

## A's News Clips, Thursday, August 12, 2010

### Dallas Braden tosses 4-hitter as A's beat Mariners

By Joe Stiglich, Bay Area News Group

Dallas Braden pitched his second complete game in his past three starts Wednesday afternoon, quite an achievement on the personal side for the left-hander.

But after the A's 5-1 victory over the Seattle Mariners, Braden was more in tune with what his outing meant for his team.

After two straight defeats to the last-place Mariners that dropped them into third place in the American League West, the A's simply needed a victory to soothe their psyche a little.

"The numbers are where they are in terms of the (division) race," Braden said. "But a tangible blow can be felt when you get swept."

The A's avoided that scenario due in part to their hitters finally breaking through with runners in scoring position. They also got a huge lift from Braden (7-8), who distances himself from his post-perfect game blues with each solid outing.

He threw a four-hitter to notch his fourth complete game of the season, the most by an Athletic since Mark Mulder had five in 2004.

"I thought he had a real good changeup today," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He had a very, very low pitch count, which gave him the ability to finish the game. ... I think he's just sharp mentally and physically right now."

And to think Braden went his first 52 major league starts without a complete game -- an Oakland record to start a career -- before throwing his perfect game May 9 against Tampa Bay.

His struggles after that were well chronicled as he failed to win in his first nine starts following his perfecto. But in five starts since coming off the disabled list for elbow soreness, Braden is 3-1 with a 2.83 ERA. He lowered his overall ERA to 3.56.

Braden doesn't point to any magic formula for his change in fortune.

"I feel like if you can go out and execute whatever the game plan is, you give your team a chance and give yourself a chance to stick around longer," he said.

Considering he entered the day getting an average run support of 3.30 per game, lowest in the AL, it helped that the A's rediscovered the path to home plate.

They were held to one run total in the first two games of the series.

Coco Crisp's RBI single in the second inning Wednesday was the A's first run-producing hit with a runner in scoring position since Kurt Suzuki doubled home Daric Barton in the first inning of Friday's loss to Texas.

The A's proceeded to go on a 0-for-35 streak with runners in scoring position, although they scored several runs during that time via sacrifice flies, bases-loaded walks and other methods.

Mark Ellis, who had just one extra-base hit over his previous 18 games, tied an Oakland record with three doubles and had three RBIs.

It was a satisfying afternoon for Ellis, who grounded into a triple play Monday and struck out three times against Felix Hernandez on Tuesday (though he reached first on a wild pitch on one of the strikeouts).

Ellis maintains he was safe at first on the triple play.

"I still haven't hit into a triple play," he joked, before adding: "Three strikeouts last night. I guess it was a series of threes."

The A's are eight games behind first-place Texas. They have today off before beginning a three-game series against Minnesota, their first games at Target Field, the Twins' new open-air home.

## **Oakland A's update: Pitcher Ben Sheets faces long odds after undergoing Tommy John surgery**

Joe Stiglich, BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

SEATTLE -- Ben Sheets will face longer odds than anticipated if the right-hander does indeed try to resume his baseball career.

Sheets originally was scheduled to have surgery Monday to fix a tear in the flexor tendon of his right elbow. Instead, he underwent a three-part procedure that also included reconstruction of his ulnar collateral ligament, commonly known as Tommy John surgery.

Sheets, 32, already was expecting to miss the rest of this season plus all of next season because of the flexor tendon surgery, a procedure he's already had once and which cost him the entire 2009 campaign.

The general recovery period for Tommy John surgery is anywhere from 12 to 18 months. That could possibly have him ready for the start of the 2012 season were he to attempt a comeback.

He also had the pronator tendon in his elbow repaired Monday. His surgery was performed by Dallas-based orthopedist Dr. Keith Meister.

"I think if I come back I'd have to feel a lot better than I did (after my first surgery)," Sheets said in a media conference call two weeks ago.

Sheets went 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts this season, his first with the A's after signing a one-year, \$10 million contract over the winter.

Manager Bob Geren gave vague details of Sheets' surgery Tuesday, saying only that Sheets had work done on his UCL. It wasn't until Wednesday that the team revealed Sheets had ligament reconstruction.

A message left at the office of Sheets' agent, Casey Close, was not returned.

Former A's outfielder Dave Henderson visited the clubhouse after a 5-1 win over the Seattle Mariners on Wednesday and chatted with rookie outfielder Chris Carter. The two know each other through former A's pitcher Dave Stewart, who is Carter's agent. Henderson spent his first five seasons and most of his sixth with the Mariners and more recently was a broadcaster for the team. Carter reached base for the first time with a walk Wednesday but is 0 for 9 in three games to start his big league career.

