

A's News Clips, Monday, September 27, 2010

Oakland A's right-hander Trevor Cahill throws a little scare into his team during 16-9 loss to Texas Rangers

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Trevor Cahill got rocked by the Texas Rangers, but he came out of Sunday's game healthy, which is what A's manager Bob Geren cared most about.

In his second-to-last start of the season, Cahill (17-8) got tagged for a career-high 12 hits and seven earned runs in just four innings, as the Rangers outlasted the A's 16-9 in a slugfest that featured the teams combining for six home runs and 35 hits.

Cahill entered the day with an AL-best 1.63 ERA at home, but it was apparent early that his stuff didn't have its normal zip.

He surrendered five consecutive hits -- including Mitch Moreland's two-run homer -- during Texas' three-run third that made it 6-0.

During that inning, Geren and head trainer Steve Sayles made a trip to the mound after Cahill appeared to be hurting. It turned out to be a false alarm.

Cahill said his stuff was lacking -- "It was just one of those days" -- but he said he felt fine physically.

"(Catcher Kurt Suzuki) said I was acting a little funny, wincing after each pitch," Cahill said. "I do a lot of weird stuff. They've learned to look past it."

Not exactly.

Pitching coach Curt Young went to the mound in the third, with Geren and Sayles soon to follow.

"I thought I saw something on his face like he hurt something," Geren said. "Suzuki saw it too. ... We were way off, which was good."

Cahill and three relievers allowed 22 hits, tying an Oakland record for most surrendered during a nine-inning game. The 16 runs allowed were a season high. It meant little to the Rangers, who started just two regulars after clinching the American League West title the day before.

But the A's still have some motivation as they embark on a season-ending, seven-game road trip that begins tonight against the Los Angeles Angels.

They're two games ahead of the Angels for second place in the AL West, and they haven't finished higher than third since winning the division in 2006.

At 77-78, the A's are also trying to nail down their first winning record since 2006.

"We were eliminated from first (place), now the goal is second," Geren said. "To accomplish that, we're probably going to have to be .500."

But even Cahill said finishing second only holds so much value considering the ultimate goal was a division championship.

"Second place doesn't get you to the playoffs unless you get the wild card," Cahill said.

Then the soft-spoken right-hander flashed a little sarcasm.

"I don't think we'll be scoreboard-watching on the Angels."

Moreland homered twice and had five RBIs for Texas, and David Murphy and Jeff Francoeur each drove in four.

But the A's scored six in the eighth to close an eight-run gap to 9-7. That rally included Steve Tolleson's first big league homer, a three-run shot to left off Matt Harrison. The Rangers answered with a seven-run ninth off Henry Rodriguez and Ross Wolf.

The A's had no luck convincing the fan who retrieved Tolleson's home run ball to give it up.

"I signed a bat for him," Tolleson said. "Whether or not that gets the ball back, we'll see. If it means that much to him, he deserves it."

Oakland A's notebook: Rickey Henderson eyes promotion to big league staff

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Rickey Henderson spent the weekend in uniform with the A's and offered tips around the batting cage during the four-game series with Texas.

Henderson has served much of the season as a roving baserunning instructor in the A's farm system, but he said Sunday that ultimately he would love to become a full-fledged member of the A's coaching staff.

For sure, Henderson said he'd love to help the A's in some capacity again next season.

"It could be the same thing (as this year)," he said. "If they bring all of their coaches back, I respect that. Just give me the opportunity to be a little more free to help (the players) out and trust me to help them out and see how the players react to that."

Henderson is also the first to admit he requires more seasoning as a coach.

He served part of 2007 as the New York Mets' first-base coach, but that's his only experience on a major league staff.

While Henderson said his first choice would be to coach with the A's, he'd listen to offers from other teams.

"Ideally, that's my goal is (coaching) on a major league club," he said. "I'd rather it be with the Oakland A's. But if I can't do it here, maybe I might have to go somewhere to get a little more experience."

The A's 16-9 loss to the Rangers on Sunday may have been the final home game for second baseman Mark Ellis. The A's hold a \$6 million option on Ellis for 2011 with a \$500,000 buyout.

