

A's News Clips, Friday, July 23, 2010

Oakland A's projected outfield has started just five games together

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The plan was in place in spring training.

Coco Crisp, Rajai Davis and Ryan Sweeney would give the A's one of the majors' most athletic outfields, covering foul line to foul line and making things happen offensively.

But as with many of their plans, the A's have been forced to detour because of injuries.

That projected outfield has started together in just five of Oakland's first 95 games.

Crisp, signed in the offseason to play center field, missed 70 of Oakland's first 72 games because of a broken pinkie and a strained rib cage muscle. Sweeney announced Monday he was having season-ending right knee surgery, leaving a hole in right field.

The A's, who sit 7 1/2 games out in the American League West, are trying to coax whatever they can from a group of outfielders that has been banged up — and largely unproductive — most of the season.

"We haven't had that team we envisioned at the start of the year," assistant general manager David Forst said. "But we're a game above .500 and within striking distance of being in a pennant race.

"Coco's (pinkie) injury was a fluke thing, and Ryan's knees we knew were going to be an issue. It's all about the plans B, C and D you have going into the season."

Though the A's have hit for more power recently, the lack of punch from their outfield is telling.

Entering Thursday, Oakland's outfielders ranked 13th out of 14 AL teams in homers (17), 12th in RBIs (121), 11th in batting average (.261) and last in slugging percentage (.382).

The A's acquired left fielder Conor Jackson from Arizona on June 15, a player they believe can add pop. But Jackson played just 14 games before going on the DL with a strained right hamstring and has yet to start playing in rehab games.

Davis initially lost out on playing time after the Jackson trade, but the injuries to Jackson and Sweeney have opened the door for him. Davis is hitting .355 (11 for 31) with nine RBIs over his past nine games.

"Everybody wants to play regularly," Davis said. "If you know you're going to be in there, you can make a mistake and not worry about it. You think about the next (play)."

It's worth noting that the A's weren't banking on much power from their outfield entering the season. The emphasis was on defense and speed.

But the left and right field positions are generally seen as power-hitting spots in major league lineups. And considering the A's don't make up for it with substantial power at other positions, the lack of pop from the outfield is glaring.

Forst and A's manager Bob Geren both mentioned Jackson as a potential power source when he returns. But his career high for a season is 15 homers.

Travis Buck? The once highly touted prospect has endured another injury-plagued season and is on a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento.

The A's believe they acquired a power-hitting outfielder for the future in Michael Taylor, obtained from Toronto over the winter for highly touted third baseman Brett Wallace.

Taylor struggled mightily for Sacramento early in the season, but he's been on a tear over the past two weeks to lift his average to .275.

A potential concern: Taylor has hit just five homers in 302 at-bats, though the A's maintain his power will come as he continues developing.

Radio talk shows are abuzz with speculation about when Taylor and first baseman Chris Carter — Taylor's Sacramento teammate and another big-time hitting prospect — might arrive in the bigs.

Carter has 23 homers but just a .241 average.

"I think we want to see both (Taylor) and Chris sustain a hot streak for a while before we consider them for here," Forst said.

My Word: Bud Selig needs to put his faith in the city of Oakland

By Barbara Lee, Guest Commentary, Oakland Tribune

THE OAKLAND A's are a storied franchise, inextricably linked to the city of Oakland. During their 42 years here, the A's have built a rich history that includes winning four World Series championships, six American League pennants, and 13 American League West titles.

Yet, despite efforts by myself and Oakland officials to keep our beloved team, there is movement to relocate this franchise to San Jose. For 16 months, Oakland has anxiously awaited a recommendation by a three-person committee appointed by Commissioner Bud Selig.

Under the leadership of Mayor Ronald Dellums, Oakland has demonstrated its commitment to keeping the A's in town, even identifying a new waterfront location for a state-of-the-art stadium along the Jack London Square corridor that would rival AT&T Park and link the Lake Merritt community to the waterfront. This plan also utilizes existing transportation — including BART, AC Transit, the Ferry System and Amtrak.

I have joined in this effort by meeting with MLB representatives and by writing to Commissioner Selig, urging him to keep this franchise in Oakland.

Retaining the Oakland A's would be a huge economic boost for the city, which has been reeling under the weight of the recession.

Results of a recent study commissioned by the Let's Go Oakland Committee shows that a stadium would generate significant construction activity, while adding some \$240 million to the city of Oakland's general fund and \$2.6 billion in economic growth in the foreseeable future.

The facts are clear: a new ballpark would be a game-changer for Oakland and would spur revitalization efforts similar to those experienced in San Francisco, Denver, San Diego, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., where stadiums triggered transformative redevelopment efforts.

An argument against keeping the A's in Oakland has focused on "dwindling crowd support." This is a red herring, as the A's have drawn more than 2 million fans 11 times, including 2.9 million in 1990. During the period from 1981 to 1992, the Oakland A's outdrew the San Francisco Giants in 10 out of 12 years. Also, the Let's Go Oakland A's Committee has 39,000 Facebook members lobbying to keep their hometown team.

