

A's News Clips, Tuesday, July 6, 2010

Oakland A's can't solve New York Yankees starter Javier Vazquez in loss

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's appeared to catch a break by missing 10-game winners Phil Hughes and Andy Pettitte in the New York Yankees rotation this week.

But does it matter when Javier Vazquez, he of the 5.11 ERA coming in, confounds them as he did Monday?

The right-hander limited the A's to three hits over seven innings as the Yankees won 3-1 to open a three-game series before 27,405 at the Oakland Coliseum.

Vazquez (7-7) outdueled A's right-hander Ben Sheets, who threw a season-high 71/3 innings and featured some of his best stuff of the season.

"When he throws the way he did against a team like that, you want to get a victory," A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said of Sheets.

Instead, the A's began a pivotal six-game homestand on a flat note after winning seven of their previous nine contests. After this series, the A's play three against the Los Angeles Angels, who are one spot above them in the American League West, before the All-Star break.

The Yankees feature three 10-game winners in Hughes, Pettitte and Vallejo native CC Sabathia, who starts tonight. They also have a lineup stocked with bashers.

But it was New York's defense that shined Monday.

Third baseman Alex Rodriguez made a diving backhanded grab and threw out Suzuki in the sixth inning. In the seventh, center fielder Curtis Granderson made a sliding catch of Gabe Gross' shallow fly, and right fielder Colin Curtis followed that with a diving grab to rob Mark

Ellis.

"When you think of them, you think of other things," A's manager Bob Geren said. "But their defense is solid also."

Rodriguez's gem was his lone highlight as he went 0 for 4 in his first game at the Coliseum since trotting across the mound April 22 and jawing with A's left-hander Dallas Braden.

Former Athletic Nick Swisher started the only rally New York needed in the second.

With two outs, Swisher doubled down the right-field line off Sheets (3-8). Then Granderson grounded a run-scoring triple past diving A's first baseman Daric Barton.

Francisco Cervelli scored Granderson with a single to make it 2-0.

The A's closed to within 2-1 in the third, when Cliff Pennington tripled and scored on Coco Crisp's sacrifice fly.

Mark Teixeira launched a solo homer to center in the sixth off Sheets, who allowed eight hits, struck out four and walked none.

After allowing Derek Jeter's single to lead off the eighth, Sheets got Teixeira looking on a 93 mph two-seam fastball and then exited.

"I think it was huge they let me face another guy and end on a better note," Sheets said.

Said Suzuki: "His last pitch of the game, to Teixeira, I thought was his best pitch."

Crisp returned to center after exiting Sunday's game early because of a groin injury, and he made a diving grab to rob Robinson Cano in the second.

A's third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff snapped an 0 for 30 streak with an infield single in the fourth. The last Athletic to suffer an 0 for 30 stretch had been Scott Brosius in 1995.

Yankees skipper Joe Girardi, the AL manager for next Tuesday's All-Star game, addressed the possibility of adding another A's pitcher to the roster to replace Trevor Cahill.

Cahill is scheduled to start Sunday, making him ineligible to pitch in the game though he'll still represent the A's.

Geren has mentioned relievers Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow as being deserving candidates.

"I think what we'll do is look at the most deserving player," Girardi said in his pregame media session.

TODAY: Yankees

(CC Sabathia 10-3) at A's (Trevor Cahill 8-2), 7:05 p.m. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

TODAY: Yankees (CC Sabathia 10-3) at A's (Trevor Cahill 8-2), 7:05 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

A's update: Alex Rodriguez and Dallas Braden ready to put the feud in the past

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

'Get off my mound?' Braden says get over it

Monday marked Alex Rodriguez's first game at the Coliseum since the incident that touched off a feud between the New York Yankees third baseman and A's pitcher Dallas Braden. Both Rodriguez and Braden, who is on the disabled list, said they're eager to move past it.

Rodriguez was asked if he was aware of the "Get Off My Mound" T-shirts being sold at the Coliseum as the Yankees arrived for a three-game series.

"I've heard of them, I hope I get a cut (of the revenue)," Rodriguez joked before the series opener against the A's.

The shirt is a reference to the April 22 incident between Rodriguez and Braden, which started when Rodriguez jogged directly over the pitcher's mound while returning to first base. The action so infuriated Braden that it ignited a national story.

That's probably why Braden is at least partly bent out of shape that the A's are even selling the "Get Off My Mound" souvenirs. Braden said he learned from teammate Brad Ziegler, the A's representative to the players' union, that the team was denied permission from the union to sell the shirts but was doing so anyway.

"They just kind of put the horse blinders on and ran with it," Braden said. "At the end of the day, (players are) all fraternity brothers. You don't ever pit two guys against each other."

The A's released a statement Monday night that read in part:

"We regret that Dallas has expressed concern in regards to the 'Get Off My Mound' T-shirts that are being sold throughout the stadium. The organization created these shirts in response to numerous fan requests and made them to generate interest in this series. The shirts represent the competitive nature of the team, which Dallas epitomizes ... "

Left fielder Conor Jackson was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a right hamstring strain. The move is retroactive to July 1, meaning Jackson can be activated July 16 against Kansas City, the A's first game back from the All-Star break.

The A's promoted outfielders Matt Carson and Matt Watson from Triple-A Sacramento and optioned right-hander Clay Mortensen to Sacramento. It's been quite a road for Watson, 31, who last played in the majors in 2005 with the A's. Since then, he's had a stint in Japan and several minor league stops. To make room for Watson on the 40-man roster, outfielder Travis Buck was transferred to the 60-day DL.

Chin Music: Conor Jackson to the DL; Coco Crisp back in A's lineup; Matt Watson earns long-awaited return to majors

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/5/2010 6:54PM

The Coliseum is gradually filling up, but there's still plenty of empty seats in the second deck as we approach first pitch of the A's-Yankees series opener.

A quick update of the day's happenings:

–The A's placed left fielder Conor Jackson on the DL with a strained right hamstring, not a surprise considering he had missed the past few games. His stint is retroactive to July 1, meaning he's eligible to come off when the A's resume play after the All-Star break. To bolster their outfield depth, the A's called up Matt Carson and Matt Watson from Triple-A Sacramento and optioned right-hander Clayton Mortensen to Sacramento. Watson needed to be added to the 40-man roster, so Travis Buck was transferred to the 60-day DL. Pretty nice story for Watson, 31, who last played in the big leagues with the A's in 2005. Since then, his journey has taken him to Japan as well as several minor league stops, but he's back in the majors now.

–Coco Crisp went through pregame drills and his groin was OK, so he's in the lineup tonight at leadoff.

–Check out tomorrow's A's notebook at contracostatimes.com for some reaction from Dallas Braden and Alex Rodriguez about A-Rod's first return to the Coliseum since his infamous trot across the pitcher's mound.

Tonight's lineups:

A's: Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Gross LF, Ellis 2B, Pennington SS; Sheets RHP.

Yankees: Gardner LF, Jeter SS, Teixeira 1B, Rodriguez 3B, Cano 2B, Swisher DH, Granderson CF, Cervelli C, Curtis RF; Vazquez RHP.

A's go quietly against Yankees

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The only really notable occurrences on the field at the Coliseum on Monday came via nice glove work by both teams, and the Yankees' first appearance in Oakland since the Dallas Braden/A-Rod flap in April was a quiet, well-played affair.

Braden is on the A's disabled list, and Rodriguez did little apart from a diving stop on a ball Kurt Suzuki hit down the line in the sixth, but the rest of the Yankees put together enough against Ben Sheets to claim a 3-1 victory in the opener of a three-game series.

"Do I think I pitched OK against them? Yeah," Sheets said. "I kept the team in it. But I know I can do better."

Sheets worked a season-high 7 1/3 innings, and two innings after giving a homer to center by Mark Teixeira - "He's a big boy and he hit it to the big part of the park," Sheets said - Sheets finished his night by striking Teixeira out looking at a two-seam fastball. "It was huge to let me face another guy and let me finish on a better note," Sheets said.

