

Oakland A's lose to Kansas City Royals on sacrifice fly in ninth

By Joe Stiglich_Contra Costa Times

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- The play that ultimately did in the A's Saturday night was chock full of controversy.

Considering how their 4-3 loss to the Kansas City Royals unfolded, it was only fitting.

Pinch runner Jarrod Dyson raced home with the winning run on Mike Aviles' sacrifice fly to left in the bottom of the ninth, sending the Royals into celebration and the A's into a collective rage at Kauffman Stadium.

No sooner had Dyson crossed home plate that A's manager Bob Geren -- and several of his players -- emerged from the dugout to argue Dyson left third base too early.

The A's were denied on their appeal to third, and another late-inning heartbreaker was in the books. Oakland is 6-6 in one-run games but just 1-6 in games tied after the eighth inning.

"Who knows if he really tagged in time?" A's right fielder David DeJesus said. "We want to win these games. But (Sunday) is another one, and we can win the series."

DeJesus said a replay he saw appeared to show Dyson left early.

Aviles' fly ball was not hit deep. A's left fielder Ryan Sweeney has a good arm but did not make a strong throw. Dyson, who can flat-out burn, scored standing up.

"I didn't (leave early)," Dyson told Royals reporters. "I thought I left a hair early, but I looked at the replay "... and it looked good to me."

End result: The A's were left pondering another game that was there for the taking, only to wind up in the loss column.

Left fielder Josh Willingham was ejected in the eighth inning, when he took a called third strike to end the inning with the go-ahead run on third.

He slammed his helmet down and got in the face of home plate umpire Bill Miller. Willingham appeared to bump Miller but insisted that any contact was incidental.

"I didn't think it was a strike," Willingham said. "My emotions got the best of me and I kind of exploded. I wouldn't have exploded if I thought it was a close pitch. I thought it was inside."

Geren was short with his answers after the game, ticked not only about the game's finish but also his team's lack of execution with runners in scoring position, a continuing problem.

Cliff Pennington's three-run homer in the eighth pulled the A's into a 3-3 tie. Coco Crisp's double put the go-ahead run on second with no outs, but the A's couldn't score him.

Daric Barton hit a comebacker to the mound, DeJesus flied out and Willingham took the third strike.

Barton, hitting .196, tied for fourth in the American League last season in sacrifice bunts, but Geren let him swing away rather than try bunting Crisp to third, where a fly ball could have scored him.

"With a left-handed hitter, it's just as easy for him to hit one to (the right) side," Geren said.

"We didn't get the big hit tonight," Willingham said. "We haven't been getting many big hits all year."

A's starter Brandon McCarthy (1-3) went the distance, the second complete-game loss he's taken this season.

Geren sent him out for the ninth, and McCarthy was at 105 pitches by the time the bases were loaded.

McCarthy said he still felt strong, and Geren said "there were guys I wasn't going to pitch tonight" in the bullpen because of over-use. Brian Fuentes, for one, had pitched four out of the past five days.

"(McCarthy) was my best guy," Geren said. "He was fresh."

A's update: LaRoche on the go watching sons play in the majors

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

KANSAS CITY -- Dave LaRoche spent his 14-year major league career trying to get hitters out.

So how did the two-time All-Star reliever wind up raising two sons who became big league hitters?

"I faced enough of them, and I gave up enough hits," LaRoche said with a laugh Saturday at Kauffman Stadium.

LaRoche made the one-hour drive from Fort Scott, Kansas, to watch youngest son Andy play second base for the A's in their 4-3 loss to the Royals. His middle son, Adam, plays first base for the Washington Nationals.

LaRoche, 62, spent the past six seasons as a pitching coach in Toronto's organization, but he retired in 2010 and now has the chance to watch both sons play more often.

LaRoche hung out in the A's clubhouse before the game accompanied by his oldest son, Jeff, who pitched in the Marlins and Rockies farm systems for three seasons.

"I should have been a hitter apparently," Jeff joked.

The eldest LaRoche pitched for five big league teams, and he was known for throwing the "eephus" pitch -- which he said was basically a high-arching curve.

Though pitching was his forte, LaRoche logged many hours working with his sons' hitting.

"I never did much with Andy's swing," he said. "Adam was a little bit more structured as far as trying to get his swing grooved."

Lest anyone question his credentials as a hitting coach, LaRoche pointed out that he hit .246 in his career.

"Typical pitcher -- proud of his hitting stats," Jeff LaRoche noted.

Closer Andrew Bailey (right forearm strain) threw live batting practice again, and for the first time he mixed in all of his pitches -- fastball, curve, cutter and changeup.

"He had that good cutter working that's hard and sharp," said Kevin Kouzmanoff, who hit against Bailey. "He looked strong, looked healthy."

A's manager Bob Geren said Bailey would next throw a simulated game, where counts are kept and Bailey will pitch as he would a normal inning.

Left-hander Dallas Braden will get his injured shoulder examined by Dr. James Andrews on Monday in Pensacola, Fla. On Tuesday, he'll get a third opinion from Mets team doctor David Altchek in New York.

Tommy Lasorda was one of several former Kansas City A's players who were introduced in a pregame ceremony. Lasorda pitched for Kansas City in 1956.

Chin Music: Dallas Braden to get 2nd, 3rd opinions on shoulder; Andrew Bailey has another good day

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/7/2011 3:29PM

The lowdown from Kauffman Stadium, as Tommy Lasorda is in the house (or on the field) as the A's take batting practice. ...

–Andrew Bailey threw a 30-pitch batting practice session and, for the first time, threw all of his pitches – fastball, curve, cutter, changeup. Manager Bob Geren said he looked good, as did Kevin Kouzmanoff, one of the hitters facing him. And Bailey said he felt good. His road back to the 25-man roster continues gradually. Next up will be a simulated game, which is different from throwing live BP – no protective screen in front of the mound, a count will be kept. It's more of game situation. Bailey estimates he'll throw "1 or 2" more times before heading off on a rehab assignment, but consider everything written in pencil.

–Dallas Braden will get a second and third opinion on his shoulder in the next few days. He'll be examined by Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla., on Monday. Then he'll see Dr. David Altchek, the Mets team doctor, in New York on Tuesday.

Tonight's lineups on a perfect night for baseball in Kansas City:

A's – Crisp CF, Barton 1B, DeJesus RF, Willingham LF, Matsui DH, Suzuki C, LaRoche 2B, Kouzmanoff 3B, Pennington SS; McCarthy RHP.

Royals – Getz 2B, Cabrera CF, Gordon LF, Butler DH, Francoeur RF, Hosmer 1B, Aviles 3B, Treanor C, Escobar SS; Hochevar RHP.

A's do more arguing than hitting against Royals

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

A's manager Bob Geren made zero pitching changes Saturday but was on the field a bunch of times, mostly to yell at umpires. He lost the game and every argument.

