

A's News Clips, Saturday, August 21, 2010

Heady play from A's Cliff Pennington leads to win over Rays

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

The Tampa Bay Rays are quickly becoming tired of seeing Cliff Pennington in the batter's box.

Pennington beat out a throw to first base after Tampa Bay second baseman Ben Zobrist was unable to handle a grounder. That allowed Kevin Kouzmanoff to score from third in the bottom of the eighth inning to help give the A's a riveting 5-4 win over the Rays at the Oakland Coliseum.

"If you don't have a guy with his speed and desire to beat that throw out, it's just another close play and the other team holds their breath," A's manager Bob Geren said. "But with a guy like (Pennington), that kind of attitude is what makes a difference."

Pennington, who came up with a critical two-run, go-ahead double for the A's in their 4-3 win over Tampa Bay on Thursday, also made an athletic play to retire B.J. Upton in the top of the ninth. Pennington went to his left to field a grounder by Upton, spun around and fired to first base to get the speedy outfielder.

"That one was so special, I'm actually looking forward to seeing that again," Geren said.

Pennington now has 11 hits in 25 at-bats in seven games against the Rays this season and has been an offensive hero for the A's during their now four-game win streak. Pennington also had the winning single for Oakland in its 5-4 win over Toronto on Wednesday.

"I'm not going to say that we're just all scrappy guys," Pennington said. "We're not hitting a three-run homer every night. But singles,

stealing bases, going first to third, we're doing the little things. If you want to call that scrappy, I think it's just playing the game hard."

Setting up Pennington was Mark Ellis, whose nine-pitch walk off Rays reliever Joaquin Benoit brought Pennington to the plate.

It all set up Craig Breslow for his second save and Henry Rodriguez for his first career major league win.

A's starter Vin Mazzaro lasted 6 1/3 innings and has been impressive in his four starts in August, allowing a combined six earned runs in 25 1/3 innings. A's starters have now gone at least six innings in 19 consecutive games, the longest such streak for the A's in 30 years.

Trailing 3-0, the A's started to take the shine off Tampa Bay rookie pitcher Jeremy Hellickson with seven hits in the first 6 1/3 innings. Hellickson came into Friday as the first pitcher in the modern era (since 1900) to pitch at least six innings and allow three hits or less in his first three career big league starts.

In the third, Pennington and Coco Crisp both reached base and executed a double-steal. Daric Barton then singled to center to score both runners.

It was both Crisp's and Pennington's 20th steal in the season. Along with Rajai Davis (36), the A's have three players with at least 20 steals in a season for the first time since 1992. That year, Rickey Henderson (48), Willie Wilson (28) and Lance Blankenship (21) were the A's leading base stealers.

In his last start on Sunday, Mazzaro limited Minnesota to one earned run in six-plus innings. After Friday, he has thrown at least six innings in 10 of his last 11 starts.

After the first two innings, Mazzaro retired 13 of the next 15 batters before he left with one out in the seventh. All of which should help Mazzaro make a case to be a part of the A's young and promising starting rotation once the 2011 season begins. He started the season in the minors last year and this year, although Friday marked Mazzaro's 32nd career major league start.

A's update: Jackson back on disable list

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

Outfielder Conor Jackson landed back on the 15-day disabled list Friday, this time with a lower abdomen injury that might require surgery.

Jackson, who just came off the DL on Monday after missing more than a month with a right hamstring strain, said he'll visit noted sports hernia specialist Dr. William Meyers in Philadelphia in the next few days to get the injury properly diagnosed.

If surgery is required, the expected recovery time would be four to six weeks.

It's an especially disheartening development for Jackson, who has played just 18 games for the A's since coming over in a trade from Arizona on June 15 for minor league pitcher Sam Demel. Jackson was hitting .236 with 18 RBIs.

"It's borderline embarrassing, because I come over to an organization, and I've only played (18) games, and I know they had high regards for me coming over here," Jackson said. "It's just frustrating, and that's really not even the word I'm looking for. It's probably something more."

Jackson said he's felt discomfort in his lower abdomen and groin area since spring training and has seen doctors in Arizona. But he was hoping to put off any procedure until after the season.

Jackson felt pain Thursday night in his first at-bat and said he had a hard time getting out of bed when he woke up Friday morning. Utility player Jeff Larish was called up from Triple-A Sacramento to take Jackson's spot on the roster.

"Just talking to others who have had this "... you have to draw a line somewhere," Jackson said. "It's just unfortunate that it has to be right now."

This is Jackson's third stint on the disabled list this season and the 23rd time the A's have used the DL in 2010 -- two shy of the Oakland record set in 2008. There are now a season-high 11 A's players on the DL, although it's possible closer Andrew Bailey (rib strain) will come off this weekend after Friday's rehab appearance with Triple-A Sacramento.

Bailey started for the River Cats and faced five batters, allowing three hits and two earned runs with one strikeout in two-thirds of an inning. He threw 18 pitches, including 10 strikes and two wild pitches.

With the A's in the midst of a 25-games-in-26-days stretch, Mark Ellis was not in the starting lineup as Steve Tolleson started at second base. Tolleson, who committed an error in the first inning on a Ben Zobrist grounder, may also spell shortstop Cliff Pennington in the coming days, A's manager Bob Geren said.

Chin Music: Surgery possible for Conor Jackson

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune, 8/20/2021 6:10PM

Conor Jackson will visit with Dr. William Meyers in Philadelphia in the next couple of days to get his lower abdomen injury properly diagnosed. But the A's outfielder said it's possible he'll need surgery to repair the problem, which would pretty much end his season.

Jackson said he's has felt discomfort in his lower abdomen and groin area since spring training. But he was hoping to put off any procedure to help him eradicate the pain until after the season. Jackson said he felt pain Thursday night in his first at-bat, and he had a hard time getting out of bed when he woke up this morning. He was later placed on the DL for the third time this season.

"It's borderline embarrassing, because I come over to an organization and I've only played (18) games and I know they had high regards for me coming over here," said Jackson, who was acquired from Arizona on June 15. "It's just frustrating, and that's really not even the word I'm looking for. It's probably something more."

Jackson hasn't been diagnosed yet, but if he needs surgery, the recovery time is between 4-6 weeks, so he should be ready for spring training next year. He's until team control next season. Travis Buck had hernia surgery in 2006 when he was in the minors, and Meyers performed QB Donovan McNabb's hernia surgery in Nov. 2005.

Interestingly enough, Jackson's injury opens the door for Buck to establish himself as an everyday outfielder. He's in the lineup tonight.

A night off for Mark Ellis, as Steve Tolleson gets the start at second base. Three hours before the game, A's manager Bob Geren was unsure if Craig Breslow or Michael Wuertz would be available tonight. But Breslow told Geren that his bruised forearm had been feeling much better.

