

**Trevor Cahill pitches Oakland A's past Texas Rangers**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Kurt Suzuki received handshakes all around in the A's clubhouse Friday, and that was before his contribution to a 3-1 victory over the Texas Rangers.

Suzuki returned to the team after the birth of his first child and wasted no time making an impact.

His run-scoring single in the third inning sent the A's on their way to a victory at the newly renamed [Overstock.com](http://Overstock.com) Coliseum.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill tossed seven shutout innings, and the A's took the opener of a four-game series against the defending American League champs.

Suzuki wandered through the clubhouse before the game with a smile on his face, elated but weary.

"I was probably more tired than I thought I was," Suzuki said. "I kind of hit a wall in the fifth inning."

He missed Wednesday's game against the Los Angeles Angels, catching a 6 a.m. flight from Anaheim to the Bay Area to be with his wife, Renee, who had labor induced that morning.

Their daughter, Malia, finally arrived Thursday morning, and Suzuki caught just a couple hours of sleep Wednesday night on a hospital pullout bed "probably about the width of my body."

He got adequate rest Thursday night, but A's manager Bob Geren gave his catcher a bit of a break by using him as designated hitter Friday.

With two outs and two on in the third, Suzuki ripped a single to left off C.J. Wilson (3-1) that scored Daric Barton to snap a scoreless tie.

"I don't know how it would be to be a new father, or what was going through his head," said Cahill, who doesn't have children. "But (Suzuki) is one of the hardest working guys in baseball. I knew he'd be prepared."

The A's made it 2-0 in the fifth on consecutive doubles from Conor Jackson and Josh Willingham, who returned after missing two games with tightness in his back.

Oakland added to its lead in the seventh when Texas second baseman Ian Kinsler threw wildly to first trying to complete a double play. The error allowed Barton to trot home from third for a 3-0 lead.

That was enough cushion for Cahill to run his record to 4-0, though it didn't appear early on that he would last seven innings.

He walked three in the top of the first but escaped a bases-loaded jam unscored upon. Cahill threw 25 pitches in the first but walked just one more and lowered his ERA to 1.88.

"Trevor had a real nice game," Geren said. "When he got in any trouble, he figured out how to get the ball on the ground."

Texas, which has lost four of its last five, came in ranked second in the American League in runs scored (128). But Cahill is now 7-2 with a 2.27 ERA against the Rangers in 10 career starts.

"His game is suited to ground balls, and that can neutralize a home run team," Geren said.

Cahill left after 100 pitches, and Grant Balfour delivered a scoreless eighth. Brian Fuentes allowed a run in the ninth but notched his seventh save.

The win moved the A's to within two games of first-place Texas in the A.L. West.

Suzuki, who was born in Hawaii but is of Japanese descent, was asked if he considered giving his daughter a Japanese name.

"Her middle name is Grace," Suzuki said with a smile. "She has a Japanese last name."

### **Oakland A's update: Josh Willingham relieved his family spared by Alabama tornadoes**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Alabama tornadoes spare Willingham's family

A's left fielder Josh Willingham watched from afar as tornadoes wreaked havoc through Alabama and much of the South this week.

Willingham, who was raised and still lives in Florence, Ala., was relieved to hear that his family and close friends were OK. He said he's never experienced a tornado himself, but growing up in the area, tornado drills were a regular occurrence in school.

"It's always been kind of a tornado alley through there," Willingham said before Friday's game against the Texas Rangers.

President Obama visited Tuscaloosa, Ala., on Friday to survey the damage. But Florence, tucked in the northwestern corner of the state, was spared major damage.

"A lot of the neighboring towns are the ones that suffered a lot," Willingham said. "There are a couple of people I know of who had the roof blown off their house."

Willingham returned to the A's lineup Friday after missing two games with tightness in his back.

Another injured outfielder, Coco Crisp, missed his second straight game with tightness in his left quadriceps. But Crisp said his leg was feeling better and he was scheduled to try running Friday.

A's pitchers Rich Harden and Brandon McCarthy, who spent last season with the Rangers, received their American League championship rings before Friday's series opener.

Harden went 5-5 in 20 games (18 starts) for the Rangers in 2010 but was left off the postseason roster as the Rangers marched to their first World Series appearance. McCarthy, who missed time with a shoulder injury, pitched strictly for Triple-A Oklahoma City.

Anyone who played in a game or spent time on the major league disabled list received a ring, which contained 137 diamonds surrounding the Rangers' "T" logo in the middle.

Closer Andrew Bailey (forearm strain) threw a bullpen session with a batter standing in.

Bailey has been throwing off the mound every three days, but he might be increased to every other day.

"I'm recovering a lot better than I was the last couple weeks," Bailey said.

There's no timetable for the two-time All-Star to start a minor league rehab assignment.

### **Chin Music: Willingham back in lineup, Crisp still out for A's**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/29/2011 6:11PM

Opportunity presents itself this weekend for the A's, as they get their first crack at the first-place Texas Rangers. Texas has three lefties going in this four-game series, and I'll be interested to see how the A's lineup looks in those games – who plays, who sits. I suppose much of that will depend on the availability of outfielders Coco Crisp and Josh Willingham.

Willingham (back tightness) is back in left field tonight, but Crisp will miss his second game with a left quadriceps injury. Manager Bob Geren penciled Mark Ellis into the leadoff spot tonight, with David DeJesus dropping to the sixth spot. Geren has dropped DeJesus down in the lineup vs. lefties before, and if the offense clicks tonight and Crisp misses another game or

two, perhaps we'll see more of Ellis atop the lineup. But from talking to Crisp before batting practice, he doesn't expect to be out much longer. "My leg is feeling better," he said. "We're going to give it one more day, I think, is their thought process." Geren said Crisp would do some running before the game to test his leg.

–Proud papa Kurt Suzuki is back with the team and serving as DH tonight. Suzuki looks pretty beat, and Geren said he thought it might be a good idea to give him a half-day off by not catching.

–Andrew Bailey threw a bullpen session with a hitter standing in. When you read about a hitter standing in but not taking swings, I'm guessing a lot of people must think, "What's so special about that?" Ask pitchers, however, and they'll say that just having a hitter standing in the box gets the adrenaline pumping. That puts a little extra strain on the arm and gives a pitcher a good read on his progress if he's coming off an arm injury, as Bailey is. Geren said that they'll see how Bailey feels tomorrow before deciding his next step. If he feels good, a minor league rehab assignment can't be far off. ...

The lineups:

A's – Ellis 2B, Barton 1B, Jackson RF, Willingham LF, Suzuki DH, DeJesus CF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Powell C, Pennington SS; Cahill RHP.

