

**Oakland A's offense covers struggling Ben Sheets against Pittsburgh Pirates**

By Ben Enos, Oakland Tribune

Center fielder Coco Crisp might feel a little as if he's still in the introductory stages with A's fans given that Friday night's game against Pittsburgh was just the fifth he's played in an Oakland uniform.

He's certainly leaving a good, albeit belated, impression.

Crisp had three hits and scored three runs, leading the charge as the A's pounded out 17 hits and beat the Pirates 14-4 before a crowd of 11,154 at the Oakland Coliseum.

"You can see it just watching him. He's a game changing-type player," A's shortstop Cliff Pennington said of Crisp. "Offensively and defensively, he's pretty special."

Crisp might've been the catalyst at the top of the lineup, but the A's offense as a whole put forth a good show at the Pirates expense, with eight players driving in at least one run.

Crisp came up a home run short of the cycle, singling, doubling and tripling in his first three at-bats.

The fact the A's hadn't scored more than four runs in a game since June 15 made their season-high run output a welcome sight for them and their followers.

"The collective effort is what we need for this ballclub to win games," Crisp said. "We're not the Red Sox or the Yankees with the home run statistics that they put up. We have to do what we did today. One through nine, whether it's offensively or defensively, we need somebody to step up."

The production at the plate came at the perfect time, as A's starter Ben Sheets (3-7) had to battle through six tough innings to earn the win.

The Pirates did well in collecting nine hits, eight of which came off Sheets. But he managed to limit the damage in each inning, finishing with nine strikeouts that helped negate any big rallies.

"I got in some deep counts, but I threw strikes when I had to," said Sheets, like Crisp a free-agent acquisition in the offseason. "The performance was pretty much on par with everything else this whole year. It's not like because I got the win, I pitched any better. It's basically the same performance as it's been the last month and a half."

No matter how it happened Friday, a win was the ultimate goal for Sheets, who hadn't earned a victory since May 8. The eight-game stretch was his longest without a win since 2004. The nine strikeouts were the most Sheets has had in a game for the A's.

Neil Walker's home run in the fifth cut the A's lead to 5-4, but Sheets threw a scoreless sixth before giving way to the bullpen in the seventh. Walker later had to leave the game after taking a knee to the head while chasing a foul ball.

Sheets' counterpart, Brad Lincoln, also battled through six challenging innings, allowing eight hits and five runs (three earned). The difference came in the strikeout total, though, as Lincoln (0-2) struck out only one.

The A's put things away once Lincoln and Sheets exited, scoring seven runs in the seventh. Pennington drove in two with a single in the middle of the rally and had a big night of his own, collecting three hits and three RBIs. He also stole a base.

"What I really liked tonight was he got a hit from the right side of the plate," A's manager Bob Geren said of Pennington. "He's swinging it from both sides."

To cap the night, Adam Rosales broke an 0-for-17 streak with a pinch-hit RBI triple in the eighth.

TODAY: Pirates (Daniel McCutchen 0-2) at A's (Trevor Cahill 6-2), 7:05 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM, 1640-AM

## **A's update: Bobby Crosby**

By Ben Enos, Oakland Tribune

Crosby returns to former home with sizzling bat

Bobby Crosby's return to the Oakland Coliseum on Friday featured several new experiences, not the least of which included his first trip into the visitor's clubhouse.

"I didn't know what to expect," Crosby said. "I didn't know what it looked like at all."

Penciled into Friday's lineup as Pittsburgh's starting shortstop, Crosby returned to face his former team for the first time since signing with the Pirates in the offseason. His return meant a steady diet of visitors for the veteran infielder.

"It's a little weird, but it's fun at the same time to see some of my buddies out here," he said.

Crosby began his first season in the National League in the same utility role he filled with the A's last year, but a hot bat has earned him more playing time at shortstop, his natural position. Crosby tallied 10 hits in his previous four games before receiving his eighth start at shortstop in the past nine games.

"When I was looking at somewhere to sign, it's a place that I thought I had an opportunity to play a good amount," Crosby said. "I already knew the manager, and I knew his reputation. So it's something where it was what I expected."

The adjustment to the visitor's quarters aside, Crosby did have one bit of inside information on how to play in the Coliseum for his Pirates teammates.

"Don't hit foul balls," he said with a chuckle. "There's too much room."

Outfielder Conor Jackson was scratched from the A's lineup because of a "sore upper hamstring," manager Bob Geren said.