The A's next pitcher, Michael Wuertz, showed some of his best stuff of the season in retiring Rodriguez and striking out Robinson Cano.

"He definitely had the real good slider working," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "That was good to see; the middle of their lineup and he pitched very well."

So did Javier Vazquez, who limited the A's to one run in the third, on a triple by Cliff Pennington and a sacrifice fly by Coco Crisp.

The Yankees also played strong defense, with outfielders Curtis Granderson and Colin Curtis making diving catches. Oakland didn't come up short in the field, either: Crisp and first baseman Daric Barton made nice diving catches, too, and second baseman Mark Ellis made back-to-back wide-ranging plays.

"Great defense by both teams, without a doubt," Sheets said.

Kevin Kouzmanoff ended his career-high hitless streak at 30 at-bats with an infield single in the fourth.

Trevor Cahill takes the mound tonight against the Yankees, and his opponent is a fellow American League All-Star, CC Sabathia. AL manager Joe Girardi will need to replace both on the active roster, though, because they are also starting Sunday on the final day before the break.

Asked if he'd specifically look at A's pitchers to replace Cahill, Girardi responded that he'll look at "the most deserving pitchers." The Yankees' manager noted that there could be other spots for replacements by Sunday, too.

As the trade deadline approaches, a few high-level scouts have been in attendance, and one said Monday that he was checking on Sheets, though it was more a matter of course than out of strong interest.

Ellis' name has popped up as a potential trade target for teams, but a club source said the A's haven't really considered moving Ellis. There are strong indications that Oakland will stand pat this month.

Jackson DL'd; Carson and Watson up

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

With **Conor Jackson** going on the disabled list with right hamstring tightness and **Coco Crisp** slightly injured, the A's called up two outfielders from Triple-A Sacramento, both familiar faces, although it has been a long time for one.

Matt Carson was recalled for the third time this season and is likely to be in the lineup tonight against **CC Sabathia**. **Matt Watson**, who last played in the majors in 2005 with Oakland, also came up.

Since then, Watson has played in Japan, for five different minor-league teams and in an independent league, which is where the A's found the 31-year-old in May. He signed a minor-league deal and then hit .313 with eight homers and 23 RBIs in 28 games at Sacramento. It took him seven hours to drive from Reno to Oakland, but, Watson said, "It's very exciting, and it's also nice and familiar."

Pitcher **Clayton Mortensen** was sent back to Sacramento.

Trial warnings: In advance of the verdict from former BART police Officer **Johannes Mehserle**'s trial, head of stadium operations **David Rinetti** asked MLB to notify this week's guests at the Coliseum - the Yankees, Angels and the umpires - of the possibility of unrest.

Yankees director of security **Ed Fastook** said that because the verdict could not come down until today at the earliest, the players had not yet been informed of any potential complications. The team, he said, routinely stays in San Francisco (like most A's opponents) and relies on San Francisco police officers as "regional security agents."

MLB told Fastook that the San Francisco detail would provide escorts for team buses into Oakland if the trip seemed hazardous. Fastook said the team did not want to place any additional strain on the Oakland police.

Briefly: Brett Anderson threw 21 pitches in a simulated game Sunday. He'll throw in a rehab game Friday if there are no negative effects from Sunday's work.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser

Tuesday, July 6, 2010

Fan appeal: Nick Swisher hopes A's fans support his campaign to be the last player voted onto the AL All-Star team. "That would be huge, no doubt about it," the Yankees' outfielder said. "I came up here and loved my time here."

Drumbeat: Carson and Watson up, Jackson to dl, Mortensen sent out

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/5/2010 3:20PM

A quick post before I head downstairs, but if you hadn't seen the tweets from earlier this hour, Oakland brought up both Matts, Carson and Watson, from Triple-A Sacramento. Conor Jackson and his sore right hammy went on the DL, Clayton Mortensen was sent back to Sacramento and Travis Buck went on the 60-day DL in order to make room for Watson on the 40-man roster.

The A's probably feel they need both outfielders because of Coco Crisp's sore hamstring/groin; they don't need a fifth starter this week. Please let this end all the continued speculation that Bob Geren will move Trevor Cahill out of the Sunday start. He won't. He wants his best pitcher to get an extra start before the break, which is tough to argue with. It's about the regular season, not the All-Star Game.

UPDATE - I asked Yankees manager Joe Girardi, the AL manager, if he's giving thought to replacing Cahill with an A's pitcher and he responded that he's going to take the most deserving pitchers available to fill the two spots expected to open up; Cahill and CC Sabathia are both starting on Sunday.

Watson is a terrific story; briefly up with the A's in 2005, he's since played in Japan and this May, Oakland signed him out of an independent league where he was playing near his East Coast home. He's been Sacramento's best player since, and it's great to see him back, at the age of 31.

I'll post the lineup once I get it, but I'll tweet it well before then, @susanslusser.

UPDATE - Here's the lineup: Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Gross LF, Ellis 2B, Pennington SS, Sheets P

Brett Anderson threw a 21-pitch simulated game last night in Phoenix, all fastballs and changeups by design. His next time out will be on Friday, probably in a rehab game, if he comes out of last night's action well. Geren said that the report he got was that everything went fine.

Jackson is eligible to come off the DL right after the break, and he told me he'll be ready to go then. He'll probably play in a few rehab games during the break.

I just talked to Nick Swisher about his campaign to be the final pick for the AL All-Star team; he filmed a commercial touting himself for the fan vote, doing it in one take this morning. It's now on the team website and it's worth a look.

Braden: T-shirts 'not a good idea'

Gwen Knapp, San Francisco Chronicle

As Dallas Braden's impromptu protocol lesson to Alex Rodriguez went corporate, the resulting T-shirt had an odd effect on the A's and Yankees. They seemed to swap identities, if only briefly, before Monday's series opener at the Coliseum.

The Yankees delivered one-liners. The A's ended up issuing a statement.

"I don't have a problem with it," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said of the \$25 shirt bearing a G-rated version of Braden's admonition: Get Off My Mound.

"Maybe A-Rod should have got a cut of it."

Rodriguez, guilty of trespassing on Braden's turf in April, said virtually the same thing. He told a group of reporters that he wanted a cut. He also said drolly that he saw one of his teammates — "somebody who plays to the left of (Derek) Jeter" — wearing one of the shirts. It was second baseman Robinson Cano, playing the ham. The A's, to be fair, did not lack for wit. Asked whether he'd had any contact with A-Rod, Braden said: "No, uh-uh. I must have lost his phone number."

But, unlike A-Rod, the A's were not amused by their marketing department's creation. The shirts were produced without input from Braden, he said, even though his silhouette appears in the script. The MLB Players Association twice denied licensing rights for the shirt, according to Braden and player rep Brad Ziegler.

"They're trying to generate revenue, trying to get butts in the seats; I can see that," Braden said. "It's almost like, at what cost, though?"

They didn't have permission. They were told on multiple occasions that, no, it's not a good idea. It's not going to be approved. They just kind of put the horse-blinders on and ran with it."

Braden received widespread praise from other players for his stand against A-Rod, but he thinks the T-shirt trading on his rebuke violates a code, showing the type of disrespect for the game that he found so objectionable when Rodriguez trespassed. "It's just a serious, gross lack of tact," Braden said. "At the end of the day, I hope I do not become associated with that kind of approach."

When reporters asked for the marketing department's response, the club released this statement: "We regret that Dallas has expressed concern in regards to the 'Get Off My Mound' T-shirts that are being sold throughout the stadium. The organization created these shirts in response to numerous fan requests and made them to generate interest in this series. The shirts represent the competitive nature of the team, which Dallas epitomizes, and were intended as a fun way to engage the fans. We will speak privately with Dallas about this to clarify our position and make sure we have a clear line of communications going forward."

It's not like the A's to take themselves so seriously. They're the team of youth and blithe spirits.

The Yankees are the club that takes blithe spirits to the barber shop.

