

A's beat Indians 3-1 behind David DeJesus' two home runs

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The bulk of the A's offense consisted of home runs Wednesday night.

Find that hard to believe?

Then the man who delivered both long balls will also be a shocker.

With two swings of his bat, right fielder David DeJesus provided the winning margin in the A's 3-1 victory over the Cleveland Indians before 13,872 fans at Overstock.com Coliseum.

A pesky contact hitter, DeJesus entered the night with just 61 homers in eight-plus big league seasons. He entered the night mired in a 55-game homerless streak dating back to last season, and he had never had a multihomer game.

"Not even in Little League," DeJesus said. "I was a bunter back then."

The A's snapped Cleveland's seven-game winning streak, and DeJesus' out-of-nowhere power display was needed on a very strange night for the home team.

Oakland recorded just four hits, and through the first seven innings, DeJesus' homers accounted for the A's only base runners against Cleveland starter Josh Tomlin (4-1). The A's nearly became the third team since 1919 to win a nine-inning game without benefit of a single, double, triple or walk.

They notched two singles in the eighth, when Coco Crisp's run-scoring hit up the middle made it 3-1.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill made the bare-bones offense stand, allowing just one run over seven innings. He lowered his ERA to 1.79 and became the A's first starter since Rich Harden in 2008 to start a season 5-0.

"He kind of settled in and did a heck of a job," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That's one of the best lineups right now in the league, and he kept them at bay."

DeJesus hadn't homered since June 13, 2010, when he was with the Kansas City Royals. The 55-game dry spell was the second-longest streak of his career after a 61-game homerless streak during the 2007 season.

DeJesus, a career .288 hitter, was a key part of the A's offensive makeover when he was obtained in a November trade that sent right-hander Vin Mazzaro to the Royals. But DeJesus brought a .227 average into the game with just eight RBIs in 26 games.

DeJesus' lack of punch in the No. 3 hole had been glaring, but Geren said before the game that he saw signs of DeJesus' swing coming around.

DeJesus hit second Wednesday with regular No. 2 hitter Daric Barton out of the lineup. Conor Jackson played first and hit third.

"History shows he's going to hit," Cahill said of DeJesus. "We're floating around .500, and our offense hasn't come out of their shoes yet. I think we have a lot to look forward to once they get going."

DeJesus got it started early. He turned on an 0-2 pitch from Tomlin and cleared the right field wall in his first at-bat.

He came up again in the fourth and drove a 2-1 changeup out to right-center to give the A's a 2-1 lead.

With the overworked A's bullpen in need of rest, Geren let Cahill take the mound in the seventh though he was running out of gas. Cahill recorded a 1-2-3 inning and tied a career high with 116 pitches.

"I loved the effort there," Geren said. "He proved something to himself. Sometimes when you're a little bit tired, you can reach back for a little extra."

With interim closer Brian Fuentes unavailable after pitching the previous three days, Grant Balfour handled the ninth inning for his first save with the A's.

A's update: Hot bat keeps LaRoche in lineup at third base

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Andy LaRoche has seen playing time all around the A's infield, but he's settled in at third base recently.

LaRoche made his fourth straight start at third Wednesday against the Cleveland Indians. He entered the night on a 7-for-15 streak over his past five games, prompting manager Bob Geren to keep him in the lineup.

That's relegated Kevin Kouzmanoff to the bench, though Geren is still not calling LaRoche his starting third baseman. Kouzmanoff came into Wednesday hitting .208 and has committed six errors, most among major league third basemen.

Though LaRoche is Oakland's utility infielder, third base is his natural position.

"Andy's just playing well right now, so I'm keeping him out there," Geren said. "I'll obviously get Kooz back in there. The last time he was in a little rut, I gave him a few days off, it worked, and he came back and did pretty well for a while."

Kouzmanoff's errors have come on fielding and throwing miscues, and A's infield coach Mike Gallego said the key is in his footwork. The two have been working extensively before games.

"We'll do whatever it takes to get him feeling right defensively," Gallego said. "He's got an unorthodox style, and if he slows down or stops his feet from moving and gets out of rhythm, there can be a lot of issues."

Geren gave Conor Jackson, another hot hitter, a start at first in place of Daric Barton, who was hitting .127 (7 for 55) over his past 16 games.

Outfielder Josh Willingham is using his charitable organization to mobilize relief efforts for those affected by the recent tornadoes in his native Alabama.

The A's Community Fund donated \$10,000 to the cause. Willingham and his wife, Ginger, are also soliciting donations from players around the majors.

"The response has been awesome," Willingham said.

To make a tax-deductible donation, go to www.thejoshwillinghamfoundation.org.

Closer Andrew Bailey threw live batting practice for the first time since being sidelined by a strained forearm during spring training.

He faced Landon Powell, Adam Rosales and Ryan Sweeney.

"(Judging) by the swings, it looked very encouraging," Geren said.

Geren said Bailey would throw another batting practice session before the A's decide when to send him on a minor league rehab assignment.

After being examined by Dr. Lewis Yocum, left-hander Dallas Braden will seek a second opinion on his injured left shoulder, Geren said.

Chin Music: No word on Dallas Braden yet; a little bullpen discussion

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/4/2011 6:55PM

I tried posting this about an hour ago, but I guess it didn't take ... So here's your pregame update, a little later than I hoped ...

It's an unusually warm night at the Coliseum. If it stays that way, might the ball be flying out of the park? A's starter Trevor Cahill has allowed just one homer in six starts. Indians starter Josh Tomlin has allowed five homers over five starts. Both are 4-0, so we've got a good pitching matchup ...

–The A's haven't released any information yet on Dallas Braden's appointment with Dr. Lewis Yocum. We might get word after the game. But the A's have to at least be encouraged by what they've seen from Tyson Ross in three starts subbing for Braden.

–Closer Andrew Bailey threw live batting practice for the first time since going on the disabled list and looked sharp, according to Geren. He's still throwing only fastballs off the mound, and Geren said Bailey would probably throw live BP again before deciding his next step.

As the games tick away, it's becoming clear how crucial a healthy return from Bailey is to the A's chances this season. This bullpen has depth – better depth than many relief corps in the majors – but Oakland is vulnerable in the late innings, as Brian Fuentes' struggles Tuesday night indicated. Fuentes was pitching in his fourth game in five days, and he admitted that he was a bit fatigued on the mound. Geren's use of his bullpen is a hot topic among A's fans, and for good reason. I didn't have a problem with Geren calling on Fuentes last night. To me, the issue goes back to Sunday, when Fuentes was brought in during the ninth with two runners on and the A's leading by five runs. That was a game where it wasn't necessary to go to him, and therefore Fuentes had nothing in the tank Tuesday when called upon for the third day in a row.

–Conor Jackson draws the start at first base, with Daric Barton getting a day off. Good call ... You gotta keep Jackson's bat in there right now, and Barton is hitting .127 over his past 16 games. For those wondering if Jackson is an option at third base, he takes grounders there pretty regularly. But he's got virtually no experience at the position as a professional, and Geren says he wouldn't consider giving Jackson a start there right now.

