

Josh Willingham's five RBIs lead Oakland A's past Texas Rangers 7-2

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Perhaps Josh Willingham should request more correspondence from the commissioner's office.

After receiving a one-game suspension from Major League Baseball for his "inappropriate conduct" toward umpire Bill Miller over the weekend, Willingham responded Monday night with the best game of any A's hitter this season.

He smacked a three-run homer off C.J. Wilson and drove in five runs to pace the A's 7-2 victory over the Texas Rangers in the opener of a three-game series at Rangers Ballpark.

Willingham was ejected from Saturday's game against Kansas City for arguing a called third strike and then bumping Miller during the exchange. He learned of his suspension Monday afternoon, but because Willingham is appealing the decision, he is eligible to play until his appeal is heard.

"I'm glad he appealed it," said A's starter Trevor Cahill, who improved to 6-0. "That's the guy we've looked to put the ball out of the ballpark once in a while."

The five RBIs are the most by an A's player this season, and Willingham's production was needed because the A's didn't swing the bats as well as the score indicated.

They notched just four hits but benefited from eight walks, including five issued by Wilson (4-2).

After Wilson walked Daric Barton and Conor Jackson with two out in the third, Willingham connected for a three-run shot -- his team-leading sixth homer.

The A's broke it open with a four-run eighth that made it 7-1, highlighted by Willingham's two-run single off reliever Ryan Tucker.

That paved the way for Cahill, who can make a case for being the best starting pitcher in the American League. He is tied with the Los Angeles Angels' Jered Weaver and the Detroit Tigers' Max Scherzer for most wins in the majors, and his 1.72 ERA is the lowest in the A.L. among starters.

Cahill allowed one run on five hits over seven innings, and he is the first A's starter to begin a season 6-0 since Dave Stewart in 1990.

"It's fun to watch," manager Bob Geren said. "What's (impressive) is he doesn't look like he's pitching over his head. The numbers are rolling up and the wins keep rolling up. It's not like he had a great game; he's just pitching the way he normally does."

The Angels lead the A's by one game for first place in the A.L. West, but if you believe Texas is the team to beat, you have to like how Cahill has handled the Rangers.

In two starts, he has allowed one earned run in 14 innings to go with 11 strikeouts and five walks.

For his career, he is 8-2 with a 2.18 ERA against Texas. More impressive, he is 3-0 with a 0.98 ERA in four starts at Rangers Ballpark, a hitter's haven.

"They're a great-hitting ballclub," Cahill said. "We've faced them so many times, I know their approach when they hit."

As for Willingham, he was just happy to be in the lineup. During Saturday's flare-up, he threw his helmet after a called third strike he didn't like, earning an ejection from Miller, the home-plate umpire.

As the two argued, Willingham bumped Miller, though he said it was unintentional and that the contact happened as Miller turned toward him.

"I felt like there was contact," Willingham said before Monday's game. "If they would have just fined me for throwing my helmet, I would have been fine. But, you know, I thought the contact wasn't really initiated by me, so I appealed it."

A's update: With a lefty starting, D.H. Hideki Matsui sits again

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas -- With the A's facing a left-handed starter for the second straight game Monday, designated hitter Hideki Matsui found himself on the bench for the second straight day.

Matsui is hitting just .171 against lefties compared to .275 against right-handers, and manager Bob Geren had said he would stack his lineup with right-handed hitters against Texas' C.J. Wilson.

Matsui, the A's most high-profile acquisition before the season, is hitting just .243 overall. But he did have two doubles Saturday against Kansas City before sitting for two games.

"I've been feeling good at the plate," Matsui said through his translator Monday. "I think the manager just decided this is the best lineup to go with, and I understand that."

Kurt Suzuki served as DH, contributing an RBI double during the A's 7-2 victory over the Rangers, with Landon Powell catching.

Struggling third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, who homered and singled Sunday, didn't get a chance to build on those good vibes.

Geren went with Andy LaRoche at third against Texas, citing LaRoche's .421 average against lefties this season.

- The A's scored seven runs Monday on the strength of just four hits.

"That's very rare," Geren said. "I don't recall ever doing that."

The A's took a 3-0 lead with a two-out rally in the third, as Wilson walked Daric Barton and Conor Jackson before surrendering a three-run homer to Josh Willingham.

"The two walks and a homer, that was a big blow," Geren said. "We always preach that on-base percentage is important, and that's a perfect example of one hit scoring three runs."

Texas, which has lost 17 of its past 26 games, aided Oakland's cause by issuing eight walks. The Rangers bullpen was beat up in Sunday's loss to the Yankees, and the relief corps had another rough night Monday.