In an emotionally draining evening, the A's used a familiar formula, combining solid starting pitching with inadequate hitting to drop another close one, 4-3 to the Royals. The difference this time was the rage exhibited by an A's team that's 4-7 in games decided in the last at-bat.

After the final play, pinch-runner Jarrod Dyson scoring on Mike Aviles' sacrifice fly to left fielder Ryan Sweeney, Geren charged from the dugout shouting that Dyson left third base too early.

"Guys get fired up. Guys get intense. Guys get after it. Guys get so into the game," said catcher Kurt Suzuki, who immediately threw to third for an appeal, which was denied. "It shows how much people care."

Josh Willingham might have cared too much. He was ejected in the eighth inning after striking out and stranding the go-ahead run at third base. He spiked his helmet and bumped plate umpire Bill Miller, meaning he could draw a suspension.

"If we touched, we touched," Willingham said. "I don't think I initiated the contact. It wasn't like I went up to him and chest-bumped him or anything. Just trying to have a conversation. A polite conversation."

Major League Baseball will determine how polite.

Perhaps some of the frustration results from the hitting woes. Cliff Pennington hit a three-run, game-tying homer in the eighth. Otherwise, the A's were 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position, wasting Hideki Matsui's leadoff double in the fifth and Coco Crisp's no-out double in the eighth - following Pennington's homer.

"We didn't get the big hit tonight," Willingham said. "We haven't gotten many big hits all year."

Brandon McCarthy pitched a complete game, sticking around through the hectic ninth because, "He was my best guy," Geren said. "I had a lot of guys down (with heavy workloads) in the bullpen."

With runners at the corners and no outs, Eric Hosmer was intentionally walked to set up a force at every base. That's when Aviles fled to Sweeney for the game-winner.

Geren argued that Dyson left early. He also argued Alex Gordon didn't touch second base on his way back to first on a sacrifice fly in the sixth. Another Geren dispute followed Willingham's ejection.

"It was a key part of the game," Willingham said. "My emotions got the best of me, and I kind of exploded a little bit. I wouldn't have exploded if I thought it was a close pitch. I thought it was inside."

With Crisp at second and a 3-3 score, Geren had Daric Barton, one of the league leaders in sacrifice bunts last year, hit away. Geren said Barton, as a lefty swinger, could slap the ball to the right side and advance the runner. Barton bounced to the pitcher.

"He actually hit a chopper, and (Crisp) didn't get a good read at second," Geren said. "Either way, you have to execute to get the job done, if you're left-handed or right-handed."

A's Andy LaRoche joins dad, brother in Kansas City

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The third LaRoche brother was at Kauffman Stadium on Saturday. While **Andy LaRoche** is an infielder with the A's and brother **Adam** a first baseman for the Nationals, **Jeff LaRoche** tried another route to the majors.

He was a pitcher in the Marlins and Rockies organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s and didn't get far.

"I should've been a hitter," he said.

Jeff was accompanied by the brothers' father, **Dave**, who did reach the majors as a pitcher - a reliever for 14 seasons who appeared for the Yankees in the 1981 World Series, striking out **Davey Lopes** on an eephus pitch.

The LaRoches are from Fort Scott, Kan., about an hour south of Kansas City. This series marks the first time either Andy or Adam played big-league games at Kauffman Stadium.

Dave finally has free time to watch his kids, having retired after six years as pitching coach of Triple-A Las Vegas (the Blue Jays' top affiliate). "First year out of baseball since 1967," said Dave, who was drafted by the Angels.

Drafted as an outfielder, that is.

"I told Andy I have a higher average than he does," said Dave, who hit .246 in 61 career at-bats, compared with Andy's .227 (though .271 with the A's).

"Typical pitcher," son Jeff said of dad. "Proud of his batting stats."

And the eephus? Started as a curve, Dave said. He used it the final years of his career. "I began messing with it in the pen, and guys asked how high could I throw it for a strike."

Lopes is among those who know the answer.

Briefly: Andrew Bailey took a big step in his rehab, throwing 30 pitches - including his first breaking balls of 2011 - to **Daric Barton** and **Kevin Kouzmanoff**. During the Texas series, he'll throw once more to hitters in more of a game-simulated situation, after which he could pitch in the minors. ... **Dallas Braden** is getting further opinions on his shoulder from **Dr. James Andrews** Monday in Florida and **Dr. David Altcheck** Tuesday in New York.

A's leading off

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Bleeding A's blue: Some old Kansas City A's were honored before the game, including Tommy Lasorda, who pitched in Kansas City in 1956, his third and final big-league season. Lasorda appeared in 18 games in '56, going 0-4 with a 6.15 ERA, proving he was destined to manage.

A's fall in ninth despite late comeback

By Robert Falkoff / Special to MLB.com

KANSAS CITY -- Brandon McCarthy saved the bullpen on Saturday night, but he couldn't save the A's from a frustrating defeat.

On a night when McCarthy went the distance to bail out an overworked bullpen, the A's still came up short as Mike Aviles' short sacrifice fly in the ninth gave the Royals a 4-3 walk-off victory at Kauffman Stadium.

Oakland, which trailed 3-0 entering the eighth, got a sudden jolt of offense as Cliff Pennington crushed a three-run homer off Aaron Crow. But after Coco Crisp followed with a double with nobody out, the A's failed to deliver the go-ahead run.

That left the Royals in position to showcase their secret weapon -- speedy pinch-runner Jarrod Dyson -- in the bottom of the ninth. Dyson, who had scored on a sacrifice fly to shortstop against Minnesota eight days earlier, entered the game as a pinch-runner after Billy Butler led off with a single. Dyson moved to third on Jeff Francoeur's single and, after Eric Hosmer was intentionally walked, raced home. The A's appealed at third, claiming that Dyson had left the bag early. The umpires disagreed.

Oakland manager Bob Geren didn't see a replay, but right fielder David DeJesus did.

"They showed a shot on the post [game] show and he left a little bit early," said DeJesus, who witnessed Dyson's speed last year when he was in the Royals' organization. "But you really can't see. You need to slow it down. He's so quick that it's hard to look at it and get it right. So what can you do?"

McCarthy, who got 25 outs on 95 pitches, never expected Dyson to break for home when he saw the depth of Aviles' fly ball.

"With Ryan [Sweeney's] arm and with it being a pretty shallow hit ball, I didn't think he was going to go," McCarthy said.

Dyson's daring baseunning helped the Royals (18-15) even the series. Oakland (17-17) will try to take two-of-three in the weekend set on Sunday afternoon.

Asked whether he left early on the mad dash for the plate, Dyson said: "No, I didn't."

But then Dyson added with a grin: "I thought I probably left a hair early, but I looked at the replay and it looked good to me."