Adam Rosales started at shortstop but came out in the second inning after aggravating a right ankle injury. Geren said Rosales would be re-evaluated Friday. "... Landon Powell started at catcher and contributed an RBI single. "... Outfielder Conor Jackson (strained right hamstring) was scheduled to join Single-A Stockton on Wednesday night to continue his rehab stint.

## **Braden's gem helps A's avoid sweep in Seattle**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's came into this series at Safeco Field expecting they might be able to use it as a springboard to climb closer to the top in the AL West.

The dysfunctional and disappointing Mariners had canned their manager, Don Wakamatsu just as Oakland arrived, and division-leading Texas had to contend with the Yankees. Yet the A's fell from second place, 7 1/2 games back, to third, nine games back, after dropping the first two games.

"We needed this game," said A's second baseman Mark Ellis, who tied an Oakland record with three doubles and also drove in three runs in Wednesday's 5-1 victory over the Mariners. The A's, who improved to a major-league-best 28-11 in day games, moved eight games back of Texas.

"It's a tangible blow when you get swept," Oakland starter Dallas Braden said. "And at this point, we need every game."

Braden helped Oakland salvage the final game of the series by throwing his fourth complete game of the season; he allowed four hits, two walks and a run, and he struck out six. Most important, he got three double-play balls, helping keep his pitch count down to 104.

Much of the A's offense came from Ellis, whose three doubles were a career high. He'd entered the day with one extra-base hit in his previous 18 games.

"He'd been in a little bit of a drought, but he hit those balls hard," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Those are all good outfielders here, too; to get the ball over their heads, you have to hit the ball well."

Ellis said he'd felt good at the plate lately, but he hadn't had much to hit, especially Tuesday night against Felix Hernandez.

"It was nice to see someone other than Felix on the mound," Ellis said. "He dominated us so badly. I didn't care who they had on the mound as long as it wasn't him."

Two of Ellis' doubles came off left-hander Luke French, and one off lefty Chris Seddon. Ellis, though, was more interested in discussing a teammate's hit: With two outs in the fourth and the A's holding a one-run lead, backup catcher Landon Powell singled to right, scoring Rajai Davis.

"That's nice to see, Landon coming off the bench with a big hit with two outs," Ellis said.

Braden faced the minimum through six, thanks to the double plays, and the Mariners put together only one real threat, loading the bases in the seventh. That's when Franklin Gutierrez launched a drive to deep left, but neophyte outfielder Chris Carter - usually a first baseman in the minors - caught it at the wall to limit the damage to a sacrifice fly.

Braden said he was sure that the ball Gutierrez hit was heading over the fence, adding he was thankful "Chris Carter is 7-foot-12 and might have a chance to get that."

Carter is 6-5, and he made the play with ease, and Braden retired the final eight men he faced.

## **Rosales needs closer look for sore ankle**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Adam Rosales'** right ankle injury is enough of a concern that the A's sent him back to Oakland to get examined after Wednesday's game.

Rosales was unavailable Sunday because of what he described as tendinitis, and he didn't play Monday or Tuesday. On Wednesday, he started at shortstop, but he had to exit after an inning and a half because the ankle bothered him while running to first after hitting a flyball.

Considering Rosales has had issues with the ankle since the All-Star break, the disabled list is a possibility. The A's have no other backup middle infielders, meaning **Steve Tolleson** probably will be recalled Friday.

**Sheets report gets worse:** The A's confirmed that the procedure **Ben Sheets** had for his right ulnar collateral ligament Monday was, in fact, Tommy John surgery, or a full elbow-ligament replacement.

The starting pitcher also had the flexor and pronator tendons repaired, meaning that by the end of his time in Oakland, he was throwing with a dysfunctional elbow.

Tommy John surgery requires 12-18 months of recovery time. With tendon repairs, Sheets is looking at the longer period of rehab, at a minimum, if he chooses to return to baseball.

**Briefly:** Right-hander **Tyson Ross** has a sprained ulnar collateral ligament, but there is no tear in the ligament. He will not throw for three or four weeks at Triple-A Sacramento, according to assistant general manager **David Forst**. ... **Andrew Bailey** had another good day of throwing, this time at a distance of 120 feet, and it's likely he'll begin throwing off the mound again in a few days. ... **Conor Jackson** went 2-for-4 with a double and an RBI for Class A Stockton at Inland Empire on Wednesday evening, and he could return to the A's soon. The A's then will have to decide whether **Chris Carter** heads back to Sacramento to keep playing left field every day.

