

TORONTO SUN
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A'S STEAL WIN FROM BLUE JAYS

KEN FIDLIN

There was no magic in Brandon Morrow's arm and none in the Blue Jay bats Tuesday night.

That was a great relief to the Oakland Athletics, losers of six of their previous seven. They took advantage of Morrow's struggles and some sloppy Blue Jay fielding for a 6-2 victory.

Those six runs matched the total number of runs Oakland had scored in their six previous losses as they beat Toronto for only the fifth time in their last 21 meetings.

Making his first start since coming within an out of a no-hitter nine days ago in Toronto against Tampa Bay, Morrow just didn't have much to offer. Neither did his teammates who managed just four hits and committed a pair of costly errors.

"I just wasn't too sharp," said Morrow. "No excuses, I just didn't have it. My arm felt fine but I just didn't pitch very well."

Morrow was on an 80-pitch count to protect his arm after he threw about 25 more pitches than normal against Tampa in his one-hitter.

"This kid is part of our future," said manager Cito Gaston. "We're looking out for him because he threw 134 pitches in that one-hitter. Sometimes, you lose a game but you win some more down the line because you do the right thing."

That said, Gaston said the eight-day layoff clearly affected Morrow's velocity and command.

"Pitchers are like dairy cows: you've got to milk 'em," said Gaston. "You've got to pitch them. If you don't pitch them, they dry up."

After falling behind 2-1 early, the Jays came back to tie in the top of the seventh but suffered a

three-run letdown in the bottom of the inning to let it slip away.

It was clear from the very start that Morrow was not on his game when the first two batters - Coco Crisp and Daric Barton - doubled into the left-centre gap to tie the game after Yunel Escobar had scored an unearned run in the top of the first for Toronto. Later in the bottom of the first, Barton scored Oakland's second run on a wild pitch.

Morrow stumbled his way through four innings, allowing four hits and three walks, but no more runs.

Reliever Brian Tallet held the fort through the end of the sixth. Back-to-back doubles in the sixth by Aaron Hill and Lyle Overbay tied the game 2-2 and got Morrow off the hook as the pitcher of record.

Tallet gave up back-to-back singles in the top of the seventh, opening the door to an ugly, three-run Oakland inning that featured a crucial error by Hill and another run-scoring error by Travis Snider.

After Crisp and Barton had singled to chase Tallet, Shawn Camp got a strikeout and then Jack Cust hit a potential inning-ending double-play ball to Hill. He tagged Barton but threw the ball away at first as Crisp scored the go-ahead run. Cust later scored on a Mark Ellis single and then left-fielder Snider failed to come up with the ball on a single by Rajai Davis, allowing Ellis to score all the way from first.

Those runs made a winner of Dallas Braden, who worked seven innings and allowed just three hits and, crucially, no home runs to a Jays team that leads the majors in homers.

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

MOLINA'S DEFENCE

KEN FIDLIN

Even after a four-hit game, an achievement Jose Molina has matched only once before in his 11-year career, it was his defence that was creating waves.

In the third inning of Monday's game, Shaun Marcum hit speedy Cliff Pennington with a pitch. Two pitches into the next hitter, Pennington broke for second base but shortstop Yunel Esobar was waiting with the ball long before he arrived. End of inning. Jose had gunned down another base thief.

Prior to that, Pennington had stolen 18 bases in 21 attempts and to be out by such a wide margin was somewhat shocking to Oakland observers.

Molina has now thrown out 50% of would-be base-stealers (12 of 24) this season to go with his catchers' earned run average of 3.10.

Molina is making \$800,000 US this year, a real bargain, and the Jays have a club option on his services at \$1 million for next season. It would seem absurd that they would not exercise that option, given that they will probably be going with a rookie in J.P. Arencibia as the No. 1 next season.

"If Jose is not here, he can catch a lot of other places," said manager Cito Gaston. "A lot of teams like Jose and we like him, too. We do have an option on his contract next year. It's up to Alex (Anthopoulos) if he wants to keep him around."

The Jays have certainly gotten more than they bargained for in Molina, who is hitting .270 with four homers in very limited playing time .

"Trust me, we worked with him. I asked Jose one day about his brother (Benjie), because when (Benjie) came up he wasn't the hitter he is now."

"And I watch Jose swing and I told him there's no reason why he can't hit like that too. What's your thinking up there? He and I have been talking and I think (hitting coach Dwayne Murphy) has been talking to him too. I think believing in himself has been a big thing. Having four hits last night is certainly not going to hurt him at all."

With four home runs in July, Molina has also shown some power that hadn't been there before.

"I don't know how many home runs he hit last year (he hit one) but I'm pretty sure it's not four, which is what he's hit this year," said Gaston. "He's got some power. In batting practice he swings it pretty good."

Not so bad in games, either.

MLB DRAFT IS A CRAPSHOOT

KEN FIDLIN

As have all professional sports drafts, the baseball draft has turned into something of a cottage industry. Blame the Internet or 24-hour sports news or player agents or maybe global warming.

Used to be, and not very long ago, that the baseball draft was a non-story 364 days a year, with a 10-paragraph wrapup on draft day, citing a collection of names nobody had ever heard of and, in most cases, would never hear of again.

Now the draft is a 365-day industry. It doesn't yet approach the hype of the NFL draft or, at least in Canada, the NHL draft but the amount of information is enough to make your eyes glaze over.

That's why the world was all a-twitter last evening in anticipation of the baseball signing deadline for this year's draftees. Yes, there's a lot of money at stake and that tends to get people's attention.

5% make it

In all the excitement, we need to remember there is one thing that hasn't changed: one of every 20 — or about 5% — of the hopeful young men who sign professional baseball contracts, will play even one game in the major leagues. That is the number quoted to me by Pat Gillick 25 years ago. From there, the odds get astronomical when talking about players who last a year, five years or a 15-year career, which makes a lot of the money that was spent on this draft class, wasted. The clubs know that, but that's the price of doing business.

The Blue Jays got their man on Monday night when the No. 11 pick, Deck McGuire, signed on the dotted line for a reported \$2 million. He may, or may not, one day be included in that rare 5% grouping, but one thing is certain: Unless he has Mike Tyson for a financial advisor, he should be set for life.

Big power

However he makes out, his baseball profile fits the mold of the kinds of pitchers Alex Anthopoulos wants in his big-league rotation: Big power pitchers with a command of the strike zone.

Last week, in a Sports Illustrated interview, Anthopoulos talked about what is required in the AL East when facing the patient veteran hitters that populate the Yankees, Red Sox and Rays.

“You need pitchers who can get strikeouts and strikes in the strike zone,” Anthopoulos said in that article. “All the lineups are really selective and will make you come into the zone. That puts a premium on the ability to get strikes in the strike zone.”

McGuire fits that profile, in much the same way that last year’s No. 1, Chad Jenkins, does.

“I’m a four-pitch guy, my fastball is 90-94 and I do my best to run it and sink it,” said McGuire in a conference call with reporters Tuesday.

