

A's Daily News Clips; April 13, 2010

A's Justin Duchscherer earns long-awaited victory, throwing 71/3 shutout innings against the Seattle Mariners

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 04/13/2010

SEATTLE — When Justin Duchscherer is on his game, the innings can fly by and the zeros can collect on the scoreboard.

The right-hander delivered his vintage stuff Monday, five days after saying he hardly felt like himself in his first start of the season. The result was a 4-0 A's blanking of the Seattle Mariners before 45,876 fans at Safeco Field for the Mariners' home opener.

Duchscherer went 71/3 innings, gave up just two hits and two walks and struck out four in the type of efficient outing that earned him All-Star appearances in 2005 and 2008. He earned his first victory since July 8, 2008, when he spun a two-hit shutout against, of all teams, the Mariners.

It had been a long road back to the win column. Duchscherer missed all of last season because of elbow surgery and treatment for clinical depression.

"To get through the things I've been through and get back out there and throw a game like that, I'm just really proud of myself," Duchscherer said.

The A's are off to their best eight-game start since 2004, when they also went 6-2. Even the oddball 3:40 p.m. start time, which the Mariners typically schedule for their home opener, didn't throw the A's off.

Randy Johnson, who rose to fame as a Mariner before winning his 300th game as a Giant and retiring after last season, threw out the ceremonial first pitch, and the game didn't officially begin until 3:54.

But Duchscherer (1-0) came out dealing, and Seattle lefty Ryan Rowland-Smith (0-1) kept the pace quick himself.

Rowland-Smith didn't allow a hit until Cliff Pennington's solo homer in the sixth, but he sabotaged his effort with five walks over seven innings.

The game wrapped up in just 2 hours, 20 minutes, ending about the time the A's typically would be finishing batting practice for a night game. Jerry Blevins and closer Andrew Bailey completed the two-hitter.

The A's jumped on the scoreboard in the fourth aided by three straight walks, with Rajai Davis scoring on Kevin Kouzmanoff's shallow sacrifice fly to left.

Pennington, the No. 9 hitter whose two homers lead the A's, drilled an 0-2 pitch over the left field wall in the sixth.

Gabe Gross' two-run single in the seventh made it 4-0, more than enough support for Duchscherer, who said the key was establishing his fastball early to set up his off-speed stuff.

"I'm proud of him," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He battled through a lot of things over the last 12 months."

Duchscherer said he still feels he's not all the way back. He said he gets fatigued by about the sixth inning, and that his fastball still can gain an extra tick in velocity.

While the A's batted, Duchscherer wandered down to the clubhouse to keep his nerves calm, saying he's still "pretty amped up" for his starts.

But he was a cool customer on the mound. His biggest jam came in the fourth, when Seattle put a runner on third with one out. Duchscherer got Ken Griffey Jr. to wave at a 69 mph offering for strike three, then retired Milton Bradley on a grounder to short.

Gross said a healthy Duchscherer could be a huge lift.

"Obviously not throwing 71/3 shutout innings every time," Gross said. "But a guy that's going to make quality start after quality start, it's what everybody — including Duke — expects."

A's update: Gabe Gross delivers two-run single vs. lefty

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 04/12/2010

Gross not out vs. lefty, delivers two-run single

SEATTLE — Outfielder Gabe Gross likes to see his name in the starting lineup, and he's not picky about whom he might be facing.

He found himself starting in left field for Monday's 4-0 win over Seattle, which was odd only because the Mariners had left-hander Ryan Rowland-Smith on the mound.

Gross, a left-handed hitting veteran of six seasons who signed with the A's on Feb. 1, entered the season with a .152 average in just 151 career at-bats against lefties. He has a .251 mark in 1,088 at-bats against righties.

But Gross delivered a pinch-hit RBI single Sunday against the Angels, and manager Bob Geren started him against Seattle over regular left fielder Travis Buck, who is hitting .190.

Gross came through with a two-run single off Rowland-Smith in the seventh to pad the A's lead.

"It's always a great confidence booster to come in and contribute to a win," Gross said. "... Anytime I'm in the starting lineup, I don't care who's pitching, I want to be in there."

Geren, who said that Gross showed him a lot by hanging tough in a spring training at-bat against Cincinnati Reds left-handed prospect Aroldis Chapman, said Gross might play right field tonight because Ryan Sweeney is due for a rest.

Second baseman Mark Ellis strained his left hamstring Sunday and is likely to miss a couple days, so Adam Rosales drew his second straight start.

With Rowland-Smith pitching, Geren sat Eric Chavez for the second straight day. Jake Fox served as the DH after catching Sunday. Fox is 0-for-8 in that span with a walk.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill, on the disabled list with a left shoulder injury, was examined by Angels team doctor Lewis Yocum on Sunday and was cleared to start throwing.

