

A's News Clips, Sunday, July 11, 2010

Rajai Davis' fuels Oakland A's Fireworks Night in romp over Los Angeles Angels

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

The A's provided two fireworks shows for the price of one Saturday night in a wild 15-1 explosion against the Los Angeles Angels at the Coliseum.

Of course, one might make the case that Angels' starter Scott Kazmir was as responsible for much of the in-game pyrotechnics. Kazmir served up an astounding 13 earned runs in just five innings, including eight in a third-inning outburst climaxed by a Rajai Davis grand slam.

That's a whole lot of earned runs by one pitcher in one outing. Consider that Colorado pitcher Ubaldo Jimenez gave up 13 earned runs in his first 14 starts this season, and you get some idea what a nightmare night it was for the veteran left-hander, who saw his already elevated ERA of 5.98 soar to 6.92.

"That's tough," said Kazmir's A's counterpart, Ben Sheets (4-8), who pitched six innings of two-hit shutout ball to get the win. "That's a lot of runs, and he's going to have string together a good stretch to get his season looking back to normal. He's a good pitcher, but that's baseball."

The 13 earned runs not only were the most Kazmir has ever allowed, but it also was the most ever allowed by an Angels pitcher in one game and the most in the major leagues since St. Louis' Jason Marquis gave up 13 on June 21, 2006.

Needless to say, the A's chalked up a boatload of 2010 offensive firsts against Kazmir (7-9) and L.A. The 15 runs were their season high, and their 8-spot in the third was also their biggest inning of the season.

Davis' blast also was the club's grand slam, while Coco Crisp and Daric Barton hit back-to-back home runs in a five-run fifth, only the second time this season Oakland has done that.

It was a crackling night for the A's in front of one of their largest crowds — 30,035 — and a much-needed breakout after starting the homestand 0-4.

"Up and down the lineup, it was a big night for us," manager Bob Geren said. "Three home runs is good for any team, and obviously, we haven't done a whole lot of that kind of thing this year."

Indeed, the A's came in with the fewest homers in the majors, and they ended a 23-game streak without multiple homers.

Davis, who came in 2-for-31 over his previous 11 games, had a monster night. He had a career-high five RBIs and matched his career high with four hits which included two doubles in addition to his home run. He also worked in a stolen base, snapping an 11-game stretch without a theft.

"I think it's a good reminder of what Rajai Davis can do," Davis said. "It just comes from preparation, believing in myself and staying positive."

Geren thought the key at-bat was a bases-loaded walk Ryan Sweeney drew that preceded Davis' blast.

A's update: Bob Geren sees team's power returning in second half

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Geren sees team's power returning in second half

Entering Saturday, the A's were on a pace to hit fewer than 100 home runs for the season — 98, to be exact. It would be their first season with fewer than 100 homers since they hit 94 in 1968, their first year in Oakland.

Oakland had hit just 53 homers in its first 87 games — last in the major leagues — and was on a dubious streak of 23 consecutive games without a multi-homer outing until a three-homer outburst against the Angels' Scott Kazmir on Saturday night.

A's manager Bob Geren didn't sound terribly alarmed.

"I'm trying to think who's below their career norm at this point," Geren said. "(Kurt) Suzuki has 10, so he's pretty much on pace. (Kevin Kouzmanoff) will probably hit more in the second half than he did in the first half (he has eight). Same thing with (Mark) Ellis, and you know Jack (Cust) will, too."

The A's hit 135 home runs in 2009, but 33 were accounted for by players no longer on the roster (Jason Giambi, Matt Holliday and Adam Kennedy). Cust, who led the team last year with 25 homers, has just three this year in 43 games. He ended a 23-game homerless streak Friday night.

Ellis, who hit 10 homers last year and has a career high of 19, has just two in 2010. Other than Suzuki, Kouzmanoff and Adam Rosales, who has six homers, no other A's player has more than four.

The A's could get a power boost when Conor Jackson (hamstring) returns from the disabled list. Geren said Coco Crisp, who hit his third homer Saturday, could supply some extra pop.

A's prospect Chris Carter has 19 home runs for Triple-A Sacramento but is hitting just .238 with 101 strikeouts in 86 games.

Left-handed pitcher Brett Anderson (elbow tendinitis) gave up four hits and one run in two innings in his rehab appearance in an Arizona League game Friday night. Geren said Anderson's velocity was up to 94 mph. Anderson will have another rehab outing Wednesday and could possibly return to the rotation on or before July 24. ... Dallas Braden (left elbow stiffness) threw 20-30 pitches in a long-toss session Saturday. Braden could possibly start a rehab game Tuesday and be back in the rotation a week later.

Gary Peterson: Oakland A's message to their fans is clear

By Gary Peterson, Oakland Tribune columnist

The A's did an interesting bit of business last week that you may have overlooked, preoccupied as you were with LeBron James' epic decision and, um, help us out here — has any other sports news broken since the Fourth of July?

No matter. A's management, which has made a recent habit of using the First Amendment as its personal Swiss Army knife, was at it again. And its actions deserve a little more examination than they got in real time.

What the A's did was sell "Get Off My Mound" T-shirts during the Yankees' three-game series in Oakland. The reference was to the April 22 set-to between A's pitcher Dallas Braden and Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez. Rodriguez ran over the pitcher's mound on his way back to first base after a foul ball. Braden, the pitcher at the time, upbraided A-Rod for committing an egregious breach of baseball etiquette.

Braden's grandmother even got into the act after her grandson's perfect game May 9. "Stick it, A-Rod," she cracked in the heady aftermath of that milestone event.

In the weeks since, cooler heads have prevailed and all parties involved have expressed a desire to put the unpleasanties behind them. Which is why the A's decision to revive the incident was such a head-scratcher.

The players union, as is its right, went so far as to deny the A's permission to sell the shirts. The A's sold them anyway, issuing a lame statement about how the shirts "epitomize the competitive nature of the team ..." yadda, yadda, yadda.

Translation: "Stick it, people. There's money to be made."

Postscript: Braden later gave Rodriguez one of the T-shirts, and the two were to sign 10 of the shirts to be auctioned for charity. So all's well that ends well, right? Not necessarily. The A's actions, when juxtaposed with two other incidents this season, indicate an unseemly tendency to play fast and loose with our guarantee to freedom of speech.