But the Yankees — who appear to have lightened up a lot in the last couple of years — were the ones laughing Monday. The A's were fuming, at their own marketing outfit. (Baseball executives, as well as the players, were not consulted about the shirt, and they were not happy.) Three months ago, A-Rod's reactions seemed both petty and foolish. He replied to questions about the showdown by saying he didn't "want to extend Braden's 15 minutes of fame" shortly before the lefty threw the 19th perfect game in major-league history. Now, Rodriguez wears the facade of a good sport.

The A's, on the other hand, appear more than a little bush league.

Braden, on the disabled list because of an injured elbow, can't pitch in this series. If his arm can't speak for him against the Yankees, a message sold at the souvenir stand — caricaturing him as a macho Emily Post — is a poor substitute.

Of course, the Yankees could laugh. The A's have a crummy old stadium with tarps covering the upper deck. They have few selling points these days, and their business side thinks it needs a Yankee as a foil to move merchandise.

"Organizations always look for creative ways to do things," Girardi said. "Obviously, the more money they bring in, the more they can spend on the players, so I don't blame them."

His diplomacy almost sounded like pity. Then the Yankees' manager suggested the two players sign a few of the shirts and auction them for the benefit of a charity. He didn't say whether he meant the A's .

Little damage against Sheets too much

Righty pitches into eighth, but Yanks' two-run second costly

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- In what's become a familiar tune this season, A's right-hander Ben Sheets pitched a decent game on Monday, but it wasn't enough for the victory.

Sheets' counterpart, Yankees righty Javier Vazquez, suffocated the A's lineup and New York won the opener of a three-game set, 3-1.

Sheets finished a season-high 7 1/3 innings on Monday, allowing three runs on eight hits, but he lost for the fifth time in seven starts. He has now given up at least three earned runs in each of his past eight outings.

But for the 31-year-old Sheets, who missed all of last season, Monday's start was the latest example of the right-hander showing the ability to pitch deep into the games. Sheets has now completed at least six innings in each of his past 12 starts.

"I knew getting deep would be a process," Sheets said. "But I didn't realize it would be this difficult. I'm starting to feel better toward the end of games, which is good. I think my stuff is starting to get better, as opposed to earlier in the year, when it was decreasing a lot."

In fact, A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said Sheets' final pitch -- a 94-mph two-seam fastball that painted the outside corner to strike out Mark Teixeira -- was also his finest pitch of the evening.

"To know I can make that pitch at [the 109-pitch mark] -- it lets me know that my stamina is starting to build up," Sheets said.

With the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline looming, Sheets' name continues to come up in trade rumors. However, the nine-year vet said he spends no time worrying about speculation. As a player who has never been traded, Sheets said he expects to be with the A's through the end of this season.

"I'm an Oakland Athletic and that's who I'm pitching for, and that's who I try to win for," Sheets said. "I don't think it crosses any athlete's mind when you're out there. ... I realize the business of it, but it's not something I think you worry about."

Sheets had three 1-2-3 innings and didn't walk a batter on Monday, but on a night when Vazquez was dealing, the A's lineup fell short.

Oakland managed just three hits and two walks against Vazquez over seven innings, its only run coming via a Coco Crisp sacrifice fly in the third. The A's fared even worse against Joba Chamberlain in the eighth and Mariano Rivera in the ninth, as the final 13 Oakland batters were retired in order.

"[Vazquez] really didn't leave many balls [over the plate]," Suzuki said. "He was changing his speeds, hitting his spots and he was pretty good tonight. It was kind of a night where you tip your hat."

Oakland manager Bob Geren said that Vazquez was able to keep the A's off balance by throwing effective offspeed pitches in fastball counts.

It didn't hurt Vazquez to have a stellar defense behind him, either. Whether it was Derek Jeter's graceful, twirling putout of Mark Ellis in the third, Alex Rodriguez's diving stab and strike across the diamond in the sixth or Curtis Granderson and Colin Curtis' consecutive diving grabs to cap off the seventh, there was plenty of quality glove work on display Monday.

"When you think of [the Yankees], you think of other things," Geren said. "But their defense is solid also. They have a pretty balanced team all the way around."

Nick Swisher, who played for the A's from 2004-07, went 2-for-4 in his most recent return to Oakland Coliseum. He doubled off Sheets with two outs in the second before scoring the game's first run on a Granderson triple. Yankees catcher Francisco Cervelli then singled in Granderson to give the Yankees a 2-0 lead. Teixeira made it 3-1 Yankees with his no-doubt solo shot off Sheets in the sixth.

"Two runs with two outs was big," Teixeira said. "Sheets pitched very well tonight, and it wasn't going to be a high-scoring night with the way those guys were pitching. It was good to get three off him."

The A's entered Monday's contest with a bit of momentum, having won seven of nine games -- albeit against three last-place teams -- but they couldn't take advantage on a night when both the Angels and Rangers lost big.

The A's now sit eight games behind the Rangers for first place in the American League West.

Though it came in a losing effort, A's third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff snapped his career-long 0-for-30 streak with a fourth-inning single. Reliever Michael Wuertz also finished off the eighth inning without a blemish and hasn't allowed a run over his past eight appearances, a span of 6 1/3 innings.

Jackson A's latest player sent to DL

Carson, Watson called up; Mortensen optioned to Triple-A

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- While placing outfielder Conor Jackson on the 15-day disabled list on Monday with a strained right hamstring, the A's called up outfielders Matt Carson and Matt Watson from Triple-A Sacramento, optioning right-hander Clay Mortensen back to Triple-A.

Jackson's move to the DL was made retroactive to Thursday, and he said he hopes to be activated by July 16, the first day he's eligible to return.

"It's frustrating," Jackson said. "After missing so much time last year and missing 18 days from this year already, now this. But I'm not going to let it drag me down. I'm going to rehab and try to get back healthy as possible."

Jackson said he first strained his hamstring on June 17 at Chicago's Wrigley Field -- playing his third game with the A's after being traded by the Diamondbacks -- and aggravated the injury the next day in St. Louis. Jackson missed 18 games for Arizona -- spending time on the DL with a strained right hamstring from April 18-May 8 -- but he said the injury occurred in a different spot this time.

"I can swing the bat, but it's the running that gets me," Jackson said. "We'll do treatment for the next six or seven days, and hopefully by the All-Star break I can get out and maybe go down to Rookie [League] ball and play some games down there."

Mortensen, 25, made his 2010 debut in place of injured lefty Dallas Braden on Saturday, allowing four runs (three earned) over six innings, while striking out seven and walking two. Mortensen is 10-2 with a 3.58 ERA in 15 Triple-A starts this season and was recently named to the Pacific Coast League All-Star team.

Due to the next week's All-Star break and an off-day on Thursday, the A's can afford to go with four pitchers until the Midsummer Classic. Oakland is hoping Braden and fellow lefty Brett Anderson can return to the rotation shortly after the break.

Carson joins the A's for his third stint this year and entered Monday having gone 1-for-9 in four games so far. In 51 games with the River Cats, Carson was batting .301 with nine home runs and 29 RBIs.

"It's good to be back," Carson said.

Watson, 31, hasn't played in the Majors since 2005, when he batted .188 in 48 at-bats with Oakland. Watson remained with the A's Triple-A affiliate in '06 before heading to Japan and playing for manager Bobby Valentine and the Chiba Lotte Marines in '07.

Watson returned to America in 2008, playing for the Blue Jays' Triple-A affiliate in Syracuse, N.Y., before signing with South Korea's Doosan Bears in '09. He also played in the Mets farm system in '09 and with an independent league team in his hometown of Lancaster, Pa.

The A's signed Watson on May 28, and he hit .313 with eight home runs and 23 RBIs in 28 games with Sacramento.

"I always like the perseverance of a young man that keeps trying to get his opportunity in the big leagues and to keep that dream alive," said Oakland manager Bob Geren.

Neither Carson nor Watson was in the starting lineup against the Yankees on Monday, but Geren said Carson could be in the lineup on Tuesday against left-hander CC Sabathia.

