

Oakland A's effort effort, Ryan Sweeney's five hits all for naught in 12-inning loss to Cleveland Indians

By Carl Steward csteward@bayareanewsgroup.com

The A's had a couple of compelling firsts Thursday. Ryan Sweeney had his first career five-hit game, and Mike Gallego absorbed the loudest boos he thinks he's ever received in Oakland.

It looked as if the A's might beat the Cleveland Indians for a second straight game on Sweeney's fourth hit, a single down the line in short right field in the bottom of the 10th inning with the score 2-2. Conor Jackson, who was running from first base on the pitch, was rounding third when Indians right fielder Shin-Soo Choo finally retrieved the ball and fired toward home.

But third-base coach Gallego held up Jackson even though the ball was cut off, and when the A's subsequently failed to score, many of the 14,353 in attendance at Overstock.com Coliseum rained down their disapproval of Gallego's decision. They no doubt still were muttering about Gags' call after the A's ultimately lost 4-3 in 12 innings.

"That could have been the top (number of boos) I've ever received here at the Oakland Coliseum," said Gallego, a former A's infielder. "I appreciate the fans, no doubt about that. Hey, they all want to win, we all want to win. It's a horrible feeling, but that's part of the game. Believe me, if I think there's a chance of sending somebody, I'm sending him."

Simply put, Gallego didn't think Jackson had a chance.

"That ball was on line, Choo's got the best arm in the game, he wasn't very deep, and the reason they cut it is because I held him," Gallego said. "If they don't cut it and they let it go, I feel Conor's out by 10 feet."

Most observers not in the stands, including Jackson, believed Gallego made the right call. But in a game where Brett Anderson threw nine stellar innings and Sweeney had five hits to no avail, even manager Bob Geren, who usually can find plenty of positives in any loss, was sounding particularly bitter.

"That's a tough one to lose," Geren said. "That's a game we could have and should have won. We had a couple of chances to win the game and didn't do it."

Whereas the A's had 11 hits, they also stranded 12 base runners -- seven of them in scoring position, including the potential tying run in the 12th. Oakland's ongoing failures at the plate in key situations once again wasted a strong starting effort, and they also allowed the Indians to escape with their first series win in Oakland since 2002.

The loss dropped the A's back to .500 as they head out on a six-game road trip to Kansas City and Texas.

"We hit some balls pretty good early for outs, but when we needed the big one, we had some relatively poor at-bats," Geren said.

For once, Geren's players were feeling more positive about where the offense might be headed. Jackson, for one, thinks a breakout is inevitable.

"Yeah, there's no doubt," he said. "To be playing .500 right now with how we've hit, we have to be encouraged. Guys aren't going to hit .200 all year. We're going to be fine. We just may be putting too much pressure on ourselves with runners in scoring position right now."

Sweeney has spent most of the early part of the season on the bench, with Josh Willingham, Jackson and David DeJesus commanding most of the time flanking center fielder Coco Crisp. Sweeney didn't exactly scald the ball Thursday, but he made consistent contact and drove in two of the club's three runs. He raised his average 102 points in one afternoon, from .241 to .343.

"I wasn't trying to do too much, just try to put the ball in play," Sweeney said. "Willingham asked me how many of those I actually hit hard today, but I think two or three of them I squared up pretty good. Five hits don't really mean anything if you don't win, though."

Nor does nine innings of superb pitching, as Anderson found out. Coming off his worst outing of the season, the left-hander returned to form with a 114-pitch effort in which 80 were strikes. He didn't walk a batter and struck out five, and he retired the first 13 hitters he faced until Travis Hafner broke through with a one-out single in the fifth.

Reliever Craig Breslow (0-2) gave up two runs in the 12th and took the loss.

Oakland A's update: Reliever Joey Devine making huge progress from Tommy John surgery at Triple-A Sacramento

Carl Steward, BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

The A's could be getting a boost to their bullpen soon from a guy who hasn't pitched in the major leagues in more than two years -- right-hander Joey Devine.

Devine, who has had a long road back from Tommy John elbow surgery, has been sparkling so far for Triple-A Sacramento. In six appearances, he has yet to surrender an earned run and has allowed just three hits over 7 1/3 innings while walking none and striking out nine.

It's a small sample size, but those are the kind of gaudy numbers he posted for the A's in 2008, when he went 6-1 with an 0.59 ERA in 42 relief appearances after being acquired from the Atlanta Braves in a deal for Mark Kotsay.

The A's would like to see just a little more from Devine before they make the call-up, but they're definitely paying attention to the early returns.

"Everybody has been pretty encouraged the way he's throwing," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He at one point hit 95 (mph) and showed a pretty good slider. It's good news."

So how long until Devine makes his big-league return?

"He hasn't had that many outings," Geren said. "But he's a guy when he's ready, he'll create a spot for himself. He doesn't have to wait for a spot. We all remember how good he was for us before his surgery."

Geren is hearing good things about left-hander Josh Outman, who also is coming off Tommy John surgery after going 4-1 for Oakland with a 3.48 ERA in 14 games (12 starts) in 2009.

Outman has made five starts for the River Cats and is 1-1 with a 7.32 ERA. But after a rocky beginning, he has pitched better of late.

"(Outman's) in the same situation (as Devine)," Geren said. "They've both been off for a while, so they need to get real sharp and consistent and create a spot for themselves."

Dallas Braden was in the process of seeking a second opinion on his injured left shoulder after being re-examined by Los Angeles orthopedist Dr. Lewis Yocum on Wednesday. Geren was uncertain if Braden had actually scheduled another appointment or with which physician.

Ryan Sweeney's five-hit game in the 12-inning loss to the Cleveland Indians on Thursday not only was his first, it was the A's first since Adam Kennedy had five against the Chicago White Sox on Aug. 15, 2009.

A's superlatives not enough against hot Indians

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brett Anderson worked nine innings. Ryan Sweeney had a career-high five hits. Usually, these things might spell a good day for the A's, but not against the streaking Cleveland Indians.

The Indians broke an extra-inning tie when former A's infielder Jack Hannahan hit a flare just out of shortstop Cliff Pennington's reach in the 12th inning to send home the go-ahead run in the Indians' 4-3 victory over Oakland at the Coliseum on Thursday.

