

## A's News Clips, Friday, July 16, 2010

### As second half begins, Oakland A's still unsure if they are buying or selling

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

There's no convenient label to slap on the A's as the second half of the season begins.

With the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline approaching, it's tough to gauge whether they're buyers or sellers.

Their 43-46 record leaves them eight games back in the American League West, well within striking distance.

But how much confidence does this team inspire based on its first half?

The A's are 22-30 against teams with a .500 record or better. They're 26-20 at home but 17-26 on the road. If there's optimism coming out of the All-Star break, it's based on the young pitching depth that has helped the A's withstand a rash of injuries.

Oakland boasted the AL's third-best staff ERA (3.85) in the first half even though two of its five starters — Brett Anderson and Justin Duchscherer — have missed major time on the disabled list. A third starter, Dallas Braden, joined the DL in late June.

With Anderson and Braden expected to return from elbow injuries this month, the A's could feature one of the AL's top rotations.

They'll need that in order to compensate for an offense that severely lacks firepower.

As the A's give chase to the division-leading Texas Rangers and Los Angeles Angels, here are five compelling story lines to follow:

Will they cash in their trade chips?

The A's aren't thought to be shopping starting pitcher Ben Sheets or center fielder Coco Crisp — their two most marketable veterans — for prospects.

Considering they're just eight games out, there's incentive to keep this team intact.

But if the A's creep closer to first place in the next week, could they flip the script and become buyers at the deadline?

"That's sort of a question that's better answered when and if (the A's gain more ground)," general manager Billy Beane said.

Beane is hesitant to part with his core young players, but it's interesting to ponder whether Sheets could fetch an impact hitter. Dealing the right-hander would be a gamble considering Anderson and Braden are still on the DL.

Beane also likes Sheets' influence on the younger pitchers, so don't assume Sheets will be dealt for prospects if the A's fade from contention.

As for Crisp, the A's hold a \$5.75 million option on him for 2011, and indications are that he's a part of their plans.

Can Brett Anderson make a healthy return?

The A's have seen several young starters take a step forward this season, including Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Vin Mazzaro.

But it's Anderson who was given a four-year, \$12.5 million contract extension and is viewed as the future ace. The second-year left-hander has made just six starts in 2010 because of left-elbow inflammation.

Anderson was scheduled to make his second rehab outing Thursday in a rookie league game, and the A's are hopeful he can return to the rotation by the end of the month.

With an offense that's averaging 4.15 runs per game (11th out of 14 AL teams), the A's will go as far as their pitching takes them. Having Anderson on the mound every fifth day would be big.

When do Carter and Taylor arrive?

With the A's lacking home run thump, curiosity grows as to when first baseman Chris Carter and/or outfielder Michael Taylor — the team's two top prospects — might get the call from Triple-A Sacramento.

Carter, 23, is hitting .233 but has 19 homers and 64 RBIs in 88 games. Taylor, 24, has lifted his average to .253 with a recent hot streak. But he's homered just four times in 74 games.

There's a feeling among scouts and team officials that neither player is ready for the majors.

That Carter and Taylor receive so much attention speaks to the void in the middle of the A's lineup. Oakland's 57 homers are tied for last in the majors with Houston and Seattle.

Kurt Suzuki is one of the team's best overall hitters, but he's miscast in the cleanup role. Jack Cust, whose primary value to the A's is as a power hitter, has just four homers in 44 games.

Can the bullpen right the ship?

Expected to be the team's biggest strength, A's relievers have been plagued by inconsistency. They had a particularly tough time in June, going 3-7 with a 4.52 ERA and four blown saves.

Michael Wuertz, so dominant as the setup man last season, has struggled to find that form, though he's been much better of late. If he can regain the regular eighth-inning role, left-hander Craig Breslow can be used in the earlier innings and the entire unit gets stronger.

"I know Wuertzie's been throwing well recently," closer Andrew Bailey said. "His velocity's back and his slider's back, so it's all about confidence with everyone."

Must Bob Geren prove he deserves a fifth season?

Geren owns a 269-305 record since taking over as A's manager before the 2007 season.

The A's hold a 2011 club option on him that has yet to be exercised. But by all accounts, his job security is airtight.

The team has been ravaged by injuries during his tenure, and Beane gives Geren high marks for guiding the A's through such tough times and keeping a positive attitude.

"Certainly wins and losses are ultimately the most important thing," Beane said. "(But) I always think you have to be careful and understand that with a young team, and a challenging financial situation, you have to temper your expectations somewhat and exercise patience."

But there's something to be said for a sense of urgency being instilled to produce a winner.

How well the A's play in the second half, and how they continue responding to Geren's leadership, is key in evaluating the fourth-year manager.

## **Oakland A's midseason report card**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A'S REPORT CARD

STARTING PITCHING: B

The rotation held up surprisingly well after losing Brett Anderson for most of the first half and Justin Duchscherer likely for the season. Trevor Cahill was called up from the minors and developed into an All-Star. Gio Gonzalez posted a respectable

3.79 ERA and Vin Mazzaro chipped in after his call-up. Their contributions helped offset a shaky start from Ben Sheets, who has a 4-8 record and 4.63 ERA but has pitched better of late.

#### BULLPEN: C-

There have been too many spotty appearances from the middle relievers. The bullpen's 37 homers allowed are second most in the AL. Craig Breslow was terrific throughout the first half, but it's asking a lot for him to repeat that performance down the stretch. That means Michael Wuertz, Brad Ziegler, Jerry Blevins and Co. all need to share the load in getting the ball to closer Andrew Bailey.

#### CATCHER: B

Kurt Suzuki leads the A's with 10 homers and is second with 37 RBIs, but he's hitting just .252. His game calling and handling of pitchers contribute to the solid grade he gets. Oakland pitchers have a 3.43 ERA with him catching and a 4.72 mark with others behind the plate. Suzuki's also made some difficult tag plays on throws from the outfield. One area he could improve is throwing out base stealers — he's nailed just 7 of 38 runners (18.4 percent).

#### INFIELD: C

First baseman Daric Barton is drawing walks and getting on base, but he has just five homers and 32 RBIs at a position that typically demands more pop. Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff will stop a ball with his teeth if he has to, but his throws to first have been an adventure. The A's need more power from Kouzmanoff, who had just eight homers in the first half. Cliff Pennington's offensive contributions were a pleasant surprise, but his 13 errors are most among AL shortstops. Mark Ellis has provided his typically stellar defense at second.

#### OUTFIELD: C-

Center fielder Coco Crisp has been terrific since returning from two long DL stints, but he hasn't logged enough games to boost this grade higher. Yes, Ryan Sweeney is hitting .294 and plays very good defense. But one homer through 89 games doesn't cut it as a corner outfielder unless you're tearing it up in another category. With Conor Jackson on the DL, it wouldn't hurt to stick Rajai Davis in left field regularly and see if his speed can help ignite things.

#### BENCH: B

Utility man Adam Rosales is a popular guy not only because of his hustle but also his production. He's filled in admirably all over the diamond. Outfielder Gabe Gross played well during an extended stretch of starts in late May and provides a solid defensive option in the late innings. Jake Fox and Eric Patterson made the opening day roster as utility men, but neither distinguished himself and the A's cut ties with both.

#### MANAGEMENT/FRONT OFFICE: C-

The A's signed Sheets to a one-year, \$10 million deal as he was coming off major elbow surgery. He's terrific in the clubhouse, but the results on the mound have yet to justify that price tag. Jackson was obtained to upgrade the offense, but he's on the DL with a hamstring injury, troublesome in that the same injury sidelined him with Arizona before the deal. Rosales was a good find. But manager Bob Geren has made some head-scratching in-game maneuvers, including walking Justin Morneau with the bases empty to start a game-winning rally for Minnesota, and failing to pull a double switch against the Cubs, which forced Bailey to leave early and contributed to another loss.

## **A's Dallas Braden far from perfect in rehab start at Stockton**

Oakland Tribune staff and wire report

STOCKTON — A's pitcher Dallas Braden threw four-plus innings and gave up three runs on seven hits in a rehab start for Single-A Stockton on Thursday night.

Braden, who was making his first appearance since going on the disabled list with elbow stiffness on July 3, left with a 6-3 lead after giving up back-to-back home runs to Visalia's Mark Krauss and Paul Goldschmidt. He threw a healthy amount of breaking balls in the 76-pitch outing to test his left elbow.

Braden, a native of Stockton, struck out four and walked one batter.

## **A's at the break**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

### **A's top three highlights**

1. Dallas Braden's perfect game on Mother's Day, the 19th perfect game in history, and what timing with Braden's grandmother in attendance - and following the A-Rod flap. Stick it, A-Rod!
2. Trevor Cahill's journey from the DL to Triple-A to All-Star, especially after giving up an Oakland-rookie record 27 homers last year.
3. Matt Carson's full-speed faceplant into the wall in center. Highlight might not be the right word, but it was certainly shown over and over enough on TV, and Carson was fine after his jaw stopped hurting.

### **A's bottom three lowlights**

1. June, particularly a 2-10 interleague stretch at San Francisco, Chicago, St. Louis and at home against Cincinnati.
2. Jack Cust's demotion. Cust, the team's top power hitter the previous three years, was stunned to be let loose when the final roster was announced.
3. The packed DL. Over the past 3 1/2 seasons, the total disabled list tally is an outrageous 81. It's tough to compete with everyone hurt.

### **Q&A's**

When spring training opened, The Sporting Green asked five questions about the A's and Giants. Here are the answers for the A's at the break.

#### **1. Will Chavez play another regular-season game in the majors?**

Chavez did appear in 33 games, but two bulging disks in his neck have knocked him out, possibly until September.

#### **2. So where would Chavez play and what happens if he can't?**

Chavez DH'd. When Chavez went out, Jack Cust escaped Triple-A.

### 3. What is the plan for Chris Carter and outfielder Michael Taylor?

Oakland's top two prospects remain at Triple-A Sacramento, where both have struggled to get their average above the .220-.230 range. Carter has 19 homers and might warrant a look sooner, but September seems most likely for both players.

### 4. Who is the fourth outfielder?

With Coco Crisp back in center and Conor Jackson acquired from Arizona, sometimes it's Rajai Davis, sometimes it's Gabe Gross.

### 5. The fifth starter is Trevor Cahill, isn't it?

Gio Gonzalez won the fifth starter job, partly because Cahill went on the DL. (Now Cahill's an All-Star).

## Defense

The Chronicle's season preview section focused on the rising reputation of defense as a key to a team's success. Many baseball analysts pointed to the Mariners as the trendy defensive juggernaut that would prove the point. Well, the M's are in last place in the AL West with the third-worst record in the league.

Here is the assessment of the A's defense so far.

One of Oakland's premier defensive players, center fielder Coco Crisp, missed almost the entire first half, with two stints on the disabled list. Even so, the A's were in the top half of the league in fielding percentage and in fewest errors (53).

The standout, not surprisingly, was second baseman Mark Ellis, who has a 53-game errorless streak going back to last year. Oakland's second basemen, primarily Ellis and Adam Rosales (44 games), have not made an error, period.

One the other hand: The A's have turned the second-fewest double plays in the AL, 68; second-year shortstop Cliff Pennington has the most errors at his position, 13; and Daric Barton is tied for the most errors among AL first basemen, nine. Pennington and Barton both are regarded as good defensive players, so there's not a lot of hand-wringing about those numbers, but the team wouldn't mind seeing some improvement.

## Injury roll call

**LHP Dallas Braden (elbow tendinitis):** Missed one start before break when he went on DL but expected to be ready for Boston on Tuesday.

**LHP Brett Anderson (elbow tendinitis):** Two stints on DL but is pitching in rehab games and should return to rotation on or about July 24.

**OF Conor Jackson (right hamstring strain):** Two DL stays with a similar problem but is expected to be activated sometime next week, if not earlier.

**DH Eric Chavez (bulging disks, neck):** Said via text recently that he might not be back until September. Has yet to resume baseball activity.

**OF Travis Buck (oblique strain, leg soreness):** Playing in rehab games in Arizona but is not expected back soon. Will need a lengthy rehab assignment after missing nearly three months, and there's a good chance he'd then remain at Triple-A Sacramento.

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**RHP Joey Devine:** Numerous setbacks from Tommy John surgery. Had hoped to be back in April, but after being shut down at points during rehab, it is unlikely he'd pitch for Oakland until September, if at all.

**LHP Josh Outman:** See Devine, above. Outman also had Tommy John surgery last summer and has had several setbacks this summer.

## **A'S MIDSEASON REPORT** **Down, but not out of it**

### **3rd-place team finds reason for optimism**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

For a team that hasn't hit the .500 mark the past three seasons, the A's certainly are upbeat going into the second half.

They don't have a winning record, but they got a taste of success in May, leading the division until a free fall in June. And oddly, it's that June plunge as much as anything that gives rise to team optimism the rest of the way, because Oakland's bad month included several things that can be fixed or won't apply.

The A's have no more long interleague stints, like the San Francisco-Chicago-St. Louis-Cincinnati stretch during which Oakland went 2-10. The team's bullpen was roughed up in June, going 3-7 with four saves, four blown saves and a 4.52 ERA - the unit, usually one of Oakland's strengths, should be better in the second half, particularly with Michael Wuertz appearing to look more like the 2009 model.

And - this is where the A's start knocking on wood - the club's health is expected to be better. That's relative in Oakland, where several figures are on the disabled list indefinitely (Eric Chavez, Joey Devine, Travis Buck, Justin Duchscherer). But two key members of the rotation, Brett Anderson and Dallas Braden, are expected back before the end of the month, along with outfielder Conor Jackson.

Jackson, out with a right hamstring strain, has yet to play in a rehab game, however, and he'll need at least three. Braden pitched on Thursday night at Stockton, and he is expected to rejoin Oakland's rotation Tuesday against Boston. Anderson had a scheduled rehab start Wednesday pushed back because of a blister on his left hand.

"Considering all the injuries we had, I think we hung in there pretty well," Oakland catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "I feel we can do a lot better, and I think we're right in it."

There is one area, though, that the A's are unlikely to be able to address unless they make a deal before the deadline, and that is the utter lack of power. This flaw has been apparent since before spring training, and the numbers are, if anything,

worse than expected, in part because of Chavez's neck injury and the fact that Jack Cust wasn't brought up until mid-May - and his home-run stroke once back in the big leagues has been slow to come around. Suzuki is the team's top home run hitter, with 10.

Indications so far are that the team plans to be quiet at the deadline, and if that's the case, Oakland's top power hope is still at Triple-A Sacramento, where first baseman Chris Carter has 19 homers. Carter, however, is batting .233, and the A's would like him to show that he can hit for a consistently decent average in the Pacific Coast League before bringing him up.

Oakland's saving grace this season might be the division. The Angels are a little down, and the first-place Rangers still have much to prove after a decadelong postseason absence. The A's are 7 1/2 games behind Texas starting play this evening.

"Obviously, we want to be closer to the top, but we only had one really bad stretch," second baseman Mark Ellis said. "We would be closer if it wasn't for that. We've got some ground to make up, but I think we'll be all right."

### **Five keys to second half**

1. Health. Have you heard that mentioned before? And yet, the A's are on track to smash their record for most DL uses, with 17 in the first half.
2. Coco Crisp. Not only must he remain on the field, he also needs to get the A's offense, minimal in the first half, revved up.
3. Road wins. The A's are 17-26 away from Oakland, allowing the most road homers in the league.
4. Dependable bullpen. Last year, this was the best unit from start to finish, but this year, relievers are inconsistent, particularly Brad Ziegler and Michael Wuertz.
5. Beat Texas. The A's second half includes 13 of their 19 games against the division-leading Rangers, including seven at the Coliseum.