The lineups:

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

Indians – Sizemore CF, A. Cabrera SS, Choo RF, Santana C, Hafner DH, O. Cabrera 2B, Brantley LF, LaPorta 1B, Hannahan 3B; Tomlin RHP.

Unlikely power source boosts Trevor Cahill to 5-0

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

David DeJesus had an inkling this week that his swing was starting to come around, but not even he would have expected this:

On Wednesday night at the Coliseum, DeJesus had the first multi-homer game of his career and the A's first of the season in a 3-1 victory over the Indians, ending Cleveland's winning streak at seven.

Trevor Cahill, the A's starter, improved to 5-0 and lowered his ERA to 1.79.

DeJesus' first homer, with one out in the first off Josh Tomlin, ended a 55-game streak without hitting one out of the park. He didn't wait at all for his next one, going deep to right center to lead off the fourth.

"The first one, I trusted my hands, stayed loose down 0-2," he said. "The second one was a changeup, and I stayed through it, instead of popping it up, and I drove the ball."

DeJesus said he never has hit two homers in a game at any level - even Little League, where, he said, he was more of a bunter.

"It's kind of weird trotting around two times in one game," DeJesus said. "But it's good because with Trevor on the mound, you know two or three runs will be enough."

DeJesus' homers represented the A's entire offensive output through seven innings. No one else reached base until the eighth, when Mark Ellis reached on an error and Cliff Pennington and Coco Crisp had two-out singles, the second of which

sent in Ellis. Pennington's single ensured that the A's would not be the third team in baseball history to win a nine-inning game with no walks, singles, doubles or triples.

Until Wednesday, DeJesus had yet to make much of an impact with his new team. A lifetime .289 hitter - he spent his first seven seasons with the Royals - he entered the game batting .227 on the season. But on Tuesday he said, "I'm starting to hit the ball hard now, it's just a matter of finding the grass - once I find some holes, everything will be good."

DeJesus is usually a slow starter - his .265 average in April is his lowest in any month. He's also adjusting to a new team while dealing with possible rust after missing the final three-plus months of last season following thumb surgery.

"I think this will be the one that gets him over the hump," A's manager Bob Geren said after the two-homer night.

Geren praised Cahill for going seven innings, even though he'd said he was tired after six. "He left his guts and blood and everything out there at the end," Geren said.

"I knew the bullpen had been in use a lot and if you're going to be good in this game, you have to have confidence in yourself to go back out there," said Cahill, who is Oakland's first starter to start the season 5-0 since Rich Harden in 2008.

With Brian Fuentes unavailable after working three straight games, Grant Balfour recorded his first save with the A's, the ninth of his career.

Josh Willingham's foundation helps tornado victims

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Josh Willingham grew up in Florence, Ala., and he still lives there. He's an Alabaman through and through.

So this week, while Willingham's wife, **Ginger**, was doing hands-on work helping people in Alabama whose homes were destroyed by the deadly tornadoes that struck the South last week, Willingham was putting together plans to help victims financially. He and his wife already have a foundation devoted to helping underprivileged children in their area, and they will now use that foundation to help those with immediate needs and to help with long-term recovery efforts.

Before Tuesday's game, Willingham asked **A's** players to consider making contributions, and he said several have responded with large donations. The A's have chipped in \$10,000, and, Willingham said, the Players Association will match up to \$15,000 of whatever amount is raised.

Willingham said his wife "has been down in the trenches with a group of about 60 people. They went and got my tractor and took it down there to help.

"A lot of people lost everything, and some of them didn't have much to start with. People are living in tents. They need water, food, so we're trying to do anything we can do."

Those interested in making a tax-deductible donation should log on to www.thejoshwillinghamfoundation.org.

Bailey throws to hitters: Andrew Bailey threw 25 pitches of batting practice and said it went well. He was happy with the natural cut on his fastball, calling it "a good sign."

Manager **Bob Geren** said Bailey looked as if he was at full speed, and **Adam Rosales**, who hit off Bailey, said "the ball was jumping."

Bailey is likely to repeat the process later this week. He is still not throwing breaking pitches off the mound.

Briefly: Geren said that starter **Dallas Braden** will get another opinion about his left shoulder discomfort after paying his second visit to Dr. **Lewis Yocum** in two weeks. Yocum had diagnosed inflammation, and no structural damage. . . . Catcher **Kurt Suzuki** will be back in the lineup today. . . . Rosales (foot) has taken batting practice two days in a row. He hopes to get clearance for full activity on May 18.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

All speed: The Japanese media was nearly as abuzz about Hideki Matsui's two infield hits Tuesday as his game-winning homer Monday. It was Matsui's first two-infield-hit game since 2004 - before his knee surgeries, according to Gaku Tashiro of Sankei Sports.

Drumbeat: A's lineup: no Daric Barton or Kurt Suzuki; Andrew Bailey news

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 5/4/2011 5:17pm

It's a start off for catcher Kurt Suzuki, because tomorrow is a day game and he'll be starting behind the plate in that one. Daric Barton isn't at first, because manager Bob Geren said he wanted to find a way to get Conor Jackson in the lineup. He said a start off might be a good thing for Barton. There's always a chance we'll see one or both in the latter stages tonight.

Barton is among the A's who have started slowly, and Jackson has hit will and played well defensively. Right now, it seems as if the A's best lineup might be one with Jackson and with Andy LaRoche, who is back at third for the fourth game in a row. LaRoche was hitless last night, but he still has the top average in Oakland's lineup tonight at .318. His on-base percentage of .375 is among the A's tops.

No word yet on Dallas Braden's visit to Dr. Yocum to consult about his continued left shoulder inflammation, but Andrew Bailey threw 25 pitches to hitters this afternoon and Geren was pleased with his outing, saying he looked "full speed."

Adam Rosales, who is in his second day of hitting live batting practice and hit off Bailey, said that Bailey's fastball was cutting really well, and, he said, "The ball was jumping."

Bailey said it went well as far as he was concerned, "and I had a little adrenaline facing hitters." He still isn't throwing breaking balls off the mound, and he expects to repeat today's drill again his next time out, which is likely to be Saturday. He said the fact that his fastball was cutting is a good sign - it's a natural cut he has, and it usually happens when he's not fighting to find his arm slot, something he felt he was doing during spring training and even late last season when his elbow was starting to bother him.

As you might have guessed, Brian Fuentes won't be available tonight after working three in a row (and four out of five). Grant Balfour gets closer duties, and Geren said Fuentes needs a day off - and maybe two.

Here's the lineup behind Trevor Cahill: Crisp cf, DeJesus rf, Jackson 1b, Willingham lf, Matsui dh, Powell c, Ellis 2b, LaRoche 3b, Pennington ss

DeJesus' two jacks power A's over Tribe

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 5/5/2011 2:06 AM ET

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Geren couldn't quite decide who to hand his gold star to following his club's 3-1 victory over the streaking Indians on Wednesday.