## **A'S LEADING OFF**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

**Zeroes:** Chris Carter went 0-for-3 for the third game in a row, hitting a flyball and a grounder to go with a walk and a strikeout. That's nothing: Third-base coach Mike Gallego started his A's career 0-for-17 (record, Bill McNulty, 0-for-25).

## **Drumbeat: Sheets had Tommy John, too; and Bailey, Jackson updates**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field 8/11/2010 11:48AM

As I'd feared yesterday when I heard the term "ulnar collateral ligament," Ben Sheets needed Tommy John surgery Monday to go along with the expected flexor-tendon surgery and the pronator tendon was fixed, too.

I'm not sure why the team didn't explain this fully yesterday, when they gave us the rundown on the injured structures (communications glitch, essentially), but it's very unexpected and a fairly big deal for Sheets - coming back from Tommy John and flexor-tendon surgeries is going to be extremely difficult at the age of 32. He'd need at least a year and a half, and considering the surgery involved every structure in the elbow - both tendons and the ligament - it wouldn't be surprising if it was longer than that. I remain amazed he was pitching with that kind of damage, and he wasn't getting shelled; he was adequate. That's extraordinary. There was basically nothing working in his elbow.

Conor Jackson is heading to Class-A Stockton to play seven innings at Inland Empire (San Bernardino County). I'd imagine he'd be back soon, perhaps by the end of the week or early next week.

His return wouldn't necessarily spell the demotion of Chris Carter, but there's no discounting that possibility if Carter continues to look overmatched. I'm kind of throwing out both of Carter's first two games, though: He admitted he was nervous in his debut Monday night, and last night, Felix Hernandez made everyone look silly. But I'd expect that Jackson is back in left most of the time upon his return, even if he's worked back in a little slowly after a nearly season-long hamstring problem. That means Carter, if he stays, maybe goes left field, DH, first base a little bit, and my impression is that the A's would just like to leave him in left to learn the spot.

Andrew Bailey threw at a distance of 120 feet this morning, he again felt great. That means maybe Sunday or Monday for throwing off the mound at a guess.

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

## **Braden, Ellis team to defeat Mariners**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- The difference is night and day.

Literally.

When under the bright lights of a stadium otherwise surrounded by darkness, the A's have been known to falter and take a loss more times than not.

But when touched by the sun in an afternoon affair, the A's often transform into a club that just can't lose.

So on Wednesday, behind a strong complete-game effort from lefty Dallas Braden, Oakland decided to continue the trend by way of a 5-1 victory over the Mariners at Safeco Field.

With the win, the A's improved to a Major League-best 28-11 during the day, a time during which they've taken 11 of their past 12 contests. In comparison, they're 29-45 at night, which ranks second worst in the American League.

So what gives? Not much, really, especially when Braden brings with him his full bag of pitches, as he did Wednesday while notching his team-leading fourth complete game of the season. That mark represents the most by an A's pitcher since Mark Mulder tallied five in 2004.

Braden uses a rather simple approach, one that put to use just 104 pitches in the effort.

"Early in the zone," Braden said. "That's one of those things I try to do, pound the strike zone and kind of send a message that I'm not going to give in at any point, and I'm not going to pitch to you. I'm going to pitch to my strengths, and it's about not really giving them a chance to get comfortable."

The A's lefty, who has now tossed a complete game in two of his past three starts, cruised through the Mariners' lineup, facing the minimum number of batters through the first six frames, three of which were aided by the double-play ball.

"A lot of offspeed," Mariners interim manager Daren Brown said of Braden's secret weapon. "He doesn't give in. He made a lot of quality pitches. He kept the ball down. I've seen him before. He's the same guy; he goes out and battles and keeps coming at you with what he's got. He spotted his fastball well and kept us off balance."

Braden gave up the Mariners' lone run of the day in the seventh inning, when the A's lefty load the bases on two base hits and a walk before Franklin Gutierrez tallied an RBI sacrifice fly to left fielder Chris Carter that fell just short of a grand slam. And while Geren insisted he didn't think it was headed out of the park, Braden sure did.

"Absolutely," Braden said. "I was just thanking God that Carter's 7-foot-12 and might have had a chance to go over the fence and catch it. I thought he got it. It was a cookie, that's for sure."

