

## A's News Clips, Monday, October 26, 2009

### Grading the 2009 baseball predictions: Buzz Ryan had Giants/A's nailed, whoever he is

Posted by [Tim Kawakami](#), San Jose Mercury News, 10/24/09

[The predictions were made last April](#) by five Merc writers.

Some of us are still writing for the Merc; several who made these wise guesses are not. And that's a great, undeniable loss of the Merc. Amazing and depressing how the world changes in just one baseball season.

OK. On to the review of our baseball picks, which I always do because I like to see who got it right, what the expectations were generally, how the local teams and players performed vs. our guesses, and who stunk it up bad. (Often me.)

Why make pre-season predictions if you don't go back and see how they look after the season?

Summary: I can't believe it, but the guy who used to be Buzz Ryan just crushed everybody else. I made fun of him a bit when he predicted that the Giants would be good and I was incorrect. That almost never happens!

He was right on the Giants. Right on the A's (guessed that they'd be under .500, the rest of us said over. .500. Right on Philadelphia in the World Series (nobody else had a single potential WS contestant, including LAA OR Yankees).

John Ryan: Your moment is here. Whoever you are.

—THE PREDICTIONS and RESULTS/

-Giants win-loss record: Miedema 79-83, Killion 80-82, TK 78-84, Purdy 80-82, Ryan 85-77. Actual: 88-74. Best predictor: Ryan.

-Giants' finish: Miedema 3rd, Killion 2nd, TK 3rd, Purdy 2nd, Ryan 1<sup>st</sup>. Actual: 3rd. Best predictor: Miedema, TK.

-A's win-loss record: Miedema 84-78, Killion 86-76, TK 83-79, Purdy 82-80, Ryan 81-81. Actual: 75-87. Best predictor: Ryan.

-A's place: Miedema 2nd, Killion 2nd, TK 2nd, Purdy 2nd, Ryan 3rd. Actual: 4th. Best predictor: Ryan.

-Tim Lincecum record: Miedema 16-6, Killion 19-6, TK 18-8, Purdy 16-12, Ryan 21-6. Actual: 15-7. Best predictor: Miedema.

-Giants' all-star: Miedema Lincecum, Killion Lincecum, TK Lincecum, Purdy Randy Johnson, Ryan Lincecum. Actual: Lincecum. Best predictors: LM, AK, TK, JR.

-A's all-star: Miedema Orlando Cabrera, Killion Matt Holliday, TK Holliday, Purdy Cabrera, Ryan Kurt Suzuki. Actual: Andrew Bailey. Best predictor: None.

-A's HR leader: Miedema Jason Giambi 32, Killion Giambi 36, TK Jack Cust 30, Purdy Cust 32, Ryan Holliday 34. Actual: Cust 25. Best predictor: TK.

-Giants HR leader: Miedema Rowand 16, Killion Pablo Sandoval 18, TK Bengie Molina 15, Purdy Travis Ishikawa 18, Ryan Pablo Sandoval 21. Actual: Sandoval 25. Best predictor: Ryan.

-World Series: Miedema NY Mets-Boston, Killion Boston-Dodgers, TK Boston-NY Mets, Purdy White Sox-Cubs, Ryan Boston-Philadelphia. Actual: Philadelphia-NY Yankees/Angels. Best predictor: Ryan is the only one who got even one team.

—My other predictions...

-My guess on A's pitcher with most wins: Brett Anderson 13. Actual: Anderson 11.

-My guess on combined wins by Anderson, Trevor Cahill and Vin Mazzaro: 22. Actual: 25.

-My guess on combined wins by Barry Zito and Randy Jonnson: 23. Actual 18. (Zito 10, Johnson 8.)

-My guess on Zito ERA: 4.99. Actual: 4.03.

-My guess on Eric Chavez games played: 90. Actual: 8.

-My guess on Ryan Sweeney HRs: 12. Actual 6.

-My guess on Sandoval batting average: .305. Actual: .330.

