

A's News Clips, Wednesday, July 28, 2010

Nelson Cruz homer in 10th dooms Oakland A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The presence of Texas Rangers left-hander Cliff Lee on the mound Tuesday night didn't bode well for the A's.

The absence of closer Andrew Bailey from Oakland's bullpen didn't help either.

Both circumstances factored heavily as the A's lost the opener of a pivotal three-game series 3-1 when Texas' Nelson Cruz hit a walk-off two-run homer off reliever Michael Wuertz in the bottom of the 10th.

Wuertz struck out cleanup hitter Vladimir Guerrero to lead off the inning but walked Josh Hamilton. Cruz, a former A's prospect traded to Milwaukee before the 2005 season, then hit a towering shot to left field on a 1-1 slider.

When the ball finally found its landing spot in the seats, the first-place Rangers dropped the A's to 8½ games back in the American League West.

"It didn't slide too much," Wuertz said of the home run pitch. "It just hung. I wasn't going to let Hamilton beat me in that situation. I tried to get a ground ball (against Cruz) and left a pitch over the plate."

Had Bailey been available, it's conceivable he would have been on the mound in the 10th facing the teeth of the Rangers lineup. But the two-time All-Star was unavailable for a fifth straight game with back spasms.

Bailey threw off flat ground before the game, but manager Bob Geren said he was unavailable. If Bailey can throw off the mound this afternoon with no pain, he could pitch tonight.

Geren is cautiously optimistic that's the case.

Wuertz has earned two saves in Bailey's absence. But trying to win a three-game series against the Rangers and their potent lineup is a tall order for the A's without their closer.

They can ill afford to continue losing ground in the standings. Lee, the 2008 AL Cy Young Award winner making his fourth start for Texas since arriving via trade from Seattle, was brilliant despite getting a no-decision.

He went nine innings, struck out a career-high 13 and walked none. It was the most strikeouts by a Rangers pitcher since Aaron Sele struck out 13 against Detroit on Aug. 12, 1999.

He also matched the club record for strikeouts by a left-hander.

But it was apparent from the A's postgame comments — or rather, what they didn't say — that they felt the Rangers benefited from an unfair strike zone by home plate umpire Kerwin Danley.

The praise was sparse for Lee.

"He was all right," A's second baseman Mark Ellis said. "He wasn't as good as he has been in the past. We had chances, that's about all I can say."

"Well, he didn't walk anybody," Geren said. "He threw a lot of strikes."

The A's went down looking seven times. Jack Cust was ejected in the seventh inning for arguing after getting rung up looking for the third time. But the A's also took several good pitches for third strikes.

A's starter Gio Gonzalez gave up his only run in the first, when Guerrero doubled home Michael Young.

Gonzalez's pitch count was at 50 after two innings, but he lasted six innings, retiring 13 of his final 15 hitters.

The A's tied it 1-1 in the sixth with help from an unusual play. Coco Crisp stole second and went to third when Texas catcher Bengie Molina's throw sailed into center field because no one covered the bag.

Crisp scored on Kurt Suzuki's two-out single to right.

Rangers manager Ron Washington told reporters that Ian Kinsler, the second baseman, should have been covering with a right-hander hitting.

A's update: Hollywood's stars visit Coliseum

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas — A's video coordinator Adam Rhoden is a huge movie buff, and Philip Seymour Hoffman ranks as one of his favorite actors.

So imagine Rhoden's surprise when he was organizing film Sunday afternoon and the Academy Award winner strolled into his office inside the Oakland Coliseum.

Filming for the movie "Moneyball" started Monday at the Coliseum. And encounters such as Rhoden's have been common as A's employees have interacted with the Hollywood A-listers involved in the movie, based on the 2003 Michael Lewis book that examined how A's general manager Billy Beane and his staff built a winning team.

Rhoden was rushing to get work done before Sunday's game against the White Sox when "Moneyball" director Bennett Miller entered his office. Behind him was actor Chris Pratt — who plays former A's first baseman Scott Hatteberg — and behind Pratt was Hoffman, the "Capote" star who portrays former A's manager Art Howe in "Moneyball."

Rhoden didn't recognize it was Hoffman until Hoffman extended his hand and said, "Hi, my name is Philip."

"I showed them a little bit of what we do," Rhoden said before Tuesday's game against Texas. "(Hoffman) was really nice, really kind of quiet. Chris Pratt looks just like Hatteberg facewise."

Brad Pitt, who's playing Beane, spent time with Beane leading up to filming to get to know him better.

Pitt also chatted with A's equipment manager Steve Vucinich and other clubhouse personnel, and Vucinich described Pitt as extremely down to earth.

Vucinich, who's been with the A's since 1968, turned down the chance to play himself in the movie. He would have had to shoot scenes in Los Angeles and the scheduling didn't work out, so an actor will portray him.

"He's shorter than I am," Vucinich joked.

Left-hander Brett Anderson, who's been sidelined since June 3 with elbow tendinitis, is set to rejoin the rotation Friday against the White Sox, though A's manager Bob Geren said he'll wait until Anderson throws a side session to make it official. "... Rajai Davis returned to the lineup in left field after missing three games with a sore left hamstring. There's still no timetable for outfielder Conor Jackson (strained right hamstring) to begin a rehab assignment. "... New Texas Tech football coach Tommy Tuberville posed for pictures with Red Raiders alum Dallas Braden before the game.

Chin Music: Rajai Davis back in A's lineup; Andrew Bailey still unavailable

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/27/2010 4:20PM

For a July series in Texas, the A's appear to be catching a little break with the weather. The heat isn't quite as bad as you might expect, and the first-pitch temperature is supposed to be 86 degrees. Weather.com forecasts a 35 percent chance of rain at about 9 p.m. local time, so odds are that it stays dry as the A's and Rangers begin a three-game series. I realize we haven't even reached August yet, but this obviously has the feeling of a big series for the A's. We'll have a lot better idea by Thursday night whether this team still holds any realistic hope in the AL West. ...

