



Clips
(June 8, 2010)

From the Los Angeles Times

Angels are in first place after 4-2 victory over Oakland

By Mike DiGiovanna

Not that Mike Scioscia really cares, because the standings this time of year are irrelevant to the Angels manager, "neither here nor there," as he likes to say.

But the Angels care, and they were pleased to be leading the American League West by a half-game after Monday night's 4-2 victory over the Oakland Athletics. They were 5 1/2 games out of first place on May 21.

"I think it means a lot considering how we started," pitcher Scott Kazmir said after delivering his best game of the season. "We're on a roll, and it feels good to be back in first. We've just got to stay confident and ride that wave right now."

Kazmir, who has struggled for two months to find the stuff and the swagger that made him one of baseball's better young left-handers, gave up one run and five hits in 6 1/3 innings, struck out five and walked two. He extended his scoreless-innings streak in Oakland to 20 before Jake Fox's solo homer in the seventh.

Bobby Abreu, who went 0 for 6 Sunday in Seattle, hit a two-run homer in the first, and Bobby Wilson (double), Erick Aybar (RBI triple) and Howie Kendrick (RBI single) keyed a two-run fifth to help the Angels to their sixth straight win and ninth victory in 10 games.

Reliever Kevin Jepsen retired the last two batters in the seventh, and after Fernando Rodney allowed an unearned run in the eighth, embattled closer Brian Fuentes retired the side in order with two strikeouts in the ninth for his eighth save.

"It's way too early to consider standings," Scioscia said. "We have a huge challenge ahead of us, and we need to keep bringing the things we've done to win games on this stretch onto the field."

Though the offense has come alive during the run, starting pitching has provided the rebar, the foundation on which a hot streak can be built.

Since inflating to a 5.23 earned-run average on May 6, Angels starters have combined for a 3.59 ERA in 30 games and allowed three earned runs or fewer in 28 of the last 40 games. They are 6-0 with a 1.95 ERA during the six-game win streak.

"We've been scoring runs the way we think we can for the past 10-15 games, but it all comes down to controlling the game with pitching and defense, and for the most part, we've done that," Scioscia said. "That's going to keep moving us forward."

Kazmir, slowed by mechanical problems, nagging hamstring and shoulder injuries and an inability to throw a sharp slider, was the team's most inefficient starter, his pitch counts routinely hitting the 100 range in five innings.

But he looked different from the start Monday, striking out three of the four batters in the first and blanking the A's on four hits through six innings.

He threw only 78 pitches through five innings, and of his 115 pitches in the game, 77 were strikes. He evened his record at 5-5 and lowered his ERA to 5.40.

"That was exciting to watch," Scioscia said. "That was some of the best stuff we've seen from Kaz in a while. He used both sides of the plate effectively and set up his changeup really well."

Kazmir has won his last two starts, allowing two earned runs and 10 hits in 12 innings, with Wilson behind the plate. In fact, the Angels are 7-0 with a 3.12 ERA in Wilson's seven starts.

"I didn't shake him off much," Kazmir said of Wilson. "Whenever he'd go to a location, he gave a good target. It just seemed we had a good rhythm going, a good tempo."

Angels are feeling chipper about their top draft pick

Angels use the first of their three first-round selections, No. 18 overall, on Kaleb Cowart, a highly regarded third baseman/pitcher who says he patterns his game after Atlanta Braves third baseman Chipper Jones.

By Mike DiGiovanna

Reporting from Oakland —

The Angels went down to Georgia for all three of their first-round selections in Monday's draft, using their top pick on an athletic switch-hitting third baseman who, not surprisingly, aspires to be the next Chipper Jones.

Kaleb Cowart, the 18th overall pick, hit .654 with 11 home runs, 59 runs batted in, 55 runs and 36 stolen bases in 36 attempts for Cook County High in Adel, Ga.

The 6-foot-3, 210-pounder, who also went 10-1 with a 1.05 earned-run average and 116 strikeouts in 73 innings, was named Gatorade national high school player of the year.

Asked on a conference call what major league player he would compare himself to, Cowart did not hesitate in choosing Jones, the Atlanta Braves star and probable Hall of Famer.

"Because we both switch-hit and play third base," Cowart said. "I think one day I can be as good as that. I hope one day to mature into as great a player as he is."

With the 29th overall pick, the Angels chose Cameron Bedrosian, a pitcher from East Coweta High in Sharpsburg, Ga., and the son of 1987 National League Cy Young Award winner Steve Bedrosian.

Bedrosian, a 5-11, 190-pound right-hander, went 8-1 with a 1.44 ERA and 111 strikeouts in 58 innings. He has signed a letter of intent with Louisiana State.

The Angels, who had five of the top 40 picks, used the 30th overall selection on Chevez

Clarke, a 6-foot, 195-pound outfielder who hit .403 with five homers and 14 RBIs for Marietta (Ga.) High. Clarke has signed a letter of intent with Georgia Tech.

The Angels used their two compensation picks after the first round on Taylor Lindsey, a shortstop from Desert Mountain High in Scottsdale, Ariz., and Ryan Bolden, a center fielder from Madison (Miss.) Central High. Lindsey was the 37th overall pick; Bolden was the 40th pick.

Draft add

Cowart, who signed a letter of intent with Florida State, is reportedly seeking a signing bonus in the \$3-million range. The 18th pick of the 2009 draft, high school pitcher Chad James, signed with the Florida Marlins for \$1.7 million.

Cowart informed teams that he wanted to be drafted as a third baseman "because I'd love to play every day," he said. "But if it doesn't work out a few years down the road and I'm struggling, I could always move to the mound."

Cowart said he has more power from the left side and is more of a line-drive hitter from the right side. He has a strong arm and decent speed.

"I feel like I'm a baseball player," Cowart said. "I love to play the game. I have a passion for the game. I feel like I can be an everyday third baseman for a major league club."

The anxiety and nervousness Cowart felt before the draft was replaced by excitement when he heard his name called on national television.

"It was overwhelming," Cowart said. "I've been dreaming about this day since I was a little kid. It's definitely surreal to be in this position, to be given the opportunity to be a major league baseball player. I've worked my entire life for this."

Short hops

Reliever Brian Stokes, on the disabled list because of shoulder fatigue, has been shut down because of shoulder stiffness and was examined Monday by Dr. Lewis Yocum, the team physician. . . . Maicer Izturis (tightness behind his right knee) sat out for a second straight game Monday, but the infielder said he would play Tuesday night.

From the Orange County Register

Kazmir pitches Angels into first place

By DAN WOIKE

OAKLAND – Scott Kazmir was just dealing all day Monday.

Before the Angels' game against the Oakland A's, the pitcher was giving shortstop Erick Aybar a lesson on how to play blackjack. On the mound, Kazmir, administered a different lesson — teaching A's hitters again that they can't get to him.

Behind Kazmir's 6 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings of one-run baseball, the Angels took the first game of a four-game series at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, 4-2.

The Angels have won 11 of their last 13 games. Since losing Kendry Morales, they are 8-1 and have rallied from third place to take over the lead in the AL West.

In 16 career starts against Oakland, Kazmir has a 2.85 ERA. He also had a streak of 20 scoreless innings at Oakland snapped in the seventh inning Monday.

"I didn't even know that," Kazmir said. "Some mounds, some stadiums, you just feel more comfortable."

Bobby Abreu gave the Angels some early runs, driving a ball over the wall for a two-run homer in the first.

The Angels added two runs in the fifth when Bobby Wilson scored on Aybar's triple. Aybar would score on Howie Kendrick's infield single.

The Angels managed just six hits Monday, but the club came up big with two outs in the fifth, when they added the necessary padding.

"We made the most of our hits," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "We bunched them well."

The A's only run off Kazmir (5-5) came on Jake Fox's solo home run in the seventh. Oakland scored one off Fernando Rodney in the eighth, before Brian Fuentes closed the door with a 1-2-3 ninth inning for his eighth save.

Although the Angels have reclaimed first place for the first time since opening day, Kazmir said the team's not done improving.

"To be honest," he said, "I feel like we just scratched the surface."

Angels draft with Georgia on their mind

By DAN WOIKE

OAKLAND – Players gathered around the television sets inside the clubhouse Monday afternoon, watching baseball's next generation of professionals get selected in the Major League Baseball Draft.

While No. 1 pick Bryce Harper is the most household name and is expected to make an impact, the Angels were able to make a firm impression with a trio of first-round picks and a pair of sandwich-round selections.

And all three of the Angels' first-round picks come from Georgia.

The Angels selected five high-school players Monday night – third baseman Kaleb Cowart, pitcher Cam Bedrosian, outfielder Chevy Clarke, shortstop Taylor Lindsey and outfielder Ryan Bolden.

The Angels have until Aug. 16 to sign anyone they select in the draft that still has college eligibility.

The Angels took Cowart, a switch hitter, with the No. 18 pick. Cowart hit .654 with 11 home runs, 55 runs scored and 59 RBI for Cook County High School in Adel, Ga. He also stole 36 bases in 36 attempts. As a pitcher, Cowart was 10-1 with a 1.05 ERA and 116 strikeouts in 73 innings.

"It was overwhelming," Cowart said. "My family and I were excited. We've been dreaming about this day since I was a little kid. It's definitely surreal to finally be in this position."

Cowart, 6-foot-3, 210 pounds, was the player of the year in Georgia this past season. He's signed a letter of intent to play baseball at Florida State, and he said he doesn't know if he will sign or go play in college.

"We are thrilled to draft a player of Kaleb's caliber," Angels' Director of Scouting Eddie Bane said. "His skills are matched by his intensity for the game and we look forward to his advancement in our system."

The Angels' other first-round picks were Bedrosian (No. 29) from East Coweta High School in Sharpsburg, Ga., and Clarke (No. 30) from Marietta High School in Marietta, Ga.

Bedrosian is the son of 1987 N.L. Cy Young Award winner Steve Bedrosian.

"In Bedrosian, we like all the tools he is equipped with to succeed as a big league pitcher and of course, the bloodlines are there," said Bane. "Clarke is a tremendous all-around athlete who we are extremely excited about."

The draft continues Tuesday.

Mathis back for the weekend?

The Angels' answers to their first-base dilemma could arrive in the form of a defensively-solid catcher this weekend.

Jeff Mathis, currently on a rehab assignment at triple-A Salt Lake, is scheduled to be evaluated after playing through Friday. Mathis went on the disabled list on April 20 with a fractured right wrist.

When Mathis returns, the Angels could play Mike Napoli at first base on a regular basis, something Mike Scioscia said he thinks Napoli can handle.

"I think Mike's feeling more comfortable down there," Scioscia said. "... We're going to have to tap into the versatility of our club to create depth, and one of the things we're tapping into is Mike's ability to play first. He's handled it well."

Napoli committed an error at first Monday, tossing the ball over Scott Kazmir's head.

Notes

Maicer Izturis didn't play for the second-straight game, as he nursed tightness in his shoulder. Izturis went on the disabled list earlier this season with a similar injury. ...Brian Stokes suffered a setback in his rehab and met with team orthopedist Dr. Lewis Yocum Monday. ...Kendry Morales has still not undergone surgery for his fractured ankle.

From the LA Daily News

Angels' Matsui a fan of female knuckleballer Yoshida

By Gideon Rubin, Special to the Daily News

OAKLAND - Count the Angels' Hideki Matsui among the hordes of Japanese baseball fans rooting for 18-year-old female knuckleball sensation Eri Yoshida.

"It's amazing what she's doing," Matsui said through an interpreter about Yoshida, called the "Knuckle Princess" by Japanese media.

Last month, Yoshida became the first woman to play professionally in America in a decade when she pitched for the Chico Outlaws in the independent Golden Baseball League. She played in Japan last year and is the only woman ever to play professionally in two countries.

Matsui hasn't seen Yoshida pitch, but said he knows of her through Japanese media reports. Chico will be in Fullerton on June 25-26, but the Outlaws have not announced whether she'll travel with the team.

"It's very courageous of her to play amongst a bunch of male athletes," Matsui said.

Boston Red Sox pitcher Tim Wakefield, who for years pitched against Matsui while he was with the rival New York Yankees, spent a day tutoring his protege in March at the team's Ft. Myers, Fla., spring training facility.

"I think that speaks of his character to take a day off to spend time with her to instruct her about the knuckleball," Matsui said.

Who's on first?

The Angels are rumored to be in trade talks with several teams since slugging first baseman Kendry Morales suffered a broken leg in a freak accident while celebrating a game-winning

grand slam on May 29.

The Chicago White Sox's Paul Konerko and Houston Astros' Lance Berkman are rumored to be among those the Angels covet, but Angels manager Mike Scioscia said he's been pleased with a rotation that's included Mike Napoli (who started Monday's game), Michael Ryan and Robb Quinlan.

The return of everyday catcher Jeff Mathis, who's at Triple-A Salt Lake City rehabbing from a wrist fracture, would allow Scioscia to play Napoli at first and possibly put a kibosh on the deal. Mathis could join the team later this week, Scioscia said.

"We're going to have to tap into a lot of the versatility of our club," Scioscia said. "One of the things we're tapping into is Mike playing first base, and he's handling it well."

Not that the Angels aren't talking.

"I think (general manager) Tony (Reagins) talks every day to other clubs," Scioscia said. "If there's someone out there that's going to make us better, Tony would consider it, but the timing of it is just whenever. I don't know if there's any rhyme or reason to it.

"If you need help, you get someone in there that can help your club as soon as you can."

On the mend

Oft-injured infielder Maicer Izturis sat out for a second day after complaining of hamstring tightness, but likely will be in tonight's lineup, Scioscia said.

Angels back at top of AL West

By Gideon Rubin, Special to the Daily News

OAKLAND - On May 14, the Angels were six games under .500, and falling fast out of contention in the American League West, a division they had won the last three years and four of the last five.

