

Manager Bob Geren shows fiery side, but Oakland A's offense remains lifeless in loss to Cincinnati Reds

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

It took a controversial play in the bottom of the fourth inning Wednesday for Bob Geren to officially blow his top.

But surely the A's manager had been simmering for a while.

Geren wasn't around to see the conclusion of a 3-0 loss to Cincinnati that completed the Reds' three-game sweep at the Oakland Coliseum.

He could have guessed the way this one would finish, however, even after earning his second ejection of the season.

Oakland continued its struggles with men on base and lost for the 10th time in 12 games. The A's finished the series 3 for 22 with runners in scoring position.

A fourth-inning sequence, in which the A's came up empty after loading the bases with no outs, punctuated the situation perfectly.

Gabe Gross hit a soft, catchable liner that Reds second baseman Brandon Phillips purposely let hit the ground before fielding. As all three A's runners froze, Phillips threw to the plate to start a home-to-third double play.

Adam Rosales then took a called third strike with runners on first and second to end the inning and preserve Cincinnati's 2-0 lead.

Geren thought Gross' ball was hit high enough for the infield fly rule to be enforced, which would have left bases loaded and one out, and he shot out of the dugout to confront second base umpire Jerry Crawford.

What ensued was Geren's most animated and passionate demonstration yet in three-plus seasons managing the A's. He shouted in Crawford's

face, then slammed his hat to the ground after getting thumbed.

As he stomped off the field, he gestured at third-base umpire Chris Guccione, then got in the ear of home plate umpire Brian O'Nora before heading down the tunnel leading to the home clubhouse.

"Having the bases loaded and nobody out (without scoring), that alone can be frustrating," Geren said after the game. "And when a call doesn't go the way you see it, it doubles any kind of frustration, I guess, at that point."

If it's true that a team takes on the personality of its manager, such fire should be viewed as a good thing, because the A's are quietly fading from relevance in the American League West.

The fourth-inning play was the game's turning point, as the A's had a golden opportunity against Reds starter Johnny Cueto (7-2).

The infield fly rule is an umpire's judgment call. A defender can't purposely drop a ball out of his glove, but there's nothing in the rules that says he can't let it hit the ground before he touches it.

"I just thought that when the ball's in the air that long, and it's that high, that's kind of what the rule's designed for," Geren said, "so you can't just sit back and take your choice and let it drop, because the runners can't go anywhere."

The Reds could have had a triple play.

When catcher Ramon Hernandez threw to third for the second out, Miguel Cairo stepped on the bag but unnecessarily took time to tag base runner Kurt Suzuki. He had a great chance to throw to second and get a force on Kevin Kouzmanoff.

Regardless, Suzuki said he appreciated Geren's reaction on the play.

"Obviously we're having a tough time right now," he said. "When (the manager) goes out there and he's backing up players, you definitely like to see that. Too bad we couldn't pull one out."

The Reds got all the runs they needed on Jay Bruce's two-run single off A's starter Vin Mazzaro (2-2) in the first.

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

A's update: Jack Cust staying patient with limited playing time

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Designated hitter Jack Cust was out of the A's lineup Wednesday for the fifth time in six games, though manager Bob Geren hasn't indicated Cust is an odd man out in the DH/outfield rotation.

With Coco Crisp back from the disabled list and playing center field, there's less playing time to go around. Because right-handed hitters had fared better against Cincinnati right-hander Johnny Cueto, Geren went with Conor Jackson at DH and Rajai Davis in left field for Wednesday's 3-0 loss to the Reds.

But Gabe Gross, who hits left-handed, got the nod in right field over Cust. Geren also went with Gross as the designated hitter on Tuesday because Gross had enjoyed prior success against Reds pitcher Bronson Arroyo, who started that game.

Geren has said he'll try to mix and match his outfielders and DH as best he can. Cust is hitting .278, but he has just two homers and 10 RBIs in 97 at-bats since being called up from Triple-A Sacramento on May 15.

"They've got some guys that are getting at-bats that need at-bats," Cust said. "I thought I was going to be in there today. ... The power will come. I know I'm going to hit home runs."

Pitchers Joey Devine and Josh Outman have both suffered setbacks in their recoveries from elbow ligament replacement surgery, and both are being re-examined by Dr. James Andrews, who performed their operations.

"They'll both be shut down for a fairly extended period of time," Geren said.

Devine had hopes during spring training of rejoining the bullpen early in the season before having complications. Outman was targeting a comeback after the All-Star break.

Devine had his surgery in April 2009, and Outman had his procedure roughly two months later.

Geren said a tentative timetable would have Brett Anderson (left elbow tendinitis) returning to the rotation 30-35 days after he began throwing, which was last Thursday. If things go as planned, Anderson could return a week or so after the All-Star break by that estimate.

Starting pitcher Vin Mazzaro lasted seven innings Wednesday, allowing two runs on six hits with one walk. He snapped a 19-start streak in which he pitched six innings or less, which was an Oakland record. ... Reliever Craig Breslow entered with the bases loaded and no outs in the eighth and escaped unscathed.

Chin Music: Conor Jackson at DH as Jack Cust sits; more setbacks for Joey Devine, Josh Outman

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/23/2010 12:34PM

We've got baseball updates and injury updates, and I'm going w/the baseball stuff first because I assume you get your fill of injury news with the A's, eh? ...