“Sometimes it co-operates, sometimes it doesn’t. I try to locate my pitches, I won’t overpower anyone for the most part, but I try to locate as well as anyone. I have a changeup and breaking ball and I use them sometimes to set up other pitches, but I’d say my strikeout pitches are my fastball and slider.”

McGuire doesn’t know when and where his pro career will start but if you use Jenkins’ first year as a profile, you probably won’t go too far wrong.

Jenkins, a late sign whose bread-and-butter is also a hard sinker, went to instructional ball last fall and was invited to spring training where he made a good impression with the Jays last February. He started his minor-league season at Lansing, the club’s low-A affiliate and will finish it at Dunedin in high-A.

McGuire went right down to the wire before signing with the Jays. He had the option of going back to Georgia Tech for another season and, until draft day, that’s all he had been thinking.

“The Jays area scout (Eric McQueen) was a Georgia Tech grad himself, we talked last fall and he did a good job letting me play and not hounding me all the time,” said McGuire. “Then on June 7, he congratulated me after the draft.”

As time went on, McGuire started realizing where his future lay.

“I just felt like I was ready to get my pro career started,” he said. “When it came time to make that executive decision, I felt it was the right time for me. They had their dollar amount and we had ours, we were able to talk it out and meet in the middle.”

Now the heavy lifting begins, not just for McGuire, but for the entire draft class, as they try to prove their worth.

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A’S HAMMER BRANDON MORROW

MARK ZWOLINSKI

It was clear, right from the outset, that Jays right-hander Brandon Morrow wasn’t the same pitcher he was back in that momentous, one-hitter Aug. 8.

In his first start since that glorious outing, Morrow fell back to earth in a four-inning start Tuesday fraught with minor blemishes that quickly added up to a short and lacklustre evening against the Oakland A’s.

The Jays also stumbled on this off-kilter night, and fell 6-2 to Oakland lefty Dallas Braden, he of the perfect game May 9.

After tying the game in the seventh on back-to-back doubles, Toronto’s defence slipped up in the bottom of the seventh, allowing the A’s to put the game away with three runs.

Morrow's much-anticipated start was plagued by a pair of wild pitches in the first inning, which brought a runner all the way around from second base for the A's second run of the inning. The A's also swiped three bases while he was on the hill, and four overall (two by Coco Crisp), to mark the most stolen bases the Jays have allowed in a game this season.

The A's showed no fear of Morrow, who carried a no hitter into the ninth two Sundays ago in a complete game, 137 pitch outing.

The notion that Morrow was going to pick up where he left off fell apart quickly. Crisp doubled to lead off the bottom of the first inning. He was cashed immediately when Daric Barton followed with another double.

Morrow logged 21 pitches that first inning. He clearly wasn't sharp, consistently getting the ball up in the zone.

The A's picked up on this without mercy. The home side pulled off a double steal in the second, thanks in part to some apparent cross-ups between Morrow and favoured battery mate Jose Molina.

Morrow exited with 80 pitches, right on the lower end of the 80 to 90 count manager Cito Gaston said would be his righthander's limit prior to the game.

"He was okay, for a guy who hadn't pitched in nine days, he was okay," Gaston said of Morrow.

"His velocity was down, he's a guy normally up at 95, 96 m.p.h., but tonight he was down at 91 and 92. I think next time you'll see him back up there."

Gaston agreed Morrow might have been affected by the layoff. But he wasn't about to deviate from an organizational plan to protect its young pitchers from overwork.

"Sure, pitchers are like milk cows, you gotta milk them," Gaston said, laughing. "But this kid is going to be a big part of our future, and we're looking out for him. You might lose one tonight but you'll win a lot more down the line."

Not only was the start the first since the one hitter, it was also the first in nine days given to him between starts to protect him from overwork after that 137 pitch display at the Rogers Centre.

That long layoff was welcomed by Morrow. He revealed in the days after the one hitter that he had trouble sleeping that night, and that he felt drained physically.

Morrow, though, said he felt "fine" the past four days and was problem free heading into the Tuesday start.

"I just wasn't that sharp," said Morrow, a native of nearby Rhonert Park, who had 24 tickets reserved for family and friends. "I'm not going to blame it on anything else."

As for the nine days off, Morrow said he felt refreshed and was expecting more of himself Tuesday.

"It's hard to tell, really, because I haven't been through this kind of thing before," he said. "I've heard other pitchers say they were rusty after a long layoff, but I felt good the last four days. I just didn't have my command, I just wasn't very good."

Morrow left trailing 2-1 as the Jays scored in the first inning off a walk, a wild pick off move by Braden and a run-scoring groundout from Jose Bautista.

Afterwards, Braden found a groove and limited the Jays to one hit for the next 6 2/3 innings.

But with two out in the seventh, and the Jays looking outmatched, the offence woke up with back to back doubles from Aaron Hill and Lyle Overbay to push across the game tying run at 2-2.

That brought some life back to the Jays, but it was quickly extinguished in the bottom of the inning. Crisp led off with a single off reliever Brian Tallet and wound up on third after stealing his second bag of the game.

Shawn Camp came in and registered a strikeout. That set up a double-play possibility, and Camp delivered with a grounder to Hill, but it turned into a nightmarish play.

Hill tagged a runner heading to second, but spun around off the tag and threw slightly wide of first in trying to finish the play. Overbay at first wasn't expecting the ball — it was wide towards home plate — and missed the throw.

Crisp scored and a runner advanced to second. Mark Ellis singled home that runner (Jack Cust) for a 4-2 lead. Then left fielder Travis Snider fumbled a grounder into the outfield allowing Ellis to score the third run of the inning.

EAGER DECK MCGUIRE HAPPY TO BE A JAY

MARK ZWOLINSKI

Newly-signed Jays draft pick Deck McGuire was obviously very excited when he finalized a \$2 million deal with Toronto near midnight Monday.

But despite being a 21-year-old fresh out of Georgia Tech, McGuire wasn't overwhelmed or intimidated by the process of signing a million dollar deal.

"I was actually watching the Rays and Rangers game as the minutes ticked down, but I actually became more and more confident things would get done," McGuire said of the signing, which went down to the wire at Monday's midnight deadline, and wasn't officially announced until 1:40 am Tuesday morning.

"I did have some family and friends there, but I kind of went into my own room by myself to handle my thoughts and kind of talk unhindered (during the final negotiations). It was a very exciting time, everyone took it all in."

McGuire, a native of Richmond, Va., was at his family's vacation home in Tallahassee, Fla., for the signing.

It was a special moment in a young career — McGuire credits his parents for their guidance over the years — but there was also the business at hand of leaving behind the comforts of a college career and becoming a professional.

McGuire understood every detail of that decision. As the Jays 11th round pick at the entry draft in June, he understood the significance of his draft position and the fact it would make him a rich young man.

Major League Baseball's slot for McGuire came in at \$1.8 million. Like many of his first round peers, his contract came in above slot. But with Jays GM Alex Anthopoulos sticking firmly to

the organization's prescribed value for McGuire, the young right hander bargained towards a deal rather than for an over-inflated dollar figure.