"He's playable. He felt like yesterday's day off would really help, and speaking to him ... we felt like one more day would help a good deal," Geren said. "It's a good time to do something like that because we have a real deep outfield, and it gives somebody else an opportunity to play."

Rajai Davis drew the start in left field. Jackson did enter in the seventh as a pinch hitter and grounded out.

Right-hander Daniel McCutchen is expected to be recalled from Triple-A Indianapolis today to make the start for Pittsburgh. McCutchen has made three starts for the Pirates this season and is 0-2 with a 13.50 ERA.

## **With blowout, A's stay perfect against Pirates**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's welcomed Pittsburgh to the Coliseum for the first time since 2004, and initially it seemed as if the two struggling teams might be well matched this weekend.

Neither club has much firepower. Both are poor on the road. And on Friday night, the teams both had defensive lapses, but the A's had one edge - they never have fallen to the Pirates in interleague play. That perfect mark remained intact when the A's turned a close game into a 14-4 victory by sending 11 men to the plate in a seven-run seventh.

"It's nice when you put up a number like that," A's shortstop Cliff Pennington said.

Oakland, which is now 7-0 all-time against Pittsburgh, had lost 10 of 12 coming into the series, and the Pirates 15 of 17, along with 15 in a row on the road.

It was the highest run total of the season for the A's, who'd scored 12 runs in the previous five games combined.

"The collective effort is what we need for this team to win games," said center fielder Coco Crisp, who had a single, double and triple in his first three at-bats, "We're not the Red Sox and the Yankees with the home-run stats. We have to do what we did today, one through nine."

Crisp laughed when asked about finishing a homer short of the cycle.

"Well, of course I knew that, but I'm not a home-run hitter," he said. "I just hit 'em now and then."

He has now played in five games this season and is batting .368.

"He's a game-changing type of player, offensively and defensively," Pennington said. "He's pretty special."

Ryan Sweeney and Pennington also had three hits apiece. Over the past 13 games, Pennington is hitting .476 with seven multi-hit games. (In the 14 games before that, he hit .065.) Adam Rosales provided an RBI pinch-hit triple in the eighth, snapping an 0-for-17 streak.

Oakland starter Ben Sheets got the win with six innings despite allowing four runs, all earned despite two errors, including his own on a pickoff attempt in the second; first baseman Daric Barton picked up the ball and fired to third to get Jose Tabata, who didn't stop at second.

"Can I get a pickoff for that?" Sheets asked jokingly.

Reliever Craig Breslow extended his string of batters retired for the A's to 17 in a row by getting a groundout in the seventh.

Pirates second baseman Neil Walker had to leave in the seventh when he collided with right fielder Ryan Church while chasing a foul pop by Kevin Kouzmanoff. Church's knee struck Walker in the head and he appeared dazed as he remained facedown for several minutes. He was examined by A's team doctors before leaving under his own power. He was taken to Summit Medical Center for a CT scan.

## **Crosby comes back a versatile Pirate**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

After spending the first six-plus seasons of his career in Oakland, **Bobby Crosby** found himself in the other dugout Friday night, and the onetime American League Rookie of the Year found it strange.

"It's kind of weird, a little bit, to be honest," he said. "It doesn't feel like it was that long ago, but at the same time, it feels like forever. It's weird being on the opposite side, seeing all the clubhouse guys over there."

Crosby popped into the A's clubhouse much earlier in the day to say hello to equipment manager **Steve Vucinich**, and he got a few minutes to visit with close friend **Mark Ellis** on the field, along with **Kurt Suzuki** and **Dallas Braden**.

He has moved on, though. Crosby said he loves playing for the Pirates, he likes all the young talent, and he's enjoying living in Pittsburgh. Plus, he's playing well: Coming into the series opener, Crosby had 10 hits in his past 15 at bats. He went 0-for-4 on Friday and struck out to end the game.

**Jackson scratched:** **Conor Jackson** was a late scratch from the A's lineup when manager **Bob Geren** decided to give him another start off to rest a sore right hamstring, which equates to roughly three days to recover, including Wednesday's duties as the designated hitter and Thursday's off day. Jackson pinch hit in the seventh and grounded out.

The hamstring injury is one Jackson has dealt with much of the season; he was on the disabled list with Arizona in April for the problem. Jackson said he will be in the lineup tonight.