On Monday, the Angels moved into first place with a 4-2 win over the Oakland Athletics in front of 10,071 at Oakland Coliseum.

The Angels' win was their sixth straight. They are a major league-best 17-7 since a 15-21 start.

"We've never been down, we know we battle the whole time, we were just looking to find a way to start to win some games and we did it," said Angels right fielder Bobby Abreu, whose two-run homer in the top of the first set the tone.

"We went through some tough times, but we dealt with it," Abreu said. "Right now, everybody's doing their job.

"The chemistry is back,"

Angels starter Scott Kazmir (5-5) extended his scoreless streak at the Coliseum to 20 innings, a run that ended with one out in the seventh, when No. 9 hitter Jake Fox hit a solo homer in a 4-0 game.

Kazmir struck out five batters and allowed one run on five hits and two walks in 6 1/3 innings.

The A's didn't pose much of a threat until the fifth, when they had runners at first and third after speedster Rajai Davis tripled into the right-field corner, and Daric Barton coaxed a walk, but Kazmir got Kurt Suzuki, who leads the A's with seven homers, to fly out to left.

"That was exciting to watch," Angels manager Mike

Scioscia said of Kazmir. "Some of the best we've seen from Kaz in a while. I thought he used both sides of the plate very effectively to set up his changeup.

"He pitched deep into the game and he pitched well."

The Angels have won nine of their past 10 games in a run that started inexplicably with their Pyrrhic victory over the Seattle Mariners on May 29, when slugging first baseman Kendry Morales suffered a possible season-ending broken ankle in a celebration at home plate after hitting a walk-off grand slam.

In eight games since Morales' injury going into Monday, the Angels are hitting .310 (third best in the majors) and lead the majors in homers (13) and runs (58).

They have outscored their opponents 53-22 eight games into a 14-game road trip in which they're 7-1.

"There's still a void there, but we're going to have to fill it with an overall deeper lineup, and that's what we've seen," Scioscia said.

The Angels stretched their lead to 4-0 in the fifth, when Erick Aybar's triple keyed a two-out two-run rally that Bobby Wilson started with a double.

Closer Brian Fuentes pitched a 1-2-3 ninth for his eighth save.

From Angelsbb.com

Angels win sixth straight, claim first place

Kazmir shuts down A's over 6 1/3 innings for fifth victory

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

06/08/10 3:00 AM ET

OAKLAND -- There's something about the Oakland A's that brings out the best in Angels left-hander Scott Kazmir.

That's especially true when Kazmir faces the A's at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, his personal field of dreams.

Entering Monday night's game, Kazmir had thrown 14 consecutive scoreless innings against the A's at the Coliseum. He extended that streak to 20 before allowing a one-out home run in the bottom of the seventh to Jake Fox in a 4-2 victory over the A's.

"For the most part, yeah, I did feel good out there," said Kazmir. "There are some mounds, some stadiums, you just feel comfortable. It seems like this is one of them. Once you step on the rubber you feel like, not necessarily it feels closer, but you just feel a little bit more locked in, a little more focused."

Kazmir helped the locked-in Angels stretch their winning streak to six and move into first place in the American League West, one-half game ahead of Texas, which lost 4-2 to Seattle. Angels manager Mike Scioscia said it's far too early to worry about the standings, but Kazmir had a different take.

"I think it means a lot," Kazmir said. "Out of where we started at and now the roll that we're on, it feels good. It feels good to be back in first place. We want to stay there. We want to keep it and build a lead on it. It's good right now, but we've got to get back to business tomorrow."

The Angels beat the A's for the sixth straight time in Oakland and for the ninth time in their past 10 games at the Coliseum. They improved to 7-1 on their 14-game road trip and are 8-1 since losing first baseman Kendry Morales, their leading hitter, to a fractured leg.

Seemingly everyone in the order is chipping in to help fill that void. On Sunday, the Angels had a season-high 18 hits in a 9-4 come-from-behind win over Seattle. Against the A's, the Angels had just six hits, but one of them was Bobby Abreu's two-run homer off A's right-hander Ben Sheets in the first inning, giving Kazmir a 2-0 lead.

The Angels struck for two more runs in the fourth off Sheets. With two outs, catcher Bobby Wilson doubled down the right-field line and shortstop Erick Aybar roped a run-

scoring triple to right-center. Howard Kendrick brought Aybar home with an infield single up the middle, giving the Angels a 4-0 lead.

"We made the most of our hits," Scioscia said. "We bunched them. I think we did a good job with guys in scoring position, we had some good at-bats. Then the two-out rally was big with Bobby Wilson's double, Erick's triple and Howie with the hit.

"Sheets really settled in after the first inning, made one mistake to Bobby and we got two runs on the board. He settled down and pitched well. Fortunately it was a night where we pitched well also."

Kazmir went 6 1/3 innings, allowing five hits and one run while striking out five and walking two. He evened his record to 5-5 on the season and improved to 9-3 lifetime against the A's with a 2.85 ERA. His career high of 13 strikeouts came against the A's on Aug. 24, 2007, when he pitched for Tampa Bay.

"That was exciting to watch," Scioscia said. "I think some of the best stuff we've seen from Kaz in a while. I thought he used both sides of the plate very effectively. [He] set up his changeup, pitched deep into the game and pitched well."

Wilson said he didn't know about Kazmir's past success at the Coliseum. He just knew that Kazmir was on.

"He threw all three of his pitches, threw the fastball in well. His changeup was the best I've seen in a long time," Wilson said. "He threw some good sliders. He competed. The last couple times I caught him, I've seen that competition, that drive."

Until Fox took a pitch up in the zone deep over the left-field fence, the A's had only one baserunner reach as far as third off Kazmir.

"He did a good job of getting ahead of us tonight," Fox said. "When you're throwing strikes and throwing all your pitches, it's going to be a long night."

After giving up a solo shot to Fox, Kazmir faced just one more batter. A's left fielder Eric Patterson grounded to first baseman Mike Napoli, but wound up on second when Napoli's toss went high and behind Kazmir, covering first, for an error. Kevin Jepsen came on to retire Daric Barton on a soft fly to left fielder Juan Rivera and Kurt Suzuki on a popup to Napoli.

Angels reliever Fernando Rodney gave up two hits and a run in the eighth, and Brian Fuentes pitched a scoreless ninth for his eighth save.

"It kind of feels like we're still scratching the service," Kazmir said. "Hitting wise, offensive wise we're starting to show a lot more. It still feels like there are quite a few things in our game that really haven't been shown yet.

"I think we'll be just fine. We have to stay confident and ride this wave right now."

Cowart is first of Angels' three first-rounders

Right-hander Bedrosian, outfielder Clarke join Draft haul

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

06/07/10 11:30 PM ET

Best-case scenario, the Angels have uncovered a player along the lines of Chipper Jones. Scenarios don't get much better than that.

With the 18th overall pick in the First-Year Player Draft, the Angels selected third baseman Kaleb Cowart of Cook county (Ga.) High School in Adel, Ga., an athlete who also has the tools to pitch.

Represented by former first baseman and Georgian Wally Joyner at the event, the Angels followed in their first-round bonanza with two more high school stars from Georgia: pitcher Cameron Bedrosian of East Coweta High School in Sharpsburg and center fielder Chevez "Chevy" Clarke of Marietta.

Wrapping up a Draft day bounty rich in quality athletes, the Angels used a pair of supplemental first-round choices to take shortstop Taylor Lindsey of Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., and center fielder Ryan Bolden of Madison (Miss.) Central High School.

"The Angels picked me, and I couldn't be happier," Cowart said.

2010 top picks

No.	Team	Player
1	WAS	Bryce Harper, OF
2	PIT	Jameson Taillon, RHP
3	BAL	Manny Machado, SS
4	KC	Christian Colon, SS
5	CLE	Drew Pomeranz, LHP
6	ARI	Barret Loux, RHP
7	NYM	Matt Harvey, RHP
8	HOU	Delino DeShields, 2B
9	SD	Karsten Whitson, RHP
10	OAK	Michael Choice, OF
11	TOR	Deck McGuire, RHP
12	CIN	Yasmani Grandal, C
13	CWS	Chris Sale, LHP
14	MIL	Dylan Covey, RHP
15	TEX	Jake Skole, OF
16	CHC	Haden Simpson, RHP

No.	Team	Player
17	TB	Josh Sale, OF
18	LAA	Kaleb Cowart, 3B
19	HOU	Mike Foltyniewicz, RHP
20	BOS	Kolbrin Vitek, 2B
21	MIN	Alex Wimmers, RHP
22	TEX	Kellin Deglan, C
23	FLA	Christian Yelich, OF
24	SF	Gary Brown, OF
25	STL	Zack Cox, 3B
26	COL	Kyle Parker, OF
27	PHI	Jesse Biddle, LHP
28	LAD	Zach Lee, RHP
29	LAA	Cam Bedrosian, RHP
30	LAA	Chevy Clarke, OF
31	TB	Justin O'Conner, C
32	NYY	Cito Culver, SS
35	ATL*	Matthew Lipka, SS
43	SEA*	Taijuan Walker, RHP
44	DET*	Nick Castellanos, 3B

* Did not have a first-round pick

Cowart, at 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds, is the 2010 Gatorade High School Player of the Year. His numbers this season are off the charts: .654 batting average (second highest in state history) with 11 homers, 59 RBIs and 36 steals without getting caught. A Florida State University signee, he was 10-1 with a 1.05 ERA with 116 strikeouts in 73 innings.

"We are thrilled to have a player of Kaleb's caliber," Angels scouting director Eddie Bane said. "His skills are matched by his intensity for the game, and we look forward to his advancement in our system."

The Angels have shown a desire to stock up on power, an area of organizational need, along with swift athletes. Cowart, who turned 18 on June 2, would love to make good on the comparisons with the Atlanta Braves' superstar.

"I'd say Chipper Jones," Cowart said on a conference call when asked to identify his role model. "We're both switch-hitters and we both play third base. One day I hope I can mature into as great a baseball player as he is."

On the mound, the comparisons have been to Jake Peavy. Cowart throws 91-94 mph, touching 95, with a developing slider and changeup.

Bedrosian, the son of 1987 National League Cy Young Award winner Steve Bedrosian, competed at East Coweta High School in Sharpsburg, Ga. A hard thrower in the image of

his dad, a feared closer, the 5-foot-11, 190-pound right-hander posted an 8-1 record and a 1.44 ERA with 111 strikeouts in 58 innings. Bedrosian has signed a letter-of-intent to play at LSU.

Clarke, who is 6-foot, 185 pounds, signed a letter-of-intent to play baseball at Georgia Tech. He batted .403 with five home runs, 14 RBIs and 17 stolen bases this season at Marietta (Ga.) High School.

"In Bedrosian, we like all the tools he is equipped with to succeed as a big league pitcher and of course, the bloodlines are there," said Bane. "Clarke is a tremendous all-around athlete who we are extremely excited about."

The Angels were awarded the selection that they turned into Cowart as compensation for losing Type A free agent Chone Figgins to Seattle. They also drew the 40th overall pick in the supplemental first round for Figgins, which they used to snap up Bolden.

Boston's signing of Type A free agent John Lackey had the 29th overall pick in the first round (Bedrosian) and No. 37 in the supplemental round (Lindsey) going to the Angels.

The Angels also had their own pick at No. 30 in the opening round (Clarke), giving them three of the top 30 selections in the Draft.

The Angels own three more picks among the top 115 through the third supplemental round: 81, 111 and 115.

They used their two first-round picks last season on outfielders Randal Grichuk and Michael Trout, who are now teammates at Class A Cedar Rapids. Their three compensation round picks were used on pitchers Tyler Skaggs, Garrett Richards and Tyler Kehrner, also at Cedar Rapids.

Angels pick Cy Young offspring Bedrosian

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

06/07/10 10:30 PM ET

With their second first-round pick in the 2010 First-Year Draft, the Angels stayed in Georgia and opted for Cam Bedrosian, a right-handed pitcher whose father, Steve, was a highly productive Major League reliever.

This selection at No. 29 overall came as part of the compensation the Angels received for Boston's signing of Type A free agent John Lackey. The Angels also were presented the No. 37 overall pick, in the supplemental first round, in the Lackey signing.

With their first of three first-round selections, the Angels went with versatile Kaleb Cowart, a Cook (Ga.) high school athlete who turned 18 on June 2. Cowart is initially projected as a switch-hitting third baseman with power, but has shown that he's a pitching prospect as well with a fastball in the 91-94 mph range.

Bedrosian, a 6-foot athlete weighing 204 pounds, attended East Coweta High School in Sharpsburg, Ga. He throws in the mid-90s, like his father, with a plus slider. He also has a developing slider and the Angels love his bloodlines. His dad pitched for 14 seasons and won the 1987 National League Cy Young Award for the Phillies as their closer.

A Louisiana State signee, he has reached 96 mph with his heater and has a curveball to go with his power slider.

First-place Angels feeling greedy

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

The reigning AL West champions are back on top.

How long the Angels will lead the division is to be determined but there is one certainty: this team is on a roll.

Following Monday's 4-2 victory against the A's, the Angels extended their winning streak to six games and moved into first place in the division, one-half game ahead of Texas, which lost 4-2 to Seattle.

Moreover, the Angels beat the A's for the sixth straight time in Oakland and for the ninth time in their past 10 games at the Coliseum. Overall, they've improved to 7-1 on their 14-game road trip and are 8-1 since losing first baseman Kendry Morales to a fractured leg.

As for Oakland, it fell to 1 1/2 games behind the Angels in the standings.

