

## A's News Clips, Wednesday, August 18, 2010

### Oakland A's assemble enough offense to pull away from Toronto Blue Jays

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

As the A's rediscovered Tuesday night, good things tend to happen when you string a few hits together.

They were long overdue for a legitimate offensive rally and finally enjoyed one in a 6-2 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays at the Oakland Coliseum.

The A's bunched together four hits off two Blue Jays relievers in the seventh -- more hits than they registered in any of their three previous games -- and scored three runs to break a 2-2 tie, ensuring they would snap their four-game losing streak before a crowd of 13,237.

"We had some two-out hits, which was huge," said center fielder Coco Crisp, who had three hits and two stolen bases. "Whenever you get those big innings, especially with two outs, it gives you a boost of confidence."

The A's were coming off three games of being held to three hits or fewer, the first time that had happened to the franchise since 1920.

Considering that Toronto starter Brandon Morrow was coming off a 17-strikeout performance in his last outing, the ingredients seemed in place for another long night at the plate.

Instead, Crisp and his teammates kept things loose, playfully jinxing Morrow before he threw his first pitch.

"We were kinda yelling out, 'He has a no-hitter' before the game even started," Crisp said.

He and Daric Barton hit back-to-back doubles in a two-run first, but then the A's gave fans the offensive silent treatment until the seventh.

With runners on the corners and one out in that inning, Jack Cust tapped a fielder's choice grounder to second that scored Crisp with the go-ahead run. Cust advanced to second when Aaron Hill threw wildly to first.

Mark Ellis then lined an RBI single to center and Rajai Davis followed with another sharp single to left. When Toronto's Travis Snider misplayed the ball for an error, Ellis scored all the way from first to give the A's a 5-2 lead.

Crisp added an RBI single in the eighth.

The late flurry gave Dallas Braden (8-8) a well deserved victory, his fourth in his past five starts. The lefty held Toronto to three hits and two runs (one earned) over seven innings, impressive work against the team leading the majors in homers.

"It's like staring down a beer-league softball team," Braden said. "They can hit home runs at will."

Oakland's starting rotation has allowed one earned run or fewer in seven of the past 10 games.

Braden talked up the defense behind him, particularly a play from shortstop Cliff Pennington, who ranged behind second base to nab Jose Molina's grounder, spun around on the run and fired to first for the out.

"I think he smiled at me and then threw it over there on a line," Braden said.

Craig Breslow relieved Braden to start the eighth but had to leave with two outs after Yunel Escobar's liner ricocheted off his forearm. Breslow suffered a bruise but didn't anticipate needing X-rays.

Michael Wuertz got the final four outs for his sixth save.

Morrow, the Santa Rosa product and former Cal star, threw 137 pitches against Tampa Bay on Aug. 8, when he came within an out of a no-hitter, so the Blue Jays skipped him for a turn to give him extra rest.

The right-hander was off his rhythm Tuesday. He walked three and uncorked two wild pitches in just four innings, getting lifted after 80 pitches. Manager Cito Gaston had Morrow on a 90-pitch limit.

## **Oakland A's update: Travis Buck searches for his place in crowded outfield picture**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Buck searches for his place in crowded outfield

Travis Buck has battled to get healthy this season, something he's used to doing over his major league career.

Now he's tackling another familiar task: Proving there's still a spot for him in the A's outfield picture.

He has his work cut out. But Buck, recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Monday, is keeping his goals simple.

"The biggest thing is obviously to get my health back and finish the season healthy," he said before Tuesday's game against Toronto. "It didn't really matter to me which uniform I finished the season in."

Buck missed 86 games while on the disabled list -- his fifth DL stint in less than four full seasons. He originally was sidelined with a strained right oblique and then with a mysterious bout of leg fatigue.

Buck said a neurologist told him his leg issues simply may have stemmed from his long period of inactivity as his oblique injury healed.

He's feeling 100 percent now and was hitting .400 (24 for 60) with 10 RBIs in his last 15 games with Sacramento before being promoted.

Is there still a place for Buck with the A's?

Coco Crisp and Rajai Davis are starting regularly in the outfield, and Conor Jackson came off the DL on Monday and appears to be settling back in as the regular left fielder. Chris Carter figures to rejoin the mix as a September call-up, as does fellow top prospect Michael Taylor.

It's conceivable all will be back in the fold again next season.

"Do I know what my role is? No," Buck said. "I know I'm not going to change the way I go out there and play. I'll be very aggressive like I always have and try to make the best of every opportunity."

Closer Andrew Bailey (rib cage strain) threw an 18-pitch simulated game and said it went well. But he and manager Bob Geren both said Bailey will need another outing -- whether it's another simulated game or minor league outing -- to sharpen his stuff before he's activated. ... Outfielder Matt Watson said he's hopeful of starting baseball activity in a day or two after having a kidney stone removed Aug. 9. He has two other kidney stones that don't cause him pain, and Watson said he'll get them removed over the winter.

## **Chin Music: Juggling the outfield, other A's pregame tidbits**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/17/2010 6:52PM

I had some technical difficulties getting this baby posted, but here's today's update ...