**Throwback:** Retro suits **Trevor Cahill** - his warm-up music is, after all, Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" - but it's becoming quite a trend: Tonight will be the third time in his year-plus major-league career that Cahill has started on "Turn Back the Clock Day."

## **A's leading off**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

**Solid gold:** It will be '70s-style all-yellow uniforms tonight for Turn Back the Clock Day; equipment manager Steve Vucinich said he has to teach many of the A's how to put on stirrups because most of them were born in the '80s.

## **A's offense breaks out in win over Pirates**

### **Crisp, Pennington fuel offensive surge; Sheets earns third win**

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- After nearly seven weeks of waiting, Ben Sheets is finally back in the win column.

Thanks to a seven-run outburst in the seventh inning, Oakland waltzed to a 14-4 victory over the Pirates on Friday to open a three-game set.

What was a 5-4 contest heading into the bottom of seventh became a laugher after the A's sent 11 batters to the plate. After third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a double to open the frame, the flood gates opened, as the A's pieced together robust rally with six hits and two walks. The Pirates needed three relievers to get through the messy half-inning, one that finally came to an end 40 minutes after it started.

"It's nice when you put up a number like that," said A's shortstop Cliff Pennington. "In the grand scheme, it's really just one win. We got a lot of these that we got to string together to get back in this thing. It's a big win, but we got to keep doing it."

For a team that hadn't scored more than four runs in eight games, it was a much needed offensive outburst. For a pitcher who hadn't earned a victory since May 8, it was a welcome result.

"I like wins," Sheets said. "I like that we won, and as a starting pitcher, you want to get a victory. Those seven losses definitely mean a lot to me, too. I'm not doing real well, so every win counts."

After navigating through a murky first inning, Sheets (3-7) went on to finish six innings, allowing four earned runs on eight hits while striking out a season-high nine. He also did not walk a batter for just the second time all season.

Sure, Sheets got a much needed "W" attached to his name, but the veteran right-hander said he didn't feel much different about this start than his previous efforts.

"The performance was pretty on par with everything else for this whole year," Sheets said. "It ain't like just because I got a win, that I pitched any better."

In the center of it all was A's leadoff man Coco Crisp, who fell a home run short of cycle while going 3-for-5 with a walk. After hitting a single in the first, a double in the second and a triple in the fourth, Crisp said he was well aware of the cycle possibility.

"It would have been nice to hit the home run early and only have a single left or something like that," Crisp said with a laugh. "That would have been more in my favor than the way it happened tonight."

Since signing his one-year, \$5.25 million deal this offseason, Crisp has only played in five games with the A's. He missed 42 games to start the year with a broken pinkie and landed back on the 15-day disabled list with a rib muscle strain after playing just two games.

But after returning to the field on Wednesday, Crisp has made his presence known. He hit a two-run homer on Wednesday, supplying the A's only offense in a 4-2 loss to the Reds, before sparking the team on Friday.

"He's a true leadoff hitter," Sheets said. "He's a good player. There's a reason they went and got him. To be missing somebody like that for the year is a pretty tough hit. I think he sets our lineup up and puts everybody in different spots they need to be in."

Also highlighting the A's offensive binge was Pennington, who went 3-for-4 with three RBIs to maintain his recent hot streak. Over his past 10 games, Pennington is batting .531 (17-for-32).

But Friday's result was definitely a team effort. Every hitter in the starting lineup except Rajai Davis got a hit, while pinch-hitters Adam Rosales (RBI triple) and Gabe Gross (RBI single) also chipped in. Ryan Sweeney went 3-for-5 with three runs scored to raise his average back to .300.

"The collective effort is what we need for this ball club to win games," Crisp said. "We're not the Red Sox, Yankees -- with the home run statistics that they put up in a season. We have to do what we did today, one through nine."

The game started off as a back-and-forth, as Sheets and Pittsburgh starter Brad Lincoln had trouble silencing the opposing bats. The Pirates took an early 2-0 lead in the first before the A's tied it up at 2 in the bottom of the frame.

Pittsburgh took a brief 3-2 lead in the third before the A's went up 4-3 in their half of the inning. After Daric Barton hit a sacrifice fly in the fourth to make it 5-3 A's, Pittsburgh second baseman Neil Walker hit a solo shot off Sheets to make it 5-4.

The A's fared well against Lincoln, tagging him for five runs (three earned) on eight hits over six innings, before putting the game out of reach against the bullpen.

"It was tough to command my fastball early in the game," said Lincoln, who is still seeking his first big league win. "For the most part, I felt fine. Early in the game, I was just a little off, just off the plate."

