

A's News Clips, Thursday, July 29, 2010

Trevor Cahill pitches A's past Rangers on day Ben Sheets is lost

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas — Ben Sheets was declared out for the rest of the season Wednesday afternoon, and there was consensus in the A's clubhouse over how much the veteran right-hander will be missed.

Then Trevor Cahill took the mound and proved why there's still much to look forward to regarding Oakland's starting rotation. The second-year pitcher allowed just two hits over eight shutout innings as the A's rebounded with a 3-1 victory over the Texas Rangers to even a three-game series in Arlington.

Cahill (10-4) has impressed time and again during a season that's included his first All-Star selection. But considering the power-packed lineup he was facing and the urgency for the A's to bag a victory, Wednesday's outing has to qualify as his best.

After losing on a walk-off 10th-inning homer Tuesday, the A's positioned themselves to take the series and stay within striking distance of the first-place Rangers if they win tonight.

"He's really kind of turned into our ace," manager Bob Geren said of Cahill. "I know everybody in (the clubhouse), when Trevor goes out there, feels good about our chances. That's the mentality of being an ace — knowing if we have a streak he's going to extend it, and if we have a slide he's going to stop it."

The A's pulled back to within 7½ games in the American League West, but they'll try to keep their hopes alive without Sheets, who went on the DL Saturday.

He was examined by Dallas-based

orthopedist Dr. Keith Meister and learned Wednesday that he's return the flexor tendon in his right elbow. He'll require surgery that will sideline him the rest of this season and likely a large chunk of 2011.

Sheets underwent surgery for the same injury in February 2009 and missed all of last season. The A's signed him to a one-year, \$10 million deal in January, gambling he could regain his past All-Star form.

It was believed that Sheets flew home to Louisiana on Wednesday. He was unavailable for comment.

A's general manager Billy Beane did not return a call seeking comment.

Sheets went 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts, hardly what the A's had in mind when they handed him the biggest one-year contract in franchise history for a free agent from outside the organization.

But catcher Kurt Suzuki said Sheets' biggest impact wasn't found in the box scores.

"We're not just losing his arm, it's more his clubhouse leadership," Suzuki said. "It was great for us young players to have been around him. It sounds kind of corny, but he always brightens up your day when you see him."

Geren officially announced Brett Anderson will come off the DL to start Friday against the White Sox, an addition that will help compensate for Sheets' absence.

Suzuki lined a homer to left off Colby Lewis (9-7) in the sixth to snap a scoreless tie. He singled home another run in the A's two-run eighth that put them up 3-0.

Vladimir Guerrero's RBI single off Michael Wuertz in the ninth pulled Texas within two. But Craig Breslow entered and struck out Josh Hamilton and Nelson Cruz to end the game and collect his second career save.

Cahill, 22, joined Tim Hudson as the only Oakland pitchers to win at least 10 games in each of their first two seasons.

A's update: Top pick Michael Choice to receive \$2 million bonus

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas — The A's have come to terms with first-round draft pick Michael Choice, though the deal was pending completion of a physical Wednesday before becoming official.

Choice, an outfielder from the University of Texas-Arlington, was the 10th overall pick. Mike McCann — who works for FnFSports, the agency representing Choice — confirmed that Choice will receive a \$2 million signing bonus.

An A's spokesperson said only that the team wasn't ready to make an announcement.

Getting Choice under contract at this point would be a nice development for the A's. Only one other top-10 pick has signed — shortstop Christian Colon, drafted fourth by the Kansas City Royals.

Last year, the A's went down to the Aug. 17 deadline before inking top pick Grant Green, a shortstop from USC taken 13th overall. After such a long layoff between the end of his college career and signing, Green played in only a handful of minor league games before the 2009 season ended.

"Waiting longer (to sign) could have given us more leverage, but Michael made it clear he wanted to begin his career," McCann said.

Teams have until Aug. 16 to sign this year's draft picks or they forfeit the rights to them.

The A's paid Green \$2.75 million last year as the 13th pick, so Choice looks to be a bargain considering he was chosen three spots higher.

Even so, Choice would receive more than the \$1.86 million salary slot that Major League Baseball recommended for the 10th pick.

Teams aren't forced to stay within the slot boundaries and often exceed them in paying draft bonuses.

The A's continue to take a cautious approach with closer Andrew Bailey, who missed his sixth straight game with back spasms.

Bailey threw 15 pitches from the mound before Wednesday's 3-1 win over Texas but seemed to agree that another day of rest was a good idea.

"Physically I feel good," Bailey said. "But it's one of those things where you don't want to rush and (hurt the back) again."

Rajai Davis stole his 30th base in the fifth inning, becoming the fifth player in Oakland history to record two or more 30-steal seasons. He had 41 last season.

Sheets done for the season with torn flexor tendon

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas — A's right-hander Ben Sheets was diagnosed with a torn flexor tendon in his elbow that will require surgery and sideline him the rest of the season, manager Bob Geren said before Wednesday's game against the Texas Rangers.

The veteran pitcher feared such a diagnosis when he was placed on the disabled list Saturday and revealed that his elbow has bothered him all season.

This is a reoccurrence of the injury that sidelined Sheets for all of the 2009 season. He underwent surgery for a torn flexor tendon in February 2009, and the A's signed him to a one-year, \$10 million contract this past January in the hopes he was recovered and would return to his All-Star form.

Sheets, 32, went 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts, earning praise for the influence and leadership he showed toward his younger teammates but never becoming that dominant No. 1 starter he was brought in to be.

"He's going to be missed, both on the field and off," Geren said. "He's been a great teammate and a pleasant guy to be around." Sheets wasn't at Rangers Ballpark before the A's took the field for batting practice, and was unavailable for comment. Geren said he expected the pitcher to possibly join the team later in the day.

Sheets was examined Tuesday by Rangers team doctor Keith Meister, the orthopedist he worked with during rehab from his first surgery, and the A's learned of the flexor tear Wednesday.

An exact timetable isn't known

for his recovery, but Sheets almost certainly won't return before midway through the 2011 season. He'll be a free agent after the season.

As Sheets departs, the A's are expecting to get left-hander Brett Anderson back from an elbow injury. Anderson threw a pain-free side session Wednesday and is slated to come off the DL and start Friday against the White Sox.

Anderson, signed to a four-year, \$12.5 million extension in April, has been sidelined since June 3 with elbow inflammation.

