

## **A's News Clips, Sunday, April 18, 2010**

### **A's Justin Duchscherer not thrilled by stingy**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Duchscherer not thrilled, but he proves to be stingy

Justin Duchscherer wasn't happy with himself for what took place in the sixth inning Saturday, but what transpired in the ninth put the smile back on his face.

The right-hander turned in 52/3 decent innings but was pulled after giving up a 2-0 lead in the sixth against the Baltimore Orioles. No matter, as the A's rallied for a 4-3 victory in the ninth.

"I thought I did a pretty good job with what I had today to keep us in the game," Duchscherer said. "I was a little disappointed to leave in the sixth, giving up two runs and giving the lead away. But that's the game of baseball."

Duchscherer nearly got out of the sixth. But after he walked Ty Wigginton to load the bases with two outs, Duchscherer allowed a two-run poke single to Garrett Atkins.

First baseman Daric Barton was charged with a fielding error earlier in the inning, and both runs against Duchscherer were unearned.

Duchscherer hasn't allowed an earned run over his past two starts. He threw 71/3 shutout innings against Seattle on Monday to bag his first victory since July 2008, after he was sidelined all of last season.

Second baseman Mark Ellis (strained left hamstring) missed his sixth straight game, and he's unlikely to play today, manager Bob Geren said. With the A's off Monday, two more days of rest could have Ellis ready for Tuesday's series opener against the New York Yankees.

With Adam Rosales playing well as Ellis' sub, the A's can afford to give Ellis time to heal completely. Rosales doubled to drive in the A's first run in the fourth, then keyed the winning rally in the ninth with a leadoff single.

Geren said the A's have been in position to win in the late innings because the bullpen has kept games close. But the team could use the presence of setup man Michael Wuertz, who's on the disabled list with shoulder tendinitis.

Wuertz threw a 1-2-3 seventh inning in Friday's rehab appearance with Triple-A Sacramento and said he came out of it well.

Geren said Wuertz's next outing could come as soon as today but that wasn't set in stone. It's unclear how many more outings Wuertz needs before he'll be activated.

### **A's win over Orioles is in line with pattern**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Victory wasn't official for the A's on Saturday until Rajai Davis crossed home plate with the winning run in the bottom of the ninth.

But given how events have played out for the A's and Baltimore Orioles so far this season, was there any other way for this script to unfold?

Ryan Sweeney's two-run single to right field scored Eric Patterson and Davis with the runs that beat the Orioles 4-3 before a crowd of 15,072 at the Oakland Coliseum. It marked the A's third walk-off victory already and gave them their best 13-game start (9-4) since 1992.

"It gives you that confidence that even if we're down a run or two late in the game, we can come back and win a game like that," starting pitcher Justin Duchscherer said.

Meanwhile, the defeat was another punch in the gut for the 1-11 O's.

They held a players-only meeting before the game, then lost third baseman Miguel Tejada to a groin injury in the sixth inning and watched fill-in closer Jim Johnson (0-1) uncork two wild pitches to assist in the A's winning rally.

Baltimore forged a 3-2 lead on Ty Wigginton's sacrifice fly in the eighth. But Adam Rosales singled to lead off the bottom of the ninth for Oakland and was bunted to second by Cliff Pennington. With Patterson pinch-running for Rosales, Johnson got Davis swinging at strike three in the dirt, but the ball took a giant hop over the backstop, advancing Patterson to third and allowing Davis to reach first.

Another wild pitch moved Davis to second, which prompted the Orioles to walk Daric Barton intentionally and load the bases with one out.

Sweeney worked the count full and lined a single to right. Davis tore around third and was right on Patterson's heels, scoring well ahead of Nick Markakis' throw.

"I was thinking I was scoring before he hit it," said Davis, who notched his 100th career stolen base in the third.

Sweeney has hit safely in every game he's played this season, a 12-game hitting streak that's tied with Florida's Jorge Cantu for longest in the majors. He also collected his first career walk-off hit.

"It's good, but it's even more important to win that game," Sweeney said. —... Trust me, we'd rather have it be 6-1 and not have to worry about it. But we've had a few games where we've won like that."

The A's are five games over .500 for the first time since July 19, 2008, when they were 51-46. But manager Bob Geren ranked this victory as the most exciting so far in 2010.

"There was a really high energy level as we came off the field," he said.

The A's staked Duchschere to a 2-0 lead through five innings, but he left in the sixth after Garrett Atkins' two-run single tied it. Wigginton's sacrifice fly in the eighth off Brad Ziegler gave Baltimore the lead.

Jerry Blevins (2-0) pitched a scoreless ninth and got the victory for the A's.

Baltimore went 1 for 9 with runners in scoring position and is now 11 for 87 (.126) for the season in that department. Tejada, the 2002 AL MVP with the A's, suffered a mild groin strain while running out a bunt single but said he believes he'll miss only a couple of games.

TODAY: Orioles (Brian Matusz 1-0) at A's (Brett Anderson 1-0), 1:05 p.m.  
TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

## **A's play a new brand of ball**

By Gary Peterson, Oakland Tribune columnist

It was the bottom of the ninth. The A's were down a run. It wasn't so long ago that there was no need for a third base coach in such a situation. Everyone knew what their strategy would be:

Nine of the biggest swings you ever saw.

On a good day, one of those swings — unleashed by, say, Geronimo Berroa, John Jaha or Matt Stairs — would result in a home run and a tie game. On a real good day, that home run would be followed by another — by the likes of, oh, Jason Giambi, Miguel Tejada or Frank Thomas — and a stirring walk-off win.

Here's how the A's played it Saturday against the Baltimore Orioles:

Adam Rosales led off with a single to center field.

"Well, it started with a nice solid hit," Oakland manager Bob Geren said, somewhat defensively, when it was suggested that these are new days for the A's.

Then Cliff Pennington dropped a sacrifice bunt.

"A sacrifice is nothing new," Geren said.

Now hold on a minute. Since the Church of Billy Beane threw open its doors in 1998, the sacrifice bunt has been one of the seven deadly sins. It represents an out, of which you get just 27 per game. Giving away an out has been analogous to wasting other life-sustaining elements, such as water or Facebook.