Rangers – Kinsler 2B, Andrus SS, Young DH, Beltre 3B, Cruz RF, Murphy LF, Torrealba C, Moreland 1B, Borbon CF; Wilson LHP.

### **Barnidge: Overstock.com? Stadium name game is all part of big-bucks sports**

By Tom Barnidge, Contra Costa Times columnist

IF YOU HAVE wondered what to make of the new naming rights deal for the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, you have come to the right place. There is a lot of history behind arrangements such as this, so pull up a chair.

The six-year, \$7.5 million contract -- proceeds to be shared by the stadium authority and the Oakland Raiders -- ensures that the charmless, concrete soup bowl where the A's and Raiders lose their home games will soon bear the name of a website you never have visited: [Overstock.com](http://Overstock.com).

This follows the stadium's previous turns under the Network Associates and McAfee branding overlords and a brief return to its original name from when it opened in 1966. Some purists yearn for those days of innocence, but only wide-eyed traditionalists indulge nostalgia in today's big-bucks sports world.

[Overstock.com](http://Overstock.com) Stadium is really not such a strange name: When the A's are playing, think of it as referring to the thousands of excess unused seats. For the Raiders, it hints at a surplus of empty promises -- nine years since a playoff berth.

The new title sponsor is an online liquidator that offers cut-rate prices on surplus inventories of furniture, clothing, baby supplies, luggage and almost anything but winning seasons. It's so keen on cutting, it is even thinking of trimming its name to [O.co](http://O.co). When that day comes, pick the stadium name of your choice. We're going with the "Big O."

There may not seem to be a tie-in between an online shopping site and a stadium, but common sense never has been important for sports sponsorships. Waste Management, a trash disposal company, sponsors a PGA tournament. Poulan Weed Eater once bought naming rights for a college bowl game.

Stamping commercial branding onto sports venues is a venerable tradition.

It's believed that Fenway Park was named as much for club owner John Taylor's Fenway Realty Company as it was for the neighborhood in which it was built. Chicago's Wrigley Field served as a branding platform for owner William Wrigley's real enterprise, chewing gum.

Beer baron August Busch, former owner of the St. Louis Cardinals, planned to have his team play in Budweiser Stadium until the commissioner's office ruled thumbs down. Instead, it became Busch Stadium.

Only after corporations started dialing up multimillion-dollar signage deals did they draw public attention, but they are so expected now that hardly anyone stumbles over the names. If you find a facility without a sponsor attached, you feel like Balboa discovering the Pacific.

The San Diego Padres play at Petco Park, the Colorado Rockies at Coors Field, the St. Louis Rams at the Edward Jones Dome, the Los Angeles Lakers at the Staples Center and the University of Louisville at the KFC Yum! Center. (Even [Overstock.com](http://Overstock.com) Stadium sounds better than that.)

Sometimes one sponsor begets another, or have you forgotten that the San Francisco Giants have played in Pac Bell Park, SBC Park and AT&T Park in the past 10 years? The Giants change stadium names as often as they change socks.

This naming rights business is only apt to increase. There are so many other attractions that companies haven't yet covered with trademarks.

How about the Starbucks Space Needle? Or Google Grand Canyon? Imagine promoters salivating over the cross-marketing possibilities of YouTube Yellowstone Park.

The most intriguing aspect of the Coliseum deal is that any commercial enterprise clamors for the association.

As everyone in San Jose knows, the A's don't want anything to do with the place.

### **New dad Suzuki, Cahill lead A's past Rangers 3-1**

Rusty Simmons, Chronicle Staff Writer

An hour before Friday night's game, Ron Romanick darted through the A's clubhouse with a teasingly worried look on his face.

"I can't find my starter," he said.

The pitching coach must have known that there was nothing to worry about with Trevor Cahill. The ace is pretty good at finding himself.

Cahill pitched around three first-inning walks to toss seven scoreless innings in a dazzling 3-1 victory over the American League champion Texas Rangers in a game that represented the start of a seven-game homestand at the Coliseum.

This was the Rangers' first trip to the Bay Area since clinching the AL West against the A's in September and playing Games 1 and 2 of the World Series in October. A game in April doesn't erase the image of a rival celebrating on your field, but it helps.

The A's got back to .500 for the season behind Cahill, who had to do a little searching of his own in the opening inning. After walking four batters combined in his first five starts, he walked three in the first inning.

He got a David Murphy groundout to get out of that jam, and went on to allow only two runners to reach second base between the second and seventh innings. Cahill allowed seven hits and four walks, and struck out four while throwing 62 of 100 pitches for strikes.

"I just started pounding the zone a little more," said Cahill, who moved to 4-0. "My goal this year is to be aggressive and not walk guys. Walking three guys put things into perspective, and I started throwing everything for strikes and not trying to be too fine with it."

Not bad against a Texas team that came into the game leading the majors with 92 extra-base hits and with the fewest strikeouts.

The A's pitching staff entered with the major's best ERA (2.66), but good pitching can't beat good hitting if the good pitchers don't get run support. Oakland, the majors' second-worst hitters with runners in scoring position, finally provided support with three runs on eight hits and some luck.

Julio Borbon spun one way, second-guessed himself back the other way, jumped and then dropped a Daric Barton liner for a two-base error. Kurt Suzuki, a day after witnessing the birth of his first child, singled Barton home for a 1-0 lead in the third inning.

"I was more tired than I thought I was," Suzuki said. "I started hitting the wall in the fifth inning after running on adrenaline."

The A's opened the fifth inning with back-to-back doubles that made it 2-0. It was Josh Willingham's double that one-hopped the left-center-field wall and scored Conor Jackson from second.

Barton singled to start the seventh inning, moved to second on a Willingham single and scored a batter later. Suzuki grounded one to shortstop Elvis Andrus, who tossed to second to force out Willingham. His hard slide forced an errant throw from Ian Kinsler, whose relay skipped past first baseman Mitch Moreland and allowed Barton to score.

Michael Young had a two-out single to right field off left-hander Brian Fuentes in the ninth inning to break up the A's shutout.

### **Kurt Suzuki returns to A's lineup**

Rusty Simmons, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's reinstated catcher **Kurt Suzuki** from the paternity leave list and plugged him directly into Friday's lineup.

Suzuki flew from Anaheim to the Bay Area on Wednesday morning and was in a San Ramon hospital with his wife, **Renee**, through the delivery of 8-pound, 3-ounce **Malia Grace** on Thursday morning.

"It feels great. I'm in awe still," said Suzuki, who was wearing a medical band on his left wrist. "I'm trying to catch up on some sleep still."

To make room for Suzuki on the roster, catcher **Josh Donaldson** was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento.

Suzuki was the designated hitter Friday and is expected to catch today. The final three games of the series will be played in the afternoon.

