

## **A's News Clips, Tuesday, May 18, 2010**

### **Some levity for A's as five-game skid ends**

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

Adam Rosales and Jack Cust provided an offensive spark for the A's during their 8-4 win over the Seattle Mariners on Monday night at the Oakland Coliseum. They also provided a little bit of comic relief.

Rosales had three of the A's 15 hits, including a two-run homer in the bottom of the third inning that gave his team a 7-1 lead. As his homer was sailing over the left field wall, Rosales was sprinting around the basepaths when he noticed Cust was only a few feet in front of him.

Rosales slowed his pace considerably but still touched home only moments after Cust crossed the plate. Cust, who was called up from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday, looked a bit startled as he turned around and saw he was nearly face-to-face with Rosales.

"If it happens again (today), Jack will know to speed it up a little bit," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Rosie likes to go hard."

It was a lighthearted moment for a team that hadn't had much to smile about recently. The A's were coming off a 1-5 road trip against Texas and the Los Angeles Angels and managed just five runs in five straight losses before Monday, their worst five-game run total since 1979. They were held to four hits by the Angels on Friday and Sunday.

"I was sprinting almost all the way to third, but (Rosales) just caught up to me," said Cust, who went 2 for 4 with two runs scored. "When he hit the ball, I was trying to score on it. But when I saw it went out, I just kind of slowed down."

Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a two-run homer in the first off Seattle starter Ryan Rowland-Smith (0-4) to give the A's a 2-1 lead, and Rosales and Cust both scored in the second on a double down the left field line by Rajai Davis.

Davis later scored on Daric Barton's sacrifice fly to center, giving the A's a 5-1 lead. Barton finished 3 for 3.

Rosales finished 3 for 4 with two runs scored as he raised his season average to .263. Rosales doubled in the sixth inning on Sunday against the Angels to snap an 0 for 15 skid.

"You have to bounce back and find a way to calm yourself down," Rosales said. "Johnny Bench said in a book that I read that a slump is like a soft bed — easy to get into and hard to get out of."

The production by Rosales and his teammates was more than enough for A's starter Gio Gonzalez, who picked up his first win since May 1. Gonzalez (4-3) allowed three earned runs and four walks but lasted at least seven innings for the third time in his past five starts.

The Mariners scored one run in the sixth and had runners on first and second base with no outs. But Gonzalez got Ken Griffey Jr. to ground into a double play and Matt Tuiasosopo to fly out to limit the damage.

Gonzalez then retired the side in order in the seventh, rebounding from his performance against the Texas Rangers last Wednesday when he lasted just four innings and gave up four earned runs in a 10-1 A's loss.

"No (pitcher) wants to be the one that continues the bleeding," Gonzalez said. "When you can be the pitcher that stops the bleeding, it's always a nice feeling."

TODAY: Mariners (Felix Hernandez 2-3) at A's (Ben Sheets 2-3), 7:05 p.m.

TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

### **A's update: Justin Duchscherer hopes to put off surgery until offseason**

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

Duchscherer hopes hip surgery is after season

Justin Duchscherer said Monday he won't know if he'll need season-ending surgery on his left hip until after he visits Nashville-based surgeon Dr. Thomas Byrd, probably later this week. But the right-hander emphasized that he wants to continue pitching beyond 2010, even if he has to undergo another operation.

"I'm not going to let this get me down; I've been through it before and I've come back from it," Duchscherer said. "That's my attitude now. If I have surgery again, I'll go through it again and come back like I always have."

According to Duchscherer, Byrd said surgery probably will have to be performed at some point to understand the problem fully, because an MRI can indicate only so much.

Duchscherer, who came off the disabled list Saturday only to be scratched from his scheduled start in Anaheim and placed on the 15-day disabled list again with left hip inflammation, said his goal is to do whatever he can to pitch again this season and delay surgery until the offseason.

"But sometimes what we want and what actually happens don't coincide," said Duchscherer, who on Monday didn't feel any pain doing everyday activities.

Duchscherer said he believes what might be going on is a Femoralacetabular Impingement (FAI), in which, as he said, "The head of the femur is large, so it bangs into the socket and tears the cartilage. Over years and years of pitching on it, I guess over time it has worn away."

Jack Cust started in left field. He was mainly a designated hitter in 33 games with Triple-A Sacramento. ... Outfielder Coco Crisp (fractured left pinkie) and second baseman Mark Ellis (strained left hamstring) will both join Single-A Stockton in time to play tonight in Lake Elsinore, A's manager Bob Geren said. Crisp played Monday in Phoenix, and Geren said he had a couple walks in "four or five" plate appearances facing live pitching. ... Geren hasn't decided who will be his starting pitcher Thursday against Detroit. If Vin Mazzaro is not called up from Sacramento, the choice could be Tyson Ross, Geren said. Ross started Saturday's game in place of Duchscherer. ... With Detroit's game against the Chicago White Sox rained out, the Tigers announced that Justin Verlander will start Wednesday against the A's Dallas Braden. Jeremy Bonderman will start Thursday.

### **Chin Music: Duchscherer holds out hope; Cust playing LF**

By Curtis Pashelka, Contra Costa Times, 5/17/2010 5:59PM

Justin Duchscherer said season-ending left hip surgery will be his last resort and that his goal is to do whatever he can to get healthy, stay healthy and pitch again this season. But Duchscherer won't completely understand his options until after he sees Dr. Thomas Byrd in Nashville, probably later this week.

As of Monday afternoon, Duchscherer had not scheduled an appointment with Byrd, as trainer Steve Sayles hadn't been able to get in touch with the surgeon's office.

Duchscherer said he only felt discomfort when he pitched, not in everyday activities. He believes what might be going on is a Femoralacetabular Impingement (FAI), where, as Duchscherer said, "The head of the femur is large, so it bangs into the socket and tears the cartilage. Over years and years of pitching on it, I guess over time it's worn it away."

According to Duchscherer, Byrd said he'll have to perform surgery at some point to fully understand what's going on, but Duchscherer is hoping to put that off until the end of the season. Regardless, Duchscherer said surgery, if it happens during the season or after, won't mean his career is over. Either way, he wants to come back and pitch either way.

Jack Cust is playing left field tonight, with Rajai Davis in center and Ryan Sweeney in right. Cust was mainly a DH with Sacramento but said he played about eight games in the outfield.

Coco Crisp and Mark Ellis will both join Single-A Stockton and play tomorrow night in Lake Elsinore, A's manager Bob Geren said. Crisp played today in Phoenix, but Geren said he hadn't received a report on how that went.

The lineups –

A's — Pennington SS, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Sweeney RF, Fox DH, Cust LF, Rosales 2B, Davis CF, Gonzalez P.

Mariners — Suzuki RF, Figgins 2B, Gutierrez CF, Lopez 3B, Griffey Jr. DH, Tuiasosopo LF, Kotchman 1B, Wilson SS, Bard C, Rowland-Smith P.

## **Dave Newhouse: Vida Blue an Oakland school hero**

By Dave Newhouse, Oakland Tribune Columnist

VIDA BLUE IS BACK IN grammar school, thus proving, at 60, that it's never too late to learn — although his education now is understanding today's generation of kids.

They're learning from him, too, about life's pinnacles and pitfalls, and also how to react to celebrities. Of course, Blue doesn't sell himself as a celebrity, therefore he and the kids are as perfect a fit as an inkwell on a school desk.

There's only one unanswered question: Has Northern Light School of Oakland adopted Blue or has Blue adopted Northern Light?

