

Oakland A's, Gio Gonzalez find just enough to douse debut of a Kansas City Royal

By Joe Stiglich jstiglich@bayareanewsgroup.com

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Gio Gonzalez wishes the best for Kansas City Royals first baseman Eric Hosmer, a can't-miss prospect who hails from the same South Florida stamping ground as Gonzalez does.

But Gonzalez had no interest in making Hosmer's big league debut more special than necessary Friday night.

With a crowd of 30,690 eager for its first glimpse of Hosmer, it was Gonzalez who made the biggest difference in a 3-2 A's victory at Kauffman Stadium.

The left-hander allowed Kansas City to take an early 2-0 lead, but he allowed just four hits total over seven innings as the A's took the opener of their six-game trip.

Hosmer was ranked the majors' No. 8 overall prospect by Baseball America, and his promotion from Triple-A Omaha was a national story.

He walked in his first two at-bats and notched a stolen base in the fourth. Gonzalez caught him looking on a fastball in the sixth.

"He's going to be a big help to Kansas City," Gonzalez said. "You can see it in his swings and the way he approaches the game."

The A's didn't muster much against Royals starter Sean O'Sullivan (1-2), who limited them to five hits over eight innings.

But Oakland strung together four consecutive singles in a three-run fifth. Gonzalez (4-2) and the bullpen made that stand.

Aside from Alex Gordon's first-inning homer and an RBI triple from Mike Aviles in the third, Gonzalez allowed no other Royal past second base.

"He dominated as usual," A's infielder Andy LaRoche said. "It was really two pitches (that hurt him), and they weren't bad pitches. Other than that, he pitched lights out."

An unusually large media contingent was on hand to watch Hosmer. It turns out that Hosmer was jazzed over a pregame encounter with Gonzalez.

Gonzalez attended Monsignor Pace High in Hialeah, Fla., and Hosmer's older brother Mike played against Gonzalez while attending nearby American Heritage School.

Hosmer was getting a haircut just outside the clubhouses before the game, and Gonzalez was next in line for a trim.

"He told me, 'I used to watch you pitch back in high school,' " Gonzalez said. "It was kind of cool talking to him, I congratulated him."

A's manager Bob Geren made a couple of lineup adjustments, the most significant of which was starting Conor Jackson at first base over slumping Daric Barton for the second time in three games.

LaRoche played shortstop, and Ryan Sweeney, coming off Thursday's five-hit game, played left field with Josh Willingham sitting.

The A's didn't generate a base runner after their three-run fifth, but that flurry was all they needed.

LaRoche's single up the middle scored Kurt Suzuki to cut the A's deficit to 2-1. Mark Ellis singled off the tip of Gordon's glove in left field to load the bases with no outs, and then Ellis came up with a key play, breaking up a double play with his slide on Kevin Kouzmanoff's RBI fielder's choice.

Because there was then only one out instead of two, that play allowed LaRoche to score on Coco Crisp's fielder's choice that followed to give the A's the lead.

The A's suffered a scare on the game's final play.

As Jackson took the throw from LaRoche, who had switched to third base by then, on Matt Treanor's game-ending ground out, Treanor collided hard into Jackson's left shoulder, and Jackson went down.

"It looked worse than it was," Jackson said.

Was it anything to keep him from playing Saturday?

"It would take an ambulance," Jackson replied.

However, Geren said after the game that he already had planned to give Jackson a day off, indicating Barton will be back at first base Saturday.

Oakland A's update: Mark Ellis not panicking over another early-season slump

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Early-season slumps are nothing new for A's second baseman Mark Ellis.

That doesn't make his current funk any more enjoyable for him to discuss.

Ellis has found the going tougher than anyone in Oakland's underachieving lineup. He's hitting .184 after going 1 for 3 in Friday's 3-2 victory over the Kansas City Royals.

"There's no panic," Ellis said before the game. "Obviously I want to be productive and help the team win, but you can't go 5 for 4. You've gotta take baby steps."

He quickly added in a good-natured manner: "I don't really know what else to say about it, and it's not going to do any good to talk about it either."

Certainly, there are hitters more crucial to the A's offensive success. But more production from Ellis would bolster the bottom of the order.

He's a career .245 hitter in April and just .229 in May, his lowest average for any month.

"He's swinging the bat better than his numbers show," A's manager Bob Geren said. "I talked to him (Friday). His confidence is still very high. He'll start getting some hits. The guy hit (.291) last year, so you know he will."

It's worth noting that it took a torrid September for Ellis to reach that .291 mark, as he was hitting .250 at the end of August.

But he's once again playing terrific defense, a main reason the A's exercised his \$6 million option over the offseason.

Friday marked outfielder David DeJesus' first trip to Kauffman Stadium since the Royals traded him to the A's in November. DeJesus played his first seven-plus big league seasons in Kansas City.

Considering the Royals posted just one winning season over that time, DeJesus has watched their early-season success this year with interest.

"I'm always seeing them win games and I'm like, 'Man, they should have done that when I was there,' " DeJesus joked.

Though DeJesus has yet to make the offensive impact the A's hoped for, it's tough to say they got the short end of the trade.

Right-hander Vin Mazzaro, the primary piece Oakland sent to Kansas City, was pegged as the favorite to be the Royals' fifth starter. Instead, he's 1-0 with a 4.97 ERA in five starts with Triple-A Omaha. Lefty Justin Marks, the other player the Royals got, is with Single-A Wilmington.