The shoulder was giving Cahill trouble during his delivery this spring, but he said the pain is gone. Cahill seems ticketed for the minors when he's activated unless the A's consider him a long relief option.

Sweeney has hit safely in every game. That eight-game hitting streak is tied with Seattle's Franklin Gutierrez for the longest in the majors this season.

CHIN MUSIC: Joe Stiglich A's Blog

Mark Ellis day-to-day with hamstring strain, Eric Chavez sits again, and other A's pregame notes

By Joe Stiglich, Monday, April 12th, 2010 at 3:42 pm

Just lost another entire blog entry as I tried to post. One of these days I'll learn to save as I'm writing. Rather than chuck my laptop out a window, which is my preference, I'll try to knock this baby out again. ...

We have a funky 3:40 p.m. start time for the A's-Mariners game, since it's Seattle's home opener. Death Cab for Cutie, a band that made it big out of Seattle, was just on the field performing John Fogerty's "Centerfield." They did it pretty good justice, too ...

On to the A's news ...

-Mark Ellis is out with a strained left hamstring, suffered yesterday as he legged out an infield grounder. He's hopeful of only missing a couple of days. Adam Rosales draws a second straight start at second base.

-Eric Chavez sits for the second straight day with Jake Fox serving as DH, though manager Bob Geren said Chavez could pinch-hit. Counting today, Chavez has started just five of the A's eight games so far. Geren said he wanted to give Chavez a couple days off as the A's faced a lefty yesterday (Joe Saunders) and get another one today (Ryan Rowland-Smith). But I'm surprised Chavez already has sat as much as he has. Perhaps it's a smart effort to keep him fresh and injury-free. But this guy hardly has played over the past three seasons, and the only way for him to find a groove is to get regular at-bats.

Chavez looked pretty good at the plate Saturday, and Geren said Chavez is doing well health-wise. "His bat speed looks good." Asked if Chavez is only his regular DH against right-handers, Geren didn't give a concrete answer. But he added that if the A's face a string of lefties in a row, Chavez will get playing time against them.

—Gabe Gross gets his first start in left field over Travis Buck. “We’re seven games into the season,” Geren said. “I want enough guys to get some playing time. He’s a good defensive outfielder and (Safeco Field) is a big outfield to cover.” It will be interesting to see how the left-handed hitting Gross fares against Rowland-Smith, because Gross hasn’t played a whole lot against lefties over his career. But I can see him getting more playing time, as Buck is hitting just .190.

A'S LEADING OFF

Susan Slusser, SF Chronicle, Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Better late: The A's have scored 22 of their 43 runs in the final three innings, when their batting average improves from .229 to .333.

Return of the Duke

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer, Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Seattle -- Two starts into the season, Justin Duchscherer has regained his All-Star form, and with some strong pitching and a grab bag of scrappy low-profile players, the A's are continuing to tear through the AL West to start the 2010 season.

On Monday at Safeco Field, Oakland ruined the Mariners' home opener when Duchscherer zipped through 7 1/3 scoreless innings, backed by a homer by Cliff Pennington and a two-run single by reserve outfielder Gabe Gross, making his first start of the season. The A's are 6-2 to start the season for the first time since 2004, and their six wins are tied with Minnesota for the most in the league.

"The story today is Duke," Gross said. "He was just amazing."

Duchscherer missed the last six weeks of the 2008 season with a hip injury, then last season with an elbow injury and then treatment for clinical depression. Monday was his first victory since July 8, 2008, also against Seattle.

"When we win and I've thrown the ball well, it's hard to walk away not feeling good," Duchscherer said. "It's been a long time since I'd won a major-league baseball game. With everything I've gone through, I'm really proud of myself."

Duchscherer was coming off a rocky season debut against Seattle last week in which he had allowed five runs in 5 2/3 innings. On Monday, he didn't allow a hit until Franklin Gutierrez's leadoff double in the fourth. Gutierrez went to third on a groundout, and Duchscherer kept him there by striking out Ken Griffey Jr. and getting Milton Bradley to ground out.

Duchscherer said he established his fastball early, which he didn't do last time out, and that enabled him to use his off-speed stuff later. He said he believes he still can add a bit of velocity, too, maybe up to 88 mph. A's manager Bob Geren pointed to Duchscherer's location, hitting the corners with everything, for his excellence.

"He doesn't have much velocity - 86 mph," Geren said. "You see young kids throw that hard."

Oakland took its sweet time recording a hit, too, but that didn't keep the A's from scoring. In the fourth, Seattle starter Ryan Rowland-Smith walked Rajai Davis, Daric Barton (who was called safe plunging back to first on Davis' steal of third; Seattle fans disagreed) and Ryan Sweeney, then Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a sacrifice fly.

The A's didn't get into the hit category until the sixth, when Pennington opened the inning with a drive over the wall in left, his team-high second homer.