Incident No. 1: During a home game on April 7, fan Jorge Leon held up a sign which read, "Wolff lied. He never tried."

The reference there was to A's co-owner Lew Wolff and whether or not he made an honest effort to find a ballpark site in Oakland before turning his attention to San Jose. Leon was asked to put the sign away. When he refused, he was ejected from the Coliseum.

It was such a brazen act that Oakland, at the urging of City Attorney John Russo, decided it would no longer enforce the team's policy of policing homemade signs based on content, in that it violates the First Amendment.

Postscript: Wolff later invited Leon and a friend to his luxury suite to watch a game. It turned out to be the day Braden threw his perfecto. While Leon enjoyed the game, here is what he wrote on a guest blog on baseballoakland.com:

"I especially remember us asking some hard questions that Wolff refused to answer."

Incident No. 2: On May 18, the A's issued a press release advising Bay Area media of a policy they claim is long-standing, if not recently enforced. You know, like fielding a winning team.

"Once the game begins," it read in part, "we must ask that you refrain from doing interviews (with fans) inside the stadium. We ask this for these primary reasons: First, we must protect our broadcast rights-holders who have exclusive rights to carry our games live. Second, we must protect our customers, who have paid for tickets to watch the game and we want to make sure they enjoy their experience."

Fort Knox should be so well protected. What do you suppose the real issue here is — the questions that might be asked of the paying customers, or the answers that might result?

Clearly A's management is obsessed with controlling the message — whatever the message and whatever the means. You can't hold up a sign, but we can sell a T-shirt. And by the way, hands off our fans.

It's just another indication — along with Wolff's digs at Oakland; one of baseball's richest ownership groups operating on an emaciated budget; tarping the upper deck in a foolish attempt to create an artificial scarcity of tickets — that makes it difficult to take A's management seriously. Or to believe it is taking the product seriously.

At the very least, it's a galling display of entitlement. Hey, that would make a good T-shirt.

We're allowed to say that, right?

Purdy: Baseball still keeps A's, San Jose waiting

By Mark Purdy, Mercury News Columnist

If you have been wondering what is up with Major League Baseball and the 16-month-long study by the committee that was appointed to decide the Oakland A's potential future in San Jose "... well, you are not sitting alone in the dugout.

Lew Wolff, the A's managing partner, is right there beside you. And he is not happy. In March 2009, when baseball commissioner Bud Selig announced the formation of a committee to study the A's ballpark options, Wolff never expected to still be waiting for an answer at the All-Star break of 2010, which begins Monday.

"No, I didn't," Wolff said in a lengthy interview last week. "And that impacts our planning and permeates both our on-field and off-field operations. I'm hoping to get some direction soon."

Wolff used the word "unfair" to characterize the situation. And he was not shy about pointing a finger at Giants owner Bill Neukom, who claims that baseball's territorial rights allow him to prevent an A's move to the South Bay.

"This is a \$400 million private stimulus package for San Jose," said Wolff, "and Bill Neukom is standing in the way."

Wolff's frustration is understandable. San Jose officials have purchased most of the land for a ballpark. They have approved an environmental impact report. The plan calls for Wolff to pay for all construction costs with the city's redevelopment providing the property.

But nothing can happen until Major League Baseball gives a thumbs-up to Wolff. He said the situation's uncertainty is not just killing the A's at the box office in Oakland, but it also has kept them from signing free agents. And it might force the A's out of the Bay Area entirely.

"We have a sense of urgency, but it doesn't seem as if anyone else has it," Wolff said.

In baseball terminology, Wolff feels like a runner trapped between two bases in a late-inning game, with no one allowing him to touch either base — but also with no one attempting to tag him out. And in San Jose, things are becoming fairly urgent. The City Council must act by Aug. 3 to put a ballpark proposal on the November ballot. But the council is loath to do so without a positive nod from MLB.

Ballot deadline

If Selig and his committee keep dawdling, it would force San Jose to push back the ballot proposal until next spring or later. Could the never-ending "study" by Selig's group be putting the San Jose plan in jeopardy? Wolff said the stakes may be even bigger.

"I think that the longer we're left in a period where we're not sure what is going to happen, the harder it will be to find a way to relocate in the Bay Area and stay in Northern California," Wolff said, "which our ownership desperately wants to do."

So what would Wolff like Selig to do?

"I would like him to provide whatever direction he feels is in the best interests of baseball," Wolff said.

To review: After four years of failed ballpark discussions in Oakland and Fremont, Wolff became convinced San Jose was the only viable option.

But the Giants have refused to even talk about a settlement with the A's over the territorial rights to Santa Clara County. Baseball granted the Giants those rights in 1993 when they failed to get a ballpark built in San Jose.

Selig appointing his "blue-ribbon panel" during spring training 2009. The panel was ordered to assess the A's situation and investigate any viable ballpark options in Oakland or any other East Bay city as well as in San Jose. Most observers expected that the panel would complete its work before the start of this baseball season. But at last word, the panel still was developing information for Selig. A source said no conclusion or recommendation seems imminent.

"I really have not had a lot of interaction with the panel," Wolff said. "They've done their best to stay independent. I'm just hoping that they haven't unintentionally created any issues that will have impact on whatever we are able to do, wherever we go."

What might those "issues" be? Murmurs persist that, instead of merely analyzing the landscape, the panel has been working with Oakland officials to develop a ballpark proposal. This would seem to exceed the panel's guidelines. Does Wolff believe this is happening?

"I don't know," Wolff said. "That's not a 'no.' I just don't know."

Team affected

Whatever the reason for the delay, the blue-ribbon panel's never-ending process plainly has had ramifications for the franchise.

Billy Beane, the A's general manager and part-owner, confirms this. Players are not eager to play in the aging Coliseum when nearly every other ballpark is more modern with a more vibrant atmosphere.

"These last two winters have been a great example of that," Beane said. "We've had more than four instances where we offered more years and more money to players than other teams have offered, but we couldn't get the players to come here."

So the A's meander onward, compiling a mediocre record and playing to small crowds in a severely outdated facility. Wolff said that if the blue-ribbon panel is indeed trying to lead Oakland officials by the hand into a new ballpark proposal, he would be open to discussions.