"I just felt like I was ready to get my pro career started," said McGuire, who was 28-7 in his college career, striking out 306 batters in 291 innings, and earning honours as an all-American and the ACC pitcher of the year in 2009.

"When it came time to make that executive decision, I felt it was the right time for me. There was some give and take on both sides. They had their dollar amount and we had ours, we were able to talk it out and meet in the middle."

When he signed, McGuire was finally able to enjoy a moment that had its genesis back in the fall when Jays area scout Eric McQueen — a Georgia Tech grad himself — first contacted him.

Draft day was June 7, and while McGuire's dream to be drafted came true, he was also pitching in an Atlantic Coast Conference championship game. Tech wound up losing the game and the day turned bittersweet for McGuire.

"It never really sunk in that way," said McGuire, who avoided speaking with the media at the time to deal with his emotions over the loss.

"People came up and told me things (about being drafted in the first round), but I focused on the things I was doing at Georgia Tech. On June 7th, I was excited but it was tough after that loss. It really didn't sink in until a month later."

Anthopoulos said McGuire's Jays career will begin with a visit to the fall instructional league. Afterwards, he's likely headed to spring training, then to class A.

"After everything had settled down and everyone caught their breath, I had a talk with Alex Anthopoulos and we're going to take some time in the next couple of days and talk it out," McGuire said about what his overall plans might be.

"Alex said he'd like me to come to Toronto within the next month or so to see the city and the ball park, and I'm definitely looking forward to that."

“I’m a four-pitch guy, my fastball is 90-94 and I do my best to run it and sink it, sometimes it operates, sometimes it doesn’t,” McGuire added.

“I try to locate my pitches, I won’t overpower anyone for the most part, but I try to locate as well as anyone. I have a changeup and breaking ball and I use them sometimes to set up other pitches, but I’d say my strikeout pitches are my fastball and slider.”

SIGNING DECK MCGUIRE A SOLID STEP FOR JAYS

RICHARD GRIFFIN

Less than an hour remained until Monday’s deadline for signing or losing June draft picks when rookie Jays GM Alex Anthopoulos loosened the Rogers purse strings, announcing four top signings, including both No. 1 pick Deck McGuire and disgruntled holdout shortstop, fifth rounder Dickie Thon. The reason for the delay and the drama was the Jays were being team players for MLB, cooperating with their suggested negotiating guidelines — which will be good for the Jays going forward.

The commissioner’s office had quietly advised teams not to begin serious negotiations or announce any major over-slot deals until the final week so that agents and advisers could not compare notes, ratcheting up prices for the big boys with precedent. As such, even with the importance of a successful McGuire signing, Anthopoulos, who handled this one himself, played hard to get until the bitter end.

“Some time after 10 at night,” Anthopoulos shrugged when asked when his first concrete money offer was made to McGuire. “A formal number? We had talked in generalities for quite a bit of time. But probably around 10:30 p.m. (Monday) we had a hard number.”

That’s cutting it close. As for the prickly Thon family, the father, former Astros’ shortstop Dickie Thon, starting Day 1 of the draft had seemed furious at the way his 18-year-old son had dropped to the fifth round, declaring in no uncertain terms his annoyance at the string of Jays’ phone calls as the rounds slid by and Dickie was available. It looked bad for an agreement when Anthopoulos took over.

Even though the lucrative deal with Thon was for US\$1.5 million, more of a bonus than any other fifth rounder and more money than the Giants’ first-rounder got, the Thon deal was actually done long ago, but announced on Monday. Rules, you know.

Why do we know? In a post-midnight conference call with media, Anthopoulos led off by explaining how he handled the McGuire case while scouting director Andrew Tinnish did the rest . . . then later corrected himself when a question regarding Thon was addressed to Tinnish. “Sorry, I did Thon too.” That doesn’t sound like something that happened Monday. That announcement was for Bud.

In total, in the deadline’s final hour, Anthopoulos spent \$4.9 million of Rogers’ money in bonuses for four unproven kids that may or may not ever see a major-league uniform. A year earlier, same owners, different GM, in the hours leading to deadline Jays spent zero. The difference between the embarrassment of 2009 and the success of 2010 is the baseball trust that Rogers and president Paul Beeston have in the direction that the young GM is taking them.

Anthopoulos is a child of scouting and player development from his time with the payroll-challenged Expos. When he discovered a kindred spirit in Beeston last summer while hanging out in the home office when he was an assistant to J.P. Ricciardi, it was a rebuilding match made in heaven.

The Jays’ general manager understands the way baseball works even if sometimes he doesn’t agree with it. Anthopoulos understands that in order to lure a Georgia kid from a major ACC university like McGuire, in order to convince a highly-touted shortstop with a letter of intent to attend baseball powerhouse, Rice University to leave, you are going to overpay them, MLB slotting be damned.

Even though it was his first June as head honcho, the kid was able to compare his drafted players talents to Aroldis Chapman, the Cuban that got away, to Adeiny Hechavarria, the Cuban that didn’t and to two Venezuelan hotshot teenagers they recently overpaid.

Anthopoulos can now convince ownership about the Jays’ future, showing them a barrel full of young prospects, an inventory that could either

become the next generation of Jays or be used as trading chips to fill in missing gaps for a run at the division—whenever that timeline may be.

Failure to sign McGuire may not have been the end of the world for the organization, but getting it done by midnight was a message to the fans that this team is willing to go the extra mile and spend the extra dollars, as long as it's not on washed up six-year major-league veterans. Pay for the future, not the past. It's a pleasant change for the Jays in a bounceback season.

BOBBY THOMSON, 86: FAMED HOME RUN HITTER

AP

Bobby Thomson, whose "Shot Heard 'Round the World" in 1951 has echoed through baseball history as perhaps the game's most famous home run, has died. He was 86.

Thomson had been in failing health for several years. He died at home in Savannah, Ga., on Monday night, the Fox & Weeks funeral home said Tuesday.

On that October afternoon, with one swing, Thomson transformed a pennant race for one season, and his life forever. He connected off Ralph Branca for a three-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning in the decisive Game 3 of a National League playoff, lifting the New York Giants over their dreaded rivals, the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The drive into the left-field stands at the Polo Grounds and broadcaster Russ Hodges' ecstatic call of "The Giants win the pennant!" remain one of the signature moments in major league history.

"I never thought it was going to be that big. Hell, no," Branca told The Associated Press from his home in suburban New York. "When we went into the next season, I thought it'd be forgotten.

"I'll miss him," Branca said. "I mellowed over the years and we became good friends. I enjoyed being around him."

A three-time all-star as an infielder and outfielder, Thomson hit .270 with 264 career home runs and 1,026 RBIs from 1946-60 with

several teams. He led the league in a hitting category only once, and that was for triples.

Yet the fly ball that flew over the wall vaulted "The Flying Scot" to a place of almost mythic status. There have been plenty of historic home runs over the years — Bill Mazerowski, Kirk Gibson, Carlton Fisk and Joe Carter, to name a few — but Thomson's shot stands as the giant among them all.

