

A's News Clips, Monday, August 9, 2010

Oakland A's keep Texas Rangers in sights in AL West race after winning series

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

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With yet another sterling outing from Trevor Cahill and some clutch work from Coco Crisp both in the field and at the plate, Oakland beat the Rangers 3-2 Sunday at the Coliseum and at least continued to sound like a team on the fringe of contention after taking two of three from the division leaders.

"It was huge, especially playing at home," said Cahill, who saw his scoreless streak snapped at 23 innings but still pitched eight innings without allowing an earned run. "We had to do at least that, win the series. We would have liked to sweep, but it's about winning series."

The A's are still 7 1/2 back with 52 games left to play, but they do play the Rangers seven more times, including four games at the Coliseum in late September. Moreover, while the A's are going on the road for series in Seattle and Minnesota, Texas has a tough upcoming stretch with eight straight against AL East stalwarts New York, Boston and Tampa Bay.

"You look at how many games are left, this was a big game because it's a two-game swing," said manager Bob Geren. "Winning today gives us a tighter race and a lot better chance down the stretch. We just have to keep winning series and playing good baseball."

Cahill (12-4) certainly couldn't do much more to keep the A's in it. He won his third consecutive start and is now 6-1

against the Rangers over his two-year career with a 1.55 ERA. In this latest victory, he outlasted former A's farmhand Colby Lewis, giving up six hits, walking no one and striking out three. Cahill and Lewis have faced off four times this season, and Oakland has won all four.

Cahill looked like he might be a hard-luck loser this time, though, after the Rangers scored twice in the sixth inning with the help of errors by shortstop Cliff Pennington and catcher Kurt Suzuki. But the A's got one back in the sixth and then added two more in the seventh, Crisp driving home the tying run with a double down the line and subsequently scoring on a Suzuki sacrifice fly.

Cahill, a 22-year-old right-hander, said it didn't faze him that his scoreless streak ended as a result of sloppy play in the field. A 26-inning streak without allowing an earned run is still intact.

"We won, so I could really care less," he said.

Cahill pitched a 1-2-3 eighth and gave way to Michael Wuertz, who escaped a potential jam by getting pinch-hitter Vladimir Guerrero to hit into a game-ending double play. It was Wuertz's fifth save in five opportunities, four since regular closer Andrew Bailey went on the disabled list.

The A's may be realizing how much closer they could be to first place had Crisp not missed all of the first half with injuries. He not only delivered the big hit Sunday but also hauled in a Bengie Molina drive to right-center in which he made a leaping catch as he collided off the wall.

"I was positioned well and when he hit it, it didn't look as if it was going as far as it did -- it caught a second wind up there," Crisp said. "I was just able to get up and make a nice grab."

Geren refused to speculate how much closer the A's might be if Crisp were available all year.

"I can't think that way," he said. "It's not worth it. I'm just happy he's here and that he's healthy and playing well."

Oakland A's update: Top prospect Chris Carter reportedly will be called up Monday

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Top prospect Chris Carter will join the team today in Seattle, according to multiple media reports Sunday night.

The A's last week appeared in no hurry to promote Carter, the organization's top power prospect. But his timeline might have been adjusted when back spasms forced first baseman Daric Barton out of Sunday's game. Barton left the game in the fifth inning after a slide into second base earlier in the game. He pronounced himself OK later, but the A's are listing him as day-to-day.

Carter, one of six players acquired in the trade that sent pitcher Dan Haren to Arizona before the 2008 season, is batting .262 with 27 home runs and 89 RBIs for Triple-A Sacramento. He recently was shifted to the outfield after playing first base most of his career.

The A's, who have hit the second-fewest home runs in the majors, also are expected to promote first baseman Jeff Larish from Sacramento. Matt Watson was unavailable Sunday because of kidney stones and will not make the trip. Larish was claimed off waivers last week from Detroit but was hitting over .400 with the River Cats and had 10 RBIs in a doubleheader over the weekend.

An A's staffer dropped off some souvenir swag from Saturday's UFC match in the clubhouse Sunday morning, and Barton pounced on it. He grabbed a hat and a T-shirt before anyone else could move in.

Barton may be the most rabid of several A's players who've been bitten by the ultimate fighting bug. A half-dozen of them attended the UFC 117 middleweight title match between Anderson Silva and Chael Sonnen at Oracle Arena, and they were still buzzing excitedly about it.

"It was awesome," said Barton, who sat in the front row with Jerry Blevins and Kevin Kouzmanoff. "The fans are into it, you can feel the energy, the dudes are intense as soon as they step up to the octagon. Especially sitting in the front row, it was unbelievable. You couldn't get any closer than we were."

Jack Cust and Kurt Suzuki sat several rows up from Barton and Co. Cust noted that he paid \$300 for his seat but added that it was well worth it.

Barton said he started watching UFC matches on pay-per-view a few years ago and fell in love with it almost instantly, but added that Saturday night's match was his first one to witness live.

Manager Bob Geren raised eyebrows when he used catcher Landon Powell as a pinch-runner for Barton instead of Adam Rosales, but Geren said Rosales was unavailable because of an ankle problem.

Chin Music: A's set to bring up Chris Carter

By Jon Becker, Oakland Tribune, 8/8/2010 11:13pm

Joe Stiglich is on his way to Seattle as the A's begin their road trip vs. the Mariners, so passing this along for him.

It looks as if Chris Carter could make his long-awaited A's debut Monday night in Seattle. CSN Bay Area is reporting that the A's will promote the slugging first baseman/outfielder to help fill the void created by two more Oakland injuries Sunday — 1B Daric Barton (left shoulder spasms) and OF Matt Watson (likely suffering from kidney stones).

Carter, who is hitting .262 with 27 home runs and 89 RBIs, was unexpectedly pulled from the River Cats' lineup after driving in a run in his first at-bat during Sunday's 11-7 loss to Round Rock.

In addition, CSN Bay Area reported that the A's are also likely to bring up first baseman Jeff Larish from Sacramento. Larish is a former Detroit Tiger who was claimed off waivers recently. Larish, a Jack Cust-esque hitter, for lack of a better comparison, hit three home runs and drove in 10 runs in Sacramento's doubleheader Friday.

Since infielder Adam Rosales (ankle tendinitis) is hurting just like Barton and Watson, the A's have three candidates for the DL in order to make room for Carter and Larish.