Braden hastily got the final out of the inning to escape the jam and recorded 1-2-3 innings in the final two frames to close out his third victory since coming off the disabled list on July 20.

"I feel good," Braden said. "I'm starting to experience a little fatigue on the foot, but other than that, it's obviously nothing I didn't expect. So, as I've always said, it wouldn't be my life if there weren't obstacles to overcome."

"I feel like if you can go out and execute whatever your game plan is and play to your strengths, more times than not you'll be able to give your team a chance, and give yourself a chance to stick around longer. I don't think it has anything to do with how you feel, but about putting in the work during the week and executing."

Meanwhile, that's exactly what the A's offense did following two games that resulted in just one run and two losses. Mark Ellis, mired in an extra-base funk -- he entered Wednesday's game with one extra-base hit over his last 18 games -- snapped out of it with a career-high three doubles en route to notching three RBIs on the day.

The A's second baseman endured somewhat of an odd series that followed a theme of multiples of three. On Monday, he grounded into a triple play. The next night, he struck out three times against Felix Hernandez. And, on Wednesday, he notched a two-base hit three times.

"As long as I'm getting three hits," Ellis said with a smile. "I just got some good pitches to hit today. It's nice to see someone other than Felix on the mound."

Landon Powell, getting the start behind the plate with Kurt Suzuki in the designated hitter's spot, also tallied an RBI, on a bloop single in the fourth. The A's collected eight hits, overall, three of them coming with runners in scoring position.

"That's huge," Braden said. "That's huge for them, for their confidence and their approach going into this next series. Knowing that, even though we had lost the series yesterday, that's kind of a testament to their approach, that they're not going to give in."

"The numbers are what they are, as far as where we're at in the race, but I think an intangible blow can be taken when you get swept. It always just feels 10 times worse than maybe it really is, but at this point, we need every game."

## **Sheets' road back grows longer**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Ben Sheets was already facing a lengthy road back to the Majors following a flexor tendon operation on Monday, but it turns out that journey will be elongated even more, with news that Tommy John surgery was also involved.

Via team head athletic trainer Steve Sayles, A's manager Bob Geren reported on Tuesday that Sheets underwent repairs to his flexor tendon, pronator tendon and ulnar collateral ligament (UCL). However, it wasn't until Wednesday morning that an A's spokesperson confirmed the UCL was actually replaced, as is the standard procedure with Tommy John surgeries.

Sheets had figured to miss at least a year's worth of action, but Wednesday's news means the right-hander could be in recovery mode closer to 16-18 months. Furthermore, the healing process will be that much more complicated, thus raising a big question mark surrounding his return to the Majors.

Sheets 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 then in undergoing Monday's elbow surgery -- his second in two years -- to give him options.

The 32-year-old righty went 4-9 with a 4.63 ERA in 20 starts for Oakland and, in a combined nine seasons with the Brewers and A's, he is 90-92 with a 3.79 career mark.

## **Bailey's return drawing nearer**

SEATTLE -- Andrew Bailey is looking a bit more cheerful these days, and for good reason.

The A's closer threw from a distance of 120 feet on Wednesday morning and proceeded to walk back into the clubhouse with his arms up in the air and a smile attached to his face.

"It went really well," Bailey said, even before being asked. "[It] felt really good."

The A's have an off-day in Minnesota on Thursday, so the righty said he'll likely just play light catch, if anything, before moving to a distance of 140 feet on Friday. If all continues to go well, Bailey could soon be seeing rehab action off the mound soon.

"It's still a day-to-day thing with him," manager Bob Geren said. "Everything depends on how he feels every day, and right now there's no exact date for when he'll throw off the mound. We're flexible with him."

Bailey, sidelined since July 20, has watched Craig Breslow and Michael Wuertz lead bullpen duties in his stead. Breslow has allowed three earned runs through four innings of work in the month of August following a July that saw him compile a 2.84 ERA over 12 appearances. However, Geren said Wednesday he isn't too worried about his lefty, who is tied for second in the American League for most appearances (54).

Wuertz, meanwhile, has not allowed an earned run in 16 of his past 18 appearances, posting a 1.88 ERA along the way.

## **Jackson takes another step toward return**

SEATTLE -- Conor Jackson, stationed in Arizona since the start of the All-Star Break, will finally be on the move on Wednesday when he heads to Inland Empire to continue his rehab assignment with Class A Advanced Stockton.

Jackson, nursing a strained right hamstring, will play seven innings in left field for the Ports, thus signaling a return to Oakland sooner rather than later. In a combined eight innings with the Athletics' Arizona Rookie League club, he went 0-for-7 with an RBI and two strikeouts.

