

OAKLAND A'S LOSE FOURTH STRAIGHT, FALLING TO LOS ANGELES ANGELS

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

A's manager Bob Geren spoke with unwavering optimism before Friday's game about his team's chances of jumping back into the American League West race.

Those hopes hinge on the A's taking care of business in games such as the one they lost Friday.

The A's fought back to tie the Los Angeles Angels three times, only to fall 6-5 when Erick Aybar homered off closer Andrew Bailey in the top of the 10th.

The A's are now 0-4 on a six-game homestand leading into the All-Star break. Add to that bad news the acquisition by the division-leading Texas Rangers of former Cy Young Award winner Cliff Lee on Friday, and the battle for the A's to re-enter the race just got tougher.

Geren was asked before the game if he thought the Rangers were catchable, and if the A's were capable of doing the apprehending.

"I am (optimistic)," Geren said. "I think we're going to get some (injured) players back that are going to help us. And we play those teams ahead of us in the second half as well."

Including the two games left this weekend, the A's play the Rangers and second-place Angels a combined total of 21 more times. Already, a demonstrative difference between the A's and Angels — the ability to do damage with one swing — has come into play.

The Angels accounted for five of their six runs by hitting three home runs, pushing their total to 89, tied for fifth-most in the AL. The A's went deep just once, and their 53 home runs are the fewest in the majors.

Jack Cust contributed their latest one, hitting a solo shot in the sixth inning to tie the game 3-3 and break his 22-game homerless drought. Cust, who clubbed a team-leading 53 homers from 2007-09, has just three home runs in 43 games.

His power issues are hardly unique, however. Ryan Sweeney, who hit third Friday, has gone a career-high 52 games without one. Cust's home run gave Friday's starting lineup a combined total of 34. The A's have hit one homer or fewer in each of their past 23 games.

Cust maintained his belief that his homers will come in bunches. As for the team's overall lack of power, he offered: "We can't be waiting around for guys to hit home runs to win games."

Bailey (0-3) hadn't allowed a homer over his previous 11 outings. After falling behind Aybar 2-0, he said he made a mental error by piping a fastball.

The homer came in Bailey's second inning of work, and Geren has made an effort to limit Bailey to one inning. But Bailey was working on four days' rest and had pitched a relatively easy ninth.

"He asked how I felt, I said I was fine and went back out there," Bailey said. "All you can do is what the manager asks."

A's starter Vin Mazzaro settled down nicely after a 29-pitch first inning in which he allowed two runs. He eventually retired 13 in a row through the fifth and gave up three runs over seven innings.

"Each start keeps getting better," Geren said. "He's doing a fine job."

The Angels broke a 3-3 tie in the eighth when Torii Hunter lined a two-run homer the opposite way off Craig Breslow. But the A's knotted the score again in the bottom of the eighth. Sweeney led off with a double off Fernando Rodney and scored on Kurt Suzuki's single.

After Cust struck out, Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled to left. Angels outfielder Juan Rivera couldn't field the ball cleanly off the wall for an error, allowing Suzuki to score from first to even things 5-5.

TODAY: Angels (Scott Kazmir 7-8) at A's (Ben Sheets 3-8), 6:05 p.m.
TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM, 1640-AM

A'S UPDATE: MATT WATSON

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

It's elementary: Watson didn't find reason to quit

Outfielder Matt Watson said the best time of his baseball career was spent with the A's organization from 2004-06. Four years later he's back with the club, but only after a journey that had him criss-crossing the globe just to stay in the game.

Watson, 31, was lost in the A's outfield shuffle back in 2006 when he had his contract bought out by the Chiba Lotte Marines of the Japanese Pacific League.

"I had left here thinking my opportunity (in the majors) was pretty much done," said Watson, who played a combined 34 games with the Mets in 2003 and A's in 2005.

He played in Japan through the 2007 season, then signed with the Toronto Blue Jays and spent 2008 with Triple-A Syracuse. Granted free agency after the season, he went to South Korea and played a few months with the Doosan Bears.

The New York Mets signed him in June 2009, but he was hindered by a back injury and released after just a few weeks. Back home in Pennsylvania, Watson joined the independent-league Lancaster Barnstormers to finish out 2009.

The A's signed him to a minor league deal on May 27. After 28 games with Triple-A Sacramento, Watson was promoted Monday.

"You can't get a job and you have bills to pay, and you start thinking about trying other avenues," Watson said. "The hard work pays off. I'm just trying to make the most of it here."

Left-hander Brett Anderson (left elbow inflammation) allowed one run in two innings in a rookie league outing, his first game since going on the disabled list June 4. His next outing would come Wednesday, site to be determined.

Left-hander Dallas Braden (left elbow stiffness) will throw a side session today off flat ground to gauge his progress.

A's manager Bob Geren said left fielder Conor Jackson (strained right hamstring) could begin a rehab assignment Monday and possibly rejoin the A's on Friday in Kansas City after the All-Star break.

Second baseman Mark Ellis is sporting his version of a Mohawk. He usually shaves his head anyway, and the strip of hair is visible only from up close. He said the gesture "is just a joke between me and Braden, to prove I have better hair than him."

Braden's response: "He lost miserably. I think the verdict is in."

INMAN: ANY OWNERS' MANUAL MUST END WITH TITLES

By Cam Inman_Bay Area News Group columnist

And all this time we thought LeBron James owned the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Turns out Dan Gilbert does, and his open letter to jilted Cleveland fans shredded every ounce of James' legacy while the former Cavaliers star slithered off to Miami.

Surely, Gilbert's epic outburst did more than distract Cleveland from more sports heartbreak. His rant was cathartic, too. Most of all, it did not conform to franchise owners' typically muted path.

So how should owners act?

Better to be seen and not heard? Just provide resources, then get out of the way? Or micromanage everyone, from what scheme the coach deploys to how much athletic tape is stocked in the equipment room?

Here is the answer, and it may sound familiar: Just win, baby.

If Gilbert had won a championship with James in tow, James would not be skipping town and Gilbert would not be authoring the most famous sports letter since Al Davis' to Lane Kiffin in 2008.

Gilbert's trumped Davis', by the way. No overhead projector needed. Enough dramatic effect came via Gilbert's bite-no-tongue descriptions of Cleveland's "former hero" and Thursday's "narcissistic" act that led to James' "cowardly betrayal."

