

A's News Clips, Tuesday, August 10, 2010

Little excitement for Oakland A's in Chris Carter's debut

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Chris Carter's inclusion in the A's lineup Monday signaled the arrival of a key piece to the team's future.

In the present, the A's are still a sputtering operation with the bat. That was reinforced during a 3-1 loss to the Seattle Mariners that included Oakland hitting into its second triple play of the season.

The A's put the leadoff runner on base in five of the first six innings but couldn't cash in against a struggling Mariners club that announced the firing of manager Don Wakamatsu, bench coach Ty Van Burkleo and pitching coach Rick Adair earlier in the day.

But despite the disappointing start to a six-game road trip, there was an air of excitement surrounding the A's with the promotion of Carter, the 6-foot-5, 231-pound slugger rated the team's top prospect by Baseball America.

Carter, 23, was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento along with infielder Jeff Larish and started at left field in his major league debut.

"I feel like I'm ready," Carter said before the game. "I've been waiting for this forever."

The early results weren't encouraging. Carter went 0 for 3 and looked bad striking out on breaking balls in his first two at-bats. He grounded out sharply to third in the seventh.

With Matt Watson going on the disabled list with kidney stones and fellow outfielder Matt Carson optioned to Sacramento, Carter figures to get regular playing time for the foreseeable future. He was hitting .262 with 27 homers and 89 RBIs in 113 games with Sacramento, showing the power that made him the A's Organizational Player of the Year in 2008 and 2009.

His arrival seems timely for a team that entered Monday ranked second-to-last in the American League in homers (70) and slugging percentage (.380). Even after Carter's debut, the A's are in a staggering 0 for 35 stretch with runners in scoring position.

"There were a couple of strikeouts with a guy on third base and less than two outs," manager Bob Geren said after Monday's loss. "We have to take advantage of those opportunities."

Carter and left-hander Brett Anderson are the only two players remaining of the six the A's obtained from Arizona in the Dan Haren trade of December 2007. They recently shifted Carter from first base to left field, a move they want to experiment with the rest of the season.

Carter corralled the only two fly balls that came his way.

After learning of his promotion Sunday, Carter said he could hardly sleep before catching a morning flight to Seattle. He waved at breaking pitches out of the strike zone to go down in each of his first two plate appearances.

"My first at-bat I was shaking, just trying to calm down," he said.

Geren didn't give a direct answer before the game when asked if Carter would play every day, but surely the A's didn't promote their top prospect to have him ride the pine.

Seattle scored two runs off Vin Mazzaro (6-4) in the first inning, but Mazzaro settled in and allowed three runs on five hits in seven innings.

The A's had runners on first and second with no outs in the fourth. But Mark Ellis hit a hard grounder right at Seattle third baseman Jose Lopez, who stepped on his bag and began an around-the-horn triple play.

Replays showed Ellis may have been safe at first.

"I was safe, there's nothing else to say. But that's not why we won or lost," Ellis said.

Kurt Suzuki grounded into a triple play against the Yankees on April 22 at the Oakland Coliseum.

A's update: Bob Geren feels for fired Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's feel pain as ax falls on two former coaches

SEATTLE -- The Seattle Mariners' season has been a colossal disappointment after big expectations, and the team's struggles cost second-year manager Don Wakamatsu his job Monday.

Wakamatsu was fired along with bench coach Ty Van Burkleo and pitching coach Rick Adair hours before the Mariners and A's opened a three-game series at Safeco Field.

Wakamatsu, who attended Hayward High and served as the A's bench coach in 2008, led Seattle to an 85-77 record in 2009. Van Burkleo was the A's hitting coach in 2007 and '08. Their dismissals hit home in Oakland's clubhouse, especially with A's manager Bob Geren. The two have been friends since being neighbors years ago in Phoenix.

"I wanted to make sure he's OK," said Geren, who called Wakamatsu after the decision. "I've known him for many, many years. Our kids grew up together, played Little League together."

The offseason addition of pitcher Cliff Lee and second baseman Chone Figgins boosted hopes that Seattle could push for the AL West title this season.

But the Mariners were 42-70 entering Monday. There's also been off-field turmoil, from Ken Griffey Jr.'s alleged napping during games to Wakamatsu's public arguing with Figgins. Lee was traded to the Texas Rangers last month.

The Mariners promoted Triple-A manager Daren Brown to take over on an interim basis.

"The truth of the matter is, I lost confidence in Don, Ty and Rick," Mariners GM Jack Zduriencik said.

The A's called up Jeff Larish from Triple-A Sacramento, and he started at first base with Daric Barton still recovering from an injury to his left trapezius muscle. Larish, 27, was claimed off waivers from Detroit on Aug. 3. He's a .239 hitter in 77 career games. Barton was available to pinch hit.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill was named the American League Player of the Week. "... Outfielder Matt Watson had a procedure to remove a kidney stone. Geren said he didn't know how long Watson would be sidelined. ... Outfielder Conor Jackson (strained right hamstring) played three innings in his first rehab game Sunday in the Arizona Rookie League and was scheduled for five innings Monday.

Chin Music: More on Chris Carter and other A's pregame notes

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/9/2010 6:36PM

A little follow-up on Chris Carter's major league debut and other A's news ...

--Carter is starting in left field and batting seventh tonight in the series opener against Seattle. Surely, if he turns into the hitter the A's expect, Carter won't see many games in the No. 7 hole. But this takes a little pressure off him since the expectations are understandably high for the player ranked as the A's top prospect.

Manager Bob Geren said he envisions Carter seeing all of his time in left field for now, though he wouldn't give a direct answer when asked if Carter would play every day. Whatever ... There's no way this guy was called up to sit on the bench. You figure he's going to start every day unless he struggles mightily. Daric Barton is not in the lineup, so Jeff Larish (also promoted with Carter) gets the nod at first tonight. Barton, who injured his left trapezius muscle (between the shoulder and neck) and left yesterday's game, said he's feeling better and that he's available to pinch hit. Regardless, Geren says Carter isn't likely to play first with Barton and Larish both on the roster.