In the seventh, Kouzmanoff doubled, Kurt Suzuki walked and after Adam Rosales moved them over with a sacrifice bunt, Gross cracked a single to left, sending in both men.

"Looking back, we went five innings without any hits but we were up 1-0 - and we could have won on that," Gross said. "When the first innings fly by, you know runs are at a premium and when you push one over and you've got a guy throwing like Duke, that's huge mentally."

Sore hammy keeps Ellis out of lineup

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer, Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Seattle -- **Mark Ellis** is tied for the league lead in runs scored (nine), but he didn't play Monday and said he will be out of action for "a couple of days."

The A's second baseman has a sore lower left hamstring, the result of trying to beat out an infield hit in the eighth inning Sunday at Anaheim. Ellis reached, though the play was called an error on Angels third baseman **Brandon Wood**, who bounced the throw.

In Ellis' next at-bat, he singled down the right-field line, driving in a run, but he came out for a pinch runner.

The A's already have six men on the disabled list, and there is one worrisome aspect to this: Ellis also missed several days during the spring with hamstring soreness. The team will have to hope that this is not a recurring problem. Ellis is batting .345 and he's Oakland's best defensive player, too.

Adam Rosales, Sunday's hero, was back at second on Monday.

Cahill's progress: **Trevor Cahill** did not throw for exactly one week because of a stress reaction on the back of his left shoulder, but he played catch Sunday and threw at a distance of 120 feet Monday.

Manager **Bob Geren** said that Cahill shouldn't be too far behind, having missed only a week and already being stretched out to start before going on the DL. Cahill might find it tough to break back into Oakland's rotation, however, unless there is an injury; new fifth starter **Gio Gonzalez** looked terrific in his first start of the season. It's likely that Cahill will go on a rehab assignment later this month.

Briefly: **Joey Devine** (elbow surgery) said he'll throw off the mound again today and he's ready to face hitters as soon as he gets cleared to do so. ... **Daric Barton** has 10 walks in eight games. He drew 26 in 54 games last year. ... **Ryan Sweeney** has hit safely in all eight games, but the right fielder might get tonight off.

A's DRUMBEAT: Susan Slusser A's Blog

Ellis out with sore hamstring, Chavez also not playing

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field, 4/12/2010

Mark Ellis has a sore left hamstring, the result of running out what I'd thought was an infield single yesterday but which was scored an error on Angels third baseman Brandon Wood (the throw hopped - but right into Kendry Morales' glove). Ellis stayed in at that point but came out for a pinch runner after singling in his next at-bat.

Ellis said he'll only miss a couple of days at the most, and this does give the A's a chance to see a little more of Adam Rosales, the hero of yesterday's win at Anaheim.

Eric Chavez gets his second game off in a row (though he's likely to pinch hit at some point). The plan remains to give Chavez regular rest and with two left-handed opposing starters in a row, manager Bob Geren said he thought that would be a good place to get Chavez extra time off.

I asked if that means that Chavez will always sit against left-handers, and Geren said no - some of the lefties the A's will face actually are tougher on right-handed hitters than left-handers. He'll just try to calibrate Chavez's playing time and left-right scenarios as best as he can - if Chavez plays four games in a row and there are two lefties, that's an easy call. It's going to be a fluid situation.

Here's the lineup vs. lefty Ryan Rowland-Smith: Davis CF, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Suzuki C, Rosales 2B, Fox DH, Gross LF, Pennington SS. Justin Duchscherer is starting for Oakland. The A's scored four runs off Rowland-Smith in his five innings last week at Oakland; three were earned. He gave up eight hits and a walk in the A's eventual 6-5 win.

Gabe Gross gets his first start in the Oakland lineup.

Trevor Cahill played catch yesterday after taking a full week off from throwing, and then he did long toss today. Cahill shouldn't be too far behind, since he was stretched out to 80-some pitches before going on the DL with a scapular stress reaction. Judging by the A's throwing program and Cahill's time off so far, I'd think he'd be on a rehab assignment before the end of the month.

Death Cab for Cutie is setting up for a two-song pregame set here as the Mariners are pulling out the stops for their home opener, which leads me to ask: If Seattle can get Death Cab for Cutie, why can't the A's get Green Day? Or at least Rogue Wave? Chris Isaak, maybe, when fellow Stockton native Dallas Braden pitches? Or...Metallica! That would be a popular choice in the A's PR department. There are a zillion possibilities in the Bay Area, come on A's!

Actually, Death Cab was very disappointing....none of their own songs. Instead, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" and "Centerfield." As esteemed Seattle Times baseball writer Larry Stone notes, they could have had anyone could have come out and do that.

