

A's News Clips, Thursday, September 16, 2010

Oakland A's ace Trevor Cahill has an off night in loss to Kansas City Royals

By Tom Keegan, Oakland Tribune

The A's young reliables, so consistent all summer, took beatings on back-to-back nights at Kauffman Stadium, where the Kansas City Royals won a three-game series after losing the opener to a man making his major league debut at age 30.

As St. Louis Cardinals former ace Joaquin Andujar once said, baseball can be summed up in "one" word: "You never know."

One night after lefty Gio Gonzalez suffered through his roughest outing of the season, A's right-hander Trevor Cahill was tagged Wednesday for one of his worst.

Wilson Betemit's third-inning grand slam and Billy Butler's fifth-inning two-run shot, both off Cahill, powered the Royals to a 6-3 victory that pushed the A's 10 games behind the Rangers with 17 left on the schedule.

Cahill lasted five innings and allowed six earned runs on six hits and three walks. He had gone 7-2 with a 1.96 ERA in his previous nine starts and was gaining momentum for a run at the American League Cy Young Award, a race Yankees left-hander C.C. Sabathia appears to be leading.

Pitching in the rain for most of a game delayed an hour, Cahill (16-7, 2.84) did not allow a hit until No. 9 hitter Mitch Maier doubled with one out in the third. From there, Cahill never looked comfortable on the mound.

"The only pitch I could throw for a strike was the curveball," Cahill said. "I didn't have any idea where the fastball was going, and the changeup was cutting instead of sinking and running like it normally does."

With the bases loaded and the count full, Betemit fouled off three pitches and swung at the fifth changeup of the nine-pitch at bat as if he knew what was coming. Betemit's high, just-fair poke rattled off the empty seats in right field for his 12th homer of the season and first grand slam of his career.

It erased a 3-0 lead the A's built for Cahill by turning three singles into two runs in the first inning and keeping it going with Matt Carson's one-out solo home run to left in the second.

Coco Crisp supplied the highlight of the night for the A's when he laid out in right-center to rob Jarrod Dyson of a hit leading off the fifth.

"It seems like every outing he makes a great play for me," Cahill said. "After a while, you just kind of expect it."

It didn't spark the team to greatness, or even mediocrity. Mike Aviles followed with a single to left and Butler ripped his 13th homer over the fence in center to put Cahill behind by the final score.

Lefty Bruce Chen (10-7) picked up the victory for the Royals and closer Joakim Soria earned his 38th save with a scoreless ninth.

Notes: Gonzalez had been listed Tuesday as the probable starter for Sunday's series finale in Minnesota, but when rookie left-hander Bobby Cramer came to the ballpark Wednesday he learned otherwise from pitching coach Curt Young. Cramer earned the second start of his career by limiting the Royals to one run in 5 1/3 innings Monday in his major league debut. "If I can keep the fifth spot in the rotation, I'll start against Texas at home and then the day game in Anaheim," said Cramer, a native of Anaheim. "I'm hoping I can pitch well enough to earn the right. If I do that, I'll have a bunch of screaming people for that day game in Anaheim." "... Chris Carter's struggles continued. Batting sixth as the designated hitter, Carter went 0 for 4 with two strikeouts, making him 0 for 24 with 11 strikeouts in the big leagues.

Betemit leads Royals over Athletics

Associated Press, 9/16/2010

Bruce Chen reaching double figures in victories this season seemed farfetched.

Chen, however, picked up his 10th victory and Wilson Betemit hit his first career grand slam as the Kansas City Royals beat the Oakland Athletics 6-3 on Wednesday night.

Chen (10-7), who was 1-13 from 2007-09, gave up three runs in the first two innings. He went five innings, allowing three runs, six hits and a walk. Chen, who started the year in the minors, leads the Royals in victories.

"For me to tell you in September I was going to have 10 wins, I would have said no way, I would say you're crazy, but a lot of crazy things have happened," Chen said. "I feel real good with the way I've been pitching. I persevered.

