

## A's News Clips, Monday April 11, 2011

### Matsui hits first homer as A's beat Minnesota

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times

MINNEAPOLIS—"Godzilla" left his biggest footprint yet in an A's uniform Sunday.

Though the A's had many contributors in a 5-3 victory over the Minnesota Twins at Target Field, Hideki Matsui's first homer as an Athletic was the most welcome sight for a team that has sputtered offensively.

Matsui sent a fourth-inning pitch from Scott Baker rocketing off the facing of the second deck in right-center. The solo shot broke a scoreless tie and ushered in a hitting onslaught—at least by recent A's standards.

Oakland broke out for four runs in the sixth, including Josh Willingham's third homer, to provide a 5-0 cushion. That was enough to withstand a late Twins' rally, and the A's took two of three over the weekend to claim their first series victory of 2011.

Matsui entered the day hitting just .160, and nobody epitomized the A's offensive struggles more than their designated hitter. He struck out with the bases loaded in Saturday's victory and generally has looked out of sync going back to the start of spring training.

"You knew it was going to come," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That ball jumped out in a hurry. That got everyone on the bench excited."

The A's had combined for just four runs over their previous three games. Sunday, they added the hitting to complement another fine pitching effort.

Brandon McCarthy (1-0) allowed two runs over 7 1/3 innings for his first major league victory since Sept. 8, 2009. Both runs scored after he left the game.

Over the last four games, A's starting pitchers have allowed five earned runs and two walks over 29 1/3 innings.

Matsui, who went 2 for 4 and scored twice, expressed relief at getting his first homer. But he was even happier about his team breaking out the bats.

"I think what was good was that the offense came through," Matsui said through a translator. "The starting pitching was pitching pretty well and wasn't getting that support."

McCarthy is one pitcher who hasn't been shortchanged in the runs department. In his first start, the A's scored six times on 13 hits against Toronto.

"So far I've been the big beneficiary," McCarthy said, before smiling and adding, "They must like me more than the other guys."

Matsui put several balls in the seats during batting practice Sunday morning, and Geren said Matsui has looked good in batting practice.

Whether he can carry it over into games consistently is big for the A's, who signed Matsui to a one-year, \$4.25 million deal in December.

Willingham, who bats cleanup ahead of Matsui, is another key hitter.

His sixth-inning solo shot off Baker traveled an estimated 427 feet, landing deep in the walkway beyond the first deck of the left field bleachers.

"It's really nice to see the middle of the lineup swinging the bats well," second baseman Mark Ellis said.

Willingham's first season in the American League has been interesting so far. He's hitting .242 and entered Sunday tied for the AL lead with 13 strikeouts. But he also has three of the A's four homers to go with a team-high six RBIs.

Willingham's homer gave the A's a 2-0 lead. Landon Powell also doubled in a run and Kevin Kouzmanoff and Cliff Pennington added sacrifice flies.

When Matsui followed Willingham's homer with a single, it snapped a string of 36 innings that the A's had gone without recording hits in consecutive at-bats.

## **A's Dallas Braden, Minnesota's Mark Buehrle meet in match up of perfect game pitchers**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS -- Dallas Braden and Chicago White Sox pitcher Mark Buehrle have more in common than a perfect game on their resumes.

Both lefties rely on craftiness and pitch location more than overpowering stuff.

They'll oppose each other Monday night at U.S. Cellular Field, the 21st time in major league history that two pitchers who have thrown perfect games will start against each other.

Braden doesn't get caught up in the historical significance, but he'll be watching closely when Buehrle takes the mound.

"He's a guy I looked to, especially early in my career, for how to get outs," Braden said before the A's 5-3 victory over the Minnesota Twins. "He's a guy who pitches to contact. That's the reason I watch him and don't watch old clips of Randy Johnson. I watch a lot of (Buehrle), Jamie Moyer "... crafty guys."

Braden notched the 19th perfect game in major league history on May 9, 2010 against the Tampa Bay Rays. Afterward, he received a congratulatory phone call from Buehrle, who threw his perfect game on July 23, 2009, also against Tampa Bay.

"I'm venturing to say this matchup is going to be a far cry from perfection," Braden said. "I'm not a math major, but the numbers say I got mine out of the way already."

Brandon McCarthy scattered nine hits over 7 1/3 innings to get Sunday's victory, striking out five and walking none.

That makes back-to-back strong starts for the lanky right-hander, who signed a one-year, \$1 million deal with the A's in the offseason and won the fifth starter's spot.

"I like his game," catcher Landon Powell said. "He commands the plate and rarely throws anything right over the plate. He's got a sinker and cutter and throws both for strikes, and a curve ball to finish."

Powell started behind the plate with Kurt Suzuki getting his first day off. Center fielder Coco Crisp also rested, with David DeJesus sliding over to center and Ryan Sweeney making his first start of the season in right field. Sweeney doubled and scored in a four-run sixth.

