

A's News Clips, Tuesday, August 31, 2010

Oakland A's ace Trevor Cahill receives rude welcoming to Yankee Stadium in loss to New York Yankees

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A New York Yankees lineup missing Alex Rodriguez theoretically should make life easier on a pitcher.

Tell that to Trevor Cahill, who can't forget his first start at Yankee Stadium soon enough.

Cahill was rocked for a career-high eight earned runs Monday night as the Yankees pounded the A's 11-5 before a crowd of 46,356.

A-Rod may be on the disabled list with a calf injury right now, but Mark Teixeira and Robinson Cano appeared very much healthy in the middle of the Yanks' batting order.

That duo had combined to go 6 for 6 with two homers and four RBIs by the time Cahill got the hook in the fifth inning, with New York leading 7-4.

Cahill (14-6) came in with a major league best 0.92 ERA in five August starts. But the eight earned runs were more than he had allowed total in his previous seven starts.

"I'm just embarrassed to get hit around like that," said Cahill, who saw his overall ERA jump from 2.43 to 2.82.

The A's hope it's just a blip on the radar for their All-Star right-hander, who had thrust himself squarely into the AL Cy Young discussion.

"It just wasn't his night," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's been so good for so long, you've got to kind of look past this one and look ahead to him pitching Saturday against the (Los Angeles) Angels."

Making his effort all the more disappointing was that the A's staked him to a 3-0 lead before he even took the mound.

Jeff Larish's two-run single highlighted a three-run first as Oakland worked Yankees starter Dustin Moseley for a 34-pitch inning.

Larish also homered and had a career-high four RBIs.

But Cahill was off from the get-go.

He walked leadoff man Brett Gardner in the bottom of the first and allowed a one-out single to Teixeira. Cano followed by scorching an RBI single past second baseman Mark Ellis, and former Athletic Nick Swisher doubled deep to center to score two and tie it 3-3.

"The first guy I just tried to throw the ball down the middle, and I couldn't even do that," Cahill said. "Walking the fastest guy on their team is unacceptable, and falling behind to their power guys."

With two outs in the third, Teixeira drilled a homer to right-center. No sooner had the vapor trail cleared than Cano followed with another liner that barely cleared the right-field wall -- the first time in Cahill's career he'd allowed back-to-back homers.

The Yankees led 6-4 before breaking things open with a five-run fifth. A run was already in when Henry Rodriguez relieved Cahill and allowed Swisher's run-scoring double and Marcus Thames' three-run homer into the second deck in left field.

Cahill has now surrendered 14 earned runs in two starts (10 innings) against the Yankees this season.

The right-hander has had great success getting lefties to chase his bread-and-butter sinker low and away.

But the Yankees, with their patient approach, stayed off that pitch out of the strike zone.

"This lineup goes so deep," Ellis said. "They dictate the whole at-bat and wait for their pitch."

The A's had momentum rolling, having taken two of three from first-place Texas over the weekend. But the Rangers' victory Monday over Kansas City dropped the A's to 8½ games back in the AL West.

today's game

Oakland A's update: Bench coach wants speedy players to bunt more often

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

NEW YORK -- A's bench coach Tye Waller wants the team's speedier players to look for ways to bunt their way on base more often.

Waller, the team's unofficial bunting guru, was all smiles Monday talking about the progress in that department.

A case in point came Sunday. Cliff Pennington dropped a bunt down the third-base line for a single in the third inning against the Texas Rangers. Pennington later would execute a safety squeeze that scored Gabe Gross, and Pennington nearly beat that out for another hit.

"He really hasn't (bunted for hits) as much as he will in the future, I believe," Waller said of Pennington, who leads Oakland with six bunt singles this season.

It only makes sense that the A's, who entered Monday with just 81 home runs, look for any way possible to get on base and jump-start rallies.

"I probably should bunt more than I do," Pennington said.

Why doesn't he?

"I want to hit," he said with a smile. "I want to swing the bat."

Rajai Davis has just one bunt single, though he has attempted many. Mark Ellis has two bunt singles.

The A's have sessions dedicated to bunting at least once a homestand, and it's paid off in one area. Oakland entered Monday tied for third in the American League with 40 sacrifice bunts, but Waller said bunting for hits is as much about attitude as technique.

Players must continue trying to bunt even if they're getting thrown out, Waller reasons, knowing that the mere threat can draw infielders in and create holes for when hitters swing away.

"If you can run, it just needs to be a part of your game," Waller said.

Brett Anderson (right knee) threw his usual between-start side session and felt fine, so he's ready to pitch Wednesday. ... Kurt Suzuki caught his 438th game for the A's, tying Jeff Newman for fifth place on Oakland's career list. ... Second baseman Adrian Cardenas has hit .304 in 19 games since being promoted to Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 9. He began the season with Double-A Midland, but this is his second stint with the River Cats.

Chin Music: A's draw big interest in Big Apple

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/30/2010 3:32PM

Everything seems magnified whenever the A's play a series at Yankee Stadium. The ballpark is huge, the crowds are usually big, and the media turnout is like nothing we see in the Bay Area. Bob Geren had a wide circle of reporters around him for his pregame media address, and the questions covered a lot of areas — Trevor Cahill's emergence as an All-Star, Henry Rodriguez's potential as a future closer (Geren definitely sees it), Jack Cust's major league career, Vin Mazzaro's development, etc. ... The A's have lots of players with East Coast connections, so there are lots of angles to be covered when the A's come to town.

—No Alex Rodriguez in the Yankees lineup, but first baseman Mark Teixeira is back from a bruised thumb. It's still a pretty imposing bunch of hitters even with A-Rod on the DL. And who's that hitting fifth? Former Athletic Nick Swisher, batting .294 with 24 homers and 75 RBIs. He's hitting .359 with runners on base this season, third-best in the American League.

Cahill will have his work cut out, but I don't expect him to get too rattled in his first start at Yankee Stadium. For being just 22, the kid's as even-keeled as they come.

—Speaking of 22-year-olds, Brett Anderson (hyper-extended right knee) got through his side session fine and he's set for Wednesday's start.

The lineups ... on a comfortable, low-humidity night in the Bronx

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Ellis 2B, Larish LF, Davis RF, Pennington SS; Cahill RHP.

Yankees — Gardner LF, Jeter SS, Teixeira 1B, Cano 2B, Swisher RF, Posada C, Thames DH, Granderson CF, Pena 3B; Moseley RHP.

Is Trevor Cahill Cy Young worthy? Not against New York

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

In many ways, this one hurt as far as the A's are concerned.

Oakland was coming off a strong series at Texas, with some nice momentum, and Trevor Cahill was on the mound for the opener at Yankee Stadium. Cahill had allowed only four earned runs in five previous starts in August.

The Yankees, though, put a damper on Oakland's good vibes. New York pummeled the A's 11-5 on Monday, and handed Cahill - who came to town as a Cy Young candidate - his worst loss of the season. The Rangers won to go 8 1/2 up in the AL West.

Cahill gave up eight runs, matching his career high, and he lasted four-plus innings, a season low.

"I definitely didn't have my best stuff, and against this team, you have to have your A-game, especially in this ballpark," Cahill said. "That wasn't a good performance. ... I didn't have command of any of my pitches, really."

Much of the damage was done by Mark Teixeira and Robinson Cano, batting third and fourth in the New York lineup. Against Cahill, they combined to go 6-for-6 with two homers, a double, six runs and four RBIs. And they hit back-to-back homers in the third, putting the Yankees ahead for good.

"I did a good job against them last time," said Cahill, who held the pair to a combined 0-for-5 on July 6. "This time, I just couldn't figure them out."

Cahill had to wait through a long top of the first, which lasted a good 20 minutes, as the A's scored three runs. Sitting might have affected Cahill a bit, he said, especially when he walked leadoff man Brett Gardner. That helped the Yankees even the score, with Mark Ellis' glove playing a role. With two on and one out, Cano hit a sharp grounder at Ellis, but the ball scooted past him. A batter later, Ellis realized his glove had broken on the play.

"It was top-spinning straight down, and it was in between a dive and not diving, so I just sort of fell to smother it, and it still got through it was hit so hard," Ellis said.