"I started in the minor leagues, then came up here in the bullpen and here I am with 10 wins. It's a long ways from where I left off from last year when I was 1-6, but I still have a chance to keep winning more."

Betemit, who homered and drove in four runs Tuesday, worked a full count from Trevor Cahill and fouled off the next three pitches before homering just inside the right-field pole in the third inning.

"That was a great at-bat in that situation with the bases loaded and my first grand slam," Betemit said. "He threw me a fastball away. He threw me every pitch and it was around the zone. He threw me a changeup, middle in and I swung the bat good. When I see the ball land in the stairs, I say, 'Yes, I've got it.' I was real happy with that."

Mitch Maier doubled, Jarrod Dyson had an infield single and Billy Butler walked before Betemit's 12th home run that snapped Cahill's 15-inning scoreless streak.

"I had a 2-2 pitch that I thought was pretty close and then he fouled off three pitches," Cahill said. "I thought I might have gotten him to maybe ground one but he didn't. Then I left a pitch up and he hurt me. I made two pretty good pitches (with a full count) but I left one up and in and he turned on it."

Mark Ellis and Kurt Suzuki had run-scoring singles in the A's first. Matt Carson homered in the second on the first pitch from Chen, giving the A's a 3-0 lead.

Joakim Soria worked the ninth for his 38th save in 40 opportunities and he has converted 31 consecutive saves.

The Royals scored 17 runs in beating Cahill and Gio Gonzalez in the final two games of this series.

"We did it against two of the best young pitchers in the American League," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "That was pretty impressive."

Cahill (16-7), who was 7-2 with a 1.69 ERA in his previous nine starts, allowed six runs, six hits and three walks in five innings.

"It just didn't happen tonight," Cahill said. "I didn't have any idea where my fastball was going and my changeup wasn't cutting and running like usual."

While Cahill has limited right-handed hitters to a .184 batting average, the lowest in the majors, he has yielded 11 home runs to right-handed batters. Butler, one of three right-handed hitters in the Kansas City lineup, homered in the fifth with Mike Aviles aboard.

The second-place A's dropped 10 games behind the Texas Rangers, who beat Detroit 11-7, in the AL West. They are a game below .500 (72-73).

Chris Carter went 0 for 4 and is hitless in 24 at-bats to begin his major league career. The A's record to start a career is 0 for 25 by Bill McNulty in 1972.

Notes: Royals 1B coach Rusty Kuntz was named special assistant to the general manager and will report Thursday to the instructional league in Surprise, Ariz., where he will work with outfielders and baserunners. Mike Jirschele, who has managed the Royals Triple-A Omaha affiliate the past eight seasons, will be the 1B coach the remainder of the season. ... Rain delayed the start of the game for 1 hour. ... A's 1B Daric Barton walked in the third, his major league-leading 101st free pass.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Big winners: With one more win by Dallas Braden, the A's will have three pitchers with double-digit wins (Trevor Cahill has 16, Gio Gonzalez 14). In 2006, the last time they had four , the A's won the AL West.

Homers hurt Cahill, A's in loss to Royals

Right-hander allows six runs on two blasts on five innings

By Robert Falkoff / Special to MLB.com | 09/16/10 2:15 AM ET

KANSAS CITY -- With an early three-run lead and Trevor Cahill on the mound, the A's seemed to be poised for victory on Wednesday night. But one tenacious at-bat by Kansas City's Wilson Betemit changed all of that.

Facing one of the hottest pitchers in the Major Leagues in the third inning, Betemit simply wouldn't give in and he ultimately did the A's in. A nine-pitch at-bat with the bases loaded ended with Cahill elevating a changeup and Betemit jumping all over it for a grand slam that boosted the Royals toward a 6-3 win at Kauffman Stadium.

That one swing by Betemit altered the script entirely.

Cahill hadn't given up a run in 15 2/3 innings when Betemit delivered. Billy Butler later added a two-run homer, but it turned out the Royals didn't need anything more offensively after Betemit's big blow.

"He made a couple of really good pitches with two strikes and the guy just got a piece of it," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "Then he hung a changeup right in Betemit's wheelhouse. To his credit, when [Cahill] made a mistake, he got on it."