He first spoke there 13 months ago, then started coming around in January and hasn't really left, making the drive from his Tracy home two or three days a week. For a celebrity to be that involved, he gets a gold star in attendance.

"It's pretty cool," he said Wednesday. "I'm impressed with the students and the faculty. My name is recognizable, but they don't know we (the Oakland A's) won the (World Series) championship three years in a row (1972, '73, '74)."

These elementary school tykes didn't know initially that Blue pitched two no-hitters for the A's — one by himself in 1970, and then combining with three other hurlers in 1975.

The kids were unaware that in 1971 Blue not only won the American League's Cy Young Award as the best pitcher, he also was the league's Most Valuable Player.

"You start talking to the kids about your life and the circle you've gone through, from A to Z," he said. "Getting married, having kids, getting divorced, still having kids (five total), being a responsible parent or brother providing for five siblings — those are things they can identify with."

Blue can tell of his being sold to the New York Yankees in 1976, then having Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn void the sale the next day, plus the trades of Rollie Fingers and Joe Rudi to the Boston Red Sox, after Kuhn accused A's owner Charles O. Finley of purposely dismantling the team.

Blue also pitched six seasons with the San Francisco Giants — he was an earlier trans-Bay version of Barry Zito — and wound up with 209 major-league wins. He's still employed by the Giants in community relations.

So there's lots to inform the kids about, including off-the-field issues, which he has openly discussed with the older students at Northern Light — a 20-year-old private, multiethnic, shining light of a school in the Oakland hills.

Blue always had a folksy friendliness about him, an openness, and the ability to relate to people of all ages. But he can be a kid among kids.

"I kept coming back to this school because there was something different," he said. "I didn't have to walk through a metal detector, which goes on at some schools. I was impressed with the kids, who said, 'Yes, sir, no sir, Mr. Blue.' "

"This is my only sanctuary where I hang out. Here I don't have to be Vida Blue. I can just be Vida Blue. They don't worry about me trying to impress them. I come here in my grubbies. They keep me young."

Bob Kelly has two children at Northern Light. He can't believe someone as famous as Blue would devote this much time to schoolkids who aren't his own.

"I remember Vida being on the radio getting listeners to turn in their cars for poor people," Kelly said. "That speaks to the kind of human being he is. Oftentimes, athletes appear to be aloof, distancing themselves. Vida sees the value of making connections with kids at their earliest years, when they develop their personalities and self-confidence."

Blue has made such a strong impression on Kelly's first-grade son, Leo, that the 6-year-old has given up all other sports to concentrate on baseball. Young Leo could be influenced, in part, by his being a lefthander just like Blue.

Some Northern Light students see Blue as a volunteer counselor. Some regard him as a lunch-hour play director, where he has as much fun as the kids do.

The sixth-grade boys are his buddies.

"Vida Blue has made a big impact at our school," Joshua Kaniaru said. "He plays with us and talks to us about challenges. He taught me always to be true to myself and have a good character."

"I didn't know who he was at first — I'm 14 — but he treated us like we were regular people," Dayo Origenwa said. "I look up to him like a dad, and I learned from him to treat everyone equally."

"Vida's taught me to always give back," Sulaiman Hameed said. "I want to be like Vida when I get older, come back to where I grew up, play with the kids."

Three fourth-graders — two girls and a boy — feel the same closeness.

"He means the world to me because of how kind he is, and he loves everyone," Paulina Rodriguez said.

"He's not like I would expect a celebrity to be, better than the people who aren't famous," Marley Igual said. "Vida's the exact opposite — an older version of us."

"Vida means friendship because he comes here and spends time with a lot of people," Quentin Smith said. "I'm becoming more friendly because of him. I'm even nicer to my brother."

Michelle Lewis founded Northern Light in 1989 to serve inner-city children. The results have been spectacular. Many graduates have gone on to prestigious universities. Three are working on Ph.D.s. One girl became an astronaut.

Lewis, in a letter to the Giants about Blue's involvement with Northern Light, wrote of "the incredible difference this man has made in the lives of children who have had so few people to believe in them and support their dreams. To the children, he is their Vida Blue, who pitches a 'perfect game' every time he walks through the doors of Northern Light School and into their lives."

Blue even wore a tuxedo for Northern Light's annual Hollywood Gala Ball and Auction, which raised \$20,000. He auctioned himself off, had a bunch of stuff donated for the event, and even danced with the kids.

On June 15, some Northern Light fourth-graders will accompany U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, former and current San Francisco mayors Willie Brown and Gavin Newsom, and former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz to the International World Expo in Shanghai, China.

And these Northern Light kids desperately want Blue to come with them.

"The kids like me," he said. "I try to let them know how special they are."

Blue was an outstanding pitcher. He would have made an outstanding teacher.

### **Offense snaps out of funk, lays skid to rest at 5 games**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

This is Dallas Braden week at the Coliseum, something the A's are calling "The Perfect Homestand." Of course, nothing is perfect unless Braden is facing Tampa Bay. Especially when the weather is dismal on a Monday night and an announced crowd of 10,051 appears.

But considering what the A's did the previous five games, all losses, their 8-4 victory over the Mariners seemed close enough to perfection to them.

"We turned a rainy night into a great night," said winning pitcher Gio Gonzalez, the beneficiary of a 15-hit effort by the A's offense, which matched a season high.

The A's, who scored more runs in three innings than they did in the entire losing streak, were bubbly again. Jack Cust was all smiles after he made a tough catch in left field in the fifth inning - despite bumping his head against the wall, which made him take his eyes off the ball - and nearly got run over during Adam Rosales' home run "trot" in the third.

The A's had six extra-base hits, including home runs by Kevin Kouzmanoff and Rosales, who sprints out his home runs - which Cust might have forgotten while playing for Triple-A Sacramento. Cust, in his third A's game of the year, simply jogged when Rosales went deep, forcing Rosales to slow down around third so he wouldn't pass him.

When Cust crossed the plate and turned around to greet Rosales, he was stunned that Rosales was right there, prompting laughter throughout the dugout.

"It was funny because the bench was yelling, 'Don't let him pass you,' " manager Bob Geren said. "The guys were teasing (Cust) because he messed up Rosales' trot."

"We had a good little laugh," Rosales said. "Sometimes you've got to have fun with it."

These are moments that aren't shared when a team scores five runs in five games, as the A's did from Wednesday through Sunday in Texas and Anaheim. It was Oakland's fewest runs over a five-game stretch since Sept. 8-12, 1979.

Apparently, it helped to be home, where the A's have won eight of 11. Daric Barton and Rosales, both going 0-for-15 in recent stretches, each had three hits. Cust had two, making him 4-for-10 since his arrival. The rotation tells more of the story: 10-5 with a 2.83 ERA at home, and 4-9 with a 5.77 ERA on the road.

After Gonzalez spotted the Mariners a 1-0 lead, the A's quickly clobbered Ryan Rowland-Smith (0-4), who's close to being an ex-starter. Kouzmanoff's homer came in the first inning, when the A's also got doubles by Barton and Ryan Sweeney. In the second, Rajai Davis doubled home two runs in a three-run rally.

Rosales' homer gave the A's a 7-1 lead, and Gonzalez cruised to his fourth win, lasting seven innings and giving up three runs and four hits, including a homer to Matt Tuiasosopo that bounced off Davis' glove and over the center-field wall.

### **Cust prepped to put in time in left field**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Jack Cust** was in left field at the Coliseum for the first time since Aug. 29, 2008, and didn't seem uneasy about it. In fact, when he was at Triple-A Sacramento, he asked River Cats manager **Tony DeFrancesco** if he could play some outfield, just in case he got a chance in the majors.

