

## A's News Clips, Sunday, September 12, 2010

### Oakland A's pick up manager Bob Geren's option for 2011

By Joe Stiglich\_Oakland Tribune

The A's made official Saturday what had been assumed for some time, picking up the 2011 option on manager Bob Geren's contract and assuring he'll return for his fifth season.

Then the A's gave Geren a gift to commemorate the event, coming from behind to beat the Boston Red Sox 4-3 at the Oakland Coliseum.

Oakland, which can complete a three-game sweep of visiting Boston today, is trying its best to keep the division-leading Texas Rangers in sight. With 21 games left, they still trailed Texas by 7 games in the American League West pending the result of the Rangers' rain-delayed game with the New York Yankees.

As the A's maintain their slim hopes for this season, general manager Billy Beane believes the team's future is in good hands with Geren. Geren has gone 297-329 in three-plus seasons and has yet to post a winning record. But the A's are 71-70 and in second place, and there was little doubt he'd return next season.

Beane echoed past comments he's made about his skipper, saying Geren has gotten the most out of a team that's had to use the disabled list 87 times since the start of the 2007 season.

"When you evaluate that position, you take a look at what you have to work with to begin with, and what you have to deal with as the season goes on," Beane said. "... Having gotten through a number of injuries start to finish (this season), I think guys have responded -- not just Bob, but the players and staff -- have responded well to that adversity. At the end of day, (the decision) was pretty obvious to all of us."

Rather than wait until after the season to pick up the option, Beane said he wanted to nip in the bud any questions about Geren's job security.

"If you've made up your mind, it makes sense to do it," Beane said. "And we had made up our minds."

From a wins and losses perspective, Geren is getting the kind of rope that few major league managers have enjoyed recently.

Were the A's to go 9-12 over their final 21 games and finish with a losing record, Geren would become the first big league manager since Clint Hurdle received a fifth season after posting losing records in his first four full seasons (2003-06).

Hurdle, who took over in Colorado early in the 2002 season, went 90-73 in 2007 and guided the Rockies to the National League pennant.

The A's have built one of the majors' top young pitching staffs, giving the team hope it can ascend to the top of the AL West again if it finds some hitters.

"We're close to being an elite team," Geren said. "There's only 30 of these jobs in the world, so it's a real honor to have one."

The A's broke through against Red Sox starter John Lackey (12-10) for three runs in the seventh to erase a 2-0 deficit.

Run-scoring singles from Jack Cust and Mark Ellis tied the game with one out. After Jeremy Hermida struck out, Rajai Davis tripled to center field to score Ellis and put the A's ahead for good, 3-2.

That made a winner of left-hander Brett Anderson (5-6), who allowed two runs on eight hits over seven innings.

The A's led 4-2 entering the ninth. Boston scored a run off Andrew Bailey, but Bailey struck out pinch-hitter David Ortiz looking to end the game with the tying run on second.

## **Oakland A's update**

By Joe Stiglich\_Oakland Tribune

Brett Anderson found himself in a jam quickly Saturday night, loading the bases with one out in the top of the first against the Boston Red Sox.

He then escaped without any early damage on the scoreboard, a good omen for the A's left-hander in a 4-3 victory. Anderson lasted seven innings and pocketed a victory that seemed destined for opposing starter John Lackey.

Boston had three straight singles in the first, but Anderson struck out Mike Lowell and retired Jed Lowrie on a grounder to first. He said the key was getting Lowell to swing through a slider for the second out.

"When in doubt, go with the breaking ball," Anderson said.

The three walks he issued snapped a string of 22 straight starts in which he walked two or fewer, just four starts off the Oakland record set by Gil Heredia in 1999. But Anderson gave up just Marco Scutaro's solo homer in the third and Ryan Kalish's RBI single in the sixth.

Lackey, 17-4 lifetime against the A's coming in, allowed just two hits through the first six innings. But the A's got to him in a three-run seventh to take the lead.

Jack Cust, who entered the night hitting .205 (17-for-83) with runners in scoring position, had two RBI singles, and the A's clinched their first season series over Boston since 2006, going 5-3.

With Rickey Henderson in the dugout, the A's did the all-time stolen base king proud. Coco Crisp and Daric Barton pulled off a double steal in the eighth, giving the A's 10 steals over their past three games. They have 134 stolen bases this season, their highest total since 1992 when they had 143.

Henderson, who tutored Crisp, Rajai Davis and other speedy Athletics in spring training, has spent this season as a roving baserunning instructor in the farm system.

But he's kept in touch with Davis, who occasionally calls to pick his brain for advice. Henderson said he's trying to teach the free-swinging Davis "how to get on base without a hit," stressing better pitch selection.

On the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy, the A's paid tribute to more than 50 Bay Area firefighters in a pregame ceremony. "... Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff (back spasms) could begin baseball activity Monday but remains several days away from returning.

## **Chin Music: A's pick up Bob Geren's option for 2011**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/11/2010 5:16PM

Lots of news today, and the A's and Red Sox haven't even taken the field! ...

—The A's exercised the 2011 option on manager Bob Geren, meaning he'll return for a fifth season as skipper. This decision was an absolute given, as Geren has gotten 100 percent backing from the front office regarding his performance since taking over before the 2007 season. Certainly the win-loss record leaves something to be desired — the A's are 296-329 (.474 winning percentage) under Geren and haven't posted a winning record over his first three seasons. They're 70-70 with 22 games left this season. Geren has come under media scrutiny for some strategic moves this season, and I get the feeling this decision won't exactly be embraced by many A's fans based on the lack of wins under his leadership.

But GM Billy Beane maintains the same rationale as past seasons in giving Geren a thumbs-up to this point. He maintains that Geren has been operating short-handed due to many injuries. Given that, Beane likes the direction the A's are headed, particularly with one of the majors' best young pitching staffs. He was asked why he decided to pick up Geren's option now rather than wait until season's end. "Usually if you've made up your mind, it makes sense to do it. And we had made up our minds," Beane said.

—As for whether the rest of the coaching staff returns in 2011, Beane said those decisions will be made after the season. Ditto on whether to pick up the 2011 options on third baseman Eric Chavez, second baseman Mark Ellis and center fielder Coco Crisp. As we all assume, the A's will likely buy out Chavez's contract at \$3 million rather than bring back the oft-injured veteran at \$12.5 million.

Tonight's lineups:

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

Red Sox – Scutaro SS, McDonald RF, Martinez DH, Beltre 3B, Lowell 1B, Lowrie 2B, Saltaalamacchia C, Hall LF, Kalish CF, Lackey RHP.

## **A's rally to beat Red Sox and Lackey**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's haven't yet finished above .500 with Bob Geren as their manager, but the team moved one game above that mark Saturday - and Geren will get at least one more season at the helm.