Cahill's Sunday start would nix Classic

OAKLAND -- The way it's scheduled now, A's All-Star Trevor Cahill won't be making an appearance at the Midsummer Classic on July 13 in Anaheim.

The 22-year-old right-hander is 8-2 with a 2.74 ERA in 13 starts this season but is slated to start on Sunday against the Angels, making him ineligible to play during the All-Star Game.

Yankees skipper Joe Girardi, this year's manager for the American League All-Stars, was asked before Monday's game at Oakland what he plans to do if Cahill pitches on Sunday.

"We'll look at all of the players that are out there," Girardi said. "Trevor Cahill has thrown the ball extremely well. He'll still be an All-Star, and he'll still represent the A's there. If he pitches Sunday, obviously he won't be able to pitch, so we'll look at other guys."

Since Cahill is currently Oakland's lone representative this season, A's manager Bob Geren said he hopes the A's can have another player participate. Geren, who will be a coach for the All-Star Game, said he hadn't talked to Girardi as Monday afternoon.

Asked if he felt obligated to tab another A's player in Cahill's stead, Girardi said, "I think what you'll do is look at the most deserving pitcher to go next."

Geren has voiced his support for catcher Kurt Suzuki and a couple of A's relievers -- closer Andrew Bailey and lefty Craig Breslow. Bailey entered Monday having converted 17 of his 20 save opportunities this year, with a 1.59 ERA. Breslow, meanwhile, had a 2.84 ERA in 40 appearances this season. Suzuki entered Monday batting .255 with 35 RBIs and a team-high 10 home runs.

"I know Bailey's had a great year again, so I was kind of surprised it was me and not him," Cahill said. "But I think we have a lot of deserving guys on this team, and this year, I was lucky enough to go."

'Moneyball' filming sparks fond memories

OAKLAND -- It was the year of the streak, the year of Billy Koch and the year of "Moneyball."

The 2002 season was certainly a memorable one for the A's, and it will soon be immortalized on the silver screen. Fans wishing to relive the magical campaign will get their chance from July 25-Aug. 5, as the movie "Moneyball" will be filming at the Oakland Coliseum.

Among the current A's, only two are left from the 2002 team: Eric Chavez and Mark Ellis. As author Michael Lewis infiltrated the minds of Oakland's front office and players for his bestselling book, Ellis was a rookie second baseman.

For Ellis, no memory trumps the 20-game win streak Oakland put together in the second half of the season.

"Without a doubt, that's one of my favorite moments ever from baseball," Ellis said. "It was just a special time -- we just kept winning ballgames. It seemed like we got out to a 3-0 lead all the time, and if we did need a big hit late in the game, Miguel Tejada was getting the big hit for us. It was a really incredible time."

The A's ended their streak in style, earning their 18th, 19th and 20th wins in their final at-bat. First was Tejada's three-run homer off then-Twins closer Eddie Guardado to win No. 18, then Tejada delivered a game-winning single off Kansas City's Jason Grimsley in the ninth inning for consecutive win No. 19.

First baseman Scott Hatteberg saved the best for last with a dramatic pinch-hit solo homer off Grimsley to give the A's a 12-11 win on Sept. 4, 2002, their 20th in a row. Ellis was in the on-deck circle to witness Hatteberg's blast.

While Oakland's "Big Three" of Barry Zito (23-5, 2.75 ERA), Tim Hudson (15-9, 2.98 ERA) and Mark Mulder (19-7, 3.47 ERA) were consistent all year, Koch -- the A's closer in 2002 -- often made things interesting in the ninth inning.

Koch went 11-4 with 44 saves and a 3.27 ERA in 2002 but earned five victories after blowing a save, including the team's 20th straight win.

"He was an awesome teammate," Ellis said of Koch. "He had a lot of personality, a lot of life. He was kind of like the way he was like as a closer -- he would walk the bases loaded and then get three strikeouts."

Though the A's eventually lost to the Twins in the American League Division Series, Tejada won the AL MVP Award, Zito won the AL Cy Young Award and the late Cory Lidle shined in the second half.

Brad Pitt will play the role of general manager Billy Beane in the movie, while Jonah Hill will be assistant general manager Paul DePodesta and Philip Seymour Hoffman will play manager Art Howe.

Worth noting

A's left-hander Brett Anderson threw 20 pitches on Sunday -- all fastballs and changeups -- in a simulated game in Arizona. Manager Bob Geren said that Anderson, who hasn't pitched in a game since June 3 due to left elbow inflammation, reported no setbacks and that the A's are still hoping he will return shortly after the All-Star break. "His mechanics and everything looked good," Geren said.

Yankees continue their winning ways

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post

Oakland, CA – The Oakland A's returned home from a six game road trip to face the power hitting New York Yankees. Winning seven of their last nine games the A's are two games under .500. They haven't been at the .500 mark since June 15 and still hold third place in the American League West.

Oakland held the Yankees to just three runs before losing 3-1 in the first game of the series. Ben Sheets pitched his best game of the season but the A's offense couldn't produce any hits to get him the win. Sheets went a season-high 7 1/3 innings allowing three runs (all earned), four strike outs, one home run and no walks.

"When he throws the way he did against a team like that, you want a victory," said Kurt Suzuki. "Tonight Ben had some of his best stuff this season but the Yankees have a golden glove in almost every position."

New York's former A's player Nick Swisher was 2-for-4 in his return. He got the rally going early in the second frame with a double followed by Curtis Granderson's triple that allowed him to score the game's first run. Francisco Cervelli then singled to bring Granderson in for the second run to put the Yankees up 2-0.

The defense behind winning pitcher Javier Vazquez was mind blowing! Derek Jeter twirled like a ballerina catching line drives while Alex Rodriguez dived getting ground balls. But it was the two great catches from both Granderson and Colin Curtis in the outfield that prevented two runs on base for Oakland. New York's defense was so solid they only allowed the A's one run.

Bottom of the third frame Cliff Pennington tripled before Coco Crisp's sacrifice fly to right field bringing him in to put Oakland with one. But Mark Teixeira's home run in the sixth inning was too much for Sheets as he lost for the fifth time in seven starts. He showed his ability to pitch deep in the game but was unsuccessful in his finish.

"I need to find a way to come out at the gate and finish stronger," Sheets said. "There ain't know doubt that this is on of the best lineups you'll find in baseball." "I think my stuff is starting to get better as opposed to earlier in the year, when it was decreasing a lot."

The Yankees own the best record in MLB at 51-31. They have six players appearing in the upcoming All-Star game next week which ties them for the most selections in the majors along with Boston. Despite various injuries throughout the season they still maintain a well balanced team on both offense and defense.

"Yes, we're in a good position right now," Jeter said. "We can always get better, there's still room for improvement."

The A's still fighting for a better position before entering the All-Star break will look to regroup and come back out tomorrow. Now eight games behind the Texas Rangers, Oakland can only hope they can move ahead in the standings in this six game homestand.

Vazquez gets best of Sheets

By JANIE McCAULEY, Associated Press

OAKLAND — The New York Yankees are a season-best 20 games over .500 and manager Joe Girardi can still see the defending World Series champions doing so much more.

Better at-bats and more consistency from the bullpen.

It's been an impressive first half nonetheless.

Mark Teixeira hit a solo homer, Curtis Granderson had an RBI triple and the Yankees beat the Oakland Athletics 3-1 on Monday night for their third straight victory.

"Trust me, I'm happy with the way we're playing and how hard our guys are playing, but I still think we can get better," Girardi said.

Francisco Cervelli added an RBI single as New York gave Javier Vazquez (7-7) all the offense he needed to end a three-start winless stretch. The right-hander outdueled Ben Sheets, Oakland's \$10 million man who has just one win over his last 11 outings.

The Yankees increased their lead in the AL East to two games over Tampa Bay, which beat Boston to drop the Red Sox to 2 1/2 games back.

Vazquez made his 400th career start, the seventh pitcher to reach the milestone while with the Yankees, and helped New York win for the eighth time in its last 11 road games.

He, too, insists New York can improve.