The lineups for Game 2 of A's-Blue Jays:

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Jackson LF, Cust DH, Ellis 2B, Davis RF, Powell C, Tolleson 3B, Pennington SS; Braden LHP.

Jays — Snider LF, Escobar SS, Bautista RF, Wells CF, Lind DH, Hill 2B, Overbay 1B, Encarnacion 3B, Molina C; Morrow RHP.

—Kurt Suzuki and Kevin Kouzmanoff are each getting standard days off. Seems like good timing for Kouzmanoff, who's in a 1-for-23 funk at the plate.

—Let's throw a question out for discussion. How would you like to see the A's handle their outfield rotation right now? Coco Crisp is going to play regularly and Rajai Davis' speed makes him an asset to keep in the lineup. I think the A's need to get an extended look at both Conor Jackson and Travis Buck to decide where (or if) they fit into the mix for next season. And you figure things will get more crowded if Chris Carter and Michael Taylor get called up at some point in September. With

Jack Cust struggling right now, I wouldn't mind seeing Jackson get some DH time (might save his hamstring a bit) and let Buck play the outfield with Crisp and Davis.

—Andrew Bailey estimated he threw about 18 pitches in a simulated game with Gabe Gross and Steve Tolleson standing in. It went well, but both Bailey and manager Bob Geren said he could use another outing to sharpen his stuff. Could be another simulated game or perhaps a minor league outing. But as things stand, it's still looking good for Bailey to come off the DL during this homestand.

## **Offense perks up; Braden mows 'em down**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Entering Tuesday night, the pertinent numbers appeared to be on Brandon Morrow's side.

The former Cal pitcher had thrown a one-hitter in his last outing, and the A's were one-hit Monday evening. Oakland had totaled seven hits in the previous three games.

So, naturally, the A's got back-to-back doubles to open the first inning in a 6-2 victory over the Blue Jays at the Coliseum. They recorded 11 hits overall, including three by leadoff man Coco Crisp.

"Before the game, we were in here kind of playing around and yelling, 'He's got a no hitter!' But the game hadn't started," Crisp said with a grin. "It felt good to break it up right off the bat."

One pattern did hold: Oakland continued to get superb starting pitching. It was Dallas Braden's turn Tuesday night, and liberally using his changeup, he allowed two runs, one earned, and three hits in seven innings against the top home run team in the majors.

"It's like staring down a beer-league softball lineup, like they can hit home runs at will," Braden said. "You don't want to make any mistakes."

A's starters have allowed no more than one earned run in seven of the past 10 games, compiling a 1.54 ERA in that stretch. Braden is 4-1 with a 2.57 ERA in six starts since coming off the disabled list.

Barton's double in the first tied the game, and Morrow, who'd had eight days off between starts, wild-pitched Barton to third and then home.

Braden hadn't helped himself in the top of the inning. He walked Yunel Escobar and then winged a pickoff attempt past Barton at first, putting Escobar at third. He scored on Jose Bautista's groundout to short.

The Jays got nothing else until the seventh, when Aaron Hill and Lyle Overbay hit two-out doubles that tied the game.

In the bottom of the inning, Crisp and Barton struck again, this time with consecutive singles. Crisp stole third and with one out, scored on Jack Cust's fielder's choice, on which Hill's errant throw to first cost the Jays an inning-ending double play.

Mark Ellis added an RBI single to center, and he scored when left fielder Travis Snider misplayed a hit by Rajai Davis. In the eighth, Crisp drove in a run with a single to left.

Craig Breslow replaced Braden in the eighth but left with two outs when a comebacker by Escobar hit his left forearm. Breslow said he's just bruised.

Shortstop Cliff Pennington made a terrific play up the middle on Jose Molina in the fifth, spinning and throwing almost without looking. "I think he smiled at me and threw on a line," Braden said. "And Barton did a pirouette and the splits and brought it all together."

"That's one of the better ones all year," Braden said. "We might need a Penny-meter."

Morrow, who attended Rancho Cotate High School, got an extra four days off because he threw 137 pitches in that one-hitter against Tampa Bay. He left after four innings Tuesday.

## **Beat: Buck happy to be back**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Travis Buck's** return to the A's means that the team will retain a final option on him for next year - he was three days shy of getting that last option burned before he was recalled Monday.

Buck doesn't mind, though. He said Tuesday pretty much what he said coming into the season: After missing much of the past several years with injuries, he simply wants to be healthy the rest of the way and allow his performance - rather than his many disabled-list stays - to determine his future.

"This is a step in the right direction," he said.

Buck might have a pesky option left, but he will benefit in a different way by being recalled before September: Unless he's sent down again before the end of the year, he is likely to achieve "super two" status in terms of service time, which means an extra year in which he's arbitration eligible.

Buck went 0-for-3 Monday and he was not in the lineup Tuesday, with **Coco Crisp** back in center and **Rajai Davis** moving back to right.

**Bailey's next step: Andrew Bailey** (ribcage strain) pitched a simulated inning Tuesday, throwing 18 pitches. "He looked very good, very sharp," said outfielder **Gabe Gross**, who was one of the batters. "I wouldn't want to face him."