The Indians tacked on another run against Craig Breslow on Lou Marson's third hit of the day, which drove in Hannahan. That was key for Cleveland, because the A's responded with a run in the bottom of the 12th on Sweeney's two-out single to

center off Chris Perez, but, with two men on, the Indians closer got pinch-hitter Hideki Matsui to pop to short to end the game.

"That's a tough one to lose," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "That's a game we could have and should have won."

The A's had an opportunity in the 10th, but third-base coach Mike Gallego held up Conor Jackson, who had singled, at third on Sweeney's two-out bloop single near the right-field line. Cleveland right fielder Shin-Soo Choo is second in the league in assists.

"That's the right call, especially with a guy like Choo," Jackson said. "If I'm at second, it's a different story."

The next batter, Kurt Suzuki - owner of eight game-winning hits in his Oakland career - fouled out to first base to end the inning, then Gallego, an enormously popular former A's player, heard lots of boos as he left the field.

"He's got the best arm in the league," Gallego said. "Believe me, if there's any opportunity of scoring, we've been aggressive. ... It wasn't deep, the throw was on the line and they cut it off because I held Jackson up. I can't assume he's not going to make a good throw."

Anderson was sensational most of the day. He didn't allow a hit until, with one out in the fifth, Travis Hafner knocked a sharp grounder to Daric Barton's right. The first baseman made a good diving stop, but he dropped the ball as he got up to throw, and the play was ruled a base hit. With two outs, Austin Kearns reached on an infield single, but Hannahan grounded out to end the threat.

Then Anderson sat while Oakland had a longish bottom of the fifth inning and scored its first run on Daric Barton's second RBI in 14 games.

"For Oakland, it was pretty hot, and I sat down there and stewed for a while," Anderson said of his sweaty wait, which made him feel a bit tired the next inning.

In the sixth, Marson singled to center and Michael Brantley did the same. Sweeney, making his second start in center field, threw to the wrong base, allowing Brantley to take second, and the next batter, Asdrubal Cabrera, sent both runners in with yet another base hit to center.

Sweeney's thinking was that Marson is a catcher, so he might be able to get him going from first to third, but, he said, "I made a bad throw."

"Just a mental mistake," said Geren, who noted that preventing Brantley from taking second base would have kept a potential double play in line.

In the eighth, with Oakland down a run, Jackson and Josh Willingham drew one-out walks against Vinnie Pestano, who had allowed only one run in 12 appearances. Sweeney stepped up and blooped a double just inside the line in left, sending in Jackson.

"Willingham asked me how many of those I actually hit hard," Sweeney said with a smile. "I was just trying to put the bat on the ball."

Reliever Joey Devine ready to return to A's

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

At least from a results standpoint, it appears as if **Joey Devine** is ready to return to the A's bullpen quite soon.

The right-hander, who missed the past two seasons after Tommy John surgery, is 3-0 with an 0.00 ERA at Triple-A Sacramento. He's allowed three hits in 7 1/3 innings and has struck out nine. He hasn't walked a batter.

"I feel like I'm ready," Devine said by phone Thursday. "Every outing, I'm getting better. ... But I'm being patient. I haven't pitched in a long time. The biggest thing is going out and getting back into the routine, getting used to the workload."

Devine has gone two innings twice; he's worked with men on base; he's been in most scenarios he'd find himself in at the big-league level. While he's not throwing 97 mph, as he used to, he is hitting 95 mph, and he said that his slider is even better than it was in 2008 - when he was 6-1 with an 0.59 ERA.

Manager **Bob Geren** said that there's no set number of outings Devine needs before returning, but, he said, "Of course he needs to pitch."

Devine said that one reason for his success is that after his first child, son **Mason Joseph**, was born last month, "All the pressure off the field was taken off my shoulders and I was able to relax."

Briefly: No decision yet about where **Dallas Braden** might get a second opinion about his sore left shoulder after visiting Dr. **Lewis Yocum** for the second time in two weeks on Wednesday. ... **Andrew Bailey** will throw another session of live batting practice on Saturday. ... **Coco Crisp** and **Hideki Matsui** got days off Thursday, as planned.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Reunion: The A's open a three-game series in Kansas City tonight against David DeJesus' former club. "It's going to be fun to play against those guys I came up with," DeJesus said. "It will be a good time - especially with my swing starting to feel good."

Drumbeat: A's lineup for series finale: Coco Crisp, Hideki Matsui out

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 5/5/2011 11:40am

A new day, a different lineup: Today, it's Coco Crisp who's getting the start off, along with a planned day off for DH Hideki Matsui. Manager Bob Geren said that with a day game today, he wanted to give Crisp a bit of a break because he had that quad tightness last week. He said Matsui is doing well but he'll still give the DH a day here and there, including on the upcoming road trip. Both are available off the bench today.

Geren is making good on his promise to use his bench fully, that's clear, which makes sense except in the instances where a very hot bat comes out of the lineup. I thought we might see Kevin Kouzmanoff back at third today following two hitless games by Andy LaRoche, but Geren said he's taking into consideration that Fausto Carmona and Josh Tomlin were both tough on Oakland, and LaRoche did hit the ball hard several times.

Geren said he does have Kouzmanoff plugged into some upcoming lineups, and with LaRoche scheduled to get time at shortstop and second here and there, Geren said Kouzmanoff and LaRoche might have essentially equal playing time.

Here's the lineup, straight from the A's tweet this morning: DeJesus RF, Barton 1B, Jackson LF, Willingham DH, Sweeney CF, Suzuki C, Ellis 2B, LaRoche 3B, Penny SS, Anderson P

I spoke to Joey Devine this morning because he's started tearing it up at Triple-A and he's itching to get back but understands he needs to be patient and make sure he's entirely ready to handle the major-league workload - and big-league hitters. More from him in tomorrow's A's beat in The Chronicle.

No word on where Dallas Braden will get a second opinion on his sore left shoulder, but my guess would be Dr. James Andrews, who has taken care of several Oakland pitchers, including Andrew Bailey. It will be someone like that, at any rate - one of the top-name orthopedic surgeons you've heard of.

