

A's News Clips, Thursday, April 21, 2011

Boston powers up in victory over A's

Ben Enos, Oakland Tribune

A simple string of singles ended Gio Gonzalez's scoreless innings streak, then the Boston Red Sox broke out the long ball to end the A's winning streak at three with a 5-3 victory Wednesday afternoon at the Oakland Coliseum.

Looking to take some serious momentum into its seven-game road trip that begins Thursday in Seattle, Oakland (9-9) jumped out to a 1-0 lead on just one pitch.

That came courtesy of Coco Crisp, who bounced Clay Buchholz's first offering off the top of the right field wall and over for a leadoff home run.

That spotted Gonzalez, who entered the game having not allowed a run since April 3, a lead that the Red Sox (6-11) erased shortly thereafter. Carl Crawford's RBI single in the second ended Gonzalez's streak at 18 innings and tied the score at 1.

"No. Maybe," said Gonzalez when asked if he knew about the streak. "It's definitely a little bit of pressure. It's a tough act to follow, especially after Brett (Anderson) went out there and did a great, outstanding job. These guys were swinging. They weren't going to let us walk all over them."

The Red Sox turned to the long ball to take the lead and build on it. Kevin Youkilis provided the first blow with a solo shot in the fourth, and Jed Lowrie blasted a two-run homer in the sixth to make it 4-1.

Gonzalez (2-1) left after six innings, giving up four runs and striking out nine. The effort took his ERA from 0.47 to 1.80.

He was backed by a fantastic defensive effort by David DeJesus, who made two highlight-reel catches against Lowrie. The first was a leaping catch at the right field wall in the second inning, the other a sliding effort in foul territory in the eighth.

J.D. Drew joined Boston's home run parade in the seventh, taking Jerry Blevins deep to make it 5-1.

Buchholz (1-2) did enough to earn the win, pitching into the sixth inning and allowing one run. He left a bases-loaded jam in the sixth, giving way with one out to Daniel Bard.

Bard struck out Cliff Pennington and, after Crisp hit a liner that fell just foul down the left field line, got Crisp to pop out to shortstop.

The A's made things interesting against the rest of the Boston bullpen. Crisp's single off Bobby Jenks in the eighth scored Landon Powell to make it 5-2.

Against closer Jonathan Papelbon in the ninth, Powell singled in Hideki Matsui to make it 5-3. Papelbon shut the door, though, getting Josh Willingham and Pennington to pop out to end the game. Oakland stranded 15 runners,.

Asked about the A's inability to come up with the big hit, DeJesus said, "It's one of those things where we're going to get them, they're going to come around and we've just got to stay positive and make sure our approach is the same."

The A's finished the homestand 3-3 and head back into divisional play with four games in Seattle and three at the Los Angeles Angels

Bad combination dooms A's against Red Sox, 5-3

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On an occasionally drizzly afternoon at the Coliseum, the A's run of starter dominance ended along with Gio Gonzalez's scoreless streak, but it was Oakland's inability to get runners in that really hurt.

Gonzalez allowed four times the runs than the A's starters combined in the past five games, and Boston beat the A's 5-3 to split the two-game series, the Red Sox's only visit to Oakland this season. It was Boston's first road win in eight tries this season, and it ended the A's three-game winning streak.

The A's stranded a season-high 15 runners, and the team is batting .216 with men in scoring position.

"I really think we're above average," A's manager Bob Geren said, citing the team's decent success rate the night before. "Today, we got them over but we didn't necessarily get them in."

When Carl Crawford singled in a run in the second, Gonzalez's string of scoreless innings was over at 18. He gave up four runs, the rest coming on homers: a solo shot by Kevin Youkilis on a 3-2 pitch leading off the fourth and a two-run shot by former Stanford player Jed Lowrie in the sixth.

Oakland's starters had allowed only one earned run in the previous five games, and in the first game of the series, Brett Anderson worked eight scoreless innings against the Red Sox.

Gonzalez, asked if he was aware of his own scoreless streak going into the game, said, "No ... maybe. There was definitely a little bit of pressure. That's a tough act to follow, especially after Brett."

Gonzalez said the Red Sox came out swinging "and they kept swinging."

He also was without his own personal motivational coach because Dallas Braden was in Southern California to get his stiff left shoulder examined. "You definitely want your ringleader, your guy in the corner, to give you words of encouragement," Gonzalez said. "He did text me up before the game, said, 'Attack the strike zone' and 'Get first-pitch outs.' "

Right fielder David DeJesus might have been Gonzalez's best ally and Lowrie's primary enemy. In the second inning, DeJesus ran to the corner and leaped at the wall to rob Lowrie, catching the ball with his glove stretched far above his head; in the eighth, Lowrie hit a flyball deep into foul territory, and DeJesus got it with a beautiful dash-and-slide in front of the side wall.

"I don't know what I did to make him mad," Lowrie said. "You don't see too many plays like that. He was all over the place."

"Afterwards, I felt bad for him," DeJesus said. "But that's the way it goes."

New reliever David Purcey, acquired from Toronto on Monday, made his A's debut and worked two scoreless innings, striking out two. He said that he made some adjustments with pitching coach Ron Romanick, moving to the right side of the pitching rubber and closing off his front side, fixes that allow him to throw more strikes.

'Positive report' on Dallas Braden's shoulder

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

General manager **Billy Beane** called the news about **Dallas Braden's** stiff left shoulder "a positive report" Wednesday afternoon.

According to Dr. **Lewis Yocum**, who examined Braden in Southern California, Braden has inflammation but no structural damage, meaning that surgery is not indicated.

In addition, Beane said, Braden "is in good spirits," which was not the case Saturday, when he came out after five innings because of discomfort, and the following day, when he was down in the dumps about what he felt might be a significant injury.

The treatment initially will be rest and anti-inflammatory medication, but there is no timetable for Braden's return.

Wuertz's outing: Reliever **Michael Wuertz**, making his third rehab appearance since going on the disabled list the first week of the season with a hamstring strain, allowed three hits, two walks and three runs in one inning at Reno for Triple-A Sacramento. Wuertz threw 39 pitches, 19 for strikes.

Wuertz allowed eight hits and seven runs in three minor-league rehab innings. He's still likely to be activated for the A's game at Seattle tonight, with left-handed long man **Bobby Cramer** the best bet to be sent out.

Bailey progresses: Closer **Andrew Bailey** had what Geren described as his best side session yet since going on the DL with a forearm strain to start the season. Bailey will throw another session Saturday and is likely to progress to throwing to hitters and perhaps a simulated inning next week.

Harden update: **Rich Harden**, who has a muscle strain under his right arm, believes he'll begin throwing again in the next day or two.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Baby talk: Kurt Suzuki's wife, Renee, is expecting their first child, and depending on the timing, the A's might use the new paternity leave rule, which would allow them to replace the catcher for one to three days.

A's are as thrilling as their .500 mark

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

The charisma-challenged Oakland A's lost a tough one to the Red Sox on Wednesday afternoon, dropping the A's record to an appropriately mediocre 9-9.

There, we said it. The A's are dull-ish.

This is not a criticism, merely an observation.

