

A's News Clips, Tuesday, September 2, 2010

Oakland A's, Brett Anderson let win slip through their hands against New York Yankees

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's created drama Wednesday night and forced New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi into important late-game decision-making.

That ranks as positive news for Oakland in what's been a gloomy three games so far at Yankee Stadium.

After falling into an early hole again, the A's fought back before losing 4-3, leaving the potential tying run stranded on second base in the ninth inning.

The A's have dropped three straight to the major leagues' winningest team. In doing so, they've lost two games in the American League West standings since taking a weekend series from first-place Texas.

They trail the Rangers by 9½ games and need to win today's matinee to avoid a four-game sweep at the hands of the Yankees.

The Yankees are 8-1 against the A's this season -- their most wins against Oakland since 1998 -- and send 18-game winner CC Sabathia to the hill today.

"It's a tough series. Guys got beat up pretty good in the first two games," A's manager Bob Geren said. "After the last two nights, to get down 4-0 early, they could have had a 'Here we go again' attitude, and they did not, which was encouraging."

A's starting pitchers let the score get out of hand early Monday and Tuesday. But Brett Anderson (3-6) managed to right the ship Wednesday after the Yankees took a 4-0 lead after two innings.

Still, the left-hander was kicking himself for a costly error that opened the door to New York's three-run second.

Anderson should have escaped the inning unscored upon.

But with two outs, he dropped an easy flip from Daric Barton while covering first base on a soft grounder from Derek Jeter. Anderson fell, the ball squirted away, and Curtis Granderson scored.

After a walk to Nick Swisher, Mark Teixeira squeezed a two-run single through the left side to put the Yankees ahead 4-0.

The switch-hitting Teixeira has terrorized the A's in the series, going 8 for 10 with seven RBIs.

Anderson, who left his previous start with a hyperextended right knee, said he was OK physically after his fall on the error. He found some humor in his defensive adventure.

"It's one of the few times in my short baseball career where I actually beat (the hitter) to the bag," he said. "I should have just caught it and stepped on the bag, but I tried to look at the bag before I caught it.

"Kind of a typical play by me -- falling and being unathletic."

Anderson lasted six innings, allowing four runs (one earned) and eight hits.

The A's jumped back in the game against A.J. Burnett (10-12), prompting Girardi to burn through four relievers in the final three innings.

Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a two-run home run in the fourth.

Rajai Davis led off the fifth with a double and stole third -- making him the fourth player in Oakland history with at least two 40-steal seasons. He scored on Coco Crisp's ground out to make it 4-3.

But the A's went 1 for 9 with runners in scoring position.

Cleanup man Jack Cust went 0 for 4 with three strikeouts.

Kurt Suzuki -- who hit just .185 in August — had two hits but stranded runners in scoring position in his final two at-bats.

In the ninth, Barton beat out a single against Mariano Rivera and stole second. But Suzuki chased strike three to end it.

A's update: Reliever Justin James gets called up, goes from T-Bones to filet mignon

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

NEW YORK -- Justin James' season began with the independent league Kansas City T-Bones, where the schedule took him everywhere from Fargo, N.D., to Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Now he's at Yankee Stadium.

That's where James, a right-handed reliever, joined the A's after getting promoted from Triple-A Sacramento on Wednesday along with reliever Ross Wolf. His first major league call-up came 12 days shy of his 29th birthday.

"It's really unbelievable," James said before the A's 4-3 loss to the Yankees. "I didn't expect that this would happen this year, coming from independent ball. I'm as happy as I've ever been."

A fifth-round pick by Toronto in 2003, James was dealt to Cincinnati after the 2007 season. After an arm injury sidelined him for most of 2008, he was released during spring training 2009. He latched on with the T-Bones -- the closest independent league team to his home in Yukon, Okla.

"It was a battle being there knowing you're on the bottom end," James said. "You're not in organizational ball, but I think it kind of makes you work a little bit harder."

The A's signed him to a minor league contract June 19, and between Double-A Midland and Sacramento, James had a 1.83 ERA and 49 strikeouts in 391/3 innings.

Upon his promotion, his first call went to brother Chad, 19, a left-hander drafted in the first round in 2009 by the Florida Marlins. Chad is pitching for Single-A Greensboro.

"We're pretty much best friends," James said. "It was a little emotional, but it was good. Me being here, doing this, I think is going to push him a little harder."