"We (now) have better personnel that can do that," Geren said. "We actually had bunting practice the other day and there were like nine guys taking turns, fighting to see who was up next. It was a lot of fun."

Did we miss something, or did Geren just prove our point? Bunting practice? Fun? Nine guys? Somewhere Mike Piazza just dislocated a retina while rolling his eyes.

Anyway. At this point Geren sent Eric Patterson to run for Rosales. No quibbles with that move. But it seems like it's been a while since pinch runners were part of the A's landscape. We don't have the data in front of us to confirm or disprove this, so let's turn it into a Bay Area News Group poll:

True or false: Eric Patterson was the A's first pinch runner since Herb Washington.

With one out and the tying run on second, Rajai Davis struck out on a wild pitch that bounced over the screen and into the stands. Davis was awarded first, and Patterson advanced to third. Nothing new-agey about that, but it was kind of weird.

At this point, Geren considered sending Davis on a stolen base attempt. Before he could, Baltimore's Jim Johnson threw a wild pitch. Davis advanced to second, with Patterson holding third.

"Sometimes the threat of a stolen base is more valuable than a stolen base," Geren said. "That might have been one. When a guy like (Davis), or Patterson, (or) Pennington is over there, (pitchers) have to be a little quicker. It could lead to something."

The Orioles intentionally walked Daric Barton to load the bases. Ryan Sweeney worked the count full (OK, not everything has changed), then lined a single to right field. Patterson scored the tying run, and Davis flew around third and scored the game-winner ahead of the throw from Nick Markakis.

There's no getting around it — change is in the air. Judging by Sweeney's postgame comments, you can smell it from the dugout.

"People are saying we don't hit very many home runs," he said, "but as long as we keep winning, and our pitchers go out there and do what they're doing, and (we) score some runs behind them, I don't think that really matters."

Agreed. The A's sudden infatuation with small ball isn't a bad thing. For example: Sweeney, their No. 3 hitter. He has no homers. But his three RBIs Saturday gave him nine for the young season, and he has a 12-game hit streak.

Watching them bunt, steal and move runners over evokes pleasant memories of BillyBall, with squeeze bunts and steals of home; Rickey Runs, where the ball never leaves the infield and the pitcher ages six months in the time it takes Rickey Henderson to complete his tour of the bases; and former play-by-play announcer Monte Moore shouting "Beep! Beep!" as Campy Campaneris takes off for second base.

It's energizing. It's fun. So much so that these new-old style A's deserve a catchy handle to call their own. The Bunt Club. Ultimate Sacrificers. Rajai's Base-Circling Revue.

Right. It's a long season. We'll get back to you.

## **A's P.A. legend Roy Steele's voice still carries**

By Monte Poole, Oakland Tribune columnist

It's cozy and familiar, like a pair of old slippers.

It's elegant and stately, like a new tuxedo.

You can feel it in your bones but can't touch it with your hands.

You can visualize it with your mind but can't see it with your eyes.

The most enduring part of a sports franchise's identity is its voice, for it transcends the action and spans generations. It outlasts players and coaches and managers — sometimes fans and facilities.

Roy Steele seized the microphone at the Oakland Coliseum in 1968, perhaps the most tragic and turbulent year of 20th century America. The nation rocked and rolled and reeled. The ballpark was new, and the players wore Afros and perms and mustaches and bell-bottom pants. The boss was tight with a penny and praise, profuse with criticism and profanity.

Steele cleared his throat and settled in for the better part of four decades, his voice booming down from somewhere above the clouds. His baritone became known around the Coliseum as "the voice of God."

If the voice didn't come from God, it surely came from God's house.

He was back at the Coliseum on Saturday, as the A's paid tribute by giving away Roy Steele bobblehead dolls to the first 10,000 fans entering the game against Baltimore. The first PA announcer honored in this way, Steele said a few words as he stood behind the plate, threw out the first pitch and headed up to the booth to flex his golden pipes once more.

Kevin Koooooooooouuzmanoff!

Though Steele was born in Missouri, his family moved to the Bay Area when Roy was 7. Within a few years, he was a paperboy at the Oakland Tribune. A few years later, when he put down the newspapers and picked up a penchant for misadventure, his parents responded as parents did back then.

"I had become kind of a juvenile delinquent," he recalled Saturday, "so my folks started taking me to church. At about 16, I started having some ministers teach me public speaking. They were even better than the college experience that I later had."

Having acquainted himself with the ministers, Steele turned to them to learn the art of voice projection. He would stand at one end of a cavernous building, they would sit at the other and, well, it didn't take long for the youngster to make himself heard.

Steele, now 76, spent much of the 1950s and early '60s as a minister in the Southwest. Shortly after returning to the Bay Area, he heard about the A's moving from Kansas City to Oakland and set up an interview/audition to be the team's public address announcer.

Anticipating a rigorous process, Steele met with radio broadcaster Monte Moore, whom owner Charlie Finley had authorized to make the hire. Steele barely interviewed and never auditioned.

"I just walked in, and he didn't even listen to me," he said. "I didn't have to audition. He just said, 'You got the job.' I said 'Well, thank you very much.' "

Steele missed five games in 38 years, but his health became an issue shortly after he worked 1,093 consecutive games between June 1990 and April 2004. He missed the entire 2006 season, worked parts of the next two years and missed 2009 altogether.

Though Steele shared the mic Saturday with Dick Callahan, the longtime local P.A. announcer who serves when Steele is unable, it was for a while like catching up with an old friend you no longer take for granted.

For Steele's voice is as much a part of the fabric of A's history as the Coliseum itself. No voice has been heard longer or pronounced more names or rattled about the structure with more gravitas.

Steele's voice has served four ownership groups. It has introduced 17 managers, from Hank Bauer and Steve Boros to Dick Williams and Bobby Winkles, and hundreds of players, from Andy Abad and Glenn Abbott to Brad Ziegler and Barry Zito.

Though the voice cracked a couple years ago during a remembrance for the late Louie Pieraldi, who managed the Coliseum dining room, it was as solid as steel during the years and eras, from the Mustache Gang to Billyball to the Bash Brothers to Moneyball.