Before Saturday's game, the A's announced that Geren's option for 2011 will be exercised. Oakland then came back to beat the Red Sox 4-3, scoring three times off John Lackey in the seventh inning to do so. Mark Ellis provided a game-tying single; Rajai Davis sent Ellis in with a triple to center; and Jack Cust had a pair of RBI singles, including one after an intentional walk to Kurt Suzuki in the eighth.

"That makes you want to do something good even more," Cust said, referring to Geren's extension.

With the win over Boston, the A's are 71-70. Geren's overall record since becoming Oakland's manager in 2007 is 297-329.

Among the reasons for picking up Geren's option, general manager Billy Beane cited the team's relative success despite its youth (the A's have the lowest average age in the league, and much of the second half the rotation averaged 23 years) and numerous injuries (the team's 23 disabled list uses are second most in Oakland history).

Beane noted that Geren and his staff have responded well to adversity this season; asked if it follows that all the coaches also will be back, Beane said that those discussions will happen in the next two weeks or so. He indicated that the team options on Eric Chavez (\$12.5 million), Coco Crisp (\$5.75 million) and Ellis (\$6 million) won't be addressed until after the season.

One area in which the A's have improved under Geren this year is on the bases, in part because of the addition of Crisp, who matched his career high Saturday with steal No. 28, but also because Geren has emphasized the running game. On Saturday, Geren discussed the A's improved ability to steal third and how such a threat can be as good as an actual steal because the opposing pitcher can become so distracted.

The A's 134 steals are the team's most since 1992. They have been successful 81 percent of the time, second best in the majors.

One of Oakland's young starters, Brett Anderson, 22, went seven innings Saturday and allowed two runs, one on a homer by Marco Scutaro in the third. Andrew Bailey gave up a run in the ninth, but with the tying run at second, Bailey struck out pinch hitter David Ortiz looking to end a nine-pitch at-bat.

Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff (back spasms) won't play until sometime on the next road trip.

## A's radio flagship goes bust

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's struggles to find a stable radio home appeared to take a hit when their flagship station went into receivership at the end of the week.

Trouble for KTRB (860 AM) might wind up benefiting the A's, though. The team has investigated buying its own radio outlet in past years, and KTRB's price at a bank auction is likely to be lower than it would be via a private sale.

According to several sources, the power of the station (50,000 watts) and its strong coverage in the South Bay make it well suited for the A's needs, particularly if the club eventually moves to San Jose.

"I think that's premature right now," team vice president of broadcasting **Ken Pries** said of any potential interest in the station. "We've talked about acquiring a station in the past, but we haven't had any serious discussions about KTRB. It will be a month before the license changes hands and goes to the receiver."

Pries said that the chief engineer remains and will keep KTRB on the air without interruption. (Recent transmission problems, however, were related to the station's financial troubles - diesel fuel bills weren't being paid).

Conservative talk-show host **Michael Savage**, an odd fit for an "all-sports" station, was among the first casualties when owners **Jim** and **Harry Pappas** turned the outfit over to Comerica Bank. The contract of pregame and postgame host **Chris Townsend** was picked up by the A's.

**Briefly:** **Michael Wuertz** was available for the first time in a week; he said he has been out with tendinitis in his left thumb. ... Reliever **Joey Devine** (Tommy John surgery) won't pitch for Oakland this year; he's being pointed toward instructional league. ... Triple-A Sacramento's **Brett Tomko** threw six scoreless innings in a 5-1 victory over Tacoma, evening the best-of-five series 2-2. ... Outfielder **Michael Choice**, the A's top pick in June, was promoted to Class-A Kane County.

## A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

**Wowing Rickey:** Coco Crisp's terrific over-the-wall catch, three hits and three steals in the series opener Friday came with Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson watching from the A's dugout. "I think he was trying to impress me," Henderson said. "It worked."

## Drumbeat: Geren's option picked up, Kouzmanoff out several more days

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 9/11/2010, 5:22PM

Not exactly unexpected, but Bob Geren's option for 2011 was picked up this afternoon. If you've followed Billy Beane's comments about Geren this year, and in previous years, the A's general manager is very much in Geren's corner. There wasn't any inkling that Geren wouldn't be back, and Beane said after the announcement that he's pleased with the young players' development and that consistency is important for the young players. Tough to argue any of those things.

Geren has yet to finish with a record above .500, though the A's have a reasonable chance to do so this season, despite their usual spate of injuries. They've danced around the .500 mark for months ... and they're exactly at it right now. Plus, they're still hanging around the fringes of the race. Like Geren or not, there were plenty of legitimate reasons to do this.

Plus, picking up an option isn't like issuing an extension. An extension is more like saying great job. An option exercised is more like pretty good job.

Geren said Kevin Kouzmanoff will be out several more days with his lower back spasms; he won't play until the road trip, for sure. Geren also said that Joey Devine threw a 20-pitch simulated inning, and his slider looked good, but he said that Devine won't be heading on a rehab assignment with a minor-league team in the playoffs, and he won't be pitching for Oakland before the end of the season. Devine is being pointed to the instructional league only, like Josh Outman, who also is coming back from Tommy John surgery. I know Devine had hoped to get into a game or two, more for his own peace of mind going into the winter than anything, but the A's are really trying to be extra cautious with all their injured players, especially pitchers with elbow issues.

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

## **A's stun Sox as playoff hunt continues**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The out-of-town scoreboard, specifically the part dictating a Texas-New York showdown, showed little life at the Oakland Coliseum for most of Saturday.

A longstanding tied score between the two clubs played background to an affair between the Red Sox and A's, the latter team hoping to witness a Rangers loss so as not to slip further in the American League West, where they began the day 7 1/2 games behind first place.

But, as the A's have learned more than ever in the past month, they can't be waiting around for Texas to win or lose. They simply have to do their own thing, win their own games.

Their thing, which has come to include dominant pitching, unstoppable speed and a scrappy but effective offense, resulted in a 4-3 victory on Saturday, when the A's erased a two-run Boston lead and subsequently found themselves one game over the .500 mark.

The win came just hours after the A's announced a decision to pick up manager Bob Geren's contract option for the 2011 season, one he insists on not thinking about until this year has concluded. That thinking goes hand-in-hand with the club's belief that it is still part of a playoff race, that efforts like the one exuded in Saturday's contest have the A's making the Rangers a little nervous.

Texas squeezed out a 7-6 victory, thus leaving Oakland 21 games to surpass a 7 1/2-game deficit. The Rangers' feat was not known until well after the A's win, but Mark Ellis nevertheless spoke about his club's fighting chance to keep things interesting.

"To still have a chance and to have meaningful games in September is huge," the second baseman said. "It's old hat for a lot of teams, but for some guys around here, it's not. We come to the ballpark and we expect to win."