Chin Music: A's lose Ben Sheets for season; lineups and other pregame notes

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/28/2010 4:28PM

Checking in from Rangers Ballpark, where it was revealed today that A's starting pitcher Ben Sheets will miss the rest of the season. He has a torn flexor tendon in his elbow — the same injury that sidelined him for all of 2009 — and will require a second surgery on his elbow. ... It's a very discouraging development for the A's but not all that surprising, given how frank Sheets was Saturday when he revealed how much his elbow has hurt him all season.

Now it's guaranteed that Vin Mazzaro will remain in the rotation on a long-term basis, and the A's will push forward with a starting five of Brett Anderson, Dallas Braden, Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Mazzaro. The bad news about Sheets' diagnosis was offset somewhat by news that Anderson definitely is slated to come off the DL and start Friday against the White Sox. Sidelined since June 3, Anderson said his elbow felt good after throwing his side session Wednesday — the final hurdle before rejoining the rotation.

If there's a silver lining here, it's that Oakland's young core of starters are now guaranteed to remain in the rotation and pitch every fifth day. That will be something to monitor even if the A's fall completely out of the AL West race. But right now, the A's are still trying to stay in contention, and winning the final two games of this series against the Rangers would help them do that.

In other news :

—Closer Andrew Bailey (back spasms) will be unavailable yet again tonight. Bailey threw off the mound this afternoon and said he feels good, but it seems the A's — and Bailey himself — are being extremely cautious. "Physically I feel good," Bailey said. "But it's one of those things where you don't want to rush and (re-injure) it again. We've gotta make sure it's all gone."

"He feels like he's very close, but he's not available tonight," A's manager Bob Geren said. "We'll see how he feels tomorrow."

Geren stressed that the DL is not being considered because Bailey is improving. But with the bullpen basically working a man down, it's crucial that Cahill pitches deep into tonight's game. Michael Wuertz, who gave up the game-winning homer last night, should be available in a save situation.

The lineups:

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Ellis 2B, Watson LF, Davis RF, Pennington SS; Cahill RHP.

Rangers — Andrus SS, Borbon CF, Young 3B, Guerrero DH, Hamilton LF, Cruz RF, Molina C, Davis 1B, Blanco 2B; Lewis RHP.

Purdy: San Jose mayor gets attention of Major League Baseball

Mark Purdy, San Jose Mercury News, 7/28/2010

These might be the dog days of the baseball season. But they are the wild howling coyote days of the A's potential San Jose ballpark season.

Tuesday, a twist in the long-running saga developed when Major League Baseball's chief executive, Bob DuPuy, made a super-special cross-your-heart promise to Mayor Chuck Reed.

DuPuy said that if MLB approves a possible A's move to San Jose — after rectifying the Giants' territorial claims to Santa Clara County — then baseball will help pay for any special ballpark election.

DuPuy's offer follows on the heels of last week's announcement by Reed that he would push for a November ballot proposal on a downtown ballpark, with or without MLB's stamp of approval. And immediately, MLB publicly proclaimed its surprise and disappointment. It seemed to be a nutty move by Reed. Why would he make such a bold announcement without running it by MLB first?

Turns out it was all calculated. The mayor's move, endorsed by A's owner Lew Wolff, was clearly intended to shake MLB from its torpor. Sixteen months ago, a blue-ribbon panel was appointed to examine the A's ballpark options. And there's still no report, no conclusion.

Mild congratulations, then, to Reed and Wolff. They have managed to slightly un-torpor the torpor. The MLB promise is evidence. The mayor already had a relationship with DuPuy, who is commissioner Bud Selig's top lieutenant. DuPuy visited Reed's office at City Hall earlier this year. Their conversation Tuesday was also cordial, Reed said.

"He told me that he appreciated our level of enthusiasm for such a project and the amount of work we've done," Reed said in a brief phone interview. "But he requested we not put it on the ballot in November."

Before deciding his next step, Reed intended to visit with Wolff. Reed also said he would speak again with DuPuy before the Aug. 3 meeting at which the council must decide whether to authorize a November ballpark proposal.

Frankly, this decision is a no-brainer. The council should trash the November plan and grant DuPuy's request. He might not be showing his full poker hand about the blue-ribbon panel's eventual conclusion. But why would baseball commit to paying for an election without thinking through the ramifications of that commitment?

DuPuy is raising a lot of hopes in San Jose and he knows it. Yes, he could be totally faking us out and performing a deke -- knowing that MLB's commitment to pay for an election is piffle because the A's will ultimately be denied a South Bay option, anyway -- but I don't think so. If that were the case, MLB would have continued its impassive stance and made no promises.

But it doesn't matter, anyway. A November election without baseball's assent was never a good idea. It's hard to believe San Jose's city council would be silly enough to authorize one.

Let's be logical. The ultimate mission is to have the A's playing in a downtown ballpark, right? But to complete the mission, any ballpark ballot measure must go before San Jose voters. And the measure must pass. It would be a slam dunk with the assurance that an A's move was guaranteed.

But with no assurance? If San Jose plows ahead with a November election, then those who oppose a ballpark will be handed a ready-made argument. They can rightfully ask: "Why are we even having this election when Major League Baseball is against it and says the A's can't move?" You can easily envision the anti-ballpark brochures with quotes from Selig expressing his "disappointment" with the ballot measure.

In other words, if the one thing you absolutely need to make a ballpark possible is to win an election, why on earth would you hand opponents a tool that would make it less likely for you to win that election?

Tuesday, when I asked Reed this question, his reply was simply: "I think it will win."

The mayor could be right. But if a November election is still held, I could see several different results — and only one of them positive for San Jose.

If voters pass the measure and MLB eventually gives permission for a ballpark, swell. But if voters pass the measure and MLB says next January: "That's nice, but we aren't going to let an A's move to San Jose happen, so you totally wasted your time," then what?

Or even worse, a November ballpark proposal is narrowly defeated and then come January, the MLB committee says: "We have determined that yes, San Jose should be permitted to build a ballpark, but oops, too bad, you just voted it down."

Either way, San Jose should be above that sort of thing. This city is better than that. It is undeniably maddening to wait for the blue-ribboners to conclude their study. But the conclusion, if it is honest, will certainly certify San Jose as a great

ballpark site. The only question will be how to satisfy the Giants and their business interests. That's what may be taking so long.

In that regard, you can find as many threads of speculation as there are stitches on a baseball. One thread is that Selig has been working with the bankers who loaned the Giants money to build AT&T Park, making sure their obligations will be met if the A's move. Another thread is that Giants' owner Bill Neukom is threatening to have his team's sponsors sue MLB if the A's move. (The Giants themselves can't sue baseball because it's forbidden under MLB's antitrust exemption, so Neukom must find surrogates.) Yet another thread has MLB threatening to contract the A's out of existence and pay off Wolff.