—Good news for the A's: Rajai Davis (left hamstring) is back in the lineup at left field. Bad news: Closer Andrew Bailey (back spasms) won't be available for a fifth straight game. Bailey threw some pitches off flat ground, and although he reported feeling better, manager Bob Geren said he remains day-to-day. Bailey won't pitch until he first throws a session off the mound. Geren thinks that could happen as soon as tomorrow afternoon, and if that were to go well, Bailey could be available tomorrow night. Luckily for the A's, Michael Wuertz is rounding into form and gives them a decent ninth-inning option. But entering a crucial series with their closer unavailable is hardly ideal.

–Brett Anderson (left elbow) came out of Sunday's rehab start well, so he's set to rejoin the rotation Friday against the White Sox barring any setbacks.

–A little observation from the clubhouse: All starting pitchers are wired differently. Some are very quiet and keep to themselves on the day of a start. Then there's today's starter, Gio Gonzalez. He's chatting up reporters and hamming it up w/teammates before games he pitches in. As a rule, writers avoid talking to starters before a game they pitch in. Gonzalez seems to prefer a little conversation. Vin Mazzaro is a little like that too ...

Here's the lineups, featuring Adam Rosales getting a start for the A's at shortstop against lefty Cliff Lee. "Rosales has been really good against left-handed pitching," Geren said. "He's going to be in there somewhere for sure." ...

A's: Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Cust DH, Rosales SS, Ellis 2B, Davis LF, Carson RF; Gonzalez LHP.

Rangers: Andrus SS, Young 3B, Kinsler 2B, Guerrero DH, Hamilton LF, Cruz RF, Molina C, Davis 1B, Borbon CF; Lee LHP.

Major League Baseball offers to help pay for San Jose stadium election — on one condition

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News

Alarmed by San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed's surprise move last week to place an A's ballpark measure on the November ballot, Major League Baseball on Tuesday asked the mayor to delay his plans — which Reed said he'll consider.

And to sweeten their request, MLB officials told Reed that if a special election is required in the spring, they would help foot the \$1 million-plus cost.

"I want to think about it, and talk to Lew Wolff, and he and I and Bob DuPuy will talk again," Reed said Tuesday, referring to the A's owner and to MLB's president, respectively.

Reed also apologized to DuPuy for not speaking with him before last week's announcement. Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig has said he was "surprised and disappointed" by the news, which Reed announced while vacationing.

Voters must weigh in before San Jose can let the A's build a \$461 million stadium on city-owned land downtown. But Selig has insisted that a vote would be "premature" until a special committee he appointed last year to study the team's options completes its work.

The committee met Monday with Selig, but there was no word about their discussion. MLB would contribute funding for an election only if league officials decide the A's can move to San Jose.

Reed will discuss DuPuy's request at today's meeting of the city's Rules and Open Government Committee, which sets the council agenda. The City Council must vote at its Aug. 3 meeting whether to put the baseball measure before voters this fall.

Reed said the deadline is why he pushed ahead with last week's announcement. Even though some observers have predicted that a stadium measure would fare better in the spring, when there won't be a raft of other ballot measures competing for attention, Reed said he wants a November vote because "I believe it will win."

Wolff said Tuesday that he wouldn't comment on MLB's request until he had spoken to Reed. Baseball officials would not comment aside from confirming that Reed had spoken to DuPuy.

San Francisco Giants spokeswoman Staci Slaughter also declined Tuesday to comment on MLB's request to Reed. The Giants vehemently object to the proposed A's move because they hold baseball's territorial rights to the South Bay; those rights can be rescinded by a vote of three-quarters of baseball's team owners.

Reed said that after deciding with Wolff and others to place the question on the November ballot, his office left several messages last week for DuPuy, who was traveling.

The mayor's office confirmed Tuesday that it had not given DuPuy's office a specific reason Reed wanted to talk.

"It was my fault for not reaching Bob," said Reed. But he said baseball officials had been apprised of the Aug. 3 deadline.

San Jose State political science professor Larry Gerston said Reed goofed by not letting baseball know about his intentions. "Mind reading is a dying art," he quipped.

But Councilman Sam Liccardo, who backed Reed's decision last week, said it might have had a positive effect on the frustratingly slow decision-making process.

"Were it not for the mayor's bold decision-making, we would be stuck in the same limbo we've been in for the last 16 months," said Liccardo.

Whether San Jose even needs money from baseball to stage a spring election is unclear. Wolff and a pro-stadium group called Pro Baseball For San Jose, led by former Mayor Susan Hammer and downtown businessman Michael Mulcahy, have said they will jointly pay to put the question before voters. The city clerk says a special election would cost at least \$1 million.

Reed's office has said city officials would rather spend that money on outreach to voters.

Even as San Jose works to lure the A's, Oakland officials aren't giving up. In a letter last week to Selig, obtained by the Mercury News on Tuesday, Mayor Ron Dellums laid out his city's case to keep the team.

"The city owns a large single parcel that makes up almost 25 percent of one of the sites that is appropriate for baseball," Dellums wrote, adding that he was ready to authorize the Oakland Redevelopment Agency to start an environmental review process.

San Jose has already finished its environmental review of the 14-acre site near the Diridon train station, but much of that land remains in private hands. And if the City Council decides to put the measure on the fall ballot, the Giants and other opponents of the stadium plan are expected to argue in court that the review is flawed.

Rangers show their strength in 10th inning

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland is trying narrow the gap in the AL West, and when it comes to games against first-place Texas, the teams seem well-matched despite some major differences in strengths.

The A's, built around young pitching and speed, and the heavy-hitting Rangers needed extra innings Monday for the third time this season in Arlington. With one out in the bottom of the 10th, former Oakland farmhand Nelson Cruz gave Texas a 3-1 victory with a two-run homer off Michael Wuertz.

Asked if the 1-1 pitch was a slider, Wuertz said, "It was supposed to be. It didn't slide too much, it just hung."

The ball didn't carry far over the wall in left, though Wuertz said initially he thought the ball was "way out" before "it got caught in the wind and died a little."