Saturday's victory awarded a gritty performance from lefty Brett Anderson, who found himself in plenty of trouble but managed to keep the Red Sox at bay just long enough to let his offense come around and allow him access to his fifth win of the season.

The A's southpaw walked away from a one-out, bases-loaded situation in the first unscathed thanks to a swinging strikeout against Mike Lowell that was followed by forceout by Jed Lowrie. The strikeout, via a devastating slider, was key, Geren said.

"He got ahead in the count and buried his breaking ball," the A's skipper said. "That's how he's able to get out of innings."

"When in doubt," Anderson said, "go to the breaking ball."

"My slider's been my go-to pitch and will continue to be my go-to pitch. I got a couple strikeouts when we needed them, a couple popups here and there, and whenever I needed it, I was always relying on my slider."

After settling himself down by way of a 1-2-3 second frame, Anderson offered up a leadoff homer to Marco Scutaro in the third that allowed Boston on the board first. In the fifth, Anderson again faced danger, this time in the form of two baserunners and just one out. But, again, he got Lowell on a swinging strikeout and proceeded to force Lowrie to fly out to right field.

Meanwhile, Oakland struggled to get anything going against Boston righty John Lackey, owner of a 17-4 record and 2.86 career ERA against the A's entering Saturday's contest. He faced just one batter over the minimum through six frames, but Daric Barton managed a leadoff double in the seventh to open the flood gates.

Jack Cust, who walked into the matchup hitting .205 with runners in scoring position, ultimately brought home Barton thanks to a single to cut Boston's lead to one. The A's designated hitter joined Barton in the dugout soon after, as Ellis -- riding a career-high-tying 11-game hitting streak -- drove him home with a game-tying RBI single.

Rajai Davis proved the A's weren't quite done with Lackey by collecting a triple to deep center field that allowed Ellis to score the go-ahead run, further frustrating the always-expressive Lackey.

"I made a couple mistakes in the seventh inning," the Red Sox hurler said. "I was pretty much in control right up until then."

The A's added an insurance run in the eighth courtesy of another run-scoring hit from Cust that followed a successful double steal by Coco Crisp and Barton, marking the club's 133rd and 134th stolen bases of the season -- the most it has garnered since 1992. The effort proved quite valuable, as Craig Breslow pitched a perfect eighth before Andrew Bailey gave up an RBI double to Adrian Beltre in the ninth and survived one heck of a scare with David Ortiz.

Boston's pinch-hitter battled it out with Bailey for nine pitches, the last one a fastball away that left him frozen at the plate to end the game and hand Bailey his 23rd save of the season.

"I just love that kind of battle," Bailey said. "Obviously, you don't want to throw that many pitches, but he's a professional hitter, and I just wanted to go right after him. I had a base open, but I didn't want to put him on. [Catcher Kurt Suzuki] and I thought we should go right after him, and it worked out in our favor tonight."

"He was fighting, man. He was making his pitches," Ortiz offered. "I was trying to fight with him, you know?"

Bailey has now made seven scoreless appearances since returning from the 15-day disabled list on Aug. 22, and he's excited to again be contributing to a team looking to sneak its way into the postseason.

"This experience that we're getting right now is going to help us down the road to play meaningful games, hopefully in the playoffs at some point in time," the A's closer said. "Right now, we're just kind of learning on the go and on the fly. We got a big four games with Texas soon. Anything can happen, man. You take four from them, and you're right back in it. That's what we're hoping to do, cut it close 'til when they come in here, and take care of business, and we'll go from there."

## **Playoff-hungry A's look to sweep Sox**

By Andrew Pentis / MLB.com

Former Athletics infielder and current Red Sox shortstop Marco Scutaro is playing through pain. Scutaro was switched from shortstop to second base shortly before first pitch on Saturday for the second time this week to reduce the strain on his sore right rotator cuff. He went 1-for-5 in Boston's 4-3 loss in Oakland, nailing a homer.

"I don't think he's going to show up and be healed," Red Sox manager Terry Francona said. "We'll just keep track of him every night and see how he's doing. We kind of told [backup Yamaico] Navarro to be on hold. That's kind of how it will be the rest of the way."

It will be up to the Athletics' Dallas Braden to retire Scutaro on Sunday. The A's lefty is seeking a career-best 10th win and a series sweep, while his club is still counting on a strong final month.

"We still feel like we have a chance to catch the Rangers," manager Bob Geren said of his squad's second-place standing in the American League West. "We have to play extremely well and get breaks from other teams, but we still feel like we can compete."

The A's are 6-2 since suffering a four-game sweep at the hands of the Yankees in New York.

"We've played more consistent baseball the last couple of weeks," Geren said. "We had that stretch of great pitching, but our offense really struggled at the time. They're starting to go hand in hand right now, so the goal right now is to obviously win every series and gain some ground on Texas and hopefully catch them."

### **Red Sox: Papelbon continues to sit**

Closer Jonathan Papelbon hasn't pitched since his 48-pitch blown save opportunity one week ago. ... Sunday starter Josh Beckett has twirled three straight quality starts.

## **A's: Keep on runnin'**

The A's lead the Majors with 69 stolen bases since the All-Star break, with Daric Barton and Coco Crisp each swiping a bag on their own in Saturday's 4-3 win to add to the total. Theft king Rickey Henderson has been in Oakland for two games, coaching the A's on baserunning.

## **Worth noting**

The Red Sox and A's have split their first eight matchups. The clubs meet for the ninth and final time of the season on Sunday. ... Beckett has dominated Gabe Gross, holding the A's outfielder to one hit in 17 at-bats, though the hit was a home run.

## **A's exercise Geren's option for 2011**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Geren believes his club is "so close to being an elite team."

Reaching that level, potentially by adding some much-needed power, is something the A's are hoping to do during the 2011 season, one which Geren will officially be able to watch in the skipper's role again.

That much was made certain on Saturday, when the A's announced they had exercised Geren's contract option for the 2011 season, which will mark his fifth year at the helm in Oakland.

"There are only 30 of these jobs in the world," Geren said, "so it's a real honor, obviously, to have one. To be asked back to try to bring us to that next level, it's a real privilege in my opinion."

Geren, who will turn 49 this month, entered Saturday's contest against the Red Sox having guided the A's to a 70-70 mark and a second-place standing in the American League West, where Oakland trails Texas by 7 1/2 games with 22 contests remaining.

A's general manager Billy Beane has watched Geren and Co. struggle to stay above the .500 mark for much of the second half, but he's also witnessed a handful of positive developments, despite all the youth and injury that surround the team.