### **Worth nothing**

Adam Rosales, who has been battling ankle tendinitis this week, left Wednesday's game in the second inning after aggravating the injury. After the game, manager Bob Geren said the club is "still assessing where he is." Rosales, who was replaced by Cliff Pennington at shortstop, will be evaluated on the team's off-day on Thursday in Minnesota. ... Mark Ellis' second-inning stolen base represented the ninth stolen base by an A's player in the last nine games. ... Coco Crisp went 1-for-4 on Wednesday and is now the owner of a five-game hitting streak, during which he's put together a .474 (9-for-19) mark.

## **Pavano looks for 15th win vs. Oakland**

By Jocelyn Syrstad / MLB.com

It's been six years since Carl Pavano won more than 14 games in a season, and he is looking to change that on Friday against the A's.

Pavano has been the face of the Twins' starting rotation this season, going 14-7 with a 3.28 ERA. He has gone seven innings or more in 16 of his 23 starts -- a sigh of relief in a rotation that had difficulty going deep into games earlier this season.

The 34-year-old hasn't won 15 games in a season since 2004 when he won 18, and with nearly two months left in the season that feat seems like a sure thing.

"He's been huge," Minnesota manager Ron Gardenhire said. "I think a lot of our guys are learning from him. He's not afraid to speak his mind in the clubhouse, which is good. He knows how we like to play and he expects that out of his teammates.

"He's not just a pitcher, he's a leader. We're happy to have him."

Pavano will be going up against Gio Gonzalez, who has had a good season, going 10-7 with a 3.51 ERA this season. His curveball has been effective against tough lineups, so it is likely he will rely on that to get past Pavano and the hot-hitting Twins' lineup.

### **A's: Offense looks to restore power**

The A's have homered just four times over their last 16 games after going deep 14 times in their previous 11 contests. Oakland has hit just 70 home runs this season, which is the second fewest in all of baseball ahead of Seattle, which has 67. The A's are on pace to hit just 101 home runs this season, which would be among the lowest in team history. The lowest amount came in 1968 when they hit 94, and they hit 100 in 1978. ... The A's have stolen nine bases in their last nine games, bringing their total to 96 on the season, which is the fourth most in the American League. This marks just the second time in the last 12 seasons that the A's have stolen 90 or more bases. The only other time was last year when they stole 133. Oakland has a record of 41-17 when stealing a base this season, and is 16-39 with no stolen bases...The A's are 17-11 (.607) in one-run games, which is the best record in the American League. However, they are 9-14 (.391) in two-run games, which is the third worst in the AL. They have dropped nine of their last 16 one-run decisions after winning 10 of their first 12.

### **Twins: Mauer continues to rake**

Catcher Joe Mauer has hit safely in 23 of 28 games since July 3, batting .393 (44-for-112) with 14 doubles, four home runs, 28 RBIs and 23 runs scored. He has 11 multi-hit games in that span. He has also had a hit in 25 of his last 46 at-bats giving him a .543 average in that span which dates back to July 27 against Kansas City. ... The Twins are batting .318 (294-for-925) in their 25 games since the All-Star break, which is the highest average in all of baseball during that span. The Cardinals were second with an average of .293 entering their contest on Wednesday. The Twins were batting .271 as a team at the All-Star break and raised that to .282 entering Wednesday's game against the White Sox, which was the best record in the Majors at that time. ... The Twins have posted a slugging percentage of .438 on the season entering Wednesday's game against Chicago, which was the third-best in all of baseball at that time. Their 243 doubles tie for second in the Major Leagues and they have the third most triples with 27. Their 107 home runs puts them at 15th, giving them 375 total extra-base hits this season -- the third most in baseball.

### **Worth noting:**

In his last start on Saturday against the Rangers, Gonzalez tossed seven shutout innings, using his effective curveball throughout much of the game. ... Pavano scattered seven hits over seven innings of two-run ball on Saturday against the Indians for his AL-leading eighth road victory. ... Pavano has a career record of 14-7 in 23 starts against the A's.

## **Major Lee-ague: Rosales exits with ankle injury**

Jane Lee, mlb.com

Adam Rosales made an early departure from Wednesday's game after aggravating the ankle injury that's been bothering him this week. Rosales told me Monday he's been battling ankle tendinitis for about a year now, but only recently has it really affected him on the field. When I ran into him today, I said his ankle must be feeling better if he's in the lineup. He shrugged with a smile, saying, "It's playable." Yet, after Geren deemed him "100 percent" and "ready to go" before the game, Rosales lasted just one inning. Hopefully this signals a need to get it completely taken care of before running him out there again. The A's don't need to crowd the DL any more.