Dallas Braden makes his first start in New York today since his "Get Off My Mound" controversy with Alex Rodriguez. The Yankees third baseman is on the disabled list because of a calf injury, but Braden can expect an earful from New York fans. "For me, it's just another game you've gotta get through," he said. Landon Powell likely will spell Kurt Suzuki and catch Braden, and the two have chemistry. Braden has thrown four of his five complete games with Powell behind the plate, including his perfect game against Tampa Bay. "I kid Dallas that when he goes to arbitration this offseason, he needs to work me in his deal," Powell said.

Chin Music: A's searching for way to contain Teixeira; relievers Ross Wolf, Justin James called up

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/2/2010 3:56PM

Can the A's turn the tide tonight after dropping two straight against the Yankees? A big key will be whether left-hander Brett Anderson can contain Yanks No. 3 hitter Mark Teixeira, who's 5-for-6 with 2 HRs and 4 RBIs in the series. Might the A's have more success against the switch-hitting Teixeira when he's batting from the right side? Perhaps ... Strangely enough, the lefty Anderson is holding right-handed hitters to a .242 average, while lefties are hitting .338 against him.

—The A's go with the same batting order as the past two nights. That includes Kurt Suzuki in the No. 3 hole. Suzuki batted .185 in August (17-for-92), the lowest single-month average of his major league career. But as manager Bob Geren pointed out — and this is a fundamental flaw with this team right now — there's no logical replacement to plug into the third spot in Suzuki's place. Just like there's not another hitter who seems like a good replacement for Jack Cust in the cleanup spot. The A's are trying to make things work with a misplaced cast in the heart of their order, and it's making it tough for them to play catch-up when the starting pitchers struggle and the team falls behind early.

–Relievers Ross Wolf and Justin James were called up from Triple-A Sacramento, the only additions the A's made on the first day rosters could expand to 40. Pretty cool story with James, who was drafted in 2003 but is just now making his major league debut at age 28. He spent all of 2009 and part of this season in independent ball. ...

Tonight's lineups:

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

Yankees — Jeter SS, Swisher RF, Teixeira 1B, Cano 2B, Thames DH, Kearns LF, Granderson CF, Nunez 3B, Cervelli C; Burnett RHP.

A's keep it close, still drop third to Yankees

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

For the first time this week at Yankee Stadium, the A's at least made it close.

No big deficits, no double-digit runs allowed, but Oakland still fell to the Yankees 4-3 on Wednesday, thanks in part to Brett Anderson's error while covering first base in the second inning. The A's, outscored 20-8 in the first two games of the series, dropped 9 1/2 games back in the AL West.

Anderson, who'd left his previous start after two innings because of a twisted right knee, went six innings and allowed four runs, but only one was earned. With two on and two outs, Anderson took a nice toss from first baseman Daric Barton, who had fielded a grounder by Derek Jeter. Anderson bobbed the ball, lost it and tumbled to the ground. One run scored.

"That's one of the few times in my short baseball career I actually beat someone to the bag ... and I had too much time to think," Anderson said. "I looked at it, looked at the runner, tried to grab it, fell - kind of a typical play for me."

Even if Anderson merely stayed on his feet, he said, the run doesn't score and maybe the inning goes differently. As it was, he walked Nick Swisher to load the bases and A's-wrecker Mark Teixeira hit a grounder that swerved past third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff and eluded shortstop Cliff Pennington.

"It was straight at (Kouzmanoff) and it kicked," said Anderson. "The baseball gods have a way of helping guys when they're hot."

Teixeira already had driven in a run with a first-inning single. In the series, he is 8-for-10 with two homers, two doubles, seven RBIs and five runs.

Dallas Braden, who is starting today, said he's considering a new tactic to employ against Teixeira.

"I might just roll it up there and hit him lightly on the ankle so I don't have to face him," Braden said with a grin. "No, the thing is with that team, they're patient, patient, patient. I'm not going to be cute or too fine. I'll be in the zone."

Braden will face CC Sabathia today and trying to prevent a four-game sweep, plus it will be Braden's first outing in New York since his "Get off my mound!" exchange with Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez in April. Since then, Braden and Rodriguez have made nice, exchanging items for each other's charities. Also, Rodriguez is on the disabled list.

"It's just another ballgame, another game on the schedule," Braden said Wednesday. "Another task at hand."