A's eye fifth consecutive win over Mariners

By Doug Miller / MLB.com, 4/13/10

SEATTLE -- They're young, they're talented, and after facing each other in their first starts of the season, A's lefty Brett Anderson and Mariners righty Doug Fister are set to meet once again Tuesday night.

A day after the Mariners' home opener ended in a 4-0 victory for Oakland, Anderson and Fister will take the hill in a rematch of last Thursday, when Anderson and the A's beat the Mariners, 6-2.

Anderson, one of the most highly regarded southpaws in the game, was dominant, shutting down the Mariners' lineup on three hits over six shutout innings. He continued the brilliance with which he ended the 2009 season. Anderson was 8-4 with a 2.96 ERA over his final 17 starts last year after going 3-7 with a 5.74 ERA in his first 13 starts.

"He's controlling his fastball, his breaking ball and his changeup on both sides of the plate, which he didn't do early last year," A's manager Bob Geren said after last week's outing. "That part of his game came in the second half, and he showed it in his first start."

Then again, Anderson said he thinks he can be better. A lot better.

"The results were good," Anderson said, "but my stuff was just OK. I didn't panic and when I did fall behind, I was able to make my pitches and get some ground balls."

On the other side of the diamond, Fister is looking to make the most of an opportunity that arose when Cliff Lee went on the disabled list, opening a spot in the rotation.

He had an uneven outing against Oakland, only giving up two runs in four innings but needing 96 pitches to do it.

"I threw a lot of strikes, but they had some good at-bats," Fister said. "Things didn't go my way, but it's something to learn from. They have some good hitters over there and they make you work."

Athletics: Barton a walking man

First baseman Daric Barton has 10 walks, the most in the American League, and this comes after he led all of Major League Baseball in walks in Spring Training. ... The A's have scored 43 runs over their first eight games and 22 of those have come in the seventh inning or later. They scored twice in the seventh in Monday's game to put the Mariners away.

Mariners: Gutierrez stays hot

Center fielder Franklin Gutierrez extended his hitting streak to 13 games (.400, 20-for-50 with six doubles, six RBIs and eight runs scored) with a double in the bottom of the fourth inning in Monday's game. The streak dates to Sept. 30 of last season. ... Fister is 1-1 with a 2.25 ERA in three starts against Oakland, including a seven-inning win last Oct. 1.

Worth noting

The A's bring a four-game winning streak over the Mariners into Tuesday's game after losing 10 of the previous 12 to Seattle dating to May 27. Monday's win also snapped a seven-game A's losing streak at Safeco Field. ... New Mariners Casey Kotchman and Chone Figgins provided a few defensive gems in Monday's game. First baseman Kotchman dived to his right in the third inning and robbed Gabe Gross of extra bases, and second baseman Figgins ran down a Jake Fox blooper in the third, making the catch in the middle of right field.

A's Duchscherer earns long-awaited win

Righty dominates Mariners for first victory since July '08

By Jane Lee / MLB.com, 04/12/10 11:38 PM ET

SEATTLE -- Justin Duchscherer heard about four different start times for Monday's game -- a special event of sorts celebrating the Mariners' opener at Safeco Field.

The A's starting pitcher wasn't too interested in knowing when legend Randy Johnson was going to throw out the first pitch, nor when Ichiro Suzuki was scheduled to receive the accolades he accumulated in 2009. Fireworks? Seen enough of 'em.

Duchscherer just needed to know when he was taking the mound, the place where he hasn't quite felt his All-Star self since 2008. He needed to allow his nerves plenty of time to settle, his mind plenty of time to focus.

Once he did step on the bump, around approximately 4:05 p.m. PT, he pretty much made everyone forget about Johnson and Suzuki. He mowed through a Seattle lineup that, just last week, pounded him for five earned runs in 5 2/3 innings. And, just like that, less than three hours later, he found himself on the winning end of a 4-0 victory.

"I felt like the last time I pitched against these guys I didn't trust my fastball enough, and today I just felt like I needed to throw my fastball early so that I could establish my offspeed stuff later in the game," Duchscherer said. "It worked. I didn't make every pitch perfect, but for the most part I kept the ball down and hit my spots on the corner well. Once I got into the game, that's when I started working my offspeed stuff to keep them off balance. And the results were better than last time."

It marked Duchscherer's first win since July 8, 2008 -- a day that, coincidentally, had him up against the Mariners. The A's righty tossed a two-hit shutout while striking out four that day.

He fell short of a complete game Monday, but otherwise the results were freakishly similar -- no runs, two hits, four strikeouts.

It took almost two years, a couple injuries and a struggling bout with clinical depression for Duchscherer to again conquer that "W" he had come so used to acquiring in 2008, and he made it no secret Monday that he felt a sense of relief in the accomplishment.

"I think, more than anything, I'm proud of myself -- it's been a long time since I've gotten a win in a Major League baseball game," he said. "To get through the things I've been through and to get back out there, I'm just really proud of myself."