He had just watched Trevor Cahill hold baseball's winningest team to one run and five hits over seven gutsy innings. But he had also witnessed David DeJesus celebrate his first career multi-home run performance, all the while tallying half of Oakland's four hits.

"It was a tossup," Geren said.

Cahill's dominance on the mound has become typical, and expected in some sorts -- he's allowed one earned run or fewer in six of his seven starts this year. So for just a night, it was OK for the right-hander to share the limelight with DeJesus, whose feat was even more impressive given the fact he entered the day with a .227 average.

It marked his first and second homers as a member of the green and gold, and the first time he had tallied two home runs in one game at any level.

"It was kinda weird trotting two times around in one game," DeJesus said.

The A's outfielder had noted before Wednesday's contest that he felt he was inching closer to finding a groove at the plate. If his performance against Tribe starter Josh Tomlin was any indication of that feeling, DeJesus appears lost no more.

"It's been tough, but baseball's a long season," he said. "There's still plenty of time. I trust myself and the work I'm putting in. That's all you can really focus on."

"We felt he was coming close, was feeling good, and I guess I was right," Geren said. "Super job by David. We're a month into the season, and he's been around a .300 hitter his whole life. You knew he was going to hit, and today was the day to get him over the hump."

The party began early in the first, when DeJesus launched a 0-2 fastball into the right-field bleachers, before proceeding to carry another Tomlin four-seamer -- this time on a 2-1 count -- over the wall in right-center in the fourth.

"On the first home run, I just trusted my hands," he said. "I stayed loose, was down 0-2, was able to stay inside the ball and get it out. The next one, I stayed through the ball -- rather than coming around it or staying under it and popping it up. I was able to stay on top of it and drive it."

At that point, DeJesus' two home runs accounted for Oakland's only hits. And it stayed that way until the eighth, when Mark Ellis reached first on an error, advanced to third on a Cliff Pennington single, and scored on Coco Crisp's RBI base hit up the middle.

Cahill, meanwhile, compiled 13 ground-ball outs -- next to just two flyouts -- while striking out five and walking three en route to tossing a career-high 116 pitches, including 22 in the second and 24 in a third inning that produced Cleveland's lone run via an RBI single from Travis Hafner.

"Cahill was tough," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "I thought we did a very good job running his pitch count up, but still we couldn't get that big hit. He just had us beating the ball on the ground pretty much the whole night."

The young righty, according to Geren, looked tired after six, but he was sent out in the seventh knowing that, if a runner reached base or he looked done, his night would be over. Cahill responded with three quick outs.

"I was going to let him go as far as he could possibly go," Geren said. "He settled in and did a heck of a job. That's one of the best lineups in the league right now, as far as run production this season. He kept them at bay. He used a great sinker and a really nice changeup today."

In doing so, Cahill improved to 5-0 with a 1.79 ERA on the year, and halted Cleveland's winning streak at seven.

"I think, most pitchers, even if they're kinda tired, you want the ball," he said. "If you want to be good in this game, you have to have confidence in yourself to go out, even when you're a little tired."

"I think today I just threw a lot of changeups, and the last couple of innings threw a lot of curveballs to get ahead. Just trying to mix it up. I feel like they're a team that's winning a lot of games, all their hitters are hot, so I was trying to keep them off balance."

His teammates, at least those not named DeJesus, struggled to produce much of anything against Tomlin, who offered up just three hits through 7 2/3 innings, striking out five and walking none.

"We knew that with Trevor on the mound," DeJesus said, "two or three runs would be enough."

"It feels good. All the work I'm putting in is paying off, and the thing is you can't stop now, you just got to keep going."

Braden to seek second opinion on shoulder

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- After making his second visit to noted orthopedic surgeon Lewis Yocum in Los Angeles on Wednesday and receiving no clear-cut answer on his stiff left shoulder, A's lefty Dallas Braden will now get a second opinion.

A's manager Bob Geren, who delivered the news following Oakland's 3-1 victory over the Indians, had no further information at the time.

Braden first visited Yocum on April 20, when he was told to rest and rehab to calm the inflammation in the shoulder. But when the left-hander took to the field on Monday to play catch for the first time, he experienced discomfort again, leading to Wednesday's appointment.

Braden hasn't pitched since April 16, when he left his third start after five frames because of the stiffness. He was placed on the disabled list two days later.

Bailey fires first live batting practice session

OAKLAND -- A's closer Andrew Bailey threw 25 fastballs in his first live batting practice session against a trio of teammates on Wednesday afternoon, with several eyes acting as the radar gun.

"He looked real good in my opinion," manager Bob Geren said. "He said he felt good, and I thought his velocity was way up there. We didn't want to put a gun on a guy throwing for the first time, but it looked full speed to me, it really did."

"By the look and by the swings, it was very, very encouraging."

Bailey's next step will be another round of batting practice, possibly with the incorporation of breaking balls. Bailey has only been getting a feel for his breaking pitches from flat ground, and he'll have to take them to the mound before he can begin a Minor League rehab assignment.

The A's right-hander could potentially return by June. In the meantime, Geren will continue to rely on lefty Brian Fuentes for closer duties.

Fuentes has appeared in each of the past three games and five of the last six, making him unavailable for Wednesday's contest against the Indians following his loss Tuesday, when he gave up three ninth-inning runs while recording just one out.

Still, the veteran hurler has seven saves this season, which ranks fourth in the American League, and 190 since 2005, which are the most by a left-handed reliever in the Majors over that span.

Overall, the A's bullpen entered Wednesday's game with a 1.96 ERA over its past 15 games, including eight in which it has not allowed a run. The 'pen is also tied for second in the AL and sixth in the Majors with a 2.88 ERA this season.

Willingham reaching out to tornado victims

OAKLAND -- In an effort to assist those in his hometown, A's outfielder Josh Willingham is raising funds to help victims of last week's devastating tornadoes in the South.

Willingham, a native of Florence, Ala., is collecting donations through the revamped Josh Willingham Foundation Website, with 100 percent of the funds being given to those affected by the natural disaster, as well as to the long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts.

"The area I am from was devastated by these tornadoes, and a lot of people need help," said Willingham, whose family was fortunately safe from harm. "My heart goes out to all those who have been dealing with this devastation, and I hope we can work together to raise funds in order to ease the discomforts of the victims who were in the paths of this disaster."

A's fans and baseball fans alike can visit www.thejoshwillinghamfoundation.org to make a tax-deductible donation to the relief efforts. Willingham originally intended the site to be utilized to help underprivileged children, but decided to focus his attention on those in need in his home state in light of the disaster.

In doing their part, the A's -- through the A's Community Fund -- have already made a \$10,000 donation to Willingham's foundation.

DeJesus confident slow start will soon be in past

OAKLAND -- One look down the A's lineup reveals a handful of stragglers who enter Wednesday's game against the Indians with a combined .240 average.

Among that group of slow starters is David DeJesus, who has hit safely in nine of his past 12 games but gone just 9-for-45 (.200) over that span. Overall, the A's outfielder has a .227 average.