Carter is one of the most soft-spoken players I know, but he couldn't keep the smile off his face while talking to reporters today. And he probably said more in his five-minute chat than in every past interview I've done with him combined. He said he could barely sleep last night, having already gotten the news he'd be flying out this morning to join the big club. As for his steady improvement at the plate with Triple-A Sacramento: "It was just getting adjusted to how people pitched me, and getting adjusted to the league. I'm feeling good now." Geren feels Carter can handle left field fine, even though he just started playing there regularly about two weeks ago. A's outfield coach Todd Steverson took Carter out to the field early for a little individual instruction before batting practice.

--Other notes: Andrew Bailey had a good throwing session today, Geren said. ... Adam Rosales, battling tendinitis in his right ankle, is available off the bench.

Here's the lineups ... and I gotta say that just seeing Carter's name in there makes Oakland's starting nine look a little more formidable:

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

Mariners — Ichiro RF, Figgins 2B, Kotchman 1B, Branyan DH, Gutierrez CF, Lopez 3B, Langerhans LF, Moore C, Wilson SS; Fister RHP.

Talking Points: How pitch-count-mania (maybe) produced the Year of the Pitcher

Tim Kawakami, San Jose Mercury News, 8/9/2010 11:20AM

* **Schedule note:** *On Sept. 23, 2008, My Media Industry Mortal Enemy swore he'd end my career in 2 years. Only 45 days left and darn it, I'm still slaving away in newspapers/bloggery bleakness. Note to MMIME: Hurry up. You promised!*

Yes, the relative de-juicing of baseball surely has been the major contributor to the lower HR totals, lower run totals, and wave of elite pitching performances throughout baseball this year.

And yes, there have been other years that have produced a torrent of no-hitters—5 no-nos and 2 perfect games already this year (and two very near-misses), most since there were 7 no-nos in 1991.

And yes, some of this is all just random: All no-hitters are a strange confluence of hot pitching, off-kilter hitting, luck and even more luck.

But I also think there's another under-the-radar cause for this rash of premiere pitching: *The controversial but now nearly 100% reliance on pitch-counts to keep arms as healthy as possible.*

I'm beginning to hear it talked about on the baseball circuit. It's out there.

The pitch-count adherence, in my view and some others (and NOT in many other corners, obviously) seems to be leading to bigger, more explosive outings by a larger number of pitchers in 2010.

Pitchers are throwing harder than ever, more consistently than ever. You can see that, right?

I realize there's an awful lot of undisciplined hitting (hello, Tampa Bay Rays?), but that's also a result of batters feeling mighty uncomfortable against pitchers who seem to be more frequently under control.

I think that's because pitchers have been more thoughtfully handled for the last 5 or 6 years...

It's just in time for the crop of pitchers now in their primes (think Halladay, Wainwright, Sabathia) to be healthy just as they're wise enough to know what to do with the extra-oomph maintained after 1,000+ career innings.

OK, some dissenting opinion, first: **David Ortiz believes the umpires are to blame/credit** for the wave of no-nos. Wider strike zones are forcing hitters to swing early, which puts them at the mercy of good pitching, Ortiz says.

There's certainly something to that, and the general sense that baseball, as an entity, is in the middle of a gigantic counter-reaction to the Steroid/HR Ball of the late-1990s and early-2000s.

Baseball wants quicker games. Umpires who call strikes are more likely to get sent to the playoffs and World Series, as Dave Campbell noted on ESPN radio last night. K-Zone.

Pitching is at a premium. Premium pitching is taking over.

-I also understand that better medicine is prolonging and maintaining great arms.

Thirty, even 15 years ago, A guy like Chris Carpenter, who had reconstructive surgery in 2002, might never have come back. Now he's motoring through as one of the game's best pitchers, year after year.

But, if you really look at it, you have to see that taking care of arms—especially young arms—has likely led to stronger pitching... and has insured that the best arms maintain their strength later into seasons and into careers.

You can hate that a pitcher at the tail end of a great performance gets yanked in the 8th, with a 2-1 lead, just because he's at 112 pitches. I know I'll hear retorts to this item ASAP by the old-time purists, who just love seeing guys finish games.

But the health of the pitcher is always more important, and we're seeing the results now, I believe. I've got some stats (of course) to back it up.

Here's the general thoughts...

1. Pitch-counts grew in importance with the advent of the slider and split-fingered fastball and other elbow- and shoulder-taxing deliveries, which became prevalent in the 1970s or a little later.

You need pitch-counts to protect pitchers now more than you did in the greatness of the '50s and '60.

(Also a nugget down below that perhaps puts a check on the romanticism of All Those Pitchers Who Lasted Forever Damn the Pitch-Count in the '60s. **Psst: It's not true.**)

2. Pitch-counts were beyond necessary in the burgeoning Steroid Era, as hitters grew stronger and stronger, parks shrunk, and run-totals went up and up.

(I know, many pitchers were using the juice, too. It's all part of the era. If you were pitching on juice, you still needed a pitch-count to remain as healthy as possible, or maybe you needed it even more.)

You wanted Kerry Wood to keep chucking 98-mph at Wrigley vs. Bonds and the Steroid Class? Fine, you got it.

You saw what happened. The pitchers who were taken care of mostly survived that era. There will always be pitching injuries, but pitch-counts help prevent some of it.

3. Though there were other anecdotal injury issues in earlier years (Gooden, Hershiser, Neagle, Hentgen), pitch-counts became nearly mandatory for managers looking to remain employed after the high-inning/early-career blow outs of Wood and Mark Prior seven or eight years ago.

Some more anecdotal evidence:

* Wainwright, who may be the best pitcher in the NL or perhaps all of baseball right now, is 28, and didn't get into deep IP territory unless last year, when he led the NL with 233 IP, at age 27.

This year, he's on pace for about 230 innings, maybe a little more. His high pitch-count is 113, and he's averaging about 100 per game. All very comfortable, nothing crazy.

Last year, he went over 120 pitches four times and averaged 106.3 pitches per game.

A key factor for Wainwright, which seems to correspond with many pitchers: He didn't get consistent heavy work until his late-20s and is currently at 813 1/3 career IP.

Wainwright was a reliever early in his career, which reduced early tax on his arm. Things like that help elongate a starter's career.

* Halladay, 33, led baseball in IP as a Blue Jay in 2003 at 26 years old, and then had shoulder trouble in 2004. He missed time in 2005 with a broken leg which, of course, is not attributable to pitch-counts (but possibly helped him by saving his arm that season).