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## **A's five keys to the second half**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

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## **A's leading off**

San Francisco Chronicle

**Above average hitters:** The A's face their first test against the best-hitting team in baseball. But while K.C. is batting .282, it's scored only 385 runs, 10th in the AL at the break.

## **Long ball power been key missing ingredient in first half for Athletics**

By Josh Dubow, Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — From the days of Reggie Jackson in the 1970s to the Bash Brothers of the 1980s to the slugging beer-league style teams that were so successful a decade ago, power has often been a big component of the Oakland Athletics' success.

It's that long ball power that has been the biggest missing ingredient in a first half of the season that had moments of perfection that were too infrequent for any sustained success.

"We can't be waiting around for guys to hit home runs to win games," slugger Jack Cust said. "Everybody hits more home runs than us."

That's pretty much been the case so far this season. The A's come out of the all-star break tied with Seattle and Houston for the fewest home runs in all of baseball with 57.

The A's are on pace for 104 home runs this season — the fewest in a full season for the franchise since 1978. In fact, the A's are in danger of failing to reach 100 home runs for the first time since the franchise's inaugural season in Oakland in 1968.

Jackson had 37 home runs at the all-star break the following season and the A's have been one of the game's best power-hitting teams ever since. Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire teamed up in the late 1980s to give Oakland a feared offensive attack and players like Jason Giambi, Miguel Tejada, Frank Thomas, Matt Stairs of Fredericton and Nick Swisher continued the trend in recent years.

But this year, catcher Kurt Suzuki is the only player in double digits in home runs with 10. The team went 23 games without homering more than once in a contest, the second longest such streak for the franchise in 21 years.

Oakland's usual No. 3 hitter Ryan Sweeney has gone 54 games without going deep. First baseman Daric Barton, who plays a traditional power position, snapped a 34-game homerless streak last weekend with his fifth home run.

"There's more home runs in there from our guys," manager Bob Geren said. "We don't have a lot of 30 home run guys. But there's definitely a core group that should hit in double digits or maybe push the 20 mark. The second half is usually more conducive to homers with the weather and things like that. Especially here in our park it travels a little better in the summer."

Cust, the team's biggest power threat, snapped a 22-game homerless streak last Friday and added another deep ball Sunday in a sign that maybe he has finally found his stroke after starting the season in the minors.

The A's hit five home runs in the final three-game series of the first half, taking two of three against the division rival Angels. That helped Oakland improve to 43-46 at the break and move within 7½ games of division-leading Texas.

"It was up and down," Cust said of the first half. "We had some good moments and some struggles but I think overall we're in a good position. We get to play teams ahead of us head-to-head a bunch in the second half. The opportunity's going to be

there so hopefully we can play some baseball like we've played the last couple days and make it tough on some of these teams."

Oakland's pitching has been the key so far, led by all-stars Trevor Cahill and Andrew Bailey. Cahill, who turned 22 in spring training, is 9-3 with a 2.94 ERA. Bailey followed up his Rookie of the Year campaign with 18 saves and a 1.70 ERA in the first half.

A's starters are fourth in the league with a 3.74 ERA despite getting only six starts from Brett Anderson and five from Justin Duchscherer because of injuries. Duchscherer is out for the year but Anderson is expected to return as early as this month to provide a big boost to the rotation.

Oakland also expects to get Dallas Braden back from the disabled list next week. Braden provided the first half highlight for the team with his perfect game against Tampa Bay on May 9, but has gone winless in eight starts since then.

"Our starting pitching has been pretty good even with their absence," Geren said. "I think we're going to get some players back that are going to help us. And we play those teams ahead of us in the second half as well."

The A's are also looking for a boost from outfielder Conor Jackson, who played only 14 games after being acquired from Arizona last month before going on the DL with a hamstring injury.

Oakland also was without outfielder Coco Crisp for 70 games, Suzuki for three weeks and second baseman Mark Ellis for a month because of injuries in the first half.

"In the second half, hopefully we'll be able to keep everybody together and everybody healthy," Crisp said. "We stand a good chance of making a push to the end and we'll see what happens."

One player who might not make it to the finish with Oakland is Ben Sheets, who signed a \$10 million, one-year deal as a free agent in the off-season. Sheets is just 4-8 but put together back-to-back solid starts against the Yankees and Angels before the break.

That could be enough to get a contender to make a play for him before the trade deadline.

"I'm just trying to go out there and pitch the best I can," Sheets said. "Everything else takes care of itself."

## **Braden back in town — on mound**

By Jason Anderson, Stockton Record

Oakland Athletics starter Dallas Braden has been back to Stockton Ballpark on a couple of occasions since pitching the 19th perfect game in Major League Baseball history - first to receive a key to the city, then for an interview with HBO - but this time will be different.

Today he returns as the starting pitcher.

Braden will make a rehabilitation start for his hometown team when the Single-A Ports play the Visalia Rawhide at 7:05 p.m. Braden, a Stagg High graduate who lives in Stockton and commutes to the Oakland Coliseum, has battled elbow stiffness since throwing his Mother's Day gem against the Tampa Bay Rays on May 9. Braden said he is regaining flexibility and is eager to test himself. He also said he will be proud to put on a Ports uniform for the first time in four years.

"I'm going to be the most excited person in that stadium and in that clubhouse, bar none, guaranteed, hands down," Braden said. "I'm going to have to reel it in and understand it's just a rehab start, make sure I feel good and not worry about anything else, but that's going to be hard to do with the city across my chest."

Braden could hardly bend his elbow in the weeks after pitching the perfect game. His flexor tendon was inflamed. His arm felt tight. He played catch only five times in June. Trainers diagnosed him with tendinitis, but Braden said there is no sign of structural damage.

Ports manager Steve Scarsone said the A's would like Braden to throw five innings or about 75 pitches.

"That's the idea, to stretch him out a little bit and, hopefully, he'll feel strong and not have any recurring things," Scarsone said. "We just want him to throw strong and feel good at the end of the day. That's our primary concern and, obviously, we'll monitor him throughout the game. If something's not right, we'll stop him right away."

Braden went 6-0 in seven starts for the Ports in 2005, his first full season in professional baseball. He went 2-0 in six starts for the Ports in 2006. He spent most of the past four seasons in the big leagues.

The Ports heavily promoted Braden's appearance during Wednesday's game at Stockton Ballpark. A team official said there was a spike in online ticket sales as word of Braden's appearance spread.

"We're very excited about having him here," Scarsone said. "He's embraced this town, and they've embraced him.

"I think it's a rare and very positive story, and he seems to feed off that as well."

Braden is 0-5 in eight starts since throwing the perfect game, but he pitched well in a number of those games. He hopes to return to the A's rotation soon, but for now he's happy to be home.

"It's always nice to come home and play some baseball in your backyard," Braden said. "It kind of shines a light on how fortunate I've been in my career to be able to go through the rigors of the game and still have the comforts of home."

### ***Staying in the show***

Barry Enright isn't taking anything for granted, but he said the Arizona Diamondbacks have indicated they intend to keep him in their starting rotation for the foreseeable future.

Enright held the St. Louis Cardinals to one run in five innings to win his major-league debut on June 30, just days after being called up from the Double-A Mobile (Ala.) BayBears. He took losses in games against the Chicago Cubs and Florida Marlins but pitched well in each outing.

Enright rejoined the Diamondbacks in San Diego on Wednesday after spending part of his All-Star break in Las Vegas. He said his next start will come at home against the New York Mets, probably Monday or Tuesday.

"They told me from the start that I earned this, but I'm just taking it start by start, soaking it all in," Enright said. "In my mind, there are no guarantees, but they think I've thrown really well."

## **With a Bow Tie and a Glove, the No. 1 Giant Relishes His Seat**

By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT, New York Times, 7/15/2010

SAN FRANCISCO — Bill Neukom sat in the front row of AT&T Park on a cool Friday night earlier this season making eye contact with his [San Francisco Giants](#) players and urging them on as they came and went from the dugout.

At the age of 68, Neukom relishes his status as the lead owner of one of the more prestigious teams in baseball, which also happens to play in one of the most attractive settings in the sport and happens to be just miles from where he grew up.

He almost always wears a bow tie and looks as if he could have been one of the country's founding fathers, with his chiseled face and head full of white hair. And indeed, he has a background in politics, having once run in the Democratic primary for attorney general in Washington State.

But Neukom, who became the Giants' managing general partner in 2008, says a great deal of luck put him where he is now — watching games while also happily giving away some of his fortune.

Thirty-two years ago, he was a lawyer in Seattle who in the decade after graduating from Stanford Law School had worked as a clerk for a judge and as a lawyer for a small firm that supported liberal causes.

Now he was working for a new firm and his boss approached him with an assignment. He wanted Neukom to serve as the lawyer for his son's company, which had only a dozen employees and had recently relocated to the Seattle area from Albuquerque.

The company specialized in computer programming — something Neukom knew little about. But his boss thought Neukom could relate to his son.

The boss was [Bill Gates's](#) father and the company he wanted Neukom to advise was [Microsoft](#).

Neukom accepted the assignment, beginning an improbable journey in which he became enormously wealthy, fought a 15-year battle with the federal government over Microsoft's business practices and eventually ascended to the top of the Giants' front office.

"I recall the conversation," the senior Bill Gates said in a telephone interview when asked about the assignment he handed Neukom. "Nothing memorable about it. But it turns out to be a memorable event in Bill's life, the life of the company and the law firm."

"It was a smart, young aggressive company and he fit in nicely," Gates added. "The company was in a charging mode, it was growing like a weed and great things were happening."

Neukom became Microsoft's first general counsel in 1985 and spent the next decade and a half as the equivalent of a baseball team's general manager, overseeing a team of lawyers in the company's bitter antitrust battle, in which it tried to fend off attempts by the Department of Justice to break it up.

Microsoft survived in one piece, but bruised.

As for Neukom, he is now two years into his tenure as the leader of the Giants and perhaps on the brink of another legal fight, this one with Commissioner [Bud Selig](#) and the [Oakland Athletics](#) owner Lewis N. Wolff.

Wolff is trying to relocate the Athletics, who play in an uninspiring stadium that struggles to attract fans. He wants to move them 40 miles south to San Jose, which sits in the heart of Silicon Valley and has one of the wealthiest populations in the country. But the Giants hold territorial rights for San Jose, which means another team cannot play there without their consent.

Neukom, fearing that a move could eat away at the Giants' fan base, has taken a hard line on the issue and is prepared to take legal action against Major League Baseball and the Athletics to prevent a move, several people in baseball said.

Neukom is happy to talk about how he sneaks away from work when the Giants are at home to watch batting practice and how he often brings a glove to a game to try to catch foul balls. But when the Athletics come up, conversation quickly comes to a halt.

"I am steadfast in protecting our rights because they are fundamentally important to the health of this enterprise," he said in the tone of an angry politician. "I have nothing more to say beyond that."

In 2009, Selig appointed a committee to study the Athletics' options for a new ballpark. In a recent telephone conversation, Selig said that the committee had not completed its study.

Gabriel Feldman, the head of the sports law department at [Tulane University](#), said territorial rights are vitally important to a team because they essentially give the team a geographic monopoly. He said any legal action by Neukom would create a huge headache for baseball.

When Neukom replaced Peter Magowan as managing general partner of the Giants at the end of the 2008 season, the franchise was on a downward cycle. The team had not had a winning record for four years. [Barry Bonds](#) was no longer in uniform but the franchise was still suffering from the fallout attached to accusations that he had used steroids.

"The organization did not have a plan after [Bonds](#)," Neukom said. He attempted to supply one. In 2009, the Giants won 16 more games than they had the year before and finished at 88-74. This year, they began the second half of the season, against the [Mets](#) on Thursday, with a 47-41 record, four games back in the National League West.

Neukom's wealth grew exponentially after Microsoft went public in 1986 and by the time he first invested in the Giants in 1993, he was one of the wealthiest people in the country. In 1995, he and his four children created a foundation to give some of his money away and in 2006 he formed the [World Justice Project](#), an organization that rates the rule of law in various countries.

"I believe I was overcompensated for my work," said Neukom, whose political outlook puts him somewhat at odds with many of his fellow owners, several of whom are Republicans. "I was in a fortunate position, but my worth to the company is not equal to the amount of money I received. I don't see it as money I earned. I see myself as the steward of the money, and that is why I give much of it away.

"Some people who worked for Microsoft don't see it the way I do," he added. "But I believe it's my job to give the money back and to other causes. But I'm no saint and I have guilty pleasures, and the Giants are one of them."

Sure enough, you can catch him this weekend against the Mets. He's in the seat closest to home plate.

## **The frustrating fall from perfection by Oakland A's Dallas Braden**

By Daniel Brown, San Jose Mercury News

During that whirlwind week in which Dallas Braden was everywhere at once, the A's left-hander appeared on "The Late Show with David Letterman." Braden read a Top 10 list that spoofed his previous anonymity. No. 3 was, "Even I've never heard of me."

For that moment, at least, Braden was the most famous player in the game. He threw a perfect game on Mother's Day, the ultimate tribute to his mother, Jodie Atwood, who died of skin cancer while Braden was a senior in high school.

The game's most enduring image came after the final out, when Braden and his grandmother melted into a teary embrace.

But since that day when everything went right, Braden can't catch a break. It was the last time he won a game, his season having unraveled into inconsistent starts, low run support, a bum elbow and an extended stay on the disabled list.

Braden takes a step toward getting back on track today, in his hometown of Stockton, where he will make a rehabilitation assignment against Class A Visalia.

The 19th perfecto in major league history, meanwhile, feels like such a long time ago.

"Well, it was a while ago, right?" Braden said as the A's headed for the All-Star break.

It has been 91/2 weeks, a span that covers eight starts. Between May 9 and his placement on the disabled list on July 3, Braden went 0-5 with a 4.31 ERA and allowed a .304 batting average. (His career totals before this season: 14-21, 4.68 ERA.) Unable to throw much more than a fastball in the bulk of those starts because of his elbow injuries, Braden performed, in short, like the pitcher Letterman had never heard of.

His slide from perfection to frustration is not unprecedented: Mark Buehrle of the Chicago White Sox threw a perfect game on July. 23, 2009, and it took eight starts — over six weeks — for him to win again. Buehrle went 0-4 with a 5.44 ERA between victories. By the time he finally earned that elusive "W," teammates joked that he owed them another round of gifts — just as he bought them after the perfect game.

Buehrle, however, had the benefit of three All-Star game appearances to his credit when he went through a rough patch. Until May 9, Braden had never so much as thrown a complete game. Shortly before the perfecto, Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez — Braden's nemesis — had dismissed him as a pitcher "with only a handful of wins."

That's why Braden's recent drought has brought back the skeptics. The man who allowed nobody to reach base is being accused, ironically, of being a one-hit wonder.

Hogwash, say the A's. For one thing, Braden delivered several solid starts in the wake of his perfect game. In fact, Braden and Len Barker (1981) are the only pitchers since 1922 to follow up a perfect game with another complete game. (Braden lost 4-0 to the Angels on May 14.) Lack of run support is certainly one factor that has prevented him from winning again.

Braden acknowledged some rough luck during his drought and said the winless stretch doesn't faze him. "No, not at all," he said. "It's a team effort."