I'll be handing the Drumbeat off to John Shea for the next road trip and perhaps even beyond, with more hockey duty apparently heading my way. John is also @johnsheahey on Twitter.

Anderson shines but A's fall in extra frames

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 5/5/2011 10:00 PM ET

OAKLAND -- The A's had what looked to be a winning formula on Thursday in the series finale against the red-hot Cleveland Indians.

Left-hander Brett Anderson, coming off of arguably the worst start of his career, got back on track, allowing just two runs and seven hits over nine innings. Ryan Sweeney, getting a rare start in center field, had a career-high five hits and two RBIs in six at-bats.

Of course, these are the slumbering A's, and looks can be deceiving. Sweeney and Conor Jackson combined for eight of the A's 11 hits, and the rest of the lineup was largely quiet, as Oakland squandered Anderson's gem and lost, 4-3, in 12 innings.

"A tough one to lose," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That was a game we could have -- and should have -- won. It was well pitched. Brett Anderson did just an incredible job, nine innings, obviously. Bullpen held them. We had a couple chances to win the game and didn't do it. And then we get beat on a blooper. We come back and battle to the end, but the hit that would have made the difference, just didn't happen."

So instead of winning the three-game series against baseball's winningest team, the A's dropped two of three -- as they fell back to .500 at 16-16 and hit the road for six games, starting with a three-game set at Kansas City.

Cleveland scored twice off reliever Craig Breslow in the top of the 12th, bunching three singles and a walk to take control. Jack Hannahan's bloop single brought one run in, and Lou Marson drove in another when he lined a single to left.

Anderson gave up nine hits and a career-high-tying seven earned runs on Saturday in an 11-2 loss to the Rangers, lasting just five innings.

Against Cleveland, Anderson had a perfect game through 4 1/3 innings. For the game, he struck out five and walked none. He threw 114 pitches, 80 of them for strikes.

"I tried to put everything that had to do with that last outing behind me," Anderson said. "That was the worst stuff, worst command, worst everything I've had since I've been in the big leagues. Tried to put that behind me, and just know it's going to be better this time. And fortunately, it was."

"Anderson was tough," Indians manager Manny Acta said. "We had a couple opportunities, and when you have those type of guys on the mound, you do need to execute. Unfortunately, we didn't against him. He was very tough. He had a very good breaking ball that he could throw for a strike at any time in the count. It was very sharp. But it's a very good win for us."

The game was tied at 2 after nine innings, when Anderson gave way to right-hander Michael Wuertz. Wuertz breezed through a 1-2-3 inning, and the A's had a great opportunity to end it in the bottom of the 10th.

Jackson lined a single to right with one out off Chad Durbin. Then with two outs and Jackson running on the pitch, Sweeney lined a single down the right-field line, and Jackson steamed toward third as right fielder Shin-Shoo Choo charged in toward the ball.

A's third-base coach Mike Gallego saw the play unfold and put up the stop sign for Jackson, much to the dismay of many A's fans, who booed him loudly.

"Believe me, if there's any opportunity of sending the guy and being aggressive, we always play on the aggressive side," Gallego said. "After the fact that they cut the ball, everyone kind of looks at it and goes, 'Well, it might have been close.' But that ball was on line. Choo's got the best arm in the game. It wasn't very deep. The reason why they cut it is because I held him. If they didn't cut it, if they'd let that ball go, I feel Conor's out by 10 feet."

Geren's take?

"In real speed, originally I thought he'd be out if he sent him," Geren said. "And then as the throw came in, it tailed a little bit. Then it looked like he had a chance. But knowing their outfielders, that guy is one of the top in assists. ... He has one of the best arms in the league."

The A's still had a chance to score, but catcher Kurt Suzuki popped out to first baseman Matt LaPorta in foul territory to end the inning. As Gallego, a former A's infielder, headed for the dugout, he received an even louder shower of boos.

"That could have been the top, top one I've ever received here at the Oakland Coliseum." Gallego said of the boos.

"Appreciate the fans, no doubt about that. But hey, they all want to win, we all want to win. It was late in the game.

"I mean, it's a horrible feeling, but that's part of the game. You've got to take your lumps with it, and take the accolades as well. But believe me, if I feel there's a chance of sending somebody, I'm sending him. As tough as it is for us sometimes to get runs across the board, we're going to play aggressively, and I'm not stopping that."

After Cleveland scored twice in the top of the 12th, the A's rallied in the bottom of the frame. With one out against Indians closer Chris Perez, Barton walked and Jackson singled him to second. After Perez got Josh Willingham to pop up, Sweeney singled home Barton, cutting the lead to 4-3.

"I was just trying to put together good at-bats and not trying to do too much," Sweeney said of his five-hit day. "Kind of stay in the middle of the field. The last two games I've played have been [against] kind of sinkerball pitchers. Not really trying to do too much, and just come through whenever I have the chance to."

At that point, Hideki Matsui pinch hit for Suzuki, but Perez retired him on a popup to shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera.

"We hit some balls pretty good early for outs, but when we needed the big one, we had some relatively poor at-bats," Geren said. "When we needed to get a big hit, they weren't executed very well."

The A's scored a combined seven runs in three games stretching over 30 innings against Cleveland. But when asked if Thursday's 12-inning loss was frustrating, Barton quickly shot down the concept.

"Frustrating? It's a one-run game," Barton said. "It's a pretty good game, right? I mean, it's a good game, everyone stayed to the end, 12 innings. It's not frustrating at all. It was a well-played game by both sides. Unfortunately, we didn't come out on top."

The A's took a 1-0 lead in the fifth when Barton grounded a single to right off Indians starter Jeanmar Gomez, scoring Mark Ellis from third.

Cleveland struck for two runs in the sixth off Anderson, stringing together three straight singles to center by Marson, Michael Brantley and Asdrubal Cabrera.

Trailing 2-1, the A's scored a run in the bottom of the eighth to pull even. Jackson worked a one-out walk off reliever Vinnie Pestano and moved to second when Pestano walked Willingham after getting ahead 0-2 in the count. Sweeney brought Jackson home with the tying run, blooming an opposite-field double down the left-field line.

After Pestano retired Suzuki, Indians left-hander Tony Sipp came on to face Coco Crisp, pinch hitting for Ellis. The switch-hitting Crisp, who entered the game batting .179 from the right side, flew out to center on the first pitch.