None of these threads may be true. All may be true. But until there's a resolution, the crazy ride will continue. Anyone else hear a wild coyote howling?

Mercury News Editorial

Mercury News, 7/29/2010

We can't tell whether Major League Baseball's insistence that San Jose delay voting on a ballpark for the A's is a good or bad omen for the city's baseball hopes. But Mayor Chuck Reed and A's owner Lew Wolff apparently are convinced that respecting the league's request and abandoning a November vote makes the most sense.

We hope they're right. A measure certainly will have smoother sailing if the league has first given its permission for the A's to move. And it will avoid the big-bucks battle that would have erupted this fall as the San Francisco Giants, who don't want the A's in San Jose, bankrolled opposition to the stadium.

MLB President Bob DuPuy said the league will help pay for a special election if it's needed in the spring. Reed should get it in writing. Taxpayers should pay no more than they would have for a measure piggybacking on this fall's city election.

Intentionally or not, Reed's ballot proposal seems to have gotten MLB moving. San Jose has been waiting a ridiculous 16 months for a decision on whether the A's can relocate, and while there's still no end in sight, the proposed measure certainly upped the ante. Perhaps it will push the league to reach a financial settlement to compensate the Giants for the South Bay territory.

It's also possible that avoiding the November vote was a face-saving tactic in case the league intends to ultimately reject San Jose. But Wolff wants to move to San Jose, and he concurs with Reed's decision to withdraw the fall measure, so we'll hope he's onto something.

A's fountain of youth: Cahill flows

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On an evening the A's learned that Ben Sheets will, in fact, miss the rest of the season, Trevor Cahill demonstrated why the team might still be OK even without the one remaining veteran in the rotation.

Without Sheets and Justin Duchscherer, the remainder of the starters are all 26 and under, with an average age of 23. On Wednesday night, Cahill, the 22-year-old All-Star, worked eight scoreless innings and the A's beat the division-leading Rangers 3-1.

A's starters have the lowest ERA in the league, and they have allowed no more than two runs in 10 of the past 13 games.

"It's very young and talented," Oakland manager Bob Geren said of his rotation. "They've all done a great job."

Cahill allowed only two hits, but he had thrown 113 pitches through eight, and Geren said the right-hander was a little tired after seven.

"It's a tough lineup, kind of a struggle one through nine, so it was smart to get me out after eight," Cahill said.

Michael Wuertz took over and gave up an unearned run, and Craig Breslow finished up for his first save as a member of the A's and the second of his career.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki said that Cahill didn't feel good about his stuff in the bullpen. "He was like, 'Oh my gosh, it's going to be a long night,' " Suzuki said. "I said 'Don't think about it, just go out and throw the ball,' and look at what he did, eight innings, two hits, against that lineup with the wind blowing out."

Geren ventured that Cahill has turned into the ace of the staff, saying, "Everyone in here feels good about our chances with him. You know if you have a winning streak, he'll extend it, and a slide, he'll end it. That's what that term means to me."

Cahill (10-4) discounted that notion. "This team doesn't really have an ace," he said. "This team has a lot of guys who can go out there and put up a good start. ... We're all kind of even."

Monday night, Gio Gonzalez, 24, held Texas to one run in six innings. Tonight, Vin Mazzaro, who stays in the rotation because of Sheets' torn right flexor tendon, will start in the series finale. Mazzaro, 23, has won his past four decisions, and he has a 2.12 ERA and a .202 opponents batting average over his past five starts.

"Vin was good out of the chute and he just keeps getting better," Geren said.

Left-hander Brett Anderson, 22, often considered the most talented of the A's young bunch, will return from the disabled list to start Friday against the White Sox.

Neither club got on the board until the sixth, when Suzuki banged a homer to left, his team-leading 12th of the season, on a 2-2 slider from Colby Lewis. Oakland added two in the eighth, Suzuki driving in another run with a single.

A's Ben Sheets to miss rest of year

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Ben Sheets was worried that his swollen right elbow was an indication he'd require flexor-tendon surgery if he is to pitch again, and he had that confirmed Wednesday after visiting with orthopedist Dr. **Keith Meister** the previous evening.

"He's out for the year," manager **Bob Geren** said. "He'll be missed on the field and off; a lot of our young guys looked up to him for his competitiveness."

A torn flexor tendon ended Sheets' season with the Brewers in 2008, and he missed last season after surgery. It isn't known yet if Sheets will opt for surgery; he is 32, and he already has been through the lengthy rehab and free-agent job search once.

Sheets, who signed a one-year, \$10 million deal with the A's in January, was unavailable to speak with reporters because he returned to his home in Louisiana.

Jason Jennings, signed to a minor-league deal by the A's this spring, did come back to start a few games for Texas after his second flexor-tendon surgery, then pitched in relief in 2009. He has yet to work in a game this year and is rehabbing at home.

Choice signs: Top draft pick **Michael Choice**, an outfielder from Texas-Arlington taken 10th overall last month, has signed with the A's for a \$2 million bonus, according to agent **Jeff Frye**, confirming Baseball America's report earlier in the day.

The A's did not make an announcement. Choice, who attended Timberview High in Arlington, might be brought to Rangers Ballpark today for an official introduction.

Briefly: **Jack Cust** said Tuesday's ejection was his first in the big leagues, but he had had enough of what he felt was an excessively big strike zone for Rangers starter **Cliff Lee**. "He doesn't need that much help," Cust said. "It was just automatically 0-1 no matter where he threw it." ... **Andrew Bailey** (back spasm) threw a bullpen session and is likely to be available today. ... **Rajai Davis** recorded his second 30-steal season, becoming the fifth Oakland player to do so.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Dugout chirping: Landon Powell dumped his bag Wednesday and said, "There are 10,000 crickets in the dugout," as several crawled out. Manager Bob Geren used the 10,000 figure, too; asked if they had counted, he said, "Yes. Landon took 5,000 and I took 5,000."

Drumbeat: Sheets needs surgery, top-draft pick signs, cricket invasion

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Arlington, Texas 7/28/2010 3:30PM

A busy day here, as Ben Sheets has a torn flexor tendon and top draft pick Michael Choice has signed for a \$2 million bonus.

As Sheets had feared, he needs a second flexor-tendon surgery; when I asked him what worst-case scenario was last week, he'd mentioned that Jason Jennings had required a second flexor-tendon surgery and that it was definitely a possibility. Flexor-tendon surgery isn't like Tommy John surgery, when essentially a new ligament is put in place - the "wrap," as it's commonly known. In flexor-tendon surgery, Sheets explained to me, the bad part of the tendon is shaved off, and the tendon basically pulled down and reattached again. There's nothing new in there, no "wrap" is possible - it's fix it and then pin it back to the bone.