"I think one of the first things to do, when you're evaluating that position, is take a look at what they have to work with to begin with and then what they have to deal with during that time and as the season goes on," Beane said. "Considering this is the youngest team in the big leagues, and also couple that with the fact we've had to get through -- and haven't even gotten through -- a number of injuries, guys have responded well to that adversity."

In Beane's mind, then, picking up Geren's option sooner rather than later "seemed pretty obvious to all of us." Much of that notion, he said, comes from wanting to give the younger players a sense of continuity as they continue to transform into Major League mainstays.

"For us, it's critical we have a manager who is not only a teacher but has the patience to get through some of the growing pains these young players are going to have," Beane said. "Bob and the rest of the staff have certainly done that. ... Under circumstances, I think they've done about as well as you can expect and probably beyond that."

"There's definitely a comfort level here," Andrew Bailey said. "I think we know what to expect, and I think Bob knows what he can expect from us. This year has been better than last year. As a team, we've obviously come together a little bit more and we're playing better baseball. It's something we're proud of and something we can build on for next year."

Geren has put together a 296-329 managerial mark in his four seasons as A's skipper, the first three of them resulting in a losing record. The A's are hoping to put an end to that trend this season, one during which several players have witnessed a shift in Geren's managerial style.

"He's changed a little bit," Mark Ellis said. "He lets guys run a little bit more and play their game a little bit more. He likes to be hands-on, he likes to have his hands on everything, but he's starting to let it go a little bit and let guys play a little bit more."

"Throughout the years, he's gotten so much better with the players," Gio Gonzalez said. "Once you get comfortable around your players and see them a lot, you start opening up. He knows how to interact and relax and keep it cool sometimes."

Gonzalez is part of a young A's pitching staff that has compiled a Major League-best 3.45 ERA, a mark that has Geren excited about the club's future. But, per usual, he's set on staying in the present, where "we still feel like we have a chance to catch the Rangers" thanks to a gritty attitude exuded by all in his clubhouse.

"I think right now, the most satisfying thing has been the development of the young players," Geren said. "Having a core group of young players that are going to be with us for a long time, and watching them mature and improve week to week, month to month, that's probably the most satisfying thing."

The 2011 season will mark his 12th year within the Oakland organization, as he served as the club's bench coach in 2006 after spending the previous three seasons as bullpen coach. Before that, he served as manager of Class A Modesto in 1999 and captained Triple-A Sacramento over the next three seasons.

Given Geren's status for the coming season, much of his current staff could be returning, but Beane made no indication that anything is set in stone. That's the same mindset he's taking with Ellis and Coco Crisp, who Beane said likely won't know about the status of their 2011 contract options until the offseason.

## **A's honor firefighters on 9/11 anniversary**

By Jane Lee and Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- On the ninth anniversary of 9/11, the A's on Saturday honored Bay Area firefighters with several events before and during the game.

More than 50 region firefighters stood on the field before the game, as Oakland Fire Captain Larry Sampson sung the national anthem. The A's also honored three local heroes for their life-saving roles in potentially deadly fire situations.

Both the A's and the Red Sox took the field wearing caps with the American flag on the logo, while several Oakland players wore hats from local fire departments before the game.

In addition, the A's raised funds for the victims of the tragic fire across the bay in San Bruno, Calif. The fire occurred on Thursday when a gas line exploded and sent a neighborhood into flames, killing at least four people.

The A's also raised money for other local firefighter charities, while displaying fire safety and awareness messages between innings.

## **Rickey helping A's get off and running**

OAKLAND -- With four steals in Friday night's 5-0 victory over the Red Sox, the A's moved their season total to 132. Rickey Henderson, of course, stole 130 bases in the 1982 season alone.

As Oakland continues to be one of baseball's most proficient teams on the basepaths (ranking third in stolen bases), Henderson has become a teacher to students like Rajai Davis, Coco Crisp and Cliff Pennington.

"I love teaching," Henderson said. "I think you love it in a sense because you enjoy the game so much. I love the game. I'm one of those guys who breathes baseball. Getting that opportunity to stay around the game, it makes you appreciate the game a lot more, too."

During the development stage of his career, Henderson said his most memorable coach was Tom Trebelhorn, who now manages the Giants' Class A short-season team in Keizer, Ore. Trebelhorn coached Henderson in rookie ball and at the Class A level.

"To this day, he was my favorite," Henderson said. "He took the time out to teach the kids. I think that's why I enjoy [coaching], because I saw what he did for me."

The A's have stolen a Major League-best 67 bases since the All-Star break, while they rank second behind Philadelphia in stolen base percentage (81.0). Henderson has been on the A's bench the past couple of games, prompting praise from manager Bob Geren.

"He talks to [bench coach] Tye Waller a lot about how we judge the opposition's pitchers, their moves and timing and when we should run," Geren said. "We've [stolen bases] very well, over 80 percent, one of the best. If we can get the best guy that's ever done it to give us a few more pointers, we'll gladly take them."

Crisp said it's been a pleasure to pick Henderson's brain, adding Davis is usually one asking most of the questions. Crisp also said he's gained the team's trust and been given more freedom on the basepaths.

"I broke some of the rules early on, with them giving me the red light," Crisp said. "That started off somewhat here and I've known for a long time that I'm a better basestealer when I can just go on my own."



"A lot of my caught stealings throughout the year have been on hit-and-runs and them telling me when to go. It's very difficult as a basestealer to do something when you're being asked to do it instead of feeling it out yourself and picking the right time."

### **Kouz unlikely to return before next week**

OAKLAND -- Kevin Kouzmanoff missed his fifth straight game on Saturday, and A's manager Bob Geren said the third baseman likely won't be making a return to the starting lineup until sometime during the club's six-game road trip next week.

Kouzmanoff isn't even slated to begin baseball activity again until Monday, when the A's begin a three-game set in Kansas City before moving on to Minnesota for three contests with the Twins starting Friday.

"He's a couple days away," Geren said. "Hopefully somewhere on the road trip he'll be back in there."

The A's infielder has been battling lower back pain since Sept. 5, when he left in the fifth inning against the Angels after experiencing back spasms out of the batter's box. In his stead at the hot corner, Geren has been platooning Steve Tolleson and Jeff Larish, the latter who will receive most starts against right-handers, as he did Saturday with Boston's John Lackey on the mound.

### **Worth noting**

A's right-hander Joey Devine threw 20 pitches in a simulated game on Saturday, and Geren said all went well. However, the reliever's hopes of pitching in Oakland this season were shut down when Geren said he wants Devine and fellow pitcher Josh Outman to simply focus on continuing their work in Instructional League in Arizona. Outman is slated to throw in a simulated game on Sunday, and both hurlers are expected to return to Arizona when the club leaves for Kansas City on Monday. ... A's general manager Billy Beane said on Saturday that the club will consider adding to the team's current roster once Minor League playoffs are completed. Righty Vin Mazzaro, he said, is not out of the question. Mazzaro got the win in Triple-A Sacramento's 6-2 postseason victory over Tacoma on Friday, giving up one run on three hits while walking two and fanning five in five innings of work. One of the club's top prospects, Michael Taylor, homered in the same game.