Note: Geren also said before the game Gabe Gross turned his ankle and is a little sore but is still available. Gross hasn't appeared in a game since Sunday, when he walked in a pinch-hit at-bat.

## **Braden tosses 4-hitter as A's beat Mariners**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas Braden tossed a four-hitter for his fourth career complete game, Mark Ellis hit three doubles and drove in three runs, and the Oakland Athletics cruised to a 5-1 win over the Seattle Mariners on Wednesday.

Braden (7-8) won for just the third time in nine decisions since throwing a perfect game on May 9 against Tampa Bay. He was out from June 23-July 20 with left elbow tightness, but is 3-1 since coming off the disabled list.

Luke French (1-3) went six innings in the loss. He allowed seven hits and four runs.

Ellis hit the first of his career-high three doubles to open the second, into the left-center gap. He stole third and scored when Coco Crisp hit a sharp single to left.

The A's added a run in the fourth when Rajai Davis hit a one-out double into the left-field corner, and Landon Powell lifted a two-out single into shallow center. They added two more in the fifth, when Ellis ripped a double down the third-base line to make it 4-0.

Just three Mariners reached base off Braden through the first six innings, but he still faced the minimum number of batters to that point. All three were wiped away with double plays.

The Mariners finally put together a meager rally in the seventh, when Ichiro Suzuki and Jose Lopez singled. Russell Branyan walked to load the bases with one out, and Franklin Gutierrez hit a sacrifice fly to the warning track. Casey Kotchman bounced out to first to end it.

Ellis responded in the eighth with his third double to make it 5-1.

Ellis entered the game with just one extra-base hit over his previous 18 games. He is hitting .423 (11 of 26) against Seattle this season.

NOTES: A's RHP Ben Sheets had Tommy John surgery on his right elbow Monday. The club did not supply specifics on the surgery until 48 hours afterward. Sheets had been told that his ulnar collateral ligament was not involved, but Texas Rangers team surgeon Dr. Keith Meister found the UCL damage during the operation. He transferred the tendon along with repairing the flexor tendon and pronator tendon. Sheets signed a one-year deal with the A's this season. ... A's SS Adam Rosales left the game in the second with a hurt right ankle. Cliff Pennington replaced him. ... Mariners OF Michael Saunders missed starting his sixth straight game with a sore neck after his crash into the outfield wall Aug. 5. He did enter Monday's game as a pinch runner.



## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Cats finish 11-run comeback, return to Raley Field**

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento returns to Raley Field on Friday night with the momentum of an 11-run come-from-behind victory at their backs. The River Cats scored 13 unanswered runs after an early 11-0 deficit to stun the host Round Rock Express 13-11 on Wednesday night.

"The team doesn't quit," said an emotional River Cats Manager Tony DeFrancesco after the game. "They have a lot of heart. We're excited to come back for this eight -game homestead."

Round Rock caused a rocky start for the River Cats, who trailed 11-0 after just two innings. River Cats starter Brett Tomko was pulled after recording only two outs and allowing seven runs. Graham Godfrey's luck wasn't much better, allowing four hits and four runs as the Express offense was clearly in control.

However, the last four pitchers for Sacramento pulled through and combined to hold Round Rock to seven scoreless innings. Jared Lansford was the first to find his groove on the mound, pitching 3.0 scoreless innings for one hit and two strikeouts. Cedrick Bowers took his turn and limited the Express to just one hit in 2.0 inning with three strikeouts. Jon Hunton, who earned the win, pitched the eighth inning with two strikeouts. Michael Benacka closed for Sacramento to complete the post-second inning shutdown of Round Rock's bats and earn the save.

It was the fourth inning when the River Cats offense awoke. Six Sacramento hits in a row and five runs later, the score gap tightened 11-5. Dallas McPherson doubled on a line drive to center field to kick off the hitting streak. Matt Carson smacked his own double that scored McPherson for the first Cats run of the night. An Adrian Cardenas single and Michael Taylor double scored Carson. Jeff Baisley became the fourth River Cat out of five batters to hit a double, scoring Cardenas and Taylor. Anthony Recker singled to keep the streak alive and score Baisley.

A two-run Corey Wimberly home run kept the River Cat rolling in the sixth. This was only Wimberly's third home run of the season.

