

A's News Clips, Thursday, May 6, 2010

Bullpen comes to Oakland A's rescue against Texas Rangers

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

A's manager Bob Geren had eight relievers at his disposal, and he wasn't shy about using them.

Oakland's bullpen was pressed into heavy duty again Wednesday afternoon, and the unit salted away a 4-1 victory over the Texas Rangers that helped the A's reclaim first place in the American League West.

With starter Trevor Cahill exiting in the sixth inning as he neared his pitch limit, Tyson Ross, Brad Ziegler and Andrew Bailey combined to allow just two hits over the final four innings.

A night earlier, five relievers handled the final six innings of a 7-6 victory after starter Vin Mazzaro was pulled early.

"They all did a heck of a job getting us those two victories," Geren said.

The A's took two of three from the Rangers and steadied the ship on the heels of a 1-5 road trip. They enjoy a day off before welcoming the Tampa Bay Rays to the Oakland Coliseum for a three-game set starting Friday.

Cahill (1-1) rebounded nicely after allowing three homers against Toronto last Friday. His sinker had the movement that was missing against the Blue Jays.

He also benefited from two double-play grounders and, unlike his previous start, pitched well after being handed an early lead.

The only run charged to him was unearned and came after he left the game.

Cahill was called up from Triple-A Sacramento because of a forearm injury to starter Brett Anderson, and the A's need him to deliver. Anderson is expected to miss three to four weeks.

"The biggest thing was I made pitches when I had to," Cahill said. "I mixed it up pretty good. Last game, when I had to make a pitch it seemed like they hit a home run. Today I was able to get some double plays in big situations."

Before Wednesday's game, the A's sent Mazzaro back to the minors and called up reliever Henry Rodriguez, giving Oakland that eight-man bullpen.

With days off today and Monday, Geren said the A's can utilize a four-man rotation for now and hope Justin Duchscherer recovers from a hip injury and avoids the disabled list.

"We can go with a four-man rotation, hoping Duchscherer can come back and fill in on the back end of that," Geren said.

The A's scored twice in the first off former Athletic Colby Lewis (3-1).

Eric Patterson's homer in the fifth made it 3-0.

Texas scored its only run in the sixth. Michael Young reached on third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff's throwing error, and Josh Hamilton's bad-hop single got by first baseman Daric Barton.

With Cahill at 90 pitches, Geren went to his bullpen. Cahill began the season on the DL and hadn't thrown more than 81 this season.

"Our bullpen is the strongest part of our team right now, so there's no point in risking anything," Cahill said.

Ross gave up Vladimir Guerrero's RBI single but coaxed Ian Kinsler into a 4-6-3 double play. Barton made a terrific stop on David Murphy's grounder and beat him to the bag to end the inning.

Barton, who is 4 for 6 with four runs in the past two games, had an RBI single in the seventh to give the A's a 4-1 lead.

Kouzmanoff is hitting .370 over his last 11 games but committed his fourth error of the season. That already surpasses his total from 2009, when he set a National League record for fielding percentage by a third baseman while with San Diego.

NEXT GAME: Friday, vs. Rays, 7:05 p.m.

Oakland A's call up reliever Henry Rodriguez, send down starter Vin Mazzaro

Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Rodriguez brought up; Mazzaro sent down

The A's have said Henry Rodriguez can be a special reliever once he gets command of the strike zone.

They saw enough from the hard-throwing right-hander to call him up from Triple-A Sacramento on Wednesday. Starting pitcher Vin Mazzaro was sent back down to make room for him.

Rodriguez, 23, has been high on the A's radar for several seasons thanks to a fastball that reaches 100 mph. He made his big league debut with three appearances in September and earned his ticket back to the majors by cutting down on his walks with Sacramento.

The right-hander didn't allow an earned run in eight appearances with the River Cats, striking out 14 and walking just three in 91/3 innings.

Catcher Landon Powell began this season with Sacramento. Not only has Rodriguez harnessed his fastball, Powell said, he's added an effective slider.

"He's definitely coming into his own," Powell said after a 4-1 victory over Texas. "Now he's a pitcher, not just a hard thrower."

Closer Andrew Bailey has been the only true power arm in the bullpen this season. Rodriguez gives manager Bob Geren another option if the A's need a strikeout with men on base. Michael Wuertz, activated from the disabled list Monday, should also help in that area.

Geren said starting pitcher Justin Duchscherer received a cortisone shot to relieve inflammation

in his left hip and that the right-hander might try throwing Monday or Tuesday. With the A's traveling to Texas on Monday, Tuesday is the likely day.

That should give some clarity on whether Duchscherer needs to go on the DL.

Reliever Brad Ziegler purchased 200 tickets to distribute to military families for Saturday's game against Tampa Bay, as part of the A's Salute to Armed Forces Day. Ziegler has started a foundation, "Pastime for Patriots," which will continue offering tickets to families. The foundation will launch Saturday, with tables set up on the concourse level of the Oakland Coliseum, where fans can find information on how to donate.

Ryan Sweeney went 0 for 4 to snap his 37-game streak of reaching base safely in home games. He fell three games short of Reggie Jackson's Oakland record established in 1969.