Braden's last two starts before surrendering to the DL — June 17 against the Cubs and June 22 against Cincinnati — were both defined as quality starts (six innings of three earned runs or fewer). More impressively, Braden gutted through those solid outings without being able to throw a breaking ball. Elbow tendinitis makes it too painful to get the proper torque on a curve.

Against the Cubs, for example, Braden's pain tolerance permitted only three curveballs. By comparison, in his perfect game, he threw 26 curveballs, 18 for strikes.

Braden is eager to get back on the mound. There is no indication that the injury is a long-term concern. When the ability to throw all of his pitches returns, so, too, should the victories.

"Definitely," Braden said. "The extended (amount of) days off are definitely going to be a benefit to me, just being able to rest. It's the first time I've ever had an elbow injury, so I'm monitoring that closely. Progress is definitely being made. The point is to go into the second half and finish strong."

A's manager Bob Geren said the point of putting Braden on the DL was to allow him to recoup the rest of his repertoire. As a pitcher without an overpowering fastball, the left-hander needs his off-speed pitches to keep batters off balance.

In the Mother's Day classic against the Rays, for example, only 57 of Braden's 109 pitches were fastballs. Those pitches were mostly in the 84-86 mph range, with only one pitch all day hitting 90 mph on a gun.

He threw 52 off-speed pitches, 34 for strikes.

But in recent starts, it has been mostly fastballs and changeups. That's not exactly the perfect scenario.

"We're looking forward to getting him 100 percent healthy," Geren said. "Obviously, we have all seen what he can do when he's feeling good."

## **Oakland, San Jose officials frustrated with MLB**

By Tracy Seipel and Chris Metinko, Oakland Tribune

Officials from both Oakland and San Jose are echoing the frustrations expressed by A's owner Lew Wolff over how long Major League Baseball is drawing out a study on whether the team can move to the South Bay.

"I think these people are playing us," Oakland Councilmember Ignacio De La Fuente said Wednesday. "The best thing (Major League Baseball) can do is pit one city against the other. I feel this is all being orchestrated."

De La Fuente's comments come just days after San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed expressed similar dismay over MLB's long, drawn-out study.

"I feel like we're being jerked around, and it's time to make a decision," Reed said Monday.

Wolff began the venting this past weekend when he, in an interview with the Bay Area News Group, expressed his continued angst that a decision has not been issued by baseball Commissioner Bud Selig and team owners on whether to remove the San Francisco Giants' territorial claim to Santa Clara County.

It has been 16 months since Selig appointed a special committee to study the A's options.

Timing becomes critical because the San Jose City Council must decide by Aug. 3 whether to place a measure on the November ballot asking voters to support a ballpark measure. Approval by a majority of voters is needed before the city can provide land for the proposed \$461 million ballpark, which Wolff has agreed to build and operate with no further public investment.

"Bud has a full grasp of everything, and he's trying to make a fair and balanced decision between us and the Giants," Wolff said.

On Tuesday, at his annual All-Star luncheon with members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America, Selig said he would not let an Aug. 3 deadline from the San Jose City Council affect the committee's timeline.

Selig also denied the three-person committee may be overstepping its original information-gathering objective and even has engaged in active talks to broker a deal for a new ballpark in Oakland.

"Well, I would say they are wrong," Selig said.

De La Fuente, who also serves on the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Authority Board that controls the stadium in Oakland, said he has not heard anything from MLB in several weeks and echoed Reed's comments about the cities being held hostage.

"At the end of the day, we should not be held hostage by baseball," De La Fuente said.

Selig said on Tuesday, in response to Reed's "hostage" comments, "It isn't a question of holding them hostage. It's a question of a very serious matter that's going to affect two franchises, and before you make a reasonable decision, you have to have a comprehensive report that covers everything. That's all that's going on."

De La Fuente did add, however, in light of Oakland's deepening financial crisis, no one should expect to see the city pony up public money for a baseball stadium. On Tuesday, Oakland was forced to lay off 80 police officers.

"If people think there is any money for a new baseball stadium, they are making a mistake," De La Fuente said.

## **All-Star game/baseball notebook: San Francisco Giants' Tim Lincecum doesn't play in the All-Star game again**

By Andrew Baggarly, Bay Area News Group



For the second time in three years, Tim Lincecum didn't appear in the All-Star game. But his view was much nicer this time.

In 2008, Lincecum spent the night in a New York hospital bed with dehydration and flu symptoms. On Tuesday, he watched from the National League bullpen at Angel Stadium in Anaheim as the NL squad sent in one ace after another.

NL manager Charlie Manuel had his top two pitchers, Ubaldo Jimenez and Josh Johnson, pitch two innings apiece. He reserved Lincecum, the two-time defending NL Cy Young winner, in case the game went to extra innings, which it didn't.

Was Timmy cool with that?

"I guess I have to be," Lincecum said before the game. "I'm on full rest — plus a day, actually. "... Obviously, if I'm here, I'd love to be a part of it. When you've got arms like we do here, everybody doing so great "... I dunno. I just know I want to win and I want to be a part of it."

Lincecum joked that his teammate, closer Brian Wilson, was edgy about being passed over for another Giant in the ninth inning.

"I said the word 'close' to him, just talking about something else, and he thought I meant 'close the game,'" Lincecum said, smiling. "He almost went off on me."

Wilson threw eight of 10 pitches for strikes while quickly dispatching of three hitters in the eighth inning, then descended the dugout stairs with an impish grin.

"Willie started it," said Giants manager and NL coach Bruce Bochy. "He came in and said, 'One-two-three, what's up with that?' So I said, 'Hey, I'd like to see that once in a while, too.' "

Wilson has retired all five hitters he's faced in All-Star competition. He threw part of the eighth inning in 2008, when the AL won in 15 innings at Yankee Stadium.

"We won, and it's not 2:30 in the morning," Wilson said. "That's a huge plus."

A's right-hander Andrew Bailey had a tough task, taking over in the seventh inning after Brian McCann's bases-clearing double. Bailey walked Rafael Furcal before striking out Brandon Phillips with a nasty curveball to end the inning.

Lincecum was a no-show to the red carpet All-Star parade Tuesday morning, saying he "ran into communication problems."

Barry Bonds has preserved his standing to file a collusion grievance against Major League Baseball, said Players' Association chief Michael Weiner.

But Weiner also said no substantive discussions have taken place between the union and Bonds' representatives since shortly after the winter of 2007, when no club offered a contract to the game's all-time home run leader.

"The union would support any player and would prosecute a case for any player if we think there's a good-faith basis to bring it," Weiner said. "But at this point all I can say is we've discussed it with him. His right to bring it has been preserved."

Bonds might not preserve that right if he announces his retirement because he no longer would be considered an active member of the union.

Around the bases: This is only the second time in history that no home runs were hit in consecutive All-Star games. The other occurrence was 1957-58, when the venues were St. Louis and Baltimore, respectively. ... The NL has a 41-38-2 record in the All-Star game despite going 0-12-1 in the previous 13. This was the first win for the senior circuit since 1996. ... Derek Jeter heard a familiar voice when he batted in the first inning. A recording of the late Bob Sheppard introducing Jeter played over the sound system. Sheppard was the longtime Yankees public address announcer who died Sunday at 99. Jeter still uses Sheppard's intro at home games.

Protest: Protesters rallied outside baseball commissioner Bud Selig's office in Milwaukee, calling on him to move next year's All-Star game out of Arizona to protest its tough new immigration law. The rally of about two dozen people came one day after Brewers pitcher Yovani Gallardo joined a number of Latino players threatening not to play in next year's All-Star game if they make the team. Christine Neumann-Ortiz, the executive director of the immigrants' rights group Voces de la Frontera, called Gallardo courageous and said Selig needs to take notice.

Rangers: A federal bankruptcy judge decided that the Texas Rangers will be auctioned off after all, despite angry creditors' claims that the bidding process is unfair and still favors Major League Baseball's preferred buyer. U.S. Bankruptcy Judge D.

Michael Lynn set the auction for Aug. 4 after changing some of the team's proposed bidding procedures, citing a "need to bring order from chaos."

Etc.: A rare Stephen Strasburg baseball card is hitting the auction block again. Bidding opens for the autographed 2010 Bowman Prospects rookie card at \$9,000 at 9 a.m. (PDT) today. Huggins and Scott, a sports memorabilia auction house in Silver Spring, Md., is hosting the two-week online auction. The anonymous owner tried to sell the card on eBay in June, but that auction ended when outrageous bids exceeding \$900,000 could not be verified. The auction will end July 28.

## **Kansas City A's salute set for July 17**

MLB.com

**KANSAS CITY, MO (July 14, 2010)** - The Kansas City Royals announced today details of a Kansas City Athletics salute set for Saturday, July 17 at Kauffman Stadium. The event will take place as the Royals open the second half of the season with a three-game series against the Oakland A's. Saturday's game time is set for 6:10 p.m.

The first 20,000 fans in attendance will receive a royal blue Retro KC cap courtesy of Hy-Vee. The cap features an interlocking KC logo that was used by the A's in Kansas City prior to moving to Oakland with the Royals color scheme. The Royals will also be wearing the retro cap during Saturday's game.

The festivities will also include a Kansas City A's video retrospective, which chronicles the history of the franchise while in Kansas City and features many of the revolutionary, and sometimes controversial, ideas introduced by late owner Charlie Finley. Video highlights - including the history of Municipal Stadium, the colorful A's uniforms, the robotic rabbit named Harvey and some of the great players with connections to the Kansas City A's - will be shown on CrownVision both prior to the game and during several inning breaks throughout the evening.

Bill Fischer, who currently serves as the club's Minor League Pitching Coordinator and is a former member of the Kansas City A's, will throw out the ceremonial first pitch. Fischer pitched nine seasons in the big leagues from 1958-64, including a three-season stint in Kansas City from 1961-63. In 1962, he set a Major League record by pitching 84.1 consecutive innings without issuing a walk, breaking the previous record of 68.0 innings set by the legendary Christy Mathewson.

In salute to Charlie O., the famous Missouri mule which Finley anointed as the team mascot while in Kansas City, fans will have an opportunity to take their photo with a Missouri mule. Photos will be available from the time the gates open at 4:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. behind Rivals Sports Bar near Gate E.

Fans may visit [www.royals.com/kcathletics](http://www.royals.com/kcathletics) for more information. Tickets may be purchased online at [royals.com](http://royals.com), by calling 1-800-6ROYALS, at area Hy-Vee stores or at the Kauffman Stadium Box Office.

## **A's hope for better health in second half**

### **Return of Anderson, Braden should boost depleted rotation**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Any dose of optimism gained by the A's this season has consistently been tempered with the reality that the club, seemingly as always, has much to overcome medically.

The past three seasons have seen the organization use the disabled list a combined 64 times while finishing with a losing record each year. It's hard to ignore the correlation between those two stats, but a 2010 Oakland team entered this season hoping to close doors on both sides of the spectrum.

Unfortunately, more than three months later, the A's have increased that DL number to 81 and sit third in the American League West. With the recent addition of newcomer Conor Jackson to the ever-growing injured reserve list, the A's exit the first half having used the DL 17 times this year, already matching the season total from 2009.

Thus, the same theme they boasted in the first half -- cautious optimism -- will once again be the focus of the second half, in which the A's hope to inch closer toward the same first-place division standing they held entering June.

It was before the page turned to June when Oakland, as expected, relied on starting pitching, which has arguably represented its biggest strength since the start of the decade. But subsequent injuries to Brett Anderson (forearm/elbow), Dallas Braden (elbow) and Justin Duchscherer (hip, out for the year) had the A's singing a rather familiar tune, one that could not be relieved by a lineup void of power.

Anderson and Braden, though, are slated to make their return to the depleted rotation shortly after the All-Star break, joining the likes of All-Star Trevor Cahill, along with the steadily improving young arm of Gio Gonzalez. With Ben Sheets likely staying put in Oakland, Vin Mazzaro is presumably headed back to Triple-A Sacramento, barring any further health setbacks to his teammates.

## **A'S MIDSEASON AWARDS**

### **MVP: Kurt Suzuki**

He's provided the A's a consistent middle-of-the-order presence while also guiding a rather young staff as one of the game's most undervalued catchers.

### **Cy Young: Trevor Cahill**

This 22-year-old hurler started the season on the DL, was moved to Triple-A and has since transformed into an All-Star.

### **Top reliever: Andrew Bailey**

Bailey has proved his 2009 Rookie of the Year campaign was no fluke, as he continues to rank rather high in nearly all reliever categories.

So if the former five -- assuming the veteran (and expensive) arm of Sheets is not dealt -- can remain on the health track, this streaky A's team believes it can easily compete with the likes of the power-heavy Angels and Rangers as the chase for postseason play continues.

"The first half was kind of in thirds," manager Bob Geren said. "April and May were good. June, we got banged up a little bit and struggled, lost some close games. And now we're starting to get healthier. We'll be getting some key guys back. So for the second half, we should be better and healthier. We'll be right in there fighting every step of the way."

Pitching won't be the only area that requires a close eye, though. Several key players, including Mark Ellis, Kurt Suzuki and Coco Crisp, also combined to miss a large chunk of the first half, demonstrating that no one is safe from the injury bug that continually plagues just about anyone who steps foot in the confines of the Oakland Coliseum.

But Ellis, the longest-tenured member of the team, knows the injury pleas can't dictate end results year after year.

"A lot of teams have injuries -- we can't use those as an excuse," the veteran second baseman said. "Look around the league right now, teams have injuries all over the place. Obviously, we're not where we want to be, we thought we were going to be a little bit better than this, but I think we're getting better as a team."

"I think we have shown here lately that we can play a little bit better. We've had some stretches where we could have really given up on the season and let things go, but we've showed some resilience and bounced back real well."

Ellis is one of 17 players who combined to miss more than 650 games in the first half, which ended with nine players on the DL. The club has had at least seven sidelined since April 21 and at least five all year. So while excuses won't be made, everyone in the clubhouse is aware that, in order to compete with AL West counterparts, the revolving door that leads to the DL needs to slow down to ensure a successful second half.

"Considering everything that happened in the first half, you try to overcome things and try to do the best you can," Suzuki said. "We're still in it. We've done a pretty good job absorbing all the injuries that have happened and we're trying to keep it positive and move forward."

"We know we can play. We know that part. Now it's just a matter of staying healthy and keeping everybody on the field."

## **Bailey stays cool under pressure for AL**

## **Two-time All-Star ends National League rally with strikeout**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- A's right-hander Andrew Bailey may not have been one of the eight hurlers put to use at last year's All-Star Game, but he perfectly played the unassuming role of wide-eyed rookie.

Fast forward one year later to the Midsummer Classic, Bailey was no longer a rookie but still wide-eyed, his new role now dependent upon getting one out with a runner on second to end the seventh, with the National League already up by two -- all in front of a larger-than-life audience.

Enter the Dodgers' Rafael Furcal, who quickly ran up a 3-2 count against the two-time All-Star. What followed, though, was a 94-mph fastball for ball four, putting a duo of NL players on first and second, Bailey now forced to face Cincinnati's Brandon Phillips.

The A's righty brought the count to 2-2 before watching Phillips swing through a nasty curveball for strike three.

Inning over. Trouble averted. Time for Bailey to breathe and return to fan mode, eventually witnessing a 3-1 victory by the NL on Tuesday. It marked the first time an Oakland player had appeared in an All-Star Game since Justin Duchscherer did so in 2008.

