

## A's News Clips, Wednesday, August 11, 2010

### Oakland A's come up empty against last-place Seattle Mariners and Felix Hernandez

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Three consecutive singles to open the game seemed like an encouraging start for the A's on Tuesday night at Safeco Field.

But based on how they've struggled to drive runners home when in scoring position, it also came across as a taunting challenge.

The A's came up empty in that bases-loaded scenario against Seattle right-hander Felix Hernandez, and they weren't heard from again in a 2-0 loss before a crowd of 21,377.

The A's have dropped two straight to the last-place Mariners and failed to build on momentum after winning a weekend series against American League West-leading Texas.

Oakland didn't advance a base runner past first base after the first inning. Hernandez (8-9) struck out a career-high 13 and allowed just five hits in eight innings, mixing a mid-90s fastball with breaking stuff that seemed to drop off a table.

"After that first inning, he was the sharpest I've ever seen him," A's second baseman Mark Ellis said of Hernandez. "He had four good pitches. We were overmatched, honestly."

A terrific effort from left-hander Brett Anderson went to waste. He allowed one run and five hits in seven innings, striking out seven and walking two. One of his walks was intentional, and it played a role as Seattle broke a scoreless tie in the sixth.

With a runner on second and two outs, A's manager Bob Geren elected to intentionally walk right-handed hitting cleanup man Franklin Gutierrez to bring up left-handed hitting Casey Kotchman, a .212 hitter entering the night.

Kotchman lined a run-scoring single to right field to give the Mariners the lead.

Aware that lefties are actually hitting him better this season than righties (.333 to .225 coming into Tuesday), Anderson said he was "a little surprised" the intentional walk was ordered but added: "You've got to play the matchups, left on left with the breaking ball. I felt confident, I just didn't get it done."

Geren defended his decision, pointing out Gutierrez had hit the ball hard in his first two at-bats, including a first-inning double.

"With two outs, you pick who you want to face," Geren said.

Things looked promising for the A's in the first.

Coco Crisp dropped a leadoff bunt single down the third-base line. Daric Barton followed with a single to left-center and Kurt Suzuki singled sharply to left field.

Oddly enough, Suzuki's hit snapped Oakland's 0-for-35 streak with runners in scoring position. But the ball was hit hard enough that Crisp couldn't score from second base.

With the bases loaded and no outs, Jack Cust struck out swinging, and Kevin Kouzmanoff hit into his 17th double play of the season.

The loss dropped the A's nine games behind Texas with 50 games remaining. They're guaranteed of losing this three-game series to lowly Seattle, with a weekend series at AL Central-leading Minnesota looming.

"You've got to look ahead, not back," Geren said. "But it's somewhat discouraging."

Chris Carter started in left field again and went 0 for 3 with two strikeouts, leaving the A's top prospect 0 for 6 with four strikeouts in his first two big league games. As on Monday, he went down swinging on breaking balls.

Anderson (3-3) posted his second straight strong outing in his third start since returning from the disabled list. He made particularly good use of a sharp slider.

"If I can keep that stuff I'll be pretty pleased," he said.

## **Oakland A's update: Rajai Davis covers all positions in outfield**

Joe Stiglich, BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Davis goes from left to right, and in between

SEATTLE -- When spring training began, Rajai Davis was preparing for a full-time gig in left field.

But it's been musical chairs for him as the season has unfolded.

Davis spent the majority of the first half playing center field as projected starter Coco Crisp had two lengthy stints on the disabled list. Once Crisp returned to the lineup June 22, Davis slid back to left field.

Now with Ryan Sweeney sidelined the rest of the season because of right knee surgery, Davis is seeing regular time in right field.

"I guess the adjustment is I have to check the lineup a little closer, instead of just knowing I'm going to left or going out to right," Davis said before Tuesday's game against the Seattle Mariners.

Before this season, Davis had spent the majority of his time playing center field since the A's claimed him off waivers from the Giants in April 2008.

Adapting to the corner spots hasn't been overly difficult for him.

"It's easier throwing from right or left when you're throwing to home plate because you don't have that mound to deal with," he said.

Davis is guaranteed to play somewhere based on how he's swinging the bat. He entered Tuesday hitting .351 with 16 RBIs and eight steals over his previous 21 games.

Coming into Tuesday, he was a career .304 hitter after the All-Star break compared to .250 before the break.class="bulletsquare">

Ben Sheets underwent surgery on his right elbow Monday. Though manager Bob Geren didn't have specific details, Sheets' procedure was more extensive than anticipated.