"It would be best to meet with them along with the committee," Wolff said. "But we can't slow down on San Jose. San Jose has done everything a city could do to get a ballpark property ready. If Oakland has anything I don't know about, I'd like to see it, sit down with the committee and see what they've got. Oakland feels I'm prejudiced toward San Jose. But I'm not. I couldn't figure out how to do it in Oakland."

Any new Oakland plan would be years behind the San Jose proposal. So why not let the South Bay have a vote? Enough is enough. Selig should simply announce that San Jose can hold the vote, and if the ballpark proposal is approved, Major League Baseball will negotiate and implement a territorial rights settlement with the Giants. Period.

Wolff and Selig, who were fraternity brothers at the University of Wisconsin, did speak on the phone last week, but only to confirm that they will meet up at the All-Star game in Anaheim on Tuesday. Wolff said the two never talk business while watching baseball.

This time, that policy might change.

A'S 15, ANGELS 1: A bang-up 3rd inning for Davis

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Officially, Saturday was Fireworks Night at the Coliseum. In reality, it was Rajai Davis Night.

The A's outfielder, toting a 2-for-31 funk into the game, managed as many hits in the third inning against the Angels as he had in those previous 31 at-bats.

Davis opened Oakland's eight-run third with a bloop double and put the exclamation mark on the inning with a two-out grand slam. The A's ended their losing streak at four games with a 15-1 stomping.

Davis went 4-for-5, tying his career high for hits and setting a career high with five RBIs.

So this has to rate as Davis' best game in the big leagues, right?

"Thus far," the 29-year-old said, smiling. "It's still early."

Davis had started only three of the A's previous 12 games.

"It's just nice getting an opportunity to play," he said.

The Angels' Scott Kazmir (7-9), who would set a team record he surely does not want to own, did not allow a hit in the first two innings. Davis led off the third with a looping double down the right-field line.

He stole third and cruised home on Kazmir's wild pitch for the game's first run. Davis would join Tony Armas (Sept. 20, 1980, at Kansas City) as the only Oakland players to have four hits, five RBIs and a stolen base in a game.

RBI singles by Coco Crisp and Adam Rosales, and Ryan Sweeney's bases-loaded walk made it 4-0.

So the bags were still full when Davis came up for the second time in the inning. He pasted a 2-1 pitch, which he called "a fastball down the middle," into the left-field stands for his third homer this season and his second career slam. It was the first slam by an Oakland hitter in 2010.

The A's were cruising at 8-0. For the 30,035 fans, the only remaining drama was how cool the postgame light show would look.

Oakland's offense wasn't done, though. With two outs in the fifth, Davis drilled an RBI double down the left-field line.

After Cliff Pennington's infield single, Crisp took Kazmir deep to left for a three-run homer and it was 12-0. On the very next pitch, Daric Barton took Kazmir deep to right. The first baseman thus snapped his hitless streak at 20 at-bats and put the A's in front 13-0.

Amazingly enough, Kazmir allowed all 13 of those runs, all earned, breaking an Angels record in the process. Scott Schoeneweis had the previous mark; he gave up 11 runs at Baltimore on May 23, 2001.

The 13 runs were the most allowed by a major-league pitcher since Jason Marquis, then with the Cardinals, gave up 13 in five innings to the White Sox on June 21, 2006.

The A's Ben Sheets (4-8) picked up his second win in two months. He tossed six shutout innings, limiting the Angels to two hits.

Sheets obviously played second fiddle to Davis on this night. A's manager Bob Geren recently has used Davis mainly against left-handed pitchers, so there's no guarantee Davis will be in the lineup today against righty Jered Weaver.

Naturally, Davis hopes his performance Saturday night sticks in Geren's mind.

Said Davis: "I think it's a good reminder of what Rajai Davis can do."

A'S BEAT: Bailey on All-Star bubble

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Trevor Cahill has gotten All-Star advice from his roommate, **Andrew Bailey**, for the past week. Today, we'll learn if Bailey accompanies Cahill for the festivities in Anaheim.

Cahill starts this afternoon against the Angels. Because of a new rule prohibiting pitchers who start the Sunday before the All-Star Game from being part of the active roster, Cahill will be merely a spectator Tuesday night.

The Yankees' **CC Sabathia**, who will start at Seattle today, is in the same situation as Cahill. That means New York's **Joe Girardi**, the AL manager, has to select two replacements today. One possibility, the Angels' **Jered Weaver** (8-4, 2.97 ERA), also starts this afternoon.

A's manager **Bob Geren** has pitched the candidacies of Bailey (1.75 ERA, 17 saves) and fellow reliever **Craig Breslow** (40 strikeouts, 25 hits in 40 innings) to Girardi.

"I don't know what other guys would be in that pool of candidates," Geren said, "but our guys are deserving if they're chosen - and he knows how I feel about them."

For what it's worth, four AL relievers - Toronto's **Kevin Gregg**, Chicago's **Bobby Jenks**, Boston's **Jonathan Papelbon** and Minnesota's **Jon Rauch** - who aren't on the roster have more saves than Bailey does.

Bailey did make the All-Star team last season on his way to winning the Rookie of the Year award. Cahill has a personal stake in hoping Bailey gets another nod.

"It would make it a lot easier on me," Cahill said, giving "me somebody to talk to who I know."

Of course, Cahill can talk with Geren. The A's manager and Angels manager **Mike Scioscia** are Girardi's coaches.

Briefly: Cliff Pennington went 2-for-4 Saturday, including his third triple in his past seven games. Over his past 26 games, he's 36-for-85 (.424). ... The A's had not had a multi-homer game in their previous 23 before Saturday. ... **Ross Wolf** made his Oakland debut in the eighth; he allowed a run but struck out the side. ... The Angels' run scored on **Cory Aldridge's** triple. It was Aldridge's first major-league hit; he has been in pro ball since 1997.

A'S LEADING OFF

Steve Kroner, San Francisco Chronicle

Deja vu, almost: The Angels' Bobby Abreu hit a two-run homer in the first inning Friday night and nearly did so Saturday. With a man aboard, Abreu jolted a Ben Sheets pitch to center. Coco Crisp raced to the wall and made a fine grab, preventing a repeat performance.

Plenty of reasons for A's to stay in Oakland

Andy Dolich, San Francisco Chronicle, 7/10/2010

The virtual pinball game to decide where the Oakland A's will relocate seems to be heating up.