After Wilson hit Coco Crisp and walked Barton in the eighth, reliever Ryan Tucker walked Jackson, and Willingham followed with a two-run single that made it 5-1. Suzuki drove in a run with a double, and Mark Ellis added a sacrifice fly.

- The A's, 19-17, are two games above .500 for the first time all season.
- Reliever John Meloan, who made six appearances with the A's in 2009 but has endured a long recovery from Tommy John elbow surgery, came off the disabled list and joined Double-A Midland's roster.

Chin Music: Josh Willingham gets one-game suspension, decides to appeal

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/9/2011 4:51PM

Checking in from Arlington, where it's warm but not nearly as hot or humid as it will get later in the summer ...

A's left fielder Josh Willingham was fined and handed a one-game suspension by Major League Baseball for "inappropriate conduct" during his argument with home plate umpire Bill Miller on Saturday that led to his ejection. Willingham has filed an appeal, and he's eligible to play until a decision on his appeal is handed down. He's starting in left field tonight in the series opener against the Rangers.

Willingham was unhappy about a called third strike in the eighth inning Saturday and slammed his helmet down, immediately getting the thumb from Miller. During the ensuing argument, Willingham bumped Miller, though he said after Saturday's game that the contact was accidental, and might have occurred as Miller turned toward him during the argument. The umpire contact was cited in the MLB press release announcing the suspension. And typically, any contact with an umpire draws such a penalty. "I felt like there was contact," Willingham said Monday. "If they would have just fined me for throwing my helmet I would have been fine. But, you know, I thought the contact wasn't really initiated by me, so I appealed it."

A's manager Bob Geren declined any comment on the suspension, saying he'd let the appeal process play out, but he added that he supported Willingham's decision to appeal.

Tonight's lineups:

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

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

–So the A's have Willingham for tonight's game, but DH Hideki Matsui is out of the lineup for the second straight day. The A's faced a left-hander Sunday in Kansas City's Jeff Francis and they get another lefty tonight in Texas' C.J. Wilson. Matsui is hitting just .171 against lefties this season, and he's 2 for 13 with five strikeouts against Wilson in his career. Geren mentioned Sunday morning that he'd stack his lineup with righties against Wilson, giving an indication that Matsui might sit for two games.

You could question the timing of sitting Matsui considering he was coming off a two-double game Saturday night. And he's a .302 hitter with six homers and 18 RBIs in 28 career games at Rangers Ballpark. But I wouldn't say Matsui has been ripping the cover off the ball. Honestly, I'm more surprised that Kevin Kouzmanoff didn't get the start at third base after homering and going 2 for 4 yesterday. The guy's been struggling big-time, and yesterday's game was his best in a while. If you have any thoughts of this guy still being a regular contributor to this team, why not let him try and build on the confidence he must have felt after Sunday's game? Geren pointed out that Andy LaRoche is hitting lefties really well this season (8 for 19), which is true. But given the circumstances, I would have stuck with Kouzmanoff.

Any thoughts?

Josh Willingham helps lead A's past Rangers 7-2

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Josh Willingham, bad boy. The A's could get used to that.

Hours after he was suspended by Major League Baseball, Willingham took the field Monday night and made a statement to anyone who thought such a penalty would get him down.

He enjoyed his most productive game as an Athletic, driving in five runs in a 7-2 victory over the Rangers. The right-handed batter hit a three-run homer off lefty C.J. Wilson and a bases-loaded single off righty Ryan Tucker, collecting half of the A's four hits.

Timely appeal, by the way.

Willingham had been suspended one game for bumping umpire Jim Miller on Saturday. He immediately appealed, hoping MLB would wipe it out because, according to Willingham, he didn't initiate the contact.

The suspension would have been served Monday if Willingham hadn't appealed. So long as the appeal process is ongoing, Willingham can keep suiting up. Fine with him. His teammates don't seem to mind, either.

"Glad he appealed it," said winning pitcher Trevor Cahill, who improved to 6-0, tied for most wins in the majors (with the Tigers' Max Scherzer and the Angels' Jered Weaver). "He's the guy on our team we look to put the ball out of the ballpark once in a while. It's nice to have that, especially in a big situation against a good pitcher and tough team."

The way Cahill pitched through seven innings, he didn't need much offensive support, but Willingham provided plenty in the third inning. Wilson, the Rangers' hottest starter - he entered 4-1 with a 2.92 ERA with his only loss in Oakland on April 29 (versus Cahill) - issued a pair of two-out walks before Willingham homered to left.