This series ranks as Exhibit A on how unpredictable baseball can be. Bobby Cramer beat the Royals in his Major League debut. But Gio Gonzalez and Cahill -- two of the hottest starters around -- took losses.

Cahill lamented that his fastball command wasn't up to par in the series finale. When he needed the big pitch to put away Betemit, it wasn't there.

"I threw him two pretty good changeups low that he fouled off and then I threw one up and in and he turned on it," Cahill said.

Prior to Betemit's at-bat, Cahill had a base open with Butler at the plate. Butler wound up drawing a walk, but Cahill said it wasn't because he was pitching around Kansas City's No. 3 hitter.

"I didn't have any fastball command tonight," Cahill said. "The only pitch I could throw for a strike was the curveball. With a 3-0 lead, you certainly don't want to put the tying run on. But the the command just wasn't there."

After Betemit's slam, the Royals looked the part of a rejuvenated club. Starter Bruce Chen settled down after a shaky beginning and four Kansas City relievers worked an inning apiece to put the A's away.

Oakland received run-scoring singles by Mark Ellis and Kurt Suzuki in the first and Matt Carson homered to left in the second with a drive estimated at 412 feet. The way Cahill has been going lately, three runs seemed like a big margin.

But sudden power can change things in a hurry.

"It just shows the importance of having some power on your club," Kansas City manager Ned Yost said. "You can put some runs on the board in a hurry against an All-Star pitcher."

The A's dropped 10 games back of Texas in the American League West. Their faint hopes of catching the Rangers are getting dimmer by the day, but Cahill said the A's will battle until the end.

"If nothing else, we want to finish strong and make a stand going into next year," Cahill said. "Regardless of whether we're two back or 10 back, we're trying to win every ballgame."

The Royals got tack-on runs thanks to Butler's two-run homer in the fifth. Meanwhile, the A's were shut out over the final seven innings.

"It seemed like we scored a couple early and then just tried to do too much," Carson said. "We wanted to really turn it on, but Chen settled down and started to change speeds a little bit."

The Royals, who are trying to avoid the cellar in the AL Central, took a lot of pride in their accomplishments against Gonzalez and Cahill over the final two games of the series.

"We did it against two of the best young pitchers in the American League," Yost said. "That was pretty impressive."

Cust reflects on hitting 100 home runs in Majors

Slugger blasted milestone shot on Monday night

By Robert Falkoff / Special to MLB.com | 09/15/10

KANSAS CITY -- When Jack Cust hit his first Major League home run for the Colorado Rockies in 2002, he never could have imagined the rocky road he'd have to travel for a shot to reach the 100-homer milestone.

Cust went up and down and all around before finding a home with the A's in 2007. Since landing in Oakland, Cust has been a homer-hitting fixture over the past four years, launching 95 balls over the fence for the green and gold. When he hit No. 100 on Monday against the Royals, Cust could reflect with pride on an odyssey in which he persevered and ultimately shined as a late bloomer.

"It feels good because it has been a long road to get to that," Cust said. "I have played a lot of baseball and hit a lot of home runs that haven't counted up here."

Cust had 204 home runs as a Minor Leaguer. At 31, can he stay around long enough to get that many as a Major Leaguer?

"Hitting 100 up here is great, but I just want to keep going," Cust said.

Carter hopes to do better in second stint with A's

KANSAS CITY -- One day after rejoining the A's, Chris Carter walked into the clubhouse on Wednesday and found his name on the lineup card.

Manager Bob Geren penciled in Carter as the designated hitter for the series finale against the Royals. Carter, who hit .258 with 31 homers for Triple-A Sacramento this year, is confident his second stint in the Majors will go much better than his first when he was 0-for-19 from Aug. 9-15.

"I'm not as nervous this time," Carter said. "The first time, I was a little amped up."

Carter had arrived in time for Tuesday's game and flied to center as a pinch-hitter. Overall, he was pleased with the year he had at Triple-A.