"Luckily, I got in some games," said Cust, who played seven games in left for Sacramento and six in right. "I was doing pretty well down there. The more I get out there, the more comfortable I'll be."

Unfortunately for Cust, he dropped a routine flyball in Anaheim on Saturday, immediately after he was recalled. "That was disappointing," he said. "Hopefully, I got it out of my system."

Manager **Bob Geren**, desperate for a potent bat, seems fine with Cust playing in left, saying, "He's had quite a few stretches playing regularly in the outfield, and he's done OK."

With the A's last year, Cust played 51 games in the outfield, all in right.

**Duchscherer hopeful:** Justin Duchscherer still is waiting for an appointment with Dr. **Thomas Byrd** in Nashville to see what's next with his latest hip ailment, which he called a femoral-acetabular impingement that was caused by wear and tear. He said Monday his "goal is to do everything I can to pitch again this year" and delay the surgery until after the season.

Surgery now or surgery later, he definitely wants to pitch in 2011. "I know if I'm healthy, I can still do it," he said. "Now it's a matter of, how do I stay healthy?"

**Briefly:** **Coco Crisp** and **Mark Ellis**, on rehab assignments, will play for Class A Stockton tonight, Geren said. ... East Bay native **Dontrelle Willis** won't pitch for Detroit in Oakland on Thursday, as initially scheduled. Because of Monday's rainout, the Tigers will start **Justin Verlander** on Wednesday and **Jeremy Bonderman** on Thursday.

## **A'S LEADING OFF**

Susan Slusser

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

**Return performance:** Dallas Braden will pitch Wednesday, his first appearance in Oakland since his perfect game, and his grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, will attend. This time, everyone will know who she is. "She's definitely become her own little celebrity in her own right," Braden said.

## **Drumbeat: 'What is hip? Tell me, tell me, if you think you know . . . .'**

John Shea reporting from the Coliseum, where the A's and Mariners hope to begin their mini-series without rain delays. . . .  
5/17 5:34PM

Justin Duchscherer still is waiting for an appointment with Dr. Thomas Byrn in Nashville to see what's next with his latest hip ailment. While it seems all signs have pointed to in-season surgery, the pitcher said today his "goal is to do everything I can to pitch again this year" and delay the surgery until after the season.

Surgery now or surgery later, he definitely wants to pitch in 2011. "I know if I'm healthy, I can still do it," he said. "Now it's a matter of, how do I stay healthy?"

Jack Cust is in left field, the first time since 2008 he played a regular-season game in left at the Coliseum. He played 51 games in the outfield last year, all in right.

"The more I get out there, the more comfortable I'll be," he said.

Dallas Braden threw on the side today in preparation of Wednesday's start, his first in Oakland since the perfect game. The A's are honoring Braden all week with promotions at the yard, including \$2.09 tickets on line for tonight's game. Braden T-shirts will be given away Wednesday.

"A great tip of the hat to the organization, which gave me what every ballplayer wants, an opportunity," Braden said. "It's something to be proud of."

Braden said his grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, will be at the game. This time, everyone will know who she is. "She's definitely become her own little celebrity in her own right," Braden said.

More Braden: "She told me, 'I want to sit in (section) 209, but I think it's further away than the place I sit normally.' "

The lineup: SS Pennington, 1B Barton, C Suzuki, 3B Kouz, RF Sweeney, DH Fox, LF Cust, 2B Rosales, CF Davis. Gio pitching.

## **A's snap skid with offensive eruption**

### **Oakland racks up 15 hits in giving Gio fourth victory of season**

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- After suffering through one of its worst stretches in more than 30 years, the A's offense finally came to life Monday in an 8-4 win over Seattle.

Oakland scored just five runs over its previous five contests -- the worst such span since September of 1979. The A's didn't even need five outs to score five runs on Monday, as they chased Seattle southpaw Ryan Rowland-Smith from the mound after just 2 2/3 innings of work.

"Guys got pitches to hit, and we didn't miss them," said A's outfielder Jack Cust.

Rowland-Smith, who after the game said he felt "lost," left too many pitches up in the zone and the A's capitalized early. Rowland-Smith exited after giving up seven earned runs on 10 hits.

Oakland manager Bob Geren said his players approached this game like they had the previous five, but that the hits simply fell in.

"I don't think there was any real physical adjustments," Geren said. "They put the good part of the bat on it when they got something to hit. They hadn't seen a lot of good pitches to hit the last few days."

Geren said the early runs eased the mood in the dugout, especially Adam Rosales' two-run homer in the third. Rosales nearly caught up to Cust before crossing home plate.

"The bench was kind of yelling, 'Don't let him pass you,'" Geren said. "I teased [Cust] that he messed up [Rosales'] trot a little bit."

Rajai Davis also provided some comedy of his own in the top of the fourth, when he leaped for a fly ball off the bat of Matt Tuiasosopo that bounced off his glove over the center-field fence for a home run. By that point, though, the A's already held a 7-1 advantage.

"I just smiled," said Oakland starter Gio Gonzalez. "I still like Rajai as our center fielder."

For the third time in five starts, Gonzalez was able to complete seven innings of work -- this time allowing three earned runs on four hits and four walks while striking out four.

Gonzalez certainly had bouts with his command on Monday, but got out of jams when he needed to.

One such instance came in the sixth frame, when Gonzalez allowed two walks in a span of nine pitches to start the inning. Jose Lopez then singled in Chone Figgins, the first walked batter, but Gonzalez got Ken Griffey Jr. to ground into a 5-4-3 double play before getting Tuiasosopo to fly out.

"He still has some parts of his game that will get better with coaching and experience," Geren said. "But if you look back 12 months and see where he is at now, I'd have to say he's grown quite a bit."

Gonzalez acknowledged his mental growth after the game and said he's come a long way since his rookie season in 2008.

"You don't show emotion, that's just a sign of weakness," Gonzalez said. "I'm starting to learn that sometimes you got to hit a wall to learn what you're doing wrong."

For Gonzalez, that "wall" hit him during his rookie season when he was called into Geren's office to discuss his composure on the mound. Since then, Gonzalez said he's relied on fellow pitchers like Dallas Braden and pitching coach Curt Young to grow.

"In '08, I must have been the biggest child on the mound," Gonzalez said. "And now you guys see it throughout all my starts -- composure is there, posture is there."

Once again, Gonzalez's curveball was effective Monday night and was the final pitch on all four of his strikeouts. Above all, Geren said he is happy that Gonzalez is able to string together consistent starts. Save for the walks, Geren called it one of Gonzalez's best performances of the year.

Although Oakland was riding a five-game losing streak coming into the game, Gonzalez said he relished the opportunity to end the skid.

"No one wants to be the one that continues the bleeding," Gonzalez said. "When you can be the pitcher to stop the bleeding, it's always a nice feeling."

Gonzalez got plenty of help from his offense on Monday night, as it tied a season high with 15 hits. Five A's recorded multi-hit games, including first baseman Daric Barton, who fell a home run short of the cycle.

"We did a good job of taking advantage of the mistakes they made," Barton said. "It's always big to get a win against a division rival, but I think we have all the confidence in the world in our team."

Cust finished 2-for-4 and is hitting .400 (4-for-10) since being called up Saturday from Triple-A Sacramento. Kevin Kouzmanoff also hit a two-run homer off Rowland-Smith, while Kurt Suzuki notched his first RBI since being reinstated from the disabled list on Sunday.

"This will be good for their confidence," Geren said. "It was good to get a couple of home runs and get a couple guys feeling good about themselves to carry them forward."