San Jose elected officials, ballpark boosters and the A's ownership seem to feel that it is a fait accompli that the A's know the way to San Jose.

Some say this game is in the final innings. No, it isn't.

It took the Giants 16 years and four failed elections to get their gem of a privately financed jewel at China Basin. It's a bear to build a new sports venue in today's California, no matter how much rose coloring you add to your glasses or how much of the owners' privately funded millions are put into the project. Just ask the long line of teams prospecting for new stadiums, ballparks and arenas in the Golden State. The A's are joined by the Raiders, the San Francisco 49ers, the San Diego Chargers, the Sacramento Kings and the effort to build a football stadium in Los Angeles. This Rubik's Cube of stadium/arena financing and construction has created an even tougher puzzle in the economic mess that is California.

Perception versus reality: If we stacked up all the articles that have been written about the A's leaving Oakland, we could build a new stadium out of newsprint. As the A's haven't been rained out since May 5, 1998, at least we won't have to worry about ink-stained soggy seats.

Since relocating from Kansas City in 1968, the A's have had their ups and downs both on the field and at the ticket window. Their peaks clearly stand taller than the valleys. This proud franchise owns four World Series Championship trophies and six American League Championships. It has sent five players to the Hall of Fame. From 1981 to 1994, the A's outdrew the Giants by 4.3 million fans. As the great philosopher Lawrence Y. Berra has said, "You could look it up."

Before anyone waves bye-bye to the Green and Gold, let's consider the following:

-- The Coliseum complex built for a paltry \$25 million has drawn over 100 million fans since 1966.

-- Oakland is the transportation hub of the Bay Area.

-- The Coliseum complex is the only major entertainment facility with a dedicated BART stop.

-- The Coliseum isn't a baseball Taj Mahal, but that's not the reason fans are staying away. You can't tell your fans, "We're leaving, so come on out."

The key to any team's success is drawing from the nine Bay Area counties and beyond. The A's have done this well in the past and can do it again.

If there is no clear decision from Major League Baseball on the San Jose question, the A's aren't leaving the market. Rumored next stops are Portland, San Antonio, Charlotte, Sacramento and Las Vegas. None of these cities have a major-league place to play, and none of those cities would make a better home for the A's than where they have been for 42 years.

The answer to the age-old question of whether the Bay Area can support two major-league baseball teams is: Yes, heck, we can and do support eight professional sports franchises.

The A's will most likely get their new stadium in Oakland because the A's will follow the Giants example. In the Giants' darkest moment, a group came together to keep the team in its rightful place in San Francisco. Oakland elected officials and private, civic-minded business leaders will find a way to build a new ballpark. When fans of the Green and Gold are celebrating their fifth world championship, it will be in Oakland.

Ultimately, the most important group in this hypothetical baseball board game isn't the owners, the commissioner's Bay Area solution committee, lawyers, judges, economists, boosters, elected officials or team executives. It is the fans of the Oakland Athletics, who have shown over five decades that they can and will support a winning baseball team composed of iconic players and owners who are committed to winning the World Series.

The Giants and A's and their loyal fans know something about seismic shifts. Unless we are going to experience a massive tectonic-plate rearrangement, home plate will remain in Oakland for decades to come.

Andy Dolich is a sports business consultant who was an executive of the Oakland A's from 1980 to 1994 under the Haas family and more recently was chief operating officer of the San Francisco 49ers and president of the Golden State Warriors. Send your feedback to us through our online form at SFGate.com/chronicle/submissions/#1.

Davis' slam leads A's rout of Angels

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Rajai Davis rarely makes his way to the batting cages without flashing his pearly whites and dropping in a few words before his pregame hacks.

Said words, always accompanied by a healthy dose of confidence, usually go something like this: *Are you ready for the show? It starts in five minutes.*

Davis, of course, is usually referring to the power he likes to display during batting practice.

On Saturday, his show was still going long after the cages had been folded, the field watered and the first pitch thrown.

Just hours later Davis busted out a career-high-tying four hits, including a grand slam, along with a career-high five RBIs while leading the A's on a power-hungry ride over Angels lefty Scott Kazmir in a 15-1 victory over the Halos on Saturday night.

Thus, any arguments surrounding the A's lack of power was temporarily put to rest on a night when Davis became just the second player in Oakland history with four hits, five RBIs and a stolen base in one game. It also marked his first start in four days.

"I think it's a good reminder of what Rajai Davis can do," he said with a smile, channeling Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson -- who has been mentoring him since Spring Training -- with a third-person reference.

Davis deemed Saturday's performance the best night of his career "thus far." Kazmir, meanwhile, was singing an entirely different tune.

The Angels southpaw was rocked for 13 runs on 11 hits and three walks through five innings, two of which handed the A's a lifetime supply of runs. And it all started in the third frame, when Oakland sent 11 batters to the plate.

Kazmir began the inning by surrendering a double to Davis, who stole third and advanced to home on a wild pitch. Following a Cliff Pennington triple, Coco Crisp recorded an RBI base hit and Daric Barton reached first on a fielder's choice before moving to second on a single from Kevin Kouzmanoff. Kazmir forced Kurt Suzuki to pop out for the second out, but he then allowed an RBI single to Adam Rosales that resulted in a close play at the plate with Barton and catcher Mike Napoli, who argued he got the tag for the third out. Instead, plate umpire Ted Barrett ruled Barton safe.

"I thought he was safe," manager Bob Geren said, "but you couldn't really tell."

"Mike thought he tagged him," Angels skipper Mike Scioscia said. "I know that inning kind of blew up after that, but, still, when it's 15-1, I don't think you're going to pick anything out there -- other than the other team just pounded you."

That play, though, led to an intentional walk to Mark Ellis (a career .179 hitter against Kazmir), another free pass to Ryan Sweeney following a seven-pitch battle and, ultimately, the grand slam to Davis -- the second of his career and first of the season for the A's -- to give the club eight runs, the most in any inning this season.

Davis' other career slam just happened to come Sept. 5, 2008 at Baltimore, where the A's last posted an eight spot in a single frame.

"I hit, I believe, a fastball down the middle," the A's outfielder said.

Did he immediately know it was leaving the yard?

"Oh, absolutely."