"I started pretty rough, but I finished strong," Carter said.

Geren said he has seen many cases where players who endured tough initial stints in the Majors relax and do much better the second time up.

"I've noticed that with a lot of players -- relievers and position players who come back up for a second time," Geren said.

"They come back a little more used to the environment. Usually, they are more themselves."

Crisp on a basestealing tear in the second half

KANSAS CITY -- One intriguing topic the A's can ponder in the offseason is how many bases Coco Crisp might steal in 2011 if he stays healthy for the bulk of the season.

Through Tuesday, Crisp has a career-high 32 steals in just 72 games. His 91.4 steal percentage (32 of 35) is tops in the Major Leagues.

"We would all have loved to see Coco play 150 or 160 games," manager Bob Geren said. "But he has had a great second half and he's got a lot more years left to keep doing what he's doing.

"We study the opposition pretty well as a staff and communicate that pretty well with the players on who's good to go against. Plus, Coco has had a lot of experience in the league and is a very smart baserunner. He's doing a real good job of getting jumps and picking the right times to go."

Crisp is grateful for the trust that Geren has shown in him when Crisp is on the bases.

"I go when I want to go," Crisp said. "Most places I've been, there have been restrictions, whether they've been minimal or not. I play the game. Until the game says, 'Don't run,' I'm going."

Cramer earns opportunity for second start

KANSAS CITY -- Thanks to left-hander Bobby Cramer, the regular members of the A's starting rotation are getting an extra day of rest.

After evaluating Cramer's Major League debut on Monday, manager Bob Geren has decided to give Cramer another start on Sunday in Minnesota.

"Everybody will just be pushed back a day," Geren said.

With Oakland having an off-day on Thursday, Geren could have skipped Cramer and stayed on schedule with his rotation. But Cramer, who allowed four hits and one run through 5 1/3 innings in a 3-1 win over the Royals, did well enough to earn another opportunity.

"His control and poise were impressive," Geren said.

Twins aim to lower magic number vs. A's

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

The clock is ticking for both the A's and the Twins, but for entirely different reasons. While Oakland's season is nearing inevitable futility, the Twins are counting down the days until they can pop the champagne.

Texas has caught fire, winning seven in a row, to drop its magic number to eight over the A's, who lost two of three to finish out their recent series in Kansas City.

The Twins, on the other hand, have stretched their lead in the American League Central to a season-high eight games over the White Sox after beating Chicago on Wednesday.

"We are through the wall right now," said Chicago slugger Paul Konerko when asked if the White Sox now have their backs against the wall. "Before the series, you know it's tough and you have to probably sweep. But you just continue to play hard and ... keep battling until they tell you that you can't battle anymore."

In their inaugural visit to Target Field in August, the A's were swept out of town by Minnesota and its strong pitching. Over the past few weeks, it's been hard to find a hotter team than the Twins, who have won 15 of their past 18 games.

The A's, meanwhile, have seen their top two pitchers go down in the past two contests. A day after Gio Gonzalez (14-9, 3.47) was touched up for seven runs in two innings, the Royals scored six runs against Oakland ace Trevor Cahill on Wednesday.

Oakland's other impressive young talent, lefty Brett Anderson, will face Minnesota's Nick Blackburn in Friday's series opener.

A's: Carter struggling in Majors

Top power-hitting prospect Chris Carter is 0-for-5 since being promoted to Oakland for the second time this season on Tuesday. He is 0-for-24 to start his career.

"I'm not as nervous this time," Carter said. "The first time, I was a little amped up."

Twins: Blackburn performing well after injury

Since Blackburn returned from a Minor League rehab stint on Aug. 23, his sinker has been much better and enabled him to go 2-1 with a 1.78 ERA in four starts.

Worth noting

Blackburn gave up five earned runs on 10 hits in 2 2/3 innings at Oakland on June 6.

Breslow nominated for MLB's Clemente Award

Ctpost.com 9/16/2010

BRESLOW A CLEMENTE AWARD NOMINEE -- Former Yale left-hander [Craig Breslow](#) of Trumbull has been nominated for [Major League Baseball's](#) Roberto Clemente Award for humanitarian and community service.