Vin Mazzaro sent down, reliever Henry Rodriguez called up

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/5/2010, 12:12 pm

Perfect day for baseball at the Coliseum, as the A's and Rangers get ready to play their series finale.

On to the A's news from the morning...

—Vin Mazzaro was sent down after last night's shaky outing and hard-throwing reliever Henry Rodriguez was called up. With days off Thursday and Monday, manager Bob Geren said the team can afford to go with a four-man rotation and eight-man bullpen for the time being. "Being that we have a couple off-days in the near future, we can go with a four-man rotation, hoping (Justin) Duchscherer can come back and fill in on the back end of that," Geren said. As I write this, Duchscherer is supposed to be getting a cortisone shot in his left hip to help relieve inflammation. The coming days should determine whether he'll need to join the DL.

I like the promotion of Rodriguez, who made his big league debut last September and touches 100 mph with his fastball. This bullpen needs another power arm besides Andrew Bailey. The return of Michael Wuertz helps, but the A's need another guy who can come in and get a strikeout with runners on base. Rodriguez's issue always has been shaky command, but word is he was spotting his fastball very well with Triple-A Sacramento. He didn't allow an earned run in eight appearances and had 14 strikeouts and just three walks in 9 1/3 innings. During spring training, he was getting some strikeouts with his breaking ball too. If he can add a consistent second pitch to complement that fastball, this guy can be really effective.

Today's lineups:

A's: Pennington SS; Barton 1B; Sweeney RF; Kouzmanoff 3B; Chavez DH; Rosales 2B; Patterson LF; Powell C; Davis CF; Cahill RHP.

Rangers: Andrus SS; Young 3B; Hamilton LF; Guerrero DH; Kinsler 2B; Murphy RF; Smoak 1B; Ramirez C; Borbon CF; Lewis RHP.

A's back in first place with defeat of Texas

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

With four teams that all have their various strengths - and some clear weaknesses - perhaps this is how the AL West will be much of the season.

The A's followed up a dismal road trip to Toronto and Tampa Bay by taking two of three from Texas at home, and Wednesday's 4-1 victory hopped Oakland over the Rangers and back into first place after a three-day absence.

"It's always a fight in our division," A's first baseman Daric Barton said. "We always feel like we play those other teams tough and they always play us tough.

"We have a lot of confidence in our team, especially our pitching staff. We ran into a little rough spell on the road, but as long as we keep hitting with runners in scoring position, we'll be OK."

Oakland has won four of its five series at the Coliseum, and, designated hitter Eric Chavez said, "Obviously, we feel really comfortable at home. We just had one ugly trip, but we don't want to look too much into it."

Trevor Cahill was one of the A's starters who'd had a poor outing on the last trip, giving up eight runs, six earned, in five innings. That was his first appearance of the year for Oakland, taking the spot vacated by Brett Anderson, and he said afterward that he thought he might have been overthrowing, trying too hard after getting recalled.

On Wednesday, Cahill had no such trouble. He gave up one unearned run in five-plus innings and he came out after 90 pitches because he'd thrown 81 his previous outing. He's increasing his total each time following a left shoulder injury that put him on the disabled list to open the season.

Cahill said the difference between his start against Texas and the game at Toronto was that when there were runners on base the previous outing, "It seemed like they hit home runs," he said. "This time, I was able to get the double plays."

That means his sinker was working. Along with a big double play in the fifth Wednesday, he used the sinker to strike out Josh Hamilton with two outs and two on in the third.

The A's lineup gave Cahill some early support, with RBI groundouts by Ryan Sweeney and Kevin Kouzmanoff. Eric Patterson added a solo homer in the fifth and Barton a run-scoring single in the seventh.

Kouzmanoff, who made only three errors last season, committed his fourth of the year, but he's also hit .370 his past 11 games after batting .210 in his first 16 games.

The defensive player of the game was in the other uniform. Texas second baseman Ian Kinsler made three terrific plays, making fine running catches on two pop-ups and also starting a double play in the sixth with a slick move. He lunged toward the middle for a grounder by Chavez and flipped the ball from his glove, leaving it floating in a perfect spot right at the bag for shortstop Elvis Andrus.

Oakland closer Andrew Bailey extended his career-high scoreless streak to 20 2/3 innings and he's converted each of his past 26 saves.

A's Sweeney true to his Iowa roots

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Don't call Ryan Sweeney the Flyin' Iowan, because that might cause some folks to confuse the A's right fielder with the numerous other Iowans who have become "hip" to airplane travel.

But Sweeney is fleet of foot, one of the three or four fastest A's outfielders. Which is impressive, because as Rajai Davis said Wednesday, "Put our outfield against the rest of the league, we'll beat 'em all in a relay."

Sweeney downplays his own speed.

"I like to consider myself more of an instinctive outfielder," he said. "I get good jumps on the ball and I might not be as fast, but I got big strides and I try to close ground and take good routes to the ball."

Spoken like a true son of Iowa, where the state motto is, "We Get A Good Jump On The Ball."