### **Duchscherer's season now in question**

### **Starter's inflamed left hip could keep him sidelined 4-6 months**

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Lounging on a couch in the A's clubhouse Monday, his feet up on a coffee table, Justin Duchscherer didn't look like a player whose season remains in question.

After suffering the latest setback with his inflamed left hip, Duchscherer said he hopes to meet with Nashville-based orthopedist Thomas Byrd this week to determine if he will need surgery.

Duchscherer said he has a femoroacetabular impingement, which is created when the ball and socket of the hip rub together and cause friction, injuring the joint. If Duchscherer needs surgery, his season will likely be over, as the recovery time usually lasts 4-6 months.

"My goal is to try to do whatever I can so that I can pitch this year, and then at the end of the season have it addressed," Duchscherer said. "But sometimes what we want and what actually happens doesn't coincide."

Duchscherer said FAI is an injury that takes time to develop before emerging as a problem.

"I think people fail to realize I signed out of high school at 18 and I'm 32 now," Duchscherer said. "I've been pitching since I was 8 years old."

Duchscherer was a game-time scratch from his scheduled start on Saturday in Anaheim and was subsequently placed back on the 15-day disabled list. A's rookie right-hander Tyson Ross made the spot start in his place, giving up three earned runs in 3 2/3 innings of work while striking out three and walking none in a losing effort.

As of Monday afternoon, manager Bob Geren said the team hasn't figured out a replacement for Duchscherer in the rotation. Geren said he will meet with the coaching staff on Monday night to discuss Thursday's starter.

Geren again mentioned righty Vin Mazzaro as a possible option, while also saying Ross could get another start.

Mazzaro is 3-1 with a 3.13 ERA in seven appearances (six starts) for Triple-A Sacramento this season. He made a start with Oakland on May 4 during Duchscherer's first stint on the DL, but threw just three innings, giving up four earned runs on two hits while walking four and striking out four.

Although he had been used exclusively as a reliever at the big league level before Saturday, 31 of Ross' 33 Minor League appearances were starts.



## **Crisp, Ellis remain on track to return**

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Geren said the recoveries of Coco Crisp and Mark Ellis are still on track, as they try to come back from a broken left pinkie finger and strained left hamstring, respectively.

Geren said Crisp played in Phoenix on Monday and that he and Ellis are expected to play for Class A Advanced Stockton when they travel to Lake Elsinore, Calif., on Tuesday. The pair is expected to join Triple-A Sacramento by Thursday and will stay there until the coaching staff is satisfied.

"It'll just be a matter of performance," Geren said.

Despite all the injuries the A's have faced this season, Geren said he's happy to be just two games back of Texas for first place in the American League West.

"If you're banged up a little bit and nobody's running away with it, you got to be happy with that," Geren said.

## **Cust feels like he never left big leagues**

OAKLAND -- Standing before his old locker at the Oakland Coliseum, Jack Cust said he's happy to be back in the big leagues.

"Feels good to be home," Cust said. "Feels like I never left."

Since his promotion from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday, Cust has been the A's starting left fielder, going 2-for-6 with a walk and a strikeout. He hit seventh and played left field again on Monday during Oakland's series opener against Seattle.

Cust said he played about eight games in right field during his time in Sacramento and admitted it took him some time to readjust to playing in the field again.

"Down there, it was just getting my legs under me, honestly," Cust said. "The first couple of games, nine innings were kind of bothering me. I could feel it in my legs during the last couple of at-bats. ... But now I got my legs under me and I feel good."

Oakland manager Bob Geren said he plans on using Cust as a left fielder for the time being and that he doesn't have any worries about Cust's fielding ability.

"He's played quite a few stretches when he played pretty regularly in the outfield, and he's done OK," Geren said.

Cust made 50 starts in right field for Oakland last year, compared to the 96 starts he made as a designated hitter.

During his time in Sacramento, Cust said he reverted back to his old approach in the batter's box after tinkering with a few things during Spring Training. He also said his Triple-A teammates picked his brain for the six weeks he was there.

"I've been through a lot of that stuff that some of those guys are going through," Cust said. "Some of the guys are struggling and kind of getting frustrated. One month into the season down there, and these guys think it's the end of the world. ... I just tell them it's just a moment in their career -- hopefully long careers."

## **Worth noting**

The Detroit Tigers' game on Monday was rained out, leading to changes to the probable starters for their two-game set with the A's on Wednesday and Thursday. Ace Justin Verlander will still start on five days' rest on Wednesday, while Jeremy Bonderman's scheduled Tuesday start has been pushed back to Thursday. ... Oakland's starting pitchers are 10-5 with a 2.83 ERA at home this season, but are 4-9 with a 5.77 ERA on the road. ... Andrew Bailey has not allowed a run in his past 15 appearances (14 1/3 innings pitched) in Oakland.

## **Aces need to give offenses a little more help**

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

With the way their offenses have struggled to score runs this season, the A's and Mariners both are looking for a little more help from their projected aces heading into the season.

Both Mariners right-hander Felix Hernandez, who is 2-3 with a 3.88 ERA this season after signing a five-year extension worth \$78 million during the offseason, and A's right-hander Ben Sheets, who is 2-3 with a 5.70 ERA this year after signing a one-year deal worth \$10 million, have disappointed a bit this year.

But both will be looking to turn it around on Tuesday when they take the mound in the second game of a rare two-game series at the Oakland Coliseum, after the A's took the first with an 8-4 win on Monday.

Hernandez, though, appeared to get back on track in his previous start when he allowed one run over seven innings against the Orioles on Thursday. The impressive outing came after Hernandez allowed 13 runs over his past two starts that totaled just 7 2/3 combined innings.

"I made good pitches to get out of the jams," Hernandez said. "That's what I do. I had that old feeling. That was me."

Sheets has also pitched well recently, as he allowed just a combined three runs over his past two starts over 12 1/3 innings for a 2.19 ERA over that span. He allowed just one run over six innings against the Rangers on Thursday and impressed A's manager Bob Geren.

"He's going to have a good season -- you can see it," Geren said. "He's added a couple things to his repertoire. He's getting crafty, and it's really showing."

One of those things he's added is a new pitch, which is similar to a cutter, according to catcher Josh Donaldson.

"We call it a cutter," Donaldson said. "It's not a putaway pitch. It helps him get off his fastball. It's about 5-6 mph slower than the fastball. Our job is to get hitters off balance so they're not just sitting on a fastball. He's been using the cutter similarly as he would use the changeup, but the cutter just allows everything else to be better."

### **Mariners: Sweeney remains day-to-day**

Designated hitter Mike Sweeney, who had homered in three consecutive games, was held out of the starting lineup for a second successive day on Monday because of a sore back and cold weather in Oakland. "We're just afraid if we played him in cold weather he'd be good for one or two at-bats, and then maybe it would lock up on him again," said Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu. "We've got to stay away from that."

### **A's: Historic skid comes to an end**

The A's broke out of their recent offensive funk Monday against the Mariners with an 8-4 win at the Oakland Coliseum. The win snapped a five-game losing streak where the A's scored just five runs total. The last time Oakland was held to five runs over a five-game stretch was from Sept. 8-12, 1979.