"Things could be better, but I feel the work I'm putting in is progressing," DeJesus said Wednesday afternoon. "I'm squaring the ball up a little better now, and I just gotta keep staying positive."

A's manager Bob Geren has also taken notice of signs that DeJesus is on his way back to his normal self, a .288 career hitter.

"I think he's letting the ball get a little deeper," Geren said. "He's hit some balls pretty good the other way, and when he clicked a ball the other way to left-center the other day, he said, 'That's what it feels like.' He knows where he needs to be, and I think he's right there. He feels real good where he's at."

DeJesus, 31, hit .318 with five home runs and 37 RBIs in 91 games for the Royals last season before missing the final two months after undergoing right thumb surgery, the after-effects from which could be a factor in his slow progression, Geren noted.

"I know we talked about [Hideki] Matsui in the spring being real close, and I think that's the point David's at right now," he said. "Players know, because swings don't change much. It depends on how you're seeing the ball and the timing. They know when they're on, when they're hot, when they're close, when they're struggling."

DeJesus is no stranger to that notion.

"I'm getting closer," he said. "I'm not there, and it's been tough to start, but it's a long season and we're right at the beginning of May, so I just have to focus on getting better each day."

"You know when you're seeing the ball better, and you feel that your timing is getting better and you're actually squaring the ball up, hitting the ball hard. I think those are the little, key factors. You just have to worry about hitting the ball hard, that's all you can control."

Worth noting

- A's lefty Dallas Braden made his second visit to Dr. Lewis Yocum on Wednesday morning for further examination of his stiff left shoulder, but results of that trip weren't available before game time.
- Regulars Daric Barton and Kurt Suzuki received the day off Wednesday. Conor Jackson got a start at first base in Barton's stead. Jackson entered the contest 9-for-30 with three doubles, a home run and seven RBIs over his past six games.

"He's been doing a nice job," manager Bob Geren said of Jackson. "We'll keep mixing him in there."

Landon Powell started behind the plate, where Suzuki is expected to return for Thursday's series finale against the Indians.

- Andy LaRoche was handed his fifth straight start on Wednesday, and his fourth at third base during that time, which again raised questions about Kevin Kouzmanoff's status at the hot corner. Geren simply said LaRoche "is playing well right now," and noted he's seen offensive and defensive improvement from Kouzmanoff on the side.
- Adam Rosales, still on the mend from his December right foot procedure, is now taking live batting practice as he strives to begin undergoing full baseball activity. Rosales is hoping to return to the team sometime in June.

Gomez takes on Anderson in rubber match

By Jon Star / MLB.com | 5/5/2011 1:45 AM ET

The Indians fell 3-1 to the A's on Wednesday, but this year's Cleveland team had already put itself in rarefied air when it comes to the 111-year history of the franchise. By entering Wednesday's action at 20-8, the Indians matched their best start in club history, equaling the 1920, 1966 and 1999 Indians.

Despite missing out on a chance to set a new high-water mark for the best start in team history, manager Manny Acta will hand the ball to Jeanmar Gomez to get the Tribe back on track. The 23-year-old, who will make his third start of the season, comes off a rocky performance, in which he gave up three earned runs on 10 hits in 5 2/3 innings against the Tigers on April 29. He may also be pitching to stay in the rotation.

Carlos Carrasco is slated to pitch a rehab assignment with Double-A Akron on Friday, and could rejoin the Indians' rotation as early as next week. That means either Gomez or Alex White could be sent back to Triple-A Columbus. In the interim, Acta has appreciated Gomez's effort.

"He's battled for us and given us an opportunity," Acta said. "He competed well for us last year. He's only had two outings here, so we're going to have to see more. If everything works out, [Carrasco] could be in line to pitch the very next week for us."

The A's Brett Anderson is not worried about his rotation spot, but he does want to improve upon his last outing, in which he gave up seven earned runs on nine hits in five innings against the Rangers on April 30. It was just the second time this year Anderson didn't last at least seven innings. He also surrendered three home runs -- after staying in the yard in his first five starts -- and walked four Rangers despite walking four in his previous 34 2/3 innings this season.

"The only thing I can take solace in is that it's going to be better next time," Anderson said after his last outing. If track records mean anything, then it should get better. In two career starts against Cleveland, Anderson is 1-0 and has allowed one earned run on seven hits in 12 innings, with 15 strikeouts and just two walks.

Indians: Shutdown southpaw

Closer Chris Perez gained recognition for his scoreless streak that carried over from last season. But having given up four earned runs already this season, the hottest hand now belongs to Rafael Perez. The left-hander has not allowed a run in his

last 22 appearances, dating back to September 4, 2010. In that span, Perez has tossed 18 1/3 innings, given up 18 hits while fanning 11. His longest scoreless stretch last season reached 14 games, from June 3-July 2.

Athletics: Suzuki, Barton return

Kurt Suzuki and Daric Barton will both return to the lineup on Thursday after receiving scheduled days off on Wednesday. Suzuki is 6-for-20 (.300) with two home runs and six RBIs since returning from the paternity leave list on Friday.

Barton, however, is the midst of a deep slump. The first baseman is hitting just .127 (7-for-55) over his last 16 games, after hitting .292 through his first 14 games. May has rarely been kind to Barton, who is a career .212 hitter during the season's second month -- the lowest monthly mark of his career.

Worth noting

In addition to clutch, late-game offense, the Indians are winning close games because of excellent defense. Cleveland ranks second in the American League in fielding percentage (.988), while its 13 errors are the second-fewest in the league.

DeJesus finds power just in time

Outfielder's first two homers of season are all Cahill needs for fifth victory

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — David DeJesus hit his first two home runs of the season, Trevor Cahill pitched another gem and the Athletics snapped Cleveland's seven-game winning streak with a 3-1 victory over the Indians on Wednesday night.

DeJesus' two solo shots handed Josh Tomlin (4-1) his first loss of the year. They were two of just four hits in the game for the offensively challenged Athletics, and all they needed behind their ace.

Cahill (5-0) gave up five hits and three walks in seven innings and never had any serious jams. He struck out five and matched his career high with 116 pitches.

Grant Balfour allowed only a walk in the ninth for his first save this season.

Tomlin struck out five and walked none in 7» innings. He didn't allow a baserunner besides DeJesus until Mark Ellis reached on an error in the eighth when third baseman Jack Hannahan bobbled a grounder, and Coco Crisp drove him in on a single to give Oakland a 3-1 lead.

DeJesus broke out of his slump with a solo home run that just cleared the right-field wall in the first inning. That snapped a 55-game streak without a home run for DeJesus that dated to last season, the second longest of his career.

After the Indians evened the score on Travis Hafner's two-out RBI single in the third, DeJesus hit his second home run to deep right-center field to put Oakland back in front. It was the first multihomer game of the season for any A's player, and it couldn't have come from a more unlikely source.

DeJesus had never had two home runs in a game in nine seasons in the majors, and he was hitting just .227 entering the game.