The most delightful names to pronounce, according to the voice, were, well, we'll hand it over to the voice.

"Geronimoooooooooh Ber-OH-ahhhh and Rauuuuul Ibanez," he said.

Steele chuckled at the memory. And, maybe, the memories. He has lots of them. So do the rest of us, his voice prominent in nearly all of them.

## **Chin Music: A's rolling and relaxed these days**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/17/2010 12:30PM

Things are pretty loose in A's land right now. Among the new decorations in the clubhouse: A couple of mini-basketball hoops, the kind you might have put on your bedroom door back in the day. Guys have been practicing their jumpers with little nerf basketballs. I'm guessing that Ben Sheets might have purchased these. He was wearing his orange Warriors trunks after last night's game and likes to boast of his hoops skills.

Today's lineups:

A's: Davis CF, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Suzuki C, Chavez DH, Gross LF, Rosales 2B, Pennington SS; Duchscherer RHP.

Orioles: Jones CF, Markakis RF, Wieters C, Tejada 3B, Scott DH, Reimold LF, Wigginton 2B, Atkins 1B, Lugo SS; Guthrie RHP.

—Second baseman Mark Ellis is out for a sixth straight game with his tender hamstring. I asked him if he'd rather be cautious because it's early in the season, but he said he's dying to get back in the lineup. With the team playing well, the A's can afford to give him all the time he needs to recover. Manager Bob Geren said he's likely to keep Ellis out tomorrow as well because the team has Monday off. The hope is that the extra rest will have Ellis ready for Tuesday's series opener with the Yankees.

—Geren said he was flipping through highlights last night before he went to sleep and he caught the replay of Cliff Pennington's two-run triple against Kevin Millwood. He liked that Pennington was able to turn on an inside pitch and not yank it foul. "A lot of guys would get jammed," Geren said. "The good thing was, his swing was short and he kept it fair."

One thing to watch with the switch-hitting Pennington is how he handles left-handed pitchers as the season wears on. His splits were much better against righties than lefties last year. This season, he's 8-for-28 from the left side of the plate but just 1-for-10 from the right.

That's all for now ...

## **Sweeney's hit lifts A's to best start since '92**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Somehow, what began as a lazy April game against the hapless Orioles turned into an exciting strategic showdown Saturday.

Baltimore fought to take a lead in the eighth inning at the Coliseum, but the A's, pulling all strings possible, staged a comeback in the ninth. With one out and a 3-2 count, Ryan Sweeney whacked a bases-loaded single to right off Jim Johnson, driving in Eric Patterson with the tying run and Rajai Davis, sprinting from second base, with the winning run.

"I was thinking I was scoring before he hit it," Davis said. "That's what was going through my mind."

The A's 4-3 victory was their third win this season in their final at-bat. The team is 9-4, Oakland's best start since 1992.

"We just come up with clutch stuff all the time," said Sweeney, who drove in three runs on the day and extended his major-league-leading hit streak to 12 games with his first-inning single. He's tied with Scott Spiezio (1999) for the fourth-longest season-opening streak in Oakland history.

With the A's down 3-2, Adam Rosales led off the ninth with a single off Johnson, and Cliff Pennington moved Rosales to second with a sacrifice. Then, Davis, whose speed was a factor all day, reached on a strikeout-wild pitch, with Rosales advancing to third.

Baltimore catcher Matt Wieters told reporters that the pitch struck the divot created by left-handed hitters digging in and skipped away from him.

"All I know is that he didn't know where it was and I didn't know where it was," Davis said with a grin.

Davis moved up a base on another wild pitch and Daric Barton was walked intentionally before Sweeney worked his way to a full count.

"I was just trying to hit it up the middle," Sweeney said. "He was throwing me a lot of sinkers, trying to cut it on me, trying to get a double play."

Instead, Sweeney delivered, and Davis dashed for home.

"Rajai got a tremendous jump against their best-throwing outfielder," A's manager Bob Geren said of Nick Markakis. "The only question I had was whether he was going to pass the first runner."

Earlier in the game, Davis recorded career steal No. 100. "I guess that's a number I'm expecting to increase," he said. He's 7-for-7 on stolen-base attempts this year.

Oakland starter Justin Duchscherer allowed seven hits, two walks and two runs in 52/3 innings, and he struck out five. Lefty Craig Breslow was charged with Baltimore's run in the eighth; he gave up a double to Cesar Izturis, who eventually scored on a sacrifice fly by Ty Wigginton. The teams combined to use 11 pitchers, including three in the eighth for Baltimore.

Before the game, the Orioles held a players-only meeting to address their rough start. Manager Dave Trembley said he welcomes it when people step "forward and exchange ideas," but there's little doubt Trembley is on the hot seat after his team dropped to 1-11.

## **Bullpen roster moves near**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Michael Wuertz** could make another rehab appearance at Triple-A Sacramento as soon as today, so the setup man is getting quite close to returning to the A's bullpen.

What happens then? The Oakland relief staff is clicking fairly well, but someone will have to go to make room for Wuertz.

When Wuertz opened the season on the disabled list because of rotator-cuff tendinitis, **Tyson Ross** wound up being an unexpected addition to the bullpen, and at that point, the 22-year-old also seemed the most likely candidate to go to Triple-A Sacramento upon Wuertz's return.

That is not going to happen now. The A's are planning to keep Ross, who has been terrific in a middle-relief role - and he earned his first career save at Anaheim by working three innings a week ago. Ross has a 2.45 ERA, and opponents are batting .167 against him.

So who will head out? It is by no means clear cut. **Edwar Ramirez**, a late-spring pickup, is pitching well, with a 1.69 ERA and a .190 opponents average, and though long man **Chad Gaudin** has a 4.15 ERA, the A's do like to keep a long reliever

on hand. No. 2 lefty **Jerry Blevins** has a 4.05 ERA, and the team occasionally has gone with one left-hander. Events in the next few days might decide things.