For the A's, a team that had lost 10 of 12 entering the contest, it was a much-needed victory. Combined with Texas' 7-4 loss to the Astros, the A's picked up a full game on first place in the American League West for the first time since June 6. Still, Oakland trails the Rangers by 10 games.

"It was an uplifting game for a lot of reasons," said Oakland manager Bob Geren. "Obviously, the win itself, the amount of runs and a lot of different guys getting in the game and contributing."

## **Davis returns to roots against Pirates**

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- About three hours before the A's opened their three-game set against the Pirates Friday, outfielder Rajai Davis shared a moment with a key figure in his professional development.

Tony Beasley, Pittsburgh's third-base coach, managed Davis for three seasons in the Minor Leagues, first in Rookie League, then Class A and Double-A. Davis was picked by the Pirates in the 38th round of the 2001 First-Year Player Draft.

Drafted so late -- as a projected second baseman, no less -- Davis didn't always appear headed to the big leagues. The fact he tried to learn switch-hitting at the professional level didn't help, either. But according to Beasley, Davis never lacked for confidence.

"He was never disrespectful, but he'd always say, 'I know I can do this,'" Beasley said. "He always believed there was a bigger force involved in his career than man."

United by their Christian faith, Beasley and Davis became friends during their time together in the Minor Leagues. After struggling in his first full season as a pro in 2002, Davis was sent back down to the Pirates' Rookie League team, where he won the Gulf Coast League batting title with a .384 average.

Davis was then assigned to the Class A team in Hickory, N.C., where he reunited with Beasley for the entire 2003 season. It wasn't until that point in Davis' development when Beasley envisioned Davis as a big league prospect.

"He was a totally different guy," Beasley said. "I don't know what clicked or what went on, but something happened where he just got it. He just took off."

Davis climbed the ladder after that, spending seasons at Class A Advanced, Double-A and Triple-A, before making his Major League debut in 2006 with Pittsburgh.

"He just promoted himself," Beasley said. "There was nothing where the organization felt like they had to do anything, but he promoted himself by the way he played and with his character."

This season with the A's, Davis has seen his role reduced with the addition of Conor Jackson and the return of Coco Crisp from the disabled list. It appears Geren favors an everyday grouping of Jackson in left, Crisp in center and Ryan Sweeney in right. Though he looks to be a primary bench player for now, Davis said he still approaches his job the same.

"I have confidence in my abilities; I know I'm a good player," Davis said. "I'm going to do what I do -- and that's continue to take advantage of opportunities. That's what I've been doing my whole career, makes no sense to stop now."

In 66 games for Oakland this season, Davis is batting .269 with two home runs and 21 RBIs, while stealing 26 bases, the second-highest total in the Majors.

"I couldn't be happier," Beasley said. "Do I take part in his success? No, none whatsoever. The only thing I hope I've done is help groom him as a person, as an individual. His talents on the ball field -- they took care of themselves."

### **Cahill, Bailey have All-Star credentials**

OAKLAND -- With the All-Star game about two weeks away, the A's discussed on Friday who they would send to Anaheim for this year's Midsummer Classic.

Both Rajai Davis and Jack Cust agreed that closer Andrew Bailey should be the leading candidate to represent the green and gold, while manager Bob Geren offered another possibility.

"Look at the job Trevor Cahill's been doing," Geren said. "If he can rattle off two or three more starts like that -- that's a solid candidate with what he's done."

Cahill, a 22-year-old righty in his second big league season, currently totes the lowest ERA (3.21) among the A's starters. His 6-2 record is also tops for Oakland, in terms of wins and percentage.

Cahill was in the running for the A's final rotation spot in Spring Training but started the season on the 15-day disabled list with neck pain. Since taking over for an injured Justin Duchscherer at the end of April, Cahill has become one of the A's most consistent starters. He's won his past five decisions, a span of seven starts, holding opponents to a .217 average while carrying a 2.62 ERA in that stretch.

Bailey, meanwhile, has remained as Oakland's most reliable option in the bullpen this season. Last season's American League Rookie of the Year is 0-2 with a 1.86 ERA and has converted 13 of his 16 save attempts.

"He's great," Cust said. "Not a lot of teams have that. It's good to have a guy in there that you know is going to get outs."

Cust and Geren also suggested catcher Kurt Suzuki as a possible candidate. Suzuki, 26, is batting .266 with eight home runs and 30 RBIs this season.