Anderson said it's only a matter of time before the A's hitters break loose.

"We've got good players, proven track records," Anderson said. "It's going to be not too long before they all come around and start doing things. Ryan Sweeney had a tremendous day today, and hopefully that will [be the] catalyst for some other guys. Who knows?"

Jackson starting to feel like old self

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- In a perfect world, Conor Jackson's batting average would be 30 or 40 points higher than the .262 he took into Thursday's game against Cleveland.

But after what he's been through the past two years, he's not about to complain.

"It's been a trip. It's been a rough two years," Jackson said. "You kind of take for granted your health, overall. Before 2009, I hadn't been on the DL before, never had an injury. After 2009, after I got Valley Fever, I didn't think I was going to play baseball again. I was that ill and that sick. So I'm just happy to be in this position and happy to be here. I feel back to my old self."

Jackson hit safely in six of his past nine games before Thursday. He had a home run, three doubles and seven RBIs during that span. That's the Jackson the A's thought they were getting when they acquired him last June in a trade with Arizona.

Jackson hit .300 for Arizona in 2008 and drove in 75 runs. His career was on the rise. But the next season, he played just 30 games after being struck by Valley Fever, a fungal disease that is common in the Phoenix area, though few people get hit as hard as Jackson.

"A lot of people get it, and you get a cold and kind of brush it off," Jackson said. "But for me, for a mid-20s white male to get, it was about .01 percent to get it as bad as I did," Jackson said. "It's no joke. If you let it go and you get it serious enough, it's fatal at times."

"I was told I could feel better in two weeks, I could feel better in a year and a half. That was the prognosis I got. It was rough. The longest lasting was the fatigue and not being able to recover. Just feeling achy. You feel like you had the flu every day. It sucks. It was awful."

Last season wasn't much better, for different reasons. He had three stints on the disabled list and underwent season-ending sports hernia surgery on Sept. 1, some three months after coming to the A's in a trade.

"Obviously, the string of injuries was awful, it was brutal," Jackson said. "In 2010 Spring Training, I tore my ab. I didn't want to have surgery for the sports hernia because I'd missed so much time the year before. So I was like, 'I'm going to

play through it.' And because of that, I started ripping my hamstrings because I was compensating. It was just a Catch 22. "Finally, I had surgery. This is the first year, going into the season, I feel really healthy and good. I'm staying on top of everything. Back to normal. Even last year, I don't think I got back to my full weight. I was hovering around 205 last year. Usually, I'm about 215, 220. I'm back to my old self now."

Rosales' recovery nearing completion

OAKLAND -- Utility infielder Adam Rosales' long road back from surgery to repair a stress fracture in his right foot appears to be nearing the home stretch.

Rosales resumed running about three weeks ago. He took live batting practice on Wednesday for the first time this season, facing injured closer Andrew Bailey's fastball.

Rosales is scheduled to have another CT scan of his injured foot on May 18 to see how much it has improved since the last scan on April 14, when it was deemed to be 90 percent healed.

"Hopefully, I'll get the clearance and start playing in some games in Arizona and Stockton or Sacramento," Rosales said.

Rosales said he's been "antsy" to get back for months, but he understands the importance of being patient.

"They've taken good care of me, and taken all the precautionary steps to get back -- get back to 100 percent and stay at 100 percent," Rosales said.

Rosales said he is close to pain-free in his recovery.

"It's a little stiff, a little sore," he said. "I took a lot of ground balls yesterday, then I came back this morning and ran. I could feel it. It takes a little while to get going. Over time, the next couple weeks I'll be able to come back from a night [game] and play a day game."

Rosales hit .281 for the A's last season, when he started at least one game at six different positions. He had seven home runs and drove in 31 runs. He went on the DL in mid-August and missed the rest of the season.

Worth noting

- Center fielder Coco Crisp and designated hitter Hideki Matsui were out of the starting lineup on Thursday, but they're healthy and available, if needed. Crisp had missed three games with a sore quadriceps before returning on Sunday against Texas. He took Monday off, too. "The plan coming back was play him a couple [of games], give him a day game off and keep building him back up," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's like everybody else on our team. We've got to try to keep everybody healthy all year, and keep everybody else in the lineup sharp also. In the long run, it's going to work out best for the team. He feels OK today, too, so it's good. He's available if I need him."
- Andy LaRoche made his fifth straight start at third base in place of the struggling Kevin Kouzmanoff on Thursday. Geren, though, said Kouzmanoff would get some starts on the upcoming road trip, which begins on Friday at Kansas City. "He's going to get back in there," Geren said. "I look out a week to 10 days, and kind of make out some lineups, jot them down, to kind of rest everybody and let players know. He's definitely getting back in there. A lot reasons. I want him to play third, and LaRoche is going to be playing some short for [Cliff Pennington], playing second for [Mark Ellis] -- plus he's going to need days off himself. If you look at the next 10 days or so, they're going to play almost equal amounts."
- Geren has been getting some positive reports from Triple-A Sacramento on the progress of reliever Joey Devine, who missed the past two seasons after undergoing Tommy John surgery. "Last I checked, the last six outings were no runs," Geren said. "At one point, he hit 95 [mph] and showed a pretty good slider. Everybody was encouraged with the way he's throwing. So that's good news." If Devine regains his pre-surgery form, he'll force his way back onto the 25-man roster, Geren said. "He's still refining his game. He was off a year and a half, and he hasn't had that many outings. He's a guy that when he's ready, he'll create a spot for himself. He doesn't have to wait for a spot."
- Injured closer Andrew Bailey, on the DL with a strained right forearm, is scheduled to throw to hitters for a second time on Saturday, Geren said. Bailey threw all fastballs in his session on Wednesday. The question is whether he'll add in some curves. So far, he's only thrown curves on flat ground. "Each day is just getting better," Bailey said.

DeJesus returning to Kauffman Stadium with A's

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com | 5/5/2011 8:59 PM ET

Longtime Royals fan favorite David DeJesus will return to a familiar setting when he takes the field on Friday at Kauffman Stadium.