Bailey hasn't worked in a game since July 20 and he believes that he'll go to Triple-A Sacramento on Friday for one inning; manager **Bob Geren** said it depends on how well he bounces back. Bailey's still likely to be activated on this homestand.

**Briefly: Matt Watson** said he's finally starting to feel better after a procedure to remove a kidney stone; he landed back in the hospital Friday after having some whole-body spasms. He should be cleared to begin workouts in the next day or two; he has two remaining stones but they'll be removed this winter. ... Just-signed picks **Yordy Cabrera** (second round), **Aaron Shipman** (third) and **Chad Lewis** (fourth) are expected to report to rookie-ball in Arizona today or Thursday.

## **A's leading off**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

**Power, less:** The A's have three homers in August. Their 71 this season are the fewest in the majors, trailing Seattle's 74. Oakland is on pace for fewer than 100 homers for only the second time in a non-strike season.

## **Drumbeat: Pre-game goings-on: lineup, Bailey and more**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 8/17/2010 5:08PM

The A's have recorded seven hits, total, in their past three games, and they're going up against Brandon Morrow, who nearly threw a no-hitter his last time out. I'm not sure the math works in the A's favor, but manager Bob Geren said that a starter's previous time out doesn't necessarily have much impact on his next one, which is true, though the A's recent trend is the one I'd be more concerned about.

It's Mr. One-Hitter vs. Mr. Perfect Game; Dallas Braden is going for the A's.

Geren said it's just days off for Kurt Suzuki and Kevin Kouzmanoff; with a day game tomorrow, he was going to get them one or the other and he decided to have them in there tomorrow against lefty Marc Rzepczynski.

Here's the lineup: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Jackson lf, Cust dh, Ellis 2b, Davis rf, Powell c, Tolleson 3b, Pennington ss

Andrew Bailey threw an 18-pitch simulated game, and it went well; what happens next depends on how he comes out of it tomorrow, but Bailey believes that an inning Friday at Triple-A Sacramento is good possibility.

Matt Watson is here and Geren said he should be cleared to resume working out in a day or two; he had an operation for kidney stones just over a week ago.

Those of you who read the Drumbeat regularly will know how glad I am to see Travis Buck back. I'd hoped he might get a few days in a row in the lineup, considering that he was swinging the bat well, but an o-fer often seems to get the just-called-up a spot back on the bench, and with Coco Crisp back in center, Rajai Davis is in right.

Buck said he's not overly concerned that he'll still have an option remaining next year; he just wants to finish up this season healthy, and as he often says, if he performs well the remainder of this way and/or next spring, the rest will take care of itself.

## **Biography review: 'Charlie Finley'**

Steve Kettmann, Special to The Chronicle

It was only in the reading of this able and workmanlike biography of the man who moved the A's from Kansas City to Oakland in 1968 - a move he later regretted - that a clear picture emerged of the current machinations over the future of the A's.

Charlie Finley clawed and scratched his way out of Kansas City, and all but danced a jig on his way out of town - then later came to see the move west as the biggest mistake of his life because he came to believe that ultimately the Bay Area could support only one baseball franchise.

With that fact in mind, it's easy to believe that the current Giants leadership that has been cantankerously resisting an A's move to San Jose has in mind one goal and one goal only: pursue a delaying game, force the A's to leave town and inherit a one-team market that would be a cash cow for them for years to come.

Maybe such thoughts inevitably come to mind in reading a life of Finley, a man who could be both generous and flamboyantly coarse but always kept a healthy focus on his own self-interest. Finley was, above all, a flashy innovator, having all sorts of fun with orange baseballs, a mule as a team mascot, and maybe most infamously, the mechanical rabbit he rigged to pop up from behind home plate to deliver fresh baseballs to the umpire.

Finley worked his way up from nothing, and the powers that be in baseball always saw him as an uncouth outsider they wished would either pipe down or disappear, but Finley was ahead of them in much of his baseball thinking as well. He suggested early that baseball go to a system where all players are free agents every year - and if it had, salary escalation would almost certainly have been held in check.

This biography, based on very thorough research, was clearly a labor of love for authors G. Michael Green and Roger D. Launius, neither of whom has any appreciable professional baseball writing experience other than being members of the Society for American Baseball Research. One has to dodge the occasional clunky construction, but there is also a fan's passion and curiosity in Green and Launius' rendering of Finley, and it helps to bring a reader fresh to a subject Bay Area baseball fans have been hearing of at length for decades.

Finley was brilliant and worked hard, and he built some amazing A's teams. The colorful, powerhouse teams that won three World Series in a row from 1972 to 1974 were a testament both to Finley's vision and his quirkiness. I never knew until I read this book that it was Finley who gave his best pitcher the name "Catfish" Hunter, nor that he did the same for John "Blue Moon" Odom, but as a kid going to A's games in the '70s, I loved both names. Finley's decision to have his players grow their facial hair was probably just another way of, in effect, giving the finger to the baseball establishment, but the result was the famous mustaches of Rollie Fingers and his teammates, a brilliant case of branding.

Still, there is something about Finley's life that leaves one with a strange sadness. He loved his players, and yet in the end many of them despised him. As the authors explain, "Just in case Finley might hoodwink the new players in the clubhouse, Joe Rudi advised them that 'any time you hear him clearing his throat, he's lying. If you hear him say "a-hem," watch out.' " Finley, it goes without saying, had given Rudi and the others no choice but to see him this way.