"Anytime the other team is hitting balls and breaking guys' gloves, it's probably not a good sign," Cahill said.

One run scored, and two men remained on for former A's outfielder Nick Swisher, who knocked in both with a double to deep center.

Then came the back-to-backs by Teixeira and Cano in the third. The Yankees added a single run in the fourth, with Ramiro Peña driving in Jorge Posada.

When Teixeira doubled and Cano singled him home to open the fifth, Cahill's evening was over.

Swisher rapped another double, this time off Henry Rodriguez, to complete the scoring against Cahill, but the Yankees weren't done that inning. After Rodriguez bounced a pitch off Posada's foot, Marcus Thames crunched a three-run homer.

Cahill's ERA rose from 2.43 to 2.82. He has allowed six or more runs three times this year - including both of his starts against the Yankees.

Vin Mazzaro ready to reverse New York luck

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Last year, **Vin Mazzaro** pitched in Yankee Stadium for the first time after growing up going to games at the old Yankee Stadium across the street.

He gave up eight hits, four walks and six runs in 4 1/3 innings in that start, but Mazzaro said that's all out of his system. Even with 50-plus friends and family members on hand for tonight's start, he shouldn't have the type of butterflies he did as a rookie.

"Last year, I was really nervous," Mazzaro admitted Monday. "I'm done with that. I know what to expect."

Mazzaro also likes the fact that he's following **Trevor Cahill**. They're right-handers who are somewhat similar in terms of repertoire, so Mazzaro watches Cahill's tape the next day. That could make for instructive viewing today after Cahill's poor night Monday.

Lift from Larish: **Jeff Larish** had a career-high four RBIs on Monday, and in six games with Oakland, he is 7-for-21 with two homers and six RBIs.

"He hit a long home run, a very sharp double and a big RBI single, and I liked the way he played left field," manager **Bob Geren** said.

Larish's homer in the fourth was a no-doubter, unlike the back-to-back shots by **Mark Teixeira** and **Robinson Cano** in the third off Cahill.

"Playing in Oakland, off the bat, I didn't think they were home runs," Cahill said. "Then I turned around and realized we were playing at Yankee Stadium."

Briefly: Geren said that **Brett Anderson's** bullpen session went "really well," and he believes Anderson (knee) will start Wednesday. ... Geren said that right-hander **Joey Devine** and left-hander **Josh Outman** (Tommy John surgeries) will be in

Oakland on Friday, and there is a possibility that one or both might go to minor-league teams that are in the playoffs, in order to get in some rehab innings.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Pride of the A's: Dallas Braden expects to get an earful from Yankees fans Thursday in his first start against New York since the "Get off my mound, A-Rod" incident. "They've had a while to think of some good stuff," he said.

Drumbeat: Series opener at Yankee Stadium, Cahill goes for A's

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Yankee Stadium 8/30/2010 2:57PM

It's a big series here for the A's - they really need a split at New York, and hope to pick up a game or two in the West. But there's no doubt they're still hanging around, keeping the Rangers on their toes, and they open this series with their top starter, Trevor Cahill, so they have the potential to set a good tone.

The New York writers, naturally, wanted to speak to Dallas Braden, even though he isn't pitching until Thursday. I think they were hoping he'd stir things up again, except that Braden and Alex Rodriguez pretty much smoothed things over in Oakland, and A-Rod is on the DL, anyway.

But Braden hasn't pitched against the Yankees since the "Get off my mound!" moment, and that is going to get a lot of notice here. He's ready. He was asked if he thinks Yankee fans will be all over him, and he said it wouldn't be New York if they aren't. He's also hoping they come up with plenty of good stuff - they've had enough time to think of things, he said. "Don't disappoint me!" Braden said.

Brett Anderson is set for the Wednesday start, according to manager Bob Geren. Anderson, who twisted his right knee on Friday at Texas, threw a bullpen session today.

Geren said that Joey Devine and Josh Outman will join the team at home. Both potentially could head out on rehab assignments with minor-league teams in the playoffs, but the exact plans have yet to be determined. That's definitely progress for Devine and Outman, who have both had setbacks in their recoveries from Tommy John surgery.

I know John Shea already reported about Ben Sheets from Texas, but it's great to see him traveling with the team. He's got such a big personality and he's so beloved by his teammates, especially the pitchers, and it's good for the young starters to be around him. He's got a huge hinged brace on his arm that makes him look bionic or like a Terminator or something. I remain amazed he was starting with nothing working in his elbow - he had no ulnar collateral ligament, no flexor tendon, no pronator tendon. And he was making quality starts!

Here's the lineup: Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Ellis 2B, Larish LF, Davis RF, Pennington SS

Cahill derailed by potent Yankees

Surging rightly allows eight runs as A's take humbling loss

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Every bit of Cy Young hype surrounding Oakland's "baby-faced assassin" -- as A's general manager Billy Beane has described Trevor Cahill -- highlighted Monday's trip to Yankee Stadium, where the young rightly was presented the chance to strut his stuff on what's considered baseball's biggest stage.

Succeeding on such a platform would only further push Cahill into serious consideration for one of the game's most prestigious awards.

But Cahill, who gave up six runs in six innings in his last meeting with the Yankees in July, was once again dominated by the fellas from the Big Apple on Monday, when he allowed season highs in hits and runs in his shortest outing of the year as the A's fell, 11-5, to New York in the opener of a four-game set.

Thus, the Cy Young talk didn't die but was rather derailed. It wasn't simply Cahill's show to steal, though. Oakland, coming off two eye-opening wins over the first-place Rangers in Texas, was out to prove it can continually compete with baseball's best. Instead, the loss put the A's (65-65) back at the .500 mark for the 26th time this year -- an ongoing franchise record -- and set them 8 1/2 games behind the Rangers, who beat the Royals on Monday.

"It's definitely one of those games that's frustrating coming off a series win in Texas," said Cahill, who noted that the defeat may have affected the club's momentum.

Second baseman Mark Ellis put an end to that notion, though, saying his teammate likely just felt bad.

"We're fine," the A's veteran said. "Obviously, you don't want to lose games, but it's just one."

It's one Cahill would like to put behind him. The 22-year-old hurler (14-6) entered the contest boasting an American League-leading 0.92 ERA in August, but he waved goodbye to the month with an uncharacteristic performance, surrendering eight runs on nine hits -- two of them homers -- while walking two and fanning two in four-plus innings.

Cahill was immediately handed a 3-0 lead by way of a sacrifice fly from Jack Cust and a two-run single from Jeff Larish off righty Dustin Moseley in the first, but the right-hander quickly watched the Yankees climb their way back in the bottom half of the frame. Cahill walked Brett Gardner to lead off the first, and after getting Derek Jeter to ground into a forceout, he gave up an RBI hit to Mark Teixeira and another base hit -- which deflected off Ellis' glove -- to Robinson Cano.

The low liner was hit so sharply that it broke Ellis' glove -- a scene that had Cahill shaking his head after the game.

"Any time a guy hits a ball and breaks a guy's glove, that's probably not a good sign," Cahill said.

It wasn't. In fact, it was followed by a two-run double off the bat of former A's slugger Nick Swisher that tied the game at 3. Before Monday's start, Cahill had allowed just one run in the first inning all season -- a 0.39 ERA.

"I definitely didn't have my best stuff," Cahill said. "Against a team like that, you have to have your 'A' game, especially in this ballpark. Just not a good performance. The worst part is the team put up three runs for me in the first and I couldn't hold it.

"I didn't have command of any pitch, really. I was behind a lot of guys, and once they started going, I couldn't stop them."

"They had a long first, and we were able to get back even," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "I thought that was real important. And we were facing a guy that's been lights-out. He didn't seem to have his sinker tonight. We were able to make him elevate the ball a little bit tonight."

Cahill was able to garner a 1-2-3 second inning, but the third frame brought about back-to-back homers off the bats of Teixeira and Cano to allow New York to go ahead, 5-3. Both were line-drive bullets to right field, barely eclipsing the wall.

"I'm used to playing in Oakland," Cahill said of the A's monstrous home field, "so I definitely didn't think they were home runs, but I turned around and realized we were playing in Yankee Stadium."

