

A's News Clips, Thursday, April 14, 2011

Oakland A's rally past Chicago White Sox in 10 innings

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times

Many adjectives --- most of them negative -- have been used to describe the A's offense in recent years.

Add "unpredictable" to that list.

The A's rallied for three runs in the top of the ninth inning to tie the Chicago White Sox and scored three in the 10th to claim a 7-4 victory in front of 16,523 fans at U.S. Cellular Field on Wednesday afternoon.

That washed away eight innings of futility against left-hander John Danks, who held Oakland to five hits and surely left the game thinking he had a victory in his back pocket.

Instead, the A's came back from a 4-1 deficit against a White Sox bullpen that has six blown saves in 12 games.

The victory capped a 5-4 road trip for the A's. It evened their overall record at 6-6 and pulled them to within three games of first-place Texas in the American League West.

Most important, the A's have steadied the ship after a 1-4 start.

"There's no panic button in here," Conor Jackson said. "To pull this out, it turned it from a decent road trip into a really good road trip."

Jackson started the game in right field but finished at third base. It was just his third major league appearance at the position, but a series of late-game substitutions left manager Bob Geren scanning down his depth chart for a capable third baseman.

Center fielder Coco Crisp, who didn't start because of back tightness, ran for Hideki Matsui in the ninth and scored the tying run on Cliff Pennington's two-out, two-run single off Matt Thornton (0-2).

Crisp, as the A's DH, then delivered the go-ahead single in the 10th.

Not to be overlooked, four A's relievers held Chicago to one unearned run over the final 4 1/3 innings.

"You look at how many guys entered the game," Geren said. "It was probably the biggest team win we've had in a long time."

The A's beat the White Sox 2-1 in 10 innings Monday and lost 6-5 in 10 on Tuesday. This marked the first time they've gone extra innings in every game of a three-game series since taking two of three from Texas on June 17-19, 1988.

Matsui's solo homer in the fourth accounted for the A's only damage against Danks, who induced three double-play grounders.

But Jackson's leadoff double got things rolling in the ninth against Chris Sale. Josh Willingham's RBI single made it 4-2, but it looked as if the A's might squander a golden opportunity with the bases loaded and no outs.

Kurt Suzuki struck out swinging against Jesse Crain. Then Geren pinch-hit Ryan Sweeney for Andy LaRoche. White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen countered by bringing in the hard-throwing Thornton for a lefty-on-lefty matchup.

Sweeney struck out, but with the A's down to their last out, Pennington jumped on the first pitch and singled to center, scoring Willingham and Crisp.

Pennington entered Wednesday hitting .160 with one RBI. He hadn't started the previous two games and has been bothered by an infected sweat gland under his left arm.

"You've got Thornton throwing 97 miles per hour," Pennington said. "I wanted to get a fastball I could hit. Luckily it fell in."

Thornton allowed one-out walks to Jackson and Willingham in the 10th before Crisp's go-ahead single and Daric Barton's two-run single.

"I don't have any closer. I don't," Guillen told Chicago reporters in his postgame rant.

A's update: Crisp contributes off bench

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

CHICAGO -- Coco Crisp began Wednesday watching from the dugout because of back tightness, but he played a pivotal role in the A's 7-4 win over the Chicago White Sox.

Crisp left Tuesday's game after hurting his back when he hit the turf while making a catch in center field. A's manager Bob Geren said Crisp was feeling about the same Wednesday morning as the night before, so David DeJesus started in center Wednesday.

But with the A's trailing 4-2 in the ninth, Crisp ran for Hideki Matsui. Showing no ill effects from his back, he scored the tying run from second base on Cliff Pennington's two-run single.

Crisp stayed in the game as designated hitter and singled home the go-ahead run in the 10th off Matt Thornton. That represented the first right-handed hit of the season for the switch-hitting Crisp, who's 4 for 23 over his past six games.

"It was a case where, in the best-case scenario, he would run," Geren said. "But he smiled and said, 'I'm ready.' He got a big hit, too."

Crisp was in no mood to discuss his condition, turning his back on reporters when asked how he felt.

Matsui said he felt his swing rounding into form on the nine-game road trip. He hit .290 (9 for 31) with six RBIs and his first two homers of the season. That's lifted his average to .262. Matsui's homer Wednesday came off left-hander John Danks. He hit just .236 with seven of his 21 homers against lefties last season with the Los Angeles Angels. Matsui hit .289 against right-handers.

Brett Anderson started and went 52/3 innings Wednesday, allowing three runs (two earned) and nine hits. His error on Juan Pierre's slow comebacker led to Chicago's first run in the fifth.

Thursday's opener against the Detroit Tigers has been moved from CSNCA to CSN Plus to accommodate the Sharks' playoff broadcast.

Chin Music: Crisp sits with back soreness as A's try to clinch winning road trip

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/13/2011 10:27AM

Today feels like one of those "swing games" for the A's, where the outcome really shapes how you look back on this road trip. A win leaves them at 5-4, which would be a nice accomplishment for a challenging nine-game trip early in the year. A 4-5 finish wouldn't be terrible, but the A's don't want the momentum from their three-game winning streak to evaporate completely. Brett Anderson takes the ball after his sharp eight-inning effort last time out against the Twins ...

—Coco Crisp is not in the lineup — his back is still bothering him. A's manager Bob Geren said Crisp felt about the same as he did last night when he left the game for a pinch hitter, so he's getting some rest. No indication right now that this is anything to be alarmed about.