Sacramento continued to chip away and scored one more run in the seventh inning. It was the ninth inning when the River Cats finished their comeback. Jeff Baisley whacked his second homer against Round Rock in this series, a three-run bomb that tied the game 11-11. Recker doubled to go 4-for-4 at bat and put the go-ahead run on base. Eric Sogard was 0-for-4 all night and got his first hit at the perfect time, a double that scored Recker to take the lead. A wild pitch brought Wimberly home and left the Express with their jaws on the ground.

With the win, Sacramento split the series with Round Rock 2-2.

The River Cats are back in action Friday for a homestand that includes eight games against Omaha and Iowa.

### **EXPRESS SQUANDER LEAD, FINALE TO SACRAMENTO 13-11**

#### **ROUND ROCK SEES 11-RUN LEAD VANISH**

Larry Little, rrexpress.com

**ROUND ROCK, Texas** – Jeff Baisley tied the game with a three-run homer, and Eric Sogard delivered the game-winning RBI double as the Sacramento River Cats overcame an 11-run deficit for a 13-11 victory over the Round Rock Express in Wednesday night's series finale at The Dell Diamond. The Express (49-70) and River Cats (64-55) split the four-game series.

Round Rock scored nine runs in the first inning, tying the highest-scoring inning in the Triple-A era of the Express (since 2005). The Express tacked on two more runs in the second.

However, the River Cats out-hit the Express 18-2 the rest of the way, rallying for the improbable victory. Sacramento squandered an 11-run lead for a loss in its series finale at Albuquerque immediately before the series at The Dell Diamond.

With one out and the bases empty in the top of the ninth, Adrian Cardenas reached on an infield single. Michael Taylor followed with a towering fly ball that landed between three Round Rock players in left-center. Baisley followed with a three-run homer, his fifth of the season, to tie the game at 11-11.

The damage was not finished, though, as the next four batters reached safely with three straight hits and a walk. Anthony Recker doubled, and Corey Wimberly singled to put runners on the corners. Sogard followed with the game-winning double. Wimberly, who moved to third on Sogard's double, scored on a wild pitch.

Michael Benacka retired the side in order in the bottom of the ninth, striking out the game's final two batters looking. It was his fourth save of the season.

Jon Hunton (6-4), the fifth of six pitchers on the night for the River Cats, picked up the win. He worked a scoreless eighth with a walk and two strikeouts. Starter Brett Tomko did not escape the first, allowing seven runs on six hits and two walks through two-thirds of an inning.

Casey Daigle took the loss for the Express, allowing five runs on six hits and a walk with one strikeout in the ninth. Starter Josh Banks surrendered seven runs, six earned, on 11 hits and three walks with three strikeouts over 5.1 innings.

The Express posted the highest-scoring first inning in franchise history with nine runs on eight hits in the first inning. Drew Locke's three-run homer started the scoring deluge. Anderson Hernandez, Brian Esposito and Brian Bogusevic added RBI singles, Tommy Manzella had a two-run double, and a ninth run scored on a Sacramento error.

Round Rock got two runs in the second on Oswaldo Navarro's RBI groundout and an Esposito RBI single. Manzella led off the third with a single, but that was the last hit for the Express until Hernandez had a one-out single in the seventh. Those were the only Express hits after the second inning.

Sacramento got back in the game with a five-run fourth. Wimberly's two-run homer in the sixth pulled the River Cats within four runs, and Baisley had a sacrifice fly in the seventh to cut the Express lead to 11-8.

Manzella was 3-for-4 with a walk, two runs and two RBI, while Hernandez was 3-for-5 with two runs scored.

Anthony Recker was 4-for-4 with two runs scored, and Baisley finished with six RBI. Cardenas and Taylor each had three hits; the latter scored three times.

## **Ports Match Season-High With 5th Straight Win**

**SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.** - Despite committing three errors and going 2-for-10 with runners in scoring position, the Stockton Ports earned their fifth straight win on Wednesday night at Arrowhead Credit Union Park in San Bernardino. Stockton scored three runs in the sixth inning en route to a 5-2 victory over the Inland Empire 66ers. Combined with a Bakersfield loss, the Ports are now three games back of the Blaze in the North Division standings and remain two games out in the wild card.

Former major leaguer Travis Blackley started the game for Stockton on a rehab assignment and retired the last six batters he faced, but would allow a run right off the bat in the first. Alfredo Silverio singled to open the night offensively for Inland Empire. While Chris Gutierrez was batting, Blackley attempted a pickoff throw to first and threw the ball into foul territory, allowing Silverio to reach third with nobody out. Gutierrez brought him home with a single to center to make it a 1-0 game. Blackley would go on to retire the next six batters. The right-hander went two full innings and allowed the one run on two hits.