Cruz, traded from Oakland to Milwaukee with pitcher Justin Lehr for infielder Keith Ginter before the 2005 season, also made a nice leaping catch on Kevin Kouzmanoff's deep drive to right in the sixth.

The A's are now 8 1/2 games behind Texas with 12 games remaining with the Rangers. Texas is a season-high 18 games over .500.

"We feel like we can play with them," A's second baseman Mark Ellis said. "It's tough, because it felt like we had a chance. You hate wasting good starting pitching."

Tuesday's starters, Gio Gonzalez and Texas' Cliff Lee, each allowed only one run. Gonzalez gave up an RBI double to Vladimir Guerrero in the first and no more, while Lee went nine innings and struck out 13, matching the Rangers' record for a left-hander (Jamie Moyer, April 8, 1989 at old Arlington Stadium).

Many of the A's were frustrated with the strike zone Monday, and in the seventh inning designated hitter Jack Cust grew weary of any extra leeway for Lee and expressed his disapproval after striking out looking for the third time. Home-plate umpire Kerwin Danley ejected Cust, then had a spirited discussion with A's manager Bob Geren.

Seven of Lee's strikeouts were looking. Geren declined to address the issue of balls and strikes after the game.

Even Lee, though, could do little about Coco Crisp's speed. Crisp, who scored a run standing up from first base Sunday on an errant pickoff throw, reached on an infield single in the sixth and stole second. Neither shortstop Elvis Andrus nor second baseman Ian Kinsler was covering, and both stood and watched as the throw from catcher Bengie Molina sailed into center field, allowing Crisp to get to third.

(The error was charged to Kinsler after the game when manager Ron Washington said it was Kinsler's responsibility to take the throw.)

With two outs, Kurt Suzuki had the best at-bat of the night against Lee, lining a 1-2 pitch into center.

The A's didn't get another man into scoring position until the 10th, when Cliff Pennington, pinch hitting with two outs against Neftali Feliz, struck out, leaving Adam Rosales at third.

Bailey could return for tonight's game

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Going into their biggest series of the season to date, the A's still were without closer **Andrew Bailey**.

Bailey, who has had back spasms since a two-inning effort against Boston on July 20, might be back in action today, though. He threw long toss Monday and also did flat-ground work, and he said it went well. If Bailey throws a side session this afternoon, he might be cleared to pitch against first-place Texas.

Bailey, a two-time All-Star, has not allowed a run in 13 of his past 15 outings, compiling a 1.10 ERA in those 16 1/3 innings.

Michael Wuertz, filling in as closer during Bailey's absence, had allowed one run in 13 appearances before giving up **Nelson Cruz's** two-run game-winning homer in the 10th inning of Tuesday's 3-1 loss.

Anderson all set: Manager **Bob Geren** confirmed that left-hander **Brett Anderson** will start at Chicago on Friday. "That's the plan for now," Geren said.

Anderson, who has spent much of the season on the disabled list with elbow and forearm issues, said, "Back in the fold ... hopefully, this time, for more than two starts."

One of the team's eight relievers is likely to be sent down to make room for Anderson on Friday, probably **Cedrick Bowers** or **Ross Wolf**.

Briefly: Outfielder **Conor Jackson** is not yet scheduled for rehab games as he returns from a right hamstring injury. Jackson had hoped to be back right after the All-Star break, but Geren said that, at one point, Jackson's improvement had plateaued. He is hitting and throwing while doing a running program for the hamstring. ... **Ben Sheets** (elbow) said he was going to see his own orthopedist, Dr. **Keith Meister**, at the ballpark before the game. Meister is one of the Rangers' team physicians.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Drawing them in: Texas' stay atop the AL West has translated into big fan support for the club, which is currently in bankruptcy proceedings. The Rangers' just-completed series with the Angels had the highest attendance for a four-game series in Arlington since 1997.

Drumbeat: Big series starts tonight in Texas, Bailey still out

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Arlington, Texas 7/27/2010 3:56PM

The A's are opening their three-game series at Texas tonight, and there seems to be some buzz here, something we haven't seen in Arlington for some time. The parking lot was far more crowded than usual when I got here, at that was at 2:45 p.m., mostly people buying tickets to tonight and future games, but still....way more than usual.

Texas might have the best balance in the division, and of course the Rangers are leading the West by 7 1/2 games over Oakland and the Angels. Texas has a fearsome lineup and their rotation is very good, but the Rangers know the A's play them tight and they definitely aren't taking them lightly. "They're scrappy," one of the Rangers told me this afternoon. "If they're still in it in the seventh inning, you've got your hands full."

Some pre-game notes: Most pertinent, the A's are still without their closer, Andrew Bailey, who has had back spasms ever since his second inning of work against Boston last week. Manager Bob Geren said Bailey is still day-to-day and he'll probably throw a side session before he's available in a game. But, Geren said, both those things can happen in the same day, and it might be as soon as tomorrow.

Bailey threw long-toss today and did flat-ground work and he said everything felt good. With Bailey out again, Michael Wuertz is the likely closer again. Scouts are still expressing a lot of interest in Wuertz and in Craig Breslow, but it's doubtful either gets moved, Breslow especially. (And scouts' interest isn't always the best gauge of teams' interest.) Cheap (relatively), effective (very), and left-handed, I think that fits the bill for the A's. Why trade him, unless absolutely overwhelmed by an offer. Plus, general manager Billy Beane has been pretty firm about the fact that he's not planning to do much of anything at the deadline.

While Bailey is unavailable tonight, Rajai Davis (left hamstring) is back in (see lineup below).

Geren said that Conor Jackson still has no rehab games scheduled. Since Jackson had hoped to be back the first game after the All-Star break, I asked if there had been some sort of setback, and Geren said no setback, more of a plateau - that right hamstring strain was getting to a certain level of improvement and staying there. Jackson is hitting and throwing, though, so once he's running at full speed, he might not need too lengthy of a rehab assignment.