It's hard to know what to make of a man who was able to plow through obstacles that would have derailed almost anyone else but who was also apparently so often his own worst enemy. I can say this, though: I called up the A's current owner, Lew Wolff, and emphatically recommended this book to him as essential reading. If nothing else, it will give Wolff something to do while Commissioner Bud Selig keeps Wolff - and the entire Bay Area - waiting interminably before he decides on the future of the A's.

## **A's rally in seventh to snap skid vs. Jays**

### **Braden goes seven strong for fourth win in past five starts**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The stage wasn't set for it, but the A's didn't care.

Never mind the fact Brandon Morrow -- the Toronto righty who lost a no-hitter in the ninth inning in his previous start -- was on the mound.

And never mind that said fact didn't look to bode well for an A's offense that collected just seven hits over the previous three games.

The past, particularly the past week, wasn't going to get to these A's. They just wanted to hit the ball, a simple notion that had been missing from their game.

So on Tuesday, they made sure it was present in a very large way by telling themselves Morrow had a no-hitter before the game even began.

Eleven hits later and a solid seven-inning performance from Dallas Braden, the A's found themselves with a 6-2 victory over Morrow and the Blue Jays to snap a four-game losing streak, not to mention an unofficial slumping stretch.

Cue the postgame clubhouse music blaring over a handful of happy-go-lucky ballplayers, a scene that's also been missing as of late.

"It feels good," said Coco Crisp, who enjoyed a three-hit and two-steal night.

Good vibes abounded with Crisp and company, who quickly came out of the gates seeing double with back-to-back two-base hits from Crisp and Barton in the first, the latter which scored the A's first run. An aggressive baserunning effort by Barton, with the help of two wild pitches from Morrow, gave them their second run of the night to void the one-run lead Braden handed the Blue Jays in the top of the inning.

"That's awesome," Braden said. "I think it's just a really true testament to the approach we've tried to employ all year. As we all know, the season's a grind. Very rarely do you start and finish hot, so you're going to go through your lulls and your peaks and valleys, so for them to turn it on and get the hits they were getting, it's just a boost of confidence they needed."

So much so that manager Bob Geren said he noticed a shift in mood around his team.

"Scoring in the first inning was a big key," Geren said. "Our bench guys were laughing, and I think it took tension out of the dugout."

The good times kept rolling in that same dugout six innings later, at which point the Jays had already knotted the game at 2, by way of back-to-back doubles of their own from Aaron Hill and Lyle Overbay.

For it was the seventh inning when Crisp did some more damage by leading off with a single and quickly advancing to second on a base hit by Barton before moving to third on a stolen base. With runners at first and third, Conor Jackson struck out for the first out and Jack Cust grounded into an RBI fielder's choice that scored Crisp. Oakland added two more runs on RBI hits from Mark Ellis and Rajai Davis.

"Our offense has gone through a tough stretch," Crisp said. "We've been hitting the ball well, but directionally not so well, because they've been going right at guys. But tonight, we had a lot of big hits, and I think that's a big boost for our confidence."

"That's huge," Braden added. "You like to see them build the momentum, and seeing them get to their guy early was a really good sign. Every pitcher goes out there and says one run is going to be good enough. That's just how you want to pitch. For awhile it was good enough, but I think the biggest thing was the explosion later in the game. That was real positive."

Braden, for his efforts, was rewarded with his eighth win of the season after allowing two runs (one earned) on just three hits while walking two and fanning five. Morrow, meanwhile, lasted just four, giving up two runs en route to taking the loss.

"He was effective with his changeup," Travis Snider said of Braden. "I think he got us a few at-bats with guys getting out in front. I know I definitely had one at-bat where he threw me a couple changeups and I wasn't able to pick it up. He pitched well tonight and battled for his team and gave them a chance to win the ballgame."

When all is said and done, that's really Braden's only goal, especially against a power-heavy Blue Jays club.

"You just try to utilize their aggressiveness against you," the southpaw said. "Those guys can do some damage. It's almost like you're staring down a [slow-pitch] softball lineup, the way they can just hit homers at will, the power that they can provide. So you don't want to make any mistakes. You want to be in the zone and out of the zone as quick as possible."

Braden's performance was aided by a seemingly flawless defensive showing from his eight teammates, including Cliff Pennington, who put together quite the fifth-inning gem on a ball to his wide left that he grabbed and flung to first after turning around while off balance.

"I don't know if there's been a better one all year," Braden said. "We might need a Penny-meter. He obviously can make those plays up the middle and in the hole. He's toting around a bazooka out there, too. That helps."

"I think he smiled at me and then threw it over there on the line, and Barton did a pirouette and the splits and brought it all together."

That same process held true for the A's bullpen, which brought the win together with two scoreless innings. Braden was relieved by Craig Breslow, who garnered two quick outs before exiting with a trainer after an infield line drive off the bat of Yunel Escobar left quite the lump on his pitching arm. The A's reliever said after the game it's "nothing serious at all," and Michael Wuertz finished off Toronto with four easy outs, including two strikeouts.