The question will be if Sheets, 32, wants to keep playing. No surgery is scheduled yet, and he's already been through the year-long process of surgery and rehab, and then finding a job as a free agent. That's not easy, and he's a free agent again and would have to try to convince teams all over to take the risk. Jennings has had trouble coming back from his second surgery; he is doing a throwing program now here in Texas. He's still in the A's system, signed to a minor-league deal this spring, but he hasn't pitched in a game.

We have yet to speak to Sheets, who is not at the ballpark. He's such a competitor, a real bulldog type, it's possible he'll want to jump right in and fight to come back. It's also possible, using the same reasoning, that he might not want to pitch again unless he can be at the top of his game. He was frustrated this season at being just OK. He told me last week that he was capable of six innings, three runs, even with the swollen and painful elbow, and when I said, "That's a quality start! Teams would take that," he said, "But I know I can do better."

I believe he's been pitching with this for some time, just as he did down the stretch two years ago while trying to get the Brewers into the playoffs. I know there are a lot of complaints about the contract - again, who cares? they had the money to spend and no one else was taking it - but Sheets was willing himself out there with a torn flexor tendon. This is not for lack of effort. And healthy, I'd still very much like to see what he can do, if he chooses to.

The A's have come to terms with Choice, who is from nearby UT-Arlington and who will come to the ballpark tomorrow for the official announcement. The team has yet to confirm the deal, but agent Jeff Frye did say that the \$2 million signing bonus, first reported by Baseball America's Jim Callis, is correct. Nice timing, with the A's in town, for Arlington's Choice and former Rangers infielder Frye.

UPDATE: I just spoke with a source who told me he doesn't think Choice is coming here but is going to Phoenix for rookie ball instead. So I'm not sure which is happening, but the announcement should be tomorrow. And it would be nice if Choice were here - Arlington, first-round pick, the media that covers the team daily, all that. Seems like it would make sense.

No Andrew Bailey again tonight, though he did throw a bullpen session, which went well. That means tomorrow is likely. Brett Anderson, already confirmed as Friday's starter, threw a side session. And if you're following the news on Conor Jackson's daily running sessions, he did very well yesterday. Could a rehab assignment be far away? Manager Bob Geren was hesitant to say, because the timetables have been tricky for Jackson's hamstring problem.

I spoke to Jack Cust about his ejection last night - his first in the majors, he said. He said Cliff Lee is good enough, he didn't need all that extra help from Kerwin Danley. Cust told me that Ellis told him that if Cust hadn't been ejected, he, Ellis, would have been. I find that hard to believe, Ellis is so polite, and what got Cust tossed was the F-word.

A swarm of crickets chased Landon Powell out of the dugout this afternoon - he came in and dumped his equipment bag, crawling with crickets, practically at my feet and said, "There are 10,000 crickets out there!"

Geren used the same exact figure, so I said, "Landon said 10,000, too. What, did you guys count them or something?" And Geren said, "Yes. He took 5,000 and I took 5,000."

I said hi to the dugout guard, who I know from my long-ago days covering the Rangers (1995-96 Dallas Morning News) and he said, "I'm monitoring the cricket situation."

Not all that well, as it turns out - one of them jumped on Geren's neck during his media session and he claimed it bit him. I'm not sure I'm buying that, but I did see the cricket jump away from him.

Also: When Powell dumped his cricket-infested bag at my feet today, he instructed me to "tweet about that," which made me laugh. Tweet about crickets, the idea. They don't tweet, they chirp! Of course, I did tweet it.

Cahill's gem leads A's past Rangers

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Kurt Suzuki admitted that his batterymate felt slightly off during his pregame bullpen session on Wednesday.

So the A's catcher, always the natural leader, lent the young Trevor Cahill -- who foreshadowed a long night ahead -- some rather simple advice.

"Don't think about it," Suzuki told Cahill. "Just throw the ball."

He did. 113 times. And, following an eight-inning scoreless performance against a deep lineup otherwise known as the Texas Rangers, Cahill found himself on the winning end of a 3-1 game at the Ballpark in Arlington while improving to 10-4 on the season.

Long night? Quite the contrary.

"Two hits," began Suzuki, shaking his head. "No runs. Against the Rangers. In Texas. With the wind blowing out. That's impressive."

Pretty much. And it left the A's catcher calling the affair "one of the best games [Cahill's] thrown."

"He was moving the ball around, in and out and up and down, and throwing his breaking ball for strikes," Suzuki added.

It marked the 17th consecutive start in which Cahill, one of two Oakland All-Stars this year, has logged at least five innings and surrendered six hits or less. Furthermore, he improved to 5-1 with a 1.83 ERA over seven career starts against Texas, including a 0.87 mark over three starting assignments in Arlington.

"It's just a coincidence, I guess," the soft-spoken Cahill offered. "Tonight I just tried to keep the ball down, and I got lucky."

Luck, though, doesn't usually sum up a 2.93 ERA, which is what the A's righty now owns following Wednesday's gem, which fell one frame short of a complete game after manager Bob Geren deemed his hurler worn out. Cahill's eight innings matched a career high, and he expressed understanding in the decision to end his night.

"The thing is," he said, "we have so many guys down in the bullpen."

"He was done," Geren said. "He was pretty tired after the seventh inning. It's outstanding what he did when you think about pitching in this environment, this weather, this team. He was about as good as you can get."

"He had great movement on his pitches, good command of the zone and he was aggressive getting early outs. That helped him go deep in the game."

Cahill's late-inning exit was met with the entrance of Michael Wuertz, whom Geren has been relying on for closer duties in Andrew Bailey's (back spasms) absence. The A's righty, who on Tuesday surrendered a walk-off homer to Nelson Cruz in the bottom of the 10th inning for a loss, quickly had to deal with a runner on second due to a throwing error by shortstop Cliff Pennington to lead off the ninth on Wednesday.

Wuertz proceeded to strike out Michael Young before allowing an unearned run on a single by Vladimir Guerrero, at which point Craig Breslow was called upon to record the final two outs -- strikeouts of Josh Hamilton and Nelson Cruz.

"The win was huge," Suzuki said. "The last couple series, we've been losing the first game and coming back. Winning the middle game is always big. Every game's big, but you definitely don't want to lose the series. You want to give yourself a chance to win every series. It was just a great team win today."