Gilbert saved the all-caps, bold-type for this: "I personally guarantee that the Cleveland Cavaliers will win an NBA championship before the self-titled former 'king' wins one."

See, it all comes down to championships. True kings wear crowns.

Getting to that winner's circle starts at the top. Strong ownership is key. If Gilbert can be admired for his bitterly blunt letter, he also must be held accountable for coddling James into that "hero" role these past seven seasons.

Makes you wonder what kind of owner the Bay Area will get in place of Chris Cohan. The Warriors can't do worse from a win-loss, playoff-history standpoint. But we might learn the letter-penning habits of the would-be buyers.

The most vilified men in Bay Area sports are not out-of-town athletes on rival teams but rather in-town owners whose franchises are in a championship rut. Here is how those owners (or spokesmen for fellow partners) come across:

Davis: The Raiders patriarch always — always — provides riveting speeches. His letter-reading dismissal of Kiffin in 2008 was stunning, and so is his command of history (see: Raiders, pro football, global

issues). What could set him off like Gilbert: criticizing any aspect of the Raiders, or, for that matter, praising any aspect of the Raiders.

Jed York: Since replacing his father, John, as the franchise's public voice, he's given 49ers fans hope that he will morph into his championship-clad uncle, Eddie DeBartolo. What could set him off: if the 49ers stadium project dies, or if coach Mike Singletary again fails to hold up Jed's vow of a postseason berth.

Lew Wolff: Whenever he talks, he pushes away Oakland and the A's fan base, all in search of San Jose's greener grass. What could set him off: if buddy Bud Selig defends the Giants' San Jose territorial rights and blocks an A's move.

Bill Neukom: A low-key, bow-tie, Giants-way presence has accompanied his succession of Peter Magowan. What could set him off: if his Microsoft stock plummets? Who knows? But we might learn come October.

Greg Jamison: The Sharks' commander-in-chief annually produces a contender but doesn't boast or bawl during the highs (regular season) and lows (premature playoff exits). What could set him off: if Joe Thornton and Patrick Marleau defect and join Evgeni Nabokov in Russia (kidding, kidding).

Cohan: He rarely spoke during an abominable term. What could set him off: if all offers to buy his franchise are withdrawn and he is stuck paying Monta Ellis' ankle therapy into 2075.

Successful owners tend to show their rage when their teams don't win. That's why DeBartolo smashed in a locker-room vending machine after a defeat during his reign. That's why Davis has changed coaches and personnel at a dizzying rate. That's why Cohan, uh, never mind.

The Bay Area's championship drought encompasses the most combined seasons of any region that hosts franchises from the four major professional leagues. But Cleveland has gone without a championship since the 1964 Browns — a curse, Gilbert claims, that James is taking to Miami. Oh sure, just like Kiffin lifted the Raiders' curse.

CHIN MUSIC: POSTGAME THOUGHTS FROM A'S 6-5 LOSS TO ANGELS

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 7/10/2010 12:01AM

Was anyone surprised to see both Ryan Sweeney and Jack Cust get pinch-hit for in the 10th inning of tonight's 6-5 loss to the Angels? Sweeney had doubled in his previous at-bat to set a game-tying rally into motion. Cust had broken a long homerless drought earlier in the game (although he struck out in his previous at-bat before the 10th). Bob Geren pointed to the .115 average lefties had against Angels left-hander Brian Fuentes, and that's a very valid point. Still, pinch-hitting for Sweeney raised my eyebrows a bit. The guy was coming off a great at-bat, and I would have liked to see him get a chance to start something there.

Regardless of whether you agree with those decisions, they point to a bigger problem: When your No. 3 and No. 5 hitters are being pinch-hit for in the bottom of the 10th and you trail by just a run, your offense is in trouble. The A's simply lack a middle-of-the-lineup presence (as if you haven't known that over the past three-plus seasons, right?)

Any overall thoughts on the game, A's fans? Had to be a tough one to digest ...

CHIN MUSIC: CLIFF LEE TRADE LEAVES ANGELS, A'S WITH EVEN TOUGHER MISSION

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/9/2010 5:39PM

Well, the A's face a steep task to jump back into contention in the AL West. And Texas' acquisition of left-hander Cliff Lee today certainly didn't make that mission any easier. That's the storyline as the A's and Los Angeles Angels — the teams giving chase to the first-place Rangers — begin a three-game series tonight at the Coliseum. A's manager Bob Geren was asked if he still felt the Rangers were catchable, and if Oakland could be the team that catches them. The Rangers hold a 5 1/2 game lead over the Angels, while the A's trail by 9 1/2. Geren, always one to take the optimistic view on things, said he considers his team very much in the hunt. "I think we're going to get some (injured) players back that are going to help us, and we play those teams ahead of us in the second half as well."

Some of those players he was referring to are pitchers Brett Anderson and Dallas Braden and outfielder Conor Jackson. Jackson (strained right hamstring) could begin a rehab assignment Monday, and if all goes well he could rejoin Oakland for the three-game series at Kansas City coming out of the break. Anderson (left elbow inflammation) is making his first rehab assignment tonight in the Arizona Rookie League. The A's are hoping he returns by the end of the month. Braden (left elbow stiffness) will throw a flat-ground side session (basically pitching without being on a mound) tomorrow, and that will give a barometer to when he returns. If all goes well, it's possible Braden could slide in at the back of the rotation coming out of the break.

That's all for now. Here's the lineups:

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

Rangers: Aybar SS, Kendrick 2B, Abreu RF, Hunter CF, Matsui DH, Rivera LF, McAnulty 1B, Frandsen 3B, Mathis C; Pineiro RHP.

A'S FALL TO ANGELS ON AYBAR HOMER IN 11TH

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's dig the long ball. They just don't hit home runs often enough to enjoy the benefits.

The Angels have a better idea what it feels like. They homered three times Friday night, including Erick Aybar's deciding blow off Andrew Bailey in the 10th inning, to beat the A's 6-5 in the opener of the final series before the All-Star break.

Bailey was beginning his second inning when Aybar homered on a 2-0 fastball to break the game's third tie. Bobby Abreu and Torii Hunter also homered to ignite an offense that was lifeless this week during four straight losses in Chicago.

The A's, who hit .193 in their previous six games, don't want to hear about lifeless offenses. They collected 11 hits Friday but failed to hit as many as two home runs for the 23rd straight game. While the Angels have 89 homers, the A's have 53, fewest in the majors.