It's a place that hasn't exactly treated the A's kindly over the past couple of years. Following Monday's loss, they dropped to 1-9 at Yankee Stadium since the start of 2008. Furthermore, they've now lost 17 of their past 20 overall to New York.

Oakland clipped New York's lead in the fourth thanks to a solo homer from Larish, but an RBI single from Ramiro Pena in the fourth put New York ahead by two runs, and trouble only escalated in the fifth. Cahill offered up a double to Teixeira followed by an RBI single to Cano, who advanced to second on the throw. That marked the end for Cahill, but he was charged with an eighth run when reliever Henry Rodriguez allowed another Swisher double to score Cano.

Rodriguez -- who had not allowed a run in eight August outings -- proceeded to hit Jorge Posada with a pitch to bring Marcus Thames to the plate with two runners aboard and no outs. The Yankees' designated hitter responded in a big way, launching a 2-2 pitch to left field for a three-run blast to bring the score to 11-4.

Meanwhile, Oakland's first four runs were charged to Moseley, who gave up five hits, walking four and striking out four, in 4 1/3 innings. Larish tallied his career-high fourth RBI of the game in the eighth with a run-scoring single off Javier Vazquez, but that's all the A's could manage off New York's bullpen.

Vazquez, who tossed 4 2/3 innings of one-run ball following Moseley's early exit, was awarded the win, his 10th of the year.

It marked the ninth time all season the A's have surrendered nine runs or more -- all nine times coming on the road.

"Their record indicates how good of an offense they have," Geren said of the Yankees' 81-50 record. "They're a good team."

The A's skipper recognized "it just wasn't [Cahill's] night," but he didn't seem the least bit worried about the young phenom bouncing back in five days, when he's set to face the Angels at home.

"He wasn't locating the way he usually does," Geren said. "He's been so good for so long that you just kind of have to look past this and look forward to his next start."

"I have to try to forget about it and not let it affect me next time," Cahill said. "They're a good-hitting team, so you've got to give them credit."

Geren inclined to keep Larish in lineup

Versatile newcomer may be replaced in outfield for late innings

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Jeff Larish received his second start in the outfield in as many days on Monday, a sign that A's manager Bob Geren would like to keep Larish's bat in the lineup.

"I like what we've seen from him," Geren said before the A's series opener against the Yankees. "I'll continue to get him out there."

Larish, who has spent most of his career at the corner-infield spots, batted seventh and started in left field on Monday. He plated two runs in the first inning with a bases-loaded single, then homered three innings later. Larish added a run-scoring double later in the game, finishing with a career-high four RBIs. Jack Cust, who was handed three starts in left before Larish squeezed his way into the outfield picture, served designated hitter duties Monday.

Larish was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 20 for his second stint with the A's this year and entered Monday's contest 4-for-14 with a home run and two RBIs in four starts since his return.

Geren, however, said that he'll consider replacing Larish with another defensive option -- likely Gabe Gross -- during the later innings when need be, as he did in the sixth inning of Sunday's 8-2 win over the Rangers.

"It's nothing against Larish," Geren said. "We just have so many good defensive options. We have a lot of good defenders on this team."

A's outfielders entered Monday ranking fifth in the American League in fielding percentage (.989), and their eight errors were tied with the Yankees and Rays for fewest in the AL.

Anderson a go for Wednesday in Bronx

NEW YORK -- A's lefty Brett Anderson endured a successful bullpen session on Monday afternoon, turning his hyperextended right knee into a non-issue in preparation of his scheduled Wednesday start against the Yankees, which he fully plans on making.

"It went really well," manager Bob Geren said. "He should be good to go, no problems."

The 22-year-old Anderson suffered the mild knee injury when he stepped in a mound hole created by Rangers hurler Tommy Hunter and subsequently fell in the second inning of Friday's 7-3 loss to Texas. Anderson took Saturday off before running and playing catch on Sunday, all of which went well and allowed him to undergo his normal bullpen routine on Monday.

Anderson is 0-2 with a 5.68 ERA in three career starts against the Yankees, but in those outings, he's also posted 7.1 strikeouts per nine innings.

Worth noting

Although the A's 13-13 August record through Sunday was the best among American League West teams, the club has gained just one game in the standings this month. ... Monday marked the 23rd time in the past 35 games the A's have played a team that was in first place in its division or the AL Wild Card race at the time of the game. Sixteen of the A's 32 remaining games come against teams that currently have winning records.

Yanks looking to break free of Rays

By Spencer Fordin / MLB.com

Win, lose or rainout, the Yankees are in lock-step with their closest competition for the American League East crown. Through Monday's games, New York and Tampa Bay have been tied at the top of their standings for eight straight days, and after forging a comeback win on Monday, the Yankees will be hoping to gain ground when they resume their series against the A's on Tuesday.

Interestingly, New York and Tampa Bay's tie seems to have set a modern-day record. The last time that two teams were tied at the top of a division for an extended period of time this late into the season was 1980, when the Dodgers and Astros locked up at the top of the National League West for seven straight days in September.

Truth be told, the Yankees probably aren't too concerned with the trivialities of such obscure records. Instead, the defending World Series champions are focused on seizing control of their division and giving themselves the best possible chance to advance through October and back to the familiar turf of the winner's circle.

"The division is very important," said New York manager Joe Girardi. "I would love to have the home-field advantage, but you can't do that at the risk of injuring someone. That's the one thing that you have to avoid during this."

Girardi would also like to avoid his team falling flat, and he can thank the schedule for making that a near impossibility.

The Yankees -- who took over the division lead on June 20 and have remained alone or tied for first place for all but one day since then -- will play 25 of their final 31 games against teams at or above the break-even mark.

In fact, after this four-game series ends, 25 of New York's final 28 games will come against division rivals. That just sets the bar high for the Yankees, giving them perspective on the final weeks of the season.

"We know they're extremely important," said Girardi. "But we said in February that this was going to be an extremely tough division and was going to go down to the wire. Obviously, these next 32 games are real important."

The A's, who are playing through their longest road trip of the season, are living with the same kind of circumstances. Oakland has a 13-14 record in August -- best among AL West teams -- but has rested between seven and 10 games out of first place in the division on every day since June 25.

New York will start Phil Hughes in Tuesday's game, and Oakland will counter with Hackensack, N.J., native Vin Mazzaro.

Both starters are searching for a reversal of fortune, with Mazzaro coming off four straight losses and Hughes -- having been hit hard in Toronto his last time out -- trying to avoid the first back-to-back losing starts of his season. The Yankees are still trying to figure out where they should draw a line for Hughes, deciding just how many innings he can pitch in his first full year as a big league starter.

"I've said all along that Phil Hughes' numbers are not dependent on someone else," Girardi said. "They're dependent on his numbers. Someone asked me about the silver lining in the Toronto game, and I would have much rather we won the game and he went deep. ... It's possible he could make all of his starts the rest of the way out."

A's: Mazzaro progressing

Mazzaro moved into the rotation back in June due to an injury to southpaw Brett Anderson, and he's pitched to a 5-6 record and a 3.26 ERA since then. So far, the A's are pleased with his progress.

"He's just done a lot better with everything this year," said A's manager Bob Geren. "His command of the breaking ball is much better. He's commanding both sides of the plate, which he struggled with last year."

Yankees: Thames hitting stride

Marcus Thames has homered in five straight starts for the Yankees, perhaps making a case for meaningful playing time in the playoffs. Thames batted just .294 with three home runs in the first half of the season, but he's come roaring out of the gates in the second half, batting .348 (23-for-66) with six home runs in his last 23 games.

And if Thames has been doing it in recent weeks, the Yankees have been getting steady play from their double-play combination all season long. Derek Jeter and Robinson Cano are well celebrated for their offensive exploits, but they went into Monday's game leading the league in fielding percentage at their respective positions.

Why is that notable? You have to go back nearly a decade to find the last team -- the 2001 Indians, with Roberto Alomar and Omar Vizquel -- that had a middle infield lead the league in fielding percentage.