It was one that may not have been possible had it not been for Suzuki's bat, which gave Cahill just enough run support in the form of a sixth-inning homer off Texas starter Colby Lewis, along with a run-scoring single in the eighth frame against Darren Oliver. Suzuki eventually scored Oakland's third run courtesy of an error by Cruz, who bobbled Jack Cust's single in right field, allowing the A's catcher to score from second.

Lewis gave the Rangers seven solid innings of work, his lone mistake coming on Suzuki's 12th long ball of the season on a 2-2 pitch. He gave up just four other hits while walking two and fanning eight.

"Colby gave us a good start," Texas manager Ron Washington said. "He got the ball in on Suzuki. That was the only bad pitch he made all day. Trevor Cahill made none. We just couldn't square him up. He was good. Better than we were tonight."

"It was a slider," Suzuki said. "It was up, and a lot of times I hit homers with two strikes because I'm not thinking, and I just go up there and react, choke up on the bat, react and see the ball longer. I just went up there with that two-strike approach, saw the ball and reacted."

And when asked if the mighty Texas wind may have helped him out, Suzuki flashed a wide grin.

"Probably," he said. "I ain't gonna lie. I hit it good, but I'm not Josh Hamilton or Nelson Cruz-type power. I use everything I can. But hey, it's a homer. A homer's a homer."

And usually a win's just a win, but everyone in the A's clubhouse is likely to attest to the fact it's all the more sweeter against a division foe like the first-place Rangers, who watched Oakland take sole possession of second place on Wednesday night for the first time since June 4. The A's still stand 7 1/2 back of the Rangers, but they've won 11 of their last 14 and feel quite confident in their push at the playoffs -- even without veteran Ben Sheets, officially lost on Wednesday due to a torn flexor tendon in his already surgically repaired right elbow.

Sheets was expected to be this year's resident staff ace, the one to carry a youthful load of fellow hurlers. He gave all he had and more, but his time in that role has ended, paving the way for ... Cahill?

"He's really kind of turned into our ace," Geren said. "I know everybody in this room knows that, when Trevor goes out there, we feel really good about our chances. That's kind of the mental side of being an ace, knowing that if you have a streak he'll extend it and if you have a slide he'll end it. That's kind of what that term, or that role, means to me."

Rangers, A's wrap up AL West showdown

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

The race between the top two teams in the American League West continues to take shape.

Following Wednesday's 3-1 win by Oakland in Texas, the Rangers' lead over the A's in the division is now 7 1/2 games.

The Rangers are not panicking. The club has been in first place in the AL West for 51 consecutive days and 87 total days this season. Overall, Texas is 18-9 against the division.

"We're a confident team. We're happy with the effort and work we've put in so far, but our job's not over," Rangers third baseman Michael Young said. "Every guy in this locker room can look at a part of his game, tighten it up and make it better. That's the goal."

The goal for Rangers starter C.J. Wilson a repeat performance of his last outing. On Friday, Wilson held the Angels scoreless over eight innings while not walking a batter. In his only start against the A's this season, he earned the no-decision after allowing only one run in seven innings of work.

"I'd say that was the best outing I've had all year, simply because of the fact I didn't walk anybody," Wilson said. "That was the best part of it for me."

The A's will counter with Vin Mazzaro, who is 4-0 with a 2.12 ERA in his last five starts. Hitters have a .202 batting average against him during that span. In his last start, Mazzaro gave up two runs in six innings in the 10-2 win against the White Sox.

"You can't be scared to throw your pitches," Mazzaro said. "I had my slider working after that and got a little more comfortable with it, and I went from there."

Rangers around the horn

Nelson Cruz is riding a career-high 16 game hitting streak. He has 14 RBIs in his last 12 games. ... Neftali Feliz has 28 saves this season, 16 more than the franchise's record for rookies and nine shy of the Major League record for rookies set by Kazuhiro Sasaki in 2000. ... Josh Hamilton has hit safely in 36 of his last 37 home games.

Athletics at a glance

Ben Sheets will miss the remainder of the season with a torn flexor tendon in his right elbow. ... The A's are "very close" to inking a deal with first-round Draft pick Michael Choice. ... Andrew Bailey, still nursing an upper back strain, was unavailable for the seventh consecutive game on Wednesday but could potentially be back on the mound Thursday. ... Conor Jackson (hamstring) is progressing with running activities in Arizona, but there is still no timetable for a Minor League rehab.

Worth noting

The Rangers are 4-2 on their current seven-game homestand. The club is 36-21 at home this season. ... The A's have allowed two runs or fewer in six of their last 12 games. ... Oakland has 17 stolen bases since the All-Star break.

Sheets done for season with elbow tear

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Six months ago, the A's lent Ben Sheets a large dose of confidence by offering him a one-year deal worth \$10 million plus incentives.

In return, Sheets accepted, acknowledging his own form of confidence in a youthful A's team, one he knew was taking a pretty steep chance with him and his surgically repaired right elbow.

At the time, Oakland was forced to envision both a best-case scenario -- a healthy Sheets guides the A's to the playoffs -- along with a worst-case scenario for cautionary measures, that being another injury-plagued year.

On Wednesday, the latter was confirmed when manager Bob Geren announced that Sheets, who consulted with orthopedist Keith Meister on Tuesday and Wednesday, will miss the remainder of the season with a torn flexor tendon in his right elbow.

According to the A's skipper, a second elbow surgery -- the first caused him to miss all of 2009 -- has not been scheduled, and there was no indication that one will be in the near future. Sheets, 31, will be a free agent at the end of the year, so he could potentially choose to elect retirement rather than face another procedure and the process of finding a team.

Nothing of the sorts has been determined, though. After all, the news was just settling in with Geren, who has already watched Justin Duchscherer and Ryan Sweeney go down to season-ending surgeries

"He'll be missed both on the field and off the field," he said. "He's been a great teammate for a lot of the young guys. A lot of them looked up to him for his competitiveness and, off the field, he was just a pleasant guy to be around."

Sheets, who posted at least six innings in each of his last 14 starts, was initially placed on the 15-day disabled list on Saturday following a pair of outings that brought about inflammation in his troubled elbow.

Surprisingly, the A's pitcher put together rather impressive numbers during those starts, which resulted in just a combined two runs. But those numbers, no matter how they read in a box score, didn't say as much as the one that read on the radar gun, Sheets insisted at the time.

"I was still successful with the diminished velocity," he said. "It didn't fool me, but I was still able to pitch. When I knew my stuff wasn't there, I knew it wasn't going away. ... Swelling's no good. I know that. Your arm just doesn't swell. Things just don't swell for no reason."