True to his roots, Sweeney goes about his business quietly, without fuss. He's a large lad (6-foot-4 and 225 pounds) but not a home-run hitter. He's a get-on-base machine, so quietly consistent that you hardly notice, unless it's like Tuesday night when he hit a rare homer and drove in five runs.

Sweeney came to the A's in the trade that sent Nick Swisher to the White Sox, and Sweeney is the anti-Swisher. Swisher wore his hair theatrically long; Sweeney rocks the buzz-cut. Swisher went for jacks, Sweeney goes for the gaps. Swisher was Hollywood (or New York City); Sweeney is pure Cedar Rapids.

This is Sweeney's third major-league season, he's 25 and presumably he has some money, and he still calls Cedar Rapids home. It ain't Des Moines, but it's glitzy enough for him. He bought a house in Cedar Rapids five years ago and still lives there. He married a Northern California girl and she now attends nursing school in Iowa.

"It's a little boring there for her, I think," Sweeney said. "She's used to a little faster pace, but she likes it, too."

Faster pace? His wife is from El Dorado Hills.

Sweeney said he enjoys retreating to the peace of Iowa every winter, although it bugs him a bit that everyone there wants to talk baseball. Maybe that's because Sweeney is a star in Iowa, and the most recent famous Iowans were Johnny Carson and John Wayne, and they're dead.

(Actually, Bob Feller, Kurt Warner and '07 Masters champion Zach Johnson are from Iowa. But Sweeney is on the short-short list of Famous Live Iowans.)

Eventually, Sweeney said, he and his wife might move from the Hawkeye State. The winters get harder to take, he said, although he knows that the relentless snowstorms are nature's way of toughening up Iowans for the summer's oppressive heat, humidity, thunderstorms, hurricanes and locust plagues.

I asked Sweeney to name the highlights of Cedar Rapids, what there is to see and do there.

"I don't know," he said.

Iowans don't brag, otherwise he would have mentioned the Cedar Rapids Museum of Modern Art and its large collection of Grant Wood paintings - although "American Gothic" hangs in Chicago.

Sweeney has become a solid, American Gothic-type big-leaguer. He hit .293 last season and had crept over .300 until Wednesday's 0-for-4 (with an RBI). It was only the second game this season he failed to get on base, and it snapped his streak of reaching base in 37 consecutive home games (Reggie Jackson holds the A's record, 40).

Sweeney has his own agenda and he's sticking to it. For example, for a big fella, he hits few home runs - one every 80 at-bats.

"I'm not going to change," Sweeney said. "A lot of guys try to hit more home runs and they strike out a lot more ... I just want to be a good all-around player."

Whatever mark he makes in the big leagues will be with his bat and glove, not with his quotes.

On getting on base: "It's not really something I think about. It's more of a team thing. Depends on what the situation presents."

On hitting .300 as a goal: "If you hit .300, they say, 'He's a good hitter.' I like to be considered that. I've come close (to .300) every year. I just try to stay consistent, not do too much or too little."

On his sometimes acrobatic play in right field: "I'm not scared to run into a wall or slide or dive or whatever to save a run. Trust me, I would like to not dive, but sometimes that's what happens."

On winning a Gold Glove: "If it happens, it happens; and if it don't, it don't."

Sweeney is just doing whatever it takes, every play, every day. The Hard Tryin' Iowan.

Mazzaro a River Cat again

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Vin Mazzaro's spot start for **Justin Duchscherer** was just that, here one day and gone the next.

Mazzaro was sent back to Triple-A Sacramento on Wednesday and the A's went to an eight-man bullpen by bringing up hard-throwing **Henry Rodriguez**, who impressed the team in September and who hadn't allowed an earned run at Sacramento this year.

The move means the A's have a three-man bench, which is risky, especially for a team that has inordinately poor health, but the team might need the extra bullpen help while trying to make do without Duchscherer by using a four-man rotation.

Oakland can do so because of off days today and Monday; the next time the team would need Duchscherer would be May 15.

If the A's placed Duchscherer on the disabled list, however, he'd also be eligible to return May 15, an indication that Oakland believes he might be ready earlier - or, more likely, that there is another move to come but the team hasn't decided what it will be.

It's hard to imagine the A's going with a three-man bench for more than a week. Should Oakland dip down to Sacramento, there are some interesting possibilities there, including **Jack Cust**.

Duchscherer had a cortisone shot for left hip inflammation Wednesday, which means his activity will be limited for several days. If the shot does not resolve the hip issue quickly, it's even more likely Duchscherer would go on the DL. Manager **Bob Geren** said Duchscherer is scheduled to resume throwing Monday or Tuesday.

Briefly: Kurt Suzuki (ribcage strain) has been doing abdominal workouts and he said he will start throwing today and he'll start hitting again in a few days. "The tightness is less and less," the catcher said. Suzuki is expected to come off the DL on Sunday or Tuesday. ... **Brett Anderson** (forearm strain) said he's going to start playing catch within a few days.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Ratings rise: The A's TV ratings have improved significantly, according to Comcast SportsNet California, jumping from an 0.70 (approximately 17,500 households) in April 2009, to 1.33 average (33,250 households) last month. The numbers are also up at least 88 percent in all key advertising demographics.