There is no evidence that colorful teams perform better than non-colorful teams. Or is there?

A lot of Giants' fans will tell you their ballclub won the World Series last year because the boys channeled their zany eccentricity into heightened performance. You might call it Goofball Power.

That might be hoey, but to disprove that theory, the A's will have to make the playoffs.

The A's suffer by their proximity to the wackiest team in baseball. Neighbor-wise, the A's are Ned Flanders to the Giants' Homer Simpson.

At virtually every position, the Giants have a player with a quirk or two, or some star presence. The A's have ... They have Dallas Braden, who not coincidentally is good pals with Brian Wilson. Braden is a genuine flake, just ask Alex Rodriguez. But it's hard for one guy to carry a team, eccentricity-wise, and it's even harder to do it from the disabled list.

Gio Gonzalez, who lost his first game Wednesday, admitted that he missed Braden's leadership and presence, and he referred to Braden as a "ringleader."

The Giants have a character, or a player with a colorful story, at virtually every position.

The A's, not so much.

Coco Crisp is a bit offcenter, with the braids and the Rolls Royce and the personal security guards. But in centerfield I give the nod to Andres Torres, the ebullient, out-of-nowhere success story.

A's right fielder David DeJesus seems to have some sparkle. You can see his smile 400 feet away when he makes a great play (he made two Wednesday) or has a near-miss of a great play (one Wednesday). But the Giants have the edge in right field, with either Thongman or RodeoclawBoy.

The A's ballpark is part of the problem. It is the frumpiest, coldest ballyard in the big leagues, Hoover Dam with bases. And since the team's limbo status (Oakland? San Jose?

Contractionville?) has dulled much fan interest, the only time the A's draw a decent crowd is when the Giants, Red Sox or Yankees come to town.

Wednesday, Red Sox fans seemed to outnumber A's fans. When A's manager Bob Geren ran onto the field to question third-base ump Jim Reynolds on his "foul" call of a Coco Crisp fly ball, there was heavy booing.

Was it directed at the ump or the manager?

Apparently it was aimed at Geren, since the fans cheered when Geren's appeal fell on deaf ears.

"We just like it when there's a lot of people here, period," Geren said, but it has to sting when your biggest crowds turn out to cheer for the bad guys. The larger-than-usual crowds are a mixed blessing for the A's. It's like when beautiful girls clamor to date you because they want to get close to your cute brother.

Part of the A's dullness is a reflection of their recent past, as in mediocre- at-best teams. The media tends to exaggerate the zaniness of a winning team. If the A's make it to the World Series, we media hounds will discover characters in the A's clubhouse, or invent them. Surely there is personality gold to be mined there.

But it's like the old philosophical question — if a player on a mediocre team wears a rally thong and there are no media people there to see it, does it really exist?

If the Giants had finished third in their division last season, nobody would now Fear the Beard (trademark).

Mostly this stuff happens by accident. The Giants were assembled by Brian Sabean, who, publicly at least, is no wild and crazy guy. The A's are masterminded by Billy Beane, who has somewhat of a rock-star personality, especially when it is measured on the general manager scale.

You know Sabean never said to himself, "I gotta find some nutballs who can pump life into this organization." It just happened.

And it goes in cycles.

Not so long ago it was the A's who had the characters (Giambi, Byrnes, Miggy, etc.), while the Giants were dullish.

The A's don't even have nicknames, that we know of. Other than "Godzilla," give me one A's nickname. "Kooz" doesn't count.

("You should talk," some readers will say.

"Judging from your mug shot, you're not exactly a one-man frat party."

(Maybe not, but you should know that they had to photo-shop the lampshade off my head

Drumbeat: A's closer Andrew Bailey making good progress: Willingham, Suzuki sit today

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum, 4/20/2011 12:19PM

Andrew Bailey had his best side session yet, according to manager Bob Geren, and the A's closer will throw another on Saturday and then be re-evaluated. That means that next week would be possible for throwing to hitters, but it's unlikely he'd start a rehab assignment until the end of the month, so he wouldn't be back on the roster until May.

Here's the lineup behind Gio Gonzalez: Crisp CF, Barton 1B, DeJesus RF, Matsui DH, Sweeney LF, Ellis 2B, Powell C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Pennington SS, Gonzalez P

Geren mentioned that Boston starter Clay Buchholz is tough on right-handers, although righties are batting .333 against him this seasons and lefties .214 (in his career, his numbers are slightly better overall against right-handers). Buchholz has had trouble with the A's in his three career starts, going 0-2 with a 10.13 ERA.

Braden has no structural damage in shoulder

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Following a 5-3 loss to the Red Sox on Wednesday afternoon, the A's received good news from the other part of the state, where Dallas Braden learned that he has no structural damage in his stiff left shoulder and won't need to undergo any surgical procedure.

Braden, who paid a visit to noted orthopedic surgeon Dr. Lewis Yocum in Los Angeles on Wednesday morning, will simply rest and rehab to calm inflammation in the shoulder that put him on the 15-day disabled list on Monday.

General manager Billy Beane called the results "positive" and noted that Braden, normally loquacious but recently gloomy since his injury, was in better spirits following the doctor's visit.

The 27-year-old Braden, in the midst of his fourth career DL stint, exited his Saturday start after five frames because of the discomfort and was 1-1 with a 3.00 ERA in three starts this season.

Right-hander Tyson Ross is scheduled to take Braden's place in the rotation on Friday in Seattle, and it is unknown at the moment whether Braden will return from the DL when eligible.

Geren impressed with Bailey's bullpen session

OAKLAND -- A's closer Andrew Bailey underwent a successful bullpen session on Wednesday morning, but there is still no timetable on when he'll make a Minor League rehab start before returning to a big league mound.

"It was his best yet," manager Bob Geren said. "We're very encouraged by his continued progression, and he seems to feel better each time out there."

Bailey, nursing a strained right forearm back to health, is slated to take part in another three-day cycle that includes a simple round of catch, long toss and, ultimately, a bullpen session. At the end of that sequence, the club will decide if the right-hander is ready to throw to hitters and then undergo a Minor League rehab stint.

The 26-year-old hoped to be back with the A's by the end of April, but he's now likely looking to rejoin the team sometime in May.

Left-handed-hitting Sweeney starts vs. Buchholz

OAKLAND -- Ryan Sweeney, who had tallied three hits in nine at-bats entering play Wednesday, was handed a start in left field against Boston righty Clay Buchholz.

Manager Bob Geren noted Buchholz's success against right-handers as a reason to plug Sweeney into the lineup in place of Josh Willingham, though righties entered Wednesday batting .333 against Buchholz, while lefties are hitting .214.

Still, Buchholz's career numbers against right-handers provide more evidence, as he's held right-handers to a .243 average compared to .254 against lefties.

Wednesday marked Sweeney's third start of the season and his second in left field. He's 1-for-3 in those starts and 2-for-5 as a pinch-hitter.

The 26-year-old outfielder 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's 1-for-3 against Buchholz in his career.