Geren confirmed what has been given as the plan for the past three days: Brett Anderson will start on Friday at Chicago. Who comes off the roster to make room for him? Well, just like the last time the A's brought a starter off the DL, it probably would be either Cedric Bowers or Ross Wolf; since it was Bowers last time, he's the more likely, I'd guess.

Here's the lineup: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Suzuki c, Kouzmanoff 3b, Cust dh, Rosales ss, Ellis 2b, Davis lf, Carson rf

Expect Adam Rosales to be in there pretty much every time there's a lefty on the mound. It's just a night off for Cliff Pennington and a way to get Rosales in the lineup.

When the lineup was first posted, Rosales and Carson were both listed at shortstop. "It's been a while," Carson joked of playing shortstop.

San Jose likely to pull back on ballpark vote

Phillip Matier, Andrew Ross, San Francisco Chronicle

After being waved off by Major League Baseball, San Jose officials are expected to announce today that they're pulling plans for a citywide ballpark vote in November, City Hall sources say.

Word of the pullback comes just days after Mayor **Chuck Reed**'s surprise announcement that the City Council would be ready at its meeting next Tuesday to place a ballpark measure on the upcoming ballot - with or without the blessing of Major League Baseball - in hopes of eventually bringing the Oakland A's to town.

Baseball Commissioner **Bud Selig** slammed the plan as "premature," saying the league had a committee that was studying the A's options for a new stadium.

On Tuesday, Reed - who had been in Washington on other business - finally had a chance to talk it over by phone with one of Selig's top lieutenants, MLB President **Bob DuPuy**. And from the sound of it, the mayor was pretty much told to back off.

Reed issued a statement that put a positive spin on the conversation, saying Selig had pledged that "if a special election is required in the spring, MLB would help pay for it."

"I informed Mr. DuPuy that I would consider the league's request and talk with (A's co-owner) **Lew Wolff**," Reed said.

San Jose City Councilman and ballpark booster **Sam Liccardo** said the phone conversation between the mayor and league "provides us with good reason to feel confident about moving forward" - even if means a few months' delay.

But then, Oakland apparently doesn't consider this a done deal. Last week, Mayor **Ron Dellums** and City Council President **Jane Brunner** sent the league an update on the city's progress on a plan to buy and assemble land for a stadium next to Jack London Square.

Meanwhile, the San Francisco Giants - who got baseball to designate the South Bay as their territory some years back - are already assembling a political hit team to try to block a possible San Jose move by the A's.

As for Wolff, who has offered to help bankroll the San Jose stadium measure - whenever that might be - he says he's simply determined to get the matter settled.

"It's been 16 months (since Major League Baseball agreed to study the A's ballpark choices), and I have 130 employees who need to know where they are headed," he said.

A's fall victim to Rangers' walk-off homer

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- The A's entered this week's three-game set with the first-place Rangers knowing full well they needed to play their best baseball.

So on Tuesday night, entering the affair more than seven games back, they attempted to do just that.

On the other end, though, hurler Cliff Lee and outfielder Nelson Cruz teamed up to derail that plan. And in the end, the A's found themselves losers of a 3-1 game and 8 1/2 games back in the division.

Lee, traded within the American League West from Seattle to Texas just two weeks ago, recorded a career-high 13 strikeouts -- a handful of which A's manager Bob Geren would probably like to view on replay. And Cruz, who at one time roamed around the Oakland organization, took away what would have become a game-changing homer while also collecting a game-changing homer of his own.

After robbing Kevin Kouzmanoff of a two-run shot at the right-field wall in a tied game in the sixth, Cruz played the hero in the bottom of the 10th, tagging righty Michael Wuertz for a two-run walk-off long ball that sealed a Rangers victory.

"Right away, I thought it was way out," said Wuertz, who said the 1-1 pitch was "supposed to be a slider. It caught up with the wind and died down a bit, but then it got out. ... He did what he needed to do."

So did Lee, who had to settle for a no-decision after nine impressive innings of work that resulted in just one run -- an unearned run that was the result of a rather odd scene with Texas leading, 1-0, in the sixth. With one out and Coco Crisp on first after singling, the A's outfielder made his way to second on a steal attempt after Daric Barton struck out, only to end up on third after Rangers catcher Bengie Molina threw to an empty second base. Crisp, credited with a stolen base, then scored on an RBI base hit off the bat of Kurt Suzuki.

Molina was initially tagged with an error, but after consulting with the Rangers' coaching staff, the official scorekeeper instead handed the error to second baseman Ian Kinsler.

Meanwhile, Gio Gonzalez was keeping the A's within reach with six innings -- not all of them solid -- of his own. He surrendered an RBI double to Vladimir Guerrero in the first frame, and he worked his way out of a two-out bases-loaded jam in the second. But the A's lefty calmed down over the next four innings, attempting to match Lee's gem and leaving after six with five hits, one run, three walks and six strikeouts attached to his name.

"We went up against a first-place team," the A's lefty said. "We battled all the way through. We stayed right with Cliff Lee the whole time. I did my best to get some ground-ball outs and keep us in the game."

It was a game that had the A's called out on strikes seven times, a number that, when mentioned to Geren in relation to a questionable strike zone, left the A's manager simply shaking his head.

"I can't talk about that," he said.

He did have plenty to say to home-plate umpire Kerwin Danley, who ejected Jack Cust in the seventh frame following Cust's third called strikeout of the game. Danley also had a lengthy -- but seemingly friendly -- chat with Crisp after the A's outfielder struck out against Lee to end the eighth.

When asked about Lee, Geren simply offered: "He didn't walk anyone. He threw a lot of strikes."

Lee threw a season-high 118 pitches in the effort, which saw him pitch at least eight innings for the eighth consecutive start -- marking the longest streak by any pitcher since Toronto's Pat Hentgen had a 12-game run in 1996.

"That game was all Cliff Lee," Texas' Michael Young said. "You can't say enough about the job he did. Their starting pitcher threw the ball really well, but Cliff dealt for nine innings."

"A well-pitched game," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "We just got finished with Anaheim with its pitching, and now here comes Oakland with its pitching. [The A's] have a good bullpen and a solid rotation. It's going to be a battle."