Sheets also expressed that at no point this season did he feel a strong progression toward his old self, the one that was a four-time National League All-Star while with Milwaukee. He was 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts for the A's and has allowed an American League-leading 57 extra-base hits.

"The whole year's been frustrating," he said. "From where I was before spring, it's never really taken any jumps you always hear about. To say I felt good for extended periods of time would be false. I felt good here and there -- a couple innings here, a couple innings there, but nothing sustained throughout the year."

With lefty Brett Anderson's impending return to the mound Friday in Chicago, the A's still boast five healthy starters, the other four being Trevor Cahill, Dallas Braden, Gio Gonzalez and Vin Mazzaro.

"[Sheets] will obviously be missed," Geren said on Wednesday, "but the good news is that Brett Anderson threw a side today and it went well, so he's still scheduled to pitch Friday."

Furthermore, the A's manager has been impressed with Mazzaro's sudden turnaround. The young righty, who began the season at Triple-A Sacramento, has posted six straight quality starts with a 6-2 record and 3.45 ERA in 10 starting assignments this year.

"We have a very young and talented five-man rotation," Geren said. "They've all done a great job, they really have. ... Vin has progressed. Each outing he's gotten better. Straight out of the chute, his strikes have been up and his balls have been down. He's been handling the running game well, he's just doing a lot of things well."

A's close to deal with top Draft pick Choice

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- The A's are "very close" to inking a deal with their 2010 first-round Draft pick, Michael Choice, and could announce the signing as early as Thursday, according to a baseball source.

The A's have not confirmed the deal, but according to Choice's agent, Jeff Frye, the agreement is worth \$2 million, pending a physical.

Choice, who was taken 10th overall, would be just the second player out of this year's top-10 picks to reach a deal with his team. The only other signed top-10 pick is Christian Colon, drafted fourth overall by the Royals.

Choice, a 20-year-old outfielder out of the University of Texas at Arlington, has what A's scouting director Eric Kubota deems "a college bat that comes with upside -- tremendous power potential."

The A's expect Choice's large dose of power to nicely complement his impressive abilities in center field, where he hopes to remain as his professional career begins.

He owns the all-time home run record at Arlington, where he averaged a long ball every 17.8 at-bats and was named a junior All-American. In 60 games for the Mavericks this year, he hit .383 to go along with a .568 on-base percentage and .704 slugging mark. He struck out just 54 times while managing 76 walks.

Major Lee-ague: More thoughts on Sheets' departure

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 7/28/2010 9:26PM

Sheets may have been the only true veteran on the club's pitching staff, and he may have been given the largest one-year contract the A's have ever handed a free agent they signed from outside their organization. But, by night's end, no one was talking about the numbers or the dollars. Sheets really gave the A's so much more than that, and I think it goes without saying the clubhouse just won't be the same anymore -- not without Sheets there yelling, "Good morning, champions!"

Kurt Suzuki was asked about the loss of Sheets after tonight's game, and before the question was finished, he blurted out a "Wow." He said he hadn't been told of the pitcher's season-ending injury, which I think surprised all of us reporters. But once he regained his thoughts, here's what he had to say about Ben:

*"That's a bummer. We're not just losing his arm. It's more of his clubhouse leadership, the role he plays on the team leadership-wise. He's always upbeat. He's always going to pick up the team. He's great to have around, especially for us young players. **It almost sounds corny, but he kind of brightens up your day** when he walks in because he always has something funny to say, and he's always talking loud, joking around. That's the biggest thing, losing that leadership, because that's huge in baseball."*

I really can't say whether Sheets will go through with another surgery or not. Even if he got it done fairly soon, I don't know if he'd be ready to audition for another team before Spring Training. And, given, his recent history, I just don't know that many teams would show up for the audition. Sheets, at least in my eyes, seems to be at peace with his situation. He wasn't around to talk today, but when he was placed on the disabled list Saturday, there was a calm about him that reminded me of Eric Chavez during Spring Training. Eric made it known that he was content with whatever happened, whether he stayed healthy or not, because he knew he gave his team every effort possible. Sheets is the same way. He'd probably pitch until his arm fell off, but at the end of the day, he knew another injury to his elbow was possible. He also has two young kids, and when he wasn't playing in 2009, he spent a lot of time with them at home, and he's said before that he doesn't regret the time missed on the field at all, mainly because of the time it allowed him with his family. So if he opts for retirement, which I'm fairly certain he's considering, I wouldn't be surprised at all. He basically pitched with pain all year, and for him to give the A's the innings he did says a lot about his competitiveness.

I wish him the best, and I know he'll make good out of any situation that comes his way in the future.

A's beat Rangers; Sheets done for season

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Trevor Cahill seems to save his best for the Texas Rangers.

Cahill allowed two hits over eight innings, Kurt Suzuki homered and drove in two runs and the Oakland Athletics beat the Rangers 3-1 on Wednesday night.

Cahill improved to 5-1 for his career against the Rangers, 2-0 with a 0.87 ERA in three starts at Rangers Ballpark, one of the toughest stadiums in the majors for pitchers.

But Cahill has no theories as to why he's so successful against a usually potent offensive team.

"I just try to keep the ball down and get lucky, I guess," Cahill said. "Just a coincidence."

Cahill (10-4) struck out four and walked three as he took over the team lead in wins, breaking a tie with Gio Gonzalez.

"(Cahill) threw only 90, 91 (mph) but he kept it off the fat part of the bat," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "He was an All-Star for a reason. But our time will come."

Cahill was chosen for the AL All-Star team, but was ineligible because he pitched the Sunday before the game.

The Texas heat didn't deter Cahill, who threw 113 pitches.

Neither did the fact that the wind was blowing out.

"You think about the environment he's pitching in, the weather, the team, that's about as good as you can do," A's manager Bob Geren said.

In pregame warmups, Cahill thought he had mediocre stuff.

"He just said, 'Oh, my gosh, it's going to be a long night,'" Suzuki said. "I just told him, 'Don't think about it. Go out there and throw the ball.'"

Earlier in the day, the A's confirmed that right-hander Ben Sheets is out for the season due to a torn flexor in his right elbow.

The A's signed Sheets to a one-year, \$10 million contract in January to pitch at the top of their rotation. Cahill has taken over that role.

"He's really kind of turned into our ace," Geren said.

Rajai Davis had three hits for the A's, who are 8-3 since the All-Star break. Oakland pulled within 7½ games of the AL West-leading Rangers, moving past the Los Angeles Angels and into sole possession of second place for the first time since June 4.