Worth noting

- Righty Michael Wuertz (left hamstring) struggled in his third Minor League rehab outing, giving up three runs on three hits and two walks with one strikeout in just one inning of work for Triple-A Sacramento in Reno on Wednesday. Wuertz said he

felt "incredible" on Tuesday, when he was eligible to be reinstated from the 15-day disabled list, but manager Bob Geren has noted he wants the veteran reliever to be sharp before returning to the A's bullpen.

- Kurt Suzuki and his wife, Renee, are expecting their first child within the next week. When Suzuki needs to leave the team for the birth, Geren said he'd likely make use of Major League Baseball's new paternity leave list, which would allow the A's catcher to be away for 24 to 72 hours. Texas' Colby Lewis was the first player to go on the list Saturday.

- Newly acquired lefty David Purcey made his A's debut on Wednesday, compiling two shutout innings with two strikeouts. His solid performance came after working with pitching coach Ron Romanick on adjusting his location on the rubber over the past two days. "He took it right in the game and his strike percentage was way up," Geren said. "His stuff was there. He went through two innings with minimal pitches, so I was real impressed."

Homers end Gio's scoreless-innings streak

Lefty notches nine strikeouts, but gives up four runs, takes first loss

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/20/2011 9:08 PM ET

OAKLAND -- The stars appeared aligned for the seemingly untouchable Gio Gonzalez as he entered Wednesday's series finale matinee against the Red Sox.

The A's lefty brought with him a 17-inning scoreless streak, along with impressive career day game numbers (11-4, 3.55 ERA), making a two-game sweep over the Red Sox quite plausible.

But that streak quickly ended at 18 in a one-run Boston second, and the young southpaw ultimately handed over four runs, including two home runs, to a backdrop of gloom and rain. Working with little room for error next to an A's offense that entered the matchup batting just .236, Gonzalez was dealt the loss in a 5-3 A's defeat.

The 25-year-old southpaw tallied a season-high nine strikeouts in the six-inning effort, giving up four runs, eight hits and one walk while watching his ERA rise from 0.47 to 1.80.

"You can see from the way he throws, he may not end up with an ERA where he's at now, but that's some pretty good stuff," Red Sox manager Terry Francona said. "That's a young left-hander that doesn't look like his arm hurts -- nice and free and easy and the big breaking ball and enough velocity on the fastball. That's a tough guy to beat."

After Gonzalez struck out two in a perfect first, Oakland lent him a one-run lead in the bottom half of the frame when Coco Crisp drove Boston righty Clay Buchholz's first pitch over the right-field wall, marking Crisp's first home run of the season.

But that was the only ounce of offense out of the A's dugout until the final two frames, when Crisp and Landon Powell tallied RBI hits in the eighth and ninth, respectively. It was too little and too late, though, as the club left 15 on base and went 3-for-15 with runners in scoring position.

The offensive struggles were most felt with one out in the ninth, when pinch-hitter Josh Willingham and Cliff Pennington each popped out with runners on first and third to put an end to any game-changing threat.

"Gio pitched well enough to win," manager Bob Geren said. "We didn't take advantage of some opportunities. We had some of our better hitters up in certain situations and didn't necessarily come through in those situations. We had our chances, we did."

The A's are hitting .215 with runners in scoring position, marking the third-lowest average in the American League. Geren, though, feels his team has offered more than the numbers show -- aside from Wednesday's disappointing results, which helped Boston to its first road victory of the season.

"I really think we've been above-average, actually," Geren said. "It's just that every single one is magnified, because every game is so close. Today we got some guys over but didn't necessarily get them in. If you average it all out, I think we're actually above-average, but it certainly doesn't look like it. It wasn't today."

Boston, meanwhile, almost exclusively relied on a single source of runs via the long ball.

Kevin Youkilis hit his third homer of the season and second in three games in the fourth to put Boston ahead, 2-1, and Jed Lowrie -- a nonstop force against lefties these days -- tagged Gonzalez for yet another homer in the sixth, this time a two-run shot that extended Boston's lead to three.

Gonzalez had not given up a home run since the second inning of his first start in Seattle, which also represented his only run allowed before Wednesday's contest. Even more, A's starters entered the game having allowed just nine home runs all year, good for fewest in the Majors.

"They were out there swinging," Gonzalez said. "They weren't going to let us walk all over them. It's a tough team to keep pitches down, and if you make a mistake, they're going to make you pay for it. That's exactly what they did. I was just trying my best to attack the zone."

The A's failed to produce much of anything against Buchholz, who gave the Red Sox 5 1/3 innings of work, allowing one run on six hits with four walks and two strikeouts.

Wednesday's loss moved the A's to a 9-9 record, and while it wasn't one that provided for any getaway music as the team prepared to head to Seattle for the start of a seven-game road swing, it did bring about a handful of positives, most notably in the form of David DeJesus' glove.

The A's right fielder twice robbed Lowrie, first leaping into the wall in the right-field corner to swipe him of a potential extra-base hit in the second.

"Unbelievable," Gonzalez said.

"It was staying down the line," DeJesus said. "I was gaining ground on it, and I was lucky jumping at the right time. I knew the ball was coming, and I jumped at the right time and was able to get it."

In the eighth, he slid into the wall in foul territory in right, influencing Geren to say, "I think we might see at least two of his plays on the highlight reel tonight."

"He did everything fantastically where he had a real minimal chance of hurting something," the A's skipper noted. "That's something that a guy who has played at this ballpark would know how to do, but for someone new here to do that, it shows great technique."

Lowrie was just as in awe and provided a dose of humor to the situation.

"I don't know what I did to make him mad, but I apologize," he said. "Those are two really good plays. One was a foul ball, but he robbed me of at least a double. Great plays. I'll probably see it on the highlight [reel] tonight."

Upon hearing of Lowrie's comments, DeJesus smiled and offered, "I wish him the best."

"I felt bad for him. That's the way it is, you got to make the play."

Felix aims to bounce back against A's

By John Schlegel / MLB.com | 4/20/2011 7:00 PM ET

It's something he really didn't have to contend with in 2010 en route to the American League Cy Young Award, but Felix Hernandez is looking to snap a bit of a slump.

Hernandez will take to his home mound to meet the A's in the opener of a four-game series Thursday, trying to fend off the hot start Oakland right-hander Brandon McCarthy has put up. Hernandez will be bringing a two-game losing streak, his innings pitched declining with each of his four outings so far.

Of course, his Opening Day complete game against the A's has something to do with that progression. Since then, Hernandez lost a tough one to the Rangers after seven quality innings, was tagged for seven earned runs by the Blue Jays, and then lasted just five innings in a loss to the Royals in his last start.

Hernandez was lifted after throwing 90 pitches in that one, as Mariners manager Eric Wedge went to the bullpen with the Royals out to a 5-0 lead on his ace.

"He threw over 100 [pitches] the first three starts," Wedge said. "Today, we wanted to take care of him."

For Hernandez, the good news is his history with the A's. Including his gem on Opening Day, in which he allowed two runs on five hits in the first nine-inning AL complete game on Opening Day since 2002, Hernandez is 10-4 with a 2.77 ERA in 18 career starts against Oakland.

McCarthy, meanwhile, blanked the Tigers for 6 2/3 innings before exiting with the A's ahead, 1-0, in his last outing. Of his 114 pitches, 71 were for strikes.