Awaiting Bailey in the dugout for a round of high fives was manager Bob Geren and teammate Trevor Cahill, who -- with the help of Bailey -- made the most of his inactivity after being deemed ineligible for the game because of his Sunday start.

"Trevor, he's a different breed," Bailey said. "He's pretty shy, quiet, but once you get to know him, he lets loose. All week he was kind of asking me what to do and how to go about his business. I just said, 'Hey man, be yourself. Don't be too shy. Everyone is the same and here for the same reason. But it will go by fast if you let it, so just enjoy the moment.'"

Named to the AL team on the strength of his 9-3 record and 2.94 ERA in 15 starts before the break, Cahill was forced to simply watch from the sidelines and brush shoulders with baseball's best.

He'll take it.

"I'm just here to soak it all in," Cahill said. "I'm just trying to pick guys' brains, hang out with Bailey and talk to other guys, and just have fun with it."

Bailey, meanwhile, had just one other goal in mind besides getting in the game, which followed a first half that saw the 2009 AL Rookie of the Year snag 18 saves and put up a 1.70 ERA.

"I wanted it to go a lot slower," Bailey said. "Last year kind of felt like it went by in two hours. There was a lot of excitement with the first time, going into the unknown you really didn't know what to expect. This year I've met some of the guys I didn't meet last year, and it's just great to be here.

"It's cool to kind of see the guys in their element. You play against them, you compete against them all year long. To be in the same locker room with the guys in here that you don't know, it's cool to see how they go about their business, and to get to know them on a more personal level. That's what it's kind of all about, for us anyway. Everyone I've met this year has been awesome."

## **American League analysis at the break** **Three teams in battle for "Beast of East" title**

By Troy E. Renck\_The Denver Post

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Derek Jeter, the Yankees' all-star shortstop, listened to the question and leaned forward with a direct answer. "What do I think? I think we play in the toughest division in baseball," Jeter said. "I know some other people might not agree, but to me there's no question about it."

The American League — "full of hairy-chested sluggers" as Rockies pitching coach Bob Apodaca likes to say — reveals its strength in the East. Three teams are capable of winning that division: the Yankees, Rays and Red Sox. One will be left lonely, nose pressed up against the window pane looking in at the playoffs. As it stands, the Red Sox have 51 victories and would be on the outside looking in. Their record would lead every other division but the National League East.

This has been a remarkable season in the junior circuit, including a perfect game pitched by the Athletics' Dallas Braden, another gem pitched by the Tigers' Armando Galarraga that wasn't officially perfect, the Triple Crown pursuit of Tigers slugger Miguel Cabrera and the surprising performance of the Rangers, who last week acquired Cliff Lee, arguably baseball's best pitcher not named Ubaldo Jimenez. A closer look:

### **American League West**

The Rangers don't make any sense. They are bankrupt. The team president, Nolan Ryan, is part of the prospective purchasing group that is suing the Rangers. In March, manager Ron Washington admitted to cocaine use last season and nearly got canned after his team started slowly. Through it all, Texas has shown remarkable resiliency and creativity. The Rangers landed Lee, giving them an ace for a young pitching staff that doesn't have to be great because of the team's offense. With Clint Hurdle as their hitting coach, the Rangers (50-38) rank second in average and third in runs. They have

two MVP candidates: Josh Hamilton and Vladimir Guerrero. Will this be the season the Rangers' pitchers don't wilt in the Texas heat?

Lee suggests they have enough to win the division.

Hot pursuit: The Angels (47-44) gear-grinded into the all-star break, losing six of seven. This team misses Guerrero, John Lackey and Chone Figgins. Manager Mike Scioscia is brilliant at maximizing his resources, but his bullpen has been taking on water for weeks and his offense needs another big bat. The A's (43-46) have wonderful pitching but linguini for bats. Until they start to hit, they can't be taken seriously. The Mariners (35-53) rank among the biggest disappointments, their season more memorable for a farewell (Ken Griffey Jr.) and a yard sale (Lee) than any performance.

Trade front: The Angels have interest in a slugger, and the Nationals' Adam Dunn could be a fit

at first base and designated hitter. The Rangers played their trump card, but the Mariners remain active. They are open to moving second baseman Jose Lopez, slugger Russell Branyan and closer David Aardsma, a Cherry Creek alum who could make sense for the Rockies.

Bottom line: Lee will be the difference in the Rangers making the playoffs.

### **American League Central**

Detroit's Justin Verlander said what everybody was thinking: "The White Sox really weren't on our mind (a month ago). I have never seen a team turn it around so quickly."

Folks in Colorado have — think September 2007 and June 2009 — but the Rockies are supposed to have the patent on U-turns and Ubaldos.

The White Sox were

22-30 on June 2, needing a telescope to see the division leaders. Then they went from flat line to red line, going 27-8 to assume the Central lead at the break.

The White Sox are a scary team, despite the loss of injured pitcher Jake Peavy. General manager Kenny Williams, who isn't afraid to make a bold trade, is pushing to acquire Astros pitcher Roy Oswalt.

Hot pursuit: Detroit and Minnesota aren't going away. It's easier to kill cockroaches. The Tigers (48-38) have a terrific manager in Jim Leyland — other than one season in Denver, he has been brilliant — and a great closer in Jose Valverde. That is a good place to start. Minnesota just plays the game the right way. The Twins (46-42) have quietly been the Rockies' role models — a team built on pitching and defense.

Trade front: The Tigers' rotation appears one arm short with the regression of Rick Porcello. But GM Dave Dombrowski has never been shy about getting help. Could he bring back Edwin Jackson? It's not that crazy. The Twins were pushing hard for Lee. Now they have to decide if it's worth cashing their chips on a secondary prize, such as Ted Lilly or Ben Sheets. Also, Justin Morneau's concussion is a concern.

Bottom line: I have gone back and forth with the White Sox. They were my preseason pick to win the division, then I prematurely pronounced them dead in June. I will stick with them, but with no conviction.

### **American League East**

The All-Star Game seems like a cliché for the Yankees. Every day they run out a planetarium full of stars.

"I believe we have a team that can win it again," said CC Sabathia, the Yankees' beast of an ace.

Sabathia wasn't just talking about the division. The Yankees are bent on winning consecutive World Series titles and received added motivation Tuesday with the death of legendary owner George Steinbrenner at age 80. It's shocking this team is this good (56-32), given that third baseman Alex Rodriguez and first baseman Mark Teixeira have been rather ordinary.

Hot pursuit: The Rays are a better version of the Giants. The Rays' rotation is so good, they traded away Scott Kazmir and Jason Hammel without even a burp. The difference between the Rays and the Giants? The Rays (54-34) can hit. It seems like they are just one Evan Longoria hot streak from putting away the Red Sox. Boston has to get healthy — and fast. The Red Sox (51-37) need Josh Beckett and Dustin Pedroia back and productive to keep pace.

Trade front: The Yankees will add someone of significance. It's a given. Will it be Lilly? Or just a versatile bench player such as Ty Wigginton? The Red Sox are sniffing around for a bullpen arm and have the young players — currency in today's game — to pull off a deal. Tampa Bay is the unknown. The Rays' payroll is loose change from the Yankees' couch cushions. But with the window closing on this group — outfielder Carl Crawford likely won't be back — the Rays could pull off a shocker and acquire a big bat, perhaps Milwaukee's Corey Hart.

Bottom line: The Yankees are too good not to make the playoffs. I still believe the Red Sox will knock out the Rays to secure the AL wild card, but they can't withstand another major injury.

## **Selig on A's territory decision: 'My objective is to get it done right'**

By Andrew Baggarly, San Jose Mercury News

More than 16 months after forming a fact-finding committee to study a new home for the A's in the Bay Area, Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig said he anticipated receiving a final report and recommendation soon.

But Selig said he would not let an Aug. 3 deadline from the San Jose City Council affect the committee's timeline. San Jose officials have said they require a commitment from Major League Baseball by that date in order to put a stadium referendum on the November ballot.

Selig also denied suspicions that the three-person committee has overstepped its original information-gathering objective and has engaged in active talks to broker a new ballpark in Oakland.

"Well, I would say they are wrong," said Selig, answering questions at his annual All-Star luncheon with members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Selig provided no more transparency to the fact-finding process while defending the 16-month wait for answers in the face of recent exasperation by A's owner Lew Wolff and criticism from San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed.

Wolff called the process unfair while telling the Mercury News that it's passed time for an answer. Reed said this week, "I feel like we're being jerked around, and it's time to make a decision."

Responded Selig: "It isn't a question of holding them hostage. It's a question of a very serious matter that's going to affect two franchises, and before you make a reasonable decision, you have to have a comprehensive report that covers everything. That's all that's going on."

"This is a very serious matter. Yes I'd like to get it done as quickly as possible, of course. But "... my objective is not to get it done as fast as possible but to get it done right."

In March 2009, Selig announced the formation of the panel to study the feasibility for a new A's ballpark "within their territory." That area includes Contra Costa and Alameda counties.

The Giants hold territorial rights to Santa Clara County and are staunchly opposed to yielding them, although their claim could be overturned if three-quarters of major league owners approve.

Selig reiterated the importance of territorial rights, but did not affirm the Giants' standing in the South Bay. He said both he and MLB President Bob DuPuy have sent for additional information, but did not specify whether his inquiries were limited to Contra Costa and Alameda counties.

"We're just trying to get a report so that no club, when we finally get to discussions, says, 'Well what about this, did you consider that?' " Selig said.

## **Selig not worried by length of A's study**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Commissioner Bud Selig doesn't seem bothered by the length of his three-man committee's study of A's ballpark options, now in its 16th month.

"Yes, I'd like to get it done as quickly as possible," Selig said. But, he added, "The object is not to get it done as fast as possible. It's to get it done right. It's very complicated."

Speaking at a Baseball Writers' Association of America luncheon, Selig said he hasn't budged on territorial rights, one issue that's preventing the A's from moving from Oakland to San Jose. Major League Baseball wouldn't approve a move to the area because the Giants hold the rights.

"Territorial rights are a serious matter," Selig said. "After all, you have to have organization in this sport. Let me go one step further: You can't have anarchy. You can't have people just doing what they want to do. That's true in all sports."

A's managing general partner Lew Wolff, whose business remains in limbo and at MLB's mercy, seems to be running out of patience. In an interview with The Chronicle, he was informed of Selig's comments.

"We requested to share the two-team territory as the other two-team territories share," said Wolff, referring to the Los Angeles, Chicago and New York markets.

"They all share the exact same geographic area. That's the request that's on the table. I need to know if we can do that or we can't.

"Not knowing either way hurts us. I understand the committee wants to explore every aspect. I guess there's nothing perfect."

Asked about the A's being held hostage by the committee's prolonged study, Selig said, "It isn't a question of being held hostage. It's a question of a very serious matter that's going to affect two franchises, and before you make a reasonable decision, you have to have a report that's comprehensive."

Will Selig hear a final report from the committee soon?

"I hope so, yes," he said.

Selig said he and Bob DuPuy, MLB's president and chief operating officer, continue to communicate with committee members and "sent them back for more things so no club will say, 'Well, what about this? Did you consider that?' "

DuPuy implied that neither Oakland nor Fremont has been eliminated.

"They have done a lot of work," DuPuy said of committee members, including Corey Busch, who was a Giants chief executive during Bob Lurie's ownership. "There have been lots of discussions with San Jose. Lots of discussions with Oakland. Lots of discussions with Fremont. And lots of discussions with the two teams, and it continues to percolate along."

Wolff now is focused on San Jose after exploring options in Oakland and Fremont and said he's not aware of options anywhere but San Jose.

"We spent five years looking at both of those," Wolff said of Oakland and Fremont. Addressing DuPuy's implication that those cities have not been ruled out, Wolff added: "It surprises me if that's the case. If it is, I'd be willing to talk to anybody."

## Q&A: Commissioner Bud Selig talks baseball

### The commissioner says labor peace and the implementation of revenue sharing are the accomplishments that he's proudest of.

By Bill Shaikin, LA Times, 7/12, 2010

Full text of a recent question-and-answer session with baseball Commissioner Bud Selig at his office in Milwaukee:

**Question:** When you awarded the All-Star game to Anaheim, you called the Angels "a model for all our franchises." In what ways are they a model?

**Answer:** Since [owner] Arte [Moreno] has taken over, their attendance has been tremendous. Their revenues have grown remarkably. So have the revenues for all of baseball, but theirs have even exceeded that. You look at their operation — from [former general manager] Bill Stoneman, to [General Manager] Tony [Reagins], to Mike Scioscia — it's a well-run, well-disciplined organization, not only in their baseball operation but in their marketing. It's just a really well-run franchise.

**Q:** Many baseball people thought the Angels were a gold mine waiting to be tapped, given the large Southern California market and the demographics of Orange County. For all its marketing magic, Disney did not do what Moreno has been able to do in marketing the Angels. Why do you believe he has succeeded where one of America's most successful entertainment companies did not?

**A:** That's an interesting question. Disney knows the entertainment business as well as any entity. They're remarkable. I loved the Autrys as well as Disney.

But it's the second-largest market in America, which is the way you analyze things. Arte has had the right touch. He works hard at it. He has the right people in position. You have to give Arte Moreno a great deal of credit.

**Q:** In an ESPN poll last year, the Angels were selected the most fan-friendly team in the four major North American sports leagues. Before he bought the Angels, Moreno was a part-owner of a minor league team, and of the Arizona Diamondbacks. How important are those kinds of experiences to the success of owners, and do you look for those kinds of experiences when recruiting and approving new owners?

**A:** You bet I do. You know, whoever said 'Experience is the best teacher' is right.

Many people were critical in the early '90s when I became commissioner. They thought an owner shouldn't be commissioner. But, in fact, every issue that has come to me, I had to face when I was the president and owner of the Brewers. It was helpful. It really gave me an insight into the sport.

In Arte's case, he came with really considerable experience, and I think he has used it very wisely. He'll do what I used to do: roam the ballpark, watch concession stands, watch how people are operating. Again, experience is a great teacher, and his experience clearly has contributed to the success of the Angels.

**Q:** You talked about the benefits of an owner becoming commissioner. Your job as commissioner is to represent the owners, yet you also are charged with acting in the best interest of baseball. How do you reconcile that?

**A:** The office has changed dramatically. A lot of people don't understand that. [Former players' union chief] Marvin Miller, whom I rarely agreed with, had it right many years ago. In his many confrontations with Bowie [former commissioner Bowie Kuhn], he said, 'I represent the players. He doesn't represent the players.'

The commissioner has extraordinary power. He or she has the ability to do a lot of things. But the office has evolved. The players have their representative. The owners have their representative, the commissioner.

I have a lot of constituencies. One is the players' association. Two is the owners. And then there is television. There is a whole series of things. I think a commissioner in any sport today — because they all have evolved in the same way — will understand what he should do and what he can do and, just as importantly, what he can't do.

**Q:** If the union represents the players and the commissioner represents the owners, who represents the fans?

**A:** I think I do. I think anybody who knows me has always said they understand my passion for the sport. I care what fans think. I listen to them. I answer every piece of mail, every day.

There have been more changes in the last 18 years than ever before in the history of the sport. I believe they are fan changes. I believe the fans wanted the wild card. They love it today. I think the fans like interleague play.

Even all the economic changes were meant to give hope and faith in as many places as possible. So you have to know I feel



good about how Cincinnati, Texas and San Diego are doing today.