Kouzmanoff hit a two-run homer off A.J. Burnett in the fourth, taking over the team home run lead, with 13. The A's were 1-for-9 with men in scoring position.

Rajai Davis became the fourth player in Oakland history to record at least two 40-steal seasons, joining Rickey Henderson (10), Bert Campaneris (five) and Billy North (three).

Justin James glad he listened to little brother

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Last year, **Justin James** was close to packing in his baseball career. He'd spent a year and a half with a mysterious arm injury, and doctors could find no structural damage.

The right-hander's younger brother, **Chad** - a left-hander who was the Marlins' top pick in the 2009 draft - convinced him to stick it out, and the two worked with a trainer, **John Carey**, who resolved Justin James' arm issues. His shoulder was too tight, and deep tissue work helped loosen things. His fastball, which had lost 8 mph, is better than ever: James throws 95 mph.

A's scout **Jeff Bittiger** and director of baseball operations **Farhan Zaidi** noticed, and the team snatched the onetime Toronto prospect away from the independent-league Kansas City T-Bones.

James, overwhelmed at making it to the big leagues at 28 (he'll be 29 this month), said, "Honestly, I don't know what to think in a way. ... I was going to give baseball just one more shot. I had everything to gain and nothing to lose."

In 39 1/3 innings at Double-A Midland and Triple-A Sacramento, James had a 1.83 ERA, 49 strikeouts and 16 walks. "I can't stand walking people," he said. "I've always been against it."

His name has something of a gunslinger air, but even though he attended Missouri, James said he isn't related to famous Missourian **Jesse James**. Sacramento play-by-play man **Johnny Daskow** calls James "the Sheriff."

The A's already had an open spot on the 40-man roster for James, and they optioned out **Cedric Bowers** (already at Sacramento) to clear another space.

Right-hander **Ross Wolf** also was added when rosters expanded Wednesday.

Briefly: There was no report on **Conor Jackson's** sports-hernia surgery Wednesday. ... **Steve Tolleson's** dad, former Yankees infielder **Wayne Tolleson**, was on hand for the game. ... **Craig Breslow** hosted a luncheon at Yankee Stadium that raised \$12,000 for pediatric cancer research.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Sacramento's surge: Triple-A Sacramento is now selling playoff tickets, almost unimaginable after a 17-26 start to the season. The River Cats were 12 1/2 games out in mid-June; now their magic number for their ninth division title in 11 years is 3.

Drumbeat: 'Farhan's guy' Justin James arrives in the big leagues

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Yankee Stadium 9/1/2010 3:03PM

As I wrote yesterday, right-hander Justin James and Ross Wolf were called up with today's roster expansion, and James, 28, was pitching for the Kansas City T-Bones, an independent team, in mid-June.

When I asked about James' background, I was told, "He's Farhan's guy" - Farhan Zaidi, the A's director of baseball operations, had championed James after getting a glowing report from scout Jeff Bittiger (who you might remember was instrumental in finding Andrew Bailey).

Zaidi heaped all the credit on Bittiger, but the combination of strong reports did the trick, and the A's signed James and sent him to Double-A Midland. As Zaidi pointed out, picking up a player from an independent team is a fairly low-risk proposition, so why not? At the same time, hitting on one is longer odds, and James was particularly long odds - the former Toronto prospect, a fifth-round pick in 2003, nearly had packed it in last year after arm trouble. No one could diagnose any exact problem with the arm, but his velocity had dropped off a good 8 mph.

His brother, Chad, who was the Marlins' top pick last year, convinced James to give it another try, and after working with noted professional trainer John Carey (Matt Holliday), Justin James said that his arm issue probably was the result of simple tightness, and working with Carey loosened things up - and he's now throwing 95 mph. He credits his brother with helping him stick with it, and Carey with his physical improvement and success. James said he was once 30 pounds heavier because he was going to play linebacker at Oklahoma (he opted for baseball at Missouri, instead), and he believes his arms just never were all that loose to begin with because of football.

James will be used in a "non-pressure" situation initially, according to manager Bob Geren.

I asked James about his great walk-to-strikeout ratio - 49 strikeouts vs. 16 walks in 39 1/3 innings - and I loved this answer: "I can't stand walking people. ... I've always been against it."

Sacramento radio play-by-play man Johnny Doskow calls James "the Sheriff," so remember, Sheriff James just says no to walks!

Wolf says James is the real deal - he pounds the strike zone, he has a live arm. "It's good to see him get the opportunity," Wolf said.