Daric Barton gets his first day off, with Andy LaRoche playing first base. Barton played in 159 of 162 games last season, and I think he could benefit from a few more off-days. But is it best to sit a guy when he's coming off a four-hit night? Geren said it was a tough call, but added that Barton's body was in need of a break. "He could use a day."

—A couple of relievers knocked some rust off last night. Craig Breslow made his first appearance in 10 days, and Brad Ziegler hadn't thrown in six. That's a tough gig for guys who've been off that long to enter a tight game and be sharp. Breslow, who finished the fifth in relief of Trevor Cahill, was mad at himself for walking the leadoff man in the sixth, which led to the Sox's tying run. Overall, Geren said he was pleased with how Breslow and Ziegler looked, and that they'd be called on more frequently. With A's starters pitching deep in games, a few relievers are bound to have long layoffs. But I wouldn't expect Breslow to get that much inactivity moving forward. His performance is a key to this bullpen's effectiveness, especially with Andrew Bailey and Michael Wuertz on the DL.

Wuertz, by the way, is scheduled to throw a simulated game Thursday at the Coliseum. If that goes well, he would pitch in a minor league game Saturday. So it looks like his return won't be far off.

Enough rambling, here's the lineups ...

A's — DeJesus CF, Ellis 2B, Jackson RF, Willingham LF, Matsui DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Suzuki C, LaRoche 1B, Pennington SS; Anderson LHP.

White Sox – Pierre LF, Beckham 2B, Dunn DH, Konerko 1B, Quentin RF, Rios CF, Ramirez SS, Castro C, Morel 3B; Danks LHP.

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Crisp helps A's rattle White Sox' wobbly bullpen

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Coco Crisp didn't start Wednesday because of tightness in his lower back, but by the end of the afternoon he was the one causing the White Sox pain in the A's late comeback.

Crisp pinch-ran and scored the tying run during the A's ninth-inning rally at U.S. Cellular Field, and in the 10th, in his first at-bat of the day, Crisp drove in the go-ahead run with a single to center. Oakland went on to win 7-4, taking the series two games to one. Each of the games went 10 innings, the first time that has happened in an A's three-game series in the team's 111 years.

"A great team win," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Everyone possible contributed one way or another."

The A's trailed 4-1 going into the ninth, but Conor Jackson - who spent the final two innings playing third base - opened the inning with a double off left-hander Chris Sale. Josh Willingham singled him in, and Hideki Matsui, whose homer in the fourth gave the A's their first run, also singled and was replaced by Crisp.

Daric Barton pinch-hit for Kevin Kouzmanoff against reliever Jesse Crain, a right-hander, and he walked. With two outs, shortstop Cliff Pennington, who'd missed Tuesday's game with an infected sweat gland under his left arm - it was later drained - knocked a single to center off Matt Thornton, pushing in Willingham and Crisp.

"That's what we have to do as an offense," Pennington said. "Scratch and claw and battle our way through."

"I just loved the attitude," Geren said. "Guys kept fighting to the end. It was going to take some hits and drawing some walks, and they did it. And knowing (Chicago's) bullpen is struggling gives you a little bit of hope."

White Sox relievers have blown saves in six of the team's first 12 games; manager Ozzie Guillen called them "a bad bullpen" after the game.

In the 10th, Thornton walked Jackson and Willingham with one out before Crisp whisked a single to center, scoring Jackson; it was Crisp's first hit of the season batting right-handed. Then he stole second, and Barton drove in Willingham and Crisp with a base hit to center.

Though reporters waited to speak to Crisp, who was receiving treatment up until the team bus was about to leave, he declined comment, so it's unclear on how he's feeling.

Geren said that when he put Crisp in to run, he was hoping for the "best-case scenario," in which Crisp wouldn't have to bat. "But he smiled and said he was ready," Geren said. "He got a big hit, too."

With Barton pinch-hitting for Kouzmanoff and Ryan Sweeney pinch-hitting for Andy LaRoche, the A's had no backup third basemen, so Jackson moved in from right field. He'd played two games there before, two innings total, in August 2007 with Arizona.

Jackson, who got no chances at third, said he'd been taking grounders there for several days in case this situation arose, but he doesn't even have a glove; he borrowed LaRoche's on Wednesday. Asked how he felt at the position, Jackson grinned and said, "It's an adventure."

The A's went 5-4 on their first road trip, and they're 4-0 in the final game of each series this season.

"It's just unbelievable to pull something like that off," Jackson said after the latest series-finale win. "That's momentum. There's a huge carryover into a sense of 'we can do anything.' "

A's Anderson happy to get a lift from his bullpen

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

For the third start in a row, **Brett Anderson** pitched well and did not get a victory, but on Wednesday he was happy to get a no-decision, as his teammates came back from three runs down in the ninth to tie the game, then won in the 10th.

Anderson went 5 2/3 innings and allowed nine hits and three runs (two earned), walked one and struck out three. He described the outing as "not nearly as good" as his previous start, in Toronto.

He's improved his fielding a great deal, so Anderson was disappointed that he'd made an error in the fifth inning. When trying to field **Juan Pierre's** comebacker, Anderson's foot slipped on the clay of the mound and the ball went between his legs. Pierre scored on a double by **Gordon Beckham**, an unearned run.

The A's bullpen did strong work in relief of Anderson, going 4 1/3 innings and allowing no hits and one unearned run (the result of an error by third baseman **Kevin Kouzmanoff**, who had another off day in the field).

Anderson has received no more than one run of support in nine of his past 20 starts, including three in a row.