Keeping the A's in Oakland would demonstrate MLB's stated commitment to America's diverse, urban inner-cities. After all, baseball's history is America's history. The racial integration of Major League Baseball, which occurred before other professional sports leagues, demonstrated that the league could be a positive force in America's quest for a "more perfect union."

Commissioner Selig can now step in and renew this important role for MLB. Oakland — the gritty, hardworking, multicultural and geographic center of the Bay Area — has long been a destination where people of various backgrounds live in harmony.

By choosing Oakland, Commissioner Selig sends a message that baseball will not jettison such communities in exchange for the empty promises of higher profits elsewhere.

Commissioner Selig, the time is now. Oakland stands ready to launch the new era of A's baseball — one that will bring the team to the downtown waterfront, transforming this city forever, and demonstrating that a multicultural city is the future for baseball, all the while bringing financial success to the team.

Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland, represents the 9th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

San Jose Mayor Reed wants to push ahead on A's ballot measure — even without baseball's OK

By Tracy Seipel, Bruce Newman and John Woolfolk, Mercury News

After months of saying his hands were tied until Major League Baseball officials decide whether to allow the Oakland A's to move to the South Bay, San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed on Thursday said he will ask the City Council to put a ballpark measure on the November ballot even without MLB's blessing.

The proposal — along with Reed's suggestions for another measure that could roll back pay for police and firefighters — shook up what had been a sedate month in San Jose, where City Council members have been on their traditional July recess.

And the move stunned the San Francisco Giants, who like A's owner Lew Wolff have been waiting for a special committee appointed 16 months ago by baseball Commissioner

Bud Selig to study the A's options.

Reed was in the Sierra Nevada celebrating his wedding anniversary Thursday and unavailable for comment. But his spokeswoman, Michelle McGurk, called a public vote "an important first step in the process of bringing the Athletics to San Jose."

The Giants remain adamantly opposed to an A's move, which they say would violate their lucrative territorial rights to Santa Clara County. "We think it's inappropriate for the mayor to proceed when Major League Baseball hasn't had its full chance to deliberate and do a thorough analysis," said Staci Slaughter, the team's senior vice-president of communications.

Reed's timing is crucial: If the council is to put the measure on the ballot, it must do so by its Aug. 3 meeting.

MLB wants firm plan

But even as Reed and other city leaders have fretted that time was growing short for MLB to revoke the Giants' territorial rights, one highly placed baseball source told the Mercury News the league was unlikely to wade into the issue without ironclad assurances the plan could go forward.

"Part of the problem is, Lew doesn't have San Jose sewn up. It's not like there's a stadium ready to be built," said this person, who refused to be identified because he isn't authorized to speak for the league.

"If there was an approval, that could make a difference. It's hard to say, 'OK, Lew, you can have it,' and then have them go through the voting process and end up losing."

As recently as last week, Reed had said it would be up to Wolff whether the city should put a stadium measure on the ballot absent baseball's approval. On Thursday, Wolff praised the mayor's proposal.

"This is another element that would make the process more viable, just like acquiring the land and finishing the" supplemental environmental impact report, he said. "The more unknowns that can be out of the way, the better."

Corey Busch, a member of Selig's special committee, declined to comment on news of the ballot measure.

But Councilman Sam Liccardo, who has cosigned the memo that will be reviewed next week by the council's agenda-setting Rules Committee, said it's now or never.

"We have an extraordinary opportunity to leverage half a billion dollars of private investment that will create hundreds of jobs," he said. "So we're getting our ducks in a row, and we expect that by our doing so, Major League Baseball will come along."

The ballot measure, called the San Jose Downtown Ballpark and Jobs Measure, will be paid for by Wolff and Pro Baseball for San Jose, a grass-roots group.

"This will not cost the city or taxpayers one dime to put on the ballot," said Pro Baseball for San Jose co-chairman Michael Mulcahy, who said his group is committed to raising \$350,000 to \$400,000 to put the measure before voters.

Other heavy hitters also plan to rally support for the ballot campaign, including Carl Guardino, chief executive officer of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

"This election will prove that support is overwhelming here in San Jose for major league baseball," said Guardino.

Organized opposition

While Wolff has agreed to pay for the \$461 million ballpark and its maintenance, the city is proposing to let the team use 14 acres of land it owns or is trying to buy near the Diridon Train Station. The city also would pay millions more for infrastructure around the ballpark; use of public funds for a baseball stadium would require a public vote under existing city law.

Two groups — Stand for San Jose, backed by the Giants' minor league affiliate, and Better Sense San Jose, which is concerned about the park's impact on traffic and parking, among other stadium-related issues — have vowed to fight any effort to spend city money on the stadium.

Other ballot measures

Gaining public support for a ballpark isn't Reed's only hurdle this fall: Four other proposed ballot measures also will be considered at the Rules Committee meeting, including ones that would increase the city's sales tax a quarter-cent; tax the sale of medicinal marijuana; and give the council the flexibility to set pension benefits for new employees.

But besides baseball, Reed is particularly focused on the issue of binding arbitration in contract disputes with police and firefighters.