Carter has been riding a torrid streak since the Triple-A All-Star break, hitting .362 with nine home runs and 25 RBIs in 25 games. During his streak, Carter's on-base percentage has been .459 and he's slugged at .691 for an OPS of 1.151.

Carter got off to a slow start in Sacramento after a breakthrough 2009 season for Double-A Midland that saw him capture Texas League Player of the Year honors for hitting .329 with 28 home runs and 115 RBIs.

Carter was acquired in the Dan Haren trade in December of 2007, along with Brett Anderson, Carlos Gonzalez, Dana Eveland, Greg Smith and Aaron Cunningham. Carter and Anderson are the only two who remain property of the A's.

A's show they're not conceding AL West to Texas Rangers

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Most people already are conceding the Texas Rangers the AL West title, but the A's aren't quite ready to join the majority.

With yet another sterling outing from Trevor Cahill and some clutch work from Coco Crisp both in the field and at the plate, Oakland beat the Rangers 3-2 Sunday at the Coliseum and at least continued to sound like a team on the fringe of contention after taking two of three from the division leaders.

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Cahill (12-4) certainly couldn't do much more to keep the A's in it. He won his third consecutive start and is now 6-1 against the Rangers over his two-year career with a 1.55 ERA. In this latest victory, he outlasted former A's farmhand Colby Lewis, giving up six hits, walking no one and striking out three. Cahill and Lewis have faced off four times this season, and Oakland has won all four.

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"I can't think that way," he said. "It's not worth it. I'm just happy he's here and that he's healthy and playing well. He can do everything, from the speed to the defense to the big base hit to the occasional homer. You don't know how he can impact the game daily because he can do it a lot of different ways."

Give 'Em Hill: Scoop-a-palooza (at the A's Root Beer Float Day)

By Angela Hill , Oakland Tribune

THIS MAY COME as a shock to those who know me, but for once in my life I am forced to challenge the infinite wisdom of Homer Simpson who, in reference to something about his legendary cartoon beer drinking, once uttered the following axiom for the ages: "Foam wasn't spilt in a day."

Clearly Homer never has attended the Oakland A's MUG Root Beer Float Day, because in the span of a mere two hours Wednesday morning, foam was not only spilt but flung from wall to wall in the Eastside Club concourse at the Oakland Coliseum as a surging mass of green-and-gold humanity slurped bubbles and sticky-sweet goo in a frenzy of float-making good will to raise a whopping \$31,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Sure, there were sales of autographed photos and a silent auction of sports memorabilia, but the bulk of the bucks came \$2 at a time as fans bought commemorative plastic mugs, then had floats scooped and poured by A's players such as Trevor

Cahill, Cliff Pennington and Gio Gonzalez, first-base coach Todd Steverson, various Raiderettes, local TV celebrities such as Dan Noyes and Carolyn Johnson and some people from the MTV reality show "Real World/Road Rules: Fresh Meat 2," whatever that is.

Oh, and me. Yes, technically I was there as a "celebrity" (snicker, chortle-chortle, harrumph, guffaw), assigned to a table with Bay Area News Group sports columnist Cam Inman and his two cute little daughters, and my pal Zoe Francis, a former reporter and mom of a teenager with type-1 diabetes. (Hence we manned the sugar-free-float stand, a big draw for diabetics, people on a diet and those who gave up on the long lines at the table with the Raiderettes.)

As celebrities go, all of my scoop mates were far more celebrated than I: Cam for his sports columns, his kids for their cuteness and Zoe for her volunteer work for the JDRF, frequently thronged by fellow foundation workers who hugged her, chatted about insulin pumps and praised her on her brilliant choice of a yellow JDRF shirt because it matched the A's colors, while I had selected a regrettably blue sweater which turned out to be the exact shade of the Kansas City Royals, the opposing team in that day's game, causing several savvy A's fans to recoil in horror.

We went through the lineup. I was a designated diet-root-beer pourer. Cam's kids would also pour, while their dad and Zoe would lead off by scooping the sugar-free ice cream from huge 5-gallon tubs donated by Dreyer's, which was pretty darned frozen solid when it arrived, but hey, surely there was time for it to soften. Surely.

And then it began. The hordes stampeded into the concourse as if being chased by bulls through a small Spanish town. Scooping was initiated and I started popping cans like a mad can popper on a popping rampage during a can-popping pop-a-palooza. It got extra crazy when A's shortstop Cliff Pennington came by our table to sign autographs, making it clear who was the real celeb. (Even Cam's cute kids took a back seat.)

Pretty soon we couldn't keep up with demand, mostly because the ice cream was hard as a rock. A rock rolled in milk and sugar and buried in an arctic ice cave for several millennia. We thought we might eventually discover a leg-bone fossil of Early Man in there. Zoe scraped its unforgiving surface with such force that, in an explosion of springs and metal levers, her scoop broke.

"My kingdom for a pick ax," she called out.

A new scoop appeared out of nowhere, and she was at it again. I felt terrible (sort of) that she was working so hard. Although my job was significantly more taxing anyway. Not only because pouring is the true art of float-making (one must pour gently, with finesse, so as not to fizz the foam and cause cups to runneth over), but also because, while Zoe and Cam jabbed at the glacial core samples, I was left to placate the mobs, offering jocular small talk as people waited in line with their cups extended in patient anticipation. "Heh heh. Our scoopers sure won't have to go to the gym today!" I'd say. Or, "Hey, I see you're wearing a lot of A's gear. Come here often?"

I got a couple of charity laughs, but mostly people just wanted their dang floats and to go drool some more over Cliff. Eventually, runners brought us some huge metal spoons, which helped -- until we ran out of diet root beer, and then it was all over anyway. The concourse cleared out to reveal gobs of ice cream mashed into the carpet, paper napkins strewn about like shingles after a tornado, foam oozing down table legs, and a lot of pooped scoopers.

Zoe went home with blisters, a sore wrist and a bent-back thumbnail. Cam had ice cream in his hair. Somehow I thought I could make it through the day without getting root beer in my shoes. Silly me.

Peterson: Car hobby still drives Reggie Jackson

By Gary Peterson, Contra Costa Times columnist

They say you never forget your first. In this respect Reggie Jackson is no different from the rest of us.