From there, Wilson faced one more than the minimum number of batters (14) through the seventh. But once he plunked Coco Crisp and walked Daric Barton to open the eighth, manager Ron Washington summoned Tucker, who faced four batters and put on four.

Conor Jackson walked to load the bases for Willingham, whose single made it 5-1. Kurt Suzuki doubled home a run, and Mark Ellis added a sacrifice fly.

Willingham said he wasn't thinking about the irony of producing big numbers on a day he was to sit out. "That lasted about a second," he said. "I appealed it, and I wasn't suspended anymore."

Willingham can focus on baseball and let the players' union handle his appeal, which will be heard by John McHale, MLB's vice president of administration. The process can take a couple of weeks.

As for bumping Miller, Willingham said, "I thought the contact wasn't really initiated by me."

The replay shows Willingham didn't necessarily charge Miller. Once Miller called strike three on a pitch Willingham thought was inside, Willingham spiked his helmet as he took four small steps toward Miller, drawing an immediate ejection.

After being ejected, Willingham made sure to get in Miller's face. The contact, Kouzmanoff's camp will argue, was inadvertent. After the contact, Miller reacted by raising his hands and stepping backward, emphasizing that he was bumped.

"It happened pretty fast," Willingham said. "I didn't waste a lot of time."

Willingham also was fined an undisclosed amount.

A's Trevor Cahill tames Texas once again

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Trevor Cahill has emerged as a nemesis of the American League champs.

Cahill beat the Rangers again on seven innings of five-hit ball, leaving him 8-2 with a 2.18 ERA in 11 career starts against Oakland's division rival. More impressive are his numbers at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington, one of the friendliest hitting domiciles in the majors.

In four starts here, he's 3-0 with a 0.98 ERA.

"They're a great hitting ballclub," Cahill said. "Part of it is, we've faced them so many times, I feel like I know what their approach is and know how they hit. Pitching against them all the time, you kind of get comfortable, unlike a team you don't know. A team from the National League, you don't know what they've got."

Cahill also cited run support and "lucky breaks" - mentioning in particular **Ian Kinsler's** sizzling liner to third baseman **Andy LaRoche**, who turned it into a double play. Still, there's something to be said about a league-low 1.72 ERA.

Texas' only run off Cahill was **Mitch Moreland's** fifth-inning homer, coming on an errant changeup. Cahill walked one and struck out seven, four in a row in the sixth and seventh: **Mike Napoli** (sinker), **David Murphy** (sinker), **Yorvit Torrealba** (changeup) and Moreland (curve), all swinging.

Briefly: The A's, 3-1 on the trip, are two games above .500 for the first time in 2011. ... They've won four of five over Texas. ... **Kevin Kouzmanoff** was on the bench after collecting two hits, including a homer, Sunday. With Texas starting lefty **C.J. Wilson**, A's manager **Bob Geren** played LaRoche at third because he was hitting .421 (8-for-19) off lefties. Kouzmanoff was hitting .182 (4-for-22). ... Geren said **Hideki Matsui**, who sat out two straight games, will play tonight. ... A's pitchers have surrendered just two homers this month.

A's leading off

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Only clunker: Brett Anderson, tonight's starter, has issued more than one walk in only one of his seven starts this season - an 11-2 loss to the Rangers on April 30, when he walked four and allowed seven runs, all earned. It was also the only time he allowed more than two earned runs.

Josh Willingham suspended; Kevin Kouzmanoff, Hideki Matsui sitting

John Shea reporting from the Land of Nolan Ryan . . . 5/9/2011 3:59PM

Josh Willingham was suspended one game for bumping umpire Jim Miller in the eighth inning Saturday in Kansas City. The contact came after Willingham was called out on strikes and threw his helmet, prompting Miller to eject the player.

The suspension was announced today.

"I felt like there was contact. If they would've just fined me for throwing my helmet, I would've been fine," Willingham said. "But I thought the contact wasn't really initiated by me, so I appealed it."

Asked if he thought he simply turned around and there was Miller, Willingham said, "It happened pretty fast. I didn't waste a lot of time."

The appeal could take a couple of weeks. Meantime, Willingham's able to play. He's in left field tonight.

Willingham said it was his first career suspension. "I show emotion. I don't think it's rare," he said. "Maybe it's rare to that extent." Is a one-game suspension fair?

"I have no idea," said Willingham, who also was fined an undisclosed amount.

Bob Geren's lineup is without Kevin Kouzmanoff, who finally started hitting yesterday, collecting a homer and single. Also missing for the second straight day: Hideki Matsui, who doubled twice in his last appearance, Saturday in KC.