The lineups

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Davis LF, Buck RF, Tolleson 2B, Pennington SS, Mazzaro P.

Rays — Jaso C, Zobrist 2B, Crawford LF, Longoria 3B, Pena 1B, Joyce RF, Aybar DH, Upton CF, Bartlett SS, Hellickson P.

A's rotation ties 1980 record

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Vin Mazzaro's solid start against Tampa Bay on Friday night called to mind the names Mike Norris, Rick Langford, Matt Keough, Steve McCatty and Brian Kingman.

That's because Mazzaro's outing - 6 1/3 innings, three hits, one earned run - brought the A's 2010 rotation on a par with those 1980 starters in one impressive streak.

And because of a two-run rally in the eighth, the A's have a four-game winning streak. They pulled out a 5-4 victory at the Coliseum.

The Rays led 4-3 in that eighth before Rajai Davis' sacrifice fly tied the game. With two outs and runners at the corners, Cliff Pennington hit a routine grounder to second baseman Ben Zobrist, but he mishandled it. Zobrist's error put Oakland in front.

For the past 13 games, A's starters have lasted at least six innings and allowed no more than three earned runs. That ties the Oakland record set in August 1980.

In the current streak, the A's rotation has an ERA of 1.67.

The A's starters have gone at least six innings in 19 straight games, the second-longest such streak in Oakland history behind a 25-gamer by - you guessed it - that 1980 staff.

Oakland manager Bob Geren said it's a little premature to compare his starters to Norris, Langford and Co., but he's enthused by Mazzaro, Cahill and Co.

"They're on their way to being that good," Geren said. "It's still early in their maturation process, but I like what we see. Everybody around the game praises our young rotation."

Mazzaro, born in 1986, admitted he hadn't heard of those 1980 starters. But when told the A's rotation had matched that mark, he said, "That's awesome. Being in the same category as those guys, it's pretty cool."

The 1980 A's also did something the 2010 club would like to do: end a streak of losing seasons at three.

Tampa Bay right-hander Jeremy Hellickson owned a nice calling card entering Friday's start: He was the first pitcher in the modern era to go at least six innings and allow three hits or fewer in his first three outings.

He wasn't quite that good in his fourth start. He gave up three runs on seven hits in 6 1/3 innings.

The A's "20-20" vision on the basepaths helped them cut a 3-0 deficit to 3-2 in the third. With one out, Pennington doubled into the right-field corner. He remained at second on Coco Crisp's infield single to the left side.

With Daric Barton at the plate, Pennington and Crisp pulled off a double steal. Each man picked up his 20th stolen base of the season - and each man scored soon thereafter on Barton's single to center.

The A's tied it in the sixth. Jack Cust jolted a Hellickson pitch over the wall in left-center. It was Cust's ninth homer this season - and only Oakland's fifth in August.

The Rays regained the lead in the following inning when Zobrist took reliever Jerry Blevins deep to left.

Henry Rodriguez worked a perfect eighth for his first major-league win.

Craig Breslow had a three-up, three-down ninth to earn his second save. Pennington backed Breslow with a brilliant play, ranging far to his left to stop a B.J. Upton grounder, then firing to first to retire the speedy center fielder.

Oakland returns Conor Jackson to disabled list

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Conor Jackson returned to the disabled list Friday because of a lower abdominal strain. The left fielder is hurting both physically and mentally.

"It's borderline embarrassing," Jackson said Friday afternoon. He has dealt with the abdominal problem since March and hoped he "could play with it until October."

Jackson aggravated the injury during his first at-bat of Thursday's 4-3 win over the Rays. He played the entire game, then had trouble getting out of bed Friday morning.

On Monday, Jackson returned from a 1 1/2 -month stint on the DL because of a strained right hamstring. The A's acquired Jackson from Arizona on June 15. He has played only 18 games, hitting .228. His lone home run with Oakland came Monday night against Toronto.

"I know (the A's) had high regard for me," Jackson said. "It's just frustrating. It's just hard to come in here and face your teammates and not be able to go on the field and play with them."

It has been a tough two years for Jackson, the Cal alum who was the Diamondbacks' first-round pick in 2003. The hamstring injury put him on the DL with Arizona early this season. A case of valley fever limited him to 30 games in 2009.

"Luck has not been on his side," A's manager **Bob Geren** said. "We all feel bad for him because he's a competitor."

The A's recalled infielder **Jeff Larish** to take Jackson's roster spot. **Travis Buck** was in Friday's starting lineup in right field, essentially replacing Jackson in the lineup, with **Rajai Davis** in left.

Oakland has used the disabled list 23 times this season, two shy of the team record set in 2008.

Briefly: Andrew Bailey (ribcage strain) allowed two runs on three hits in two-thirds of an inning in a rehab outing for Triple-A Sacramento against Iowa. He's eligible to come off the DL, but it's not certain when he will do so. ... Tampa Bay has the best road record (35-24) in the majors but has lost four straight at the Coliseum. ... The A's have three men (Davis, **Coco Crisp** and **Cliff Pennington**) with at least 20 stolen bases for the first time since 1992 (**Rickey Henderson**, **Willie Wilson** and **Lance Blankenship**).

A'S LEADING OFF

Steve Kroner, San Francisco Chronicle

Rarely on Friday: The Rays own a 74-48 record, the second-best mark in the majors, but somehow, they are 3-16 on Fridays. One of those three victories came at the Coliseum, a 4-1 decision May 7.

Drumbeat: C. Jackson back on the DL

From Steve Kroner, at the Coliseum: 8/20/2010 3:34PM

Merely four days after he came off the disabled list, the A's have placed outfielder Conor Jackson back on the 15-day DL with a lower abdominal strain. Oakland recalled infielder Jeff Larish to take Jackson's spot on the roster. Larish had gone to the River Cats on Monday, when Jackson returned from 1-1/2-month stint on the DL because of a strained right hamstring.

Jackson is hitting .228 with one homer (he hit it Monday against Toronto) and five RBIs for Oakland. It's his third time on the DL this season; a hamstring strain sidelined him from April 19 to May 6 while he was with Arizona.

The A's have used the DL 23 times this season, two short of the Oakland record set in 2008.

Pennington lifts A's for third straight game

Shortstop beats throw to drive in winning run vs. Rays

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- He did it again. Again.

Cliff Pennington has had himself quite the homestand. First came the walk-off single in Wednesday's 5-4 win over the Blue Jays. Then came his game-winning two-run single in Thursday's 4-3 victory over the Rays.

On Friday, Pennington helped take down one of baseball's top teams again, this time busting down the first-base line to reach on an error and drive in the game-winning run to lift Oakland to a 5-4 win over Tampa Bay.