After a couple of soft IP years, Halladay recovered and now his arm has matured. He's averaging 109.3 pitches per start this year, and on pace for 240 IP or maybe a little more.

* Brandon Webb, 31, piled up large innings totals for four seasons, 927 IP from the time he was 26 to he was 30... and a total of 1,319 career IP before he was 30.

And now he might be done. He had major surgery and has pitched one time since the start of 2009, with no clear prognosis for the future.

* Even CC Sabathia, your standard old-time horse who has thrown more pitches and piled up more innings in the last three seasons than anyone, was relatively taken care of early in his career.

Of course he started so young—he won 17 games as a 20-year-old for Cleveland—that it seems like he's been piling up innings forever, but Sabathia didn't go over 210 IP in a season until 2007, when he was 26.

* Curt Schilling possibly was able to last as long as he was, throwing as hard as he did, because, due to various issues, he was far from a IP horse in his 20s.

He had only 988 1/3 career IP before he turned 30... I think that's a big threshold. If a guy had less than 1,000 IP in his 20s, he has a much greater chance to pitch effectively, and throw hard, into his late-30s.

* Brandon Morrow, who just was one out from a no-hitter for Toronto yesterday and struck out 17, is 26 years old and has struggled for many seasons after his elite draft status (ahead of Tim Lincecum).

This is Morrow's fourth season, and he's at 127 1/3 IP this season. His previous career high was last year, when he threw 69 2/3 IP.

I don't know that Morrow will have a great long career, but you know that he didn't have his right arm blown out before he ever got a chance to have such a thing.

* A's young star Trevor Cahill is 22, and he's mowing down opponents, game after game, but he's still only at 133 2/3 IP, on pace for about 190-200 IP this year, after totaling 178 2/3 IP last year.

His season high is 113 pitches, which he has done twice.

* OK, to Lincecum, where people might really yell at me. I don't have anything too inflammatory to say, other than he's 26, and he already has 750 1/3 career IP.

Hey, he's excellent: He *should* pitch a lot, and deep into games. But he averaged 109 pitches per start in 2008. That's a lot for a guy who was 24. He's averaging 107 per start this year. That's a lot, too.

If you want a partial explanation for his career highs in ERA (3.15) and WHIP (1.28), maybe there has been a bit of a toll.

Though it has been eased some: Lincecum has pitched 151 2/3 IP this year, on pace for about 200-210 IP this season, which might actually give him a break after back-to-back 225+ seasons—if the Giants don't get to the playoffs and tack on another couple starts.

(Wait, yes, I know the Giants want to get to the playoffs and Lincecum would kill to do so. I'm just talking about wear on the arm here. That is all.)

More anecdotes: Lincecum has gone 120 pitches or more four times this season.

In the four starts immediately AFTER those 120 games, Lincecum is 0-1 with 3 no-decisions, with a 4.39 ERA and has given up 5 HRs.

In his 19 other starts, none of which came after a 120-pitch game, Lincecum is 11-4, with a 2.88 ERA, and has given up 7 HRs.

—On a side note (I received this from a trusted contributor, who wishes to remain anonymous)... These are the top 10 leaders for Innings Pitched during the 1960s:

1. Don Drysdale
2. Jim Bunning
3. Juan Marichal
4. Bob Gibson
5. Larry Jackson
6. Jim Kaat
7. Dick Ellsworth
8. Claude Osteen
9. Milt Pappas
10. Dean Chance

-Words of the contributor: What's interesting is that in during this fabled era of pitching talent, during this famed decade not one of these pitchers went on to win 300 games. In fact, only two of them cracked 250 wins.

Maybe pitch counts would have been a good idea after all.

The career win totals of those pitchers looks like this Kaat 283, Gibson 251, Marichal 243, Bunning 224, Drysdale 209, Pappas 209, Osteen 196, Jackson 194, Chance 128, Ellsworth 115. Pretty good list and no arguing that there's Hall-of-Fame talent there.

But, by comparison, the 1990s list includes *four* pitchers who went on to win 300 games — Maddux, Glavine, Clemens and Johnson. The 1990s represented the emergence of pitch counts as a statistic.

—Back to me: Again, way too long. Won't be read much. Still, this has been kicking around in my head, and when that happens, it's going to end up on this blog.

My apologies.

For Oakland, it's not yet Carter country

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Chris Carter might be the answer for the A's at some point, maybe even soon, but he was not on Monday night in his major-league debut.

The 23-year-old came up nearly a month earlier than planned, thanks to three A's injuries Sunday, started in left field and went 0-for-3, striking out in his first two at-bats in Oakland's 3-1 loss at Safeco Field.

"My first at-bat, I was shaking, trying to calm down," Carter said, and discussing his first two at-bats, he added. "I was chasing, overanxious to hit something."

A's manager Bob Geren said he didn't think Carter swung at any bad pitches and he liked that he'd hit the ball hard to third base his final time up.

Though the Oakland organization thinks highly of Carter, who came to the A's in the Dan Haren deal with Arizona, no one wants to place any undue pressure on him. A first baseman much of his career, Carter has played little in the outfield; the initial plan was for him to spend a month in left at Triple-A Sacramento before coming up in September.

In addition, he was slow to get going at Sacramento (though his power numbers were fairly constant). Each time he has been promoted, Carter has needed time to get on track.

"Chris' history suggests that it takes him a while to adjust to the next level," A's general manager Billy Beane said. "But we have confidence that over time, he will be successful at the major-league level."

So patience is the word, and there is no guarantee Carter will stay in Oakland if he does struggle. Asked about the plans for Carter, Geren couldn't guarantee he'd be in the lineup every day and Beane said that he prefers not to make definitive statements.

"He's swinging the bat well right now and we're a little banged up and short on bodies," Beane said. "We needed someone and it seemed foolish not to give him the opportunity to swing the bat here. It's a good time to introduce him to the big leagues."

Carter was almost giddy before the game, with a wide smile despite not sleeping the night before. "I feel like I'm ready," he said, adding with enthusiasm, "I've been waiting for this forever!"

He hit 27 homers and drove in 89 runs with Sacramento, but, Carter said, "I don't feel pressure to hit home runs. I'll just do what I've been doing."