Worth noting

New York's Triple-A affiliate, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, clinched its fifth consecutive division title on Sunday, setting a new standard for the International League. ... The Yankees are 18-4 against the A's since the start of the 2008 season and 37-18 against them since the beginning of the '04 campaign. ... New York is now a season-high 31 games above .500. ... The Yankees have scored the first run in six of their past eight games and are 45-15 in those circumstances this season. ... The A's are 16-27 in series openers this season, but they improve to 21-21 in the second game of a series. ... Oakland is playing through its longest road trip of the season, a 10-game excursion, and is 4-3 through seven games. ... The A's have a Major League-high 52 stolen bases since the All-Star break, and 117 -- third in the AL -- all season.

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Slight knee injury won't disrupt left-hander's schedule

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

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Postseason possibilities seemingly endless

Crunch time arrives as teams race toward season's climax

By Mark Newman / MLB.com

It's time for magic numbers, tiebreaker calculations, tentative October schedule planning, and a general state of anxiety and excitement.

Major League Baseball on Monday released the first of its now-daily "Tentative 2010 MLB Postseason Outlook" updates, signaling the moment fans whose team is in a race can really start sweating the standings.

Tonight, they will be right in the thick of it all. It is the second-busiest Monday on the season schedule to date, with 13 games on the docket -- 11 of which feature at least one club that is within at least 7 1/2 games of postseason position.

Both the Yankees and Rays -- each sitting on 80 wins, the most in the Majors -- begin home series tonight against the A's and Blue Jays, respectively. Many fans already are looking ahead to the seven potentially decisive games the American League East co-leaders are scheduled to play in mid-September.

But the Yankees are certainly not going to look past tonight's opposing starter, Oakland's Trevor Cahill (14-5), and Tampa Bay is playing host to a Toronto club that is six games above .500 and led by MLB home run leader Jose Bautista. But fans do the math, anyway. The Rays have a 6-5 season-series edge on the Yankees and thus would be AL East champs if the season were to end now, with the teams tied atop the standings.

The Rays would open one AL Division Series at home against the Rangers, who are 73-57, 7 1/2 up on the A's in the AL West despite losing their last two to Oakland.

Minnesota, idle on Monday, has a 75-56 record to lead the AL Central by 4 1/2 games over the White Sox, who could open their series tonight at Cleveland with an expected newcomer named Manny Ramirez in tow. This means that, if the season were to end now, new Target Field would be host to the other ALDS, with the Wild Card Yankees opening defense of their World Series title on the road. The Wild Card cannot face against the champion of its own division in the first round, so it opens on the road against whichever of the other two division champs has the best record or tiebreaker advantage. In such a scenario, that would be Minnesota.

Tampa Bay knocked Boston back to 6 1/2 games out in both the AL East and Wild Card picture on Sunday, but you have to include the Red Sox in that daily postseason outlook. The Red Sox open a series at Baltimore. What if either the Yankees or Rays were to dominate those remaining seven head-to-head games, knocking one of the teams back, while the Red Sox put together a strong September? Anything is possible at this point, because that's what can happen during pennant races.

"If I have my choice between a pennant and a Triple Crown," said baseball's last Triple Crown winner, Carl Yastrzemski, "I'll take the pennant every time."

Getting there is the fun -- and usually gut-wrenching -- part. Here is some other head-to-head info: Yankees lead Red Sox, 7-5; Rays lead Red Sox, 7-5; and Twins lead White Sox, 10-5.

All Division Series games will again be televised live by TBS, and that includes both ALDS openers on Wednesday, Oct. 6, with air times to be announced later. The third game on that Wednesday will be one of the two National League Division Series, with the other starting on Oct. 7, along with Game 2 of both AL series.

Which NL clubs will be its four representatives? All four races are close. Fans will be doing a lot of scoreboard watching, but what would happen if the season ended today?

The Braves won the season series against the Reds, 3-2. That looms large, because Atlanta and Cincinnati lead their respective divisions with identical 75-55 records, and head-to-head records are the first tiebreaker. San Diego has the NL's top record at 76-53 with a magic number of 28, and Philadelphia leads the crowded NL Wild Card chase with a 73-57 record, two behind Atlanta.

Because Atlanta could not open against the Phillies, one NLDS would have the Reds at the Braves, and the other would be the Phillies at the Padres, a rematch of the series just played over the weekend at PETCO Park in San Diego.

The Cardinals, 28-36 on the road after losing the past two at Washington, continue to struggle away from Busch Stadium. The Redbirds open a series at Houston, while the Reds are home against Milwaukee, with hopes of extending what now is a five-game NL Central lead. Unless the trend changes, St. Louis fans might start looking more seriously at the Wild Card standings, which show them just three behind Philadelphia.

Carlos Gonzalez and the Rockies are opening against the Giants in San Francisco tonight, and that is a big series for both the NL West and Wild Card pictures. The Giants are five behind the Padres, who open tonight in Arizona, in the division and just 1 1/2 behind the Phillies in the Wild Card standings. Meanwhile, Colorado has shown signs of making its move lately. The Rockies are eight out in the West and 4 1/2 back in the Wild Card.

Just as it was odd to see many Yankees fans rooting for the Red Sox on Sunday night at Tampa Bay, it will be strange to see Giants and Rockies fans rooting for the Dodgers starting tonight. The Phillies open a series at Dodger Stadium against a club that is still very much alive at 6 1/2 back and still hopeful of extending Joe Torre's streak of managerial postseason appearances that extends back to the Yankees clinching a berth in 1996.

The standings make for very strange situations like that one. Even Giants fans who say they aren't rooting for the Dodgers are likely to privately hope the Boys in Blue can make it easier to catch and pass the Phillies in the Wild Card picture.

"No club that wins a pennant once is an outstanding club," Hall of Fame manager John McGraw once said. "One which bunches two pennants is a good club. But a team which can win three in a row really achieves greatness."

Can the Phillies win a third straight NL pennant? Right now they are in position to make a run at it, even if it means starting out as the Wild Card on the road.

The Mets are a .500 team that could be more than a spoiler. They start a series tonight at Turner Field against the division leaders, and that could be a chance to make up ground in the Wild Card race as well. New York is eight back in those standings. A half-game in front of them is Florida, which starts a series at home against the Nationals tonight.

Last year, the NL West (Dodgers) and NL Wild Card (Rockies) representatives were not decided until the final weekend. Don't be surprised if something similar happens with at least a couple of NL races this season. Just in case, here is some tiebreaker head-to-head info you might need:

The Braves lead the Phillies, 7-5. The Cardinals lead the Reds, 10-5. The Phillies and the Cardinals are tied, 4-4. The Cards are 31-26 against the NL Central, and the Phillies are 25-22 vs. the NL East.

The Phillies and Giants are tied, 3-3. The Phillies are 25-22 vs. the NL East, and the Giants are 21-26 vs. the NL West. The Cardinals and Giants are tied, 3-3.

You'll want to either keep track of that info, or just check in here every day, because the tentative postseason outlook will be updated each day until the last of eight playoff teams is decided. To calculate a magic number, first determine the number of games yet to be played, add one, then subtract the number of games ahead in the loss column of the standings from the closest opponent.

Then just watch the games, starting with Monday's 13 matchups that will keep the excitement building. It's that time again, and you can feel it.

A's routed by Yankees, 11-5

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Robinson Cano, Mark Teixeira and the New York Yankees tagged Trevor Cahill for the second time this season, emphatically ending the All-Star's run of pitching excellence in an 11-5 rout of the Oakland Athletics on Monday night.

Marcus Thames hit a three-run shot to extend his home run streak and New York (81-50) got back-to-back long balls from Teixeira and Cano to move a season-best 31 games over .500. Nick Swisher added three hits and three RBIs, including a two-run double in the first inning that helped the Yankees erase a 3-0 deficit.

Still, they couldn't shake Tampa Bay atop the AL East. The Yankees and Rays, who beat Toronto 6-2, remained tied for first place for the eighth straight day.

The Yankees said that's the longest stretch that two major league teams have been tied for first this late in a season, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Demoted starter Javier Vazquez (10-9) replaced Dustin Moseley in the fifth and earned his second win in three relief outings this year. Aided by Derek Jeter's fine play at shortstop, Vazquez allowed one run and two hits while striking out six in the final 4 2-3 innings.