Briefly: After manager **Bob Geren** pinch hit lefty **Ryan Sweeney** for righty **Andy LaRoche** in the ninth, White Sox manager **Ozzie Guillen** made a second trip to the mound and replaced righty **Jesse Crain** with lefty **Matt Thornton**. Geren went out to discuss Guillen's move with home plate umpire **Dan Iassogna**, and when asked about it after the game, Geren said he'd had questions about the timing of the move. Geren described it as "just a little confusion," and he said that the move was right. ... Geren did not have **Daric Barton** in the lineup though the first baseman had four hits the night before. Geren said he felt Barton needed a day off with a day game after a night game. Barton walked as a pinch-hitter in the ninth and singled in two runs in the 10th. ... LaRoche got his first start at first base, and he now has started at each infield spot in the A's first 12 games.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Waking up: Hideki Matsui hit his second homer of the season, a solo shot off left-hander John Danks, and he went 5-for-13 with three RBIs in the White Sox series. He was 1-for-24 against them last year.

Drumbeat: A's Coco Crisp out with back stiffness, day off for Barton

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at U.S. Cellular Field, 4/13/2011, 9:32AM

Coco Crisp's lower back is still tight, so he's out of the lineup today, and more surprisingly, so is first baseman Daric Barton, who had four hits last night and looks like he's finally getting on a roll.

Manager Bob Geren said that that wasn't an easy decision, given Barton's good game, but he felt that Barton could use a start off, especially with a day game after a night game. He'd played in every game, and last year he was a workhorse, appearing in 159 games.

So it's Andy LaRoche at first base in the series and road-trip finale. LaRoche has now started at every infield position in the A's first 12 games.

Cliff Pennington is back at shortstop; he had that infected sweat gland drained, yuck, and he said he's fine.

Here's the lineup behind Brett Anderson: DeJesus cf, Ellis 2b, Jackson rf, Willingham lf, Matsui dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Suzuki c, LaRoche 1b, Pennington ss.

Craig Breslow did give up a run last night, but Geren said it was his best outing and he was encouraged by Breslow's performance and by Brad Ziegler's. I asked if Breslow might return to a more regular role (last night was his first appearance in 10 days) and Geren said yes, although of course that does depend on how deep the starters go in game - the bullpen as a whole has seen little work except for primary set-up man Grant Balfour and closer Brian Fuentes.

Rich Harden has not resumed throwing and he'll get checked out by team doctors tomorrow. The lat muscle under his right arm is still bothering him two months after the fact.

A's storm back, beat White Sox in extras

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/13/2011 7:42 PM ET

CHICAGO -- On the very first day of Spring Training, A's manager Bob Geren told his players that they best be prepared to not only play close games but win them.

Following Wednesday's 7-4, 10-inning comeback victory against the White Sox and subsequent series victory, Geren reveled in recalling that moment, as well as several similar ones that have come since.

"We talked to them about how many close games we played last year," he said. "We wanted them to know how important situational running and hitting is, how big defense is. I told them we had good pitching and that we anticipated a lot more close games.

"We talked about it right before this series again. The guys, early on in the season, can see how important every little piece of the game is. They're taking it to heart."

Before Wednesday's winning escapade developed, it had been nearly 23 years since the A's had played extra innings in each contest of a three-game set.

In an exaggerated sense, it almost felt just as long since the A's had done much of anything with runners in scoring position, as they entered the day's series finale with an American League-worst .186 average in such situations.

So when they were forced to stare down a three-run deficit heading into the ninth inning, having entered the contest with a combined .230 average, they didn't exactly have the best of odds on their side.

Still, they put Geren's words into action, scoring three apiece in the ninth and 10th innings, claiming their second straight series victory and finishing their first road trip of the season with a respectable 5-4 record.

"Unbelievable," Conor Jackson said. "To pull something like that off, that's momentum, hands down. It's huge having that mindset of 'We can do anything.' The way we've been scoring late in games, if we can only play in the eighth and ninth innings, we'd be a force."

The A's are now 2-2 in extra-inning games this season following a 2010 campaign that saw them go 4-7 in such contests.

Having managed just five hits off Chicago starter John Danks through the first eight innings, an extra inning didn't appear likely for Oakland. But the A's quickly jumpstarted a rally off reliever Chris Sale in the ninth on a leadoff double from Jackson and an ensuing RBI single from Josh Willingham.

A Hideki Matsui base hit forced Sale out of the game, and Jesse Crain entered to face pinch-hitter Daric Barton. The A's first baseman, who was handed a day off following a career four-hit night, picked up a free pass off the Chicago right-hander. Kurt Suzuki and pinch-hitter Ryan Sweeney proceeded to strike out, dimming the lights on a comeback, but Cliff Pennington kept it alive against Matt Thornton via a two-run single to right-center, tying the game at 4.

"With Thornton on the mound throwing 97 miles an hour," Pennington said, "I was just looking for a fastball I could hit."

"First pitch fastball," Thornton said. "[He] just dropped it in."

A go-ahead RBI single from Coco Crisp broke open the game in the 10th, and a two-run base hit by Barton padded Oakland's lead.

Crisp didn't start the game because of lower back tightness and, in a best-case scenario, Geren said he only hoped to use the outfielder as a pinch-runner.

"But he smiled," Geren noted, "and said, 'I'm ready.'"

"This went from a decent road trip," Jackson said, "to a really good road trip."

The dramatic finish left A's starter Brett Anderson off the hook with what was going to be his second loss of the season following 5 2/3 innings of work.