The tall, lanky and self-effacing Thomson, however, was stunned that in a lineup that included future Hall of Famers Willie Mays and Monte Irvin, he would hit the pennant-winning homer. He called himself "the accidental hero."

Thomson never quite understood all the fuss the homer created. On its 40th anniversary in 1991, he said, "I can't believe we're still talking about it."

The home run decided one of baseball's most memorable pennant races, and later led to one of its most-debated questions: Did he know Branca was going to throw the high-and-inside fastball that Thomson hit out of the park?

More than a half-century later, it was revealed the Giants during the season had used a buzzer-and-telescope system to steal signals from opposing catchers. Helped by the inside information, the Giants overcame a 13½-game deficit to the Dodgers, won 37 of their final 44 games and forced a playoff.

Thomson steadfastly claimed he did not know what pitch was coming when he connected. Branca was never quite so sure.

For years, Thomson and Branca appeared together at functions of all kinds, a modern-day Abbott & Costello act, their retelling of the moment filled with fine-tuned comic touches and playful jabs.

Only one thing was missing from their act: the home run ball itself. The prize remains an elusive souvenir, with several people claiming to have it but no one able to prove it.

"We did award shows, dinners, autograph shows, golf outings, maybe five or six a year," Branca said.

Thomson moved south about five years ago to be closer to one of his daughters. Branca said he hadn't seen him for a couple of years.

Long after the Giants and Dodgers left town and moved west, Thomson remained a recognized figure on New York streets. Taxi drivers, office workers and pedestrians of a certain age would stop him or call out his name — the old Giants fans cheered, the Dodgers crowd, not so much.

Thomson homered on Oct. 3, and the 1951 World Series began the next day. Thomson hit a mere .238 without a home run as the Giants lost in six games to the crosstown New York Yankees, who were in the midst of winning a record five straight crowns.

The lustre from Thomson's shot, though, never dimmed. There was even a funny postscript, provided by the great Yogi Berra.

Berra and some of his Yankees teammates attended Game 3 of the Dodgers-Giants playoff, eager to see which team they would face. But after Brooklyn scored three times in the eighth inning for a 4-1 lead, Berra decided he'd seen enough and wanted to beat the late-afternoon traffic.

Yep, it's true. The man who coined the phrase "it ain't over till it's over" thought it was over and actually left the Polo Grounds and was driving home when Thomson homered.

Thomson's home run came during an era that baseball fondly calls "The Golden Age," a time when the sport was No. 1 in America and New York was its epicenter. The pennant race between those longtime rivals, the Giants and Dodgers, only heightened the frenzy.

New York won Game 1 of the playoff as Thomson homered against Branca in what turned out to be an eerie precursor. Brooklyn won Game 2 in a rout, setting up a winner-take-all rematch.

Down 4-1 in the ninth, the Giants began to rally when Alvin Dark and Don Mueller led off with singles against Don Newcombe. After Irvin fouled out, Whitey Lockman hit an RBI double that made it 4-2.

Mueller broke his ankle sliding into third and was replaced by pinch-runner Clint Hartung —

in fact, a little more than a month ago, Hartung died.

Branca then relieved Newcombe and on an 0-1 pitch, Thomson connected. And the rest, really, was history.

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Thomson was named after an uncle who was killed in the First World War. He came to the United States in 1926 when he was 3 years old and the family settled in Staten Island, N.Y., where he played high school and semipro ball. He worked out for both the Giants and Dodgers and after signing a contract with the Giants in 1942, he spent three years in the military during the Second World War.

When Thomson came to the major leagues in 1947, he was a fleet centre-fielder, often called "The Staten Island Scot," and lauded for his speed, but he was an anomaly in a lineup of slow-footed sluggers.

The Giants hit 221 homers in Thomson's rookie season and he had 29 of them. By 1949, Thomson was a prominent hitter in the lineup, batting .309 with 27 homers and 109 RBIs.

The rivalry with the Dodgers was as intense as any in sports, two teams in the same city, playing in the same league. There seemed a genuine dislike for each other by the players and sometimes it overshadowed the games.

When he hit the homer, Thomson recalled the emotion of the moment. "I remember thinking, 'We beat the Dodgers! We beat the Dodgers!'" Then, almost as an afterthought, "We won the pennant!"

The home run made him an immediate New York icon. There were television appearances, banquet speeches, the whole range of spoils for a low-profile outfielder who won a pennant with one dramatic swing.

But sentiment goes only so far in baseball front offices and in February 1954, the Giants traded Thomson to the Milwaukee Braves for four players and cash.

In a spring training exhibition game, Thomson broke his ankle trying to break up a double play. His roster spot went to a rookie who would fill in

admirably for the Braves. Hank Aaron went on to set a record with 755 home runs.

Thomson spent two seasons with the Braves and then was traded back to the Giants in 1957, their last season in New York. Then there were cameo appearances with the Chicago Cubs, Boston Red Sox and Baltimore Orioles.

Thomson was a businessman after he retired and stayed around the New York area for many years.

“He was a real gentleman and I think he handled his role well, too, being the hero of that series,” said former Brooklyn pitcher Carl Erskine, who was warming up in the bullpen when Branca was summoned. “I think he and Branca turned that incident into two real pros who handled that in a real class way.”

Thomson’s survivors include two daughters, Megan and Nancy.

Funeral arrangements were pending.

CTV EXECUTIVE KEITH PELLEY NAMED PRESIDENT OF ROGERS MEDIA

Rogers Communications Inc. has appointed former CTV executive Keith Pelley to head up its media division, the wing of the company that includes its broadcasting and digital media assets, as well as the Toronto Blue Jays.

Pelley takes over from Tony Viner, who retires as president of Rogers Media, on Sept. 7.

“Keith is a highly regarded media executive with strong business acumen and an extensive background in sports,” Rogers president and CEO Nadir Mohamed said Tuesday.

Pelley, 46, was executive vice president of strategic planning at CTV and president of Canada’s Olympic broadcast media consortium.

He also served as president and chief executive officer of the Toronto Argonauts from 2004 to 2007. He was appointed president of TSN in 2000 following his roles as senior vice president of programming and production and vice president, programming.

“Keith’s incredible depth and breadth of experience will be an asset to our senior executive team as we leverage our media assets in an increasingly digital world,” Mohamed said.

Viner, 63, joined Rogers in 1982 and has grown Rogers Media from three radio stations when he started into a diversified media company, Rogers said. The division is now comprised of radio, over-the-air and specialty television services, publishing, digital media and sports entertainment.

Rogers Media also includes Rogers Publishing, Rogers Sportsnet, the Shopping Channel and the Rogers Centre.

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BRADEN FRUSTRATES BLUE JAYS

Oakland right-hander helps A’s end four-game losing streak with 6-2 win over Toronto

AP

Dallas Braden likened the Toronto lineup to a beer league softball team. He was lucky enough to avoid the barrels.

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 Blue Jays 6-2 Tuesday night.

“I tried to utilize their aggressiveness against them,” Braden said. “I can’t give in because they can do some damage. It’s almost like staring down the barrel of a beer league team because they can hit home runs almost at will. You can’t make any mistakes and you have to get in and out of the zone as quickly as possible.”