Geren said he's going with matchups. But while Matsui is hitting .154 (2-for-13) off lefty C.J. Wilson, Kouzmanoff is at .429 (3-for-7). The third baseman is Andy LaRoche, who has never faced Wilson. But against lefties this year, he's hitting .421 (8-for-19).

Kouzmanoff vs. lefties: .182 (4-for-22).

Geren said Matsui will be in tomorrow's lineup. He wasn't sure about Kouzmanoff.

Top of the heap: Cahill wins sixth in A's rout

On heels of appeal, Willingham's five RBIs carry Oakland offense

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Given the choice of suspension or appeal, Josh Willingham took the latter on Monday.

In fine follow-up fashion, the A's outfielder made good use of that decision by launching a three-run homer and tallying a season-high five RBIs in a 7-2 series-opening victory over the Rangers.

Willingham was supposed to be serving a one-game suspension for his actions in a contest two days prior, but instead found himself at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington courtesy of his appeal, making the whole thing not seem like such a terrible thing, after all.

It would seem that the very thought crossed his mind, but Willingham insists he never once reflected on the pregame matter throughout the night. Instead, he just hit.

"I feel like when I get some pitches to hit, I gotta be able to hit them, and I was able to do that tonight," he said. "I was happy to be able to help the team tonight and get a couple of big hits."

Those efforts helped jump start a four-run eighth and provided plenty of support for starter Trevor Cahill, who utilized the cruise-control option while throwing seven innings of one-run ball.

Cahill walked one and struck out seven, including four in a row, over seven innings of one-run baseball. He retired nine consecutive batters at one point while improving to 6-0 with an American League-best 1.72 ERA on what's becoming yet another impressive season.

Los Angeles' Jered Weaver and Detroit's Max Scherzer are the only other pitchers in the league who have garnered as many wins, and Cahill joined Scherzer as the only two with 6-0 marks.

"Just another fantastic game," said A's manager Bob Geren. "This is not a great place to pitch, and everybody knows that. To come out and keep rolling the way he is, it's fun to watch. The best thing about it is it doesn't look like he's pitching over his head. He's just pitching the way he normally does, changing it up, hitting his spots, being real consistent and plugging along."

The right-hander's lone mistake came in the fifth, when Texas' Mitch Moreland carried a first-pitch changeup into the right-field stands.

Otherwise, Cahill forced 10 ground-ball outs next to just one in the air, where he is seemingly floating in the midst of a career-high-tying seven-game winning streak, dating back to last season. He has now allowed one run or fewer in seven of his eight starts and has walked two batters or fewer four times.

"He just goes out and does it every fifth day, it seems like, giving us a chance to win," Willingham said.

Cahill now owns a career 8-2 record and 2.18 ERA in 11 starts against the Rangers -- not to mention a 0.98 mark in four outings in Arlington.

The low-key hurler is not one to elaborate on personal success, so when asked about his continued dominance over Texas, Cahill simply shrugged and noted his comfort level against an intimidating, albeit familiar, team.

"I think, with most parks, if you make your pitches, you'll get outs," he said. "Being a ground-ball pitcher, I was able to keep it on the ground. They're a great hitting ballclub. I think part of it is that we face them so much, so I know what their approach is. Everything, it seems, has gone my way against them."

"He's pitched well against us," said Rangers outfielder David Murphy. "He did well again tonight, and we didn't."

Opposing hurler C.J. Wilson surrendered just two hits over seven innings, but he also walked five, including two straight with one out in the third, setting up Willingham's homer. The A's put together seven runs on just four hits.

"We'll take 'em however we can get 'em," Willingham said. "We haven't scored seven runs many times this year."

"That's very rare," Geren said. "I don't remember ever seeing that. The two walks and the homer, that was a big blow. We've always preached that on-base percentage is important, and that's the perfect example of one hit scoring three runs."

Wilson was ultimately tagged with five runs, as both of his inherited runners scored in the eighth when Willingham recorded a two-run single off Ryan Tucker. Kurt Suzuki's ensuing RBI double extended Oakland's lead.

The A's, who climbed two games over the .500 mark for the first time all year, have now won 10 of their past 16 games and lead the season series, 4-1.

"Division rival, they're the team to beat," Cahill said, "So definitely, getting a win in the first game of the series, it helps to keep the momentum going."

Willingham appeals one-game suspension

A's outfielder charged with bumping umpire in Saturday's game

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- A's outfielder Josh Willingham was handed a one-game suspension and fined an undisclosed amount on Monday for what Major League Baseball deemed "inappropriate conduct" in Saturday's game in Kansas City.