### **Sore hamstring keeps Jackson out of lineup**

OAKLAND -- Battling a sore hamstring, Conor Jackson was absent from the A's starting lineup on Friday, the opener of a three-game set against the Pirates.

Since being traded from the D-backs to the A's on June 15, Jackson has been a steady presence in the batting order. In each of the previous six games, manager Bob Geren inserted Jackson into the No. 3 hole in the lineup. In nine games with Oakland, Jackson is batting .345 with three RBIs and five runs scored.

Geren said Jackson has been bothered by the injury for a few days, and that one more day of rest would do the outfielder good. Jackson was a designated hitter on Wednesday before the A's had an off-day on Thursday.

"He's playable," Geren said. "It's a good time to do something like that because we have a real deep outfield, and it gives someone else an opportunity to play."

On Friday, it was Rajai Davis, who batted ninth and took over Jackson's regular post in left field. Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, whose 34 hits in June are second best in the American League, replaced Jackson as the third-place hitter on Friday.

Jack Cust returned to the lineup after a two-game hiatus, hitting sixth as the designated hitter.

### **Worth noting**

The A's will play their game on Saturday against the Pirates at 7:05 p.m. PT, back an hour from the original 6:05 start time. The game will feature a Turn-back-the-clock theme, as the A's and Pirates will play in uniforms designed in the same style as they wore during the 1970s. ... Rick Rodriguez, pitching coach for Triple-A Sacramento, will serve in the same capacity for the World team in the June 11 XM All-Star Futures Game to be played in Anaheim. ... Oakland set a new season high with 14 runs in Friday's 14-4 win over the Pirates. ... Infielder Adam Rosales snapped his career-long hitless streak at 17 consecutive at-bats with his pinch-hit triple in the eighth inning on Friday.

## **Cahill can improve All-Star candidacy vs. Bucs**

By Jocelyn Syrstad / MLB.com

When 22-year-old Trevor Cahill steps on the mound on Saturday against the Pirates, A's manager Bob Geren said fans will see a good candidate for the All-Star Game.

Cahill has won his previous five decisions, the longest streak in his career. That stat alone is enough to have Geren convinced the youngster is good enough to make the trip to Anaheim in mid-July. The right-hander's 6-2 record and ERA of 3.21 helps make the manager's case as well.

"Look at the job Trevor Cahill's been doing," Geren said. "If he can rattle off two or three more starts like that -- that's a solid candidate with what he's done."

While the A's praise their starter, the Pirates will be putting a new face on the mound. Zach Duke, who was supposed to start on Saturday, was placed on the disabled list on Wednesday, meaning Daniel McCutchen will start in his place.

McCutchen has appeared in only four games this season, all coming in April. He has a 13.50 ERA and has pitched only 12 innings. He is 0-2 on the year.

However, after being sent back to Triple-A Indianapolis, McCutchen is feeling confident about going up against the A's.

"I've been feeling pretty good lately," McCutchen said. "I worked some things out in Indy. I'm feeling more like my old self, pounding the strike zone more, more command of my pitches."

### **Pirates: Searching for first win over A's**

The Pirates are looking to break through for their first win against the A's. They were swept by Oakland in both 2002 and 2004 when the teams played in Interleague. ... Pirates infielder Bobby Crosby is playing against the team that originally drafted him in 2001. He was the 25th pick overall and the A's first-round pick. He played seven seasons in the Oakland organization.

### **A's: Breaking out of skid**

The A's have lost 10 of their last 13 games, but they broke a three-game losing streak on Friday when they beat the Pirates, 14-4.

### **Worth noting**

Saturday's game will be Turn-Back-The-Clock night at the Oakland Coliseum. Both teams will wear throwback uniforms, with

the A's donning the gold tops and pants made popular during the team's championship run in 1973. The A's won three straight titles from 1972-74. The Pirates will dress out in their '70s black jerseys with black pants.

## **Sheets cruises, A's crush Pirates**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Coco Crisp had three hits and Ben Sheets won for the first time in more than a month when the Oakland Athletics beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 14-4 on Friday night.

Crisp singled, doubled and tripled in his third game since coming off the disabled list earlier this week. He just missed becoming only the seventh player in Oakland history to hit for the cycle after flying out, walking and grounding out in his final three plate appearances.

Neil Walker homered and had a career-high three hits for the Pirates. Walker, who needed a triple for the cycle, appeared to get hit in the back of the head by teammate Ryan Church's knee as they chased a foul ball.