## **Davis' RBI triple lifts A's**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Mark Ellis was surprised to learn his hitting streak was up to a career-high 11 games.

The veteran second baseman has something else on his mind.

Ellis scored the tiebreaking run on Rajai Davis' triple in the seventh inning and Andrew Bailey struck out David Ortiz with the tying run on second to end the game, preserving the Oakland Athletics' 4-3 victory over the Boston Red Sox on Saturday night.

Oakland improved to 6-2 on its nine-game homestand. Still clinging to faint playoff hopes, the A's trailed AL West-leading Texas by 7½ games before Saturday's action.

"A lot of guys in this clubhouse have never been through this before, and to still have a chance and to have meaningful games in September is huge," Ellis said. "It's old hat for a lot of teams but for some guys around here it's not."

Ellis said he doesn't care about his hitting streak.

"I don't think I'm going to break Joe DiMaggio's record," he said.

The victory capped a big day for A's manager Bob Geren, who is set to return to Oakland's dugout next season. The team announced before the game it had exercised its option on Geren's contract for the 2011 season, ensuring him of a fifth year in charge of the club.

"At the end of the day it seemed pretty obvious to all of us," general manager Billy Beane said. "For us it's critical that we have a manager that's not only a teacher but has the patience to get through some of the growing pains a young player's going to have. Bob and the rest of the staff have certainly done that."

Oakland scored three times in the seventh and once in the eighth, erasing a 2-0 deficit and clinching its first season-series win over the Red Sox since 2006. Ellis hit a tying RBI single before coming around on Davis' hit.

John Lackey (12-10) pitched seven innings for Boston, yielding three runs and six hits. The right-hander fell to 17-5 with a 2.90 ERA in 31 career starts against Oakland.

Lackey was working on a two-hit shutout before Oakland rallied in the seventh.

"I made a couple of mistakes in the seventh; other than that I was pretty much in control," Lackey said. "In our situation you can't make too many mistakes. In the first half of the season we were hitting the ball all over the place. Right now we need to pitch well and win games."

Adrian Beltre doubled in Victor Martinez with two out in the ninth to get Boston within one but pinch-hitter Ortiz looked at a called third strike, giving Bailey his 23rd save in 26 opportunities this season.

Martinez, Beltre and Darnell McDonald had two hits apiece for Boston, which has lost six of eight and is struggling to stay in the playoff picture. The Red Sox were nine games back of the AL East-leading Yankees and 7 1/2 back in the wild-card race entering play Saturday.

"We had a good game going but we left some runs out there early and it caught up with us late," Boston manager Terry Francona said. "The pitch to Davis was a fastball that caught too much of the plate. That was obviously the key at-bat."

Daric Barton started the Oakland seventh with a double and scored on Jack Cust's one-out single. Cust took second when left fielder Bill Hall briefly bobbled the ball and came home on Ellis' tying hit to center.

After Jeremy Hermida struck out, Davis tripled to center to make it 3-2.

Lackey, who beat the A's earlier this season despite allowing four earned runs and a season-high 12 hits, struck out six and walked none. The Red Sox have scored seven runs total in his last three games, all losses.

"Lackey's thrown a lot of good games in this ballpark when he was with Anaheim," Ellis said. "It looked like he was going to have the same outcome early in the game but we put some good at-bats together and we were able to string some together late."

Brett Anderson (5-6) scattered eight hits over seven innings for Oakland. He struck out five and walked three.

Marco Scutaro homered for Boston, which has lost eight of its last 12 road games.

Scutaro, making a rare second straight start at second base, has reached base in 20 of his last 24 games. The home run was his fourth in September and 11th overall.

Boston added another run off Anderson in the sixth when Jed Lowrie doubled and scored on Ryan Kalish's single.

## **NOTES**

\*Oakland 3B Kevin Kouzmanoff (back spasms) did not play and likely won't return to the A's lineup until next week when the team is on the road.

\*Oakland RHP Joey Devine threw 20 pitches in a simulated inning and reported no pain.

\*The A's have stolen 135 bases this season, their most since swiping 143 in 1992. Coco Crisp has stolen 20 consecutive bases, the longest streak by an Oakland player since Stan Javier had 28 straight.

## **A's exercise contract option on Geren for 2011**

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even though his club is likely to miss the playoffs for a fourth straight season, Oakland Athletics general manager Billy Beane saw no reason to let manager Bob Geren's contract status linger.

Confident in the direction that the youngest team in the majors is headed, Beane and the A's on Saturday exercised the club option on Geren's contract for the 2011 season, saying his influence and work with the club's younger players is critical to the franchise's future.

"At the end of the day it seemed pretty obvious to all of us," Beane said. "For us it's critical that we have a manager that's not only a teacher but has the patience to get through some of the growing pains a young player's going to have. Bob and the rest of the staff have certainly done that."

The A's have been beset by a number of injuries to their front-line players. All-Star infielder Eric Chavez played in only 33 games before being sidelined for the year because of back and shoulder issues. Pitcher Ben Sheets, who signed a \$10 million, one-year deal with Oakland in the offseason, had season-ending elbow surgery in August, and center fielder Coco Crisp missed most of the first half of the year with leg injuries.

Despite all of that, the A's have managed to stay around .500 in the AL West. Oakland went into Saturday's game against Boston trailing first-place Texas by 7 1/2 games and still clinging to slim playoff hopes.

"I talked to Billy and thanked him for the opportunity," Geren said. "We're so close to being an elite team, and to have the opportunity to manage them ... it's a real honor. To be asked back to try to bring us to the next level is a real privilege."

Geren received a one-year contract extension, with the option, in March 2009. He was promoted from bench coach in November 2006 by his close friend Beane. The GM had given Geren a vote of confidence this season, another in which the A's have been plagued by injuries but still stayed competitive in the AL West.

The 48-year-old Geren, the 28th manager in franchise history, had a 296-329 career record in four seasons heading into Saturday night's game against Boston.

"Under the circumstances they've done about as well as you could expect and probably beyond that to be totally honest," Beane said of the A's coaching staff. "As the season went on and we saw how everybody was responding, it was a question you shouldn't be in a position to have to ask given what he has done. If you've made up your mind it makes sense to do it. It allows everybody to concentrate on moving forward."

Geren played five major league seasons as a catcher with the New York Yankees and San Diego before his coaching career.

Beane said the team would address the contract status of the rest of the coaching staff later.