Coco Crisp had three hits and an RBI, Daric Barton and Mark Ellis each drove in a run and the A’s finally mustered some early offense in winning for the 11th time in their last 16 home games.

“It definitely feels good to get it started,” said Crisp, who also stole two bases and scored twice.

"I felt pretty good. Before the game, while we were still in the clubhouse I joked, 'He has a no-hitter.'" 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.

"He used his changeup to his advantage and sprinkled just enough fastballs to both sides of the plate," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's been very consistent and giving us a lot of innings."

Craig Breslow got two outs in the eighth before getting hit on the left forearm by Yunel Escobar's line drive and leaving the game. Michael Wuertz recorded four outs for his sixth save.

"It's not anything to worry about," Breslow said. "It's a little tight right now. It all happened so fast."

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.

"Morrow pitched okay," Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston said. "He had not pitched in nine days so he did okay for a guy who hadn't pitched in so long. He had a pitch limit."

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.

"I wasn't too sharp," Morrow said. "I seemed to be behind a lot and ran my pitch counts up, had a few walks. I only got four innings out of the 80 pitches. I feel lucky to keep us in it."

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.

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SCHOOLING PROSPECTS IN BASEBALL, LIFE

JOHN LOTT

When the Toronto Blue Jays called Sal Fasano in the off-season, baseball was the last thing on his mind.

His two-year-old son, Santo, was about to undergo a third heart surgery. "He was born with half a heart," his dad says of the rare condition, called hypoplastic left heart syndrome. "The doctors rewired it."

It was not that simple, of course. Santo underwent his first operation when he was five days old, his second at three months. Now, as the

third scheduled surgery neared, the Fasano family prepared for another round of unspeakable anxiety.

With the day approaching, Jays assistant general manager Tony LaCava happened to call. Fasano, a career backup catcher with 17 professional seasons behind him, was 38 and undecided about whether to continue playing after a frustrating season at Triple-A Colorado Springs.

“Tony basically said we’re trying to start anew and we think you could be a big part of our organization in our rebuilding,” Fasano recalled. “I was honoured that he thought of me, but I had a lot of stuff on my mind with the baby.”

Santo’s surgery was successful. He is thriving.

“You can’t even tell [he had the surgery],” Fasano said with a smile. “He’s a pistol.”

As he speaks proudly of Santo, and his other two sons, Enzo, 8, and Angelo, 5, he is sitting in the manager’s office at Cooley Law School Stadium, hard by Michigan State University and home of the Lansing Lugnuts, Toronto’s low Class-A affiliate.

He is a big man, still wearing his trademark Fu Manchu mustache, his legs like tree trunks, his knees aching from all those years squatting behind the plate. And throughout his playing career — nine big-league teams, including the Jays, and 15 minor-league stops — Sal Fasano earned a reputation as one of the nicest, and smartest, guys in the game.

Never mind that his career batting average was .221, or that he never appeared in more than 78 games in a big-league season. He kept working because of his defence, and because when teams brought him aboard, they also knew they had hired a solid role model and an extra coach.

With Santo’s surgery behind them, Fasano and his wife debated LaCava’s open-ended offer — no specific job was mentioned at the start — and ultimately decided it was time to turn the page.

The Lansing job was ideal. The city is only three hours from their Chicago home.

“I thought it would be nice to have stability for the first time in my life,” he said. “I don’t have to worry about whether I’d be called up [from

Triple-A]. I’d be in the same place the whole year, and hopefully have the opportunity to teach guys what I think is the right way to play baseball.”

It seems to be working. Jays officials say he runs a tight ship. His players love him.

“Sal’s a great guy, a great manager,” said Kevin Ahrens, a No. 1 draft pick in 2007 who struggled early in his pro career but looks to have turned a corner under Fasano this season. “He’s really taught me more about baseball and life, and how to separate them, and come to the ballpark every day with a great attitude. I thank him for that.”

Fasano says he has learned a lot, too. The average age of his players is just over 21. Several were barely out of high school a year ago. Often, he says, they are fragile, unaccustomed to failure and daunted by the pressure that comes from being billed as the next big thing.

His roster is in a constant state of flux. Most of his new arrivals, like Ahrens, are coming down the ladder for more seasoning. To reach the top, there are three more rungs above Lansing.

And this is not an equal opportunity enterprise. A prospect is a big investment, and a prospect gets priority, even if he is batting .220. Someone batting 50 points higher will ride the bench to let the prospect play.

“Some guys have to get developed,” Fasano said. “Some guys are here to help.”

After a career as someone who was there to help, Fasano feels for the kids consigned to that role. He thinks of them when asked about his biggest challenge as a rookie manager.

“I think it’s when you have to be hard on someone,” he said. “Sometimes they just look crushed. You don’t want anybody to feel that way. Some guys, when they get a few days off, they get that look of dejection — it’s hard to live with sometimes.”

Fasano says his players’ energy level has increased since the season started. He believes his combination of intensity and joie de vivre has rubbed off.

He also rejects one of the traditional principles preached by many managers and coaches.

“People always say you want a guy to be on an even keel,” he said. “I don’t believe that. You’re going to have your ups and downs, but you want that oscillating line to keep going up. So when you’re at your lowest point at the end of the year, it should be higher than your beginning highest point at the start of the year. That’s how I look at things.”

Fasano likens his new job to his old one, in which wins and losses ultimately turned out to be secondary.

“It’s the relationships you build over the years that are sacred,” he said. “The moments on the field come and go.”

But there are moments on the field that make his day, too.

As a catcher, Fasano was adept at framing pitches, moving his body or glove ever slightly to turn a ball into a strike. Earlier this year, after working on that skill with catching prospect A.J. Jimenez, the payoff came.

“He caught a pitch that was a ball and the way he presented it made it look like a strike, and the umpire called it a strike. He looked over at me in the dugout, and he smiled. I was like, ‘Yep, there it is.’ Those little moments of satisfaction are the best part of the job.”

When he started, Fasano was unsure how he would take to managing. Now, with a few more years of experience, he can envision doing it in the big leagues. But he is in no hurry.

“I tell the players, ‘If you were any better, you’d be at a higher level. If the umpires were any better, they’d be at a higher level. And if I was any better, I’d be at a higher level.’ We all have to start somewhere, and we all have to learn.”

Ten of his players have learned enough this year to earn promotions. When Fasano called them into his office to deliver the good news, they, in turn, gave it right back.

“It’s funny. They’re excited they’re getting called up,” he said. “And then they’re like, ‘Oh man, what if it’s not the same up there as it is here?’ ”

JAYS' TOP PICK EAGER TO START CAREER

ERIKA GILBERT

Deck McGuire, the Blue Jays’ first-round pick in the 2010 draft, says he was confident a deal would get done as the clock crept toward Monday’s midnight deadline for signing draft picks. Still, when McGuire finally agreed to sign — just minutes before 12 a.m. after more than two months of uncertainty — the moment was not without emotion.