Manager Bob Geren pulled Ellis to start the seventh inning. But he first let Ellis take his position, so the Oakland Coliseum crowd could give Ellis an ovation as he left the field.

"He deserved to be taken off the field like that," Geren said. "The way he plays the game is similar to our fans' style -- hard core. He plays it right."

Ellis, who has been with the A's since 2002, reiterated his desire to stay and said he expects to have discussions with management regarding his option "next week."

Vin Mazzaro pitched four innings in relief of starter Trevor Cahill, allowing David Murphy's two-run homer for his only damage. ... Left fielder Chris Carter sat out with a sore left thumb but said he hopes to return tonight.

Chin Music: Chris Carter's left thumb acting up, he's day-to-day; other A's pregame tidbits

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/26/2010 12:37PM

It was moving day inside the A's clubhouse this morning, with players packing up boxes and getting ready to ship bats and other supplies to their offseason homes. The team hits the road for the final seven games starting tomorrow, and players aren't going to want to stick around and pack after the team charter lands in Oakland next Sunday night. Some might even fly home from Seattle.

–The only real news to report: Chris Carter's left thumb is bothering him again and he's out of the lineup. Bob Geren listed Carter as day-to-day and was hopeful he'd return tomorrow in Anaheim against the Angels. But this is the same thumb that caused Carter some DL time with Triple-A Sacramento in August, so we'll see whether it lingers.

Not surprisingly, lots of Texas regulars are getting the day off after the Rangers clinched the AL West on Saturday. Julio Borbon and David Murphy are the only true starters in the lineup. ... Sort of like a split-squad game in spring training ...

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

Rangers — Borbon CF, German 2B, Murphy LF, Francoeur DH, Davis 1B, Cantu 3B, Moreland RF, Blanco SS, Teagarden C, Lewis RHP.

Barney: Ken Burns returns to the ballpark with 'The Tenth Inning'

By Chuck Barney, Contra Costa Times

"Tenth Inning" is a two-part follow-up to Burns' 1994 epic, "Baseball," the most-watched program in PBS history. Generally dismissive of sequels, the acclaimed filmmaker decided to revisit the subject after observing the curse-busting 2004 World Series triumph by his beloved Boston Red Sox and the devastation wreaked by work stoppages and rampant abuse of performance-enhancing drugs.

Burns and co-director Lynn Novick deftly navigate all the highs and lows as they usher viewers through an epochal era for the major leagues -- an era that saw an influx of Latino and Asian players, the introduction of interleague play, playoff expansion, sparkling new ballparks and the superhuman feats of Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa.

Much of the focus is on those big boppers, who thrilled fans with a hailstorm of home runs, but also found themselves at the center of baseball's sordid steroid controversy. Bonds, in particular, is a key narrative thread and Burns takes a provocative approach to the enigmatic Giants star.

Rather than use broad strokes to paint him as a villain, he strives for context by attempting to understand why Bonds reportedly turned to performance-enhancing drugs to bulk up his body and his already stellar stats. The film posits that his decision was born of ego, pride and a burning frustration from seeing other, less-talented -- and supposedly juiced-up -- players hogging the spotlight.

So empathetic is Burns that he all but suggests steroid use was a logical step in baseball's evolution. After all, the game forever has fielded stars who sought an edge via spitballs, doctored bats or other means. Also, Bonds and players like him, Burns points out, were a product of their prosperous era, when so many Americans had dollar signs in their eyes.

Says comedian Chris Rock, "Who in the whole country wouldn't take a pill to make more money at their job?"

When "The Tenth Inning" isn't confronting thorny issues, it often basks in the kind of rhapsodic sentimentality that marks many of Burns' productions. A parade of lyrical writers and historians present baseball as poetry, religion and life blood all wrapped into one. You practically expect to hear James Earl Jones reprise his climatic speech from "Field of Dreams" with violins swelling in the background.

The film would have been better served by a greater reliance on men who actually play the game. (I'm sure Jose Canseco would have gladly blabbed on for hours). Unfortunately, they're in short supply here. Cerebral Burns would rather mingle with old standbys like George Will and Doris Kearns Goodwin.