-My guess on Rowand HRs: 10. Actual: 15

## **Saturday's AFL roundup**

### **Minor, Saguaros post first shutout of the season**

MLB.com

Saguaros 6, Javelinas 0

Mike Minor, the Braves' first-round pick in the 2009 Draft, scattered three hits over three innings and combined with six relievers on the first shutout of the season as the Saguaros won the latest battle of Peoria. Reds prospect Yonder Alonso and Brandon Hicks (Braves) delivered two-run singles for the Saguaros. Southern League All-Star Jordan Danks (White Sox) had two hits for the Javelinas to raise his average to .424.

Solar Sox 4, Rafters 3 (10 innings)

Blue Jays prospect David Cooper homered with two outs in the 10th inning as Mesa halted a two-game slide. Surprise rallied in the ninth on back-to-back homers by former first-round pick Ike Davis (Mets) and red-hot Yankees prospect Brandon Laird. Hank Conger (Angels) drilled a two-run blast and Steve Singleton (Twins) had a sacrifice fly for the Solar Sox, who got five strong innings from Red Sox farmhand Randor Bierd. Jarrod Dyson (Royals) collected three hits, including a run-scoring triple, for the Rafters.

Desert Dogs 7, Scorpions 3

Orioles prospect Matt Angle went 3-for-5 for his fifth straight multi-hit game, grabbed a share of the AFL lead with his sixth stolen base and scored twice as Phoenix cruised past Scottsdale. Brandon Waring (Orioles) collected three RBIs for the Desert Dogs, while Diamondbacks first baseman Brandon Allen went 3-for-3 with a run-scoring double for the Scorpions.

## **Red-hot Angle sparks Desert Dogs**

### **Orioles prospect records fifth straight multi-hit game**

By Daren Smith / MLB.com 10/24/09

The fact that Matt Angle has logged five straight multi-hit games for the Arizona Fall League's Phoenix Desert Dogs came as news to Matt Angle.

"Really?" the Orioles outfield prospect asked after Saturday's three-hit night. "When you're not playing every day, sometimes it's hard to keep track."

Angle went 3-for-5, grabbed a share of the league lead with his sixth stolen base and scored twice as the Desert Dogs cruised to a 7-3 victory over the Scottsdale Scorpions.

The 2007 seventh-round Draft pick might not be the best known prospect among the Orioles' contingent, but he's making a name for himself in the AFL. Angle is 13-for-25 with 10 runs scored during his current tear to raise his average to .406.

"I just wanted to come out here and play, get some experience," he said. "There are some great players out there and I just wanted to compete with them. I was excited to play some winter ball."

Even when he struggled in his first two Fall League games, going 0-for-7, the Ohio State product drew three walks, stole a couple of bases and scored a run.

"I definitely already made a couple of adjustments," he said after working with coaches Moe Hill and Brian McArn. "I shortened up a little bit from the first week I was here. I'm using my hands a lot more than my body."

Angle hit .289 with 40 steals at Class A Advanced Frederick this season before a brief stint at Double-A Bowie. He attributes his recent success at the plate to preparation.

"I try to get t the cage early," he said. "I take the same number of swings every day going into the game. ... I just try to see pitches and when the opportunity's there to steal, I try to take advantage. I don't try to force anything too much."

Angle helped the Desert Dogs (7-4) erase an early two-run deficit. Held to two hits over four innings by Scorpions starter Joe Martinez (Giants), Phoenix scored five times in the fifth. A.J. Jimenez (Blue Jays) and Angle had RBI base hits, former first-round pick Chris Marrero (Nationals) delivered a two-run single and Brandon Waring (Orioles) drew a bases-loaded walk.

Waring capped the Desert Dogs' scoring with a two-run double in the seventh.

Ryohei Tanaka (1-1), an Orioles farmhand who rooms with Angle, got the win after tossing 3 1/3 innings of scoreless relief.

Diamondbacks first baseman Brandon Allen went 3-for-3 with an RBI double for Scottsdale (6-5).

## **Paul VI grad Bailey made grade as Oakland closer**

By Marc Narducci, Inquirer Columnist 10/24/09

The down-time has passed and Oakland A's closer Andrew Bailey is itching to get back to work. The 2002 Paul VI graduate may have exceeded expectation more than any professional athlete this year.