"We can't be waiting around for guys to hit home runs to win games," said Jack Cust, who homered in the sixth inning, ending a 22-game homerless streak, the second longest of his A's career. "Everybody hits more home runs than us."

Cust led the A's in homers the past three years, but Friday's homer was his third in 131 at-bats and first since June 8, which also was against the Angels. Also in a Vin Mazzaro start. The A's won 10-1 that day, and it was Mazzaro's first win as a starter in 2010.

"Home runs come in bunches," Cust said. "Hopefully, this is the start of one of those bunches."

Mazzaro didn't get a decision Friday, but his seven solid innings kept the A's close. After getting roughed up in the first inning - Abreu (1-for-24 coming in) hit a two-run homer - Mazzaro retired the next 13 batters.

He hiccupped in the sixth when Hideki Matsui hit a bases-loaded sacrifice fly but slipped out of trouble by getting Juan Rivera on a comebacker turned double play. Reliever Craig Breslow pitched the eighth, and Hunter's two-run homer put the Angels up 5-3. The A's rallied for another tie, only to watch Aybar snap it.

Bailey said he didn't expect the leadoff hitter to swing on 2-0 and grooved a fastball. "Bad mind-set by me," said Bailey, who pitched beyond one inning for the first time since June 20. Manager Bob Geren said it was because Bailey had four days' rest.

Asked about Oakland's power outage, Geren said, "Home runs are instant offense. (The Angels) showed it late with two big homers. We played the game hard and correctly all night. We were just victimized by the homer.

"We'll see some more (power) in the second half. Jack will get it going. Our games will be about pitching and defense and running the bases perfectly and timely hits. And adding more power in the second half will definitely help, and we have guys to do it."

In the bottom of the 10th, Geren used pinch-hitters Matt Carson for Ryan Sweeney and Adam Rosales for Cust because right-handers do better off Brian Fuentes, but the A's went quietly anyway.

A'S BEAT

BEANE NOT ITCHING TO DEAL

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

A's general manager **Billy Beane** doesn't make a practice of reacting to moves made by other American League West teams, and that's apparently the case in the wake of Seattle sending All-Star pitcher **Cliff Lee** to Texas.

Asked if his own big-money starter, **Ben Sheets**, could be dangled before the July 31 trade deadline, Beane said, "I don't want to comment on individual players but, in our situation, I don't anticipate us being that active at the trade deadline."

The A's rely heavily on their farm system, and Beane doesn't seem eager to move more key prospects. For now, it's more about allowing young players to continue to develop at the big-league level.

With pitchers **Brett Anderson** and **Dallas Braden** returning after the All-Star break, Beane said, "We want to have some kind of momentum. We have young players (he cited several, including **Cliff Pennington**, **Daric Barton** and **Gio Gonzalez**), and it's important where we're at right now, regardless of where we end up, to make the second half meaningful."

If that means Sheets and others stay, so be it.

When they acquired Lee, the Rangers were leading the Angels by 5 1/2 games and the A's by 9 1/2. It was a 4-for-2 trade, with the Mariners gaining four prospects, including rookie first baseman **Justin Smoak**.

"It's probably about as good an upgrade as you can get, especially this time of year. He's a difference-maker," Beane said. "You credit Texas. There's a right time in your development for those kinds of deals. We've made them. When you're a team that relies on the farm system, you have to be careful of making those deals. You better make sure it's the right time, and I don't think this is the right time for us."

Manager **Bob Geren** was asked if the Rangers are catchable. "We just have to catch a hot streak like they did," he said. "We're going to get (injured) players back who'll help us, and we play those teams ahead of us in the second half as well."

Second baseman **Mark Ellis** added, "It's obviously a great trade for the Rangers. They definitely got better today. It doesn't make it easier. But the season's not over."

Briefly: In his first game action since being shelved with elbow tendinitis, Anderson surrendered one run and four hits in two innings in an Arizona rookie-league game. ... Braden, who threw long toss and will throw from a shorter distance today, said he could begin a rehab assignment or throw a simulated game during the All-Star break. ... Geren said **Conor Jackson** could begin a rehab assignment Monday and be ready when the second half begins.

A'S LEADING OFF

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

A little help: Twenty extra private security officers were hired for the game, according to David Rinetti, VP of stadium operations, in case the 12 Oakland police officers summoned for the game were needed for fallout from the Johannes Mehserle verdict.

DRUMBEAT: REACTION TO CLIFF LEE TRADE

John Shea from the Coliseum, where the A's and Angels open the final series before the All-Star break . . . 7/9/2010 6:45PM

Half of the AL West teams were involved in today's Cliff Lee trade. The other half are here.

The Angels are 5 1/2 games behind Texas, the A's 10 back. Are the new-and-improved Rangers catchable? That was a question for A's manager Bob Geren.

"We just have to catch a hot streak like they did," Geren said of the Rangers. "In the second half, we'll add pretty good players: Brett Anderson, Dallas Braden, Conor Jackson."

Here's Mark Ellis' reaction to the Lee trade: "It's obviously a great trade for the Rangers. They definitely got better today, a lot better. It doesn't make it easier. But the season's not over. We have a lot of season left. He's proven at the top of the rotation. It's a great thing for them, but we've had some good games against him. We'll see what happens. It's only one player."

Anderson is pitching in Arizona tonight, about 40 pitches, and Geren said he still expects Anderson to rejoin the A's this month.

Braden threw long toss today and will throw off a mound tomorrow. He said he could begin a rehab assignment or throw a simulated game during the All-Star break.

The lineup: CF Crisp, 1B Barton, RF Sweeney, C Suzuki, DH Cust, 3B Kouz, 2B Ellis, LF Gross, SS Pennington. RHP Mazzaro is pitching.

HOMER-HAPPY ANGELS DELIVER DECISIVE BLOW

THREE OAKLAND RALLIES FOR NAUGHT AFTER AYBAR'S 10TH-INNING JACK

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's lack of power isn't necessarily a new finding.

In fact, it's been ingrained in the organization for quite some time.

But every time they're stacked up against a club that, well, has a dose of power, the notion rises anew.

Such was the case Friday, when the Angels showed the A's a homer-happy time by pounding out three long balls en route to a 6-5 extra-inning Oakland loss.

After the affair, manager Bob Geren was presented questions regarding the power void that's ever so present in his lineup. He's not too worried -- he thinks said power is coming in the second half, in the form of Kevin Kouzmanoff, Jack Cust and a healthy Conor Jackson.