"We're not a team that hits a lot of home runs," Pennington said. "We're not all scrappy guys, but we're not going to hit a three-run homer every night. We're going to get our hits and make our way around the bases. That's what's working for us right now."

With two outs in the bottom of the eighth and runners on first and third, Pennington hit a hard ground ball to Tampa Bay second baseman Ben Zobrist, who fumbled his initial attempt at the ball. As a result, Zobrist rushed his throw and he one-hopped it to first base, but not before Pennington lunged in safely.

"Once the ball was hit, I was just trying to get down the line as fast as I could," Pennington said. "I was maybe two feet out of the batter's box when I saw him bobble it. I could see him the whole time I was running, and I figured I had a good chance to beat him."

Pennington certainly made good on his chance. Since his average bottomed out at the Mendoza line on June 9, Pennington has been the team's most consistent hitter. Over his past 58 games, Pennington is batting .333.

But it wasn't just about Pennington's bat on Friday night, he flashed some leather, too.

With one out in the ninth inning, Pennington made a nice ranging play to his left, picked up the ball, spun and fired a one-hop strike to first, just in time to nab B.J. Upton. He also made a nice play in the seventh inning to get the speedy Carl Crawford out at first.

"That's one of those plays when you get spoiled as Major League manager ... and you just kind of chalk it up like, 'That's a Major League play,'" Oakland manager Bob Geren said of Pennington's ninth-inning twirl and throw. "But that one was so special I'm actually looking forward to seeing that one again."

If it weren't for a stellar at-bat by pinch-hitter Mark Ellis, Pennington may have never reached the batter's box for the game's crucial sequence.

Ellis, who replaced second baseman Steve Tolleson, faced a 1-2 count after three pitches from reliever Joaquin Benoit. Slowly but surely, Ellis worked himself back into the count and eventually drew a nine-pitch walk. Pennington delivered the game-winner four pitches later.

"That was an unbelievable at-bat, a huge at-bat," Pennington said. "Coming into a pinch-hit role isn't easy, and for him to foul off ball after ball and then draw a walk, that was huge for this team."

For a moment, it looked as if Jerry Blevins would go from savior to goat in the span of 24 hours. A day after he notched a 1-2-3 ninth to earn his first big league save, Blevins surrendered a go-ahead solo shot to Zobrist in the seventh inning which gave the Rays a 4-3 lead.

But Rajai Davis bailed out Blevins with a sacrifice fly in the eighth, two batters before Pennington delivered the dagger.

Once again, Oakland starter Vin Mazzaro's worst inning was the first inning, as Tampa Bay took advantage of two A's errors and jumped out to an early 2-0 lead.

The first error was committed by Tolleson, who couldn't cleanly field a Zobrist grounder to allow him to reach first base. Mazzaro then had an unsuccessful pickoff attempt and the ball rolled into foul territory, as Zobrist moved to second.

After Crawford singled and Carlos Pena walked to load the bases, Rays right fielder Matt Joyce singled up the middle to score Zobrist and Crawford. Though both runs were unearned, Mazzaro now has an ERA of 6.60 in the first inning this season, his highest for any frame.

While Mazzaro has certainly noticed the trend, he still doesn't understand it.

"I really don't know," Mazzaro said. "I'm still trying to figure that out myself. It don't know, it happens. Something that will hopefully pass soon, just got to keep battling."

Mazzaro's ineffectiveness carried into the second inning, as he issued a leadoff walk to Upton, who eventually scored on a John Jaso sacrifice fly to make it 3-0 Rays.

From that point on, though, Mazzaro was locked in. He retired 15 of 17 batters to finish out his evening, issuing two walks while allowing no hits in that span.

Mazzaro used 104 pitches to get through six innings, but was pulled after getting one out on one pitch in the seventh. In his 6 1/3 innings, Mazzaro allowed three runs (one earned) on three hits and four walks while striking out five.

"We just didn't hit as well as we can tonight," Zobrist said. "But give credit to their pitcher over there. He threw a good game. He worked off his fastball well. And threw that changeup and two-seamer well and spotted it up pretty well. You've got to give him credit."

Oakland's lineup, meanwhile, got its first up-and-close look at Tampa Bay's impressive rookie Jeremy Hellickson. The 23-year-old righty, who won his first three big league starts since being promoted on Aug. 2, looked sharp in his first two frames before the A's finally broke through in the third.

Hellickson surrendered a double to Pennington and a single to Coco Crisp and the pair proceeded to pull off a double steal. The next pitch, Daric Barton drilled a single up the middle to score Pennington and Crisp.

Jack Cust evened the score at 3 in the sixth with a solo shot off Hellickson, who allowed three earned runs on seven hits and a walk over 6 1/3 innings while striking out seven.

"He looked good," Barton said. "He spotted his fastball and threw his offspeed well down in the zone."

A's reliever Henry Rodriguez pitched a perfect eighth, before Craig Breslow notched a 1-2-3 ninth to earn his second save of the season. The Rays had just one hit after the second inning on Friday, Zobrist's home run in the seventh.

"They outplayed us tonight," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "They just played better than we did. They made plays, they ran the bases well. They pitched better. They beat us tonight. They deserved to win that game."

With Mazzaro's effort, Oakland has received 13 straight starts of at least six innings without giving up more than three runs, tying the Oakland record set in 1980. The A's starting rotation has a 1.67 ERA in that span.

Young guns Price, Anderson set to face off

By Bailey Stephens / MLB.com

At this point in late August, with the Rays jockeying for position in the ever-tight American League East, every game is a pressure-packed matchup.

And with two of the AL's top young left-handed pitchers dueling, Saturday's contest between the Athletics and Rays promises even more drama.

In a clash of the league's top two pitching staffs, southpaws David Price and Brett Anderson will square off on Saturday afternoon for Game 3 of the series. While Anderson hasn't found the same run support that Price has this season, he's turned in a 2.25 ERA in his past three starts.

But Anderson insisted he's not getting frustrated with the A's offense, which has been especially sluggish of late.

"As a pitcher, if their guy is going out there and throwing up zeroes, you want to be right there with him, step for step and inning for inning," Anderson said. "It puts the ultimate test on you to match him pitch for pitch and out for out. You just got to take what they give you and go from there."

With a pitcher like Price on the mound, Saturday's matchup suggests another tight game. Price, gunning for his 16th win of the season, is focused on pitching deep into the ballgame. The young pitcher, who is days away from his 25th birthday, has pitched just 11 innings combined over his past two starts. He's been tallying higher strikeout numbers, but Price insists that isn't something he's focusing on.

"I'd rather get a ground ball on the first pitch," Price said. "That's just what happens sometimes. I don't really have an answer for it."

His manager thinks it's a case of better command, which is always a positive development.