His manager and several teammates are just as proud.

"We had a conversation before the game about his last spring tuneup in San Francisco," said skipper Bob Geren, referring to Duchscherer's mastery over the Giants on April 1. "He had real good command, and it was a glimpse of what he did for us a couple years ago. I told him to repeat what he did then, and he went out and did just that. He was real efficient with his pitches. Great game for him."

It was one that, at first, had the makings of a pitchers' duel. Both Duchscherer and Seattle starter Ryan Rowland-Smith breezed through the first three frames without surrendering a hit. But the latter pitcher quickly lost control in the fourth, walking three en route to giving up a sacrifice fly for a 1-0 A's lead, which came without a hit.

"Baseball's a crazy game like that, but that's the kind of ballclub we are," A's second baseman Adam Rosales said. "We are going to push runs across any way we can."

Two innings later, Cliff Pennington made it a 2-0 game with his second homer of the season -- a shot to left field -- before the A's attacked again in the seventh frame on a two-run single by Gabe Gross. It was more than enough to spoil Seattle's home opener and hand Rowland-Smith the loss following seven innings of three-hit ball.

Meanwhile, Duchscherer escaped his only jam of the night -- a seventh-inning situation that had Mariners runners on second and third with one out -- before being pulled after 7 1/3 innings.

"I've had difficulty so far trying to incorporate myself back into the rhythm of being out there," Duchscherer said. "It still feels like six, seven, eight innings is hard. Even though the results are there, I still feel like I'm straining and I'm pretty physically and mentally tired right now."

No worries, though, as Jerry Blevins and Andrew Bailey quickly laid to rest the two-hit shutout against a Seattle team that has scored just 21 runs in its eight games, leaving the A's starter a rather happy man.

"We won," Duchscherer said with a smile. "I threw the ball well. The results were good."

"You have to tip your hat to them," Seattle's Chone Figgins said. "That's not a bad team over there. They are playing good ball right now."

Sore hamstring sidelines A's Ellis

Geren says second baseman likely to miss two days

By Jane Lee / MLB.com, 04/12/10 8:23 PM ET

SEATTLE -- Less than 24 hours after tallying his fourth multihit game of the season, Mark Ellis was sidelined with a sore left hamstring and deemed day-to-day.

According to manager Bob Geren, the A's second baseman should not be out longer than two days.

"We're not really looking at it as anything more than a day-to-day thing," Geren said as the A's prepared to take on the host Mariners for the first of a three-game set. "It's more precaution."

Ellis, who was slotted in the designated hitter's spot Sunday afternoon against the Angels, suffered the injury in the eighth inning while running to first on an infield ground ball that resulted in a Brandon Wood throwing error. He stayed in the game and reached base in the ninth on a single to left field but was immediately relieved by pinch-runner Travis Buck.

The 32-year-old Ellis, who experienced hamstring tightness for a handful of days in Spring Training, entered Monday with the club's second-highest batting average (.345) next to Daric Barton, who is hitting .381.

Adam Rosales will fill second-base duties while Ellis recovers, and he'll carry with him an impressive starting debut that saw him go 2-for-3 with a home run and go-ahead single on Sunday.

A's right-hander Cahill cleared to throw

SEATTLE -- A's right-hander Trevor Cahill, who revealed a left scapula stress reaction just two days before Opening Day, was cleared to throw again after visiting orthopedist Lewis Yocum in Anaheim on Sunday.

Cahill began the season on the disabled list next to five other A's players, including fellow pitchers Michael Wurtz and Joey Devine. He said the neck pain began at the end of last season and resurfaced after his Minor League start on March 29.

The 22-year-old pitcher made 32 starts as a rookie last season and was expected to have the edge for the fifth rotation spot entering camp. However, his injury -- combined with a strong showing from Gio Gonzalez -- led the A's to go with the left-hander.

Manager Bob Geren noted that Cahill is seemingly only a week behind other pitchers. But where the righty fits into the A's picture after fully recovering is unknown. There is no timetable for his return.

Gross gets first start for A's

SEATTLE -- For the second consecutive day, A's manager Bob Geren pulled from his bench to fill in his outfield Monday.

Gabe Gross received his first start in left field after collecting just two at-bats in Oakland's previous seven games. He garnered his first hit and RBI of the season as a pinch-hitter in Sunday's contest against the Angels, snapping a career-long 0-for-19 streak dating to last year.

Meanwhile, Opening Day left fielder Travis Buck got his second day off Monday after starting each of the club's first six games -- a span in which he went 4-for-21 (.190), bringing to mind his career April average of .198.

Sunday starter Eric Patterson, who went 0-for-3 while playing left field, is expected to share backup outfield duties with Gross throughout the season. Gross was acquired late in the offseason as a free agent after compiling a .227 average with six home runs in 115 games with Tampa Bay last year.