Aside from fixing a tear in Sheets' flexor tendon, Dallas-based orthopedist Dr. Keith Meister repaired damage to the right-hander's pronator tendon and ulnar collateral ligament, Geren said.

How this affects Sheets' timetable for recovery is unknown. In a media conference call two weeks ago, Sheets said he wasn't sure if his elbow would recover enough for him to ever pitch again.

Closer Andrew Bailey (rib cage strain) said he's felt very good in recent throwing sessions, but he doesn't know yet when he'll get back on the mound.

## **Chin Music: Daric Barton returns to first base — can A's offense rebound against King Felix?**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/10/2010 6:28PM

The A's are back to a more familiar lineup tonight, as Daric Barton returns to the No. 2 spot in the order and Rajai Davis moves back to the seventh slot. Chris Carter is hitting eighth, one spot lower than last night. Regardless of who hits where, the A's need to find a way to get runners home from scoring position. It won't be the easiest task tonight against Felix Hernandez. ... Call this a "swing" game. If the A's win, things suddenly look more promising and they're in position to win the series. If they lose, it won't matter what happens tomorrow, they're going to be in bad shape rolling into a weekend series with a tough Minnesota team.

–Quick injury updates: Closer Andrew Bailey (rib cage strain) has felt very good throwing the past couple of days, though he still doesn't know when he'll throw off the mound. ... Outfielder Conor Jackson (right hamstring) played five innings last night in the Arizona Rookie League and will DH tonight. He won't come off the DL until he's up to playing nine innings, but things seem to be progressing well. Where does he fit in when he returns, and what will that mean for Carter? We'll find out ...

–Ben Sheets had surgery yesterday on his right elbow, performed by Dallas-based doctor Keith Meister. Though manager Bob Geren didn't have many details, it sounds like it was more involved than expected. In addition to fixing his flexor tendon, Sheets also had repairs done on his pronator tendon and ulnar collateral ligament, Geren said. We haven't gotten specific information on what this means for Sheets' timetable for recovery. As he said two weeks ago on a conference call, he's unsure whether his elbow will recover enough to allow him to pitch again.

Tonight's lineups ...

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

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

## **Bats again fail to back up good pitching**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's run of hitless at-bats with men in scoring position came to an end quickly Tuesday night.

But all Kurt Suzuki's first-inning single did was to load the bases. The A's somehow didn't manage to score in the inning, and they didn't get another man in scoring position in a 2-0 loss to the Mariners. Felix Hernandez, the Seattle starter, recorded 13 strikeouts in eight innings, and Oakland struck out 14 times in all.

"We ran into one of the best pitchers in the league," A's second baseman Mark Ellis said. "Give him credit."

Entering the day, the A's totals with men at second and/or third were pitiful, 0-for-35, the second-longest such streak in Oakland history after an 0-for-41 in 1980.

The first inning Tuesday was a doozy: There were no outs when Suzuki's single loaded the bases. Then Jack Cust struck out, and Kevin Kouzmanoff hit into a double play.

"A lot of real good pitchers, any weakness early, you have to take advantage of it," A's manager Bob Geren said. "But he really pumped up the volume there. He found a little extra burst of adrenaline."

Teams hit an RISP rut at least once a season, and A's hitting coach Jim Skaalen said when it happens, he says "absolutely nothing. I say the same things I always do: Relax, get a good pitch to hit. If you start thinking about it, you start pressing, and nothing good can come of that."

Geren said he's happy with the team's effort. But, he said, "Don't get me wrong. You need hits with runners on base, without a doubt."

Anderson allowed five hits and one run in seven innings; he struck out seven, and he walked two, one intentionally. The intentional walk was to Franklin Gutierrez in the sixth; the next batter, Casey Kotchman, delivered an RBI single. Geren cited left-right numbers, Kotchman's recent funk and the fact that Gutierrez had doubled earlier. "You're going to play the matchups, left on left," Anderson said. "And I just didn't get the fastball in enough."

As Geren noted, Anderson's first start after coming off the disabled list was so-so, his second was good and his third, Tuesday night, was outstanding. "I'm pretty pleased," Anderson said. "I feel like I turned a little corner last time out. If I stay here or even progress, I'll be right where I want to be."

Cliff Pennington made a marvelous barehanded play up the middle on Ichiro Suzuki in the third, picking up a bouncer near the bag with Ellis moving right in front of him, then throwing in the same motion for the out. He nearly got Ichiro in the sixth with a ranging play up the middle, a spin and throw, but Ichiro was barely safe.

"Ichiro is so hard to defend against," Ellis said. "I was surprised when I turned around and saw he was out. And that second one might have been even better."