"I think overall the fastball is in the zone more consistently than it had been," manager Joe Maddon said. "I think he's gotten back to the point where the fastball command has gotten a little better. And it's been really alive. He's been consistently mid 90s [mph]."

Rays: Joyce, Upton doing more on offense

The Rays are starting to see more offensive output from two guys, Matt Joyce and B.J. Upton, which is a good sign for a team that needs all the offense it can muster to outlast the Yankees. With his two RBIs on Friday, Joyce now has eight in his past 10 games, a period which has seen him hit .297.

Upton went hitless in Friday night's opener against the A's, but has been heating up of late especially around right-handers who have given the young slugger fits this season. "I've seen a lot more hard contact [from Upton]," Maddon said. "He's been doing a good job against lefties pretty much the whole time; it's been more against right-handed pitchers. And we just talked to him about a few different issues with that."

A's: Oakland getting quality starts

Starting pitching hasn't been an issue for the A's recently, a stretch that continued on Friday night with a strong effort from Vin Mazzaro. His start extended a string of 19 consecutive outings of six innings or more from A's starters. The starting crew, who all have ERAs under 4.00, have also now recorded a quality start in 13 straight games. Due to a lack of offense, though, the A's are just 7-6 over that stretch.

Worth noting

The Rays are a Major League best 27-13 when the opposing team starts a left-hander, which will play in their favor against Anderson. ... Reliever Chad Qualls will rejoin the Rays on Saturday after leaving the team for a couple of days due to a

death in his family. ... The Rays fell to 3-16 on Fridays with the loss. ... The Rays are now 14-8 against the AL West. ... With two on Friday, the A's now have a Major League-leading 42 stolen bases since the All-Star break.

A's place Jackson on disabled list

Oakland recalls Larish from Triple-A Sacramento

By Alex Espinoza and Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A nightmare season for Conor Jackson took another bad turn on Friday, as he was placed on the 15-day disabled list with what's believed to be a sports hernia. In a corresponding move, the A's promoted Jeff Larish from Triple-A Sacramento for the second time this year.

"It's definitely a mental blow," Jackson said. "It's borderline embarrassing, just because I come over to a new organization and I've only played [18] games. I know that they had high regards for me coming over here and I felt like health has ridden my performance. It's just frustrating, that's not even the word I'm looking for."

Jackson said he's felt discomfort in his lower abdomen and groin since March and that he hoped to play through the pain this season. But during his first at-bat of Thursday's 4-3 win over the Rays, Jackson said he aggravated the injury and that he could barely get out of bed on Friday.

Jackson has seen three or four doctors regarding the injury dating back to his time with the D-backs earlier this season, but the A's hadn't yet diagnosed the injury before Friday's game.

Jackson said surgery is "the route we're looking at" and that recovery time for such a surgery usually runs four to six weeks. The A's have roughly six weeks remaining in the season. Jackson said he will meet Philadelphia-based Dr. William Meyers, who is renowned for diagnosing sports hernias, on Sunday.

"It's just hard to come in here and face your teammates and not be able to go out on the field and play with them," Jackson said. "I grew up a baseball player and it's tough watching. ... You've got to draw the line somewhere."

Jackson said teammate Travis Buck underwent a similar surgical procedure and that Buck was out for four to six weeks.

Jackson has missed 55 games this season due to a strained right hamstring, 37 with Oakland and 18 with Arizona. He said he believes his current abdominal injury may have led to his hamstring strains.

"Luck has not been on his side this year," manager Bob Geren said. "I feel bad for him because he's such a good player, but hopefully he'll be back there soon."

With Larish, the A's get a player who can play first and third base. It also means top power-hitting prospect Chris Carter will remain in Sacramento for the time being.

Blevins reflects on first career save vs. Rays

OAKLAND -- Though it was familiar territory for Jerry Blevins, he left with an unfamiliar result.

A day after he gave up a two-run single and blew a save on Wednesday against the Blue Jays, Blevins on Thursday picked up his first career save against the Rays in a 4-3 win.

"[Wednesday] I gave up a couple of runs to blow a save there actually, but I always have confidence in myself," Blevins said. "[A's catcher Kurt] Suzuki, when he comes out there, he's like, 'These guys got nothing on you, let's just go out there and get 'em.' And then when you get a nod of confidence from the skip, it's always nice."

With Andrew Bailey, Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow unavailable Thursday, Oakland manager Bob Geren turned to Blevins, a 26-year-old southpaw. In 53 games this season, Blevins has a 3.86 ERA. Over his past 22 outings, Blevins has posted 19 scoreless appearances and a 2.35 ERA.

Along with Texas' 4-0 loss at Baltimore Thursday, Blevins' save helped move the A's into a tie with the Angels, seven games behind first-place Texas in the American League West.

"That's huge," Blevins said. "I feel our momentum's been kind of down, but now we win these three in a row, so it's a good run. We're trying to stay in the race and now we're making a push to get in first place again. We always peek at the scoreboard. We're not really looking at numbers, we just know that we're within arm's reach."

Bailey struggles in first rehab outing

OAKLAND -- Andrew Bailey's first career Triple-A game didn't exactly produce the best results, but the A's are only worried about how their closer came out of the outing.

Bailey, nursing a right intercostal strain, allowed two runs on three hits while walking none and striking out one in just two-thirds of an inning for the River Cats. He used 18 pitches -- as part of a pitch restriction -- and faced five batters.

The A's are likely to see how Bailey feels Saturday to determine if he'll need another rehab outing before being activated from the disabled list, where he's been sitting since July 30.

"I felt good," Bailey said Friday via text to MLB.com. "I have to talk with the trainers and coaches and will know more tomorrow."

The Oakland righty, enduring his first career stint on the disabled list, hasn't pitched in a game since July 20. Before that time, he hadn't allowed a run in 13 of his past 15 appearances.

Friday's stint marked Bailey's first with Sacramento, as he made the rare jump from Double-A to the Majors last year.

Worth noting

Matt Watson was seen packing his bags following Friday's game, and he told MLB.com he's heading on a rehab assignment Saturday with Triple-A Sacramento. That's good news for the A's outfielder, who wasn't expected to be ready for the rehab stint until Monday or Tuesday. Watson underwent surgery Aug. 9 to remove a kidney stone, and he's now taking part in all baseball activity. ... Coco Crisp has hit safely in 12 of his past 13 games and is batting .412 over that span. ... Cliff Pennington garnered his 20th stolen base of the season Friday, making him the first A's shortstop to have 20 steals in a season since Alfredo Griffin had 26 in 1987. Crisp also got his 20th stolen base, giving the A's three players with 20 steals. Rajai Davis has 36.

A's ballboy lands date with fan

Fennell gives spectator four foul balls on Thursday night

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Jacki Lynch walked into her first A's game Thursday night with no other itinerary than to take advantage of a free ticket and enjoy the company of some college friends.