I believe that one of the things that didn't happen in the 30 or 40 years before me was that we didn't listen to the fans enough. We were more bound by tradition and history and unwilling to change. All the changes we've made, I believe, are the reason the sport is more popular today than ever before, in terms of attendance, in terms of gross revenues, in terms of everything else. It's because we do listen to the fans.

**Q:** The Dodgers' reputation as one of baseball's flagship franchises has been tarnished by a divorce that has revealed owners spending lavishly on themselves and on their lawyers while reducing the spending on players to a mid-market level. What can you do to assure Dodgers fans their team will not deteriorate into mediocrity?

**A:** I'm comfortable saying I am very confident it won't. I don't want to comment on all the things that have happened to the ownership of the Dodgers. It is a flagship franchise, a great franchise, with a great ballpark. Every time you see the Dodgers, it's like when you see the Yankees or the Cubs.

I watch every franchise every day. I understand the concern. It has been a flagship franchise, and it will continue to be. I will monitor the situation, but we have to let that [divorce court] proceeding take place.

**Q:** In the interest of due diligence, how seriously have you had conversations with potential investors should all or part of the Dodgers be put up for sale?

**A:** I have not had any conversations. The team is not for sale. There are proceedings ahead of it. Those will take place. I have not talked to anyone.

**Q:** George Mitchell delivered the report you commissioned on baseball's steroid era — 700 interviews, 115,000 pages of documents — in 21 months. It has been 16 months since you commissioned a report on the Oakland Athletics' stadium situation, an issue that does not appear anywhere near as complex. The A's still want to move to San Jose; the San Francisco Giants still say no. Why have you not been able to broker a deal between the A's and the Giants?

**A:** I'm proud of the Mitchell Report. Let me get to that first. We have the toughest testing program in sports. We've banned amphetamines.

We had cocaine in the '80s. It was brutal. We had the Pittsburgh drug trials — 29 people went down, four guys went to jail. They couldn't get a drug-testing program. Steve Howe was suspended seven times.

I have doctors and trainers here all the time. I monitor this very closely. Everybody really assures me we are doing well. I really am very proud of that. We have to be very zealous in the future. We're trying desperately to get a test for HGH.

So I'm glad you gave me that opportunity.

Now, as far as the San Francisco-Oakland thing: It's complicated. I like both parties a great deal. We have territorial rules. I put a committee together that has the qualifications to understand. They're still hard at work. They've still got things to do. This has a lot of ramifications to it.

Eventually, I will make a decision. What I want to say — because I'm generally very deliberate, as everybody knows — is that I didn't want to have anybody say at the end, 'Did you look at this? Did you look at that? What about X? What about Y?'

**Q:** Why is it not as simple as: The Giants claim their business will be severely damaged if the A's move to San Jose, so you quantify how much their business is hurt and write them a check?

**A:** It isn't that simple. You've got two parties involved here. There are a lot of questions that people raise about damage. It's up to us to check everything out. There are a lot of questions the other clubs can ask — and I will ask — before we can make any move. I know that people want a decision. I understand that. But my job is to get it right. If it takes a little longer than people thought, so be it.

**Q:** The A's and Tampa Bay Rays are the two teams still looking for a new ballpark. When the collective bargaining agreement expires next year, so does the moratorium on contraction. If the ballpark situations are not resolved, would you consider folding the A's and Rays?

**A:** No, I wouldn't. I think we have moved past that.

We're going into 16 years of labor peace. I regard that as maybe the prime reason for the growth of the sport.

I love the new ballparks. I love revenue sharing. I love interleague play and the wild card. But I don't think we understood how those labor confrontations were damaging us, whether it was 1972, 1973, 1976, 1980, 1981, 1985, 1990 or 1994.

There is no question that both of those teams need new ballparks. We'll just have to work our way through it. Tampa has done a marvelous job running their team. [General Manager] Billy Beane has done a terrific job in Oakland. With the

economics of baseball today, you've got to have a new stadium.

**Q:** You are fond of saying how baseball is a social institution with enormous social responsibilities. Yet, when you had the chance to address the issue of whether you should move next year's All-Star game from Phoenix in the wake of Arizona's controversial new immigration law, you pointed to baseball's progress in minority hiring, which did not address the issue. Since half the major league teams hold spring training in Arizona — in ballparks built at almost no cost to the teams — how might those business ties have influenced your decision not to address the issue?

**A:** No, they haven't. I believe we are a social institution. I believe more than ever we have addressed our responsibilities. We're setting up a lot of academies in the inner city, starting with Compton, going on to Houston, Miami, Philadelphia. We've had the great Civil Rights Weekend.

[Sports ethicist] Richard Lapchick, who can be very tough and very difficult, gave us our highest grades. I think the thing I will always be proud of is that he said Bud Selig has made the front offices look like America now. That was the highest compliment he could pay. That's what I said when I answered the question.

**Q:** But that doesn't address the issue.

**A:** I think it does. We will be socially active when we can do something to change life. We'll do everything we can to do what Jackie Robinson set us out to do. I'll stand by our record. But I want to say this again: We will do things where what we do really influence the outcome.

**Q:** So do you foresee any chance that next year's All-Star game will be moved?

**A:** I think I've given you the answer.

**Q:** How did you find out about Armando Galarraga's not-quite-perfect game?

**A:** I was watching it. I was sitting in my office at home, watching the game and excited.

**Q:** You have such respect for tradition that it is difficult to imagine you actually considered awarding Galarraga a perfect game, but you did consider it. How seriously, and what ultimately swayed you not to do so?

**A:** Not much. I really knew that, if I did that, the precedents would be overwhelming. I had a club say to me the next day, 'If you do that, we lost this game this year and we might lose our division by one game, and you've got to look at that.' It could go on. One thing about this job: You are always guided by precedent.

The Detroit organization was tremendous. The pitcher was great. [Umpire] Jim Joyce was great.

You know what happened as the result of that? It was a wonderful lesson to kids all over the country, people all over the country, about how to accept disappointment in a gracious manner. I think baseball looked great.

And, no, I didn't think very hard about it.

**Q:** You have said you are wary about expanding instant replay because you don't want to open a Pandora's box. But you already have limited instant replay, so how would you explain that Galarraga might have lost his perfect game on a blown call at first base, which could not be reviewed, but might not have lost his perfect game on a blown call down the left-field line, which could have been reviewed?

**A:** I reluctantly agreed to this, and yet I am happy with what we are doing now. The umpires convinced me they had to run 200 or 300 feet in new ballparks, and it was tough for them to see. That wasn't fair.

I know how I feel, but I'm interested that — whether it's on my special committee, or fans that I talk to, or media — there is very, very little pressure [for more replay]. The player polls were very supportive — not only of my decision, but they didn't want any more instant replay.

The more I listen to managers and general managers, I like where the sport is right now.

**Q:** So would you foresee any replay expansion?

**A:** The only thing I will say is that I'll continue to review it. I'll give everybody the chance to continue to talk about it.

**Q:** Is it on the agenda for any meetings?

**A:** No.

**Q:** On the one hand, nine teams have played in the World Series in the past five years. On the other hand, seven teams have not appeared in the playoffs even once in the past 10 years. How would you assess the progress toward giving every

fan the hope and faith you often talk about?

**A:** We have more competitive balance than any other sport. We have more competitive balance than ever before. The economic work that we have done, which was so difficult and painful, has had a great economic effect on baseball. So you've got Cincinnati, San Diego and Texas this year. You've had Tampa.

I was a Yankee fan when I was growing up here. From '49 to '64, they won [the American League] 14 times and won the world championship nine times. I rest my case.

We've had more teams in the playoffs than any other sport.

**Q:** How do you get to the point — or can you get to the point — where the quality of management is much more determinative than economic disparity in determining whether a team is a consistent winner?

**A:** That is my goal. That is a very profound question. We have made enormous progress. Think about this: When I took over in '92, there was almost no revenue sharing. This year, we'll have about \$450 million in revenue sharing. We have more competitive balance.

Management is certainly more important. But that is the goal, to have management take over and not just money. Is our system perfect today? No. But we have made enormous progress. I feel good about it. There is work to be done.

**Q:** You have been in charge of baseball for almost two decades now. What accomplishments are you proudest of?

**A:** Labor peace, clearly. Nobody ever thought it possible. The change of the economic system. We were in great trouble in the '90s. We had no competitive balance. The small-market teams won something like 3% of the playoff games.

Obviously, the wild card worked out. I took a lot of criticism for a lot of these things. Today, I think 96-98% of fans love the wild card. Interleague play. It wasn't my idea. I heard [former executive Bill] Veeck and [Hall of Famer Hank] Greenberg talk about it when I was a kid growing up.

It's a whole series of things. Our gross revenue was \$1.2 billion in '92. This year, hopefully, it will be close to \$7 billion. We're at attendance numbers nobody ever thought possible.

And I'll tell you another thing I'm proud of. Given that this is the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, baseball has done remarkably well, and we're off to a good start this year.

So I would say the changing of the economic system, which was still back in the Ebbets Field/Polo Grounds days, and labor peace along with that. Those are the two things I'm proudest of.

**Q:** And yet many historians might start your legacy with "Bud Selig, the commissioner who presided over the steroid era ..."

**A:** They can do whatever they want. I referred to the cocaine era, when there was no drug-testing program. Certainly, one can talk about amphetamine use that was at a very high level for a very long time. We have now cleaned the sport up. My minor league program is in its 10th year. We didn't sit around waiting.

In 2002, it was the first time it was the subject of collective bargaining. The players' association wouldn't argue that they fought it at every turn. It's a fact. You know that and I know that. The fact we've gotten to this point is remarkable.

There are people who say, 'Well, you should have known.' And I have a lot of people who resent that. What were we supposed to be looking for? I don't understand that. They did this stuff away from the ballpark.

You can call it a steroid era. Derek Jeter resents that a lot. He's said that to me, and he's named off all the players on the Yankees who didn't do it.

In the minor leagues now, every young star has been tested from day one, whether it was [Albert] Pujols or [Ryan] Braun or [Ryan] Howard or [Prince] Fielder or [Chase] Utley or Andre Ethier, on and on. So it's one thing if we hadn't done anything about it, but I'm really very proud of where we are, and we did it in spite of a lot of difficulty.

This is a subject of collective bargaining. I think I pushed hard. I'm very proud of that. How historians look at it may be a different story. I would have to say to that, 'How come I'm the only commissioner that has gotten a drug-testing program, and it's the strongest in professional sports?'

**Q:** One of your reforms was to broaden drug testing beyond players, to those who come in contact with players. How often are you tested?

**A:** They can test me anytime they want. I have been tested. Everybody should be tested. They can test me too.

**Q:** How often?

**A:** It's been a couple of years. Everybody in the office, clubhouses, everywhere. That's the way it should be.

**Q:** Did you test positive for anything other than frozen custard?

**A:** A lot of ice cream. A lot of frozen custard, no doubt. And probably hot dogs from my delicatessen.

**Q:** Since your office consults with the managers on the All-Star game rosters, did you consider putting Stephen Strasburg on the National League roster? Did Fox ask you to consider doing so?

**A:** No. The fans vote. The players vote. We have tried to be fair. You're never going to get it perfect. The amount of interest and intensity is really wonderful. But did we interfere? Did Fox interfere? No.

**Q:** You live in Milwaukee. How tired do you and the fans in Milwaukee get of seeing the Yankees and Red Sox on TV all the time?

**A:** I don't. The Brewers have already been on national TV three or four times. Our broadcast partners, I think, have been very fair. I have no quarrel with them. Look, it's in our best interest. My job is to make sure baseball grows and continues to grow — and so, if they're ratings-conscious, so am I. That's good for the sport. I really don't have any quarrel with that.

**Q:** You're just down the road from the Green Bay Packers, and you're a big fan. How about a community-owned team in baseball?

**A:** I don't think it works. No. 1, if you lose money, who is going to pay?

The Packers' story is unique. You notice no one else has done it in sports, including in football. It's a great story. I give the NFL credit. Their economic system saved the Packers and let the Packers grow into what they are today, which is a remarkable institution. But does it really work in today's economics, if you're just starting now? No.

**Q:** In your youth, baseball was the unquestioned national pastime. Why do you think the NFL has passed Major League Baseball in popularity, and is that irreversible?

**A:** I'm not sure I won't quarrel with that. Our gross revenues have exploded. Our attendance is at numbers you and I could not have guessed five and six years ago. There was a big story the other day that baseball has outstripped the NFL in merchandising.

Look, the NFL has done great. [Former commissioner] Pete Rozelle will always be one of my heroes. I think [NFL commissioner] Roger Goodell has done a remarkable job. There's no question football has enjoyed great success.

Baseball was, as I said, stuck in neutral for a couple decades, in the '60s, '70s and '80s. I really think we have come alive. People will say, 'Look at their ratings.' They produce great ratings, don't misunderstand. But, overall, we have a lot of teams with their own networks. We are doing remarkably well.

And I will say this to you: If somebody came back to baseball that wasn't there in '92 or even 2000, they would be stunned at how well it is doing today. If you want to know why and how, just look at BAM [Major League Baseball Advanced Media, known to most fans as mlb.com] and our network. Amazing story. They're two of the great business stories — forget sports, two of the great business stories of all time, which are manifestations of popularity.

**Q:** In time, I suspect that the World Baseball Classic will be remembered as one of your greatest successes. But there are still many parts of the world that pay little or no attention to baseball.

**A:** Before I leave, that's really what I want to concentrate on. We're very popular in Japan, Korea and Central America. We're getting interest in Europe. We've opened an office in China. We've done great domestically. We've got work to do here, so please don't misunderstand me, but my next great dream — having gone from \$1.2 billion to \$7 billion — is international. We have other parts of the world we need to get to.

**Q:** How would you explain to someone who never has seen a game why the sport is so compelling?

**A:** The more I watch baseball — which is a lot, much to my wife's chagrin — it's the greatest game in the world. There was a great old announcer, Bob Elson, who did the White Sox games for about 40 years. He had a lot of great lines, but one of his greatest was, 'The only predictable thing about the greatest game in the world is its unpredictability.'

There is something about it that is so engaging. The more you watch baseball, the more you realize what a remarkably great game it is. There was a period in life where people thought baseball was dull and boring, back in the '60s.

It's different every day, because the pitching is so different. It's not a game that you can really figure out. It's the greatest game in the world. All you have to do is watch it.

[Former commissioner] Bart Giamatti used to say to me, 'On a daily basis, baseball is a metaphor for life.' And, you know, it is a metaphor for life, in so many ways. That is what makes it what it is.

## **Bay All-Stars show Giants, A's are a wash**

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle. 7/12/2010

What if we could combine the best of the Giants and A's? Please withhold your comments about how the resulting team would be way over the mediocrity cap.

It's All-Star time, so let's go ahead and select a Bay Area All-Star team. If nothing else, the exercise demonstrates how evenly matched the two teams are, and how non star-studded.

In selecting this dream team, we eliminated the flaws of All-Star Game selection. No fan voting, no player voting, no meathead-manager selections, no Internet, no meddlesome U.S. Supreme Court naming the starting pitchers. Purity.

So here we go:

**Catcher:** Buster Posey.

Controversy already! Accusations that our one-man selection committee has fallen victim to Poseymania.

Maybe. Also, we (meaning I) don't want to deal with the mocking 10 years from now: "You left Posey off your 2010 All-Bay team? Dude (or whatever word they use 10 years from now)!"