He'll just do it while wearing an Oakland uniform. DeJesus, who spent eight seasons with Kansas City and was a cornerstone player for the franchise, was traded to the Athletics during the winter for right-hander Vin Mazzarro.

DeJesus is looking forward to the reunion.

"It'll be cool, just because I have so much history there, so many teammates that I played with over the last few years," the outfielder said. "It'll be fun to bring back some of those memories. I see they're doing pretty good, so I'm always sending them positive text messages, telling them they're looking good. It's good to see them doing well, but hopefully we can go in there and beat them down pretty good."

DeJesus is hitting .231 for the season with two home runs and 10 RBIs.

The veteran said he has kept up with his former team and is not surprised by its success. He knows better than to underestimate the Royals, who will have top first-base prospect Eric Hosmer in the lineup for his Major League debut.

"They're good. They wouldn't be up here if they weren't good," he said. "They had success, and once you've had success you can build off that. [Jeff] Francoeur has brought them some production. He's a leader that they needed. But still, we want to go there and win, that's for sure."

Expect a cordial greeting from the outfielder's former teammates. Don't be surprised if the fans also show their appreciation for his time spent in Kansas City.

"He was an energy giver," Royals left fielder Alex Gordon said. "He'd come to the field every day with a smile on his face. He was just a good guy to be around all the time. He was a great teammate to have. It was a sad day to see him leave."

Athletics: Gonzalez expects Royals to be a challenge

Oakland starter Gio Gonzalez allowed five hits and two runs over 6 2/3 innings against the Rangers to snap his two-game losing streak in his last start. He'll try to build on that start Friday against the Royals.

"My next start, I'm just going to try to go out there, give seven, try to minimize the damage as much as possible," Gonzalez said. "Kansas City's not going to be easy. The last two starts weren't easy, either. This game, it just gets better and better. I just try to do my best to minimize damage."

Gonzalez is 1-2 with a 7.85 ERA against the Royals in four career starts.

"They're a team you don't want to take lightly," he said. "You've got to go out there and attack each one of these guys individually, and if they get contact, hopefully it's not a base hit or a home run."

Royals: O'Sullivan shines as a starter

Sean O'Sullivan was coming off a virus last Saturday against the Twins, and he struggled, issuing a career-high seven walks in six innings. He still gave up just two hits and two runs (one earned). He has a 1.59 ERA in his three starts in the No. 5 slot in the rotation.

"In the bullpen, I didn't feel real strong," O'Sullivan said. "I spent most of the night bending over a toilet with a little bit of a food virus, and my legs were pretty weak out there."

Cohn: Hey, A's, make a move, why don't you?

By LOWELL COHN, THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

In a sense, this is in praise of the Oakland A's. They are a good team, although they lost to the Cleveland Indians, 4-3, on Thursday.

They pitch as well as any team in the majors and that includes the Giants. They currently contend in the American League West and yet — please excuse me here — they generate almost no enthusiasm. Really, they don't.

They had a crummy crowd against the Indians on Thursday — 14,353 — although Cleveland came into the game tied for the best record in baseball. Maybe there's an excuse for the small crowd. The Indians don't register on the road like the Red Sox and Yankees, but if they played in San Francisco on a Thursday afternoon with the temperature in the 70s and the sky sun-dappled and beautiful, fans would fill up AT&T Park.

So, although I'm praising the A's for contending and for their pitching, I am criticizing them for not making more noise and certainly for not making more effort. In San Francisco, fans are beside themselves because, although the Giants can pitch, they sure can't hit. People wonder what the Giants should do, and already there is chatter and blogging about how the Giants must get Mets shortstop Jose Reyes to make the team complete.

Somehow we hear nothing about the A's needing Reyes. Understand the A's are in exactly the same position as the Giants — good pitch, no hit — and no one says or even expects them to do anything about it. I mean, the A's scored seven runs in the three Cleveland games. They came into Thursday's game fourth-worst in the American League in batting average, second-worst in runs and third-worst in home runs. They lost even though Ryan Sweeney got five hits and Brett Anderson gave up just two runs in nine innings.

That's very bad for a team that could win its division with a few upgrades.

So, get this. If Reyes is appropriate for the Giants, he's just as appropriate for the A's. Plus, Sandy Alderson is running the show for the Mets and he used to be the A's president. There's a connection. Why are we not hearing Reyes-to-Oakland noise?

There should be more noise — call it loud complaints.

The A's need a third baseman who can hit for power and a first baseman who can hit for power and a shortstop and second baseman who can just plain hit. They need more hitting because it puts so much pressure on a pitching staff when a team can't score — a pitcher cannot afford even one bad inning.

A's fans buy into the notion the A's can't make a trade because they're a small-market team and all that. Why can't they make a trade? Why can't they improve themselves?

The A's accepting the status quo seems like business as usual, as if the A's operate by different standards — not the usual major-league standards. Most teams want to win it all. The A's want to do OK, be respectable, not embarrass themselves. At least that's how it seems.

They need to act like a big-league ballclub. They need to upgrade their position players to match their wonderful pitching. Lots of teams have pitching in 2011 — but the teams that also hit will excel.

This is Oakland's window of opportunity — right now — and a front office worth its salt would be active and think like a contender.

I give credit to the A's for bravely creating this window of opportunity. For goodness sake, burst through it.

A's waste Anderson's outing, lose 4-3 to Indians

Associated Press

Another powerful pitching performance. Another struggle to score runs.

That's become a familiar theme already this season for the Oakland Athletics, and it was again in a 4-3 loss to the Cleveland Indians in 12 innings Thursday.

"This was a tough one to lose," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That's a game we could have and should have won."

Jack Hannahan and Lou Marson had RBI singles in the 12th inning to help Cleveland Indians match the best start in franchise history, wasting another brilliant start by Brett Anderson.

Anderson allowed two runs on seven hits over nine innings, dominating the Indians for most of the day. But he had little run support — again — and watched as the Indians rallied against the bullpen.

"It was a tale of three different games really," Anderson said. "I felt good at the beginning and then we had that long inning and scored and I got a little tired. Then I felt good at the end. My command was a lot better."

A night after Oakland snapped Cleveland's seven-game winning streak, the Indians won in their final at-bat for the seventh time this season. This is also the seventh time the Indians have started 21-9, including in 1948 — the last time they won the World Series.