Jack Cust is out of the lineup again, with Conor Jackson getting a start at DH, Rajai Davis playing left field and batting ninth, and Gabe Gross starting in right field. Also, Adam Rosales draws a start at shortstop, and Bob Geren says he'll continue bouncing Rosales around the infield to give other players a rest. Geren said he wanted to keep Jackson's bat in the lineup while resting his legs a little bit by not playing defense.

And now for the medical news ...

-Pitchers Joey Devine and Josh Outman have both been shut down and aren't likely to throw again for a few weeks. Both are hitting road blocks in their ongoing recovery from Tommy John surgery, and their setbacks are serious enough that both

are being re-examined by Dr. James Andrews, who performed the procedure on both pitchers. Geren said one pitcher already visited Andrews and that the other was scheduled to do so very soon, but he didn't specify which was which.

I'm not sure the A's were counting on Devine rejoining the bullpen anytime soon, and this latest news continues the ongoing struggles for Devine in his attempt to get healthy. It was hoped that Outman might return sometime after the All-Star break, but now it's unknown when he'll be back.

—Brett Anderson continues throwing long toss, although there's still no date for him to get on the mound. But Geren said the A's had a 30-35 day timetable for Anderson to return to the rotation from the time he started throwing, which was Friday. If that schedule was to hold, Anderson would be back roughly a week or so after the All-Star break. Again, it's always best to put that in pencil ...

Today's lineups:

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Jackson DH, Suzuki C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Gross RF, Rosales SS, Ellis 2B, Davis LF; Mazzaro RHP.

Reds — Cabrera SS, Cairo 3B, Votto 1B, Phillips 2B, Gomes DH, Bruce RF, Nix LF, Stubbs CF, Hernandez C; Cueto RHP.

Manager ejected in A's loss to Reds

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Though not as crazy as 10 hours of tennis with no result, the A's had some weirdness Wednesday in yet another loss to the Reds.

Manager Bob Geren was ejected in the fourth inning of the 3-0 defeat for arguing that the infield fly-rule should have been called on a ball Reds second baseman Brandon Phillips intentionally let drop. Geren, usually even-keeled, went so far as to throw his cap to the ground.

"I did?" Geren said with surprise after the game. "Obviously, it was a big part of the game, bases loaded, nobody out - that (double play) was already frustrating. A call that doesn't go the way you thought doubles the frustration."

His team was actually lucky to avoid hitting into a triple play: Phillips let Gabe Gross' little looper drop in front of him with the bases loaded, and he threw home to get Conor Jackson. Catcher Ramon Hernandez went to third to get Kurt Suzuki, but third baseman Miguel Cairo waited a moment to tag Suzuki unnecessarily - had he thrown to second, he would have retired Kevin Kouzmanoff.

"He messed up my ESPN time," Hernandez said jokingly of Cairo's failure to complete the triple play.

Geren thought the ball was hit high enough to be considered a pop-up; the umpiring crew thought it wasn't high enough for the infield-fly rule to be called.

"When the ball is in the air that long, that's what the rule's there for," Geren said, "because the baserunners can't go anywhere."

Suzuki said, "Your first instinct is to go back to the bag, but when I saw Phillips take a couple of steps back and field it, I just started running. There's pretty much nothing you can do except tip your cap to Phillips. That's a good play right there."

So at least there was something different in the A's third loss in a row to the Reds and their seventh loss in the past eight games, and Suzuki said the team appreciated Geren's display of anger.

"Obviously, we're having a tough time right now, and when your manager goes out there and backs you up, the players like to see that," he said.

Otherwise, the proceedings were familiar, right up to a bad 0-2 pitch to Jay Bruce, this time by Vin Mazzaro with two outs and the bases loaded in the first; Bruce singled to send in two runs. In the series opener, Andrew Bailey was bit by Bruce on an 0-2 pitch that gave the Reds the lead in the ninth.

Mazzaro didn't help himself by walking Joey Votto with two outs that inning or by hitting Jonny Gomes to load the bases. But after the first, Mazzaro was quite good, allowing only six total hits and the two runs in seven innings. Reds starter Johnny Cueto went seven innings.

In the eighth, Oakland's Craig Breslow came into the game with the bases loaded and retired all three men he faced. The lefty has retired 17 batters in a row overall.

Pitchers' returns stalled

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Reliever **Joey Devine** and starter **Josh Outman** continue to have difficulties while rehabbing from Tommy John surgery, and both have been shut down for a while.

Devine, who has had some flexor-tendon trouble, initially had hoped to be back by the end of the spring, and Outman by the All-Star break. Outman said via text that he won't throw for four weeks because of some irritation in his new ulnar collateral ligament. He saw Dr. **James Andrews** on Monday and got a platelet-rich plasma injection. Devine is expected to see Andrews this week.

Brett Anderson (elbow tendinitis) is throwing at a distance of 160 feet, manager **Bob Geren** said, and if all goes according to plan, he will be back in Oakland's rotation shortly after the All-Star break.

So far, tests to determine why outfielder **Travis Buck** has continued leg soreness have come back normal, Geren said.

Suzuki contract update, etc: The A's are continuing to talk to **Kurt Suzuki's** agent, **Dan Horwits**, about a multiyear deal, and though there is nothing imminent, the team is optimistic about getting something done at some point, according to general manager **Billy Beane**.