Cust agreed to an extent, but at the end of the day, he knows the A's have to take a different approach to winning.

"Everybody hits more home runs than us," Cust said, "so we're gonna see a lot of games like that."

That's no exaggeration -- the A's sit last in the Majors with just 53 jacks attached to their name. Despite three comeback efforts in a seesaw opener, it hurt them.

"That's just the way the game is," Geren said. "Home runs are instant offense. They showed that. We played the game hard and right. We were just victimized by homers."

The last blow came in the top of the 10th with Andrew Bailey on the mound for his second inning of work. After facing four batters in the ninth, the A's closer was brought back in to go against the Halos' top of the order, beginning with Erick Aybar.

The Angels shortstop, trying to break open a 5-5 game, did just that by running up a 2-0 count before launching his third homer of the year into the right-field bleachers.

"It was a fastball," Bailey said. "I fell behind 2-0 and tried to get back in the count. I left the ball in the middle of the plate. I thought he was going to try to work his way on rather than swing for the fences in that situation, but you can't fall behind 2-0 like that."

"I'm never thinking about hitting a home run," Aybar said. "I always just try to get on base and hit line drives. That just happened."

Bailey, who had not allowed a run in nine of his past 10 games, was making his first appearance in five days -- so Geren said sending him out for a second inning was a rather easy decision.

"He asked me how I was feeling. I said fine and went back out there," said Bailey, who threw 37 pitches. "All you can do is what the manager asks."

Bullpen mate Craig Breslow gave up a home run as well -- a two-run shot to Torii Hunter in the eighth -- that erased a 3-3 deadlock. Suddenly down a pair, the A's answered in the bottom half of the frame with two runs of their own, courtesy of RBI hits from Kurt Suzuki and Kouzmanoff.

It marked the third comeback effort of the night for the A's, who began the game with righty Vin Mazzaro on the mound. He endured a shaky beginning, giving up a two-run homer to Bobby Abreu in the first, before retiring 13 straight thereafter. In the meantime, the A's gave him two runs thanks to a run-scoring double from Gabe Gross and an RBI groundout off the bat of Coco Crisp.

But Mazzaro then walked Howard Kendrick to lead off the sixth and eventually allowed the second baseman to score on a sacrifice fly from Hideki Matsui. Again, Oakland climbed back when Cust knotted the score with a solo home run -- his first in 22 games -- to left-center off Angels starter Joel Pineiro.

Mazzaro pitched a perfect seventh and was lifted after the inning with three runs, four hits, three walks and five strikeouts attached to his name, but he left accompanied by a no-decision following Hunter's long ball off Breslow one frame later. Aside from the first-inning blunder, though, Geren liked what he saw from his right-hander, who has a 3.12 ERA over his past seven starts after posting a 6.08 mark in his first four outings.

"I thought he threw well," Geren said. "Each start he keeps getting better. He's doing a fine job. He's throwing more strikes. His sinker's had good late life, and he's getting more swings and misses on his slider."

"I had a rough start, but I battled back." Mazzaro said. "It's a tough loss when you battle to come back three times like that."

In the bottom half of the 10th, with the A's facing their final at-bats, Geren decided to send out a handful of right-handed hitters against southpaw Brian Fuentes. Ryan Sweeney was lifted for Matt Carson, while Jack Cust was pulled for Adam Rosales. Neither, though, could do much of anything against the Angels closer, who also coaxed an out from Suzuki for a 1-2-3 inning.

"The two relievers we had in there have been our best pitchers all year," Geren said. "When you tie the game with a homer and bring them in after seven, you think you have a good chance."

"We never had the lead, though. It was a great battle. Every time they scored, we came back. They'd add on, and we'd come back. We just fell short."

KAZMIR, SHEETS LOOKING TO BETTER SOLID OUTINGS

By Dan Mennella / MLB.com

The results have been less than ideal for the starters in Saturday's Angels-A's matchup in Oakland, but both took solace in minor victories earned last time out.

The Halos' Scott Kazmir has struggled to regain the form that made him one of baseball's rising stars a few years back, but he's been flashing his nasty slider more frequently of late, and it's integral to working deeper into his starts with more effective results.

Though his final line wasn't pretty in his most recent outing against the White Sox on Monday -- 6 1/3 innings, seven earns runs, five walks and three homers -- Kazmir pitched well early in the game, something that was attributed largely to the reclaimed slider.

"I really don't think the linescore shows some of the positives we saw from Kaz," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia. "That's unfortunate that he got hit a little bit at the end. He had a good slider. I think he pitched better than his linescore showed."

For the A's Ben Sheets, this season has been a struggle at times to rebuild his stamina after missing all of 2009 due to right elbow surgery. Sheets, however, went a season-high 7 1/3 innings in his previous start, a loss against the Yankees, and he said afterward that he's finally back to his pre-surgery stamina.

"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."

Sheets will be charged with halting Oakland's four-game slide, while Kazmir hopes to make it two Halos victories in a row after they snapped a four-game skid of their own in Friday's triumph.

ANDERSON HURLS TWO FRAMES IN FIRST LIVE ACTION

SOUTHPAW TOSSES 30-35 PITCHES IN FRIDAY REHAB APPEARANCE

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Rehabbing starter Brett Anderson faced his biggest test yet Friday night in an Arizona Rookie League game, where he allowed one run on four hits while striking out two in two innings of work.

The A's lefty said via text he threw 30-35 pitches -- only fastballs and changeups -- in his first game action since being sidelined with elbow tendinitis at the beginning of June.

"I felt good," Anderson said. "The results were OK."

The next step for the 22-year-old pitcher will likely have him throwing close to 60 pitches, including his breaking ball, in another Arizona Rookie League game on July 14, when Triple-A Sacramento will still be off as part of the All-Star break. Five days later, on July 19, the young southpaw could make his return to the Oakland rotation, manager Bob Geren said.

"It's all tentative," he said. "We'll see how everything goes and where everyone is then."

Anderson, enduring his second stint on the disabled list this season, is expected to be able to throw 75-85 pitches by the time he returns to a Major League mound. He carried a 2.35 ERA in six games before landing on the DL.

Braden, Jackson making strides in rehab

OAKLAND -- A pair of impact players are on schedule to rejoin the A's shortly after the All-Star break.

According to manager Bob Geren, lefty Dallas Braden and outfielder Conor Jackson are making strides with their respective rehab work.