Jerry Blevins allowed Jim Thome's two-run homer in the eighth, the 590th homer of Thome's career. A's manager Bob Geren chose Blevins over Craig Breslow when he needed a lefty reliever, saying afterward that Blevins has been sharper lately.

## **Chin Music: David DeJesus hits leadoff, Ryan Sweeney in right field for series finale vs. Twins**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/10/2011 10:22AM

So far, so good on the weather at Target Field. It's windy and cloudy, but no sign of rain moving in as the A's wrap up batting practice. First pitch is 1:10 p.m. local time, and forecasts call for a 25 percent chance of rain by 3 p.m. ...

Kurt Suzuki and Coco Crisp are each getting their first days off today, with Landon Powell behind the plate and Ryan Sweeney drawing a start in right field. David DeJesus shifts over to center field and is batting leadoff. Manager Bob Geren said he likes Sweeney's strong arm in right field, and that Sweeney and DeJesus are about equal in center field defensively. DeJesus is no stranger to the leadoff spot, having made 636 starts there over his seven-plus major league seasons. He's batted first far more times than any other spot in the lineup.

Geren raved about the drives Hideki Matsui was hitting in batting practice this morning. But the A's need this guy to start doing it in games. He's hitting just .160 with no homers and three RBIs. Geren wouldn't say if Matsui would start Monday

against White Sox lefty Mark Buehrle, but he did say right-handed hitters Conor Jackson and Andy LaRoche would. Don't be surprised if one of them serves as DH tomorrow – or perhaps Josh Willingham – with Matsui sitting.

The lineups:

A's: DeJesus CF, Barton 1B, Willingham LF, Matsui DH, Sweeney RF, Ellis 2B, Kouzmanoff 3B, Powell C, Pennington SS; McCarthy RHP.

Twins: Span CF, Mauer C, Morneau 1B, Thome DH, Young LF, Kubel RF, Cuddyer 2B, Valencia 3B, Casilla SS; Baker RHP.

## **Matsui, McCarthy lead A's past Twins, 5-3**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

- Getting a terrific starting performance isn't unusual for the A's, but on Sunday, it was the new guy, Brandon McCarthy, and he got what the other Oakland starters have seen little of: run support.

DH Hideki Matsui and outfielder Josh Willingham hit no-doubter homers and then the run-challenged A's continued to add on in a 5-3 win over the Twins.

"Exactly what we needed," Oakland second baseman Mark Ellis said of the home runs. "Some instant offense."

With the bats finally working, the A's took a series for the first time this season, and Oakland has won three of its past four games overall, despite a mostly missing offense. The team leads the league in starters' ERA, at 2.47, but in the A's previous four games, they'd hit .187 and averaged 1.7 runs per game.

In fact, the last time the team had done much damage was in McCarthy's season debut; the A's also scored five runs while he was on the mound that day.

"It's nice, so far I've been the big beneficiary," McCarthy said, adding with a grin of the offense, "I think they like me better than the other guys. I've got a better personality."

Matsui entered the day with the lowest average of the A's regulars, at .160, with zero home runs for his new team. But he was crushing the ball in batting practice Sunday, putting one over the seats in right and onto the plaza outside and then one 10 runs up in the upper deck in right center. In the fourth inning Sunday, he did it for real, with his first regular-season homer for Oakland, a solo shot to deep right.

"I wasn't doing anything special," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon when asked about what he'd been working on. "In batting practice, I was feeling pretty good out there, and (in the game) I was just able to put a good swing on a pitch that caught the plate."

"You knew it was going to come," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That ball jumped out in a hurry. That got the bench pretty excited."

Willingham hit his third homer in nine games, a colossal drive to left in the sixth that stayed just fair before disappearing into an open area between the stands.

"Willingham hit one out of the stadium," Geren said.

"It made a pretty loud sound," said Matsui, who was on deck.

The A's continued to tack on that inning, a real shift from their norm. Matsui singled, Ryan Sweeney doubled and Mark Ellis walked to load the bases. Matsui came in on a sacrifice fly by Kevin Kouzmanoff, Landon Powell doubled in Sweeney and Ellis scored on a sacrifice fly by Cliff Pennington. Sweeney and Powell were making their first starts of the season.

"The starting pitching has been really good, and they weren't quite getting offensive support," Matsui said. "It's good to see the offense come together like this."

## **A's Brandon McCarthy picks up 1<sup>st</sup> win since 2009**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Before Sunday, the last time Brandon McCarthy had won a big-league game was Sept. 8, 2009, but the right-hander downplayed that fact Sunday, calling it "just another game, another opportunity."

Finally healthy after years of trouble with stress fractures in his right shoulder, McCarthy is using his super control and excellent movement to good effect, going 7 1/3 innings Sunday and allowing nine hits and two runs while striking out five, mostly with curveballs.