The A's are also in talks with **Jeff Frye**, who represents top draft pick **Michael Choice**, although no significant developments are expected until several other top-10 picks sign.

Four lower-round picks are in the fold, with the team reaching agreements with outfielder **Jordan Tripp** (seventh round), right-hander **Blake Hasebrock** (eighth round), right-hander **Josh Bowman** (10th) and left-hander **Ryan Hughes**, a 16th-rounder who is from Pleasanton

Ynoa sighting: High-profile pitching prospect **Michael Ynoa** made his first appearance in a minor-league game this week: The 18-year-old right-hander threw three scoreless innings for the A's Phoenix rookie-ball team, allowing one hit and striking out four.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Honor for minor-leaguer: Shortstop Grant Green, the A's first pick last year, was selected for the Futures Game during All-Star week in Anaheim. Green is hitting .320 with five homers and 30 RBIs at Class A Stockton.

Drumbeat: Pregame update from the Coliseum

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Oakland 6/23/2010 12:17PM

The A's try to salvage a game from Cincinnati today, using this lineup behind Vin Mazzaro: Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Jackson DH, Suzuki C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Gross RF, Rosales SS, Ellis 2B, Davis LF

Bob Geren said it's a coincidence that Jack Cust has had two days off in a row; Gabe Gross had good matchup numbers against Bronson Arroyo last night, and today, Geren wanted to give Conor Jackson a day to rest his legs, reasoning that with tomorrow's day off, he'll get an extra little break. Also, Johnny Cueto's splits favor right-handed hitters, who have a .287 mark against him.

In the daily injury rundown, Geren said that if all goes well with Brett Anderson's rehab, he'll be back in the A's rotation shortly after the All-Star break.

Joey Devine and Josh Outman, both coming back from Tommy John surgery, have been shut down for a while in Arizona, according to Geren. Devine has had repeated setbacks since this spring, and Outman is just 12 months removed from surgery.

According to Geren, all the test results so far to determine what's behind the leg soreness that Buck told me about last week have come back normal. The tests are to determine if there's some sort of nutritional deficiency or the like causing the problem. Buck is undergoing more tests; he can't work out hard without severe leg soreness the next day.

Michael Ynoa made a nice organizational debut the other day, allowing one hit and striking out four in three innings for the Arizona rookie league team.

A's unable to capitalize on Mazzaro's work

Geren ejected after arguing double-play call in fourth

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Bob Geren's calm demeanor is well documented.

The A's skipper rarely strays course from his even-keel manner, his glass-half-full sentiments, his positive spins. A win or a loss, Geren remains consistently unruffled.

But his team has lost 10 of its past 12 games, including Wednesday afternoon's affair, which resulted in a 3-0 defeat to the Reds and, subsequently, a three-game series sweep. Furthermore, Oakland has dropped to a season-high 10 games behind Texas in the American League West after entering the month in first place.

So Geren -- mild-mannered Geren -- is suddenly facing an emptying glass, one that shook a good amount in the midst of his eighth career ejection Wednesday following a strange double-play ball he believed should have been avoided with the infield fly rule.

The mishap, which took place with no outs and the bases loaded in the fourth inning, began when Gabe Gross hit a soft line drive toward Cincinnati second baseman Brandon Phillips, who let the ball drop before trapping it in his glove and tossing it home to get Conor Jackson out at the plate.

Former A's player Ramon Hernandez, manning the plate for the Reds, then flipped the ball to third baseman Miguel Cairo for the double play, which could have transformed into a rare triple play had Cairo thrown to second.

Cincinnati settled for the double play, though, as Geren bolted from the dugout to argue the call with second-base umpire Jerry Crawford, who exchanged words with Geren briefly before tossing him out of the game, at which point Geren threw down his hat.

"In my opinion," Geren said, "that's an infield fly. The rule states if it can be caught with ordinary effort outside of a line drive, it can be called an infield fly. He thought it was a semi line drive. I thought it was more of a popup. The ball in the air that long, it's got to be an infield fly."

"I just saw an opportunity where I thought I could get a double play," Phillips said. "It wasn't hit that hard, it wasn't hit that high. It wasn't an in-between hop, so I just let the ball drop and threw it home. I thought hopefully something would happen and it did ... the play turned out to be a game-changer."

Geren's rant continued on his way back to the dugout, as he shared some thoughts with home-plate umpire Brian O'Nora as well. After the game, Geren downplayed the rare animation he displayed on the field, simply saying it was a play seen from two separate viewpoints.

"We just had a disagreement on what the ball did," he said. "The baserunners did everything they were supposed to. What could they do? They run, they get doubled off. It was a big part of the game. Bases loaded, no outs, of course that's frustrating."

Frustration is running high for this ballclub, which has scored a combined six runs during its past three games. On Wednesday, the A's left eight men on base, and the craziness that was the fourth inning proved to be the only time they put a runner on third base.

So while Geren's dispute showcased something rarely seen inside the confines of the Oakland Coliseum, the remainder of the game made out to be what's turning into a pretty normal occurrence.

Translation: The A's aren't lending their pitchers much run support.

Thus, a respectable outing from starter Vin Mazzaro that included a season-high seven innings on Wednesday resulted in the right-hander's second loss of the season. In the first frame, he surrendered a two-out walk to Joey Votto before giving up a single to Phillips and hitting Jonny Gomes with a pitch to load the bases. Mazzaro then allowed a two-run single to Jay Bruce.