The former, who hasn't pitched since June 22 and hasn't won since his perfect game on May 9, threw from 140 feet Friday in a continuing effort to nurse a tight elbow back to health. All reports signaled good signs for the lefty, who is next scheduled to throw a side session from flat ground on Saturday.

"All indicators say things are going well," Geren said.

If things continue that way, the club hopes he can rejoin the rotation sometime around July 20, when lefty Brett Anderson is also expected to be lifted off the disabled list.

Jackson, meanwhile, has returned to running activities and could begin a rehab assignment as early as Monday. The A's outfielder, who was acquired on June 15 and played just 15 games before landing on the DL, will hopefully be ready to return to the lineup Friday when eligible, Geren said.

A's relatively indifferent about Lee trade

OAKLAND -- The image of Cliff Lee and a future with the Texas Rangers graced a handful of televisions in the A's clubhouse Friday afternoon, but not too many eyes followed along.

In fact, news of Lee's impending trade from the Mariners to the Rangers -- already the American League West leaders -- didn't shake the green and gold too much. The A's know they can't control the doings of other teams, and any trades outside of their own organization can't shake any second-half ambitions.

"I wasn't surprised by the move," said manager Bob Geren. "Teams are trying to find what's best for them. It's that time of the season where teams are trying to get good deals done. They acquired a good one."

"We just have to catch a hot streak like the Rangers did. In the second half, we'll be getting great players ourselves with Brett Anderson, Dallas Braden and Conor Jackson coming back. They'll help us out quite a bit."

Lee owns a 4-2 career mark and 2.61 ERA against the A's and is likely to face Oakland at some point during the team's 13 meetings in the latter half of the season. Still, his presence doesn't automatically turn Texas into a Grade-A pitching team.

"When you think of the Rangers, you normally think of that lineup they have," said Craig Breslow. "I think, for the most part, we're still going to be worrying about the lineup when we face them. They've just strengthened their pitching. I don't think it came out of nowhere, though. You knew they were interested.

"Texas was a good team. Now you can make the argument that they're a great team."

TOUGH LOSS FOR A'S

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 7/10/2010

Oakland, CA – One hit changed the outcome of the game and the hopes of staying in the American League race. Erick Aybar's solo home run in the tenth frame sealed the Angles victory over the A's 6-5.

It was a tough loss for Oakland, they tied the game three times before losing their fourth straight game. As for Los Angeles they ended their four game losing streak after being swept by the Chicago White Sox.

"We did what we had to do," said Torii Hunter. "For Aybar to step up and hit a home run in the 10th off Andrew Bailey (one of my favorite closers) was pretty big." "He's been pretty hot lately, as a team we haven't been hitting but he has and I'm excited he got the job done."

A's pitcher Vin Mazzaro gave up a two-run homer in the first frame to Bobby Abreu. By the second frame he had calmed down to retire twelve batters before the Angels scored their next run. Hideki Matsui hit a sacrifice fly bringing in Howie Kendrick giving the Angeles a 3-2 lead.

Jack Cust quickly responded by belting a home run off a 2-0 pitch to tie the game for the second time. This is his third home run of the season, batting .325 over the last 27 games after hitting .229 over his first 15 contests.

"We've been hitting the ball better in previous years," Cust said. "We can't be waiting around for guys to hit home runs and win games." "Everybody hits more home runs than us so, we're going to see a lot of games like that."

Los Angeles has been struggling as well with getting hits but tonight they minimized damage with their bullpen, pitchers Kevin Jepsen and Brian Fuentes. They both pitched scoreless innings in the ninth and tenth innings limiting Oakland's chances of getting back into the game.

Hunter continued his hot streak, he also blasted a two-run homer in the eighth inning. Over the past six games, he is hitting .476 (10-for-21) with three home runs and nine RBI's. Hunter got his thirteenth career multi-home run this past Sunday when hit two home runs.

"The last series was tough," Hunter said. "The lights went out with our offense, so we have to come back and play better baseball." "Our pitching has been well but we haven't scored runs within the last seven or eight games."

The A's in a similar situation must continue to remain optimistic. Manager Bob Geren feels strongly that things will turn around especially in the second half of the season. With two games remaining in this series before the All-Star break he expects his team to battle and finish strong.

"I'm very optimistic," Geren said. "The second half of the season we're going to be adding some of our injured players back and that's going to help us." Right now we have to play our best baseball for this series and stay focused."

OAKLAND LOSES FOURTH STRAIGHT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Despite rallying to tie the game two times, in the sixth and eighth innings, the Oakland A's lost their fourth straight after being swept by the Yankees earlier in the week. Oakland (41-46) will go into the All-Star break with a losing record for the second straight season.

Erick Aybar homered to lead off the 10th inning, and Torii Hunter and Bobby Abreu also went deep as the Los Angeles Angels beat the A's 6-5 on Friday night to end a five-game road losing streak.

Aybar's drive off A's closer Andrew Bailey (0-3) sailed over the scoreboard in right-center. The Angels had taken the lead on Hunter's two-run homer with two outs in the eighth but it didn't last long.

In the bottom of the inning, Kurt Suzuki hit an RBI single then moved to third on Kevin Kouzmanoff's double. Left fielder Juan Rivera botched the play for an error that scored Suzuki for the tying run.

That spoiled Joel Pineiro's chance at a seventh straight winning start. He still hasn't lost since May 21 against St. Louis.

Kevin Jepsen (1-1) pitched a 1-2-3 ninth with two strikeouts for the victory, and Brian Fuentes finished for his 16th save in 20 chances.

Abreu had a two-run homer in the first and two singles, and Hideki Matsui added a sacrifice fly for the Angels, whose losses away from home all had come in Chicago. They were just swept in a four-game series by the White Sox and lost to the Cubs at Wrigley Field on June 20.

Abreu's ninth homer of the year came in the first to put the Angels ahead.

Oakland tied it in the third, getting a run-scoring double from Gabe Gross and Coco Crisp's RBI groundout two batters later. Cust homered in the bottom of the sixth to tie it at 3.

Pineiro is two victories shy of his career-best eight-game winning streak. He failed to receive a decision for just the third time all season and first since May 26.

He has gone six or more innings in nine straight outings and 16 of 18.

A's starter Vin Mazzaro, who had won his last two starts, left after seven innings with the game tied.