Lee's gutsy performance was followed by a shutout 10th frame from Neftali Feliz, who allowed a leadoff single to Adam Rosales before retiring the next three batters to end Oakland's late-inning threat. In the bottom half of the frame, Wuertz struck out Guerrero but walked Josh Hamilton before Cruz came to the plate and ended the extra-innings affair in dramatic fashion.

"We've had real close games with them all year," Geren said. "Nelson Cruz pretty much took two runs away with that catch from Kouz's ball, and then he hit the homer. That was really the difference right there."

Breakout pitchers Cahill, Lewis face off

By Chris Hempson / MLB.com

He has been in the Majors just two seasons, but A's starter Trevor Cahill has quickly cemented his place in the team's rotation.

After sporting a 10-13 record with a 4.63 ERA in 2009, the right-hander has seen his numbers drop in all the proper categories. He's 9-6 with a 3.15 ERA in 2010, and although the month of July has been a bit of a downer, the 22-year-old still has a 3.74 ERA in five outings this month.

He's completed at least six innings in his past seven starts, while walking just 13 batters during that stretch. Thanks in part to Cahill's pitching -- along with the staff as a whole -- and some timely hitting, the A's were 8-2 in their past 10 games before losing to the Rangers on Tuesday night, 3-1, in 10 innings.

Such was Oakland's recent success that Rangers manager Ron Washington was certainly taking notice on Tuesday.

"[I'm] not surprised," he said of the A's hot play of late. "They've certainly changed their game plan. They're not sitting back waiting for three-run homers anymore. They've got speed at the top of their lineup. They've got a lot more contact hitters in that lineup. The young starting pitching is starting to come into its own, and they've always had a good bullpen. They play a different game now. They're not going any place.

"It should be another intense series. I like playing those kind of games every day. It's a reason to bring the best out of you."

The Rangers have certainly brought their best all season long, currently sitting with the largest divisional lead in the Majors.

A chunk of the Rangers' success can be attributed to Colby Lewis, who will take the mound on Wednesday. Although he's tossed just one scoreless outing this season, the righty has been fairly effective.

In his past eight starts, Lewis has completed 53 total innings with a 3.40 ERA. He's walked just 12 batters during that stretch while striking out 51. All eight of those starts have been at least five innings.

A's: Return of Anderson

Although the A's have been hot of late, they've been winning with a depleted rotation. That could change come Friday.

Pitcher Brett Anderson is expected to return after a successful rehab start with Triple-A Sacramento on Sunday. Manager Bob Geren said on Sunday that Anderson "felt great" after his outing. Granted, the left-handed Anderson hasn't made a start for the A's since June 3 due to elbow tendinitis, but he did just toss 5 1/3 innings of shutout ball for the River Cats, giving up four hits while striking out nine.

Rangers: Closing time

You may not have noticed it, or even heard about it just yet, but rest assured, if Rangers closer Neftali Feliz keeps up his current pace, you certainly will.

The rookie already has 28 saves on the year -- most in the American League -- and 16 more than the previous Rangers rookie record. Additionally, he's just nine shy of matching the all-time Major League rookie record.

"I'm just trying to do my job," Feliz said. "It's something that they've told me, but I just thank God for the ability to stay healthy and do my job."

His 19 consecutive saves marks the seventh longest streak in Major League history and third longest by a rookie.

Worth noting

The A's haven't lost a day game since June 23. ... Coming into Tuesday, the Rangers had their second-best win-loss record through 99 games in team history.

Bailey feeling better, but still day-to-day

A's closer could be available Wednesday after bullpen session

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Andrew Bailey walked out of the visitors' clubhouse Tuesday feeling "a whole lot better," but it wasn't enough to convince manager Bob Geren to change his closer's status from day-to-day to available.

Bailey, sidelined since July 20 with upper back spasms, threw out to a distance of 200 feet Tuesday afternoon, but Geren would like to see the A's reliever undergo a bullpen session before deeming him eligible to pitch.

That time could come as soon as Wednesday, and if all goes well, Geren said Bailey could potentially be available that night for the club's second contest of a three-game set in Texas.

"He's feeling good," Geren said, "but he's still day-to-day. There's a chance for tomorrow."

The A's could very much use their top reliever during the pivotal series with the first-place Rangers, who boast their own All-Star closer in Neftali Feliz. The young Texas hurler entered Tuesday's affair with an American League-leading 28 saves, including 19 in a row. Bailey, meanwhile, has not allowed a run in 13 of his past 15 appearances, a stretch over which he's compiled a 1.10 ERA. He has a 1.56 mark for the season, good for the sixth lowest among AL relievers.

Anderson likely to take the ball Friday

ARLINGTON -- Brett Anderson is tentatively slated to make his return to the mound on Friday in Chicago, but manager Bob Geren doesn't want to make anything official until the young A's lefty pitches one final bullpen session.

Anderson, though, is more than confident he'll be ready for the task.

"All signs are pointing forward," Anderson said before Tuesday's game against the Rangers. "It'll just be about getting over that initial hump and continuing on and staying healthy for the rest of the year."

The southpaw hasn't made a start for Oakland since June 3 due to elbow tendinitis, which also kept him out of the mix from April 25 to May 28. He tossed 5 1/3 shutout innings for Triple-A Sacramento on Sunday, giving up just four hits and striking out nine with 87 pitches.

Thus, he believes he's ready to go the distance Friday, saying he'll likely be eyeing the 100-pitch mark, "which is a pretty normal start, anyway."

In Anderson's first start coming off the disabled list in May, he held Detroit scoreless over 5 2/3 innings, allowing just three hits. But in his next start at Boston, he had to leave the game after two innings because of elbow pain. He gave up five hits and two runs and now thinks he may have rushed his return back then -- something he's tried to avoid this time around.

"I think the longer rehab strengthened my arm more this time," he said. "Going through it the first time, you never really know what to expect. But something like an elbow injury, you can't hurry up the process. I feel good about where I am right now, and I'm ready to help the team."