Kevin Fennell, however, had a different plan for her, although both didn't know it at the start.

The 21-year-old A's ballboy, stationed near Oakland's bullpen throughout the game, spotted Lynch nearby in the stands and, after putting his glove on a foul ball, passed by a line of fans and handed it to her.

"He looked at me and pointed," Lynch recalled. "I said, 'Me?' and he came over and gave me the ball."

Later in the game, an eventual 4-3 Oakland win over Tampa Bay, Fennell did it again, at which point the A's television crew caught on to the act and shared it with its audience -- including those friendly with Lynch.

"People kept texting and calling me," Lynch told MLB.com by phone on Friday. "I thought it was so funny. I can't believe how much attention this has all been getting."

Although video only shows Fennell handing off two balls, he admitted the count actually grew to four. Lynch, though, says she walked away with five balls, the last of which came via messenger from the bullpen, reading, "How about a phone number for our Ball Man, Kevin?"

Fennell not only received the digits, but he's also already communicated with Lynch via text message to set up a date.

"We're going to get drinks next week," he said.

The blushing Fennell, who on Friday afternoon was nervously preparing in the A's clubhouse for a television interview with MLB Network, is suddenly quite the popular face. At the same time, he's also gotten plenty of slack for Thursday's events.

"Everyone was booing because he was giving all the balls to me," Lynch said, laughing. "I don't know anyone who's gotten five foul balls in one game before. I thought I was going to get mauled or something."

Instead, she got a date. And Fennell said he made amends with the booing crowd.

"After the game," he said, "I gave out about 10 balls."

That doesn't mean A's players are cooling off the banter just yet, though.

"It's OK," he said. "As long as it works out with Jacki."

Major Lee-ague: Ballboy is Ball Man for a night

Jane Lee, mlb.com

By now, most everyone knows all about Kevin Fennell, the A's ballboy who was very generous to a young girl named Jacki by way of four foul balls last night. As I wrote in this story, Jacki said she received a fifth ball from the A's bullpen, which requested a phone number for Kevin. Now, most of you are thinking that it was the relievers, not Kevin, who is responsible for him landing the number. But Jacki assured me that she was going to give Kevin her number anyways. After all, Kevin is quite the gentleman - he not only gave Jacki the foul balls but hand warmers as well because she was cold. Major props on that one.

The A's are loving this, by the way. During Kevin's live interview with MLB Network this afternoon, the A's were on the field during batting practice and were essentially glued to the screen, laughing hysterically, while watching it all. And before his interview, he was roaming around asking for any and all interview tips. Michael Wuertz told him to "just be yourself," while Landon Powell had a different idea in mind: "Use the third person." When I heard that, I could just picture the way that would go: "Kevin wants girl, Kevin gets girl." Kevin didn't end up taking Landon's advice, but I'd say he did pretty well with the interview, which you can see here.

Some people have reacted to this story with the notion that Kevin should have been giving away the balls to kids and, while I understand the thought, I still think you have to enjoy Kevin's efforts at getting a girl's attention. We've all been there, right? Besides, it's always fun to see how baseball games bring people together. And from my brief conversation with Jacki, she seems like a sweet girl. She was even gracious enough to pass along a picture of the ball that was sent via a security guard from the bullpen:

A's rally, beat Rays on error

By JANIE McCAULEY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Kevin Kouzmanoff scored the go-ahead run on second baseman Ben Zobrist's fielding error with two outs in the eighth inning, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Tampa Bay Rays 5-4 Friday night for their second straight one-run victory in the series.

Rajai Davis hit a tying sacrifice fly in the eighth, then Cliff Pennington hit a grounder to second and wound up part of the decisive play for the third straight game. He hit a game-ending single to beat Toronto 5-4 on Wednesday and a go-ahead, two-run double in Thursday's 4-3 victory over the Rays.

Tampa Bay missed a chance to move into a first-place tie with the Yankees in the AL East after New York was shut out at home 6-0 by Seattle. The Rays lost a late lead for the second night in a row.

Henry Rodriguez (1-0) pitched a 1-2-3 eighth for his first major league win. Joaquin Benoit (0-2) allowed two runs, one earned, and took the loss. He had given up only six runs all year.

Jack Cust hit a solo homer for Oakland to tie it at 3 in the sixth before Zobrist's go-ahead solo shot in the seventh. But the Rays' bullpen couldn't hold a one-run lead that would have given rookie Jeremy Hellickson a win in his fourth straight start to begin his career.

Hellickson was optioned to Class-A Port Charlotte after the game.

Craig Breslow, pitching for the first time since taking a line drive off his forearm Tuesday, worked the ninth for his third career save and second this year.

Matt Joyce hit a two-run single and John Jaso added a sacrifice fly for the Rays, who lost their second straight at the start of a seven-game West Coast trip following a five-game winning streak.

Daric Barton hit a two-run single in the third, when Oakland became the first team to produce more than two hits in an inning against Hellickson.

Hellickson was trying to become the first pitcher to win four straight starts to begin his career since Cleveland's Scott Lewis did it in September 2008. The 23-year-old right-hander got a few boosts from the defense, too.

Center fielder B.J. Upton stole a hit from Davis in the fourth with a sprint to the gap in right-center and then a stretched-out diving catch. And Upton made a great throw to first to nearly double up Kouzmanoff.

Pennington and Coco Crisp pulled off a double steal in the third, giving them each 20 stolen bases this year.

That put Pennington on third following his one-out double and he and Crisp scored moments later on Barton's hit.

Davis leads the A's with 36 steals and this marks the first time since 1992 three A's players have stolen 20 or more bases in a season. Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson had 48 that season and was joined by Willie Wilson (28) and Lance Blankenship (21).

A's starter Vin Mazzaro saw his winless stretch extend to five starts dating to a victory July 24 against the Chicago White Sox.

He allowed three hits and struck out five over 6 1-3 inning but saw his pitch count climb in a hurry with four walks.

NOTES

*Rays starters Jeff Niemann and Wade Davis, each on the disabled list with a strained shoulder, threw simulated games. Manager Joe Maddon was pleased with their progress and both could be activated in the coming days. "Both are on task to be brought back and start," Maddon said. "They were really loose and free. I don't anticipate any setbacks."

*Tampa Bay is 3-16 on Fridays this year and has lost 14 of its last 15.

*Rays reliever Chad Qualls was away from the team and in Southern California for a second straight day following a death in his family. He is expected to return for Saturday night's game.

*Injured Oakland closer and reigning AL Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey, working his way back from a right rib cage strain, allowed three hits and two runs in two-thirds of an inning for Triple-A Sacramento. He threw 18 pitches and faced five batters, struck out one and didn't issue a walk.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento falls 2.0 games back of Fresno

By Robbie Enos / Sacramento River Cats

Political pundits can only hope the California gubernatorial election will be as exciting as Friday night's River Cats' game before a sellout crowd at Raley Field.