He beat the Angels 10-1 here on June 8, but couldn't get a decision this time despite a strong outing. Mazzaro allowed three runs and four hits, struck out five and walked three.

Mazzaro retired 13 batters in order before Howie Kendrick drew a leadoff walk to start the sixth. Abreu followed with a single and Hunter walked to load the bases. Rivera later grounded into an inning-ending double play.

Crisp has either scored or driven in a run in 15 of his 16 games this season, his first with Oakland that was slowed by two stints on the disabled list.

NOTES

-- Oakland LHP Dallas Braden, who pitched a perfect game May 9 but has since gone on the DL with left elbow stiffness, played catch from 140 feet without problems. He will push it more today with a side session on flat ground. "Tomorrow will be a day to kind of find out where he is," manager Bob Geren said.

-- A's LHP Brett Anderson allowed one run and four hits in two innings in an Arizona Rookie League game as he rehabilitates from left elbow inflammation that landed him on the DL for a second time June 4. He struck out two and didn't walk a batter.

PLEASANTON'S BRETT BOWER EARNING KUDOS AS A'S BATBOY

Justin Lafferty, Pleasanton Patch, 7/9/2010

Amador Valley High alumnus regarded as one of the best batboys in baseball by A's officials and opposing managers.

He says he's a diehard Oakland A's fan, but the closet of Pleasanton's Brett Bower is stocked with Boston Red Sox, New York Yankees and San Francisco Giants hats and jerseys.

Bower, 20, keeps his fandom under wraps for a few hours each day while he serves as the visiting batboy at A's home games, dressing in the opposition's uniform. This is his fourth season working for the A's and he's responsible for making sure visiting teams have what they need on game day.

"He's known as probably being the best in baseball," said Matt Weiss, the assistant visiting clubhouse manager. "I don't have to worry about much during the game at all. He's right there to do it."

Bower, a graduate of Amador Valley High School, gets to the Oakland Coliseum about four hours before each game and doesn't usually leave until roughly three or four hours after the final pitch.

He balances the demands of work with his studies at San Jose State University, where he's a social science major and planning to get his teaching credential. Bower said he has to find time to do homework whenever he can, often spending nights at the clubhouse while he studies for tests.

He said that working for the A's has actually made him hit the books more seriously. That's because the managers place an emphasis on education over baseball, said Weiss.

"I'm definitely more organized when I have work," said Bower, who wants to become a high school history teacher. "I have to make my schedule now as early as possible. I purposely set up one (class) after another and then go to the library as long as I can and then head to work."

Before the game, he helps put out the pregame spread in the clubhouse and set up equipment for batting practice. If players have any last-minute needs, like a cell phone charger, Bower or one of the other attendants will take care of that. He said he's been on Taco Bell runs for Tampa Bay Rays third baseman Evan Longoria and fielded a request by a Red Sox pitcher for a special type of shampoo he forgot at home.

After batting practice, Bower makes sure the visiting players' lockers have their game uniforms washed and ready. Once the game starts, he handles the bats and equipment for opposing players, making sure nothing is left on the ground. When the game is over, Bower cleans out the visiting dugout, making sure players didn't leave sunglasses or gloves behind, sets up dinner and does laundry for the next day.

He said he loves his job because he gets to see a side of the athletes they usually don't show others.

"The level of stress can be very minimal," Bower said. "The coolest part is being able to know the players for who they really are and actually being able to talk to them."

Bower has earned praise from opposing players and coaches for his professionalism and helpfulness. Weiss said that Minnesota Twins manager Ron Gardenhire, among others, usually tells him that Bower is a great batboy. Bower said that he enjoys when the Twins come to Oakland, because they're pretty friendly.

Minnesota relief pitcher Matt Guerrier bought new shoes for Bower and the other visiting batboys as a token of his appreciation for their work. Bower said the Twins staff also invited him to work as a batboy for a game at the new Target Field in Minneapolis.

"What's cool is I'm not that nervous anymore," he said. "The first year, I wouldn't say much of anything. I was just in awe."

Four years ago, Bower worked in the Kid Fit department of Club Sport in Dublin. He watched the children of Mike Thalblum, the A's visiting clubhouse manager. Thalblum would often talk with Bower about baseball and one day asked if he wanted to work for him.

Bowers did not hesitate. Working for the A's would mean the best seat in the house. It would mean being elbow-to-elbow with the players he's seen on TV and from the bleachers. It would, unfortunately, also mean that he couldn't cheer when an Athletic hit a home run or started a double play.

Though he works for the A's, wearing the opponent's uniform makes him a representative of that team.

Early on, such a task was daunting, and earned him some ribbing from players. Now, he is more focused on doing his job than the score.

"I have to keep my calm and pretend like I don't care," Bower said. "I just have to keep calm every single time. That was hard in the beginning, but now I'm used to it."

BE AN EXTRA IN MONEYBALL, FINALLY HAVE A REASON TO CHEER IN THE OAKLAND COLISEUM

by April Siese, San Francisco Appeal, 7/9/2010

A's fans: would you like to see something great happen in the Coliseum with you involved? You know, possibly cheering on that extraordinary event? Attendance may be plummeting at actual baseball games at the Oakland Coliseum, but as plans move ahead on the big screen adaptation of A's-centric book Moneyball, the stadium whose team has lately been referred to as the Triple A's may see a resurgence in actual human life.

The Brad Pitt starring movie primarily focuses on the 2002 season and how general manager Billy Beane took Oakland's small-market payroll and transformed it into big-hitting success. According to SFGate, many beloved former A's personnel will have a hand in the movie, with former manager Art Howe playing himself, among other greats.

ABC reports that filming will start on July 26th and wrap up around August 6th.

There will be plenty of opportunities to be an (unpaid) extra, sign up here. A good portion of scenes filmed in the Coliseum are meant to recreate the A's stellar 20-game winning streak. I remember being at five of those games and loving every minute of them (as well as Billy Koch's fantastic facial hair). Although it's incredibly exciting to reminisce, what about also focusing on this season?

Okay, try to forget the fact that we just got swept by the Yankees and are about to experience it again with this weekend's series against the Angels. But we've become so dismal that to recreate that fantastic season, Coliseum personnel will have to untarp Mount Davis because those seats are no longer available and haven't been since 2006, the last time the A's even made it to the post-season (where they absolutely chocked against Baltimore. Who's laughing now, worst team in baseball?).