"It's a nice reward for a collective team effort," Braden said. "We played ridiculous defense -- again, that's not something we ever lack, if you ask me. We have some tremendous athletes out there. And then there was the timely hitting. That's why I use the phrase collective, because it was all facets of the game we executed when they needed to be executed."

"The bullpen came in and did their job. Breslow went down, and Wuertz stepped up, which he's been doing all year. We really just didn't miss a beat."

## **Geren gives Kouzmanoff, Suzuki Tuesday off**

### **Struggling players get rare day of rest against Blue Jays**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A pair of struggling A's players were handed what manager Bob Geren deemed a physical and mental day off Tuesday for the club's second contest of a three-game set against the Blue Jays.

Kurt Suzuki and Kevin Kouzmanoff, widely known for their gritty efforts to play every day, both received a rare day of rest after going a combined 5-for-51 over the team's past seven games.

"With Kurt, it was either going to be today or tomorrow," Geren said. "I decided tonight was better to give him a day off since we have a lefty going tomorrow."

"I've been looking at days to give Kevin a break. It's not just him struggling, though. We have a lot of guys struggling. We've run into some well-pitched games. So he was a lot like some other players, needing a mental and physical day off."

By now, it's no secret that the club as a whole is in a slump, as evidenced by the fact it collected just seven hits over the past three games entering Tuesday. But Suzuki, always one to present an honest mindset, isn't too worried.

"We've just run into a funk," the A's catcher said. "Pitchers are doing well against us. In this game, there's never really much mystery to it. In baseball, there are a lot of ups and downs, and you try to get out of them as fast as you can. We're just trying to stay the course and not get too frustrated."

Suzuki admittedly said he had a discussion with Geren regarding the skipper's decision to sit him Tuesday, but at the same time he understands that, in the end, "he makes the decision."

"It's more of a mental thing, allow yourself a mental day off," he said. "I wanted to be in there, but it was just one of those things where Bob thought it was better for me if I took a day."

Suzuki also happens to be a career .167 hitter against Toronto's Tuesday starter, righty Brandon Morrow. Furthermore, his .176 career mark against the Blue Jays is his lowest against any American League team, one he's also never homered against.

Despite the day off, Suzuki -- per usual -- went about his normal routine, and he insisted that's just what everyone's doing in the midst of a 1-6 stretch.

"I think we're OK in the clubhouse," he said. "It's kind of like, here we go again. But like I said, that's the game of baseball. Everybody in the clubhouse is working hard, just as hard as when we were hitting well. Everybody's attitude's the same."

"We realize we're going through a tough stretch, but we know sometimes you have to deal with things like this. It's about how you come back from it, instead of dwelling on it or making it worse."

### **After simulated game, Bailey close to return**

OAKLAND -- Andrew Bailey underwent a successful simulated game Tuesday afternoon, and manager Bob Geren believes his closer will only need to throw one more time before being cleared to return from the disabled list.

Bailey's activation could come as soon as this weekend for the club's final two games against the Rays. Before that happens, though, he'll either face another simulated outing or a quick Minor League rehab assignment.

"His velocity was there and his stuff is back where it needs to be," Geren said. "His command wasn't perfect, but that's what you expect after being off for so long."

Bailey hasn't pitched since July 20 due to lower back pain and, most recently, a right intercostal (rib cage) strain, which led to his first career DL stint. Such an injury isn't one to be rushed, so Geren said the club is being cautious with its reliever.



"When you throw to that velocity like he did today," the skipper said, "the next step really depends on how you feel the next day. But, today, he felt OK."

### **Watson beginning rehab after surgery**

OAKLAND -- Matt Watson knew of his kidney stones two years ago. He was just hoping they would try to pass on one of the days he wasn't making a start in a Major League outfield.

"The doctors said they could stay in there forever," Watson said. "They just chose a bad day."

The A's outfielder first began experiencing side and back pain Aug. 8, when he was taken from the Coliseum to the hospital. One day later, after learning it was one of his kidney stones causing all the commotion, he underwent surgery to remove it. Now, just a week later, he's on the rehab train following a period in which he couldn't even eat.

"My body just wouldn't let it pass, so they had to go in and get it out," said Watson, who appeared in the A's clubhouse Tuesday for the first time since his operation. "I have a couple more in there, but they said they could be in there for 10 years."

Watson isn't going to take any more chances, though. He said he'll likely have both of his remaining stones removed in the offseason. After all, he doesn't want to endure another round of the pain he's been forced to face.

"It hasn't been fun at all," he said. "I wouldn't wish this on anyone."

Watson did some weight work Tuesday, and he's hoping to progress with his baseball activity throughout the week.

"Hopefully in the next couple days I can start fully working out and then do some rehab at Sacramento," he said. "Then, I guess we'll see what happens."

Kidney stones aside, it's already been a long year for Watson, who began the year playing in the Independent Atlantic League before being signed by the A's as a free agent to a Minor League contract May 28. He was immediately appointed to Sacramento, and was promoted to Oakland on July 5. He appeared in 12 games before the setback, going 6-for-30.

"I was finally getting the chance to play, and that's what makes it frustrating. This is a great clubhouse, and I was getting to know everyone. Hopefully it's one of those things where I can go do my rehab and come back here and play again."