"It was a rough first inning," Mazzaro said. "You can't walk a guy with two outs like that. Luckily, I was able to settle in after that, make my pitches and get some ground balls."

The righty induced three 1-2-3 frames and left the game having allowed just the two runs on seven hits and one walk while fanning three.

"I thought he pitched good," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "It was probably his best performance of the year. He was attacking the strike zone and not necessarily trying to force strikeouts but just get weak contact, which he did."

"Mazzaro, he threw the ball well," Cincinnati manager Dusty Baker said. "Every day on this trip, we saw good pitching against us. The American League has some good young pitchers, everyone we saw."

The A's just happened to see good pitchers, too -- as evidenced by the fact they went 3-for-22 (.136) with runners in scoring position in the Interleague set. On Wednesday, it was right-hander Johnny Cueto, who limited the A's to seven hits without a run through seven solid innings. Thus, Mazzaro was given little room for error.

"As a pitcher," Mazzaro said, "you try to keep your team in the ballgame. Today, it didn't turn out that way. We came up short."

"It's tough going through a stretch like this," Suzuki said, "but we have to get back on the horse and come back strong. It's frustrating, but that's why there are so many games in a season."

The A's enter an off-day Thursday and will be back at the Coliseum for a three-game weekend set against a struggling Pirates team before heading off to Baltimore and Cleveland for a six-game road trip.

"Those are two teams that are struggling," Geren said in reference to Pittsburgh and Baltimore. "I'm sure both teams look at it the same way, though. It will be good to get a mental break tomorrow and come back physically ready to go."

Devine, Outman to revisit Dr. Andrews

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's were hoping to receive help for their struggling bullpen via two familiar faces in the near future, but reliever Joey Devine and starter Josh Outman have been shut down from their respective rehab programs indefinitely.

According to manager Bob Geren, the right-handed Devine and left-handed Outman are slated to see renowned orthopedist Dr. James Andrews, who performed both of the pitchers' Tommy John surgeries last year -- Devine in April, Outman in June. Recovery time for the operation is usually around the 12-month mark, but both have experienced setbacks.

The 26-year-old Devine, who in 2008 posted a 0.59 ERA in 42 appearances with Oakland, was throwing a bullpen session every two to three days at the A's Minor League complex in Phoenix at beginning of the month and hoped to be making a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento by now.

Meanwhile, Outman -- who solidified his spot in Oakland's rotation last year before suffering his elbow injury -- was progressing with his rehab work until experiencing a dose of flexor tendon soreness in early June.

"They haven't been responding the way they'd like," Geren said Wednesday. "They'll be reevaluated. They'll be shut down for a fairly extended period of time."

Anderson to return after All-Star break

OAKLAND -- If all continues to go well with his rehab work, lefty Brett Anderson could be returning to Oakland's rotation shortly after the All-Star break, manager Bob Geren confirmed Wednesday.

Anderson, placed on the 15-day disabled list on June 4 with elbow tendinitis, is completing the first week of a rehab program that is expected to last a total of 30-35 days. He is up to a throwing distance of 160 feet off flat ground and will eventually begin a round of bullpen sessions before undergoing a Minor League rehab stint.

Geren ejected after arguing in fourth inning

OAKLAND -- Manager Bob Geren was ejected in the fourth inning of Wednesday's game against the visiting Reds following a double-play ball that the A's skipper presumably argued should have been avoided with an infield fly rule calling.

With no outs and the bases loaded, A's outfielder Gabe Gross hit a soft line drive toward Cincinnati second baseman Brandon Phillips, who watched the ball drop in front of him before trapping it in his glove and tossing it home to get Conor Jackson out at the plate. Reds catcher Ramon Hernandez then flipped the ball to third baseman Miguel Cairo for the double play, at which point Geren ran out to argue with second-base umpire Jerry Crawford.

Whether Phillips' decision to get the ball on the hop was intentional is unknown, but multiple replays showed the ball was rather low for an infield-fly-rule calling.

It marked the eighth career ejection -- second this year -- for Geren, who promptly threw his hat to the ground upon being tossed before exchanging a few more words with Crawford.

A's reach deals with four Draft picks

OAKLAND -- The A's on Wednesday agreed to terms with four players from the 2010 First-Year Player Draft.

Officially in the fold are seventh-round pick Jordan Tripp out of Golden West College and right-handed pitcher Blake Hasebrock, who was picked in the eighth round out of North Carolina-Greensboro.

Oakland also signed right-handed pitcher Josh Bowman (10th round, Tampa) and Nebraska lefty Ryan Hughes, selected in the 16th round.

The A's have now agreed to terms with 27 of their 50 picks. The first four selections remain unsigned, but Oakland has inked 15 of its 16 selections from Rounds 5-20. The final day to lock up Draft picks is Aug. 15.

Worth noting

Travis Buck has fully recovered from the strained right oblique muscle that put him on the disabled list April 22, but the A's outfielder is now experiencing leg soreness. Buck has undergone several tests for the problem, all of which have come back

negative. He will receive more tests this week in hopes of continuing his rehab work. ... The A's will hold their annual Community Fund Golf Classic on Thursday, with proceeds benefiting the A's Community Fund and pitcher Craig Breslow's "Strike 3 Foundation," which he established in 2008 to help find a cure for childhood cancer. Dallas Braden, Michael Wuertz and Gabe Gross will participate in the long drive contest, while others such as Cliff Pennington, Ryan Sweeney, Daric Barton and Billy Beane are also expected to play during the day.