Coming off a complete-game loss in Minnesota, the lefty held Chicago scoreless through the first four frames and carried a 1-0 lead into the fourth, courtesy of Matsui's solo shot, his second, to right-center off Danks.

The fifth proved troubling for Anderson, though, as he committed a one-out fielding error on a one-hopper from Juan Pierre and proceeded to offer up an RBI double to Gordon Beckham to tie the game.

The A's southpaw, looking to limit the damage, did just that, garnering two quick outs before unraveling again in the sixth, when he granted a leadoff walk to Carlos Quentin and a double to Alex Rios.

Anderson solidified out No. 1 on an Alexei Ramirez ground ball, but, with runners on second and third, Ramon Castro hit a ground ball to third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, who threw home with no chance of a play to make it 2-1 and leave runners at the corners.

Brent Morel set down a sacrifice bunt to extend Chicago's lead to 3-1, and, following a Pierre base hit, Anderson was replaced by lefty Craig Breslow, who forced a popout from Beckham to end the two-run inning.

"It wasn't nearly as good as my first two outings, but I kept us in the ballgame against a good pitcher," Anderson said. "It's funny how baseball works. I go eight innings and give up two runs and get a loss last time, and then I come out here and do this and we win."

The young southpaw was tagged for three runs total -- two earned -- and nine hits, one walk and three strikeouts in the no-decision. Oakland's bullpen quartet of Craig Breslow, Brad Ziegler, Grant Balfour and Brian Fuentes combined to surrender just one unearned run -- on a Kouzmanoff throwing error -- to solidify the team victory.

"Love the attitude," Geren said. "The guys kept fighting right til the end. It was going to take stringing some hits together, getting some walks, and they did it. Just a great team win, and to have this one finish [the trip] off, it's a real good feeling."

"You look at how many guys entered in the game, everybody contributing positively in one way or another, it was probably the biggest team win I can remember in a long time."

Crisp does not start, collects game-winner

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Coco Crisp was held out of Wednesday's series finale against the White Sox while still recovering from lower back tightness that first surfaced in Tuesday's game.

At least that was the plan.

The A's outfielder entered the game in the top of the ninth as a pinch-runner for Hideki Matsui and ultimately plated the go-ahead run in the 10th inning, as the A's picked up a 7-4 victory in Chicago.

After the win, manager Bob Geren said he had hoped he would only have to use Crisp in a running situation, but Crisp told him he was available late in the game for any and all needs.

The A's outfielder was 1-for-4 in Tuesday's 6-5 loss before being pulled in the top of the 10th, when Josh Willingham was inserted into the lineup as a pinch-hitter.

Crisp initially felt back discomfort after diving for a fly ball in the outfield earlier in the game, and A's manager Bob Geren said Wednesday morning that he "feels about the same as last night."

The 31-year-old veteran is 3-for-22 (.136) over the last five games since opening the season riding a five-game hitting streak and a .333 average.

In Crisp's place, David DeJesus was moved to center field and batted leadoff, while Willingham started in left and Conor Jackson got a start in right field against White Sox lefty John Danks.

Barton gets partial day of rest after big night

CHICAGO -- Less than 24 hours after tallying a career-high four hits, A's first baseman Daric Barton was given the day off on getaway day in Chicago.

Barton had recorded four hits just one other time in his career -- Sept. 26, 2009, at Anaheim -- and entered Wednesday 11-for-40 (.275) with eight walks on the season. Even more, he hadn't committed an error since making three miscues in as many days to start the season.

Manager Bob Geren cited no physical problems for Barton, simply saying, "He could use a day." Barton had started each of the club's first 11 games, following a grueling 2010 campaign in which he played in 159 contests.

"It's tough to give him one after what he did last night, but if there's a day to do it, today's the day," the A's skipper said. "I'm just glad he's feeling great, and hopefully that will continue to carry over."

It did, and sooner than Geren thought. Barton was inserted in Wednesday's game in the top of the ninth to pinch-hit for Kevin Kouzmanoff, and he walked to continue a three-run comeback rally. After the A's went ahead, 5-4, in the 10th, Barton was also responsible for two insurance runs courtesy of a two-run single that extended Oakland's lead to 7-4.

Barton is a career .285 hitter in April, representing his second-highest monthly mark. He's hit .287 in September.

Utility player Andy LaRoche got the start at first base on Wednesday, and he's now started six games this season at four different infield positions.

Jackson sees action at third in wild win

CHICAGO -- In a strange series of events on Wednesday, all of which led to a 7-4 extra-inning, A's comeback victory, Conor Jackson made just his third career appearance at third base in the bottom of the ninth.

"It was an adventure," Jackson said with a smile.

Jackson, utilizing Andy LaRoche's glove, didn't have to make any plays, but it was enough of a job feeling relaxed out there. Asked if he felt comfortable, he smiled and said, "Sure."

A's manager Bob Geren was forced to insert Jackson at third base after removing Kevin Kouzmanoff and LaRoche -- playing first -- from the lineup in the top of the ninth inning for pinch-hitters Daric Barton and Ryan Sweeney, respectively. In the bottom of the frame, Barton resumed first-base duties and Sweeney went to right field.

Jackson, carrying backup outfield duties this year, has a handful of experience at first base, but hadn't appeared at the other infield corner since August 2007. It was then, while with the D-Backs, he played third base twice in a span of one week.

"A few days ago, they sat me down and gave me the heads-up that it could be a possibility I would have to play there occasionally," he said. "So I've been taking ground balls and getting my work in there."