"Things have been kind of hectic for me," Suzuki said. "It's kind of good to get my body back into it after not doing much."

**Ring ceremony:** In the bowels of the Coliseum, Rangers director of baseball operations **Matt Vinnola** and media relations director **John Blake** presented A's right-handers **Rich Harden** and **Brandon McCarthy** with their 2010 AL Championship rings. The rings have a red T surrounded by 137 diamonds.

**Mystery man:** The A's will face three lefties in four games against Texas, so they brought in a mystery left-hander to throw batting practice. Known only as "**Alameda Eddie**," the real identity of the man was unknown, even to manager **Bob Geren**.

**Injury updates:** Geren said closer **Andrew Bailey** (strained right forearm) threw with a batter standing in the box and looked good. ... Center fielder **Coco Crisp** rode the stationary bike and ran but was unavailable to play.

**Briefly:** Warriors swingman **Dorell Wright** tossed the ceremonial first pitch, a one-hopper that would have plunked a left-handed hitter.

### **A's leading off**

Rusty Simmons, San Francisco Chronicle

**Not buying it:** Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum is, as of Wednesday, called Overstock.com Coliseum. "I still call it the Coliseum," said Texas manager Ron Washington, a former A's coach. "I had a lot of good days here."

### **Father knows best: Suzuki backs Cahill**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/30/2011 2:15 AM ET

OAKLAND -- On any other day, a seven-inning scoreless performance against the offensive-minded Rangers in a 3-1 A's victory would automatically turn Trevor Cahill into postgame celebrity.

And on any other day, a typical RBI single off the bat of Kurt Suzuki would be a nice touch -- a helpful effort -- but not much more.

But it's not every day a baseball player gets to celebrate his new fatherhood with such a hit, as Suzuki did Friday, making him just as worthy of a gold star as Cahill, who was still rightfully applauded for his fourth win of the season as Oakland notched its second in a row.

Suzuki, who was reinstated from the paternity leave list on Friday following the Thursday birth of his daughter, Malia Grace, shook off a dazed yet anxious feeling by putting his designated hitter duties to work and placing the A's on the board first with a run-scoring single in the third off C.J. Wilson.

"It's been a long couple of days," Suzuki admitted. "It was rougher for [wife Renee], but we have a beautiful child. She's such a precious thing. It's good for me to get back out here and help the team any way I could."

"It's a huge day for anyone's life, obviously, and he was all smiles, but he was looking forward to getting back to work," manager Bob Geren said. "He came in today looking a little tired, so I thought it would be a good time to DH him, get him some swings and give him a chance to contribute offensively.

"It's an exciting time for him, and to have it happen in the middle of the season, you have to get right back into it, and he did, and he helped us win the game tonight."

Suzuki's hit plated Daric Barton, who led off the frame with a hard-hit ball to deep center field, where Texas outfielder Julio Borbon was charged with a two-base fielding error when he dropped the ball on the run.

It marked the first of three errors on the night for the Rangers, whose defensive woes were met with a sense of frustration against Cahill, who didn't even boast his best stuff in a 100-pitch effort.

Rather, his seemingly perfect night was far from that at the start. The A's righty walked three in a lengthy 26-pitch first inning, but proceeded to leave the bases loaded and scatter seven hits and one more walk over the next six frames while stranding nine total.

"His walks in the first were not out-of-control-type walks," Geren said. "They were all very, very close pitches. It's a little different when a guy comes out of the bullpen, can't find the zone and he walks guys and it looks like it maybe could be a

long night. But in this case, they were just missing, were a little bit down. All he had to do was make a minor adjustment, which he did perfectly."

The 23-year-old hurler is now 7-2 with a 2.27 ERA in 10 career starts against the Rangers, which is the seventh-lowest mark by an opponent with a minimum of 10 starts vs. Texas. Friday was also the fifth time in 10 starts he did not allow an earned run against the Rangers and the third time he did not allow any runs at all.

"If you look at his history against us, it's good," Rangers outfielder David Murphy said. "He throws the ball well against us, and in our division we're going to face him five or six times. He also caught us at a good time. We're not swinging the bats well top to bottom. At this point there is no reason to dissect it or over-analyze it. We just need to hit better."

The Rangers most recently watched their club batting average drop from .272 to .264 over their previous six games, but heading into Friday's contest it still represented the second-best mark in the AL.

"They're one of the best offenses in baseball, so when people come up and say you've had a lot of success against them, you don't really think of that," Cahill said. "They have a lot of guys that can hurt you. I think a lot of it is you face them so many times, so you start to learn their strengths and their weaknesses. So far, I've stuck to my strengths."

"He threw well," added Michael Young. "He made good adjustments after the first inning. But our job is to find a way to score runs no matter who the pitcher is, what ballpark we're playing in or what time of year it is. We didn't do that."

Cahill has given up 16 earned runs in 63 1/3 innings against the Rangers, and 12 of those came in the two losses.

Backed by Cahill's strong Friday showing, the A's scored three runs -- just one earned -- against Wilson, who allowed eight hits and three walks in seven innings en route to falling to 3-1.

Following Suzuki's hit in the third, the A's extended their lead by one in the fifth courtesy of back-to-back doubles from Conor Jackson and Josh Willingham, the latter whom went 2-for-4 after missing two games with back tightness.

"I felt good," Willingham said. "I just tried to relax and not do too much and see what happens."

Oakland's final run came in the seventh with help from Rangers second baseman Ian Kinsler, who threw away a potential double-play ball from Suzuki with Barton on second and Willingham on first to allow Barton to score.

After Grant Balfour pitched a scoreless eighth, lefty Brian Fuentes surrendered a two-out RBI single to Young in the ninth but garnered the third out for his seventh save of the season, which culminated in Suzuki's very first win as a dad.

"Being able to hold your daughter for the first time, it's a tremendous feeling," he said. "She's a beautiful girl. We're all excited."

"Something like that, it puts things in perspective," said Willingham, father of two. "You can go out and have fun instead of trying too hard."

### **Bailey on track to return to A's in May**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Andrew Bailey is sounding like a broken record these days, but that's good news for the A's, who hope to have their closer back in May.

Bailey, stationed on the disabled list with a strained right forearm, threw yet another successful bullpen session on Friday afternoon, tossing 35-40 fastballs off the mound.

"It went really well," Bailey said. "I'm making strides every time out there, and it was definitely my best one yet. You don't want to rush it so that all of a sudden you set yourself back. You've gotta take baby steps, but also push it at the same time. Today I went out there, let it loose a little bit and was feeling good."

Bailey also mixed in some flat-ground work after playing catch, spinning a handful of curveballs while getting a feel for his breaking pitches again. He'll likely undergo those same activities in three days unless he comes out of his most recent session feeling well enough to face hitters.