"I was probably 15 years old," he said Sunday morning, by phone from New York. "It was a '51 Ford with a Cadillac engine in it. I worked on it, putted around the neighborhood without a driver's license. I learned to drive with it. I bought it from my brother for \$5."

Reggie had caught the car bug.

"I loved it," he said. "My dad had a bunch of wrecks that had to be fixed up before they could be driven. The wish to own a set of wheels was something everybody strived for as a kid."

Not many people get the mileage from their hobbies that Reggie has from his love of cars -- fast cars, expensive cars, rare cars. Over the decades he has collected dozens. There are stories associated with most, sentimental attachment to all.

"I bought a '55 Chevy in 1970," he said. "I gave the guy a couple of Panasonic TVs and got the price down to \$1,500. I've painted it four, five times, changed the engine four, five times. It'll probably stay with me forever."

His other cars? Not so much. Reggie has decided to start divesting himself of much of his collection. To this end, he will offer 15 cars for sale at the Mecum Auction this Friday and Saturday at the Hyatt Regency and Spa in Monterey (10 a.m.-5 p.m.). Admission and parking are free. For anything else, you might want to bring a little walking-around money.

Reggie believes the cars he'll offer are worth close to \$2 million. Perhaps the most valuable is a 1969 ZL-1 Camaro that is believed to be just one of six of its kind with the original engine.

"The base price of the car was about \$2,000 at the time," he said. "The engine option was \$4,100 -- twice the value of the car. Now they're worth from \$500,000 to \$1 million, depending on the originality."

There's no guarantee Reggie will get that much, or even that any of his cars will be sold.

"In 90 percent of auctions, there will be a reserved price," he said. "Either (the bidding) gets to the reserve, or the car comes back home. Once it gets to a price I think is fair, I can allow a car to change hands."

Why sell off? This may be hard to take for longtime A's fans, but Mr. October is in the autumn of his life.

"It's time to simplify," said Jackson, who turned 64 in May. "After realizing important priorities in life, family and friends, I think I realize part of my life was gathering the stuff, and now it takes management time and time away from things I like to do and love."

More than 50 of Reggie's cars are housed in a 15,000-square-foot garage in Monterey. Others are stored in Newport Beach.

"I've worked on all of them," he said, "driven them all. I've done something to all of them. Everything I do to them is fun. It's a great hobby that luckily has turned into a nice investment."

Reggie will be on site before and during the auction, prepping the cars and monitoring the bidding. Apparently it's quite a show.

"There can be 15 guys with their hands in the air with the bidding at \$3 million," he said. "It shocks you sometimes when you see it. Guys raising their hands -- '4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6. I'm sorry sir, at 4.5 you're out, and in the time it took me to explain that, it's already 4.8 to you.' I've seen all that. I've seen guys bid against themselves."

Reggie hasn't confined his interest in collectibles to cars. Twice -- in 1999 and 2004 -- he was involved in efforts to buy the Oakland A's. He's aware of the current drama surrounding the future of the franchise.

"I certainly pay attention," he said. "A friend of mine is monitoring what's going on. I root for them. I'm an original Oakland A. I still own a home there."

Obviously the A's aren't for sale. But when you see the buzz Nolan Ryan's involvement with the Rangers has created in Texas, and how Mario Lemieux has helped secure the Penguins' future in Pittsburgh, you can't help but think about the psychic value Reggie could bring to the team and place where he launched his legend.

"You never know," he said. "When the stars align, and when the timing is right, that opportunity may present itself."

So says the man who bought his first set of wheels for a roll of quarters.

A's Chavez mulling retirement

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Eric Chavez is still at home with his family, contemplating his future as he tries to recover from two bulging disks in his neck.

The six-time Gold Glove third baseman, limited to a designated-hitter role this season before it became clear that the neck injury was hampering his performance, said in an e-mail to The Chronicle that he is considering ending his career.

"I've pondered retirement," Chavez said. "I'd lie if I said I didn't. The truth of the matter is that I don't know what I'm going to do."

Chavez, 32, has had two back surgeries and three shoulder surgeries in an effort to get back into the lineup, and he said last month that he hoped to be able to play in September as long as that fit into the A's plans.

The longest-tenured A's player, Chavez is in the final season of a six-year, \$66 million deal; the A's are certain not to pick up next year's \$12.5 million option.

In his e-mail, Chavez wrote, "All that I can say is that the A's have dealt with me with the utmost respect and class. ... I can't say enough about what it's meant, the way they've treated me.

"I'd love to come back and play the last month of the season with the team. I just don't know if that's going to happen, but it would mean the world to me to be in uniform when the season ends. Either way, I'll be in Oakland one way or the other, to come back and play, or to say goodbye."

Chavez has kept tabs on the A's, and he said, "It's been fun watching the team battle all year, there are so many great guys and so much young talent to build around, I just wish I could have been there for them.

"Anyway, I still would love to play this game, whether or not I can and whether or not my body can go through any more is yet to be determined."

A's likely to call up top prospect Carter

Scott Ostler, Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writers

According to a team source, top prospect **Chris Carter** will be called up today for the A's game at Seattle, and there is a possibility that infielder **Jeff Larish** might come with him.

Carter, who has 27 homers and 89 RBIs, came out of Triple-A Sacramento's game at Round Rock on Sunday after one at-bat. Carter plays first base and recently moved to left field. A's first baseman **Daric Barton** left Sunday's game with shoulder spasms and left fielder **Matt Watson** was hospitalized with what are believed to be kidney stones.

In addition, **Adam Rosales** was unavailable with ankle tendinitis, leaving backup catcher **Landon Powell** to play first after Barton's exit in the fifth.

A's officials declined to comment about Carter's status, but he was the only Sacramento player to leave Sunday's game early, and he was not injured. Larish, acquired on waivers from Detroit last week, drove in 10 runs in a doubleheader Friday; he'd be an option only if the A's believe that two of the three injured players might miss much time.

Barton is expected back tonight. Rosales said he would be good to go tonight or Tuesday.

Cahill's roll: The volume of **Trevor Cahill's** fan mail surely is increasing, but he wouldn't know. "I haven't checked," Cahill said. "I save it all for the offseason." Bring a forklift, dude. The baseball world is starting to notice you.