For the time being, Watson is simply glad to be out of what he called "the bat cage I was basically living in."

"It was so bad my wife flew out from Pennsylvania and left the kids at home," he said. "She's starting nursing school on Wednesday, so she's flying home right now. Time to start taking care of myself."

### **Pair of lefties set to duel in matinee finale**

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

Marc Rzepczynski grew up in California, and the Blue Jays' left-hander seems very comfortable pitching in his home state. As for Oakland starter Gio Gonzalez and the rest of his teammates, it seems that the daytime is the A's time.

When these two lefties square off Wednesday afternoon in Oakland, both starters figure to be in their comfort zones.

For Rzepczynski, who grew up near Anaheim, his masterful outing against the Angels in his last start showed what he's capable of and why the Blue Jays are so impressed with his stuff and demeanor on the mound.

He blanked the Angels on two hits in seven innings for what was by far his best outing to date in an injury-ravaged season - - not to mention the longest start of his career -- and impressed his manager, Cito Gaston.

"He had a good sinker, kept the ball down, didn't try to overthrow," said Gaston, who added that he also had "good break stuff tonight, hit the corners pretty well and stayed within himself. ... He's a pretty calm kid, for a kid who hasn't pitched up here for a while."

Gonzalez, meanwhile, has been a breakout standout in the A's rotation this year after showing flashes of promise as a spot starter and part-time reliever in 2009.

He has allowed one run or fewer in six of his past 10 starts and is 4-3 with a 2.54 ERA over that span. He's 6-1 with a 2.10 ERA in eight starts during the day and has a team-leading 121 strikeouts, but also has issued 66 walks, which is tied for second-most in the AL.

In his last outing in Minnesota, Gonzalez took the loss after giving up four runs (two earned) on three hits in six innings while striking out seven. An error and two walks, one of which let in a run, hurt him in the telltale first inning, however.

"A walk always hurts," Gonzalez said. "I'm pretty sure any pitcher at the Major League level doesn't want to walk in a run like that."

### **Blue Jays: Snider, Lind on fire**

Outfielder Travis Snider is batting .307 (31-for-101) with 11 doubles, six homers and 17 runs over his past 27 games. Seventeen of his past 31 hits have been extra-base hits. Outfielder Adam Lind, meanwhile, is batting .300 (33-for-110) with 14 extra-base hits (seven doubles, two triples and five homers) in 29 games since the All-Star break. Over his past 13 games, Lind is batting .375 (18-for-48) with four doubles, a triple, three homers and seven RBIs. ... Reliever Casey Janssen has struck out 10 batters over his past 9 2/3 innings of work and has struck out at least three batters in a game seven times this season.

### **A's: More daytime delight**

It isn't just Gonzalez that has shined along with the sun this year. The A's have won 11 of their past 13 day games and are 28-12 during the day for the season, which is the best record in the Majors. They're 30-48 at night, which is second worst in the American League to Baltimore (31-55). The A's have a league-low 2.73 ERA (108 earned runs in 355 2/3 innings) during the day. ... Gonzalez is 1-1 with a 4.26 ERA in two career starts against Toronto, both at Rogers Centre. The win came in his only start against Toronto this year, which took place May 1.

### **Worth noting**

Jays catcher John Buck, on the disabled list since Aug. 4 because of a laceration of his right thumb, tore up Double-A pitching in his first rehab game Wednesday night. Playing for the New Hampshire Fisher Cats, Buck homered twice and drove in six runs in a 15-5 pounding of the Binghamton Mets. Buck hit a two-run shot in the first inning and capped a five-run second with a grand slam. ... The A's stole four bases Tuesday night and now have a Major League-leading 39 stolen bases since the All-Star break and 104 for the season. It's the second time in the past 12 seasons that the A's have stolen 100 or more bases in a season. They had 133 last year. The A's have a record of 42-19 when stealing a base and are 16-41 in games in which they do not have a steal.

## **Cohn: Near no-no took toll on Morrow**

LOWELL COHN, The Press Democrat

Brandon Morrow surged into Tuesday night's game against the A's riding the crest of a tidal wave. In his last start, Aug. 8 against Tampa Bay, he had a no-hitter going with two outs in the ninth inning, only to lose it on a groundball single to right by Evan Longoria.

Along the way he struck out 17, the most by a major-league pitcher this season. That's what you call dominating. Forget dominating. It's devastating. He came into Tuesday night's game with a career-high four wins in a row and he had not lost since June 29. If you wonder why I'm chronicling Morrow's season, where have you been?

Morrow, 26, attended Rancho Cotate High School and Cal Berkeley. His parents still live in Rohnert Park and his dad, John, is the baseball coach at Rancho Cotate. So, this is a local-boy-makes-good story, and how.

If there was a downside to Morrow's almost no-hitter, 17-strikeout game — and how could there be a big downside? — it was the 137 pitches he threw. That number, 137, is enormous in this day of pitch counts. Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston gave Morrow extra days to recover. In fact, Morrow rested eight days before facing the A's, an unprecedented sabbatical in-season for a starting pitcher.