The Angels will look to Jered Weaver to keep the winning streak alive, and it's hard to blame them for feeling confident. As of his last start, Weaver had the best winning percentage for active American League pitchers with a minimum of 50 victories. He holds a .659 (56-29) winning percentage for his career.

Additionally, Weaver has allowed two earned runs or fewer in nine of his past 12 starts. He threw seven scoreless innings in his last start against the Royals and gave up four hits in the win.

The A's will counter with Vin Mazzaro, who will start for Brett Anderson after he landed back on the 15-day disabled list with a strained left forearm. In two career starts against the Angels, Mazzaro is 0-1 with a 7.88 ERA.

Angels: Angels on the mend

Infielder Maicer Izturis, who was scratched from the lineup Sunday against Seattle because of soreness behind his right knee, was also given the day off Monday. He hopes to return to the lineup Tuesday. Angels manager Mike Scioscia said there's a chance catcher Jeff Mathis, who's on the disabled list with a fractured right wrist, could rejoin the team this weekend. Mathis is on a rehabilitation assignment with Triple-A Salt Lake.

A's notes: Chavez on comeback trail

Eric Chavez, who is recovering from two bulging disks in his neck, is planning to meet with A's head athletic trainer Steve Sayles and the coaching staff Monday to create a plan for his recovery. He took batting practice Monday along with A's pitchers as they prepared for Interleague Play, but he is currently unable to throw.

Worth noting

Scioscia returned to the team after missing the weekend's games against Seattle to attend his daughter, Taylor's, high school graduation. The team went 2-0 under bench coach Ron Roenicke in those two games and 7-0 when Roenicke fills in. ... A's hitting coach Jim Skaalen was ejected by home plate umpire Eric Cooper in the sixth inning of Monday's game against the Angels. ... Justin Duchscherer underwent surgery on his injured left hip Monday.

Izturis misses second straight game

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

06/08/10 2:00 AM ET

- Frandsen returns to Bay Area
- Worth noting

OAKLAND -- Infielder Maicer Izturis, who was scratched from the lineup Sunday against Seattle because of soreness behind his right knee, got another day off Monday when the Angels opened a four-game series with the Oakland A's.

Izturis said he expects to return to action Tuesday.

"I'm feeling much better," Izturis said before the game. "I ran the bases today."

"He was real tight in Seattle over the weekend," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We wanted to give him a couple days to rebound. He had a real good workout today early and should be ready to play tomorrow."

Izturis said he felt pain while running to second on a sixth-inning double Saturday against the Mariners.

"It's more like a hamstring [injury]," he said.

Izturis was red-hot before getting hurt. On Friday and Saturday against Seattle, he had a combined three hits, two walks, two RBId and four runs scored as the Angels' leadoff hitter.

Frandsen returns to Bay Area

OAKLAND -- For Angels infielder Kevin Frandsen, this four-game series that opened Monday night against the Oakland A's is a homecoming of sorts.

Frandsen was born in the Bay Area city of Los Gatos and attended Bellarmine Prep in San Jose. He played college baseball for San Jose State, was drafted by the San Francisco Giants in 2004 and played 174 games for them before being traded in March to the Boston Red Sox.

Frandsen, who was claimed by the Angels off waivers on April 29, came into Monday night's game hitting .417. He started at third base before plenty of family members and friends.

Fun times?

"Fun for me is winning," Frandsen said. "I want to come home and win."

Frandsen said fitting in with his new teammates has been easy. Hitting over .400, of course, helps. But he said he knew plenty of players on the team. What's more, the Angels' aggressive style fits him perfectly.

"This is more my style," Frandsen said. "I really do enjoy it. It makes baseball that much more fun.

"I feel comfortable in here just because the guys are open and they have a good time together. Everyone's pulling for each other."

Frandsen said he "wasn't really shocked" when the Giants traded him.

"Because I knew they didn't have a plan for me. I know they gave up on me, but they gave me an opportunity to go somewhere," he said. "They could have just released me."

Worth noting

Angels manager Mike Scioscia said there's a chance catcher Jeff Mathis, who's on the disabled list with a fractured right wrist, could rejoin the team this weekend. Mathis is on a rehabilitation assignment with Triple-A Salt Lake. Scioscia said "we'll evaluate him" after he plays Thursday and Friday "and see where he is and see whether he's ready to help us this weekend." ... Right-hander Brian Stokes, who is on the disabled list, has had a setback during his rehabilitation from right shoulder fatigue, Scioscia said. "Brian

Stokes is getting examined by Dr. [Lewis] Yocum today," he said before Friday night's game against Oakland. "[He] had a little stiffness in his shoulder. It's just something that's just been kind of bugging him. It's just been lingering a little bit. We want to make sure that hopefully there's nothing that's going to affect what we're trying to do." ... Scioscia returned to the team after missing Saturday and Sunday's game against Seattle to attend his daughter, Taylor's, high school graduation. "It's a weird feeling," he said of missing the games. "You're somewhere you're not supposed to be. It's a foreign feeling, but the guys played well." Bench coach Ron Roenicke filled in for Scioscia, and the Angels won both games. Roenicke is now 7-0 lifetime, subbing for Scioscia. "These guys didn't skip a beat. They kept playing well. Ron did a great job," Scioscia said.

Angels pick two in supplemental round

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

06/07/10 11:00 PM ET

The Angels knew exactly what they wanted -- high school athletes with upside -- and they went after them throughout a busy Day 1 of the 2010 First-Year Player Draft with five of the top 40 choices.

After tabbing three Georgia high school talents in the first round, the Angels wrapped up their work with two more high school standouts: shortstop Taylor Lindsey of Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., and center fielder Ryan Bolden of Madison (Miss.) Central High School.

Lindsey came with the 37th overall pick in the Draft as compensation for the signing of John Lackey by the Red Sox. Bolden was No. 40 overall, compensation for the Mariners' signing of Chone Figgins.

Lindsey is a left-handed hitter, 6-foot and 195 pounds. He was first-team all-state as a junior and regional player of the year.

Bolden, tall and rangy at 6-foot-2 and 195 pounds, is a right-handed hitter who throws with his left hand. If he turns out to be anything like Rickey Henderson, who fit that uncommon profile, the Angels will be thrilled.

Top of Draft skews younger than usual

By Spencer Fordin / MLB.com

06/07/10 11:00 PM ET

We've seen the next generation of prospects. And it skews young.

The talent flowed from the top on Monday, when the Nationals stuck to plan and chose prodigy Bryce Harper at the top of the 2010 First-Year Player Draft. Harper, considered by many analysts as one of the best prep prospects in the past two decades, headed off a talent-laden first round that featured fellow youngsters Jameson Taillon and Manny Machado picked among the top three selections.

That represents the first time three players that young have been selected that high in two decades. Harper, just 17 years old, made his entry a full year ahead of schedule. Taillon and Machado are both high school seniors. The last time three prep-age players were chosen at the top of the Draft was 1990, when Chipper Jones, Tony Clark and Mike Lieberthal were the first three selections.

And if you exclude that case, there's only one other Draft in the past 35 years that fits the criteria. That would be 1987, when prep players Ken Griffey Jr., Mark Merchant and Willie Banks were all chosen in the top three picks. Players from four-year universities also had a heavy presence in the top 15 on Monday, but high school players began to reassert themselves after the midpoint of the round.

Harper, chosen out of the College of Southern Nevada, is believed to be the first junior college player selected first overall. His age, though, pales in comparison to his impressive skillset, which has garnered the attention of a player far beyond his age. When Harper's name was read on Monday, it was met with a lively ovation that caught Commissioner Bud Selig off guard.

"Thank you," said Selig, gathering himself after the raucous applause. "I didn't think it was that much of a surprise."

And it wasn't, not if you've been paying attention to the Draft circles over the past 12 months. Harper gained notoriety for leaving high school early and earning his GED to attend Southern Nevada, where he debuted as the youngest player in his conference. Harper led his team in virtually every offensive category en route to being named the Scenic West Athletic Conference Player of the Year.

That accolade will go right on top of 2009, when Harper was named Baseball America's High School Player of the Year as a sophomore. Harper, who will likely play in the outfield as a professional, gives Washington its second consecutive prime building block. The Nationals selected Stephen Strasburg first overall last season, and the right-hander will make his big league debut on Tuesday.

Pittsburgh was the team up after Washington, and the Pirates selected Taillon to help flesh out its stockpile of pitching prospects. Taillon, out of The Woodlands High School, is regarded by many analysts as the top prep pitcher from Texas since Josh Beckett was chosen second overall in 1999. Taillon, who stands 6-foot-6, is considered a power arm with a lot of projection left in his frame.

The Orioles were linked to Taillon in recent weeks, but they selected Machado as their consolation prize. Machado, a solidly built shortstop out of Brito Private High School in Hialeah, Fla., has drawn comparisons to former top pick Alex Rodriguez. Baltimore has concentrated heavily on pitching in recent seasons, and Machado will immediately become one of the team's top position player prospects.

The run of prep players ended at No. 4, where the Royals selected shortstop Christian Colon out of Cal State Fullerton. Colon, who was chosen by Colorado in the 10th round of the 2007 First-Year Player Draft but didn't sign, batted .352 with 16 home runs this season. Colon will join prospects Mike Moustakas, Eric Hosmer and Alex Gordon as the standard-bearers of Kansas City's next generation.

Cleveland went back to the college well with the fifth overall choice, taking southpaw pitcher Drew Pomeranz out of the University of Mississippi. Pomeranz went 9-1 with a 2.24 ERA and held opposing hitters to a .139 batting average this season. Pomeranz was named second-team All Southeastern Conference for the 2009 season and the SEC Pitcher of the Year in 2010.

Matt Harvey, a right-hander from the University of North Carolina who was once a top high school prospect but reclaimed his status with a big junior season, was taken by the Mets with the No. 7 pick.

Two potential second-generation players -- Delino DeShields and Cam Bedrosian -- were chosen with the eighth and 29th choices in the Draft. DeShields, a speedy infielder just like his father and namesake, was selected by the Astros despite a commitment to Louisiana State University. Bedrosian, son of former Cy Young Award winner Steve Bedrosian, was taken by the Angels. He is smaller than his father but has a mid-90s fastball with a slider that could lead him to being a short reliever like his dad.

San Diego took prep pitcher Karsten Whitson with the ninth overall selection, and Oakland rounded out the top 10 by selecting outfielder Michael Choice out of University of Texas-Arlington. Choice, who wasn't drafted out of high school, batted .383 with a .568 on-base percentage during his junior season, and he further enhanced his credentials with 16 home runs and 12 stolen bases in 16 attempts.

Eight of the top 15 picks were pitchers, with outfielders (three) and shortstops (two) representing the next two tiers of talent. Eight of the top 15 picks also came from four-year universities, with six coming from high school and just Harper from the junior college ranks. Eleven of the next 17 picks came from the high-school ranks, and only two college pitchers were taken after pick No. 15.

By contrast, 15 first round picks came from the prep ranks last year, but only three went in the top 10. This year, four prep players were selected from the state of Georgia alone, with DeShields the highest pick among them. Georgia native Kyle Parker -- who doubled as Clemson's outfielder and quarterback last season -- was taken at No. 26 by the Colorado Rockies.

Cincinnati made an interesting choice at No. 12, dovetailing a few of its recent selections by taking backstop Yasmani Grandal out of the University of Miami. The Reds had chosen a first-rounder out of Miami -- first baseman Yonder Alonso -- just two seasons ago. Cincinnati also took prep catcher Devin Mesoraco 15th overall in 2007, and Grandal should be able to move through the system a little faster.

Two college pitchers who were expected to go higher -- Georgia Tech's Deck McGuire and Florida Gulf Coast's Chris Sale -- found homes in the top half of the Draft. McGuire went 11th overall to Toronto, while Sale fell to the White Sox at No. 13. Sale gained acclaim at a small school by going 11-0 with a 2.01 ERA and racking up more strikeouts (114) than baserunners allowed via hits (83) and walk (14).

The Angels had five of the top 40 selections due to some free-agent defections last winter, and they picked for the first time at No. 18. The Halos took two-way prep player Kaleb Cowart with its first pick, later selected Bedrosian and closed out their first round by taking prep outfielder Chevy Clarke.

Los Angeles selected two more prep players in the compensatory round, which saw 11 of the 18 players selected come from the prep ranks. Six of those high school players were pitchers, and three more played the infield. The Blue Jays took a pair of prep players of their own in the compensatory round -- pitchers Aaron Sanchez and Noah Syndergaard -- and also nabbed Asher Wojciechowski out of The Citadel.

From the Associated Press

Surging Angels beat A's 4-2 for sixth straight win

By JANIE McCAULEY
AP Baseball Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Bobby Abreu hit a two-run homer, Scott Kazmir won for the third time in four starts and the Los Angeles Angels beat the Oakland Athletics 4-2 on Monday night for their season-best sixth straight victory.

Erick Aybar added an RBI triple as the Angels improved to 8-1 since Kendry Morales broke his leg jumping on home plate in a celebration following his game-ending grand slam against Seattle on May 29.

Abreu's first-inning drive gave Los Angeles a quick lead and the Angels only built on it from there. Manager Mike Scioscia returned following a one-game absence for his daughter's high school graduation.

Howie Kendrick singled in a run as the Angels won their sixth straight in Oakland. They have outscored the A's 30-14 in those games.

Kazmir (5-5) gave up a solo home run to Jake Fox with one out in the seventh, ending the pitcher's scoreless streak in Oakland at 17 1-3 innings spanning his last three outings. The left-hander pounded the strike zone to work ahead in the count much of the game. He improved to 9-3 lifetime against the A's.

Kazmir gave up four other hits in 6 1-3 innings, struck out five and walked two. Brian Fuentes earned his eighth save in 11 opportunities with a 1-2-3 ninth, including consecutive called third strikes to end it.