We could have put Posey at first base and given the catcher's job to Kurt Suzuki. But we didn't need three months to be persuaded that Posey's talent truly will flourish only behind the dish.

And you know what? We don't hear any complaining from the pitchers on our mythical team.

**First base:** Daric Barton.

We're a little light here. We could run Travis Ishikawa out there, but he hasn't played enough, and you can't sit your way onto this squad. Also tempting: Put Aubrey Huff at first and Suzuki in left, but that's too gimmicky. Who are we to play All-Star god?

**Second base:** Mark Ellis.

This was a coin flip, but we didn't have a coin, so we looked at stats. Ellis and Freddie Sanchez are both hitting well, fielding beautifully, and providing leadership. Ellis has a slight edge stat-wise, and has played a few more games.

**Third base:** Pablo Sandoval.

Another tough call. Two excellent guys who aren't giving you the type of hitting you want from your third baseman, especially power-wise. Sandoval gets the nod based on more walks, fewer whiffs and a better on-base percentage.

Sandoval is the bigger disappointment because Kevin Kouzmanoff has not hit over .275 in the bigs, but we're not here to talk about the past.

**Shortstop:** Nobody.

Just kidding; got to have a shortstop. We're not impressed with Cliff Pennington, Edgar Renteria or the cooled-off Juan Uribe. So we're going off-road a bit here, picking Adam Rosales.

Rosales has the best arm among our shortstop candidates, he has some power, and if there were an All-Madden team in baseball, Rosales would be on it. What the hell, we admit it, we just like to watch Old-Socks play baseball. Best home run sprint in the game.

**Left field:** Aubrey Huff.

For the first half of the season, Huff gets our Gettin'-Er-Done Award. If Brian Sabean and Bruce Bochy keep their jobs, they owe Huff big. I wish I hadn't just written that, though, because now Giants' fans will boo Huff.

**Center field:** Andres Torres.

Another good mark for Sabean and Bochy, even if it took them too long to give Torres the job.

**Right field:** Ryan Sweeney.

Falls out of bed hitting .294, not a bad thing.

**Designated hitter:** Rajai Davis.

You want a homer guy as your DH, but Jack Cust isn't yet dialed in (Sunday's big fly notwithstanding). Davis creates big problems with his baserunning, thus: more impact.

**Starting pitching:** Tim Lincecum, Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez.

Cahill deserves the starting job, you say? He has a lower ERA than Lincecum (2.94 to 3.16) and better stats regarding baserunners allowed. But Lincecum has twice as many strikeouts, and in All-Star Games, we're looking for magic, which the Freak is more likely to deliver.

**Closer:** Brian Wilson.

He has slammed the door in 23 of 25 opportunities. Andrew Bailey is no slouch, but we want our closer to strike out guys, and Wilson does that at twice the rate of Bailey. Plus, our selection committee has a soft spot for closer shtick.

**Bullpen:** Craig Breslow.

We don't need much of a bullpen. And if we stand for anything here, it's counterbalancing the mockery of All-Star roster bloat.

There will be injured feelings and bruised egos among the players left out, but that will provide a week's worth of headlines - "(Fill in name) miffed at snub."

If you don't like our picks, maybe you'd prefer your All-Bay squad to be selected by Charlie Manuel and a computer geek in Upper Slovenia.

## **Bailey, Cahill ride All-Star wave together**

### **Pitching duo first multi A's reps at Midsummer Classic since '04**

By Chris Haft / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Andrew Bailey and Trevor Cahill are glad to be sharing this year's All-Star experience, though their paths could diverge sharply as the game unfolds.

Cahill worked seven innings and allowed an unearned run in the A's 5-2 victory over the Los Angeles Angels on Sunday, rendering him inactive for the game. That cleared a path for Bailey, Oakland's closer who secured his 18th save in 21 chances Sunday, to join the American League squad for Tuesday's Midsummer Classic at Angel Stadium.

So while Cahill knows he'll be a spectator, Bailey realizes that he could be summoned at almost any time to face the National Leaguers. That knowledge made him a bundle of nerves at last year's All-Star Game, when he made the AL team as a rookie.

"I was sitting down there in the bullpen, and in the first inning I was sweating already," Bailey said. "I was so nervous. Hopefully this year I'll be able to kind of hone everything in a little bit more and not be as nervous. ... I know my chances of pitching are pretty good. If I get in there, I'm going to take full advantage of the opportunity to represent my bullpen and the Oakland Athletics organization. If I don't get in there, I'm not going to be disappointed. It's just awesome being here and being acknowledged by [AL manager] Joe Girardi and Major League Baseball."

Bailey didn't appear in the AL's 4-3 triumph, but he still benefited from his visit to St. Louis. Merely watching proven pitchers such as Mariano Rivera, Jonathan Papelbon, Mark Buehrle and Joe Nathan go about their business deepened his insight into his craft.

"It was incredible to see how they go about their business and prepare for each and every game," said Bailey, 26. "We were just kind of hanging out and I was trying to act like I've been here before."

Now it's Cahill's turn to make the most of his inactivity.

Asked if he'll assume the traits of a sponge over the next couple of days, the 22-year-old Cahill said, "That's a good way to put it. I'm just here to soak it all in. I'm just trying to pick guys' brains, hang out with Bailey and talk to other guys and just have fun with it. I don't have anything to worry about."

Accompanying Bailey, who has been exposed to All-Star decorum and customs, is invaluable for Cahill. "I'll probably be his shadow most of the time," said Cahill, who's 9-3 with a 2.94 ERA in 15 starts.

That's not unusual for Bailey and Cahill, who are roommates when the A's are at home. They share a place about 20 miles northeast of Oakland in Walnut Creek.

Both also have encountered obstacles en route to All-Star status.

Cahill wasn't even on Oakland's Opening Day roster. He began the season on the disabled list, forced to deal with a stress reaction near his left scapula. Upon recovering, he was sent to Triple-A Sacramento, where he made two starts before being recalled to fill in for the injured Brett Anderson.

"He got on a roll with his command this year, and he was able to make adjustments with left-handed hitters.

"That's been the biggest difference for him," A's manager Bob Geren said of Cahill, who finished 10-13 with a 4.63 ERA last year. "With the left-handed hitters, he's really turned that around 180 [degrees]."

Bailey has glided along a hurdle-free path this season en route to receiving an invitation to the AL roster to replace the Angels' Jered Weaver, who replaced Cahill. But Bailey overcame a measure of anonymity slightly more than a year ago, when he was completely off the baseball radar.

Bailey was a 2009 non-roster invitee to Spring Training after salvaging his 2008 season with a move from Double-A Midland's starting rotation to the RockHounds' bullpen. In a meteoric rise, Bailey not only made the big league club but soon found himself in the coveted closer's role and, ultimately, on the All-Star team as the A's lone representative.

"I think where Trevor started this year, at Triple-A, with some uncertainty, I guess you can kind of compare it to what I went through last year," Bailey said. "It was a whirlwind for me, making the team and having success come from that. It's kind of the same thing with him, not knowing if he was going to make the team. For him to start the year on the DL and then go to Triple-A and come up here and prove that he does belong, that just shows what character and confidence he has in his stuff, and what the organization thinks of him."

Bailey and Cahill give the A's multiple All-Star representatives for the first time since 2004, when pitchers Mark Mulder and Tim Hudson joined forces. Bailey also is the first A's player to earn back-to-back All-Star accolades since Mulder did so in 2003 and 2004 and the first A's closer to make the team in consecutive seasons since Dennis Eckersley in 1991-92.

## **Cam Inman: Get rid of one-All-Star-per-team rule**

By Cam Inman, Bay Area News Group

Baseball's All-Star game is a misnomer. It is actually should be called "All 30 Teams' Stars And Token Representatives Play For November Bragging Rights."

At least one player is invited per club. What kind of outdated roll call is that?

Baseball has an identity crisis when it comes to the "Midsummer Classic."

For a few fleeting seconds each July, when All-Stars wink at television cameras during pregame introductions, fans of hapless franchises are hypnotized into thinking they belong to baseball's elite. The reason: An archaic rule saving at least one spot for every club.

That rule needs to be taken out, out, out of the ballgame.

Tonight's outcome in Anaheim preposterously decides which league gets World Series home-field advantage. That being the case (since 2003), rosters ought to be crafted in more fitting fashion.

Stop giving handouts. Demand the best of the best, not just the top choice off dismal clubs' scrap heaps.

"There's a strong sentiment from the commissioner and from everyone — or a lot of people — to have every team represented. I have a contrary view," Angels manager Mike Scioscia told the Los Angeles Daily News. "I think that if there's a team that doesn't have a legitimate All-Star representative, who doesn't have a year worthy of consideration, and another team has three guys who are worthy, it's wrong to penalize one guy on another team who would have made it, just because you have to take a guy not worthy of an All-Star recognition."

Do not fear the All-Star alternative: a matchup dominated as if it were the New York Yankees vs. Philadelphia Phillies, for example. If big-money clubs are stocked with the top talent, shoot those stars (yes, stars) at us.

"I have no problem if they want to include a Baltimore Oriole or Pittsburgh Pirate," MLB Network contributor Bob Costas said Monday. "But if you're then going to say that a bloop single by that Baltimore Oriole or Pittsburgh Pirate — in an exhibition game, in the least typical game all year — could decide or influence the most important game played all season long, the seventh game of a World Series, this defies all logic."

While baseball is willing to somewhat alter its All-Star show (see: re-entry procedures and designated-hitter roles), rosters have ballooned. A record 34 active players are on tonight's respective rosters, up from 33 a year ago and 32 in 2008. Factoring in all the substitutions (because of injuries and a new rule sidelining starting pitchers who worked Sunday), the American League is expected to introduce 42 players, the National League 40.

Based on 25-man rosters, that amounts to roughly 11 percent of all major leaguers, and, by virtue, a watered-down accolade. But some see the bloated rosters as a positive.



"I feel that because rosters have expanded, it still makes sense to have a representative from each team," Cardinals manager Tony La Russa said in a phone interview Monday from his Alamo home.

La Russa has managed five All-Star squads, three times during his A's heyday 20 years ago and twice in the past five years as the Cardinals' manager. How many times did he find himself snubbing a worthy All-Star to comply with the one-per-team rule?

"Every year," La Russa answered.

Because of the greater stakes involving World Series home-field advantage, La Russa acknowledged that a "legitimate argument" can be made about the one-per-team rule.

"Putting someone on who's there because he's the lone representative, that means a more deserving All-Star doesn't get picked," La Russa said. —... (But) imagine the message you send when your team doesn't have an All-Star."

Counterpoint: We do not need confirmation that 30 different jerseys exist in this day and Internet age. We simply need the best stars if it affects the season's ultimate finale in November.

When the All-Star series made its debut in 1933 — at the recommendations of Chicago Tribune sports editor Arch Ward and sports writer Grantland Rice — all 16 clubs were represented on the 18-player, fan-picked rosters. But the following year, the National League's two cellar dwellers, the Philadelphia Phillies and Cincinnati Reds, were not represented.

Managers took over the selection process in 1935, and that is when the one-player minimum apparently took affect. A 1935 Chicago Tribune article (kindly dug up by National Baseball Hall of Fame researchers) explains how the rule relieved managers from the urge to select "their own boys" and prevent clubhouse strife.

Shoehorning players from throughout the league into a 20-man roster was their answer.

Worked well, for an exhibition. Not so much for World Series ramifications 75 years later.

## **A's-to-San-Jose plan could be running out of time before deadline, Stanford expert says**

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News 7/13/2010

Oakland A's owner Lew Wolff's venting this weekend about the slow pace of talks to move his team to San Jose could be a sign the relocation effort is in trouble, one leading sports economist said.

In an exclusive interview with Mercury News sports columnist Mark Purdy, published Sunday, Wolff expressed his continued angst that a decision has not been issued by baseball Commissioner Bud Selig and other Major League team owners on whether to remove the San Francisco Giants' territorial claim to Santa Clara County.

It's been 16 months since Selig appointed a special committee to study the A's options, and neither Wolff nor San Jose leaders can fathom what's taking so long.

"I feel like we're being jerked around, and it's time to make a decision," Mayor Chuck Reed said.

Timing becomes critical because the City Council must decide by Aug. 3 whether to place a measure on the November ballot asking voters to support a ballpark measure. Approval by a majority of voters is needed before the city can provide land for the proposed \$461 million ballpark, which Wolff has agreed to build and operate with no further public investment.

Baseball officials offered no comment Monday on the Mercury News interview, nor did the Giants or Corey Busch, a spokesman for Selig's committee.

Wolff said he didn't know if Selig — a fraternity brother in college — had read it. He expects to meet up with Selig at tonight's All Star game in Anaheim but predicted they "won't discuss difficulties" in what's meant to be a convivial environment.

"Bud has a full grasp of everything, and he's trying to make a fair and balanced decision between us and the Giants," said Wolff.

Roger Noll, a professor of sports economics at Stanford University, said Wolff's frustration means "Selig isn't doing the job of a commissioner, which is getting the Giants and the A's to talk together." He has predicted the two teams could strike a financial settlement for the territorial rights.

"It's very difficult to reach a deal without the commissioner coming in and saying, 'Look, I want a deal... and you guys need to work it out,'" said Noll. "And if you don't, I will impose one on you."

He added that Wolff's move to go public with his complaints "must mean this is pretty close to the last chance."

What surprises Noll is that the other MLB owners haven't stepped forward to help resolve the issue. He surmised that Wolff's going public "is all about trying to bring this to a head at the owner's meeting around the All Star game, so they can at least get the ball rolling for a resolution to the territorial rights issue."

Absent a decision from MLB by Aug 3., Reed said Wolff could request the council to put a measure on the ballot anyway, without baseball's sanction. Wolff on Monday declined to say whether he would push for that.

If no measure appears on the Nov. 2 ballot, the next option would be a special election on March 8. Political experts say that could bode well for ballpark proponents, even though it would cost the city at least \$1 million to stage.

"It's a question of strategy," said Larry Gerston, a political science professor at San Jose State University. He noted that while special elections draw fewer voters, they tend to draw those who are most committed to a cause.

Another option would be for a citizen's initiative to be placed on the March 8 ballot. That idea — which would be less beholden to environmental restrictions than the city's current process — has been floated by Michael Mulcahy, a downtown San Jose businessman and co-chair of a booster group called Pro Baseball San Jose. Organizers would need to collect verified signatures from 8 percent of San Jose's registered voters, or 30,740 people.

But opponents of the stadium also are making plans. A new grassroots group called "Better Sense San Jose" announced its official launch Monday, vowing to fight public funding for the park.

Marc Morris, a spokesman for the new group, is a 20-year-resident of the Shasta-Hanchett neighborhood near the site and filed one of three formal objections to the environmental impact report city officials prepared for the park. The city council last month approved the report over those objections, which mostly focused on parking and traffic concerns.

Morris said his group is not affiliated with "Stand For San Jose," a separate grassroots group funded by the San Francisco Giants with a similar goal to fight any ballpark ballot measure. Still, he added, "Never say never."

Wolff on Monday expressed frustration that "there is an argument between us and the Giants when I don't think there needs to be."

He also repeated that he believes the A's have explored "every opportunity we can find in Oakland and Fremont, and only then did we focus on San Jose. If the committee has discovered something we have missed, I would be happy to talk about it."