### **Worth noting**

Mariners catcher Rob Johnson and outfielder Ryan Langerhans, both nursing injuries, were out of the lineup again Monday night against the Oakland A's. Johnson, however, is expected to be in the lineup on Tuesday while Langerhans will be available in case of emergency. ... A's starter Justin Duchscherer suffered another setback with his inflamed left hip, and said he hopes to meet with Nashville-based orthopedist Thomas Byrd this week to determine if he will need surgery. If he has surgery, his season is expected to be over, as the recovery time usually takes 4-6 months. ... The recoveries of A's center fielder Coco Crisp and second baseman Mark Ellis are still on track as they try to come back from a broken left pinkie finger and strained left hamstring, respectively. Geren said Crisp played in Phoenix on Monday and that he and Ellis are

expected to play for Class A Advanced Stockton when they travel to Lake Elsinore, Calif., on Tuesday. The pair is expected to join Triple-A Sacramento by Thursday and will stay there until the coaching staff is satisfied.

### **A's defeat Mariners, 8-4**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — The way his teammates were hitting the ball, Gio Gonzalez forgot all about Oakland's recent losing streak.

Kevin Kouzmanoff and Adam Rosales each hit two-run homers, Gonzalez allowed four hits in seven innings and the Oakland Athletics ended a five-game losing streak, beating the Seattle Mariners 8-4 on Monday night.

"Sometimes I psych myself out," Gonzalez said. "I didn't even realize we were in such a long losing streak. The way we played, it felt more like a five-game winning streak."

Rajai Davis drove in two runs, and Daric Barton and Kurt Suzuki also drove in runs for the A's, who have won eight of their last 11 home games.

"Their pitcher left a few balls up in the zone and we didn't miss them," A's manager Bob Geren said. "It's good for their confidence. There was a much lighter mood on the bench tonight."

Gonzalez (4-3) gave up three runs and matched his season high for innings pitched. He walked three and struck out four.

"I want to be in the same pack as the other pitchers where you say whoever pitches we have a chance to win," Gonzalez said. "I like that kind of confidence and I want to bust my tail off for this team because of it."

Matt Tuiasosopo hit a home run, and Jose Lopez had two hits and drove in three runs for the Mariners, who lost their third straight and have dropped five of six overall.

Ryan Rowland-Smith (0-4) gave up a career-worst seven runs in 4 1-3 innings, his shortest start of his career. He matched his career high of 10 hits allowed, and has failed to pitch more than 4 1-3 innings in each of his last three starts. Rowland-Smith has given up 17 runs over his past 10 innings.

"It seems like anything I threw in the zone, they were crushing it," Rowland-Smith said. "I felt like I was hitting the glove, and I try to think if there's anything else. I don't know, baseball, for me, is just not happening right now."

Jack Cust went 3 for 4 for the A's, making him 5 for 10 since his recall from Triple-A on Saturday. Barton ended an 0-for-15 skid emphatically, hitting a double and triple among his three hits.

Ryan Sweeney also added two hits as the A's matched their season high with 15 hits.

"Any time you're not winning games, it's nice to come home and get a nice win," Cust said. "Guys got pitches to hit. We were able to get balls up in the zone and not missing. It's the makings of a good night doing that. Kouz hit a nice home run early on and we didn't let up after that."

The A's scored a total of five runs during their five-game streak.

After Lopez's RBI single in the first gave Seattle a 1-0, Oakland came right back in the bottom of the inning to go up 2-1 on Kouzmanoff's two-run homer.

The Athletics made it 5-1 in the next inning on Davis' two-run double and Barton's sacrifice fly. They added two more in the third on Rosales' two-run shot.

Tuiasosopo's second career home run came when Davis knocked the ball over the fence trying to catch it in the fourth inning.

NOTES: Ken Griffey Jr.'s 88 at-bats are the most he has gone without a homer to start a season. Including last season, his current streak is 93 consecutive homerless at-bats, eight shy of the longest regular-season streak of his career. He failed to homer in 101 straight from May 22, 1990, through June 20, 1990. ...

Mariners INF Mike Sweeney was given another day off to rest a cranky back. He was available to pinch hit. ... Seattle OF Ryan Langerhans was also given a day off to rest a stiff left elbow. ...

OF Coco Crisp played in a game at the A's minor-league complex in Phoenix and is scheduled, along with INF Mark Ellis, to play with Single-A Stockton at Lake Elsinore on Tuesday. ... The A's were undecided about Thursday's starter, with RHP Vin Mazzero and RHP Tyson Ross mentioned as possible candidates to take RHP Justin Duchscherer's place in the rotation. ... Mariners' C Rob Johnson said he was ready to play, but was kept out of the lineup to protect his sore back. He's expected to play Tuesday.

### First quarter of season a memorable one

### A perfect game, a no-hitter and there's much more to come

By John Schlegel / MLB.com

What will a quarter get you these days? If it's the baseball season, plenty -- plus a guarantee of much more to come.

Now that the 2010 season has made it through six weeks, teams will be playing their 40th games in the coming days -- the Blue Jays and Angels do it Monday night -- and will surpass the one-quarter mark of the season with their 41st. By the latter part of the week, when Interleague Play steps up to the plate for a one-weekend appearance, all 30 teams will have made it through the first quarter of their 162-game seasons.

One thing has been made clear already: Another three quarters like this, and we'll be looking at a jackpot of a season. But then, we already are -- and we always do.

So far, 2010 has brought a perfect game, a no-hitter and an early Triple Crown and .400 threat wrapped up in one player. The Royals have changed managers while other underdogs have thrived. The Twins have taken their game outdoors, and quite a few rookies are playing like All-Star veterans. Alas, the game also has been shaken by the losses of a heavenly voice in Ernie Harwell, one whiz of an arm in Robin Roberts and a fresh and promising baseball mind in Rockies executive Keli McGregor.

It's a lot to absorb in one quarter of a season, and much of what has transpired will only continue to evolve as the rest of the quarters drop in baseball's season.

Here are a few of the remarkable events embossed on this first quarter that figure to continue to, ahem, change the landscape of 2010:

**Dallas Braden's perfect game** on Mother's Day came a little more than two weeks after the Yankees' Alex Rodriguez stepped on his mound, sparking a battle of words that lasted for weeks and took on new life with the perfect game itself. You can rest assured that when the Yankees visit the A's on July 5-7, it'll come up again. As much as the history of the feat itself resonates, being only the 19th occurrence, Braden's journey became a perfect storm: A relatively unknown pitcher taking on a superstar and then making history of his own. But as Braden knows, especially with how Oakland's rotation has suffered physically, his most important starts now are his next 25 or so as the A's try to stay in the four-horse race that is the AL West.

**Ubaldo Jimenez's no-hitter** at Atlanta on the second weekend of the season actually validated what many in the National League already believed, for he entered the season as a Cy Young candidate hitting his prime. If he were to fulfill that part of his promise with a season riddled with spectacular starts, he just might help lead the Rockies back to the playoffs as well. With Jeff Francis back off the DL, it's not all on Jimenez. But the Rockies have some ground to make up to overcome the Padres and Giants in the NL West race.

**Andre Ethier's bat** has raised him to an impressive pedestal six weeks into the season -- he's batting .392, which has people thinking about that magical number eight points above it, and he's right there at the top in the other two Triple Crown categories. Unfortunately, his bat might be getting in the way, too. Ethier suffered a broken finger when his right pinkie got caught on the knob in one of his left-handed swings in batting practice. That could be tough to overcome, but he'll find out quickly now that he has a splint on it, and the Dodgers will go about the business of holding their breath.

**The Padres, Nationals and Blue Jays** all have gotten off to starts that few experts saw coming. The Padres had set the early tone in the NL West, but the Dodgers' three-game sweep this past weekend tightened the division standings, leaving only a half-game of breathing room between the Padres and Giants, heading into their two-gamer with the Giants. Meanwhile, the Nats have the two-time NL champion Phillies in the way, and the Blue Jays are in the stacked AL East, so these underdogs have a long road before they get their day. But each team has shown that it has the talent to make something happen this year, and there's enough youth on all three -- either already with the club or on its way -- to set all three teams up for years to come.