The Angels are in a stretch with 14 road games in as many days, their longest trip since a 14-gamer during their World Series season of 2002. They've been impressive so far.

"When Kendry got hurt, everybody stepped up," Torii Hunter said.

Ben Sheets (2-5), the A's \$10 million right-hander, lost his second straight start as the A's lost for the fifth time in seven games and dropped the opener of this key four-game series between division rivals. A dismal announced crowd of 10,071 turned out for this one.

Sheets is winless in his last six outings since beating Tampa Bay on May 8. Sheets struck out five and didn't walk a batter in six innings, allowing four runs - three earned - and six hits.

Ryan Sweeney doubled twice, singled and drove in a run for Oakland, which would like to get back on track during this tough stretch with 20 games in 20 days. They were

coming off four straight one-run games, including a series loss to Minnesota in which they salvaged Sunday's series finale to avoid a sweep.

Eric Patterson replaced Rajai Davis in center field for Oakland in the top of the seventh after Davis' left hamstring tightened up following a fifth-inning triple.

A's hitting coach Jim Skaalen was ejected in the sixth inning by home plate umpire Eric Cooper for arguing balls and strikes. It was Skaalen's second ejection with Oakland. He also got tossed May 25, 2009, against Seattle.

Notes: The Angels are 10-3 in their last 13 road games following a 2-10 stretch away from home. They are 9-2 in their last 11 at the Coliseum. Los Angeles hasn't lost a season series to the A's since 2003 (8-12). ... A's SS Cliff Pennington got a day off and Adam Rosales started in his place. ... Injured Oakland DH Eric Chavez (neck spasms) took batting practice on the field for the first time since going on the DL May 21. ... A's RHP Justin Duchscherer underwent season-ending surgery on his troublesome left hip.

Angels select son of Steve Bedrosian in draft

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los Angeles Angels selected third baseman Kaleb Cowart of Cook County High School in Adel, Ga., with the 18th overall pick in the major league baseball draft Monday.

The switch-hitting Cowart was chosen in the first round. Cowart hit .654 with 11 home runs, 55 runs scored, 59 RBI and 36 stolen bases. His batting average ranked second on Georgia's state single-season list.

As a pitcher, the right-hander had a 10-1 record with one save and a 1.05 ERA with 116 strikeouts in 73 innings pitched. The 6-foot-3, 210-pounder signed a letter of intent to play baseball at Florida State.

Cowart was the first of three first-round picks the Angels have this year, the second time in club history they've had three in the first round.

With their second pick, the Angels took right-hander Cameron Bedrosian of East Coweta High in Sharpsburg, Ga., as the 29th overall selection. They chose center fielder Chevez "Chevy" Clarke of Marietta (Ga.) High with their third pick, the 30th overall.

Bedrosian is the son of 1987 NL Cy Young Award winner Steve Bedrosian. The younger Bedrosian, a 5-11, 190-pound right-hander, had an 8-1-1 record and a 1.44 ERA with 111 strikeouts in 58 innings pitched. He's signed a letter of intent with LSU.

Clarke, a 6-foot, 185-pounder who signed to play at Georgia Tech, hit .403 with five home runs, 14 RBI and 17 stolen bases for Marietta.

The Angels took shortstop Taylor Lindsey of Desert Mountain High in Scottsdale, Ariz., in the compensation round of the draft, making him 37th overall.

The 6-foot, 185-pounder hit .347 with eight homers and 31 RBI. He's signed to play at Arizona State.

They also selected center fielder Ryan Bolden of Madison (Miss.) Central High with the 40th pick in the compensation round. He helped lead his team to the Class 5A state title this spring. Bolden hit .351 with eight homers, 30 RBI and 19 stolen bases. He signed with Ole Miss.

From the SportingNews.com

Angels-Athletics Preview

STATS Writer

With their longest win streak of the season, the Los Angeles Angels have climbed back atop the AL West.

They have a very good chance to stay there if Jered Weaver can repeat his recent efforts against the Oakland Athletics.

The right-hander will try to help Los Angeles to its seventh straight win and seventh in a row in Oakland as the teams continue a four-game series Tuesday night.

After starting this season 4-7, the Angels (32-28) rallied into a first-place tie with the A's (30-29) on April 29, but a seven-game losing streak pushed the three-time defending AL West champions back down the standings.

Los Angeles started to get on track with a three-game home sweep of Oakland in mid-May and have really gotten hot lately, winning 11 of 13. Monday night's 4-2 victory in the series opener pushed the Angels a half-game ahead of second-place Texas and 1 1/2 games better than the A's.

"I think it means a lot, from the way we started and now the roll that we're on," pitcher Scott Kazmir said. "It feels good to be back in first place. We want to stay there."

Bobby Abreu gave Los Angeles the lead for good Monday with a two-run homer in the first inning. The right fielder has hit three of his seven homers this season off Oakland pitchers.

Weaver (5-2, 2.74 ERA) also has flourished against the A's lately. The right-hander has a 1.17 ERA in the past four matchups and won his previous trip to Oakland on Oct. 2,

allowing three hits over five scoreless innings in a 5-2 victory. He gave up one run over six innings April 10 against the A's but did not get the decision in a 4-3 win.

Weaver earned his first victory since May 7 on Thursday with seven scoreless innings at Kansas City in a 5-4 win, and he's given up one unearned run over his last 16 innings.

Losers in five of seven this month, the A's will counter with Vin Mazzaro (1-0, 6.08), who is replacing the injured Brett Anderson in the rotation. Anderson was placed on the disabled list with left elbow inflammation after leaving a 9-8 win in Boston on Thursday.

Mazzaro relieved Anderson in that game and earned his first victory since Aug. 12 despite allowing three runs and nine hits in 3 1-3 innings.

Mazzaro was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento for the second time this season May 20 to give some relief to an overworked bullpen.

In his lone start this season, the right-hander lasted only three innings, allowing four runs and walking four in a 7-6 win over Texas on May 4. Mazzaro, who made 17 starts as a rookie for Oakland in 2009, is 0-1 with a 7.88 ERA in two starts versus Los Angeles.

The Angels are on their longest win streak since an eight-game run July 18-25, and their six straight wins in Oakland are their most since taking seven in a row from July 7, 1996-July 13, 1997.

From ESPNLosAngeles.com

Angels, alone at top, don't feel like it

Los Angeles leads the AL West, but still feels there's a lot of work to do

By Mark Saxon
ESPNLosAngeles.com
Archive

OAKLAND -- It might seem as if the Los Angeles Angels are coming at the rest of the American League West like an 18-wheeler careening down a mountain road with faulty brakes, but their charge hasn't felt nearly as violent from the driver's seat.

This is a team that's somehow on a roll without ever actually hitting its stride.

"To be honest, it kind of feels like we're still scratching the surface a little bit," pitcher Scott Kazmir said.

The Angels have practically breezed into first place, where they now sit alone for the first time this year. After Monday's 4-2 win in Oakland, they've made up 5½ games and passed two teams in a matter of 15 days. They've won six games in a row and nine of the past 10, grinding up bad teams and watery lineups -- which is what first-place teams are supposed to do.

If this were the end of the season, it would look like an epic charge -- or collapse, from the Oakland and Texas viewpoints -- but it's early June. And the Angels don't feel like they're at the top of their game. They're probably not even close.

"I definitely feel like there's more in there," catcher Bobby Wilson said. "I just feel like everyone's starting to feel a little more comfortable."

Kazmir, for example, has shown only flashes of his old self. Monday's performance was another step in that direction, but it wasn't a destination. His slider is showing signs of coming around, though he still calls it just a "show" pitch. His changeup was devastating at times Monday. He at least can spot his fastball to both sides of the plate, an important tool. But he realizes there is a lot more untapped ability than he's showing.

"It's coming," Kazmir said.

What he showed the Angels in getting into the seventh inning while allowing just five hits and striking out five A's was important: They are beginning to see the outlines of some starting pitching depth. It's no longer a two-man show of Jered Weaver and Ervin Santana.

"That was exciting to watch," manager Mike Scioscia said. "I think that was some of the best stuff we've seen from Kaz in a while."

That rest of the division should probably be a little worried that these guys got back to the perch and still don't feel they've reached any peaks or crossed any finish lines. Virtually every hitter in the lineup has numbers below their career norms. Most of the relief pitchers have struggled to throw strikes. The rotation is only now beginning to round into the form the Angels expected it to show.

The Angels have gone 8-1 since they lost their best hitter, Kendry Morales, to a freak injury. During this winning streak, their starting pitchers are a combined 6-0 with a 1.94 ERA. But nobody was doing any touchdown dances Monday or at any other time on this road trip.

"Yeah, I think there still is upside," Scioscia said. "We're going to need it."

And as for the weak stretch of schedule they're enjoying, cut them some slack. The Angels battled through the second-toughest schedule in the majors for the first six weeks of the season.

Catching on

It might not be a coincidence that two of Kazmir's best starts have come with Bobby Wilson behind the plate.

As good as Mike Napoli's hitting has been -- and he has been pounding the ball for a month -- it's becoming apparent that the Angels are better off with him somewhere other than behind the plate. That's why Jeff Mathis' return -- probably on Saturday in Los Angeles -- could be another important date for the Angels. The Angels could move Napoli to first base and leave him there.

Kazmir said he had excellent chemistry with Wilson these past two starts.

"I really didn't shake him off that much," Kazmir said. "Whenever he'd go to a location, he'd give a good target. It just seemed we had a good rhythm going, a good tempo."

Napoli's catcher's ERA is 4.88, the worst among any of the three primary catchers. He is the only catcher with a losing record when he starts. The Angels are 7-0 when Wilson starts, 6-5 when Mathis starts and 17-22 when Napoli starts.

Scene and heard

Oakland hitting coach Jim Skaalen wasn't happy about a pitch on the outside corner that plate umpire Eric Cooper called a strike with Kurt Suzuki batting in the fifth inning. The following half-inning, Skaalen started yelling from the A's dugout when Oakland pitcher Ben Sheets didn't get a similar call.

Cooper ejected Skaalen from the A's dugout, sparking a confrontation with Oakland manager Bob Geren. The crowds here are so sparse -- just 10,071 bought tickets Monday

-- you could actually hear the two men yelling at one another all the way up in the press box, perched just under the top deck.

Quote of the day

"The chemistry came back for our team. We never were down. We know we were battling the whole time, just looking to find a way to start to win some games. We did it."
-- Bobby Abreu

Looking ahead

Jered Weaver (5-2, 2.74 ERA) is looking like a lock to be the Angels' lone representative at the July 13 All-Star game in Anaheim. Though he went nearly a month without a win, it had more to do with a lack of run support than anything Weaver was doing wrong.

He struck out nine batters in his last start in Kansas City and hasn't allowed an earned run in 16 straight innings. He has a 1.36 ERA in his past four starts. He has owned the A's, posting a 1.17 ERA in his past four starts against them.

He'll pitch Tuesday opposite Oakland right-hander Vin Mazzaro (1-0, 6.08), who was recalled May 20 from Triple-A Sacramento. Mazzaro is coming out of the bullpen to fill in for Oakland ace Brett Anderson, who is on the disabled list with elbow tendinitis.

From MLBFanhouse.com

Angels Filling in Nicely for Injured Kendry Morales

By Jeff Fletcher 6/08/2010 9:00 AM ET

OAKLAND – When Kendry Morales' grand slam ended one of the most disheartening walk-off victories you could imagine, the Angels were just starting to emerge from their two-month malaise.

The Angels may have lost their star first baseman, perhaps for the rest of the season, but that hasn't stopped them from turning their season around.

Since the May 29 game that Morales suffered that freak injury, the Angels have won eight of nine, hitting .297, pulling themselves to a season-best four games over .500. As of this morning, the Angels are alone in first place for the first time all year.

We now resume your regularly scheduled Angels season.

"That's been our thing, trying to overcome adversity," Torii Hunter told FanHouse before the Angels won their sixth in a row, beating the A's 4-2 on Monday night. "Last year it was the passing of a teammate. This year it was the rough start and we lost one of our

best hitters for the rest of the season. We've been through this before, and we just got to grind it out."

Don't forget, these are the Angels who last year were 25-25 on June 2, having played the first two months of the season under a cloud caused by the death of Nick Adenhardt. They suffered further with injuries to Hunter, Vladimir Guerrero and Juan Rivera.

In the end, though, the Angels comfortably won the AL West and advanced to the ALCS. This year they were under .500 almost all of April and May, falling as far as six games under. They were still three games under .500 after Morales hit a game-winning grand slam that ended with him breaking his leg as he stepped on the plate. Although it's still very early in their post-Morales season, they seem to be intent on proving again that they can overcome a tough loss.

"We would love having Kendry Morales in the lineup -- who wouldn't? -- but when he went down, we knew we weren't going to be with him, so a lot of guys stepped up," Hunter said.

The big three have been Hunter, Hideki Matsui and Mike Napoli (right), a catcher who is now playing first base. In just over a week since Morales got hurt, Hunter has hit .333 with 10 RBI; Matsui has hit .400 with three homers and nine RBI; Napoli has hit .282 with two homers and 11 RBI.

"I think we were starting to go even before (Morales) got hurt," hitting coach Mickey Hatcher said. "A lot of the guys were swinging the bats good. They just kept it going. It just happened at the time when we needed it."

Whether Napoli can be the answer at first base for the rest of the season remains to be seen. There is no question that he has the raw power to be productive at a corner infield spot, but he may have trouble defensively. For now the Angels are cautiously optimistic that they can work with Napoli enough to make him the primary first baseman.

"He has good hands," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's played there before. He's showed he has the tool set to be able to handle first base. There is no reason why he couldn't."