Infielder Jeff Larish, claimed on waivers last week from Detroit, played first base with Daric Barton recovering from left shoulder soreness. Barton said the shoulder has been sore for more than a week and he felt like he jammed it when he slid into second base Sunday. Larish went 0-for-3 with one strikeout.

Barton and Adam Rosales (ankle tendinitis) were available. Outfielder Matt Watson went on the disabled list after a procedure to remove a kidney stone. Outfielder Matt Carson was sent back to Sacramento.

Mariners' triple play typifies Oakland's futility

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

For the second time this season, the A's hit into a triple play, sort of the capper on a night of little offense for Oakland.

Jack Cust led off the fourth with a base hit and **Kevin Kouzmanoff** walked before **Mark Ellis** hit a sharp bouncer to third to initiate an around-the-horn triple play. Ellis was ruled out on a close call at first.

"I was safe," said Ellis, who'd seen the replay. "There's not really anything else to say. That's not why we lost the game."

Manager **Bob Geren** agreed Ellis was safe, and he said of the ball Ellis hit, "Another inch to the left and it's a double."

On April 22, **Kurt Suzuki** hit into another of the 5-4-3 variety in a win over the Yankees.

Oakland's run came in the sixth, when **Coco Crisp** singled and scored on a double by **Rajai Davis**. The A's were 0-for-9 with men in scoring position and they're 0-for-their-past-35 overall, though Geren would have taken a productive out.

"A couple of times, a groundball would have scored a run," Geren said. "We had (three) strikeouts with less than two outs."

Wakamatsu reaction: Don Wakamatsu, fired as Seattle's manager, was the A's bench coach in 2008.

"I'm surprised, knowing how good a baseball man he is," Suzuki said. "I know how much of an impact he had on me as a player. ... It kind of sucks."

Ellis said after the 3-1 loss, "Especially seeing our friend get fired from their team, it would have been nice to win this game."

Medical corner: Andrew Bailey (right ribcage strain) threw from 45 feet, 65 feet and 80 feet. "It felt good," he said. ... **Conor Jackson** (hamstring) played five innings at rookie-ball Arizona and went 0-for-2 with an RBI. ... **Jason Jennings**, who hadn't pitched this season after signing a minor-league deal during the spring, started in Arizona and went two innings, striking out one and allowing one unearned run.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Honor for Cahill: Pitcher Trevor Cahill, 22, was named the AL Player of the Week after going 2-0 without allowing an earned run in 17 innings. His roll of scoreless innings reached 23 before he gave up two unearned runs Sunday. He hasn't allowed an earned run in 26 innings.

Drumbeat: Carter is officially called up, and Larish arrives too

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field 8/9/2010 3:05PM

UPDATE: As you might have seen on the Twitter feed, Carter is in left and he's batting seventh; Larish is right behind him, and he's playing first base with Daric Barton still having some left shoulder discomfort.

Carter is so excited, he's grinning from ear-to-ear and he said he got no sleep at all. His phone is ringing off the hook, too. His family won't be here for his debut, but Carter believes they'll attend the A's next homestand.

Manager Bob Geren won't commit to playing Carter every day; he said he'll consider every lineup each day as he always does, so he doesn't want to make any definitive statements.

I believe the A's don't want to make too much of Carter's callup. He's here because the team had three injuries on one day and Carter and Larish were swinging the hottest bats at Triple-A Sacramento, but the team doesn't want any undue pressure placed on Carter. He's 23, there are still plenty of question marks about his ability to play in the outfield and his ability to hit big-league hitting.

The preference, I gather, would have been to bring Carter up in September after he'd played in left for a month, but the injuries sped this up, and if he struggles - as he has at every level when first promoted - Carter will get sent back out.

The "Chris Carter Era" stuff is all nice, and it's exciting he's here, but no one here will be surprised if he needs patience and time to adjust, or even a trip back to Sacramento.

Of course, if he goes on a tear right away and stays hot and hits a bunch out, Carter is here to stay. No pressure at all!

Carter said he's still adjusting to the outfield, but he said he's comfortable out there. Sounds like that will be a work in progress.

Larish has had a whirlwind week, claimed on waivers, sent to Sacramento, 10 RBIs in a doubleheader, on a plane to Seattle with Carter. He's excited too, if in a bit of a daze. Neither player is working on much sleep; they had early wakeup calls two days in a row.

Geren said that Matt Watson had a procedure to remove a kidney stone today; he's not sure how much time Watson will miss.

Andrew Bailey did pre-game throwing, a three-set progression, and Bailey said it went well and he feels good. And Conor Jackson will play five innings at Arizona tonight.

Adam Rosales and Barton are both available tonight but Geren would like to stay away from them if possible. Rosales said he's had ankle tendinitis for more than a year; it's usually manageable, but it has bothered him more since the All-Star break. Barton has had a sore shoulder for more than a week, he said, but it had been better the past five days or so until he slid into second yesterday. He said it doesn't feel like spasms, more like a jammed shoulder. He hit in the cage today and said he felt OK.

Geren and catcher Kurt Suzuki are close to Don Wakamatsu, the former A's bench coach fired as Seattle's manager today. Geren said he was "saddened" by the news and he said he'd spoken to Wakamatsu to make sure he was doing OK (he is). Suzuki, who was mentored by Wakamatsu, said, "It kinda sucks." He's sure that Wakamatsu will find another job soon because he's so highly respected in the game.

ORIGINAL POST: Chris Carter is now a member of the Oakland A's, and I'll update this after we talk to him and to Bob Geren to find out exactly where he'll be playing, the big overall plan and all that.

Jeff Larish also was brought up; I'd been told he'd be on Carter's flight from Texas this morning but at that point, it wasn't certain he'd be activated. He's here, he's on the roster, and Matt Watson (kidney stones) is on the DL and Matt Carson has been optioned back to Triple-A Sacramento.

The first real question will be: Where is Carter playing and how much? If he's here, he should be in there every day. He has 27 homers and 89 RBIs. Put him in the lineup. But does Daric Barton come out? Does Carter play in left, a spot he's not all that familiar with? We'll soon find out.