## **Henry Rodriguez showing savvy as well as power**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

As manager **Bob Geren** said before Tuesday's game, you can't teach 99 mph.

So when you have someone who can throw that hard, you work with him on all the other fundamentals, and the A's believe that **Henry Rodriguez**, he of the occasional 100 mph fastball, is starting to really pick up some of the other niceties.

Geren noted that Monday night, when Rodriguez retired both batters he faced, he also controlled the running game better than he had in the past. Seattle manager **Daren Brown** knows Rodriguez from the Pacific Coast League, so Brown put a speedy pinch runner at first. Geren said that Rodriguez was so quick to home and so varied in his looks and his throws over, **Michael Saunders** couldn't even get a good jump.

"He's controlling the strike zone, too," Geren said. "When you have all that, you have a very good late-inning pitcher, and obviously it's our goal to get him to that point."

**Bailey better:** Closer **Andrew Bailey** said he felt his throwing session went really well; he went out to 100 feet, and he expects to move to 120 today. He's probably several days away from throwing off the mound.

**Sheets' surgery:** Geren provided some general information about **Ben Sheets'** Monday surgery in Dallas, saying that Sheets had his flexor and pronator tendons repaired, along with the ulnar collateral ligament.

Sheets had thought the ligament was sound, so such extensive damage is something of a surprise. Geren didn't have full details about the procedures performed.

**Briefly:** **Conor Jackson** DH'd in a rehab game at Arizona and was hitless in his first three at-bats. He is likely to head to Triple-A Sacramento soon. ... **Tyson Ross** was scheduled for an MRI on his right elbow Friday. He is on Sacramento's disabled list. ... With **Jeff Larish's** call-up, infielder **Adrian Cardenas** was promoted back to Sacramento; he was batting .345 at Double-A Midland.

## **A's leading off**

Susan Slusser. San Francisco Chronicle

**Not such a celebration:** It was much remarked Monday that the Mariners fired Don Wakamatsu, the first Asian American manager, on Seattle's Japanese Heritage Night, and A's catcher Kurt Suzuki, also Japanese American, noted that he himself went 0-for-4.

## **Drumbeat: A's Tuesday tidbits and updates**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field 8/10/2010 6:18PM

Chris Carter got moved down a slot to eighth because Daric Barton's back at first tonight. Here's the lineup:

Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Suzuki c, Cust dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Ellis 2b, Davis rf, Carter lf, Pennington ss

Andrew Bailey's throwing session went great today, he said; he moved out to 100 feet and he'll go to 120 tomorrow. Just going on past throwing programs for rehabbing pitchers, that means he's several more days away from throwing off the mound.

Conor Jackson is DHing tonight in Arizona but he's probably close to moving his rehab assignment to Triple-A Sacramento.

Not so good news from Sacramento: Tyson Ross is getting an MRI on his elbow today after soreness landed him on the DL.

I forgot to mention Ben Sheets' surgery, which sounds far more extensive than planned: He had his flexor and pronator tendons repaired along with his ulnar collateral ligament.

Sheets had been told the UCL was sound, and it's unclear exactly what he needed done during the procedure; when you hear UCL, you think Tommy John surgery. I'm hoping to get a more clear understanding as soon as possible, but I'm striking out so far. I'd hope someone with the A's gets a full report on Sheets.

I'm also amazed Sheets was pitching at all with that kind of damage. And he wasn't all that bad, considering.

The talk here today is about the A's ongoing 0-for-35 with runners in scoring position, the second longest such stretch in Oakland history (they had an 0-for-41 in June, 1980). Also, the triple play (Mark Ellis is still insisting he was safe at first, and I've never seen him react so strongly to a call as he did at the end of that play). The last time the A's grounded into two triple plays in a season was 1914 (thanks, David Feldman), but it's not all that unheard of. In fact, Boston hit into two triple plays in the same game in 1990 - and still won.

For you Harry Potter fans, Neville Longbottom (Matthew Lewis) threw out the first pitch, and I mean this affectionately when I say he throws like a Brit. I went to school there for a year; even cricketers don't make real over the top throws.

## **Anderson, A's outdone by Felix's career day**

### **Thirteen of Oakland's 14 strikeouts come vs. Mariners ace**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Right out of the gates, the A's looked to be departing from their woeful offensive ways Tuesday.

And then, following three straight hits to load the bases and end an 0-for-35 skid with runners in scoring position, they crawled right back into their struggling hole by way of a strikeout and double play.

Inning over. Threat demolished.