**Briefly: Coco Crisp** had his broken left pinkie checked and he will not need a pin in it, but he will remain out a few weeks longer. Crisp has been wearing a removable soft split. ... **Mark Ellis** (hamstring tendinitis) did running and agility work and he said he hopes to be in the lineup Tuesday. ... Longtime public-address announcer **Roy Steele**, "the Voice of God," threw out the first pitch and also did some player introductions, including a hearty "**Kevin Kooooouzmanoff**" ... Baltimore third baseman **Miguel Tejada**, the onetime A's shortstop, left with a groin strain but said he does not expect to go on the DL.

## **A's leading off**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle, 4/18/2010

**Behind the plate late:** When Andrew Bailey entered Friday night's game in the ninth, so, too, did regular catcher, Kurt Suzuki, replacing Jake Fox. Suzuki is a superb defender and he'd been warming up Bailey, manager Bob Geren reasoned.

## **Roy Steele Day, A's vs. Orioles - updated**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum

Roy Steele is throwing out the first pitch today, and today's giveaway is a Roy Steele Bobblehead, kind of neat for the longtime A's public address announcer, who has battled ill health the past several years. It's not quite the same without him behind the microphone here; we anxiously await his return.

UPDATE: That was a very nice little ceremony with Steele, though I'm surprised that there were fan interviews conducted while Steele was standing patiently at the mike on the field, waiting to speak.

Steele had some nice words for the A's, he's thrilled about being the first PA announcer with his own Bobblehead, and he concluded his brief remarks by encouraging fans to drive home safely - his usual post-game announcement. The nicest part of the Steele ceremony was that scoreboard operator Chester Farrow, Steele's longtime boothmate and close friend - he has helped Steele enormously during Steele's recent illnesses - caught the first pitch. First, Farrow waved Steele in from the mound, moving him in 15 feet or so. Then Steele got it to Farrow on the fly, a nice, strong throw.

Steele will be making some of the announcements today, too. Pretty cool.

UPDATE No. 2: Steele got a lot of mileage out of Kevin Kouzmanoff's name. I kind of wish the A's could do what the Yankees did with Bob Sheppard and record Steele introducing some of the A's regulars for the days he's not here, because the Kouzmanoff introduction is a keeper.

In today's news: Mark Ellis (left hamstring tendinitis) said he's feeling better; he did some running on the field and some agility work, and he's hopeful he'll be in the lineup on Tuesday against the Yankees. Michael Wuertz will make at least one more rehab appearance at Triple-A Sacramento, possibly as early as tomorrow. It sounds as if there might be more Sacramento in his future, though; manager Bob Geren emphasized that the A's want Wuertz able to pitch the eighth inning as soon as he comes back.

Here's the lineup against the struggling Orioles: Davis CF, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Suzuki C, Chavez DH, Gross LF, Rosales 2B, Pennington SS. Justin Duchscherer is pitching against former Stanford right-hander Jeremy Guthrie.

Baltimore is 1-10 and there was a lengthy players-only meeting before the game, apparently called by starter Kevin Millwood. Manager Dave Trembley told reporters, "I think it's always positive when people step forward and exchange ideas," but you've got to think that's a little worrisome for the guy in charge. I wasn't in Trembley's media session, but I'm told he was a little on the gruff side. Interesting situation brewing there.

## **Sweeney's walk-off single lifts A's to win**

### **Right fielder drives in three, extends hitting streak to 12**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Ryan Sweeney doesn't mind being part of an underdog team. In fact, the A's outfielder relishes every second of it.

"When people don't talk too much about you, it's fun to fly under the radar," Sweeney said.

Just don't tell him that he's not as low on the radar as he might think -- especially after Saturday's performance.

Sweeney, who entered the A's third game against the visiting Orioles riding an 11-game hitting streak, quickly reached the dozen mark with a single in the first. He did it again in the ninth with not just any base hit, but one that drove in the tying and winning runs, and sent the A's flying out of the dugout to celebrate a 4-3 victory -- their third straight.

"That was my first career walk-off hit, and it was pretty fun," a smiling Sweeney said. "Any win's good, but that just kind of gets the crowd more into it and gives us a positive mindset going into our next game."

Sweeney's late-inning heroics marked the third time this season that the A's have won in their last at-bat, but perhaps none of those victories saw an odder scene unfold than that which came Saturday.

Down 3-2 leading off in the ninth, Oakland's Adam Rosales quickly notched his second hit of the day with a single and advanced to second on a ground ball by Cliff Pennington. Orioles reliever Jim Johnson (0-1) then struck out Rajai Davis, but a wild pitch allowed Davis to easily reach first base without a throw and move pinch-runner Eric Patterson over to third. After Daric Barton was intentionally walked to load the bases, Sweeney forced a 3-2 count before driving a hard-hit ball to right field to bring in Patterson and the speedy Davis, who beat a throw from Nick Markakis.

"Our scouting reports say he's got one of the best arms of any outfielder," manager Bob Geren said, "but then the only question was if Raj was going to pass up the first runner."

That was all Sweeney could think about, but neither he nor his skipper had any qualms about Davis, who also displayed his speed by tallying his seventh stolen base -- the 100th of his career -- in the third.

"I was going to make [Johnson] throw me a strike, and he was effectively wild," Sweeney said. "Once I got him 3-2, I was looking for something up that I could drive out, or at least get a sacrifice fly. After I hit first, I was just paying attention to Rajai."

Sweeney, however, was the first to say that any hype surrounding his game-changing hit couldn't take away from Oakland's effective pitching staff, which limited the Orioles to nine hits and three runs while keeping the A's within reach of a win.

Leading the pack was starter Justin Duchscherer, who, for the second straight game, didn't allow an earned run. The A's righty did, however, allow two unearned runs to cross the plate in the sixth after a Barton fielding error. The runs knotted the game at two.

Duchscherer, who settled for a no-decision, exited with two outs in the sixth, having scattered seven hits while walking two and fanning five, and mentioned he's had "better-stuff days."

"I think I did a pretty good job with what I had," he said. "I was a little disappointed to leave in the sixth after giving up the lead, but that's the game of baseball."

"I'm still not quite physically 100 percent, and I felt like I was wearing down a bit in the sixth. I'm still fighting it, but I felt like I stayed in the game long enough to keep us in there."