"I thought it was a pretty good outing on the whole," McCarthy said. "I battled my command for a little bit. I wasn't as sharp as I felt I had been my first two outings, but I felt like I did a pretty good job making some pitches to get out of some jams. Some good pitches to some good hitters. So I'm happy with it, in that regard."

So were the A's fans, who gave him a standing ovation as he exited the game.

Athletics: Rotation depth paying off

Right-hander Tyson Ross might have lost out on a spot in the Opening Day rotation, but he'll come to the rescue Friday, taking over as Dallas Braden is on the shelf with a stiff left shoulder.

"I'm excited," Ross said of his pending 2011 debut against young Seattle starter Michael Pineda. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity to start again."

Ross has not allowed a run in two of his three relief appearances after going 1-0 with a 0.59 ERA and 10 strikeouts through 15 1/3 innings spanning five Spring Training outings.

"He threw the ball great all spring, was pretty close to making the rotation out of spring, and we think the world of him," A's manager Bob Geren said.

Mariners: First base platoon sans Smoak

The Mariners will be without first baseman Justin Smoak, on bereavement leave following the death of his father, and Wedge

indicated he's likely to use Chris Gimenez against left-handers and Adam Kennedy against right-handers in Smoak's absence. That means Kennedy likely starts against McCarthy in Thursday's opener.

For Wedge, the lineup wasn't the biggest concern. That was reserved for Smoak and his family.

"I tell the guys, it's not your wife and it's not your life, it's just a game," Wedge said. "You've got to keep it in perspective. When you talk about family, there's nothing more important. We all have mothers and fathers, or have had mothers and fathers. More times than not, they're the most important people in your life, outside your wife and kids.

"My mom and dad both had cancer and beat it. It touches so many different people. It's just a powerfully sad thing to have to go through. But I know Justin has a lot of support at home, and he'll have a lot of support here. We do what we do. We keep going."

Worth noting

The Mariners got off to a 2-1 lead in the season series with Hernandez's Opening Day gem followed by strong work from Jason Vargas and the Seattle bullpen. The A's won the season series a year ago, 13-7. **MLB.COM COMMENTS**

Major Lee-ague: Postgame quick hits

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 4/20/2011

A small handful of notes following Tuesday's 5-0 victory over the Red Sox:

- The A's have won eight of their last 12 games since starting the season 1-4 and are over the .500 mark for the first time all year.
- They are now 26-22 (.542) against the Red Sox since 2006, which is the best record by any American League team over that span. They have also won 17 of their last 23 games against Boston when playing in Oakland.
- A's starting pitchers have a remarkable 0.27 ERA (one earned run in 32 2/3 innings) over their past five games and now boast a 2.01 ERA on the season.
- Hideki Matsui, who got off to a slow start, had a two-run double in the eighth and now has eight RBIs in his past nine games.

A's lose to Red Sox, 5-3

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Kevin Youkilis and Jed Lowrie homered off the previously untouchable Gio Gonzalez and the Boston Red Sox got their first road win of the season after seven straight losses, beating the Oakland Athletics 5-3 on Wednesday.

Clay Buchholz (1-2) allowed a leadoff home run to Coco Crisp and nothing else in 5 1-3 innings as the Red Sox snapped the longest season-opening road losing streak in franchise history.

Despite building a 5-1 lead, there were some tense moments late for the Red Sox. Crisp's one-out RBI single off Bobby Jenks in the eighth inning cut Boston's lead to three runs, but Jenks recovered by striking out Daric Barton. Jonathan Papelbon escaped the jam by striking out David DeJesus.

The A's added another run in the ninth on Landon Powell's RBI single before Papelbon got pinch-hitter Josh Willingham and Cliff Pennington to end the game for his third save.

Gonzalez (2-1) came into the game having thrown 17 straight scoreless innings and having allowed only one run in three starts for an 0.47 ERA. But he allowed an RBI single to Carl Crawford in the second, a solo homer to Youkilis in the fourth and the two-run shot by Lowrie in the sixth in a rare off performance for an Oakland starter.

In the previous turn through the rotation, A's starters gave up just one earned run in 33 2-3 innings for an 0.27 ERA. Gonzalez was touched for four runs and eight hits in six innings in a game played in a steady rain.

Gonzalez had good stuff as evidenced by his nine strikeouts but was done in by the homers from Youkilis and Lowrie as the A's lost for just the sixth time in their past 24 home games against Boston.

J.D. Drew added his first homer of the season, a solo shot, in the seventh off Jerry Blevins to help the Red Sox win for the fourth time in five games after a 2-10 start.

Buchholz allowed 10 runs in five innings on the way to a pair of losses in Oakland last season and got off to a rough start in this game as well when Crisp homered to right field on Buchholz's first pitch.

But Buchholz stranded a pair of runners in both the second and fifth innings and pitched around Mark Ellis' one-out double in the fourth before being relieved by Daniel Bard with the bases loaded and one out in the sixth inning.

Bard struck out Pennington and then escaped the jam by retiring Crisp on a popup. Crisp's out came one pitch after his line drive to left field landed just inches foul.

Buchholz allowed one run and six hits in 5 1-3 innings.

Notes: Ellis' double in the fourth was the 200th of his career. Ellis also made Oakland's major league-worst 20th error in the top of that inning when he dropped a ball on a potential force at second. ... Lowrie was 2 for 4 and is batting .480 this season against lefties. ... Crisp's homer was just the eighth of the season for the A's. ... LHP David Purcey, acquired from Toronto earlier in the week, made his Oakland debut with a perfect eighth inning. ... This marked the 99th anniversary of the first game played at Fenway Park, a 7-6 Boston win in 11 innings over the Yankees in 1912.

Gutierrez: A's starters playing 'Top This'

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - The first face Brett Anderson saw in the A's dugout as he came off the field after throwing eight innings of shutout ball at Boston Tuesday night belonged to Trevor Cahill.

Anderson expected a congratulatory hand. A hug. An Atta-boy of some sort. Instead, Cahill simply shook his head and smiled.

"That damn Casper Wells," Cahill said, referring to the solo home run he gave up to the Detroit Tigers' center fielder on Sunday.

It has been an epic game of Can-You-Top-This? One that has seen the A's starting staff matching if not one-upping each other with every start.

And Cahill was talking about the lone earned run given up in the past five games by an A's starting pitcher. A run he gave up. The shot by "that damn Casper Wells."

Consider: starting with the opening game of the Detroit series, and including Tuesday night's 5-0 victory over the Red Sox, A's starters have allowed just one earned run in a combined 33 2/3 innings, a 0.27 ERA.

[NEWS: Anderson spins gem, A's top Red Sox 5-0]

"It's fun when we're going like that," said Anderson, who gave up four hits while walking one and striking out eight Red Sox hitters. "We're feeding off each other and want to put up as many zeroes as possible.

"You want to do your part like the (previous) guy. Right now, we're doing a pretty good job."

Better than pretty good, actually.

The season is only 17 games old but the A's, who are 9-8 and above .500 for the first time in 2011, have the most stingy rotation in the big leagues.