## **BASEBALL: Vista's Cahill cherishes All-Star status**

BY JOHN MAFFEI, North County Times (San Diego), 7/12/2010

ANAHEIM -- It was a slap in the face, but Trevor Cahill decided to use it as a kick in the butt.

Slowed by a left shoulder injury in spring training, the Oakland A's optioned the Vista High grad to Triple-A Sacramento to start the season.

Apparently Cahill's 10-13 showing with the A's in 2009, when he made 32 starts and posted a 4.63 ERA, meant little.

"I was up with the big club all last year, then I get optioned to the minors before this season," Cahill said. "I was a little upset. I took it very personally. There were other guys throwing well, but I used it as motivation."

Cahill rejoined the A's on May 1 and has been the club's best pitcher ever since. His 9-3 record and 2.94 ERA in 95 innings were good enough to earn the 22-year-old right-hander a spot on the American League roster for Tuesday's All-Star game at Angel Stadium.

"Trevor Cahill has thrown the ball extremely well," said AL manager Joe Girardi. "You see so many young kids who are throwing the ball at a high level. I think it's the time of the pitcher right now. The influx of young pitching in baseball is incredible, and not just guys with stuff, but guys that know how to pitch at a young age."

By rule, Cahill isn't eligible to pitch in the game because he appeared in a game Sunday, tossing seven innings to beat the Angels. But he is thrilled to be in Anaheim.

"If I only make one All-Star team -- and I hope this isn't just a one-time deal -- San Diego and Oakland would be the only places better than Anaheim," Cahill said on Monday. "To make the team and be this close to home, to not put a burden on my friends and family to come to the game is pretty cool."

One person who plans to be in the stands is Vista baseball coach Rick Lepire.

"Trevor and I speak all the time," Lepire said. "I didn't bother asking him for tickets because I know he has limits. My seats aren't great, but I'll be there to support him."

"Trevor is a man of few words, but his loyalties run deep. He works out with us in the winter. He has a real connection to Vista High. And he's not some kind of big-time guy. He works with our kids, shows them what it takes to get in shape for a big-league season. He's a great role model."

"He has had an amazing rise through the A's organization. We're pretty darn proud of him."

Cahill's rise to All-Star status is even more surprising because he threw only 19 innings as a junior at Vista and wasn't considered a pro prospect.

But he grew into his 6-foot-4 frame the summer between his junior and senior seasons. His fastball went from a pedestrian 82-83 mph to 91-92, which grabbed the attention of scouts.

Still, Cahill was set to go to Dartmouth after a senior year in which he posted a 2.31 ERA with 109 strikeouts in 66 2/3 innings. But the A's used their top draft pick in 2006 -- albeit a second-rounder -- to convince him otherwise.

And that was after A's general manager Billy Beane, who played at Mt. Carmel High, saw Cahill at his worst.

In a San Diego Section playoff game against Torrey Pines, Cahill -- who had lost 15 pounds while battling strep throat -- was hit hard.

"But I saw what I needed to see," Beane said. "I saw a big, rawboned kid, who, despite being sick, competed like crazy. As a GM, if you don't trust the reports your scouts turn in, you aren't a very good GM. I played in North County. I know the kind of competition he was going against. So I trusted my scout."

Scouts have compared Cahill's sinker to that of Atlanta's Derek Lowe. This season, however, he has added a spiking curveball, a pitch that used to be known as a knuckle curve.

"The sinker is still my bread-and-butter pitch," Cahill said. "But after last season, I knew I needed another breaking ball. So I experimented with a number of curveball grips, and the spike grip is what worked for me."

A's closer Andrew Bailey, who was taken in the sixth round of the 2006 draft, has taken Cahill's place on the AL roster.

The A's couldn't be happier to have two players on the All-Star team.

"I'm really happy for both Trevor and Andrew," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "I was hoping we'd get more than one guy, and Trevor was definitely worthy of the honor the way he has thrown the ball. He's as good a pitcher as there is in the American League."

## **Teams Looking for a Little More Bounce From Bobbleheads**

By KEN BELSON, New York Times 7/12/2010

Are bobbleheads old hat? That is the question some baseball executives are asking.

Teams have been giving the latest generation of bobbleheads since the 1990s. Yet in an era when youngsters are hooked on iPods, iPads and iPhones, some people feel the kitschy ceramic or polyresin figures may have seen their day.

At least that's what Marc Gold heard. Gold is the co-owner at Gold Pure Food Products, which is best known for its horseradish, a staple at many Seders. The company also produces the official mustard of the Mets.

As part of its sponsorship with the team, Gold's has had its name on bobbleheads since 2002, when the Mets gave away a likeness of Mike Piazza (emphasis on likeness, since the doll did not look much like him). On Sunday, the Gold's name will adorn the Jason Bay bobbleheads that will be given to the first 25,000 fans entering Citi Field.

Gold said the bobbleheads had helped increase mustard sales about 10 percent a year since the company started sponsoring them. Sales have grown regardless of the team's performance or the commemorated player, a group that has included John Franco, David Wright and even Kaz Matsui, a less than popular infielder.

"People are going to put it on their fridge or desk and connect it to Gold's," he said. "We're moving up in the mustard business."

This year, though, Gold was told by a team executive that the promotion might be getting, well, a little stale. "There's concern that they might want us to go another direction," he said.

While the Mets have not begun their marketing plans for next year, the team says it remains committed to bobbleheads.

"Bobbleheads are unique to baseball," said David Newman, the Mets' senior vice president for marketing. "It is a staple and our fans love them."

In 2000, Tom Seaver was the first Met to be featured on a bobblehead. Some years, the club has given away more than one bobblehead with different sponsors. In 2005, for instance, Pedro Martinez, Carlos Beltran and Willie Randolph were honored.

Along with T-shirts and caps, bobbleheads remain the most popular promotions. According to the blog Baseball Daily Digest, 25 teams will give away at least one bobblehead this year.

Now that the initial fascination with bobbleheads has worn off, fans expect more from them, said Vince Gennaro, the author of "Diamond Dollars: The Economics of Winning in Baseball" and a consultant to several teams. Campy renditions of, say, Matsui, whose head was almost as big as his body, are not as cute anymore.

So teams and bobblehead makers are making dolls that more accurately reflect the player's face. They are also finding new poses. The Mets gave out a bobblehead in 2007 that showed Endy Chavez making a leaping catch like the one he made in the 2006 playoffs. Not coincidentally, the bobblehead was sponsored by the American International Group, whose logo was on the wall where Chavez made the grab.

Malcolm Alexander, the president of Alexander Global Promotions in Bellevue, Wash., created a bobblehead for Justin Verlander of the Detroit Tigers with a dial that counts strikeouts.

"It's much different than just throwing a player on top," Alexander said. "When you look at adding pieces that include a sense of humor or engagement, then a lot of the marketing departments can't say, 'Not another bobblehead doll.' "

Bobbleheads make financial sense because they cost about \$3 each to produce and deliver, though they are time-consuming to design, Gennaro said. Once pictures of the player are sent to the bobblehead maker, the team and manufacturer go back and forth about six times to adjust the proportions, skin color and so on. The sponsor must approve the design.

Teams do not want to be left with any inventory, and they must pick the right player. Last season, the Indians gave away Victor Martinez bobbleheads after the catcher was traded to the Red Sox.

Gennaro estimates that bobblehead giveaways produce sales of between 2,500 and 6,000 extra tickets. But it is often unclear how many of those fans might have gone to that game because of, say, the opponent that day, or whether they substituted one game for another, said Ira Mayer, the editor of The Licensing Letter, a newsletter that tracks the licensed goods industry.

The Mets said it was difficult to determine how many fans buy tickets just to receive a bobblehead, because the team generally gives them away on summer weekend games that often draw the largest crowds — and when sponsors like Gold's can get the most exposure.

## **Rangers, Pads show savvy that local teams lack**

Gwen Knapp, San Francisco Chronicle 7/11/2010

As the A's and Giants amble toward the All-Star break and barely tread water in the standings, their division leaders keep on sprinting (Saturday's results notwithstanding). The Rangers and Padres have not only robbed the Bay Area of midsummer hope, but they've also taken away a lot of excuses.

Low payroll? The Rangers and Padres are ranked 27th and 29th in baseball, with the A's sandwiched in between. The Giants are ninth or 10th, depending on the method of calculation.

Bats not delivering? The A's and Giants can hit. They're both in the upper half of the majors in team batting average - 12th and 14th as of Friday night. They're also in the top six for grounding into double plays, while the Rangers rank 23rd and the Padres hold last place by a substantial margin.

The Rangers' deal to get Cliff Lee from Seattle - and simultaneously swipe him from the Yankees, who thought they had a trade in place - revealed a boldness and certainty that the Bay Area teams can't match. Granted, neither of them has the same pressing need for a pitcher of Lee's caliber, but the Rangers were working under Chapter 11 bankruptcy and with ownership in limbo. Still, they got what they needed, and what several other teams needed just as badly.

This deal took excuses out of the Dodgers' mouths, too. The financial chaos created by the McCourts' divorce may impede deal-making to a certain degree, but the Rangers sealed this transaction because they had other resources - well-regarded prospects and a strong impetus to trade them.

The Rangers felt an unusual urgency. They have been relentlessly mediocre for so long, they were compelled to make a move that said "no more waiting till next year." So they gambled some of their future on a pitcher who will be a free agent in a few months. The owners-in-waiting, led by Nolan Ryan, can now take over a very fresh team, possibly with a chance of paying Lee to stick around.

Are the A's and Giants similarly positioned? No, but comparing them directly to the Rangers is making excuses. San Diego came into the season with an agenda driven, in large part, by desperation. The Padres decided to run the bases like mad because they had limited options for generating an offense and because, really, they had nothing to lose.

The Giants, on the other hand, had their sterling young pitchers to consider, and the prospect of contention. So while the Padres slapped together an ark in no time, the Giants simply plugged holes in their life raft of an offense. They have been careful to the point of timidity. They're constantly trying to see what will work, trying to avoid mistakes, rather than committing to a vision of the team's future.

Buster Posey's delayed move to catcher may have fit into the blueprint for the team, which requires precise handling of the pitchers. But Bengie Molina's return to the team turned out to be a mistake; he wasn't prepared for the emotional demands of accepting his own baseball mortality and waiting for Posey to push him aside. Likewise, Aubrey Huff was a great offseason addition, except that he doesn't really shape the identity of the offense. Nothing does, at least not yet. It's still a lump of clay, without no apparent wheel to help mold it.

The lack of speed is particularly disturbing. The Padres wanted to run, in part, because they knew their park did not favor power hitters. The Giants' home is very similar. Yet the offense plods, undermining itself with double plays. It is a model of inefficiency. So, for that matter, are the A's, who do have some speed.

What they lack is an eye at the plate, a stunning change for an organization that long preached from the Bill James bible: "A walk is as good as a hit." They rank 22nd in on-base percentage.

The most important element of the Padres' running game has to be the confidence it generates for the team's young pitchers. They are outperforming any reasonable expectations, and plenty of pundits assume that they will eventually fall to earth. But they don't have to cope with the deflating experience of routinely throwing great games, only to see a slovenly offense burp up a loss.

The Giants and, to a lesser extent, the A's have pitching staffs that should put them into contention. So far, the definitive game of this season was the Giants' 1-0 loss in San Diego on the night that Jonathan Sanchez threw a one-hitter. The Giants got five hits. They put a runner on third with nobody out. They didn't score.

If Sanchez had given up a homer, the loss might have been fathomable. If he had walked a bunch of batters or faced a Jake Peavy, it might have made sense. Huff did fall into a poorly designed photographer's well, helping the Padres score their only run.

But that didn't explain this game. Sanchez gave up only a double and one walk, and he was facing the still-evolving Mat Latos, who was 2-3 at the start of the game and is now 10-4. The Padres undoubtedly got a lot out of that win. The Giants couldn't even mine an excuse from it.

## **Shea: Three sides to every story at the break**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 7/11/2010

Three strikes per at-bat, three outs per inning and three more years before we can expect **Bud Selig's** study-the-A's committee to deliver a verdict.

While wondering how many more no-hitters will be thrown in the second half - **David Price? Josh Johnson? Tim Lincecum?** - we provide some other threes to consider on the eve of the All-Star break:

### **Three teams that aren't as lousy as we expected**

1. Padres: Still not hitting much. Still not convincing the rest of baseball. Yet, still leading their division, thanks to baseball's best pitching. So much for those reports that **Adrian Gonzalez** and **Heath Bell** would be traded.

2. Reds: These young guys are making the Cardinals squirm, and they'll do it a lot more when they add **Edinson Volquez** and **Aroldis Chapman**.

3. Rangers: Good move by **Nolan Ryan** not to can **Ron Washington**, who's doing in Texas what A's fans wish **Bob Geren** could do in Oakland.

### Three teams that are lousier than we expected

1. Mariners: So much for defense winning championships.

2. Phillies: The NL's so-called best offense has taken a dive, thanks to shrunken home run totals by **Ryan Howard** and **Raul Ibañez**.

3. Marlins: The exaggerated expectations were courtesy of owner **Jeffrey Loria**.

### Three feel-good stories

1. **Daniel Nava**, from working as Santa Clara's equipment manager to getting released by the Chico Outlaws to hitting a grand slam on his first big-league swing.

2. **Stephen Strasburg**, from the most hyped prospect in history to living up to it to all.

3. **Dallas Braden**, from boldly challenging **Alex Rodriguez** to perfect-gaming the Rays on a historic Mother's Day.

### Three feel-bad stories

1. **Armando Galarraga** would have had a perfect game if not for a hideously imperfect game by umpire **Jim Joyce**. This actually developed into a feel-good story because of both parties' reactions.

2. The demise of old-timers **Trevor Hoffman**, now pitching in garbage time for Milwaukee, and **Ken Griffey Jr.**, now retired after a falling-out with manager **Don Wakamatsu**.

3. Selig's three-man committee is in its 16th month examining possible sites for the A's, and it has lasted this long because the Giants are bulldogs about their territorial rights, leaving the A's stuck in a facility restructured for football.

### Three things to watch in the second half

1. Could **Miguel Cabrera** become the first Triple Crown winner since 1967? What a nice turnaround for this Tiger, who was a disruption down the stretch in 2009, getting drunk and brawling with his wife.

2. The NL Rookie of the Year competition: Braves fans wanted to hand the award to **Jason Heyward** weeks ago, but then Strasburg arrived and **Buster Posey** got comfortable. Also keep an eye on **Mike Stanton**, **Ike Davis**, **Mike Leake**, **Jaime Garcia**, **Jonathon Niese**, **Starlin Castro**, **Alcides Escobar**, **Gaby Sanchez** and **Madison Bumgarner**.

3. Now that **Cliff Lee** has been dealt, talks involving other starting pitchers will heat up: **Dan Haren**, **Roy Oswalt**, **Ted Lilly** and **Ben Sheets**. While Lee is a two-month rental, the most costly pickup would be Haren, who's signed to a reasonable contract through 2012 with a 2013 team option.

### Three races to follow in the second half

1. In the NL West, the Rockies are supposed to go on a run, overtake the Padres and leave behind the Dodgers and Giants. If it doesn't happen, it could be a four-team pursuit into September.
2. In the AL East, a powerhouse will get eliminated. The Yankees should win the division, and the wild card will be about whether the Red Sox can overcome the Rays by overcoming injuries.
3. **Ubaldo Jimenez**. Braden. **Roy Halladay**. **Edwin Jackson**. Four no-hitters, two perfectos. Who's next?