Anderson's return happens to cross paths with Ben Sheets' exit to the DL. The elder pitcher was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a strained right elbow on Saturday, and there is no timetable on his return until he visits with orthopedist and Rangers physician Keith Meister while in Texas this week.

"You never want to come back under those circumstances, with someone else on the DL," Anderson said. "It's unfortunate for Ben, but hopefully it's nothing too serious and we'll get him back soon, too."

Anderson's potential Friday start pushes Dallas Braden to Saturday, and Anderson will look to build on a season that -- before his injury -- saw him go 2-1 with a 2.35 ERA in six starts.

Cust ejected for arguing called third strike

ARLINGTON -- A's slugger Jack Cust was ejected in the top of the seventh inning during Tuesday's game against the Rangers after arguing balls and strikes with home plate umpire Kerwin Danley.

Cust, facing Texas lefty Cliff Lee in a 1-2 count, watched a called third strike pass by him, at which point he exchanged only a couple of words with Danley before being tossed from the 1-1 game.

It marked the third called strikeout of the contest for Cust, who started the game as the designated hitter.

Jackson working his way back to A's

ARLINGTON -- Conor Jackson updates continue to be few and far between, as there is still no timetable for a rehab assignment for the A's outfielder.

Jackson was placed on the 15-day disabled list -- marking his second DL stint of the year -- on July 5 with a right hamstring strain and has been stationed in Arizona since the beginning of the All-Star break. Manager Bob Geren on Tuesday reported that he is "feeling better," but no plans have been made for him to play in Minor League games.

"He's hitting," Geren said, "so he's staying in shape. He's still working on the running, though."

Jackson had hoped to return shortly after the break, but Geren mentioned "there was a plateau" stage -- not necessarily a setback -- in his rehab development.

"He was progressing for a while," Geren said, "and then all of a sudden, he was kind of staying the same. But now he's back on track."

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

In Jackson's stead, Geren has been playing musical chairs with his outfield, handing Matt Watson and Matt Carson, along with Gabe Gross, time in the outfield. On Tuesday, with Rajai Davis back in the lineup and playing left field after missing a couple of games with a sore left hamstring, Geren placed Coco Crisp in center and Carson in right field.

Worth noting

Cliff Pennington received a day off Tuesday, and Adam Rosales was given his eighth start of the season at shortstop in his place. ... Manager Bob Geren said he'd like to continue to keep Jack Cust's hot bat in the lineup. The A's designated hitter entered Tuesday having driven in at least one run in nine of his last 11 games and is batting .333 with six home runs and 15 RBIs over that span. Cust went 7-for-17 on the club's most recent six-game homestand, a time during which he jumped over the .300 mark. ... Right-hander Tyson Ross, who began the year in the bullpen with the A's, threw five shutout innings for Triple-A Sacramento on Sunday. He has thrown 10 shutout frames with 15 strikeouts over his past two starts. ... Dodgers hitting coach Don Mattingly will manage the Phoenix Desert Dogs -- a team that will include a handful of A's prospects -- of the Arizona Fall League, which begins Oct. 12.

A's lose in 10 innings

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Nelson Cruz hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the 10th to lift Texas to a 3-1 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Tuesday night after Rangers starter Cliff Lee struck out a career-high 13 and scattered five hits in a nine-inning no-decision.

With the game tied at 1, Josh Hamilton drew a one-out walk off Michael Wertz (2-2) and Cruz followed by lofting a 1-1 pitch high into the left field seats.

Lee, who remains stuck on 99 career victories, had the most strikeouts for the Rangers since Aaron Sele's 13 on Aug. 12, 1999, against Detroit. Lee didn't walk a batter and has issued only seven walks in 17 starts this season.

Oakland advanced a runner to third with two outs in the 10th, but Neftali Feliz (2-2) struck out pinch-hitter Cliff Pennington.

The A's only run against Lee was unearned in the sixth with the help of a two-base error on second baseman Ian Kinsler.

Lee has lasted at least eight innings in eight straight starts, the longest streak in the majors since Toronto's Pat Hentgen had 12 in a row in 1996.

Lee is 1-1 with two no-decisions in his four starts since he was acquired by Texas in a trade with Seattle on July 9.

Over that span, Lee has issued only one walk in 35 1-3 innings, and that was intentional.

A's starter Gio Gonzalez allowed eight baserunners in the first four innings, then retired the final six he faced before leaving after six innings and 111 pitches. Gonzalez gave up one run and five hits, struck out six and walked three.

In the Texas first, Michael Young drew a one-out walk and raced home ahead of Vladimir Guerrero's double. Young dislodged the ball from catcher Kurt Suzuki's glove on his slide to the plate.

Guerrero had been in a 4-for-31 slump over his previous eight games and had gone without an RBI for a season-long nine straight games.

The A's tied it at 1 in the sixth with the help of Kinsler's error. Coco Crisp singled, and took off for second on a steal attempt. Neither second baseman Kinsler nor shortstop Elvis Andrus went over to cover catcher Bengie Molina's throw, and Crisp moved to third when the ball skipped into center field.

Suzuki's single drove in Crisp.

After the game, the official scorer consulted with Rangers coaches and it was determined that Kinsler was supposed to cover second on the play.

NOTES: Cruz went 2 for 5 to extend his career-best hitting streak to 15 games. ... A's DH Jack Cust was ejected in the seventh by home plate umpire Kerwin Dantley for arguing a called third strike. ... Texas RHP Rich Harden allowed two hits over six shutout innings with 10 strikeouts against Memphis in a rehab start for Triple-A Oklahoma City on Monday night, and he could be activated off the 15-day DL (strained left gluteus muscle) by the weekend.

... The Rangers have signed their second-round pick in the June draft, RHP Cody Buckel of Simi Valley, Calif. Buckel has been assigned to the team's Arizona League entry. ... Oakland RHP Andrew Bailey threw in the outfield before the game and is day-to-day.