Jeff Larish homered and drove in four runs for the A's, who fell to 4-18 against the Yankees over the past three years — including 1-6 this season.

Oakland began the day with the AL's best ERA at 3.48, but that was before running into New York's high-powered offense. The Yankees scored 11 times in the first five innings to chase Cahill (14-6) after he entered 5-1 with a 0.77 ERA in six starts since July 28. The sinkerballer gave up eight earned runs and nine hits, both season highs, in four-plus innings — his shortest outing of the year.

Cahill was touched up for six runs by New York in six innings of a 6-1 loss at home July 6, when Alex Rodriguez hit a grand slam and a solo homer off the right-hander.

Rodriguez, on the disabled list with a strained left calf, wasn't even a threat Monday night — but the Yankees have hardly missed a beat when he's out, going 16-3 without the three-time MVP this season.

Teixeira returned to the lineup after sitting out Sunday's victory over the Chicago White Sox with a bruised right thumb. The slugger certainly looked healthy, reaching base safely all four times up with a single, double, homer and walk.

With two outs in the third, the Yankees snapped a 3-all tie when Teixeira and Cano hit consecutive line drives just over the short porch in right. It was Cano's career-high 26th homer this season, surpassing his total from last year.

No. 9 batter Ramiro Pena added an RBI single with two outs in the fourth, then Jeter turned in a difficult play to preserve a 6-4 lead in the fifth. With runners at the corners and two outs, he made a backhand pickup and one-hopped a jump throw to first to get Kevin Kouzmanoff by a half-step.

New York broke it open as the first five batters reached safely in the bottom half. Teixeira led off with a double and scored on Cano's single, which chased Cahill. Swisher hit an RBI double off Henry Rodriguez, Jorge Posada was hit by a pitch and Thames drove a three-run shot into the second deck in left, just inside the foul pole.

It was Thames' sixth home run in his last five starts.

Teixeira, Cano and Swisher, New York's 3-4-5 hitters, went 8 for 9 with five extra-base hits and seven RBIs through the first five innings as the Yankees got off to a big start in the opener of a 10-game homestand, their longest this season.

Notes: Oakland LHP Brett Anderson threw his bullpen session without a problem and is on track to start Wednesday night.

Anderson left his previous outing early with a hyperextended right knee. ... Larish started in left field for the second consecutive day. Before that, he had never played the outfield as a pro in a regular-season game. ... RHP Vin Mazzaro said he has a pass list of 30 and expects about 80 family members and friends to be in attendance Tuesday night when he starts for Oakland. The 23-year-old Mazzaro, who also pitched at Yankee Stadium last season, grew up in nearby Rutherford, N.J. "Giants Stadium in my backyard," he said. Mazzaro lost 6-3 to CC Sabathia last July in a game delayed more than 2 1/2 hours by rain. "I was a different pitcher back then. I've learned a lot the past year," Mazzaro said.

Yankees dismiss Cahill and A's with ease in 11-5 romp in the Bronx

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Nothing like the New York Yankees in the Bronx to remind you of where you stand in the baseball world.

Just ask Trevor Cahill and the Oakland Athletics, thoroughly humbled tonight in New York.

The A's took a 3-0 lead in the first inning, but the Yankees just laughed, scored three of their own in the bottom of the opening frame and danced away from Oakland by the third inning on their way to an 11-5 win tonight.

Ho-hum.

The Bronx Bombers hit three home runs off A's pitchers -- including two off Cahill to send him to the showers early -- and banged out 13 hits while making four Oakland hurlers throw 179 pitches on the night (in only eight innings).

Yeah, it was *that* ugly.

The A's came into this series high off two straight wins in Texas, but clearly, there's a big difference between the Ballpark at Arlington and Yankee Stadium.

Of course, it doesn't matter where Oakland plays New York: the Yankees will usually win it. This year, the A's have lost six of seven to the defending World Series champions, the only victory coming on April 22 when Dallas Braden told A-Rod to stay off his mound.

Thankfully, Oakland only has the next three games left against the Yankees in 2010.

But this gap between the top of the American League and the A's is clearly noticeable, and if Oakland can hang with the Texas Rangers, the eventual AL West champion has no chance in the playoffs come October.

The A's basically had their best starter on the mound tonight, facing someone named Dustin Moseley starting for the Yankees.

And it didn't matter.

His career 5.22 ERA withstanding, Moseley was gone before the fifth inning ended, as the A's knocked him around for four runs.

Unfortunately, the modern version of Murderer's Row torched Oakland's All-Star pitcher for eight runs in only four innings -- making Cahill look like the green, inexperienced guy on the mound.

From there on, all the Yankees had to do was outlast the A's, and with their deep pockets, New York has the depth to send out a "reliever" making \$11.5M this year to finish the game.

It's hard for Oakland to compete against that, even when they throw their best guy to the wolves.

And tonight, the wolves ate well.

Oakland A's pitcher Dallas Braden won't face A-Rod this week, but will face New York Yankees fans

BY [Peter Botte](#), [Kristie Ackert](#) AND [Anthony Mccarron](#) , DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITERS 8/31/2010

[Dallas Braden](#) and [Alex Rodriguez](#) already muted their early-season war of words when the [Yankees](#) were in [Oakland](#) in July. Both players signed T-shirts for charity depicting the "Get Off My Mound" comments the A's hurler had directed at A-Rod following a game there two months earlier.

Still, that hatchet-burying doesn't mean that Braden - who also happened to toss the 19th perfect game in baseball history on May 9 - expects to be greeted warmly this week by the Bronx fans.

"You guys wouldn't be New Yorkers if that wasn't the case," said Braden, who is slated to start Thursday. "That's part of the excitement. They've had a while to think of some good stuff, so don't disappoint."

For the second straight series between the teams, there will be no on-field confrontations between A-Rod, who is on the 15-day disabled list, and Braden, who was shelved with an elbow injury in July.

Asked how his life has changed since achieving perfection, the lefty joked that "cooler people want to talk to me now," and that he only speaks to his grandmother through "her publicist."

Braden's grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, who took care of him after his mother died of cancer while he was in high school, gained national acclaim when she said "Stick it, A-Rod" to reporters moments after her grandson completed his Mother's Day perfecto against Tampa Bay.

"People want her autograph now," Braden said. "The other day we were stopped, and they didn't want my autograph. They wanted to shake my hand, but they wanted her autograph."

NOT OVA FOR NOVA

An MLB official said there was "nothing new" pertaining to the investigation of rookie Ivan Nova and minor-league pitcher Wilkin De La Rosa for allegedly injecting each other with B-12 shots while teammates at Double-A Trenton in 2009.

"I have nothing to say about it," Nova said.

"I am still unaware of the investigation. I have not been told there is an investigation going," Joe Girardi said. "As far as talking to Nova, we prepared him a little bit in a sense, 'you might be asked these questions,' is what we did. That was basically it."

De La Rosa has denied the allegations, and told the Hunterdon County (N.J.) Democrat last night that he hasn't been contacted by MLB investigators.

"I have never done that and doing that has never entered my mind," he said. "I try and stay away from all of that stuff (supplements), because I don't know a lot about it. I am not interested in any of that stuff."

De La Rosa added that he hasn't spoken to Nova about the investigation because "He's in the big leagues and I have no interest in talking about it because it isn't true.

"We don't need to talk about it because we didn't do anything. I was mad because we have a lot of work to do with baseball right now and when people make that comment, no matter what, it is on my mind. I worked hard my whole career only to have someone say that. ... That kind of comment - you have it with you for life."

PETT SOUNDS

ndy Pettitte said he felt expected soreness, one day after throwing a successful bullpen session Sunday in Chicago. "Just normal soreness," Pettitte said. "I haven't been on a mound for a while."

Pettitte, who has been on the disabled list with a left groin strain, jogged in the outfield, exercised, worked in the pool and played catch. He expects to throw another bullpen again today or tomorrow. The next step in his rehab is to face batters.

"We've gone so far, there's no sense not being extremely careful," Pettitte said. "I'm not going to push it, I am going to do whatever they think I should."

Both Pettitte and Girardi said that with no setbacks, Pettitte could be back in the Yankees rotation by mid-September.