Kansas City manager Ned Yost used closer Joakim Soria in a tie game in the ninth and quickly called on Dyson after Butler's hit opened the bottom of the inning.

"He's a great little weapon to have," Yost said of Dyson. "To be able to steal a base, go first to third on just about any ball hit to the outfield and then score on a medium-range fly ball; I think he's the fastest guy in baseball. He's got incredible instincts."

Both starters -- McCarthy and Kansas City's Luke Hochevar -- were outstanding through the early part of the game, but the Royals finally got to McCarthy for four hits and three runs in the sixth. The way Oakland has been swinging the bats, it seemed that might be enough.

But the A's got a leadoff single from Andy LaRoche in the eighth and Yost went to reliever Aaron Crow, who hadn't allowed a run all year in 15 1/3 innings. Sweeney greeted Crow with a single before Pennington hit his 382-foot homer over the wall in right to tie the game.

After Crisp doubled, Geren elected not to bunt with Daric Barton, and Barton tapped one to the mound with Crisp holding at second.

"With a left-handed hitter, it's just as easy to get one to that [right] side," Geren said. "We actually got the chopper, but we just didn't get a good read at second. Either way, you have to execute and get the job done."

Crisp was at third with two outs when Josh Willingham was called out on strikes. He was then ejected for arguing with home plate umpire Bill Miller.

"I didn't think it was a strike and my emotions got the best of me, and I kind of exploded a little bit," Willingham said. "I thought it was inside."

DeJesus made a leaping catch at the right field wall to rob Chris Getz of a leadoff extra-base hit in the ninth. But the DeJesus play was only a temporary reprieve for the A's. Dyson made sure of that.

Ross looks to maintain momentum against Royals

By Tyler Jett / MLB.com | 5/8/2011 1:15 AM ET

Though Tyson Ross and Jeff Francis have just one win between them season, Oakland's young arm comes into the contest riding the momentum of a strong outing last week.

Ross is 1-2 with a 2.38 ERA in three starts this season, and he gave Oakland a quality start on Tuesday, when the right-hander surrendered just one run on eight hits against Cleveland. Ross also struck out three and didn't walk any.

In his second season in the Majors, Ross was promoted to Oakland's starting rotation when Dallas Braden was placed on the disabled list with a stiff left shoulder. Ross has yet to give up a home run in 22.2 innings this season.

Opposing Ross for Kansas City will be seven-year veteran Francis. But while Francis has a better track record -- he's won 10-plus games in three separate seasons -- he seems to be going in the opposite direction of Ross, momentum wise.

Francis, who spent his first six seasons in Colorado, holds a 10.65 ERA in his last three starts. In his most recent outing against Baltimore on Tuesday, Francis gave up five runs on six hits and walked four batters in 5 2/3 innings.

In his first three starts with the Royals, Francis had a 3.00 ERA, but was 0-1 because of a lack of run support.

Athletics: DeJesus close to a milestone

- Right fielder David DeJesus needs three more hits to reach 1,000 for his career.
- The Athletics are tied for third-worst in the Majors with 27 errors this season, but Oakland has yet to commit one this weekend against Kansas City.
- Oakland pitchers lead the Majors with 10 pick offs this season.

Royals: Strong at home

- The Royals improved to 6-2 on their homestand with Saturday's win. Kansas City's 15 home wins lead the Majors.
- Heralded rookie first baseman Eric Hosmer recorded his first career hit off Brandon McCarthy in the fifth inning on Saturday. Hosmer is 1-for-5 with three walks this weekend.

Worth Noting

Kansas City reliever Aaron Crow gave up a three-run homer to Cliff Pennington in the eighth inning on Saturday, snapping a 26-inning scoreless streak for the Royals' bullpen that dated back to April 27.

Bailey throws encouraging bullpen session

By Robert Falkoff / Special to MLB.com

KANSAS CITY -- Right-hander Andrew Bailey had an encouraging session in live batting practice on Saturday, and the next step will be for the reliever to throw in a simulated game.

"The only question is when," A's manager Bob Geren said. "How he feels [Sunday] will probably determine when that next step will take place."

Bailey, recovering from a strained right forearm, said he continues to gain confidence in the rehabilitation process.

"I'm at the point now where I'm worrying about location and executing pitches, rather than how it feels," Bailey said. "I'm kind of beyond that."

Bailey will move out from behind the L-screen when he throws in a simulated game, and will graduate to mixing in all his pitches based on counts.

"It's nice that I'm progressing each time," Bailey said.

Bailey said he threw a set of 14 pitches and, after a three-to-four minute break, came back with another set of 15 or 16 pitches.

"Hopefully we'll soon be able to go straight through with 25 to 30 pitches," Bailey said.

After observing the Bailey session, Geren came away pleased.

"I thought it went very well," Geren said. "He threw all of his pitches today. He looked good."

Willingham ejected for arguing third strike call

KANSAS CITY -- Josh Willingham didn't get to stick around for the conclusion of the A's-Royals game on Saturday night.

Willingham, who started in left field, was ejected by home plate umpire Bill Miller for arguing a called third strike in the eighth inning of a 3-3 game. With the potential lead run at third, Willingham was called out on strikes. He got into a brief but animated discussion with Miller before the umpire signaled the ejection.

Jackson appears to be OK after collision

KANSAS CITY -- Conor Jackson, who was involved in a shoulder-to-shoulder collision with Royals catcher Matt Treanor at first base on Friday night, was not in Saturday's lineup. But A's manager Bob Geren said he had already planned to give Jackson a day off before the collision, and "all indications are" that Jackson is OK.

"He'll probably be ready to go [Sunday]," Geren said.

Jackson said late on Friday that he absorbed a stinger, and that his left shoulder was a little sore, but that it was nothing to be overly concerned about.

Braden to seek multiple opinions on shoulder

KANSAS CITY -- Left-hander Dallas Braden has scheduled second and third opinions to discuss the stiff left shoulder that landed him on the disabled list.

Braden will meet with Dr. James Andrews on Monday in Pensacola, Fla., and on Tuesday he'll meet with Dr. David Altchek in New York.

Braden was placed on the disabled list retroactive to April 17.

Braden recalls Mother's Day perfect game

A's lefty celebrates the one-year anniversary of his perfect game

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Dallas Braden's grandmother has watched it nearly 20 times on DVD. At least once a month, she insists. Not every minute of it, but always the last few frames.

Braden, himself, has yet to relive it through film -- "I don't know if I ever will," he says -- but admittedly thinks about it every day.

But when recalling his perfect game, on the day he entered baseball lore nearly one year ago, the A's lefty says he doesn't think about the actual performance, not one of the 27 outs he tallied in a row against a Tampa Bay team that had baseball's best record at the time.

"I do think about it constantly," Braden said. "Every day, and it's only because I think about my mom every day."