On blacks in MLB: blame game is off base

Bruce Jenkins, San Francisco Chronicle

There's a lot of consternation these days about the decline of African American talent in baseball, and it's a topic worthy of concern. There's a prevailing opinion that the institution of Major League Baseball has somehow screwed this up, which completely misses the point. It is also widely assumed that young African Americans don't have enough role models in today's game - players to emulate, to phrase it better - and that's just plain wrong.

It should be hastily noted that if you're looking for expertise on this matter, you might not be turning to a white sportswriter from Half Moon Bay. But I'm old enough to have been influenced by the game's greatest era, a time when black athletes were the very essence of baseball, and that's the source of some worthwhile perspective.

As a kid growing up in Southern California, I felt sorry for the fans who adopted the expansion Los Angeles Angels in the early '60s. Their league was so hopelessly behind. The National League's brand of ball was infinitely more entertaining, sophisticated and progressive with the likes of Willie Mays, Henry Aaron, Frank Robinson, Bob Gibson, Richie Allen, Willie McCovey, Billy Williams, Willie Davis and Maury Wills (there were dozens more) dictating play.

These were children of the Great Depression, born in the 1930s and getting a sense of their athletic prowess in the years after World War II. If you were lucky enough to own a television set in the early '50s, there wasn't much to watch in the realm of sports. The NFL was many years away from its booming popularity, and the NBA was a fly-by-night outfit operating out of places like Rochester, Fort Wayne and Sheboygan.

Baseball, in other words, was *it*. Even for the Baby Boomer generation, a commitment to pro football or basketball meant four years of college and a world of uncertainty. A baseball career might require a few seasons in the minors, but kids could sign right out of high school and start making some money (the Joe Nuxhall experiment was something of a novelty, but he pitched two-thirds of an inning for the Cincinnati Reds at the age of 15).

As baseball fields began to vanish in America's inner cities, and equipment costs (especially for aluminum bats) rose beyond all reason, it's hardly a mystery that African American kids gravitated to pro football, now by far the most popular sport in the country, and basketball, where so many of today's elite players went straight from high school to the NBA. Far too often, baseball strikes young athletes as the most unwieldy path to stardom.

Remember this, too: It ranks No. 1 in boredom. Think back to the hotshot athletes or musicians from your high-school days; it's *so* much about sex. If you can play the guitar, wail on sax, throw down a massive dunk or weave your way through six angry tacklers - always in front of an energetic crowd - you have it *made*. There will always be kids who appreciate baseball for its cerebral nature and variety of skills, but it also means playing before about eight people in the chill of a blustery spring afternoon on a jagged landscape of pebbles and potholes.

The sex factor is relevant, OK? I'm amazed more people don't bring this up. Sex, stardom, recognition, full swagger down the hallway, a chance to *be* somebody. And that goes for any race or background. Baseball didn't do anything wrong; kids just got some far more attractive choices.

Meanwhile, as people analyze the numbers and lament the percentages (roughly 9 percent of the major-league population this year and last, as opposed to 27 percent in 1975), they're completely oblivious to the African American talent that *did* choose baseball. The realm of superstardom may be somewhat limited - Derek Jeter, Jimmy Rollins, Ryan Howard, CC Sabathia - and maybe that's what Edwin Jackson meant when he said, "There's just not many of us left. Pretty soon, there will be none of us around." But isn't this about where the game is headed? If you're talking about unlimited potential, check out Jason Heyward, Matt Kemp, Adam Jones, Andrew McCutchen, the Upton brothers (Justin and B.J.), David Price, Dexter Fowler, Cameron Maybin and Austin Jackson. Athletes don't get any more powerful than Prince Fielder, Derrek Lee or Chris Young; more classy than Curtis Granderson, Torii Hunter or Ken Griffey Jr.; more charismatic than Orlando Hudson or Dontrelle Willis; more studious than Howie Kendrick; more speed-disruptive than Carl Crawford, Chone Figgins, Michael Bourn or Eric Young Jr.

You're calling this a wasteland? That's just not realistic. Things are just as promising in the minor leagues, where the likes of Desmond Jennings (Tampa Bay), Domonic Brown (Phillies) and A's prospects Chris Carter and Michael Taylor loom for midseason arrival.

Michael Wilbon, the African American columnist of the Washington Post and one of the leading sports voices in the country, wrote recently, "Black kids today are seduced by glamour, by what appears to be instant riches, by trappings which some folks outside our culture won't begin to understand. That's why I don't want to hear for one second that MLB has somehow failed black youngsters. I *know* the programs MLB has undertaken to attract black kids (notably Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities). I know the resources, human and financial, that have been devoted to this. Nobody needs to be blamed. Sorry, but our kids are interested by and large in basketball, then football, then a bunch of other things."

Life in the big leagues won't ever be like it was in the 1960s. Then again, we'll never have another Otis Redding, Sam Cooke or the Ronettes, either. Life does go on, taking its natural course. Blend your memories with faith.