Walker remained face down on the turf for several minutes. He was eventually helped to his feet and left the field under his own power.

Coming off a three-game sweep by Cincinnati, the A's had 17 hits and a season-high 14 runs. Every starter except Rajai Davis had at least one hit while eight players drove in at least one run.

That was big for Sheets (3-7), who hasn't received much run support in his first season in Oakland. The A's had scored one run or less in seven of Sheets' previous 15 starts.

Sheets, who signed a one-year, \$10 million contract with the A's in the offseason, scattered eight hits over six innings and had a season-high nine strikeouts to end his personal eight-game winless streak.

The Oakland right-hander labored through a 13-minute first inning when he gave up three straight hits and two runs, then allowed single runs in the third and fifth. Sheets, who hadn't won since beating Tampa Bay 4-2 on May 8, retired eight of the final 10 batters he faced before giving way to the bullpen.

Crisp, who singled in the first and doubled in the second, hit a leadoff triple in the fourth and scored on Daric Barton's sacrifice fly to break a 4-4 tie. He also walked and scored as part of Oakland's seven-run seventh inning when the A's sent 11 men to the plate.

Cliff Pennington singled three times and had three RBIs while Ryan Sweeney added three hits and scored three times for Oakland, which improved to 7-0 against Pittsburgh in interleague play.

Brad Lincoln (0-2) gave up five runs in six innings for the Pirates, who have lost 15 consecutive road games and 22 of 27 overall.

This could be a costly defeat, too. Walker was shaken up after his collision with Church and appeared woozy as he walked slowly off the field, a towel draped around his neck.

Before getting hurt the rookie second baseman was Pittsburgh's best offensive weapon. He doubled and scored in the first, singled in the third, then homered off Sheets with one out in the fifth. Both teams struggled with their defense early.

Davis tried to backhand Andrew McCutchen's double to left in the first inning, allowing the ball to skip past him and roll to the fence as Walker scored.

One batter later, first baseman Daric Barton allowed Ryan Doumit's sharp grounder to skip between his legs for an error while McCutchen scored.

Pittsburgh's defense wasn't much better and cost Lincoln two unearned runs in the bottom of the inning. Walker fumbled Sweeney's two-out grounder, allowing Crisp to score, and Jack Cust followed with an RBI single that McCutchen, the Pirates center fielder, appeared to make a diving catch of before the ball squirted out of his glove.

Notes: The A's had scored one run or less in seven of Sheets' previous 15 starts. ... Oakland, which led the AL West by one game on May 31, is 10 games behind first-place Texas.



## Minor league news

### **Sacramento thumps Vegas for series split**

By Robbie Enos / Sacramento River Cats

Most people go to Las Vegas for the booming city, raging casinos, and guarantee at a fun night. But the Sacramento River Cats were in Vegas for a different reason, coming into town to play the Las Vegas 51s.

Vegas' game was not on, as the River Cats put them away 11-2 in a huge offensive performance for Sacramento.

Overall the Cats had a full house: 13 hits, three doubles, a triple and a home run. Michael Taylor was the top contributor, going 4-for-5 with a double, two runs scored and four runs batted in. Matt Carson was 2-for-3 with two walks and a home run in the fifth.

On the mound, the top dealer of the night was Sacramento starter Clay Mortensen, who threw 7.0 innings, allowing two earned runs and one walk. He opened up the outing with five consecutive strikeouts, and finished with eight total.

It was in the seventh inning that the River Cats went all in and won big. Matt Watson led off the inning with a double. Chris Carter smacked a ball to left center that bounced off the wall and away from Vegas center fielder Adam Calderone. Watson scored and Carter reached third for an RBI triple.

Sacramento didn't fold after that, completing a series of hits that developed into a six-run inning. Left-handed hitting Dallas McPherson drove a single the other way, and then Carson walked. Josh Donaldson drew another walk, and then Taylor smoked his fourth hit of the game to center, scoring McPherson and Carson.

They continued to raise, as Corey Wimberly hit an infield single, and Vegas second baseman Luis Figueroa committed an error off a ball from Eric Sogard, scoring both Donaldson and Taylor. Reliever Merkin Valdez allowed all six runs, and Zach Jackson managed to get the 51s out of the inning by forcing a double play from Watson.