**Rookies have ruled** beyond their years so far, from Jason Heyward's powerful run production for the Braves to Austin Jackson's sparkplug performance at the top of the Tigers' lineup. The Cardinals' Jaime Garcia and David Freese and the Reds' Mike Leake are among the other rookies who have made veteran-like impact in the first quarter. And remember, two of the biggest potential rookie names of the year, the Nationals' Stephen Strasburg and the Reds' Aroldis Chapman, haven't even arrived yet.

**The Rays, Reds and Royals** all have been news-makers early in the season, although the Royals' news wasn't as pleasant as that of the other two. The Rays stepped up with their best start in franchise history to take the early lead in the AL East, maintaining an edge over the defending World Series champion Yankees. The Reds are among the teams that have made their presence known early in the season, as some predicted they would, and showed the Cardinals, the defending NL Central champs, this weekend that they might have some staying power by taking over first place. The Royals dismissed their manager, Trey Hillman, replacing him with Ned Yost -- and Zack Greinke went out and got his first victory in eight tries in Hillman's swan song.

**The Cy Young races** are off to a roaring start, with the Giants' Tim Lincecum performing perhaps at a higher level than even the last two seasons he won it in the NL, Jimenez making his move and former Blue Jays ace Roy Halladay showing he's perfectly comfortable with the National League and his Phillies pinstripes. In the AL, the picture is pretty wide open, but the Bronx tandem of Phil Hughes and Andy Pettitte have gotten off to as strong a start as anyone. However, there are a lot of pitchers in both leagues keeping the runs down. Whether that holds up into the summer months remains to be seen.

**The Twins' new home** at Target Field was plenty cozy for the home team and its fans in its opening homestand, and the Twins have made themselves right at home atop the AL Central standings. Joe Mauer has missed about a week with a sore heel -- but not a month like he did last year -- and Minnesota's nice start is keeping the Tigers at bay, for now. The changes in Motown seem to have taken, so, who knows, maybe another 163rd game is in their future, or at least a third in a row in the AL Central overall.

But, hey, we're only getting to 40 so far, barely a quarter. Only two bits of the season has passed us by.

At this particular checkpoint, some teams and some players are glad this much of the season is complete, boding good things for the rest of the year. But most are probably glad there remains three-quarters of the campaign ahead, providing ample opportunity to get on track.

A quarter can get you something special these days, sure. But, even better, another three quarters are on their way.

### **Bench coaches prove vital to team success**

#### **Right-hand men assist, complement the managers they work for**

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

When Joe Maddon first took over the title of bench coach with the Angels in 1996, he didn't quite know what to make of it.

The role was relatively new to the game. The job requirements -- being a baseball lifer, having plenty of coaching experience, owning a proven rapport and trust with the manager, players and organizational higher-ups -- were no-brainers for any position around the diamond.

The expectations were the same as always: Win ballgames. Preferably now.

"I didn't know exactly what to do," says Maddon, who parlayed that longtime gig into the managerial job with the Tampa Bay Rays in 2006, won American League Manager of the Year and made it to the World Series two years later. "I kind of defined it myself."

Within five years, Maddon was not only helping manager Mike Scioscia organize the club's routines and use computers to download and print out information on situational hitting, spray charts and defensive alignments, but he also was injecting his own brand of personality into the daily proceedings, including an inspirational thought of the day.

Hewn into the lineup cards were hand-picked gems from "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations," including these nuggets:

"You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions." -- Naquib, Mahfouz

"Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go." --William Feather

"No man is an island." --John Donne

Some of it might have been above the heads of players mainly concentrating on *playing* above their heads. As Maddon says, that was kind of the point.

"If any of that made them think about what we were trying to accomplish," Maddon says, "then it was worth it."

The Angels went on to win the World Series in 2002 and Maddon's credentials as a baseball man were sent into the stratosphere. Eight years later, the role of a bench coach has become more defined, whether or not it includes key lines from a Walt Whitman, Henry Ford or Carrot Top.

In fact, 29 of the 30 Major League teams has a bench coach, and the only one that doesn't, the Jim Leyland-led Detroit Tigers, essentially has third-base coach Gene Lamont acting as Leyland's main strategy assistant and confidant.

"I like to think that a bench coach's job is to make everything run more smoothly," says Ty Van Burkleo, who serves as bench coach under Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu. "I plan out the day, I make sure everybody's where they need to be throughout the course of the workday, pre-game, and I'm there to make Don's job easier in any way I can."

Bench coaches with managerial experience	
BENCH COACH	MANAGERIAL EXPERIENCE
John Gibbons, Royals	Blue Jays (2004-2008)
Nick Leyva, Blue Jays	Phillies (1989-1991)
Pete Mackanin, Phillies	Pirates (2005, interim); Reds (2007, interim)
John McLaren, Nationals	Mariners (2007-2008)
Jackie Moore, Rangers	A's (1984-1986)
Al Pedrique, Astros	D-backs (2004)
Tony Pena, Yankees	Royals (2002-2005)
Willie Randolph, Brewers	Mets (2005-2008)
Tom Runnels, Rockies	Expos (1991-1992)
Bob Schaefer, Dodgers	Royals (1991, one game; 2005)
Carlos Tosca, Marlins	Blue Jays (2002-2004)
Alan Trammell, Cubs	Tigers (2003-2005)
Gary Varsho, Pirates	Phillies (2004, three games)

Van Burkleo spends a lot of time talking to players, making sure that there are open lines of communication between the players and coaching staff at all times. He lets Wakamatsu, who himself was a bench coach for Texas and Oakland before getting the Mariners job, put full concentration on things a skipper uniquely worries about, like handling the media and addressing crucial personnel situations like demotions, trades and releases.

Once the game starts, he's Wakamatsu's right-hand man, who can be counted on at any moment to give input on a key in-game decision.

"I think being a bench coach allows you to really see the whole game in an intellectual way," says Van Burkleo, who was the A's hitting coach before coming to Seattle. "When I was a hitting coach, I was concentrating fully on making my hitters better. Pitching coaches are focusing on pitchers. But when you're a bench coach, you're really like a second manager in a lot of ways. You're involved in all aspects and have to be aware of everything."

That's a big reason why bench coaches are really the proverbial heartbeat away from the manager's chair.

When a manager is ejected, for example, the bench coach is the one who takes over for the rest of the ballgame. And when a manager is dismissed from his position, more often than not it seems to be the bench coach who is handed at least the interim gig and sometimes even the full-time reins.

Maddon, Wakamatsu, Houston skipper Brad Mills, Boston manager Terry Francona, Yankees skipper Joe Girardi and Brewers manager Ken Macha are all former bench coaches. And a host of current bench coaches, including Willie Randolph of the Brewers, Tony Pena of the Yankees, John Gibbons of the Royals and Alan Trammell of the Cubs, are former managers.

That's how similar -- and often interchangeable -- these parts are.

Take Jim Tracy, last year's National League Manager of the Year, who started the fateful season as bench coach under then-manager Clint Hurdle but replaced him as interim manager after the club got off to an 18-28 start. Tracy, too, had managerial experience in the Majors, having piloted the Dodgers (2001-05) and the Pirates (2006-07).

Immediately he injected his own brand of confidence, saying, "Am I sitting here saying to you that this is going to be a turnaround overnight? Maybe not. But I am going to do what I think has a chance to work."

Turns out it *was* an overnight turnaround, and one of historic proportions. The Rockies went 74-43 the rest of the way and took the eventual NL champion Phillies to four games in a taut NL Division Series.