"Conor took it to heart," Geren said. "He's been working a lot over there."

Worth noting

- Shortstop Cliff Pennington returned to the lineup Wednesday after missing two games because of an infection in the sweat gland under his left arm.
- Rich Harden (lat muscle) will be evaluated by a doctor in the Bay Area on Thursday to determine his next step. The A's right-hander was shut down Monday before he was scheduled to throw live batting practice because of the same soreness that's bothered him for two months.
- Closer Andrew Bailey (forearm) will undergo his next bullpen session on Thursday in Oakland.

Finding ways to win, Tigers, A's meet up in Oakland

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | 4/13/2011 9:00 PM ET

The Tigers and Athletics are talented teams seeking answers in the early juncture of the season. And though it's still too soon for clear-cut resolutions, each got positive signs with comeback victories in their respective series finales on Wednesday.

Facing off against the talented White Sox, Oakland reeled off three runs in the ninth and three more in the 10th for a 7-4 extra-inning victory, giving the A's four wins in their last five games.

The Tigers, meanwhile, used a second straight day of walk-off heroics to beat the team with the best record in baseball, this time using a ninth-inning Brandon Inge home run to pull off a 3-2 win over the Rangers and notch their second straight victory.

Now, the two will look to continue their momentum against one another at the Oakland Coliseum, in a four-game series that begins Thursday.

"The next trip is going to be tough," said Tigers right fielder Magglio Ordonez, who may or may not appear in the set due to bursa fluid collecting behind his right ankle. "I think Oakland has the best pitching staff."

After starting off the season 1-4, the A's have won five of their last seven games to move to .500.

Oakland finished off its nine-game road trip 5-4 and now heads home for six against the Tigers and Red Sox.

"Love the attitude," A's manager Bob Geren said after Wednesday's dramatics. "The guys kept fighting right til the end. It was going to take stringing some hits together, getting some walks, and they did it. Just a great team win, and to have this one finish [the trip] off, it's a real good feeling.

The Tigers, meanwhile, started a season with championship hopes with a 3-7 record. And though there was little doubt in that clubhouse, there's no underestimating what winning a series against baseball's hottest team can do for a talented squad at this early juncture.

"I'm 100 percent certain that nobody on this team would intentionally panic or try to stress this early in the season, but there's just a difference," Inge said. "The feeling right now, as opposed to if we had gotten swept by the Rangers, is completely different, especially going into a long West Coast swing. There's something to that not panicking thing, just letting it play out."

The Tigers will continue to play it out with reliever-turned-starter Phil Coke, who will get his second start of the season opposite A's standout lefty Gio Gonzalez, who has given up just one earned run in 13 innings this season.

The Tigers and A's split the season series last year, 3-3, with Detroit taking two of three on the road.

Tigers: Cabrera loves the American League West

Among active players with at least 200 plate appearances against the AL West, Tigers first baseman Miguel Cabrera is tops with a .356 batting average, .423 on-base percentage and .635 slugging percentage. He has also added 27 homers and 109 RBIs in his 116 games against the division.

Despite going 0-4 on Wednesday, Cabrera is hitting .349 this season.

Athletics: Starting pitching coming through

The A's got another solid start on Wednesday, this one coming in the way of three runs (two earned) in 5 2/3 innings from Brett Anderson.

Heading into Wednesday, the 72 2/3 innings from Oakland's starting staff ranked first in the Majors, while its 2.73 ERA ranked second (behind only Texas). Brandon McCarthy (3.52 ERA), Dallas Braden (4.15) and Trevor Cahill (3.12) will pitch behind Gonzalez in the series.

Worth noting

- Tigers right-hander Ryan Perry (left eye infection) is ready to begin a rehab stint at Triple-A Toledo and believes he'll be ready to return when he's eligible to come off the 15-day disabled list next Wednesday.
- Detroit recalled right-hander Alberto Alburquerque from Triple-A Toledo on Wednesday to take the roster spot of right-hander Robbie Weinhardt.
- Athletics outfielder Coco Crisp did not start the series finale against the White Sox while recovering from lower back stiffness, but he did drive in the go-ahead run in the 10th inning.

A's rally with 3 in ninth, 3 more in 10th

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Oakland scored three times in the ninth inning, then Coco Crisp hit a go-ahead single in a three-run 10th as the Athletics feasted on Chicago's shaky bullpen for a startling 7-4 win over the White Sox.

Crisp entered the game in the ninth as a pinch-runner and was in a 3-for-22 slump before singling off Matt Thornton (0-2). The struggling Chicago closer had walked Conor Jackson and Josh Willingham to set up Crisp.

Daric Barton followed with a two-run single and Thornton was booed as he was walked off mound and was replaced by Tony Pena.

Cliff Pennington's two-out, two-run, bases-loaded single in the ninth off Thornton made it 4-all. It was the third late-inning meltdown by Chicago's bullpen in less than a week, all resulting in tough losses.

With the White Sox leading 4-1 in the ninth, Chicago reliever Chris Sale gave up a leadoff double to Jackson, an RBI single to Willingham and a single to Hideki Matsui. Jesse Crain came on and walked pinch-hitter Barton to load the bases before fanning Kurt Suzuki.

Thornton then struck out pinch-hitter Ryan Sweeney for the second out before No. 9 hitter Pennington dropped his two-run single into center.

Thornton, who took over as Chicago's closer this spring, still does not have a save this season in four chances.

Grant Balfour (1-1) pitched the ninth for the win and Brian Fuentes the 10th for his fifth save in as many chances.