The remaining eight frames brought about much of the same for the A's, who littered 14 strikeouts across the scorecard en route to spoiling a rather solid performance from Brett Anderson in a 2-0 loss to a masterful Felix Hernandez and the Mariners.

In that fateful first frame, Coco Crisp led off with what A's manager Bob Geren deemed a "beautiful bunt," and Daric Barton and Kurt Suzuki followed with a pair of hits against Hernandez. But, just when the A's appeared headed for an early lead, King Felix showed up and strutted his dominant stuff.

And the rest was history.

"Looking back at the game," newly appointed Mariners interim manager Daren Brown said, "that first inning was probably the ballgame right there, having the bases loaded, nobody out and being able to get out of it."

"You gotta get to him early," Geren said. "You have to take advantage of those situations. He really pumped up his velocity after that. Everything went up. It seemed like he had an extra boost of adrenaline."

It didn't matter, though. The rest of his stuff, said A's second baseman Mark Ellis, was so overpowering that velocity proved to be nothing more than the cherry on top.

"He always has good velocity -- that's what he's blessed with," said Ellis, who struck out three times en route to an 0-for-3 night. "But he was throwing four different pitches for strikes, and we were overmatched, honestly."

"There are a certain number of guys in the league like that, who you just have to take advantage of when you have the chance. After that first inning, he was as sharp as I've ever seen him. ... He was pretty special."

So special that it wiped away any chance of Anderson walking away with a win despite giving up just one run through seven solid innings. The A's lefty came on strong, fanning the first two batters he faced, before boarding the next two Mariners to put runners on second and third. But he got Casey Kotchman to ground into an inning-ending out, and he proceeded to retire eight straight.

Yet five innings later, Kotchman came back for revenge. Anderson surrendered a base hit to Ichiro Suzuki to begin the sixth and, following a sacrifice bunt by Chone Figgins and groundout by Jose Lopez, Geren ordered up an intentional walk to Franklin Gutierrez with two outs to bring Kotchman to the plate.

"There are a lot of reasons for doing that," Geren explained. "Gutierrez is a much better hitter against lefties. With two outs, you pick who you want to face. You weigh your options. Brett got ahead of [Kotchman] 0-1, and then he pulled his hands and got a single."

The base hit scored Ichiro, the only run Anderson allowed.

"You just gotta think he's going to put up zeros every time out," Anderson said, "so you need to put up zeros, too. I was trying to match him pitch for pitch, and I did a pretty decent job until that inning."

The A's lefty admitted to being "a little bit" surprised by the intentional walk call but, in the end, "I didn't do my job."

It was all Anderson would lend the Mariners, and he left after seven having given up five hits while striking out a season-high seven. It marked his third start since coming off the disabled list, and Geren commented on it being his best yet.

"His first start back," the skipper said, "he was so-so. His second outing was real good, and tonight he was outstanding."

But Hernandez was even better. The Seattle right-hander gave up just two hits over his final seven frames and didn't allow a runner past first base during that span, striking out a career-high 13 along the way.

"I thought he mixed up his pitches really well," Brown said. "His offspeed stuff was real good tonight. I thought he spotted his fastball well. The numbers speak for themselves. He had good stuff tonight."

Seattle scored its final run in the eighth off lefty Craig Breslow, who surrendered three consecutive hits -- including a run-scoring single to Gutierrez -- to begin the inning before inducing a double-play ball and a flyout to end the frame.

It marked the fifth time this season the A's have been shut out and the third time an opposing pitcher has tallied at least 13 strikeouts against them. Each of the starting nine struck out at least once -- including Chris Carter, still left looking for his first Major League hit after a 0-for-3 day and two swinging strikeouts.

The lack of run support resulted in Anderson's third loss of the season, while Hernandez improved to 8-9 on the season and 9-4 all-time against the A's. With the loss, Oakland moved back to .500 and nine games behind the first-place Rangers, whom they took two of three from before entering Seattle.

"You gotta look ahead, not back," Geren said, "but it's somewhat discouraging. Coming into today, you knew, or at least predicted, it would be a low-scoring game. We had our chance to score early, and that was really the only one we had."

"Tonight, we just ran into one of the best pitchers in the league," Ellis said.

## **Mariners look for first sweep under Brown**

By Jocelyn Syrstad / MLB.com

The Mariners' poor record of 40-72 in the first 112 games of the season cost manager Don Wakamatsu, pitching coach Rick Adair, bench coach Ty Van Burkleo and performance coach Steve Hecht their jobs on Monday, as they were all dismissed by general manager Jack Zduriencik.

However, when interim manager Daren Brown received a phone call Sunday night asking if he'd take over the team, he found himself in familiar territory.