Worth noting

SEATTLE -- Eric Chavez was given his second straight day off Monday, and manager Bob Geren noted that the Mariners' offering of left-handed starter Ryan Rowland-Smith eased his decision to sit Chavez, who will be given regular rest often. ... Geren on Monday mentioned that right-hander Michael Wuertz (shoulder) felt fine a day after throwing a 28-pitch bullpen session. Wuertz is likely to toss one more bullpen session before making a Minor League rehab appearance. ... Cliff Pennington hit his second homer on Monday after tallying four through 60 games in Oakland last year. ... Daric Barton has reached base safely via hit or walk in all eight games.

Oakland A's, Justin Duchscherer ruin Seattle's home opener with 4-0 win

Associated Press, 04/12/2010

SEATTLE — Justin Duchscherer was terrific in his second start in 20 months, pitching into the eighth inning to help the Oakland Athletics ruin the Seattle Mariners' home opener with a 4-0 victory on Monday.

Cliff Pennington homered and Gabe Gross had a two-run single for Oakland, off to a surprising 6-2 start.

Duchscherer (1-0) allowed two hits and walked two in 7 1-3 innings. The right-hander, a two-time All-Star, missed last season because of an elbow injury and was later treated for clinical depression.

Former Mariners star Randy Johnson sent a charge through the Safeco Field crowd with a ceremonial first pitch but Seattle still dropped to 2-6 after entering the year with playoff aspirations following a splashy offseason. It's the Mariners' worst start since beginning 1-7 in 2004.

Ryan Rowland-Smith (0-1) allowed just three hits in seven innings for Seattle, but issued a career-high five walks and allowed four runs. The 32-year-old Duchscherer didn't make his spring debut until March 22. Then he allowed five runs and seven hits over 5 2-3 innings in a no-decision last week against Seattle, a game that the A's won late.

His second start since Aug. 18, 2008, was even better. He twice struck out Ken Griffey Jr., the second time with the tying run on third in the fourth inning.

Only one other Seattle runner got past first base on Duchscherer after that.

Duchscherer was an All-Star in 2005 and '08 before the problems with his back, hip, elbow and depression. He's still on an amended training schedule designed to preserve his back.

Rowland-Smith didn't allow a hit until the sixth - and it hurt. Pennington, the No. 9 hitter, lined an 0-2 pitch over the roof of Oakland's bullpen bench for his second homer of the season.

Pennington's drive made it 2-0, a considerable deficit considering the way Seattle has hit so far this season. The Mariners, who were averaging three runs before Monday's game, had just three baserunners and one hit in the first six innings.

Oakland added two more in the seventh. With two out and runners on second and third, catcher Rob Johnson could not hold on to a two-strike foul tip by Gross. Given the reprieve, Gross celebrated his first start with the A's by driving in two with a single.

Randy Johnson got a warm welcome from the sellout crowd of 45,876 before he fired a strike to his former Mariners catcher, Dan Wilson, minutes before the game.

The 46-year-old Big Unit, a five-time Cy Young Award winner from Livermore who rose to prominence with Seattle in the 1990s, looked tanned and relaxed in a black, open-collared shirt and jeans. He tossed the ball about 20 rows back into the lower seats behind the Mariners dugout as he walked off the field with Griffey, Wilson, and fellow former teammates Edgar Martinez and Jay Buhner.

The crowd roared - for one of the last times of the day.

NOTES: Mariners RF Ichiro Suzuki received his ninth consecutive Gold Glove trophy and his third career Silver Slugger bat before the game. ... A's manager Bob Geren said 2B Mark Ellis might miss two days with a strained hamstring. He was injured Sunday against the Los Angeles Angels. ... The Mariners announced OF Ryan Langerhans had cleared waivers and was optioned to Triple-A Tacoma.

A's Minor League News Clips; April 13, 2010

Sacramento rallies back behind McPherson slam

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

04/13/2010 2:32 AM ET

Dallas McPherson's seventh-inning grand slam changed the momentum and helped the visiting Sacramento River Cats kick off a four-game series against the Tacoma Rainiers with a victory.

McPherson totaled five RBIs in the 10-7, come-from-behind victory.

The Rainiers came out aggressive against Sacramento starter Clayton Mortensen, who allowed seven runs (five earned) over 6.0 innings. Fortunately for Mortensen, who settled down to retire eight of his last 10 batters, the Cats' offense was just gearing up when he left with a 7-2 deficit.

Chris Carter opened the scoring with a first-inning solo home run, his first of the season. The right-handed power hitter has now hit a homer in five consecutive games against Tacoma, dating back to last season's four-game playoff series in which Carter hit a bomb in each game.