It's packed with reporters here in the press box today - not because of Carter's big-league debut, but because Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu, the A's former bench coach, was fired today along with bench coach Ty Van Burkleo (also ex-A's hitting coach) and pitching coach Rick Adair. Wakamatsu is among the most impressive people I've met in the game, and I don't doubt he'll find work again quickly. Any team that hires him is smart.

Drumbeat regular says Watson has kidney stones

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 8/8/2010 2:51PM

Elephants in Oakland, also known as EiO on the Drumbeat, is friendly with Matt Watson going all the way back to Watson's first time at Triple-A Sacramento, and he tells me that Watson has kidney stones. EiO said that's the info from Watson's wife and mom, who he'd spoken to. Watson was taken to the hospital before the game complaining of pain in his side.

I'm off today, but when I just relayed this information to Scott Ostler, who's on the scene for The Chronicle, Dr. Ostler told me that's exactly what he'd thought Watson had, given the symptoms. Seems like everyone (EiO, too) has had kidney stones and knows the signs. I'll take everyone's word for it and hope to continue avoiding them.

Could this mean a quicker return for Travis Buck, and thus another option for Buck next year? My favorite topic, and on my day off, yet. Or could it be promotion time for Chris Carter? He is pretty much a newbie in the outfield, except a handful of games last year and the past week. He has 27 homers, though. That's compelling even with limited outfield experience. He has more than double anyone on the current A's team.

That's all for now unless any other Drumbeat regulars can provide any breaking news. Thanks EiO!! You are officially the Drumbeat contributor of the day.

(If anyone is wondering how legit EiO is, many of the A's know him from Sacramento; he's pals with several of them, but Watson is his longtime friend. I trust his info, obviously.)

Carter quiet as A's tripped up by triple play

Prospect goes 0-for-3 in debut; Ellis grounds into rare feat

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Aside from the expected hype, all was quiet on the Chris Carter front Monday night.

Around him, at least for one inning and three blink-of-an-eye outs, not so much.

During a time when all eyes were to be on Carter, the top prospect making his highly anticipated Major League debut, the A's not only found themselves on the wrong end of a triple play Monday but also on the losing end of a 3-1 contest to the Mariners at Safeco Field.

Carter, who admitted after the game he was "pretty nervous," endured an 0-for-3 night with two swinging strikeouts and a groundout while seeing just two balls come his way in left field. In the fourth, the 23-year-old rookie found himself in the on-deck circle watching Mark Ellis at the plate with no out and two runners on base, the A's down, 2-0.

Translation: The A's biggest callup of the year was facing a chance to show off his power -- he had 27 homers in Triple-A upon his promotion -- with runners in scoring position.

But Carter never saw an at-bat that inning. Instead, Ellis grounded into the A's second triple play of the year.

With Jack Cust at second and Kevin Kouzmanoff at first, Ellis pulled a sharp grounder to third base off Mariners starter Doug Fister, who watched Jose Lopez field the ball and touch the third-base bag simultaneously to force Cust for the first out.

Lopez then threw the ball to second to force Kouzmanoff, and second baseman Chone Figgins completed the triple play to Casey Kotchman at first, although Ellis believed he beat the throw.

"I was safe," Ellis said. "There's not really much else to say."

"He was safe," A's manager Bob Geren said. "I didn't see it, but I was told he was safe. Obviously, it ended the inning. It was hit fairly decent. Another foot to the left, and it could have been a double."

Oakland's first triple play of the season came April 22 at home, where Alex Rodriguez began a 5-4-3 Yankees triple play courtesy of a Kurt Suzuki ground ball with Daric Barton and Ryan Sweeney on the bases.

"That's a very unique play," Geren said. "If you're going to turn one without a line drive involved, that's exactly the way you do it."

The play left Carter stranded on deck, and it also continued a trend the A's would prefer to see come to an end. The club is 0-for-35 with runners in scoring position since Friday -- numbers Geren wasn't too thrilled to hear.

"It's frustrating," he said, "in the respect that we had chances to score runs without a hit."

That was the story of the sixth inning, which began with Coco Crisp singling and scoring on an RBI double from Rajai Davis, marking the A's lone run of the night off Fister. Davis advanced to third on a groundout from Suzuki, but Cust and Kouzmanoff quickly garnered the final two outs without moving him home.

Fister, subsequently, left after six innings having given up just the one run along with seven hits, one walk and five strikeouts. His counterpart, meanwhile, went seven innings for the fourth time in his last six starts, but Vin Mazzaro was ultimately tagged with the loss despite his efforts.

The Oakland righty found himself in early trouble when he allowed back-to-back run-scoring hits to Lopez and Franklin Gutierrez in the first frame. He got through the next two innings unscathed, but in the fourth he allowed a leadoff walk to score on a sacrifice fly from Josh Wilson.

"That first inning was a little rough," Mazzaro said, "but after that, I was able to settle down, and I got into a groove. I made my pitches when I had to, just came up a little short."

Mazzaro surrendered three runs and five hits with two walks and five strikeouts en route to dropping to 6-4 on the season. The young right-hander is winless in his past three starts, but he didn't necessarily pitch all that poorly, his skipper insisted.

"He didn't get hit hard all night," Geren said. "If we get a couple hits with runners in scoring position, he'd have more room."

Carter, meanwhile, was simply satisfied to put a big league game under his belt despite tallying two swinging strikeouts in his first two at-bats.

"I was shaking," he said, "just trying to calm down. I was chasing those strikes, maybe a little over-anxious to hit something."

By night's end, though, he "felt fine out there," and Geren said the newcomer looked it, too.

"He hit the ball pretty hard that last time," the A's manager said. "He was locating his pitches well and just chased some balls."

"He doesn't seem to have that anxious look at all. He seems pretty relaxed."

Felix, Anderson meet for likely duel in Seattle

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

The A's and the Mariners might not be at the top of the standings in the American League West, but they still have two of the best young starters in baseball, and they're hooking up in a Tuesday night duel that figures to be a Safeco Field gem.

The A's will start gifted 22-year-old left-hander Brett Anderson, who's playing catchup after missing two months of the season because of left elbow inflammation, and he looked like he might be all the way back in his last start -- his second since coming back off the disabled list.

In that outing, a victory over Kansas City, he gave up two runs on three hits in seven innings and got back in the win column while lowering his season ERA to 3.14.