Lee's Leftovers: A dose of injury updates

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 6/23/2010 5:15PM

Travis Buck has fully recovered from the strained right oblique muscle that put him on the disabled list April 22, but the A's outfielder is now experiencing leg soreness. Buck has undergone several tests for the problem, all of which have come back negative. He will receive more tests this week in hopes of figuring out the cause of said pain and continue his rehab work.

Joey Devine and **Josh Outman** will revisit orthopedist Dr. James Andrews this week. Both pitchers have experienced several setbacks recently and, according to manager Bob Geren, will be "shut down for a fairly extended period of time." Devine was hoping to be undergoing a Minor League rehab stint by now and join the team by the end of the month. He had Tommy John surgery last April, and players usually require 12 months of recovery time.

Brett Anderson (elbow tendinitis) is steadily progressing with his rehab program in Arizona, where he's now throwing up to 160 feet from flat ground. If all continues to go well, the right-handed starter may very well be back in Oakland's starting rotation shortly after the All-Star Break.

A handful of Minor League tidbits: **Chris Carter** is batting just .238 for Triple-A Sacramento. He's collected 15 homers, but he's also tallied 82 strikeouts in 70 games. ... **Michael Taylor**, meanwhile, has been struggling a bit at the plate as well. He's hitting .241 through 56 games for the River Cats. His strikeout total: 42. ...2010 Spring Training invitees **Dallas McPherson** and **Eric Sogard** are posting big numbers for Sacramento. McPherson went 2-for-3 with two home runs and five RBIs in Tuesday's contest and now has four long balls and nine RBIs over his last four games. Sogard's been impressive all season for the River Cats and most recently has a 15-game hitting streak, a time during which he's batting .373 (22-for-59). ... 2009 first-round Draft pick **Grant Green**, who on Tuesday was named to the 2010 All-Star Futures Game, ranks third in the California League with 90 hits. ... Remember **Brad Kilby**? He's been on the disabled list in Sacramento since May 27.

A's Shutout in Finale of the Series

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 6/24/2010

Oakland, CA - The Oakland A's fought hard but it just wasn't enough to stop the Cincinnati Reds from taking all three games in the series. The A's were shutout in the final game of the series 3-0.

Now ten games behind first place Texas in the American League, Oakland must find a solution to stay in contention. The philosophy behind baseball is that tomorrow's always new day. Losing 10 of their last 12 games is troubling. Yet, the ball club remains positive that things will turn around.

"It's tough going through a stretch like this," said Kurt Suzuki. "We have to get back on the horse and come back strong." "It's frustrating but that's why there are so many games in the season."

The frustration is mounting and it took a controversial call for manager Bob Geren to lose it! After loading the bases in the fourth frame, Gabe Gross hit a soft line drive toward second baseman Brandon Phillips. He deliberately let the ball drop before picking it up and throwing to home plate to prevent Conor Jackson from scoring.

Then Reds catcher Ramon Hernandez then threw the ball to third for the double play which caused all three runners to freeze in position. Geren thought Gross's ball was hit high enough for the infield fly rule which would have left the bases loaded and one out. But the umpire ruled against it and that sent Geren racing out to the field in anger before being ejected.

"In my opinion that's an infield fly," said Geren. "The rule states if it can be caught with ordinary effort outside of a line drive, it can be called an infield fly." "Having the bases loaded and nobody out (without scoring) can be frustrating." "When a call doesn't go the way you see it, it doubles any kind of frustration, I guess."

The A's continue to struggle with having men on base and not being able to finish strong. Batting against good pitchers hasn't helped either. Johnny Cueto allowed seven hits without scoring a run through seven solid innings. He turned another nice outing as he took a shutout into the eighth inning.

"We had a tough time with our pitching," Geren said. "We saw a few guys who we really haven't seen much of." "All three are a little different than your ordinary righties, they all had something different to offer."

Oakland will have a day off Thursday to rest and regroup before facing the struggling Pirates this weekend for a three game series.

Cueto shuts down A's as Reds earn sweep

By The Associated Press

Johnny Cueto pitched shutout ball into the eighth inning, Jay Bruce had an early two-run single on the way to his second straight three-hit game and the Cincinnati Reds earned a sweep of the Oakland Athletics with a 3-0 win Wednesday.

The Reds salvaged a .500 road trip after losing all three at Seattle over the weekend.

Cueto (7-2) retired the first seven batters of the game before Mark Ellis doubled to shallow right with one out in the third. Cueto responded well after losing 1-0 to Cliff Lee and the Mariners on Friday at Safeco Field.

Bruce's single put the Reds ahead, and Cueto went right to work with the lead. He allowed seven hits, struck out four and walked two in seven-plus innings before leaving in the eighth after allowing back-to-back singles. Nick Masset quickly got Kurt Suzuki to ground into a double play, then struck out Kevin Kouzmanoff.

Francisco Cordero saved his second straight game — his 19th in 24 chances — after blowing the save but earning a win in Monday's 6-4, 10-inning victory.

Jonny Gomes added an insurance run with an RBI double in the eighth for the Reds, who return home for six games following their first West Coast trip of 2010.