City voters in 1980 approved arbitration for public safety workers, letting an outside judge decide whether the city or union position prevails. Reed has argued the process, though invoked only a few times, has allowed costs for officers and firefighters to far outpace city revenues. Those costs have nearly doubled in the past decade, helping drive nine straight years of deficits.

Police and firefighters have said they would vigorously fight any attempt to repeal binding arbitration. They see it as crucial to ensuring fairness in negotiations, noting that they're legally barred from striking. And they have argued that the sour economy and poor spending priorities, not arbitration, are really to blame for the city's chronic shortfalls.

A memo detailing Reed's arbitration proposal, due out today, will call for limiting binding arbitration rather than repealing it outright, as some citizen groups have urged. Reed hasn't necessarily embraced the other measures under consideration, however. McGurk said he would probably support letting voters have a say on a medical marijuana tax, but she said he "has serious concerns about the viability of a sales tax measure."

Group opposed to San Jose ballpark questions its true costs

By Stephen Baxter, San Jose Mercury News

A new group called Better Sense San Jose is asking tough questions about what it calls the hidden costs of building a major league baseball stadium downtown. San Jose redevelopment leaders are rebutting the group's claims.

The Better Sense group is led by Marc Morris, who lives a few blocks from the ballpark site and is a board member of the Shasta Hanchett Neighborhood Association. Morris said if the baseball leaders allow the Oakland A's to build a ballpark and a measure is placed on the November ballot to use public money, the true cost of the project should be disclosed.

That cost would include the city's land purchases for the ballpark, the cost of revamping the roads around Autumn Street and the property tax revenue lost from not building offices or shops. At a time when San Jose is closing fire stations and losing police, Morris and others wonder whether the stadium's costs are worthwhile.

"It's a time when we should be paying attention to every penny spent. We have to think about all of it and be careful," Morris said.

So far, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency has spent \$26 million on roughly 211,000 square feet of land near Diridon station, redevelopment officials said. The total land costs will range from \$42 million to \$46 million once three more parcels of the 12-parcel project are purchased, said Harry Mavrogenes, executive director of the redevelopment agency.

The stadium itself is expected to cost \$489 million, which would be built by the team. The city would lease the land beneath it to the team.

The Better Sense group fears a potential sweetheart deal on the lease, which has happened in other cities.

Mavrogenes said if the redevelopment agency sells or leases the land for less than what it paid, there is "legitimate legal precedent" to do that.

"Sometimes the land use you want is not the highest and best use. ... We buy land on streets that go nowhere. We buy land that has bad lot patterns so we can combine them and make them developable, because on their own, they may never be developed," Mavrogenes said. A controversial independent economic analysis indicated that if a ballpark opened in 2014, it would deliver \$2.9 billion to San Jose's economy in 30 years from ripples like restaurant meals and hotel stays.

Leaders of the Better Sense group doubt that figure, but they say the issue runs deeper than money.

Morris said San Jose leaders have had an "inferiority complex" in relation to other cities since their attempts to lure the San Francisco Giants in the 1970s and early '90s.

The Better Sense group argues that the land would be better used for offices or commercial development, which could create 4,000 jobs compared with 135 to 1,000 jobs that economists say the stadium would create.

The whole project hinges on whether Major League Baseball will change its territorial rights to allow the A's to move to San Jose.

Plan B, Mavrogenes said, is to try to lure a corporate headquarters. The redevelopment agency helped bring Adobe's headquarters downtown, he added.

Mavrogenes said the agency would have bought the parcels regardless of the stadium.

Morris said his group is focused on defeating a potential ballot measure on the stadium. His group is not related to Stand Up For San Jose, which is aligned with the San Francisco Giants.

The best and worst of Beane's July trades

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

For weeks, the A's have indicated strongly that they plan to do little, if anything, by the trade deadline, which is a week from Saturday.

So, to fill any hankering for wheeling and dealing, here are some of the biggest July hits and misses during Billy Beane's previous 12 years as Oakland's general manager, with Beane's recollections about the deadline moves:

BEST JULY TRADING

July 23-31, 1999 - In a flurry, Beane acquired:

-- Outfielder Terrence Long from the Mets for pitchers Kenny Rogers and Omar Olivares.

-- Infielder Randy Velarde from the Angels.

-- Pitcher Kevin Appier from the Royals.

-- Pitchers Jason Isringhausen and Greg McMichael from the Mets for closer Billy Taylor.

This bevy of deals signaled that the A's, non-factors in the mid-to-late '90s, were poised to make some noise.

"That was the debutante party for us," Beane said. "That was really the beginning of the run we had."

Despite adding pieces, the A's came out ahead on the payroll side, convincing trade partners to absorb some of the salary hits in order to lower their luxury-tax obligations, a loophole that no longer exists.

"There's no question that was the most frantic week, all around," Beane said. "There were so many moving pieces and salaries. It was a lot of fun. Those were the days of sort of hyperactivity."

Best - runner-up

July 25, 2001 - The A's acquired Jermaine Dye from the Royals for minor-leaguers.