THUMB KIND OF WONDERFUL

Mark Teixeira is back on track. Back in the lineup for the first time since leaving with a bruised thumb on Saturday, Teixeira went 3-for-3 with a home run and scored a season-high-tying three runs last night. He's now one homer shy of becoming only the sixth Yankee to hit 30 home runs in his first two seasons in pinstripes.

"It's feeling better, good enough to play obviously," Teixeira said. "Any time you are out there, you want to produce, so it was a good day."

Teixeira said after the game his thumb was a little sore, but he expects it at this time of the year. He said he expects to be in the lineup tonight.

"Bone bruises get slowly better, it's a little sore now, maybe next couple of days it'll get slowly better," Teixeira said. "We play with a little soreness all the time. I don't know if there is a game you play without being a little tight or a little sore. (Sunday) I wasn't going to go out there and not really help the team out. I just wanted to make sure (last night) I was good enough to swing. I was."

CALF-WAY HOME

Rodriguez did some light running and hitting before the game. The third baseman has been on the DL with a strained left calf since Aug. 21, but jogged and walked along the right-field wall for about 30 minutes before going inside to the batting cage to hit off a tee. He declined comment, but Girardi said he expects Rodriguez to be ready to be activated Sunday. "When he's eligible to come off (the DL)," Girardi said. "I don't think he'll go on a rehab, no."

ON THE MARCUS

Marcus Thames continues to ride his ridiculous home-run binge, blasting a three-run shot into the second deck in left for his sixth in as many games (five starts). Just don't compare the proven veteran slugger to former Yankees' late-season homer-hitting flashes Kevin Maas and Shane Spencer.

"I know I'm not going to get one every day, just trying to do my part," said Thames, who has 10 homers in 151 at-bats this season. "I've been playing a little more and if you look at every year I've been playing, I've done something like this when I get more at-bats consistently."

THINK YOU CAN, LANCE?

Lance Berkman (right ankle sprain) began a minor-league rehab assignment last night for Double-A Trenton and went 2-for-5 with a run scored as the DH. He will play again tonight in hopes of being activated as early as tomorrow.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Recker scores winning run as Sacramento takes 2.0-game lead

The pressure was once again on Jermaine Mitchell as the Cats were tied 2-2 in the ninth inning. Mitchell, called up Saturday from Single-A, once again wasn't frozen by the pressure and walked on a wild pitch that scored Anthony Recker for a 3-2 River Cats win over the Las Vegas 51s.

The River Cats opened the scoring with a two-run fourth inning. Zach Jackson walked three consecutive River Cats to load the bases. Travis Buck scored on an Anthony Recker sacrifice fly and Mitchell doubled on a line drive to center that scored Taylor.

This was Mitchell's second hit in three games since being called up from Stockton. Mitchell earned his keep when he knocked in the go-ahead run in a River Cats come-from-behind win against Fresno on Sunday afternoon.

Las Vegas tacked on their first run in the sixth inning to make it a one-run game. The 51s added another run in the eighth inning to tie the score 2-2. Manny Mayorson advanced to second on a fielding error by right fielder Michael Taylor and a Jarrett Hoffpauir single scored Mayorson.

It only took two Cats at bat to pull out the winning run in the ninth inning. Recker's explosive triple, his second of the season, put Sacramento in good position with no outs. Mitchell walked on a wild pitch to score Recker for the win.

The 51s, who lead the league in slugging and on-base percentage, were limited to just four hits from the stellar Sacramento pitching staff. Travis Banwart started and pitched 7.0 innings for two hits and one run. Jon Hunton pitched 0.2 innings and allowed two hits and one run. The win went to Travis Blackley, who pitched the final 1.1 innings.

With the win, Sacramento pulls a comfortable 2.0 games ahead of the Fresno Grizzlies in the PCL South division. The River Cats' Magic Number is 5.

Andy Jenkins Leads Frisco Over Hounds

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

When Andy Jenkins homered in the last of the first inning, Frisco took a 4-0 lead, but it would take more heroics from the Frisco designated hitter in the last of the eighth to give the RoughRiders a 6-4 win Sunday evening.

Jenkins' 2-run double into the right-field corner scored Rangers Major Leaguer Christian Guzman and Emerson Frostad, breaking a 4-4 tie as Frisco evened the 3-game series at a game apiece, bringing the RoughRiders to within one game of the RockHounds in the Texas League South second half pennant race.

In the last of the first, Ian Kinsler (he and Guzman are both in Frisco on re-hab assignments) drove in the game's first run, but it was a line drive single that helped change the course of the game. Ryan Edell struck out Joey Butler, leaving Kinsler on first with two out. Frostad then sent a line drive back up the middle, striking Edell in the left hip and bounding away for a single. After a lengthy conversation at the mound with Athletic Trainer Justin Whitehouse and manager Darren Bush, Edell stayed in the game. The first pitch he threw to Jenkins would turn into a 3-run home run and a 4-0 Frisco lead.

Edell would allow no runs on just two hits over his next 5.1 innings, and the 'Hounds would chip away, eventually tying the game at 4-4 in the top of the eighth.

Fautino De Los Santos, who had retired the side in order in the seventh, walked Guzman on four pitches to open the eighth. Renny Osuna laid down a sacrifice bunt, and De Los Santos struck Butler out before walking Frostad intentionally to pitch to Jenkins (right-hander against right-hander). But Jenkins took a 1-1 pitch the opposite way, dropping a double into the right field corner, bearking the tie and squaring the series.

In addition to Kinsler and Guzman, Texas Rangers right-hander Dustin Nippert also appeared in the game, making a re-hab appearance and going the first 2.1 innings, allowing only a walk.

There are eight (8) games remaining in the 2010 Texas League season, and the 'Hounds will play the next five of those games on the road. Monday's game at Frisco concludes the 3-game series, and will provide a two-game swing. With a win, Frisco gains a tie for first place, while the RockHounds would re-gain a two-game lead with a victory. The 'Hounds then move on for a 4-game set at San Antonio ... a series which could determine the South's second playoff spot.

The RockHounds close the regular season at Citibank Ballpark with a 3-game Labor Day weekend series against Frisco.

The pennant race & the wild card: The RockHounds now lead first half champion Frisco by just one game in the South. San Antonio's second straight win over Corpus Christi draws the Missions within three games of the top spot and virtually eliminates the Hooks, who are now seven out with eight to play.

If Frisco wins the second half, the wild card race takes effect. The RockHounds continue to lead San Antonio by three games with Corpus Christi six games out. Corpus Christi and San Antonio meet four times in the last eight games and the Hooks also host Frisco for four.

There are eight (8) games remaining in the 2010 Texas League regular season.

Six-Run Eighth Inning Gives Ports 9-5 Win

Magic Number at 4 for Stockton Ports

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Stockton Ports (70-63) wrapped up the regular season at home with an exciting come-from-behind win on Monday night, overcoming the San Jose Giants (71-62), by a 9-5 final with a six-run eighth inning.

The Ports retain their 4.0 game lead over the second-place Bakersfield Blaze in the second half standings, decreasing their magic number to 4, to clinch the division. The Ports, after a three-game series this week at Modesto, will face the Blaze for four games to end the regular season.

Grant Green hit a three-run home run to put the Ports ahead, 6-5, in the eighth, and the Ports went through the order as they added some insurance runs that inning. Green, along with Tyler Ladendorf and David Thomas, collected two hits in the contest. The Ports totaled 11 hits in Monday's win.

Stockton starter Justin Murray allowed four runs on five hits in 5.1 frames. Scott Deal picked up his second win on the year, tossing three perfect frames to shut down the Giants and close out the game. Edwin Quirarte got the loss, his ninth, on Monday.

The Giants struck first, as a solo shot by left fielder James Simmons gave San Jose a 1-0 lead in the top of the second. They pulled ahead, 2-0, in the top of the third. Catcher Matt Klimas led off the third inning by reaching on a throwing error by second baseman Tyler Ladendorf. He moved to second as shortstop Ehire Adrianza hit a bunt single. Center fielder Juan Perez then hit a sacrifice bunt to move the runners along. While Jose Flores was batting, Murray threw a wild pitch that allowed Klimas to score.