Bailey hasn't been able to pitch in a game since July 20 due to back spasms. ... Oakland LHP Brett Anderson will have a bullpen session on Wednesday and if that goes well, he's expected to be activated off the 15-day DL and start Saturday against Chicago.

Anderson has been out since June 4 with an inflamed left elbow.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Boof, there it is! Bonser dominant in victory

By Annie Becker / Sacramento River Cats

After a 12-game road trip, Sacramento put on a dominant pitching and offensive performance for the Raley Field faithful Tuesday night.

The River Cats toppled the Colorado Springs Sky Sox 7-1 to take over sole possession of first place in the Pacific Coast League South Division with Fresno's 9-3 loss to Tacoma.

During the first half of the game, eyes were on starting Sacramento pitcher Boof Bonser (2-1). The delivery was near perfect for Bonser, who didn't allow a hit through five innings and faced just 23 batters through seven scoreless innings, recording six strikeouts.

"He pitched just fantastic," said pitching coach Rick Rodriguez. "This was his best start of the season and he displayed great pace and his curveball was working."

Corey "Slice" Wimberly ended the scoreless affair in the fifth inning for the River Cats. With runners on first and second, Wimberly hit a shot past diving Sky Sox shortstop Chris Nelson, scoring Dallas McPherson from second base.

But the Cats were just getting started.

<P< p for < corner. right-field the into triple bases-clearing Wimberly?s table setting bases, load to walked Heather Adam and third on McPherson moved field right double Baisley Jeff A base. second at hole through singled Dallas when scored then Tolleson field. left Steven a off single with followed Taylor Michael sensation Hitting sixth. open chart run home his 24 No. added Carter Chris Slugger>

"We feel good right now," said a smiling Carter after the win. "The last road trip was great and we just look to do that night after night."

Bonser, who allowed just one run and four hits, was replaced after 7.2 innings by Graham Godfrey.

The six runs in the sixth secured the victory for Sacramento, which looks to continue its success against the Sky Sox in Wednesday night's game at 7:05.

Seven Run First Drives 'Hounds On Tuesday

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

How do we best describe the first game of a 3-game series between first place Frisco and the second-place RockHounds? Frisco starting pitcher Martin Perez is the Texas Rangers' # 3 prospect. The 19-year-old left-hander will certainly have his share of tough nights on the pitcher's mound in his career, but very few THIS tough. Tuesday night at Citibank Ballpark, he allowed six hits and seven runs ... in one-third of an inning.

RockHounds starter Carlos Hernandez, meanwhile, lasted 5.0 innings and was staked to the 7-0 lead.

How wild was this game? Neither starter would be the pitcher of record.

The RockHounds scored seven in the first ... Frisco got two in the third and five in the fifth, and the game was tied at 7-7.

The 'Hounds came right back with another half-dozen in the sixth inning, and would eventually hold off the RoughRiders, 14-9.

Alex Valdez and Corey Brown each drove in three runs with one swing ... Alex with a bases-loaded double in the first and Corey with a bases-loaded trip-le in the sixth. Valdez and Shane Peterson had three hits each for the 'Hounds while Matt Sulentic had two hits and drove in two runs.

Emerson Frostad went 3-for-6 with two RBI for Frisco and Marcus Lemon had a 4-hit game (4-for-6).

The box score showed final totals of 23 runs on 32 hits and four errors with 20 base runners left on.

Oddities: All that baseball took just three-hours, 13-minutes and none of the 32 hits were home runs.

Frisco's Ben Snyder went 3.1 scoreless innings in relief of Perez, a notable performance o this night. The RockHounds bullpen of Justin Friend, Mickey Storey and Justin Souza combined for 4.0 innings, allowing five hits and two runs, both of which were unearned.

Oh, by the way ... the RockHounds have now won 8-of-their-last-10 and are just one game behind the RoughRiders in the Texas League South. The teams meet twice more at Citibank Ballpark in this series, and three games next week in the Metroplex, with another pair of home-and-home, 3-game series down the home stretch of the second half pennant race.

Ports Can't Weather Storm in 10th Inning

Stockton loses 40,000th game in California League history

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Stockton Ports made a bit of history on Tuesday night at Banner Island Ballpark, playing the 40,000th game in California League history. But the Ports (48-54) dropped the milestone game, as the Lake Elsinore Storm (62-40) scored eight runs in the tenth inning to defeat Stockton, 14-6.

The Ports had a 6-5 lead heading into the top of the ninth, but Paul Smyth blew the save, allowing the tying run to score on an RBI single by Cole Figueroa. Smyth and Jose Pina combined to give up eight runs in the tenth. The Port missed an opportunity to gain some ground in their division, as Modesto, San Jose and Visalia also lost on Tuesday night.

Smyth, in addition to collecting his ninth blown save of the year, also collected his fifth loss. Aaron Breit was the winner for Lake Elsinore. Ports starter Brett Tomko was in line for the win, as the Ports had a 6-5 lead when he left the game after five innings.

Tomko allowed five runs (including four solo home runs) on six hits in 5.0 innings. Lance Sewell tossed two shutout frames to extend his scoreless streak to 22.1 innings. He has not allowed a run since June 26. The Ports scored all six of their runs on three hits, including two home runs.

The Storm pulled ahead to a quick 2-0 lead in the first inning. Center fielder and leadoff batter Bo Davis slammed a home run into the far corner of the visitor's bullpen in left field on a 3-2 pitch to jumpstart the Lake Elsinore offense. It was his first home run for the Storm. Figueroa followed suit with a solo shot to right field on a 2-1 pitch. Tomko then retired the next three in order to get out of the jam.

Left fielder Jaff Decker hit the third Storm home run of the game to lead off the second inning. Tomko then hit designated hitter Allan Dykstra and walked shortstop Jesus Lopez. Catcher Robert Lara next singled to load the bases with no out. Tomko struck out Davis next, and then Figueroa hit into a fielder's choice play. Dykstra scored on the play to put Lake Elsinore ahead, 4-0.