Las Vegas starter Lance Broadway did not have the hot hand early, giving up three runs in the second inning. The rally started when Carson muscled a ball into right field, followed by a Josh Donaldson walk. Taylor doubled both runners home, and then scored himself on a sacrifice fly from Wimberly.

Broadway got a lucky roll in the fourth, when a great defensive play by Brett Wallace saved a run. Donaldson and Taylor led off the inning with back-to-back singles. Steve Tolleson executed a sacrifice bunt, advancing both runners.

Broadway next dealt to Wimberly, and the River Cats leadoff man hit a ground ball to the first baseman Wallace. Wallace picked up the ball and fired home, nailing Donaldson at the plate. Wallace is more known for his bat, having hit 14 home runs on the year already.

The River Cats upped the ante for Las Vegas in the fifth, when Carson mashed a home run to left-center, scoring him and Carter. It was Carson's eighth home run of the season.

The mighty Mortensen was playing the table well through four innings, but he finally lost the shutout in the fifth. J.P. Arencibia led off the inning with a single, and then Chris Lubanski walked. Edwin Encarnacion beat out a double play ball, putting runners on first and third. Luis Figueroa singled to bring Arencibia home, putting Vegas on the board.

The River Cats threatened to score again in the sixth, but it turned out to be a bluff when reliever Merkin Valdez worked out of trouble. Taylor singled, stole second, and then advanced to third on a wild pitch with no outs. But Valdez struck out Tolleson and Wimberly, and then forced a ground out off the bat of Eric Sogard to get out of the jam.

Arencibia homered to left-center in the seventh, as the 51s tried to prove the game wasn't a flop. But reliever Jamie Wright pitched two scoreless innings to put the game away, allowing only three hits.

Sogard had been playing a hot hand as of recent, coming into the game with a 17-game hitting streak. But an 0-for-6 performance ended the run, the longest hitting streak for the Cats this season.

The River Cats split the pot against Las Vegas, winning the final two games to even out the series. They will start a seven-game homestand against Tacoma on Saturday at 7:05 p.m.

## **Hounds Drop Third Straight**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

They weren't the only two plays in Friday night's game at San Antonio, but they were the two that decided the game. A RockHounds error early and a Missions "Web Gem" late did in the 'Hounds, who fell to 0-3 in the second half, while San Antonio (and Frisco) improved to 3-0.

In the last of the first, with one on and one out, San Antonio's Logan Forsythe sent a soft liner to center field. Corey Brown misplayed the ball, and the Missions went on to score the game's only two runs, both of them unearned. Without the miscue, the game would have remained scoreless.

Missions starter Simon Castro went 5.0 shutout innings, allowing just one hit, but the 'Hounds put together a serious threat against reliever Nathan Culp in the sixth. J.C. Holt led off with his second double of the game, and Brown lined a single to right, putting runners at the corners with no outs. Jeff Baisley then ripped a line drive headed toward the left field corner, but Missions third baseman Christian Colonel made a sensational, leaping catch, taking away a certain double, which would have driven in a run and would have left runners at second and third with no outs. Instead, the web gem from Colonel (who played at Texas Tech) doused the rally and the Missions bullpen didn't allow another serious threat the rest of the way.

RockHounds starter Justin Murray, who allowed eight hits in 4.0 against the Missions in his first start for the RockHounds (June 20, also at San Antonio), pitched 6.0 strong innings, allowing the two unearned runs on four hits, walking two and striking out four. Justin James pitched scoreless ball in the seventh and eighth, and has not allowed a run in his three appearances with the RockHounds (5.0 innings), routinely hit 95+ on the radar gun.

## **Stockton Slugs Out 9-4 Win In Lancaster**

**LANCASTER, Calif.** - For the second straight night, the Stockton Ports offense got off to a fast start and kept the momentum rolling throughout the game. Stockton took Game 2 of their four game set with the Lancaster JetHawks by a final of 9-4 to improve to 2-0 in the second half.

For the third straight game, the Ports plated runs in their half of the first inning. David Thomas, who was added back to the active roster on Friday, walked to open the contest. Grant Green followed with a two-run homer to left, his sixth of the year, to give the Ports an early 2-0 lead.

After setting the side down in order in the bottom of the first, Ports starter Paul Oseguera (2-2) struggled in the last of the second. Oseguera gave up a one-out single to Freddy Parejo, then an RBI double to Mark Ori to cut Stockton's lead to 2-1. Federico Hernandez followed with an RBI double to right to tie the game at two.