"He looked pretty good," manager Bob Geren said. "The ball was coming out of his hand pretty well. We'll see how he is [Saturday], if we want to do that again or try something different."

On Friday, Bailey settled for a non-swinging hitter, as an antsy Adam Rosales -- nursing a surgically-repaired right foot -- stood in while the right-hander threw off the mound.

"It looked hard to me, and it had some movement," Rosales said. "I saw about 15 pitches. The ball was jumping at me, but I feel like everything is jumping at me. I'm excited to see him back out there."

The 26-year-old Bailey, who has been sidelined since mid-March, calls his rehab "a long, frustrating process," but has remained positive in knowing that he continues to make progress. And while he can't dictate when he'll be fully healed, he likes the idea of a May return, depending on how many Minor League rehab appearances are necessary.

"I haven't really had a Spring Training," he said, "so that will be my Spring Training."

In Bailey's absence, part-time closer Brian Fuentes has not allowed an earned run in nine of his 11 appearances while picking up six of eight save opportunities along the way. Overall, he has a 3.75 ERA.

"We play a month or two extra," joked Bailey, referring to the postseason, "so I figure I'll take the first month or two off."

### **Crisp misses another game with tight quad**

OAKLAND -- A's outfielder Coco Crisp was held out of Friday's series opener against the Rangers as he continued to nurse a tight left quadriceps back to health.

Crisp, who hasn't played since Tuesday, was slated to participate in running drills on Friday afternoon, the results of which would likely dictate his availability for Saturday's contest against Rangers righty Colby Lewis.

Crisp is batting .364 (24-for-66) against right-handed pitching this season, compared to .080 (2-for-25) when facing southpaws.

"He'll do some running and see how it feels," manager Bob Geren said. "He feels pretty decent today, so that's good news. He's doubtful for tonight. It's looking more like a test to see where he's at than a test to see if he can play tonight."

The 32-year-old outfielder, whose 2010 campaign was interrupted by injuries three times, was pulled from Tuesday's game in the third inning after sustaining the quad soreness while sprinting to first base on a potential double-play ball.

Crisp had three consecutive three-hit games leading up to that game and was 1-for-1 with a first-inning single when he exited the contest. He leads the A's with 26 hits and a .286 batting average and is second in the Majors in triples (three) and fourth in steals (eight).

David DeJesus was inserted into center field in Crisp's stead on Friday, with Josh Willingham playing left and Conor Jackson manning right field. DeJesus, whose 262-game errorless streak is the longest active streak among all Major League outfielders, has now started four games in center this year.

### **New dad Suzuki back in A's lineup as DH**

OAKLAND -- A dazed Kurt Suzuki was handed a partial night off Friday in the form of designated hitter duties following the birth of his first child just one day prior.



The A's on Friday reinstated Suzuki from Major League Baseball's new paternity leave list, which allows players to be away for one to three days, and optioned catcher Josh Donaldson to Triple-A Sacramento.

Suzuki missed just one game (Wednesday) and was afforded Thursday's off-day to be with wife Renee without having to miss another contest. Malia Grace Suzuki, born Thursday morning, was welcomed into the world at 8 pounds and 3 ounces.

"He's a very happy, proud young father," manager Bob Geren said, "and he should be."

Suzuki was greeted with countless well wishes from teammates and coaches on Friday, when Landon Powell received his second straight start behind the plate. Donaldson, who is batting .158 with one home run and six RBIs in 15 games with the River Cats, did not see any action during his short two-day stay with Oakland.

By giving Suzuki a day without catcher's gear, Geren said he'll be mentally and physically fresh to start the first of three consecutive day games on Saturday. The A's skipper also wanted to utilize as many right-handed hitters as possible against Friday starter C.J. Wilson, who has held lefties to a .185 average in his career.

As a result, regular DH Hideki Matsui, a career .154 hitter against Wilson, was out of the starting lineup but available to pinch-hit, Geren said.

### **Willingham returns after missing two games**

OAKLAND -- Outfielder Josh Willingham returned to the A's starting lineup against Texas on Friday after missing two games with back tightness.

Willingham's return was greatly welcomed by the A's, who were still without Coco Crisp (quadriceps) for the first of four contests against the defending American League champion Rangers.

The 32-year-old left fielder is 9-for-25 (.360) with 11 RBIs with runners in scoring position on a team that is hitting just .204 in such situations -- the second-lowest average in the Majors -- this season.

Overall, Willingham entered Friday's contest with a .234 mark and a team-leading three home runs and 13 RBIs. He has never faced the Rangers in his career.

### **Worth noting**

- Brandon McCarthy and Rich Harden, former Rangers pitchers, received their 2010 American League championship rings -- featuring 137 diamonds -- outside of the Oakland clubhouse on Friday.
- With Coco Crisp out of the mix with a tight left quad, Mark Ellis received his first start in the leadoff spot this season on Friday. It marked his 220th time batting leadoff in nine Major League seasons.

"He's very versatile," manager Bob Geren said. "He likes the challenge of hitting anywhere. He has that 'I'll hit where you need me' attitude. It's great."

Ellis snapped his 0-for-17 streak with a single in the fourth inning on Wednesday. He entered Friday batting .200, but is a career .300 hitter against the Rangers.

- The A's have been without a left-handed batting practice pitcher for home games, but they may have found their new man. Southpaw Eddie Delzer, who pitched for Cal State Fullerton before playing three seasons in the Angels' Minor League system, was on hand Friday as the A's prepared to face Texas lefty C.J. Wilson.

Delzer is expected to return Saturday, but it is unknown whether his role will be solidified for the entire season.

- Rangers manager and former A's infield coach Ron Washington relayed a sense of gratefulness for Oakland's head groundskeeper Clay Wood on Friday.

"Without a doubt, Clay Wood does a great job," Washington said. "He keeps this field in great shape until football starts. He works hard at it and has pride in it. He just takes a ton of pride in it. With all he has to deal with, he does an excellent job."

The 2011 season marks Wood's 17th year as the head groundskeeper of the Coliseum and his 22nd in the A's organization.

## **A's know Rangers are team to beat**

By Arden Zwelling / MLB.com | 4/30/2011 1:30 AM ET

The last time the Texas Rangers made a trip to Oakland to play the Athletics -- a 4-3 Rangers victory on Sept. 25, 2010 -- it was a joyous occasion for the Rangers and a glimpse of what could be for the A's.

The Rangers had just won the American League West title, while the Athletics were finishing a rebuilding year in which their pitching staff took big strides forward and the team finished an even .500, the first non-losing season for the A's since 2006.

Oakland manager Bob Geren watched the Rangers celebrate that day and dreamed of his own team toasting the same feat someday soon.