Chin Music: Conor Jackson gets another start at first base for A's; Kevin Kouzmanoff back at third

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/6/2011 4:39pm

It's early May, and the Royals are 17-14 and in second place in the AL Central. That has people talking in Kansas City after this franchise has struggled for so long. But the real buzz as the A's begin a three-game series at Kauffman Stadium is the major league debut of Royals top prospect Eric Hosmer. The left-handed hitting first baseman wasn't supposed to reach the bigs until later this season. But he mashed at Triple-A and the Royals believe he's ready. Hosmer, 21, was the third overall pick in the 2008 draft. He's the crown jewel from Kansas City's loaded farm system, and it should be entertaining to watch him take his hacks against lefty Gio Gonzalez.

The A's could use some exciting new blood in their batting order. For now, Oakland fans will have to settle for tonight's intriguing lineup. Conor Jackson draws his second start in three games at first base in place of Daric Barton. Ryan Sweeney's five-hit game Thursday buys him a start in left field, with Josh Willingham sitting. Andy LaRoche spells Cliff Pennington at shortstop and Kevin Kouzmanoff returns to third base after riding the bench for five games. A's manager Bob Geren says no one is out of the lineup for health reasons. "Everybody's healthy. That's why I'm continuing to mix guys in to keep everybody healthy and everybody fresh," Geren said.

I don't read too much into Willingham sitting, but it's interesting to see Jackson getting another start at first base, particularly against a right-hander. Geren is looking for ways to keep Jackson's bat in the lineup, and Barton is hitting .204 with six RBIs in 31 games. If Jackson keeps hitting, might he get more time at first? Right now, I like him in the No. 3 spot with David DeJesus batting second.

—A team spokesman said there was no more news on Dallas Braden, so we can assume he has yet to get that second opinion on his injured shoulder.

—It's a big night for DeJesus, who returns to Kansas City for the first time after spending the previous seven-plus seasons with the Royals. He held a pregame press conference but then had no idea how to find his way from the interview room to the visitor's dugout. He never spent much time on the visitor's side of this stadium until tonight ...

The lineups:

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

Royals — Aviles 2B, Cabrera CF, Gordon LF, Butler DH, Francoeur RF, Hosmer 1B, Betemit 3B, Treanor C, Escobar SS; O'Sullivan RHP.

A's beat Royals, 3-2; Hosmer debuts

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Gio Gonzalez didn't know much about Eric Hosmer, the Royals' hot-shot prospect who made his debut Friday night. But Hosmer knew an awful lot about Gonzalez and told him before the game he had seen young Gio pitch in high school.

Both played high school ball in South Florida, and Gonzalez apparently faced Hosmer's older brother, Mike, who claimed he went 2-for-2 off Gonzalez, who didn't remember any of it.

"You know what, high school is a long time ago," Gonzalez said after the A's beat the Royals 3-2. "The memory is a little fuzzy right now. Now you're facing other guys who are big names, huge names. But congratulations to Eric. He's going to be a big name for these guys for a while."

Gonzalez surrendered two runs in seven innings, and Grant Balfour and Brian Fuentes completed the five-hitter. Gonzalez twice walked Hosmer before striking him out in the sixth inning and admitted, "I was trying to be too perfect." Fuentes also struck out Hosmer in the ninth.

The 6-foot-4 first baseman stole a base and converted a nifty first-short-first double play to end Oakland's first-inning threat. This was considered the biggest Royals debut since Bo Jackson in 1986, and 9,835 tickets were sold on game day - after the Royals announced his promotion late Thursday.

Hosmer, the third overall pick in the 2008 draft, was hitting .439 in 26 games for Triple-A Omaha. He bumped into Gonzalez before the game as they took turns getting haircuts at the ballpark. Gonzalez went to Monsignor Pace High School, Hosmer to American Heritage High School.

"You try not to give it up to him even though he's from South Florida," Gonzalez said.

Manager Bob Geren played Ryan Sweeney for left fielder Josh Willingham, Conor Jackson for first baseman Daric Barton and Andy LaRoche for shortstop Cliff Pennington and proclaimed, "We were derailed by injuries over the last few years, and we never had this much depth, and I'm going to use it."

Sweeney and LaRoche contributed to a fifth-inning rally that accounted for all the A's runs. Kurt Suzuki, Sweeney, LaRoche and Mark Ellis bunched singles, though only LaRoche's scored a run. Sweeney and LaRoche scored on fielder's choices by Kevin Kouzmanoff and Coco Crisp.

Ellis' takeout slide at second on Kouzmanoff's grounder prolonged the rally.

From there, the A's didn't get another baserunner, going 12-up, 12-down off starter Sean O'Sullivan and Tim Collins. Fortunately for the A's, the Royals were 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position, including Matt Treanor's game-ending groundout.

On the play, Treanor flattened Jackson, who stretched toward the plate for the throw and got drilled in the left shoulder. He said it "looked worse than it was. It's a stringer, nothing to be too concerned about."

Gonzalez won a game for the first time in 2011 without motivation from good buddy Dallas Braden, who's rehabbing a shoulder injury. Gonzalez had been 3-0 with a 1.05 ERA in Braden's presence, 0-2 with a 6.55 ERA with Braden absent.

"I respect Dallas 100 percent as a teammate and ballplayer," Gonzalez said, "but I don't want to say without Dallas, I can't do the job."

Ex-Royal David DeJesus returns to Kansas City

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Back in Kauffman Stadium, **David DeJesus** recalled his best moments as a Royal, including his major-league debut, which at first wasn't registered.

"They forgot to put me in the box score," DeJesus said. "I'm calling home, saying, 'Guys I played my first game.' They said, 'No, you're not in the box score. We don't believe you.' "

It was Sept. 2, 2003, and DeJesus replaced **Carlos Beltran** in center field in the eighth inning at Texas, but it wasn't announced on the public address system or acknowledged by the official scorer. Eventually, they got it right and it counted.