Back in the same room in which he addressed reporters following his perfect game on May 9, 2010 -- fittingly and, somewhat, miraculously given his well-documented story, on Mother's Day -- Braden relaxes in a chair, picking at a piece of Oreo ice cream cake.

For almost 30 minutes, he revisits the magnitude of his achievement and the memory he created not only for himself and an inspired nation but for his grandmother, Peggy Lindsey. She is the selfless woman who has been by Braden's side since birth, and raised him single-handedly while running a motel following his mother's death to skin cancer when he was in high school.

"I think I have a little more appreciation now for the significance of the whole undertone of what happened that day and where I had come from," Braden said. "It's so weird because I've talked about this story so often and I've been asked questions from the time that I was drafted about the road I traveled as a youngster, where I've come from, things I've gone

through, and to actually sit back and listen to myself answer these questions and realize what I've gone through and realize what it actually means to accomplish something like that ..."

He pauses, rests his fork down and can only laugh while shaking his head in disbelief before continuing.

"I mean, if you want to talk about stars aligning -- I know it was a day game, but they were all in a row," he said. "That's the only way that something like that happens."

"You would seriously have to call [director Steven] Spielberg and plan all of that out. You'd have to sit down and write that story for it to be true. That happened. I have a DVD of that. That's really hard for me to wrap my brain around because I don't know that I've had a perfect inning since that day, let alone an entire game's worth, and my grandma was there. I didn't have to call her and tell her about it. We have tangible proof and that everlasting memory."

Still, Lindsey, who became a media darling following the historic day for her equally quirky and entertaining remarks as her grandson, can't help but put it on her home television in Stockton every once in awhile.

She experiences that same excitement that overtook her on the day it happened, the same overwhelming and anxious feeling when Braden's final pitch to Gabe Kapler bounced its way toward shortstop Cliff Pennington, who threw the ball over to Daric Barton at first base for the final out.

"It's like it's a whole new game every time I watch it," Lindsey said. "He's my favorite subject. I never get tired of watching him."

Kapler's groundball seemingly lives in Braden's subconscious now, toying with the hurler as he is constantly forced to decipher dream from reality.

"It really is almost like a dream, and it's like when the last out was made I woke up," he said. "And it's one of those dreams where you wake up and it almost hurts to wake up because it's so real. What you experienced was so vivid, and I feel like I'm just drifting in and out of consciousness from here on out."

The realness of that day hits Braden hard and often when he's approached by friends and strangers who offer sincere thank you messages to the 27-year-old kid from Stockton. They recount their stories of Braden's perfect game bringing them closer with their own motherly figures, after watching the game that served as something of a triumph of imperfections.

"Every time someone comes up and shares that with me, they're sharing that with me for the very first time, so it all comes flooding back, like it's the very first time, like it's just the day after it happened," he said.

Braden welcomes those serendipitous moments, no matter the time and place, be it at Bed Bath & Beyond, the local grocery store or on the streets -- all have happened -- as they help trigger memories that he maybe would have otherwise disregarded.

"I think, to a fault, I try to forget about the past, and it sometimes doesn't allow me to appreciate where I've been and maybe some things that I've experienced," he said. "I've gone through some negative things that I'd just rather not think about, rather not feel. I think anytime something happens, I just process it and then move on."

"I think the game has done that to me, not being able to dwell on a bad outing. I could probably take some more time and reflect on the perfect game, but I'm just so steadfast in my approach and where I want to be. I don't want to be stagnant, especially in my own memory."

He is anything but that when thinking of his late mother, Jodie Atwood, whose tireless work and countless sacrificial actions are anything but forgotten.

Appreciation for the game

"Throw-up" was the name of the game, and Braden was its biggest fan.

Nevermind the barbed wire that surrounded him outside the run-down apartment complex he called home, one of many throughout Braden's unstable but unconditionally loved childhood days. He was going to play anyway.

"I would tell my mom I was going outside," he recalls, "and I would throw the baseball up in the air to myself for hours and hours and hours."

Many of his other hours were spent in the parking lot, a space he utilized as a 7-year-old to sell baseball cards -- "I knew that's where the traffic was," he says -- and converse with any passersby, including a middle-aged Native American man he invited over for dinner and turned into a long-time friend.

Atwood eventually created a strike zone for her son, a square of duct tape placed against a brick wall. Braden threw to that square every day. He didn't have a brother or a sister with whom he could engage in a game of catch, so that square became his partner since, well, the wall was going to send the ball right back.

Atwood was never an athlete herself, but she was set on making Braden one. And Lindsey had no choice but to come along for the ride, as she played the dual role of grandmother and parent to Braden while he combated Stockton's unruly streets and hardscrabble neighborhood.

"I always tried to be the stern parent," Lindsey says. "Jodie stayed calm. She could call his every move."

Atwood also watched his every move, whether by moving the chains at his football games just to secure the best view in the house, or keeping him still as a young boy at the Stockton Ports' Minor League ballpark, where, unbeknownst to anyone at the time, Braden would ultimately take to the mound as a professional ballplayer years later.

"She wasn't the type of mom who took me to the Ports games to let me run around," Braden said. "She said, 'You're going to sit right here, we're going to watch this baseball game. We're going to watch all nine innings, and if there's bonus baseball we'll be here for that too.' There was an appreciation for the game at an early age."

Age 4, to be exact. Around that same time, Atwood enrolled Braden in Little League. She rarely was absent for a practice and missed just one game during the next 13 years of his life, when she was consigned to a hospital bed after back surgery.

"The day she got out," Lindsey said, "I took her home, she changed clothes, and we went to a ballgame."

Lindsey vividly recalls a particular game -- at Amos Alonzo Stagg High School, where Braden's Delta Kings were playing against Bear Creek High. A handful of sprinkles began falling on the field, and a friend shared an umbrella over Atwood's head in the stands.

"They were holding an Oakland A's umbrella," Lindsey said. "That was her last ballgame."

The perfect gift

It was the last one for which she was physically present, at least, for on May 20, 2001, she succumbed to melanoma, leaving her mother and son to do what they've come to do best -- take care of each other.

But much like that A's umbrella did for her on that rainy day nine years before, Atwood hovered over the team's Oakland Coliseum on May 9, 2010, her presence very much felt amidst an overcast sky as Braden prepared to make his 53rd Major League start.

It marked not the culmination but the continuing journey of a promise Braden made to Lindsey following the death of his mother. He had been drafted by Atlanta in the 46th round of the 2001 Draft or, as he gently puts it, "the 947,000th round."

Still, it was quite the accomplishment given Braden had played just two years of high school baseball, the other two years taken away from him because of poor grades and wrong decisions made off the field, which Lindsey insistently put a stop to quickly.

"I promised my grandma, 'You'll see me play Major League baseball,'" he said. "She cried and cried and cried when I would tell her that because she wanted it to be real but she also understood, I think, how far-fetched of an idea it was."