The A's lost for the seventh time in eight games and 10th in 12 to fall a season-high six games under .500 (34-40). They are 6-16 this month.

Bruce was a big reason the Reds bounced back after being held to one total run in their sweep at Seattle. He had three hits Tuesday night and drove in a run Monday.

Oakland starter Vin Mazzaro (2-2) is winless in three starts since earning back-to-back victories June 3 and 8, one in relief.

He didn't get any help from his hitters, either.

The A's had the bases loaded and no outs in the fourth but came out of it with nothing but their manager being ejected.

Reds second baseman Brandon Phillips made a heads-up play not fielding a soft liner by Gabe Gross and instead caught the ball on a short hop and threw home for a force. Catcher Ramon Hernandez fired to third baseman Miguel Cairo and he both stepped on the bag and tagged Suzuki. Had Cairo stepped on third and immediately thrown to second right away, Cincinnati would have had time to turn a triple play.

Phillips wildly jumped up and down in frustration at the missed chance.

Oakland skipper Bob Geren was tossed by second base umpire and crew chief Jerry Crawford, apparently arguing for the infield fly rule that would have made it only one out.

It was the second ejection this year and eighth overall for Geren, who emphatically threw his hat into the ground and continued to scream at Crawford for several minutes after being thrown out.

A's center fielder Coco Crisp, playing only his fourth game of the year following two disabled list stints, called off left fielder Rajai Davis on Joey Votto's flyball in the third but wound up dropping it for an error.

Votto also drew three walks and has reached base safely in 32 straight games, matching the longest in the majors this year also done by the Rays' Evan Longoria.

It's the longest such streak by a Reds player since Austin Kearns reached in 32 consecutive games in 2003.

NOTES: A's pitchers Josh Outman and Joey Devine, both recovering from Tommy John reconstructive elbow surgery, have been shut down and were set to be examined this week. ... Reds RHP Edinson Volquez, coming back from Tommy John surgery, allowed three hits and one run in five innings in his third rehab outing and first for Triple-A Louisville. He struck out one and didn't walk a batter and in three minor league starts hasn't issued a free pass over 13 innings. ... Reds RHP Mike Leake won't pitch this Sunday against Cleveland and instead will get two extra days' rest and go Tuesday vs. the Phillies. ... Reds GM Walt Jocketty said the team is likely to sign free agent OF Gary Matthews Jr. by the weekend.

Baseball trade winds are about to start blowing

By Bob Nightengale, USA TODAY 6/24/2010

SAN DIEGO — There is nothing but silence in the San Diego Padres' clubhouse.

Padres first baseman Adrian Gonzalez and closer Heath Bell no longer have to answer questions about trade speculation. They have the comfort of knowing they're staying put, at least for now.

The Padres (42-29 through Wednesday) were in first place in the National League West, playing far too well to even consider trading their two enticing trade chips, CEO Jeff Moorad and general manager Jed Hoyer say.

"That was always our hope," Bell says. "But now we're playing so well, it'll be interesting if we're buyers. Just give us one more hitter. ..."

It's the time of year when players are surfing the Internet, checking with news reporters on the latest trade rumors and staying up late to watch ESPN's *SportsCenter*.

The baseball trade season is upon us, with the Arizona Diamondbacks kicking it off by sending left fielder Conor Jackson to the Oakland Athletics for reliever Sam Demel.

"Now that Arizona made that deal, things should open up," Hoyer says. "I get a feeling recently that things are starting, but I think it will take a little time before things really happen. Really, only a handful of teams consider themselves sellers right now."

Here are some elite players who could be moved by the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline:

•**Starting pitcher Cliff Lee, Seattle Mariners:** Mariners general manager Jack Zduriencik acknowledges he is fielding calls about Lee but has yet to declare Seattle (30-41, 13 games behind in the American League West) out of the playoff race. Lee is a free agent at the season's conclusion.

If he goes elsewhere, he would join his fourth team since July.

"He understands the business side of it," agent Derek Braunecker told *The Seattle Times*. "From our standpoint, it goes to show you how valuable the guy is. ... If (he is traded) again, it's to win a championship. That shows how he's viewed."

The Mariners say they want hitters in return for Lee.

•**Starting pitcher Roy Oswalt, Houston Astros:** Oswalt, who averaged 15 victories, a 3.23 ERA and 30 starts a season from 2001 to 2009 and had a 3.08 ERA through his first 15 starts this season, has indicated he would approve a trade. Texas Rangers President Nolan Ryan says his team definitely is interested.

"I think he's phenomenal," Ryan told MLB.com. "I think he's been one of the top four or five pitchers in the league for quite a while. He's a big-game pitcher and consistent with his stuff. ... He's special."

But will Astros owner Drayton McLane deal Oswalt to a state rival?