Breslow, a reliever for the [Oakland Athletics](#), founded the Strike 3 Foundation, a charitable organization that heightens awareness, mobilizes support and raises funding for childhood cancer research. He created the foundation in honor of his sister, Lesley, a survivor of pediatric thyroid cancer.

Online voting for the award is available on MLB's website, mlb.com, through Oct. 8

Urban: Wednesday in Bay Ball (Sept. 15 Edition)

[Mychael Urban](#), CSNBayArea.com

The [Giants gave up one hit and lost](#), falling 1 1/2 games out of first place. The [A's got smoked](#) by one of the worst teams in baseball, falling to .500 for what seems like the 79th time this season. From the shores of McCovey Cove to Jack London Square we go, on our daily quest to make sense of it all ...

... The persistent haterism of Barry Zito is understandable on some fronts; his overall performance relative to his paycheck makes him low-hanging fruit, and the Bay Area media lazily plucks it daily. But while it's fair to say that Zito has been a disappointment based on the money he makes, today is not the day to savage the guy. All he's done in his past two starts -- in September, during a pennant race, when only the true clutch performers show up -- is give up two runs on six hits while posting a 1.54 ERA with a 0.94 WHIP. Those numbers are unassailable.

... On that note, do yourself a favor and try not to think about money when deciding whether or not you truly dig an athlete. It's an exercise in futility. *None* of these guys are "worth" the money they make in the minds of those of us who grind out our livings with eight-to-12-hour days, often putting stress on our personal relationships in the very name of maintaining them. So forget about the salaries of sports stars. Either you like Eric Chavez or you don't. That he pulls \$12 mil a year shouldn't sway you one way or another.

... Aaron Rowand, of course, is in Zito territory as far as the paycheck/performance dilemma goes. No matter what he does - unless he goes 40-for-50 with 20 bombs the rest of the way -- he'll be forever reviled by Giants fans. And for what? For accepting a deal beyond his wildest dreams that gave his family generational security? Hmmmm. Seems like a serious case of misplaced dissatisfaction.

... Picking up a theme yet today? Here it is: Baseball is hard. Damn hard. And unless you have evidence that a guy making big money isn't working his butt off to earn it, simmer down. Rowand might not be the player he once was, but he's at the park early every day for extra work, he doesn't complain about his reduced role or make excuses, and when he's not playing he's fully engaged. All you can ask.

... Back to baseball we go: Does any manager in baseball have greater job security than Bob Geren? Somebody asked me that in one of my recent MLB chats here at CSNBayArea.com. Someone else asked me the same question via Twitter (@MURBANCSN), and yet another fan asked the exact same thing via email (murban@comcastsportsnet.com). My answer: Billy Beane. Kidding (sort of)! Not kidding: If Geren doesn't lead the A's to 88 wins with that pitching staff next season, he won't be secure at all. Five years? You've gotta start winning.

... Should Juan Uribe have made that play last night? Absolutely. Even he called it an "easy play." But it served as a reminder that the best shortstop on the team, Edgar Renteria, was not on the field at the time.

... You aren't going to get many more chances to watch Trevor Cahill work this season, so take advantage of the opportunity tonight. He's got a pretty good chance at getting his 17th win tonight in Kansas City, and even if you're a Giants fans you should make some time to check out the first several innings on CSN California (Pregame Live! at 4:30 p.m.) before bouncing over to CSN Bay Area for Giants Pregame Live! at 6:30. Cahill is a 22-year-old in full flight right now. Well worth a quick watch.

... And finally, our "Why?" of the day: Why *wasn't* Renteria on the field? So Pablo Sandoval could be on the field? Against a left-handed starter? Ridiculous. Insanity is doing the same thing, over and over, and expecting the results to change.

That's all for which we have time today, folks. Peace, chilled red grapes dipped in a brown-sugar-and-light-sour-cream glaze, and "I'm a Slave 4 U" by Britney to all.