Rather than joining the Braves system, Braden pitched for two years at American River Community College in Stockton and a year at Texas Tech before signing with Oakland as a 24th-round Draft choice in 2004.

He spent four years in Oakland's Minor League system, including a stint for his hometown Stockton Ports in 2005 and '06, before making his Major League debut in '07 in Baltimore, where Lindsey sat in the stands as witness to the promise made six years prior.

"Every step I took, every decision I made, was with that in mind, to get me to that point," Braden said. "I saw the sacrifices she made, working where she did, working how hard she did, and the things she went through. My ultimate goal was to alleviate that stress for her."

Hundreds of days and a handful of highs and lows in Braden's career later -- the latter coming in the form of demotions and injuries -- Lindsey again found herself in the crowd on that fateful day in May. Just as she does every time her grandson takes the mound in Oakland, she made the hour-long drive from Stockton to celebrate Mother's Day, with Braden on the mound and Atwood watching on from above.

The clouds gradually disappeared with each out made, and the ensuing events of that day are now forever embedded in baseball history and represent "the best thing that's happened to me," Braden said.

"You always think about the perfect gift," he explained. "You sit there and you rack your brain during the holidays. But this memory was something that, literally, was the one and only thing that I could have given her, and I actually gave it to her. It's like being the dishwasher and actually being able to afford that dream home for your mother or father.

"That's exactly what happened to me. I'm your average run-of-the-mill dude, and I was able to give my grandmother a memory that means so much to us on a day that will mean so much to us for the rest of our lives."

A new set of keys

This Mother's Day, Lindsey knows, won't be the same. Braden, nursing a stiff shoulder, is on the disabled list, unable to contribute to the game that's brought him and Lindsey so much shared happiness. He's also facing the 10-year anniversary of his mother's death.

No Mother's Day gift will take away from that sadness, nor top the perfect one that helped ease it last year.

That didn't stop Braden from giving his grandmother yet another surprise, though -- this time in the form of a new Mercedes-Benz SUV, which Lindsey drove straight off the showroom floor after Braden had enticed her near the lot by pretending he needed help transporting a TV stand.

"I said, 'Give me your car keys,' and I handed her a Mercedes key," he said, "I told her, 'This will open any one you want.'

"She likes that the seats hug her and the headlights move like eyeballs when she turns."

It was the least Braden can do for the woman who's given him everything, the warrior who, he says, "is to grandmotherhood what a closer is to a baseball team."

"Just an almighty stopper, just the one who you know is going to do it," he continued. "That's who she's been for me since birth, that go-to. She's been the best player on my team my whole life."

Braden didn't need to throw a perfect game to come to these conclusions. It has simply allowed him to share them with the rest of the world.

"He's just the greatest," Lindsey said. "He gave me one of the best days of my life. To be there with him, right when it happened, knowing Jodie was there too, it's just incredible."

Cohn on Cahill: Ace with modesty

By LOWELL COHN, THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Give Giants pitchers their props, but the A's Trevor Cahill may be the best pitcher in the Bay Area. That's saying something because the Bay Area has two fabulous pitching staffs, and Tim Lincecum works for the Giants.

It's just that Cahill has more wins than Lincecum this season — he's undefeated — and a lower earned run average, and last year he had more wins in the regular season.

I'm just saying.

Cahill is 23 and in his third year in the big leagues. Before his rookie season, we spoke in spring training and said he was shy — you might say painfully shy. The other day in the A's clubhouse I reminded him we had spoken of his shyness in 2009.

"Really?" he said like someone who had been outed for tax fraud.

"Are you still shy?" I asked.

"Umm, I'd say yes with people that I don't know."

His rookie year was worse.

"I wasn't used to talking to people or even being away from home and all my friends," he said.

In his free time, he watches movies.

"You can rent movies that aren't even out on DVD yet. I kill those. I love going to the theater. It just relaxes me — dark, quiet, nice seat, you get a soda and some candy and just relax."

What movie did he enjoy?

"I'm trying to think what I've seen lately."

"It doesn't have to be lately," I said. "It could be anything. It could be the 'Wizard of Oz.'"

Cahill laughed.

"It's too broad," he said.

"How about in the last year?"

"The King's Speech," he said.

He was into the conversation now, sitting in his chair at his locker, talking comfortably. I asked if he feels different on the mound than in real life.

"Yeah," he said. "Once I start playing catch and warming up, I feel a lot more confident. And definitely when I get on the mound, I feel I can get these guys out. I'm a pitcher, so on the mound — it's where I go, it's what I'm prepared to do."

Then I brought up Lincecum.

"Do you watch him pitch?"

"Yeah, he's a guy everyone in the league likes to watch pitch because he's 'the Freak' and that kind of fits him. I mean, he's a little guy and he has unique mechanics and he's just a fun guy to watch — his fastball, his changeup, his breaking stuff. Him and Roy Halladay — all the pitchers stop and watch them, they're both so good."

"You're also very good. You don't put yourself in that category?"

"No," he said. It was a long, drawn-out "no," which meant the comparison was absurd.

"Why?"

"They've proven themselves. It's so hard to maintain that level of excellence."

"You are a different pitcher from Lincecum," I said. "How would you describe the difference?"

"He's a strikeout guy. If there's a guy on third and less than two outs, I feel I can try and strike guys out. But for me to throw 110 pitches throughout a game I'm not going to be able to throw strikeout-type stuff the whole time and stay healthy. I've got to change speeds and try and get weak contact."

"Do you ever say to yourself, 'I wonder what it feels like to be Lincecum?'"

"A little bit," he said. "I wonder what it would be like to do that over and over again. You see the hitters in the video room watching (Albert) Pujols' swing. Same with us, we watch that."

Add one more quality to Cahill's shyness. Attractive, innocent, disarming modesty.

McCarthy goes distance again, but A's lose

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Brandon McCarthy has pitched two complete games already this season for Oakland, which is good. Not so good were the outcomes.

Ultra-fast pinch-runner Jarrod Dyson came flying home from third on a shallow fly ball in the ninth inning Saturday night, giving Kansas City a 4-3 victory and making McCarthy 0-2 in his two complete games.

"I felt ready to go (in the ninth). They were a couple of good pitches that I gave up hits on," McCarthy said.

Through the first half of the crisply played game, McCarthy and Luke Hochevar squared off in a classic pitching duel. Hochevar sat down the first 11 A's and McCarthy retired the first 14 Royals.

"He was outstanding," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He had one inning there, but he threw the ball well."

Billy Butler singled leading off the ninth against McCarthy (1-3) and Dyson pinch ran. He sped to third when Jeff Francoeur singled and scored easily when Mike Aviles lifted a shallow fly into left that would probably have caused almost any other runner to stay put.