"That pitch, right there," Kazmir said, "that was a pitch I wanted running in. By that time it was bases loaded already, and it was a 2-1 count, and I just couldn't throw a strike."

The A's didn't let down against Kazmir, who offered up another five runs in the fifth frame -- two of which came on back-to-back homers from Crisp -- who blasted a three-run homer -- and Barton, the latter who snapped a 0-for-20 hitless streak. Earlier in the frame, Davis collected his fifth RBI of the game when he doubled home Rosales.

"It was amazing because you'd watch one thing happen, and then you couldn't take your eyes off the game because you'd miss another thing happen," Davis said. "It's exciting to watch, and it's something we look forward to doing a little bit more."

Oakland's offensive output -- eventually turned 15 in the eighth thanks to a two-run double from Gabe Gross -- proved to be more than enough for A's starter Ben Sheets, who pitched six scoreless innings while allowing just two hits, walking one and fanning three despite experiencing a little tightness in his back during his bullpen session.

"I was just trying to go out and pitch the best I can," said the A's righty. "When you win the game, you don't try to break too much down, because that's all that matters."

"That was a lot of hitting from our guys, and anytime I can go six scoreless is a good thing. I was able to get a rhythm going early, and it was a little tough to get loose after that long third inning, but I was able to battle out there."

Kazmir, meanwhile, witnessed his ERA jump to 6.92.

"Three home runs are good for any team," Geren said. "There's more home runs in there for these guys."

"I think this puts us in a position to take the series," Davis said, "and I think you gotta look at the momentum it gives us going into tomorrow."

Although Geren wouldn't say whether Davis would get a chance to contribute in the series rubber match, the A's outfielder -- who finished a triple shy of hitting for the cycle -- believes he has a pretty decent shot at seeing his name in the lineup come Sunday morning.

"I think it's a good reminder of what Rajai Davis can do," he said.

Angels look to shake off struggles

By Matt Brown / MLB.com

One day, the Angels fought to a 6-5, extra-inning win to snap a four-game losing streak. The next day, they found themselves suffering an embarrassing 15-1 loss at the hands of the A's.

The Angels had lost six of their last seven entering Friday but rebounded with a win in the 10th inning. All that was forgotten on Saturday night, and now they will try to bounce back again in Sunday's rubber match in Oakland.

On the flip side, the extra-innings loss on Friday extended Oakland's losing streak to four games. Then the A's posted eight runs in the third inning on Saturday, and the previous week's offensive woes were seemingly forgotten.

Neither team has been particularly hot as the All-Star Game in Anaheim approaches, but one 14-run rout could certainly swing momentum in the A's favor.

They'll send an All-Star to the mound in an attempt to win the series, as right-hander Trevor Cahill will start his third game of the season against the American League West-rival Angels. In five starts over the past two years, Cahill has been consistently good against the Angels, posting a 2-1 record with a 2.56 ERA.

Meanwhile, Jered Weaver will start for the Angels with All-Star caliber numbers. He'll also make his third start of the season against the A's, although he and Cahill have yet to go head-to-head this season.

Angels: July not being kind

The Angels have won just three games in July and have only scored more than two runs twice in that span: an 11-0 win over the Royals and Friday's 6-5 win over the A's. In the seven losses this month, they've scored a total of nine runs. Saturday's blowout loss saw more of the same, as the Angels posted just four hits in comparison to Oakland's 16.

A's: Ellis gets shot at DH

For just the sixth time in his career, Mark Ellis was in the designated hitter spot on Saturday, and he was one of the few A's to struggle on offense. He went 0-for-4 with a walk and a run in the 15-1 blowout win. At second base, Adam Rosales thrived and went 3-for-5 with three runs scored.

Worth noting

The Angels lead the season series between the two clubs 7-5, thanks mainly to a three-game sweep of the A's in May. ... Cahill has allowed just one home run to current Angels' batters in 75 at-bats. The one homer is Bobby Abreu's lone hit off Cahill in 10 at-bats.

Geren touts Bailey, Breslow as All-Stars

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A pair of late-inning homers offered up by Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow on Friday night didn't change manager Bob Geren's mind about their All-Star worthiness.

In fact, less than 24 hours after the relief duo each surrendered game-changing long balls to the visiting Angels, Geren was -- yet again -- pushing for both to be considered for Tuesday's Midsummer Classic.

The A's currently boast just one All-Star in righty Trevor Cahill, who is slated to pitch Sunday and thus will be on the inactive roster. American League manager Joe Girardi has said he won't name a replacement for Cahill, which must be a pitcher, until Sunday.

The 22-year-old right-hander still likes the chances of brushing shoulders with a teammate come Tuesday, especially one like Bailey, who not only has All-Star experience but happens to be his roommate.

"Because I live with him," Cahill said on Saturday, "it's easiest to talk to him about what to expect. He's been through it. With him there, it would make it a lot easier on me, having someone to talk to."

Bailey entered Saturday's contest with a 1.75 ERA, which is eighth-lowest among AL relievers. Meanwhile, bullpen mate Craig Breslow boasts a .175 opponents average on the season, good for seventh-lowest in the league.

"[Girardi] knows which players I'd like to see there," Geren said. "He thanked me for the information. I don't know who all will be considered, but I think our two guys are very deserving."

Braden on track for July 20 return

OAKLAND -- Dallas Braden endured a successful side session on Saturday that has him on track to potentially make a rehab start Thursday before returning to the A's rotation on July 20.

The A's left-hander, according to manager Bob Geren, took part in a "very good" long-toss routine before throwing 20-25 pitches, including his breaking ball, in a bullpen session from flat ground. He reached 94 mph with his fastball.

"He threw all of his pitches," the A's skipper said, "and came out very happy with how it went."

Thus, Geren is rather confident Braden will need just one rehab start before making his way back into the rotation for an outing against the visiting Red Sox in 10 days. The A's southpaw has yet to appear in a game since June 22 and hasn't won since his perfect game on May 9.