I'm also convinced that many fans who live left of the Mississippi will detect an East-Coast bias. Yes, the Red Sox victory was a monumental achievement, and the New York Yankee dynasty absolutely deserves its props. But Burns, a native New Englander, spends an inordinate amount of time on these topics, while glossing over the achievements of other players and teams. (He does pay homage to the "Moneyball" era of the cash-strapped Oakland A's).

None of these complaints, however, should dissuade you from watching "The Tenth Inning," which, at least, hits a solid triple. As usual, Burns puts forth a dazzling spread of vintage clips and still photographs, and his love for baseball is palpable throughout. Fellow fans will appreciate how the film celebrates the resilience and enduring appeal of the game.

"The Tenth Inning," in fact, is so vivid, absorbing and ultimately uplifting, that one can only hope that Burns will return to the ballpark in future years as more history and drama unfold. After all, as Yogi Berra famously proclaimed, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

Wild one at the Coliseum

Rusty Simmons, Chronicle Staff Writer

Fans who came to the Coliseum on Sunday, thinking they were attending the A's home finale, ended up getting transported all over the country.

Or so it seemed.

Let's explain how the A's 16-9 loss in essentially a slow-pitch softball game to Texas transported 21,030 fans from Oakland, to Oklahoma City, to Phoenix, to Colorado and back.

The game seemed to start in Oklahoma City, home of the Rangers' Triple-A team. Texas had only two regulars in its lineup, but that didn't stop its farm club from clobbering Trevor Cahill, who allowed a career-high 12 hits and gave up seven runs in four innings.

"Nothing was really working for me," Cahill said. "I made some good pitches, and they hit those. I made some mistakes, and they hit those, too."

Trailing 9-1 in the seventh inning, A's manager Bob Geren took the fans to the team's spring training facility in Phoenix. He subbed out the entire infield, but waited until after warm-ups for Mark Ellis so that he could receive a nice ovation as he trotted off the field in what is possibly his last home game in Oakland. The A's used 20 players and the Rangers used 15, leaving scorecards looking like a Leonardo da Vinci notebook entry.

The A's reserves led the tour to Colorado for two innings of playing at altitude without humidor balls. Oakland scored eight runs in the final two innings, cutting the deficit to 9-7 with a six-run eighth.

Steve Tolleson hit his first major-league homer, a three-run shot on an 0-2 pitch, but Texas answered with seven runs in the ninth inning. "The ball really doesn't fly that well at this park," Tolleson said. "I've hit some balls in batting practice really well, and they haven't gone out. Once I realized this one went out, it was hard to hold back the smile."

The A's allowed a season high in runs, tied the franchise record for hits allowed (22) in a nine-inning game and snapped their home-series unbeaten streak at 11. The Rangers set a season high for runs, had their most hits in a game since smacking 29 in a 30-3 win at Baltimore in 2007 and used four relievers in the final two innings after leading 9-1 in the eighth.

Bailey feels 'amazing': Closer Andrew Bailey said by phone that he was at physical therapy at 8 a.m. the day after surgery to clean up his right elbow last week. Dr. James Andrews removed bits of bone chips and loose bodies, and he also removed scar tissue.

"It was all kind of beat up and irritating the joint," said Bailey, who had Tommy John surgery in 2005. "Dr. Andrews said everything looks great, and it's kind of amazing how good I feel. There's no pain, just some swelling."

Bailey should be pitching in three months.

Andrews showed Bailey the debris he removed. "It was in a little jar," Bailey said. "I wanted to keep it as a souvenir, but they wouldn't let me."

Briefly: Ellis said he plans to meet with the A's after the season to discuss the possibility of returning next year. "I love playing here and I'm interested in what they have to say." ... Chris Carter missed the game with a swollen left thumb. Geren said Carter is day-to-day with the injury that has been bothering him since his recall from Triple-A Sacramento.

Cahill's rough day a somber end to home slate

Rangers touch ace for career-worst 12 hits as rally falls short

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Trevor Cahill is a man of many aliases within the A's clubhouse. They call him the Baby-faced Assassin, Pterodactyl or simply Dactyl, for short.