"That's our fifth starter. ... We're doing all right," second baseman Mark Ellis said.

McCarthy hadn't worked much this spring with backup catcher Landon Powell, who was behind the plate Sunday. To prepare, Powell went through McCarthy's previous outing, pitch by pitch on video, then sat with McCarthy on Saturday night and discussed all of the Twins' hitters with him as the game went along.

On Sunday, Powell said, McCarthy was commanding both sides of the plate, hitting both corners and sinking and cutting the ball. "Brandon never threw anything over the plate," Powell said. "I know as a hitter that makes it a frustrating day."

McCarthy threw 107 pitches, and in the eighth, he said, he was tiring a bit and losing some sink. With one out, he gave up a single to Denard Span and a double to Joe Mauer.

Geren replaced McCarthy with left-hander Jerry Blevins, who gave up an RBI groundout to Justin Morneau, ending a string of 16 shutout innings by Oakland. Then Jim Thome hit a monster homer to center to cut the A's lead to two.

It was career homer No. 590 for Thome, who also hit a three-run blast off Blevins in Minneapolis last August; Blevins said it was the same pitch, a fastball.

Geren said that left-hander Craig Breslow was available but that Blevins had moved ahead of him because he'd had the better outings lately.

Briefly: Andrew Bailey might throw off the mound today, according to Geren. ... David DeJesus has a 25-game hitting streak against the Twins. He started in center Sunday, led off and reached base three times. ... Conor Jackson and Andy LaRoche are likely to be in the lineup tonight against left-hander Mark Buehrle. ... Dallas Braden will go for the A's. Tonight's matchup will be the 21<sup>st</sup> time that two men with perfect games to their credit will face each other.

## **Drumbeat: Different looking lineup for A's, Coco Crisp gets day off**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Target Field 4/10/2011 10:34AM

It's just a day off for Coco Crisp today, according to manager Bob Geren, day game after night game, plus Crisp had started every other game. As Geren said yesterday, Landon Powell and Ryan Sweeney are in the lineup. This is David DeJesus' first start in center and batting leadoff for Oakland.

Here's the lineup behind Brandon McCarthy: DeJesus cf, Barton 1b, Willingham lf, Matsui dh, Sweeney rf, Ellis 2b, Kouzmanoff 3b, Powell c, Pennington ss.

Hideki Matsui hit some absolutely monster shots in batting practice. I know, I know, it's only batting practice, but still, these were shots you don't usually see then, either - one went over the seats in right and onto the plaza beyond, and the other went about 10 rows up in the top deck in right center.

Pertinent stats today: A's batting average is .226, starters' ERA is 2.47.

Good news on Andrew Bailey: He might throw off the mound tomorrow.

## **Big flies back McCarthy as A's top Twins**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/10/2011 6:45 PM ET

MINNEAPOLIS—Hideki Matsui should probably rewrite the check he was supposed to leave on his manager's desk on Sunday morning.

After the A's designated hitter splattered a handful of home runs into the right-field bleachers during batting practice before the club's series finale against the Twins, skipper Bob Geren playfully told Matsui, "Pay us for all those balls," and jokingly suggested a check be written.

Less than four hours later, Matsui showcased the same swing, launching a ball to right field off Minnesota starter Scott Baker for his first home run as an Athletic. The veteran slugger collected another hit in an eventual four-run sixth as Oakland's bats came alive and starter Brandon McCarthy tossed seven-plus impressive innings in a 5-3 victory at Target Field.

It marked the A's first series victory of the season, as they inched closer to the .500 mark by improving to 4-5 following five games that have been decided by a combined six runs.

Matsui entered Sunday's contest 4-for-25 (.160) over his first seven games, but also with a career .321 mark against the Twins—his best average against any team.

"I'm just happy to get one in and to also have a win," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon. "My batting practice has felt pretty good. As for today, I was just able to get some good pitches."

"You knew it was going to come, and to see that performance from him today," Geren said, "that ball jumped out of here. He got the bench pretty excited."

Matsui's long ball was the first of two for the A's off Baker, as Josh Willingham led off the sixth with his third homer of the year—a deep shot to right field that jumpstarted a much-needed offensive rally for a club that had scored just seven combined runs over its last four games.

"The most important thing was getting the offense going," Geren said. "To come out of here with two out of three, you gotta be happy. And to have three of the last four, not swinging that well, is a positive, because you know we're going to be swinging the bats better than we have, like today."

Willingham's homer was followed by back-to-back hits—a single from Matsui and a double off the bat of Ryan Sweeney, who went 1-for-3 with a walk in his first start of the season on Sunday. Righty Jeff Manship, in relief of Baker, walked Mark Ellis to load the bases for Kevin Kouzmanoff, whose sacrifice fly scored the A's third run of the game.