Iowa escaped with a 7-6 win over Sacramento on California Governor Bobblehead Election night. Republican Meg Whitman's bobbleheads ran out first, making her the winner over Democrat Jerry Brown.

It was a brutal and hard fought battle. Iowa left the bases loaded three times, and the River Cats were saved and defeated by their defense.

The Cats had several outstanding performers, including a 2-for-4, one run, one RBI showing from third baseman Jeff Baisley. Matt Carson went 1-for-5 and was the only River Cat to score more than one run.

"It kind of feels like the story all year, especially when I have been here, has been errors," Carson said after the game, speaking of the reason for the Cats loss. "It seems like every time we make an error it costs us at least one run. Today, looking back, there were a couple of times that the little things killed us. If you give a good team extra outs, they're going to take advantage of that. These guys are really good, and you can't afford to give them more than three outs, and that's what we did."

The Cubs had two three-hit nights, coming from third baseman Marquez Smith and first baseman Micah Hoffpauir. Overall, the Iowa offense managed 15 hits and nine walks, opposed to the 11 and two marks put up by the Cats.

"Marquez Smith had an excellent series," Iowa manager Ryne Sandberg said after the game. "He swung a hot bat tonight. Hoffpauir has been steady and swinging a good bat. The bullpen did a great job, especially Jeff Gray and Jeff Stevens coming in to take care of the seventh, eighth and ninth. I thought the pitching put up a great effort against a team that's swinging the bats pretty well."

Still in the middle of a 6-5 battle in the seventh, the River Cats turned the stakes up a notch by tying the game. Against Gray, Chris Carter smacked a 1-1 pitch into left field for a single with Matt Carson on first to put runners on first and second. With two down, a clutch Baisley single on a 1-1 count evened the score.

Bobby Scales drew a 3-2 walk off reliever Jonathan Hunton to lead off the eighth, setting up the go-ahead run. LaHair singled to right, and then both runners advanced on a sacrifice bunt. River Cats Manager Tony DeFrancesco went to reliever Michael Benacka with one out and runners on second and third. Camp brought the run home, hitting a sac fly to center to give Iowa the 7-6 lead.

"That rally in the eighth inning was key," Sandberg said. "Just being able to bring in that seventh run when we did against pretty good relief pitching. It was a battle and a really good series all the way through. It's nice to come back and salvage the first two games after dropping the first two. That's kind of the character of the team, and now we can go home on a good note."

2009 Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey started the game for the River Cats, coming down on a rehab assignment. Bailey only collected two outs while giving up three hits and two earned runs in his outing. After easily mowing down leadoff hitter Jim Adduci with a mid-90's fastball, Smith and Brad Snyder hit singles to left field.

Snyder's single drew some controversy. It was a little blooper that barely edged fair down the third-base line, a call DeFrancesco came out to argue.

But the call stood, and after a wild pitch allowing both runners to score, Hoffpauir drove a 3-1, belt-high fastball into right, scoring Smith. A sac fly from Jason Dubois scored Snyder to give Iowa the early 2-0 lead. Travis Banwart came on in relief, giving up a hit to Scales before striking out LaHair to end the inning.

Cubs starter Matt Atkins had a rough start to his outing, allowing two earned runs to even out the score in the first. Atkins did a good job of putting batters into two-strike counts, but failed to finish them off.

Carson stroked a one-out double on a full count, and Dallas McPherson blasted a two-run bomb to center field after falling behind 0-2. Baisley smoked a two-strike double off the top of the left-center fence, but did not score.

Smith dealt a retaliation blow to the Cats, serving up a two-run jack in the second to up the ante for Sacramento. Smith's homer was a two-out blast, following a single and stolen base from short stop Matt Camp.

The River Cats scored another run in the second. Adrian Cardenas got another two-strike hit for Sacramento, and then stole second to get into scoring position. On a Corey Wimberly ground ball into the right side hole, Scales was unable to nab the short hop going to his left, and allowed the ball to get through for an RBI single.

The first scoreless inning of the night wasn't an easy one, but Banwart managed to get out of a bases-loaded jam to keep the score 4-3. Hoffpauir led off with his second hit of the night in the top of the third, and then advanced to second on a Dubois grounder to third.

LaHair was intentionally walked, followed by a Chris Robinson swinging bunt down the third-base line to load the bases. Banwart kept his cool and struck out Camp to end the threat. Atkins retired the side in the bottom half to put up the goose egg.

With left-hander Travis Blackley on the mound in the sixth, Iowa added two runs. After offering a one-out walk to Snyder, Blackley gave up a double to Hoffpauir. The play was another blooper down the left-field line that barely edged in foul, and a throwing error by left fielder Wimberly allowed Snyder to score on the play.

Dubois drew a walk, and then Scales hit into a fielder's choice at second, putting runners on the corners. LaHair put salt in the wound, slapping a broken bat single over the head of Cardenas at second to score Hoffpauir. After the hit, Blackley was taken out in favor of Jared Lansford. A great sliding catch out in right field by Michael Taylor ended the inning.

After his early struggles and inability to finish hitters in the early innings, Atkins settled down to pitch three straight scoreless innings and strike out four batters. Four of the base hits he gave up came with two strikes, but he allowed just two more the rest of the way to keep the Cats' bats quiet.

The Cats didn't give up as quickly as the Cubs may have hoped. With reliever David Cales on the mound, Baisley drew a one-out walk and advanced to second on an Eric Sogard single. Sogard took second on the throw to third, putting both runners in scoring position. Cardenas hit a groundball to the right side to score Baisley, and Taylor finished things off with a double into the right-center gap.

The Cubs seemed to be in for a big inning in the seventh, but a few clutch moves from the Cats closed the door. Camp led the inning off with a single into center field. Smith drew a one-out walk. A wild pitch allowed Camp to advance to third. Hoffpauir drew a walk to load the bases with two down.

In the middle of the next at-bat against Dubois, reliever Cedrick Bowers was removed after a visit from the trainer. He was removed in the middle of the at-bat, giving way to big Jon Hunton. Against Hunton, Dubois hit a ground ball up the middle. On a sensational play, the second baseman Cardenas got the forceout at second by making a diving stop, and then flipping to the shortstop Sogard to end the inning.

In the eighth, the Cats could smell another comeback. Taylor smacked an 0-2 pitch into center for a single before Recker boarded on a fielder's choice and error. Wimberly hit a fly ball to right field, advancing Taylor to third and putting runners on the corners.

The next batter, Carson, battled to a 2-2 count with two down, but after hitting a dribbler in front of the pitcher's mound, the catcher Robinson made a great play, sliding to his knees to retrieve the ball and firing to first to nail a diving Carson at first.