Geren said he had no qualms about sticking with McCarthy in the ninth.

"He was good. He was my best guy and he was fresh," he said. "I had a lot of guys down in the bullpen. He was throwing a good game. (The bullpen) has (pitched in) five out of seven, four out of five. There was no way some of those guys were going to pitch tonight."

Joakim Soria (2-0) worked the ninth and got the victory.

McCarthy went eight innings plus four batters, gave up seven hits and four runs, with two walks and three strikeouts. On April 21, he lost a complete-game 1-0 decision to Seattle.

"McCarthy was tough," Aviles said. "He was going in and out, cutter, curveball. He pitched really well tonight. He pitched well the whole game. I'm not surprised he finished out the game."

Hochevar, trying to beat Oakland for the first time in five decisions, was locked in a scoreless duel with McCarthy until the fifth when Butler's sacrifice fly capped a 3-run inning for Kansas City.

After Andy LaRoche singled leading off the Oakland eighth, just the fourth hit off Hochevar, rookie Aaron Crow came out of the bullpen with a streak of 15 1-3 scoreless innings to start his career.

Kevin Kouzmanoff singled and then Cliff Pennington slammed Crow's 2-1 pitch into the visitor's bullpen, tying it 3-all with the first runs Crow had allowed as a major leaguer.

McCarthy did not allow a baserunner until rookie Eric Hosmer singled into right with two outs in the fifth for his first major league hit. McCarthy had not even gone 2-0 on a batter until Francoeur lined out to first baseman Daric Barton just before Hosmer came to the plate.

The Royals finally broke through against McCarthy when Matt Treanor and Alcides Escobar, the Nos. 8 and 9 hitters, singled leading off the sixth. After a sacrifice bunt, Melky Cabrera and Alex Gordon stroked RBI singles for a 2-0 lead before Butler's sacrifice fly put the Royals on top 3-0.

Hideki Matsui doubled leading off the fifth, went to third on an infield out and tried to score on LaRoche's grounder to shortstop Escobar. But Escobar's strong throw to the plate resulted in a 6-2-5 putout.

The A's argued that Dyson left the bag early.

"I thought so, from my angle," Geren said. "You make the appeal play. You put the call in their hands."

Dyson, at first, thought Geren may have been right.

"I thought I probably left a hair early, but I looked at the replay and it looked good to me," he said.

NOTES: The A's have not been shut out by Kansas City since Aug. 7, 1996, a span of 139 consecutive games. ... Hosmer and RF Francoeur almost ran into each other chasing Josh Willingham's pop fly in the seventh. At the last second, the rookie pulled back and Francoeur made the catch. ... A's LF Willingham was tossed by home plate umpire Bill Miller for arguing a called third strike ending the eighth.

For Dorfman, 100 Percent of the Game Was Mental

By RICK WOLFF, New York Times, 5/7/2011

A vast majority of baseball fans never heard of Harvey Dorfman. But for 30 years until his death in February at 75, he had a profound effect on hundreds of major league players. Dorfman was hired by the Oakland Athletics in the mid-1980s to serve as their mental performance coach, and worked his magic with some of the game's biggest stars.

At his home in North Carolina, and in his private office, he had dozens of framed photographs of players — many of them future Hall of Famers — and each was autographed with a sentiment like, "Harvey — I owe my career to you" or "If you weren't for you, Harv, I wouldn't still be in the big leagues."

Players like Roy Halladay, Brad Lidge, Mike Pelfrey, Rick Ankiel, Jim Abbott, Al Leiter, Bob Welch, even Greg Maddux — and on and on — had quietly worked with Dorfman. In truth, he never wanted to talk openly about the players who consulted him. He respected their privacy. But the bottom line was that Harvey helped all these players, and hundreds more, focus on their mental approach to the game.

Dorfman wrote several books, two of which have become mandatory reading for professional ballplayers: "The Mental Game of Baseball" and "The Mental ABC's of Pitching." Ballplayers often referred to him as a kind of baseball shrink, but he would laugh that off.

"I'm not a shrink," he would protest with a smile. "I'm a stretch!"

He was not a psychologist. He did not have a doctorate in psychology. Rather, he combined hard-core common sense with a mixture of tough-love confrontation and compassion. In his gruff, profanity-laced way, he regarded traditional sports psychology approaches like "take a deep breath" or "think only positive thoughts" as nonsense.

Rather, Dorfman's style was confrontational, or as he would say, "I hold a mirror up to your face." He would tell All-Stars who were struggling with their hitting or pitching what nobody else would, "You're pulling off the ball on the outside corner" or "You can't get your first pitch over for a strike."

The key was that Dorfman would then demand: "What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do to make the appropriate adjustments?"

His approach was all about the ballplayer's taking responsibility and being accountable. Force him to find his own way back to success. And by doing so, he will be even stronger than before.

Dorfman was a man of letters. Although he grew up in the Bronx, he became a beloved English teacher in Vermont, where he settled with his wife, Anita, and their two children. Dorfman was conversant in the current best sellers and would routinely quote chapter and verse from famous philosophers about life's challenges.

He started to hang around the Vermont Expos farm team and became buddies with Karl Kuehl, who ran the Montreal Expos' minor league system. When Kuehl went to work for the A's, he hired Dorfman full time.

I had never heard of Dorfman when he called in 1989 after reading my book, "The Psychology of Winning Baseball." He said a number of major league clubs were looking for somebody like me, who had played professional baseball and had a background in psychology. I was flattered and told Dorfman, "Feel free to give out my name and number." Most general managers, I thought, still believed in the old-school philosophy that no baseball player needed a sports psychologist.

But within the next few days, I started to receive phone calls from representatives of major league teams like the Indians' Hank Peters, the Orioles' Roland Hemond and the White Sox' Jerry Reinsdorf.

Suddenly, I was being courted like a college recruit. Each team was offering me a deal to work with its players. I ended up signing with the Indians and got the chance to work for them for a number of years. I even received a 1995 American League championship ring, which I cherish.

The Hall of Fame does not have a wing for sports psychology, but if it did, Harvey Dorfman would be a first-ballot unanimous choice. He was one of a kind, and major leaguers everywhere mourn his passing — especially those who are mired in batting slumps or who can't throw strikes.

This date in baseball: May 8

MAY 8

1906: Philadelphia manager Connie Mack needed a substitute outfielder in the sixth inning of a game against Boston and called on pitcher Chief Bender to fill in. Bender hit two home runs, both inside the park.

1907: Boston's Big Jeff Pfeffer threw a no-hitter, giving the Braves a 6-0 victory over the Cincinnati Reds in Boston.

1929: Carl Hubbell of the New York Giants pitched a no-hitter against the Pittsburgh Pirates, the first by a left-hander in the majors in 13 seasons.