No matter how you cut it, Cahill was the American League's most unhittable starter this season. Keyword: was.

In an unprecedented display, Cahill gave up seven earned runs on 12 hits to the Rangers on Sunday, as the A's fell, 16-9, in their final home game of the year.

"Nothing was really working for me," Cahill said. "I thought I made some good pitches and they hit those. Then I made some mistakes and they hit those. Can't really do anything about it, it was just one of those days."

For Cahill, who entered the game with the AL's best batting average against (.210), the 12 hits represented a career high. It was only the second time in 61 starts he gave up double-digit hits. Still, not even such a letdown could mar Cahill's brilliance in Oakland this year, where he went 11-3 with a 2.17 ERA in 15 starts.

From the first inning, Cahill struggled to find any consistency. He surrendered at least three hits in each of the first three frames and gave up a run in each of the four he finished. He is now 17-8 with a 3.08 ERA.

Cahill has thrown 197 1/3 innings between Oakland and Triple-A Sacramento this season, up from the 178 2/3 he recorded as a rookie last year. But Cahill said he wouldn't use the workload as an excuse.

"I think everybody's feeling a little tired," Cahill said. "Everybody's a little worn out from the long schedule, but I don't think you can point your finger at just that. Just one of those days where I just didn't have my stuff."

Of the dozen base knocks Texas racked up, 10 were singles and two were home runs. The first home run, a two-run shot by Mitch Moreland in the third inning, gave Texas a commanding 5-0 lead. The second dinger, a blast served up to Jeff Francoeur to lead off the fourth, put Texas ahead by seven.

"It was a lineup he hasn't faced all year," Texas starter Colby Lewis said. "It probably took him by surprise. It's late in the season and he's got a lot of innings. I don't know if that contributed to today. But for our guys to step up and play like that, it shows what kind of team we are."

If it sounds like Lewis is familiar with Cahill, he is. The two right-handers squared off five times this season, with the A's emerging victorious on four occasions. Lewis tossed six effective innings of one-run ball to finally defeat the A's.

Vin Mazzaro relieved Cahill in the fifth, giving up a pair of runs in four innings of work. Then the A's made things interesting in their half of the eighth.

Propelled by Steve Tolleson's first career home run, a three-run shot to left field, the A's rattled off a six-run, two-out rally to make the score 9-7.

"It's an exciting time," Tolleson said. "I think any player would tell you the first time they hit a home run in the Major Leagues is exciting, no matter what part of the game. The good thing is it got us back in the game for a little while. Unfortunately, we didn't hold it, but that's the way it goes sometimes."

Tolleson said he didn't know if the ball was gone once it left his bat. Tolleson said the fan who grabbed his ball didn't want to give it back, even though Tolleson sent the fan a signed bat.

"It's unfortunate, but hopefully that won't be the last one," Tolleson said.

But Texas wasn't to be outdone, returning the favor with seven runs in the top of the ninth to take a 16-7 lead. The game turned out to be a historically bad one for the A's, as the 22 hits allowed tied an Oakland record for a nine-inning game.

With the stinging defeat, the A's bid farewell to the Oakland Coliseum until next season. Whether the 2011 A's will still feature Mark Ellis is unknown. In a ceremonial gesture, A's manager Bob Geren pulled Ellis from the game after he took ground balls before the seventh inning. Ellis left to a hearty ovation from the Oakland faithful.

"It was a little embarrassing," Ellis said. "But it was nice of Bob to do that."

Ellis, 33, has played all eight of his big league seasons in Oakland, which holds a \$6-million club option for him next year. Ellis said he would be meeting with the A's to discuss his future shortly after the season, but that he has no expectations yet.

"I'm just going to listen to hear what they say," Ellis said. "It's really not up to me."

Given the rise of young middle-infield talent in the organization this year, including players like Tolleson and Eric Sogard, Ellis could be deemed expendable. Ellis admitted he got a bit nostalgic while playing possibly his final home game in Oakland.

"A little bit," Ellis said. "It's a little bit sad. There have been some really good times on this field."