"I think [the Rangers] know that we have a good team and that we're going to be there to fight for this title. It would be nice to have a good showing against them here," Geren said ahead of his team's three-game series with Texas. "We want to win every game we play, obviously, but they're a confident team and they know we're an improved team also and we're going to be competing right along with them."

Friday night's 3-1 win over the Rangers was a step in the right direction for Geren and his troops who are now 5-5 over their last 10 games. The fifth-year manager likes how his team matches up against the defending division champions.

"Our one-to-four and their one-to-four, as far as pitching matchups, seem pretty even," Geren said. "I think our pitchers have been throwing the ball better than theirs, but they've been swinging the bat better."

The A's may have a chance to awaken their bats Saturday when Rangers starter Colby Lewis takes the mound. Lewis is 0-3 with a 7.88 ERA in his last three starts and allowed six runs in the fifth inning of his last outing, a 6-4 loss to the Blue Jays.

He gave up three home runs to the Blue Jays, bringing his total on the season to eight over four starts.

"I felt great, I just had one bad inning," Lewis said of his start against Toronto. "I just need to be more consistent. I felt like I threw the ball well the last time, but just left a couple pitches up."

To his credit, Lewis has yet to lose the confidence of his manager during his rocky start to the season. In fact, Ron Washington went so far as to say he thinks Lewis is close to getting on a roll.

"I do, I really do," Washington said. "In his last start, his breaking ball was sharp, he was able to throw his changeup and for four innings he was able to keep his fastball down. Then he throws one over a guy's head and he hits it out of the ballpark."

The A's will counter with left-hander Brett Anderson, who is 2-1 with a 1.56 ERA after back-to-back wins over the Red Sox and Mariners in his past two starts.

### **Athletics: Crisp sits out again**

A's outfielder Coco Crisp was held out of the lineup for the second straight game Friday night with a tight left quadriceps, but could potentially return Saturday. The 32-year-old, whose 2010 campaign was interrupted by injuries three times, was pulled from Tuesday's game in the third inning after experiencing quad soreness while sprinting to first base on a potential double-play ball.

### **Rangers: Young continues to hit in the clutch**

Veteran Michael Young is as clutch as they come, leading the American League with a .538 average with runners in scoring

position. He has 14 RBIs with runners in scoring position and 16 total for the month of April, matching his career best for the month.

### **Worth noting**

The Rangers have won the season series against the A's in four of the past five seasons. ... A's pitchers currently lead the Majors with eight pickoffs after leading the league in 2010 with 27. ... The A's are 7-2 in day games and 5-11 at night. ... The Rangers have been in first place in the American League West for 144 of 147 days over the past two seasons, beginning June 8, 2010.

### **Major League: Crisp sits again; Willingham, Suzuki return**

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 4/30/2011 2:44AM

The A's received a pair of welcomed faces back on Friday when Josh Willingham and Kurt Suzuki returned to the lineup. Willingham had missed the team's previous two games with back tightness but, with the help of Thursday's off day, he was ready to go for the first of four games against the Rangers. Suzuki, meanwhile, was plugged into the DH spot for multiple reasons. He and his wife, Renee, welcomed baby girl Malia Grace into the world yesterday, and Geren figured Suzuki could use what's sorta a half off day. Even more, he wanted to have as many righties in the lineup as possible against Texas lefty C.J. Wilson.

Willingham returned to left field, while Conor Jackson got a start in right and David DeJesus played center in Coco Crisp's absence. Crisp is still nursing a tight left quad, but Geren said he was feeling better on Friday and was expected to do some running drills. Depending on how those went, he could return to the lineup as soon as tomorrow.

Also on the injury front, Andrew Bailey threw another bullpen today and came out feeling great. He tossed 35-40 fastballs and also played around with his curveball a bit from flatground in an effort to start getting a feel again for his breaking pitches. Bailey isn't sure how soon he'll face live hitters, so for now he'll simply continue on this three-day cycle that has him upping the intensity level with each bullpen.

Lineups for tonight's game:

A's: Ellis 2B, Barton 1B, Jackson RF, Willingham LF, Suzuki DH, DeJesus RF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Powell C, Pennington SS

Rangers: Kinsler 2B, Andrus SS, Young DH, Beltre 3B, Cruz RF, Murphy LF, Torrealba C, Moreland 1B, Borbon CF

### **A's Cahill hangs in for win**

By JANIE McCAULEY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Sleep-deprived first-time father Kurt Suzuki came off the paternity leave list and delivered a go-ahead RBI single to help Trevor Cahill stay unbeaten and the Oakland Athletics beat the Texas Rangers 3-1 on Friday night.

Cahill (4-0) overcame a three-walk first inning to pitch seven scoreless innings against the Rangers, who kicked off a seven-game West Coast road trip all against the division with a punchless performance to lose for the fourth time in five games.

Texas fell into a first-place tie with the Los Angeles Angels in the AL West.

Grant Balfour pitched the eighth and Brian Fuentes finished for his seventh save in nine chances after allowing Michael Young's two-out RBI single.

Cahill outdueled C.J. Wilson (3-1) and quickly found his rhythm after escaping the first inning unscathed following three walks. Cahill, who on April 11 received a new five-year contract worth \$30.5 million, issued three free passes in an inning for the fifth time in his career but the first since July 17, 2009, against the Angels during his rookie season.

Cahill had walked only eight batters total in his first five starts this season before the four total walks Friday. The right-hander allowed seven hits and also struck out four.

Mitch Moreland, Young and Elvis Andrus each had two hits for Texas, which has gained or lost ground in the division race each of the last 14 days after holding a two-game lead for three straight days from April 13-15.

Suzuki did some early catching work in the bullpen to get back in a groove but he started at designated hitter. Manager Bob Geren said Suzuki would be back behind the plate Saturday. His two-out RBI single in the third put the A's ahead, then Josh Willingham added an RBI double in the fifth. Suzuki also grounded into a fielder's choice in the seventh as Oakland's third run against Wilson came home.

Suzuki left Anaheim on Wednesday to return to the Bay Area, where his wife, Renee, gave birth to the couple's first child Thursday morning. The baby girl, Malia, weighed in at 8 pounds, 3 ounces.

Regular A's DH Hideki Matsui had the night off against a lefty starter but was slated to start Saturday.

Oakland played its first game back home since the venue was named the Overstock.com Coliseum this week.

"I still call it the Coliseum," quipped Rangers manager Ron Washington, a longtime A's third base coach before taking the Texas job.

Texas clinched the club's first AL West title since 1999 at the Coliseum last Sept. 25 and went on to reach the franchise's first World Series before losing to the San Francisco Giants in five games.