The Ports scored their first run in the bottom of the third to make it a 2-1 ballgame. Thomas walked to start the offense. He went to second as Green singled. Both runners advanced on a wild pitch while

Stephen Parker was batting. Parker struck out for the second out of the frame. Giants starter Andrew Romo then hit Mike Spina and Jeremy Barfield. Barfield's hit-by-pitch scored Thomas. Catcher Yusuf Carter then struck out to end the inning and leave the bases loaded.

The Ports took a 3-2 lead in the bottom of the fourth. With two out, designated hitter Kent Walton walked. Thomas stepped up to the plate and launched his second home run of the year over the grassy knoll in right field. Thomas ended the night 2x3 with two RBI and three runs scored.

But the Giants came right back in the sixth inning to take a 5-3 lead. Murray gave up back-to-back singles to Francisco Peguero and Flores to start the inning. First baseman Michael Sandoval then flew out for the first out of the inning. Ports manager Steve Scarsons called on southpaw Trey Barham to face designated hitter Wendell Fairley. Fairley drilled the first pitch he saw from Barham over the right field wall for a three-run home run. It was his first home run of the season, and first in nearly a year. Barham finished the inning.

The Ports had ample scoring opportunities in the sixth and seventh innings, leaving five base runners stranded combined in those two frames. The Ports stranded 12 in the course of the game.

After Deal retired the side in order in the eighth, the Ports offense jumped back to life. Walton started the inning with a double down the left field line. He took third as Thomas singled to shallow center field. With two on and no out, Green came up to the plate and drilled an 0-1 pitch over the mini monster wall in left field to put the Ports ahead, 6-5. Park then singled to right to keep the offense rolling. Spina next flew out for the first out of the inning. But Barfield singled up the hole at short to put two on for Carter. While Carter was batting, Klimas had a passed ball which allowed the runners to advance. Carter then singled to left field to bring home both base runners and give Stockton an 8-5 lead. Carter later scored the ninth and final Ports run on an RBI single by Ladendorf.

Deal got the final three batters to ground out to Parker in the ninth inning to end the game.

Cougars Hang On to Edge Rattlers **Doolittle works 9th-inning magic to get out of jam, confirm victory**

APPLETON, Wisc. – Ryan Doolittle worked out of bases-loaded no-out jam in the bottom of the ninth inning Monday afternoon to help the Kane County Cougars nip the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers, 4-3, at Time Warner Cable Field. The Cougars have taken two of the first three in the four-game series and, pending other Midwest League activity Monday night, will stay at least 1.5 games behind Clinton for the top playoff spot and at least 1.0 game ahead of Beloit for the Wild Card spot with seven games left.

The Cougars led, 4-1, entering the bottom of the ninth with Connor Hoehn, who had worked a perfect eighth inning, on the mound. The Rattlers used three hits, a wild pitch and a walk to chase Hoehn and make it 4-3. Doolittle entered with runners at second and third and walked Chris Dennis intentionally to load the bases, which led to a 5-2-3 double play from Cameron Garfield. Then Doolittle got Michael Marseco to line out to third, as Leonardo Gil made a leaping catch to end the game.

The Cougars built a 4-0 lead in the early innings against Hiram Burgos (5-6). Tyreece House poked a run-scoring fielder's choice in the second to make it 1-0. Then in the third Rashun Dixon walked with the bases loaded, and Jason Christian nailed a two-run single for a 4-0 score. Starter Dan Straily (9-7) picked up the win with seven innings of one-run ball. He walked three and fanned seven in his team-best 10th quality start before handing it off to Hoehn.

The four-game set concludes Tuesday night at 6:35 CT. Aaron Larsen is expected to join the Cougars (34-28, 66-65) from Oakland's Arizona League affiliate and make the start in place of Jose Macias. The Timber Rattlers (30-33, 56-75) will counter with Jake Odorizzi (7-3, 3.34). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 6:20 p.m.

Oakland A's MLN: Post-Season Outlook & Awards

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Aug 30, 2010

The minor league regular season is in its final days, and currently five Oakland A's affiliates are in position to make the post-season. We review those scenarios and discuss other news and notes, including some post-season hardware heading the way of A's prospects, inside...

Post-Season Scenarios

A significant aspect of the Oakland A's player development philosophy is that winning is an important part of growing as a player. A's prospects have had plenty of practice in that area lately, as all of the team's US affiliates have had strong second halves of the season, positioning most of them for a post-season run. We review those scenarios below.

Sacramento River Cats

Winning is nothing new for the A's Triple-A affiliate. Sacramento has been to the playoffs all but two seasons since becoming an A's affiliate in 1999. However, a post-season run didn't seem likely on June 15th when the team fell to 12.5 games behind the first-place Fresno Grizzlies.

A mere 10 weeks later and the River Cats have turned the tables on their Pacific Coast League rivals. Sacramento took four out of five games in a critical series against the Grizzlies this weekend to move into sole possession of first place. The fourth win came on Sunday when Sacramento eeked out a 2-1 victory, giving the River Cats a one-game lead with eight games to play.

Sacramento has had to rely on a number of unlikely heroes to get back into first place. On Sunday, the hero was outfielder [Jermaine Mitchell](#), who has spent the majority of the season with the High-A Stockton Ports. Mitchell was called up to Sacramento on Saturday when star first-baseman/outfielder [Chris Carter](#) was placed on the DL with a sprained left thumb. Mitchell singled in the winning run in the eighth inning of Sunday's game. It was the first Triple-A hit in the career of the A's 2006 fifth-round pick.

Catcher [Anthony Recker](#) has also stepped it up in the glare of the pennant chase. Recker has assumed the starting catcher's role for the past month while [Josh Donaldson](#) has been on the DL with a sprained knee. Recker homered four times and drove-in nine runs in five games versus Fresno this weekend. He also walked four times and scored five runs. Recker is batting .267 with a 788 OPS in 72 games for the River Cats this season and he may have positioned himself for a September call-up to Oakland if the A's need a third catcher when rosters expand on September 1st.

Starter [Bobby Cramer](#) has given the River Cats' rotation a boost. He allowed only one run on five hits and a walk in six innings versus Fresno on Friday. In five starts for Sacramento since joining the team from Mexico, Cramer has allowed no

more than two earned runs in any start. He has a 1.55 ERA and a 28:4 K:BB ratio in 29 innings.

Major league veterans [Brett Tomko](#) and [Jason Jennings](#) are giving the River Cats some experience during the pennant run. Tomko struggled in his first start with Sacramento (six runs in only two-thirds of an inning), but he has since allowed only six runs in 16.1 innings. Jennings has made two starts for the River Cats, and has allowed three runs in eight total innings.

Midland Rockhounds

The Midland Rockhounds have played only .500 baseball this second half, but that has been good enough to put them in a strong position to defend their Texas League title this September. Going into Monday, the Rockhounds sat a game ahead of the first-half champion Frisco RoughRiders for the second-half division title. The Rockhounds also hold a three-game lead in the wild card, which would come into effect if Frisco were to win the second-half division title having already won the first half crown.

It has been an up-and-down season for outfielder [Shane Peterson](#), but he has been a big part of the Rockhounds' push to the playoffs. Peterson hit only .230 with a 621 OPS before the All-Star break, but he has hit .330 with an 875 OPS since the break. Over his last 10 games, he is batting .382 with seven walks and six RBIs. Peterson was a big factor in the Rockhounds' 2009 Texas League championship. He hit .433 with six RBIs in eight games during last year's post-season.

Outfielder [Matt Sulentic](#) has also overcome a slow start to the year to give the 'Hounds offense a late-season boost. He has a modest four-game hitting streak at the moment and has batted .331 after the All-Star break. He hit .228 before the break. Sulentic hit a walk-off homerun to give the 'Hounds the 2009 second-half division title last year.

The 'Hounds will be relying on mid-season addition [Ryan Edell](#) to pace the starting rotation. Since joining the A's in May in a trade with Cleveland, Edell has gone 9-4 with a 3.19 ERA in 118.1 innings. In August, he has a 3.10 ERA in six starts. Edell is tied for the team-lead in wins with starter [Carlos Hernandez](#), who beat a Frisco line-up on Saturday that included rehabbing Texas Rangers [Nelson Cruz](#), [Ian Kinsler](#) and Cristian Guzman. Hernandez allowed only two hits in seven shut-out innings. He has a 2.67 ERA in six August starts.