The A's had an open spot on the 40-man, and they now have another, because they optioned out Cedric Bowers (who already was at Sacramento) to clear an additional space. They've got some flexibility in case they need to add someone in the event of an injury or something. I know Dallas McPherson has tight hamstrings right now, but you've got to think he'd be considered at some point, though perhaps not until after the Triple-A playoffs.

Here's the lineup: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Suzuki c, Cust dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Ellis 2b, Larish lf, Davis rf, Pennington ss

No word on Conor Jackson's sports-hernia surgery today yet.

Teixeira a handful for A's in third straight loss

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- On Wednesday, lefty Brett Anderson set out to do what two of his right-handed teammates couldn't quite accomplish in their own starts against the Yankees earlier this week: Beat Mark Teixeira.

Easier said than done -- no matter what side of the plate he's batting from.

The Yankees first baseman, who in his first two games of the series tallied five hits -- two of them homers -- and four RBIs, only added to that total Wednesday, compiling three hits and three RBIs as the A's, for the third straight day, fell to New York, 4-3.

For what it's worth, Wednesday's affair represented a rather notable improvement from the club's previous two defeats, which brought about a combined 20 Yankees runs. After all, Oakland's starter lasted more than four innings, and its hitters showed some decent life following back-to-back poundings absorbed by righties Trevor Cahill and Vin Mazzaro.

Yet there were still flaws, notably a second-inning catching error by Anderson at first base, where he dropped a ball fielded by Daric Barton while at the same time stumbling over the bag and onto the ground. The two-out error brought home Curtis Granderson, who had reached base on a single. It also paved way for back-to-back base hits from Nick Swisher and Teixeira, the latter of which scored two runs.

The eventful second frame followed a first inning in which Anderson gave up a leadoff hit to Derek Jeter that was followed by a one-out, run-scoring single off the bat of Teixeira.

Anderson managed to keep the Yankees off the board during his final four frames, but he left trailing, 4-3, having given up four runs -- one earned -- on eight hits while walking two and fanning four. He was tagged with his sixth loss of the season and has not won since Aug. 4.

His offense, meanwhile, stayed quiet through the first three frames against Yankees starter A.J. Burnett before Kevin Kouzmanoff launched his 13th homer of the year -- a two-run shot to right field -- to get the A's going. An RBI groundout from Coco Crisp in the fifth represented Oakland's third run of the night, but that's all the club could muster off Burnett, who gave up three runs and six hits with two walks and eight strikeouts in six innings.

The A's, who dropped to two games below the .500 mark, have now lost five of their last seven games and are 4-5 on their current road trip with one game remaining at Yankee Stadium.

September callup excites A's James

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Justin James thought he was going to be closing out Triple-A Sacramento's game on Monday.

But the right-handed reliever never got the nod to warm up. Instead, he got a different type of call.

"After the game, [manager] Tony DeFrancesco was giving us a pep talk, saying how everyone was playing well," James said. "He said there were a few guys doing so well that they were going to the big leagues. And then he said my name.

"I was definitely surprised. I don't look too far into the future, especially with the way things have gone. I try to just worry about the present."

It was a moment that had the 28-year-old James still smiling ear-to-ear Wednesday, when he and fellow reliever Ross Wolf joined the A's in New York as the club's first pair of September callups. It was also one he wasted no time in sharing with his brother, Chad, a Marlins 2009 first-round Draft pick who is currently playing Class A ball.

"He's my best friend," James said. "There were a lot of emotions. He was pumped up for me and we were both tearing up a bit."

His brother happens to be responsible for keeping James in the game. James was originally drafted by the Blue Jays in the fifth round of the 2003 Draft and spent five seasons in their organization before being traded to Cincinnati following the 2007 season. The next season brought about elbow problems, leading to limited playing time and a subsequent release -- all of which had James seriously considering his future.

"You never want to take the jersey off your back," James said, "but I was going through a rough time."

He took time out of his offseason to visit with his brother's trainer, who discovered that, despite negative MRI results on his sore arm, the right-handed pitcher had no mobility in his shoulder. Thus, James was able to use that knowledge to work his way back to the mound.

"That was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life, going there," he said. "It really changed my life around. My brother kept telling me to hang in there and keep going, and I did."