"That was such a phenomenal team, anyway, and we basically added the best defensive right fielder and right-handed bat available," Beane said.

WORST JULY TRADING

July 8, 2008 - Sending Rich Harden to the Cubs was the worst July trade Beane has made. The deal netted three players since traded: outfielders Eric Patterson and Matt Murton and pitcher Sean Gallagher. Harden went 5-1 with a 1.77 ERA for the Cubs that season and has had mixed results since.

There was little interest elsewhere in Harden, however, and the A's, at .500 and looking to shed an oft-injured pitcher with a large salary, took what they could. Plus, the A's also got catcher Josh Donaldson in the deal. He is performing well at Triple-A Sacramento and has a big-league future that might make the deal look better.

Looking at Beane's overall trading-deadline activity, he's been at his best when adding a piece or two to improve the team, rather than just shedding payroll. This isn't unusual: Buyers' deals tend to make good teams better.

"No question," Beane said, "it always depends on what side of the ledger you're on. Teams sniff out quickly when you have to get a deal done because you have to move payroll, and you're at their mercy. It's not really a great negotiating stance."

Worst - runner-up

July 5, 2002 - The A's picked up Yankees pitcher Ted Lilly and two minor-leaguers in a multi-team trade for, among others, first baseman Carlos Peña and pitcher Jeremy Bonderman. This one worked out for Oakland initially - Lilly was a nice addition to the rotation, going 12-10 with a 4.34 ERA in 2003. But eventually Peña (after other stops) and Bonderman turned into very good players.

Worst - honorable mention

June 29, 2007 - Pitcher Andrew Brown came from San Diego for Milton Bradley. OK, so this wasn't quite July, and the A's really had no choice but to move Bradley, who'd gone from postseason hero to distraction. But giving up outfielder Andre Ethier to get Bradley in the first place added to the sting of getting so little in return.

FIRST DEADLINE TRADE

July 31, 1998 - Infielder/designated hitter Ed Sprague from Toronto for a minor-leaguer. Beane chuckled when recalling this one, which was completed a minute before the deadline and primarily because he was a new general manager and gung-ho.

"We already had Mike Blowers at third, and their stats were almost identical," Beane said. "It was like exchanging a red apple for a green apple. I had to go to Mike and explain that we'd just made this trade and tell him we were trying to make an incremental improvement."

Sprague was hitting .238 with 51 RBIs, Blowers .239 with 56 RBIs.

"Mike was looking at me like, 'OK, genius,' " Beane said with a laugh. "But it was my first year. I was going to do *something*."

It's tough for Beane to stay on the sidelines this time of year. But the only year in which he made no deadline deals was 2006 - the year the A's made it to the AL Championship Series.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Ruff night: The A's are holding their fifth annual Dog Day at the Park tonight. Princess Abby, winner of the 2010 World's Ugliest Dog Contest, will be on hand for the Pup Rally and the Pup Parade.

Inbox: Is a deal in the works for Sheets?

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

So what's the deal with Ben Sheets? Is he here to stay, or will general manager Billy Beane pull the trigger and get some prospects?
-- **Danny E., San Leandro, Calif.**

The deal with Sheets is that there likely won't be a deal. That seems to be the general assessment for several reasons, the main one being that Sheets -- because of his inconsistent velocity and overall lack of potential difference-maker presence for a contending club -- isn't going to bring the A's the type of star-power prospects they'd like in return. And unlike in past years, the A's are really not pushing to shed payroll, given that they have only \$8 million committed to next year's payroll, which stands at the \$58 million mark.

Sheets could soon be one of six starters on the A's staff if Dallas Braden and Brett Anderson can prove their health, but no one's holding their breath in Oakland. There is absolutely no guarantee that Anderson will stay healthy, since recurring elbow issues don't exactly result in the best of endings for a pitcher. And Braden, winless since his perfect game on May 9, takes the term "injury-prone" to a new level. Thus, in the event that either or both of them go down again, Sheets' absence would only further deplete the pitching staff.

At the end of the day, Sheets is giving the A's innings -- he's gone at least six frames in each of his past 14 starts -- and providing unmatched leadership in the clubhouse.

That's not to say there's no interest in him -- because there is. But the teams looking at him are also likely looking for a discount, and I don't see Beane handing him away for little to nothing.

Will Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow be on the move before the Trade Deadline?
-- **Sean M., Pasadena, Calif.**

There's no doubt that trade talks involving the A's have suddenly shifted to the bullpen, but come August, Wuertz and Breslow will be brushing shoulders with Sheets. Breslow has been good all year, and Wuertz, who had an up-and-down first half, is starting to look like his old self. On Wednesday he was handed closer duties against the Red Sox, and he put together a perfect inning for the save. I'm sure any reliever will tell you that not only does something like a save lend a dose of confidence, but simply being handed the opportunity builds some self-assurance. That's part of what Wuertz was missing in the early months of the season. But now that his confidence is back, as is his often devastating slider, I see him putting together a solid second half. I think the A's see it, too, so they're not going to ship him -- or Breslow -- away without receiving something in return.