The Cubs loaded the bases again in the ninth, but failed to capitalize once more thanks to pitching performances by Benacka and Fernando Hernandez. That last pitching change made it eight total pitchers used for Sacramento in the game.

A Fresno 4-2 win over Omaha has now put the Cats 2.0 games back in the standings. Sacramento next plays a four-game road series against the Salt Lake Bees before coming back to the a very important five-game series against Fresno starting on the 25th.

"It seems like our road record is pretty good," Carson said of the Cats 36-28 road record as opposed to their 31-32 home record. "Just get back to winning on the road, and we can get some momentum going before we play against Fresno."

Hounds Get Swept In Tulsa, But Hold South Lead

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Saturday night in the Texas League ... the Tulsa Drillers completed a sweep of their South Division opponent. So did the Arkansas Travelers. So did the Springfield Cardinals. So did the Northwest Arkansas Naturals. Ooops. Correction. The Naturals didn't sweep the Frisco RoughRiders. They "only" took 2-of-3.

In the four (3-game) series' played Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, North Division clubs won 11-of-12 from the South. Only Frisco managed a win, defeating North Division leading NW Arkansas. End result? The Naturals' lead in the North went from three games to two. In the South, first half champ Frisco moves into a 2nd-place tie with San Antonio, three games in back of the RockHounds. San Antonio and Corpus Christi remainin exactly where they were three days ago, three and six games back, respectively.

Two swings of the bat changed the course of Friday's game at Tulsa, where the 'Hounds rallied from deficits of 2-0, 5-2 and 6-5, tying the game each time.

The 'Hounds had come back to tie the game in the third inning on Jemile Weeks' 2-run single. With Jemile at first with one out, and running on the pitch, Shane Peterson lasered a line drive back up the middle. Tulsa pitcher Cory Riordan made a classic, "self defense" catch, turning the would-be base hit into an inning-ending double play.

In the Tulsa third, with two on and two out, Warren Schaeffer was jammed on a pitch from Matt Wright. Schaeffer sent a bloop about 30 feet from home plate, just out of the immediate reach of both Wright and catcher Petey Paramore, loading the bases. Radames Nazario then sent an 0-2 pitch down the left field line for a bases-clearing, 3-run double and a 5-2 Tulsa lead.

Josh Horton brought the 'Hounds back with a 2-run single in the fourth, extending his hit streak to eight games in the process. Paramore, who is now 10-for-his-last-24, then drove in the tying run, squaring the game at 5-5. In Horton's 8-gamer, the 'Hounds shortstop is now 17-for-27, with five walks, a .630 batting average and a .688 on-base percentage.

Tulsa took a 6-5 lead in the last of the fourth and, after an Alex Valdez single tied the game once more in the fifth, Tulsa came right back to score the game's last three runs in the home half of the inning, a rally capped by Jeff Kindel's 2-run single. The bullpens then settled in, with both clubs blanked from the sixth inning on.

The Drillers completed the 3-game sweep, leaving the 'Hounds midway through a 6-game road trip still in search of a win, and facing the challenge of a 3-game series at NW Arkansas. The Naturals own the league's best overall record at 74-49, and are a league-best 40-19 at home.

The pennant race & the wild card: The RockHounds now lead both San Antonio and Frisco by three games, with Corpus Christi six games back.

In the wild card race (which takes effect if Frisco wins the second half), the RockHounds lead San Antonio by three games and Corpus Chroisti by five.

There are 17 games remaining in the 2010 Texas League regular season.

Ports score 13 in 13th consecutive win

Stockton ties Lake Elsinore's 2007 streak on Friday

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Stockton Ports (64-59) won their 13th straight game, defeating the Lancaster JetHawks (48-75), 13-1, on Friday night. The last League team to win 13 consecutive games was Lake Elsinore in 2007.

The win gave the Ports their fourth straight sweep, all against South Division opponents. The victory, combined with a Bakersfield loss, gives the Ports a three game lead in the second half North Division standings.

Justin Murray won his tenth game on Friday, allowing just one run (a home run) on five hits in 5.2 innings. Mike Hart and Scott Deal combined for 3.1 shutout innings for Stockton. The Ports collected 12 hits in the contest and took advantage of four Lancaster errors in the game. David Thomas led the team with three hits, and Jeremy Barfield and Grant Green both homered in the contest.

The Ports jumped to a 5-0 lead in the first inning, and did not look back. With one out, Green singled to start the offense. He moved to third as Stephen Parker singled to center field. Green scored on an error by center fielder Jay Austin. Parker ended on second base on the play. Mike Spina then walked, and Yusuf Carter next struck out for the second out of the inning. Lancaster starter Edwin Walker issued a walk to Tyler Ladendorf to load the bases. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield slammed a two RBI single to give the Ports a 3-0 advantage. Designated hitter David Thomas then stepped up to the plate and drove home two more runs with a double to left field. Thomas tried to stretch his double to a triple, and was thrown out at third for the final out of the inning.

Stockton added two more runs on back-to-back sacrifice flies by Green and Parker in the second inning.

The Ports went up 9-0 in the bottom of the third inning on a two-run home run by Barfield. It was his first home run since August 10. He ended the game with four RBI, the most he's had in a single game this season. Barfield has collected 17 multi-RBI games this season.

Parker scored his second run of the game and the tenth for the Ports in the fourth inning. He doubled off the center field wall to start the frame, and scored as Ladendorf grounded out.

The Ports made it 11-0 in the bottom of the fifth inning, as Thomas scored while Green grounded into a double play.

The JetHawks ended the shutout bid in the sixth inning, as first baseman Brian Pellegrini slammed his tenth homer of the year, a solo shot over the left field wall. The Ports pitchers shut down the JetHawks offense from there, limiting them to just one hit and three walks in the last three innings.

But the Ports offense kept on going, as the Ports collected their final two runs in the seventh inning. After left fielder Kent Walton doubled to lead things off, Green collected his ninth two-run home run of the year to make it a 13-1 game.

Cougars Rally, Beat Kernels in 10

Kane County storms back, picks up crucial victory in series finale

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa – The Kane County Cougars scored once in the ninth and four times in the 10th inning Friday night to stun the Cedar Rapids Kernels, 7-3, at Veterans Memorial Stadium. Jose Crisotomo had four hits and three RBIs to lead an 11-hit attack, as the Cougars took two of three to win the series. They also took a half-game lead over Clinton for the top playoff spot in the Western Division and increased their lead over Beloit to two games with 17 games left.