Vazquez sure liked the way the defense played behind him. He was aided by back-to-back diving catches by Granderson in center and Colin Curtis in right field to end the seventh.

"That was unbelievable in the seventh inning those two catches by Grandy and Colin," Vazquez said. "We're playing good. We still feel we can play better. Hopefully it says something that we're 20 games over."

Nick Swisher doubled and singled against his former club, still making a push for a last-minute All-Star spot. This is the Yankees' second trip to Oakland this year, kicking off a seven-game road trip that also features four games at Seattle before the All-Star break — New York's last West Coast swing of the season.

Teixeira's homer was his 14th overall and sixth in 25 games since June 8.

The A's lost for only the third time in their last 10 games. New York is 7-3 at Oakland since 2008.

Vazquez allowed three hits and one run, struck out two and walked two in seven strong innings. Joba Chamberlain pitched a perfect eighth with two strikeouts and Mariano Rivera finished for his 19th save in 21 chances as New York retired the final 15 batters in order.

Sheets (3-8), who lost to the Yankees back on April 21, struck out four and didn't walk a batter in a season-high 7 1-3 innings — lasting seven innings for only the third time in 18 starts this year. He gave up eight hits and three runs.

He went further than seven innings for the first time since Sept. 6, 2008, for Milwaukee in a shutout of San Diego.

The right-hander, who didn't pitch in 2009 while recovering from reconstructive elbow surgery, has given up at least three extra base hits in each of his last eight starts.

"The deeper you get the more you expect to go back out there," Sheets said. "I knew getting deep would be a process. I didn't realize it would be this difficult. I'm starting to feel better toward the end of games, which is good. I think my stuff's starting to get better as opposed to earlier in the year when it was decreasing a lot. I'm pleased with that. I have to find a way to come out of the gate, it's something I've struggled with my whole career."

He had a 10-pitch, 1-2-3 inning in the first and had retired the first five batters in order on 13 pitches before the Yankees got to him with Swisher's double, the triple to Granderson and Cervelli's single before the second inning ended.

"Any time you can come up and get hits there it's big," Granderson said. "It's difficult to do."

Kevin Kouzmanoff's single in the fourth for the A's snapped his 0-for-30 skid.

Earlier Monday, Yankees lefty Andy Pettitte (10-2) was added to the AL All-Star team. He replaces injured Red Sox pitcher Clay Buchholz for next Tuesday night's game at Angel Stadium in Anaheim.

The 38-year-old Pettitte was added to the team Monday because he was next in line in voting by AL players. Buchholz was placed on the 15-day disabled list Monday with a strained left hamstring.

NOTES

*Girardi said he hasn't decided who he will pick to replace Oakland RHP Trevor Cahill on the AL All-Star team. Cahill is scheduled to pitch for the A's on Sunday, two days before the midsummer classic and therefore won't be available to pitch. He will still attend the festivities.

*The A's are selling 'Get Off My Mound' T-shirts, a reference to the April 22 game here between the two teams when Alex Rodriguez jogged over the pitching mound while heading back to first base on a foul ball, a move that infuriated Oakland pitcher Dallas Braden. Braden, who is on the disabled list, won't be pitching in this three-game series. Girardi's playful suggestion: have both players autograph some of the shirts for auction. A's players have expressed frustration in the club's marketing department in making the shirts.

*A's LHP Brett Anderson (elbow) threw 20 pitches during a simulated inning in Phoenix and could pitch in a rehab game on Friday.

*It was just 58 degrees at first pitch.

With A-Rod Flap Over, Dallas Braden Turns Ire Toward A's for 'Mound' Shirts

Jeff Fletcher, Fanhouse, com, 7/6/2010

It's now Braden vs. the A's.

Dallas Braden and Alex Rodriguez took turns saying they were well past the April 22 incident in which Braden called out Rodriguez for violating baseball etiquette by running across the mound.

What has Braden really ticked is that the A's marketing department chose to revive the incident by selling T-shirts with the phrase "Get Off My Mound."

"I think we all understand where they are coming from, but it's just a serious, gross, lack of tact," Braden said Monday. "At the end of the day, I hope I do not become associated with that kind of approach."

The A's began selling the T-shirts about a month ago. Braden said he was not consulted. He also said the Major League Baseball Players' Association twice refused to give its approval to the A's for the shirts.

"They didn't ask anybody that would potentially be involved in it," Braden said. "From that standpoint they should probably tighten that ship up a lot."

The T-shirts do not include Braden's name. There is a silhouette of a left-handed pitcher.

"That's me," Braden said. "That's my silhouette."

The A's also produced a television commercial in which groundskeeper Clay Wood is shown giving extra attention to the mound.

When Braden's complaints made it to the A's director of marketing, Jim Leahey, officials huddled for more than an hour before producing a written statement:

"We regret that Dallas has expressed concern in regards to the 'Get Off My Mound' T-shirts that are being sold throughout the stadium. The organization created these shirts in response to numerous fan requests and made them to generate interest in this series. The shirts represent the competitive nature of the team, which Dallas epitomizes, and were intended as a fun way to engage the fans. We will speak privately with Dallas about this to clarify our position and make sure we have a clear line of communication going forward."

The shirts were a reference to April 22, when Braden lit into Rodriguez because Rodriguez had jogged over the pitcher's mound on his way back to first after a foul ball. After the game, Braden explained to reporters that Rodriguez had violated one of baseball's unwritten rules, and that Rodriguez was "too busy tasting himself" to notice.

The story lived on for a few days, and then Braden pitched a perfect game a few weeks later, which started it all up again, extending what Rodriguez had called Braden's "15 minutes" of fame.

Since the perfect game, Braden hasn't had much to celebrate. He is 0-5 with a 4.31 ERA. He has pitched through a couple nagging injuries, and he was just placed on the disabled list with left elbow stiffness.

Even though he's unable to pitch in the series, Braden fully expected to be the center of attention again. He just wished that his own organization wasn't stoking the fire on a story he wants to go away.

"They were told on multiple occasions 'no, that's not a good idea and it's not going to be approved,' and they kind of put on blinders and ran with it," Braden said.

Brad Ziegler, the A's player rep, said doing something that could potentially incite the opponent doesn't go over well in the clubhouse: "There isn't a guy in this locker room that wanted those T-shirts made."

It doesn't appear to have caused much reaction among the Yankees, though. Rodriguez, who was booed lustily when he came to the plate on Monday, seemed to get a kick out of the T-shirts.

"I hope I get a cut [of the profits]," he said.

Rodriguez also said that one of his teammates was wearing one in the clubhouse on Monday afternoon: "I won't mention who it was, but he plays left of Jeter."

Former Alex Rodriguez foe Dallas Braden appalled by Oakland's 'Get Off My Mound' T-shirts

BY Mark Feinsand , DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

OAKLAND - Robinson Cano broke out a "Get Off My Mound" T-shirt in the visiting trainer's room before Monday night's game, causing an eruption of laughter inside the Yankees' clubhouse.

Even Alex Rodriguez laughed at the shirt, which is being sold in the A's team store, a nod to Dallas Braden's famous words for A-Rod after he crossed over the mound on his way back to first base during the Yankees' visit to Oakland on April 22.

"I hope I get a cut," Rodriguez told reporters.

Braden echoed the same sentiment when questioned by reporters, but the mouthy pitcher quickly added that if it were up to him, the shirts wouldn't be at souvenir stands, calling the idea a "suicide request" by the A's.

According to Braden, the A's marketing department went to the MLBPA to get the shirt approved, but was not given the go-ahead to license it. As a result, the shirt doesn't have Braden's name, face or uniform number on it, though it does include a silhouette of him delivering a pitch.

"They're trying to generate revenue, trying to get butts in the seats, I can see that," Braden said. "It's almost like, at what cost do you do that? They didn't have permission. They were told on multiple occasions that, no, it's not a good idea. It's not going to be approved. They just kind of put the horse-blinders on and ran with it."

Braden's objection to the shirt is that it pits him and A-Rod against each other, something he finds distasteful as part of the "baseball fraternity" of players.