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"It would be nice to take the pressure off early," with some run support, Anderson admitted. "We just try to match the (opposing) pitchers and go from there."

Besides the 0.27 ERA in the last five games, A's starters are 3-0 in giving up 19 hits with 35 strikeouts and 10 walks. Opponents are hitting .162 in that stretch.

"Sometimes hitting is contagious and pitching can be too," said A's manager Bob Geren. "Every one of them has a real solid routine in between their starts. One after another, they're all outstanding starts. They're doing a fantastic job."

Even that "damn Casper Wells" has to admit it.

Three Red Sox home runs carry Boston over Oakland

By Jorge L. Ortiz, USA TODAY

OAKLAND — In similar fashion to their hosts in this two-game series, the Boston Red Sox have put together a nifty streak of strong starts that has begun to lift them out of an early abyss.

Now the trick for Boston is to extend that hot spell on the road, where it finally notched its first victory of the season Wednesday.

Three Red Sox home runs finally dented the Oakland A's rotation as Boston posted a 5-3 win, snapping its worst-ever season-opening string of road losses at seven.

Winning pitcher Clay Buchholz wasn't nearly as sharp as his rotation mates, giving up a run on six hits and four walks in 5 ½ innings, but that represented substantial improvement after he opened the season 0-2 with a 6.60 ERA.

Buchholz owes at least a steak dinner to reliever Daniel Bard, who took over with the bases loaded and one out in the sixth and got a strikeout and a popup to quell the threat.

"I think he's done it four times now in my career, coming in with the bases loaded and less than two outs," Buchholz said. "That's what he does."

Bard's heroics allowed Buchholz to become the fifth consecutive Boston starter to hold opponents to a run or less, propelling a 4-1 surge. The starters have combined to allow four earned runs over 31 ⅓ innings in that span, good for a 1.15 ERA.

That doesn't quite match the brilliant stretch by the A's rotation, which had given up one earned run in its last 33 ⅓ for a 0.27 ERA until Wednesday, when Gio Gonzalez took his first loss by allowing four runs in six innings.

More significantly, though, the recent performance marks a turnaround for the Boston rotation after it posted a 6.71 ERA over the first 12 games, when the Red Sox went 2-10. For all the fretting in New England about Carl Crawford's early offensive woes, the pitching was a bigger issue.

"The best way for us to play good baseball is to go

A's lineup needs more pop to back pitching

Art Spander, San Francisco Examiner, 4/20/2011

Say this for the Oakland A's. The commissioner of baseball hasn't felt the need to commandeer them, as he did the Los Angeles Dodgers.

At least the people who run the A's still are controlling their direction. Or misdirection.

We know the negatives about the A's: their football stadium that isn't a ballpark and the constant attempts of owner Lew Wolff to shift them to San Jose, where there's neither a football stadium or a ballpark. But deep down, they are an entertaining ball club. They played one to the wire Wednesday, losing to the Boston Red Sox 5-3 to end a series so ridiculously short, two games in a space of 21 hours, it barely existed. That's major league ball in this era of cross-country flights and interleague games.

For a club whose management feels compelled to put tarpaulins on the upper deck of the three-tiered Coliseum, the A's had two good crowds against the Red Sox. Not that this is a surprise.

On Tuesday, the announced gate was 25,320. Then Wednesday, it was 29,045, which for comparison was nearly 2,000 larger than the Dodgers-Cardinals game Sunday at Dodger Stadium. All is not hopeless in Oakland, if you don't count the bottom of the batting order.

When the Red Sox show up, if even for less than two full days, their fans show up. It's unnerving to a point when more people in Oakland are chanting for the Sox than for the A's, yet Oakland manager Bob Geren contends all that matters is there are people in the seats.

"Quite frankly," said Geren, "we just like a lot of people here. The more people the better." Still, a home team wants to feel like a home team. And now that the Red Sox are gone for the season, not until the Yankees arrive the end of May will there be anything comparable.

What the A's need is what the Giants finally developed, fans who come out no matter the opponent. That may take a while.

The A's, as predicted, have excellent starting pitching. Tuesday, Brett Anderson shut out the Red Sox for his eight innings. Wednesday, Gio Gonzalez gave up two home runs, which doomed him, but struck out nine. "Keep it close, I'll think of something," was the Tommy Lasorda mantra. The A's keep it close.

What they should be thinking of is what can be done with the No. 8 and No. 9 spots in the lineup, third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, who is batting .200, and shortstop Cliff Pennington, batting .204.

That's the left side of the infield, which is fine on defense. That's the bottom of the lineup, which is unfortunate on offense. The A's on Wednesday left 15 men on base, two in the bottom of the ninth.

"We just couldn't take advantage of the situations, even when we had our better hitters up," Geren said.

There aren't a lot of "better" hitters for the moment. The lineup the A's started Wednesday included five players batting .250 or lower.

Pitching and defense may win pennants, but every now and then the people who come to the plate have to do something more than pop up or ground out.

Oakland bats can't pick up Gio as Boston finally wins a road game

Sam McPherson, examiner.com, 4/20/2011

(OAKLAND) -- As good as the Oakland Athletics starting pitchers may be, they're not always going to be throwing shutouts.

And those are the days that the A's offense needs to show up.

Didn't happen on Wednesday.

The 5-3 loss to the Boston Red Sox -- the first road win of the season for the boys from Beantown, no less -- highlighted an Oakland weakness: an inability to deliver clutch hits.

The A's hitters had plenty of opportunities against mediocre Boston pitching: they got 12 hits and five walks on the day, providing 15 at-bats with runners in scoring position.

But with only three hits in those situations, Oakland could only manage three runs total for the game, and Gio Gonzalez' first bad start in 2011 was too much for the weak A's hitters to overcome.

Gonzalez entered the game with a 0.47 ERA on the year, and although he struck out eight batters in six innings, he was done in by surrendering two home runs.

And despite getting a home run themselves from leadoff hitter Coco Crisp in the bottom of the first, the A's offense just couldn't come through much when it mattered most in this game:

- Second inning: runners on first and second with one out, Cliff Pennington lined out and Crisp lined out;
- Fourth inning: runner on second with one out, Landon Powell lined out and Kevin Kouzmanoff flied out;
- Fifth inning: runners on first and second with two out, Hideki Matsui flied out;
- Sixth inning: bases loaded with one out, Pennington struck out and Crisp popped out;
- Eighth inning: bases loaded with one out, Daric Barton and David DeJesus both struck out;
- Ninth inning: runners on first and third with one out, Josh Willingham popped out and Pennington did, too, to end the game.

The missed opportunities piled up, and they cost the A's another winnable game.

Generally, the Oakland offense has trouble setting the table in the first place: the team's .299 on-base percentage is an absolute joke for a major-league team.

But to set the table and not be able to clear it off?

That's just wasting rare opportunity, and if the A's want to win in 2011, they have to start delivering more regularly in those infrequent moments when they actually have a chance to score.

The offense isn't built around the three-run home run, and the station-to-station baserunning that seems to plague all A's offensive rallies relies on delivering hits with RISP to win.

However, Oakland hits even worse than normal when they have a chance to score runs that way (.284 OBP, with a .217 batting average).