Pizarro: Tech Museum's new gallery puts spotlight on Silicon Valley companies

By Sal Pizarro, Mercury News, 9/11/2010

Silicon Valley is home to some of the most creative companies in the world, and now San Jose's Tech Museum of Innovation has a place for them.

Next week, the Tech is opening its Silicon Valley Innovation Gallery, created in collaboration with Intel, Google, Nvidia and Adobe.

The permanent exhibit on the museum's upper level shows off the companies' technology in fun ways.

You can experience a wraparound trip on Google Earth, guide a digital rocket sled through an environment you create or try your hand at some digital finger painting using a high-tech descendant of the Etch A Sketch.

The gallery opens to the public Wednesday, to coincide with the Zero One digital art festival next week.

"We really wanted to bring Silicon Valley to the Tech Museum, and we're going with big, big companies," Tech Museum President Peter Friess said.

GRANDPARENTS' TREAT: Sunday is National Grandparents' Day, and Happy Hollow Park & Zoo is celebrating by giving grandparents free admission from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. when they're accompanied by a grandchild.

For more information, go to www.hhpz.org or call 408-794-6400.

BASEBALL TRIBUTE: San Jose Fire Captain Doug Stewart will be throwing one of the ceremonial first pitches at today's Oakland A's game as part of a tribute to Bay Area firefighters.

Stewart has 48 years of service, and he'll be joined on the mound by two other long-tenured firefighters: Hollis Franks of Alameda County and San Francisco Battalion Chief Mike Morris.

BIG THANKS: Patty Humecke's family moved into their Willow Glen neighborhood back in 1963, when there were still plenty of cherry orchards on Curtner Avenue. Today, the family helped put together a block party/reunion for all the kids who grew up on Sweetbriar Drive plus the current generation of neighbors.

Humecke wasn't surprised by the permit rules the city requires these days to hold such an event -- even that the organizers need to have barricades to block the street. But when she contacted D&M Traffic Services on Reed Street to ask how much it would cost to provide the barricades, the answer did surprise her.

It turns out that for neighborhood parties like theirs, D&M donates the barricades. They just need to be picked up and returned.

Humecke is giving a big shout out to D&M Traffic Services today for their "small-town spirit."

"It's something I would have expected in 1963, but not today," she said.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Naturals Ride Seratelli To Game One Win

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

In game 1 of the Texas League Championship Series, the RockHounds out-hit the Northwest Arkansas Naturals, 9-8, but lost the game by a score of 7-2. Since the 'Hounds played errorless ball and walked just one batter, this would indicate that the Naturals got some very big swings of the bat. They did.

The Naturals, in fact, got four home runs, one of them from Texas League Triple Crown winner Clint Robinson. But Robinson's long ball was icing on the cake, scoring the seventh and final NW Arkansas run. The other homers came from far less "usual suspects."

Manny Pina's 2-run homer in the 2nd tied the game at 2-2, after the RockHounds scored twice in the top half of the inning to take the early lead. The next two swings came off the bat of the Bambino, Anthony Seratelli.

Seratelli hit a pair of 2-run homers. The first, off Graham Godfrey, broke the 2-2 tie in the 4th and the second (off reliever Paul Smyth) gave the Naturals a 6-2 lead in the 7th.

Seratelli's home runs were his 4th and 5th of the playoffs (he hit three in the North Division Championship Series against Springfield). This would be impressive on its own merit, but Seratelli hit just three home runs in 101 regular season games. His three homers came in 299 at bats, virtually 100 at bats per home run. His five in the post-season have come in 16 at bats.

The RockHounds missed a golden opportunity in the 5th. Trailing, 4-2, the 'Hounds loaded the bases with one out against NW Arkansas starter (and top 10 Kansas City Royals prospect) Danny Duffy, but couldn't cash in. The score remained 4-2 until Seratelli's second homer.

The series, delayed one day due to wet grounds, will continue Thursday night in Springdale, Arkansas. The teams will forfeit the scheduled travel day, bussing over night after game 2 and playing game 3 Friday night at Citibank Ballpark.