James was playing in the independent Northern League at the time the A's signed him to a Minor League contract on June 19, when he was appointed to Double-A Midland. With the Rockhounds, he posted a 2.29 ERA in 12 relief appearances before being promoted to Sacramento, where he did even better with a 1.37 ERA and 28 strikeouts in 19 2/3 innings.

"The last thing I want to do is walk people," he said. "Just stay with what I've been doing and keep pounding the zone, that's what I want to do."

"It's nice to see a guy like that get a chance to succeed here," Wolf said of James. "He has a good, live arm. He goes after hitters and isn't scared to throw hard. He's a good story."

Wolf, who enjoyed listening to James say, "This is awesome" every five minutes on their Wednesday flight to New York, is hoping to make a lasting impression on the A's after appearing in just four games over a span of six weeks.

"That's the goal," said Wolf, who compiled a 2.45 ERA in those four games. "When I first came up with the Marlins in 2007, I didn't do a good job of that, of proving what I was really capable of. I was only 24 at the time, and I think I've learned a lot since then."

Wolf's return and James' selection was met with the news lefty Cedrick Bowers was outrighted to Sacramento, thus leaving one spot open on the club's 40-man roster.

Braden welcomes what Bronx has in store

NEW YORK -- Dallas Braden is well aware that his Thursday start will likely be met with a rowdy New York bunch, but the A's lefty isn't about to shy away from any of it.

In fact, he's looking forward to it.

Braden's Thursday outing marks the first time he'll face New York since "Get Off My Mound" T-shirts -- inspired by his April run-in with Alex Rodriguez -- made their way into gift shops at the Oakland Coliseum.

Braden insists both he and A-Rod (who is currently on the disabled list) are well past any negative feelings that resulted from their feud, but he's pretty sure Yankees fans will do their best to offer a healthy diet of boos.

"I'm sure they'll be their normal New York selves," Braden said this week. "I wouldn't expect anything else -- should be interesting to see what they come up with."

Braden, tied for seventh in the American League in wins since the All-Star break, is 1-1 with a 5.87 ERA in five career appearances -- two of them starts -- against New York. He came out of April's dramatic start against A-Rod and Co. a winner, allowing two runs on six hits and a walk with two strikeouts in six innings.

The A's lefty plans on bringing his normal approach against a Yankees team that has dominated Oakland starting pitchers this year. Entering Wednesday's game, A's hurlers had compiled a 3.47 season ERA -- second best in the Majors -- but a 7.41 mark when facing New York.

"They're a patient bunch," Braden said. "I don't need any motivation to throw strikes, though. That's what I always set out to do. That's the key in my game."

Worth noting

Lefty Craig Breslow said he raised about \$12,000 at Wednesday's charity luncheon in the confines of Yankee Stadium's NYY Steak restaurant for his Strike 3 Foundation, which supports and raises funds for childhood cancer research. Nearly a dozen A's players, along with the Yankees' Joba Chamberlain and Curtis Granderson, were on hand for the event. ... The A's allowed a combined 20 runs on Monday and Tuesday, marking the most they've allowed in consecutive games since July 3-4, 2009. ... Both the A's and Rangers finished the month of August with a 13-15 record, thus marking no loss or gain for Oakland in the American League West. ... Daric Barton entered Wednesday's contest having reached base safely via hit or walk in each of his last 16 games. He has walked twice in each of his last four games, matching the longest streak of consecutive multiwalk games in Oakland history.

Yanks hope Jeter's turnaround comes vs. A's

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

The race for the top spot in the American League East is heating up, and the Yankees are hoping their top man in the batting order can catch fire again.

Entering Thursday's series finale against the A's, Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter, a career .314 hitter, is batting .266. In his last 10 games, the Yankees' captain is hitting .081.

Jeter and the first-place Yankees lead the Rays by one game in the division.

"His average is down a little bit, but he's on pace to score 115 runs, which is not too bad for a leadoff guy," Yankee manager Joe Girardi said. "I just think people are so used to seeing him have such great years offensively that when you're having a little bit of a down year and you're older, people's eyebrows go up."

Jeter went 1-for-5 with a strikeout in the Yankees' 4-3 victory Wednesday. He has struck out seven times in his last eight games but Girardi said he is not moving the veteran out of the leadoff spot.

Oakland starter Dallas Braden hopes otherwise. The left-hander tossed his second shutout of the year on Saturday against the Rangers in Texas. He allowed only four hits.