Tacoma responded with three runs in the first, including an RBI double from former River Cats infielder Tommy Everidge. Everidge, who went 2-for-3, made a splash last season in Sacramento when he hit .368 over 52 games before getting called up to Oakland.

After a scoreless second, Sacramento clawed within a run when Matt Carson tripled on a drive to right-center field and scored on a Carter fielder's choice.

Tacoma continued its hot hitting in the third. Run-scoring doubles from Eliezer Alfonzo and Matt Mangini scored Everidge and Alfonzo before Josh Wilson lined a hit to center field to score Mangini for a 6-2 lead. Greg Halman homered to left field in the fourth for a five-run lead, and it looked as if Sacramento was heading toward a third consecutive defeat.

Luis Munoz replaced Tacoma starter Andrew Baldwin in the sixth, and it may have been just the break the Cats needed. A Tacoma fielding error put Michael Taylor on third and McPherson on second with two out, but Josh Donaldson struck out swinging to strand both runners.

The seventh inning proved to be magical for the Cats. Jai Miller walked, and promptly stole second. After Eric Sogard walked, Miller didn't hesitate and went on to steal third. Corey Wimberly then scored Miller with a single, Carson singled to load the bases and Carter walked to force home Sogard.

After Jack Cust popped up on the infield for the first out, Michael Taylor hit a hard grounder to second base that Chris Woodward couldn't handle. Instead of an inning-ending double play, the ball bounced off Woodward's glove and into center field, scoring Wimberly and setting the stage for McPherson.

The third baseman, who hit 42 home runs with the Albuquerque Isotopes in 2008, slugged a grand slam over the left-center field wall for a 9-7 Sacramento lead.

Suddenly Mortensen (1-0) was in line to get the victory after allowing seven runs in the first four innings. Marcus McBeth relieved Mortensen to pitch two hitless innings before Henry Rodriguez struck out two batters in a hitless ninth inning to earn his first save of the season.

McPherson's RBI single in the ninth inning scored Cust to provide the final margin.

The two teams tangle again Tuesday in a 7:00 p.m. start. The River Cat's have their first home appearance Friday against the Reno Aces. Game time is 7:05 p.m.

Sacramento rallies, beats Tacoma 10-7 | Pacific Coast League

Dallas McPherson's grand slam highlighted a seven-run seventh inning for Sacramento in a 10-7 win over Tacoma.

Seattle Times, April 12, 2010

TACOMA — Dallas McPherson's grand slam highlighted a seven-run seventh inning for Sacramento in a 10-7 Pacific Coast League win over Tacoma Monday night at Cheney Stadium.

Ten Sacramento batters went to the plate against relievers Luis Munoz and Steve Bray in the River Cats' big seventh. Munoz (0-1), who walked three and gave up four runs in one inning, took the defeat.

Tacoma led 7-2 going into the top of the seventh. Greg Halman hit his first home run of the season for the Rainiers.

River Cats set to unveil HD videoboard

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee
Tuesday, Apr. 13, 2010

The new jumbo video board at [Raley Field](#) will be fired up today for the media to take pictures of the big, high-definition wonder.

Fans get a chance to see it in person on Friday when the River Cats open the season against the Reno Aces, the Triple-A affiliate of the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#).

Until then, here's the board by the numbers:

- The new HD screen is 60 percent larger than the screen it replaces.
- At 800 square feet, it's the footprint size of a small home.
- The screen weighs 10 tons.
- High resolution through nearly 500,000 pixels.
- Pride Industries, creating jobs for people with disabilities, built and tested 500 printed circuit board to power control modules.

Hounds Blown Away On Monday

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds
04/13/2010 12:07 AM ET

Two things were "howling" Monday night at Citibank Ballpark: The West Texas wind and the Springfield Cardinals' bats.

The Cardinals banged out 15 hits, erasing a 5-0 first-inning deficit, and went on to an 11-6 win over the RockHounds. It was Springfield's third consecutive win overall their their second over the 'Hounds.

Cardinals starter David Kopp struggled in the first inning, and the 'Hounds took advantage, scoring five runs on four walks and two hits.

Springfield threatened early, but scored only one run in the first three innings, despite putting at least the first two runners on in each of the first three frames.

RockHounds starter Ben Hornbeck had battled through 4-and-two-thirds innings and had a 5-3 lead with one on and two out in the fifth, one out away from completing 5.0 innings with the lead. Instead, Pete Kozma ripped an RBI triple ... an error extended the inning ... and Steven Hill belted a 3-run, bases-loaded double to cap a 6-run fifth inning with the Cardinals now in the lead, 9-5.