## **Cramer Defies The Odds**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Sep 12, 2010

OAKLAND - At the start of the 2010 season, Bobby Cramer's dream of a major league career seemed out of reach. Exiled to Mexico, Cramer appeared to be a forgotten man within the Oakland A's organization. However, he forced himself back into the picture with a standout 2010 season. Now Cramer is set to make his major league debut on Monday. We spoke to Cramer on Saturday.

In an Oakland A's organization filled with pitching talent from the major leagues on down, Bobby Cramer's name is hardly one that has stood out over the past four seasons. Starting his career in the Tampa Bay Devil Rays organization in 2002, Cramer had been out of baseball for more than two years and was working as a substitute high school teacher and coach when he was signed by the A's as a free agent in 2007.

Cramer pitched well for the High-A Stockton Ports and the Double-A Midland Rockhounds that season and started for the Triple-A Sacramento River Cats in the post-season, but was out of affiliated baseball once again in 2008 when the A's released him. After pitching well in the independent Golden Baseball League in 2008, he was brought back by Oakland in 2009. He pitched well again, appearing for Stockton, Midland and Sacramento and winning a Texas League title with the 'Hounds. However, Cramer's path to the big leagues appeared blocked when he was loaned out by the A's to the Quintana Roo Tigres of the Mexican League at the start of this season.

He willed himself back on the path to the big leagues by starring in the Mexican League and then dominating for Sacramento when the A's brought him back to the US in August. Still, on Thursday night when Cramer got the news from Sacramento manager Tony DeFrancesco that he was being promoted to Oakland after the River Cats lost Game Two of their playoff series with Tacoma, Cramer could hardly believe it.

"I just thought he was going to give the rah-rah speech and he kind of did, but then he said, 'you know, the main reason we are all here is to get you to the big leagues.' Then he said, 'Bobby Cramer, you are going up.' It kind of got a little dark and I blanked out for a second [laughs]. It took me a second to realize what he had just said, but it was the best thing I've heard in a long time," Cramer said.

Early on in his stint with the Quintana Roos, Cramer got calls from teams in Asia about playing for them next season. Knowing that he would have a job in professional baseball in 2011 regardless of whether he fit into the A's plans helped him to relax and focus only on his season in the Mexican League and nothing else. After finishing atop the Mexican League leader boards in wins (13), complete games (5), shutouts (3), WHIP (1.12) and strike-outs (123 in 128 innings), Cramer was called on by the A's to return to Sacramento. He responded by posting a 1.94 ERA in 41.2 innings for the River Cats, aiding Sacramento's late-season surge into the playoffs.

"Having been brought back [to Sacramento], I was happy. That league down there [in Mexico], it's a good league as far as skill, but as far as the little things that we get used to here, like having clubhouses with air conditioning and whatnot [those aren't there]. So once I got back, I felt like I was already in the big leagues," Cramer said.

"I had never had much success [at Triple-A]. I had never really had a prolonged stint in Sacramento until this year. This is the most innings I've ever thrown in Sac., so to go there and be healthy and throw the way that I hoped I could throw if I was healthy there, I was happy. To get up here [to the big leagues], it's just been a magical season."

When Cramer reflects on the winding path his season and career has taken to get to the big leagues, he is clearly emotional.

"I don't know if I can put it into words. It's been a long season. This is the most [innings] I've ever thrown anyway," Cramer said on Saturday.

"I never felt further away from my dream then when I was down there [in Mexico]. I kind of felt like maybe I wasn't really fitting into the plans, that they were just sending me down there to get some players in return. I realized after a few months I was going to be there all season, so I just figured I'd settle down and continue to throw and whatever happened would happen."

Oakland A's Director of Baseball Operations Farhan Zaidi says that Cramer's promotion sends a positive message to the entire A's organization that any player within the organization can advance if he gets the results on the field.

"I really think that the best and fairest way to run an organization is as a meritocracy. It should be a situation where, if you do well, you get promoted," Zaidi said.

"No matter where we drafted you or how you were acquired, if you perform, you will get a chance to move up. He's a guy who has had a couple of stints with us and he has been terrific at every level.

"It's not the prototypical starting pitching prospect profile, but to get those kind of results, to have the ERA that he does, to get the groundball numbers that he has, and with the walk-and-strike-out ratio being so favorable, we think he's a guy who has a chance to come up here and have success."

Cramer has often been described by scouts as a "typical finesse lefty," in other words, a southpaw who relies on his command of his fastball and his secondary pitches rather than velocity. Despite not being a fire-baller, Cramer has struck-out 158 batters in 169.2 innings between Mexico and Sacramento this season. More importantly, he has only walked 38.

"It takes the control of all of your stuff that I am having right now to be able to have the kind of season that I am having," Cramer said.

"My curveball everyday has been there. Maybe some days it is sharper than others, but I am always able to throw it for strikes in any count. My fastball, I have been able to have a lot of movement on it. I'm not throwing any harder than I ever have. It's about the same as always, but I've had good movement and I've been keeping the ball down and throwing strikes."

Cramer is scheduled to make his major league debut on Monday at Kaufmann Stadium versus the Kansas City Royals. He hasn't begun reviewing video on the Royals yet, but he will enter the game with some familiarity with the KC line-up.

"I'm going to take the early bus to the stadium on Monday and I'm going to get changed out and watch some video," Cramer said.

"The nice thing is that I looked at their line-up that they put up the other day and something like six guys in that line-up I've faced before, whether it was in Omaha [Triple-A] this year or Wichita [Double-A] a couple of years ago. So I've faced a lot of

those guys before and the ones I haven't, I'm sure they'll give me a good report on."

Although Cramer has never been even a non-roster invitee to the A's big league spring training camp, he felt comfortable the moment he entered the A's clubhouse on Friday.

"You always think, 'what's it going to be like?' I was actually more nervous last year in spring training when I went to back up a big league game than I was coming here," Cramer said.

"I was able to come here [to the Coliseum] last year for the Bay series to end spring training and even though I didn't play, I still got a chance to come to the stadium and walk around and get to know the clubhouse and the guys.

"I've played with a lot of these guys the last couple of years. I knew about 70 percent of the team before I even got here. So that made it a very easy transition."

Although his focus is firmly on his upcoming major league debut, Cramer is keeping an eye on his teammates in Sacramento as they attempt to claw all of the way back from an 0-2 deficit in their best-of-five playoff series against Tacoma. Cramer was with the River Cats in 2007 when they dropped the first two games of the divisional series to the Salt Lake Bees before roaring back to win three straight for a series win. Sacramento would later go on to win the Pacific Coast League title.

Cramer says that DeFrancesco wouldn't let the team quit in 2007 so he isn't surprised that the River Cats have traveled to Washington and taken two straight from Tacoma to force a decisive Game 5 on Sunday.