I used to sit in those seats, facing the ever-present threat of nosebleeds along with such fanatics as banjo man and the couple dressed as an apple and hammer (you remember them, too, right?). Where have the other fans gone, though? Obviously not to Fremont, as those stadium plans got nixed quite quickly. Speaking of which, how can any good-standing A's fan demand their team stay in our beloved Oakland and yet let attendance drop to Expo-level lows?

If Moneyball sees an impressive turnout, I demand that the team Lewis' book so lovingly honors sees similar numbers as well. Regardless of how innovative Moneyball once was, the rest of the baseball world has seemingly caught on and for quite a few seasons, the A's have been beaten at their own game.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS OWNER LEW WOLFF RIGHT AT HOME IN ST. LOUIS

BY DEB PETERSON, St. Louis Post Dispatch, 7/9/2010

WOLFFIE FEST: When former hometown product **Lew Wolff** was in town recently to watch his Oakland Athletics play the Cardinals in a homestand, he hosted a lunch at Busch Stadium for some buddies from his U. City high class of 1953.

About 100 old friends, spouses, children and grandchildren enjoyed a lunch of hot dogs, hamburgers, taco salad and pasta in a pair of 2nd-floor suites at the stadium.

Wolff and his wife, **Jean**, a sculptor, worked the room for a couple of hours, talking to friends about sports, high school memories and life in general. Cardinals topper **Bill DeWitt, Jr.** also stopped by to chat with the group.

Wolff, 74, didn't come to his love of athletics recently - he honed his skills as a center fielder for the U. City high Indians when they played at Heman Park. In addition to the A's, Wolff has had ownership interest in numerous other sports teams, including the St. Louis Blues, the San Francisco Warriors and the San Jose Earthquakes.

Friends **Bob** and **Marcia Shapiro**, whose wedding Wolff was in years ago, said that no matter how successful he's become, Wolff never puts on airs and is as genuine as he was when he still lived in St. Louis.

Along with the Shapiros, others at the lunch included: **Kenny Green, Dick Lipman, Essie** and **Earl Kessler, Larry** and **Barbara Poger, Robbie Lowenstein, Ken Fendleman, Danny** and **Ellen Bluestone, Dick** and **Mariette Palmer, Steve** and **Julie Plax, Jerry** and **Myrna Sokolik, Vickie Rothman Fenster, Jutah Fass, Jan** and **Richard Baron, Gerry** and **Marylee Mandel, Eldon** and **Marcia Weinhaus, Marilyn** and **Steven Dardick** and **Chuck** and **Boo Cook**.

Minor League News

Baisley home runs lift Cats to 6th win in row

By Robbie Enos / Sacramento River Cats

There was no small ball or any kind of station-to-station strategy being played at Raley Field on Friday night.

The Sacramento River Cats just used brute force in a 7-3 win over the Portland Beavers. The sixth consecutive victory for the Cats came at the hands of a four home run game, two of which came off the bat of Jeff Baisley.

"I like what I see," hitting coach Brian McArn said. "We've been battling and the at-bats have been a lot better. We've been more consistent and guys are getting some confidence."

Also contributing home runs were middle infielders Steve Tolleson and Eric Sogard. Overall, the Cats had 10 hits, six of them for extra bases. Sacramento took a 4-3 lead heading into the eighth before racking up three more runs to seal the deal.

"We just need to keep playing like we've been playing," Sogard said. "We're going out there and doing everything we can, and things are going our way. Hopefully we can finish strong before the All-Star Game."

Portland got on the board quick against River Cats starter Travis Banwart in the first. Lead-off hitter Luis Durango lined a single into left field, and then center fielder Cedric Hunter hit a lob shot over third baseman Baisley's head. Hunter hustled to second for a double and Durango advanced to third. Kyle Phillips brought the run home by hitting a ground ball to Chris Carter at first.

Banwart wiggled his way out of a lead-off walk surrendered in the third to Dusty Ryan. Ryan advanced to second on a Durango sacrifice, and then got to third when Hunter hit a groundout to the shortstop Tolleson. With Ryan on third and the three spot hitter Mike Baxter up, Banwart recorded the strikeout to put the threat away.

The Cats brought out the big stick in the third. Sogard blasted his second home run of the season to right field, a shot that landed in the bullpen.

"It was a hard-throwing righty and I knew he had a good fastball," Sogard said. "I figured he'd be going with the heat, and when he tried to throw one by me I put the barrel out there. I caught it pretty good and it just made it."

Corey Wimberly scored the second run to take the lead. Wimberly doubled down the right-field line. He danced around at second and distracted Portland starter Liz Radhames. The right-hander fell behind to Tolleson, who then smoke a single to center to score Wimberly.

Portland regained the lead in the fourth starting with a Kyle Phillips single to right. Phillips advanced to second on a wild pitch and then advanced to third on a Lance Zawadzki groundout. Craig Cooper hit a blooper to center field that barely fell in front of Wimberly, allowing Phillips to score. Josh Barfield smacked a double to left-center, scoring Cooper on a close play at the plate.

Baisley hit his first River Cat home run of the season in the fourth. The solo shot came on the first pitch of the at-bat and landed over the left-field fence.

Banwart pulled another Houdini trick in the fifth after giving up a bunt single to Durango to lead off the inning. The speedy Durango stole second despite a pitchout, and then advanced to third on a Baxter groundout. With two outs, Phillips grounded out to Sogard at second, leaving Durango stranded.

Baisley jacked his second shot in the sixth. He battled to a full count and then smacked another shot over the left field fence, giving the Cats a one-run lead heading into the seventh.

After giving up a one-out single to Ryan, Banwart was relieved by Michael Benacka in the seventh. Banwart finished with eight hits, seven strikeouts, one walk and three earned runs over 89 pitches. Radhames Liz was relieved by Greg Burke in the eighth after giving up four earned runs on five hits with eight strikeouts and one walk.

Tolleson blasted his solo shot in the eighth off of Burke, an 0-1 ball over the left field fence. It was Tolleson's seventh of the year.

"The scouting report said Burke has a great fastball, but he lives and dies by his slider," Tolleson said. "So at one point I knew he was going to throw one in the at-bat, and I got the bat head out on one."

Carter hit a bloop single to center field and then scored on a Dallas McPherson triple. McPherson's shot went deep to center field and bounced off the wall. Basiley added a cherry to his performance by driving McPherson in with a single.

"I was just looking for something out over the plate," McPherson said. "He hung a changeup out in the middle of the plate, and I put a good swing on it."