"What can you say?" Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "A shutout in the heat in Arlington against a lineup like that. What else can you say? That's about it."

The Yankees will counter with CC Sabathia, who is seeking his 19th win of the season.

Athletics: Davis swipes milestone bag

Rajai Davis stole his 40th base in the fifth inning Wednesday to become the fourth player in franchise history with multiple seasons of 40 stolen bases. Rickey Henderson, Bert Campaneris and Billy North also accomplished the feat. ... Kevin Kouzmanoff is hitting .344 with 10 RBIs and seven extra-base hits on the current road trip. ... Daric Barton has reached base safely in 17 consecutive games.

Yankees: Teixeira red-hot vs. A's

Mark Teixeira is 8-for-10 with one walk and one hit by pitch against the A's this series. ... The Yankees have scored in the first inning in 10 of their last 15 games, including five of their last six games. ... Reliever Boone Logan has retired 27 of the last 31 left-handed hitters he has faced, the streak includes a stretch of 20 consecutive hitters.

Worth noting

The Yankees are 8-1 against the A's this season, marking their most wins in a season against them since winning eight games against Oakland in 1998. ... The Yankees now have five pitchers with at least 10 wins for the first time since 1999.

Burnett bounces back to beat A's

RICK FREEMAN, Associated Press

NEW YORK - A.J. Burnett bounced back from an awful August by pitching six effective innings and the New York Yankees beat the A's 4-3 Wednesday night for their fifth straight win.

The Yankees held their one-game lead over Tampa Bay in the AL East. They'll go for a four-game sweep Thursday with CC Sabathia on the mound.

Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a two-run homer for Oakland and Brett Anderson only allowed one earned run, but the A's fell to 1-8 against New York this season.

Burnett (10-12) went 0-4 in five starts since his last win, July 28 at Cleveland. He came off a particularly rough outing in which he lasted 3 1/3 innings and tied a season high with eight earned runs, leaving him with a 7.80 ERA in August.

Burnett got September off to a stronger start, allowing three runs and striking out eight.

Mariano Rivera pitched the ninth for his 28th save. He struck out Kurt Suzuki with a runner on second to end it.

Joba Chamberlain allowed a pair of two-out singles in the seventh, but Suzuki flied out to end the threat.

Kerry Wood also put two runners on with two outs, retiring Rajai Davis to end the eighth.

Anderson (3-6) has lost four of his last five starts. He gave up eight hits in six innings.

Mark Ellis had three hits for the A's, who gave up 20 runs in the first two games of the series against New York, but couldn't capitalize when they held the Yankees to four.

Coco Crisp's RBI groundout that made it 4-3 in the fifth was possible because Davis stole third base after he doubled.

The Yankees got a couple of breaks in their three-run second inning that made it 4-0.

Curtis Granderson and Eduardo Nunez both hit one-out singles just over shortstop Cliff Pennington's glove.

Granderson came home as Derek Jeter was safe at first when Anderson bobbed the catch while covering the bag on a grounder to second. Mark Teixeira's two-run single to left bounced just to the left of third baseman Kouzmanoff's glove and just to the right of Pennington's.

Teixeira hit a long RBI double to left-center in the first inning. The Yankees scored three runs in the first the night before and have scored in the first inning in 10 of their last 15 games.

Notes: Jorge Posada pinch-hit for Yankees C Francisco Cervelli in the eighth and was ejected after plate umpire Dana DeMuth called strike three on a pitch that appeared to be outside. Posada took his bat and drew a line in the dirt, showing where the ball was wide. Chad Moeller, called up earlier in the day when rosters expanded, trotted in from the bullpen and caught the ninth. ... Yankees switch-pitcher Pat Venditte was promoted from Class A Tampa to Double-A Trenton. ... Davis got his 40th steal of the season in the fifth. The only other A's to have 40 in a season are Rickey Henderson, Bert Campaneris and Billy North. ... Yankees DH Lance Berkman was reinstated from the 15-day disabled list. He batted for Nunez in the eighth, doubled to center on his first pitch and was lifted for a pinch-runner. ... RHP Javier Vazquez will rejoin the Yankees' rotation on Saturday against Toronto, returning two successful appearances in long relief. ... New York LHP Andy Pettitte (groin) had another successful bullpen outing. He has been out since July 18. He says he expects to pitch another bullpen and make a rehab appearance before he can rejoin the Yankees. ... Yankees OF Austin Kearns singled in the third for his first hit in 20 at-bats. ... Jeter had been 1 for 25 before he led off the bottom of the first with a single.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Everidge's big hit lifts Cats; Magic Number is 3

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

Tommy Everidge's first hit since being added to the Sacramento roster was a three-run double that helped lift the Cats to a 6-3 victory over the visiting Las Vegas 51s on Wednesday afternoon at Raley Field.