- **Starting pitcher Ben Sheets, Athletics:** The A's are all but out of the playoff race. Knowing the veteran is signed to a one-year deal and the team isn't shy about dealing established players, it seems likely he will be traded.
 - **Starting pitcher Ted Lilly, Chicago Cubs:** He's a free agent after the season, the Cubs were seven games under .500 entering the week, and he is not quite living up to his \$13 million paycheck this season with a 2-6 record and 3.42 ERA. But he's certainly capable of being a huge weapon in the pennant stretch.
 - **Starting pitcher Dan Haren, Diamondbacks:** The Diamondbacks say they will listen, but it's doubtful they can get the prospects they need considering Haren's hefty salary. He is owed the remainder of his \$8.25 million salary this year and \$29 million through 2012. It's possible that teammate Edwin Jackson, owed the remainder of a \$4.2 million salary this year and \$8.35 million next, could have more trade value.
 - **First baseman Lance Berkman, Houston Astros:** He says he's willing to waive his no-trade clause. Yet the price tag will be steep. It will cost not only valuable prospects, but Berkman is earning \$14.5 million this year and has a \$15 million option in 2011.
 - **First baseman Paul Konerko, Chicago White Sox:** The White Sox would likely have listened to any and all offers for Konerko before they went on a 10-1 tear through Sunday. Konerko should stay put for now, though he becomes a free agent after the season.
 - **First baseman Adam LaRoche, Diamondbacks:** The Diamondbacks don't look to be going anywhere in the playoff race. He is a good fit for the Rangers, San Francisco Giants or Los Angeles Angels.
 - **First baseman Derrek Lee, Cubs:** Lee is a free agent after the season. If the Cubs fall much further out of the playoff race, he could be shopped.
 - **Outfielder David DeJesus, Kansas City Royals:** The Royals certainly don't need to trade him, considering he's quite affordable at \$4.7 million with a \$6 million option. But if someone wants to cough up their top prospects for DeJesus, the Royals could bite.
 - **Second baseman Kelly Johnson, Diamondbacks:** He's having a fabulous season with 13 home runs and 34 RBI through Sunday and would be a cheap pickup for any contender. (He signed a one-year, \$2.35 million deal in the offseason.) The trouble is precious few contenders are in need of a second baseman.
 - **Shortstop Stephen Drew, Diamondbacks:** The emergence of infielder Tony Abreu could save the Diamondbacks a boatload of money since Drew is eligible for salary arbitration this winter.
- "We'll explore a lot of possibilities and see where we end up," Diamondbacks general manager Josh Byrnes told *The (Phoenix) Arizona Republic*. "I do think a lot of our players are guys we value and want to keep, and I think if we're going to make trades, we'll have to get the type of things — particularly young pitching depth — that would make sense to us."
- **Closer Kerry Wood, Cleveland Indians:** Wood earns \$10.5 million this year with an \$11 million option for next season. If someone is willing to pick up the contract, he could be theirs.
 - **Closer David Aardsma, Mariners:** He has struggled in 2010 after last season's success, so contenders might be gun-shy about using him as their main man in a pennant race. He could be used as a setup man.
 - **Third baseman Mike Lowell, Boston Red Sox:** He has no role with the Red Sox. The Rangers, who tried to deal for him in the offseason, could use depth. The Minnesota Twins could use him at third. It's easy to envision Lowell anywhere but Boston after July.

Crisp Return Not Enough For Win

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 6/22/2010

Oakland, CA – Being down in the minors can be fun but eventually the novelty wears off. On the road to recovery Coco Crisp was activated off the fifteen day disabled list today. Harbored with injuries Crisp has spent most of the season in the minor league.

He missed 42 games this season with a broken left pinkie finger and only played in two games before going back on the DL with a strained rib muscle. After batting .591 (13 for 22) in six games with Triple A-Sacramento, Crisp joined his team earlier than expected.

"I was hoping to be here earlier," Crisp said. "I rallied to get myself back but it helps to play well with such a request." "I hope to finish the season with no more injuries and avoid going back down to the minors, even though I like hanging with the guys."

As the leadoff batter in the lineup, Crisp showed some life for Oakland when he hit a two-run homer, his first of the season. He brought the A's back in the game after being down 3-0. The Reds jumped ahead early in the second frame when Corky Miller hit a two-RBI single on a fly ball to Conor Jackson, who didn't have control of the ball.

Oakland had no answer to stop Reds starter Bronson Arroyo. He pitched eight strong innings, allowing two earned runs on five hits, no walks and one strike out. Arroyo retired 13 of the 15 batters he faced and recored 1-2-3 innings on the night.

Dallas Braden fell 0-5 with a 4.31 ERA since pitching a perfect game back on May 9. He allowed ten hits, four runs (three earned), one walk and four strikeouts over six innings. Braden received two runs or fewer for the eleventh time in fifteen starts.

"The car ran real good," said Branden. "Turn 1 was good, turn 2 and 3 had some bumps. Got into turn 4 and 5 had a couple of speed bumps. Turn 6 it king of flattened out, but overall a bumpy track."

Dallas looked at his hands and used a NASCAR comparison to explain the struggles that continue to loom over him since his perfect game. When asked if he thinks he is cursed, he simply replies, "it's been going since May 9 and I may have a shaved head tomorrow! The positive side of this situation is that in baseball things can always change."

"We do need to start winning games to be closer to Sept," Crisp said. "We have a long way o go, I just wished I could've helped more but I did my best!"

Oakland relief pitchers delivered three scoreless innings after Branden. Brad Ziegler allowed one single while Tyson Ross finished the eighth and ninth innings. After a tough month in May, Ross is finding more comfort on the mound. He has pitched a scoreless five innings over his past three outings.

The A's now fall 9 1/2 games behind first place Texas in the American League West. They have lost nine of their past eleven games.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento shut out by Las Vegas

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

Stellar Las Vegas pitching combined to shutout Sacramento, 8-0, for the River Cats' second loss in a row against the 51s on the road.