The Angels aren't closing the door on bringing in someone from the outside, though. Scioscia said that general manager Tony Reagins "is going to do whatever it takes to make us better. Right now we are rotating guys through first base that are doing the job and we're holding our own. If there is something that will make us better, Tony will consider it."

The good news for the Angels is that there are several intriguing first base options who could be on the trade market.

Paul Konerko might be the quickest fix, because he's reportedly on the market right now. He's got pop and he's having a good season. The Angels showed interest in him in the past, nearly signing him in the winter of '05-'06. He is a free agent at the end of the year,

so the Angels would not be committed to him for the long term. He's making \$12 million this season.

Lance Berkman could also be interesting, but Berkman is said to be asking for a team to exercise his \$15 million 2011 option before he would waive his no-trade clause.

Prince Fielder is making just \$10.5 million this year. He's arbitration-eligible for 2011, and he's a Scott Boras client, so he isn't likely to sign a long-term deal without first testing the market.

If the Angels want to shop for someone in the discount bin, they might take a run at Arizona's Adam LaRoche, who is making \$4.5 million this year with a \$1.5 million buyout on a mutual option for \$7.5 million in 2011.

In the meantime, the Angels are doing fine with the hot bats they've got.

"We're playing great ball right now," Hunter said. "I know everyone wants us to get a first baseman. That would be fine and dandy. If we don't, I definitely feel we can hold it down."

From the USAToday.com

American League Team Notes

BALTIMORE ORIOLES

INSIDE PITCH

The Orioles' pick was already made by the time they were on the clock Monday night.

With the Nationals' selection of Nevada junior college star Bryce Harper and the Pirates' pick of Texas high school star Jameson Taillon, the Orioles were handed Florida high school shortstop Manny Machado.

The first round was broken into three segments: Harper, the unquestioned No. 1; Taillon and Machado, the rest of the top three; and then everybody else.

Machado is a 6-foot-2, 190-pounder who turns 18 on July 6. He's been most often compared to Alex Rodriguez by scouts and analysts. But Machado's size has raised questions about whether he can play shortstop long term, much like a former Oriole, Hall of Famer Cal Ripken.

As a senior, Machado batted .639 with 12 homers and 68 RBI for Brito Private High School in Miami.

The Orioles didn't have another pick until the 85th overall selection. They lost their second-round pick as compensation for signing free agent reliever Michael Gonzalez.

It's the second straight year the Orioles sought to solve their longstanding hole at shortstop. Last year, they selected Florida high school shortstop Mychal Givens in the second round.

NOTES, QUOTES

—2B Brian Roberts sat out another extended spring training game Monday and is expected to see a back specialist Tuesday, MASNsports.com reported. Roberts receives treatment every morning and likely will see a specialist in St. Petersburg, Fla. Roberts, out since April 9 with a herniated disk, is eligible to come off the 60-day disabled list Wednesday.

—RHP David Hernandez pitched in back-to-back games Saturday and Sunday for the first time in his career. In four relief appearances spanning 6 1/3 innings entering Monday's off day, Hernandez has allowed just three hits and one earned run. He's averaging a strikeout an inning, as well.

—INF Ty Wigginton told The Baltimore Sun he's not worried about trade rumors and would prefer to spend the 2010 season in Baltimore. Originally slated for a reserve role, Wigginton has become the Orioles' power source this season, playing regularly and hitting in the middle of the lineup. He would undoubtedly command some interest at the July 31 trade deadline.

—RHP Alfredo Simon will return to the closer's role upon his return from the disabled list, manager Juan Samuel said. Simon, out since May 23 with a hamstring strain, is eligible to return to the active roster Wednesday. Simon and OF Felix Pie threw at extended spring training Monday, MASNsports.com reported.

—3B Miguel Tejada made his first start of the season as designated hitter Sunday. It's a role he could see more of now, with the Orioles out of contention and INF Scott Moore earning more playing time. Tejada could face a decrease in playing time if the club recalls prized prospect Josh Bell in the near future.

BY THE NUMBERS: 20 — Consecutive at-bats without a hit for C Matt Wieters until a ninth-inning single June 5.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "While I am disappointed at the outcome, I feel it was a privilege to wear the Orioles uniform each day and I thank all the fans for their tremendous support. I hope the team will soon return to the winning tradition they enjoyed for so many years."
— Dave Trembley's team-issued statement after being fired on June 4.

BOSTON RED SOX

INSIDE PITCH

Victor Martinez was brokenhearted last July when the Indians, the team that signed him as a 17-year-old out of Venezuela in 1996 and brought him to the majors in 2002, traded him to the Red Sox.

Now, Martinez is grateful.

Upon returning to Cleveland for the first time Monday, Martinez thanked Indians management for sparing him from being part of a rebuilding phase and shipping him to a perennial playoff contender. The Indians fell one victory short of reaching the World Series in 2007. Three years later, few players remain from that team, and the Indians are 14 games below .500.

"You go back to '07 and that team that we got, and just two or three years later, there's pretty much nobody from that team anymore," said Martinez, who joins CC Sabathia (Yankees) and Cliff Lee (Mariners via Phillies) as stars shipped out of Cleveland. "It's pretty tough to believe. But it is what it is."

Martinez went 2-for-4 with an RBI in his return to Cleveland. He also threw out a runner trying to steal second base. But Martinez said he didn't draw any extra motivation from facing the Indians and insisted he harbors no ill feelings toward the team.

"It was just more like I was kind of anxious to see the field and see the guys that I played with, but I don't have anything against (the Indians)," Martinez said. "It's all good memories here."

In fact, while the Red Sox are in town, Martinez is staying with Bob and Patty Bixler of Warren, Ohio, his host family when he played at short-season Mahoning Valley in 1999.

"They're like my mom and dad," he said. "They're my family."

RED SOX 4, INDIANS 1: Daisuke Matsuzaka threw eight shutout innings and Marco Scutaro tied a career high with three doubles to lift the Red Sox to a victory in the series opener at Progressive Field.

Victor Martinez, traded by the Indians to the Red Sox last July 31, also added two hits and one RBI in his first game back in Cleveland since the deal.

Matsuzaka threw 112 pitches, 70 strikes, and continued to impress the Red Sox with his command. It marked his 150th career victory between Japan's Nippon Professional Baseball League and the majors. Josh Reddick went 1-for-4 and recorded his first career stolen base. The Red Sox have won 15 of their last 20 games and are 18-5 against the Indians since 2007.

NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Jonathan Papelbon was placed on the bereavement/family medical emergency list because of an undisclosed family medical issue, the Red Sox announced Monday. Manager Terry Francona declined to offer additional information and asked for people to respect Papelbon's privacy. "When you get placed on that (list), it's serious," Francona said. "He has our full support." Papelbon, who tossed a scoreless ninth inning Sunday in Baltimore and left with the rest of the team, must remain inactive for at least three days before he can rejoin the Red Sox. He missed two games in April after his wife gave birth to their second child. Francona didn't appoint an interim closer, but setup man Daniel Bard is the most likely choice.

—OF Jacoby Ellsbury, who continues to be hampered by a still-healing hairline fracture of four ribs, will get another opinion this week from doctors at the Kerlin-Jobe Clinic in Anaheim, Calif. The second opinion, suggested by agent Scott Boras, is primarily to alleviate some of Ellsbury's lingering concerns about the injury, which has caused him to miss 50 of the last 53 games. Manager Terry Francona said the Red Sox are in agreement that it's a good idea to have him checked again. "I think we all know it hurts, but if we can eliminate everything, then he can maybe progress quicker knowing he's not hurting himself," Francona said. "When a guy feels something and you've done a ton of tests and you haven't found anything, do more. I'm OK with that because the whole idea is to get a good player on the field and healthy where he can be productive. That's what we're all trying to do."

—SS Marco Scutaro has been coping with a pinched nerve in his neck that has occasionally caused numbness in the upper part of his left arm. It hasn't affected his hitting, though. After going 3-for-4 with two runs, three doubles and a walk in Monday night's 4-1 victory over the Indians, Scutaro is 21-for-51 (.412) with 10 runs, seven doubles, two home runs and 10 RBI in his last 11 games. The three doubles tied a career high set June 5, 2009, when he was with the Blue Jays. "He wasn't an everyday player for a long time. He wants to be an everyday player," manager Terry Francona said of Scutaro, who came up through the Indians' farm system but didn't reach the majors until 2002 with the Mets. "And he's working hard to be productive."

—RHP Daisuke Matsuzaka is figuring out that good things happen when he throws strikes. On May 27 against Kansas City, Matsuzaka walked eight batters, including five in one inning. But 70 percent of his pitches over his last two starts have been strikes. That includes Monday night's gem, in which he threw 70 of 112 pitches for strikes and blanked the Indians for eight innings. "He was able to use his fastball, get ahead, and then expand the zone a little more," C Victor Martinez said. "With the stuff that he's got, he can be pretty tough."

—RHP Manny Delcarmen left Sunday's game in the seventh inning with lower back discomfort. He said he still felt "a little stiff" Monday and continued to receive treatment. The Red Sox haven't set a timetable for when he'll be available to pitch.

BY THE NUMBERS: .074 — Batting average for left-handed hitters against flame-throwing righty Daniel Bard ending last weekend, as he's retired 50 of 54 left-handed hitters.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We have every stat known to man, so why not have instant replay to get it all right? We're going to replay it for the next two months anyway, so you might as well replay it over two minutes and make sure you get it right." — Mike Cameron on expanding instant replay in Major League Baseball.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

INSIDE PITCH

Last week, it was manager Ozzie Guillen stating the obvious about his team and the likelihood that it could be headed for a breakup with the poor play displayed on the South Side this season.

"That's Kenny's (call). That's (assistant general manager) Rick Hahn's view," Guillen said, referencing general manager Kenny Williams. "Whatever they want to do — do they want to trade, do they want to add, who is available? So many things are involved in that. I'm not that smart, I don't have that type of power. I've been in baseball for a little while, and I told the guys, 'Listen, if we continue to play like that, and the chairman (Jerry Reinsdorf) and front office people don't think we can do it, they're going to make moves.' That's not just the White Sox, that's everyone."

Entering this week, the players are now feeling that.

The White Sox players know that it would take a long winning streak to put to rest questions of whether changes are coming. Even with Guillen committed to keeping them, they know it is not his place of business to make that final decision.

"I wouldn't be (shocked)," pitcher Mark Buehrle said of potential moves. "You've got to look at how we're playing and guys' contracts are up. Guys are making a lot of money and not performing. That's Ken Williams' job, and he's got to (make changes) if he feels like we're going to be out of it. If it's best to get rid of a bunch of guys, then he's got to do it. But I don't know when that time will be, and you've got to go out there and keep trying to win games."

While the players are well aware that changes could be coming, they definitely aren't dwelling on those possible moves.

"It's one of those things that if it happens, it happens," Buehrle said. "You can't go up there and play thinking, 'I'm going to get traded or there's a chance that I'm going to get traded,' or whatever. If you're playing like that, you're going to be playing tight. I don't think anybody's worried about it. And if that day comes, you pack your bag and go and try to help that team win."

NOTES, QUOTES

—Manager Ozzie Guillen said he was looking forward to seeing Detroit's Armando Galarraga, a fellow Venezuelan, in the right-hander's first start since losing his perfect game bid after umpire Jim Joyce's controversial safe call at first. "I might not talk to him because that day he's pitching, but I might talk to him after the game," Guillen said. "He's throwing the ball better. Last year he struggled. There's going to be a lot of attention coming after that (near-perfect) game. We are going to approach (him) the same way we approached him in the past. We had pretty good success against him in the past."

—OF Juan Pierre had an unforgettable 2006 season on the North Side of town, playing for the Cubs. But with the cross-town rivalry between the White Sox and Cubs opening up for the first of two series this weekend, Pierre knows that a trip back to Wrigley Field will at least be memorable — especially because he'll be wearing enemy colors. "To be honest, the way the season is going, I'm just taking each game one at a time," he said. "I know they booed me when I came back with the Dodgers (the last few years), so I guess they'll boo me louder."

—1B Paul Konerko has called this season a "head scratcher," and with good reason. Forget the fact that the Sox have severely underachieved, they have also done so against poor competition. The Sox have played poorly against other sub-.500 teams. They are 17-18 against teams with records of .500 or better and 7-13 against clubs with losing marks.

—OF Alex Rios has been the best all-around offensive force the Sox have had all season, and he has cemented himself as the No. 3 hitter in the lineup. More important, he has obviously turned the page on the bad second-half showing he had with the Sox when they acquired him off waivers from the Blue Jays — a move that is looking better now. Entering the Tigers series, Rios has 12 home runs and 17 stolen bases while hitting .318. He also gives the Sox their first legit center fielder since they traded Aaron Rowand away after the 2005 season.

—3B Joe Crede has been out of baseball since back problems again hampered him in the 2009 season with the Twins. GM Ken Williams was asked recently if the former Sox third baseman would ever get a call, especially with Mark Teahen on the shelf for at least six weeks with a fractured right middle finger. His reply came without hesitation — a big "no."

BY THE NUMBERS: 13-17 — The White Sox's home record through June 6.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "There have been a lot of rock bottoms this year. I'm like you — kind of out of answers. If there are any, come and let us know." — 1B Paul Konerko, on all that has gone wrong for the Sox so far this season.

CLEVELAND INDIANS

INSIDE PITCH

Fausto Carmona is pitching better and winning less for the Indians, who opened a 10-game homestand Monday with a 4-1 loss to Boston. Carmona started and took the loss even though he only gave up two earned runs in six innings.

Over his last four starts, Carmona is 0-4 but has a respectable 3.81 ERA in those starts. Carmona started the season with a record of 4-1. Since then his ERA has gotten better, but his won-lost record has not.