Willingham was scheduled to serve his suspension during Oakland's series opener against the Rangers on Monday night, but he elected to appeal the decision and will play until the process has been completed.

The eight-year veteran was ejected by umpire Bill Miller for arguing a called third strike and throwing down his helmet at the conclusion of the top of the eighth inning. Willingham appeared to bump Miller, but said on Monday, "I felt like there was contact, but I felt like the contact wasn't really initiated by me."

It is the first suspension in Willingham's career. He said he was unclear how long the appeal process is expected to last.

"I didn't know what to expect," Willingham said. "I've never been through any of this."

Should Willingham have to miss a game, A's manager Bob Geren has plenty of options to fill his lineup thanks to a roster stacked with outfield depth. Ryan Sweeney and Conor Jackson have each started multiple games in left field this year.

Willingham is hitting .235 after Monday's 7-2 win over the Rangers. He has a team-leading six home runs and 22 RBIs. He's also struck out 37 times, tied for third-most in the American League.

LaRoche in, Kouzmanoff out against southpaw

ARLINGTON -- Kevin Kouzmanoff, coming off a two-hit day in Kansas City, sat Monday's series opener against the Rangers in favor of Andy LaRoche, who brought in a .421 mark vs. left-handed pitching.

Kouzmanoff entered Sunday as the owner of a .195 average but, thanks to a home run and a base hit, is above the Mendoza Line at .209. Allowing the struggling third baseman to find something of a groove seemed like a plausible scenario, but A's manager Bob Geren simply wanted LaRoche to face Texas lefty C.J. Wilson.

LaRoche who had never faced Wilson in his career, finished the 7-2 victory 0-for-1 with three walks. Kouzmanoff is 3-for-7 lifetime against the southpaw. LaRoche's overall numbers when facing lefties this season, though, trump Kouzmanoff's .233 mark.

"Kouzmanoff had a few hits yesterday," Geren said, "but LaRoche is hitting over .400 against lefties, and it'd be nice to get them both in there if I could."

LaRoche has now started 10 of the club's 36 games at third base. He's 1-for-18 at the plate in his past five games after recording three consecutive multi-hit contests, a span in which he went 6-for-11.

Worth noting

- Hideki Matsui, who is batting .171 against left-handers this season, was held out of the starting lineup for a second consecutive day against Rangers lefty C.J. Wilson. Manager Bob Geren said Matsui will start Tuesday's contest.
- Mark Ellis, who has four hits in his past 10 at-bats, entered Monday's game in Texas with a .348 career mark at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington. He went 0-for-3.

A's have chance to claim first by topping Texas

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

The Rangers and A's are no longer tied for second place in the American League West.

Following Monday's 7-2 victory, the A's sit alone in the second spot in the standings, and the Rangers find themselves in unfamiliar territory.

Texas has not been outside of the top two spots in the standings since the club was in third place on April 30 of last season. The Rangers, who have lost seven of their past nine games, trail the Angels by 2 1/2 games.

By contrast, the A's have won 10 of their past 16 and are only one game behind Los Angeles.

"We have a lot of good players on this team, and they're just starting to heat up," said A's manager Bob Geren. "We're fortunate the pitching has been so good, always giving us a chance to win. It's a good feeling knowing that when the guys start swinging the bats as well as we know they can, they can give us a little run support and we can get on a roll."

The Rangers, who have lost four of five games to the A's this season, are not panicking. For their part, the A's aren't exactly celebrating.

There are two games left to play between the two clubs this week and 126 games remaining for each team. But it's a good start to the week if you wear green and gold.

It will get even better if A's starter Brett Anderson pitches to his capabilities Tuesday. In his past start, Anderson pitched nine innings but did not figure in the decision against the Indians. He has allowed two earned runs or fewer in six of his seven starts.

"Brett Anderson did just an incredible job -- nine innings, obviously," Geren said. "Bullpen held them. We had a couple of chances to win the game and didn't do it."

Rangers starter Colby Lewis pitched a complete game against the Mariners in his last start but lost, 3-1. He struck out a career-high 11.

"Hitting comes and goes, but it's frustrating to waste a pitching performance like that," said Rangers outfielder David Murphy. "Colby did a great job. We should have gotten him more runs."

Lewis could be on track for another solid start. He is 1-1 with a 2.81 ERA in his past two starts after going 1-3 with a 6.95 ERA in his first four outings.