Friday, nearly eight years later, another top Royals prospect made his debut: first baseman **Eric Hosmer**, the third overall pick in the 2008 draft, who started at first base and went 0-for-2.

"I think they're going to remember that," DeJesus said.

DeJesus, who hit .289 in 876 games as a Royal, said he still follows his old team, including on the scoreboard at the Coliseum. "I always see them win games," he said. "I'm like, man, they should've done that when I was there."

John Buck was DeJesus' best man at his wedding, and **Mike Sweeney** was his mentor. Many of his old buddies are gone. In fact, DeJesus - traded to Oakland in November for **Vin Mazzaro**, who has a 4.97 ERA in five starts at Triple-A Omaha, and **Justin Marks** - wasn't much help in pregame meetings Friday.

"A bunch of pitchers, we just watched them on tape. I couldn't even offer any advice on them," he said. "I had no clue what they threw or who they were."

Briefly: In his pursuit to overcome a strained forearm, closer **Andrew Bailey** will face hitters today for the second time. ... **Brandon McCarthy**, tonight's pitcher, has faced the Royals nine times. In his lone start, in '05, he yielded six runs and seven hits while issuing four walks in 4 2/3 innings.

A's leading off

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Cool art:

A giant photo hangs in the interview room of the 1973 AL All-Star team lined up for introductions. It includes A's Campy Campaneris, Reggie Jackson, Rollie Fingers, Ken Holtzman and Sal Bando. Catfish Hunter is missing, apparently warming up in the bullpen. It was in K.C., as is next year's All-Star Game.

Drumbeat: It's Depth Day for the A's

John Shea from Kansas City, filling in for ace Susan Slusser . . . 5/6/2011 5:22pm

No Josh Willingham (Ryan Sweeney's in left after collecting five hits yesterday). No Daric Barton (Conor Jackson at first base). No Cliff Pennington (Andy LaRoche is at short).

"Everybody's healthy," manager Bob Geren said. "That's why I'm continuing to mix guys in and keep everyone healthy and fresh. Thirty-two games into the season, we've had only a day-or-two thing with Coco (Crisp, who actually missed a bit longer) and a day-or-two thing with a couple other guys.

"It's working to keep everybody in the mix, and that's the strategy for the whole year. We were derailed by injuries over the last few years, and we never had this much depth, and I'm going to use it.

"The good thing about this year, when I take somebody out, like Josh, and put Ryan Sweeney in, you're giving a major-league player a rest and replacing him with a major-league player. It's working so far one-sixth into the season. If we continue to do this, we won't have a lot of heavy, slow bats late in the year.

"It's a good feeling to have a really solid lineup every day."

Here it is:

CF Crisp, RF DeJesus, 1B Jackson, DH Matsui, C Suzuki, LF Sweeney, SS LaRoche, 2B Ellis, 3B Kouzmanoff. Gonzalez on the hill.

Gonzalez, A's write their own winning script

Lefty tosses seven solid innings to beat host Royals

By Robert Falkoff / Special to MLB.com | 5/7/2011 12:54 AM ET

KANSAS CITY -- The pre-game storylines were reserved for A's right fielder David DeJesus and Royals' rookie first baseman Eric Hosmer. But by the end of the night, Oakland left-hander Gio Gonzalez had stolen the show.

Gonzalez turned in a strong, seven-inning start as the A's opened their six-game road trip with a 3-2 victory at Kauffman Stadium. On a night when the Kansas City fans were buzzing about the Friday callup of the celebrated Hosmer from Triple-A and the return of long-time Royals' outfielder DeJesus, Gonzalez was the dominant figure between the lines.

Continuing Oakland's season-long trend of stout starting pitching, Gonzalez allowed just four hits and left with a one-run lead. Grant Balfour came on to work a perfect eighth and Brian Fuentes closed out the ninth for his eighth save.

The A's (17-16) did all their damage offensively in the fifth when they strung together four hits in a row and scored their three runs off Royals starter Sean O'Sullivan.

One productive offensive inning proved to be enough.

"Gio had pretty electric stuff," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Not only did he pitch well, but the two relievers who came in have been working a lot. We've played a ton of one-run games and they've really been pushing the envelope. To see them as sharp as they were tonight was something that really impressed me."

Gonzalez (4-2) lowered his ERA to 2.68 and seemed to get stronger as the game wore on. Alex Gordon hit a solo homer in the first and Mike Aviles delivered a run-scoring triple with one out in the third. But with his team down 2-0, Gonzalez took a deep breath and minimized the damage. The left-hander got Melky Cabrera on a tap to third and Gordon flied to left.

"He was upset with himself on that [triple], getting the pitch up," Geren said. "But he shifted gears and left that runner on. That was huge. Leaving that runner out there isn't an easy feat."

Oakland's offense got busy in the fifth when Kurt Suzuki, Ryan Sweeney, Andy LaRoche and Mark Ellis all singled to open the inning. With one run in and the bases loaded, Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a grounder to third for what looked like a double play. However, Ellis went hard into second base and Aviles never made the relay throw as a run scored. That play loomed large as Coco Crisp followed with another RBI forceout for a 3-2 Oakland lead.

"It was hit after hit, one of those innings," Gonzalez said.

O'Sullivan got through eight innings with just 89 pitches. But the fifth-inning flurry did him in.

"Their pitcher did a great job," Gonzalez said. "Eight innings and three runs, that's not bad."