Las Vegas pitcher Marc Rzepczynski showed no mercy against the River Cats. The left-hander pitched an outstanding 7.2 innings with three hits, no runs, and nine strikeouts. Reliever Jesse Carlson came in for the save.

Rzepczynski's pitching limited a River Cats team loaded with power hitters to just three hits on the night.

First batter of the night was Eric Sogard, who looked like he was getting the game going on a positive note with a line drive single. In the third inning Sogard reached base on a walk, and a Matt Carson double put Sogard on third, which is the closest the Cats came to a score.

It was a five-inning wait before another River Cat touched a base. Steven Tolleson doubled on a fly ball to center field, but a pop fly ended the inning quick.

Sacramento's defense was able to rally back in the second half of the game, but the 8-0 lead the 51s acquired through the fifth was too much.

A Mike McCoy home run for the 51s started what would become 11 batters in the third inning. Edwin Encarnacion, Brian Dopirak, and Adam Calderone all singled to score and give the 51s a 5-0 lead over the Cats to close the third.

An Aaron Mathews two-run homer in the fifth inning sealed the deal for the 51s.

With the loss, Sacramento drops to 0-2 in this series against Las Vegas. The River Cats have two more shots at redemption Thursday and Friday, before returning home.

RockHounds unable to tame RoughRiders

Shawn Shroyer, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The first day of the Texas League's second half began right where the first half left off.

With a 6-1 victory Wednesday at Citibank Ballpark, the first half champion Frisco RoughRiders jumped back into first place in the South Division while the Midland RockHounds fell back into last place. The contest was a pitcher's duel the first five innings and, based on the talent and experience of both sides' starting pitchers, that wasn't a surprise.

But based on what Frisco left-hander Martin Perez and Midland right-hander Matt Wright were coming back from, it didn't seem the most likely of scenarios.

Although the No. 3 prospect in the Texas Rangers' system, Perez entered Wednesday with a 6.51 ERA and lasted just 1 1/3 innings in surrendering eight runs, seven earned, his last time out. Meanwhile, the well-traveled Wright was making his RockHounds debut after injuring his hamstring pitching in a Korean league earlier this season. None of those facts were evident on Wednesday.

"Matt threw the ball well," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "He attacked the zone down and did a good job. He's a professional pitcher, so I expected him to be around the zone."

To say Wright was around the zone wouldn't do him justice. In his four innings of work, he threw 32 of his 34 pitches for strikes. He didn't return for the fifth inning, but it had nothing to do with his pitch count. Instead, Bush said the club had an "ups" max for Wright, meaning he was only supposed to get up for four innings.

In four innings, he allowed just one hit and struck out three, impressing RoughRiders manager Steve Buechele.

"No, we didn't know anything about him," Buechele said. "For his four innings, he was good, too. They were both cruising."

Once Wright departed, Perez (3-4) stole the show.

Perez tossed seven shutout innings, giving up just three hits and a walk while striking out three. At one point he retired 13 straight RockHounds batters. He faced no more than four batters in any inning.

"That was his best of the year. He was outstanding," Buechele said. "It was just important for him to go out and get some innings under his belt. He was efficient and it was nice to have a talk about sending him back out there. It was good to have that talk after the fifth inning."

The RockHounds' best chance at scoring off Perez came when catcher Petey Paramore doubled to lead off the sixth inning. But Perez responded with a strikeout, groundout, and his final strikeout of the game.

"He attacked us with his fastball and came at us," Bush said. "That was his plan and he did it."

In the top of that inning, the RoughRiders offense finally broke through.

Shortstop Guilder Rodriguez started the inning with a single. Left fielder Marcus Lemon followed and executed a hit and run to perfection with Rodriguez running on the pitch. Lemon's drive wound up in the right-center field gap, easily driving in Rodriguez.

"That's the first run and he's been swinging the bat well," Buechele said. "He found the gap and it put a crooked number on the board, which was big for us."

The RoughRiders plated two more runs that inning of RockHounds reliever Justin Souza (1-2) and added another three-spot in the seventh to pull away.

Things won't get any easier in tonight's conclusion to the RockHounds' four-game homestand when they take on right-hander Tanner Roark (7-3, 4.87), yet another of Texas' talented pitching prospects.

"We have to make him pitch in the zone and hit his mistakes," Bush said.

NOTEBOOK

ROCKHOUNDS BITES: Wednesday's starting pitcher for the RockHounds, Matt Wright, took an interesting path to Double-A. Wright last pitched in affiliated ball in 2009 with the Omaha Royals in Triple-A and was a non-roster invitee this year to Oakland's spring training. The Korean club KIA Tigers, though, purchased his contract and he pitched five games for the Tigers, going 0-1 with a 5.00 ERA before straining his hamstring and being released. ... The roster changes for the Texas League All-Star teams continued on Wednesday. Arkansas reserve infielder Ryan Mount was placed on the disabled list and replaced by Springfield's Matt Carpenter. Meanwhile, pitcher Eduardo Sanchez was promoted to Triple-A Memphis and replaced by teammate Adam Reifer of Springfield.

TODAY'S PROBABLE PITCHERS: Frisco RoughRiders (39-31) -- Tanner Roark (RHP, 7-3, 4.87); Midland RockHounds (35-36) -- Ryan Edell (LHP, 3-1, 1.42)