“It was a very exciting time,” said the 21-year-old McGuire, who was selected 11th overall by the Blue Jays on June 7 and was with friends and family when he and the club came to terms on an agreement. “I think everybody along with me took a big, huge breath when it all got done just before midnight.”

The 6-foot-6, 218-pound right-hander from Georgia Tech agreed to a US\$2-million deal, about US\$200,000 more than the “slot” guideline recommended by Major League Baseball.

There were some concerns about his willingness to sign with the Jays in June, when McGuire did not do the traditional post-draft conference call with the media. Some reports suggested he was not happy to have been selected by Toronto but general manager Alex Anthopoulos denied the rumours, saying McGuire seemed enthusiastic about joining the Jays organization.

McGuire admitted it was tough for him to celebrate when he was drafted. That had nothing to do with his feelings about the Blue Jays, though, and everything to do with the team he was playing for at the time. Georgia Tech, where McGuire was 9-4 with a 2.96 ERA as a junior, had just been knocked out of an NCAA regional tournament.

“I was excited to be drafted,” McGuire said. “It’s been a childhood dream of mine to get a chance to play professional baseball and it was a great day on that front, but in that moment it was really, really difficult for me to celebrate at all, just from the standpoint of such a tough loss.”

Anthopoulos had said the team was willing to walk away from McGuire and accept

compensation in next year's draft if an agreement could not be reached, but McGuire, who has one more year of eligibility at Georgia Tech, was eager to get his career going.

"I felt like I was just ready to get the pro career started, to be totally honest with you," McGuire said. "When it was coming down to the end there, and it really came time to make that executive decision, I felt like it was time to start my professional career and time to help out a great organization.

"I know that [the Jays are] a pretty young organization — a lot of guys getting ready to come up through the ranks. It's very exciting to be a part of that growth and I hope I can help out."

McGuire calls himself a "four-pitch guy" with two strikeout pitches — a 90-94 miles-per-hour fastball and a slider — as well as a curveball and changeup.

"I do my best to run [my fastball] and sink it at times. Sometimes it co-operates and sometimes it doesn't, but I really try and locate," he said. "I'm not going to overpower anybody, but I'm going to locate as good as anybody."

McGuire, who says there was "some give and take" on the final dollar figure, was just one of 13 first-round picks who had yet to agree to terms half an hour before the deadline. All but three ended up signing. Anthopoulos said in the wee hours of Tuesday morning that the two sides had been talking for a long time before the deadline but the Jays did not submit a formal offer until after 10 p.m. on Monday.

Anthopoulos said in June that he expected negotiations to go down to the deadline, as has often been the case recently, as teams are reluctant to sign deals over slot too early for fear of influencing the signing market.

The Jays, who did not sign three of their top four picks in the 2009, boosted their budget for this year's draft and signed 33 of their 56 picks, spending more than the recommended bonus on several occasions.

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BLUE JAYS SCUFFLE DEFENSIVELY IN LOSS TO A'S

On pitch count, Morrow allows two runs in just four innings

ALEX ESPINOZA

Aaron Hill almost pulled it off.

In the seventh inning of Tuesday's game against the A's, with one out and runners on first and third and the game tied, Jack Cust hit a chopper to the Blue Jays' second baseman. Hill wisely tagged out Daric Barton, who crossed his face as he fielded the ball, and tried to nab Cust at first for the inning-ending double play.

Alas, the ball sailed inches wide of first baseman Lyle Overbay's glove and Coco Crisp scored the eventual game-winning run of Toronto's 6-2 loss.

"It didn't work out, unfortunately," Hill said.

Instead of being in the dugout, the Blue Jays stayed out in the field and the A's took advantage, scoring two more insurance runs to put the game out of reach.

Following Hill's gaffe, Mark Ellis delivered an RBI single before scoring on a fielding error by left fielder Travis Snider, who misplayed a Rajai Davis single.

"We haven't made a lot of mistakes this year as far as defense," Toronto manager Cito Gaston said. "We're pretty high up the board as far as playing defense and it was just one of those nights that we had that we didn't play defense as well as we should."

One day after Shaun Marcum one-hit Oakland, Brandon Morrow took the hill for the first time since tossing his near no-hitter on Aug. 8. Limited by a pitch count, Morrow exited after just four innings of work on Tuesday.

"I just didn't feel that sharp," Morrow said. "I didn't have my best stuff by far."

Morrow certainly didn't have the same magic he had the last time he was on the mound. He surrendered consecutive doubles to the first two batters he faced, wiping out any chances of a repeat performance.

Both of the doubles, one by Crisp and one by Barton, were solid shots to the left-field gap. Morrow then proceeded to throw two wild pitches to allow Barton to advance to third and eventually score.

Morrow, pitching in front of dozens friends and family about 45 minutes away from his hometown in Rohnert Park, threw 80 pitches including 47 strikes. He allowed two earned runs on four hits and three walks while striking out two.

"For a guy who didn't pitch in nine days, he didn't have his velocity that he normally has," Gaston said. "This kid can get it up to 96, 95 [mph] but tonight he probably topped out a couple of times at 91, 92 and mostly in the 80s. But for a guy who hadn't pitched in nine days, that's not bad."

Morrow, 26, threw 137 pitches in the Aug. 8 gem, when he tossed 8 2/3 innings of no-hit ball before it was broken up by an infield single. Asked if he would let Morrow rest eight days again if presented the same situation, Gaston said, "This kid is going to be part of our future and we're looking out for him. ... We'd do it again. Sometimes you lose a game and win some more down the line if you do the right thing."

Gaston said he expected Morrow to be a bit rusty, though, adding, "Pitchers are like dairy cows, you've got to milk them. You've got to pitch them and if you don't pitch them, man, they're going to dry up."

Before the game, Gaston told reporters Morrow would be on a limit of 80-90 pitches, but he didn't tell Morrow. The right-hander, who played college baseball at nearby Cal, said he didn't feel uncomfortable heading into the game.

"I felt good the last four days leading up to my start," Morrow said. "My arm was loose and felt alive, I just didn't really have that command and that extra little gear that I had the last couple of times. ... Some guys say they're rusty after too much rest and I don't want to blame it on anything, I just wasn't that sharp."

Morrow's counterpart, Oakland lefty Dallas Braden, was rather sharp on Tuesday. After giving up an unearned run in the first inning, Braden tossed five scoreless frames before the Blue Jays used consecutive doubles from Hill and Overbay in the seventh to tie the game at 2. That was all the Blue Jays would manufacture.

"He was effective with his changeup," Snider said. "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 and he pitched well tonight and battled for his team and gave them a chance to win the ballgame."

Braden, a control pitcher who likes to change speeds, kept the Toronto lineup off-balance all night by locating his offspeed stuff. He finished seven innings, allowing two runs (one earned) on three hits and two walks while striking out five.

"You just try to utilize their aggressiveness against you," Braden said. "Those guys can do some damage. It's almost like you're staring down a beer league 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."

PAIR OF LEFTIES SET TO DUEL IN MATINEE FINALE

DOUG MILLER

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.