Over the last year or so, Bailey went from struggling minor league starting pitcher to All-Star major league closer.

The big story was supposed to have taken place in April when Bailey overcame the longest of odds just to make the Oakland roster. However, he kept exceeding others' expectations, but not his own.

After moving to the bullpen midway through the 2008 season for Double-A Midland, Texas, Bailey has surely found his niche.

In posting a 0.66 ERA in 12 spring training appearances, Bailey had shown enough to make the A's. And once he earned his spot, Bailey kept moving to the back of the bullpen until he inherited the closer's role.

This season, he was 6-3 with a 1.84 ERA in 68 games. Along the way, Bailey struck out 91 batters in 83 1/3 innings and earned 26 saves

So now the 25-year-old Bailey is enjoying an offseason like none other, where he has a bit of security but still guards against complacency.

"I still feel I have to make the team and if you think you have it made, bad things can happen," Bailey said in a recent phone interview. "If you are not working every day to make the team, somebody is there to take that spot."

Bailey should know. He was one of those who took someone else's spot and never relinquished it.

He has taken a few weeks off since the season ended, but is already starting to gear up for next year.

Bailey isn't getting too wrapped up in Rookie of the Year talk; he's among many candidates in a deep American League field.

"Going into last year, my goal was to make the team and make an impression," Bailey said.

Then he went on to make the American League All-Star team.

"I won't be disappointed if I don't win the (Rookie of the Year) award," Bailey said. "Obviously, I would be honored and thrilled if it did happen, but it's not something I think about a lot."

Bailey admits that he was a little bushed at season's end.

"I was tired," he said. "The adjustment for me was not so much the innings, but . . . the times getting game-ready and not going in, and having to go in the next day to pitch."

He's always afraid to dwell too much on his successful rookie season because in baseball and any other sport, it's all about looking ahead.

Still, he said he'll always get a good feeling when thinking about what it was like walking into the American League locker room during for the All-Star gathering in St. Louis.

"It was awesome and something I will never forget," he said. "It was so sweet to walk in and see guys like Jonathan Papelbon, Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera. Being selected to the All-Star team was an eye-opening experience."

Even though he's a pro and an All-Star, Bailey remains a fan. And he says that he is pulling for the Phillies to repeat as World Series champion.

Growing up in Haddon Heights and with his parents now living in Medford, Bailey and his family are huge Philadelphia sports fans.

"You can't go to the doctor's office and withdraw the Philly blood," he said laughing. "The Eagles, Sixers, Flyers, and Phillies, those are the teams I grew up watching and rooting for."

And he still roots. Now, there are so many South Jersey people who knew Bailey who are also A's fans.

It's hard not to root for someone who hasn't forgotten his own roots. And he has remained grounded, despite his remarkable story.

Next offseason, Bailey plans to get married. But before then, he has another Major League season to prepare for.

Bailey understood the hard work required to get to where he is now. And after a few weeks of putting his feet on the couch, he's ready to start again, determined to pick up where he left off during an incredible first season that won't need a Rookie of the Year award for validation.

## **Making the grade: Defense**

### **Beat writer Mychael Urban assesses A's fielders**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

"Making the Grade" is a four-part series analyzing the performances of various units of the 2009 Oakland A's. It kicked off last Wednesday with [starting pitching](#), followed by a look at the [bullpen](#) last Friday and the [offense](#) this Wednesday. Today, the final installment: defense.

OAKLAND -- The A's made 107 errors in 2003, then made fewer than 100 in each of the next five seasons. With that as a barometer, the 105 errors in 2009 -- tied for fourth-most in the American League -- represented a regression.

Not good news for a team bereft of power and heavily reliant on starting pitching.

In this case, however, the numbers lied a touch. Oakland's defense was downright bad in the season's final 15 games, making 20 errors over that stretch, but it was otherwise fairly solid.