Meanwhile, 66ers starter Ethan Martin (9-11) found a groove and stayed there until the sixth. Martin allowed a hit in each of the first two innings, but upon recording the second out in the second he set down 11 in a row to take him through the fifth.

Trailing 1-0 in the sixth, the Ports came through with their biggest inning of the night. Jermaine Mitchell singled to start the inning to extend his hitting streak to 13 games. Mitchell went to third on a wild pitch but was thrown out between second and third on a fielder's choice comebacker to the mound off the bat of Grant Green. Green took second base on a wild pitch and Conor Jackson, who is with Stockton on a major league rehab assignment, tied the game on a double to the left-field wall. Jackson went to third on an ensuing ground ball from Stephen Parker, then scored on a wild pitch to Mike Spina to give the Ports a 2-1 advantage. The wild pitch to Spina made it a 2-0 count, and Spina hit Martin's next pitch over the left-field fence for his 22nd home run of the year, making it a 3-1 Ports lead.

Martin would go 5.2 innings and take the loss after allowing three runs on six hits while walking two and striking out five.

Geison Aguasviva came on in relief of Martin and tossed 2.1 scoreless innings of relief.

Inland Empire inched closer with an unearned run in the sixth. Scott Van Slyke reached to start the inning when Mitchell dropped a pop-fly in shallow center. Van Slyke would score on a double-play ball off the bat of Pedro Baez to make it a 3-2 game. It was the only run allowed by Justin Murray (8-4), who picked up the win in relief of Blackley, going 4.2 innings and allowing six hits while striking out three and inducing three double-play balls.

The Ports added insurance runs in the ninth. With one out and Tyler Ladendorf at second, Jeremy Barfield doubled to deep center field to drive in his fourth run of the series. Barfield would take third on a wild pitch, then score on a passed ball charged to catcher Tony Delmonico to make it a 5-2 lead. Both runs (one earned) were charged to Eric Krebs in his lone inning of relief.

After Scott Hodsdon tossed 1.1 scoreless innings to get through the eighth, Paul Smyth (SV, 20) came on for the ninth. Smyth walked two batters to get the possible-tying run to the plate in the person of Silverio. Silverio, however, would strike out looking to end the game. Smyth struck out the side in the ninth to record his 20th save of the season.

The Ports will look to extend their winning streak to a season-long six games when they take the field on Thursday night for their series finale with the 66ers at Arrowhead Credit Union Park. Left-hander Ben Hornbeck (4-3, 5.35 ERA) will take the mound for Stockton, opposed by right-hander Josh Walter (1-6, 6.19 ERA) for Inland Empire. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

## **Cougars Crush Kernels in Opener**

### **Kane County offense steamrolls another opponent**

**CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa** – Through four games on their Iowa road trip, the Kane County Cougars have four victories and have outscored their opponents, 42-12. Wednesday night at Veterans Stadium the Cougars routed the Cedar Rapids Kernels, 11-2. The offense connected for 17 hits, including five from Leonardo Gil, and the pitching trio of Murphy Smith, Max Peterson and Jose Guzman allowed only four.

Jason Christian gave the Cougars a lead they never gave back with a second-inning homer off Max Russell (1-2), and it remained 2-0 until the fifth. Anthony Aliotti hit an RBI double, and Rashun Dixon singled him home. Then Juan Nunez delivered a two-out two-run single to make it 6-0. Smith allowed his only run in the bottom half, and the Cougars sent 10 to the plate during a five-run sixth to reach 11 runs. Aliotti had a two-run double, Gil nailed a run-scoring single, Christian roped a sacrifice fly, and Mitch LeVier scored on an error.

Smith (7-0) gave up one run on three hits over six innings for his fifth straight quality start. He walked two and struck out two in the win. Peterson faced the minimum over two frames, and Guzman yielded one run in the ninth before ending it, giving the Cougars their 10th win in the last 13 games and 25th in the last 37.

The Cougars (27-17, 59-54) and Kernels (24-19, 68-44) go at it again Thursday night at 6:35 CT. Jonathan Joseph (1-4, 4.45) is scheduled to pitch against Tyler Kehrler (4-4, 5.08). The game will be broadcast online at [www.kccougars.com](http://www.kccougars.com) with pre-game coverage starting at 6:20 p.m.