That's not recipe for success, especially on days when the starting pitchers are merely human.

Gutierrez: A's starters playing 'Top This,' dealing

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - The first face Brett Anderson saw in the A's dugout as he came off the field after throwing eight innings of shutout ball at Boston Tuesday night belonged to Trevor Cahill.

Anderson expected a congratulatory hand. A hug. An Atta-boy of some sort. Instead, Cahill simply shook his head and smiled.

"That damn Casper Wells," Cahill said, referring to the solo home run he gave up to the Detroit Tigers' center fielder on Sunday.

It has been an epic game of Can-You-Top-This? One that has seen the A's starting staff matching if not one-upping each other with every start.

And Cahill was talking about the lone earned run given up in the past five games by an A's starting pitcher. A run he gave up. The shot by "that damn Casper Wells."

Consider: starting with the opening game of the Detroit series, and including Tuesday night's 5-0 victory over the Red Sox, A's starters have allowed just one earned run in a combined 33 2/3 innings, a 0.27 ERA.

"It's fun when we're going like that," said Anderson, who gave up four hits while walking one and striking out eight Red Sox hitters. "We're feeding off each other and want to put up as many zeroes as possible.

"You want to do your part like the (previous) guy. Right now, we're doing a pretty good job."

Better than pretty good, actually.

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Tags:

Washington Nationals Milwaukee Brewers Tampa Bay Rays Los Angeles Angels

First pitch: Red Sox latest to attest to brilliance of A's rotation

By Jorge L. Ortiz, USA TODAY

OAKLAND – The resurgent Boston Red Sox starters gave up no more than one run for the fourth consecutive game Tuesday night.

Against the Oakland A's rotation these days, that's not good enough.

Facing a team that had scored 21 runs in its last three games, Brett Anderson allowed just four hits and a walk over eight innings in a 5-0 victory, completing a turn through the rotation that has served notice of how tough A's starters can be.

In their last five games, they have combined to pitch 33 2/3 innings and allowed just one earned run for an 0.27 ERA. That score came on a home run by the Detroit Tigers' Casper Wells off Trevor Cahill on Sunday. Overall, A's starters have a 2.01 ERA for the season, best in the majors.

"I came out in the eighth inning and Trevor just shook his head and said, 'Damned Casper Wells,' " Anderson said. "I'm sure we'll rib him a little bit. That's just a testament to how good our rotation is right now, with everybody doing their part and then some."

Anderson, 23, improved to 1-1 while lowering his ERA to 1.63. His inability to win before Tuesday points to the A's offensive failures, defensive inconsistency and some bullpen breakdowns, which had conspired to keep the club from climbing over the .500 mark until toppling Boston.

But even those flaws may not be enough to hold back a rotation headed by Cahill, Anderson and Gio Gonzalez, none over 25.

The only solace for opposing hitters might be that fifth starter Dallas Braden has been placed on the disabled list with a shoulder injury. He is due to visit orthopedic surgeon Lewis Yocum in Los Angeles today and will be replaced by second-year right-hander Tyson Ross on Friday.

Boston won't get to face him, instead getting Gonzalez, who has the staff's best numbers with a 2-0 record and an 0.47 ERA in three outings.

"They're a hot staff right now," manager Terry Francona said. "(They've) got a guy going tomorrow that's hotter than any of them. We're going to have to really battle."

The Red Sox came in with the majors' hottest hitter in shortstop Jed Lowrie, who boasted a .516 batting average and had hits in 15 of his previous 24 at-bats.

Lowrie typically hammers lefties – the switch-hitter's career average of .348 right-handed is 124 points higher than batting left-handed – but Anderson struck him out twice and retired him all three times he faced him. Lowrie finished 0-for-4.

Anderson said he had relied too much on his slurve – a combination slider-curveball – in his previous start, so this time he made a point of mixing up his pitches and throwing more sinkers away. When he needed a strikeout, and he got eight, he still had the breaking ball at his disposal.

"I don't know what he calls it. It's hard and it has a sharp break to it," Lowrie said. "When he can throw it for strikes and then throw it in the dirt like he did tonight, he's tough. Tip your hat to him, because he had good stuff."

Red Sox Nation Invades Oakland

BY ART SPANDER, REALCLEARSPORTS.COM, 4/20/2011

OAKLAND - The old Mausoleum wasn't so empty or quiet Tuesday night. The exes were there, as in expatriates, as in Red Sox fans who wouldn't go back to New England for all the tea once dumped into Boston Harbor, but for reasons you don't want to hear cling preciously to the old ball club.

It's an interesting matchup when the Bosox, as the headlines in the old Sporting News called them, show up in Oakland. An interesting contrast too.

Whatever one thinks of the partisans, now describing themselves as "Red Sox Nation," they arrive in large numbers, at home, Fenway Park, or away.

Meanwhile, out here at Agony by Bay, the Athletics play in a stadium re-signed for the football Raiders, who as the A's are unable to fill the place but unlike the A's don't cover the upper deck with tarpaulins.

See, folks, there are all those seats, but since you can't see them they don't exist. That's the theory.

Seats other than those had people in them for the opener of a series about as brief as the baseball people could make it, two games in about 22 hours - Wednesday the teams play at 12:30 p.m. PDT - and then hit the road.

Red Sox fans may border on the obnoxious, acting as if they were blessed by Ted Williams or Carl Yastrzemski, but when they help create the second-largest crowd of the eight games the A's have played at home so far, 25,230, nobody in Oakland is complaining.

Including A's starter Brett Anderson, who pitched the first eight innings of a 5-0 win over the Sox.

"It was a pretty good crowd tonight," said Anderson, used to the great empty spaces at most home games. "Almost like pitching in Boston. The crowd is against you."

Not all of the crowd, but a decent percentage. Until the A's scored four in the bottom of the eighth. Then Boston fans fled like the British being chased by the colonials, leaving only the Oakland partisans, few as they might be, gloating and chanting.

As you've read, the A's are at the bottom of the major league heap in attendance, in part because of the stadium, in part because owner Lew Wolff wants to move them to San Jose, in part because the team 10 miles across the water, the Giants, has a beautiful park and a World Series trophy.

Every once in a while someone in a supposedly official capacity tosses out the "C" word, contraction, a euphemistic method of saying, "You no longer exist."

But for once, the A's are very much with us. They have arguably the best starting staff in baseball, those pitchers having gone 33 2/3 innings, giving

It's early, but the A's rotation could be something very special in 2011

Sam McPherson, examiner.com, 4/20/2011

(OAKLAND) -- With the Oakland Athletics' 5-0 win over the Boston Red Sox last night, the starting rotation just completed a cycle of amazing accomplishment.

Even with Dallas Braden going on the disabled list, the A's have to feel pretty good about at least one part of their team -- in truth, the most important part of any baseball squad.

The starting pitcher -- like a hockey goaltender -- has the most influence over the outcome of his team's game in comparison to any other position in baseball or any other major organized sport. He has it going? No one is going to beat his team.

To wit, Oakland's starting rotation just went through five games giving up a single earned run.

One earned run.

In five games.