Morrow seemed to be feeling the effects of something when he began the game — either the long rest or the 137 pitches or both. He immediately gave up two consecutive doubles on elevated fastballs to start the first inning, long fly balls to deep left center. They accounted for one run. He allowed the second run when he wild-pitched Daric Barton from second to third and then from third to home. Morrow didn't look like the guy who'd stood the Rays on their heads.

"I didn't have my best stuff by far," he said afterward. "My fastball wasn't that great."

Maybe not, but after giving up two runs, the only runs he would allow, he did what good pitchers do — found his groove, his rhythm, whatever you want to call it. In fact, he seemed to be cruising, which made it surprising when Gaston got his bullpen up in the bottom of the fourth on Morrow's 72nd pitch of the game. Even though Morrow got out of the fourth with no damage, Gaston took him out after just 80 pitches.

Morrow didn't know it but he was on a predetermined limit of roughly 80 to 90 pitches because of the long layoff. After the fourth, Gaston removed him, thinking it was pointless to have Morrow warm up and then throw a few pitches and then come out in the fifth. Morrow didn't argue.

"I wasn't too sharp tonight," he said. "I seemed to be behind a lot and ran up my pitch count. Unfortunately, I only got the four innings out of the 80 pitches. I didn't feel that sharp and I felt lucky just to keep us in there at that point."

Someone asked if the extended rest made him rusty.

"Hard to say," he replied. "I haven't gone through that before. It's still a learning process. Some guys say they're rusty after too much rest. I don't want to blame it on that. I just wasn't that sharp. I wasn't putting the ball where I wanted to for most of the night and then you try and take something off or add a little. I just didn't have that extra little gear I had the last few games and I didn't have great command. It was a so-so outing with a high pitch count."

Morrow had left 24 tickets for friends and family to watch him work. He figured a bunch more drove down and bought tickets. He had come to the Coliseum a lot as a kid, more to Oakland than the Giants. When he was 10 he came to the Coliseum on Little League Day to see Randy Johnson pitch and Johnson threw a one-hitter. (If you're looking for parallels to Morrow, that's one.) "My dad said, 'Look how tall that guy is,'" Morrow said. "I didn't know too much who he was then. My grandparents were A's fans and used to come over with elderly day-tripping from Santa Rosa and I would come with them, too."

And now Morrow is the guy throwing one-hitters. This you should know. Morrow was the fifth selection in the 2006 draft, taken by the Seattle Mariners. That means he was taken five spots ahead of Tim Lincecum, an event fans in Washington State noticed and resented — Lincecum is from Washington.

Morrow was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Mariners didn't know what to do with Morrow. They tried him at starter and reliever, even at closer — a pitcher with a golden arm bouncing from role to role. After the 2009 season, they traded him to Toronto, where, to say the least, he's flourished. It is possible Morrow could become the pitcher Lincecum used to be and may never be again.

It's funny how history rewrites itself if you're patient and you wait long enough.

## **Braden throws gem, A's beat Blue Jays 6-2**

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Dallas Braden pitched three-hit ball for seven innings, Jack Cust drove in the go-ahead run and the Oakland Athletics ended a four-game losing streak by beating the Toronto Blue Jays 6-2 Tuesday night.

Coco Crisp had three hits and an RBI, Daric Barton and Mark Ellis each drove in a run and the A's won for the 11th time in their last 16 home games.

Braden (8-8) allowed two runs, one earned, and improved to 4-1 since coming off the disabled list July 20. He walked two and struck out five.

Craig Breslow got two outs in the eighth and Michael Wuertz recorded four outs for his sixth save.

Brian Tallet (2-5) took the loss in relief of starter Brandon Morrow, who lasted four innings in his first start since his near no-hitter that included 17 strikeouts Aug. 8 against Tampa Bay.

Given extra rest after throwing a career-high 137 pitches in that one, Morrow allowed two runs and four hits Tuesday. He walked three and struck out two.

Jose Bautista got his 90th RBI in the first to put the Blue Jays ahead.

Morrow gave up consecutive doubles to Crisp and Barton leading off the bottom half and later threw a wild pitch that allowed Barton to score, giving the A's a 2-1 lead.

Lyle Overbay singled home the tying run for Toronto in the seventh.

Tallet gave up singles to Crisp and Barton to open the bottom of the seventh and was replaced by Shawn Camp, who struck out Conor Jackson after Crisp stole third.

Cust hit a sharp RBI grounder to second baseman Aaron Hill, who tagged Barton but threw wildly past first base for an error that allowed Cust to reach second. Crisp scored the go-ahead run on the play and Cust came around moments later when Ellis singled.

Rajai Davis then singled to left and Ellis scored when Travis Snider misplayed the ball for an error, making it 5-2.

Crisp added an RBI single in the eighth.

NOTES: Morrow matched his second-shortest outing of the season. ... Tallet has allowed runs in 10 of his 18 appearances. ... Overbay was 0 for 10 before his seventh-inning single. ... A's RHP Andrew Bailey threw an 18-pitch simulated game and will likely throw at least one more before returning to action. ... Barton snapped an 0-for-12 streak with his first-inning double. ... Crisp has 13 stolen bases since the All-Star break, matching Juan Pierre of the Chicago White Sox for most in the majors. ... While Morrow lost his no-hit bid on Evan Longoria's two-out single in the ninth, it was Braden who pitched the majors' first perfect game this year May 9 against the Rays.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Carter, Taylor provide big hits in victory**

By Annie Becker / Sacramento River Cats

Welcome back, Carter.