Veteran [Matt Wright](#) will get the start on Monday. He has posted a 2.98 ERA in 13 starts for Midland since joining the team in June. Wright was a non-roster invitee to the A's big league spring training camp, but was let go by the A's so that he could pursue an opportunity in Korea. When injury prevented Wright from staying in Korea, the A's re-signed the 6'4" righty and assigned him to Midland.

Stockton Ports

Like the River Cats, the Stockton Ports' playoff chances seemed DOA in July. However, a recent 14-game winning streak has put Stockton in a strong position to make the post-season. Going into Monday, the Ports are holding a four game lead in the second-half division standings over Bakersfield. The Ports are also tied for first in the wild card standings. Stockton has gone 19-7 in August and are 38-24 in the second half.

The Ports' pitching staff has been outstanding during the month of August, posting a 2.95 ERA, an incredible mark considering the generally strong offense of the California League. Ports pitchers have struck-out 208 in 229 innings and have allowed only 202 hits.

[Ben Hornbeck](#) (1.17 ERA in four starts, although he was placed on the DL on Sunday), [Justin Marks](#) (2.03 ERA in three outings) and [Justin Murray](#) (1.11 ERA in six outings) have led the way in August. [Shawn Haviland](#) has also been impressive, with a 3.29 ERA and 31 strike-outs in 27.1 innings in August. [Paul Smyth](#) has saved 10 games in 10 opportunities this month while posting a 2.63 ERA in 13.2 innings. [Trey Barham](#) has done a good job setting up for Smyth, posting a 3.09 ERA in 11.2 innings this month.

[Grant Green](#) has gone on a power-splurge in August, blasting seven homeruns and driving in 23 runs in 26 games. [Stephen Parker](#), [Jeremy Barfield](#) and [Yusuf Carter](#) have also put up good power numbers with five homers a piece. Barfield leads the team in August with a 953 OPS and a .333 batting average. As a team, the Ports have a 794 OPS in August.

Kane County Cougars

The Cougars dropped a thriller on Sunday, losing 11-10 in a four-hour, 11-inning marathon to the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers. That loss cut the Kane County lead to one game in the wild card race with eight games left on the Midwest League schedule.

Kane County has gone 33-28 during the second half of the season and is 65-65 overall. In August, the Cougars have gone 13-14. The pitching staff has posted a 3.80 ERA, while the hitters have a .269 average and a 755 OPS.

Conner Crumbliss, Leonardo Gil, Mitchell LeVier and Rashun Dixon have led the team offensively in August. Crumbliss is batting .321 with a 942 OPS and 29 walks this month. He has broken the team record for walks in a season with 116. Gil has hit .361 this month with three homers and 14 RBIs, while LeVier has 17 RBIs and an 897 OPS. Dixon is batting .327 with a .412 OBP in August. Jason Christian has also contributed with a team-best (tied with LeVier) 17 RBIs.

The Cougars lost team ace Ian Krol to a promotion to Stockton and have added 2010 18th round pick Jose Macias to the rotation. Macias is the first member of the 2010 draft class to progress past short-season ball. Murphy Smith (2.67 ERA in five starts) and Jonathan Joseph (2.27 ERA in six starts) have pitched well in the rotation this month. Former starter Robert Gilliam has allowed only one earned run in 7.2 innings since returning from the DL in a relief role. Josh Lansford has struck-out 17 in 10.1 relief innings this month.

Vancouver Canadians

The Vancouver Canadians hadn't seen first place in August since 2005 until they reached that milestone this month. The C's have dominated the second half of the season, posting a 22-9 record. Vancouver currently has a five-game lead over Everett for the second-half crown with eight to play.

There is no question that the addition of A's 2010 number one pick Michael Choice has boosted the C's line-up during the second half. Choice has appeared in 21 games for Vancouver and has already hit seven homeruns and has driven in 26 runs. He also has 12 walks, six stolen bases and has scored 20 times.

A.J. Kirby-Jones and Josh Whitaker are tied for second behind Choice in homeruns this August with four apiece. Kirby-Jones has an 875 OPS this month, while Whitaker is sporting an 887 mark. Catcher Ryan Lipkin has a .338 average with an 819 OPS this month.

On the mound, Matt Thomson has continued to be the story. Thomson actually made one start for Stockton this month -- allowing no runs and striking out 10 in five innings -- but he has still managed to make five August starts for Vancouver, posting a 0.64 ERA with 39 strike-outs in 28 innings.

Nathan Long has also impressed out of the rotation, posting a 2.84 ERA in six starts. The C's bullpen has been terrific in August, led by Jake Brown (0.87 ERA in 10.1 innings), A.J. Griffin (2.25 ERA and six saves in seven chances), Daniel McDaniel (1.42 ERA in 12.2 innings), Daniel Tenholder (no runs allowed in nine innings), Zach Thornton (one run allowed in 11.2 innings) and Pedro Vidal (two runs allowed in 15 innings).

Arizona Athletics

The AZL A's are the only A's US affiliate to be eliminated from playoff contention, but they have still had a strong second half. Going into Monday, the AZL A's were 30-26 during the second half of the season.

Outfielder Royce Consigli has been a star for the A's all season and that has carried over into August. Consigli has hit .347 with an 892 OPS this month. Neudy Clime has matched Consigli with a .347 average in 12 August games. He has an 866 OPS this month.

Zhi-Fang Pan, the A's first signing out of Taiwan, has closed out his first US season in impressive fashion. In 19 August games, the shortstop is batting .427 with a 996 OPS.

Starters Argenis Paez and Aaron Larsen have had strong Augusts. Paez has a 3.95 ERA in 27.1 innings, while Larsen has a 2.37 ERA in 19 innings. Out of the bullpen, Omar Duran (1.13 ERA in 16 innings), Sean Murphy (one earned run in 10 innings), Drew Tyson (one earned run in 15.2 innings), Jeff Urlaub (one earned run in 9.1 innings) and J.C. Menna (3.18 ERA in 11.1 innings) have impressed.

Post-Season Accolades

A number of A's prospects have taken home hardware for their strong 2010 campaigns.

Three Midland Rockhounds took home post-season Texas League accolades. Corey Brown and Josh Horton were named to the Texas League post-season All-Star team, while hitting coach Webster Garrison was honored with the Coach of the Year award.

Brown is currently second in the league in batting average with a .321 mark. He also has 10 homers, 48 RBIs and 19 stolen bases in 20 chances in 89 games for Midland. Brown's 919 OPS is fourth-best in the league.

Always steady defensively, Horton has contributed offensively to the tune of a .282 average for Midland this season, good for 12th-best in the league. He has hit .284 with a 740 OPS since the All-Star break. Horton missed the first three weeks of the season rehabbing an off-season elbow surgery.

The Stockton Ports are also well-represented on the California League post-season All-Star team. Shortstop Grant Green, third-baseman Stephen Parker and pitcher Shawn Haviland all made the Cal League post-season squad.

Green has been a steady force all season for Stockton. He is batting .313 with 18 homers, 80 RBIs and an 869 OPS. He ranks 10th in the league in OPS and second in the league in doubles (37).

Parker has also had an outstanding first full season with 20 homers, a .292 average and an 896 OPS for Stockton. Parker ranks second in the league in walks (79), ninth in homers, fifth in RBIs (89) and eighth in OPS.

Haviland is 9-6 with a 3.62 ERA in 144.1 innings for Stockton this season. He ranks fourth in the league in ERA, seventh in wins and second in strike-outs (159).

In the Midwest League, Kane County was represented on the post-season All-Star team by starter Ian Krol, who finished his time with the Cougars with a league-best 2.65 ERA in 118.2 innings. He walked only 19 and led the league with a 0.99 WHIP. Krol has since moved up to the Cal League, where he has allowed four earned runs in 9.2 innings over two starts.

Post-season All-Star teams have yet to be announced for the Pacific Coast, Northwest and Arizona Leagues.