Duchscherer's season was in question for much of Spring Training due to a lower-back injury that resulted in a nerve ablation procedure and a handful of missed starts. But he is part of an Oakland starting staff that currently boasts a 6-0 record and 2.26 ERA. He believes he's on the verge of returning to his All-Star form but does not want to rush his progression.



"There's a fine line between not giving yourself a chance to win and saying, 'Well I'm just coming back from pitching last year,' and then going out there and giving it your all while recognizing I might not be as good as I am midseason," he said. "I have to be patient with myself, but I have to be hard enough on myself to give us a chance to win."

His efforts Saturday provided just enough for the A's, who tagged Orioles starter Jeremy Guthrie for two runs, six hits and a walk, before ultimately topping Baltimore's bullpen. The Orioles sent five pitchers to the mound in their ninth straight loss.

"That's awesome, we can show we can come back every time," Sweeney said. "I know people are saying how we don't hit a lot of home runs, but as long as we're out there winning and our pitchers keep doing what they're doing, it doesn't really matter."

Left-hander Jerry Blevins recorded his second win of the season after pitching a perfect ninth, preventing Craig Breslow from being saddled with the loss. The left-handed Breslow was responsible for Baltimore's go-ahead run in the eighth, which came on a sacrifice fly off the bat of Ty Wigginton.

It didn't matter by game's end, though, as a struggling Baltimore team essentially handed Oakland its best record (9-4) in its first 13 games since 1992. Making matters worse for the O's, they lost Miguel Tejada to injury in the sixth.

"When you have a lot of wins in your last at-bat, that tells you how good your bullpen is," Geren said. "If you're down a run or two and they can hold it, it gives you a chance to come back."

"It was the most exciting win of the year. I like the high-energy level of this club."

## **Young stars Matusz, Anderson face off**

By John Schlegel / MLB.com

Two of the game's rising left-handed pitching stars will face off Sunday when Brett Anderson of the A's meets up with the Orioles' Brian Matusz in the finale of a four-game series in Oakland.

The A's helped extend the Orioles' losing streak to nine games on Saturday afternoon with a 4-3 walk-off win, putting Matusz into the stopper role in the third start of his first full season in the Majors.

Matusz, Baltimore's first-round pick in 2008, is focusing on continuing to mature as a Major League pitcher.

"I was just looking over video from my last start, and I can just see how relaxed I was, how well I stayed back on all my pitches and didn't rush anything," he said Friday. "My goal is just to continue that feeling."

Anderson, meanwhile, kept the good feeling going throughout a stellar rookie campaign in 2009, and he has started 2010 without allowing a run in his first two starts. Being a quick study in the Majors earned him a four-year, \$31 million contract extension that was announced on Friday, tying him up with the A's through his arbitration years.

Anderson finished strong last season, going 4-0 in September. This year, he is 1-0 with 10 strikeouts and three walks.

"I think the adjustments I made last year in the second half are a big key," Anderson said after getting the long-term deal. "I don't know if these first two starts I've had here had anything to do with it, but I'd say they put a pretty good taste in their mouth, I guess. I'm just, overall, excited about it."

Anderson did not face the Orioles last year, and this is Matusz's first meeting with the A's.

"I'm going to go over the scouting report with Matty [Wieters], because those are all hitters I haven't faced before," Matusz said. "But, for me, the main key is just focusing on what I need to do to make quality pitches. And to continue to do what I did last game. "

### **Orioles: Trying to snap skid**

With their nine-game losing streak, the Orioles are off to their worst start since 1988, when they went 0-21. Seven of the Orioles' 12 games have been decided by two or fewer runs, including Saturday's 4-3 loss in the bottom of the ninth. It doesn't get any easier for the Orioles from here. After they finish up the series in Oakland, they head to Seattle, then to Boston before going home to host the Yankees.

### **Athletics: Starting rotation sharp**

Justin Duchscherer's solid start on Saturday, in which he allowed two unearned runs on seven hits in 5 2/3 innings, continued the early season brilliance for the A's rotation. A's starters are 6-0 with a 2.26 ERA through 12 games covering 79 2/3 innings thus far this season. Oakland boasts the only rotation in the American League that has yet to lose. ... Rajai Davis' seventh steal of the season in the third inning on Saturday was the 100th of his career.

### **Worth noting:**

The A's are 68-28 (.708) against Baltimore since the start of the 1999 season. That's the best winning percentage of any American League team against the Orioles during that span.

### **Wuertz perfect in first rehab appearance**

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 4/18/2010

OAKLAND -- Rehabbing right-hander Michael Wuertz made a one-inning relief appearance at Triple-A Sacramento on Friday night, tossing a 1-2-3 inning for the River Cats in an 8-4 home-opening victory.

Wuertz, who pitched in just two Spring Training games before being placed on the disabled list on April 3 with shoulder tendinitis, entered in the seventh inning and threw 14 pitches, nine of which were strikes.

A's manager Bob Geren said on Saturday that the relief pitcher could be back on the mound in Sacramento as soon as Sunday. How Wuertz fares in that outing will dictate when he's ready to make his 2010 Oakland debut.

"We want him to be where he needs to be, in order to be ready to pitch the eighth inning for us," Geren said.

### **Ellis could return to lineup on Tuesday**

OAKLAND -- Mark Ellis was missing from the A's starting lineup for the sixth consecutive game, but manager Bob Geren said on Saturday that the second baseman could return for Tuesday's contest against the visiting Yankees.

Ellis, 32, has been bothered by a sore left hamstring for the past week but has been keeping himself busy with plenty of baseball activities, including batting practice and agility work. Because of the club's back-to-back day games on Saturday and Sunday, Geren said that Ellis was "less than 50-50 for tomorrow."

Meanwhile, Adam Rosales has started each of the last six games at second base and entered Saturday's contest against the Orioles batting .333.

"He's made every play he's supposed to make," Geren said. "He's done a great job for us."

### **Crisp could have cast removed Wednesday**

OAKLAND -- Coco Crisp, sidelined since April 3 with a fractured left pinkie, visited a doctor on Friday and learned that he could get his cast permanently removed on Wednesday.