Worth noting

According to A's manager Bob Geren, lefty Brett Anderson experienced no ill effects one day after throwing two innings in his first game since being placed on the disabled list with elbow tendinitis at the beginning of June. He'll next throw around 60 pitches, including his breaking ball, in another rehab start on June 14. Five days later, Anderson could make his return to the Oakland rotation. ... Conor Jackson (right hamstring) will undergo a series of field tests on Sunday, at which point the club will draw out a rehab schedule. Geren hopes the A's outfielder will be able to be activated from the DL when eligible on Friday. ... Mark Ellis received just his sixth career start -- fourth of the year -- at the designated-hitter's spot on Saturday, while Adam Rosales got the nod at second base. "He's done it a few times now," Geren said, "so when you're there sporadically, there's a certain comfort level once you've been there before. Both Ellis and Rosales are so good defensively, so it doesn't change the dynamic of the defense."

Rajai Rally's the A's Win

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post

Oakland, CA – Missing in the starting lineup since Coco Crisp's return, Rajai Davis dominated in the third frame. He doubled, stole third base, scored the A's first run and hit a grand slam all within one inning. Davis rallied Oakland's win 15-1 over the Los Angeles Angels to even the series.

"My faith through God has kept me focus through my time off," said Davis. "If I go out and dominate than great, if not it'll be another day."

That day came for the outfielder, as he coins the phrase "It's the Rajai Davis Show, Are you Ready?" Davis had a career-high five RBI's and matched his career-high with four hits that included two doubles and a home run. He 's the second player in the history of the A's to have four hits, five RBI's and a stolen base in one game.

Snapping an 11-game stretch without a stolen base and only playing just three of the last twelve games Davis proved he's worthy of being out on that field. Everyone knows the speed of Rajai yet questions still loomed, "can he hit"? All naysayers were proven wrong tonight.

"I took some pressure off myself since I hadn't been paying consistently," Davis said. "I think it's a good reminder of what I can do on the field which comes from preparation, believing in myself and staying positive."

Oakland's struggle with getting hits in now in the past. The ball club totaled fifteen earned runs coming from Davis along with seven other players. Both Coco Crisp and Daric Barton hit back-to-back home runs in the fifth frame. This is the second time this season that the A's have connected for consecutive long balls.

"Up and down the lineup, it was a big night," said A's manager Bob Geren. "Three home runs is good for any team and obviously, we haven't done that too often this year."

Angels pitcher Scott Kazmir will also be remembered for giving up a career-high 13 earned runs in five innings. It was the most runs allowed by an Angels pitcher and the first time for Kazmir in one game. He gave up 11 hits, 13 runs (all earned), 3 walks (1 intentional), 2 wild pitches and 2 strikeouts.

The A's ended their four-game losing streak in front of one of their largest crowds 30,035. Many came out to view the fireworks and got more for their dollar when Oakland almost shutout their division rivals. This was a much needed win as this team prepares for the upcoming break.

"We always play the Angels tough," Ryan Sweeney said. "It's going to be good to have a few days off." "We're definitely in a better position for the second half of the season when some of injured players return." "Hopefully we can finish the season with a healthy team since that was our biggest challenge in the beginning of the season."

A's clobber Kazmir, Angels

By JOSH DUBOW, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — The Oakland Athletics have had few nights like this in a first half of the season where scoring runs consistently has been difficult.

Few pitchers have ever had the kind of night Scott Kazmir endured for the Los Angeles Angels.

Rajai Davis capped Oakland's biggest inning of the season with a grand slam and the Athletics handed Kazmir the worst pounding ever for an Angels pitcher in a 15-1 victory over Los Angeles on Saturday night.

Kazmir (7-9) allowed eight runs in the third inning and five more in the fifth, capped by back-to-back homers by Coco Crisp and Daric Barton.

"Today is a tough one to swallow," Kazmir said. "I can't have too much confidence after a game like this."

The 13 runs are the most allowed by an Angels pitcher, topping the 11 Scott Schoeneweis gave up against Baltimore on May 23, 2001.

It was the most in the majors since St. Louis' Jason Marquis allowed 13 to the Chicago White Sox on June 21, 2006.

The offensively challenged A's broke out in a big way night after scoring only 19 runs in the previous seven games. Davis, who entered the game in a 2-for-31 slump, added two doubles, a single and a career-high five RBIs. Crisp drove in four runs to help Oakland snap a four-game losing streak and reach a season-high in runs.

"Three home runs is good for any team. It's a real solid night for us," manager Bob Geren said. "We haven't done that too often, obviously. It's just guys getting the good part of the bat on the ball."

Ben Sheets (4-8), who came into the game with the fourth worst run support in the American League, was the beneficiary of the outburst. He pitched six scoreless innings to win for just the second time in his last eight starts. The A's had scored one or fewer runs in eight of his previous 18 starts.

Davis started the big third inning with a double, stole third and scored on a wild pitch. Crisp hit a popup that landed between right fielder Bobby Abreu and second baseman Howie Kendrick for an RBI single and the inning took a bad turn for the Angels when Adam Rosales hit a two-out single to center with runners on first and second.

Torii Hunter made a strong throw home and Mike Napoli made a swipe tag that appeared to get Daric Barton. Plate umpire Ted Barrett ruled that Napoli missed the tag, much to the dismay of manager Mike Scioscia, who came charging out of the dugout to argue.

"Mike thought he tagged him," Scioscia said. "I haven't seen the replay. I know the inning got away from us after that but changing the dynamic of any one inning is not going to change anything tonight. They scored 15 runs."

After an intentional walk to Mark Ellis loaded the bases, Kazmir walked Ryan Sweeney to force in the fourth run. Davis followed with a drive into the left-field seats for Oakland's first grand slam of the season. It was also the team's biggest inning, topping a seven-run seventh inning against Pittsburgh on June 25.

Kazmir stayed in the game and ran into more trouble in the fifth. He allowed an RBI double to Davis and then a three-run homer to Crisp. Barton hit the next pitch out for Oakland's second back-to-back homers of the season, snapping an 0-for-20 streak that matched the worst of his career.

"It was amazing," Davis said. "You see one thing and you can't take your eyes off the game because another thing is happening, especially in the third inning when we scored all those runs. It was exciting to watch and something we look forward to doing more."

Kazmir allowed 13 runs and 11 hits in five innings, the fourth straight start he has allowed more runs than innings pitched. He has a 13.73 ERA in that span, raising his mark on the season to 6.92.

Scioscia said he kept Kazmir in so long because he needed the innings from his starter.

"Kaz was struggling. We'll keep pushing until he gets it right," Scioscia said. "He'll be in the rotation when the second half starts. If we have to make a move we'll consider it but we're not there yet. ... He's still going to be very important for us."