Stockton quickly took the lead back in the third, an inning where they sent nine men to the plate. Michael Richard and Thomas started the frame with back-to-back singles to put runners at the corners. Green came up and hit into a fielder's choice that scored a run to give the Ports the lead back at 3-2. Two batters later with two down, Mike Spina broke out of an 0-for-7 series funk with an RBI double to left to make it 4-2. Jeremy Barfield drew a walk next to put runners at first and second and Tyler Ladendorf followed with an RBI single to center to give the Ports a 5-2 lead and knock JetHawks starter David Duncan (0-2) from the ballgame.

Duncan would be charged with the loss after allowing five runs in 2.2 innings of work. Edwin Walker would be summoned from the bullpen and pitch the next 3.1 innings scoreless for Lancaster.

Oseguera would struggle at the start of the third inning, but find his groove in the same frame. After giving up a leadoff single to Jay Austin, Oseguera yielded back-to-back walks to Albert Cartwright and Brandon Barnes to load the bases. Oseguera would escape the jam with minimal damage, getting Lee Cruz to fly out to shallow left, Parejo to hit a sac-fly to center, and Ori to ground out. Oseguera escaped the third allowing just one run, and Cruz's fly-out to left started a string of 10 in a row retired by Oseguera taking him into the sixth inning.

In the sixth with Stockton leading 5-3, Oseguera walked Parejo with one out, then gave up a double to Ori that scored Parejo and made it a one run game.

Oseguera would be lifted after recording the inning's second out. Scott Hodsdon came on and, with the possible tying run at third, got David Flores to ground out to end the inning. Oseguera earned the win on the night, going 5.2 innings and allowing four runs on five hits while striking out five.

From that point forward, Stockton's bullpen took command of the ballgame as they combined for 3.1 scoreless innings of relief. Hodsdon pitched 1.1 scoreless innings without allowing a hit. Brett Hunter pitched a scoreless eighth and Andrew Carignan set the side down in order in the ninth to end the ballgame.

Stockton's offense came through with insurance runs in each of the last three innings. The Ports took advantage of a JetHawks error in the seventh and tacked on a run on a sac-fly from Spina to put the lead at 6-4. In the eighth, a two-out RBI single from Thomas made it a 7-4 ballgame. Both of those runs came off JetHawks reliever Kyle Godfrey who pitched two innings in relief.

In the ninth, Spina delivered the crushing blow with his 13th home run of the year-a two-run blast off Brian Wabick to give the Ports their largest lead of the night at 9-4.

The Ports will go for their third straight win on Saturday night at Clear Channel Stadium. Kenny Smalley (2-5, 6.19 ERA) will take the bump for Stockton, opposed by right-hander Ross Seaton (3-8, 5.83 ERA) for Lancaster. First pitch is set for 7 p.m. PDT.

## **Gilliam, Cougars Win 2<sup>nd</sup>-Half Opener**

### **Kane County improves to 8-3 vs. Quad Cities with Friday's win**

**DAVENPORT, Iowa** – Behind the pitching of Rob Gilliam and three different two-out run-scoring hits by their offense, the Kane County Cougars beat the Quad Cities River Bandits, 4-2, Friday night at Modern Woodmen Park to claim the 2nd-half opener. The Cougars had been off since last Sunday for the all-star break and are now 8-3 against playoff-bound Quad Cities this season.

Gilliam (5-5) improved to 4-0 with a 1.99 ERA in four outings against the River Bandits this season. He pitched 5 1/3 innings of four-hit ball with three walks and seven strikeouts in the win. He departed with the bases loaded in the sixth, and Connor Hoehn ended that jam and pitched the next two frames with scoreless relief. Jose Guzman yielded a pair of runs in the ninth before recording the final out.

The Cougars grabbed two runs in the second off Eric Fornataro (5-6) on a two-out double by Mike Gilmartin. Then Rashun Dixon singled home Anthony Aliotti with two outs in the sixth, and Max Stassi's poked his third hit of the night with a two-out RBI single in the eighth that plated Conner Crumbliss. The Cougars were 5-for-9 with runners in scoring position.

The Cougars (1-0, 33-37) and River Bandits (0-1, 40-30) continue the three-game set Saturday night at 6 CT. Dan Straily (5-4, 4.80) is scheduled to face Jorge Rondon (2-4, 3.40). The game will be broadcast online at [www.kccougars.com](http://www.kccougars.com) with pregame coverage starting at 5:45 p.m.