MOLINA AIMING FOR CONSISTENCY AT THE PLATE

*Jays hope defensive specialist can bring bat up
to speed*

ALEX ESPINOZA

While Jose Molina is no John Buck when it comes to handling the bat, he's no slouch when it comes to handling the pitching staff. In his six starts since Buck went on the 15-day disabled list with a lacerated right thumb, Molina has guided the pitching staff to a 2.33 ERA and a 5-1 record.

After going 0-for-16 in five starts as Buck's replacement, Molina finally broke out with a four-hit performance on Monday to raise his average to .270. Manager Cito Gaston said he talked with Molina about his brother, Rangers catcher Bengie Molina, and how he was able to develop into a legitimate big league hitter.

"Trust me, we've worked with him," manager Cito Gaston said. "I think believing has been the big thing and last night is certainly not going to hurt him at all."

Looking at Jose Molina's batting practice stroke, Gaston said he doesn't understand why he can't be a consistent power threat, something Molina has never been. Molina is a lifetime .238 hitter and he's never hit more than six home runs in a season.

"I said, 'There's no reason why you can't hit, it's just your approach must be different,'" Gaston said. "And he said, 'I never play regularly and I care more about pitchers than I do about myself.' Then I said, 'Yeah, but you can do both, you can separate the two,' and he agreed with that."

The Blue Jays have an option to bring back Molina at season's end, but if he doesn't stay with the team, Gaston said the 35-year-old should have no problem finding work elsewhere. Molina said he's enjoyed working with Toronto's young staff.

"They're here to learn and we're here to teach," Molina said. "The good thing about them is that they're all good listeners."

Gaston remembers '89, '92 AL playoffs vs. A's

Back in 1989, Cito Gaston's first year as Toronto's skipper, the Oakland Coliseum wasn't exactly a place he wanted to visit.

After Jimmy Williams was fired following a 12-24 start to the season, Gaston took over and the Blue Jays went 77-49 the rest of the way to earn a date with the A's in the American League Championship Series. The Blue Jays lost the series in five games, before the A's eventually went on to sweep the Giants in the World Series.

But three years later, Gaston and company would return to the Coliseum for the 1992 ALCS and get retribution. Asked to recount his favorite memory from the series, Gaston didn't hesitate.

"When Robbie finally hit the home run and we beat [the A's]," he said. "That's the big one I remember, otherwise we got our butts whooped here."

Gaston, of course, is referring to Roberto Alomar's infamous home run against Oakland's Hall of Fame closer Dennis Eckersley in Game 4.

In that contest, Toronto trailed 6-1 heading into the eighth inning, but Alomar doubled to lead off the frame before stealing third and scoring to

make it 6-2. Eckersley, who led the Majors with 51 saves and had a 1.91 ERA that season, then entered the game and promptly gave up a pair of RBI singles to set the stage for Alomar's heroics.

Alomar came up in the ninth inning with no outs and runner on third and sent an Eckersley pitch over the right-field wall to send the game to extra innings. Toronto would go on to win the game in 11 innings and the series in five games. Alomar's home run propelled the franchise into the World Series for the first time after the team had lost in the ALCS three times.

"I was actually looking at that fence yesterday thinking about that," Gaston said.

Blue Jays bring their power to Oakland

As the Blue Jays and A's do battle at the Oakland Coliseum, the matchup features baseball's most powerful team against the game's most powerless.

Entering play Tuesday, Toronto led the Majors with 183 home runs while the A's were last with 71. Jose Bautista, whose 37 home runs are tops in the big leagues, has as many as Oakland's top four home run hitters combined.

"They have some strong, powerful guys," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Obviously, that's a big part of their offense ... a big part of their game."

While Oakland catcher Kurt Suzuki leads the A's with his 12 home runs, the Blue Jays have eight hitters with at least 13.

The series opener on Monday was the latest example of Toronto's long ball prowess. A's lefty Brett Anderson entered the contest without giving up a home run in his nine starts this season, a span of 50 innings, but Bautista cranked one out of the park in the fourth inning before Edwin Encarnacion added a two-run shot off Anderson in the fifth.

Anderson is one of three lefties the Blue Jays will face this series, as Oakland is the only American League team to currently feature three southpaws in its rotation. Dallas Braden (7-8, 3.56 ERA) started on Tuesday, while 24-year-old Gio Gonzalez (10-8, 3.49) will take the mound on Wednesday.

"It's a little different," Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston said. "I think that's probably the first time I've ever been through something like that. I can't remember facing three left-handers in a row. Most teams don't have three left-handed starters."

As Gaston pointed out, Toronto has struggled against left-handed pitching this season. The Blue Jays are batting .259 against righties, but they are batting just .218 against lefties.

MCGUIRE THRILLED TO JOIN JAYS ORGANIZATION

JAMES HALL

With all of Blue Jays nation sweating as time inched ever closer to Monday's midnight ET signing deadline, right-hander Deck McGuire, the Jays' first-round pick in the 2010 First-Year Player Draft, was nothing but cool.

With McGuire unsigned literally minutes before the buzzer, he and Blue Jays general manager Alex Anthopolous smoothly and meticulously orchestrated a pressure-cooker deal, eventually agreeing on a \$2 million signing bonus.

"They obviously had their dollar amount, and we had ours," McGuire said. "We were able to talk and get stuff worked out."

McGuire was in Florida with friends and family when he received the good news.

"[I was] just hanging out watching baseball," he said. "As the minutes ticked down, I became more and more confident that we were going to get something done."

"I kind of went into my own separate room to handle [business conversations], just so I could be alone with my thoughts and be able to talk unhindered. With all that stuff going on, it was a very exciting time, [and] I think everybody along with me could take a big huge breath when it all got done just before midnight."

McGuire was taken by the Jays out of Georgia Tech with the 11th overall selection. The athletic, 6-foot-6, 218-pound right-hander offers a four-pitch repertoire -- fastball (90 mph to 94 mph), slider, curveball and changeup -- and has

been touted as an extreme competitor with the ability to eat innings at the big league level.

In his third and final year at Georgia Tech, the 21-year-old posted a 9-4 record with a 2.96 ERA. Though he briefly mulled over the idea of returning to school for another year, he decided that he was more than ready to begin his professional career.

"It was really just weighing the pros and cons," he said. "When it was coming down to the end there, and it really came time to make that executive decision, I felt like it was time to start my professional career and [with] a great organization."

As for his immediate destination within the organization, that remains to be seen. He and Anthopolous are arranging a meeting for later this week to discuss further details.

Happy to be a Blue Jay, McGuire cited Draft day as bittersweet, as Georgia Tech was eliminated from the NCAA Atlanta Regional finals the same night.

"I was excited to be drafted. It's been a childhood dream of mine to play professional baseball," he said. "It was a great day on that front, but in that moment, it was really difficult for me to celebrate it all in terms of a standpoint of such a tough loss."

Going forward, however, he is thrilled to be a part of an organization committed to developing young talent.

"A lot of guys [are] ready to come up through the ranks. It's very exciting to be a part of that growth, and I hope I can help out," he said.