The Royals (17-15) had brought up Hosmer after he hit .439 against Triple-A pitching. Gonzalez walked Hosmer his first two trips to the plate, but then threw a third strike past Hosmer in the sixth with the tying run in scoring position.

Gonzalez and Hosmer are both from south Florida and Gonzalez actually played high school ball against Hosmer's brother.

"Even though he's from south Florida, you try not to give it up to him," Gonzalez said. "He's going to be a big name for these guys for awhile."

Gonzalez' 110th and final pitch of the night struck out Aviles with the tying run at first.

"Gio was right on top of his game," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "A 94-to-96 mile-per-hour fastball, real tight, a sharp-breaking curveball. He's a tough lefty."

The game ended with Fuentes getting Matt Treanor on a slow roller to third. LaRoche's off-balance throw prompted a shoulder-to-shoulder collision between Treanor and first baseman Conor Jackson, who held onto the ball and was all right after initially going to the ground in pain.

The A's starters now have a 2.56 ERA. Four straight singles and a couple of RBI fielder's choice bouncers go a long way when the starting rotation is that proficient.

"The nice thing about our rally today was that it was the bottom part of the order that contributed," Geren said. "They all linked hits together. Our power numbers are way down, so to score runs we have to link them together."

Hochevar seeks another quality outing against A's

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com | 5/6/2011 11:02 PM ET

After two consecutive rough outings, Luke Hochevar finally took a step toward returning to form in his last game. Now the Royals are hoping the right-hander will string together a pair of quality starts.

On Saturday, Hochevar (3-3, 5.48 ERA) will oppose Oakland's Brandon McCarthy (1-2, 3.05) in the second game of a three-game series.

In his last start against the Twins on May 1, Hochevar allowed three runs on five hits in 6 1/3 innings. He also walked four, but the outing was a vast improvement from his previous two in which he had given up six runs in each.

Saturday's game will be a tough task for the right-hander, however, as Hochevar is 0-5 with a 9.00 ERA in four career starts against Oakland.

While Hochevar is coming off a good start, McCarthy is looking to rebound from a rough outing fielding-wise in which he committed two throwing errors. The right-hander's two miscues led to all four unearned runs he allowed in his six innings against Texas.

Outside of his fielding, McCarthy was pleased with how he threw, scattering six hits while walking two and striking out four.

"It was an up-and-down day, pretty much a story of a few bad pitches in places where I shouldn't have made them," McCarthy said afterward. "The errors, if someone is giving you an out, you gotta take them."

A's: LaRoche fitting into role

Andy LaRoche has performed well in his utility role this season, getting the start at shortstop Friday. A's manager Bob Geren said he's been pleased with LaRoche all season.

"Andy came to Spring Training and won a job," Geren said. "He has done a heck of a job no matter where I put him. I'm very comfortable with him."

- Mark Ellis has played 994 career games at second base for Oakland and is two away from tying Eddie Collins for third-most games played at the position in A's history.

Royals: Kendall shooting for early return

Jason Kendall, who has been on the disabled list while recovering from offseason right shoulder surgery, said he's hoping to return by June or July, but isn't going to push. The catcher said he has zero pain in the shoulder after experiencing a setback last month. On Friday, Kendall was placed on the 60-day disabled list and isn't eligible to return to the active roster until May 30.

- In nine career appearances (one start) against Kansas City, McCarthy has a 6.23 ERA. His lone start against the Royals was his third career start on June 20, 2005.

Worth noting

Several former Kansas City Athletics are scheduled to attend a Salute to the Kansas City A's Night prior to Saturday's game at Kauffman Stadium. ... A's third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff's 0-for-2 performance on Friday marked the only time in eight career games against the Royals that he didn't record a hit. ... Two of Kansas City's Melky Cabrera's three career hits against McCarthy have been home runs.

Jackson fine after collision on final play

By Robert Falkoff / Special to MLB.com

KANSAS CITY -- First baseman Conor Jackson said on Friday night he wasn't "too concerned" after a shoulder-to-shoulder collision with Royals catcher Matt Treanor on the final play of the A's 3-2 victory at Kauffman Stadium.

Treanor hit a slow roller to third and Andy LaRoche's throw was off-line, which prompted the collision as Jackson held onto the ball. Jackson initially went to the ground in pain, but said after the game there was no significant problem with his left shoulder.

"It looked worse than it was," Jackson said. "It was a stinger. It went numb for a little bit. It's a little sore, but nothing to be too concerned about."

LaRoche proving to be valuable utility player

KANSAS CITY -- Andy LaRoche's infield versatility is giving A's manager Bob Geren plenty of flexibility in filling out the lineup card.

LaRoche started at shortstop in Friday's 3-2 win over the Royals and went 1-for-3, including an RBI single that sparked a three-run fifth inning. He now has nine starts at third, four at short, three at second base and one at first base.

"Andy came to Spring Training and won a job," Geren said. "He has done a heck of a job no matter where I put him. I'm very comfortable with him."

Depth is key to keeping A's players healthy

KANSAS CITY -- Thirty-two games into the season, the A's are continuing to use their depth in an effort to keep injuries to a minimum.

"We've only had the day or two thing with Coco [Crisp] and a day or two thing with a couple of other guys," manager Bob Geren said. "Keeping everybody in the mix is working. That's the strategy for the whole year. We were derailed by injuries over the last few years. We've never had this kind of depth and I'm going to use it."

"The good thing about this year is that when I give a Major League player a rest, we replace him with another bonafide Major League player. We want to keep everybody as healthy and sharp as possible

MLB, union reportedly talk policy on alcohol

Times wires

NEW YORK - Major League Baseball and the players' association are considering a formal plan for dealing with alcohol-related incidents in the next collective bargaining agreement, the Associated Press reported Friday.