In the previous two seasons, Brown was "called up," so to speak, from Triple-A Tacoma late in the season as an extra coach for the Mariners. And although he has been in the organization for 10 years, the jitters and nerves still come when he steps onto a big league field.

"The biggest thing is I have been on the rail further down [the dugout] and nobody really looked at me," said Brown, whose team seeks a sweep of the A's on Wednesday. "So it was different [Monday night] standing there knowing I had a different responsibility. As I said yesterday, I was probably the most comfortable after the national anthem. Before then I was kind of numb."

With a new guy in charge, it is to be expected that the Mariners will see some changes in the coming games. However, Brown assured there would be no outrageous changes to how the team is used to doing things.

Basically, don't plan on Ichiro Suzuki batting fourth in the lineup anytime soon.

"I don't plan on it," Brown said. "What I like to do is kind of get a pretty set lineup. But I also know how you put a lineup together -- put your guys in the best position to be successful."

### **Athletics: Winning mark since break**

The A's are 13-10 since the All-Star break, which is the fourth-best record in the American League behind Minnesota, Toronto and Texas. Oakland has won five of its seven series since the break, including all four of its home series. In that time, the pitching staff has an ERA of 2.86 (65 earned runs through 204 1/3 innings), which is the lowest mark in all of baseball. The offense also leads all of baseball with 30 stolen bases in that span. ... The A's have stolen eight bases in their last eight games, bringing their total to 95 on the season, which is the fourth most in the AL. This marks just the second time in the last 12 seasons that the A's have stolen 90 or more bases. They stole 133 bases last year. Oakland is 40-17 when stealing a base this season, and is 16-39 with no stolen bases. ... The A's have used the disabled list 21 times this year and 85 times since the beginning of the 2007 season. The only team that has used the DL more times in that span is Texas, which has used it 90 times.

### **Mariners: Four runs is magic number**

The Mariners are 30-15 when they score four or more runs, compared to 14-55 when they score three runs or fewer. They have scored two runs or fewer in 53 (8-45) of their 113 games, and they have scored one or fewer, including 10 shutouts, in 30 games (2-28). ... The Mariners entered Tuesday's game against the A's fourth in the AL with 66 quality starts. The starting rotation also led the AL at that time with 24 starts of at least eight innings pitched. The Mariners' 10 complete games lead the AL and are second in all of baseball. It is the most the Mariners have had in a season since they tossed 17 in 1998. ... The Mariners have used 96 hitting lineups and 80 defensive lineups so far this season.

### **Worth noting**

Dallas Braden will go up against Luke French in Wednesday's series finale. Braden has gone 6-8 with a 3.75 ERA for the A's this season. In his last start against the Rangers on Friday, he left after throwing only 88 pitches due to jaw pain from a poor dental procedure. He expects to be fine for Wednesday's start. French is 1-2 with a 4.73 ERA for the Mariners this season. French outpitched reigning AL Cy Young Award winner Zack Greinke in his last start against the Royals.

## **A's encouraged by Bailey's rehab work**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Although there's still no timetable for a return date for Andrew Bailey, the A's are encouraged by how their closer is responding to rehab work.

Bailey, suffering from a right rib-cage strain, underwent a successful round of flat-ground throwing Tuesday in Seattle, and he's expected to continually increase his distance as best suited to the way his body's responding before moving to the mound.

The 26-year-old righty was initially told by Dr. Keith Meister that he would likely miss four to six weeks, a span that Bailey would like to speed up if possible. He's enduring his first disabled-list stint and has been out since July 20, when he first experienced back spasms. Those have since relieved, but Bailey is now trying to rid himself of rib pain.

"He's still day-to-day," manager Bob Geren said, "but the good news is that he's feeling good after every activity."

### **Sheets undergoes surgery to repair elbow**

SEATTLE -- A's right-hander Ben Sheets told reporters last week that he was going to approach his right elbow surgery -- his second in two years -- "very cautiously."

"It won't be the same," Sheets said. "It will be slightly different."

Just how different, though, was unclear until Tuesday, when manager Bob Geren reported that Sheets not only had his flexor tendon repaired Monday, but also his pronator tendon and ulnar collateral ligament. His 2009 operation, performed by Dr. James Andrews, involved only the flexor tendon.

This time, Dallas-based orthopedist Keith Meister, the Rangers' team physician, orchestrated the busy procedure, and Sheets is expecting to undergo a year's worth of recovery time, as he did while missing all of the 2009 season.

The A's took a gamble on Sheets with a one-year contract worth \$10 million plus incentives, the latter part of the agreement no longer relevant given his shortened season. It represented the largest one-year deal the A's have ever awarded a free agent they signed from outside their organization.