Landon Powell, who also received his first start, notched an RBI double to make it 4-0 and, after lefty Glen Perkins was brought in, Cliff Pennington extended Oakland's lead to five with a sac fly to center.

"That's exactly what we needed, some offense like that," Ellis said.

McCarthy, meanwhile, continued the team's string of dominant pitching, scattering nine hits over 7 1/3 frames, and striking out five Twins and walking none en route to garnering his first big league win since Sept. 8, 2009 at Cleveland, a 10-5 victory when he was a member of the Rangers.

The feat never really crossed McCarthy's mind until he heard a few rumblings around the clubhouse. The right-hander did realize, though, that he's been the biggest offensive beneficiary thus far, as he's had five runs of support in each of his two starts.

"I think they like me more than the other guys," he joked. "It's nice that we're scoring a bit and put together a consistent rally like that, and hit for some power. Those are things that are going to come around as the season goes along. We just have to be patient."

McCarthy needn't be patient on the mound. The 27-year-old hurler works quickly, and on Sunday he compiled 12 ground-ball outs and just one flyout in a 107-pitch effort, while the Twins left five on base.

"He stayed away and he mixed his pitches up," said the Twins' Michael Cuddyer. "We didn't help ourselves out too much. But he made pitches when he needed to make pitches."

"Any time I go out there, [command] has got to be one of my strong points," McCarthy said. "I have to be able to hit my spots and move the ball around. I did a pretty good job of that today and was able to stay consistent."

He held the Twins scoreless through the first seven innings before tiring and offering up consecutive hits to Denard Span and Joe Mauer with one out in the eighth. That put runners on second and third for reliever Jerry Blevins, who made it interesting with a three-run outing, highlighted by Jim Thome's two-run shot that was estimated at 444 feet.

McCarthy was saddled with two of the runs, but his 3.52 season ERA means A's starters have a 2.47 mark—the result of just 17 earned runs in 62 innings.

Grant Balfour closed out the eighth by getting Delmon Young to fly out, and Brian Fuentes garnered his third save of the season, and second in as many days, with a scoreless ninth frame.

"Having to come back for a day game and be as sharp as he was, I was happy to see that," Geren said of his closer. "He's a veteran guy and he said he could go, and he did a good job."

Oakland, winner of three of its last four games, now heads to Chicago for a three-game set against the White Sox to close out a nine-game, three-city road trip.

"It's really nice to get a series win, to get some positive momentum going," McCarthy said. "We're pitching well and starting to put some runs together, which is important."

## **Matsui shows positive signs in series finale**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

MINNEAPOLIS—Following Hideki Matsui's 0-for-3 night on Saturday, including striking out with one out and the bases loaded in the seventh, A's manager Bob Geren said he wasn't worried about his struggling slugger.

"He'll be all right," Geren said. "He's been through it before. I'm sure he's had plenty of ups and downs in his long career. We know he has confidence, and I have confidence in him."

Matsui took those words of encouragement and proceeded to tally his first home run as an Athletic on Sunday in his second at-bat of the game against Scott Baker, against whom he entered the contest with a .364 average.

"I'm just happy to get one in and to also have a win," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon. "My batting practice has felt pretty good. As for today, I was just able to get some good pitches."

Matsui entered Sunday's contest 4-for-25 (.160) over his first seven games. He's a .267 career hitter in April with 20 home runs and 101 RBIs—all of which represent his lowest figures for any month.

The A's designated hitter is a notorious slow starter, and his sluggish beginning follows a spring in which he hit just .169. But on Sunday, he put all of those numbers aside and went 2-for-4.

"You knew it was going to come," Geren said.

Sweeney, Powell get first starts of season

MINNEAPOLIS—Looking to get his club its first series win of the season, manager Bob Geren shook up his lineup in Sunday's finale against the Twins, handing Ryan Sweeney and Landon Powell their first starts of the 2011 campaign.

Geren also inserted David DeJesus into the leadoff spot while giving Coco Crisp his first day off. DeJesus played center and Sweeney, a former lineup regular, manned right field, where he made 76 of his 77 starts last year.

"It's good to see Ryan in there," Geren said. "I think both Sweeney and DeJesus are pretty equal in center, but Ryan's arm in right brought it that way."

The 26-year-old Sweeney, who has a bench role alongside Conor Jackson, had started each of the previous three A's openers before this year and was batting a team-leading .294 with one homer and 36 RBIs in 82 games last season before undergoing season-ending right knee surgery at the end of July.

Sweeney is considered the club's best left-handed option off the bench, given his career .298 average against righties. In comparison, he owns a .248 mark when facing left-handers. He entered Sunday's contest with a career .200 average against Twins right-handed starter Scott Baker, but that number spanned just five at-bats.

Powell, meanwhile, had never faced Baker, but Geren said the backstop couldn't be more mentally prepared for his start behind the plate, as he carefully watched video of each pitch from starter Brandon McCarthy's last outing.