The problem for Carmona and the problem for the Indians as a whole is that their offense remains one of the worst in the major leagues. The Indians came into Monday's game 12th in the American League in runs scored.

They scored only one run in Monday's game, and that came in the ninth inning when they were trailing 4-0. In Carmona's last four starts, each of them losses, the Indians have scored a total of just seven runs.

Unfortunately for Carmona and the other Indians pitchers, the club's offensive woes probably aren't going to go away, mostly because of the youth and inexperience of many of their starters.

Three of the Indians' eight position starters — shortstop Jason Donald, catcher Lou Marson and second baseman Luis Valbuena — are in their first full season in the major leagues as regulars. Those three players are hitting .235, .195 and .172, respectively.

RED SOX 4, INDIANS 1: OF Austin Kearns' solo home run in the ninth inning prevented the Indians from being shut out. RHP Fausto Carmona gave up two earned runs in six innings but still took the loss, dropping his record to 4-5.

NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Fausto Carmona took the loss Monday in a 4-1 loss to the Red Sox. In his last four starts Carmona is 0-4 despite a 3.81 ERA in those starts. The Indians have scored a total of just seven runs in those four starts.

—OF Austin Kearns continues to be one of the Indians' most consistent hitters. His ninth-inning home run Monday prevented the Indians from getting shut out in a 4-1 loss to Boston. In his last 12 games Kearns is hitting .354, raising his overall average to .313.

—1B/OF Matt LaPorta was optioned to Class AAA Columbus on Monday in order to make room on the roster for INF Andy Marte, who was activated off the disabled list. LaPorta was supposed to be the Indians' everyday first baseman this year, but Indians officials instead decided to sign free agent 34-year-old 1B Russell Branyan, who has been getting the bulk of the playing time at first base. LaPorta also lost playing time in left field to OF Austin Kearns. Manager Manny Acta said there aren't enough at-bats available for LaPorta to make it worth keeping him on the major league roster. LaPorta appeared in 35 games and hit .218 with one home run and seven RBI.

—INF Andy Marte was activated off the disabled list. Marte will resume his role as the Indians' backup corner infielder. He had been on the DL since May 15 because of a non-baseball medical issue.

—RHP Frank Herrmann, signed by the Indians as an undrafted free agent out of Harvard in 2005, has made two appearances since his recall from Class AAA Columbus. He has pitched 2 2/3 scoreless innings, allowing one hit with two strikeouts and no walks.

—INF Mark Grudzielanek, who came out of Sunday's game because of a tight hamstring, didn't play Monday. He was listed as day-to-day.

BY THE NUMBERS: 17 — Number of consecutive starts RHP Justin Masterson went without winning a game, before snapping the streak June 4 with a victory over the White Sox. Masterson was 0-11 during his 17-start winless streak.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "You never want to have to make that call in that situation, ever in your lifetime." — 1B Russell Branyan, on umpire Jim Joyce's blown call that cost Detroit RHP Armando Galarraga a perfect game.

DETROIT TIGERS

INSIDE PITCH

The Tigers were without a first-round pick — having given it up for signing closer Jose Valverde — so they rolled the dice on a high school infielder with power and then took a college closer with good bloodlines with their second selection in the compensation round.

They chose 44th as compensation for losing setup man Brandon Lyon to Houston and drafted third baseman Nick Castellanos of Archbishop McCarthy High in Southwest Ranches, Fla. He was one of the more highly touted high school power bats in the country.

Castellanos is committed to Miami, and the Tigers will have to shell out to sign him. But the organization's history of doing just that suggests they will pay what it takes to get the youngster in the organization.

David Chadd, the Tigers' draft and scouting boss, described himself as "ecstatic" that Castellano was untaken, "maybe the most I've been with any selection I've had. If I told you I think I would shock you, where I had him on our board."

With the 48th pick in the draft, compensation for the Los Angeles Angels' signing of closer Fernando Rodney, the Tigers went for Chance Ruffin, closer for the University of Texas and son of former big-league pitcher Bruce Ruffin.

Chance Ruffin, a junior who will have to be signed away from his senior season, jumped his fastball to 90-93 mph after switching full time to the bullpen this season. He has a solid slider, a nice, late-breaking curve and a "show-me" changeup. His father was a second-round draft choice out of Texas in 1985.

Ruffin has "three power pitches and the ability to locate all his pitches," Chadd said. "He's an exciting guy to watch. Think he definitely could start at a higher level. Whether he ends up as a setup type or closer, that remains to be seen."

The selection of Ruffin is a little bit against the Tigers' recent profile of taking tall, lean right-handed power pitchers at the top of the draft, but because he's a reliever it might not matter the he's only 6-foot-1.

NOTES, QUOTES

—SS Danny Worth will join the Tigers on Tuesday in Chicago and begin sharing time on the field with INF Ramon Santiago. Results will dictate who sees the most action. "Every player dictates their at-bats by how they play," manager Jim Leyland said. Worth hit .333 in eight games as a second baseman bridging the time between 2B Scott Sizemore being sent back to the minors and the activation of 2B Carlos Guillen from the disabled list.

—SS Adam Everett, 33, was designated for assignment to make room for Danny Worth. Everett was batting .185 in 81 at-bats. "He's going to be good for a long time," Everett said of Worth. "He has a great demeanor and did a lot in the offseason, from what I understand, to change his swing around. He looks great. I wish him nothing but the best. Sometimes you need a break. This is his break."

—1B Miguel Cabrera might be a longshot, but he has a shot at becoming the first Triple Crown winner since Carl Yastrzemski of Boston in 1967. Cabrera has nine home runs in his last 14 games to close in on league leader Jose Bautista of Toronto. He leads the majors with 52 RBI and takes a .351 average, also close to the league lead, into Tuesday's game at Chicago.

—RHP Armando Galarraga makes his first start Tuesday since hurling his famous near-perfect game against Cleveland last week. Galarraga retired the first 26 batters in that game before first base umpire admitted he blew the call on the 27th, signaling SS Jason Donald safe at first when replays showed him clearly to be out. Galarraga will be making his fourth start since being recalled from the minors to rejoin the rotation. His slider and control have been excellent in two of the first three.

—OF Brennan Boesch doubled Sunday in his most recent game, giving him 21 extra-base hits in his first 35 major-league games. Boesch continues to advance in plate discipline, too, and has drawn nine walks. Recently he has adjusted to pitchers not throwing him first-pitch strikes and is laying off until he sees something in the strike zone.

—LHP Bobby Seay, trying to avoid rotator cuff surgery, has been cleared to begin throwing from 45 feet while he rehabs in Lakeland, Fla. "Bobby will throw from 45 feet

again this week in four sessions," Tigers head trainer Kevin Rand said. "It's the first step back. Hopefully, he will be able to build up his arm strength and we can get him back." Seay, 31, was 6-3 with a 2.45 ERA in 67 games in 2009. He is on the 60-day disabled list.

—OF Clete Thomas, who hit .253 in 142 games over the previous two seasons, is finished for this year after undergoing microfracture left knee surgery Friday. Thomas reportedly damaged his knee sliding into a base earlier in the season. He has been at Class AAA Toledo all year. Another prospect, RHP Cody Satterwhite, the team's No. 2 draft choice out of Mississippi in 2008, had recent shoulder surgery and will miss the rest of the season.

BY THE NUMBERS: 22 — Consecutive scoreless appearances by closer RHP Jose Valverde through Sunday, equaling the known best by a Detroit reliever. RHP Todd Jones posted 22 straight scoreless games in 2000. It's the best string since at least 1952, when extensive records began being kept, but is probably a club record since relievers were used differently before then.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I'm going to try him a little more for awhile to get a little more thunder at the bottom of the order. Justin (Verlander) and him had a pretty good rapport (Saturday). He called a good game and swung the bat pretty well... But I will not forget about Gerald Laird." — Manager Jim Leyland, on giving rookie C Alex Avila more playing time.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

INSIDE PITCH

The Royals selected Cal State Fullerton shortstop Christian Colon with the fourth overall pick in the draft Monday.

Colon, 21, hit .352 with 16 home runs, 16 doubles, 64 RBI and 12 stolen bases in 60 games as a junior for the Titans. He had a .439 on-base percentage with a .621 slugging percentage.

Colon, who was born in Cayey, Puerto Rico, played for Team USA's Collegiate National Team in 2009. He led Team USA with 34 hits, five home runs, 37 RBI and 24 stolen bases. He was named the 2009 Summer League Player of the Year by Baseball America and became the first player in the history of the Collegiate National Team to earn the title of captain.

In his college career, he walked 68 times and struck out 66 times. He struck out just once every 11.3 at-bats with Cal State Fullerton. He struck out 13 times in 193 at-bats with Team USA.

He played with three different high schools and was a 10th-round pick in 2007 by the Padres but did not sign.

NOTES, QUOTES

—C Jason Kendall had logged three consecutive multi-hit games after going 2-for-5 Sunday. The last time he had three straight multi-hit games was 2009 with the Brewers. Kendall's recent surge has hiked his average to .299.

—RHP Brian Bannister, who beat the Tigers 7-2 on Sunday afternoon, has a 20-8 record in 37 career day games, 36 of them starts. Under the lights, he is 16-33.

—RHP Zack Greinke, who starts Tuesday at Minnesota, is averaging 7.2 strikeouts per nine innings, down from 9.5 in 2009. His high this season is eight (twice). In winning the American League Cy Young Award last season, he recorded five games with 10 or more.

—RF David DeJesus went 2-for-4 Sunday to extend his hitting streak to seven games. He is hitting .462, 12-for-26, with six RBIs. He has hit safely in 17 of his past 18 games, going 30-for-75, to raise his overall average to .307.

—OF Alex Gordon is hitting .372, which leads the Pacific Coast League. Gordon has 15 multi-hit games in 32 games with Omaha, the Royals' Class AAA affiliate. He is hitting .411 with three home runs and 10 RBIs in his past 14 games.

BY THE NUMBERS: 2.48, 0-4 — RHP Zack Greinke's ERA and his record in six road starts this season.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I think that guy has made great strides. When I first saw him a couple of years ago, if he got into trouble it was harder was better. I think (catcher Jason) Kendall and (Bob) McClure, the pitching coach, have done a great job with him. Now he's backing off, using the change up, using other pitches. I think they've done a spectacular job with him. He's always been a talented guy, but (Saturday, June 5) he looked more like a pitcher than a good arm and good stuff." — Tigers manager Jim Leyland, on Royals RHP Luke Hochevar, who allowed one run in seven innings but took the loss against Detroit.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS

INSIDE PITCH

The Angels made five of the first 40 picks on the first day of this year's draft Monday, selecting five high school players.

"Having five in the first 40 is really unique for an organization that wins all the time," scouting director Eddie Bane said before the draft. "We're looking forward to it."

"It's a nice feeling. We've been on the other end of that."

The bonanza of early picks is part of a two-year rejuvenation of the Angels' farm system that started in 2009. After years of sacrificing their first-round draft pick in order to sign free agents like Bartolo Colon, Vladimir Guerrero, Gary Matthews Jr., Brian Fuentes and Torii Hunter, the Angels have been on the other end of free agent compensation the last two years.

The departures of free agents Francisco Rodriguez, Jon Garland and Garret Anderson two years ago, then John Lackey and Chone Figgins last winter, have given Bane a passel of extra picks to use.

In 2009, Bane used the Angels' two first-round picks on outfielders Randal Grichuk and Mike Trout, then the supplemental picks on pitchers Tyler Skaggs, Garrett Richards and Tyler Kehrner. All five are at Class A Cedar Rapids, with Trout already having emerged as one of the most dynamic young prospects in the low minors.

This year, Bane used the three first-round picks on third baseman Kaleb Stewart (also a pitching prospect), pitcher Cam Bedrosian (son of former big-leaguer Steve Bedrosian) and outfielder Chevy Clarke. All three were high school stars in Georgia. With the supplemental picks, the Angels chose shortstop Tyler Lindsey of Arizona and outfielder Ryan Bolden of Mississippi.

ANGELS 4, A's 2: The Angels won their season-high sixth consecutive game (and seventh in the first eight games of this 14-game road trip) and moved into sole possession of first place for the first time this season.

LHP Scott Kazmir took a shutout into the seventh inning before giving up a solo home run to Jake Fox. By then, the Angels had given him a comfortable lead with OF Bobby Abreu's two-run home run in the first inning and two more runs in the fifth inning. The Angels have won nine of their last 10 games in Oakland.

NOTES, QUOTES

—LHP Scott Kazmir's streak of 17 $\frac{1}{3}$ scoreless innings against the A's ended with Jake Fox's solo home run in the seventh inning Monday. Kazmir is 9-3 with a 2.85 ERA (28 ER, 88 $\frac{1}{3}$ IP) in his career against the Athletics.

—RHP Jered Weaver will take a streak of 16 innings without allowing an earned run into Tuesday's start against the A's. Weaver has allowed just three earned runs in 23 innings over his last four starts against the A's.

—2B Howie Kendrick drove in a run with an infield single in Monday's win and has 37 RBI this season, two short of the team lead shared by OF Torii Hunter and injured 1B Kendry Morales. Kendrick has reached base safely in 11 of his last 13 games and driven in 14 runs in the past nine. Kendrick leads the Angels with a .349 average (22-for-63) with runners in scoring position.

—C Jeff Mathis started his fourth game (third at catcher) for Class AAA Salt Lake on Monday and is scheduled to continue his minor league injury-rehabilitation assignment through Friday. Mathis is 3-for-16 (.188) in the four games.

—C Bobby Wilson went 2-for-3 with a double and a run scored Monday in his seventh start this season. The Angels are 7-0 in games Wilson has started behind the plate. Wilson has been the catcher in LHP Scott Kazmir's last two starts, and Kazmir has allowed just two runs in 12 innings in those starts, winning both.