Sheets, who went 4-9 with a 4.63 ERA in 20 starts for Oakland, will be a free agent at season's end and, even though he wouldn't commit to continuing his playing career last week, he expressed an interest in undergoing the surgery to give him options.

### **Worth noting**

Daric Barton was back in the starting lineup, playing first base and batting second on Tuesday. He was pulled in the fourth inning of Sunday's game with left shoulder spasms and held out of Monday's series opener in Seattle due to the injury. ... With Barton back in the lineup, Chris Carter -- called up Monday for his Major League debut -- was moved from the seventh spot to eighth. Rajai Davis took the No. 7 slot. ... Geren said Conor Jackson, who is 0-for-4 with an RBI and two strikeouts in a combined eight innings of rehab work, was slated to DH for the A's Arizona Rookie League club Tuesday night. The A's outfielder, nursing a strained right hamstring, is expected to join another Minor League club within the organization at some point soon, Geren said.

## **Major League: 'Minor' Notes**

Jane Lee, mlb.com

Some quick updates from around the Minors:

- **Conor Jackson** went 0-for-2 with an RBI in five innings of work in Arizona tonight. It marked his second rehab game, and he's expected to continue building up innings before returning to Oakland.
- First-round Draft pick **Michael Choice** collected his first pro hits tonight, as he went 2-for-4 with a triple for Vancouver, the A's short-season Class-A club.
- In that same game, **Jason Jennings** pitched two innings, allowing one run with one strikeout.
- For Triple-A Sacramento, **Travis Buck** went 2-for-4 with 2 RBIs and has suddenly raised his average to .309. Unfortunately, I see Buck staying there for quite some time, given **Carter's** promotion and Jackson's impending return.
- Also in that game, **Adrian Cardenas** collected a double in his first Triple-A action since being promoted from Double-A Midland today. He started at third base.



## **A's shut out in Seattle**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — Felix Hernandez scattered five hits over eight innings and struck out a career-high 13 to lead the Seattle Mariners to a 2-0 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Tuesday night.

David Aardsma took over in the ninth for Hernandez (8-9), who threw 110 pitches. He picked up his 22nd save in 26 opportunities.

The Mariners scored a run in the sixth off starter Brett Anderson (3-3) when Ichiro Suzuki led off with his major league-leading 38th infield hit. He was sacrificed to second. After a groundout and an intentional walk to Franklin Gutierrez, Casey Kotchman singled through the right side to score Suzuki.

Seattle added a run in the eighth off Craig Breslow when Gutierrez lofted an RBI single to shallow left.

It was the sixth shutout for the Mariners and the fifth time the A's have been shut out.

The lack of scoring is not new to Hernandez this season. In his nine losses, the Mariners have scored a total of nine runs.

Hernandez worked some pitching magic getting out of a bases loaded, no-out jam in the first inning. He struck out Jack Cust then induced Kevin Kouzmanoff to hit a two-hop ground ball to second baseman Chone Figgins, who turned it into a routine double play.

At that point, the A's were hitless in their last 37 chances with runners in scoring position. They would not have another chance.

Hernandez settled in after the first-inning blip. Over a span of 25 batters, he retired 22, 12 on strikeouts. The only hitters to reach were on two singles and a walk.

Anderson also had a brush with first-inning trouble. He walked Jose Lopez with two outs then Gutierrez doubled into the left-field corner. Lopez, who is not fast, was held up at third. Kotchman ended it with a right-side groundout.

Anderson went on to retire 13 of 14 batters, allowing only a two-out single in the fourth. He gave up two hits through five innings but couldn't get through the sixth unharmed.

NOTES

Daren Brown got a call from his father, Paul Brown, after the Mariners' 3-1 victory Monday in his first game as manager. His father had played parts of four seasons with the Phillies (1961-63, 1968) and was 0-8 as a pitcher. He told his son he was proud that he was a winner first time out. "That was special to me for him to say that," Daren Brown said. "He's a part (of my life). He grew up around the game. It's real important to me."

A's RHP Ben Sheets had more extension surgery Monday on his right elbow than expected. Texas Rangers team surgeon Dr. Keith Meister repaired the flexor tendon, pronator tendon and the ulnar collateral ligament. Sheets had been told that his UCL would not be involved.

## **Urban: Wakamatsu, Geren and the A's**

[Mychael Urban](#), CSNBayArea.com

Battling the annual torrent of injuries, balancing the dual priorities of winning now and developing for the future, keeping a flawed club on the fringes of a pennant race and trying to avoid his fourth consecutive losing season in four years as a big-league manager, A's skipper Bob Geren is carrying quite a mental load these days.