DeJesus' standing at the top of the lineup marked his 641<sup>st</sup> career start in the leadoff hole, where he owns a career .294 mark and .807 OPS, with 54 home runs, 290 RBIs and 40 stolen bases in 2,540 at-bats.

"He's the second-most experienced guy in that spot," Geren said. "Anywhere in the top of the lineup, he's done it."

DeJesus has hit safely in each of his four games during the road trip (5-for-16) after going 1-for-12 in three games in Oakland, and he also has a 24-game hitting streak against the Twins. Overall, the A's outfielder is 108-for-340 (.318) vs. Minnesota.

Worth noting

Closer Andrew Bailey (forearm) might throw off the mound in Chicago on Monday for the first time since going down to injury March 14, manager Bob Geren said. ... Fellow rehabbing hurler Rich Harden is scheduled to toss live batting practice on Monday. ... Craig Breslow hasn't appeared in a game since April 2, but Geren says he's fine. Jerry Blevins, Geren said, has been ahead of him right now in the line of lefties out of the bullpen based on recent performance. ... By going 2-for-4 with a walk on Sunday, David DeJesus has now hit safely in 25 consecutive games against the Twins, dating back to Sept. 11, 2008, when he was still with the Royals.

## **Braden, Buehrle face off in perfect matchup**

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com | 4/10/2011 6:00 PM ET

For only the 21<sup>st</sup> time in Major League history, two pitchers who have thrown perfect games will start against one another Monday when Oakland's Dallas Braden faces Chicago's Mark Buehrle.

Braden and Buehrle each tossed their perfect games against the Rays, with Braden's coming on May 9, 2010, and Buehrle tossing his on July 23, 2009.

The last time two pitchers with perfect games on their resumes squared off was April 24, 2007, when Arizona's Randy Johnson faced San Diego's David Wells. On that day, both Johnson and Wells struggled—each allowing more than five runs and lasting only five innings—with Wells earning the victory.

Despite their perfect moments, Braden (0-1, 6.43 ERA) and Buehrle (1-0, 7.36 ERA) have struggled in their early outings this season. In his season debut against the Blue Jays, Braden allowed five runs on 10 hits in seven-plus innings.

Braden got in trouble early, allowing a first-inning homer, but wasn't too disappointed in his his debut.

"I left one pitch north of the border, and it ended up farther north of the border. That's how that goes," Braden said afterward. "I think seven ups and downs is not a bad way to start the year, but when your team goes out and gets you the lead, you want to sustain it. It doesn't matter if it's a 1-0 lead or 2-1 lead, you want to go out and hold it, and that didn't happen."

Buehrle put the White Sox in a three-run, first-inning hole in his last start, but escaped with a no-decision after Chicago fought back for a win over the Royals. Buehrle lasted only five innings, allowing five runs on six hits.

In 26 career games (22 starts) against the A's, Buehrle is 4-13 with a 3.90 ERA.

Athletics: Looking for offensive answers

Oakland's five-run performance Sunday came at the perfect time. Entering Sunday's games, the White Sox were tied with the most runs scored (56) in the Majors, while Oakland's 24 runs were the fourth fewest in baseball. A's manager Bob Geren said the club has been taking extra swings in the cages and getting in more batting practice time to offset the offensive woes, which he hopes are close to being cured.

"They're scoring a lot of runs," Geren said of Chicago. "Either we have to match them in that capacity or pitch the way we've been pitching to shut them down, or both."

- Hideki Matsui went 2-for-4 with a home run Sunday, so Geren proved correct in his pregame statement that he wasn't at all worried about Matsui, who entered Sunday hitting .160 (4-for-25). "He'll be all right," Geren said. "He's been through it before. I'm sure he's had plenty of ups and downs in his long career. We know he has confidence, and I have confidence in him."

White Sox: Short-term six-man rotation a possibility

With Phil Humber's performance Saturday (one run in six innings) and Jake Peavy's pending return, White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper said a six-man rotation might happen.

"Overall, long term? No," Cooper said. "Short term, one time here or there, giving our starters an extra day depending on the schedule with off-days and rainouts, it's certainly something that has popped in my mind. Let's just say the first time through we have a lot of games in a row, and maybe we would think about it. I like thinking out of the box. Everyone gets an extra day and has a chance to catch your breath. It's a long season, and you want guys sprinting across the finish line, not falling across."

- Adam Dunn, who missed his fifth straight game Sunday following an appendectomy, took batting practice prior to the game and said he felt fine. "It was good to get out of solitary confinement and hang out with the general population, you know what I mean?" Dunn said. "I feel better than I did yesterday, which is good."
- Peavy will make his next rehab start Wednesday at Triple-A Charlotte, and Cooper said Sunday he expects the right-hander to make three more rehab starts before he returns to Chicago. Cooper added that Peavy likely will throw around 80 pitches in his outing.