Hannahan's bloop single to left field off reliever Craig Breslow (0-2) provided the go-ahead run, and Marson followed with a single to propel Cleveland to another late-inning rally. Chad Durbin (2-1) pitched two innings for the win and Chris Perez earned his ninth save in 10 chances.

"Brett did a great job and we just couldn't get him the extra run," first baseman Daric Barton said. "A one-run game, 12 innings? It's not frustrating at all. It was a well-pitched game and unfortunately we didn't come out on top."

The Athletics couldn't match the late-game exploits.

Ryan Sweeney had a career-high five hits and added two RBIs for the Athletics, who wasted another strong performance by starter Anderson. He pitched nine innings and got a no-decision.

Oakland stranded 12 runners on base and twice blew chances in extra innings with men in scoring position.

The Indians again showed why they have been one of baseball's best and most surprising teams this season.

They overcame Sweeney's tying RBI double in the eighth against reliever Vinnie Pestano and continually pitched out of jams. Sweeney's run-scoring single in the 12th brought Oakland within a run before Perez regrouped to get pinch-hitter Hideki Matsui to pop out to short left and end the game.

"They're a scrappy team that knows how to put runs on the board," Sweeney said. "They have the best record in baseball for a reason."

The Indians found a way to outlast another pitcher at his peak for their first series win in Oakland since 2002.

Anderson retired the first 13 batters with relative ease, with only two outs even making it beyond the infield. Not until one out in the fifth inning did a Cleveland hitter finally reach base, and even that took some help.

Travis Hafner hit a hard ground ball to Barton, who made a diving stop but bobbled the ball trying to transfer it out of his glove and toss it to Anderson hustling to cover the base.

The slow-to-score A's struggled again to produce at the plate behind a sharp starter.

Anderson struck out five and allowed seven hits in nine innings, baffling Cleveland's hitters on a sun-baked day at the Coliseum. He just didn't get much support, a growing theme for Oakland's starters this season.

Barton's two-out, RBI-single in the fifth drove in Mark Ellis to give Oakland a 1-0 lead. The A's stranded two more runners in the inning, with Conor Jackson grounding out to end the threat.

The Indians briefly got to Anderson with singles from Marson and Michael Brantley to open the sixth. Then Asdrubal Cabrera drove both home with a single up the middle to put the Indians ahead 2-1.

Indians starter Jeanmar Gomez allowed one run, six hits and two walks in 5 2-3 innings.

NOTES: A's All-Star closer Andrew Bailey is scheduled to face hitters for the second time this week Saturday in Kansas City, manager Bob Geren said. Bailey hasn't pitched this season because of a strained right forearm. ... A's CF Coco Crisp and DH

Matsui also had scheduled days off with the quick turnaround after Wednesday night's game, although both pinch-hit late in the game.

Oakland offense, bullpen costs team another game as Cleveland wins in 12

By Sam McPherson, Oakland A's Examiner

(OAKLAND) -- The Oakland Athletics had numerous chances today to win a ball game, but they let every one of them slip through their fingers.

The result: a 4-3 loss in 12 innings to the Cleveland Indians that pushes the A's back to .500 for the ninth time already this year and demonstrates again that Oakland is just too flawed of a team to put together any consistent play required of a team with playoff aspirations.

While the bullpen lost its American League-worst eighth game this season (that's 25% of the team's overall games, right there, lost by the relievers), the offense continued its inability to score runs when presented with golden opportunity.

To wit:

- In the first inning, the A's got a walk, a double and a single, but they couldn't score a run. Daric Barton swing at the first pitch and grounded into a double play. By the way, the Oakland first baseman is one of the worst hitters at his position in the AL this year, with a .204 average, a .287 slugging percentage and zero home runs coming into today's game;
- In the eighth inning, the A's managed to tie the game when Ryan Sweeney doubled with one out to drive in Conor Jackson. But with runners on second and third and one out, Kurt Suzuki couldn't get the go-ahead run across the plate -- he popped up to short left field, and Oakland missed a huge opportunity to take the lead going into the ninth inning when Coco Crisp popped out as well;
- In the tenth inning, Jackson was on first when Sweeney hit what appeared to be another double with two outs. Jackson was motoring around third and headed home, but third-base coach Mike Gallego held him up -- and the throw in held Sweeney at first, strangely enough. Suzuki popped out again to end the inning and Oakland's chance to win the game (see below);
- Overall, the A's left 12 men on base in a game they lost in 12 innings by one run. Playoff teams don't do that kind of thing on a regular basis, but Oakland does.

So while the starting pitching again was the best shot the team had to win the game -- Brett Anderson pitched nine innings, giving up only seven hits and two runs to the highest-scoring team in the AL -- the offense failed to do its part on several occasions, and eventually, the bullpen couldn't hold the opponent in check.

And the A's lost another game they could have won.

Sound familiar?

They may have the best starting pitchers in the major leagues, but they're a .500 team because they can't hit consistently when it matters, usually can't field very well and have a mediocre (at best) bullpen.

The play in the bottom of the tenth really hurt the most, perhaps, because with two outs, the A's had a chance to end the game by sending Jackson home and making Cleveland rightfielder Sin-Shoo Choo execute a perfect throw.

Now Choo does have perhaps the best outfield arm in the league, but it would have been a tough throw -- and Oakland had nothing to lose. If Jackson was thrown out, oh well -- you head to the 11th inning, which is what happened anyway after Suzuki popped out.

The A's catcher is a tough leader for this team, no doubt, but like the team overall, he's a lousy clutch hitter this year: he was hitting .208 with an OPS of .477 with runners in scoring position coming into this game, and his 0-for-3 in those situations today just makes those numbers even worse.

Sending Jackson home against Choo's arm was the smart percentage play there, and Gallego should have known it.

It's shocking that Oakland is 16-16 right now, only two games out of first place. If they just were able to make key plays at key times, whether at the plate or on the mound, the A's could be in the division lead by a mile.

Missed opportunities are the basis of mediocrity, and Oakland shows no signs of being able to overcome their problems right now.