Tracy eased back into a familiar leadership role. He didn't panic. He handled the situation by combining the managerial skills he already possessed with the trust he had built in the Rockies clubhouse as bench coach.

"Quite frankly ... these players really relished, they appreciated ... when I got to a point where I felt like they understood ... what I wanted," Tracy said.

"Then I moved out of the way and let them do their thing."

### **Lost Coast: West Has Been AL's Worst**

Jeff Fletcher, fanhouse.com 5/18/2010

OAKLAND -- Nearly a quarter of the way into the season, all four teams in the AL West have the same reason for optimism: They are in the AL West.

A division that some thought might be one of the best and most competitive in baseball has, so far, turned out to be simply competitive. All four teams believe that they have underachieved, although the Athletics didn't look a whole lot better on paper than they have played so far.

Still, the consensus worst team in the division is hanging around because of the struggles of the Angels, Mariners and Rangers.

"If you are banged up a little bit and no one is running away with it, you are going to be happy with that," A's manager Bob Geren said before Monday's game against the Mariners. "Being just a couple games out of first with some guys banged up, those are all good signs."

The team currently occupying the basement in the division is the Mariners, who are now 14-24 after an offseason in which general manager Jack Zduriencik was the toast of baseball for adding Cliff Lee, Chone Figgins and Milton Bradley to a club that won 85 games last year.

So far, it's been nothing short of a disaster. We all know what's happened to Bradley. Lee missed the first month with an injury. Figgins is batting .182. On Monday night the Mariners had five players in their lineup batting .200 or worse, and one hitting .213.

"We've kind of underachieved at this point," Zduriencik said Monday. "Hopefully we'll get this thing going and make everything competitive."

One of these teams is going to end up in first place, even though none of them look like playoff teams today.

"I think it'll be between the Angels and Texas," said a scout who covers all four teams in the division. "Those are the two that you'll see at the end. They will compete better than the other two."

The Angels, who have won the division each of the past three years, are showing some signs of waking up. They swept the A's over the weekend in Anaheim, before losing 4-3 to Texas on Monday night.

"They played better," Geren said. "When we came in a couple of their guys' averages were down, but [Bobby] Abreu and [Kendry] Morales had good series. They are playing better than they were earlier. Their starting pitching was leading all the majors in walks allowed and homers allowed, and they didn't look that way against us."

Said Zduriencik of the Angels: "Everybody respects them because of what they've done the past few years. Regardless of where you are in the division, whether it's us or Texas or Oakland, your eyes are on them. You have to respect them."

As the season heads toward it's second quarter, here's a team-by-team look at how each team stands in baseball's most

disappointing division:

## Angels

Jered Weaver has lived up to his billing as the new No. 1 starter, replacing John Lackey, but the other starters have been inconsistent. The bullpen has been a real mess, which is a problem they aren't used to having in Anaheim. Closer Brian Fuentes is in danger of losing his job to Fernando Rodney.

"They are going to hold it the way it is for now, it seems," the scout said. "I think there will be a flip-flop there (with the closer situation). I think everyone is expecting that."

The Angels' offense has been sporadic. They are clearly missing Figgins at the top, with new leadoff man Erick Aybar not getting on base nearly enough. Abreu, Torii Hunter, Juan Rivera and Hideki Matsui have all been below their career averages. Morales, who had been hot in April, has slumped lately, but he's still leading the team with nine homers.

"He's really fun to watch hit," the scout said. "He's just a real good hitter, as well as powerful."

## Athletics

After 20 games, the A's were 12-8 and in first place. They were getting good pitching, solid defense and enough hitting. Since then, they have gradually come back to earth.

Two of the pitchers who started the year in the rotation, Justin Duchscherer and Brett Anderson, are hurt. Another, Ben Sheets, has been wildly inconsistent. The bullpen has been as good as advertised, but it doesn't help much when they're losing 4-0.

The offense was going to be an issue all along, and the only hitter to really overachieve so far is Daric Barton.

"They don't have much pop, and their defense is below average, from what I've seen," the scout said. "They've got good young arms, though. The pitching can go a long way."

## Mariners

They have been losing, and making plenty of news along the way. First was Bradley's latest off-field issue. He is on the restricted list, fighting an undisclosed personal issue. Then came Ken Griffey Jr.'s reported clubhouse snooze. All of that has blown up over a last-place team.

"They were hoping for something from Bradley and (Eric) Byrnes and both of them fell flat," the scout said. "The guys at DH (Griffey and Mike Sweeney), neither of them are hitting at all. They had good chemistry last year and some magical stuff happened to them, and they made a lot of changes, which they had to because they had a lot of guys who were free agents, but they are going through a rebuilding and things aren't working for them."

Between Lee, Felix Hernandez and the surprising Doug Fister, the Mariners have the makings of a good rotation. The bullpen has also been good enough. The problem is run-scoring. Zduriencik said right now he's not looking at getting help from outside.

"I think there are some pieces to this club that are really good," Zduriencik said. "A lot of the guys have not played up to the level of what their career is. You are not asking guys to come up overnight and do something they are not capable of doing. We just would like them to play to their level of ability. If they do that, it's going to be very competitive."

## Rangers

Last, the team that is in first, by default. With Monday's victory over the Angels, the Rangers are 21-18, the worst first-place team in the majors.

"If Texas can get their pitching straightened out, they'll compete well," the scout said.

C.J. Wilson and Colby Lewis have been solid starters, and Derek Holland has come up from the minors and won both of his starts. Rich Harden has been inconsistent. Scott Feldman has been the worst starter.

Offensively, the Rangers missed Nelson Cruz and Ian Kinsler, who each had stints on the disabled list so far. They are also trying to get some production out of first base, where Chris Davis was demoted and replaced by Justin Smoak, who has also failed to produce.

"I don't think anyone thought any club would run away with this," Zduriencik said. "Every club has its strengths. ... Everybody has had issues."



## **Baseball legend Billy Beane launches Leaders in Performance**

World Football Insider, 5/17/2010

Leaders in Performance, the international conference dedicated to the identification, development and management of talent, is proud to officially launch its second edition on 7th October 2010 at Chelsea FC.

In the first of a long list of world class speakers, Billy Beane, General Manager of the MLB franchise the Oakland A's and renowned baseball legend, will be addressing the delegates attending.

Beane turned the identification and recruitment of players into a science, famously charted in the best selling book "Moneyball" and has moulded the A's into a perennial postseason contender whilst running the club as one of the most cost effective in the MLB. Throughout his career Beane has been awarded a number of honours including The Sporting News' Executive of the Year', Major League Baseball's Executive of the Year, and Street & Smith's Sport Business Journal's "40 Under 40" list.

The exclusive interview with Beane will focus on his management approach of identifying and using undervalued assets to create and sustain a competitive edge. The format will allow significant interaction with the audiences so as to create rigorous debate and the exchange of ideas. Over 300 international coaches, managers, performance and sporting directors are expected to attend this year's edition to learn best practise, share challenges and find solutions

Beane says "I am very much looking forward to speaking at Leaders in Performance and meeting all the delegates from around the world involved in player identification and development"

James Worrall, CEO, Leaders in Performance states "Billy is a legend not just in baseball but across all sports for the way in which he revolutionised player recruitment and it is an honour to welcome him to the stage at Leaders in Performance this year"

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Donaldson homers, Sacramento holds on in New Orleans**

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

A late New Orleans Zephyrs rally wasn't enough as the visiting Sacramento River Cats held on for a 9-8 victory Sunday afternoon.