Sheets, who had allowed a major league worst 54 extra-base hits coming into the game, seemed on his way to another rough night early. Kendrick hit a one-out double in the first and Abreu then drove a ball to deep center that looked as if it could go out. But Crisp made a leaping grab before crashing against the wall for the second out.

Sheets settled down after that, allowing only one more hit despite sitting during two long innings when the A's were at the plate.

"It was long," Sheets said. "I don't think I ever got my stuff totally back. I went out there and just tried to make pitches."

NOTES

*Kazmir had allowed only one earned run in his previous three starts against the A's.

*Davis' only other grand slam came on Sept. 5, 2008, against Baltimore.

*Angels outfielder Cory Aldridge hit an RBI triple in the eighth for his first career hit in his 14th professional season.

*Oakland LHP Dallas Braden (left elbow stiffness) threw a side session on flat ground before the game. Geren said Braden could make a rehab start July 15 and return to the majors July 20 if there are no further setbacks.

Voorhees native Andrew Bailey, reigning AL Rookie of Year, balances fun, focus

Marc Carig/The Star-Ledger

Bailey, above, and his fiancée have agreed that baseball talk is okay on the car ride home, but not in their house.

As he shagged fly balls in batting practice last week, Andrew Bailey spotted an open window in one of the suites overlooking the Oakland Coliseum outfield, and he couldn't resist. So, as he's known to do sometimes, the A's closer fired a baseball toward the open window, simply curious to see if he could hit his target.

But Bailey, according to his teammates, can be a little gullible. Which is why when his teammates told him that the man watching the silliness unfold from a nearby suite was A's general manager Billy Beane, Bailey bought it.

"You'd think he was left-handed," A's teammate Michael Wuertz said. "He's a little loony. I don't think a lot of people see that. He's like a 16-year-old in a 26-year-old body. He likes to have fun. He brings a lot of energy to our bullpen, that's for sure."

Indeed, there are distinct sides to Bailey, the Voorhees native and reigning American League Rookie of the Year. On one hand, Bailey remains a light-hearted character, able to quickly brush aside good days and bad ones too, capable of laughing hard even when a joke comes at his expense.

But there is also something serious about Bailey, the one who spends hours analyzing film to avoid the dreadful feeling of stepping onto the mound unprepared.

It's that balanced combination of fun and focus that has helped Bailey sustain the success he enjoyed last season, so far

putting to rest any notions of a sophomore slump.

The A's have been conservative with Bailey, who missed time in spring training with what he called tennis elbow. Though he came back healthy, Bailey's workload early in the season slowed to a trickle, as he converted his only two save chances in April.

Even when work did pick up, the A's have remained committed to keeping Bailey to one-inning appearances, hoping to save him from unneeded wear.

Bailey's strikeout rate has dipped from last season, going from a stunning 9.83 per nine innings to 6.09, a change he attributes to an adjustment opposing hitters have made. They have become more aggressive, swinging earlier in counts. But Bailey's drop in strikeouts has also been accompanied by a slight decrease in walks. He, too, has made adjustments. Even though he's not missing as many bats as he did during his impressive rookie season — in which he was also named an AL All-Star — Bailey has been effective. He has posted 17 saves and a 1.59 ERA over 34 innings that have been spread out over 33 games.

"He gets to the field early, watches a lot of video on the hitters he's going to face, and he watches a lot of videos after the games that he's pitched," Wuertz said. "That's one of the biggest things for him, why he's successful. He prepares a lot." Film study is just one of the helpful habits that Bailey said he picked up by being surrounded by veteran relievers during his rookie year, people such as Craig Breslow, Russ Springer and Wuertz.

Bailey watches film not to study himself but to break down the hitters he'll face. He looks for tendencies and reactions on certain pitches. He keeps an eye on stances, looking for little signs that might hint at an area of vulnerability, spots that Bailey can exploit with his cutter and a fastball that sits easily in the mid 90s.

"I don't like to go into an at-bat not knowing what that guy looks like in the box," Bailey said. "He could be opened (in the stance) or closed, or what have you, and you can attack him differently."

From the veteran group around him, Bailey also learned the art of moving on quickly, a critical skill for those who hold ambitions of long-term success as a big-league closer.

"As a reliever, you have to do that," he said. "Being a starter prior years, you have some time to marinate, to think about at-bats. Being a closer, the day's over with as soon as that game is over, whether you give up a walk-off hit or get the final out."

One rule Bailey has instituted is in play during his car rides home from the ballpark. Any time on the trip, he and his fiancée allow one another to talk about the game. But once they walk through the door at home, they've agreed that all baseball talk is banned.

Things like that, Bailey said, have made the process of turning the page much easier.

Minor League News

Sacramento win streak ends at six

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

Sean Kazmar belted a fourth-inning grand slam Saturday night and the Portland Beavers rolled to a 11-0 shutout over the Sacramento River Cats at Raley Field.

Not even a Corey Wimberly triple could get the River Cats to home plate. Sacramento was knocked around on both offense and defense. Sacramento had only four hits for the night and committed two errors.

The loss went to Boof Bonser, who in his second pitching appearance with Sacramento struggled at the mound. In three innings, Bonser gave up seven hits, six runs (all earned) and threw one strikeout. Sacramento shuffled through their bullpen, with Graham Godfrey, Henry Rodriguez, Jon Hunton, and Dan Giese all making appearances.

Portland's aggressive play never stopped. The Beavers put runs on the scoreboard in four consecutive innings starting in the second. The six-run fourth inning that included Kazmar's grand slam put the Cat's behind 9-0, and proved too much to overcome. Kazmar, who had only one home run entering play, hit two against the River Cats before 11,010 fans Saturday.

Mike Baxter tacked on an insurance run in the ninth for Portland with a solo home run.

The closest Sacramento came to scoring was a bases loaded scenario in the sixth inning. Steven Tolleson singled, Chris Carter walked and Michael Taylor singled to prep the bases for Josh Donaldson. Donaldson was called out on strikes for the final out and the Cats weren't able to take advantage. Tolleson increased his hitting streak to 13 games, dating back to June 26, and Taylor increased his to eight games.