Please tell me Jack Cust's power is here to stay again. We can't be waiting on guys like Kevin Kouzmanoff and Kurt Suzuki to hit home runs every night. I love those guys, but they're no power hitters.

-- John F., Manteca, Calif.

It does appear that Cust's power stroke is back, and I think it should take the A's for a fun ride in the second half so long as he lets it. Cust has been saying that he'd like to become a more all-around hitter and not worry so much about the long balls. But let's be honest -- Cust is here to hit home runs, and his most recent tear has proven that he should probably keep doing more of the same. He's gone deep four times in Oakland's past seven games, and the A's happen to be 6-1 during that stretch. Oakland's brass likes to say that pitching and defense win ballgames, but it's no secret that the long ball, well, goes a long way.

Why are Chris Carter and Michael Taylor still at Triple-A, and when will we finally see them in Oakland?

-- Chuck D., Castro Valley, Calif.

The A's have done right by letting Carter and Taylor find their respective grooves in the Minors while also preserving their Major League service time. At the same time, recent numbers show that the once-struggling Pacific Coast League duo has found its own groove, so I'm ready to see one of them brought up. Yes, only one, because -- despite popular sentiment -- they really don't come as a 2-for-1 deal on the 25-man roster, let alone the 40-man roster.

Carter is already on the 40-man roster, so calling him up would be easier, and I don't think the A's would mind adding a guy who has 22 homers on the year to their seemingly lifeless lineup. Carter also ranks among PCL leaders in extra-base hits (47) and RBIs (70). How he fares at the Major League level has yet to be seen, but it's about time the A's at least give him the chance to find out. Then again, the same can be said of Taylor, who has put together a nice .379 average that spans a 15-game hitting streak. He doesn't have Carter's power, though, and that's what Oakland can use right now. Unfortunately, we may not see either until September.

What's the name of Trevor Cahill's warmup song?

-- Chris T., San Jose, Calif.

It's Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit," and it's unique sound -- not one you would normally equate with getting amped up for a baseball game -- happens to be a favorite among us warmup/walkup song critics in the press box. The young All-Star, a self-prescribed classic-rock guy, is a rather quiet fixture in the clubhouse, but there's definitely more than meets the eye with him, and "White Rabbit" perfectly exemplifies his eclectic nature.

Broadcasting legend Bill King still missed nearly five years after his death

By Bruce Magowan, Special to Bay Area News Group

I always like to imagine an individual listener, sitting at home or perhaps in a car somewhere. When I'm calling a game, I try with each passing moment to perhaps tie that person's stomach a little tighter into a knot. If at the end of the day I accomplish that goal, then I have a day's satisfaction."

- Bill King in 1969

LONGTIME SPORTS FANS throughout the Bay Area miss Bill King. He was the longtime radio voice of the East Bay's pro teams. He worked for almost a half-century here in Northern California, mainly behind the microphone of the A's, Raiders and Warriors. He broadcast a collective 73 seasons for those three teams, an astounding record of endurance.

King had an encyclopedic knowledge of sports, but his interests away from the games were varied and he took advantage of many of the cultural and recreational diversions the Bay Area had to offer.

King spent the last 40-plus years of his life living in Sausalito. Like many waterfront residents, King loved to sail. Residents and fellow sailors along the Sausalito docks often saw the bearded King padding around the docks in his bare feet or in sandals while working on his beloved 28-foot wooden-hulled ketch, "Varuna."

"I got the sailing bug when I was in the service in Guam, just after the war while working on the Armed Forces Radio Network," King said. Twelve years later King left his Midwest broadcasting roots to try and make it in California. His first thought was San Francisco because, "It seemed

like the perfect place for me to get in plenty of sailing."

When he took his boat out on the water, King was usually joined by his wife Nancy, a cat named Hank, and an eclectic group of friends. Longtime Warriors owner Franklin Mieuli who served as one of Bill's bosses for 21 years joined in on occasion, as Mieuli was liked to go out on the bay and beyond in a catamaran he kept docked in nearby San Francisco. One of King's best friends, Tom Meschery, a burly forward on the Warriors, also joined in on occasion. Meschery was born in Manchuria during the war after his father escaped Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. King became fascinated with Russia and the two would spend hours on the road talking about Russian poetry, history and literature.

But for a man who was so busy broadcasting sports and traveling about 80,000 miles a year, it was sailing that gave King probably the most time to decompress and refresh. His favorite moments came when he, Nancy and his pals boldly ventured up or down the Pacific Coast for several weeks. On one memorable trip, King anchored "Varuna" off an island near British Columbia and he recalled being shaken out of sleep one morning by the roaring sound of running water.

"I walked out on the deck and saw this stunning array of waterfalls coming out of the cliffs near the water," King said. "The scenery was incredible and I had never felt such peace. As we were getting ready to go I looked at Nancy and then asked her, 'Why, why are we leaving this place?'"