With the win, Sacramento moves 2.5 games ahead of the Fresno Grizzlies in the Pacific Coast League South Division standings, and the River Cats' Magic Number to clinch the playoff is now 3. If Fresno loses tonight at Salt Lake, the River Cats could clinch the playoffs on Thursday night (7:05 p.m. start) at Raley Field with a win over Las Vegas and a Fresno loss at Salt Lake. The River Cats are looking to finish off the biggest comeback in franchise history after trailing the Grizzlies by 12.5 games in the standings on June 15.

Everidge stepped to bat in the fifth inning with the bases loaded and took full advantage. The 240-pound slugger smacked a three-run double to right-center field that gave the River Cats a 6-2 lead. Michael Taylor and Anthony Recker singled, followed by a Jeff Baisley walk to set the stage for Everidge, who was signed as a free agent on Monday.

Last season with Sacramento, Everidge lit up the PCL with a .368 batting average, 12 home runs and 41 RBIs.

Jared Price was the first to light up the scoreboard for Sacramento. Price's second home run of the season jumped the Cats to a lead 1-0 in the third inning.

The River Cats put another two runs up in the fourth inning. Michael Taylor walked and stole second with Anthony Recker batting. Corey Brown also walked, and a Jeff Baisley double scored Taylor. Brown scored on an Everidge sacrifice fly that put the Cats up 3-0.

Las Vegas added one run in the ninth inning, but it wasn't enough to make a difference. Manny Mayerson doubled on a fly ball that scored Al Quintana.

Brett Tomko's scoreless gem ended in the fifth inning when he allowed two Las Vegas runs, and the score tightened to 3-2. Tomko earned the victory and improved his record to 2-0. Tomko pitched 6.0 innings for two runs, eight hits and four strikeouts.

Sacramento has won two of the first three games against Las Vegas with the series finale Thursday night at 7:05 p.m. Thursday night is also Fan Appreciation Night, where players and coaches will greet fans at the gates and the River Cats will give out prizes throughout the game.

Missions Score Late To Gain Ground On Wild Card

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

It was a completely different game from the less-than-pretty 8-3 San Antonio win in the series opener, but the Missions scored in the seventh to tie and the eighth to take the lead, edging the RockHounds, 2-1, Wednesday night at Nelson Wolff Stadium.

The win was the "perfect storm" for the Missions, as the Coprus Christi Hooks made it two-in-a-row over Frisco, blasting the RoughRiders, 9-0, at Corpus. San Antonio's win moves the Missions into a 2nd-place tie with Frisco, just two games back of the RockHounds, and slices the 'Hounds wild card lead to that same, 2-game margin.

Starters Jeremy Hefner and Graham Godfrey were outstanding, each pitching scoreless baseball through the first five innings. Shane Peterson led off the 6th with a triple and scored on Alex Valdez' sacrifice fly to give the 'Hounds a 1-0 lead.

Godfrey, returning to the form he showed as an 11-game winner for the RockHounds last season and in 5.0 shutout innings at Northwest Arkansas on the last road trip, struck out nine batters in 6.0 shutout innings, escaping a bases-loaded jam in his final inning.

A flair single by James Darnell leading off the 7th was compounded by a walk and an error, and would turn into the tying run. Lance Zawadzki then led off the Missions' 8th with a double off Mickey Storey. After a pair of walks, Darnell drove in the winning run with a bases-loaded, no out, single.

The RockHounds play at San Antonio Thursday & Friday before returning to Citibank Ballpark for a 3-game Labor Day weekend series against Frisco. In keeping with our "theme," Thursday's game now becomes the Texas League South's most important game to date in the 2010 season. The heat IS on.

Personnel move: Tuesday, the Oakland A's promoted Corey Brown to (AAA) Sacramento and outfielder Jermaine Mitchell from the (Advanced-A) Stockton Ports to the RockHounds. Corey was named to the 2010 Texas League All-Star Team after hitting .320 in 90 games with the 'Hounds. Mitchell, who played in 30 games early in the season for the RockHounds, was hitting .309 for Stockton, with 10 HR, 32 RBI and 21 stolen bases. Jermaine hit .370 in July for Stockton.