Monday, Indians RF **Shin-Soo Choo** became the sixth player this season arrested for an alcohol-related incident, joining: Indians LF **Austin Kearns**, Mariners INF **Adam Kennedy**, A's CF **Coco Crisp**, Braves RHP **Derek Lowe** and Tigers 1B **Miguel Cabrera**.

None were suspended by their teams.

The CBA, which expires Dec. 11, has provisions for dealing with "drugs of abuse" such as cocaine and marijuana but does not provide commissioner **Bud Selig** the authority to discipline players for alcohol-related offenses.

Instead, players are typically offered confidential counseling and treatment case by case. The AP reported the league and union want to "codify" the process.

The plan could mirror the one in place for players who test positive for marijuana. They face mandatory counseling and possible suspension if they refuse to cooperate.

"This is something we have planned to discuss, alcohol in general," MLB spokesman **Pat Courtney** said. "It's been brought up and will continue to be brought up."

Oswalt goes on DL

PHILADELPHIA - Phillies star RHP **Roy Oswalt** went on the 15-day disabled list with lower back inflammation. The move is retroactive to April 27, so he can return Thursday.

"Just some soreness, but we're not going to take any chances," Phillies GM **Ruben Amaro** said.

Oswalt hurt his back April 15 while running the bases but had made two starts since.

"I've been a little tight, and it hasn't got any better," Oswalt said. "I could probably pitch (today) but couldn't promise any results."

More Phillies: 2B **Chase Utley**, out all season with right knee tendinitis, is set to play in an extended spring training game today. But his return to the majors remains unknown.

Cardinals: SS **Ryan Theriot** left with a bruised left shin after being hit by a pitch. His status is unknown.

Dodgers: Closer **Jonathan Broxton** went on the DL with a bone bruise in his right elbow and will miss 4-6 weeks. **Vicente Padilla** takes over as closer.

Mets: CF **Angel Pagan**, at extended spring training recovering from a strained oblique, felt pain. Out since April 22, he had hoped to return this weekend.

Padres: C **Nick Hundley** went on the DL with a strained muscle in his right side sustained while swinging at a pitch Wednesday.

Rangers: Closer **Neftali Feliz**, out since April 20 with right shoulder inflammation, was activated. RF **Nelson Cruz** missed his second game with a tight right quad. An MRI exam is scheduled for today.

Reds: RHP **Mike Leake** (3-1, 5.77) likely will move to the bullpen. RHP **Homer Bailey** (shoulder) returned Thursday, and RHP **Johnny Cueto** (biceps and triceps) is set to return Sunday.

Yankees: SS **Derek Jeter** returned a day after sitting with a sore right hip. But RF **Nick Swisher** sat with a cold. And INF **Eric Chavez** went on the DL with a broken left foot sustained while running the bases Thursday.

Dykstra indicted: Former Mets and Phillies outfielder **Lenny Dykstra** was indicted by a Los Angeles federal grand jury in a bankruptcy fraud case. Dykstra, 48, filed for bankruptcy in 2009 and is accused of stealing and selling items from an \$18.5 million estate. He faces 80 years in prison. Dykstra's lawyer said the case stems from a dispute with the bankruptcy trustee and no fraud was committed.

Gutierrez: A's next challenge? Two games over .500

[Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com](http://Paul.Gutierrez.CSNCalifornia.com)

So the A's went to Middle America, all but silenced one of the most potent offenses in the American League and, for only the fourth time in 2011, climbed a season-best, ahem, one game over .500 with Friday night's 3-2 defeat of Kansas City.

Good stuff, right?

Yes, and no.

Because for as many positives as Oakland has authored thus far, the A's have also fathered some of the more bone-headed, self-defeating moves in baseball.

How else to describe the A's entering Friday night's series opener against the Royals as the epitome of an average team? They were 16-16 overall, 8-8 at home, 8-8 on the road. They had scored 109 runs while surrendering 109 runs. In their previous 10 games, they were, yup, 5-5.

This is not to celebrate mediocrity. It is merely to point it out, again, and to address the obvious; if the A's want to be taken serious, they need to get over the hump and get like, you know, two games over .500.

Three times already the A's have won one more game than they had lost, and proceeded to lose all three games.

Killer instinct? Not yet. But another chance arises Saturday, when Brandon McCarthy takes the hill for the A's against the Royals.

The A's need to be better at the plate than they were Friday night, when they went down in order - 1-2-3 - seven times, and wasted one no-outs, runners-at-first-and-third situation.

Put it this way, if the A's merely had a mediocre offense (which would actually be an improvement) to support a stellar pitching staff, they'd be much better than a game over .500. Maybe even *two* games over .500.

Good stuff, right?

Players taking advantage of MLB's new paternity leave policy

Mel Antonen, SI, 5/6/2011

WASHINGTON -- The details of April 27 are stamped into Ian Desmond's memory forever. His eyes light up and a smile creases his face when he tells the story of rushing from Washington, D.C. to Sarasota, Fla., to be with his wife, Chelsey, for the birth of their first child, Grayson Wesley.

"He arrived at 3:56 in the afternoon and it was an unbelievable feeling," Desmond says. "I don't know how to describe it."

Desmond's sentiments aren't all that different than those of any most new fathers. What was different is that the job he left behind for a few days was that of major league shortstop. That makes Desmond something of a pioneer in that he's one of the first four players to take advantage of Major League Baseball's new softer side, a rule that allows paternity leave for players. It's a guilt-free accommodation for the player to take up to three days off for the birth of a child without hurting the team, which can fill the roster spot while the new papa is experiencing a dream moment.