A Wimberly triple, his third of the season, gave the Cats another chance in the seventh inning. A Tolleson walk kept hope alive and a Carter strike out quickly ended it.

Sacramento may not have been able to swing for a win, but they certainly swung for a cure. Players wore commemorative pink uniforms that were auctioned off during the game to raise money for Breast Cancer Awareness.

Sacramento will go for the series victory on Sunday at 1:05 p.m.

RockHounds rebound for win over Travelers

Midland Reporter-Telegram

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. -- The Midland RockHounds rebounded from a tough loss on Friday to hang on for a 6-4 victory against the Arkansas Travelers on Saturday.

The RockHounds (7-8) used a four-run fourth inning to come back from a 3-0 deficit to the Travelers (6-9) for a 4-3 lead and then added single runs in the fifth and sixth innings for their six runs in the game.

During the fourth, Adrian Cardenas started the scoring with a double to left that scored Josh Horton. Cardenas later scored when Alex Valdez drew a bases loaded walk, and then Matt Sulentic slapped a single to center that scored two more runs.

The RockHounds extended their lead to 5-3 in the fifth when Archie Gilbert was driven in by a sacrifice fly from Cardenas. Midland's final run came when Valdez scored on a Petey Paramore single to center in the sixth.

The RockHounds sent six pitchers to the mound on Saturday as starter Jeff Lyman gave up a run on three hits with three strikeouts. Derrick Gordon earned the victory by pitching 1 1/3 innings, allowing two runs on two hits with a walk and strikeout, and Jared Lansford quelled a rally in the ninth for his 12th save of the season.

Midland will begin a three-game series with Springfield at 6:10 p.m. today at Hammond Field in Springfield.

Bullpen Buoys Ports To 4-2 Win

MODESTO, Calif. - For the second night in a row, the Stockton Ports bullpen completely shut down the opposition. After combining for 4.1 scoreless frames on Friday night against the San Jose Giants, Stockton's 'pen hurled 5.2 scoreless frames to preserve a 4-2 victory over the Modesto Nuts. The Ports bullpen has now combined for 10 consecutive scoreless innings of relief.

Before the bullpen could preserve Stockton's lead, an old friend made a triumphant return to the Cal-League and put the Ports in front. Yusuf Carter, a Cal-League All-Star from a year ago, rejoined the team and hit a two-run homer in his first at-bat off Nuts starter Juan Nicasio (8-5) in the second inning. The home run was part of a 2-for-4 effort for Carter on the night.

The Ports added another run in the third. David Thomas led off with a single, followed by an RBI double from Tyler Ladendorf to make it a 3-0 ballgame.

Brett Tomko, starting the game on a rehab assignment for Stockton, allowed a hit and a walk in each of the first two innings but didn't allow a run in that span.

Tomko would fall victim to a mental mistake made by the catcher Carter in the third. With Jordan Pacheco at first and one out, Tomko struck out Ben Paulsen on a pitch in the dirt. Paulsen ran to first, but Carter didn't realize Paulsen was prohibited from taking first because it was occupied by Pacheco. Instead of throwing to second to get Pacheco, Carter threw to first unnecessarily, allowing Pacheco to reach second and the inning to continue. Joe Sanders came up next and singled to right to put Modesto on the board. Jimmy Cesario followed with an RBI knock to right to cut Stockton's lead to 3-2.

Tomko threw 72 pitches and went 3.1 innings, allowing two runs on five hits while walking two and striking out four.

Stockton's bullpen took the baton beginning with one out in the fourth. Brett Hunter (2-0) came on after Tomko and tossed 1.2 innings of scoreless relief and was credited with the win. Scott Deal followed with two scoreless innings, allowing two hits while striking out four. Trey Barham pitched a perfect eighth and Paul Smyth (SV, 14) a perfect ninth to record his second save in as many nights.

The Ports tacked on an insurance run in the seventh. Todd Johnson led off with a triple off Nicasio and two batters later, Brandon Pinkney came through with a clutch single to center on a 1-2 pitch with one out to score Johnson and make it a two-run cushion at 4-2.

Nicasio took the loss after going seven innings, allowing four runs on eight hits while striking out eight and not allowing a walk.

Kurt Yacko and Adam Jorgenson pitched a scoreless eighth and ninth, respectively, for the Nuts.

Stockton and Modesto will play the second game of their three-game set on Sunday afternoon at John Thurman Field. Left-hander Fabian Williamson (0-0, 6.35 ERA) will take the mound for the Ports, opposed by Nuts right-hander Dan Houston (4-5, 5.70 ERA). First pitch is set for 1:05 p.m. PDT.

Cougars Use More Late Offense for Win

Kane County's 6-run 7th inning fuels victory

GENEVA, III. – For the third night in a row, the Kane County Cougars' offense used a late rally to grab a victory. They had rallied in the ninth on Thursday and Friday to win in Peoria, and Saturday night the Cougars scored six runs in the seventh inning to come back and beat the Clinton LumberKings, 9-4, in front of 8,758 at Elfstrom Stadium. The Cougars have won seven of their last night nine games.

The Cougars trailed, 4-3, entering the bottom of the seventh. Conner Crumbliss singled, and Tyreace House walked against Ryan Moorer (0-1). Then Anthony Aliotti poked an RBI single to tie it off Brandon Josselyn, and Mike Gilmartin reached on a run-scoring fielder's choice to make it 5-4. After Jose Crisotomo delivered an RBI infield single for a 6-4 game, two runs scored on a pair of Clinton errors and Leonardo Gil singled home Jason Christian for the 9-4 score. The Cougars had five of their 11 hits of the game in that inning, and 10 batters came to the plate.

Clinton scored twice in the first inning against Rob Gilliam, but the Cougars countered with three in the first against Taylor Stanton on RBIs from Gilmartin, Crisotomo and Juan Nunez. The 3-2 lead remained until Clinton tied it in the fifth and took the lead in the seventh. Gilliam gave up three runs over 4 1/3 innings in a no-decision, Connor Hoehn (5-3) yielded one run in 2 2/3 innings and Jose Pina tossed two scoreless innings.

The Cougars (9-7, 41-44) and LumberKings (8-7, 45-39) continue the three-game series Sunday afternoon at 1 CT. Dan Straily (6-5, 4.57) will Jimmy Gillheaney (6-6, 3.14). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 12:45 p.m.