King was a patron of the arts who enthusiastically supported the local ballet and opera companies in San Francisco. At his memorial service in October of 2005 at the Oakland Arena two dancers from the Michael Smulin Ballet Company performed a stunning 10-minute exhibition.

In the 1980s, King also took up painting. From time to time King might bring a folder to the ballpark and proudly display some of the watercolors and oils he had painted of landscapes near his digs in Sausalito.

"Wally Haas (the former A's owner) used to have these art retreats up in western Marin and I enjoyed taking part in them," King said.

King's interest in all things Russian sparked him to try and learn how to speak the language, and that effort paid off during a sailing trip to the Baltic Sea back in the 1970s.

"I had a working vocabulary of perhaps 600 words, so when we got off the boat and went to the outdoor market to get some food for the rest of our trip, I didn't have a major problem speaking the language," he said. "But it drove the Soviet authorities crazy, because they were following us wherever we went and couldn't believe that we would have the temerity to not only speak their language but to also try and get around on our own."

King's passion for the written word also got him briefly into teaching, as he substituted several times as an instructor for a course in Russian literature at the College of Marin.

Whenever people talk about Bill King, it's usually in reference to some memorable radio call of his, such as the "Holy Roller;" the last second play by the Raiders that won a game against San Diego, or perhaps it's of a last-second, game-winning jump shot by former Warriors superstar Rick Barry in a big game against the rival Lakers.

Those who listened to King's broadcasts and understand the craft of sportscasting still consider him one of the finest to ever grace the airwaves anywhere, and certainly at the top of the list among local announcers.

At the service in Oakland four years ago, there were many local sports luminaries attending who extended heartfelt tributes to King. Al Davis, former Warrior coach Al Attles and A's broadcaster Ken Korach all had glowing things to say about their good friend, but also mixed in funny stories and anecdotes about his variety of outside interests.

No doubt King was considered such an elite talent in his field because he was so well-rounded with a rich life that extended far beyond sports and broadcasting. So it's not surprising that those who knew him well would often refer to him as the quintessential renaissance man.

Voice of Oakland A's treats every game like it's his first

By Ginny Prior, Bay Area News Group, 7/2/2010

It's a warm summer's eve, and the air is perfumed with the scent of sausages and beer. Suddenly a booming voice punctuates the stillness. "Now batting "... third baseman Kevin KOOOOOzmanoff." A chorus of KOOOOOOS ascends from the stands as the crowd mimics the announcer, sitting high in his perch above home plate.

Dick Callahan is the man in the cat bird seat — the stadium voice of the Oakland A's. His tools are his vocal chords and his work ethic. He prepares for each game as if it were his first, making notes and learning player pronunciations well before the first pitch.

But this is far from Callahan's rookie year behind the microphone. At 69, his resume reads like a who's who of sports, having announced everything from Warriors basketball to college sports at Cal and St. Mary's. And to think he got his start with a "little white lie."

"The announcer for my college team didn't show up for a game," he recalls, "and they said 'have you ever done a game before?' I said yes, even though I hadn't." It was the old Catch-22. You needed experience to get a job, but you needed a job to get experience.

That was in 1961, and Callahan made \$5 a game that season. Today he makes considerably more — although still not enough to survive on unless you like peanuts and Crackerjack. Luckily, his "day job" is running the successful Kosich and Callahan Insurance Services in Lafayette.

His office walls are decorated with jerseys famous "SHOOOOOOO—TING TWO" when a player was standing at the free-throw line.

"It was so well accepted, I still hear from people all around the country," Callahan says of the call. It served as his signature and it quieted the crowd, and it hasn't been done successfully since. "The guy who replaced me tried to do it, and they booed him."

Over almost five decades, Callahan has had some great stories to share — like the time Kobe Bryant walked up to him during a game, leaned in and said "Watch this." With nine seconds left and the Lakers up by 2, Kobe got the rebound and jammed it through the hoop for the win.

"I said, 'How did you know you were going to get it?' 'It didn't matter,' he said. 'I was going to get it.' Now that's confidence."

Callahan knows what he's talking about — and even gives talks on confidence at conferences and colleges. But even he was feeling the pressure on May 9 when A's pitcher Dallas Braden was closing in on his perfect game.

"I was a wreck in the seventh inning," he says. "I thought I was going to mispronounce a name. I didn't want to screw it up."

Braden's game was perfect and, not surprisingly, so was Callahan's. Both had worked hard to get to that moment in time. And for an insurance salesman from the sleepy town of Moraga, it would be one more great story to tell from a job that's seemed more like a dream.

Slap Hitter: A's Radio finally delivers

Kibby Kleiman, East Bay Express, 7/22/2010

The Oakland Athletics have been on stations with stronger signals, FM capability and with far less right wing programming. But after yesterday's broadcast wrapping up the Boston series, I am a convert. KTRB, flaws aplenty is without a doubt the best forum the A's have had in years. Here's why...

The radio home of the Athletics has a baffling array of programs. In addition to the lack of proofreading on the station's own website, they also misidentify their own programming, uh...JT *is* the Brick.