"It was better than any game I've played or any big hit I've had," says Desmond, the Nationals' 25-year-old rising star. "People think that players are supposed to be tough and not do these things, but I say that players should take paternity leave and enjoy the experience."

The new rule was discussed at the general managers' meeting in November, and after a recommendation, ownership and the players' union without much debate approved it for this season.

"Players were torn between their family and leaving their team a man short," MLB spokesman Patrick Courtney said. "Baseball understands that players need to be with their families, but there was no rule to replace the player. Because of that, players were feeling pressure."

The new rule makes life easier for managers.

"Players should be able to leave and be with their wives," Nationals manager Jim Riggleman says. "But, it's good to be able to have a replacement. What would happen to a team if two players had to be gone at the same time?"

San Francisco Giants manager Bruce Bochy agrees. He doesn't want players to miss the birth of a child, "But when a player leaves, you manage differently with a 24-man roster, and it can affect a game," says Bochy, who, as a former catcher, missed the birth of his first son in 1979 because his team, the Houston Astros, were on the road.

"Back then, we wouldn't have even thought about asking for time off to be with our wife and newborn," Bochy says. "I didn't see my son until he was eight days old."

Pitcher Colby Lewis has the distinction of being the first player to be placed on paternity leave when he left the Texas Rangers to witness the birth of his daughter, Elizabeth Grace. The other two to have taken advantage of the policy are Oakland Athletics catcher Kurt Suzuki, who took time off last week to be with his wife, Renee, when she delivered a daughter, Malia Grace, and the Mets' Jason Bay, who returned Thursday after missing two games for the birth of his third child, son Garrett David.

In the New York *Daily News*, Mets manager Terry Collins said, "Twenty-five years ago nobody left. Nobody went to weddings. You played because the season was six months long or five months long and you stayed. But the rules changed and that's part of the Basic Agreement now, but they got this rule which helps you so you don't lose a player and you can keep a core roster. We adjust to it. (But) I'm sure the wives are happier."

As Collins notes, things are very different now. Former pitcher Mike Krukow, who retired in 1989, found out about the birth of one of his children in the fourth inning of a game he was pitching.

Former San Francisco catcher Bob Brenly was told he could be at his child's birth, but only if he were able to fly back to New York in time for the game. Ex-outfielder Tom Grieve missed a birth because he couldn't leave a spring-training game with the New York Mets in 1978.

Longtime catcher Ray Fosse had to leave the hospital for the ballpark a few minutes after his daughter was born. Current Giants second baseman Freddy Sanchez was told he could be with his wife until the seventh inning.

Suzuki couldn't imagine that circumstance.

"Never, never," Suzuki says, emphatically. "I would do anything to be there. When they put that baby in your arms for the first time, it's a surreal kind of thing."

Past players would love the same luxury of time.

"Times have changed and that's a good thing," says Fosse, an Athletics broadcaster.

On Sept. 24, 1975, when his wife, Carol, delivered their daughter, Nicole, Fosse got a few minutes to hold her before he had to report to the ballpark in Oakland as the A's prepared to clinch the American League West.

"I probably left the hospital within the hour," Fosse says. "It was emotional and draining, and the last thing I wanted to do was play baseball."

He was planning to pass out cigars in the clubhouse and return to the hospital, but "(manager) Alvin Dark asked me to stay in case something happened."

Fosse caught the ninth inning, and after the A's clinched the division with a win against the Chicago White Sox, Fosse grabbed a bottle of champagne and returned to the hospital.

On April 19, 2005, Sanchez, then a utility infielder with the Pittsburgh Pirates, was told on the day that his wife, Alissa, was due that he could be absent, but the team rule was that he had to be back in uniform by the seventh inning -- whether the child had been born or not.

His son, Evan, arrived during the early evening. Sanchez monitored the Pirates' game on TV and left in time to be in the dugout for the final three innings. He didn't play.

"Trust me, I didn't want to go," says Sanchez. "I was a young player and had to follow the team's policy. I didn't want to get sent down. But, your baby is all that matters, and that's all you're thinking about."

Four of Krukow's five children were born during the baseball season, one in June, two in July and another in September.

His first son, Jarek, was born in 1979 when Krukow was pitching for the Cubs in a game at Wrigley Field. That same day, Krukow hit his first big-league home run, but, after getting involved in a brawl, he was ejected, but couldn't leave the ballpark. He kept thinking about his wife, Jennifer, watching back in the hospital.

There was a bizarre twist to the birth of his second son, Bake, born in 1983 when Krukow was pitching in for the Giants in Pittsburgh. Jennifer was in labor back in San Francisco, so he left her the phone number of the Giants' clubhouse in case there was any news.

There was.

Jennifer called the clubhouse and pitcher Mark Davis answered. "He came into the dugout and said, 'Congratulations, you just had a baby boy,'" Krukow says.

When he got to the mound, there was a congratulatory announcement on the scoreboard.

"I was pumped, but it takes away your concentration," Krukow says.

Suzuki and Desmond can understand concentration issues, especially before the birth. Suzuki says that when the due date was approaching, all he could think about was the how his wife was doing.

"Especially on the road, you are away from your wife and there's the possibility she would go into labor at any time," Suzuki says.

When he returned from leave, Suzuki had four RBIs in three games vs. Texas.

Desmond had a similar experience. As the birth approached, he wasn't hitting. After the birth, he had six hits, including a home run, in his first four games. Riggles said Desmond was more relaxed after the birth.

Desmond arrived from D.C. in Sarasota at noon, four hours before his son arrived.