DeJesus ends Indians winning streak

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post, 5/5/2011

Oakland, CA – What a night for making a first impression. David DeJesus recorded his first multi-home run game in his eight-year career in the Major League. On a night where the the A's offense was pretty still, DeJesus spoke loudly with his bat. Two long balls in both the first and fourth frames gave Oakland a little breathing room before tying the series.

The Indians 3-1 loss came to the hands of one player and great pitching. Oakland produced only four hits behind Trevor Cahill's excellent nigh on the mound. David who was acquired back in November 2010 for Vin Mazzaro and Justin Marks. He came in hitting .200 (9 for 45) over his last 12 games and was brought in to add more depth. His time finally arrived!

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

Not bad following behind Cahill who improved to 5-0 with a 1.79 ERA and became the first A's pitcher to start undefeated since Rich Harden in 2008. Another historic night for the right-handed pitcher who threw a career-high 116 pitches. Allowing only one hit, Cleveland saw their winning streak come to an end. In seven innings, he gave up five hits, walked three and struck out five.

"I think today I just threw a lot of change ups," said Cahill. "The last couple of innings I threw curve balls 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."

"Hot" is an understatement in describing the Indians soaring start to the season. They just finished a perfect 6-0 homestand, won thirteen straight home games equaling their longest home winning streak since April/May 1996. Notching the best start in club history Cleveland seems to be picking up where they left off last season.

"I think everything relates to how we played last season," manager Manny Acta said. "Our pitching staff has made al lot of progress, in Spring Training we made it clear that our success was not by chance, it was a full half so we need to stay on that track." " I couldn't tell you we would start the season at 20-8 but we knew we'd be good."

Josh Tomlin never really got a chance after his third pitch, a fastball that met DeJesus bat for his first home run of the game. Tomlin gave up three runs (two earned), struck out five, walked none and shaved his season ERA down to 2.43. He earned his first loss taking him to 4-1 while the Indians fall 20-9 and tie for the best record in baseball along with Philadelphia.

The Indians only hit came in the third inning win Grady Sizemore went deep for the double followed by Travis Hafner's single RBI to briefly tie the game 1-1 top of the third. Oakland's defense was outstanding throughout the night. They managed to get another hit when reliever Tony Sipp entered the game yielding a run-scoring base hit to Coco Crisp giving the A's their last and final run.

Notes – The Oakland A's teamed up for the second consecutive season to honor the "Wells Fargo Teacher Awards" providing funds to deserved and undeserved schools in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. This cause provides a platform for schools to seek grant funding from Wells Fargo Community Relations.

Tonight, Kennedy High School of Richmond, CA was honored with a check for \$1,000 to Assistant Athletic Director Michael Bobino. Presenting the award was Wells Fargo manager Surafel Tensai and A's pitcher Brett Anderson. The program has pledged 10K in grants for overall funding to programs throughout our community.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Carson's monster blast lifts first-place Cats

By Kyle Tucker / Sacramento River Cats

Led by Matt Carson's fourth home run and a dominant pitching performance by Graham Godfrey, the River Cats knocked off Salt Lake 7-1 on Thursday night at Raley Field.

Sacramento improved to 5-0 on Thursday night games and 3-0 at home on Miller Lite Thirsty Thursdays.

Godfrey (4-0, 2.43 ERA), who entered Thursday averaging a strikeout per inning, looked sharp early on, striking out the first four batters he faced.

Eric Sogard led things off for Sacramento by drawing a walk in the first inning. Salt Lake starting pitcher Matt Palmer got off to a shaky start for the Bees by throwing two wild pitches in the opening frame. The first wild pitch allowed Sogard to

advance to second with Steve Tolleson at the plate. Tolleson then bounced out to first base, moving Sogard to third with one out. Palmer then threw a second wild pitch, allowing Sogard to score the first run of the night.

Carson smacked his fourth home run of the season in the third inning, a two-run shot that landed on the roof of the field house beyond the center-field wall -- an estimated 440-foot blast. Carson added his third RBI of the night with a sacrifice fly to center field, scoring Josh Horton in the fifth.

Godfrey left with a 5-1 lead after 6.0 innings of two-hit ball while striking out seven, giving him the team-lead in strikeouts with 28.

"You just tell him to keep doing what he's doing," said River Cats Pitching Coach Scott Emerson about Godfrey's recent hot streak. "He's been showing great command, getting ahead early in counts, and keeping his pitch count low which makes our job easy."

Josh Donaldson added a little insurance in the seventh with a two-run single to left field, scoring Jai Miller and Anthony Recker for a 7-1 lead.

The Sacramento bullpen was lights-out once again. Recent call-up Fautino De Los Santos pitched 1.0 inning, giving up a hit and no runs. Willie Eyre lowered his ERA to 0.81 by tossing 2.0 shutout innings.

The River Cats open a four-game series against Colorado Springs on Friday night at Raley Field, sending Josh Outman (1-1, 7.32) to the mound against Josh Muecke (1-2, 4.40) in a battle of left-handers.

RockHounds Rally to Win

Corpus Christi Hooks

CORPUS CHRISTI - Midland struck for three runs in the seventh to defeat Corpus Christi 6-5 Thursday night at Whataburger Field before 5,818.

The RockHounds improved to 13-14; Corpus Christi stands 12-15.

Midland reliever Jared Lansford (1-1) earned the victory with 2 2/3 innings of scoreless relief. He permitted one hit and struck out four. Jermaine Mitchell, Grant Green, Michael Spina and Matt Sulentic had two hits each for the visitors.

Mickey Storey claimed his first save despite a somewhat tenuous ninth. Texas League stolen base leader Jimmy Paredes drew a lead-off walk, but was gunned out at second by Yusuf Carter.

Neil Wagner, who tossed two scoreless frames, served as the bridge between Lansford and Storey.

Corpus Christi starter Jonnathan Aristil brewed up some two-out first-inning trouble. He yielded a single to Stephen Parker and issued walks to Spina and Jeremy Barfield. Sulentic made Aristil pay with a two-run single to center.

The Hooks immediately halved that advantage. Andy Simunic reached on an error by shortstop Green, stole second and covered the last 180 feet when J.D. Martinez stroked a single up the middle.

Corpus Christi batted around in the third against Carlos Hernandez while taking a 4-2 lead. David Flores' third home run of 2011, a two-out, two-run shot to left, keyed the Hooks' three-run surge. Jimmy VanOstrand contributed an RBI single to plate T.J. Steele, who'd doubled into the right-field corner.