The syndicated identity is a mystery as well. Is it Sporting News radio? Is it Fox Sports radio? Promotions play throughout the day for shows that don't get picked up on the 860 dial. Etc. The less said about Michael Savage the better. Except to say

that there is one howlingly bad cross-promotion, where he is supposedly extolling the link between his John Birch style hate radio and Sports that devolves into an ad for finding gold. Anyway...

The amazing thing for the A's is that the station is living up to its spring training claim to be a real locale for Athletic supporters. The morning guy, Rick Tittle will talk A's ball for his two hours, then pass it to the real star of the station, a gentleman named Chris Townsend, who does everything short of fiddling with the antenna at the transmitter (I think). Townsend does a pre-game show and then will stay on for a post-game show for about forever. There doesn't seem to be any hard and fast standard. So yesterday's game ended at about 3:30 and Townsend's post-game show went until about 7:30 in the evening. I tuned in off and on all p.m. and was delighted to hear the game's post-mortem for hours. It sounded very much like the host just kind of wanted to keep going longer after the satisfying series victory, until he decided that he had enough. Townsend also hosts the stations overnight show, meaning, I think he is undead.

When the year began, I missed the chummy tones of the past year's post-game host, and thought that the "new guy" was trying too hard, had no legit connection to our downtrodden team and the station was another in a series of mismatches. My bumper would stick out six inches farther if I had attached a sticker for every station the A's had been on for the past twenty years. We've been on Christian radio, news radio, country radio, podcast radio and oldies radio. This year's masters said they were sports radio and then dumped 70% of their programming for the antagonizing Savage Nation. But honestly, like the tape and four-leaf clover construction that makes the A's, the radio station feels very familiar. God knows what they're doing. They are decidedly underdogs in the market. But for now, they have made a commitment better than almost anyone other than A's fans, and for that they deserve a listen.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Once 12.5 back, Comeback Cats tied for first

By Annie Becker / Sacramento River Cats

Dead in the water?

Not a chance.

These are the Sacramento River Cats, winners of eight division titles and four Pacific Coast League championships over 10 seasons.

After trailing the Fresno Grizzlies by 12.5 games just more than a month ago, the Sacramento River Cats are now tied for first place after finishing a sweep of the Colorado Springs Sky Sox with a 14-9 victory Thursday afternoon.

Fresno fell 11-3 to the visiting Salt Lake Bees on Thursday night, allowing Sacramento to claim its first taste of first place since April 18. The River Cats hit their low point in mid May, when they fell into the Pacific Coast League South Division cellar at nine games under .500. Since that point, Sacramento (56-43) has posted a 39-17 record, including 20 wins over their last 25 games.

Sacramento's four-game sweep over Colorado Springs was its fourth sweep of the season and first against a team other than the Reno Aces. The River Cats are now 6-2 on a 12-game road trip that next heads to Tacoma.

Corey Wimberly opened Thursday's scoring in the third inning. The center fielder doubled, then stole his league-leading 36th stolen base and scored on a Steven Tolleson single for a 1-0 lead. Jeff Baisley opened the fifth with a double, advanced to third on an Anthony Recker single and scored on a Wimberly double play for a 2-0 lead.

But the scoring didn't stop there.

Sacramento came up big in the sixth and seventh innings, scoring a combined 10 runs. The Cats put up four in sixth with four singles, a walk and a fielding error. However, it was in the seventh -- after Colorado Springs scored three in the sixth to close to 6-3 -- that the River Cats used their power to take a commanding lead.

Josh Donaldson followed his Tuesday night grand slam with a three-run homer, making that 16 long balls for the season. Donaldson trails River Cats home run leader Chris Carter, who hit four homers over the first three games of this series before going homerless Thursday. Carter leads the team with 23 bombs.

And the Cats never looked back.

After Donaldson cleared the bases, Baisley recorded a double before Anthony Recker blasted a deep home run over the center-field wall, his fifth of the season. Dallas McPherson stepped up to the plate in the eighth and dropped his 10th home run of the year, scoring Carter.

Colorado Springs continued to score for the remainder of the game, but came up short.

River Cats starter Boof Bonser (1-1) held Colorado Springs scoreless through five innings before allowing three runs in the sixth without recording an out. Tolleson, who has now accumulated enough at-bats for his .336 average (third in the PCL) to qualify in the league batting title, went 2-for-5.

Sacramento travels to Tacoma for the last series of a 12-game road trip. Game 1 is Friday night at 7 p.m. The River Cats return to Raley Field on Tuesday night to open an eight-game homestand.

Peterson and Horton Homer In 11th For Win

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

In the third inning Thursday night, Shane Peterson drew a bases-loaded walk, giving the RockHounds a 2-1 lead. Moments later, in the last of the third, Koby Clemens hit his league-leading 22nd home run, and the game was tied at 2-2.

Seven scoreless innings later, Peterson stepped to the plate in the 11th, with the game still tied at 2-2. "Pete" launched a solo home run to right field and Josh Horton would follow with a 2-run home run, giving the 'Hounds a 5-2 win and a 3-games-to-1 series win at Corpus Christi.