To wit: Four of the six errors committed in right field were made by Jack Cust and Aaron Cunningham, and Matt Holliday made four errors in left and was below average in general on defense. Cunningham played in all of 16 games, and Cust probably shouldn't be playing the outfield at all; if he's back in Oakland next year, it'll be primarily as a designated hitter.

Also of note: Adam Kennedy made 13 of his career-high 20 errors at third base, a position he'd never before played with any regularity as a professional. And shortstop Orlando Cabrera made 14 errors before he was traded in late July.

Thus, the defense was better than it appears statistically. There were some growing pains, as evidenced by rookie shortstop Cliff Pennington's eight errors in 60 games, but Pennington was much better than the numbers suggest.

(Note: Only position players who appeared in at least 40 games are graded; Oakland's pitchers made 13 errors on the year, and only Dallas Braden (three) made more than one. Players who didn't finish the year in the organization are excluded, too, but their performances factored into the overall grade.)

Overall: B

Outfielder Ryan Sweeney was a human highlight reel, turning in sensational plays in center and right field. He also racked up 12 assists before teams flat-out stopped testing his exceptionally strong and accurate arm. "A+."

Catcher Kurt Suzuki didn't just play virtually every day. He played extremely well, posting a .995 fielding percentage while handling an extremely young staff with aplomb. Another "A+."

Second baseman Mark Ellis missed two month with a calf strain, and his .990 fielding percentage in 105 games (five errors) represented a drop-off from his typical excellence. But he gets to balls many at his position don't get to, he always makes the right play, and he's the rare second sacker who truly quarterbacks the infield. "A."

First baseman Daric Barton only played in 51 games, but he's improved dramatically on defense since his callup in 2007. He made one error and posted a .998 fielding percentage. A solid "A."

Outfielder Rajai Davis made four errors in 118 games, but he offset them with eight assists and by getting to a lot more balls than a typical center fielder. He wasn't always pretty, but he was pretty darned good. "A-."

Infielder Bobby Crosby had to learn three infield positions on the fly, and while he struggled at third base (seven errors in 42 games there), he was perfect in 51 games at first base and only made one error while filling in at second base. "B."

Outfielder Scott Hairston made one error in 57 games. His arm isn't great, but he makes the smart play. His routes need work, but he was solid overall. "C+."

Shortstop Cliff Pennington went through the same kind of trial-by-fire initiation to the big leagues that was thrown at Suzuki a few years back. He wasn't close to perfect, but he turned in some outstanding plays and showed off a cannon of an arm, suggesting that with improved footwork, he'll be an above-average defender before long. "C."

Catcher/first baseman Landon Powell made three errors in 36 games behind the plate and one error in six games at first base. Tough to grade someone on so little work, but anything more than a "C" would suggest he was above-average, and he wasn't.

Infielder Adam Kennedy ended the season with a resounding thud at the hot corner, making errors of every variety. He's an excellent second baseman and performed well in Ellis' stead, and he was OK at third base until late August, but you have to take the whole season into account and give him a "C-."

Outfielder Jack Cust should have been charged with more errors. He doesn't take good routes to the ball, and he played a number of singles into doubles or worse. He's not as awful as fans seem to think, but he's a DH. Period. A somewhat generous "C-."

## **Friday's AFL roundup**

## Laird continues surge with three hits, five RBIs

MLB.com

Rafters 15, Desert Dogs 12

Yankees prospect Brandon Laird broke out of a slump with three hits, including his second AFL homer, and five RBIs as Surprise outslugged Phoenix. Futures Game selection and Texas League All-Star Daryl Jones (Cardinals) homered, doubled twice, drove in two runs and scored a pair for the Rafters, while Colin Curtis (Yankees) went 3-for-4 with two RBIs. Athletics prospect Grant Desme went 3-for-4 with a tape-measure solo homer and three runs scored for the Desert Dogs, who also got three hits and three runs scored from Matt Angle (Orioles). [Game story](#) | [Box score](#)