Worth noting

The White Sox have led in all nine games this season. ... Chicago's Buehrle (Gold Glove) and Alexei Ramirez (Silver Slugger) received their 2010 awards during a pregame ceremony on Sunday. ... Oakland won last season's season-series against the White Sox, 5-4.

## **A's snap out of offensive funk to beat Twins 5-3**

JON KRAWCZYNSKI, AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — [Hideki Matsui](#) homered to help the Athletics break out of a season-long offensive slump and [Brandon McCarthy](#) pitched into the eighth inning in Oakland's 5-3 victory over the [Minnesota Twins](#) on Sunday.

McCarthy (1-0) allowed two runs and nine hits with five strikeouts in 7 1-3 innings and [Josh Willingham](#) also went deep for the A's, who took two of three from Minnesota in the Twins' first home series of the season. [Brian Fuentes](#) earned his third save.

Justin Morneau had three hits and an RBI for the Twins and [Jim Thome](#) hit his first homer of the season. But their three-run eighth was too little, too late in another slow day for the offense.

Scott Baker (0-2) gave up four runs on seven hits with two walks and five strikeouts in five innings.

Landon Powell had two hits and an RBI and the A's scored four runs in the sixth inning — they scored four total in their previous four games — to take a 5-0 lead.

The way the Twins had been swinging the bats, that lead seemed insurmountable. But McCarthy gave up a single to [Denard Span](#) and a double to [Joe Mauer](#) to start the eighth. After Morneau drove in Span with a groundout, Thome launched his two-run homer off lefty [Jeremy Blevins](#) over the 36-foot high wall behind the center-field fence to make it 5-3.

Fuentes, who has not allowed a run to the Twins in seven career appearances, slammed the door in the ninth to close it out.

Oakland entered the game with just 24 runs in eight games, the third-fewest in the [American League](#). Yet even they were ahead of the Twins, who had 21.

Twins manager [Ron Gardenhire](#) pulled out all the stops to try and jump-start his struggling lineup, moving [Michael Cuddyer](#) from right field to second base and giving Mauer a rare day game behind the plate.

On paper it looked quite formidable with Mauer hitting second followed by Morneau, Thome, [Delmon Young](#), [Jason Kubel](#) and Cuddyer against a right-handed pitcher, ideal for Minnesota's lefty-heavy lineup.

But McCarthy chewed them up all game long, pounding the strike zone and recording 11 groundouts.

The series featured both good pitching and anemic offense, with the teams combining to score 12 runs in the three games. Runs were at such a premium that when Matsui's homer slammed off the scoreboard on the facing of the second deck in right-center, the hometown fans let out a groan as if the game had ended right there.

Willingham led off the sixth with a towering home run to left field that traveled an estimated 427 feet. [Kevin Kouzmanoff](#) and [Cliff Pennington](#) added sacrifice flies and Powell had an RBI double to make it 5-0.

NOTES: Thome's two RBIs gave him 1,629, moving him past [Harold Baines](#) for 29<sup>th</sup> on the career list. ... Mauer received his 2010 Gold Glove before the game. ... The Twins also honored the [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#) men's hockey team, which won the national championship Saturday night with an overtime victory against Michigan. ... [Ryan Sweeney](#) got his first start of the season for the A's, going 1 for 3 with a double while playing right field.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Miller's monster home run propels Sacramento**

By Alexandria Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

River Cats center fielder Jai Miller hit a three-run home run to left-center field to give Sacramento an early lead en route to an 11-3 victory over Tacoma on Sunday afternoon at Raley Field.

Miller's blast landed on the Raley Field clubhouse - traveling about 430 feet - and gave the River Cats a 3-2 lead. Sacramento went on to score four more runs in the inning and added three more in the third inning for a 10-2 lead.

"Any time we can put up that many runs against a team like that, it feels good," said River Cats first baseman Wes Timmons, who went 2-for-4 with two RBIs and a walk.

Grass Valley native and Nevada Union High School graduate Gary Daley Jr., who was called up from Single-A Stockton earlier in the day, allowed three runs over 5.0 innings to record the victory.

Daley began his outing by walking Dustin Ackley, who was driven in by a Matt Tuiasosopo single. Alex Liddi later scored Greg Halman (double) with a sacrifice fly. Daley then got out of the first inning with a double play. He allowed only one more run over the next four innings, working out of several jams.

The River Cats offense made an impression on the Rainiers right-hander Chaz Roe in the second inning. Wes Timmons walked and Adrian Cardenas singled to open the inning, setting up Miller's three-run blast. After Adam Heether singled and Chris Carter walked, Matt Carson scored Heether with a single. Anthony Recker was then hit by a pitch, setting up a two-run single from Timmons. After Cardenas was hit by a pitch, Miller walked to force in the seventh run of the inning.