The Cougars trailed, 2-0, in the top of the seventh inning when Crisotomo delivered a two-run single with the bases loaded to tie it, 2-2. After the Kernels took a lead against Ryan Doolittle in the bottom of the seventh, the Cougars fought back in the ninth. With two outs and the bases empty against Kernels closer Johnny Hellweg, Crisotomo singled, Tyreece House and Conner Crumbliss walked and Anthony Aliotti was hit by a pitch to tie it, 3-3.

Then in the 10th against Mike Kenney (3-3), Mitch LeVier cracked a bases-loaded two-run double, Max Stassi scored on a wild pitch and Crisotomo notched an RBI single for the 7-3 final. Jose Guzman (4-1) retired all four batters he faced to pick up the win. Dan Straily got a no-decision, allowing two runs on six hits over six solid innings.

The Cougars (29-23, 61-60) are back home Saturday night at 6 CT to start a four-game series against the Quad Cities River Bandits (32-19, 72-48). Jose Macias will make his debut for the recently-promoted Ian Krol, and Daniel Bibona (2-0, 0.61)

will start for the Bandits. The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 5:45 p.m.

2010 Top 20 Oakland Athletics Pre-Season Prospects in Review

by [John Sickels](#), minorleaguebaseball.com

2010 Oakland Athletics

Here is a review of the 2010 Athletics prospect list, originally published [December 28, 2009](#). **THIS IS A REVIEW OF THE OLD LIST AND PRE-SEASON GRADES. THIS IS NOT A NEW LIST.** The 2011 list and new grades won't be ready until the season is over and I start writing the book.

- 1) [Chris Carter](#), 1B-OF, Grade A-: .261/.366/.526 with 28 homers, 69 walks, 130 strikeouts in 441 at-bats for Triple-A Sacramento, 0-for-19 with nine Ks in the majors so far. The power is obvious but the strikeouts are quite high. I still think that he has better pure hitting skills than the numbers indicate, but we'll see.
- 2) [Michael Taylor](#), OF, Grade B+: .262/.337/.380 for Sacramento. Power vanished; other components didn't change much. Not sure what the problem is.
- 3) [Grant Green](#), SS, Grade B+: .319/.363/.508, 15 homers for High-A Stockton, 34/107 BB/K in 480 at-bats. He's having a good year with the bat, although plate discipline isn't great. Glovework not good statistically, high error rate with mediocre range.
- 4) [Grant Desme](#), OF, Grade B: Quit baseball to join a Roman Catholic monastery.
- 5) [Adrian Cardenas](#), 2B, Grade B-: .345/.436/.469 in 51 games for Double-A Midland, then .247/.298/.307 in 41 games for Sacramento. Makes contact, not showing much pop this year.
- 6) [Jemile Weeks](#), 2B, Grade B-: .293/.373/.423 with 14 steals in 62 games between Midland and rookie ball hip injury rehab. Good contact hitting with speed, lack of physical durability looks like a problem.
- 7) [Tyson Ross](#), RHP, Grade B-: 5.49 ERA with 32/20 K/BB in 39 innings for Oakland, 39 hits. 3.55 ERA with 30/13 K/BB in 25 innings for Sacramento. On the DL with elbow problems right now. Strong ground ball tendencies, but his command wasn't sharp in major league action.
- 8) [Max Stassi](#), C, Grade B-: .238/.314/.404 for Low-A Kane County, 13 homers, 37 walks, 126 strikeouts in 366 at-bats. Has thrown out 33% of runners. Passed ball and error rates are high. Potential is here but needs refinement on both offense and defense.
- 9) [Josh Donaldson](#), C, Grade B-: .234/.331/.472 with 18 homers for Sacramento, 39% of runners caught, PB and Error rates are decent. 4-for-26 (.154) in the majors. He's shown good power and decent walk rate this year, so I still think he's interesting despite low batting average.
- 10) [Sean Doolittle](#), OF-1B, Grade B-: Out all year with knee injury.
- 11) [Henry Rodriguez](#), RHP, Grade B-: 1.69 ERA with 31/9 K/BB in 21 innings for Sacramento, 3.52 ERA with 16/8 K/BB in 15 innings in the majors. Stuff is there, just needs to throw strikes and stay healthy.
- 12) [Corey Brown](#), OF, Grade C+: 80 games, .337/.429/.537 with 10 homers, 17 steals for Midland, but .156/.207/.275 in 34 games for Sacramento. Triple-A pitching exposed his weaknesses of approach, but with his tools more chances will come.
- 13) [Fautino De Los Santos](#), RHP, Grade C+: 2.30 ERA, 22/3 K/BB in 16 innings for Stockton, 5.68 ERA with 39/10 K/BB in 25 innings for Midland, 23 hits. Midland ERA is deceptive; he's looked very good more often than not in the Texas League. Relief option for next year.

- 14) Michael Ynoa, RHP, Grade C+: Tommy John.
- 15) Arnold Leon, RHP, Grade C+: Tommy John.
- 16) Pedro Figueroa, LHP, Grade C+: 5.30 ERA, 57/29 K/BB in 71 innings for Midland, 84 hits. Injured.
- 17) Ben Hornbeck, LHP, Grade C+: awful at Midland, 5.87 ERA with 26/19 K/BB, 43 hits in 38 innings. Sent back to Stockton, 4.69 ERA with 108/38 K/BB in 88 innings, 109 hits. 1.78 GO/AO overall, with a 134/57 K/BB in 127 innings but 152 hits. Not sure what to make of him at this stage.
- 18) Sam Demel, RHP, Grade C+: 1.26 ERA with 28/9 K/BB in 27 innings for Sacramento. 4.61 ERA with 23/5 K/BB in 27 innings, 32 hits in the majors, traded to Arizona. Going to be a very nice bullpen arm.
- 19) Anthony Capra, LHP, Grade C+ 4.31 ERA with 105/74 K/BB in 111 innings, 103 hits for Midland. Command problems the big issue here, walk rate is just too high.
- 20) Connor Hoehn, RHP, Grade C+: 3.19 ERA with 94/34 K/BB in 79 innings for Low-A Kane County, 58 hits. Love the K/IP and H/IP. Needs to sharpen control for higher levels.
- 21) Justin Marks, LHP, Grade C+: 4.91 ERA with 129/48 K/BB in 125 innings between Kane County and Stockton, 124 hits. The ERA is deceptive; his K/BB and K/IP marks are strong. Sleeper for next year.
- 22) Mickey Storey, RHP, Grade C+: 5.54 ERA with 14/5 K/BB in 13 innings for Sacramento, 3.32 ERA with 58/18 K/BB in 65 innings for Midland. Not a bad year.

Injuries and a spiritual commitment took a toll here, but some guys have just been disappointing and having hard transitions to higher levels. I still believe in Chris Carter, who has shown the ability to adapt and make changes before. Rodriguez, De Los Santos, and Storey could all provide some bullpen help next year, and Hoehn isn't far behind them.