The Indians have surprisingly been off to one of baseball's best starts this season and could have equaled their best start in franchise history through 29 games had they won another. The only time they began a season 21-8 was in 1920.

The only serious threat the Indians mounted off Cahill came in the third, when Grady Sizemore led off the inning with a double. Carlos Santana walked with two outs before Hafner's single, and Cahill got Orlando Cabrera to ground out and end the threat.

NOTES

* Cahill also threw 116 pitches on Sept. 4 in a 3-1 win over the Angels last season.

* A's All-Star closer Andrew Bailey faced hitters before the game, throwing about 25 fastballs at full speed. Bailey hasn't pitched this season because of a strained right forearm. The team will decide Thursday what the next step is for Bailey.

Gutierrez: Cahill, DeJesus provide 'The Force'

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - By some sheer, ahem, *force* of nature, Trevor Cahill and David DeJesus found each other in the A's dugout in the seventh inning.

Cahill, that Star Wars-loving wunderkind, pointed out to his right fielder that the A's only had two hits at that point. And they were both by DeJesus, who had hit two home runs in a game or the first time in his life, at any level. Even little league. He had to steal a glance at the scoreboard, just to believe his pitcher.

"With Trevor," DeJesus said later, "we know we only need two or three runs. He's that good."

Truly, and he'd be the first to admit it, DeJesus was anything but *bueno* at the plate entering Wednesday night's game against Cleveland.

But this is what the A's are, what they evolving into, who they are, really.

A pitching-rich team that needs to scrap together enough runs to not only win games, but stay competitive. It was never more evident than in the A's 3-1 defeat of the white-hot Indians.

No wonder Oakland manager Bob Geren could not decide what the story of the game was. Cahill or DeJesus? DeJesus or Cahill?

"It's a toss up," Geren said, a gleam in his eye.

Then let's start with Cahill, who went seven innings and threw a career high-tying 116 pitches, giving up the one run on five hits with five strikeouts and three walks. He snapped the Indians' seven-game winning streak in the process and improved his record to 5-0 while lowering his ERA to 1.79.

So nasty is he on the mound, I've taken to calling him "Darth 'Dactyl," since his nickname as already "'Dactyl," as in a Pterodactyl. Timely, especially on Star Wars Day...May the Fourth (of May) Be With You.

But not wanting to offend the lad, who was born almost 11 years after Star Wars was released, I had to ask: are you a Jedi (you know, the good guys), or Sith (yup, the heels)?

"Depends," he said with a wide grin, "on how I'm feeling."

And, apparently, on how well he's carving on the mound. Something DeJesus had not been doing at the plate. At all.

A career .289 hitter coming off a career-best .318 injury-shortened season in 2010, DeJesus entered Wednesday batting a sickly .227 with no homers and just eight RBI.

He, along with Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui, was acquired to bolster the A's attack, to no avail in April. And still, the A's were within a game of first place in the American League West.

"We're floating around .500," Cahill observed, "and our offense hasn't even come out of its shoes yet."

On this night, at least one A's hitter did. Finally.

Study: Clouds help hitters, blue sky for pitchers

By Randolph E. Schmid, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- A sunny, summer day is great for baseball, if you're a pitcher. For hitters, a little cloud cover helps.

It turns out that batting averages go up when the sun ducks behind a cloud, according to a new study that looked at thousands of major league baseball games played between 1987 and 2002.

And hitting isn't the only thing -- the presence or absence of clouds affects baseball in all sorts of ways, from strikeouts to errors to which team wins, Wes P. Kent and Scott C. Sheridan report in an analysis published by the American Meteorological Society.

"Brighter conditions may result in increased eye strain for a batter and a higher level of glare in a ballpark," the researchers suggested.

While playing in Washington last week, New York Mets third baseman David Wright agreed: "When it's overcast, your eyes are a little more relaxed, I think. There's not as much squinting. Sometimes, when it's really bright, it's a little tougher to see as a hitter. I always prefer a little cloud cover."

Home teams had a .266 batting average on cloudy days, the researchers found. That slipped to .259 on clear days. For the visitors, the batting average was .256 when it cloudy and .251 on clear days.

Obviously, if cloudy days are better for hitting, sunshine should benefit the pitcher, and that's just what they found.

Earned runs allowed by home pitchers were lowest on clear days at 3.93, climbing to 4.26 on cloudy days. For visiting pitchers the ERA was 4.50 in the clear and 4.68 under the clouds.

"Sometimes, it's so bright out, it might be tough for them (batters) to see the spin of the ball," Washington Nationals relief pitcher Drew Storen said.

The analysis is based on statistics from 10,758 major league day games obtained from STATS LLC and weather data collected by the National Climatic Data Center, showing the conditions at the nearest National Weather Service office to each stadium at game time. The findings are published in the current issue of the journal *Weather, Climate and Society*.

Kent said he had expected to see better hitting in cloudy conditions but was surprised by how strong the effect was on strikeouts. Home pitchers averaged 6.65 strikeouts on clear days, but in cloudy conditions that fell to 6.22. For visiting pitchers, the drop from clear to cloudy was from 6.14 to 5.67.

"I was also surprised with the increase in home-team winning percentage from cloudy day games to clear day games. While I had anticipated that the home team would be better equipped to compensate for any potential disadvantages caused by increased sunlight, I did not foresee the increase in winning percentage that resulted," he said.

On clear days, home teams won 56 percent of their games and visitors 44 percent. When it was cloudy, that fell to 52 percent home wins and visitors 48 percent.

"On the other hand, the lack of response of some of the baseball variables to changes in cloud cover was also a little surprising. In particular, I thought that home runs would have showed a stronger response, along with walks. Both of these variables did not really return any significant results," Kent said.

Home teams had 0.98 home runs per game for clear days and 0.96 when it was cloudy. For visitors, the change from clear to cloudy was from 0.95 to 1.01. Home pitchers gave up 3.37 walks on clear days and 3.43 when it was cloudy. Visiting hurlers averaged 3.56 walks for clear days and 3.50 under clouds.

Anyone who's seen an outfielder lose a ball in the sun won't be surprised to hear there are more errors on clear days than cloudy ones.

The difference is largest for visiting teams who would not be accustomed to the glare and light angles in someone else's stadium. Visiting teams averaged 0.80 errors on clear days and 0.73 on cloudy days. For home teams the decline was from 0.77 on clear days to 0.75 as it got cloudier.

The study also looked at thousands of games played at night or in domed stadiums and found that hitting at in those conditions was slightly better than on clear days but not as good as on cloudy days. Similarly, pitchers had higher ERAs at night or in domes than on clear days, but lower than cloudy days.

Kent, who has since graduated, did the research for his masters thesis in climatology at Kent State University. Co-author Sheridan is a professor in the geography department at the university.

Giants, A's sharing same woes at the plate

Art Spander, San Francisco Examiner, 5/5/2011

At least A's manager Bob Geren hasn't felt the need to say of his team, "We're awful," which is specifically what Giants manager Bruce Bochy said of his team's offense of late, even though they are not.