Oakland's rally denied Chicago starter John Danks a victory after he gave up a run and five hits in eight solid innings and left with a three-run lead.

The White Sox broke a 1-all tie in the sixth against Oakland starter Brett Anderson when Carlos Quentin was hit by a pitch, Alex Rios doubled and a sliding Quentin scored on Ramon Castro's grounder to third that drew a high throw to the plate from Kevin Kouzmanoff.

Brent Morel dropped down a bunt to score Rios from third for a 3-1 lead. Juan Pierre's third single of the game chased Anderson (0-2), who was hurt by his own error in the fifth. Anderson gave up nine hits and three runs — two of them earned — in 5 2-3 innings.

Chicago added a run in the eighth as Rios walked, stole second, moved up a sacrifice and scored on Kouzmanoff's throwing error.

Matsui's second homer of the season put Oakland up 1-0 in the fourth. Chicago tied it in the fifth when Pierre reached as Anderson fumbled his comebacker for an error and Gordon Beckham doubled.

NOTES: Pierre reached base five times Wednesday — on three hits, an error and a walk. ... White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said the fans' reaction to Pierre on Tuesday night, giving him a mock cheer every time he catches a fly ball, was unfair to the left fielder. Pierre twice dropped fly balls during the current homestand that led to late meltdowns and losses by the White Sox. "He doesn't deserve that," Guillen said. There were a few boos in the third inning Wednesday when Pierre fumbled Pennington's single for an error, allowing him to advance to second base. Pierre now has three errors in 12 games. He made only one error in each of the previous two seasons combined, a span of 305 games. ... Oakland's Andy LaRoche made his sixth start of the season at a fourth different position, this time getting the nod at first base.

Grading baseball teams' slogans

By DJ Gallo, espn.com 4/13/2011

The baseball season is still young. Franchises are still trying to sell their teams to their cities. Most teams have official team slogans they put on their websites as a marketing aid.

Most teams do. But 14 of the 30 major league teams do not have slogans. Some, like the Mets, probably couldn't afford one; others, like the Indians, likely couldn't think of a good, baseball-related anti-LeBron line. So we are left to develop a perception of those teams on our own -- based off, I don't know, how good they are at baseball or something. Weird.

As for the 16 MLB teams that did make the effort to come up with a slogan for 2011? Here are the best and worst:

Grade: F

Minnesota Twins -- This Is Twins Territory

In case you logged on to MinnesotaTwins.com and were worried you were actually on another site, or perhaps went to Target Field for a game and panicked upon seeing half the players on the field in non-Twins apparel ... do not fear! You are indeed in Twins territory!

Chances are MLB gives each team the option of going with a slogan or without, and if a team chooses "with" they are automatically assigned a vanilla default slogan they are supposed to improve like "This Is Twins Territory" or ...

Cincinnati Reds -- This Is Reds Country

Yes, this is Reds country. It's definitely not Twins territory. That's an entirely different boring place.

Grade: D

Baltimore Orioles -- This Is Birdland

"This Is Birdland" is slightly better than what the Twins and Reds have going. Baltimore took the standard default option -- something like: "This Is Where The Baltimore Orioles Play Baseball" -- and spiced it up a little bit by giving the finger to the St. Louis Cardinals. "Hey, we might not be too great or excited about our prospects this season, but screw the Redbirds, am I right? This is Birdland."

Houston Astros -- We Are Your Astros

Simple and honest. But also incredibly depressing. "Remember when we had Bagwell, Biggio, Berkman and Oswalt? Well, those guys are long gone. Now we are your Astros." Instead of a trumpet playing "Charge!" at home games, it's very likely the Astros employ a sad trombone player.

Detroit Tigers -- Who's Your Tiger?

Perhaps this is a spin on some cool phrase the kids are saying? If so, I apologize for not staying up on the hip lingo. I am aware of "Who's your Daddy?," but that's pretty dated. Again, I'm not up on the latest rad sayings. But I can see this catchphrase becoming popular in Detroit: "Who is the Tigers' marketing director? Do they have one? I seriously doubt it."

Oakland A's -- Green Collar Baseball

It's not white collar baseball, it's not blue collar baseball ... it's Green Collar Baseball! See what they did there? It's actually kind of clever. Really. Unfortunately, no one knows if this green collar baseball is good or bad. For now we can just assume it includes the A's and maybe poor hygiene and infrequent laundering. So until the A's turn the corner, it's probably best to just pass.

Grade: C

Pittsburgh Pirates -- Pride. Passion. Pittsburgh Pirates.

Now here is a slogan that seems like someone with a legitimate marketing and branding background had a role in creating. It's alliterative, it provides a sense of emotion and, best of all, it doesn't make any promises of success -- an important element for a team with 18 consecutive losing seasons.

Unfortunately, it's also the same exact slogan from last year when the Pirates lost 105 games. Maybe reusing a solid slogan is better than changing it to something like "Same Old Bucs" just for the sake of change.

Toronto Blue Jays -- Hustle + Heart 2.0

Toronto went 85-77 last year. So the team had a much better season than the Pirates did. But the Jays still finished fourth in the AL East. What's their plan to get over the hump in 2011? Nothing. Just a reboot of what they did last year. It's a mediocre song REMIX!

Chicago White Sox -- All In.

Chances are GM Kenny Williams came up with this slogan last year when he traded for Alex Rios and Jake Peavy. And if the White Sox do well this year, make the playoffs and make a run at the World Series, "All In" is a perfect slogan. If not, expect their 2012 slogan to be something like Houston's 2011 mantra: "Our Apologies, But These Are Your White Sox."