With the [Monday firing of Don Wakamatsu as the manager in Seattle](#), the load might feel a tad heavier.

To say that Wakamatsu, Geren's bench coach and clubhouse consigliere in 2008, was popular among A's players is akin to saying Katy Perry is popular among teenage boys. Oakland's brass knew it, too. They loved the guy as well.

Geren, mind you, is in the last guaranteed year of his contract, with a club option for 2011. He's essentially a lame duck at the moment, and there's an awfully pretty duck out there now, unattached and with a positive history in Oakland.

If that thought hasn't dawned on Geren, he's a tougher nut than we know.

We know Geren to be slightly on the sensitive side -- to criticism of himself, his players and his employers -- and something of an overthinker. Witness his bullpen management and propensity for asking others what they think of a move he might be considering as overwhelming evidence of the latter.

Is Geren wildly popular in the A's clubhouse? Not nearly as popular as Wakamatsu; to this day several A's are in regular contact with him.

Then again, bench coaches are like backup quarterbacks and uncles with candy, and being liked isn't a requirement of major-league managers.

Winning *is* something of a requirement, and that partly explains why Wakamatsu, who had run-ins with two of his most prominent players (Ken Griffey Jr., Chone Figgins) this season, got the boot.

After engineering the biggest turnaround in the game last season (from 61 wins the year before he was hired to 85), he was expected to lead a revamped team that planned to emphasize defense in an unprecedented manner to the playoffs. Heading into Monday's series opener with the A's, though, the M's were 22 1/2 games out of first place.

That's a full 15 games behind Oakland, for those of you keeping track, but how much of what happened in Seattle is Wakamatsu's fault? Was he a significantly better manager than Geren last year but not this year? Or was he saddled with a poorly conceived team?

How much of what's happened in Oakland over the past 3 1/2 years -- good and bad -- is the product of Geren's acumen or lack thereof?

These are questions that Oakland general manager Billy Beane and his own consiglieres are going to have to answer. Until they do, either by picking up their manager's option or not, Geren might be hearing those questions in his head for quite some time.

And it's a pretty busy head to begin with.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **McPherson provides River Cats with needed lift**

Sacramento River Cats

Dallas McPherson has experienced rough stretches. The left-handed slugger has missed two entire seasons because of back injuries.

He also knows how to bounce back. McPherson hit a Minor League Baseball-best 42 home runs in 2008 after missing all of 2007, and has provided the 2010 River Cats with a big bat in the heart of the order after being sidelined all of 2009.

So it's no surprise that it was McPherson who came up big when Sacramento needed it most, following a three-day stretch that saw the team blow two huge leads and suffer through a brutal travel day following a 5-hour game.

McPherson hit a go-ahead three-run home run in the fifth inning Tuesday night and tacked on an RBI double in the ninth for good measure as Sacramento knocked off host the Round Rock Express, 5-1.

The victory snaps a three-game losing streak for Sacramento, which included blown leads of six and 11 runs. Saturday's 11-run collapse marked the longest game in River Cats history (5 hours, 3 minutes) and ended around midnight. That misery was followed by a 4 a.m. flight to Round Rock. After landing in Texas, the team had enough time for a power nap and a few practice swings before sleepwalking through a 11-7 loss Sunday.

After squandering an early 6-0 lead in Monday's defeat, McPherson's offensive display Tuesday provided a much needed boost for the River Cats, who also lost top run-producer Chris Carter to Oakland during their PCL version of Hell Week.

Matt Carson, who returned to Sacramento when Oakland promoted Carter, opened the River Cats scoring with a solo home run in the second. Carson's return provides Sacramento with a top defensive outfielder who can provide some of the power lost with Carter's departure.

Sacramento starter Bobby Cramer, recently signed out of the Mexican League, held the Express to one run through 5.0 innings, striking out six and walking one. He left with a 3-1 lead after McPherson brought home Corey Wimberly and Travis Buck with his 14th home run of the season, a drive to left-center. McPherson has a nine-game hitting streak, including home runs in each of his last three.

Fernando Hernandez and Justin James combined to pitch scoreless baseball over the final 4.0 innings. James threw 2.1 hitless innings, recording his first save of the season.

Travis Buck, who entered with a .438 average in eight August games, went 3-for-4 with two doubles. Wimberly stole his league-leading 45th base of the season.