What they are is disappointing. So are the A's.

Two teams on two sides of the Bay, one filling every seat at every home game and, although the thought is denied, maybe a little too full of itself after a championship of which reminders are everywhere, except on the field so far. The other, the A's, whose record as of Wednesday morning was marginally better than the Giants' — 15-15 to 14-15 — but whose home attendance unfortunately is much worse — less than 10,000 on Monday against Texas? Yikes! — and play so far has been vexing.

If it gives anyone satisfaction, the Bay Area clubs are not the only ones in baseball where, as a team or as individuals, frustration is apparent.

The New York Mets' only highlight was that five-hour spectacular against the Philadelphia Phillies on Sunday being played while the world was captivated by events in Pakistan.

And the New York Yankees' Derek Jeter, with his new three-year \$51 million contract, is batting so poorly, at .250 some 60 points off his career average, the New York Times felt compelled to analyze his problems on Wednesday's front page, right below the story of Osama bin Laden's death.

The strange situation locally is that the Giants appear to have become the A's, injuries every time someone takes a step or a stab at a fly ball, while the A's, leading the league in pitching and 10th in batting, seem to have morphed into the Giants.

The first basemen for both teams, to be kind, have struggled. When Aubrey Huff is hitting .190 (though he did smack the game-winning homer Tuesday night) and Daric Barton .204, what's to choose? Maybe they call Jeter to commiserate.

San Francisco's pitching, while hardly embarrassing, hasn't been as effective as last year — will it ever be again? And it's the Giants, the team of silent bats, who thus are being shut out instead of getting the shutouts.

The way everything went right in 2010, which is what happens when a team wins a World Series, everything or almost everything is going wrong in 2011. Which sometimes is what happens the year after a championship and a reason there hasn't been a repeat champion in a decade.

Andres Torres will be back in a few days. Pablo Sandoval, however, won't be back until July. Could anyone have guessed the end of last season the third baseman would be Miguel Tejada and the shortstop Mike Fontenot? Or that Buster Posey would have people mumbling the phrase, "sophomore slump"?

In Oakland, the only consistent hitter has been Coco Crisp. The A's, like the Giants, have changed third basemen, but for a different reason. Kevin Kouzmanoff dropped to .208 and was replaced by Andy LaRoche.

When both men at the corners, Kouzmanoff and Barton, are around the dreaded so-called Mendoza Line of .200, even with an outfield of Ruth, Aaron and Mays, you'd have problems. The A's have them. Problems that is, not Ruth, Aaron and Mays.

The 2011 season may not be rewarding, but it will be interesting.

A's scuffle to win over Cleveland behind DeJesus home runs and Cahill's arm

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

You win some ugly, you lose some ugly -- but the unattractiveness still remains despite the final score.

Style points don't matter in sports, truthfully; it's always the wins that count in the Machiavellian way -- the end justifies the means.

Or so we want to believe in baseball.

Thus, the Oakland Athletics beat the Cleveland Indians on Wednesday night, 3-1, behind a workman-like effort from starting pitcher Trevor Cahill and a unique offensive effort from a hitherto-quiet hitter on the year.

David DeJesus hit two solo home runs for Oakland, one in the first inning and the other in the fourth inning. The A's added an insurance run in the eighth inning, but prior to that score, Oakland had only DeJesus' two hits on the evening off Cleveland starter Josh Tomlin. They had no other base runners.

In that eighth inning, an error and two more hits enabled Mark Ellis to score the third run for the A's. Oakland actually had only one at-bat with a runner in scoring position tonight: Coco Crisp drove in Ellis from third base with the A's fourth and final hit on the night.

Oakland reliever Grant Balfour pitched the ninth inning to finish off the Indians, one night after Brian Fuentes cost the team a winnable game. It was Balfour's first save this year.

Cahill's effort -- seven innings and one run -- was impressive, considering the righty only threw 67 strikes in his career-high 116 pitches. Demonstrating he can win without his best stuff is a sure sign the A's young starter is establishing himself as one of the American League's best pitchers.

His 5-0 record with the 1.79 ERA is a surprisingly follow-up to his stellar 2010 campaign that came out of nowhere.

Meanwhile, DeJesus' bat had been pretty quiet in the first month of the season, and Oakland's free-agent signing of the former Kansas City Royals outfielder didn't look like a great move. Hitting only .227, he had no home runs on the year and only three doubles.

But his two big shots were all the A's needed tonight to beat the streaking Indians, owners of the best record in the AL. It was DeJesus' first career two-home run game.

New baseball policy helps players take leave

By Michelle Smith, espnw.com, 5/4/2011

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Truth be told, Kurt Suzuki looked a little tired. And he thought he might be catching a bit of a cold. It'd been a busy few days.

Suzuki, the Oakland Athletics' catcher, had his glove on his hand Monday morning and was getting ready to go out and take some batting practice swings before a day game at McAfee Coliseum.

His wife, Renee, had just got home from the hospital after giving birth to a baby girl named Malia, the couple's first child, last Thursday. Suzuki had been back in the A's lineup since Friday -- back from paternity leave.

Suzuki is one of four players -- Jason Bay of the New York Mets added himself to the list on Tuesday -- who have taken advantage of Major League Baseball's new policy this season that gives players 24 to 72 hours away from their club to attend the birth of a child. Teams are permitted to temporarily replace the new father on the roster.

The players association fought for the policy, which lets players take leave without leaving teams in the lurch. Major League Baseball is the only one of the big four professional sports leagues (MLB, NFL, NHL and NBA) to enact a policy that goes beyond the human resources departments of individual teams or applicable state laws.

The first player to take paternity leave under the new rules, Rangers pitcher Colby Lewis, was in the opposite clubhouse from Suzuki in Oakland. His wife, Jenny, gave birth to Elizabeth Grace, their second child, on April 13.

Lewis didn't understand his options until he was getting ready to take time off.

"I didn't know it was even available until I left," Lewis said. "But I was glad they wouldn't be short because they could call somebody up."

Lewis absorbed some odd criticism for taking time off.

A Dallas-area blogger and radio talk show host, Richie Whitt, suggested Lewis and his wife should have "scheduled" the birth for the offseason, because players are paid millions and shouldn't be missing games.

"If it was a first child, maybe," Whitt wrote. "But a second child causing a player to miss a game? Ludicrous."

Whitt, to be fair, caught his share of criticism for the criticism.

Lewis' response to the feedback: Whatever.

"Everybody is entitled to an opinion," Lewis said. "If they want to stir up negativity about something, they are entitled to it. I don't care if you make \$100 million, I don't think you should miss the birth of your child. But everybody has got a different view on things.

Lewis continued, "We have a very rigorous schedule. It's not like we play every three days or ever four days. Anybody in this clubhouse, if they are having a child, they would go home for it. Maybe the older guys say they wouldn't want to lose a spot, but I don't know. My thinking is, How many times are you going to have a kid? I want to be there for it and I'm sure everybody in this clubhouse would be in agreement with me."