The River Cats play the third game of the series against Portland on Saturday at 7:05 p.m., looking for that crucial third win to secure the series victory.

"We just need to keep doing what we're doing," McArn said. "Try not to look ahead. That old cliché take it one game at a time and one at-bat at a time is very true. We just need to keep fighting and having good at-bats."

ROCKHOUNDS LOSE 3-RUN LEAD LATE

MIDLAND REPORTER-TELEGRAM

LITTLE ROCK -- In a game that took well over three hours to complete a mere nine innings, the Midland RockHounds watched a 5-2 lead over the Arkansas Travelers quickly dissipate in the bottom of the seventh.

The Travelers put three runs on the board in the seventh, tying the game at 5-all, then got a clutch single from Alexi Amarista to plate Tyson Auer, delivering the Travelers a 6-5 comeback victory.

The RockHounds got a 3-RBI performance from right fielder Val Majewski, who put Midland up 2-0 with a two-run homer in the first inning. The RockHounds added a third run in the fourth after Corey Brown scored on a fielding error by Arkansas shortstop Darwin Perez.

The Travelers pulled within a run in the bottom of the fifth, when Perez came across on a single by Carlos Colmenares and Auer was plated by a Jeremy Moore infield single.

Midland pushed its lead back to three runs with two runs in the top of the seventh. An Archie Gilber double to left put the RockHounds up 4-2 by plating Petey Paramore. They took a 5-2 advantage courtesy of a sacrifice fly by Majewski to right field, scoring J.C. Holt from third.

That only set the stage for the Travelers comeback. They scored three runs in the bottom of the seventh to tie it with Perez scoring the tying run after a Moore single.

The RockHounds and Travelers play Game 3 of the four-game series at 7:10 p.m. today at Dickey-Stephens Field in Little Rock.

Green, Parker Power Ports to 5-2 Win

STOCKTON, Calif. - The Stockton Ports (38-48) jumped to an early 5-1 lead and did not look back, as they avoided being swept by San Jose (50-36) at home on Friday night, by winning 5-2.

David Thomas, Grant Green and Stephen Parker all collected two hits apiece in the game, with home runs by Green and Parker accounting for all of the Ports runs. Mike Spina extended his hitting streak to a season-long nine games by singling in the second inning. Ports pitchers looked sharp as well. Stockton starter Ben Hornbeck allowed two runs on four hits with five strikeouts in 4.2 innings, while Lance Sewell tossed 3.1 shutout innings for the win. Paul Smyth collected his 13th save on the year with a scoreless ninth.

The Ports got things started early in the first inning. Thomas led off with a single, and then Green stepped up to the plate. He fouled a ball off his leg, and took a second to recover before ripping a 1-2 pitch over the Ports bullpen in left field to give the Ports a 2-0 lead. It was his eighth home run of the year. Green will be absent for the next two Ports games as he is competing in the 2010 Futures Game on Sunday, July 11.

San Jose returned the favor in the top of the second inning, as first baseman Michael Ambort hit a solo shot over the right field wall.

But Parker gave the Ports the final insurance runs they needed in the third inning. After Thomas and Green both singled to reach base, Parker ripped a three-run blast to right field to make it 5-1 in favor of Stockton.

The Giants responded by scoring their final run in the fourth frame. Designated hitter Johnny Monell doubled to start the inning. He came around to score on a single by catcher Matt Klimas. The Giants would load the bases with one out with a single by right fielder Juan Perez and a walk by center fielder Francisco Peguero. Hornbeck then struck out second baseman Charlie Culberson and got Ambort to fly out to end the threat.

San Jose put two runners on with two out in the fifth inning, but Sewell came on to replace Hornbeck, and got Klimas to ground out to end the offensive attempt.

Sewell retired the Giants in order for the next three innings. The Giants wouldn't get a base runner on until the ninth, when Smyth walked Culberson. Ambort grounded out for the final out of the game.

The Ports had a few runners reach base after the third inning, but only one would reach as far as second safely in the last five innings of the game. The two early home runs and strong Ports relief pitching enabled Stockton to snap a four-game losing streak.

The Ports will head to Modesto for a three-game series starting on Saturday at 7:05 PM PST at John Thurman Field. RHP Brett Tomko (0-0, 0.00) will start on the hill for Stockton, after joining the team from the AZL A's on July 8. He will face RHP Juan Nicasio (8-4, 3.36), who is starting for Modesto.

Cougars Rally Again to Beat Chiefs

Kane County wins 8th series out of last 11 thanks to late surge

PEORIA, ILL. – For the second night in a row, the Kane County Cougars never led against the Peoria Chiefs until a game-changing ninth-inning rally sparked them to a victory. Friday night the Cougars scored three runs in the top of the ninth to turn a 2-1 deficit into a 4-2 lead and an eventual 4-3 win at O'Brien Field. The Cougars took two out of three from the Chiefs to clam third straight series and eighth out of the last 11.

Trailing, 2-1, Rashun Dixon led off the ninth with a single against Corey Martin (1-2) and took third on a Mike Gilmartin double. Then pinch-hitter Jose Crisotomo singled home Dixon to make it 2-2. Gilmartin was tagged out near home on a fielder's choice by Jason Christian, but the rundown lasted long enough for Crisotomo to reach third and Christian to take second. As the Chiefs tried to walk Juan Nunez intentionally to load the bases, Martin fired a wild pitch to score Crisotomo for a 3-2 lead. Then Leonardo Gil belted a run-scoring single to plate Christian and make it 4-2. Jose Guzman yielded one in the ninth but converted a save for the second night in a row, his 10th overall.

The Cougars fell behind, 1-0, in the second but tied it in the fifth when Nunez singled in Myrio Richard. Starter Justin Marks worked into the sixth inning but departed with a man on base, and that runner came home to score off A.J. Huttenlocker. Marks gave up two runs on two hits, walked four and struck out 10 over 5 2/3 innings, leaving in line for a loss but getting a no-decision. Bo Schultz (3-1) got the win. He allowed one run over 1 1/3 innings before Guzman entered in the ninth to save it.

The Cougars (8-7, 40-44) return home Saturday night at 6 CT to commence a nine-game, 10-day homestand with the opener of a three-game series against the Clinton LumberKings (8-6, 45-38). Rob Gilliam (5-6, 4.11) will face Taylor Stanton (6-4, 3.52). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 5:45 p.m.