A's: Where there's a Willingham, there's a way

- Josh Willingham leads the team with six home runs and 22 RBIs. In five games against the Rangers this season, he is hitting .350 with three home runs, two doubles and eight RBIs.

Willingham is appealing his one-game suspension for what Major League Baseball deemed "inappropriate conduct" in Saturday's game in Kansas City.

- Hideki Matsui, who is batting .171 against left-handers this season, was held out of the starting lineup against Rangers lefty C.J. Wilson, but he will start Tuesday against Lewis. Matsui is 6-for-13 with two home runs in his career against the right-hander.

Rangers: Borbon on fire

- Center fielder Julio Borbon extended his hitting streak to nine games with a single in the third inning Monday. He is batting .423 during the hit streak and hitting .381 since returning to the starting lineup April 24.
- Outfielder Josh Hamilton, out since April 13 with a non-displaced fracture of his right humerus bone, has been swinging off of a tee since last Thursday and will take batting practice on Friday.

Worth noting

Expect Adrian Beltre back in the starting lineup Tuesday. The third baseman has four hits in his past 31 at-bats and hasn't hit a home run in 14 games after hitting seven in the Rangers' first 21 contests. He did not start, but made an appearance as a pinch-hitter Monday night. ... Rangers pitcher Brandon Webb threw a bullpen session in Surprise, Ariz., on Monday and will pitch in an extended spring training game on Thursday. There is no timetable for his return. ... Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus has hit safely in 20 of his past 22 games and is 11-for-11 in steal attempts this season. Including last year's postseason, Andrus has been successful in 19 consecutive steal attempts.

A's beat Rangers; Cahill improves to 6-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Trevor Cahill is making it so routine to pitch impressively for the Oakland Athletics that manager Bob Geren has come to expect these kind of performances.

Cahill did it again Monday night with seven strong innings for his sixth consecutive victory to start the season in a 7-2 victory over the Texas Rangers.

"The best thing about it is it doesn't look like he's pitching over his head or anything. It just looks like he's just Trevor," Geren said. "That's what the fun part is. It feels like he can just do that. ... It looked like he pitched the way he normally does. That's a good feeling."

The 23-year-old right-hander struck out seven, walked one and allowed five hits. He became Oakland's first 6-0 starter since Dave Stewart did it 21 years ago.

"He's pretty awesome," Josh Willingham said. "Every fifth day he gives us a chance to win. It's good to score some runs for him."

Willingham, getting to play after appealing his one-game suspension for making contact with an umpire on Saturday, hit a three-run homer off C.J. Wilson (4-2) in the third put the Athletics ahead to stay, and he added a two-run single when Oakland tacked on four runs in the eighth.

"Definitely glad he appealed," said Cahill, who really didn't need too much help.

Cahill (6-0) matched Jered Weaver of the Los Angeles Angels and Detroit's Max Scherzer with six wins. The big A's right-hander also equaled his career best by winning his seventh consecutive decision.

The only crucial mistake by Cahill was the changeup he tried to throw on the first pitch in the fifth. Mitch Moreland pulled it into the second deck in right field for his fifth homer.

Chris Davis followed the homer with a single before Cahill retired his last nine batters, including four consecutive strikeouts during that span.

Cahill improved to 8-2 with a 2.18 ERA in 11 career starts against Texas — he has no more than four wins against any other team. Even more impressive is that the big right-hander is 3-0 with a 0.98 ERA (three earned runs over 27» innings) in four starts at hitter-friendly Rangers Ballpark.

Much of his success goes to his sinker that keeps balls down. Oakland outfielders only recorded two outs in his seven innings.

“I think a lot of the parks if you make your pitches, you’ll get outs,” Cahill said. “If my sinker’s working I feel like I have a decent shot. I think it was moving a lot today.”

Wilson, coming off a complete game victory at Seattle last Wednesday, allowed only two hits over seven innings. But the left-hander walked five and hit another batter — and those accounted for four of the five runs against him. He struck out two.

“The whole game was frustration. It’s good you can’t read body language or read minds, that would be bad,” Wilson said. “That’s how they have to beat me, is I have to make mistakes and walk a bunch of guys.”

Willingham’s sixth homer of the season, a 402-foot blast deep into the left-field seats, came after Wilson issued consecutive two-out walks. Wilson was gone after hitting Coco Crisp with a pitch to start the eighth and then walking Daric Barton for the second time in the game.

After Wilson came out, rookie Ryan Tucker failed to retire any of the four batters he faced. Tucker allowed a two-run single to Willingham that scored Crisp and Barton, and the right-hander left with the bases loaded. Mark Ellis then hit a deep sacrifice fly to left off Brett Tomko.