The Rangers broke up the shutout bid in the ninth on Vladimir Guerrero's RBI single off Michael Wuertz, who gave up the game-winning, two-run homer to Nelson Cruz in the 10th inning Tuesday night.

Craig Breslow struck out major league batting leader Josh Hamilton and Cruz for his first save of the season and second of his career. A's closer Andrew Bailey was unavailable due to back spasms.

Rangers starter Colby Lewis (9-7) matched Cahill until Suzuki's one-out homer in the sixth.

"It was one pitch, a hanging slider, and Suzuki hit it," Lewis said. "If I bury it, he's out."

Suzuki added an RBI single in the eighth off Darren Oliver.

Suzuki later scored from second on Jack Cust's single that was misplayed for an error by Cruz in right field.

Lewis went seven innings and 116 pitches, allowing one run and five hits with eight strikeouts and two walks.

Cruz went 1 for 4 to stretch his career-best hitting streak to 16 games.

Texas had runners at the corners with two outs in the fourth, but Cahill struck out Cruz looking to end the threat.

San Jose withdraws ballot proposal for A's stadium

The Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif.—San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed is withdrawing an effort to have residents vote this November on a ballot measure authorizing a ballpark for the Oakland Athletics.

Reed said Wednesday he decided to shelve the proposal after speaking with baseball and other elected officials.

Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig had expressed disappointment that Reed had planned to go ahead with the measure even though the league hasn't decided yet whether the team can move.

The A's need approval for relocation because the San Francisco Giants hold territorial rights to the area.

Reed said part of the reason he proposed putting the issue to voters in November was to save money. But MLB officials said they would help cover the costs of a special election, if needed.

San Jose drops November A's ballpark vote

Silicon Valley / San Jose Business Journal

Mayor Chuck Reed said on Wednesday he has dropped plans to seek a November citywide vote on a **Major League Baseball** park.

Reed said the decision to postpone the ballot question came after a discussion with **Oakland Athletics** owner Lew Wolff about MLB's offer to help pay for a vote in the spring instead.

"I pursued a November election because I believe the citizens of San Jose deserve to have their voices heard. We have strong community support to build a privately-funded ballpark, which would be a catalyst for thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue to fund vital city services," Reed said.

The mayor said he will still ask the City Council to adopt a resolution of support for moving the A's to San Jose.

Wolff released a statement praising the mayor's decision. "I'm grateful that San Jose has shown a gritty determination to help us build a new ballpark for our franchise. We appreciate the strong leadership of both the Mayor and Commissioner Selig."

City Councilor Sam Liccardo credited the move to hold a November election with moving the process of bringing the A's to San Jose forward.

"The initial push to hold a November vote sent a strong signal to league officials that San Jose is serious about attracting a Major League ballclub and that it's time to move forward with the process," he said. "The commissioner's offer to help pay for a possible election in the spring was the first indication that the league is inching closer to a decision on territorial rights."

City leaders have been working on a downtown ballpark proposal near Diridon Station since the A's plan to build in Fremont fell apart in April 2009.

Reed pushed for a November vote last week, saying it would save the city money to pose the question during a regular election rather than a special one.

MLB Commissioner Bud Selig protested that such a vote would be premature before hearing from a special committee that has been studying the A's ballpark issue for 16 months.

Braden's Back, A's Get Win

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 7/26/2010

Oakland, CA – The dark cloud that loomed over Dallas Braden for eleven weeks has finally dispersed. The frustration, doubt and short stint on the disabled list are now behind him. Braden won his first game since May 9 when he pitched a perfect game against the Tampa Bay Rays.

"I can finally quit answering calls from the Oakland Zoo looking for their monkey," Braden said. "He's off my back and I'll be sending him home."

The A's continued their winning ways since the All-Star break. They won seven of their last nine games and beat the Chicago White Sox 6-4 to take the series. Oakland has moved to second place in the standings and sit eight games behind first place Texas.

"He had a little trouble early and settled down to pitch well," manager Bob Geren said. "He lost a little bit of steam in the end and the White Sox got three on the board to make it interesting late."

The A's mounted a 6-1 lead through the first six innings behind Braden who retired 13 of 14 batters through five innings. The sixth frame was most challenging after he walked two hitters and allowed three batters to single top of the seventh frame.

"I felt good, I expected some fatigue in the first three to four starts after coming back," Braden said. "For the most part I finished pitches which is what I was worried about coming off my last start.

He got winded as his pitch count went up to 98 but did well overall giving up five hits, three runs, two walks, and five strike outs. Not bad for the Stockton native who got his second start since coming off the disabled list, after nursing his elbow back to health.

"I think it's been bothering him a little bit, just the fact that everyone keeps talking about the perfect game," Kurt Suzuki said. "You do such a great thing after and your obviously going to be under a microscope a bit more." "It's nice to get the first win back, now it's time to for him get on a roll." "We're excited to have him back and his pitching was awesome!"

Oakland will have a day off before heading to Texas for a three game series. One of the many factors in the A's success has been speed. While this team may not be equipped with home run hitters they can still provide great defense and offense when needed.

During the sixth inning leadoff man Coco Crisp made a very crucial play to secure the A's win. Crisp singled, stole second base and scored when Chicago reliever Erick Sheets threw a wild pitch to first on a pick off attempt. When he saw the third base coach Mike Gallego waving him home he used his speed to round the bases.

"Gags' arm was feeling good so he decided to use it and wave me around," Crisp said. "It ended up working out because the throw was off line, if the throws on target, I'm out." "It was good to take the chance while the guy's moving away from home plate in foul territory because it turned out to be an important run."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Colorado Springs shuts down Sacramento bats

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento couldn't string together two consecutive home wins as the River Cats fell 5-3 to the Colorado Springs Sky Sox at Raley Field on Wednesday night.

Corey Wimberly and Eric Sogard demonstrated why they are Nos. 1 and 2 on the team in hits this season. Wimberly doubled with two out in the third inning, and Sogard backed it up with a double of his own to score Wimberly and tie the game 1-1. Wimberly finished 2-for-4, and Sogard finished 3-for-4, accounting for five of Sacramento's seven hits.

Catcher Josh Donaldson tried to get something going defensively for Sacramento. Donaldson made an impressive sliding catch off a pop out in foul territory for the first out of the fifth inning. The rest of the inning wasn't quite as stellar. Two more Sky Sox runs and a fielding error from Steve Tolleson left the River Cats trailing 3-1.

The Cats attempted a rally in the eighth inning when Michael Taylor was able to take advantage of loaded bases, smacking a two-run single to left. Tolleson walked and loaded the bases again to give Dallas McPherson a shot at a game-changing hit. Instead, McPherson struck out swinging and the inning ended with the score gap tightened 4-3, Sky Sox on top.