That River Cats momentum continued throughout the game. Daley escaped the third inning without allowing any more hits. Right-hander Willie Eyre replaced Daley after five innings in which he allowed five hits and three runs while hitting two batters.

Miller finished the game 2-for-3 with five RBIs and two walks.

Sacramento, which next hosts Las Vegas from Monday through Thursday at Raley Field, earned a four-game split with the Rainiers.

### **Haviland loses no-hit bid in seventh**

04/10/2011 9:15 PM ET

By John Parker / Special to MLB.com

A's prospect Shawn Haviland picked up right where he left off last season, taking a no-hitter into the seventh in his Double-A debut Sunday as the Midland RockHounds beat the Springfield Cardinals, 6-5, in 10 innings.

Haviland was a California League postseason All-Star with Stockton last year and twice was named the circuit's Pitcher of the Week in August. He won his last three decisions to finish 9-6 with a 3.69 ERA.

The 25-year-old right-hander retired the first seven Cardinals before issuing a walk to Nick Derba. He set down the next 11 straight before Ryan Jackson led off the seventh with a single to right. Former Texas League All-Star Tyler Henley followed with a triple to break up the shutout, but Haviland recovered to retire the next three batters.

"I had a pretty good fastball tonight," the former 33rd-round Draft pick said. "I was able to locate it throughout the zone, up and down, and get inside on some of their hitters."

The Harvard University product needed only 74 pitches -- 49 were strikes -- to get through seven innings. He ultimately allowed one run on two hits and a walk while striking out four.

"My pitch count was actually 90 coming into the game, but they didn't want me to have that many [inning warmups]," Haviland said. "I still felt strong, but I knew I was done after the seventh."

Despite the stellar outing, Haviland did not earn the victory as Springfield stormed back to tie the game with four runs in the ninth. Pinch-hitter Mitch Canham's double in the 10th drove home Stephen Parker to give the RockHounds their fourth straight win to open the season.

Designated hitter Matthew Sulentic led the 'Hounds, going 4-for-4 with an RBI double. Jeremy Barfield went 2-for-4 with a solo homer and scored three runs, while leadoff man Jermaine Mitchell tripled and singled twice.

"It's pretty exciting to start off the season the way we have," Haviland said. "I wouldn't want to pitch against our lineup the way some of our guys have been hitting the ball."

Jackson and Henley had two hits apiece for the Cardinals.

Reliever Trey Barham (1-0) got the win, despite walking a and throwing a wild pitch while recording one out.

Ramon Delgado (0-1) took the loss after allowing a run on three hits and a walk over 1 1/3 innings.

## **Hounds Fight Back To Sweep Travs**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The season's first post-game fireworks show was on the schedule for Saturday night at Citibank Ballpark. Mother Nature let the fans down; the RockHounds didn't. High wind and extremely dry conditions cancelled the fireworks, but the 'Hounds put on a show of their own for the 6,079 fans.

Thursday and Friday, the 'Hounds came from behind to defeat Arkansas, each time breaking a 2-2 tie and going on to a lop-sided win. Saturday, it took a 2-run eighth inning to complete a third straight comeback win, this time in a game in which the RockHounds trailed early, 4-0.

Grant Green's 2-out single in the eighth drove in Mitch Canham with the tying run and moments later, Jermaine Mithcell (who went from first to third on the Green single), scored on a wild pitch. The win gave the RockHounds a sweep of the three-game series.

Canham, the former San Diego Padres farm hand, acquired by Oakland at the end of Spring Training, had a critical 2-run single in the sixth, drawing the 'Hounds to within 4-3. The former Oregon State University star, who played in San Antonio the past two seasons, scored one run and drove in two others in his first game in a RockHounds uniform.

The game's two biggest hits each came after on 0-2 count, and each with two out. Canham's 2-run single in the sixth came on an 0-2 pitch and Green's eighth inning hit came on a 1-2 pitch.

Mike Trout, the Los Angeles Angels' top prospect (and considered perhaps one of the top two prospects in the game) busted loose, going 2-for-4, including a 2-run inside-the-park home run in the top of the third. His drive toward the left field corner deflected off the wall, and Trout made it home cleanly, using his outstanding speed. Trout also drew a walk and stole second in the ninth inning, but was stranded thereat game's end.

The RockHounds bullpen had an outstanding series. Jonathan Ortiz, Paul Smyth and Fautino de los Santos combined to pitch no-hit, shutout ball over the final 4.2 innings.

Ortiz, in his Double-A debut, entered the game in the fifth with the RockHounds down, 4-1, two on and one out. He would retire 7-of-the-8 batters he faced over 2.2 innings. Smyth pitched a scoreless eighth, and de los Santos was electric in the ninth. Touching 97 on the radar gun (unofficially) and mixing in a couple of knee-bending sliders. Fautino earned his second career svve and first at the Double-A level. He walked Trout with two out, but then struck out Darwin Perez with a mid- 90's fastball, striking out the side and ending the game.