There was good news on the player personnel side: Outfielder Corey Brown, a key member of the 2009 Texas League championships club, has been assigned to the RockHounds from (Triple-A) Sacramento. The Oakland A's re-signed outfielder Jack Cust to a minor league deal, and also acquired

outfielder Jai Miller (on waivers from the Florida Marlins). Both players were assigned to Sacramento, making Brownly the "odd man out." Because the A's certainly want Corey (rated Oakland's # 12 prospect) to be an every day player, he now re-joins the RockHounds.

Rainy Days and Mondays: Ports and Blaze Washed Out

Stockton Ports, 04/12/2010 6:15 PM ET

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - Monday night's scheduled contest between the Stockton Ports and Bakersfield Blaze has been postponed due to unplayable field conditions resulting from late afternoon rain showers.

The game will be made up as part of a doubleheader on Sunday, May 9th in Bakersfield at a time to be determined.

The two teams will begin their series on Tuesday night at 7:15 p.m. at Sam Lynn Ballpark.

Cougars Keep Rolling, Win 3rd Straight

Kane County Cougars, Game Story 4/12/2010

GENEVA, Ill. - For the third game in a row, the Kane County Cougars' entire offensive lineup reached base safely, and the team won easily. The Cougars beat the Burlington Bees, 7-2, Monday afternoon in front of 5,397 at Elfstrom Stadium. Anthony Aliotti had a pair of RBI doubles, and Justin Marks, Connor Hoehn and Jose Guzman did not allow an earned run on the mound.

The Cougars, who have not trailed during the winning streak, scored four times in the first inning against Bryan Paukovits (0-1) for a lead they never gave away. Max Stassi hit a bases-loaded single to score Conner Crumbliss, and Kent Walton scored on an error. Then Aliotti brought home Chris Affinito with a double, and Stassi scored on a Rashun Dixon grounder.

The Bees managed a pair of unearned runs against Marks in the third to cut it to 4-2. Marks left after 4 2/3 innings and gave up three hits, walked four and fanned five. A close call that led to a walk prevented him from getting through the fifth and qualifying for the win. Hoehn (1-0) tossed 3 1/3 innings of one-hit relief, and Guzman worked the ninth to close it out. Aliotti and Dixon had consecutive RBI connections in the third, and Crumbliss drove in one with an eight-inning fielder's choice to account for the 7-2 final.

The Cougars (3-2) look for their fourth straight win Tuesday at noon CT when they conclude their three-game set with the Bees (1-4) and continue their nine-game homestand. Ian Krol (0-1, 4.91) will face John Lamb (0-1, 2.25).

Early outburst puts Cougars on verge of sweep

April 13, 2010

By **MIKE KNAPP** For Sun-Times Media

GENEVA -- Good pitching and good hitting is a tough combination to beat.

It has been working for the Kane County Cougars in the first two games against Burlington, and Monday afternoon's 7-2 win over the Bees has the team on the verge of its first series sweep of the season.

Going back to Saturday's 10-5 win to close out the Wisconsin series, the Cougars (3-2) have owned a 26-8 advantage on the scoreboard over the last three days.

"I've been impressed with the way they have grinded out their (at-bats), their selectivity for the most part and how they have barreled some balls up and made some noise," Cougars manager Aaron Nieckula said. "We are playing some nice team baseball right now."

Big innings also help, and the Cougars put one up in the first inning to take an early 4-0 lead. Loading the bases with one out against Burlington starter Bryan Paukovits, Max Stassi plated two runs with a blooper to center, then Anthony Aliotti and Rashun Dixon followed with RBIs of their own.

Again the offense was well represented up and down the order. Eight Cougars had hits, all nine reached base for the third straight game and Stassi, Dixon and Aliotti led the RBI parade with two apiece.

The pitching staff, meanwhile, held up its end of the bargain by combining to hold Burlington without an earned run while give up just five hits and striking out 12.

Starter Justin Marks fell one out short of qualifying for the win when he left with the bases loaded and two outs in the fifth inning, but Connor Hoehn (1-0) retired Carlo Testa on a popup to shortstop Michael Gimartin to end the threat. He tossed three more scoreless frames to earn credit for the win.

"Conner did a nice job," Nieckula said. "He's a strong young man and has good stuff. He showed a lot of mound presence."

The bullpen has been outstanding over the course of the Cougars' modest three-game win streak, allowing just three runs on five hits in their last 11 1/3 innings of work for an ERA of 2.44.

With the starters on tight pitch counts in the season's early going, that means the bullpen takes on more of a workload, so much of the Cougars' success will hinge on the performance of the relief corps.

A small sample size, for sure, but right now it is so far, so good.

"Knock on wood, the bullpen has done come in and pitched very well," Nieckula said.

The series concludes today with another noon game as Neuqua Valley product Ian Krol (0-1, 4.91 ERA) will start the game for the Cougars as part of a tandem outing with Jonathan Joseph (0-0, 3.00). John Lamb (0-1, 2.25 ERA) will take to the mound for the Bees.