Texas Rangers -- My Texas. My Rangers.

This is the only team slogan that makes me somewhat scared. It has a certain "From my cold, dead hands!" feel to it. But I prefer this slogan to a possible more literal version: "Texas Rangers: Beware! Our Fans Are Packing."

Grade: B

Los Angeles Dodgers -- It's Time For Dodgers Baseball.

It's a fairly boring line up there with "This Is Twins Territory" and "This Is Reds Country." But the Dodgers are in a different situation than the Twins and Reds. Their fans have been subjected to non-stop divorce stories. So anything that is related to actual baseball is a winner. I would have gone with "Dodgers Baseball: Mommy And Daddy Still Love You." But what they picked works, too.

Boston Red Sox -- We Won't Rest

A solid, level-headed team slogan about motivation and not giving up. It was a good motto before the season started. It's even better now. Because if the Red Sox had to come up with a 2011 slogan after their 2-9 start, I'm not sure "AAAAAAHHHHHH AAAHHHH!" or "This Is Panic Button Territory" would serve them too well.

Kansas City Royals -- Major League Moments

A realistic yet hopeful team slogan. There will, indeed, be major league moments at Royals games this season. A cleanly fielded ground ball here, a nice hit-and-run there. And as the team continues to make progress, in future years there may be entire major league-quality *games*.

San Francisco Giants -- Together We're Giant

Solid slogan. It tells the fans that they are needed and appreciated. If only it wasn't the same line BALCO used on its athlete brochures in the '90s.

Grade: A

Chicago Cubs -- It's A Way Of Life

It's A Way Of Life. Five short words, yet they perfectly capture being a Cubs fan. Why continue to root for a big budget team that fails year after year -- almost century after century? It's a way of life. (I imagine the official delivery of the line has a sigh after it.)

Florida Marlins -- Catch Our Moves!

Catch Our Moves?! Many sports have moves. You can put a move on a defender in basketball, hockey and football. Wrestling is all about moves. Baseball? No moves.

So maybe the Marlins were implying they're going to be dumping all of their good players again? No. Too depressing.

Dancing? Will there be dancing? Perhaps Marlins players have been instructed to dance on the field between innings this year. No. That's ridiculous.

I have no idea. But it's a terrible, terrible, terrible slogan. Just terrible. And that's why it's great. It's so bad it's good. The Florida Marlins ... A Winner Is You!

Minor League News

Error costs Sacramento is loss to Vegas

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

After losing by a score of 5-3 to the Las Vegas 51s on Tuesday, the River Cats looked to bounce back with Josh Outman on the hill.

Things didn't go according to plan as the 51s scored two in the ninth inning to beat the River Cats, 6-5.

The Las Vegas offense was firing on all cylinders from the outset. Outman gave up a leadoff single to center fielder Darin Mastroianni, who would later come around to score on an Eric Thames two-out single. Outman then walked designated hitter Ryan Shealy and gave up a three-run home run to right field to first baseman David Cooper. As a result, the Cats were down 4-0 in the top of the first. A walk, hit and fly-out would end the inning with no further harm done.

Despite allowing four hits, two walks and four runs on 43 pitches to open the game, Outman and the River Cats did not give in.

Second baseman Jemile Weeks led off the bottom of the first with a double to deep right-center field. Shortstop Eric Sogard followed up with a single of his own, and just like that the River Cats had runners on the corners with no out and slugger Chris Carter at the plate.

The big left fielder grounded into a double-play, but scored Weeks, shrinking the deficit to three. Outfielder Matt Carson then flied out to deep center field to end the inning.

After a shaky opening frame, Outman had a chance to redeem himself as the 51s' leadoff hitter, Mastroianni, led off the top of the second inning. Outman responded by giving up one hit on 14 pitches with two strikeouts.

Sacramento kept the pressure coming in the bottom of the second as a hit-by-pitch from Anthony Recker and singles from both Adrian Cardenas and Jai Miller loaded the bases with no out. After a fielder's choice from Josh Horton kept the bases loaded with one out, Las Vegas third baseman Brett Lawrie let an Adam Heether chopper slip past his glove for an error. Two Cats scored on the play, bringing Sacramento to within one run with runners on first and second. Weeks and Sogard would pop and line out to end the inning, but the damage was done. The River Cats had new life.

Despite seemingly righting his ship, the River Cats pulled Outman in favor of reliever Vinnie Chulk to begin the third. The move proved to be wise as Chulk pitched 2.2 innings, allowing three hits, one walk and no runs with three strikeouts.

Neither team made noise until the River Cats challenged in the bottom of the fifth inning. Weeks, who entered the game hitting .391 while leading the team in runs (nine) and total bases (12), set the table yet again. With one out, the speedy first-round pick was hit by a pitch then stole second and third base. However, Sacramento was unable to bring the run home. As a result, the River Cats entered the sixth inning trailing the 51s 4-3. But, they wouldn't trail for long.

With one out in the sixth, Cardenas and Miller hit back-to-back doubles to tie the game at four. After Horton walked, he and Miller converted a double steal, giving the Cats two runners in scoring position. Heether singled to right, scoring Miller and giving Sacramento its first lead. Weeks then grounded into a double play, sending the game into the seventh with the River Cats on top, 5-4.

After a quite seventh and eighth inning, Sacramento called on closer Fernando Cabrera to finish off Las Vegas. Unfortunately for the Cats, defensive miscues would cost them the victory in dramatic fashion.