Cohn: A's are first in standings, last in charisma

LOWELL COHN, The Press Democrat

The A's are back in first place after beating Texas on Wednesday, so maybe what I'm writing is unfair, out of balance. But, come on, the A's are boring.

Some teams have stars, guys you want to see, players who rivet your eyes. The Rangers have such a player — Vladimir Guerrero, even though people said he's washed up. He isn't. But the A's have no player like that.

I'll tell you what the A's have. They have Generic Player. One guy gets hurt, so they bring up another guy who's vaguely familiar, has a vaguely similar name, plays more or less the same game. Generic.

Some of this is not the A's fault. They are hurt. In spring training, general manager Billy Beane told me his team would succeed if it stays healthy, but if too many players get hurt — well, forget about it.

Here are some facts about the A's and injuries, provided by Oakland's public-relations department. The A's already have used the disabled list 10 times this season, the 10th wipeout being Kurt Suzuki last Friday. Suzuki is the A's only bona fide star, so that hardly helps the A's and their image problem.

The A's have used the DL 74 times since the 2007 season began. They currently have eight guys on the DL. The roll-call please: Brett Anderson, Travis Buck, Coco Crisp, Joey Devine, Mark Ellis, John Meloan, Josh Outman and Suzuki. Justin Duchscherer is not on the DL but he's also not playing. He got a cortisone shot on Wednesday for his inflamed left hip and is expected to start throwing — not pitching, throwing — May 10 or 11. There's a lot of hurt going around the A's.

You can't blame anybody for these injuries. You can't blame the manager or the trainer, although you can wonder why so many major leaguers get injured these days. Did players get hurt so much in the 1950s when pitchers used to pitch complete games?

It is the A's fate to get hurt and here's the result. The A's are minus their best starting pitcher, Anderson, and their second-best starting pitcher, Duchscherer, and a really good reliever, Devine, and their new center fielder, Crisp, who hasn't played a single game, who has a broken pinkie.

So, although the A's probably have a certain number of exciting players — semi-exciting players? — those players are currently in the doctor's office or the training room or they're getting well in Arizona.

Let me add this. Ben Sheets was supposed to have star quality — to be a draw. For \$10 million, he should be a draw. But he has been a bust. His fastball is as straight as a clothesline and batters whack him around, and he's either hurt and hiding that fact, or he's relearning how to pitch. Watching him is not pleasant. Overall, the A's lack pizzazz.

Still, the A's are in first place. When a team is in first place, their home yard is the place to be. Is the Coliseum the place to be?

For Wednesday's matinee against a rival competing for the top spot in the division, the A's drew 15,403 fans. Monday night the A's had 8,874, although people there said it looked like half that, and the place was so quiet and polite it sounded like an audience for a chamber-music recital. On Tuesdays, the A's give away free parking. On Wednesdays they sell seats for two bucks. Still, they are 28th out of 30 teams in major-league attendance. Even factoring in the bad economy, that is hold-your-nose material and it shows, incontrovertibly, the A's can't generate a following.

There are reasons for this aside from the lack of stars you can grab onto, care about, hope about. The A's are unabashedly doing everything they can to ditch Oakland. They say they tried to get a ballpark in Oakland, made the sincere effort. That may be true. It's just that right now they have a U-Haul backed up to the stadium gate and, if they can get the go-ahead from Major League Baseball, they will fill the U-Haul and haul butt to San Jose.

This is not a posture that induces fans to pay even \$2 a ticket. Fans, especially season-ticket holders, think, "They don't want to be there, so why should I want to be there?"

So, yes, it is fine and wonderful that the scrappy A's are in first place despite all their injuries. But here is a philosophical question to ponder: If a team is in first place but no one is there to notice, is it truly in first place?

A's take series, move into first place

Janie McCauley, AP, 5/6/2010

OAKLAND — Nobody's playing great baseball in the wide-open AL West. The Oakland Athletics are back in first place for now — at only one game above .500.

Eric Patterson homered, Trevor Cahill won in his second start since getting called up from the minors and the A's beat the Texas Rangers 4-1 on Wednesday to reclaim the division's top spot and take the series.

"I think that's big in the clubhouse," closer and reigning AL Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey said. "Everyone knows we have a young team. To be able to go out there and win a series against division rivals, that's going hold strong for late in the season and give us that confidence that we need to continue."

Ryan Sweeney and Kevin Kouzmanoff produced consecutive RBI groundouts in the first as the A's (15-14) staked Cahill to an early lead. Patterson connected for his second homer leading off the fifth against Colby Lewis (3-1).

Cahill (1-1), a 10-game winner last season as a rookie, allowed only two baserunners past first in five solid innings to earn the victory. He was brought up from Triple-A Sacramento last Friday to start at Toronto as the A's deal with an injury-depleted pitching staff.

The Rangers won the first four games of their road trip before dropping the last two, losing their first series in the last three.

"We can execute better," manager Ron Washington said. "We've got to make sure we continue to pound and get them in the right frame of mind. There are still some guys in that lineup trying to find themselves. We go according to the middle of our lineup. They go, we go."