The River Cats, who led 9-2 heading into the bottom of the eighth, allowed three runs in the eighth to make the score 8-5.

The Zephyrs used another three-run rally in the ninth to pull within one, but Sacramento closer Sam Demel came in to put out the flames.

It was the Zephyrs who kicked off the scoring in the first inning to take the early 1-0 lead. Chris Carter tied the game in the second inning by scoring on a bases loaded walk by Corey Brown. The Zephyrs took the lead back for the last time, 2-1, to close out the second.

River Cats newcomer Brett Harper showed his hitting skills with a double in the third inning that scored Josh Donaldson and Carter. Steve Tolleson then singled to score Harper. The River Cats continued hitting in the fourth. Eric Sogard singled to score Michael Affronti and Corey Wimberly and Harper singled to score Sogard.

The scoring halted until the seventh inning when Donaldson blasted the ball to left field for a two-run homer that also scored Sogard. The River Cats had 14 hits on the night. Wimberly went 3-for-6 with two stolen bases to improve his league-best total to 18.

The River Cats have one more game against the Zephyrs on Tuesday to close out this series. The River Cats then return home Thursday to Raley Field to kick off their next homestand against the Memphis Redbirds.

### **Horton's 'Hounds Walk Off With Win**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Last Thursday was starting to get kinda cold and windy ... Friday brought a monsoon and a rainout ... Saturday wasn't much prettier in a double-header loss ... Sunday was gorgeous, but the scoreboard wasn't. T-G-I-M. Thank Gosh It's Monday.

The RockHounds scored the game-winning run in the bottom of the 10th inning to defeat the Frisco RoughRiders Monday night at Citibank Ballpark in the first of a 4-game series.

Josh Horton's two-out single to right scored Yusuf Carter with the game-winner, as the 'Hounds said "so long" to a 4-game slide, and tightened up the Texas League South in the process.

At San Antonio, Matt Clark hit a walk-off home run in the last of the ninth, giving the Missions a 1-0 win over Corpus Christi (and San Antonio's fifth consecutive victory). The two terrific ballgames resulted in Frisco's lead over Corpus remaining at one game, while San Antonio moves to within two and the RockHounds are now three back of the RoughRiders.

Frisco broke a scoreless tie with an unearned run in the fifth, and made it a 2-0 lead in the sixth on Joey Butler's RBI single.

Despite a 2-4 mark and a 6.35 ERA, RoughRiders starter Richard Bleier had also tossed a complete game, 3-hit shutout at San Antonio. He did not allow a hit through 5.0 innings, before Jermaine Mitchell beat out an infield single leading off the sixth. Alex Valdez walked and Jeff Baisley ripped an RBI double into the left field corner, scoring Mitchell. Archie Gilbert then knotted the game with a sacrifice fly to deep center.

Ryan Edell, on a 50-pitch limit having last pitched May 5, went 4.0 innings of shutout ball, allowing just two hits (the first of those a bunt). Acquired as a free agent after being released by the Cleveland Indians, Ryan was making his Oakland A's debut. Justin Friend went 3.2 solid innings in relief, allowing two runs (only one earned) and former RoughRider Beau Vaughan shut down an eighth inning rally, keeping the game tied. Jared Lansford pitched a scoreless 10th for the win.

#### **Personnel:**

Infielder Yung-Chi Chen has been placed on the disabled list. He suffered a bruised left palm/wrist while sliding hard to break up a would-be double play last Thursday, struck in the hand by the relay throw. Ironically, Yung-Chi (who has struggled at the plate) had just ripped a single and had a likely home run kept in the park by the wind earlier in the game.

Infielder J.C. Holt will fill the roster spot. The former LSU star was Atlanta's third round draft choice in 2004 and had reached as high as Triple-A on the Braves' farm before being release earlier this month.

#### **Ports Can't Tame Mavs Offense In 9-3 Loss**

**ADELANTO, Calif.** - It seemed the Stockton Ports never fully regained their footing after blowing a 9-1 lead on Friday night. Despite Stockton's win on Saturday, High Desert's offense barely slowed down all weekend and on Monday night, the Mavericks took the third of four games from the Ports by a final of 9-3. Monday night marked the first time all series the Ports did not reach double figures in the hit column, and the first time all season the Mavs have won back-to-back home games.

High Desert's offense got off to a quick start and never turned back. Kyle Seager and Edilio Colina started the bottom of the first with back-to-back singles to put runners at the corners. Nate Tenbrink brought in the first run of the game with an RBI groundout off pitcher Kenny Smalley's (2-3) glove and to the second baseman Tyler Ladendorf. Two batters later, Rich Poythress hit a two-run homer to left-center to give the Mavericks a 3-0 lead.

The Mavs offense kept churning in the second with a two-out RBI single from Colina to make it a 4-0 game.

Stockton's offense came to life in the third, but settled for less than they could've had. After a leadoff walk drawn by Todd Johnson, Shane Keough tripled to left-center to bring in the Ports' first run. With Keough at third, Ladendorf popped to second for the first out. Grant Green drew a walk to put runners at the corners and Stephen Parker followed with a double to right, scoring Keough and moving Green to third, putting runners at second and third with one out. Mavs starter Kenn Kasperek (3-1) would bear down, however, and strike out Mike Spina for the second out, then get Matt Whitney to ground to second to end the inning.

Kasperek would have no additional hiccups after the third inning. After walking three batters over the first three innings (Kasperek came into the game having walked just six in 42.1 innings on the season), he allowed just one more hit over his final three innings of work, retiring nine of the last 11 batters he faced. He would earn the win, going six innings and allowing two runs on just three hits while striking out four.

Smalley, meanwhile, allowed a leadoff home run to Johermyn Chavez to start the third. It was Chavez' second home run in as many games and increased the Mavericks lead to 5-2.

Smalley would be chased from the game in the fifth after walking two of the first three batters and recording just one out in the frame. Trey Barham came on in relief and yielded a soft single to right to Denny Almonte to make it 6-2. Jake Shaffer followed with a sac-fly to center to give High Desert a 7-2 advantage.

The first seven High Desert runs were charged to Smalley, who took the loss after going 4.1 innings and allowing seven runs on six hits while striking out four and walking three. It was Smalley's shortest outing of the season.

The lone bright spot on the night for Stockton was the work of Barham and Brett Hunter, who combined for 2.2 innings of scoreless relief while striking out four and allowing just one hit between them.

Stockton added a run in the seventh in the midst of what would be their final threat of the night while facing Mavs reliever Marwin Vega. With runners at first and second and two down, Parker knocked an RBI single to center to score Johnson and make it 7-3. Spina came up next and drew a walk to load the bases and bring the possible tying run to the plate in Whitney. Vega, though, would get Whitney to pop to second to end the inning.

High Desert put the game away with a pair of runs in the eighth off Fautino De Los Santos. Almonte and Shaffer started the inning with back-to-back doubles. Two batters later, Juan Diaz singled to left to bring in Shaffer and give High Desert a 9-3 edge.

De Los Santos pitched two-thirds of an inning and allowed two runs on three hits while striking out one. Scott Deal recorded the final out of the frame.

Mavs reliever Steve Richard allowed an infield single to Keough to start the ninth, but struck out the side in order after the hit to end the ballgame.

After dropping three of four in High Desert, the Ports will head south on Tuesday to begin a three-game set with the Lake Elsinore Storm, winners of seven straight. Left-hander Anvioris Ramirez (0-6, 7.75 ERA) will take the hill for the Ports, opposed by right-hander Erik Davis (3-1, 3.93 ERA) for the Storm. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.