Here's the rotational effort since last week:

- Gio Gonzalez: six innings, zero runs on Thursday night;
- Brandon McCarthy: six and two-thirds innings, zero runs on Friday night;
- Dallas Braden: five innings, no earned runs on Saturday night;

- Trevor Cahill: eight innings, one earned run on Sunday;
- Brett Anderson: eight innings, zero runs on Tuesday night.

Overall, the five pitchers threw 33 2/3 innings and gave up only two runs, one of them unearned. That 0.27 ERA over the past five games has merely solidified the staff's position atop the American League rankings for starters.

In 17 games this year, the A's rotation has a 2.01 ERA -- easily tops in the AL, by more than a run. Overall, including the bullpen, the team as a whole has an AL-best ERA of 2.44 on the year -- more than a half-run better than the second-best staff (Los Angeles Angels).

The Oakland pitchers surely won't keep this pace for the whole season, but it does reveal how special the staff can be in 2011. And while the hitting, the defense and the bullpen are struggling, that rotational prowess has kept the A's above .500 and in contention early in the year.

A huge factor in this development is the Oakland starters' ability in 2011 to miss bats. Last year, even though they led the AL in ERA, the A's pitchers were not dominating with strikeouts. Getting a strikeout means the ball isn't put in play, and as noted above, the pitcher has more control over his team's destiny if he earns the outs himself at the plate.

With the mediocre defense on this team, it's important to get more strikeouts, in truth.

In 2010, Oakland was merely 10th in the AL in starters' strikeouts (675 Ks in 992 IP). This year, they rank first in starters' strikeouts with 91 in 112 innings. The increase in punchouts (6.12 per nine innings last year to 7.31 this season so far) reflects the improved dominance of a staff that was already pretty good.

And that dominance is going to be necessary all year long in order for the A's to get to the promised land for the first time since 1989.

Going from A's to Zzz's

Phil Taylor, Sports Illustrated, 4/25/2011

In the unlikely event that you run into a member of the A's, and in the almost equally unlikely event that you actually recognize him, be sure to throw a compliment or two his way. Tell him you enjoyed listening to the game the other night, even though you probably couldn't have found the team's radio station with a search party. Say something positive about Oakland's talented young pitchers, even though you probably can't name any of them. Do what you can to make him feel that the A's are *not* the most overlooked team in baseball, even though they are.

One more thing: Try not to mention that other team across the Bay. In fact, in deference to the A's and their fans, who have heard plenty about that other club since October, consider this column a G-word-free zone. Let that team in orange and black be anonymous for a change. You know the guys we're talking about—the ones whose World Series victory last season made them stars, complete with a reality series that premieres on Showtime in July. They are funky (pitcher Tim Lincecum), hunky (catcher Buster Posey) and a little less chunky (slimmed-down third baseman Pablo Sandoval), and they have a wacky closer/comedian, Brian Wilson, whose beard alone is a bigger celebrity than any member of the A's.

It's hard not to be drawn to the team whose name rhymes with *clients*, which is what makes it so difficult to be the A's at the moment. There are other two-team markets in which one team is clearly more popular than the other, but nowhere is the disparity as glaring as in the Bay Area. There are other teams with a lower average attendance than Oakland's 20,449, which ranked 11th out of the 14 American League teams through Sunday, but none of them have to live with seeing the team next door enjoying a lovefest. "I don't think about it as much as one might imagine," says Oakland general manager Billy Beane. That's understandable. For the A's, it's like having a sibling who's the valedictorian, captain of the football team and lead in the school play—who can compete with that?

Oakland deserves better. It's a solid team, with four starters—Brett Anderson, Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Dallas Braden—who had an ERA of 3.50 or less last season. The A's even have a touch of star power with new DH Hideki Matsui. But the club at the other end of the Bay Bridge has a postcard-pretty ballpark lapped by McCovey Cove and a waiting list for season tickets. The A's have 45-year-old Oakland Coliseum hard by I-880 and a tarp covering the upper deck to make their modest attendance look a little less so.

It seems as if every day at AT&T Park the team that Willie Mays played for is conducting some pregame celebration of last year's magical season. Already this spring it has raised a championship flag, awarded Posey his Rookie of the Year trophy and handed out plenty of World Series jewelry, all with great fanfare. There was a ring ceremony for the entire team, then a second one when a key player in 2010, infielder Juan Uribe, returned with the Dodgers. Stay tuned for possibly another, when Series MVP Edgar Renteria, who signed with the Reds in the off-season, is back in town. "How many damn rings can you give out?" asks Braden, who earned the A's some fleeting attention with a perfect game last season. "Can we wrap it up in one night and be done with it?"

The Oakland lefthander was smiling when he said that. He was, after all, a fan of the Bay Area's National League franchise when he was growing up in Stockton, Calif. But just as it's hard to blame the World Series champs and their fans for keeping the celebration alive, it's understandable if the A's and their supporters are a little tired of all the noise coming from the

party. Sportscasters on the local news almost invariably lead with the team from the town where Tony Bennett left his heart, with just a quick nod to Oakland before they throw it back to the anchor desk. If you spent the day downing a shot of whiskey every time sports-talk-radio callers brought up the A's, you'd still pass a Breathalyzer test.

Even devoted fans discover it's not that easy to follow the A's. While the What's-their-names have KNBR, their 50,000-watt flagship radio station, blanketing the Bay Area with coverage, Oakland games have bounced among three stations over the last several years, and this season the A's didn't have a radio deal in place until 24 hours before Opening Day. They finally worked out an agreement with KBWF, 95.7 FM. Until the station switched from country music to an all-sports format last week, the team was sharing airtime with Kenny Chesney and Travis Tritt.

The A's and their fans might be the only Bay Area residents who are less than giddy about the success of the, um, team that plays in the same city as the 49ers. But they're not jealous. "We need to use it as motivation," Gonzalez says. They're also not asking anyone to feel sorry for them. They just want to know that they'll get the same treatment if they win big. "Our message is that although you are missing what's going on here, you're not going to miss it for very much longer," says Braden. "To continue to ignore us would be a huge mistake." Notice he didn't say *giant*.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Miller time: Outfielder cracks 2 homers in win

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

On Tuesday, one team was too much for the other to handle as host Reno overpowered Sacramento.

On Wednesday, the River Cats returned the favor, winning 14-7.

Both teams sprinted out of the gates, scoring four runs in the first inning with Reno leading, 3-1. In the top of the second, the Cats responded with a three-run inning, highlighted by a Steve Tolleson two-run single up the middle to give Sacramento an early 4-3 advantage.

After Michael Wuertz, on a rehab assignment from Oakland, started the game by allowing three runs in 1.0 inning, starting pitcher Guillermo Moscoso came in to baffle a normally potent Aces lineup. The right-handed prospect went 5.0 innings, allowing just one hit, no walks and no runs with six strikeouts. The dazzling performance lowered his season ERA to 0.56.

Despite having the upper hand, the River Cats did not let their foot off the pedal, scoring a run in each inning except the fourth. Outfielder Jai Miller continued his torrid performance at the dish, going 2-for-4 and hitting his third and fourth home runs of the season. In all, the multi-talented outfielder finished with two runs and five RBIs while raising his batting average to .371.