"He looked much sharper today," A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "His fastball has a lot more life on it and his breaking pitches were a lot sharper."

The same could be said for Mariners righty Felix Hernandez, last year's AL Cy Young Award runnerup who has been brilliant this year without much reward for his efforts.

In his last start, Hernandez held the division-leading Rangers, the third-highest-scoring team in the AL, scoreless through six innings. But the two-run, opposite-field homer he surrendered in the seventh snapped a scoreless deadlock, kick-starting the Mariners to a shutout loss. In his last five starts, the Mariners have scored two, two, one, zero and zero runs for him.

"I can't complain, it's just baseball," he said. "I just have to keep working hard."

Hernandez has been working plenty hard in a solid 2010. Despite his struggles with wins and losses, he still ranks tied for fourth in the AL in ERA (2.84), fourth in strikeouts (152) and first in quality starts (21).

A's: Power not the priority

The A's have carved out a winning record this year without the long ball. They have homered four times over the last 14 games after going deep 14 times over the previous 11 games. Overall, they've hit 70 homers this season, the second-fewest in the Majors ahead of Seattle (67). Suzuki leads the team with 12 homers. There have only been two seasons in Oakland history in which the A's did not have a 20-home run hitter (1978 and 1983). ... Anderson has not allowed a home run in 43 innings this year and his eight consecutive starts without a home run is the longest such streak by an A's pitcher over the last three years.

Mariners: Team ready to turn the page

Tuesday will mark Day 2 of the Daren Brown era as Mariners interim manager, and the Seattle players who learned of Don Wakamatsu's dismissal Monday afternoon said they realized they'll have to move on quickly and try to win games. "That's the only way we can look at it," outfielder Ichiro Suzuki said. "It's not just me, but our challenge as a team is to perform well enough to win." ... Hernandez is 8-4 with a 3.05 ERA in his career against Oakland (16 starts). He's 0-0 with a 4.26 ERA in two starts against the A's this year.

Worth noting

The A's have won 10 of their last 11 day games and are 27-11 during the day this season, the best day record in the Majors. They're 29-44 at night, which is the third worst night record in the AL. ... Mariners reliever Sean White has not allowed a run in five games (6 1/3 innings) since being recalled from Triple-A Tacoma. ... Mariners closer David Aardsma has allowed one run over his last 10 outings and has gone 5-for-5 in save opportunities since July 11.

A's call up top prospect Carter, Larish

Slugger hit 27 homers at Triple-A, starts in left field on Monday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Chris Carter's parents couldn't quite understand why their son was pulled after just one at-bat during Triple-A Sacramento's Sunday afternoon game. So they texted him, worried of an injury.

Carter didn't text them back. He called them instead.

And while the conversation is now somewhat of a blur in the youngster's mind, the bottom line was rather simple. Carter, injury-free, told them he was headed to The Show.

"I was all smiles the rest of the day," Carter said.

The 23-year-old phenom was still beaming Monday, when the A's officially announced they have called up their top prospect, along with recently acquired infielder Jeff Larish, in the wake of outfielder Matt Watson's trip to the 15-day disabled list with kidney stones.

"I still can't believe it," Carter, normally soft-spoken, said while sitting at his freshly adorned big league locker. "I couldn't sleep because I was so excited."

No time for shut-eye, anyway. Carter was immediately inserted into Monday's lineup in Seattle, playing left field and batting seventh, and manager Bob Geren said his playing time will be something of a "day-by-day" basis for now.

Carter went 0-for-3 with swinging strikeouts in his first two at-bats and a groundout and caught two balls that came his way in the A's 3-1 loss.

Carter left Sacramento with a .262 average, along with a healthy dose of 27 homers and 58 extra-base hits -- both of which rank fifth in all of the Minors. He also gathered 89 RBIs while playing in 94 games at first base, five in right field and 15 in left -- where he made 11 of his last 12 appearances.

That's also where he'll likely spend the majority of his initial time in Oakland, Geren said. The A's skipper mentioned Carter probably won't be seeing many innings at first base "right away," but he's aware of his abilities at the position.

"Daric Barton's my first baseman," Geren said. "He's close to being ready to play."

Barton was held out of the lineup Monday due to lingering left shoulder spasms, which prompted Geren to place Larish right behind Carter in the batting order at first base. And while Geren said he is "hopeful for tomorrow" for Barton's return, he feels rather confident in his temporary replacement.

Larish, 27, was claimed off waivers from the Tigers on Tuesday and went 10-for-24 (.417) with four homers and 15 RBIs in just five games with Sacramento. He said he has experience playing both corner infield positions and boasts a pretty simple mind-set about which he prefers.

"Whatever gets me on the field," he said. "I know this is a young and talented group. They play the game the right way, and I'm hoping a little change of scenery will help me."

To make room for Larish on the club's 25-man roster, the A's optioned outfielder Matt Carson to Sacramento. At the time of his demotion, Carson was in the midst of his third stint of the year with the A's and went 7-for-32 (.219) in 12 games.

Meanwhile, Carter -- who, for the past two seasons, was named the A's Organizational Player of the Year -- represents the last of six players acquired in the 2007 Dan Haren trade to make the big leagues. He has watched pitchers Brett Anderson, Dana Eveland and Greg Smith and outfielders Aaron Cunningham and Carlos Gonzalez go before him, but Carter said it's been worth the wait.

"Everything's better here," he said, looking around, still smiling. "The clubhouses, the facilities, the hotels. Everything. It's great."

Braun, Cahill named the week's best

By Bailey Stephens / MLB.com

Consistency has been the name of the game this season for Athletics hurler Trevor Cahill. But this past week, the young hurler took it up a notch.

Cahill, who highlighted his strong season with a dominating week on the hill, picked up Bank of America American League Player of the Week honors on Monday, joining Brewers' slugger Ryan Braun, who earned the National League Player of the Week Award.

Cahill, 22, completed a commanding week on the mound, going 2-0 with a 0.00 ERA in 17 innings of work. In the first start of the week, on Aug. 2, he tossed his first career complete game, a three-hit shutout of the Royals. He showed great execution, but his teammates are more impressed by his demeanor.

"What I'm impressed with -- besides his stuff and his ability -- is his mentality," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "He's such a fun, happy-go-lucky guy off the field, but when he goes on the mound, he's a competitor."