## **Shea Hey: Angels willing to stand pat**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 7/11/2010

The Angels find themselves in a curious predicament. Usually the dominant team in the AL West, the Anaheimers are learning what it's like to be part of the pack.

The Rangers are the new class of the division with **Cliff Lee**'s worst-to-first leap in the standings, and the Angels already are saying they won't try to match the Rangers' big heist.

In the six-player deal, the Rangers sent Seattle four prospects, including rookie first baseman **Justin Smoak**, and they get at least 12 weeks of Lee, who'll be a free agent after the season. Angels manager **Mike Scioscia** said his team isn't interested in a rental player even if he boosts the offense and provides a better chance to contend.

So no **Adam Dunn** or **Derrek Lee**.

"Our philosophy is not to bring someone here for two or three months and empty the cupboard in the minor leagues to do it," said Scioscia, whose team has won the AL West five of the past six years but is without **Kendry Morales**, **Vladimir Guerrero** and **John Lackey**. "So the pool gets smaller as to the players you can acquire."

The cash-strapped Rangers, who are in bankruptcy court and have a payroll set by MLB, received more than \$2 million from Seattle and \$2 million from San Francisco in the **Bengie Molina** deal. Meantime, the Angels, presumably filthy rich, are willing to give it a whirl with their current makeup.

The Rangers, whose last division title was in 1999, are all about the here and now. Reaching the playoffs would be nice, but getting deep into them would be a new twist.

The Rangers have never been past the first round, and Lee is the type of pitcher to change that.

## **John Shea: The Bull Pen**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 7/11/2010

-- Don't be surprised if Florida's **Josh Johnson** is picked over Colorado's **Ubaldo Jimenez** to start the All-Star Game. Johnson's eight scoreless innings against the Dodgers on Wednesday lowered his ERA to 1.70. He's 9-3, while Jimenez is the first in 10 years to enter the break with 15 wins. But Johnson has the hotter hand (0.80 ERA in his last 11 starts) and a superior WHIP and strikeout-to-walk ratio.



-- The Phillies wanted more offense, so they designated **Brian Boco**ck for assignment and promoted **Cody Ransom** from Triple-A. What do the Phillies know that Giants fans don't?

-- **Alex Rodriguez** was in Seattle when **LeBron James** had his goofy TV production to announce he's leaving Cleveland for Miami. Mariners fans still resent A-Rod for leaving 10 years ago and greeted him with boos, and a fan threw a bunch of dollar bills from the upper deck. A-Rod, a South Florida guy, was asked about the LeBron move and said, "Better him than me. Whooo. Next question."

-- Anyone remember the album cover of **Herb Albert & The Tijuana Brass**, with a nude woman almost completely covered in whip cream? Well, pitcher **Anthony Lerew** of those giddy Royals covered himself in shaving cream, head to toe, and walked through the clubhouse Wednesday. No clothes underneath. Hey, the Royals had won 10 of 13. Let 'em get wacky.

-- It looked silly then, and it still looks silly now: The Mets agreed in 2000 to buy out the final year of **Bobby Bonilla's** contract by paying him \$1.19 million annually for 25 years, beginning in 2011.

-- The Phillies were the first team in history with two native Hawaiians in a starting lineup: center fielder **Shane Victorino** and catcher **Dane Sardinha**. Never happened with the A's, because ex-farmhand **Jerome Williams** never reached the parent club and got to throw to **Kurt Suzuki**.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Cats win 7th road game in row, now 2.0 games back**

By Annie Becker / Sacramento River Cats

The All-Star break produced All-Star plays.

Sacramento returned from a three-day All-Star break to continue its first-place chase, topping the host Salt Lake Bees 5-4 in 12 innings Thursday night.

Michael Taylor delivered big hits all game, including the go-ahead single in the top of the 12th, as Sacramento rallied from an early 4-0 deficit. The River Cats have now won seven consecutive road games and 15 of 18 overall.

River Cats starting pitcher John Halama gave up a three-run home run to Terry Evans in a four-run Salt Lake first inning.

Slow starts are becoming the norm for Sacramento, which has either come from behind or used extra innings to win its last nine games. Anthony Recker, who played his first game after being placed on the disabled list with an oblique strain, got Sacramento's rally started with a solo home run in the fifth.

The Cats came up big in the eighth to tie the game.

A Taylor double drove in Dallas McPherson (walk) and Jeff Baisley (hit by pitch) to bring Sacramento within one. Taylor then advanced to third on a Steven Tolleson ground out and scored the game-tying run on a clutch Recker single.

The River Cats and the Bees battled through extra innings, but it was Taylor who scored Chris Carter to put Sacramento on top for good in the four-hour encounter.

Winning pitcher Jon Hunton (5-2) held the Bees scoreless in the 10th and 11th innings before flame-thrower Henry Rodriguez struck out the side in the 12th for his 10th save.

Sacramento, which trailed the first-place Fresno Grizzlies by 12.5 games on June 15, is now 2.0 games out after Fresno lost Thursday night to visiting Las Vegas.

The River Cats, which are embarking on a season-long 12-game road trip, will face Salt Lake in Game 2 of the four-game series Friday night at 6:05 p.m.

## **RockHounds fight through close game**

By Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter Telegram

One could tell that Thursday night's game against San Antonio at Citibank Ballpark meant a lot to the Midland RockHounds.

Every RockHound on the bench was standing right by the dugout fence in the critical ninth and 10th innings of this tight and well-played ballgame. The RockHounds had taken an early lead, only to see the Missions fight back to take the lead in the seventh.

But after the RockHounds tied it at 2 in the ninth, they won it in the 10th when Corey Brown smacked a single to right field to score Josh Horton for a thrilling 3-2 victory over their Texas League South rivals.

This was the second consecutive 10th-inning victory for the RockHounds, who came back from a three-run deficit on Tuesday for an 11-10 victory over Springfield.

"I knew we weren't going to give up today," Brown said. "We have a strong lineup and we're going to fight back until the end. Today we were able to capitalize. It was exciting."

Brown said it added to the excitement that the RockHounds were playing the Missions, who are not only division rivals, but some on the team are friends as well. That includes San Antonio's Craig Italiano (4-3), who is arguably one of the best closers in the league and a one-time Oakland A's farmhand with some of these RockHounds.

In the ninth and 10th innings, the RockHounds got to the usually reliable Italiano.

With the RockHounds down 2-1 in the ninth, Brown drew a leadoff walk, went to second base on a sacrifice bunt by Archie Gilbert then went to third on a groundout by Shane Peterson. With the RockHounds down to their last out, Matt Sulentic delivered with a single to left field to score Brown to tie the game at 2.

Then in the 10th, Horton led off with a double and moved to third on a groundout by Adrian Cardenas to set up Brown's heroics two batters later.

"(Italiano) just happened to throw one over the middle for me to make some contact with, and luckily I was able to put the ball in play and get my first walkoff hit," Brown said. "He's a sinker thrower and I guess he left a few up for us to hit. Horton was able to knock that double and Archie did a nice job in the ninth of getting me over to second, so everyone contributed tonight."

On paper this wasn't supposed to be a great pitching matchup between Midland's Anthony Capra and San Antonio's Corey Kluber, but that's what the announced crowd of 4,133 fans saw through six innings.

The game was scoreless through three innings when Cardenas hit a solo home run to right field for the early 1-0 lead.

Meanwhile, Capra looked sharp on the mound. He gave up only one unearned run on five hits through six innings, struck out six, and most importantly for Capra, did not walk a batter. Cutting down on walks is something the 23-year-old lefty has been trying to improve on all season.

"It finally took, what, 18 starts for me not to walk a guy?" Capra said sarcastically. "It feels good, though. It's something to build on and something to build some confidence with and keep going."

The only run he allowed came in the sixth. Blake Tekotte reached with a single and then advanced on a throwing error by Capra. The pitcher said that error got to him a little bit and Tekotte later scored on a single by Logan Forsythe to tie the game at 1.

"I didn't execute pitches as well as I wanted to, but I was able to get out of it without any more damage," Capra said.

Capra did take a ball off his left calf to end the inning, but Capra said he should be OK.

Midland manager Darren Bush said Capra's performance was more than just OK.

"He did a great job," Bush said. "He kept the ball down. The last time out, he only had two walks and today he had none. He's attacking the zone."

The Missions took the lead in the seventh against Justin Souza as Sawyer Carroll walked and then scored on a single by Brad Chalk.

Bush said despite that run, he said his bullpen did a good job of containing the Missions in the late innings.

"We stopped them from scoring more runs," Bush said. "Souza did a good job of getting out of a bases loaded jam with one out (in the seventh). (Fautino) De Los Santos also got out of the eighth after a leadoff walk. Them not scoring more proved to be huge for us tonight."

'HOUND BITES: Missions CF Blake Tekotte made a great play to end a RockHounds threat in the bottom of the third inning. With runners at first and third and two outs, Josh Horton hit a ball deep to center field, but Tekotte made an over-the-shoulder catch at the warning track to make the out. ...A scary moment came in the bottom of the fourth when Missions SS Drew Cumberland injured his left leg while chasing after a foul ball hit by Val Majewski. Cumberland was sliding to try to make the catch when he crashed into the concrete wall in foul territory beyond left field. Cumberland appeared to try to get back up but immediately went down to the ground in obvious pain. Trainers placed his left leg in an air splint while he was on the ground and then was carried back to the San Antonio clubhouse by two of his teammates. ...Midland is now 13-8 against San Antonio but only 2-7 against the Missions at Citibank Ballpark.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds are expected to send RHP Jeff Lyman (0-1, 4.91 ERA), while San Antonio will likely start RHP Jeremy Hefner (7-4, 2.44).

## **Spina's walk-off homer lifts Ports, 10-9**

### **Dallas Braden makes rehab start in Stockton victory**

**STOCKTON, Calif.** – The Stockton Ports (42-49) put on an exciting game for 3,837 folks at Banner Island Ballpark on Thursday night. Hometown hero LHP Dallas Braden made a rehab start in the game, and Mike Spina hit a walk-off three-run home run to center field to lift the Ports 10-9 over the Visalia Rawhide (48-43).

It was the second straight win over the Rawhide, and secures the series victory for the Ports. Stockton hasn't defeated Visalia in two consecutive games since April 8 and 9. Scott Hodsdon picked up his first win of the season in the contest. Braden allowed three runs on seven hits in 4.0 innings in his rehab start. Trey Barham tossed 1.1 shutout innings in the contest to help hold the Rawhide. Billy Spottiswood picked up the loss for the Rawhide.

The Ports collected 12 hits in the game, and all but two players had a hit in the game. Jermaine Mitchell and Yusuf Carter homered in the game as well. The Ports are now 11-10 in the second half.

Stockton took an early lead, as Mitchell hit a lead-off home run over the Ports bullpen in left field off Visalia starter Daniel Taylor.

After tossing two shutout innings, Braden allowed a run in third inning, as Visalia tied the game. Shortstop Niko Gallego singled to start the inning. Braden then got Dan Kaczrowski and Alfredo Marte to fly out, before giving up a single to Marc Krauss. Paul Goldschmidt then hit an RBI single to score Gallego. Ryan Wheeler popped out to end the inning.

The Ports pulled ahead, 6-1, in the bottom of the fourth inning. Third baseman Stephen Parker led off with a single and advanced to second as Spina reached on an error by Wheeler. Carter then stepped up to the plate and dropped his fourth home run of the year over the left field wall to put Stockton up 4-1. It was his fourth home run in five game. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield flew out for the first out of the inning. Tyler Ladendorf and David Thomas hit back-to-back singles to keep the Ports offense rolling. Designated hitter Kent Walton notched an RBI single to score Ladendorf. Thomas came around to score on an RBI single by Mitchell.

Visalia inched closer, plating three runs in the top of the fifth to make it 6-4. Braden gave up back-to-back home runs to Krauss and Goldschmidt to start the inning. He was then relieved by Justin Murray. Murray got Wheeler to ground out before allowing a solo home run to catcher Josh Ford. Murray retired Brent Greer and Gallego to get out of the jam.

Visalia took their first lead of the game in the seventh inning, as they scored five runs for a 9-6 advantage. Murray walked Goldschmidt to lead off the inning, and gave up a single to Wheeler. Ford then collected another RBI by singling to center field. Right fielder Alberto Diaz kept the scoring going with an RBI single to bring home Wheeler.

The Ports then called on right-handed pitcher Scott Deal to face Greer. Greer laid down a sacrifice bunt to advance the runners. Gallego then reached on an error by shortstop Grant Green, who had three errors on the night. The error allowed Ford to score the seventh Visalia run. Kaczrowski popped out for the second out of the inning. Marte then singled to collect an RBI and drive home Diaz. The Ports then called on southpaw Barham to pitch. Barham gave up a single to Krauss, which scored Gallego and put Visalia up 9-6.

Both teams were kept scoreless in the eighth. Hodsdon pitched a perfect ninth, and the Ports entered the bottom of the inning looking for a comeback. Visalia called on Spottiswood to face Stockton in the bottom of the ninth.

Thomas singled to start the inning, and moved to second as pinch hitter Todd Johnson singled toward the shortstop. Mitchell came up to bat and struck out for the first out of the inning. Green then walked to load the bases with one out for Parker. Parker grounded into a force out which put out Green at second, and allowed Thomas to score. So, the Ports had runners on the corners with two out for Spina. Spina strode to the plate, and slammed a 1-0 pitch well over center field to carry the Ports to victory. The Ports celebrated the win at home plate.

The Ports will look to sweep the Rawhide on Friday night at 7:05 PM at Banner Island Ballpark. RHP Brett Tomko (0-0, 5.4) will start for Stockton, while RHP Ryan Cook (4-4, 4.85) will take the hill for Visalia. Fans can follow the game live on Comcast Hometown Network (Channel 104) or on KWSX 1280 AM.

## **Marks Keeps Cougars in Win Column**

### **Southpaw's 2<sup>nd</sup> straight 10-K performance leads Kane County**

**GENEVA, III.** – Kane County Cougars left-hander Justin Marks delivered his sixth quality start of the season Thursday night and notched his second straight 10-strikeout performance, leading the team to a 5-0 victory over the South Bend Silver Hawks in front of 7,182 at Elfstrom Stadium. The Cougars now have won 10 of their last 13 series -- including five straight - - and 10 of their last 13 games.

The Cougars gave Marks (3-10) early support with single runs in each of the first three innings. Myrio Richard singled home Tyreace House in the first against Mike Belfiore (1-7), Chris Affinito doubled and scored on a wild pitch in the second and Rashun Dixon poked a sacrifice fly in the third to make it 3-0. That advantage remained until the eighth when Mike Gilmartin nailed a two-out two-run single for the 5-0 final.

Marks got out of two bases-loaded jams but otherwise cruised. He gave up five hits, walked two and struck out 10. He has fanned 107 in 96 innings this season. This was his first victory since June 3, though he had given up three runs or less in four of the six outings since. Connor Hoehn logged two scoreless innings, and Ryan Doolittle posted a run-free ninth in his Cougars debut.

The Cougars (12-8, 44-45) and the Silver Hawks (8-12, 38-50) conclude the three-game series Friday night at 7 CT. Kenny Smalley (3-6, 6.46\*), who rejoined the Cougars on Wednesday from High-A Stockton, will pitch against Andrew Wolcott (0-1, 9.00). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at [www.kccougars.com](http://www.kccougars.com) with pre-game coverage starting at 6:45 p.m.