Ziegler proud of positive signs from 2010 club

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Less than 24 hours after seeing the Rangers celebrate the American League West title on their field, the A's wrapped up their 2010 home schedule in Sunday's matinee. With Saturday's deflating 4-3 defeat, the A's extended their playoff drought to four years.

"For me, there's a lot of positive to come from this season," said A's reliever Brad Ziegler. "But it's also one of missed opportunities. When you finish this close to the playoffs, you look back and realize there are games that I personally could have pitched better. If I had executed a few more pitches, it might have made a difference in two or three games, and maybe even more. I'm sure everybody kind of looks back and feels the same way."

While Oakland should be proud to lead the AL in team ERA (3.57) and shutouts (16), it was never able to stray far from the .500 mark this season. But the team did form a new identity as a scrappy team that relies on pitching, defense, situational hitting and stolen bases.

Manager Bob Geren said he expects the team to keep the same offensive philosophy next season, while also saying the current pitching compares favorably to the A's vaunted staffs of the last decade. The way it looks now, the A's have another burgeoning big three in Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Brett Anderson, who have an average age of 23.

Alas, the team also went through its usual rash of injuries, using the disabled list 23 times this season, two trips short of the Oakland record set in 2008. The overwhelming sentiment within the clubhouse is the A's are close to becoming an elite team, but that they need to add some more pop to the lineup.

With no new stadium in sight, the A's will remain at the archaic Oakland Coliseum for the time being. The 2010 season was marked with consistently sparse crowds. Entering play Sunday, the A's ranked last in MLB attendance, averaging 17,467 fans a game.

"It's always tough to leave our fans here," Ziegler said. "Our fans are so passionate and our fans are so supportive -- the ones that come out."

Geren totes Barton's, Gio's significant growth

OAKLAND -- With the 2010 season coming to a close, A's manager Bob Geren discussed the development of two of his young regulars this season -- southpaw Gio Gonzalez and first baseman Daric Barton.

While Trevor Cahill has evolved from a 10-game winner as a rookie to one of the league's top arms, Gonzalez has made an arguably greater transformation. In his first two seasons of big league service, Gonzalez went 7-11 with a 6.24 ERA. This year, Gonzalez is 14-9 with a 3.35 ERA.

Though stuff has never been an issue with Gonzalez, he was finally able to harness his emotion on the mound this year. In years past, Gonzalez would often be undone by his fiery temper.

"He's improved that composure aspect of his game by 100 percent," Geren said. "He still has a way to go, but I think that with time and more experience, he's going to continue to get better at that. Stuff-wise, his command is better with all of his pitches."

Geren said he thought Barton made the most significant improvement this year. The 25-year-old first baseman, who shuttled between the big leagues and Triple-A last year, leads the American League in walks (106) while toting a .273 average and .394 on-base percentage.

Geren also tabbed Barton as a potential Gold Glove winner while praising him for being among the league leaders in games played this year. But Barton has yet to become a consistent power threat, something often expected from an everyday first baseman. Barton has just eight home runs and 51 RBIs in a full season of work.

"The best hitters that I've seen were ones that used the entire field when they're young, then learn to hit home runs when they get older," Geren said. "He could be on that type of track, it's a possibility."

Worth noting

A's top power-hitting prospect Chris Carter was held out of the starting lineup on Sunday with a sore left thumb, the same one that sidelined him for a couple of weeks earlier this month. Carter hit safely in the initial six games of the homestand, starting in left field each time and going 7-for-18 with a home run, two RBIs and three runs scored. He went 0-for-32 on the road to begin his career.

A's aim to continue strong finish against Halos

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com

When you're officially out of the postseason race while wrapping up a long season, it can be difficult to sit back and find positives that came out of the year.

For the A's, that isn't the case.

After finishing third or lower in the American League West the past three seasons, the A's will end this season in second place. There have been a lot of positives, but none more so than the pitching staff.

Trevor Cahill has evolved from a 10-game winner as a rookie to one of the league's top arms, and left-hander Gio Gonzalez also has made a huge leap, going 14-9 with a 3.35 ERA in 2010 after going 7-11 with a 6.24 ERA last season. Add Dallas Braden, who threw a perfect game earlier this season, and Brett Anderson, who has pitched well since returning from injury, and the A's don't have to worry about pitching in the near future.