On Sunday he continued his success, allowing just two unearned runs in eight innings to the AL West-leading Rangers.

The young right-hander has now made 19 consecutive starts of at least five innings in which he allowed six hits or fewer. The impressive streak is the second longest of its kind in modern Major League history, just behind Nolan Ryan's streak of 20 starts in 1972-73. Cahill credits his impressive numbers, now 12-4 with a 2.56 ERA, to an emphasis on getting ahead of batters.

"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."

Despite Cahill's success, it's likely he wouldn't want to face his National League counterpart. But then again, the way Braun is swinging the bat, there probably aren't many pitchers itching to face him.

Braun hit a Major League-leading .538 this past week, pacing the pack with 14 hits. In addition to tallying at least one hit in each of his games, he had four multihit appearances.

On Aug. 2, Braun tied a career high with five hits in a rout of the Cubs. He and teammate Prince Fielder became just the third pair of Brewers to record five hits in a game in franchise history.

"There's no reason to explain it. There's no reason to look into it," Braun said. "Enjoy it while it lasts and move on to the next one."

Braun's recent signs of life are all the more impressive considering he'd been battling through what by his high standards is a down season, statistically. The 2007 Rookie of the Year hit just .200 in July and is off his earth-shattering pace of years past, but he isn't getting caught up in the numbers.

"I just try to move on, man," he said this week. "There's no reason to dwell on the past; dwell on what's negative. I try to stay positive, stay optimistic and move forward. I can't go back and get an extra 20 hits or 10 home runs or drive in an extra 30 runs.

Major League: Dribblers: Injury updates and more

Jane Lee, mlb.com

SEATTLE -- Chris Carter's promotion and Don Wakamatsu's dismissal have created lots of commotion around these parts today. That doesn't mean all other news stopped, though. Here's some updates from beautiful Safeco Field, where Carter just went down on a swinging strikeout in his first at-bat:

- **Andrew Bailey** (rib strain) endured a good side session from flat ground today, Geren said. No word yet, though, on when he'll begin throwing off a mound.
- It sounds like **Daric Barton** (shoulder spasms) should be good to go tomorrow.
- **Adam Rosales** said he's available tonight if need be. He's suffered from ankle tendinitis for the past year, but it only recently started bugging him after the All-Star Break. Nothing major, though.
- **Conor Jackson** (right hamstring) played 3 innings in Arizona on Sunday, and Geren said there were "no issues," so he's slated to play 5 today.
- **Matt Watson** underwent an operation this morning to remove the kidney stones that were causing him severe side and back pain yesterday. Geren wasn't sure how long his recovery process will be.

This and that:

- **Carter** is widely known as being a shy personality, but today he surprised all by responding to questions with answers other than "yes" or "no." You can tell he's so psyched to be here, and it's fun watching him go through the big league routine for the first time. Geren wouldn't go into much detail -- if any -- regarding his playing time, but I would imagine the A's would like to give him a long look in the outfield. I don't think they want that kind of power sitting on the bench.
- **Jeff Larish**, meanwhile, is also pretty shy, I've heard. But, just like Carter, I found him to be rather nice and respectful. Sounds like he was looking for a change of scenery and, while he told me it's been a crazy couple weeks for him,

he said he's genuinely excited to be here with a young bunch. He went to Arizona State, so he knows fellow Sun Devil **Travis Buck** pretty well. He's also friends with **Eric Sogard**, who was a freshman at ASU when he was a senior.

- One final note, **Adrian Cardenas** was promoted from Double-A Midland to Sacramento today, and for good reason. He had reached base safely in 46 of his past 50 games and was hitting .347 over that stretch.

A's lose in Seattle, 3-1

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — Last-place Seattle welcomed new interim manager Daren Brown by getting its first triple play in 15 years in a 3-1 win over the Oakland Athletics on Monday night.

Brown moved up from Triple-A Tacoma earlier Monday when Seattle fired first-time manager Don Wakamatsu after 1 1/2 seasons.

Brown became the 10th of Seattle's 17 managers to win their first game.

Only one of the other 16 finished their Mariners tenure with a winning record: Lou Piniella. The only manager to take Seattle to the postseason left after the 2002 season with a year left on his contract.

Brown, a 10-year veteran of Seattle's system, is the team's sixth manager in the eight seasons since. He said he got word the Mariners were promoting him at 11:30 Central time Sunday night, following Tacoma's 12-inning win at Omaha. He boarded a plane there at 6:30 Monday morning and arrived in Seattle hours before the Mariners' game.

He looked tired while hanging on the padded dugout railing early in the game. But he and the rest of the 19,943 attended were awakened in the top of the fourth by Seattle's first triple play since July 13, 1995, against Toronto.

Jose Lopez took a chopper by Oakland's Mark Ellis and immediately stepped on third base for a forceout. Lopez then threw to second base for a forceout there and Chone Figgins' throw to first baseman Casey Kotchman appeared to arrive at the same time as Ellis' foot hit the bag, but first base umpire Cory Blaser called Ellis out.

Ellis argued the call to no avail. Seattle's lead remained 2-0.

The 5-4-3 play was the 10th triple putout for the Mariners, who began play in 1977.

RBI singles by Lopez and Franklin Gutierrez with two out in the first off Vin Mazzaro gave Doug Fister (4-8) and relievers Sean White, Brandon League and David Aardsma all the runs they needed.

Aardsma was perfect in the ninth for his 21st save in 25 chances — and sent Oakland back to eight games behind idle and first-place Texas in the AL West.

Seattle's insurance run came after Mazzaro walked Gutierrez leading off the fourth. Gutierrez came around and scored on Josh Wilson's sacrifice fly.

Fister won for the first time in eight decisions and 12 starts, since May 14. He allowed seven hits and one run in six innings. He walked one and struck out five. Oakland's only damage off him was a single by Coco Crisp and a double by Rajai Davis to begin the sixth.

Seattle pitchers retired the final 12 A's batters to end it.

Mazzaro (6-4) allowed only three other hits and two early runs in his seven innings.

Touted outfielder Chris Carter became the last of Oakland's haul of six prospects received in the Dan Haren trade a couple of years ago to reach the major leagues. Carter went 0 for 3 with two strikeouts in his debut.