Saguaros 11, Solar Sox 10

Zach Cozart homered twice and drove in four runs to power Peoria past Mesa. The Reds' second-round pick in the 2007 Draft opened the scoring with a solo shot in the second inning, lifted a sacrifice fly in the fifth and capped a five-run sixth with a two-run blast. Matt McBride collected three hits and two RBIs to raise his AFL average to .391 for the Saguaros. Fellow Indians Minor Leaguer Connor Graham escaped a bases-loaded jam in the ninth to record his first save. Florida State League All-Star Chris Parmelee (Twins) homered, tripled and drove in five runs for the Solar Sox. [Game story](#) | [Box score](#)

Scorpions 8, Javelinas 7

Brandon Crawford's infield hit in the bottom of the ninth inning scored Phillies prospect Domonic Brown with the winning run after Scottsdale squandered a seven-run lead in the top of the inning. Diamondbacks right-hander Bryan Augenstein pitched three dominant frames for the Scorpions, striking out five while allowing one hit. Southern League All-Star Jordan Danks (White Sox) started Peoria's ninth-inning comeback with a single and capped it with a bases-loaded double. [Game story](#) | [Box score](#)

## Laird carrying success over to AFL

### Yankees prospect drives in five in Rafters' slugfest

By Daren Smith / MLB.com

Brandon Laird admits there weren't a lot of games like this in the Florida State League.

The Yankees prospect snapped out of a slump with three hits, including his second Arizona Fall League home run, and five RBIs on Friday as the Surprise Rafters held on for a wild 15-12 victory over the Phoenix Desert Dogs.

"The ball flies out here," said Laird, who helped the Tampa Yankees capture the FSL championship last month. "Over there, it's a tough league. There's no crowd, it's hot, the ball doesn't carry real well."

The ball's been carrying well in Arizona for the former 27th-round pick, who's tied for second in AFL with 13 RBIs in seven games. Laird had hits in nine of his first 11 at-bats for the Rafters, then scuffled through a 2-for-18 stretch before another big afternoon Friday.

"I was getting my pitches [early on], then I got real anxious in my approach," he explained. "I kept working on it in batting practice."

The younger brother of Detroit Tigers catcher Gerald Laird singled and scored in the second inning, then delivered a two-run double and came home again in the sixth to give Surprise a 6-3 cushion.

The Rafters (7-3) appeared to blow the game open with an eight-run seventh, keyed by Laird's three-run blast. But Phoenix (6-4) answered with eight runs in the bottom half.

"I'm loving it [out here]," Laird said. "We've got a good team and I've got some good buddies I played with growing up. We're just having fun."

"I ended the season real well, looking to carry it over here. I'm just hoping it can keep going."

Futures Game selection and Texas League All-Star Daryl Jones (Cardinals) homered, doubled twice, drove in two runs and scored a pair for Surprise. Colin Curtis (Yankees) went 3-for-4 with two RBIs and Mike Moustakas (Royals) and Mitch Moreland (Rangers) each scored twice.

On a rough afternoon for pitchers, Rangers left-hander Matt Harrison (1-0) tossed a scoreless inning for the win.

Athletics prospect Grant Desme went 3-for-4 with a tape-measure solo homer and three runs scored for the Desert Dogs. Matt Angle (Orioles) also collected three hits and scored three times.

Nationals first-rounder Drew Storen was a bright spot out of the Phoenix bullpen, retiring all five batters he faced.

## **Thursday's AFL roundup**

### **Strasburg shell-shocked in his second professional start**

MLB.com

Javelinas 9, Desert Dogs 6

No. 1 overall Draft pick Stephen Strasburg was roughed up over 2 2/3 innings in the second start of his pro career, allowing eight earned runs on seven hits -- including three homers -- on Thursday. Russ Mitchell and C.J. Retherford hit back-to-back homers in the first inning and Casper Wells hit a two-out slam to dead center field in the third. Strasburg's third start is slated for Tuesday against the Peoria Saguaros at Phoenix Municipal Stadium. [Game story](#) | [Box score](#)