Cahill went eight innings Sunday as the A's won 3-2 in the deciding game of the three-game series with Texas. Cahill (12-4) gave up zero earned runs to shrink his ERA from 2.72 to 2.56, but his scoreless streak ended at 23 innings.

Still alive: Cahill's streak of 19 starts with six hits or fewer and five or more innings pitched. The modern record is 20 (**Nolan Ryan**, 1972-73).

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Ynoa update: Pitcher Michael Ynoa, 18, who was signed in 2008 for \$4.25 million, a record for an A's prospect, is determining with doctors and his agent whether he should have surgery on his right elbow, the team said.

Drumbeat: Carter leaves Sacramento game early - appears headed to bigs

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 8/8/2010 5:36PM

UPDATE I've had it confirmed from a team official that Carter did not leave Sacramento's game with an injury ("He's healthy"), but all other questions went unanswered....which is as close to a confirmation that he's coming up as I think anyone might get from the A's side, anyway.

ORIGINAL POST: Chris Carter exited Triple-A Sacramento's game at Round Rock after one at-bat, in the fourth, while the A's had their regular first baseman, Daric Barton, leave today's game with shoulder spasms, and had an outfielder, Matt Watson, go to the hospital with what have been described as kidney stones.

Carter can play first base, and lately, he's been in left field, which is Watson's spot when he's in the lineup. Does this mean an earlier-than-expected call-up for Carter?

No one with the A's seems to be talking, and the A's always like to make sure that players get to wherever the team is before announcing any player moves, but there were no indications from Round Rock that Carter is hurt. And the fact he plays both spots the A's have some question marks at - and the fact that he has 27 homers and 89 RBIs - might be the best indication of what's happening.

At this point, it's speculation, but such an early exit is more than suspicious. It's hustle-and-get-on-a-plane-to-Seattle timing.

There are two things to consider, though:

*The A's generally only bring up top prospects when they can get them playing time every day.

*The team wanted Carter to dominate at Triple-A before coming up, and while his power and production are top-notch, he's only recently got his average over .250. Many scouts believe he's got big holes in his swing and can be pitched to at the big-league level (he has trouble with the high fastball and breaking stuff outside, several have told me).

Like everyone, I'm curious to see him, but I'd be surprised if Carter came up to sit on the bench or if the team didn't feel he was able to handle big-league pitching.

If I hear anything more, I'll update ASAP, but my guess is that we won't know anything until tomorrow. I can tell you that Travis Buck is still in the game, though, and Carter isn't. It isn't crazy to think Carter will be at Safeco Field tomorrow night.

Cahill, Crisp lead A's to series victory

Righty goes eight strong innings for third straight win

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's lineup isn't exactly an offensive juggernaut these days. But what they lack in power has been made up for with creativity lately, as the A's used a pair of sacrifice flies to eke out a 3-2 victory over the Rangers on Sunday.

It didn't hurt to have that Trevor Cahill kid on the mound, either.

Before Sunday's rubber match against the Rangers, Michael Wuertz pulled Cahill aside and told him to throw eight strong innings. The veteran reliever proved to be prophetic, as Cahill tossed eight sharp innings and Wuertz escaped a ninth-inning jam to seal the win.

Cahill entered the game with an 18-inning scoreless streak and on the heels of his first career shutout.

"Why not eight more?," Wuertz said. "Give us relievers a little bit of work down there, too. It was great to see and what more can you say? What is it 12 wins now he's got? That's spectacular."

If it weren't for a couple of fielding blunders by the A's, who knows if Cahill (12-4) could have tossed another shutout? The way he was dealing Sunday, it wouldn't be out of the question.

While Cahill's curveball wasn't snapping as he would have hoped, he was able to pound the zone and let his defense do the work. Cahill was stung by two errors in the sixth inning that resulted in a pair of unearned runs for Texas, but that's all he would surrender.

"He's one of those frustrating guys ... we feel like we should beat him every time," Texas outfielder David Murphy said. "He just works magic with that sinker. He keeps it down and seems to always get us."

The 22-year-old righty used 110 pitches to finish his third consecutive start of at least eight innings, allowing six hits and striking out three. The two-run sixth snapped his career-high 23-inning scoreless streak.

"If I'm not going to strike guys out, I've got to go deep into games," Cahill said. "I think that's kind of what I didn't do last year, get ahead of a lot of guys. This year I'm able to get ahead of them and go deeper into games and save the bullpen."

The A's, meanwhile, were stifled by Texas starter Colby Lewis, but found things much easier against the Rangers bullpen.

Oakland's lone run off Lewis came in the sixth inning, when Rajai Davis hit a sacrifice fly to score Kevin Kouzmanoff, who led off the frame with a double to left field. Other than that, Lewis proved to be stingy, as he struck out seven batters over six innings, allowing three hits and three walks.

"Every time I've pitched against the Rangers I've gone against Colby Lewis," Cahill said. "He's pitched some gems and fortunately I was able to be on the good side of some late run scoring."

Lefty Darren Oliver relieved Lewis in the seventh and promptly gave up a leadoff single to Cliff Pennington. He then surrendered a double to Coco Crisp down the left-field line, as Pennington scored to knot the game at 2. Crisp kept up his hot weekend, as he also keyed Saturday's 6-2 win over the Rangers with several big plays.

"He can do everything," A's manager Bob Geren said. "From his speed to defense to a big base hit to the occasional homer. You don't know exactly how he can impact the game daily, but he can do it a lot of different ways."

Crisp also turned in one of the afternoon's finest defensive plays in the fourth inning, when he made a leaping grab with his back against the wall to rob Bengie Molina of extra bases and keep the Rangers off the board.

"I'm just thankful that I'm able to contribute in some ways," said Crisp, who missed 70 of Oakland's initial 72 games with injuries. "It's tough playing these guys, they have a phenomenal lineup. We're just jumping on the backs of our pitchers and they're doing a good job of keeping us in the game."

Kurt Suzuki delivered the game-winner later in the seventh, when he hit a sacrifice fly to center to score Crisp.

That set the stage for the ninth inning, when Wuertz picked up his fourth save in four tries since closer Andrew Bailey went on the disabled list with a rib muscle strain. It didn't go without some drama, though.

Wuertz issued a pair of walks, one to Molina and one to Cristian Guzman, but got pinch-hitter Vladimir Guerrero to ground into a game-ending 6-4-3 double play.