When he was placed on the disabled list, the A's outfielder was told he would miss 3-8 weeks -- a timetable that has yet to change. Crisp's injury came during Oakland's exhibition game against the Giants on April 2, when he was tagged by Juan Uribe while sliding into second base in the third inning of a 2-1 A's loss.

Crisp has been lifting weights and playing catch with his right hand, in an effort to stay involved in baseball activities. Once off the DL, he is expected to resume his role as the club's everyday center fielder.

Rajai Davis, who replaced Crisp in center, will likely slide into left field. Thus, the A's will presumably be forced to move one of the team's current backup outfielders -- Travis Buck, Eric Patterson or Gabe Gross -- to Triple-A.

### **A's honor longtime PA announcer Steele**

OAKLAND -- The A's on Saturday celebrated one of the Bay Area's most recognizable sounds, otherwise known as the "Voice of God."

Roy Steele, Oakland's longtime public address announcer, was honored in a well-deserved pregame ceremony before Oakland's contest against the visiting Orioles. As 10,000 fans carried with them a Roy Steele bobblehead, Steele spoke to the assembled crowd and threw out the day's ceremonial first pitch.

Steele is the first public address announcer in Major League Baseball to have a bobblehead given away in his honor. The 76 year-old Steele, who began his job with the A's in 1968, passed the time on Saturday by doing some of the game announcing.

He worked 1,093 consecutive games -- including postseason matchups -- from June 24, 1990 to April 22, 2004. Prior to sitting out the 2006 season because of health reasons, Steele missed only five games. He has announced only a handful of games over the last few years and was missing in action during the entire 2009 campaign.

### **A's win on Sweeney's two-run single in 9th**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Ryan Sweeney has the longest hitting streak in the majors this season, yet he's not interested in talking about it.

With the Oakland Athletics off to their best start since 1992, Sweeney's focus is on bigger issues.

"As long as we're winning, it doesn't really matter to me," said Sweeney after hitting a game-ending two-run single with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning to give the A's a 4-3 win over the Baltimore Orioles on Saturday.

"I'm not too worried about hitting streaks," he added. "It's the beginning of the season and I'm obviously trying to get as many hits as I can. I've had slow Aprils so I'm just trying to stay consistent throughout the whole year."

Sweeney's hit capped a stirring comeback for Oakland and marked the A's third walkoff win of the season.

Adam Rosales singled leading off the ninth and advanced to second on a sacrifice. Rajai Davis struck out but reached base on a wild pitch before the Orioles opted to intentionally walk Daric Barton and load the bases. Sweeney, who singled in the first to extend his hitting streak to 12 games, followed with a single to right to drive in pinch-runner Eric Patterson — he ran for Rosales at second base — and Davis, who easily scored ahead of the throw from Baltimore right fielder Nick Markakis.

Jerry Blevins (2-0) pitched an inning for the win, Oakland's ninth straight at home against Baltimore. The A's are 9-4, their best start after 13 games since 1992, and moved five games over .500 for the first time since July 19, 2008.

"We just grind out runs and sometimes we score a bunch," said Sweeney, who also had a sacrifice fly in the fifth. "The main thing is our pitchers hold (teams) to two runs or less a game, and that's huge confidence for us because we feel like we're always in games."

For the Orioles, it was another frustrating day in their terrible opening month.

They fell to 1-11, their worst start since opening the 1988 season with 21 consecutive losses, and lost third baseman Miguel Tejada to a possible groin strain in the sixth inning.

Baltimore stranded nine runners and is 2 for 47 with men in scoring position this season. The Orioles also committed their fourth error in the last three games which led to an unearned run off starter Jeremy Guthrie in the fifth.

Not even a players-only meeting in the clubhouse before the game could shake the Orioles out of their slump. Baltimore has already fallen 7½ games behind the New York Yankees in the AL East and manager Dave Trembley is starting to show the strain.

Trembley, who has tried to maintain an upbeat attitude, bristled at repeated questions about his team's lack of success before abruptly ending his pregame chat with reporters before Saturday's game. Afterward, he was at a loss to explain the Orioles' latest setback.

"You'd have to be in here living it and seeing it to believe it," said Trembley, whose team has lost six games decided by two runs or fewer this season. "I apologize if you think I've been a little short but this is not easy."

It could get rougher.

Tejada appeared to slow slightly while running toward first base and went into a headfirst slide. He was safe but lay on the ground atop the bag in pain as a team trainer rushed out. After a brief examination, Tejada was removed from the game and replaced by pinch-runner Cesar Izturis.

Trembley said he was uncertain of Tejada's condition after the game but the infielder told reporters he had a groin strain that isn't likely to keep him out very long.

Baltimore starter Jeremy Guthrie gave up six hits and two runs but pitched with runners in scoring position in all but one of his six-plus innings.

The Orioles scored a pair of unearned runs off Oakland starter Justin Duchscherer in the sixth inning then took a 3-2 lead on Ty Wiggington's sacrifice fly in the eighth.

## NOTES

Oakland RHP Michael Wuertz pitched one shutout inning in the minors while he continues to rehab from tendinitis in his pitching shoulder.

2B Mark Ellis missed his sixth straight game because of a sore left hamstring and A's manager Bob Geren said it's 50-50 whether Ellis will play Sunday.

Baltimore RHP Koji Uehara (hamstring) threw batting practice without problems and will pitch in a simulated game Monday.

Oakland's Davis had his 100th career stolen base in the third inning.

The A's honored longtime Coliseum announcer Roy Steele before the game. Steele, 76, threw out the ceremonial first pitch and his likeness was featured on a bobblehead doll given away to fans.

## **Sweeney hits first game-winning hit in Oakland A's win over Baltimore**

Claire Reclosado, examiner.com, 4/18/2010

OAKLAND, Calif. --- In a game that included a couple milestones, the Oakland A's sure know how to inject some excitement to punctuate their win over the Baltimore Orioles. Riding on great performances by the A's pitching staff, Rajai Davis, and Ryan Sweeney, Oakland won the game in the bottom of the 9th with a score of 4-3.

Following a pre-game ceremony honoring long-time A's PA announcer Roy Steele, the A's provided the 15,072 fans in attendance with their "Green Collar Baseball."