The pennant race & the wild card: The RockHounds now lead both San Antonio and first half champion Frisco by two games in the South, with Corpus Christi five out with five to play.

If Frisco wins the second half, the wild card race takes effect. The RockHounds also lead San Antonio by two games for the wild card playoff berth with Corpus Christi still in contention, down by four games.

There are five (5) games remaining in the 2010 Texas League regular season.

Peisel, Nuts Hand Ports 6-2 Loss

MODESTO, Calif. - The Stockton Ports were unable to reduce their magic number on Wednesday afternoon at John Thurman Field. Stockton, sitting at a magic number of two to clinch a playoff berth, were unable to get their bats started against Modesto Nuts starter Ethan Hollingsworth (11-8). Ryan Peisel drove in four of the six Modesto runs as the Nuts defeated the Ports by a count of 6-2. The Ports can still have their magic number reduced to one game if Visalia defeats Bakersfield on Wednesday night.

Stockton got the scoring started in the second. With one out, Yusuf Carter homered to left off Hollingsworth to make it a 1-0 game.

Modesto used free passes handed out by Ports starter Fabian Williamson (4-2) to take the lead for good in the third. Williamson walked the first two batters of the inning and with runners at the corners, Scott Robinson bunted to the right side for a base hit that scored Chandler Laurent to tie the game at 1-1. After Williamson recorded two outs, he walked Mike Zuanich to load the bases, then walked Ben Paulsen to bring in Modesto's second run and give them the lead for good at 2-1. Peisel followed with a two-run double down the left field line to make it a 4-1 Nuts lead. Paulsen was thrown out on a relay play at the plate to end the inning.

The Nuts extended their lead to 6-1 in the fifth. With two on and two out, Peisel struck again, this time with a triple to right-center past a diving Ports center fielder David Thomas. Peisel went 2-for-4 on the afternoon with four RBI.

Williamson was charged with his second Cal-League loss, allowing six runs on nine hits while walking four in seven innings.

Hollingsworth, meanwhile, retired eight in a row from the third to the sixth innings. Jeremy Barfield started the seventh with a solo homer to left to make it a 6-2 ballgame.

Hollingsworth would be lifted after recording the first out in the seventh. He earned the win after going 6.1 innings and allowing two runs on six hits while striking out five and not walking a batter.

Isaiah Froneberger tossed 2.2 scoreless innings of relief to close out the game for the Nuts.

Andrew Carignan tossed a scoreless eighth inning for Stockton. Carignan walked and hit a batter in the frame, but induced a double-play and struck out Scott Robinson to end the inning.

Stockton and Modesto will play their season series finale on Thursday night at John Thurman Field. Shawn Haviland (9-6, 3.62 ERA) will head to the bump for the Ports seeking his 10th win of the season, opposed by Nuts right-hander Rob Scahill (10-7, 4.75 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Smith Helps Cougars Blank Chiefs **Kane County opens home stretch with shutout victory**

GENEVA, III. – The Kane County Cougars opened up their final homestand of the regular season Wednesday night with a 7-0 victory over the Peoria Chiefs in front of 5,018 at Elfstrom Stadium. With only five games remaining, the Cougars' win Wednesday night confirmed they would at least stay 1.0 game ahead of Beloit for the Wild Card spot and perhaps gain ground on Clinton for the top spot. Beloit and Clinton are playing each other, and the Cougars trailed Clinton by 1.5 games prior to Wednesday's action.

The Cougars posted their first shutout since August 9 and their first home shutout since July 16. Murphy Smith (8-2) posted seven frames and gave up five hits -- all singles. He walked one and fanned six in his 10th quality start, which ties him for the team lead. Josh Lansford saw the minimum over two scoreless relief innings to end it.

Offensively the Cougars knocked out 13 hits, six of which came against major leaguer Carlos Silva (0-1), who was making a rehab appearance for Peoria's parent-club Chicago Cubs. Jason Christian launched a two-out three-run homer off Silva in the fourth to make it 3-0, and the Cougars doubled that in the fifth to chase the right-hander. Anthony Aliotti, Mitch LeVier and Rashun Dixon each posted run-scoring singles, and Jose Crisotomo singled home Dixon in the seventh for the 7-0 final.