Ian Desmond of the Washington Nationals was the second player to take leave. He also caught a little grief on message boards, from fans who weren't happy to see a player take a couple of days off during the season -- no matter the reason.

But the policy reflects a cultural change and puts baseball in line with companies around the country, which are allowing fathers more time with their families.

When Lewis took his leave, the Rangers' CEO, pitching legend Nolan Ryan, acknowledged that times had changed from his heyday in the 1970s and '80s.

"In those days, they never allowed you to go home for a child to be born," Ryan told ESPN during a broadcast. "It's just something you heard about if it happened during the season: "By the way, you have a new son or daughter."

The truth is, Lewis didn't miss much time with his team. Technically, he didn't even miss a start because a rainout in Baltimore pushed back his spot in the rotation. He rejoined the Rangers on the road two days after his daughter was born in Bakersfield, Calif.

Suzuki flew home from a road trip in Anaheim on Wednesday morning. The team had an off day on Thursday -- the day that 8-pound, 3-ounce Malia was born after a long labor. He was the designated hitter in Friday's game.

Suzuki didn't face any criticism. He also said he wouldn't have cared if he had.

"It was nice to be able to go back and ... enjoy a couple of days with my wife and daughter," Suzuki said. "I just worry about my own family and the birth of my child. This is an important part of your life and I think something like this is good."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Errors cost Sacramento in loss to Salt Lake

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

A perfect 82-degree day for baseball began with a rare but special ceremony and ended with a River Cats loss.

As ordered by the President of the United States of America, Specialist Israel Luna received a Purple Heart for wounds received in action before a crowd of 5,352 at Raley Field on Wednesday afternoon.

Luna was joined by 250 other soldiers with the Community Based Warrior Transition Unit-California (CBWTU), who were in attendance as special guests of the River Cats. The CBWTU, established for soldiers that were wounded, injured or ill while serving in uniform, provides a goal-oriented road map for recovery and transition back to civilian life or return to duty.

After the Purple Heart ceremony, Luna and his fellow soldiers took their seats for nine innings at noon. Unfortunately for the River Cats, they were unable to win their third-straight game against Salt Lake.

Things looked grim early for Sacramento as an Adam Heether error on a fly ball that got caught in the wind to right field led to 1-0 Salt Lake lead in the second inning. Neither team scored in the third but the Bees tacked on two runs in the fourth with aggressive base-running.

The 6-foot-3, 220-pound Jeff Baisley, a former River Cat, scored from first on a Chris Pettit double, then Pettit scored from second on an Efren Navarro single.

The Cats' offense stranded one in the bottom of the fourth, bringing the Bees to the plate in the fifth with a 3-0 lead.

Sacramento starter Travis Banwart got the Salt Lake offense to hit the ball right to defenders, the Cats just couldn't make the easy plays.

Shortstop Eric Sogard was unable to pick up a grounder to lead off the inning. The next batter, Andrew Romine, reached on a bunt single as both the pitcher and first baseman went for the ball, leaving first base unattended. Second baseman Josh Horton followed that by allowing a groundball to roll past his glove, scoring a run. All in all, the Bees scored four runs in the inning, all unearned to the team.

Banwart was pulled part way through the inning and finished with a line of 4.0 innings pitched, allowing five runs - two earned - on five hits with one walk and two strikeouts. Joe Bateman came in relief and allowed the final two runs of the inning to score. As a result, the Cats trailed 7-0 entering the bottom of the fifth inning.

Sogard did his best to bring the Cats back, driving in Shane Peterson for Sacramento's first run. He then made up for his error by making two nice plays in the hole to prevent Salt Lake from adding to its lead.

However, the River Cats went back to their misfielding ways as Bateman committed the team's fourth error of the contest while trying to cover first base for Anthony Recker, allowing a runner to reach base in the seventh. Bateman would right the ship and get out of the inning unscathed.

The Cats threatened one more time in the bottom of the eighth. Sacramento loaded the bases with Josh Donaldson at the plate and two out. Unfortunately for the Raley Field faithful, Donaldson would send a chopper at the pitcher, ending the threat.

Down by six, Sacramento lifted Bateman in favor of Fernando Cabrera. Bateman finished the game with 4.0 innings, three hits, two earned runs, two walks and three strikeouts.

Salt Lake tacked on one run in the top of the ninth on a solo shot from Baisley, then retired the Cats in the bottom of the frame to earn the 8-1 victory.

Each team finished the game with nine hits, but Sacramento's four errors were the difference as the Bees were flawless defensively.

Left fielder Shane Peterson went 3-for-4 and scored the River Cats' only run, raising his batting average to .306 on the year.

The Cats will look to take the series Thursday night at 7:05 p.m. River Cat Graham Godfrey (3-0, 2.66) will face Matt Palmer (0-1, 7.94).

'Hounds Drop Sixth Straight In Corpus

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Whataburger Field (Corpus Christi, TX) - - -

The RockHounds' road woes continued Wednesday "at the beach," as the Corpus Christi Hooks defeated the 'Hounds, 4-2.

After shutting out Frisco over 7.0 innings in his last start, Hooks left-hander Xavier Cedeno went 5.0 innings, allowing just one run. The Hooks didn't fare much better against Justin Murray, who went 6.0 innings and allowed just two earned runs on five hits in his best performance of the season.

Andy Simunic was the only Hooks player with more than one hit (3-for-4), but the Hooks got enough offense to keep the RockHounds at bay. The 'Hounds got within one run twice at 2-1 and 3-2, but could draw no closer, and left 10 men on base along the way.

- The RockHounds have dropped six straight with two games remaining on the road trip.
- Corpus Christi tied the 'Hounds for second with the win, putting both clubs at 12-14. First place San Antonio (17-9) still leads the division by five games, but the Missions fell for the second straight game at Frisco (3-2 in 10 innings). Frisco (11-15), the only club to consistently limit the San Antonio offense, is now six games back.
- Grant Green (3-for-5) extended his hit streak to 10 games, and is hitting .465 (20-43) in the streak. Over the 10 games, Oakland's # 1 prospect has boosted his average by more than 100 points (.178 to .288).
- Michael Spina saw a 13-game hit streak and 18-game on-base streak end on an 0-for-4 night.

- Jermaine Mitchell, who lost a 13-game streak Tuesday, went 2-for-4 with a walk, run and RBI. Mitchell is now fourth in the Texas League, hitting .340. He is third in on-base percentage at .472, and leads the league in runs scored (29), walks (25) and triples (6).

- Stephen Parker, who lost a 12-game streak Tuesday, had an RBI single and has now hit in 13-of-14 games ... Jeremy Barfield went hitless for just the second time in 16 games.