Daric Barton had an RBI single, doubled and scored a run for the A's. The Rangers had led the division for the first time all season the previous three days.

Cahill gave the A's a boost after their starters had gone 1-6 over the past eight games.

"The biggest thing was I made pitches when I had to," Cahill said. "I was throwing my sinker in to righties and getting groundballs to get some double plays. My sinker was a lot better today, and I was able to throw it well for strikes."

Brad Ziegler pitched a perfect eighth and Bailey finished the 2-hour, 26-minute game with a 1-2-3 ninth for his fifth save in as many chances. Bailey hasn't allowed a run in a career-best 20 2-3 innings dating to last Sept. 6 and has converted 26 straight saves overall.

Lewis was coming off consecutive 10-strikeout games but he labored through six innings and saw his pitch count go up in a hurry. He was done after 105 and couldn't beat his former team the way Rich Harden did Monday in the series opener.

"There were a lot of times I felt like I was forcing my pitches," Lewis said. "I got slider happy and didn't really mix my pitches well."

Vladimir Guerrero had an RBI single in the sixth for the Rangers' lone run, which was unearned after Michael Young got aboard on Kouzmanoff's throwing error at third base to start the inning.

Washington offered to give Guerrero a day off after he had a grand slam and five RBIs in Tuesday's 7-6 loss.

"Before I could get it out he said no," Washington said.

Since last May 31, the Rangers are 4-11 against the A's, who improved to 8-3 in day games.

NOTES: A's starter Justin Duchscherer received a cortisone injection in his sore left hip. He will try to throw early next week. ... Sweeney saw the end to a stretch of 37 straight home games reaching base. ... Oakland's Rajai Davis stole his 12th base in 13 attempts. ... Texas leadoff man Elvis Andrus was caught stealing for the fourth time. ... The A's recalled hard-throwing RHP Henry Rodriguez, who has been clocked at 100 mph, from Triple-A Sacramento to help the bullpen and optioned RHP Vin Mazzaro to Sacramento after his spot start Tuesday. ... The Rangers return home for a stretch of 14 in 17 games at Arlington. Bench coach Jackie Moore rejoined the team this series following the death of his daughter. ... Ziegler has purchased 200 tickets for military families to attend Saturday's game vs. Tampa Bay through his new foundation "Pastime for Patriots," helping the team salute Armed Forces Day.

The Best of Two Out of Three

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 5/6/2010

Oakland, CA – Another day of great pitching led the Oakland A's to win game two of the series over the Texas Rangers 4-1. The A's have now reclaimed first place in the American League West.

"We won with good pitching, defense and getting guys on base," Rajai Davis said. "Despite our injuries we have the desire to not give up." "To win the series and be back over .500 is a blessing for us."

Trevor Cahill won his second start since being called up from the minors last Friday to start in Toronto. He threw 90 pitches (56 were strikes) and only allowed two base runners past first in five solid frames. Cahill was relieved in the 6th inning before the A's bullpen took over.

"The biggest thing was I made pitches when I had to," said Cahill. "I mixed it up pretty good this time, I think that was the biggest difference." "Today I was able to get some double plays in big situations, so that helped."

The A's quickly got going early when Cliff Pennington singled and Daric Barton doubled giving them a lead 2-0. With team effort Oakland provided good defense that kept the Rangers scoreless until top of the 6th inning. Before that happened Eric Patterson belted out a home run in the fifth to make it 3-0.

Texas was 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position but could not score. They had some good opportunities but the A's stellar defense once again ended all attempts. The Rangers got their only run in the sixth when Michael Young, lead off the inning and got to third base on an error. Vladimir Guerrero later singled and Young scored leaving runners on base.

"The difference in the game today is they got some hits and ground balls," said manager Roy Washington. "We just couldn't get hits when we had runners out there." "They killed some rallies and I guess you have to give their pitchers credit for making pitches in that situation."

Texas starter Colby Lewis allowed three runs, five hits and three walks in six innings. Lewis faced his first loss of the season and is now 3-1 with a 3.03 ERA. The Rangers dropped out of first place in the American League West after finishing 4-2 on their six game West coast trip.

"A lot of times out there I felt like I was forcing my pitches," said Lewis. "I didn't mix my pitches well, but overall I battled." "It's just one of those things, it doesn't always work out."

A's fans are clearly fed up

ART SPANDER , Special to The Examiner 5/4/2010

OAKLAND — Perhaps the A's should rethink the policy against banners at the Coliseum negative to management, permitting display on the condition that signs must be accompanied by paying customers.

While understandably no one wishes to be trashed in his own house, and figuratively that's what the Coliseum is for the A's, better to have the seats filled, if even by those who proclaim disdain for Lew Wolff.

A month ago, Jorge Leon was ejected from the Coliseum for refusing to remove a sign that read "Wolff Lied. He Never Tried," a reference to the owner's determination to move the club to San Jose, contending he was unable to negotiate with the city of Oakland.

Whether Leon showed up Monday night when the A's opened a homestand with a series against the Texas Rangers is unknown, but very few others did.