"Vladimir's not a guy you want to be facing with runners on first and second and one out," Wuertz said. "I made a pretty good pitch and luckily we got a double play."

A's first baseman Daric Barton left the game in the fifth inning after experiencing muscle spasms in his left shoulder, but said he felt OK after the game. Geren used Landon Powell as a pinch-runner and kept him in the game at first base, saying Adam Rosales was unavailable due to an injured ankle.

With the win, Oakland pulled itself to 7 1/2 games back of the Rangers for first place in the American League West.

"Oakland is not going any place," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "But I'm not worried about the A's. We need to take care of our own business. They're not going away because they've got good pitching and they've got a bunch of scrappy guys who play the game hard. They execute. If their pitching keeps them in the game, they're tough."

Gutierrez out to heat up as A's end trying run

By Dan Mennella / MLB.com

Spearheading the Mariners' feel-good rebound season in 2009 was Franklin Gutierrez, who overcame the tag of defensive specialist to become an all-around player as Seattle enjoyed a remarkable turnaround from the previous season.

And though he's remained a defensive stalwart this season, he's struggled at the plate at times, as have the Mariners, in general. Through Sunday's action, Gutierrez is batting just .245 with 10 homers and 45 RBIs after hitting .283 with 17 jacks and 70 RBIs in '09.

"It's a bit of a balance issue with Franklin," hitting coach Alonzo Powell said Sunday. "He's not staying back as good as he should. But Franklin's a good player. He proved it last year and had a great start this year.

"I think he's guilty, kind of like everybody else right now, of trying a little bit too hard, and when that happens, you really get out of who you are. It's a bit of a common theme here. Everybody's pressing to try to do well because they know everybody's not playing up to their capabilities."

Meanwhile, the A's are hoping to decompress after playing 12 of their past 15 games against first-place teams, a stretch in which they went 6-6, punctuated by Sunday's win over the Rangers.

That stretch -- although no small feat relative to the competition -- stands as a microcosm for the A's season in many regards. Still 7 1/2 games behind the division-leading Rangers, Oakland has been .500 seven times since the All-Star break and 18 times overall this season, and it will need to do more than just tread water if it wants to make a late-season run at the division title.

The A's have been .500 more times at the end of play in a given season only twice -- 1968 (20 times) and 2007 (19 times). Perhaps not surprisingly, the A's are now .500 (6-6) against the Rangers so far this season with six games remaining against them.

Taking the hill for the A's on Monday as they try to further distance themselves from the .500 mark -- they're currently two games over -- will be Vin Mazzaro, who has been steady since the calendar flipped to July. Since then, the right-hander is 3-1 in six starts with a 3.43 ERA.

A's: Up and away?

If the A's are to make said late-season run, they'll need to pick it up on the road. Though they've enjoyed playing at Oakland Alameda-County Coliseum (34-24), they have struggled away from those friendly confines, going 22-30 on the road. The pitching, in particular, has been starkly different. At the pitcher-friendly Coliseum, A's hurlers have allowed the

second-fewest homers (39) in the AL. On the road, however, they have allowed the second-most homers (67). Their road ERA is 4.43.

Mariners: Four-ward thinking

The Mariners improved to 12-55 when scoring three or fewer runs with Sunday's 3-2 win over the Royals, highlighting their difficulty in racking up the runs. When they do manage to break out at the plate, however, they have enjoyed success, going 30-15 when they score four or more runs.

Worth noting

Rajai Davis had his 15th multi-steal game of the season on Saturday, giving him 100 swipes since joining the A's. He now ranks 10th on the team's all-time list. ... The Mariners have won their past two series openers after dropping their previous eight.

Injured Bailey plays catch for second time

A's closer still does not have timetable for his return

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's closer Andrew Bailey played catch on Sunday for the first time since Wednesday, but still doesn't know when he will return to the mound for Oakland.

"It went better than the last time we tried it," Bailey said. "It's obviously a plus; good enough to continue on the path to get back into the games. As far as a timetable for a game, that's really not up to me."

Bailey made 20 tosses on Sunday, 10 from 45 feet and 10 from 65 feet. Bailey said he felt good on Sunday, unlike Wednesday when he felt a bit of discomfort in the area of his rib muscle strain.

"I felt it on Wednesday," Bailey said. "It wasn't as bad as it was before but it was still, in my mind, right on the cusp of feeling good so we didn't want to push it too much. That's why we decided to take an extra couple of days."

Bailey hasn't thrown in a game since July 20, but said he hopes to be able to return after throwing a couple bullpen sessions and a simulated game. Bailey said he will throw from a longer distance on Monday.

"It's not like I need to build up a pitch count to 50 or 60," Bailey said. "I think it will be quicker than a starter's [rehab]."

Barton leaves game with left shoulder injury

OAKLAND -- Daric Barton left in the fifth inning of Sunday's 3-2 win over the Rangers with left shoulder spasms after advancing to first base on an error by Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus.

Manager Bob Geren elected to go with Landon Powell as the pinch-runner and said Adam Rosales, a much faster option, was unavailable because of an injured ankle. Powell remained in the game at first base, where he started four contests in 2009. It marked the first time that Powell had played first base all year.

Barton, who leads the A's with 108 games played this year, said he was fine after the game.

A's on base-stealing tear in second half

OAKLAND -- For years, it was rare for the A's to steal bases with regular frequency. Since the All-Star break, though, Oakland's 29 stolen bases are the most in the Majors.

While Rajai Davis and Coco Crisp are team's most proficient base stealers, Cliff Pennington is holding his own. The A's shortstop has stolen 17 bases, which is the second-most on the team, while getting caught twice.

"He's a guy that is a very intelligent baserunner," A's manager Bob Geren said. "It impresses me to the point where he'll see something in timing or some kind of rock back in the pitcher where he can get even a better jump."

Oakland's 94 stolen bases are the fourth-highest total in the American League this year, while its 79.7 percent success rate is second only to Tampa Bay (79.8 percent). It's the second time in 12 years that the A's have stolen at least 90 bases, after stealing 133 last year. Davis' 34 steals are third-best in the American League, while Crisp has 14 in 37 games.

The A's even pulled a double steal with a four-run lead in the eighth inning during Saturday's 6-2 win over the Rangers. Geren said the unwritten rules of baseball have changed over the years, as such actions used to be deemed unethical.