Since starting the season 9-1, the defending AL champion Rangers (18-18) have lost 17 of 26 games and slipped to third place in the AL West.

The A’s (19-17), who won three of four at home against Texas last week, are alone in second place behind the Angels.

The Rangers added an unearned run in the eighth on a throwing error by right fielder Conor Jackson, who missed the cutoff man after Michael Young’s single. Oakland third baseman Andy LaRoche made a nice barehanded snag of Elvis Andrus’ slow chopper in the third, but his throw was nowhere near first base — and instead went into the Rangers dugout on the fly.

NOTES

Cahill is 3-0 with a 1.53 ERA in four starts against AL West teams this season.

3B Adrian Beltre was out of the Rangers lineup for the first time this season. Beltre wanted to play, but manager Ron Washington said it was just time to give him a break. Beltre was 4 for 30 (.133) his past eight games. Beltre grounded into a game-ending fielder’s choice as a pinch-hitter.

Oakland is 68-68 at Rangers Ballpark, which opened in 1994.

The only player to start all 35 games for Texas is Young, though 24 of his starts are as the DH.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats record 3rd shutout of homestand

By Mike Morris / Sacramento River Cats

For a franchise in its 12th season, the Sacramento River Cats are rich in history.

Two Triple-A Championships. Four Pacific Coast League titles. Nine Division Titles. The list goes on. ...

On Monday afternoon, the River Cats added to the Raley Field lore with a 9-0 shutout of the visiting Colorado Spring Sky Sox.

It marks the first time in team history Sacramento has recorded three shutouts during a single homestand. Sacramento recorded three shutouts over an eight-game road trip from April 24-May 2, 2004.

First-place Sacramento recorded its second series sweep of the season (the last sweep coming against Tacoma from April 14-17) and improved to 21-11 on the year.

After a mellow first few innings, the River Cats heated up in the third, stringing together five runs. Sacramento added two more in the fifth, one in the seventh and one in the eighth. The Sky Sox were unable to fight back, having only three hits on the day compared to the River Cats' 13.

Shane Peterson started the third-inning rally with a walk, then moved to third on a Wes Timmons double. Sacramento second baseman Jemile Weeks scored Peterson and Timmons with a single for a 2-0 lead, but the River Cats didn't stop there.

Eric Sogard singled to left, moving Weeks to third. Sogard then got caught in a run-down between first and third, distracting Colorado Springs long enough for Weeks to steal home. Sacramento scored two more in the third for a 5-0 lead.

Sacramento held the Sky Sox to five runs over the four-game series while recording a four-game sweep. The previous time the River Cats had held an opponent to five runs or less over a four-game series was from August 27-30, 2007, when the River Cats held Colorado Springs to four runs while winning three of four games in the series.

Sacramento right-hander Travis Banwart (1-2, 3.24 ERA) threw a solid 7.0 innings, allowing three hits and striking out seven. Trystan Magnuson pitched two hitless innings to complete the shutout.

River Cats infielders Weeks and Timmons have been fighting off the injury bug this season, but were able to produce Monday. After missing 22 games with an ankle injury, Timmons has gone 3-for-4 the last two games. Weeks also had three hits Monday while driving in two and scoring two.

Weeks, who has played in three games since April 28, is batting .351 with 12 RBIs and 10 extra-base hits on the season. The River Cats are 19-6 over the last 24 games.

The River Cats next head to Memphis where they open an eight-game road trip that finishes in Nashville. Sacramento is 9-3 on the road.

Hounds Fall Despite Mitchell's Big Night

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Citibank Ballpark - - -

First, I wouldn't use the "sizzling Hamburger" reference for fear of it sounding disrespectful, but my colleague, Frisco Radio Voice Aaron Goldsmith, had already coined the phrase.

After allowing a walk and a hit to open the eighth, Mark Hamburger would then escape the jam (getting out of the "pickle" .. sorry) retiring the last six batters he faced, five by strikeout. Puns aside, the right-hander has been outstanding. In his last 14.2 innings, Hamburger has allowed one run on three hits and has struck out 22 batters while walking five in 19.2 innings for the season.

The middle of the Frisco order ... Joey Butler, Tommy Mendonca and Mike Bianucci ... went a combined 9-for-13, scoring six runs and driving in four. The trio was a collective 6-for-6 through their first two at bats. Butler scored three times, with Mendonca and Bianucci driving in two runs apiece, with one of Bianucci's RBI coming on his ninth home run of the year.