A'S RALLY IN SEVENTH TO SNAP SKID VS. JAYS

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

JANE LEE

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 Wuerzt 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 Wuerzt stepped up, which he's been doing all year. We really just didn't miss a beat."

RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

DEEP RUN'S MCGUIRE
SIGNS WITH BLUE JAYS

Bryce Harper's deal with Washington wasn't the only one that went down to the wire.

The Toronto Blue Jays signed first-round draft pick - and former Deep Run High School star - Deck McGuire, agreeing to a minor-league contract with a \$2 million bonus. McGuire's deal was completed Monday at 11:59 p.m., one minute before the deadline.

McGuire is a 6-6 218-pound right-hander from Georgia Tech who went 28-7 with a 3.28 ERA in 45 starts in three years for the Yellow Jackets. He was chosen 11th overall.

Toronto officials said McGuire likely would be ready for a full-season Class A team, such as Lansing (Mich.) or Dunedin (Fla.) in April 2011.

SAN JOSE MERCURY
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

OAKLAND A'S PUT SOME
HITS TOGETHER IN WIN
OVER TORONTO BLUE JAYS

JOE STIGLICH

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

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 before a crowd of 13,237.

The A's bunched four hits off two relievers in the seventh -- more hits than they registered in any

of their three previous games -- and they scored three runs to break a 2-2 tie, ensuring they would snap their four-game losing streak.

"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 in which they had 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, 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 kind of 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 at 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.

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 left-hander 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 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 while 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 out after Yunel Escobar's liner ricocheted off his forearm. Breslow suffered a bruise.

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

Morrow, a former Cal star, was coming off a nine-day layoff. He 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 four innings, getting lifted after 80 pitches.

FLORIDA TODAY
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

KENNY WILSON'S CLUTCH HIT LIFTS DUNEDIN BLUE JAYS PAST BREVARD COUNTY MANATEES

Kenny Wilson's two-run single in the top of the eighth inning snapped a 5-5 tie as the Dunedin Blue Jays defeated the Brevard County Manatees 7-5 Tuesday in a Florida State League baseball game at Space Coast Stadium.

Yan Gomes walked to lead off the inning and Justin McClanahan reached on a bunt single. Ryan Goins' sacrifice bunt moved Gomes to third and McClanahan to second. Wilson then followed with his two-run single to center field.

Dunedin took a 2-0 lead in the top of the first on Jon Talley's two-run single to center field.

Brevard County scored four runs in the bottom of the first on Erik Komatsu's run-scoring single to center field, Angel Salome's run-scoring double to right field and Sean Halton's two-run double to center field.

The Blue Jays tied the game at 4 in the top of the second on Mark Sobolewski's two-run single to center field. Dunedin took a 5-4 lead in the fourth as Sobolewski's single to right field drove in Anthony Gose, who earlier had reached on a hit by pitch.

The Manatees tied the game in sixth as Matt Cline doubled to left field and later scored on Salome's single to left field.

Brevard County will travel to Lakeland today for a two-game series against the Flying Tigers. A third game between the two teams will be played at 7:05 p.m. Friday at Space Coast Stadium.

DESERT DISPATCH
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

**SANCHEZ STILL ON
STREAK FOR BLUE JAYS**

DAVID HELDRETH

Aaron Sanchez threw a no hitter during his four innings on the mound for the Gulf Coast Blue Jays on Tuesday.

The Barstow native and former Barstow High School pitcher started Tuesday's game for the Blue Jays rookie league baseball team in a game against the Gulf Coast Pirates. The Blue Jays won 2-0. Sanchez was nearly perfect in the game. He has extended his shutout run to four games and 10 innings. He hasn't given up a run since the three runs, two earned, he allowed in a game against the Phillies on July 27.

Sanchez had an impressive game against the Pirates despite walking four batters. He struck out seven batters in the game, his highest total this season. Tuesday also marked the most innings Sanchez has seen in a game.

The Pirates started the game with a fly and ground out, and Sanchez only got better. He struck out the next five batters to end the first and second innings and start the third inning. Sanchez made his first mistake giving up a walk to Daan Cornelissen in the third inning. However, Dylan Child hit into a double play to end the third inning.

The fourth inning started with a fly out for the Pirates. Sanchez loaded the bases with walks before ending the inning and his time on the mound with a strikeout.

Sanchez now has a 1.69 ERA on the season after pitching 16 innings in six games. He has allowed 14 hits, eight runs, three earned runs, 12 walks and struck out 24 batters in that time.

UNION LEADER
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

**BUCK STOPS HERE, MAKES
FISHER CATS HISTORY**

KEVIN GRAY

John Buck took a place in Fisher Cats' history with his first two swings.

The Blue Jays catcher flexed his muscle on a rehabilitation assignment, blasting homers on the first two strikes he saw last night.

The second bomb, a grand slam, gave New Hampshire a 9-0 lead and sent a jolt of energy throughout Merchantsauto.com Stadium.

We've seen memorable rehab stints in Manchester, including appearances from John Smoltz and Daisuke Matsuzaka last season, and Buck shined as bright as anyone.

Two homers in two swings? Now that's a big-league All-Star.

The beautiful evening along the Merrimack River was one of those nights fans will be fondly remember during the cold winter. Buck had six RBIs before breaking a sweat, and New Hampshire ace Kyle Drabek earned his league-leading 13th win.

Forty dinners from Outback Steakhouse were being delivered as the Fisher Cats and Mets finished the series opener. Buck, who paid for the postgame spread, will play two more games with New Hampshire before rejoining the Blue Jays -- assuming his right thumb doesn't have any lingering problems.

Pretty sure he's OK. Buck's first homer sailed 425 feet over the center-field wall. The crack of the bat was like a cannon being fired over the river.

"The No. 1 thing is to get my timing back and finish games healthy," Buck said before the game. "I just want to see some pitches and get back in the groove. It probably shouldn't take that long."

Buck, 30, wore a shiny Blue Jays' mask and took his place behind the dish. Drabek and Buck may be working together in Toronto next season, though the Jays' would have to re-sign the veteran catcher, who'll likely entertain offers as a free agent following this season.

A first-time American League All-Star this season, Buck will command a hefty salary after putting up career numbers with Toronto. The 6-foot-3 slugger is hitting .277 with 14 homers and 49 RBI for the Jays.

Toronto should consider re-signing Buck, who could serve as a mentor for young catcher J.P. Arencibia next season. Fellow ex-Fisher Cat Brian Jeroloman also is being groomed for a big-league roster spot.

"I haven't really put much thought it (next season). I'll play the year out and see if they decide to sign me. If not, obviously, J.P. will probably take over," said Buck, earning \$2 million in salary this season. "I just know that when I come off the DL (Friday) I'll be catching every day."

Buck played his first game since Aug. 4 at Yankee Stadium, the day of Alex Rodriguez's 600th career homer. An A-Rod foul tip ripped a chunk of skin off Buck's thumb, which needed stitches, and Buck landed on the 15-day disabled list.

In the first inning, A-Rod ripped the milestone homer off ex-Fisher Cat righty Shaun Marcum. Buck had the best view in the house.