- Former RockHound Andre Ethier didn't have a hit Wednesday, but his 29-game streak is still alive. The Texas League's 2005 Player of the Year had the day off in the Los Angeles Dodgers' 4-1 home loss to the Cubs. Andre's streak is within two games of the longest hit streak in the Dodgers' more than 100-year history (Willie Davis hit in 31 straight games in 1969). Andre is just the 40th big league player to reach the 28-game plateau in the last seventy years. The 28-game mark is halfway to Joe DiMaggio's all-time record of 56 consecutive games, set in 1941 (70 years ago).

Ports Outlast 66ers In 13-Inning Slugfest

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. - In a contest that was expected to feature a pitcher's duel, Wednesday night's game between the Stockton Ports and Inland Empire 66ers was anything but that. In a game that featured a combined 16 runs on 32 hits, the Boys of Banner Island outlasted the 66ers by a final of 9-7 in 13 innings.

The game's starting pitching matchup featured Dan Straily, who's ERA was under 1, and Manuel Flores, who hadn't lost a game yet on the season. Despite the highly touted pitchers, it was offense that took over early on. Stockton jumped out to an early 1-0 lead on a Dusty Coleman solo home run in the top of the 1st off Flores.

Inland Empire fired back with a run in the bottom of the first. With two down, Kole Calhoun tripled to right-center and scored on an ensuing RBI single from Jose Jimenez to tie the game at 1-1.

After the Ports grabbed a 2-1 lead in the top of the 2nd, the 66ers fired back with four runs in the bottom of the inning.

Inland Empire's four-run second was highlighted by a two-run triple from Jean Segura as they took a 5-2 lead on Straily.

The Ports cut the deficit to 5-3 in the 4th when Max Stassi scored on a throwing error committed by the shortstop Segura as he tried to double up Rashun Dixon at first. The 66ers pushed the Ports' deficit back to three runs with a run in the fourth on an RBI single from Calhoun to make it 6-3.

Straily would suffer his roughest outing of the season, going four innings and allowing six runs on 10 hits while striking out four.

Flores would pitch the 5th inning for the 66ers and Stockton would knot the game at 6-6 in that frame. With two on and one out, Michael Choice drove in a pair of runs with a double to left to make it 6-5. Three batters later, Myrio Richard tied the game with an infield single to the left side that scored choice.

Flores would receive a no-decision after tossing five innings and allowing six runs (five earned) on eight hits while striking out six.

The Ports took the lead in the 7th against 66ers reliever Matt Oye. Choice started the inning with an infield single and then stole second. He scored two batters later on an RBI single from Stassi to make it a 7-6 ballgame. Oye would throw two innings and allow just the one run on two hits.

Jeff Lyman and Scott Deal combined for four scoreless innings of relief from the 5th through the 8th. In the 9th, the Ports called upon reliever Jose Guzman to try for his fourth save of the season. Guzman surrendered a leadoff double to Calhoun, and after striking out Jimenez, fell victim to a fielding error made by Leonardo Gil, who was moved from first base to third at the start of the inning. With runners at the corners and one out, P.J. Phillips tied the game with a sac-fly to center.

Guzman was charged with his second blown save of the season, but allowed just the unearned run in his two innings of relief.

In extra innings, the Ports dodged a huge bullet in the bottom of the 12th. Inland Empire got a leadoff double from Phillips, and two batters later, a one-out single from Mitch Blackburn to put runners at the corners with one out. A.J. Huttenlocker (1-0), however, was able to bear down and get Justin Bass to fly to shallow right and get Segura to line out to second on a terrific diving catch made by Conner Crumbliss to send the game into the 13th.

In the top of the 13th, Stockton took full advantage of their new life. With Johnny Hellwig (1-2) on the hill, Dixon drew a one-out walk and Ryan Lipkin followed with a single to put runners at first and second. Crumbliss came up next and singled to right to score Dixon with the go-ahead run and put Stockton in front 8-7. After Anthony Aliotti walked next to load the bases, Lipkin would score on a passed ball charged to catcher Ikko Sumi to give the Ports a 9-7 cushion.

Hellwig would be charged with the loss after allowing the two runs in the top of the 13th.

Huttenlocker, after escaping the jam in the 12th, would earn the win after three innings of scoreless relief. Huttenlocker tossed a perfect 13th inning and retired the last five batters he faced to end his outing.

The Ports, assured of at least a series split, will try to take three of four from Inland Empire on Thursday night in their series finale with the 66ers at Arrowhead Credit Union Park. Robert Gilliam (2-2, 5.63 ERA) will head to the bump for Stockton, opposed by right-hander Kyle Hurst (0-0, 3.60 ERA) for Inland Empire. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

17-inning marathon ends in Kernels victory

By Morgan Hawk / Cedar Rapids Kernels

Cedar Rapids, IA - The Kernels outlasted Burlington 4-3 in a 17-inning, 4 hours and 57 minute game on Wednesday night at Perfect Game Field.

Travis Witherspoon's RBI single in the 17th inning brought home pinch runner Ryan Jones with the winning run. The game had been tied 3-3 since the 6th inning.

Kernels reliever Caleb Graham (1-0) got the win by pitching three innings of scoreless ball. He allowed one hit while striking out five and walking one.

Jeff Urlaub (0-2) took the loss for Burlington. The only hit he gave up was the game winning hit by Travis Witherspoon in the 17th inning. He allowed one run on one hit while striking out three and walking one in 1.2 innings.

Kernels starter Heath Nichols went six innings, allowing three runs on four hits. He struck out five and walked one.

Burlington starter Blake Hassebrock went six innings, allowing three runs (two earned) on five hits. He struck out six and walked one. Hassebrock had not allowed an earned run prior to the ballgame.

The Kernels bullpen combined for 11 innings pitched while allowing no runs on four hits. The Kernels bullpen struck out 11 and walked three.

Burlington's bullpen combined for 10.2 innings pitched while allowing one run on six hits. They struck out 11 and walked one.

The two teams combined for a total of 33 strikeouts in the game.

The Bees scored twice in the 3rd inning. Yordy Cabrera led off the inning with a single and scored on a Josh Whitaker RBI double to right center. Whitaker scored on a Tyreece House single to give the Bees a 2-0 lead.

Jose Rivero doubled to lead off the 6th inning and advanced to third on a groundout. Rivero scored when a ball hit to third base by Yordy Cabrera. Kernels third baseman Jeremy Cruz threw the ball home on the play, but Rivero slid in safely to give the Bees a 3-0 lead.

The Kernels scored their first run in the 5th inning. Wes Hatton walked with one out and reached third on two wild pitches by Burlington starter Blake Hassebrock. Hatton scored on an error by Bees third baseman Tony Thompson to cut Burlington's lead to 3-1.

The Kernels tied the score 3-3 in the 6th inning with two runs. Drew Heid, Travis Witherspoon, and Jeremy Cruz began the inning with consecutive singles. Heid scored on the RBI single from Cruz. Witherspoon scored on a sacrifice fly to center field by David Harris.

The Kernels continue their six-game home stand tomorrow night versus Burlington at 6:35 p.m. Fans can come celebrate Cinco de Mayo with Thirsty Thursday specials of \$1.50 draft beer and \$2.00 bottled soda and water.