"The determination on my wife's face was awesome," Desmond says. "She was inspirational with all that she went through. I was cheering her on all that I could. Her look of gratification was beautiful. I can't imagine not being there."

That night, Desmond held Grayson in one arm and watched the Nationals' game vs. the New York Mets on his cell phone. "I could tell that he likes baseball," Desmond says. "I didn't want to put him down. I never wanted to leave him."

Some day, Desmond will tell Grayson the story about their first night together. Desmond said that connection is important for the father-son relationship. He never had a conversation about his birth with his dad, Wesley, a hair stylist who died of a heart attack at 46.

"It was something that was missing for me," Desmond says. "Some day, I will tell my son the story of his birth. It's something I'll never forget."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Miller leads River Cats to 8th win in 10 games

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats have their spark back.

After sitting out for seven consecutive games with a sore hamstring, Jemile Weeks returned to the Sacramento lineup Friday night and paid immediate dividends, helping his squad to a 6-2 victory over Colorado Springs.

Coming into the contest, the River Cats averaged just fewer than three-and-a-half runs per game this season when Weeks was out of the lineup. In contrast, the team scores nearly six runs per game when he plays. That trend continued on a cool Friday night at Raley Field.

After a scoreless first inning in which Sacramento starter Josh Outman allowed logged two walks and two strikeouts, he allowed the Sky Sox to draw first blood in the second on a Brad Emaus solo home run.

The River Cats didn't stay down for long, thanks to Weeks.

Jai Miller led off the second inning with a walk. After an Anthony Recker double, Adrian Cardenas drove in Miller on an infield single. A Steve Tolleson walk loaded the bases for Shane Peterson, who scored Recker on a fielder's choice to give Sacramento the lead. Weeks then stepped in and delivered a two-run single to give the River Cats a comfortable 4-1 advantage.

Both teams went unscathed until the fifth inning.

Colorado Springs shrank the gap a bit with a Mike Pagnozzi solo shot, but Sacramento responded in the bottom of the inning with a Miller solo home run, his seventh of the season.

To lead off the sixth inning, Outman walked Sky Sox third baseman Matt Macri and was subsequently pulled for reliever Vinnie Chulk. Chulk faced just two batters in the inning as he induced a pop-out and an inning-ending double play. Outman finished the game with 5.0 innings pitched, having allowed six hits, four walks two earned runs and three strikeouts.

In the bottom of the inning, Peterson drove in Adrian Cardenas to extend the Sacramento lead to 6-2.

That would be all the Cats needed, as the bullpen locked down the Sky Sox, earning the River Cats the victory.

Weeks finished 1-for-4 with two RBIs. Miller and Cardenas had two runs each while Recker went 3-for-4. The impressive performance from Recker raised his batting average to .359, surpassing long-time team-leader Cardenas.

In addition to strong performances at the plate and from the bullpen, the River Cats were stellar defensively.

Coming into the contest, the team had more multi-error games than error-free games. However, on Friday night, Sacramento made no mistakes and turned two double plays. The team also had a couple nice plays that won't show up in

the box score, including a diving catch from Miller in the ninth inning. With the win, the River Cats move to 18-11 on the year and are now 16-6 over their last 22 contests.

Sacramento will look to continue its positive momentum Saturday at Raley Field when Guillermo Moscoso (1-2, 4.62) will face Claudio Vargas (--, --).

First pitch is set for 7:05 with Sutter Health Fireworks to follow.

Parker Pops Hooks

Corpus Christi Hooks

CORPUS CHRISTI - Stephen Parker's two-out seventh-inning grand slam off Danny Meszaros lifted Midland past Corpus Christi 7-5 Friday at Whataburger Field before 5,871.

The RockHounds and Hooks split their four-game series. Midland is 14-14, Corpus Christi 12-16.

Parker's opposite-field jack to left of a 2-2 offering on the ninth pitch from Meszaros (0-1) transformed a two-run deficit into a two-run lead for the visitors. Hooks starter Ross Seaton achieved outs 19 and 20, but was lifted after a Jason Christian single. David Berner was gone after a single by Jermaine Mitchell and Parker stepped in to face Meszaros with the sacks full courtesy of a Grant Green walk.

Trey Barham (3-0) worked just 2/3 of an inning but was Midland's pitcher of record when the tide turned. Jonathan Ortiz and Mickey Storey (2nd save) kept Corpus Christi off the board over the final 2 2/3.

Jacob Goebbert's first Double-A plate appearance kick-started a two-run rally for Corpus Christi in the second. Called up from Class A Lancaster after regular left fielder J.D. Martinez pulled a hamstring, Goebbert drove a one-out double to left-center. Anthony Capra hit T.J. Steele to put runners at first and second for Brandon Wikoff, who singled to center for a 1-0 Hooks lead. David Flores followed with a sacrifice fly to make it 2-0.

Goebbert picked up his first Double-A RBI an inning later. Capra paid the price for two-out walks to Jon Gaston and Jimmy VanOstrand when Goebbert singled to right.

Capra's woes continued during the fourth. Singles by Wikoff and Jonathan Fixler put runners at the corners. Wladimir Sutil's safety squeeze gave the Hooks a 4-0 advantage.

The lithe shortstop, a four-year Hook from Venezuela, played long ball in the sixth with his second home run of the year and fifth career. Sutil has hit safely in 20 of his last 21 games.

Capra sat down after 5 2/3 innings, six hits, two walks and three strikeouts.

Midland broke through against Seaton in a three-run, four-hit fifth. Mitchell (single) and Green (fielder's choice) drove home Matt Sulentic and Yusuf Carter, respectively, for the RockHounds. Christian scored on a wild pitch.