BY THE NUMBERS: 58 — Runs scored by the Angels in the first eight games following 1B Kendry Morales' broken ankle. Morales led the team in average (.290), home runs (11) and RBI (39) at the time of his injury, but the Angels were averaging only 4.35 runs per game.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I wish we could figure out our offense." — Angels bench coach Ron Roenicke, on the way the team's offense has improved since the loss of its most dangerous hitter, 1B Kendry Morales.

MINNESOTA TWINS

INSIDE PITCH

The Twins took Ohio State junior Alex Wimmers with the 21st overall pick in the draft Monday night. The 6-foot-2, 195-pound right-hander is a prototypical Twins pitcher — throws strikes, not overpowering, good breaking ball, throws a changeup.

"He was the guy," scouting director Deron Johnson said. "We had backup plans, but we were fortunate."

Wimmers went 9-0 with a 1.60 earned-run average and pitched the Buckeyes' first nine-inning no-hitter last season. The Twins consider him signable and would like to see him pitch this summer with their own coaches.

In terms of being ready for the majors, Wimmers, 21, has been compared to Cincinnati Reds phenom Mike Leake, who made the jump straight from Arizona State to the majors this spring. He has a fastball in the 90-mph range, but his changeup and breaking ball are considered above average.

"It's tough to go straight to the major leagues," Johnson said. "He's got a lot of guys to jump over just in our organization alone. He's got his work ahead of him."

That changeup is what has some thinking he's nearly major league ready. Twins vice president of personnel Mike Radcliff said the changeup "very well could be top of the scale. It could be plus right now."

Wimmers was thrilled to be selected by the Twins because of the team's track record with pitchers.

"They picked the perfect guy," he said. "Don't walk batters and trust your stuff. Command your stuff. I feel I fit the organization very well."

NOTES, QUOTES

—INF Nick Punto went 3-for-4 in Sunday's loss to Oakland, a game in which the Twins had only one completely healthy player on the bench and the starting lineup did not include 1B Justin Morneau, SS J.J. Hardy or 2B Orlando Hudson. "That's for the manager to worry about. We've just got to go out there and play," Punto said after the team wrapped up a 3-4 road trip. "You want to come out of that road trip 4-3, but going home 3-4 is not the end of the world."

—LF Delmon Young might have lost almost 30 pounds this offseason and had scar tissue removed from his ankle — two things that have made the outfielder more mobile this season — but Young said he still doesn't have the speed he did in the minors or in his rookie year with Tampa Bay. "Second base seems like it's in left center when I get to first sometimes," he said. Where did it seem last year? "I never really got on base until September," he said, "so I couldn't tell you."

—RHP Alex Burnett, in his first nine appearances as a rookie reliever this season, allowed seven earned runs in 13 2/3 innings. In his last 10 outings, a span of 13 2/3 innings, he has not allowed a run, giving up just eight hits while striking out eight and walking one. In 27 1/3 innings this season he has a 2.30 ERA.

—RHP Jesse Crain gave up two runs that tied the game during an eventual Twins win Saturday night in Oakland. For Crain, his three hits and two runs allowed in two-thirds of an inning came after a stretch of eight straight scoreless appearances. In 24 2/3 innings this season, Crain has a 5.47 ERA.

—C Joe Mauer, who last year led the American League in batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage, has seen his batting average fall from .360 on May 18 to .311. During that span of 19 games, Mauer has batted just .236 with a .313 OBP. He has hit just two homers this season after hitting a career-high 28 in 2009.

—IB Justin Morneau has taken the lead at first base in 2010 All-Star Game voting, mlb.com reported Monday. He has 973,563 votes, leading New York's Mark Teixeira by more than 40,000. Morneau leads the majors in hitting (.370), on-base percentage (.483) and slugging percentage (.688).

BY THE NUMBERS: 4-for-58 — Combined results for Minnesota's No. 1 and 2 hitters during the team's seven-game road trip to Seattle and Oakland from May 31 through June 6, good for a .069 average.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "He said he wanted to hit, and then I knew I had to run for him. I didn't want to see a grown man go to the bathroom in his pants on the field. It wasn't a pretty sight. It wasn't even a pretty thought." — Twins manager Ron Gardenhire, on using flu-stricken Justin Morneau to pinch-hit Saturday night in Oakland. Morneau was intentionally walked and left for pinch runner J.J. Hardy, who later scored the winning run.

NEW YORK YANKEES

INSIDE PITCH

The Yankees bullpen has had its share of ups and downs this season, but with some of the club's relievers starting to show some consistency, manager Joe Girardi has great hope for the unit.

New York's relief corps has posted a 4.19 ERA in 55 games, which ranked sixth in the American League through the weekend. Several of the Yankees' relievers struggled through May — Chan Ho Park, Joba Chamberlain and David Robertson each posted ERAs of 5.73 or higher — but the group seems to have found its groove in June.

Park, Robertson, Mariano Rivera, Damaso Marte and Sergio Mitre have combined to throw 9 1/3 scoreless innings over eight appearances this month, while Chamberlain has a 2.25 ERA in four June outings.

"The relievers are not immune to having their bad days," Girardi said. "We had a few. Some guys had a few in a row. They seem to bounce back. They're back on track. You'd love to say we could keep them there the whole year. Maybe we'll be fortunate."

The eighth-inning bridge to Rivera has been solid for the most part, as the Yankees are 30-2 this season when leading after seven innings. Park and Mitre have helped make up for the absence of Alfredo Aceves, who is on the disabled list indefinitely with a disk problem in his back.

A year ago, the Yankees made wholesale changes to their bullpen, ditching Jose Veras and Edwar Ramirez to give Robertson and Phil Hughes bigger roles. This year's group has more experience, as most of the relievers played a part in the team's championship run last fall, though the possibility for change always exists.

"Bullpens do emerge, and I think they find a feel in how they work together," Girardi said. "Not only for them, but for us, too. Hopefully we're on our way."

NOTES, QUOTES

—1B Mark Teixeira, despite a 1-for-14 weekend that included a five-strikeout game Saturday, said he felt good swinging the bat Sunday during his 0-for-4 day. Even as his

average has dropped to .211, Teixeira doesn't think there are many major adjustments he needs to make before he takes the field Tuesday in Baltimore.

"If there's a mechanical flaw, you fix it. If there's a pitch selection flaw, you fix it," Teixeira said. "When it's just a matter of being a little out front or that they caught it, you really don't change much."

—The Yankees will send RHP Phil Hughes, LHP CC Sabathia and RHP A.J. Burnett to the mound this week against the Orioles at Camden Yards, three pitchers with a combined 26-5 record in their careers against Baltimore. Sabathia and Burnett have combined to lose only once in 15 career starts at Camden Yards, going 11-1 with a 3.34 ERA.

—RF Nick Swisher has reached base safely in 27 of his 29 road games this season, hitting safely in 21 of those games. Swisher is batting .303 on the road this year with five home runs and 18 RBI.

—In six starts this month, the Yankees rotation has combined for a 2.60 ERA, allowing 16 runs in 55 1/3 innings. Opponents are hitting only .180 (35-for-194) against New York's five starters in June.

—RHP Phil Hughes starts Tuesday in Baltimore, taking on the Orioles for the third time this season. Hughes is 1-0 with a 1.42 ERA in his first two starts, holding Baltimore to one run in seven innings in his last start. Hughes has received an average of 8.20 runs scored per nine innings this season, the highest mark among all AL pitchers.

BY THE NUMBERS: 17 — Games in 2B Robinson Cano's hitting streak that ended June 4, leaving him one short of his career-high.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It was a tough first month for him, but I give him credit; he kept fighting. He did what we asked him to do. For that, I really applaud him, because he never stopped trying and never got so down that he didn't do his work and go about his business. It's the mark of a true professional." — Manager Joe Girardi, on RHP Javier Vazquez.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS

INSIDE PITCH

The A's picked No. 10 overall on Monday, the team's highest pick since 1999, when the A's used the ninth selection for Barry Zito.

This time, the A's used their pick for Texas-Arlington center fielder Michael Choice, a 20-year-old who was not drafted out of high school but who told reporters on a conference call that he expects to be in the big leagues in two years.

That might be a little optimistic, but there's little doubt that Choice represents a commodity the A's have had little of since Jermaine Dye played for the team: a right-handed impact hitter in the outfield.

Michael Taylor was supposed to be that; the A's traded Brett Wallace (acquired in the Matt Holliday trade with St. Louis last summer) to Toronto to get Taylor from Philadelphia in the Roy Halladay/Cliff Lee deal this winter. But Taylor is 24, and his progress this year at Class AAA Sacramento was delayed by a calf injury. He's hitting .231 with two homers.

Taylor has been compared to Dye for his size and speed, and there's still time for the former Stanford player to fulfill his potential. And the A's wouldn't mind having two strong right-handed hitters in the outfield.

The team plans to leave Choice in center for now while acknowledging that he could wind up playing the corners instead. He hit 16 homers this year, and for the on-base-loving A's, he walked 76 times and had a .568 on-base percentage.

ANGELS 4, A'S 2: The A's fell out of first place in the AL West near the end of last week; then the Angels passed the A's and went into second place. On Monday at the Coliseum, a victory over the A's put the Angels into first place.

The A's got a solo homer from Jake Fox and an RBI double by Ryan Sweeney, who had three hits. Rajai Davis, the center fielder while Coco Crisp is on the DL, came out of the game in the sixth, an inning after pulling up holding his left hamstring on a triple to right.

NOTES, QUOTES

—DH Eric Chavez took early batting practice on Monday and said afterward that everything went well. Chavez is on the DL with two bulging disks in his neck, but nearly two weeks of rest and traction therapy eliminated the discomfort, and he hopes to go on a rehab assignment next week.

—OF Coco Crisp will play in an intrasquad game on Monday at extending spring training in Phoenix, according to manager Bob Geren. Crisp would then be scheduled for a rehab assignment if all goes well. Crisp has played in two games this season, first on the DL with a fractured pinkie and now with a rib cage strain.

—RHP Vin Mazzaro will make a scheduled start on Tuesday night in place of injured left-hander Brett Anderson (elbow tendinitis) after having made three appearances in long relief in the last 2 1/2 weeks. It will be his second start of the season. The second-year pitcher also got the call May 4 against Texas. He allowed two hits, four walks and four runs in three innings in that game.

—OF Rajai Davis pulled up after grabbing his left hamstring at third base on a fifth-inning triple, then came out of the game after the sixth inning. The A's announced the injury as hamstring tightness.

—RHP Ben Sheets allowed four runs, three earned, in six innings Monday, and the A's did not score while he was in the game. Sheets is winless since May 8, a span of six starts in which his only decision was a loss at Boston last week.

BY THE NUMBERS: 11-4 — Oakland's record in one-run games through Sunday, the best mark in the majors.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It would've taken a home run to beat us. Fortunately, so far in my career, I haven't given up many of them. I'd like to have my shot in that situation, but it's not my decision, and after that, I didn't do a very good job." — A's reliever Brad Ziegler, after being asked to walk pinch hitter Justin Morneau intentionally with the bases empty and one out. Ziegler then also walked Nick Punto, and with two outs, Ziegler gave up a game-tying hit to Matt Tolbert.

SEATTLE MARINERS

INSIDE PITCH

There were changes for the Mariners all over the field Monday.

First-base coach Lee Tinsley and third-base coach Mike Brumley switched places.

In the lineup, Chone Figgins was moved to the No. 9 spot in the batting order after batting second all year.

Milton Bradley, who had hit nowhere other than fourth, fifth or sixth, was moved into the No. 2 spot, which had belonged to Figgins.

Casey Kotchman was told he was going to lose playing time to Mike Carp, who was called up with Mike Sweeney going on the disabled list. Carp was told by manager Don Wakamatsu he'd be getting regular playing time and was in the lineup batting fifth.

The changes came in the wake of a three-game sweep at the hands of the Angels in Seattle. Much of the problem in the sweep was the lack of performance by the bullpen, but much of the problem in the first third of the season has been the Mariners' inability to score consistently.

MARINERS 4, RANGERS 2: LHP Cliff Lee shut out the Rangers for eight innings, then struggled through the ninth to notch the complete game and end a three-game losing streak.

Lee (4-2) has thrown 17 innings against the Rangers this year and has allowed just Monday's two ninth-inning runs. Overall, Lee has thrown eight or more innings five times in his last nine starts while lowering his ERA to 2.77.

LF Michael Saunders gave Lee all the offense he needed with a three-run homer in the second inning off RHP Scott Feldman, and C Rob Johnson added an RBI single an inning later.

The game featured a new look for the Mariners, with 2B Chone Figgins batting ninth, DH Milton Bradley hitting second and 1B Mike Carp batting fifth. Figgins and Bradley hadn't hit in those spots before, and Carp was in his first big-league game of the season after starting with Class AAA Tacoma.

NOTES, QUOTES

—DH/1B Mike Sweeney went on the disabled list before Monday's game against the Rangers. He hit .310 in May with six homers but has had increasing trouble with lower back inflammation. He'd missed the last four games.

—RHP Taijuan Walker, a 6-foot-5 power pitcher out of Yucaipa (Calif.) High was the Mariners' first pick in the draft, No. 43 overall. He has a 91-95 mph fastball with a power curve and is just 17.

—1B Mike Carp was recalled from Class AAA Tacoma to take the place of DH/1B Mike Sweeney, who went on the disabled list. Carp, 23, was hitting .250 in 50 games with Tacoma while hitting 10 homers with 31 RBI. In June games, the lefty was 8-for-20 with a double and a homer. He started at first Monday and batted fifth.