The announced crowd of 8,874 was the A's smallest in seven years and the smallest in the majors this year.

Once, in a darker era — April 17, 1979 — the A's drew only 653 paid spectators, a ridiculous total, but that was the last year of the regime of Charles Oscar Finley, a man even more disliked than Wolff. And it also was a notably chilly night.

Finley desperately sold the club to the late Walter Haas, who in a wise series of moves, including the acquisition of Bill King as play-by-play announcer and Sandy Alderson as GM, made the A's relevant. They won a championship. They made the turnstiles click.

We have returned to the bad, old days, a time when the ballyard was so depressing it was nicknamed the "Oakland Mausoleum." Now, the upper deck is covered by tarps, the two lower decks buried in gloom.

"It's not much fun to play in front of an empty stadium in your home park," A's reliever Brad Ziegler wrote recently on his Twitter page. "We're going through that when A's fans boycott our games because ownership has threatened to move the team."

While the word "boycott" may be somewhat of an overstatement, Ziegler's disenchantment is appreciated. So too is the disenchantment of A's fans, presuming they do exist, with Wolff.

If they attend a game, they enrich Wolff's coffers. If they do not attend, they enrich his desires. Ah yes, San Jose and those Silicon Valley capitalists.

Monday night, three signs hung on the right-field railing in front of mostly empty stands, one reading, "Keep Our A's in Oakland," another, "Don't Take Our A's," and the third, "A's Fans Say: No San Jose."

A's fans? We're back to the conundrum: If a ballgame is played in front of 45,000 empty seats, even if some of them are hidden under camouflage, did it really take place?

Gary Radnich, the TV and radio anchor and host, used to say when the Giants still were at Candlestick Park that a Monday night game against Montreal was the standard against which tiny crowds should be judged. That was the bottom.

This Monday night between the A's and Rangers was right down with the worst of them.

Hey, Lew, do something. And that doesn't mean gleefully shifting your team down to San Jose. Here they might have no attendance. There they still have no ballpark.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Salt lake rallies past Sacramento

Sacramento suffered from an offensive slump Wednesday night, collecting only three hits in a 6-3 loss to visiting Salt Lake.

Dusty Napoleon jump-started the Sacramento offense with his first home run of the season on the first pitch of the third inning. For Napoleon, it was his first hit of the season after going 0-for-13 in Single-A Modesto to start the season and 0-for-5 entering Wednesday with Sacramento.

Bees left-handed pitcher Trevor Reckling then walked the bases loaded before giving Jack Cust a free pass to force home Corey Wimberly. Cust has five walks in the last two games and six in the series.

Michael Taylor grounded into a double play to score Steve Tolleson for the Cats' third and final run. Fighting back, Reckling struck out Adrian Cardenas to leave Chris Carter stranded on third base and keep Salt Lake's deficit at 3-1.

After tying the game with single runs in the fourth and fifth, Salt Lake flew ahead in the top of the sixth with three runs. A wild pitch by Edwar Ramirez allowed Mark Trumbo to slide home for the first run, and Nate Sutton doubled home two more for a 6-3 lead. Sutton went 4-for-4 on the night, hitting back-to-back doubles in the fifth and sixth innings. He alone drove in three RBIs and scored one run.

Defensively, the River Cats managed three double plays, with shortstop Tolleson and first baseman Carter having a hand in all three.

Sacramento has now lost eight of nine games at home. River Cats second baseman Eric Sogard extended his hitting streak to nine games with a single.

The River Cats return to Raley Field on Thursday night at 7 p.m. to face the Bees in the fourth and final game of the series.

Hounds Welcome Chris Young With Five Run 1st

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Sunday in San Antonio, the RockHounds faced San Diego Padres pitcher Chris Young on a Major League re-hab assignment ... with the Padres' top pitching prospect, Simon Castro waiting to enter the game when Young was through.

Young, as it would turn out, would not survive the first inning, a victim of four walks and a huge, 3-run double by Jermaine Mitchell. Four consecutive walks were followed by Mitchell's bases-clearing shot to left-center (on a 1-2 pitch), and the 6-10, 270-pound Padres right-hander was through. Gabe Ortiz then took reliever Bryan Oland's first pitch to right field, driving in Mitchell, and the 'Hounds exited the inning with a 5-0 lead. Castro, entering the game in the third, would give up two runs on five hits over 5.0 innings, and the RockHounds led, 7-1.

The "other" pitcher in the game was Pedro Figueroa. Oakland's # 5 prospect would be the game's pitching "story," earning his first Double-A victory with 7.2 outstanding innings, allowing two runs (just one earned), while walking three and striking out seven.

Figueroa did not go to a 2-0 count on a San Antonio batter until the seventh inning. True to "the book," that batter, James Darnell, would take advantage. From the 2-0 start, he eventually drove a 3-2 pitch out for a solo home run.

In the eighth, Figueroa ran out of steam, allowing two of his three walks and a Cedric Hunter double to load the bases with two out. Justin Souza entered the game to face Matt Clark with the bases full and the tying run on deck (a save situation). He whiffed Clark on a 3-2 pitch to end the threat and, after a lead-off single in the ninth, struck out the side to end the game, earning his first save.