A's center fielder Coco Crisp missed his second straight game with tightness in his left quadriceps, but tested the injury before the game. He could be back Saturday. Left fielder Willingham returned to the lineup after missing Wednesday's series finale against the Angels with a tweaked back.

Former Rangers pitchers Rich Harden and Brandon McCarthy received their AL champion rings — featuring 137 diamonds — from Texas director of baseball operations Matt Vinnola and media relations director John Blake outside the Oakland clubhouse before the game.

**Notes:** Oakland pulled in a left-hander from nearby Alameda — the A's are calling him "Alameda Eddie" because they don't know his last name — just to throw batting practice before the A's opened the series in which they will face three lefty starters. Even longtime equipment manager Steve Vucinich didn't have additional details on the man, and he was also a mystery to manager Bob Geren. Word is he's Eddie Delzer, former Cal State Fullerton star. ... The Rangers signed veteran RHP reliever Justin Miller to a Triple-A contract and he is scheduled to join the Round Rock team Monday. The 33-year-old Miller could be called upon to help Texas' taxed and beat up bullpen. ... Injured A's closer Andrew Bailey (strained forearm) threw with a batter in the box with no problems. How he felt Saturday was to determine his next step. ... Warriors swingman Dorell Wright threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

### **Philadelphia A's Historical Society Struggles To Maintain Memories**

#### **Hatboro baseball museum is financially strapped as fan base fades.**

By Edward Levenson | Norristown Patch, 4/30/2011

It's been 100 years since the 1911 Philadelphia A's beat the New York Giants 4-2 in the World Series. The win marked the first back-to-back World Series victory for the Athletics, a feat accomplished only one other time by a Philadelphia-based team (1929-30 A's). Shown in this photo, which was taken along the rightfield wall at Shibe Park, are: Back row (from left): Harry Davis, Frank Baker, Jack Coombs, Harry Krause, Ira Thomas, Chief Bender, Claude Derrick, Cy Morgan and Paddy Livingstone; center row (from left): Rube Oldring, Bris Lord, Danny Murphy, Connie Mack, Eddie Plank, Jack Lapp and

In their prime, both the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team and the flamboyant entertainer Liberace had a devoted following.

Years after the Athletics no longer played in Philadelphia and Liberace no longer played in Las Vegas, faithful fans supported museums dedicated to their quite different legacies.

But the once-successful Liberace Museum in Las Vegas closed in 2010 after 31 years in operation. As fans aged and memories faded, attendance dropped from a peak of 450,000 annually in the late 1990s to 50,000 in 2009.

While considerably smaller, the Philadelphia Athletics Historical Society in Hatboro hopes to avoid the same fate. Fifteen years after it was formed, the society is trying desperately to keep open its museum and gift shop on North York Road.

"We struggle every day. We somehow find a way to get through the month," said Ernie Montella, executive director of the nonprofit organization. The group is committed to preserving the legacy of the Athletics, which won nine American League

pennants and five World Series playing in Philadelphia from 1901 to 1954. The Athletics moved to Kansas City before the 1955 season, and moved again to Oakland, Calif. in 1968.

Membership has dropped from a peak of nearly 1,000 five years ago to about 700. About half live in the Philadelphia region. The rest are former area residents who moved away and baseball buffs from across the United States and even foreign countries, according to Montella, 76, of Warrington.

While 128 former A's players were alive in 1996, today there are fewer than 40, mostly in their 90s. As a result, the society no longer holds dinners or events featuring ex-ballplayers, each of which used to draw hundreds of fans, Montella said.

Gift shop sales - which raise most of the society's revenue - have dropped, due both to a decline in fans and the poor economy. The majority of sales are from the Web site, not the estimated 50 to 100 people who visit the museum each week, according to Montella. The storefront shop and museum, which opened in 1998, sells books, replica jerseys, sweatshirts, T-shirts, caps, autographed baseballs, player figurines and other items related to the A's, the Phillies and other baseball teams.

Last year's total revenue, which also included the \$30 membership dues, barely covered the \$70,000 cost of operating the mostly volunteer museum, publishing a periodic newsletter and maintaining a Web site, Montella said. The society this month held one of its periodic auctions of surplus donated baseball memorabilia (not from the Athletics collection), but those sales bring in only a few thousand dollars.

Museums nationally are suffering because of the recession, according to Dewey Blanton, spokesman for the American Association of Museums in Washington, D.C.

"It's not just small museums. It's not just sports or history museums," he said. Even large institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York have laid off staffers. Government grants to privately run museums are dwindling.

He said "niche" museums devoted to a deceased celebrity or a defunct organization face an added burden to stay afloat.

"As the memory fades, it's a real challenge to keep that person relevant to contemporary Americans," Blanton said.

That's the case with the Jimmy Stewart Museum in Indiana, Pa., the actor's hometown. Opened two years before the actor's death in 1997, the museum has seen attendance cut in half, from 10,000 to 5,000 a year, as fewer of Stewart's aging fans make the pilgrimage. The museum, which relies on volunteers, remains open but faces an uncertain future.

Blanton said the Philadelphia A's Society is the only independent museum he knows of devoted exclusively to a single former professional sports team. In Washington, for example, there is an organization for fans of the former Senators baseball team, but it doesn't run a museum.

He suggested the Athletics museum could broaden its appeal by partnering with the Phillies and relocating to downtown Philadelphia.

Montella said the A's society has considered both options. It previously approached the Phillies, but the team was not interested in preserving Athletics history.

The society is talking with the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent (formerly the Atwater Kent Museum) in Center City. The history museum, closed since 2009 for a \$5.8 million renovation, is due to reopen in September.

"We've worked with them in the past (on a baseball exhibit)," said Kate Bieg, the Philadelphia museum's director of marketing and public relations. "We're continuing the discussion. What would work with our collection?"

When it reopens, the museum will have a gallery called "Played in Philadelphia," with exhibits on the city's sports teams, broadcasting, movies and other activities. The museum owns some Athletics and Phillies memorabilia.

"It's obvious this is a sports town," Bieg said. "Our main goal is to make Philadelphians feel at home."

While nothing has been decided, the museum is interested in the A's society's collection, according to Bieg.

A few of the items currently on display in Hatboro include: A's souvenir programs dating back to the early 1900s, baseballs and photographs signed by A's players, tickets from the 1929 and 1930 World Series won by the A's, a silver loving cup

presented to the A's as the 1910 World Champions and even a turnstile from the former Shibe Park, the Athletics stadium in North Philadelphia.

Over the years, the society has sold hundreds of bricks from Shibe Park, obtained from a man who worked on the crew that demolished the ballpark in 1976, according to Harry Adams of Bensalem, a board member and the society's auditor. Originally priced at \$99, the bricks now sell for \$150.

Several Athletics society board members, in their 70s, remember going to A's games at Shibe Park as boys.