1935: In the first game of a doubleheader, Ernie Lombardi of the Cincinnati Reds hit four doubles in consecutive innings (sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth) off four different Phillies pitchers. Lombardi also singled as the Reds beat Philadelphia 15-4.

1966: Frank Robinson became the only player to hit a home run out of Baltimore's Memorial Stadium. Robinson hit a 451-foot — 541 feet total — shot on a fly over the left-field wall off Cleveland right-hander Luis Tiant. The Orioles won 8-3.

1966: The St. Louis Cardinals closed old Busch Stadium with a 10-5 loss to the San Francisco Giants.

1968: Jim "Catfish" Hunter of the Oakland A's pitched a perfect game, beating the Minnesota Twins 4-0.

1984: Minnesota's Kirby Puckett had four singles in his first major-league game as the Twins beat the California Angels 5-0.

1994: The Colorado Silver Bullets, the first women's team to play a pro men's team, lost 19-0 to the Northern League All-Stars. Leon Durham hit two homers and Oil Can Boyd started for the All-Stars. The Silver Bullets had two hits, struck out 16 times and made six errors.

1998: Mark McGwire became the fastest player to hit 400 home runs when he connected in the third inning of the St. Louis Cardinals' game against the New York Mets. McGwire, the 26th player to reach the milestone, hit his 400 homers in 4,726 at-bats. The previous best was 4,854 by Babe Ruth.

2001: Randy Johnson became the third pitcher to strike out 20 in nine innings, but didn't finish the game as the Arizona Diamondbacks went on to beat Cincinnati 4-3 in 11 innings. Johnson, the first left-hander to strike out 20, missed out on the chance to join Roger Clemens and Kerry Wood as the record-holders for a nine-inning game because Arizona could not finish off the Reds in regulation.

2003: Aaron Boone hit three solo homers, leading the way as the Cincinnati Reds beat the St. Louis Cardinals 8-6.

2010: Jody Gerut hit for the cycle and drove in four runs as the Milwaukee Brewers pounded the Arizona Diamondbacks 17-3. Gerut hit a solo home run in the second inning, singled in the third, drove in a run with a triple in the fifth, and added a two-run double in the ninth.

2010: Mark Teixeira joined Lou Gehrig as the only Yankees to hit three home runs against the Boston Red Sox, and he and Francisco Cervelli drove in five runs each as New York beat Boston 14-3. Teixeira hit solo homers in the fifth and seventh, then added a two-run shot far over the left field wall in the ninth off outfielder Jonathan Van Every for the third three-homer game of his career.

Today's birthdays: Adam Moore 27; Adrian Gonzalez 29.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Moscoso brilliant on hill in River Cats shutout

By Cassie Kolias / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento starter Guillermo Moscoso pitched 6.0 scoreless innings as the River Cats shut out Colorado Springs 4-0 on Saturday night before 10,629 fans at Raley Field.

The River Cats have allowed three runs or less in all 10 of their home victories this season. Sacramento improves its record to 19-11, and remains in first place of the Pacific Coast League South Division.

Moscoso allowed only one hit, walked two and struck out eight, a season high for a Sacramento pitcher.

Second baseman Steve Tolleson was hot at the bat, going 3-for-4 with two RBIs in front of 10,629 fans.

He hit his second homer of the season to get the game started in the first. It was a solo blast to left field with a pitch count of 3-1.

The River Cats got their offense hot once again in the fifth inning. The inning started with third baseman Josh Donaldson walking. Outfielder Adam Heether reached first on a fielding error by Sky Sox third baseman Matt Macri, and shortstop Eric Sogard singled on a line drive to center to bring home Donaldson.

Tolleson then singled on a line drive to left field to knock in Heether to bring the score 3-0 over Colorado Springs.

Outfielder Matt Carson hit a lead off double down the right field line in the eighth inning, and stole third base. Adrian Cardenas then doubled to left field to bring home Carson and leave the score at 4-0.

Center fielder Jai Miller sat out Saturday night's game after bruising his ribs on an amazing diving catch in the ninth inning in Friday night's game. First baseman Wes Timmons came off the disabled list after missing 22 games with a left ankle sprain.

The River Cats bullpen was stellar in relief to shutout Colorado Springs. The Sky Sox faced Sacramento pitchers Fernando Cabrera, Fautino De Los Santos and Willie Eyre, who combined only allowed one hit.

The series against Colorado Springs continues at 1:05 p.m. on Sunday. Left-hander Bobby Cramer (0-0, 6.35) will take on right-hander John Maine (1-1, 7.16). The first 2,500 fans at this Mother's Day game will receive a Cold Cup Tumbler presented by PG&E.

RockHounds blow ninth-inning lead

Staff Reports, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The Frisco RoughRiders rallied with three runs in the ninth inning to take a 9-8 victory against the Midland RockHounds on Saturday in the first game of a four-game series at Citibank Ballpark.

The RockHounds (14-15) were up 8-6 entering the final inning as they had a big eighth inning where they scored three runs. During that eighth inning, Midland scored two runs on consecutive walks with the bases loaded, and the other run came on a Kent Walton single to left that scored Jason Christian.

But the RoughRiders (13-16), who opened the game a 5-2 lead after the first three innings, took advantage of an error and a walk to load the bases with two outs. Travis Adair hit a double to left that scored all three runs to take the lead.

RockHounds reliever Neil Wagner, who came in at the start of the ninth inning, gave up three runs on two hits in the one inning of work and was tagged with the loss.

Meanwhile, Frisco's Mike Perconte took the win as he pitched 1/3 of an inning to finish off the eighth.

Jermaine Mitchell, Jeremy Barfield, Matt Sulentic and Tyler Ladendor each had two hits for the RockHounds on the night as Mitchell and Barfield also drove in two runs.

Lucky 13--Ports Win Fourth Straight In Extras

05/07/2011 11:30 PM ET

LAKE ELSINORE, Calif. - For the second time in a week, the Stockton Ports won a 9-7 ballgame in 13 innings. On Saturday night at The Diamond, Stockton blew a two-run lead in the 9th to the Lake Elsinore Storm, only to come back and win in extras for their fourth straight win and their fifth in six games on this Southern California road trip.

In an inning that foreshadowed the entire night, the Ports scored four runs in the 1st. With a steady wind blowing out to left field, Conner Crumbliss started the game with a triple to left and scored on an ensuing groundout from Dusty Coleman to give the Ports a 1-0 lead. Michael Choice came up next and singled, and Max Stassi followed with a deep fly ball to left. Storm left fielder Wande Olabisi got in position to make the catch, but had the ball hit off his glove, allowing Choice to score from first and Stassi to wind up at third. Stassi scored on an ensuing double from Mitch LeVier to make it a 3-0 game. LeVier scored two batters later on a two-out single from Anthony Aliotti to give the Ports a 4-0 advantage after the first inning.