The A's struck first as outfielder Gabe Gross scored in fourth inning on a double hit by second baseman Adam Rosales. Oakland centerfielder Rajai Davis scored a run in the fifth inning—the same inning where he got his 100th-career stolen base.

"That's a number I'm expecting to increase," Davis told reporters after the game.

Starting pitcher Justin Duchscherer pitched 5.2 innings, giving up two runs on seven hits while striking out five. The bullpen kept the score 2-2 until the eighth inning when Baltimore's Cesar Izturis scored on a sacrifice fly by Ty Wiggington off of A's

pitcher Brad Ziegler.

In the bottom of the ninth, the A's took advantage of the lack of control of Orioles pitcher Jim Johnson. After intentionally walking A's first baseman Daric Barton to load the bases, Johnson tried to coax a double play out of A's outfielder Ryan Sweeney. Sweeney worked the count to 3-2, and then singled to right field, scoring Eric Patterson and Davis.

Sweeney said coming from behind to win is "awesome," but his hit was even more special for him. Following the game he told reporters, "That was my first career walk-off hit and it was fun."

While the hitters naturally receive most of the credit, Oakland manager Bob Geren is quick to recognize another big reason for the team's success.

"When you have a lot of wins in your last at-bat, I think in a roundabout way, it sounds funny, but it tells you how good your bullpen is," Geren said. "When you have a bullpen that can hold a one-run deficit, it sounds funny, but it's actually important to hold a one-run deficit—you have a chance."

Pitching has been a key to Oakland's success this season, owning an MLB-best 2.58 team ERA.

"The main thing is our pitchers hold them [opponents] to a minimum of two or less runs a game," Sweeney said. "That's huge confidence on us because we always feel like we're in the game."

With the great start, the A's remain in first place in the American League West, but still may not get the respect that other teams sitting atop their respective divisions receive.

"I like being the underdog," Sweeney revealed. "They don't talk too much about you, you just fly under the radar and show them the numbers at the end of the year. Just keep winning ballgames is the main thing."

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **River Cats strike early, blank Reno**

John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee, 4/18/2010

Turning point: Eric Sogard's second-inning ground ball skidded under Reno shortstop Ed Rogers' glove and into left field for a two-run single that gave the River Cats a 2-0 lead.

Take a bow: Sacramento starter Clayton Mortensen (2-0) threw seven shutout innings, allowing five hits, striking out six and walking two.

Who's hot: Catcher Josh Donaldson and right fielder Jai Miller each contributed two hits for the River Cats.

Who's not: The Raley Field scoreboard below the new video board didn't work for a second consecutive game.

Major league moment: Miller ran a long way from right field toward center to make a diving catch of Doug Deeds' fly ball with two outs and one on in the eighth inning.

Not for the box score: U.S. softball Olympian Crysti Bustos is scheduled to conduct a pre-game hitting demonstration at 11:30 a.m. before throwing out the first pitch. Gates open at 11 a.m.

Worth noting: The Cats placed infielder Dallas McPherson on the disabled list with a strained left hamstring and called up infielder Michael Affronti from Double-A Midland.

Upcoming: Today, River Cats' RHP Vin Mazzaro (1-0, 0.00) vs. Reno RHP Kevin Mulvey (0-0, 2.89), 1:05 p.m.

### **Mortensen shuts down Aces bats**

By Kevin Poveda / Sacramento River Cats

River Cats pitching stayed hot Saturday night behind a stellar performance from starter Clayton Mortensen.

The right-hander threw 7.0 shutout innings as Sacramento knocked off the visiting Reno Aces 2-0 before 12,042 fans at Raley Field. Mortensen (2-0, 3.26) allowed five hits, two walks and recorded six strikeouts.

"To come home to this crowd and get two quick wins, it's a huge momentum swing for us," said Mortensen, who also picked up a win in his first outing at Tacoma. "We have to keep it rolling."

Sacramento pitchers have been phenomenal over the last five games, allowing only eight runs and recording two shutouts. The River Cats (7-3) have gone 4-1 in that stretch and have held the opponent to two runs or less four times.

Things are only looking to get better for the River Cats, as they start their ace right-hander Vin Mazzaro (1-0, 0.00) in Game 3 of a four-game series against the Aces on Sunday at 1:05 p.m.

Sacramento opened the scoring with two runs in the second on a single by second baseman Eric Sogard. With a runner on second in the eighth, River Cats right fielder Jai Miller kept the shut out alive with an astonishing diving catch in shallow right-center field.

Things got interesting for the River Cats in the ninth, as Reno's Ryan Roberts advanced to third base on a wild pitch by Sacramento reliever Sam Demel. Demel kept his poise with a full count, getting Sean Coughlin to ground out to shortstop Corey Wimberly with the tying run at the plate to end the game. Demel recorded his first save of the season and Sacramento nailed down its second victory in as many nights.

River Cats first baseman Chris Carter extended his hitting streak to six games with a single in the first inning.

## **Hounds Hold On For 6-5 Win**

**NORTH LITTLE ROCK** - The Midland RockHounds played with the lead from the first inning and carried a five-run lead into the ninth inning only to hold on at the very end for a 6-5 victory over the Arkansas Travelers at Dickey-Stephens Park on Saturday. Centerfielder Corey Brown hit a three-run homer (1) in the first inning off losing pitcher Michael Anton (1-1) putting Midland ahead early. The Travs rallied in the ninth for four runs, but Midland closer Beau Vaughan stranded the winning runs on base when Julio Perez's drive to left field was caught at the edge of the warning track.

Anton walked a batter and hit another in the first inning before Brown hammered a 2-2 pitch over the centerfield wall giving Hounds lefty Anthony Capra (1-1) a 3-0 lead. Anton recovered nicely and held Midland without a run over his last four innings. The Travs lefty also struck out four, but walked three and allowed four base hits in five frames.

Capra was outstanding during a five-inning performance where just one runner advanced to third base. He earned his first win of the year allowing no runs and just two hits while walking three and adding five strikeouts.

Hounds righty Jason Ray relieved in the fifth, but allowed Brian Walker's RBI double in the seventh scoring Carlos Colmenares all the way from first base.