The RockHounds erased a 3-0 deficit and would take a 5-4 lead, with Jermaine Mitchell driving in the first four and scoring the fifth. Mitchell ripped a 2-run home run to get the 'Hounds on the board in the third, slicing the Frisco lead to 3-2. He then drove in the tying runs in the seventh with his seventh triple of the season and scored the go-ahead run on Grant Green's sacrifice fly.

The RoughRiders came right back with a 2-run, go-ahead single by Jonathan Greene, who contributed a 2-for-5 night with three RBI to the hefty production from the middle of the order. The 'Riders added a pair of insurance runs in the ninth.

- South division-leading San Antonio (21-10) made it 3-in-a-row over Corpus Christi, defeating the Hooks, 5-2, in a late morning game in San Antonio. Padres' # 1 prospect Casey Kelly was the winning pitcher, and the Missions have now outscored the Hooks, 24-4, in the first three games of the series. The Missions continue to hit better than .333 against the "rest of the league" after batting a collective .203 in eight games against Frisco.

- The Missions lead RockHounds (15-16) by six games, Frisco (14-17) by seven and Corpus Christi (12-19) by nine games.
- Scary stat: Saturday is the midway point (game 35) of the first half.
- Mitchell remains third in the Texas League batting race at .352 ... he has hit in 20-of-21 games (33-79, .418) ... Jermaine leads the league in hits (43), runs scored (35), walks (27) and triples (7) ... he now ranks second in the league with an on-base percentage of .470 (James Darnell of San Antonio leads at .489). He is fourth on the club with 22 RBI.
- Green had a single and a walk to go with his RBI, and has reached base in 15 straight games.
- Frisco's first eight hits came with two outs, four of them coming after an 0-2 count.
- Jon Meloan made his first appearance for the 'Hounds since joining the club a few days ago. It was also his first appearance in a "game" situation since October 3, 2009, when he pitched in Oakland against the Los Angeles Angels. Jon, who missed all of 2010 due to injury, also has Major League experience with the Dodgers (2007) and Cleveland (2008). This game can be so frustrating ... and almost unfair ... at times. When he finished the October 3, 2009 relief stint against the Angels, he had made six appearances with the A's in 2009, going 8.2 innings, allowing one (unearned) run on three hits, while walking two and striking out 11. His next "live" game action would not come until last night.

Bees Win Fifth Straight; 4-2 in Clinton

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

CLINTON, IA- The Burlington Bees (23-7) scored two runs in the sixth inning to beat the Clinton LumberKings (9-23) by a score of 4-2 and complete the three-game sweep at Alliant Energy Park on Monday night.

The LumberKings scored a run on three hits in the first inning against Burlington RHP Blake Hasebrock (2-0). 3B Stefen Romero (1-4) singled and moved to third base on a single by 1B Mickey Wiswall (1-4). DH Matt Browning (2-5) singled home Romero for a 1-0 Clinton lead.

The Bees scored a run in the third inning on a solo home run by 3B Wade Kirkland (1-3). He pulled a fastball at the letters from Clinton RHP Forrest Snow (1-4) over the left field wall for his first career home run and a 1-1 tied score.

Burlington scored the go-ahead run in the fourth inning. SS Yordy Cabrera (3-5) doubled and moved to third base on a single by LF Jose Rivero (1-5). DH A.J. Kirby-Jones (1-2), in his first game back from the Disabled List, was hit by a pitch. Kirkland floated a ball to shallow left field. Clinton SS Carlos Ramirez and LF Robbie Anston ran into each other. The ball fell to the ground and Cabrera scored. The umpires invoked the infield fly rule and Kirkland was called out and issued a sacrifice fly. Burlington took a 2-1 lead.

The Bees scored two runs in the seventh inning. With the bases loaded, Kirkland reached base on a fielder's choice as the Clinton 2B Shaver Hansen threw late to home plate to try and force out the lead runner Cabrera. C John Nester (1-3) lifted a sacrifice fly to right field to score Rivero and make it 4-1.

Bees Buzzings: The Bees made a pair of roster moves over the weekend. Before the game on Sunday RHP Nate Long was activated from the Disabled List and LHP Jeff Urlaub was placed on the Disabled List. The Bees also made a move on Monday, activating 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones from the Disabled List and placing IF Tony Thompson on the Disabled List.

The Bees finish their road trip in Peoria with the first of a three-game series against the Peoria Chiefs on Tuesday night at 6:30 p.m. The pitching match-up is as follows: RHP A.J. Griffin (3-0, 2.04) for Burlington against RHP Hayden Simpson (0-1, 4.15) for Peoria. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 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.