Seaton yielded seven hits, walked one and fanned two.

The Hooks stranded 11 runners and were 2-for-12 with runners in scoring position.

Green extended his hitting streak to 12 contests with a first-inning double. Wikoff has a six-game hitting streak, VanOstrand seven. Both have hits in 12 of the last 13 games.

The Hooks travel to San Antonio for a four-game series Saturday-Tuesday. Lefty Shane Wolf (1-1) pitches for Corpus Christi against Matt Buschmann (3-1) in the opener.

Storm Stumble As Ports Win Third Straight

05/06/2011 11:00 PM ET

LAKE ELSINORE, Calif. - The Lake Elsinore Storm came into Friday night's contest as the worst defensive team in the league, and the Stockton Ports took full advantage of that in the first game of a three-game set at The Diamond. The Boys of Banner Island scored four unearned runs in the second inning en route to a 8-5 victory over the Storm.

Lake Elsinore scored the game's first run in the bottom of the 1st. With the bases loaded and nobody out, Edinson Rincon hit a sac-fly to center to score Reymond Fuentes and give the Storm a 1-0 lead. Ports starter Gary Daley, Jr. (2-0) was able to

minimize the damage in the 1st as he got Nate Freiman to line out to third. Ports third baseman Leonardo Gil threw on to second to double off Dean Anna for the inning-ending double-play.

Stockton took advantage of the first of four Lake Elsinore errors in the top of the second. With Mitch LeVier at first base and one out, Rashun Dixon hit what looked to be a potential inning-ending double-play ball to short. Storm shortstop Jonathan Galvez threw wide of second base, allowing LeVier to head to third and Dixon to slide into second, putting runners in scoring position with one out. Stockton took full advantage, as Anthony Aliotti grounded to second to drive in LeVier and tie the game at 1-1. Ryan Lipkin followed and drew a walk. Storm starter Mike Watt then uncorked a wild pitch that allowed Dixon to score and give Stockton a 2-1 advantage. After Conner Crumbliss singled, Dusty Coleman doubled to center to drive in two more runs and give the Ports a 4-1 lead.

All four Stockton runs would be unearned for Watt, who went five full innings and allowed the four unearned runs on three hits while striking out four and walking two.

The Storm got one of the runs back in the bottom of the 2nd. Galvez reached on a fielder's choice and was at first base with one out. Glavez then stole second and stole third with two down, and scored on a passed ball charged to Lipkin to make it a 4-2 score.

Lake Elsinore would tie it in the 5th. With one out, Rincon singled and Freiman hit a two-run homer to left to knot the score at 4-4.

Daley would finish the 5th and, thanks to run support in the 6th, would earn the win. Daley allowed four runs on six hits while walking a season-high five batters.

In the top of the 6th, the Ports would take the lead for good. With Jeremy McBride (0-2) on the hill, LeVier launched a solo home run to right-center with one out in the inning to give the Ports a 5-4 advantage. Two batters later with two down, Aliotti singled, Lipkin doubled, and Crumbliss drove both home with a two-run single off the right-field wall to make it a 7-4 game.

McBride would take the loss on the night, going two innings and allowing three runs on four hits while striking out one.

Lake Elsinore cut the deficit to two runs in the 7th with a two-out RBI double from Freiman, who drove in three of the five Storm runs on the night. The double came off Ports reliever Brett Hunter, who was added to the roster from Extended Spring Training. It was the only run Hunter allowed in his two innings of relief.

The Ports got the run back in the top of the 8th. With one out, Dixon doubled and came home on an Aliotti single to center to make it an 8-5 ballgame. The run came off Storm reliever Dustin Pease, and it was the only run he allowed in his lone inning of work.

Ben Hornbeck (SV, 1), who also joined the roster from Extended Spring Training, tossed the final two innings of scoreless relief to earn the save in his first appearance of the season.

The Ports and Storm will play the second game of their three-game set on Saturday night at The Diamond. Murphy Smith (1-2, 5.54 ERA) will head to the bump for the Ports, opposed by Storm right-hander Jerry Sullivan (3-2, 5.66 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Bees Win Close One in Cedar Rapids 3-2

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA-The Burlington Bees (20-7) played their sixth consecutive one-run game and earned a 3-2 win over the Cedar Rapids Kernels (18-10) at Perfect Game Field on Friday night.

Burlington scored a run in the second inning when 1B Josh Whitaker (2-4) smacked a solo home run over the 407 foot marker beyond the wall in left center field for a 1-0 lead.

Cedar Rapids scored two runs in the fourth inning. CF Travis Witherspoon (1-4) singled and moved to second base on a walk by 3B Jeremy Cruz (0-2). DH Brandon Decker (1-3) singled home Witherspoon and LF David Harris (1-2) hit a sacrifice fly to right field to late Cruz and make it 2-1.

The Bees scored two runs in the fifth inning for a 3-2 lead. LF Jose Rivero (1-3) doubled and moved to third base on a single by Whitaker. SS Wade Kirkland (0-3) reached base on a fielder's choice for to score Rivero and tie it a 2-2.

C John Nester (1-3) later lined an RBI single to score Kirkland and give the Bees the lead.

RHP Josh Bowman (4-0) pitched seven innings to get the win. RHP Chris Mederos pitched the ninth inning to earn his fourth save.

The Bees travel to Clinton to begin a three-game series with the Clinton LumberKings on Saturday night. The pitching match-up is as follows: RHP Tyler Vail (0-0, 2.45) for Burlington against RHP Brandon Mauer (1-2, 3.38) for Clinton. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:15 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com.

2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To purchase season tickets, bonus books or single game tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705 (319) 754-5705 , go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.