"We regret that Dallas has expressed concern," the A's responded in a statement. "The organization created these shirts in response to numerous fan requests and made them to generate interest in this series. The shirts represent the competitive nature of the team, which Dallas epitomizes, and were intended as a fun way to engage the fans. We will speak privately with Dallas about this to clarify our position and make sure we have a clear line of communications going forward."

"It's just not cool," said Braden, who pitched a perfect game against the Rays on May 9. "It's just a serious, gross lack of tact. At the end of the day, I hope I do not become associated with that kind of approach."

A's look to capitalize on war of words

By Andrew Marchand, ESPNNewYork.com

OAKLAND -- Oakland A's pitcher Dallas Braden says he is over his tiff with New York Yankees shortstop Alex Rodriguez, but his team won't let it go.

In an effort to take advantage of the Braden-Rodriguez controversy that began when Braden objected to A-Rod running across the mound during an April 22 game here, the A's are selling T-shirts that say, "Get off my mound."

"It looks like the A's are making light of the situation," Braden was quoted saying in Monday's San Francisco Chronicle. "In some ways, it might keep what happened alive."

Braden, who is on the disabled list and will not pitch, says he doesn't plan on going after Rodriguez verbally or physically over the next three days. On the field, in April, Braden yelled, "Get the [expletive] off my mound" when A-Rod broke what Braden thought was an unwritten rule of returning to the dugout.

Rodriguez responded by saying he never heard of such a rule and dismissed Braden's criticism of his route to the dugout by claiming it was funny coming from a pitcher with "a handful of wins."

Later, Braden made reference to his hometown of Stockton, Calif., adding the two may have to settle things with their fists. Rodriguez tried to put out any controversy, saying he didn't want to extend Braden's "15 minutes of fame."

The words had barely escaped A-Rod's lips when the relatively unknown Braden pitched his perfect game on Mother's Day in early May. While Braden fired the perfecto, the Yankees were in Boston. After Braden's grandma told A-Rod to "stick it," Rodriguez responded by saying, "Uncle," and that he was done talking about Braden. Now, it appears, Braden might be too.

"I'm way over it," Braden was quoted in the Chronicle. "My 15-minute timer went off a little time ago."

Souvenir to Greet Yankees' Return

By BEN SHPIGEL, New York Times, 7/5/2010

OAKLAND, Calif. — For \$25, fans here can wear their support of Dallas Braden. Even before the Yankees' arrival Monday, the Athletics have been selling green T-shirts that say, "Get Off My Mound" — what Braden, in a bit of spicier language, yelled at Alex Rodriguez in April when Rodriguez crossed over the pitcher's mound on his way back to first base.

"Maybe it would be a good idea for both of them to sign a couple and auction them off for charity," Yankees Manager Joe Girardi said.

What Braden thought of Girardi's proposal was not known. When the Oakland clubhouse opened to reporters Monday afternoon, Braden was told that a few from New York had just walked in, and he disappeared into an off-limits area. The Yankees will not see him except, perhaps, if their paths cross before the game, and that seems unlikely. Braden is sidelined with a tender left elbow and will not pitch again until after the All-Star break.

In recent comments to the local news media, Braden has said he does not want to revisit the imbroglio that began April 22, when he took offense that Rodriguez had violated what he viewed as an unwritten rule of baseball.

A's Braden sends peace offering to A-Rod

By KEVIN KERNAN, New York Post

OAKLAND, Calif. --- Perhaps Dallas Braden is more upset with his A's now for marketing a "Get Off My Mound" T-shirt than he is with noted mound-crosser Alex Rodriguez.

Asked last night if he had talked with Rodriguez since the April 22 incident when A-Rod crossed the mound on his way back to first after a foul ball, Braden said, "No, I must have lost his phone number."

A few minutes later the lefty was seen boxing up an autographed poster and some other goodies that were sent over to the Yankees clubhouse as a peace offering to A-Rod.

Earlier, Braden was asked by The Post what kind of feedback he had gotten from other major leaguer players since taking on A-Rod and said, "It's all positive. It's all about respecting the game."

Braden, who pitched a perfect game on Mother's Day, is on the disabled list with a sore elbow. He could only watch last night as the Yankees beat the A's 3-1 at the Coliseum.

"There are things that are going to have to happen," Braden told CSN Bay Area soon after the incident. "Out of respect to my teammates, out of respect to the game. I think he's probably garnered a new respect for the unwritten rules and the people who hold them close to their game. But I think you're right, we don't do much talking in the 209 [area code]."

Nothing happened, though.

When A-Rod showed up in clubhouse yesterday, Robinson Cano greeted him wearing one of the GOMM shirts. A smiling A-Rod said of the Braden situation: "We've opened that window and closed it."

He jokingly added that he would like a cut from the shirts.

"I'd like one, too," said Braden, who added that the A-Rod incident was "over."

Now it's all about the A's marketing that T-shirt with his silhouette.

"I can see the angle, but I can't see pretty much, the suicide request on their end," Braden said. "Because that's what it sounds like to me. They didn't ask me. They didn't ask anybody who would be involved in that. So from that standpoint they should tighten up that ship a lot."

Braden found himself in the middle of a storm with his own club when the A's released this statement, saying, in part, "The shirts represent the competitive nature of the team, which Dallas epitomizes. We will speak privately with Dallas about this to clarify our position."

Braden's big problem is that the A's didn't have permission from the Players Association to market the shirt.

"At the end of the day it's a baseball fraternity," he said. "Just like any other fraternity, not everybody gets along. We're all fraternity brothers; you don't ever pit two guys against each another no matter how fun-loving or how severe the incident might be."

Said A's player rep Brad Ziegler, "We'd very much would like them to stop selling the shirt."

The shirt, Braden said, doesn't respect the game, which was his original problem with A-Rod. The day of the incident Rodriguez gave this little slap to Braden, saying, "He just told me to get off his mound. I was a little surprised. I'd never quite heard that. Especially from a guy that has a handful of wins in his career."

Braden's tough-minded grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, who uttered the famous line: "Stick it, A-Rod," after the perfect game.

Baseball has been far from perfect since then. Braden is 0-5. Opposing hitters have hit .304 against him.

Braden does not regret the way he handled the situation. "I would have liked to face these guys, just from a competitive standpoint," he said.

Maybe he'll get his chance when the A's visit the Bronx at the end of August. Until then, he'll just have to keep his shirt on.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento again comes from behind to topple Reno

Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento's bullpen allowed one run over 6.0 innings Monday as the River Cats came from behind for the second consecutive game.

Edwar Ramirez (2-1, 3.65) pitched 3.0 scoreless innings in relief of Boof Bonser as the River Cats topped host Reno 7-3 for their 10th consecutive win against the Aces. Jon Hunton pitched two scoreless innings and Michael Benacka allowed one run in the ninth inning as Sacramento's bullpen continues a dominant trip. On Sunday, the River Cats bullpen pitched 5.2 scoreless innings as Sacramento rallied from an early 8-3 deficit for a 10-8 victory.

On Monday afternoon, River Cats starter Boof Bonser allowed two runs in the first inning before settling down with scoreless second and third innings. Bonser, who was drafted by the San Francisco Giants and spent three seasons with the Minnesota Twins, allowed three walks and two hits over 3.0 innings in his first start with Sacramento. The right-hander, who was signed as a free agent Sunday after being released by the Boston Red Sox, was on a tight pitch count.

Ramirez entered to keep Reno bats quiet, and Corey Wimberly highlighted a three-run fourth inning for Sacramento with a two-run single. The River Cats added a run in the sixth and Michael Taylor smacked a two-run single in a three-run ninth.

Sacramento's six-through-nine hitters combined to go 6-for-14 with four runs, four RBIs and three walks. No. 2 hitter Eric Sogard collected three hits, and No. 7 hitter Steve Tolleson went 2-for-4 to improve his team-high batting average to .328.

Sacramento has won nine of its last 11 games.