"When you talk about 12 pitchers, that's usually what most teams have to go into the offseason trying to improve," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Being that that's such a premium and that's our strong suit, that's a real positive thing because that's the thing everybody needs."

Anderson will take the mound in Monday's series opener against the Angels, who have been on the outside looking in all year after winning the division five of the past six seasons. To oppose Anderson, the Halos will summon right-hander Ervin Santana, who has dominated Oakland throughout his career, going 12-3 with a 1.80 ERA. This season, Santana is 2-1 with a 4.24 ERA against the A's.

In his last outing, Santana set a career high with his 17th victory, a complete-game shutout. He's won four straight decisions, working six or more innings in 15 of his past 17 starts.

"It's an impressive performance for Ervin to have pitched as deep in games as he has," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said after Santana's last start. "He's had to grind out every win he's had, and he's done that. He's thrown the ball as well as we've seen him."

Athletics: Left thumb bothering Carter

Amidst a six-game hitting streak, A's top power-hitting prospect Chris Carter was held out of Sunday's starting lineup with a sore left thumb, the same one that sidelined him for a couple of weeks earlier this month. On the homestand, Carter went 7-for-18 with a home run, two RBIs and three runs scored. ... Anderson is 0-2 in three starts against the Angels in his career.

Angels: Aybar, Izturis could return

Los Angeles is holding out hope Erick Aybar and Maicer Izturis can return before season's end. Prior to Sunday's game, Scioscia said Aybar and Izturis remain day-to-day. An important aspect in getting Izturis back would be to give the infielder a better idea on how much he needs to improve during the offseason. "I think it's important at the end of the season to understand where you are physically," Scioscia said. "It gives him a baseline for the winter."

Worth noting

Oakland first baseman Daric Barton (6-for-19) is the only A's hitter batting above .300 in more than 15 at-bats against Santana. No current A's hitter has hit a homer off the Angels right-hander.

Rangers hit 4 home runs in 16-9 win over A's

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Rookie Mitch Moreland homered twice and drove in a season-high five runs, leading the AL West champion Texas Rangers past Trevor Cahill and the A's, 16-9, Sunday.

David Murphy hit a two-run homer and Jeff Francoeur added a solo shot as the Rangers won their third straight game. A day after clinching the division, Texas rested many of its regulars and still got a season-high 22 hits.

The Rangers led 9-1 before Oakland scored six times in the eighth. Texas came back with seven runs in the ninth to pull away.

Colby Lewis (12-13) gave up one run and six hits in six innings. He walked one and struck out six. Lewis won for the third time in his last four starts and has a 2.16 ERA in that span.

Lewis is set to start Game 3 in the first round of the playoffs. Cliff Lee will pitch the opener, followed by C.J. Wilson.

Cahill (17-8) failed to become the A's first 18-game winner in nine years on his first try. He gave up seven runs and a career-high 12 hits over four innings.

Moreland hit a three-run homer and two-run drive. Francoeur had three hits.

Steve Tolleson hit his first major league homer, a three-run shot in the eighth for the A's. Matt Carson homered in the ninth and Rajai Davis had four hits.

Cahill had 11 of his previous 13 decisions at home, and his 1.63 ERA at home was the lowest in the majors.

Jorge Cantu had three hits for Texas, Moreland was in an 0-for-9 slump before his third-inning home run and Julio Borbon is 11 for 21 during his current six-game hitting streak.

Moreland hit a three-run homer, Francoeur hit a two-run single, Esteban German singled home a run and Murphy walked to force home a run as the Rangers pulled away in the ninth.

Notes: German recorded his first major league hit since last October. ... A's IF Kevin Kouzmanoff ended an 0-for-12 slump which his career-best 32nd double. ...

Cahill entered the game with a career 6-1 record and 1.55 ERA against Texas in eight starts. ... Oakland OF Chris Carter missed the game with a sore left thumb. ...