Scorpions 11, Solar Sox 1

Brandon Allen homered, doubled and drove in three runs and fellow Diamondbacks prospect Cole Gillespie had three of Scottsdale's 19 hits in a rout of Mesa. Hector Gomez (Rockies) and Phillies prospects Domonic Brown and Tuffy Gosewisch each drove in two runs. Hector Gomez (Rockies) and Phillies prospects Domonic Brown and Tuffy Gosewisch each drove in two runs. [Game story](#) | [Box score](#)

Rafters 3, Saguaros 2

Former third-round pick Blake Wood bounced back from a previous rough outing and allowed four hits over three scoreless innings for Surprise. The Rafters gave up a two-run lead in the ninth inning, but rallied back to beat Peoria at Surprise Stadium. Mets prospect Ruben Tejada's two-out single plated Colin Curtis (Yankees) for the walk-off win. [Game story](#) | [Box score](#)

### **Strasburg takes loss in second AFL start**

#### **Right-hander allows seven hits, including three homers**

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

PEORIA, Ariz. -- It was a learning experience for the Nationals' Stephen Strasburg on Thursday at Peoria Stadium. In his second Arizona Fall League start for the Phoenix Desert Dogs, the No. 1 pick in the nation plummeted to earth.

Strasburg allowed eight earned runs and seven hits, including three homers (one a grand slam), in a 9-6 loss to the Peoria Javelinas. It was his first look at that kind of disaster. Take note that he gave up only 16 earned runs in 15 college starts this season for San Diego State, for which he was 13-1 with a 1.32 ERA during his junior year.

In his two AFL starts, he's 1-1 with a 10.50 ERA. Welcome to professional baseball.

Start No. 3 is slated for next Tuesday at 2:35 p.m. ET against the Peoria Saguaros at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

"I felt pretty good, but I just wasn't able to work ahead in the count," Strasburg said. "I left some pitches up, and I know what I need to fix. Part of getting back into game shape is, you're going to have some good games and some bad ones. It's all about learning from it, and I feel I learned a lot from this outing."

Strasburg had only worked 8 1/3 innings since his final college start -- on June 1 to Virginia in a 5-1 loss at the NCAA baseball regionals. In addition, he was accustomed to pitching once a week in college -- every Friday. This was the first time the 22-year-old right-hander and San Diego native has been used in a five-day rotation, and it showed.

This past Friday night in Phoenix, adrenaline carried Strasburg through a 3 1/3-inning win, during which he allowed no runs on two singles, walked one and struck out two. On Thursday, in front of a crowd of 471, he seemed out of kilter right from the outset, although he whiffed four.

The second batter he faced, Jordan Danks, lined a single. With two out, Russ Mitchell and C.J. Retherford hit back-to-back homers, and suddenly, Strasburg was down, 3-0. Casper Wells hit a two-out slam to dead center in the third, making it 8-3. All of the homers came on pitches high in the zone. A batter later, he was pulled, having thrown his required 60 pitches.

Strasburg couldn't remember the last time he was struck for three homers in a single game, but it certainly wasn't during his last two collegiate seasons, when he became a national sensation as a starter after serving as the Aztecs' closer during his freshman season in 2007.

"I haven't faced professional hitters my entire life," he said in explanation. "I'm sure there were times in college when my stuff wasn't very good and I got away with it. These guys can hit mistakes. This isn't college baseball. These are Double-A, top prospects in each of their organizations. They can all hit and all have a plan out there."

Mitchell's homer came on an 0-1, 96-mph fastball. Retherford and Wells hit curveballs that hung in the zone.

"Those were the only two pitches I hung all day," he said.

According to MLB.com's Pitch F/X tracker, Strasburg topped out at 99 mph on the first batter, Lorenzo Cain, who struck out. He also threw two 98-mph pitches in that at-bat.

Even so, Strasburg said that he didn't trust his pitches. When asked what he learned about the pelting, Strasburg said:

"I learned that you've really got to trust your stuff. I came out today, and I really didn't trust it. I hit my spots well, and I wasn't getting the calls. So I tried to make an even better pitch rather than sticking with that spot and really working it. Bottom line is that I really need to go out there and trust in my abilities and let the chips fall. Today I got away from that, and I paid for it."