Statistical Note: The three-game, season-opening series between the 'Hounds and Travs produced a Grand Slam (Michael Spina) ... Trout's inside-the-park HR ... and four triples.

The RockHounds welcome in the Springfield Cardinals at 4:00 PM on Sunday afternoon. Shawn Haviland will make his first Double-A start for the 'Hounds, as Springfield sends Deryk Hooker to the hill (another player making his Double-A debut).

## **Ports Pitching Holds Strong In 2-1 Win**

Stocktonports.com

MODESTO, Calif. - Pitching was the order of the day on Sunday afternoon at John Thurman Field. After an offensive outburst on Saturday night, the Ports and Nuts locked horns in a pitcher's duel in the season's first matinee, with the Ports emerging victorious in a 2-1 decision.

Ports starter Ryan Doolittle (1-0) and Nuts starter Parker Frazier (0-1) dueled in a scoreless ballgame through the first four innings. Doolittle at one point retired nine straight hitters, and Frazier retired the first eight batters he faced to open the contest.

Stockton, however, would break the ice in the top of the fifth. Mitch LeVier drew a walk to start the inning and Anthony Aliotti and Jonathan Johnston knocked back-to-back singles to load the bases with nobody out. Michael Gilmartin came up next and hit into a fielder's choice that scored the game's first run. Dusty Coleman followed with a sac-fly to center to make it a 2-0 Ports lead.

Frazier would take the loss, going five innings and allowing two runs on three hits while walking two and striking out one.

Doolittle tossed five scoreless innings in his Cal-League debut, earning the win while allowing just two hits and striking out four.

Scott Deal followed in Doolittle's footsteps, coming out of the bullpen and hurling two scoreless innings. Deal allowed a one-out triple to Kent Matthes in the seventh but didn't allow him to score. Gilmartin, Stockton's second baseman, made a terrific diving stop on a ball hit by Eliezer Mesa to end the seventh inning and keep Modesto off the board.

Jose Guzman (SV, 1) came on to start the eighth and set the side down in order. After retiring the first two batters in the ninth, Guzman gave up a solo home run to Mike Zuanich to make it a 2-1 ballgame. Zuanich finished the series an eye-popping 9-for-14 with six extra-base hits (three home runs and three doubles). Guzman, though, would get Matthes to pop to short to end the ballgame and preserve Stockton's second straight win.

Modesto's relief tandem of Alan DeRatt and Mike Marbry combined for four scoreless innings of relief down the stretch for the Nuts.

After splitting their opening weekend series with Modesto, Stockton's road trip continues with a three-game series in Visalia beginning on Monday night at Recreation Park. Murphy Smith (0-0, 0.00 ERA) will make his season debut for the Ports. First pitch is set for 7 p.m. PDT.

## **Bees Win 4-3 in 10 Innings**

By Jon Versteeg, BURLINGTONBEES.COM

CLINTON, IA- The Burlington Bees (3-1) scored a run on a throwing error in the 10<sup>th</sup> inning to earn a 4-3 win over the Clinton LumberKings (1-3) on Sunday afternoon at Alliant Energy Field Clinton scored a single run in the first inning against Burlington RHP Blake Hassebrock. RF Julio Morban (4-5) reached on a fielder's choice and moved to second base on a passed ball. DH Mickey Wiswall (1-4) hit an RBI single to score Morban.

Burlington scored two runs in the second inning to take a 2-1 lead. DH Yordy Cabrera (0-5) reached base on a fielder's choice. RF Royce Consigli (4-5) singled Cabrera to second base. 2B Ryan Pineda (1-4) walked to load the bases. Cabrera scored on a wild pitch and Consigli crossed home plate on a passed ball.

The Bees scored an insurance run in the sixth inning. SS Wade Kirkland (1-5) singled and stole second base. Consigli ripped an RBI single to score Kirkland and make it 3-1.

Clinton scored single runs in the eighth and ninth innings. SS Anthony Phillips (1-4) hit a solo home run against LHP Jeff Urlaub in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning to tie the score at 3-3.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> inning Kirkland reached base on a fielder's choice. A balk by Clinton RHP Tyler Blandford (0-1) moved Kirkland to second base and pinch-hitter Jose Rivero (0-1) hit a ground to Phillips, who threw wide of first base to allow Kirkland to score and make it 4-3.

The Bees open up the home portion of their schedule on Monday night against the Peoria Chiefs at 6:30 p.m. The first one thousand fans through the gates at Community Field will receive a free magnet schedule sponsored by Mazzio's Italian Eatery. Peoria will start RHP Graham Hicks (1-0, 1.80 Vermont Lake Monsters/1-6, 5.27 Hagerstown Suns in 2010) against LHP Jacob Brown (2-3, 1.82 Vancouver Canadians 2010). Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com.