The Ports got on board by scoring three in the third inning. Lake Elsinore starter Nick Schmidt pitched just two innings before being replaced with Gary Poynter. Poynter issued three walks to Kent Walton, Jermaine Mitchell and Grant Green to load the bases. With two out, Yusuf Carter singled to right field, to bring home two runs. Green came around to score later in the inning as Mike Spina reached on an error by Lopez.

Lake Elsinore made it 5-3 in the top of the fourth on a solo home run by Dykstra, his tenth this season.

But the Ports offense kept rolling in the bottom of the fourth, getting three runs off pitcher Nick Vincent. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield walked to start things off. Catcher Ryan Ortiz notched his eighth home run of the year, a two-run shot to left field, to tie the game at five runs. Green would later collect his eleventh homer of the year in the inning, a solo home run to left field, to put the Ports ahead, 6-5.

The two teams would remain scoreless from the fifth through eighth innings, as each bullpen kept a tight hold on batters.

Trey Barham would give up a leadoff double to Dykstra to start the ninth inning, after picking up a hold in the eighth inning. The Ports then called on Smyth to pitch. Smyth retired the first two batters he faced before hitting Davis with a pitch to put two on. Figueroa then hit an RBI single to second base. Stockton second baseman Tyler Ladendorf wasn't able to keep the ball in the infield, which allowed Dykstra to score the tying run. Smyth then struck out Daniel Robertson.

The Ports went down in order in the bottom of the ninth.

In the tenth, Smyth gave up a leadoff double, a single and then intentionally walked Jaff Decker to load the bases with no out. Smyth then hit Kevin Hansen to bring home the seventh Lake Elsinore run. Lopez hit an RBI single through the hole at shortstop to make it 8-6.

Ports manager Steve Scarsone then called on Jose Pina to face Lara. With Lara at the plate, Ortiz had a passed ball, which allowed Jaff Decker to score and make it 9-6 in favor of Lake Elsinore. Lara hit a two-RBI single to keep the Storm rolling and give them a five-run lead. Davis struck out, but then Pina walked Figueroa to put two on with just one out. Robertson then grounded out to Pina for the second out of the inning. But Lake Elsinore wasn't finished yet. Vice Belnome stepped back up to the plate for the second time in the inning, and slammed a three-run home run to left field to make it 14-6. Cody Decker collected another hit, and Pina walked Jaff Decker to put two on for Hansen. Hansen hit into an inning-ending fielder's choice.

The Ports put a base-runner on in the tenth inning, as Parker walked, but Stockton wasn't able to rally to overcome the eight-run deficit.

The Ports will work to even the series on Wednesday night at 7:05 PM PST. LHP Fabian Williamson (2-0, 4.35) will start for Stockton, while RHP Erik Davis (9-3, 4.02) will take the hill for Lake Elsinore. Fans can follow the game live on KWSX 1280 AM.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Ian Krol, SP

David Malamut, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jul 28, 2010

Just a little more than a year removed from high school, Low-A Kane County Cougars left-hander Ian Krol has put together one of the finest seasons of any starting pitcher in the Oakland A's chain. The A's 2009 7th round pick is fourth in the league in ERA (2.74) and he has a terrific 71:17 K:BB ratio and has allowed only four homeruns in 98.2 innings. David Malamut spoke to Krol...

David Malamut: How has your season gone so far?

Ian Krol: I've had decent success. Everything I've done in the offseason has pretty much gotten me to this point right now so I'm pretty happy with it. Got to keep working on a couple of things. Nobody's perfect, just gotta keep working hard and go with the flow.

DM: What do you throw?

IK: Fastball, changeup and curveball. My changeup is most likely to be my out-pitch. I still need to work on my curveball a little bit more because I'm getting underneath it.

DM: What is your mentality on the mound?

IK: Three pitches or less, just force contact and get outs.

DM: What are you working on?

IK: Curveball, my pick off move and trying to force contact.

DM: What did you learn at Nequea Valley High School?

IK: I really didn't learn too much at Nequea. I had fun at Nequea. It wasn't that much of a learning experience except my coach was really old school and old fashioned. He taught me a lot of things. When I got to pro ball I just learned how big of a difference it is and how much you actually do learn on the field.

DM: What was the difference between high school and the summer league in Wisconsin?

IK: Things were a lot more laidback. I didn't have practice everyday. I went up there on the weekends and just played. Things were just nonchalant.

DM: How was draft day?

IK: It was pretty crazy actually. I didn't know what I wanted to do, up until the decision that I made. Up until that day, getting calls back and forth from people, working on the computer waiting for your name to be called. It was pretty crazy.

DM: Were you happy about being with Oakland?

IK: Yeah very happy. Everything happens for a reason. If I wasn't here right now I probably would be in Arizona [Krol was committed to University of Arizona before the draft] or working summer baseball in the Northwoods League or the Cape Cod league or wherever.

DM: Would you have gone to college?

IK: Yeah. I mean what else would I have done? I have no idea what my major would've been. That is probably the main reason I didn't go to college.

DM: How was Arizona and Vancouver?

IK: Arizona is just a whole different world. The environment, the dry heat, the whole state in general is just a whole different experience. Vancouver was awesome. I had a lot of fun, very scenic, great weather, a lot of nice people.

DM: How has your Kane County experience been?

IK: I've been here before. This is my home. You always love your home. It's good. The fans are supportive. I don't really have too much to worry about. I'm just playing at home. What else more can I ask for?

DM: What do you think of the Midwest League?

IK: Pretty good. The hitters are pretty good.

DM: What do you think of you having an innings or pitch limit?

IK: It's great being on a pitch limit because that is going to limit my innings for the year, and it's going to save my arm, so it's a smart idea.

DM: Besides baseball what do you like to do?

IK: Just hang out. I'm a really lazy guy. Watch movies, go golfing.

DM: Top 5 artists in your iPod?

IK: Little Wayne, John Mayer, Kings of Leon, Gucci Mane. I listen to everything. There are so many of them.

DM: Biggest influence growing up?

IK: My dad. He encouraged me to start playing. My parents are the biggest influence I have right now.