"[In '07,] we dropped a couple of heart-breakers in Salt Lake to start the series. We were actually winning both games and we lost and I was like, 'man, you can't come back from that.' We came back in the clubhouse in Salt Lake and everyone was down and Tony was pissed that we didn't have the radio up and everyone was hanging their heads," Cramer said.

"He was like, 'it ain't over yet. Get your heads out of your you-know-whats. Turn the radio on. Have some fun. Relax. We are going to win this thing.' That is just the mentality that they have. We had been playing some pretty good ball there in Sacramento lately and hadn't lost two in a row in awhile so I didn't expect them to lose three in a row. Makes sense that they are coming back and I am happy for them."

## **Brave Manteca girl, firefighters celebrated at Oakland A's game**

By Lori Gilbert

OAKLAND - If the events of Sept. 11, 2001, taught us anything, it's that heroes come in all shapes and sizes.

That was evident Saturday when 3-year-old Manteca resident Alesaundra Tafoya was among a handful of people the Oakland Athletics honored during a pre-game celebration on Firefighter Appreciation Night.

In commemorating the anniversary of 9/11 with firefighters from throughout Northern California, the Athletics paid tribute to the engaging toddler.

Three weeks ago when she couldn't wake up her dad, she left her house and walked by herself two blocks to a fire station to summon help.

Taking Capt. Robert Villaloboz and firefighter Brian Swift by the hands, she walked them to her home where they found Frank Tafoya unconscious.

Tafoya and Alesaundra had just returned from a doctors appointment during which he'd been given new medication for a chronic back condition that had worsened since surgery on it in 2005.

He took one of the pills, but combined with pills he'd taken earlier, he lapsed into a state of unconsciousness. His daughter's quick thinking saved his life, doctors told him.

As Tafoya, and his wife, Dawn, contemplate his good fortune, they continue to marvel at the action of their daughter.

"I've talked to people with other kids we're close to, and they said, 'I don't think my kids would have done it.' And I say, 'I wouldn't have thought mine would either,' " Dawn Tafoya said. "As parents, we need to give our kids more credit."

For at least one firefighter, the credit goes to the family and the Manteca Fire Department.

"It shows the community really does respect their firefighters," said Matt Baker, an eight-year veteran of the Stockton Fire Department, who joined about 20 other Stockton firefighters in accepting Oakland Athletics pitcher Dallas Braden's invitation to attend the game. "For that little girl to leave her house, to know where the firehouse was, it touches you to realize our job truly makes a difference and affects people in different ways.

"At her age, it is truly amazing. It means those guys in Manteca touched her."

Frank Tafoya, who was born and raised in Manteca, had called on firefighters in the past for medical reasons.

"They've always been the first ones to arrive," Dawn Tafoya said.

Fire station 243, on busy Louse Avenue, is only a couple blocks from the family's home. Alesaundra and her dad pass it every day when they walk her brother, 5-year-old Frankie, to school every day.

"Those are good people right there," Frank Tafoya told his daughter. "They take care of Daddy. They take care of everybody."

Somehow when "Daddy" needed their help the most, Alesaundra remembered the lesson, as well as where that fire station was.

The Oakland A's called her a hero. She was joined in the pre-game ceremony by fellow "heroes" Sylvester Wiggins of Richmond, who forced his way into a burning building to save a trapped family; Gilbert Rodriguez of Elk Grove, whose quick reaction to a fire-igniting spark between his neighbors' homes saved the two families lives; and a group of high school students who are teaching fire-safety tips to tenants of single-room-occupancy buildings in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Alesaundra was no more intimidated by the huge gathering at the Oakland Coliseum for the A's game with the Boston Red Sox than she'd been by her dad's emergency. She took in the attention with ease and smiled broadly for photographs with A's great Rickey Henderson and local favorite Braden, who'd arranged for limousine transportation for Stockton firefighters. She gave Stomper, the A's elephant mascot, a high-five and smiled as she caught herself on the big outfield screens. She waved to the crowd and clapped when the efforts of the other honorees were announced.

Baker was delighted to see citizens honored for heroism, and not just the firefighters in attendance.

"We don't expect accolades," he said. "It's our job. It's what we love to do."

The jobs of firefighters were on the public conscience Saturday, not just because it was the ninth anniversary of the attacks of 9/11 when 343 New York firefighters lost their lives after charging into the burning twin towers, but because across the bay, an area of San Bruno was still smoldering.

That horrific eruption Thursday was particularly jarring for Stockton firefighters to watch on television.

"Right away you thought of the Quail Lakes fire," Baker said, referring to the wind-driven fire of 2008 that damaged or destroyed 13 single-family homes and 20 condominiums. "It was very similar. It brought back a lot of memories. You feel terrible for all the families that lost their homes and families that lost members of their families in the incident. You wish you could do something for them."

It's not always possible, though, and Baker said being too late, or unable to help are the worst calls for firefighters.

Others are pleasantly unforgettable.

Robert Jacobsen, the engineer on duty when Alesaundra arrived at Manteca Firehouse 243, won't forget that day.

"Having people come to the station to tell us there's a problem is not uncommon, but the age of the little girl and her confidence were amazing," Jacobsen said. "Her ability to keep her wits about her was something."

Three weeks later, her parents said they don't know how much Alesaundra understands about what she did or why it has resulted in her being on television, radio and the Internet.

"She sounds like she understands, but I don't think she does," Dawn Tafoya said. "She knows she did a good thing."

Her parents are still trying to come to terms with what she did.

They balance the danger of her walking down a busy street by herself with the knowledge that Frank Tafoya's condition was life-threatening.

They shake their head in wonder at their child's prompt action, and on Saturday, a stadium full of baseball players, fans and firefighters joined them in doing so.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **River Cats force elimination game Sunday**

Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats are still alive.

Sacramento starter Brett Tomko pitched 6.0 scoreless innings as the River Cats beat Tacoma 5-1 to even the best-of-5 Playoff series at 2-2.

Tacoma won the PCL Pacific Conference Championship series' first two games Wednesday and Thursday at Raley Field, coming back from a six-run deficit in Game 1. But Sacramento, which has made a habit of coming back from large deficits this season, has won Games 3 and 4 at Safeco Field to force an elimination Game 5 on Sunday night in Seattle.

Tacoma is hosting its first-round home Playoff games at Safeco Field, home of the Mariners, because of construction at Cheney Stadium.

Sacramento strung together three first-inning singles Saturday, capped by Matt Watson driving home Corey Wimberly for a 1-0 Cats lead.

Meanwhile, Tomko was retiring the first 10 batters he faced, including striking out the side in the second inning. He finished with six strikeouts, three hits allowed and a walk over 6.0 innings.