"[The unwritten rule] definitely exists, it's just that line has gone a little further," Geren said. "Since my 30-plus years in the game, there's a lot more bigger, stronger guys who can hit homers and teams score runs in bunches quickly a lot more than they used to 20, 30 years ago."

Worth noting

A's outfielder Matt Watson left the clubhouse before Sunday's game after experiencing severe pains in his side and back. Manager Bob Geren said Watson went to the hospital, while the team later announced the injury was not baseball related. ... Conor Jackson is scheduled to play three innings in the Arizona Rookie League on Sunday.

Major Lee-ague Update: Carter to be joined by Jeff Larish

Jane Lee, mlb.com

Greetings from Seattle: From what I'm hearing, we may be seeing not just one, but two, new faces in green and gold come tomorrow. Susan Slusser of the San Francisco Chronicle recently reported via Twitter that Chris Carter is for sure on his way to Seattle on Monday and that Jeff Larish may be on Carter's flight. I was just informed by a source that Larish was indeed told he's joining the big league club tomorrow, so that makes two confirmed call-ups.

Larish was claimed off waivers by the Tigers on Tuesday and essentially tore up the PCL during his week-long stint with Sacramento, where he was hitting .417 with four homers and 15 RBIs in 24 at-bats. He plays first base, and that's where I'm assuming he'll be in Barton's stead. The extent of Barton's injury is unknown, and normally he's one to shake things off and continue playing, but spasms anywhere are always weird and unpredictable.

The 27-year-old Larish -- originally selected by the Tigers in the fifth round of the 2005 Draft -- was named Detroit's Minor League Player of the Year in '07 after leading the Eastern League with 28 home runs and 101 RBIs, and he was rated as possessing the best power in the International League by Baseball America in '08. He made his big league debut that season, batting .260 with two homers in 42 games.

Should be an interesting day tomorrow...

A's Cahill wins fifth straight against Rangers

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Coco Crisp practiced making spectacular catches in the outfield even when an injured hand kept him out of the lineup. The real thing just seemed routine.

Crisp had two hits, drove in a run, stole a base and robbed Bengie Molina of extra bases in helping the A's beat the first-place Rangers, 3-2, on Sunday.

"It's tough playing the Rangers," said Crisp, a career .292 hitter against them. "We just jumped on the back of our pitcher and tried to contribute. We're chasing Texas so we can't get too far ahead of ourselves."

As for his fourth-inning grab high up the wall in center field? "I was positioned well," Crisp said. "When I first looked up it didn't look like it was going that far. It caught a second wind but I had enough time to know where the fence was."

Kurt Suzuki hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the seventh inning, Trevor Cahill allowed six hits through eight and the A's won for the eighth time in their last 10 home games. Rajai Davis also drove in a run.

Cahill (12-4) won his fifth straight against the Rangers despite allowing two unearned runs in the sixth. He struck out three and did not walk a batter.

"I had been walking a lot of guys my past few starts so I was trying to throw strikes and let them hit it," Cahill said. "No free passes."

Darren Oliver (0-1) started the seventh, and gave up a single to Chad Pennington and an RBI double to Crisp before leaving the game.

Texas starter Colby Lewis failed to win his 10th game for a fourth consecutive start, although the Rangers were leading when he was replaced. He gave up a run on three hits over six innings, walking three and striking out seven.

"He never did have a 1-2-3 inning," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "He had to keep making pitches, which he did. We put up two runs against Cahill and took the lead into the seventh inning. It just didn't work out."

Michael Wuertz pitched the ninth for his fifth save in as many chances. He walked Molina and Cristian Guzman around a strikeout and then got pinch hitter Vladimir Guerrero to ground into a game-ending double play.

"It's not the situation you want to be in," Wuertz said.

"With Vlad on the bench you know he'll probably get a turn at bat.

Walking two guys just makes it harder. I made a pretty good pitch and luckily we got the double play."

Cahill had his career-long scoreless streak end at 23 innings, including 13 against the Rangers, when Josh Hamilton singled home a run in the sixth. Cahill improved his AL-leading day ERA to 1.33 in seven starts.

"He just continues to go out there and keeps doing everything right," Wuertz said.

Lewis took a shutout into the sixth. Kevin Kouzmanoff opened the frame with a double, moved to third on Mark Ellis' groundout and scored on Davis' sacrifice fly.

"It seemed like they had runners in scoring position every inning," Lewis said. "I threw too many pitches, allowed too many baserunners to go deep in the game."

The Rangers scored a pair of unearned runs in the sixth to take the early lead. Elvis Andrus was safe on a fielding error by Chad Pennington and scored on Hamilton's sharp single.

Hamilton reached third on the play when Suzuki threw the ball into center field and scored on Nelson Cruz's sacrifice fly.

Notes: Ellis doubled in the second inning, ending a streak of 15 games without an extra base. ... A's OF Matt Watson was sent to a local hospital for tests after complaining of pain in his side and back. ... Molina played in the Bay Area for the first time since the Giants traded him on July 1. ... A's 1B Daric Barton left the game in the fifth inning with spasms in his left shoulder muscles.

... Cahill and Lewis have matched up four times this year, with the A's winning each time.

A's Top Prospect Carter To Debut

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Aug 9, 2010

Sources have confirmed to OaklandClubhouse.com that top Oakland A's prospect Chris Carter has been promoted to the major leagues. We take a look back at his minor league career.

Not since the Oakland A's called up a young slugger named Jose Canseco in 1985 has the team had a prospect join them from the minor leagues with the power potential of [Chris Carter](#).

Since he was acquired as part of the [Dan Haren](#) deal before the 2008 season, Carter has been launching homeruns at a

prolific pace. Originally drafted out of a Las Vegas high school by the [Chicago White Sox](#) in 15th round of the 2005 amateur draft, Carter instantly made an impression by hitting 10 homeruns in 65 games for Rookie League Bristol.

Carter was sent to Low-A Kannapolis the next season, but struggled and wound-up spending the majority of the season in the Rookie Pioneer League, where he hit .299 with 15 homers in 69 games. He would get another crack at Kannapolis in 2007 and this time he dominated the South Atlantic League, posting a 905 OPS and hitting 25 homeruns in 126 games.