Aristil responded by striking out the side.

Hernandez was lifted for Lansford in the fourth, when the Hooks added a run the easy way. Brought in to clean up a one-out bases-loaded mess, Lansford struck Steele out but walked VanOstrand.

Hernandez was peppered for nine hits over 3 1/3 innings. He was charged with four earned runs and walked one.

Mitchell opened the fifth with a single and Green slapped an RBI double to left as the RockHounds pulled to within 5-3.

Midland pulled ahead for good two innings later, Mitchell again the spark. He reached on an infield single, advanced to second on a Matt Nevarez (0-1) wild pitch, third on a throwing error by catcher Federico Hernandez and home via Parker's sacrifice fly to center. Sulentic's two-out single into left-center scored Spina (single, wild pitch) to knot the affair at 5. Carter greeted Arcenio Leon with a run-scoring single, sending Barfield (walk) to the pay station.

Aristil completed five innings. His line: five hits, four walks, six strikeouts in 96 pitches (55 strikes).

Steele has an eight-game hitting streak. He and VanOstrand have hits in 12 of the last 13 games. Wladimir Sutil has hit safely in 19 of 20.

Ross Seaton (1-1) starts for the Hooks in the season and homestand finale Friday at 7:05. Southpaw Anthony Capra (0-1) is the scheduled starter for Midland. Fans enjoy Friday Fireworks from Bud Light.

Ports Pummel the 66ers

By Shane Downey, Inland Empire

San Bernardino, CA- The Stockton Ports defeated the Inland Empire 66ers on thirsty Thursday at Arrowhead Credit Union Park by the final score of 10-3. The Ports were winners in three out of four in the series.

Kyle Hurst started his second game for the 66ers giving up four runs in six and a third innings, raising his ERA to 4.76. The game was still within reach with the score 6-3 in favor of Stockton going into the ninth inning. However 66er newcomer Beau Brooks had a rough first outing allowing four earned runs in two thirds of an inning.

Inland Empire collected eight hits in the game, three a piece from first baseman Casey Haerther and Justin Bass making his first start at second base on the season.

Bass, who finished a triple short of the cycle, only registered three at bats in the game while batting ninth in the order. Justin tied the game at three in the fifth inning on his deep blast to right. For Bass it was his first homerun of the season.

The 66ers left runners in scoring position the following two innings yet failed to score.

Up next the Inland Empire 66ers will hit the road for a three game set against the Lancaster JetHawks. Scheduled starters for Saturday's game in Lancaster are Harold Williams for the 66ers (0-0 4.05 ERA) up against Jake Buchanan (3-1 1.45 ERA) and the JetHawks.

Buchanan threw a complete game shutout in his last appearance against Inland Empire.

The 66ers will return home to Arrowhead Credit Union Park for a six game home stand beginning May 10th at 7:05 against the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes.

Burlington scores a run in the 9th to win 6-5 over the Kernels

By Morgan Hawk / Cedar Rapids Kernels

Cedar Rapids, IA - Burlington scored a run in the 9th to down the Kernels 6-5 in a back and forth game at Perfect Game Field on Thursday night.

Burlington scored right out of the gates with three doubles and two runs in the 1st inning against Kernels starter Suammy Baez. Royce Consigli led off the ballgame with a double. Consigli scored on Nino Leyja's RBI double to make the score 1-0. Leyja then scored on a double by Yordy Cabrera to give Burlington a 2-0 advantage.

The Kernels cut the lead in half with a single run in the 2nd inning. Three consecutive singles brought home one run. Brandon Decker led off the inning with a single. Wes Hatton and Ricky Alvarez followed with singles of their own. The single by Alvarez drove home Decker to cut Burlington's lead to 2-1.

Kernel designated hitter Ricky Alvarez tied the game 2-2 in the 4th inning with a solo home run to right field. The Kernels took a 4-2 lead with two runs in the 5th inning. Braulio Pardo and Drew Heid singled with one out. They both came home on a double to left center by David Harris.

Burlington battled back to even the score 4-4 in the 6th inning. With two outs, Baez walked Tony Thompson and Yordy Cabrera. They both came home on a single up the middle by Jose Rivero.

The Bees took a 5-4 lead in the 7th inning. Baez hit Josh Whitaker with a pitch to lead off the inning. Whitaker advanced to second base on a sacrifice bunt by Daniel Petitti. Whitaker reached third base on a groundout by Royce Consigli. Kernels starter Baez then walked Wade Kirkland. Baez then exited the ballgame for reliever Manny Correa. Correa threw a wild pitch with Nino Leyja at the plate. Whitaker scored on the wild pitch, giving the Bees a 5-4 lead.

Baez went 6.2 innings, allowing five runs on five hits. He struck out four and walked four.

Burlington starter A.J. Griffin went seven inning, allowing four runs on eight hits. He struck out four and walked none.

The Kernels tied the game at 5-5 in the 8th inning off of reliever Pedro Vidal. David Harris led off the inning with a walk. Wes Hatton then singled. Harris reached third on an error by the pitcher Vidal. Harris scored on a Ricky Alvarez sacrifice fly to right field.

Burlington took a 6-5 lead in the 9th inning. Josh Whitaker led off the inning with a single off of Correa. He reached second base on a sacrifice bunt by Daniel Petitti. Correa exited the ballgame after a walk to Tyreace House. Kernels reliever A.J. Schugel entered the game. Whitaker reached third base on a wild pitch by Schugel. Whitaker scored on a fielding error by Kernels second baseman Wes Hatton to give the Bees a 6-5 lead.

Burlington's Daniel Tenholder pitched the bottom of the 9th inning for his fourth save. He went one innings, allowing no runs on one hit. He struck out two and walked none.

Pedro Vidal (1-0) was the winning pitcher in relief. He went one innings, allowing one run (no earned runs) on one hit. He struck out two and walked one.

Manny Correa (0-1) took the loss for the Kernels. He went 1.2 innings, allowing one run (no earned runs) on two hits. He struck out two and walked one.

A.J. Schugel went 0.2 inning, allowing no runs or hits while striking out two.