The ninth inning didn't spell the comeback the Cats hoped for. Another Sky Sox run, a quick River Cat at-bat concluded the game Colorado Springs on top 5-3.

The loss goes to Clayton Mortenson, who pitched 7.0 innings for four hits, three runs (two earned), and five strikeouts.

The series is now split 1-1, and Sacramento looks to regain their lead when they square off again Thursday night at 7:05.

Peterson Stays Hot As Hounds Roll

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The RockHounds busted loose, again, in the first inning, taking a 6-0 lead over the division-leading Frisco RoughRiders. This time, however, the 'Hounds never let loose of the lead, building the advantage to 14-0 after three innings and going on to a 14-3 win at Citibank Ballpark.

The win was the RockHounds' fifth in six games in the current home stand, and pushes the 'Hounds into a first place tie with Frisco in the Texas League South Division pennant race.

Shane Peterson extended his hit streak to 15 games, and led the RockHounds attack, going 2-for-4, scoring three runs and driving in three more. Archie Gilbert went 2-for-4 for with two runs and two RBI ... Matt Sulentic was 3-for-4 with a pair of ribbies ... and Josh Horton had a 4-hit night (4-for-6), scoring two runs and driving home another. RockHounds lead-off batter Jemile Weeks had a unusual (and productive) night. Making six trips to the plate, Jemile was 0-for-2, but walked four times, scored twice and drove in a run with a ground out.

The RockHounds and Frisco conclude their 3-game series Thursday, with the club that wins the game boarding the bus with the division lead. The 'Hounds are bound for a week on the road, and will depart after Thursday's game for Corpus Christi. The club will play four at "the beach" against the Hooks and three in the Metroplex against the RoughRiders.

Storm Edge Ports, 3-2

Grant Green extends hitting streak to 12 games

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Lake Elsinore Storm (63-40) edged the Stockton Ports (48-55) on Wednesday night at Banner Island Ballpark, taking Game 2 from the Ports by a 3-2 final.

The Ports tied the game in the bottom of the seventh inning, but were unable to complete the rally. The Storm plated the winning run in the top of the ninth inning off Brett Hunter to secure the victory. Grant Green finished the game 1x4 to extend his hitting streak to 12 games. He is now the second Ports player to hit safely in 12 or more consecutive games this season. Todd Johnson had a 15-game hitting streak earlier in the season.

Lake Elsinore took a 1-0 lead in the second inning off a solo home run by left fielder Jaff Decker. It was his ninth home run of the year and his second in this series. The Storm made it 2-0 in the third inning. Center fielder Bo Davis led off the inning with a single to left field. He stole second, and later scored on an RBI single by designated hitter Cody Decker.

Those were the only two runs allowed by Ports starter Fabian Williamson, who walked three and struck out five in 4.0 innings. Scott Hodsdon kept the Storm scoreless from the fifth through seventh innings.

The Ports scored their first run in the sixth inning. With two out, second baseman Tyler Ladendorf reached first safely after a dropped third strike. He stole second, and came around to score on an RBI single by Jeremy Barfield. Barfield led the Ports with two hits in the game.

The Ports made it a 2-2 game in the seventh inning. Reliever Hayden Beard walked catcher Ryan Ortiz and center fielder David Thomas to start the inning. He was then replaced by Robert Musgrave. Jermaine Mitchell next stepped up to the plate. He got to a 3-2 count, before being ejected by home plate umpire Greg Stanzak. Mitchell had been complaining to Stanzak during his at-bat, and Stanzak tossed him in the middle of his at-bat. Ports manager Steve Scarsone and first base coach Tim Garland both came to home plate to discuss the issue with Stanzak, as Mitchell returned to the dugout. Kent Walton came in to finish the at-bat, and walked. With bases loaded and no out, Green hit a sacrifice fly to center field to drive home Ortiz and tie the game. The Ports offense threatened with two runners in scoring position, but Stephen Parker and Mike Spina both struck out swinging to put a halt to the rally.

Both clubs were scoreless in the eighth, thanks to shutout innings by Trey Barham for the Ports and Aaron Breit for the Storm.

Hunter took the mound in the top of the ninth for the Ports. He gave up a leadoff single to shortstop Jesus Lopez, and later allowed the game-winning RBI double to Davis.

The Ports would get a runner on in the bottom of the ninth, as Yusuf Carter collected a two-out, pinch-hit single, but Green grounded out to end the game.

The Ports will look to avoid the sweep on Thursday night at 7:05 p.m. PST at Banner Island Ballpark. RHP Shawn Haviland (6-6, 3.85) will start for Stockton, while RHP Jeremy McBryde (1-2, 3.93) will take the hill for Lake Elsinore. Fans may follow the game live on KWSX 1280 AM.

Cougars Fall in Opener with River Bandits Kane County Drops Tough Loss 8-1 in Quad Cities

Davenport, Iowa. – The Kane County Cougars continued their struggles on the road with an 8-1 loss against the Quad Cities River Bandits. The Cougars only were able to gather 4 hits and 1 run, while stranding eleven runners on base. With a loss tomorrow Kane County is in jeopardy of dropping their third straight set, after winning six previous series in a row.

Chris Mederos (3-3) got the starting nod, and looked solid through his first three innings on the mound. He faced only one more than the minimum during those three frames, but struggled in the fourth. Mederos left after 3 1/3 innings and gave up 3 runs (2 were earned), and the suffered loss. Kenny Smalley (1-0) came in relief, but found trouble as well. Kenny through 2 innings, but gave up five runs to the River Bandits in the bottom of the sixth.

The Cougars offense had their own issues. Kane County collected only four hits and struck out 14 times. Nine of them coming off of the winning pitcher Joe Kelly (6-6) who had a season-high nine strikeouts in 6 2/3 innings. Tyreece House scored the only run of the game for the Cougars in the top of the fourth.

The Cougars (17-14, 49-51) will continue the series with Quad Cities on Thursday at 7 CT with the second game of the three-game series against the Quad Cities River Bandits (20-9, 60-38). Dan Straily (7-7, 4.40) will be on the hill for the Cougars. Quad Cities will send Eric Fornataro (7-8, 4.51) to the mound. The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 6:45 p.m.

6:45 PM (CT) Pre-Game Show, 7:00 First Pitch on WBIG 1280-AM & kccougars.com Thursday's Probable Starters RHP Dan Straily (7-7, 4.40) Vs.

RHP Eric Fornataro (7-8, 4.51)