"I went to my first ballgame in 1948," said Dick Rosen, 70, of Huntingdon Valley, vice chairman and the society's historian. "By the time I was 8 years old, I could recite the names and batting averages of the [World Champion] 1929 A's."

"My first game was on Memorial Day, 1943. The A's played the Tigers," said chairman David Jordan, 76, who grew up in communities along Old York Road and now lives in Chesterbrook, Chester County.

Rosen and Jordan acknowledged that the society's long-term survival depends on interesting a new generation of fans who don't share their first-hand experiences in the Athletics.

"We like to talk about the most successful sports franchise in Philadelphia sports history," Jordan said. None of the city's other professional teams - the Phillies, the Flyers and the Sixers - can match the Athletics' record of nine league and five world championships.

"I think we're out to keep that history alive," Rosen said. "We don't want to abandon the A's at all. I'm hoping we can keep it afloat."

The Brooklyn Historical Society, located in the New York City borough, has found there still is a lot of interest in the former Brooklyn Dodgers, although the baseball team relocated to Los Angeles after the 1957 season.

Its special exhibit, "Home Base: Memories of the Brooklyn Dodgers at Ebbets Field," opened in June 2009 and was due to close this month, but has been extended until August because of the enthusiastic public response, according to Keara Duggan, development and communications manager.

"There are people who still live in Brooklyn who have a soft spot in their heart for the team," she said. "I think the Dodgers are part of the brand of Brooklyn as we know it today."

The museum does not have a permanent exhibit on the team, but its Dodgers collection includes photographs, baseball cards, uniforms, autographed baseballs, scorebooks and the papers of the last Brooklyn team owner, Walter O'Malley. The Brooklyn Cyclones minor league team displays some Dodgers memorabilia in a gallery at its Coney Island stadium, according to Duggan.

A's society board members said they would like to keep their museum in Hatboro if possible, but they have to explore options to make sure the collection remains intact.

"We want to keep the collection together," Montella said. "We'll never sell it off piecemeal. We'd put it in storage first."

If the society is forced to close the museum, it could continue as an A's fan club, publishing a newsletter and operating a Web site. In that event, Montella said, his feelings would be, "We've had 15 good years. It's time to call it quits."

But he and the other directors hope it doesn't come to that.

"We're proud of our museum. We'd like to keep it as such," Jordan said.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Sacramento wins rare pitching duel in Las Vegas**

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats are officially clutch.

One night after scoring four runs in the 13th inning to defeat the Las Vegas 51s, Sacramento came from behind to squeak out a 2-1 victory.

Despite Thursday's high-scoring affair, Friday was a prospect pitcher's duel. Las Vegas starter Brad Mills went 6.0 shutout innings, allowing four hits and two walks with nine strikeouts. Not to be outdone, Sacramento starter Graham Godfrey allowed one run over 6.0 innings with four hits and four strikeouts. Godfrey is now 3-0 with a 2.66 ERA.

The difference in this contest, as it has been many times this season, was bullpen performance.

The inning after Mills was pulled, the Cats manufactured two runs to take the narrow 2-1 lead. Anthony Recker scored on a sacrifice fly and Adrian Cardenas scored on a fielder's choice.

The River Cat pen came out firing, beginning with Joe Bateman who threw 2.0 perfect innings with two strikeouts to set up closer Vinnie Chulk, who contributed a perfect inning of his own for the save.

Sacramento ended with two runs and eight hits. Matt Carson, who started in center field and hit third, went 2-for-4 with two doubles. After hitting two home runs a night ago, designated hitter Anthony Recker went 2-for-3 with one run and one walk. Adrian Cardenas, who scored the go-ahead run, went 1-for-4, bringing his batting average to .358 on the year. Jai Miller and Eric Sogard each went 0-for-4 with three strikeouts.

The River Cats improve to 8-2 on the road and maintain a strangle-hold on first place in the Pacific Coast League South Division.

The Cats will look to secure the series victory Saturday night in Las Vegas. The River Cats will send Josh Outman (0-1, 8.59) to the mound. The 51s' starter is to be determined. First pitch is slated for 7:05 p.m.

### **Decker's home run lifts Missions past RockHounds**

Staff Reports, Midland Reporter-Telegram

SAN ANTONIO -- Cody Decker's home run in the bottom of the fourth inning held up as the San Antonio Missions took a 3-2 victory against the Midland RockHounds on Friday at Nelson Wolff Stadium.

Decker's home run gave the Missions their third run of the game and a 3-1 lead.

The RockHounds opened the game by scoring a run in the first when Jermaine Mitchell scored on a Stephen Parker single.

But Midland would not light the scoreboard again until the seventh inning when Parker scored on a Michael Spina double to left.

The RockHounds totaled 12 hits against four San Antonio pitchers, but left 14 baserunners stranded on the night.

The lack of offense overshadowed what was a solid performance by the RockHounds pitching staff on Friday. Starter Justin Murray was tagged with the loss after allowing three runs on three hits with three walks and a strikeout in five innings, but the Midland bullpen held the Missions scoreless through the final three innings.

Mickey Storey, Trey Barham and Neil Wagner allowed a combined three hits over those final three innings.

San Antonio starter Casey Kelly picked up the victory as Brad Bach had his seventh save of the season.

Kent Walton was 3 for 5 for the RockHounds, and Parker and Spina were each 2 for 5.

San Antonio (14-7) and Midland (12-9) will play the second game of a four-game series at 7:05 p.m. today.

## **Straily Stuns Again!**

By Kirstie Haruta / Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports celebrated an 8-3 victory on Friday, April 29 in the first game of a three-game series at home against the Bakersfield Blaze. Excellent pitching, solid defense, and active bats gave the Ports the upper hand on this windy evening at Banner Island Ballpark.

It wasn't an ideal beginning for Ports starter Daniel Straily, who hit lead-off hitter, centerfielder A.J. Means. Means went on to steal his way to third, but was ultimately left in scoring position after a groundout, flyout, and strikeout by left fielder Josh Fellhauer, catcher Yasmani Grandal, and third basemen Eric Campbell, respectively, ended the inning.

Stockton wasted little time getting on the board. With two outs, centerfielder Michael Choice reached first on a base hit off of Blaze starter Pedro Villareal. Third baseman Leonardo Gil walked, putting two on base for first baseman Anthony Aliotti. Aliotti hit one high to left field, which dropped just fair, allowing both Choice and Gil to score. With Aliotti on second, designated hitter Max Stassi struck out to end the inning.

Straily's pitching continued to hold up in the top of the second, save for a walk given up to second baseman Henry Rodriguez, and a wild pitch to first baseman Chris Richburg, which allowed Rodriguez to advance to second. Richburg struck out, bringing up shortstop Brodie Greene. Greene bunted out and Rodriguez advanced to third, but the Blaze would once again leave a runner in scoring position when designated hitter Stephen Hunt flew out to left field for out number three.