Sacramento continues to shine when Chris Carter is in the line-up. After a week-long sting with the Oakland A's, Carter rejoined his championship-hungry Sacramento River Cats in the starting lineup Tuesday night. The slugger hit his 28th home run of the season to help lift Sacramento over the visiting Iowa Cubs, 5-4.

Iowa, led by Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg, came out strong early at Raley Field in the first of the four-game series.

Sandberg, who starred at second base with the Chicago Cubs in the 1980s, is in his first season as Iowa's manager. He is currently the only member of the Hall of Fame managing in minor league baseball. Sandberg played 15 seasons for the Cubs and was the 1984 National League MVP. He is a 10-time All-Star and has won nine Gold Glove Awards. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame on July 31, 2005.

Sacramento starter Brett Tomko started shaky. After drilling Jim Adduci in the back, Tomko gave up back-to-back singles and it was the Micah Hoffpauir single that drove in Adduci for a 1-0 lead in the first.

With the Cats trailing early, Jeff Larish got a warm welcome to Raley Field with a game-tying RBI double in the first, scoring Matt Carson who had singled.

Iowa was quiet for the next few innings, but made some noise with a two-run homer from Marquez Smith in the fourth.

But Carter was not going to let Smith have the last word, smashing his 28th home run for the year in the sixth. With two out in the sixth, Jeff Baisley walked and Adrian Cardenas doubled on a line drive to right field. Michael Taylor stepped up with a hard hit single to left, scoring Baisley and Cardenas for a 4-3 lead.

Dallas McPherson added a solo homer in the eighth to extend the Sacramento lead.

Iowa's late game surge left Sacramento turning to the bullpen repeatedly at the end of the game. However, it was Michael Benacka who struck out two batters with runners on second and third to end the game.

Sacramento and Iowa will face off again Wednesday at 7:05 p.m.

## Haviland shines as Ports win tenth straight

### Stockton earns their second shutout victory on Tuesday

**STOCKTON, Calif.** – The Stockton Ports (61-59) won their tenth straight game on Tuesday night, continuing their domination over South Division opponents, blanking the Lancaster JetHawks (48-72), 4-0. Shawn Haviland, Trey Barham and Paul Smyth combined for the shutout victory with great performances, and a late three-run inning helped secured the win for the Boys of Banner Island.

The victory tied the Bakersfield Blaze for first place in the second half North Division. The Ports remain 1.0 games back in the wild card race.

It was Stockton's second shutout victory of the season, and it's the first time the Ports have been 2.0 games above .500 since they were 4-2 following their win on April 14.

Haviland allowed just two hits in 6.0 innings, and struck out a season-high 11 batters. He picked up his eighth win on the year on Tuesday. Southpaw Patrick Urckfitz got the loss for Lancaster, although he turned in a solid performance as well. He struck out eight and allowed just one run on two hits in 7.0 innings. Barham tossed 1.2 scoreless frames and Smyth collected his 23<sup>rd</sup> save on the year with 1.1 shutout innings for Stockton.

Haviland struck out seven of the first 11 batters he faced, holding the JetHawks scoreless. Urckfitz retired the Ports in order over the first three frames to keep a tight hold on the Stockton offense as well.

The Ports were the first to score, taking a 1-0 lead in the fourth inning. Shortstop Grant Green ripped a triple off the right field wall to get things going in the fourth inning. He came around to score as third baseman Stephen Parker hit a sacrifice fly.

Haviland kept performing well, retiring the side in the fifth inning after an error by Parker. He struck out his final two batters to start the sixth inning before walking catcher John Curtis. Curtis was caught stealing while left fielder Andy Simunic was batting to end the inning.

Barham retired the side in order in the seventh, and got center fielder Jay Austin to hit into a double play in the eighth before right-handed Smyth was called on to face switch-hitting shortstop Jonathan Villar. Villar struck out to end the Lancaster eighth inning.

The Ports were able to put a base runner on the paths in the fifth and sixth innings, but left the runners stranded. The Stockton offense popped to life in the bottom of the eighth inning, as the Ports found success against Lancaster reliever Jose Trinidad.

Right fielder Jeremy Barfield singled to center field to start the eighth inning for Stockton. He moved to second as David Thomas hit a perfect sacrifice bunt. Designated hitter Brandon Pinckney then singled to left field. Ports manager Steve Scarsons waved Barfield around, and Barfield ran around third and made a move for home. Simunic threw the ball to Curtis, but Curtis dropped the ball as Barfield slid home. The error allowed Barfield to be safe at home and Pinckney to be safe at second. Left fielder Jermaine Mitchell then walked to put two on for Green. Green singled to center field to drive home Pinckney and put the Ports ahead, 3-0. An RBI single by Parker gave Stockton a 4-0 lead before Trinidad struck out the next two batters.

Smyth retired the JetHawks in order in the ninth to seal the victory.