NOTES: Aardsma has allowed just one run over his last 10 games and is 5-for-5 in saves since July 11. ... The A's placed OF Matt Watson on the 15-day disabled list and optioned OF Matt Carson to Triple-A Sacramento. Besides Carter, Oakland also

recalled 1B Jeff Larish from Sacramento in time to start the game. Manager Bob Geren said Watson had a procedure Monday morning to remove a kidney stone.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Six-run lead not enough for slumping Cats

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

A six-run cushion wasn't enough for the River Cats to hold on for a win Monday night. A monster Round Rock rally aided the Express in topping visiting Sacramento, 11-7.

Michael Taylor started and ended the second inning for Sacramento. All nine players in the batting lineup cycled through and swung hard to give the River Cats a 6-0 lead. Taylor singled to kick things off. Adrian Cardenas followed with a double and a Jeff Baisley single scored Taylor and Cardenas. Corey Wimberly singled to advance Baisley to third. Eric Sogard, who doubled in the first, did so again to send Baisley home. Travis Buck and Dallas McPherson also had hits on the inning.

Round Rock rallied to tie the game at six in the fifth inning. The Express slowly started adding on runs, one in the second and one in the third. It was a four-run fifth inning when the Express bats broke open. Edwin Maysonet doubled on a fly ball to center that scored three Express and quickly brought them back within one. An Edwin Bellorin single scored Maysonet for the tying run.

The Express continued to threaten the River Cats and put together back-to-back four-run innings. Round Rock lengthened its lead to 10-6 in the sixth inning. An Andrew Locke homer in the seventh rounded out Round Rock's 11 runs.

Dallas McPherson made sure Round Rock wasn't the only one to hit one out of the park and smacked his 13th home run of the season in the ninth inning.

The loss went to Jared Lansford, who pitched 0.2 innings for four hits, three runs, and a 7.36 ERA.

With the loss, Sacramento has dropped two in a row to Round Rock. The Cats look to prove themselves Tuesday night as they play game three of the series at 5:05.

Martinez & Buzachero Lead Hooks Past Hounds

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Tuesday is an off day for the Texas League. As fate would have it, the RockHounds are the only team that has the added "bonus" of the off day at home with no travel. (*)

The break comes after the 'Hounds dropped the last three of a 4-game home series against Corpus Christi. The Hooks captured the series finale, 8-2, with the clubs also sitting out a rain delay of just over two hours.

Corpus Christi led, 1-0, when a power surge knocked out about half the stadium lights. During what was to have been a 10-minute delay to re-set the lights, a rain, thunder and lightning storm hit.

After the delay, Matt Sulentic singled in the last of the third, and was the potential tying run. The hit would be the RockHounds' last until the seventh inning and, by that time, Corpus Christi had erupted for a 3-run fifth inning and a 4-run sixth. Corpus Christi's J.D. Martinez had a 4-RBI game, highlighted by a towering, 2-run home run that gave the Hooks a 3-0 lead.

Bubbie Buzachero, acquired in a minor league trade by Houston from Toronto late last week, was brilliant again. After tossing 4.0 perfect innings earlier in the series, the right-hander went 3.0 innings and allowed only Sulentic's single, earning the win in the process.

The next 12 games on the Texas League schedule are North-versus-South, with the RockHounds facing Tulsa and Northwest Arkansas in home-and-home, 3-game series. The 'Hounds home stand continues through this weekend and concludes next Monday.

(*) The RockHounds will "pay the price" later this month, playing at Springdale, Arkansas on Monday night, August 23, then bussing all night (12-14 hours) and playing at Citibank Ballpark the next night.

The pennant race & the wild card: It's "game on" in the Texas League South. The RockHounds now lead San Antonio by just one game ... Frisco by two and Corpus by five. 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 just four games back.

Congrats to "AC," Chris & Sam

Adrian Cardenas has been promoted back to Triple-A. Since his re-assignment to the RockHounds (from the Triple-A Sacramento RiverCats) in early June, "AC" hit in 48-of-51 games with a .345 average. Chris Carter made his Major League debut last night, starting in left field for the Oakland A's at Seattle. Chris was the 2009 Texas League Player of the Year, hitting .337 with 24 HR and 101 RBI for the RockHounds. Former TCU star Sam Demel earned his first Major League win Monday, pitching for the Arizona Diamondbacks. Sam was sensational in early 2009 with the RockHounds, posting 11 saves with a 0.61 ERA. He was traded to the Arizona Diamondbacks in June, and was the winning pitcher in the D'backs extra-innings win at Milwaukee. The losing pitcher in the game? Major League Baseball's all-time saves leader, Trevor Hoffman!

Cougars Keep Rolling in Burlington

Kane County now 11-1 against Bees in '10, outscoring them 89-36

BURLINGTON, Iowa – With their 8-0 victory Monday night at Community Field, the Kane County Cougars improved to 11-1 this season against the Burlington Bees and reached a new season-high for games above .500 at nine. They are 26-17 in the 2nd half and now own a 2.5-game lead over Clinton for the top playoff spot in the Western Division. Ian Krol pitched five shutout innings for the win, and Jason Christian drove in two to lead the offense.

The Cougars jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the first inning when Rashun Dixon bounced into a double play to bring home Conner Crumbliss. Then in the fifth Tyreace House stole second and third and scored on an error to make it 2-0. In the sixth, Christian tripled in Mitch LeVier, and Jose Crisotomo poked an RBI single for a 4-0 score. The Cougars doubled their lead with four more in the ninth. Crisotomo and Aliotti scored on wild pitches, Aliotti doubled home a run and Christian delivered a run-scoring grounder for the 8-0 final.

Krol (9-4) has not allowed a run against the Bees as a starter in 11 innings. He scattered seven hits, walked none and fanned three in the victory. A.J. Huttenlocker logged the next two innings, and Ryan Doolittle and Kenny Smalley each tossed one to wrap it up. The Cougars have outscored the Bees 89-36 in their head-to-head matchups this year.

The Cougars (26-17, 58-54) and Bees (15-26, 37-73) conclude the four-game set Tuesday night at 6:30 CT when Murphy Smith (6-0, 4.08) faces Elisaul Pimentel (9-4, 3.50). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 6:15 p.m.