Arkansas reliever Barret Browning came on after Anton and was perfect through two innings. He tried to get through the eighth, but was pulled after walking three batters. Amalio Diaz was called upon to get out of the jam, but all three inherited runners crossed the plate. Shane Peterson scored when Steve Kleen's slow roller to the hole at shortstop was picked up for an infield single. Diaz allowed the next two runs to score on a wild pitch and a balk increasing Midland's lead to 6-1.

The ninth inning started with some luck for the Travs as Paul McNulty and Abel Nieves reached base on back-to-back bad hop singles. Then shortstop Yung-Chi Chen dropped a throw at second base after Efren Navarro grounded to first baseman Anthony Recker. With the bases loaded the no outs, Colmenares grounded a single to right field scoring two runs. Then Walker came through with a clean RBI single to center field cutting the deficit to 6-4. Vaughan then got the first out of the inning when he caught Clay Fuller looking. Andrew Romine was the second out on a sacrifice fly that knocked in Colmenares bringing the Travs within one run. Ryan Mount, pinch running for Walker, advanced to third base when Jeremy Moore singled to center field. Perez jumped on a 1-0 pitch and drove it high to left field, but it was caught just shy of the track by Archie Gilbert to end the game.

NOTES: Midland won two of three during the series and the Hounds won the first-half series against the Travs 5-1.

The Travs welcome the Frisco RoughRiders to town for a three-game series beginning Sunday afternoon. Arkansas right hander Ryan Braiser (1-0, 0.00) takes the hill against Frisco righty Blake Beavan (1-1, 3.27 ERA). First pitch is set for 4:00

p.m. with the gates opening at 3:00 p.m. The broadcast of the game on Sports Animal 920 and www.travs.com begins at 3:40 p.m.

### **Rawhide Powers over Ports, 5-3**

**STOCKTON, Calif.** - The Ports left the first inning with a 1-1 tie with Visalia, but couldn't keep up with the Rawhide in the course of Saturday night's game. Stockton (4-5) dropped their third straight game, 5-3, to Visalia (6-4) at Banner Island Ballpark. The Ports will look to avoid being swept in their first series at home when they take on Visalia on Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

Designated hitter Grant Green, the A's First Round pick in last summer's draft, collected his first professional home run in the first inning off RHP Josh Collmenter. It was a solo shot to left field over the mini monster wall. Green's hit was the only Stockton hit of seven total hits that went for extra bases in the contest, while seven of the nine Visalia hits were for extra bases-including five doubles, a triple and a home run.

The Ports are batting .182 (6x33) with runners in scoring position with 27 runners left on base in this series. Visalia is batting .33 (9x3)0 with 22 runners left on base in this series.

Ports starter Anivioris Ramirez had another rough outing, posting a line almost identical to his April 11 debut against Visalia. He allowed five runs, all earned, on eight hits with three walks and a home run in 5.0 innings. But Ports relievers turned in another stellar performance. Paul Smyth allowed just one hit and fanned five in 2.2 innings. Daniel Thomas threw 1.1 scoreless and hitless innings and struck out two as well.

Visalia jumped to a 1-0 lead in the top of the first. After walking the leadoff batter, Rey Navarro, Ramirez got second baseman Brent Greer to ground into a double play. First baseman Ryan Wheeler then doubled to right-center field and designated hitter Paul Goldschmidt then brought him home with a double to left field. Stockton tied it up in the bottom of the first as Green homered.

An RBI double by right fielder Dan Kaczrowski and a sacrifice fly by Navarro scored a pair of runs to put Visalia ahead, 3-1, in the second inning. The Rawhide pulled ahead, 5-1, in the third inning on a two-run home run by center fielder Alfredo Marte.

The Ports chipped away at the lead, however. Left fielder Shane Keough singled to get the Ports offense going in the fifth inning. He came around to score on an RBI single by second baseman Jason Christian. Christian collected a pair of hits in the game.

In the ninth inning, the Ports attempted to rally. Shortstop Tyler Ladendorf singled to get things rolling. Keough then reached first safely as Greer committed an error in a Visalia attempt to turn a double play. With runners on first and second, catcher Ryan Ortiz hit into a 6-4-3 double play, which allowed Ladendorf to score the Ports third and final run. Christian struck out to end the game.

Stockton will take on the Rawhide for the final game of the series at 2:05 p.m. PST on Sunday at Banner Island Ballpark. RHP Justin Murray (1-0, 1.50) will start for Stockton, while LHP Wade Miley (0-2, 6.30) will be on the hill for Visalia. The first 1,000 fans will receive a Ports fist bump giveaway. A's roving instructor and legend Rickey Henderson will continue to work with the Stockton Ports on Sunday.

### **Cougars Knocked Out by Kernels** **Kane County crushed by Cedar Rapids in series opener**

**GENEVA, III.** – The Kane County Cougars dropped the opening game of a three-game set against the Cedar Rapids Kernels, 14-6, on Saturday night in front of 5,328 at Elfstrom Stadium. The Cougars trailed, 4-0, early, battled to within, 4-3, but then never got any closer. A quartet of pitchers gave up 15 hits and walked nine in the loss.

Starter Justin Marks (0-1) gave up nine runs on six hits in 3 1/3 innings and suffered the loss. Josh Lansford gave up two runs in 1 1/3, Bo Schultz got touched for three runs -- two earned -- over three innings, and Hector Garcia worked a scoreless ninth with the game out of hand.

After a four-run second by the Kernels, the Cougars rallied in the third to chase Cedar Rapids starter Tyler Kehrer. Kent

Walton hit a sacrifice fly to score Leonardo Gil, and Rashun Dixon drilled a two-run triple to make it 4-3. Then in the seventh, down 12-3, Crumbliss earned a bases-loaded walk, and Walton nailed a two-run single to account for the Cougars' final runs. Kyle Hurts (2-0) got the win for the visitors.

The Cougars (5-5) and Kernels (5-5) play Game 2 of the series Sunday afternoon at 1 CT. Ian Krol (0-1, 9.53) will face Garrett Richards (0-0, 0.82).