Before the game, outfielders Matt Watson and Matt Carson were called up to Oakland.

For Watson, the transaction marks a poignant moment in an amazing journey. The left-handed slugger played with Sacramento from 2004-06, with a short stint with the Oakland A's in 2005. Since then, Watson had played baseball overseas and with independent leagues across the country before signing with Sacramento in late May. Now, after posting a .313 average and 23 RBIs in only 28 games with the River Cats, Watson will begin his second stint with the big club.

Oakland sent River Cats All-Star Clayton Mortensen back to Sacramento after the right-hander's solid performance with the A's on July 3. The River Cats also added Jeff Baisley from the Double-A Midland RockHounds. Baisley, who scored a run and drew two walks in his 2010 River Cats debut Monday, spent the entire 2009 season with Sacramento.

Hernandez Dazzles In Win

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

A week ago, the RockHounds saw their game in San Antonio shortened by rain, then returned home to host the Texas League All-Star Game, followed by a six-game home stand. The sun did manage to sneak out a little bit on Independence Day, but Mother Nature also provided a rainout and a LOT of cloudy skies. Somewhere around the seventh inning of Monday night's game, the clouds actually drifted by and, just about the time Jared Lansford zipped a fastball past Tommy Pham to end Monday's game, the sky turned blue and a rainbow appeared.

All things considered, that's one heckuva week, with six thousand fans attending both the All-Star Game and the fourth of July ballgame, and five thousand on hand for Saturday's contest.

Was the rainbow an omen? Not even Dorothy or the Wizard (Oz reference) know, but the 'Hounds won a terrific game with Springfield, scoring three runs in the fourth inning and backing those three runs with terrific pitching and outstanding defense. Ironically, as was the case Sunday, a Springfield error with two outs opened the way for the 3-run inning. Ironic, because Monday's game continued a home stand in which there have been a boat load of outstanding defensive plays.

Shane Peterson was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, and Matt Sulentic's 2-run single to shallow right brought home a pair, the difference in the game.

Carlos Hernandez tossed six shutout innings before giving up consecutive hits to open the seventh. Justin James gave up an RBI-run single as Springfield drew to within 3-2, but James then induced a double-play, something the RockHounds did three times to end Springfield threats. Lansford then came in for a 1-2-3 ninth with a pair of punch-outs ... the rainbow appeared ... and the game was over in a brisk two hours, 12-minutes.

Key stat: RockHounds pitching recorded five strikeouts, and got two outs on fly balls. The other 20 outs all came on ground outs.

Jeff Baisley has been promoted to Triple-A Sacramento. The promotion is richly deserved for "Bais," who first appeared in a RockHounds uniform in 2007. He spent 2008 and 2009 at the Triple-A level and also played in 14 games in The Show for Oakland in 2008. Jeff, who has battled a variety of injuries over the course of his career, opened 2010 in extended spring training after undergoing off-season labrum surgery on his right (throwing) shoulder.

In 51 games with the RockHounds, Bais hit .332 (ranking second in the Texas League) with four home runs, 34 RBI and 19 doubles (fifth in the league). His performance was very similar to that of Tommy Everidge, who opened 2009 at the Double-A level with the 'Hounds a year ago despite having led the Texas League in RBI the season before. Both players turned in performances best described as that of the "consummate professional." We wish Bais all the best at Triple-A and beyond.

Quick side bar on Tommy Everidge (mentioned, above). "T" has been signed by the Astros and is now playing for the Round Rock Express of the (AAA) Pacific Coast League.

The RockHounds conclude their All-Star / Independence Day home stand Tuesday against Springfield with first pitch at 6:30 p.m. The club will depart for Little Rock, Arkansas after Tuesday night's game and will open a 6-game road trip (which also includes Springfield, Missouri) Thursday at Dickey-Stephens Park in North Little Rock, Arkansas, facing the Travelers in the first of a 3-game set.

Tuesday night's RockHounds starter is Jeff Hyman, a former 2nd round draft choice of the Atlanta Braves (2005). The 23-year-old California native was acquired by Oakland July 2, claimed by the A's off waivers from the Braves.

Nuts Power Past Ports, 13-3

STOCKTON, Calif. - The Stockton Ports (37-45) mustered just five hits on Monday, as they fell 13-3 to the Modesto Nuts (43-39) at Banner Island Ballpark. Mike Spina collected his 15th home run and Jeremy Barfield posted two hits in the game, but the Nuts got to the Ports early and Stockton wasn't able to overcome the deficit.

Ports starter Paul Oseguera picked up his fourth loss in the game, allowing eight runs (seven earned) on 11 hits in 5.0 innings. Scott Deal, Scott Hodsdon, Andrew Carignan and Lance Sewell appeared in relief for the Ports. Juan Nicasio collected the win, his eighth, and Isaiah Froneberger collected the save, his first. Nicasio held the Ports to two runs on three hits in 6.0 innings.

The Nuts pulled ahead, 2-0, in the first inning. Left fielder Scott Robinson singled to lead off the inning for Modesto. He came around to score on an RBI triple to center field by Tim Wheeler. Catcher Jordan Pacheco hit a sacrifice fly to Ports left fielder Todd Johnson, allowing Wheeler to score. The Nuts added another run in the second inning on an RBI single by Robinson.

Modesto went ahead 6-0 in the top of the third. Pacheco led off the inning with a double to center field. He moved to third on a single to right field by first baseman Ben Paulsen. Shortstop Thomas Field then doubled to center field to score Pacheco and make it 4-0 in favor of the Nuts. A sacrifice fly to center field by designated hitter Jimmy Cesario scored Paulsen. Right fielder David Christensen then hit an RBI single to score Field and give the Nuts a six run advantage.

The Nuts added two more runs in the fifth inning. Field walked to start the inning. He moved to second on a single by Christensen. Second baseman Erik Wetzel hit a sacrifice fly to right fielder Barfield to bring home Field. Third baseman Ryan Peisel collected his first single in the fifth inning, and Robinson collected his second RBI of the game with a single to score Christensen.

Modesto made it 10-0 in the top of the sixth. Deal came on to start the sixth, relieving Oseguera. Deal gave up a leadoff single to Pacheco, before retiring Paulsen. He then gave up a two-run home run to Field.

The Ports, who had been held to one hit in the first five innings, posted two runs in the bottom of the sixth. With two out, Nicasio issued back-to-back walks to Stephen Parker and Spina. Barfield then broke an 0x11 hitless streak with an RBI single to left field to score Parker. Johnson next stepped up to the plate and belted an RBI single to score Spina. Designated hitter Kent Walton flew out to end the inning.

Stockton chipped away at the Modesto lead in the eighth inning, as Spina slammed a solo home run over the groundskeeper shed in deep center field. It was his 15th home run of the year. He was followed on base by Barfield, who doubled. However, Barfield was stranded as Johnson grounded out to end the frame.

Modesto collected their final three runs in the top of the ninth. Carignan took the mound to start the inning for Stockton. He gave up a leadoff single to Cesario before striking out Christensen. He then walked Wetzel and allowed a single to Peisel to load the bases. Robinson walked in a run next to make it 11-3.

The Ports then called on southpaw Sewell to face Wheeler. Wheeler singled, to bring home Wetzell. Sewell then struck out Seabury. Paulsen stepped up to the plate with two out and the bases loaded. He reached on an error by shortstop Tyler Ladendorf, which allowed Peisel to score the final Modesto run. Sewell struck out Field swinging to end the inning. The Ports went down in order in the bottom of the ninth to close out the game.

The Ports will work to secure the series victory on Tuesday at 7:05 p.m. PST at Banner Island Ballpark. LHP Fabian Williamson (0-0, 9.00) will make his home debut on Tuesday for Stockton, against RHP Dan Houston (4-5, 5.79) of the Nuts.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Murphy Smith, P

David Malamut, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jul 6, 2010

It has been an admittedly rollercoaster-like season for Murphy Smith. The Oakland A's 13th round pick in 2009 struggled to start the season with High-A Stockton but has improved since being sent back to Low-A Kane County. David Malamut spoke with Smith about his season and more...