## **Five-Run First Helps Ports To 8-5 Win**

**SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.** - The Stockton Ports wasted no time in getting off on the right foot on their six-game South Division road trip. The Boys of Banner Island put up a five-spot in the top of the first inning en route to an 8-5 win over the Inland Empire 66ers. The win, combined with Modesto's loss to Visalia, puts the Ports two games back of the wild card lead in the North Division playoff race.

Inland Empire starter Tim Sexton (0-1), despite pitching brilliantly in the middle innings, got off to a rough start in his first appearance back from Double-A Chattanooga. With one out in the first, Sexton yielded four straight singles, the last two to Mike Spina and Yusuf Carter each producing a run to put the Ports in front 2-0. After Tyler Ladendorf struck out, Jeremy Barfield connected on a three-run homer to left to give the Ports a hearty 5-0 lead in the first inning.

Sexton would allow a single and a walk in the second, but finish his night retiring 13 of the last 14 batters he faced. He still wound up with the loss, allowing five runs on six hits in six innings of work.

The 66ers began climbing back into the contest right away in the bottom of the first. Alfredo Silverio greeted Ports starter Shawn Haviland with a solo home run to left to make it a 5-1 game. Inland Empire added another run in the second when Tony Delmonico singled home Dustin Yount who'd doubled to start the frame to make it 5-2.

Haviland would settle in, however, and not allow a run over his final 2.2 innings of work. Stockton's starter reached his pitch count in the fifth after retiring the first two batters of the inning. Haviland would receive a no-decision, going 4.2 innings and allowing two runs on five hits while striking out five.

Jose Pina (2-3) came on to finish the fifth and Pina tossed 2.1 solid innings as he retired seven of the eight batters he faced. Pina would end up the winning pitcher in the ballgame.

Stockton made it a five-run game again with a pair of runs in the seventh off 66ers reliever Brandon Mann. David Thomas greeted Mann with a double to start the seventh. Jermaine Mitchell followed with a double to right to score Thomas, extending his hitting streak to 12 games and making it a 6-2 Stockton lead. Mitchell stole third on the very first pitch to Grant Green. Green would come through with a sac-fly to deep center to make it a 7-2 contest.

Mann would allow two runs over two innings of work and not factor into the decision.

Inland Empire, trailing 7-2, was given new life in the eighth with one swing of the bat. With Trey Barham on the hill and one on with two out, Yount struck again with a two-run homer to right to make it 7-4. Yount would fall a triple shy of hitting for the cycle while going 3-for-4. Barham allowed two runs in his lone inning of work.

Stockton added a run in the ninth off reliever Eric Thompson. After a one-out single from Thomas, Mitchell came up and again displayed his blazing speed, legging out a triple on a ball he hit to the base of the left-field fence to score Thomas and make it an 8-4 game. It was the lone run allowed by Thompson in his inning of relief.

Inland Empire wouldn't let the game slip away easily in the ninth. Mike Hart started the inning by walking Johan Garcia, and then got Ramon Jean to fly to left. With one out, Ports skipper Steve Scarsone elected to go with Paul Smyth from the bullpen despite it not being a save situation. Smyth gave up a single to Silverio to put two on with one out. After Chris Gutierrez walked to load the bases, Scott Van Slyke hit a grounder to third. Stephen Parker tagged the bag for the force out which brought in a run as he was unable to complete a double-play attempt to first. Austin Gallagher came up as the possible tying run and, on a 3-2 pitch, struck out swinging to end the game.

The Ports and 66ers will play the second of three games on Wednesday night at Arrowhead Credit Union Park. Left-hander Ben Hornbeck (4-3, 5.35 ERA) will toe the slab for Stockton, opposed by right-hander Ethan Martin (9-10, 5.61 ERA) for Inland Empire. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

## **Cougars Rained Out in Burlington**

### **Finale of 4-game set is cancelled by rain, will not be made up**

**BURLINGTON, Iowa** – The Kane County Cougars' finale of a four-game series Tuesday night against the Burlington Bees at Community Field was cancelled due to rain. It will not be made up, as the two teams do not play each other again before the end of the regular season.

The Cougars won the first three games of the set, outscoring the Bees, 31-10. They have won nine of their last 12 games and 24 of their last 36 and entered Tuesday with a 2.5-game lead over Clinton for the Western Division's top 2nd-half playoff spot.

The Cougars (26-17, 58-54) continue their road trip Wednesday night at 6:35 CT when they open a three-game set against the Cedar Rapids Kernels (24-18, 67-43). Murphy Smith (6-0, 4.08) is scheduled to face Max Russell (1-1, 4.09). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at [www.kccougars.com](http://www.kccougars.com) with pre-game coverage starting at 6:20 p.m.