His performance in Kannapolis made him a hot commodity and Carter was involved in two high-profile trades during the 2007 off-season. First he was traded by the White Sox to the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) straight-up for slugger [Carlos Quentin](#). Then Carter was one of six prospects acquired by the A's for All-Star right-hander Dan Haren and reliever [Connor Robertson](#).

At the time of the trade, Carter was one of the lower profile prospects involved, with [Brett Anderson](#) and [Carlos Gonzalez](#) being the prospects who garnered the most headlines. The A's were confident they were getting something special in Carter, however.

"We just liked Carter so much and we are an organization that has really lacked a lot of right-handed power over the past couple of years," A's Director of Baseball Operations Farhan Zaidi told OaklandClubhouse.com right after the trade.

"We had [Frank Thomas](#) for a year, and that worked out well. We brought in [Mike Piazza](#) and he had health issues, but the possibility of having a homegrown, right-handed power hitter was just way too tempting to pass up. Eventually, we just couldn't come up with any incarnation of this deal that would have left Carter out."

Despite a slow start to his 2008 campaign with High-A Stockton, Carter lived up to expectations during his first season in the A's organization. Playing at first base, third base and in right, Carter hit a Stockton-record 39 homeruns during the regular season and then hit five more homeruns during the playoffs and helped lead the Ports to the California League title.

After being named the A's Minor League Hitter of the Year, Carter spent that off-season participating in the Hawaiian Baseball League. He was also invited to the A's big league spring training camp as a non-roster invitee for the first time.

When camp broke, Carter was sent to Double-A Midland. While he didn't struggle early in the season as much with the Rockhounds as he had the year before with the Ports, he didn't really catch fire until mid-season. But when he did get hot, Carter left the rest of the Texas League in his wake.

Although Carter didn't hit as many homeruns with Midland as he had with Stockton, he was a much more complete hitter. He raised his batting average from .259 with the Ports to .337 with Midland and his OPS jumped from 930 to 1011. Carter won the Texas League's MVP award despite the fact that he spent the final three weeks of the season with Triple-A Sacramento, where he hit .259 with four homers and 14 RBIs in 13 games. Carter led all Pacific Coast League hitters with four homeruns during the post-season. Incidentally, the Rockhounds went on to win the Texas League title, giving Carter two rings in two seasons in the A's system. He was named the A's Minor League Hitter of the Year for a second straight season.

A's Director of Player Development Keith Lieppman was particularly impressed with Carter's ability to become a more well-rounded hitter in 2009.

"To have cut down on his strike-outs and improved his at-bats like he did is not an easy task in such a short period of time from last year until now," Lieppman told OaklandClubhouse.com after the 2009 season.

"He is a much, much better hitter. His quality of at-bats have improved and he doesn't give a lot of at-bats away. He has really improved mentally. His focus is a whole lot better on every pitch as opposed to letting some at-bats get away from him. He's locked in the majority of the time and that is a really big part of his success."

During the off-season, Carter, who was named MiLB.com's Minor League Hitter of the Year for 2009, would have been eligible for the Rule 5 draft, although it wasn't a difficult decision for the A's to add him to their 40-man roster and protect him from that draft. He was a part of the A's big league camp for much of this year's spring training, although he hit only .160 with a homer in 17 big league spring games.

At end of camp, Carter was assigned to Sacramento, where he joined a prospect-studded line-up. Like many of his River Cats' teammates, however, he had an uneven start to his season. He posted a solid 872 OPS in April, but his OPS slid to 770 in May and climbed only slightly to 808 in June. However, as has happened in each of the past two seasons, as the calendar turned to July, Carter's bat ignited. He hit .318 with 1075 OPS in July and that had carried over into the first week of August, when he hit .333 with a 1111 OPS.

Carter leaves the River Cats with a .262 average and 27 homers, 89 RBIs and an 898 OPS in 113 games. He struck-out 124

times, but he walked a team-high 68 times. Carter had been playing mostly at first base for the first four months of the season, but over the past week, he has been seeing time in the outfield. He will likely see time at both positions and at DH with the A's.

In three minor league seasons in the A's system, Carter hit 94 regular season homeruns and nine post-season longballs, by far the most of any player in the A's system over that period. He will be joining an A's line-up that has been desperate for power all season. The A's are currently second-to-last in all of baseball in homeruns.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento can't overcome Round Rock offense

By Robbie Enos / Sacramento River Cats

The Round Rock Express dropped the Sacramento River Cats in the first game of a four-game series, exploding for a big offensive performance to the tune of an 11-7 final.

Overall, the Express managed 15 hits, four of them extra-base shots. Six of the nine starters had multi-hit games, and all nine players scored at least one run.

Sacramento almost made a great comeback, obviously frustrated after blowing an 11-run lead the night before. Down 11-4 heading into the ninth, Eric Sogard got things started with a one-out single. With two down, Corey Wimberly walked.

Bottle-of-Lightning hitter Jeff Larish stepped in to knock a pitch out of the park for his fourth home run with the River Cats. The two-out rally sparked some excitement, but a Dallas McPherson flyout ended the fiasco.

The River Cats got off to a vquick start with an Eric Sogard double in the first. Sogard advanced to third on a Travis Buck single, and then scored on a Chris Carter groundout. On the mound for Round Rock was Yorman Bazardo, a right-hander who came into the game with a 4.07 ERA.

But Round Rock immediately answered with a bang against River Cats starter John Halama in the first, going for four runs. Jack Shuck walked to lead off the inning, and then advanced to third on a Wladimir Sutile sac bunt. With two down, Shuck scored on a wild pitch.

Chris Shelton walked, and then advanced to third on a Matt Kata single to right field. Andrew Locke capped things off with a three-run jack to left-center, his 13th bomb of the year.

Round Rock managed two more runs against Halama in the third. Sutile led off with a single before Brian Bogusevic was hit by a pitch. Round Rock then initiated a double steal, allowing Sutil to score on a Kata RBI single. Locke brought Bogusevic home on a sacrifice fly.

Brian Esposito joined the scoring spree in the fourth, slamming a one out double and then later scoring on a Sutil single. Sacramento finally had an answer in the sixth, thanks to a Dallas McPherson two-run homer that scored Wimberly.