Left-handed hitters are 0 for 15 against Rangers LHP Clay Rapada. ... Moreland recorded his first career multihomer game. ... The 22 hits allowed tied an A's opponent record in a nine-inning game.

Oakland pitchers mail it in for final home game of 2010, losing 16-9 to Texas

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

If the Oakland Athletics have nothing to play for but pride at this point, the 21,000-plus fans who showed up for the final home game of the season sure got a whiff of lacking character from the A's pitching staff.

With the best ERA in the American League, the A's pitchers took the day off mentally, giving up a whopping 22 hits and 16 runs to a Texas Rangers lineup full of backups, scrubs and Triple-A hitters.

With the 16-9 loss, Oakland finishes its home season with a 47-34 record -- but the team dropped back under .500 on the season, down to 77-78. With seven games left, the A's will have to win five of them -- on the road -- in order to reach 82 wins for the first time since 2006.

And if the pitching staff offers up anything resembling what it threw out there today, that's not going to happen.

In fact, it looked like the Oakland staff was attempting to give this one away -- right from the start.

Trevor Cahill -- a pitcher once considered to be a contender for the Cy Young Award -- gave up 12 hits and seven runs in just four innings of work. His ERA, once as low as 2.43 on the year, now resides at 3.08 after his third outing in the last six that he's given up at least six earned runs.

And it just went downhill from there.

Banished former starter Vin Mazzaro gave up two runs, reliever Henry Rodriguez gave up five runs without retiring a batter, and the last pitcher, Russ Wolf, gave up two runs as well.

The truly terrible part was after the A's offense scored six runs in the bottom of the eighth inning to draw back to a mere two-run deficit at 9-7, Rodriguez and Wolf came out in the ninth inning and promptly gave up seven runs to bury the team once again.

As a result of the poor pitching, Rangers hitters hit four home runs, went 8-for-18 with runners in scoring position, and *still* left 12 men on base.

And all that was with a lineup minus All-Star players Ian Kinsler, Michael Young, Josh Hamilton, Vlad Guerrero, et al. Bench players like Julio Borbon (three hits) and Andres Blanco (three hits) had banner days. Reserve catcher Taylor Teagarden entered the day with a .138 batting average, but he got two hits nonetheless.

In fact, the only Texas starter without a hit today was AAAA prospect Chris Davis -- he went 0-for-6.

Meanwhile, the A's offense finished strong, but to no avail. This was the first game in 2010 the Oakland offense scored seven or more runs in a losing effort.

It was shameful way to end the home season, and even the Dallas Braden Perfect Game Bobblehead giveaway wasn't enough to keep the fans from souring on the effort. Several homemade signs in the outfield bleachers made reference to the ownership group's bungling of the new stadium efforts.

And a disgruntled female fan sitting in the second deck behind home plate kept cheering, "Let's go, River Cats!", in reference to the A's farm team in Sacramento.

And that just about sums up the final glimpse of the Oakland Athletics at the Coliseum in 2010.

A's Lose, Rangers Clinch Division

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 9/26/2010

Oakland, CA – The celebration began when the Texas Rangers dugout cleared as players ran onto the field. The Oakland A's looked on in despair and were eliminated from the American League West contention after losing 4-3.

The victory on field was something the A's wanted to prevent, they put up a good fight but not enough to stop Texas from winning their first division title. It's been 11 years since the Rangers have clinched and they have Jorge Cantu to thank.

"It's a special feeling," Cantu said. "I have great teammates who support me, believe in me and what can be more perfect than this?" "I want to thank all of them, this is such a great feeling!"

Ending a streak of 83 plate appearances without a RBI, Cantu hit a solo homer off Michael Wuertz top of the eighth. The longest such streak to begin a career in Texas was now over and awarded in a big way.

Texas has led the AL West for majority of the season but were unsure on when they would reach their mile stone. Oakland kept pace trailing behind by seven games but could not acquire the winning steak needed to catch them.

"I've never managed a team that won anything," manager Ron Washington said. "When we commit, we can make anything happen, these guys had to learn on the job unlike the veterans of years past."

Through cigar smoke and champagne being sprayed all over the locker room, players and coaches remained humbled. With eight games left in the season they know there's more baseball left to play.

