed by Kennedy & Co.

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Dana Eveland pitched like he wanted another chance to start this season.

Eveland would have received another start no matter what happened Sunday. Pitching five strong innings only enhanced his chances.

"They haven't told me if I will be starting again," Eveland. "I hope to start but I don't question it either way. I'll just do what they tell me."

A's manager Bob Geren confirmed afterward that Eveland would remain in Brett Tomko's spot.

"It was a respectable outing," Geren said. "He kept throwing strikes."

Eveland (2-3) won his first Major League game since April 26 by giving up one run on five hits as the Athletics completed a four-game sweep of the Cleveland Indians with an 11-4 victory.

It was the first time since Aug. 26-29, 2005, at Baltimore that the A's have swept a four-game set.

"This is the most fun I've had in this clubhouse since I've been here," Eveland said. "Everything is clicking right now and it would be hard not to be positive."

Eveland went to Triple-A Sacramento to work on his pitching. What he found was a new pitch.

He worked with A's roving Minor League pitching instructor Gil Patterson on developing a cutter.

"It's pretty much been a career saver, or at least I hope so," Eveland said. "It's the missing link. I threw it in my last three Triple-A starts and got a lot of outs."

Patterson, whose own pitching career was cut short due to an injury, has become somewhat of a guru.

"Gil the Genius," Eveland said, "the cutter master."

Eveland walked two and struck out two as the A's matched their season-best seven-game winning streak. The A's have never trailed during the streak.

Eveland stayed with the sinker and cutter the whole game and said he was able to get a lot of "soft outs."

The biggest threat Eveland faced was Jhonny Peralta's broken bat in the fourth inning, which bounced up the middle. Eveland needed to skip over the loose piece.

With Tomko likely out for the remainder of the season and the A's committed to a six-man rotation, Eveland will start against the Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim on Saturday.

Adam Kennedy had three hits and drove in three runs, two on his 11th home run of the season in the sixth. Ryan Sweeney drove in two runs, with Rajai Davis, Daric Barton, Cliff Pennington, Scott Hairston and Matt Carson supplementing the offense with an RBI each.

"When you put the ball in play, good things happen," Kennedy said. "The offense has an identity right now. We're having fun and we're getting on base."

Davis, who had two hits, is one of the hottest hitters in baseball since June 1. He owns the fifth-best batting average in the Majors, at .340, in that span.

Hairston, Sweeney and Jack Cust also each added a pair of hits to the A's cause.

Oakland hitters and Cleveland fielders all contributed to give Eveland a 5-0 lead in the second inning.

Kurt Suzuki was struck by a pitch on the 'u' of his name-tag on his uniform to open the inning and both Cust and Mark Ellis had bloop singles to load the bases. After Barton hit a sacrifice fly, Hairston singled softly to load the bases again ahead of Pennington, whose ensuing pop up was somehow misplayed by Cleveland left fielder Trevor Crowe, allowing Ellis to score.

"For every time I've said we hit the ball hard with nothing to show for it, it evened out quite a bit," Geren said. "It's rare to see that many [bloop singles] in a row. It was absolutely luck and absolutely the sun."

Kennedy and Davis singled home runs and Sweeney's groundout also scored a run for the A's.

Oakland's offense went into hibernation afterward as Fausto Carmona retired 11 of the next 12 hitters until he tired in the sixth.

"That had to be very frustrating and tough luck for Fausto," Kennedy said. "We got a few balls to drop but he stayed in there and toughed it out."

Pennington and Sweeney each added RBI doubles in the sixth to break open the game.

Jerry Blevins and John Meleon, making his A's debut, each pitched two innings to finish off the victory.

Meleon became the 49th player used by the A's this season, the fourth-highest total in Oakland history.

"He threw a lot harder than I thought," Geren said. "He hasn't pitched two innings in a game for a while. He's definitely going to be in the mix."

The A's are 40-35 since June 29.

A's expect tough series from Rangers

Oakland (71-78) vs. Texas (81-67), 7:05 p.m. PT

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The Athletics delivered a knockout punch the last time they met the Rangers, sweeping them in Texas last week and outscoring them, 19-1, in the three-game set.

The Rangers come to Oakland not only looking for a measure of revenge, but to remain relevant in the Wild Card race.

The A's have been streaking lately, but they know what they might face when the four-game series opens Monday.

"We had a good series there and they've won some big games lately," A's manager Bob Geren said. "They are coming in trying to stay in the race and they will be coming hard. We look forward to the competition."