Graham Godfrey entered the game in the sixth, ending Halama's seven-earned run outing. Collin DeLome seemed to fancy the change, blasting a solo shot to right field in the first at-bat against Godfrey. The shot was his 13th of the season.

The production of the Round Rock offenses continued on in the inning, starting with a Shuck single and Bogusevic walk. This set the stage for a Shelton two-RBI double to put Round Rock in double digits for the night.

Jeff Baisley nailed his fourth home run of the season in the seventh for Sacramento's third run. Bazardo was taken out later in the inning, ending a seven-hit, four-run outing. He walked two and struck out seven. Round Rock took the run right back in the bottom half of the inning, when Oswaldo Navarro singled to left field and came around to score on a Shuck single.

The River Cats will have a rematch against Round Rock on Monday with a 5:05 p.m. start.

Gaston's Homerun Provides Spark For Hooks

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The Corpus Christi Hooks got something Sunday night the RockHounds have been looking for lately, without much success: One big swing of the bat.

Jon Gaston broke a 1-1 tie with a 2-run home run in the sixth inning, and that one swing would be the difference as the Hooks held off two 'Hounds late threats for a 3-2 win, the Hooks' second consecutive victory in the series.

With the game tied at 1-1 and the bases empty with two outs in the sixth, Koby Clemens singled to right for his third, consecutive single of the game. Gaston then followed, three pitches later, with his blast to right field off RockHounds starter Matt Wright.

Gaston, selected by the Houston Astros in the 7th round of the 2008 draft out of the University of Arizona, led all of minor league baseball with 35 home runs last season (playing at the Single-A level). While the California League, where he played, is a notoriously hitter-friendly league, Gaston's home run was his ninth at the Double-A level and his fourth in 19 games.

Gabe Ortiz singled and scored in the eighth inning, drawing the RockHounds within 3-2, and the 'Hounds had a runner in scoring position in the top of the ninth, before Ortiz bounced out to second base to end the game.

The Hooks and RockHounds conclude their series Monday, with a league-wide off day on Tuesday. That one-day break will be followed by the final section of cross-division play with the RockHounds hosting Tulsa and Northwest Arkansas.

The pennant race & the wild card: It's pretty much official ... the Texas League South race is as hot as an August afternoon. The RockHounds still lead the division by two games, but that lead is now over two teams. San Antonio defeated Frisco, 3-2, to tie the RoughRiders and move to within a pair of the 'Hounds. Corpus Christi is playing very well of late, and is just six games back. In the wild card race (which takes effect if Frisco wins the second half), San Antonio is two behind the 'Hounds and Corpus Christi is very much alive at five games back.

Stockton Completes Sweep with 4-2 Win

Jermaine Mitchell extends hitting streak to 11 games

STOCKTON, Calif. – After being swept at San Jose earlier this week, the Stockton Ports (54-59) bounced back by sweeping the High Desert Mavericks (60-53) with a 4-2 win on Sunday night at Banner Island Ballpark.

Jermaine Mitchell extended his hitting streak to 11 games, by finishing 2x4. Tyler Ladendorf also had a pair of hits in the game, hitting a home run in back-to-back at-bats. Stockton starter Fabian Williamson earned his third straight win, and Paul Smyth collected his 19th save on the year, striking out two in the ninth frame. Scott Hodsdon tossed 2.1 shutout innings, fanning four batters in the appearance.

High Desert took a short-lived 1-0 lead in the second inning, as third baseman Rich Poythress collected his 100th RBI on the year by slamming a solo shot over the Mavericks bullpen in left field.

The Ports took a 3-1 lead in the third inning. Third baseman Stephen Parker singled to right field to start the inning. Designated hitter Yusuf Carter slammed his ninth home run of the year over the left field wall to give Stockton a 2-1 advantage. Ladendorf then stepped up to the plate and slammed a solo shot to left field as well.

The Mavericks cut the lead to one run in the fifth inning. Designated hitter Kuo Hui Lo walked with one out to start the High Desert offense. Center fielder Denny Almonte then singled to put two on for catcher Ralph Henriquez. Henriquez hit the ball to shortstop Grant Green, who threw the ball to Parker to put out Lo at third. With two out and two on, Williamson then walked left fielder Maximo Menez to load the bases. Shortstop Kyle Seager, a UNC product, then walked, allowing Almonte to come trotting home to score the second High Desert run. Williamson then got second baseman Shaver Hansen to strike out to get out of the jam.

The Ports got another insurance run in the sixth run as Ladendorf collected his fifth home run of the year, another solo blast to left field.

Cougars Slug Past Bees Again

Gilmartin and LeVier flirt with cycle as Kane County rolls

BURLINGTON, Iowa – For the second game in a row in Burlington, Iowa, the Kane County Cougars' offense could not be stopped. The Cougars hit three homers and pounded out 15 hits Sunday afternoon in a 13-7 rout of the Bees at Community Field. Mike Gilmartin homered and drove in five, Mitch LeVier homered and drove in four, and each player missed the cycle by one hit. The Cougars have won eight of their last 11 games. They are 10-1 against the Bees this season and have outscored them 81-36 for the year and 23-10 so far in the series.

Gilmartin notched a sacrifice fly in the second during a two-run frame, and Jose Crisotomo's fielder's choice in the fourth made it 3-0. After the Bees got their first run in the fourth against Dan Straily, Gilmartin ripped a two-run triple in the fifth to make it 5-1. Then the Bees chased Straily from the game with a five-run fifth and took a 6-5 lead. Straily gave up six runs on seven hits over four-plus innings in a no-decision.

Down, 6-5, in the sixth the Cougars took a lead they never gave back on a three-run homer by LeVier, who nailed an 0-2 pitch off Rodolfo Encarnacion (1-2). LeVier tripled home Rashun Dixon in the eighth and missed the cycle by a double. Gilmartin cracked a two-run homer in the eighth and for the second straight game missed the cycle, this time by a triple. Anthony Aliotti played long ball in the ninth with a solo homer to account for the 13-7 final. Bo Schultz (5-1) notched the relief win.

The Cougars (25-17, 57-54) and Bees (15-25, 37-72) play Game 3 of the four-game set Monday night at 6:30 CT. Ian Krol (8-4, 2.65) is scheduled to face Keaton Hayenga (1-9, 6.59). The game will be broadcast online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 6:15 p.m.