Four other River Cats joined Miller with multi-hit games. Shortstop Eric Sogard went 4-for-5 with two runs, an RBI and a walk while Tolleson and outfielder Matt Carson contributed three hits each. Catcher Anthony Recker contributed two doubles.

The scoring outburst was a team effort as every player reached base with only one, Jemile Weeks, failing to record a hit. Instead, Weeks logged three walks and two runs.

Sacramento aims to continue its hot-hitting Thursday at 6:05 p.m. in Reno. Cats starter Yadel Marti (0-0, 2.45) will face lefty Zach Kroenke (2-0, 3.65).

Doolittle Domination

By Kirstie Haruta / Stockton Ports

The Ports ended a four game series against the Rawhide on a high note, taking a 2-1 victory to split the series with Visalia.

Stockton's starter Ryan Doolittle wasted no time getting the ball rolling, swiftly retiring leadoff hitter David Nick. Chris Owings and Adam Eaton followed soon after, each with a groundout.

It would be Ports second baseman Michael Gilmartin to get Stockton's bats going with a barely-fair double to left field off of Visalia starter Eric Smith. Unfortunately, the inning ended with Gilmartin left in scoring position.

After a quick second inning and top-half of the third, the Ports bats got to work in the bottom of the third. Right-fielder Rashun Dixon led off the inning with single to shortstop, followed by a base hit to left field by catcher Jonathan Johnston. Conner Crumbliss laid down a bunt and reached first on an error by Smith to load the bases. Gilmartin returned to the plate and drove a base hit to right center, bringing in the two runs that, in the end, would win the game for the Ports.

Ports shortstop Dusty Coleman nearly drove in a third run with his base hit to left-center, but Crumbliss was tagged out at home on a close-call, much to his and Ports fans' dismay.

The Rawhide responded in the top of the fourth, when center-fielder Adam Eaton drove one out of the park over the right-field wall. Right-fielder Kyle Greene walked and first basemen Bobby Borchering got a base hit to left field, but the Ports got out of the inning without giving up anymore runs.

All was fairly quiet again until the bottom of the fifth, when Johnston reached first on a hit to second base. With two outs, Coleman walked, and designated hitter Max Stassi reached first on an error at short by Chris Owings. The inning would end with the bases loaded with first basemen Anthony Aliotti striking out.

In the top of the sixth, Jose Guzman came in to relieve Doolittle, who gave up one run on three hits with six strikeouts in five innings. He gave up one hit to Greene before ending the inning by striking out Borchering.

Visalia would also make a pitching change in the sixth, bringing in Taylor Sinclair to relieve Smith, who gave up two runs on six hits with six strikeouts. Sinclair gave up one base hit to third basemen Leonardo Gil, before striking out two and getting Johnston to ground out.

In the top of the seventh, designated hitter Brent Greer walked, followed by a base hit from both Nick and C. Owings to load the bases with two outs. Eaton grounded into a force at third to get the Ports out of the inning, still in the lead.

After giving up three hits, no runs, and striking out one in two innings, Connor Hoehn came in to pitch for the Ports in the top of the eighth for a three-up-three-down inning.

With the Ports still leading 2-1 in the top of the ninth, the Rawhide had one last chance to score, but failed to do so. Left-fielder Jon Mark Owings popped one up behind the plate, which was caught by Johnston for the first out. Catcher Rossmel Perez drove a base hit to right-center. Justin Hilt came in as a pinch-runner for Perez, and stole second base. However, when Greer hit a grounder to shortstop, Coleman caught Hilt too far off of second base, and tossed to Gilmartin to tag him out. With Greer on first, Nick hit a pop up behind home, which was caught by Johnston to end the game.

The Ports travel to Lancaster tomorrow for a three game series against the JetHawks. Murphy Smith (0-1, 3.38) takes the mound for Stockton.

Bees Sweep Twinbill in Kane County

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

GENEVA, IL- The Burlington Bees (10-3) took advantage of two Kane County (5-9) errors to score four runs in the seventh inning to beat the Kane County Cougars 8-3 in game one of a doubleheader. In game two RHP A.J. Griffin allowed one run on three hits over six innings to help Burlington to a 6-1 win and a doubleheader sweep before 5,233 fans on Wednesday afternoon at Elfstrom Stadium.

Kane County scored a single run in the third inning against Burlington RHP Josh Bowman (2-0). SS Gerard Hall, Jr. (2-3) reached base on a single and moved to second base on a ground by CF Alex Llanos (1-4). 2B Yowill Espinol (0-4) reached on an error to score Hall, Jr. and make it 1-0.

Burlington scored two runs in the fourth inning. 3B Nino Leyja (3-4) singled and moved to second base when LF Douglas Landaeta (1-4) was hit by a pitch. DH Jose Rivero (1-4) hit a two-run double to make it 2-1.

The Cougars scored two runs in the fourth inning. DH Lane Adams (0-3) reached on an error and moved to second base on a single by 3B Ryan Stovall (1-3). 1B Fernando Cruz (1-3) grounded out to move both runners into scoring position. SS Gerard Hall, Jr. (2-3) singled to left field to drive in both runners and make it 3-2.

The Bees added two runs in the sixth inning to make it 4-3. Leyja singled and went to third base on a double by Landaeta. Kane County RHP Leondy Perez was called for a balk. Leyja scored from third base and Landaeta moved to third base. A sacrifice fly by 1B Tony Thompson (1-3) scored from right field to score Landaeta.

Burlington exploded for four runs in the seventh inning. 2B Ryan Pineda (1-3) reached base with a two-out double and scored on a single by CF Tyreece House (1-4). He moved to second base on the throw and to third base on a single by Leyja.

Landaeta and Thompson each reached base on errors and three more runs crossed home plate for an 8-3 Burlington lead.

The Bees took an early lead in game two of the doubleheader. CF Tyreace House (0-3) and 3B Nino Leyja (1-2) worked back-to-back walks. 1B Tony Thompson (2-4) hit a two-run single to make it 2-0.

Thompson drove in a run in the fifth inning on another RBI single. RF Royce Consigli (2-4) followed by popping out to third base and DH Jose Rivero (1-3) hit a three-run home run over the left field wall to make it 6-0.

BEES BUZZINGS: The Bees placed RHP Nate Long and IF A.J. Kirby-Jones on the Disabled List before the game and added RHP Pedro Vidal and IF Josh Whitaker to the active roster for the Athletics Extended Spring Training program in Arizona. Vidal went 4-0 with a 2.92 in 34 relief appearances with Vancouver. Whitaker split time between the Arizona Rookie League A's and Vancouver Canadians in 2010 combining for a .254 batting average with four home runs and 26 RBI.

The Bees return home to start a three-game series with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers on Thursday night at 6:30 p.m. It's Thirsty Thursday with drink specials on all beer and Pepsi products throughout the game sponsored by the Mark Warth Agency and The New Mix 107.3. There will be 2 for \$4.50 specials on 12 ounce beers and 2 for \$3.00 pop specials. RHP Matt Miller (0-1, 8.68) starts for Wisconsin against RHP Blake Hasebrock (1-0, 0.00) for Burlington. 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 or (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.