Stassi started the 3rd inning with a double to left. After Storm starter Jerry Sullivan got two quick outs, he yielded another two-out RBI single to Aliotti to give the Ports a 5-0 lead.

Ports starter Murphy Smith caught fire out of the gate, setting down the first six batters he faced while striking out four of the six. Lake Elsinore would catch a break, however, when an Aliotti fielding error allowed Eddy Rodriguez to reach base to start the 3rd. After back-to-back singles from Dan Meeley and Olabisi loaded the bases with nobody out, the Storm produced two runs on back-to-back groundouts from Reymond Fuentes and Jeudy Valdez to make it a 5-2 score.

After failing to score in the 4th, the Ports would start a two-out rally in the 5th with four straight two-out singles, the final two resulting in an RBI each for Leonardo Gil and Juan Nunez to make it a 7-2 score and chase Sullivan from the contest. Sullivan would receive a no-decision, allowing seven runs (five earned) on 10 hits while striking out four.

Trailing 7-2, the Storm began their comeback in the 5th. With Smith still on the hill, Lake Elsinore loaded the bases on three straight singles from Rodriguez, Meeley and Olabisi. After Smith got Fuentes to line to second and Valdez to strike out, he had Jedd Gyorko in a two-strike count before surrendering a two-run single to left that made it a 7-4 ballgame.

In the 6th, the Storm got an infield single from Nate Freiman, who would wind up at third with two down. With two out in the inning, Meeley hit a fly ball to shallow right. Richard ran in hard to try and make the play and as he leaned forward to make the catch to end the inning, he dropped the ball, allowing Freiman to score from third and making it a 7-5 contest. Meeley would be thrown out trying to reach second base to end the inning.

Smith, who came a strike away from winning the game, would receive a no-decision after going six innings and allowing five runs (two earned) on eight hits while striking out a season-high eight batters.

After two perfect innings of relief from Jose Guzman, the Ports turned the ball over to Jeff Lyman to pitch the 9th and try for his first save of the season. Lyman would get into immediate trouble by allowing three straight singles to Dean Anna, Rodriguez, and Meeley to load the bases with nobody out. Lyman would then record back-to-back strikeouts of Olabisi and Fuentes and have Valdez down to his final strike. Valdez, however, lined a single into center field to score two runs and tie the game at 7-7.

Lyman would be charged with a blown save and allow two runs on four hits in his lone inning of work.

The Ports had to survive another jam in the last of the 10th. With Scott Deal (2-1) on the hill, the Storm got a leadoff double from Edinson Rincon. After a strikeout of Freiman, Deal intentionally walked Anna to try and set up the double-play, but then walked Rocky Gale to load the bases with one out. Deal, though, would bear down and get Meeley to pop to short and Olabisi to ground to short to end the inning and send the game into the 11th.

Stockton, despite leadoff singles in the 10th, 11th, and 12th had failed to come up with the go-ahead run. In the 13th, however, the Ports got a leadoff single from Ryan Lipkin (who had to come into the game in the 11th due to the use of a pinch-runner for Nunez) and eventually found the runs they were looking for. After a sac-bunt from Crumbliss advanced Lipkin to second, Storm reliever Adam Schrader (0-1) intentionally walked Coleman, then allowed a single to Choice that loaded the bases with one out. Stassi came up next and hit into a fielder's choice where Gyorko threw home to get the force out. With the bases loaded and two down, LeVier stepped to the plate and delivered what turned out to be the game-winning hit—a two-run single to left that scored Coleman and Choice to give the Ports a 9-7 lead.

Schrader would take the loss after allowing the two runs in the 13th on three hits.

In the last of the 13th, Josh Lansford (SV, 2) came on and set the side down in order, including back-to-back strikeouts of Meeley and Jonathan Galvez to end the ballgame.

Storm manager Carlos Lezcano was ejected following the bottom of the 5th for arguing balls and strikes.

The Ports, now winners of four straight, will try for a series sweep on Sunday afternoon at The Diamond as they close out their seven-game road trip. Left-hander Fabian Williamson (2-3, 10.36 ERA) will head to the mound for Stockton, opposed by Lake Elsinore right-hander Matt Lollis (1-4, 5.46 ERA). First pitch is set for 2:05 p.m. PDT.

Cabrera's Ninth-Inning Double Downs Kings

By Dave Lezotte / Clinton LumberKings

Clinton, IA - The Clinton LumberKings hung tight with the West's top team, but the Burlington Bees still found a way to win as Yordy Cabrera's one-out RBI double in the top of the ninth provided the winning run in a 2-1 final Saturday night at Alliant Energy Field.

Kings' right-hander Brandon Maurer struck out a career-high 11 batters over 6.0 innings and allowed just one run, coming on Royce Consigli's jam-shot RBI single to right in the third. The LumberKings answered right back in the bottom half of the third as Shaver Hansen singled with two outs, stole second and scored on Tim Morris's single to right-center.

Right-hander Jonathan Arias (L, 0-2) pitched two scoreless innings and picked off the only baserunner he allowed in that time, but was greeted by a leadoff infield single by Nino Leyja in the ninth. Leyja advanced to second on an errant pickoff throw by Arias, moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by Jose Rivero and scored two batters later as Cabrera belted a double to the wall in left.

Right-hander Tyler Burgoon came on and stranded an inherited runner with help from his defense as catcher Steven Baron and the second-baseman Hansen pulled off a 2-4-2 out at the plate on a double steal attempted by the Bees. Hansen's relay home on Cabrera was perfect to Baron, who blocked the plate for the crucial out.

That play kept the Kings in the game for the bottom of the ninth. Morris reached on his third single of the night and was replaced by pinch-runner Matt Cerione. During Stefen Romero's at bat, Cerione attempted to move up on a ball in the dirt and was thrown out by Bees' catcher John Nester. Romero followed with a double down the left-field line, but would stay there as Bees' right-hander Daniel Tenholder (S, 5) struck out Mickey Wiswall and induced Ramon Morla into a groundout that he nearly beat out at first base, ending the game.

Bees' right-hander Zach Thornton (W, 2-1) turned in 3.0 scoreless innings to get the win.

Morris (3-for-4, RBI) and Romero (3-for-4, two doubles) had six of the seven hits for Clinton in the losing cause. The LumberKings are now 1-5 against Burlington this season.

The LumberKings (9-21) continue the series with the Bees (21-7) tomorrow afternoon at 2:00 PM. Left-hander James Paxton (0-1, 4.50) is slated to make his second start for Clinton. Burlington counters with left-hander Jacob Brown (3-0, 1.48). LumberKings' players and coaches will be wearing pink caps for Cancer Awareness Day tomorrow. Selected autographed hats will be auctioned off at Alliant Energy Field, while the rest will be available for auction online. Check LumberKings.com for updates.