"We have a lot of guys going through this for the first time," first base coach Gary Pettis said. "This is what hard work comes from so, we have every reason to celebrate this win." "These guys paid attention to detail and that's why we're enjoying this moment right now."

The A's locker room was somber and silent. The loss put Oakland back to .500 where they have spent most of the season, 21 times since the All-Star break and a record 32 times this year.

Now the attention shifts to their first winning record under manager Bob Geren. At 77-77 they want to end in second place which would be the highest finish since 2006.

Lefty Gio Gonzalez got off to a rocky start when he pitched six innings giving up a leadoff double to Ian Kinsler, who quickly scored on a single from Cantu. Gonzalez allowed seven hits, two runs (both earned), three walks, two strike outs and one home run.

"Hopefully we won't be in this spot next year," Gonzalez said. "Today was just one of those games where you try to keep your team in the game." "I tired to do my best to go deep in the game and I wanted to make sure it wasn't an easy battle for them."

It wasn't an easy win by far, both teams battled throughout the entire game. Kurt Suzuki hit an RBI single bottom of the first to give the A's the lead but the Rangers responded immediately tying the game 1-1 with Michael Young's home run in the third frame.

Rangers hero Cantu hit a single RBI to take the lead back in the sixth. Then it was Cliff Pennington who gave Oakland hope when he tied the game 3-3 with a two-run homer off Clay Rapada in the seventh. But Cantu's home run in the eighth put Texas back on top for the win.

"At the time, down two, hit a home run, tying it up was nice," Pennington said. "But in the end, it wasn't enough."

Athletics' Krol Wins Midwest League ERA Title In Debut

By Casey Tefertiller, Baseball America 9/16/2010

Best Player: Shortstop Grant Green had always been an inside-out hitter with Southern California, knocking the ball to right and center. But the Athletics wanted their 2009 first-round pick to rework his swing so he could add more power to his game.

Green responded with aplomb for high Class A Stockton, batting .318/.363/.520 with 20 homers and 39 doubles in 548 at-bats. The A's believed Green could develop power when they drafted him 13th overall in 2009, but even they were surprised it developed so quickly.

Farm director Keith Lieppman said that Green began his career with a professional outlook. "The consistency is what I notice," he said. "I see it in his daily routine, his batting practice, his work ethic. Everything that you would sort of expect from a more seasoned guy, not a first-year player."

Green also progressed on defense and projects to play up the middle, either at second base or short.

Best Pitcher: Scouting director Eric Kubota so liked lefthander Ian Krol that he kept going after him, even when negotiations did not seem to be progressing with last year's seventh-round pick.

Krol spent most of his debut season with low Class A Kane County and went 9-4, 2.65 with a 0.99 WHIP in 24 appearances. He led the Midwest League in ERA, WHIP and fewest baserunners per nine innings (9.2). In a four-start finish with Stockton, Krol fanned 20 in 20 innings.

"He's able to consistently pitch ahead in the count," Lieppman said. "He's extremely aggressive with a tremendous mound presence and a competitive edge about him. When hitters face him, they know they're in for a battle."

The 6-foot-1 lefty sits in the low 90s and his changeup could become a plus pitch. To ease the transition to pro ball, Krol lived at home with his parents in Naperville, Ill., while playing for Kane County.

Keep An Eye On: During last year's instructional league, Steve Parker demonstrated that he had the capacity to learn quickly and develop fast. Specifically, he made major improvements at third base and started adjusting to the wood bat.

Those developments continued this season when he moved to Stockton and hit .296/.392/.508 with 21 homers and 98 RBIs in 524 at-bats.

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- Stockton catcher Ryan Ortiz, a sixth-round pick from Oregon State in 2009, was considering surgery for his ailing right shoulder. He was limited to 58 games on the year, none after July 28, but he showed promise in batting .277/.394/.479 in 188 at-bats.
- Triple-A Sacramento's Chris Carter suffered a sprained thumb at the end of August and missed the final 10 days of the season. He clubbed 31 home runs during the regular season and one more in the Pacific Coast League playoffs.