The A's have put together a remarkable string of games since losing two in a row to the Seattle Mariners on Sept. 3-4. They are 12-2 since then, taking a series in Minnesota before sweeping the Rangers and Indians.

Should the Twins and/or Rangers miss the playoffs, it will likely be because they ran into the A's when they were playing their best baseball.

Geren said right-hander Edgar Gonzalez will not be restricted in any way even though he is making just his fifth start of the season among 25 appearances.

Gonzalez pitched four innings in relief of Dana Eveland against the Rangers last week, allowing a run on four hits. He's pitched three times over the past 36 games.

Pitching matchup

OAK: RHP Edgar Gonzalez (0-2, 4.74 ERA)

Oakland's designated long reliever for most of the season, Gonzalez was moved into the rotation as its sixth man as the club tries to limit the workload of its young starters. Gonzalez hasn't pitched much of late, with only six outings since July 27, but he faced the Rangers in his most recent assignment and pitched well, holding Texas to a run -- David Murphy hit a solo homer -- over four-plus innings.




TEX: RHP Kevin Millwood (10-10, 3.94 ERA)

Millwood is making his first start since an 8-3 loss to the Mariners in which he allowed five runs in 32/3 innings. He has spent the time since then working in the bullpen with pitching coach Mike Maddux. He is 2-5 with a 6.29 ERA in 12 starts since the beginning of July. He is 3-7 with a 4.71 ERA in 14 starts on the road. Millwood is 1-0 with a 2.57 ERA in two starts against Oakland this year and 5-3 with a 3.66 ERA in 15 starts against them lifetime.

Tidbits

Mark Ellis has a career .414 average (12-29) against Millwood, but has never driven in a run against him. ... On the other hand, Adam Kennedy is 1-14 (.071) against the Rangers' right-hander, with that hit being a home run. ... Jack Cust has an unusual line against Millwood, hitting .190 (4-21) with no home runs, but four RBIs. He's also struck out 11 times and walked six times against Millwood. ... After losing five of their first seven games against the Rangers, the A's have won seven of the past eight. ... The A's will likely finish with a winning September, which would be their first winning month since June of 2008. ... The A's need one more win against the Rangers to clinch their first season series win since going 11-8 against them in 2005. The A's lead the season series 9-6.

Up next

- Tuesday: Athletics (Trevor Cahill, 9-12, 4.54) vs. Rangers (Brandon McCarthy, 7-3, 4.97), 7:05 p.m. PT 
- Wednesday: Athletics (Clay Mortensen, 2-2, 6.12) vs. Rangers (Tommy Hunter, 8-4, 3.25), 7:05 p.m. PT 
- Thursday: Athletics (Brett Anderson, 10-10, 4.21) vs. Rangers (TBD), 12:35 p.m. PT 

A's shine a light on closer Bailey

Club pushes for AL Rookie of the Year honors for righty

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- It was Andrew Bailey T-shirt day at Oakland Coliseum on Sunday and the Oakland Athletics took the opportunity to promote their All-Star for American League Rookie of the Year.

Bailey certainly has the numbers to make a case for the award. He's 6-3 with a 1.95 ERA and an Oakland rookie record 25 saves, including the last 20 in succession entering Sunday's series finale against the Cleveland Indians.

"He needs to keep doing what he's doing and not think about winning the award," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Just stay aggressive, fearless. There's nothing else he needs to be told."

Bailey didn't have much time to comment. He was busy autographing the promotional T-shirts.

The A's currently have a petition, which fans are asked to sign in support of Bailey's effort. It will be sent to the president of the Baseball Writers Association in hopes of raising awareness.

"It's an outlet for the fans to show their appreciation for the season Andrew Bailey is having," said an Oakland Athletics' official (two active voting members for the award were in attendance).

It helps that Bailey is in the midst of a spectacular season. He was the lone rookie named from either league to the All-Star team this season.

Bailey appeared in 14 games before he recorded his first save, a two-inning effort against the Toronto Blue Jays on May 8. By then he was already 3-0 with a pair of holds and a blown save.

He began his consecutive save streak against the Los Angeles Dodgers on June 17, a week after giving up three runs in an inning to run his ERA to a season high 2.58.

He's been nearly unhittable since.

"We try to teach everybody to focus on things they can control," Geren said. "Andrew has no control over the voters, so all he can do is control what he does on the mound."

He's already tied with the Orioles' Jorge Julio for the seventh-most saves by a rookie (2002), currently ranks second among AL relievers in strikeouts (85) and opponents' batting average (.176) and was named AL Rookie of the Month for August.