David Malamut: How has the season gone for you so far?

Murphy Smith: It's been kind of an up and down. I struggled a little up in Stockton and am kind of just trying to figure things out again. The last couple of times out it felt pretty good.

DM: What pitches do you throw?

MS: Fastball, curveball, cutter, change-up.

DM: What's your mentality on the mound?

MS: I'm not real sure. I just like to go after hitters, try to challenge them and not walk too many guys.

DM: What are you working on?

MS: Over the last month or so, staying closed a little more. Early on I was kind of opening up with my left side. It was pulling me off the mound and leaving balls up.

DM: Always a pitcher?

MS: Yes.

DM: How was playing in high school?

MS: Our high school coach was big on just being competitive, going after guys.

DM: And Binghamton University?

MS: In high school you only need like two pitches. In college you learn a third one. I just tried to be more consistent and have a little better mental game.

DM: How was draft day?

MS: Pretty exciting. Cool, real cool.

DM: Arizona?

MS: I enjoyed it out there, just kind of meeting the brass.

DM: Vancouver?

MS: I was only there for about a week, so i didn't get to experience that much of it. For the short time that I was there I enjoyed it.

DM: Kane County last year?

MS: Totally different group of guys.

DM: Stockton?

MS: It was fun. I was struggling here and there. I enjoyed the experience up there.

DM: This year to last year in Kane County?

MS: It was my first year of pro ball so I was still just trying to get used to it, trying to learn some things. I'm much more comfortable here now, but at the same time it's still baseball wherever you go.

DM: Midwest League?

MS: I like it. All the places are pretty cool.

DM: If you were not playing ball what would you be doing?

MS: Finishing up my degree. I got about a year left in school. I'm an accounting major. I'm going to finish it up.

DM: What besides baseball do you like to do?

MS: Not a lot of time for any other hobbies.

DM: Top 5 artist in your iPod?

MS: That's a tough call. I listen to just about everything. I really couldn't even tell you.

DM: Biggest influence growing up?

MS: My dad and I have an older brother who played too.

DM: Did you have a baseball hero growing up?

MS: I don't even know if I had one.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Robert Gilliam, SP

David Malamut, OaklandClubhouse.com

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Robert Gilliam has impressed people throughout the organization with his arm strength since he was drafted by the Oakland A's in the eighth-round in 2009. Through Sunday, Gilliam had a 3.94 ERA and 78 strike-outs in 91.1 innings for the Low-A Kane County Cougars. David Malamut spoke with the right-handed starter...

David Malamut: How has the season gone so far?

Robert Gilliam: It's been going alright. I've had my ups and downs but overall it's been a pretty good experience.

DM: What pitches do you throw?

RG: Fastball, curveball, slider, changeup.

DM: What do you ultimately want those pitches to do?

RG: Be strikes I throw all of my off speed pitches to just throw off timing.

DM: What's your mentality on the mound?

RG: To be aggressive, get ahead of guys and compete.

DM: What are you working on?

RG: Throwing all of my pitches for strikes, getting ahead of guys and keeping my pitch counts down.

DM: Have you always been a pitcher?

RG: Not in high school. I was always a shortstop and a catcher, and then I pitched a little bit.

DM: How was the high school experience?

RG: I learned to fill up the zone, never give up. You have to compete all the time.

DM: How hard was it after three years in California to go your senior year in North Carolina?

RG: Not that hard. I grew up when I was younger in North Carolina, so it was kind of like going back home. My whole family is from the East Coast anyways, so it wasn't too tough.

DM: UNC-Greensboro?

RG: It was a great experience. I played three years there, and I had a blast. I definitely picked up a ton of knowledge. That is what made me the pitcher I am today. The coaches there were great. They helped me a ton mentally.

DM: The Cape Cod League?

RG: There you are just playing against the top college guys in the country. It was a really good experience there. I had a blast. I really like the Cape. It was my second time facing wood bats. I just had to pitch inside a lot more.

DM: Political science major?

RG: My plan is to eventually go to law school.

DM: Draft day?

RG: Stressful. I was just so happy to get picked. I was just at my house listening on the computer by myself. I was really excited when I got picked and was really glad when I heard my name. The Oakland A's have a great organization. I feel like you can't really pick an organization better than that.

DM: Arizona?

RG: I really like Arizona. Our spring complex is in Phoenix near Scottsdale and it's great down there. I think it's probably one of the nicer areas I've ever been in. The heat didn't really bother me a lot. It's dry heat so it's not that bad. You go down to North Carolina on a summer day when the humidity is out that is not where you want to be.

DM: Vancouver?

RG: I had a little bit of arm problems there. I just kind of worked it out. It was my first taste of pro ball, and my first taste of having big crowds every night so it was nice. Canada was pretty cool. I didn't really get to see a whole lot of it. I pretty much went from my host house to the field every day. The travel there can be pretty long. We had one trip to Boise that was 14 hours. On the trips to pass the time I just listen to music. No cards, since I was a first year guy I had to share a seat.

DM: Midwest League?

RG: It's been great. I really like it up here. It's really nice. I really like the area.

DM: You worked mainly as a reliever in college and in your first year as a pro. How has the transition been to a starter this year?

RG: I've had to take a different mentality. I was always a late-inning closer type guy in college. Here you have to keep a little in the tank. It's a little different, but overall it's still pitching. It's not anything new. The difference as a starter is you have to face the same batters three or maybe four times. You have to be able to pitch with your other pitches. In college, I just pitched with my fastball and threw a slider occasionally. Now I'm trying to throw all of my pitches and face the guys over and over. It's definitely something I'm learning more as I go. I feel like every single start I learn something. I just try to build on every single start.

DM: Besides baseball what do you like to do?

RG: I really like to go fishing and hunting and boating and just kind of outdoor things.

DM: If you were not playing baseball what would you be doing?

RG: Right now I'd probably be on a lake since it's a great day.

DM: Top 5 artists in your ipod?

RG: Hard to say. I listen to a lot of country music. Dirk Bentley. There are a lot of guys I listen to. I can't name just five.

DM: Biggest influence growing up?

RG: My dad. He taught me everything I know.

DM: Biggest baseball hero?

RG: I always liked Nolan Ryan a lot. He was at the end of his career when I was young, but he was always a guy I looked up to and watched how he was. I got to see the highlights of him. He kicked butt out there on the mound.

Cougars Rally to Pound Snappers

Kane County uses more late offense for a home victory

GENEVA, III. – Fueled by an eight-run rally in the seventh inning, the Kane County Cougars stormed past the the Beloit Snappers, 11-6, Monday afternoon at Elfstrom Stadium. The Cougars evened the series with Beloit and improved to 3-2 on their six-game homestand, knocking out 12 hits with every player either having at least one hit or RBI. It was the third time this season the Cougars scored a season-high eight runs in one inning.

The Cougars trailed, 6-2, entering the last of the seventh and had stranded 10 on the bases to that point. Then Chris Affinito, who rejoined the team yesterday, belted a three-run homer off Peter Kennelly to make it 6-5, and the Cougars loaded the bases against Matt Tone (2-3). Conner Crumbliss walked to tie it, and Jose Crisotomo and Tyreace House both scored on the same wild pitch for an 8-6 lead. Crumbliss came home via another wild pitch, and Myrio Richard nailed an RBI single for a 10-6 game. The Cougars sent 11 men to the plate in the frame and then added one more in the eighth on Jason Christian's run-scoring grounder.

Jose Pina (1-1) gave up two runs in two relief innings but picked up the victory, and Max Peterson posted two perfect innings to wrap it up. Starter Rob Gilliam yielded four runs on four hits, walked three and fanned eight over five innings in a no-decision. He left trailing, 4-1.

The Cougars (5-6, 37-43) and Snappers (5-6, 42-38) wrap up their series Tuesday afternoon at 12 CT. Dan Straily (5-5, 4.69) will face B.J. Hermsen (4-2, 3.73). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 11:45 a.m.