Carlos Hernandez, coming off a very rough start (nine hits and 10 runs in 3.1 innings) versus San Antonio, found himself down, 1-0, on singles by the first three hitters he faced. While he did give up Clemens' game-tying home run, the lefty finished with 6.0 strong innings, allowing just two runs on seven hits, walking one and striking out five.

Justin Friend, Fautino De Los Santos, Neil Wagner and Mickey Storey combined for 5.0 scoreless innings, allowing just two hits with two walks and eight strikeouts. For the second consecutive night, Wagner (4-1) was the winning pitcher with Storey getting the save, his fifth.

In the final two games of the series, the pitching staffs combined for forty-nine strikeouts in 20 innings of baseball, with RockHounds pitching whiffing 13 in the extra-innings win.

The RockHounds open a 7-game homestand versus San Antonio & Frisco tonight (Friday) with first pitch at 7:00.

Ports Back On Track With 6-2 Win Over Giants

SAN JOSE, Calif. - On Thursday night in San Jose, the Stockton Ports figured that a win would be the best way to get over lopsided loss of the season a night before. A win is what they got. The Ports withstood a potent San Jose Giants offensive attack and hit two key home runs in a 6-2 win over the Giants to win their fourth straight series and earn their 10th victory in their last 13 games.

The Ports opened the scoring in the top of the first. With two on and one out, Mike Spina drove in Grant Green with a single to right to put Stockton up 1-0.

In the third, Stephen Parker gave the Ports some breathing room with a two-run homer to center to make it a 3-0 advantage.

Both of San Jose's runs on the night came on solo home runs. The first came with two down in the third when Francisco Peguero launched his second blast of the series to put the Giants on the board.

Peguero's solo homer was the only run allowed by Ports starter Fabian Williamson (2-0), who, despite allowing a hit in each of his five-plus innings of work, was able to minimize the damage. Williamson earned the win after going five-plus innings and allowing nine hits while walking two and striking out three.

Leading 3-1, the Ports added a run in the sixth on a leadoff solo home run from Mike Spina, his 18th of the season to make it a 4-1 lead. It was the final run allowed by Giants starter Kyle Nicholson (6-8), who went six innings and allowed four runs on six hits while striking out five.

In the seventh, the Ports got a gift-wrapped run from San Jose. With Jermaine Mitchell at second and two down, Parker hit what looked to be a routine inning-ending grounder to second. Jose Flores fielded the ball cleanly but threw it over the head of first baseman Michael Sandoval, allowing Mitchell to score. The run was unearned for Giants reliever Brian Anderson, the only run that scored in his two innings of relief.

The Giants got their second run in the last of the seventh on a two-out solo home run from Drew Biery-his third in two games-to bring the Giants to within a run at 5-2. It was the only run allowed by Scott Deal in three innings of relief. Deal entered the game in the fifth with two on and nobody out and got Biery to hit into a double-play and Flores to ground out to end the greatest Giants threat of the night.

Stockton tacked on a final run in the ninth on an RBI single from Mitchell of Giants reliever Jason Stoffel to make it a 6-2 ballgame.

Paul Smyth allowed a two-out triple to Peguero in the ninth, but struck out Ehire Adrianza to end the game.

The game was played in front of a crowd of 6,151, the second largest crowd in San Jose Giants history.

The Ports will head to Visalia on Friday to play the second leg of their six-game road trip. Shawn Haviland (6-6, 3.89 ERA) will head to the bump for the Ports, opposed by right-hander Charles Brewer (3-2, 3.82 ERA) for the Rawhide. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Cougars Score First and Last but Fall

Kane County loses first series in nearly a month with defeat in Michigan

LANSING, Mich. – For the first time since late June, the Kane County Cougars have lost a series. They fell, 7-5, Thursday night at Cooley Stadium against the Lansing Lugnuts and have dropped the first two in the set. The pair of defeats snaps the Cougars' series-winning streak at six. The Cougars are still 14-6 in July and 14-6 against the Eastern Division.

The Cougars jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the top of the first against Dave Sever, as Max Stassi cracked a two-out two-run double and Jason Christian followed with an RBI single. But Lansing handled most of the offensive production the rest of the way. Kenny Smalley (0-1) gave up two runs in each of the first two frames and left before the second inning was over. He gave up four runs on five hits over 1 2/3 innings in the loss. Chris Mederos yielded two runs -- one earned -- over 3 1/3 relief innings, Connor Hoehn tossed two scoreless and Josh Lansford gave up a homer in the eighth to make it 7-3.

The Cougars, who had four hits in the first inning but just two from the second through the eighth, tried to rally in the ninth. Jose Crisotomo delivered a two-out two-run single to cut it to, 7-5, but Tyreece House followed with a strikeout to end it as he represented the tying run. Sever (4-6) won it for Lansing.

The Cougars (16-10, 48-47) and Lugnuts (14-12, 50-45) wrap up the three-game series Friday night at 6:05 CT. Dan Straily (7-6, 4.35) will face Ryan Tepera (8-4, 3.30). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 5:50 p.m.