The Ports had less offensive luck in the bottom of the second. Left fielder Mitch LeVier got the only Ports hit of the inning, but was caught stealing with two outs at second baseman Conner Crumbliss at the plate.

The top of the third saw Straily get three outs on six pitches, with three Blaze groundouts in a row. With the Ports up to bat again, Crumbliss got on with a walk. Shortstop Dusty Coleman then came to the plate and drove one off the wall in left-center, his determination to make the hit a triple pushing Crumbliss to score. Bakersfield would only give up the one run, however, as Coleman was thrown out at the plate on a hit by Gil to shortstop.

The efficiency of Straily's pitching made the top of the fourth another three up, three down affair. The Ports then gained one more run in the fourth with a home run to right field by LeVier, his second solo shot in as many games.

The Blaze remained hitless in the top of the fifth, earning nothing but a walk for Hunt. In the bottom of the inning, Andrew Bowman came in to pitch for Bakersfield, after Villareal had given up four runs on six hits in four innings. Choice got the ball rolling with a single to third base. Gil struck out, and Aliotti reached first on a throwing error, as Richburg went for the force out at second. With runners on first and second, Stassi blasted a home run out of left field, giving the Ports a 7-0 lead.

It wasn't until the top of the sixth that the Blaze managed a hit off of Straily's Cal League Pitcher of the Week-worthy throwing. After Means popped out, Fellhauer broke the no-hitter with a single to shortstop, but the inning ended on a double play turned on Fellhauer and Grandal. The run ended Straily's 21 scoreless inning streak, which dated back to April 13.

In the bottom of the sixth, catcher Ryan Lipkin hit a lead-off double to left field, and scored on a Crumbliss single to centerfield. The inning ended with the next three batters, but the Ports were up 8-0.

However, Campbell would get the Blaze on the board in the seventh, with a home run to right-center field. The hit was followed by two flyouts and a groundout, and no further damage was done.



After giving up four runs on four hits in two innings, Bowman was replaced by Blaze left-hander Tzu-Kai Chiu. Chiu pitched a short seventh inning, with three batters hitting into outs.

The Blaze got two men on in the top of the eighth, but did not score. Chiu quickly retired three more batters in the bottom of the eighth, bringing the Blaze to their last chance for runs.

After giving up only one run and four hits in an impressive eight innings, Straily left the mound and Jeff Lyman came in to close. He struck Grandal out, but then hit Campbell, and gave up a hit to Rodriguez. Richberg struck out after fighting off several pitches for the second out. A wild pitch to Greene advanced the runners to second and third, putting them in scoring position for Greene's base hit to centerfield. But with the Ports still five runs up, a flyout to right by Hunt would end the game with the Ports victory very much intact.

The Ports look to repeat their victory tomorrow evening as RHP Rob Gilliam takes the mound for Stockton. Former A's great Dave Stewart will be on hand all evening long, and the Ports will don special A's throwback jerseys in his honor.

### **Bees Walk Off With a 2-1 Win**

04/29/2011 4:08 PM ET

BURLINGTON, IA-1B Josh Whitaker (1-4) hit a solo home run to lead off the 11th inning and give the Burlington Bees (15-5) a 2-1 win over the Kane County Cougars (7-15) before 2,276 fans at Community Field on Friday afternoon.

The Bees scored a run in the first inning. 2B Nino Leyja (0-3) worked a two-out walk and scored on a double by 3B Tony Thompson (1-4) for a 1-0 lead.

The Cougars tied the game in the third inning. RF Geulin Beltre (0-4) reached base on an error and went to second base on a single by C Travis Jones (1-4). SS Gerard Hall (1-4) executed a sacrifice bunt to move both runners into scoring position. CF Alex Llanos (0-4) hit a sacrifice fly to score Beltre and tie the score at 1-1.

Burlington RHP Blake Hassebrock pitched six and one-thirds innings and allowed one unearned run on two hits. RHP Drew Tyson (2-2) got the victory by pitching a scoreless 11th inning.

The Bees and Cougars finish their series on Saturday night at 6:30 p.m. It's Friends and Family Night at Community Field where fans can bring your family and friends, and everyone gets to run the bases after the game sponsored by KCPS AM 1150. The pitching match-up is as follows: RHP Sugar Ray Marimon (0-2, 5.74) for Kane County against RHP A.J. Griffin (3-0, 1.46) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 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, go online to [www.gobees.com](http://www.gobees.com), or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.

### **A's Simplify Choice's Swing To Tone Down Strikeouts**

By Casey Tefertiller, Baseball America, 4/25/2011

OAKLAND—Scouts watched center fielder Michael Choice with a degree of apprehension as he took his swings at Texas-Arlington.

That swing was unorthodox. Choice could get the job done at the college level, but what would happen when he had to adjust to 95 mph fastballs and hard-breaking sliders?

"He had an unconventional swing," farm director Keith Lieppman said. "(Special assistant) Grady (Fuson) saw him and mentioned that there were things he'd need to change in his approach. There were a few different moving parts—a double tap, a leg kick, then the barrel of the bat had a lot of movement in it."

So Choice, whom Oakland drafted 10th overall last year, went to instructional league with a mission.

"He's got a nice little free-flowing approach that wound up being a very good combination," Lieppman said. He's pared down the movement: just a small leg kick."

The hope is that the modified swing will help cut down his strikeouts. Choice made a big impression last year at short-season Vancouver, batting .284/.388/.627 with seven homers—but he also struck out 43 times in 102 at-bats.

The 21-year-old Choice began this season with high Class A Stockton by going 13-for-58 (.224) with 23 whiffs in his first 15 games, though he had connected for three homers, including a 10th-inning walk-off shot.

Choice says that every day is a learning process, and he took much away from his session in Arizona. "The biggest thing was how to keep a routine: come to batting practice ready to go every day and learn something new."

Much of his time this spring has been spent working on defense. "In Arizona, the sun's a big factor," Choice said.

He also worked intently on coming in on the ball and developing better angles. "Defense was one of the biggest things I worked on. In college, I was just out there running around with no method. I had no idea what to do."

Choice made a big impression at major league spring training.

"I think what everyone saw was how athletic he is," Lieppman said. "He has so many ways he can help a team from both the offensive and defensive side. You don't often see a guy that has all those abilities."

#### A's ACORNS

- The A's held back outfielder Aaron Shipman in extended spring training because of tendinitis in his knee. He could be ready for low Class A Burlington in May.
- Lieppman reports that hard-hitting shortstop Grant Green showed improved defensive work in spring training.