It was a far cry from his previous start, September 6 at Colorado Springs, when the right-hander allowed seven runs over 4.2 innings in a losing effort.

Corey Brown singled home Eric Sogard for a second run in the sixth inning. The River Cats used three walks and a two-run double from Travis Buck to tack on three more runs in the ninth inning. Eliezer Alfonzo scored Mike Carp on a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth for Tacoma's lone run.

Sacramento has come back from a 2-0 series deficit once before, clawing from the hole against Salt Lake in 2007. The difference in that series is that Sacramento won the final three games at home. This time, after dropping the first two games against the Rainiers at home on Wednesday and Thursday, the River Cats will need to win three in a row on the road.

The River Cats overcame a 12.5-game deficit to the Fresno Grizzlies in the Pacific Coast League South Division standings to make these Playoffs. During that riveting tear up the standings, the River Cats used a franchise record 11-run comeback to defeat the Round Rock Express 13-11 on August 11. And for the River Cats to come back on the road isn't out of the question either. Sacramento posted the league's second best road record this season (42-30), a mark far better than the team's home record (37-35). In reversed roles, this scenario played out in the 2005 Playoffs, when Tacoma lost Games 1 and 2 at home to Sacramento, then beat the River Cats at Raley Field in Games 3, 4 and 5 to take the series.

## **RockHounds close out Frisco in Game 4**

Shawn Shroyer, Midland Reporter-Telegram

It took the Midland RockHounds until the last game of the regular season to wrap up home field in the first round of the playoffs. As it turned out, the RockHounds didn't even need it.

The RockHounds finished off the Frisco RoughRiders, the same team they clinched home field against, with a 9-4 victory in Game 4 on Saturday at Citibank Ballpark, making Game 5 unnecessary.

"You definitely want to get it done before a fifth game," said RockHounds shortstop Josh Horton, who was 3 for 4 with a run, an RBI and two doubles on Saturday. "It's baseball. You play 140 games, so you just try to take the same approach, have the same mindset, and keep it going."

The RockHounds now have the next two days off before the Texas League Championship Series, but may not know who their opponent will be until Monday night. Northwest Arkansas and Springfield had Game 1 of their series postponed, so their series may not end until Monday if a Game 5 is necessary.

A match up between a pair of players making their Double-A debuts set the tone for the evening.

Left-hander and 2008 Rangers second round pick Robbie Ross was making his first start for the RoughRiders, while 2009 A's first round pick Grant Green was batting second for the RockHounds. Following a leadoff single from J.C. Holt, Green lifted the first offering he saw from Ross the opposite way and over the right field wall for a two-run home run.

"His first swing was a good one," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "We needed somebody to come through from the right side. He came through and it put us up early."

It was one of two home runs for the RockHounds in the game. Alex Valdez went deep off Ross in the fourth inning with two men on. The RockHounds retook the lead, 5-3, with the home run after the RoughRiders took a 3-2 lead in the top of the inning.

"These guys are resilient in dealing with pressure," Bush said. "Falling behind isn't going to deter them."

The RockHounds were far from done scoring in the fourth, though.

Ross faced five batters in the fourth without recording an out and was removed in favor of Fabio Castillo. Castillo walked the only two batters he faced -- Matt Sulentic to load the bases and Petey Paramore to force in a run -- and was taken out. After



the first seven batters in the inning reached safely, Beau Jones finally recorded an out for the RoughRiders. But Green brought in the fifth run of the inning with a sacrifice fly before Jones got out of the inning.

With a 7-3 lead to work with after the fourth, RockHounds left-hander Carlos Hernandez (1-0) settled in.

He kept the RoughRiders off the board his final two innings of work, holding the opposition to three runs, two earned on seven hits and a walk while striking out three. With the win, he improved to 4-0 this season against Frisco.

"He made pitches and he was around the zone," Bush said. "He made them swing their bats and put the ball on the ground."

And the RoughRiders hit grounders at the most inopportune times.

The RockHounds turned three double plays with Hernandez on the mound and exterminated any would-be rallies in the eighth and ninth innings with two more double plays. Midland and Frisco combined for eight double plays in the game.

"That's big," Bush said. "Double plays turn the momentum of the inning right around in our favor."

#### NOTEBOOK

**ROCKHOUNDS BITES:** The RockHounds lost a highly touted prospect on Saturday, only to have him replaced with another. Second baseman Jemile Weeks was deactivated, but 2009 first round pick Grant Green was promoted from Single-A Stockton. Green, a shortstop, has played one game at second base this season, but served as the designated hitter on Saturday. In 131 games with the Ports, Green hit .318 with an .883 OPS, 20 home runs, 87 RBI and nine stolen bases. RockHounds manager Darren Bush said he hoped Weeks would be available for the Championship Series. ... Springfield defeated Northwest Arkansas, 13-9, on Saturday to take a 2-1 lead in the Texas League North Divisional Series. Game 1 of the series was postponed, which is why the North teams are a game behind their Southern counterparts.

## **Straily, Cougars Take Game 1** **Kane County blanks Clinton, moves to within 1 win of league finals**

**GENEVA, III.** – Dan Straily fired seven innings of shutout ball with 11 strikeouts, and Michael Choice and Rashun Dixon hit back-to-back homers Saturday night at Elfstrom Stadium as the Kane County Cougars blitzed the Clinton LumberKings, 4-0, in Game 1 of the best-of-three Midwest League Division Championship Series. The Cougars now are one win away from their fifth trip to the League Championship Series. Game 2 is Sunday in Clinton at 5 CT.

The Cougars gave Straily (1-0) all four runs of support in the bottom of the first inning. Myrio Richard roped a double off Taylor Stanton (0-1), and Leonardo Gil struck out but reached on a wild pitch. Then Choice, the Oakland A's 1st-round pick - 10th overall -- from this past June's draft, cracked an opposite-field three-run homer in his first Cougars at-bat to make it 3-0. Dixon followed with a solo homer, marking the first time the Cougars hit back-to-back homers since April 25, also against Clinton.

Straily gave up three hits -- all singles -- and tied the season-high for strikeouts by a Cougar with 11. Murphy Smith had struck out 11 on June 28, also against Clinton. Straily walked none and retired the final 14 batters he faced. Josh Lansford handled the next two innings to end it, working out of a bases-loaded jam in the eighth and striking out the side in the ninth. The 16 strikeouts from Straily and Lansford were the most by Cougars pitchers in a nine-inning game this year.

The series now shifts to Clinton, Iowa, for Game 2, which starts Sunday afternoon at 5 CT. Kenny Smalley (0-2, 5.88\*) is scheduled to oppose Nick Cxyz (0-0, 0.00). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 4:45 p.m. Game 3, if necessary, would be Monday night at 6:30 CT in Clinton.