—1B Casey Kotchman will be losing playing time in the immediate future to 1B Mike Carp, who was called up Monday and put in the starting lineup. Kotchman's defense has been flawless, but he hasn't hit as much as the Mariners had hoped. "I brought Casey in and we talked," manager Don Wakamatsu said. "This gives Casey a chance to maybe work on some things and continue to try to get his swing to where he feels comfortable with it."

—C Adam Moore (fibula) went out on an injury rehabilitation assignment to extended spring training in Peoria, Ariz. He'll catch some simulated games there, then be moved to play elsewhere in the system.

—RF Ichiro Suzuki's 10-game hitting streak was snapped. It was the 34th hitting streak of double digits in his career since joining the Mariners from Japan in 2001. That is second among active players to the 38 of Yankees SS Derek Jeter and the fourth most since 1962. Hank Aaron had 44 and Pete Rose 39. Lou Brock also had 34 hitting streaks of 10 or more games.

—DH Milton Bradley, who has only batted fourth, fifth or sixth, moved into the No. 2 spot in the batting order with 2B Chone Figgins moving from second to ninth. It's part of manager Don Wakamatsu's plan to try to shake up the offense.

—Lee Tinsley, who had been coaching first base, will coach third for the rest of the year. Mike Brumley, who had been at third, moves to first.

BY THE NUMBERS: 1 — Number of career ejections for 2B Chone Figgins, after he was tossed on June 6.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We've had our struggles with the bullpen the whole season." — Manager Don Wakamatsu.

TAMPA BAY RAYS

INSIDE PITCH

With two first-round picks for the first time in franchise history, the Rays went for a pair of highly rated high school players, selecting outfielder Josh Sale and catcher Justin O'Conner.

Sale (pronounced SAH-lay), an 18-year-old from Bishop Blanchet High School in Seattle, was ranked the best high school power hitter in the draft by Baseball America.

A lefty hitter who is 6-foot-1, 205 pounds, he posted a .520 average with five homers, 20 RBI and 27 walks as a senior. He is committed to Gonzaga University but already has indicated after being the No. 17 pick that he wants to sign.

"I don't have a definite answer, but I don't see myself going to school," Sale said. "Right now, I'm just thankful for the Tampa Bay Rays investing in me and I'm extremely happy that they did. It's been a non-stop celebration."

O'Conner, an 18-year-old from Cowan High School in Muncie, Ind., was rated the top high school catcher in the draft (and third best overall), as well as the top arm among high school position players, by Baseball America.

He hit .470 as a senior with eight home runs, 40 RBI, 15 stolen bases, 13 doubles and 43 runs scored. He also sounded eager to start his pro career. "This is like a dream come true to me," he said. "Right now, I'm going to play professional baseball. That's what I've always wanted to do."

NOTES, QUOTES

—C/DH John Jaso, a rookie, is expected to remain in the leadoff slot against right-handed starters for a while. Against lefties, manager Joe Maddon is leaning toward CF B.J. Upton, who was on base five times Sunday. The Rays will face several lefties this week.

—RHP Jeff Niemann said he won't make any changes in his approach Tuesday against the Blue Jays even though he had a rough outing against them last week. Niemann (5-0) remained unbeaten when the Rays rallied to win in the ninth, and on Tuesday he will seek to match RHP James Shields (2007) as the only Rays starters to begin a season 6-0.

—1B/OF Leslie Anderson and LHP Sergio Espinosa, both Cuban free agents, were promoted from Class A Charlotte to Class AA Montgomery. Anderson, who hit .262 with three homers and 11 RBI in 21 games, is more advanced and could be a September call-up for the Rays.

—RHP Joaquin Benoit's scoreless streak ended Sunday in his 14th appearance for the Rays, but that hardly diminishes the remarkable job he has done. He has allowed one run while retiring 36 of 43 batters. Manager Joe Maddon said he will remain cautious in his use of Benoit, who signed a minor league deal with the Rays after missing all of 2009 recovering from shoulder surgery.

—RHP Rafael Soriano has converted his first 15 save opportunities and can tie RHP Al Reyes' 2007 team mark of 16 straight to start a season. The Rays' overall consecutive saves mark is 19 by Roberto Hernandez in 1999.

BY THE NUMBERS: 41 — Number of lineups used by manager Joe Maddon in the first 57 games.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I never thought we would run away with anything. It was going to have to even out at some point. Now you've really got to get after it every day." — Rays manager Joe Maddon, on the prospects of a four-team AL East race.

TEXAS RANGERS

INSIDE PITCH

A year ago, the Rangers failed to sign first-round draft choice Matt Purke, who is currently 14-0 at TCU.

It appears they are determined not to suffer the same fate again.

Within hours of selecting Georgia high school outfielder Jake Skole (No. 15) and Canadian catcher Kellin Deglan (No. 22), it appeared the Rangers were close to deals with both. Deglan had reportedly already agreed to a deal, pending a physical. Skole, who has a football scholarship to Georgia Tech, was close to a deal, too.

"I hope to get it done soon and get out there and be an impact as soon as I can," Skole said. "I hope we're further along than most guys to get it done."

Skole missed much of his senior season at Blessed Trinity Catholic High School in Roswell, Ga., while recovering from an ankle injury. The center fielder, however, returned to hit six homers and drive in 21 runs as Blessed Trinity reached the Class AA semifinals. In Blessed Trinity's elimination loss, he had two hits against Kaleb Cowart, who ended up going 18th overall to the Los Angeles Angels.

Though his high school had no team, Deglan played at an elite level in Canada. Most recently, he played for the Canadian Junior National Team as it toured the Dominican Republic and played exhibitions against Dominican Summer League affiliates of major-league teams.

The Rangers also had two "sandwich" round picks. They used the 45th pick overall (compensation for the loss of Marlon Byrd) to select Florida high school pitcher Luke Jackson and the 49th pick (compensation for the loss of Ivan Rodriguez) on University of Connecticut third baseman Mike Olt.

MARINERS 4, RANGERS 2: The Rangers tumbled out of first place thanks to their loss combined with red-hot Los Angeles' sixth consecutive win. Rangers RHP Scott Feldman allowed a three-run homer to Michael Saunders in the second inning and the Rangers managed just four hits off Seattle LHP Cliff Lee through the first eight innings.

Though the Rangers did break through in the ninth, Lee retired C Matt Treanor on a popup with the tying runs on base to finish off the game.

NOTES, QUOTES

—LHP Derek Holland had no issues after testing his left shoulder with a long-toss session on Monday. The next step for Holland, who has been on the DL for a week, is to test his shoulder with a bullpen session.

—LHP Matt Harrison saved the bullpen Monday with 3 1/3 scoreless innings of relief. The bullpen had worked four innings in the sweltering heat Sunday. Harrison retired 10 of the 11 batters he faced with only a bloop single blemishing his record. Harrison, who moved from the rotation to the bullpen, had allowed three runs in 4 1/3 innings over his first two outings.

—LF Josh Hamilton returned to the lineup after missing most of Sunday while getting some time to rest a sore right knee. Hamilton had a run-scoring single in four at-bats to give him seven RBI in the last six games. Hamilton is hitting .366 since May 18.

—DH Vladimir Guerrero continues to lead the AL in voting at the designated hitter spot. In addition, it looks as if the Rangers will have at least one starter in the AL outfield. Nelson Cruz, currently on the DL, is second in the voting, just 3,700 votes ahead of Tampa Bay's Carl Crawford. Rangers OF Josh Hamilton is fourth.

—SS Elvis Andrus was given the day off Monday after playing back-to-back day games in the sweltering Texas heat. Andrus was on deck to pinch hit when the game ended but did not appear and carries a 12-game hitting streak into Tuesday.

BY THE NUMBERS: 19.9 — Average pitches per inning for RHP Rich Harden. It is the worst pitches per inning average for any starter in the majors. On Sunday, Harden threw 111 pitches in five innings. He threw at least 20 pitches in four of the five innings he started.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I don't know if I just didn't believe it in my head. (Hitting instructor) Clint Hurdle didn't push towards anything, but we talked. I was getting out in front of everything and starting my swing earlier and earlier. He said ultimately it was going to get to the point where I'd be starting my swing before the ball was coming out of the pitcher's hand." — OF Josh Hamilton, on why he has switched from a swing that started with a toe-tap trigger to a more conventional swing.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS

INSIDE PITCH

Rookie scouting director Andrew Tinnish selected Georgia Tech right-hander Deck McGuire with his first pick, 11th overall. McGuire received the news while Georgia Tech was losing at the NCAA regionals to Alabama.

Tinnish watched North Carolina Tar Heels right-hander Matt Harvey (chosen seventh Monday by the New York Mets) face McGuire in April. McGuire pitched seven innings, allowing one run on six hits and three walks. He struck out 10, lowering his earned run average to 1.17.

McGuire had a successful baseball and football career at Virginia's Deep Run High, where as a senior he was 10-1 with a 1.35 ERA and 129 strikeouts. He also set school records for homers and RBIs by hitting .479 with five homers and 31 RBIs but went undrafted.

After going 8-1 as a freshman at Georgia Tech, McGuire established credentials pitching for Peninsula team in the Coastal Plain League in the summer of 2008. He was 8-0, with a 1.28 ERA in 11 starts and allowing 35 hits in 56 innings while striking out 65.

This spring he was 9-4 with a 2.96 ERA in 16 starts, walking 33 and striking out 118 in 112 2/3 innings. Opponents hit .226 against McGuire, whose Yellow Jackets played Alabama in the NCAA regional Monday night in Atlanta.

The 6-foot-7, 225-pound McGuire worked eight innings, fanning six in a 5-2 loss to the Crimson Tide. He's one of 30 semi-finalists for the Golden Spikes Award, presented annually to the nation's top amateur player. He's a nice bookend for hulking right-hander Chad Jenkins, the Jays' No. 1 pick a year ago.

—Managers are paid to make game decisions, while players are paid to perform.

But there are times when those lines get crossed, for good and for bad.

Take what happened in the decisive eighth inning of Sunday's 4-3 loss by the Blue Jays against the Yankees.

The inning started with the Jays up 2-0, but after two hit batters, a double and a wild pitch, the Yankees had tied the game and with one out had runners at second and third.

With right-hander Jason Frasor on the mound, Jays manager Cito Gaston came out for a visit.

First base was open, so Gaston asked Frasor which batter he would rather face: Robinson Cano, who was 2-for-3 in the game, or Jorge Posada, who was 0-for-2 with a walk. If Posada, he would walk Cano intentionally.

"I just felt comfortable with Cano right there," Frasor said. "I think I've had a little more success against Cano as of late anyways. I guess I chose wrong."

Cano sliced a two-run single to left field to make it 4-2 for New York.

The question is: Is that a fair question for Gaston to ask? Should he put it on the player or should he make the decision?

"Most of the time I give guys the choice, and I think it's better that way," Cito said of his reasoning. "To me, it's just like I tell catchers all the time: 'Don't make a guy throw a pitch he don't want to throw. Don't make him do that.' If I make him pitch to someone he'd rather not pitch to and he'd rather pitch to someone else, it's the same thing. If you have confidence that you can get this guy out, then you go at it."

NOTES, QUOTES

—The Blue Jays have struggled against left-handed pitching this season, as they are hitting a collective .200 (89-for-446) against lefties. In Saturday's 14-inning marathon, their stats took another nosedive south against Yankees LHPs Andy Pettitte and Damaso Marte, who combined to hold the Jays to five hits over 8 1/3 innings. On the season, the two Jays with the worst averages against left-handers are 2B Aaron Hill and DH Adam Lind. Hill is batting just .105 (4-for-38) with one homer and three RBI. As bad as that is, it is better than Lind's numbers, as he is batting .103 (6-for-58) with no homers and four RBI. The top hitter on the Jays against left-handers? C Joe Buck, who is batting .357 (10-for-28) with three homers and nine RBI.

—Over the just completed nine-game homestand, the Jays starters went 5-1 with three no-decisions. In that nine-game stretch, the starters allowed just 12 earned runs in 67 innings for a 1.61 ERA.

—RHP Dustin McGowan, who is on the 60-day disabled list in his lengthy recovery from shoulder surgery performed in July 2008, threw off the mound Monday for the first time since a Class AAA spring training game March 19. McGowan threw 25 pitches in a bullpen session. Afterward he reported: "No problems."

—OF Dewayne Wise, who signed with the Jays last weekend, is working out in extended spring training at the team's minor league complex in Dunedin, Fla. Wise, a Rule 5 pick

of the Jays in 2000, expects to join Class AAA Las Vegas as soon as his right ankle is 100 percent.

—1B Lyle Overbay has shown a dramatic rise in performance since he was switched to the No. 7 spot in the batting order, down from the No. 5 spot that he had occupied for the first part of the season. In the nine games in which Overbay has batted seventh, he is hitting .382 (13-for-34) with four doubles, three home runs and six RBI. In 47 games while hitting fifth, Overbay hit .195 with four homers and 18 RBI.

BY THE NUMBERS: 3 — Times the Jays had successfully employed the sacrifice bunt this season through June 6. The Jays used the strategy (a sac bunt by Fred Lewis) in the 14th inning June 5, and it led to a 3-2 victory over the Yankees when 2B Aaron Hill followed with a game-winning single. The only other Jay to have recorded a sacrifice bunt was INF John MacDonald, who had two.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I think we played some good teams and we're going to lose games like that. Unfortunately it is frustrating. But we played two of the best teams in baseball and had a chance to win every one of them. I think it shows that we still need to continue to improve, that's what this whole process is about, becoming a better team from top to bottom. If we continue to play like this, continue to play the game the right way then we'll start winning some of these games." — CF Vernon Wells, after the Jays went 3-3 versus the Rays and the Yankees, all three losses the result of blown saves by the bullpen.