The RockHounds (13-10) now have a 2-game lead in the crazy Texas League South, with San Antonio, Frisco and Corpus Christi each at 11-12. The 'Hounds are now 5-2 on an 8-game road trip which ends Monday morning (11:00) at San Antonio.

Ports drop close game, 4-3, to Giants **Stockton strands 12 runners in Wednesday's loss to San Jose**

STOCKTON, Calif. - The Stockton Ports (12-14) were unable to capitalize on their eight runners in scoring position in Wednesday's contest, as they struggled to push the winning run across the plate in their 4-3 loss to San Jose (13-11) at Banner Island Ballpark.

The Ports had a 3-2 lead, but Paul Smyth (0-1) allowed two runs in the eighth inning and the Ports were unable to drive home their base runners in the eighth and ninth innings. The Ports stranded a total of 12 baserunners in the game, and finished 0x8 with runners in scoring position. Stockton leads the League with 209 runners left on base in 26 games this season.

Stockton Starter Shawn Haviland allowed two runs on five hits in 6.1 innings for the Ports. Josh Horton went 2x5 on the night with a pair of doubles, while Mike Spina collected his second home run of the year in the game.

Stockton scored a run in the first inning without posting a hit. Left fielder Shane Keough reached on an error by Giants second baseman Charlie Culberson. He stole second while Stephen Parker was batting. Parker walked, and then both runners successfully made a double steal with Spina at the plate. Spina walked to load the bases. Then Jeremy Barfield hit a sacrifice fly to right field to score Keough and give the Ports a 1-0 lead.

The Giants tied the game on a solo home run by Culberson. Culberson ended the game 3x4 with a pair of solo home runs and a single. Culberson hit a home run in back-to-back at-bats. He gave San Jose a 2-1 lead with a solo shot in the fifth inning.

But Stockton made it 3-2 in the sixth. Spina led off with his solo home run over the Food 4 Less sign in left field. Barfield then singled. Horton stepped up to the plate and doubled to center field, allowing Barfield to score. Horton advanced to third on the throw. The Giants then called on Eric Stolp to replace starter Craig Westcott. Stolp got Tyler Ladendorf to pop out to shortstop Ryan Lormand.

The Ports put runners on the corners with one out as catcher Petey Paramore walked. Kala Ka'aihue hit into a fielder's choice, and San Jose third baseman Drew Biery worked to put Horton out at home. The Giants caught Horton in a run down, but Horton evaded the Giants players long enough to allow Paramore and Ka'aihue to advance a bag and into scoring position. With runners on second and third and two out, Keough struck out to end the inning and the Ports threat.

The Ports held onto the slim lead until the eighth inning. With one out, catcher Aaron Lowenstein singled, and moved to second as centerfielder Juan Perez walked. Lormand hit into a fielder's choice to left field as Keough put out Lowenstein at third. A wild pitch by Smyth allowed both base runners to advance, and both scored on a single by right fielder Francisco Peguero. First baseman Brandon Belt flew out to end the inning, but the Giants had their 4-3 lead.

The Ports had a baserunner in the eighth as Paramore collected his only hit of the game—a single—and put runners on first and second on a fielder's choice and a walk in the ninth with two out before Horton grounded out to end the contest.

The Ports and Giants will determine the series winner on Thursday at 7:05 PM at Banner Island Ballpark in Stockton's homestand finale. RHP Murphy Smith (2-1, 8.14) will face off against RHP Justin Fitzgerald (2-0, 1.06) in the contest.

Krol Leads Cougars Past Bees

Kane County southpaw fires another gem, team now 5-0 vs. Bees

BURLINGTON, Iowa – Naperville native Ian Krol tossed six shutout innings for the second start in a row, and this time was rewarded with his first professional victory as the Kane County Cougars cruised past the Burlington Bees, 6-1, Wednesday night at Community Field. The Cougars are 5-0 against the Bees this season and are within one game of the .500 mark.

The Cougars gave Krol plenty of offensive support. Kent Walton singled home Anthony Aliotti in the second and nailed a sacrifice fly in the fifth to make it 2-0. Then Myrio Richard and Rashun Dixon delivered consecutive two-out RBI doubles in the sixth for a 4-0 game. Krol (1-1) yielded two hits, walked two and fanned four in his second straight quality start.

Mike Gilmartin squeezed home Leonardo Gil in the seventh, and after the Bees notched their first run against Jonathan Joseph, Aliotti plated Tyreace House in the eighth to account for the 6-1 final. The Cougars totaled 10-plus hits for the second game in a row. Joseph logged two innings, and Josh Lansford faced the minimum in the ninth to end it. Kelvin Herrera (2-1) took the loss for Burlington.

The Cougars (13-14) and Bees (10-17) conclude the three-game set Thursday at 11:30 a.m. CT. Dan Straily (2-1, 7.15) will face Tyler Sample (1-0, 4.81). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com, with pregame coverage starting at 11:15 a.m. Then the Cougars return home Friday night to start a three-game set against the Peoria Chiefs.