After a walk and a pop-out to open the inning, Las Vegas shortstop Mike McCoy lined the possible game-ending double play ball at third baseman Cardenas. However, the ball got by Cardenas, putting two runners on with one out. Lawrie, who had an error of his own at third earlier in the game, delivered with a two-run double, propelling the 51s to their 6-5 victory.

The Sacramento comeback attempt was stifled in the bottom of the ninth as Las Vegas closer Rommie Lewis allowed just one man to reach base before slamming the door shut.

In the end, the Sacramento bullpen pitched 7.0 innings, allowing two runs (one earned) on four hits with seven strikeouts.

Outfielder Jai Miller paced the Cats offensively as he went 2-for-3 with two runs, an RBI and a stolen base. Weeks went 1-for-4 with a run and his first two steals of the 2011 campaign.

The River Cats will try to avoid a sweep Thursday at 7:05 p.m. at Raley Field. Kings center DeMarcus Cousins will throw out the first pitch.

Choice slugs game-winner in 10th

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

Michael Choice appears to be finding his groove.

The Athletics' 2010 first-round pick homered for the second straight game Wednesday, launching a two-out, three-run shot in the top of the 10th inning to give Class A Advanced Stockton an 8-5 victory over Visalia.

"I've been battling since the beginning of the season," Choice said. "Battling pressure, high expectations and to overcome them in that at-bat and come up for my team was huge."

After batting just .118 (2-for-17) in his first five games, Choice has gone 4-for-10 with his first two home runs of the season in his last two contests.

"I feel like my approach is getting better," Choice said. "I'm staying calm. Everybody's always excited about a new season, but you can't get amped up to do too much. Now I'm relaxing and letting my hands work."

Arizona lefty prospect Tyler Skaggs had a strong start for Visalia, allowing one run on two hits over five innings. The 19-year-old, who was a key piece in the trade that sent Dan Haren to the Angels, struck out seven while walking four.

But the Rawhide bullpen surrendered seven runs in five innings. In the 10th with two on, Choice took a fastball from Christopher Odegaard (0-1) over the center-field wall.

"They had been throwing me a lot of breaking stuff, a lot of offspeed pitches throughout game, and I had been chasing them," Choice said. "I thought they would pitch me backwards because they thought I was sitting on something offspeed. I went with that approach, and they left me a fastball over the plate."

Choice was selected 10th overall by the A's last year. He signed with the team early, and played 27 games for short-season Vancouver, where he hit .284 with seven home runs in 102 at-bats.

That professional experience is helping Choice adjust to the full-season California League.

"I had a pretty rough start at the beginning of last year," he said. "Without knowing how it is every day in pro ball, you learn how much time you have to figure things out. That's a huge stepping stone in the Minor Leagues and professional baseball. You have to make adjustments right now, not later."

As he gains experience, Choice is learning to deal with the pressure that comes with being a high Draft pick.

"It's not so much [pressure] to climb the ladder, but the expectations that people put upon you," he said. "You want to meet those expectations; you don't want to be the guy who doesn't get there. So basically you tend to put a lot of pressure on yourself -- more than you need to.

"I'm learning how to cope with it and realizing that this is just a game. Everybody has to come out here and do the same thing regardless of where they were picked. I'm just trying to relax and play the game."

Bees Slug Their Way to an 8-7 Win

By Jon Versteeg

BURLINGTON, IA (April 13, 2011) - LF Douglas Landaeta (3-5) drove in five runs and the Burlington Bees hit three home runs en route to an 8-7 win over the Peoria Chiefs before 558 fans at Community Field on Wednesday night.

The Bees exploded for five runs on three hits in the first inning. 2B Ryan Pineda (0-4) led off the game by reaching on an error and moved to second base when 3B Nino Leyja (1-2) walked. Landaeta followed with a three-run home run over the left field wall for a 3-0 Burlington lead.

1B Tony Thompson (1-4) followed with a solo home run over the second level of outfield signage beyond the left field wall to make it 4-0.

Burlington scored its fifth run of the inning after RF Jose Rivero (3-4) singled, stole second base, advanced to third on a throwing error by Peoria C Sergio Burruel and scored on a throwing error by Chiefs CF Rubi Silva. The Bees took a 5-0 lead.

Peoria fought back with single runs in the 3rd, 4th and 5th innings. Silva hit an RBI single in the 3rd inning against Bees RHP Josh Bowman (1-0) to make it 5-1, Burruel hit a sacrifice fly to drive in a run in the 4th inning and RF Smailly Borges (4-5) hit an RBI single in the 5th inning to make it 5-3.

The Bees scored a run in the fifth inning when Rivero pulled a pitch from RHP Yohan Gonzalez over the left field wall for a solo home run and a 6-3 Bees lead.

With Peoria adding a run in the 6th inning, the Bees scored two more runs in the sixth inning. SS Wade Kirkland (0-3) was hit by a pitch and went to second base on a single by DH Yordy Cabrera (1-4). Leyja walked to load the bases and Landaeta hit a two-run single to center field to make it 8-4 Burlington.

The Bees and Chiefs finish their four-game series on Thursday night at 6:30. It's Thirsty Thursday with 2 for \$4.50 beer specials and 2 for \$3.00 pop specials. The Chiefs will send RHP Dallas Beeler (0-0, 0.00) to the mound against RHP A.J. Griffin (0-0, 3.00) for the Bees. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com 2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To purchase season tickets, bonus books or single game tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705 (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.