

**Coco Crisp can't quite pull off steal of home in Oakland A's loss**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Everyone in the ballpark was stunned when Coco Crisp broke for home on a steal attempt Friday night with two out in the eighth inning and the A's down by a run.

Everybody, that is, but Chicago White Sox third baseman Omar Vizquel.

"I played with Coco in Cleveland, and I know the kind of player he is," Vizquel said. "He's one of those daredevil guys who might try to do something. It was a great play. It was awesome."

Well, almost. Crisp tried to elude Chicago catcher A.J. Pierzynski on a close play at the plate, but Pierzynski barely got the tag on Crisp's right shoulder, and the A's lost 4-3.

After Oakland had rallied from a 4-0 deficit with three runs in the seventh, Crisp drew a one-out walk in the eighth against left-handed reliever Matt Thornton. Crisp stole second and advanced to third on Daric Barton's ground out, then on an 0-1 pitch to pinch hitter Conor Jackson, Crisp bolted for home.

"(Thornton) wasn't paying attention to me," Crisp said. "The only person who was, really, was Omar. I kind of got out there far enough to make it. But my timing was a little off because Omar was playing up so close I didn't want to get picked off. I stutter-stepped instead of going through with it, and that's what made it close in his favor and not mine."

A's manager Bob Geren wasn't overly critical of his fleet leadoff hitter for making the bold attempt.

"That's a play, if he makes it, it's a great play," Geren said. "He's one of two guys I've ever given the green light to pretty much anytime he gets on. His success rate last year was so good, he kind of earned that. But I didn't know he was going to take off for home right there."

Crisp said it was the first time he has been thrown out while trying to steal home, even though he doesn't have a successful attempt in the major leagues.

"Only once in the minor leagues, and high school doesn't count, does it?" he asked. "It was just one of those things where I was trying to make something happen. I told Gags (third-base coach Mike Gallego) I could make it, and I still believe I would have made it without that stutter-step."

Chicago manager Ozzie Guillen also thought it was a worthy attempt by Crisp.

"I guarantee you if that happens two weeks ago, he is safe," said Guillen, referring to a 4-18 stretch that Chicago went through before winning five of its past six games.

Sergio Santos, unscored upon in 14 appearances and 18 innings, picked up his fourth save with a perfect ninth, finishing with two strikeouts.

Early on, the game looked like a lock for the White Sox. Starter Philip Humber (3-3) shut down the A's on two hits over six innings and was cruising along with a 4-0 lead. The A's finally got to him for three runs in the seventh.

Humber was actually Oakland property for a month after being claimed off waivers from Kansas City on Dec. 17. When the A's acquired right-hander Guillermo Moscoso from Texas on Jan. 8, they needed a spot on the 40-man roster and placed Humber back on waivers.

Throw out the second inning, and A's starter Brandon McCarthy (1-4) was Humber's match. McCarthy surrendered four runs in that inning on two walks, three hits and his throwing error.

McCarthy allowed just two hits and no walks in the other six innings, striking out six for the game.

"I just lost the feel for my mechanics and arm slot," McCarthy said. "It took me too long to make the adjustment ... and stop the bleeding. That one inning kind of sullied the whole thing."

## **A's update: Outfielder Josh Willingham drops appeal of one-game suspension**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Even though he still professes his innocence, A's outfielder Josh Willingham decided to drop the appeal of his one-game suspension and sat out Friday night's game against the Chicago White Sox.

"I dropped the appeal for no reason other than to get it over with," Willingham said.

It probably didn't hurt Willingham's decision that right-handed batters came into the game batting .094 (5 for 53) against White Sox starter Phil Humber. Lefty Ryan Sweeney started in Willingham's place in left field, and might have anyway.

Willingham said there was just too much uncertainty about how the appeal might turn out and when it might be decided.

"It could have been a week, it could have been a month," he said. "I didn't have a clue to begin with what was going to happen. I just got a opinions and none of them were like, 'You're going to win' or 'You're going to lose,' so I just said I'm not going to go through the process."

Willingham drew the suspension after throwing his helmet and bumping home plate umpire Bill Miller in a game at Kansas City last Saturday. He still claims any contact was purely accidental. He added that he will pay an undisclosed fine for throwing his helmet.

With Willingham out, the A's had just three position players available on the bench -- infielder Andy LaRoche, outfielder Conor Jackson and catcher Landon Powell.

"We're coming off an off day for the team and everybody's healthy and fresh," manager Bob Geren said. "We don't want to play short, but if we have to, today's a good day to do it."

Reliever Andrew Bailey (right forearm strain) is scheduled to pitch an inning in an extended spring training game in Arizona on Saturday. If all goes well, he could make a rehab appearance in a minor-league game in Stockton or Sacramento next time out.

"What we've done every step with (Bailey) is see how he's performed and how he's felt and made a decision after that," Geren said.

Female pitcher and women's baseball advocate Justine Siegal, who pitched batting practice to six major-league teams this spring including the A's, threw early B.P. in Oakland on Friday.

"She wanted an opportunity to do it in a major-league stadium, so we said no problem," said Geren, who was the first in the box to take a few swings. "She was great. We had quite a few of our players face her, and she did real well."

## **Chin Music: Intriguing matchup vs. Chisox, Willingham drops suspension appeal and sits**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 5/13/2011 5:52PM

In for Joe Stiglich tonight ...

Interesting pitching matchup tonight. Brandon McCarthy goes for the A's against the White Sox, the team that originally drafted him in 2002 and with whom he made his major-league debut in 2005. He's only pitched once against them, picking up a win in 2009 while with the Texas Rangers, throwing five innings and allowing one run.

Then there's the interesting case of Chicago starter Phil Humber. The A's claimed him off waivers from the Kansas City Royals on Dec. 17, 2010, but when they subsequently acquired Guillermo Moscoso from the Texas Rangers on Jan. 8, 2011, they needed a spot for Moscoso on the 40-man roster and put Humber back on waivers themselves. The White Sox, who one Chicago writer told me were hot on Humber before the A's stepped in first, claimed him from Oakland on Jan. 15.

Long story short, Humber made the White Sox rotation and has pitched well. He's 2-3 with a 2.97 ERA, and in the start before last, he took a no-hitter into the seventh inning against the Yankees. He also pitched seven innings in his last start against Baltimore, allowing just three hits, but took the loss in a 2-1 outcome. Moscoso, meanwhile, is pitching for Triple-A Sacramento and doing decently: he's 3-2 with a 3.13 ERA in seven appearances, six starts.

A's news: Josh Willingham dropped the appeal of his one-game suspension, paid an undisclosed fine and is sitting out Friday night. Willingham said he just wanted to be done with it even though he still contends he was innocent of the claim that he bumped umpire Jim Miller in Kansas City last Saturday after being ejected for throwing his helmet after a called third strike. Ryan Sweeney starts in left tonight in Willingham's place.

Andrew Bailey is scheduled to pitch in an extended spring training game tomorrow in Arizona. If it goes well, he could make a subsequent rehab appearance in Stockton or Sacramento.

Tonight's lineups:

A's: CF Crisp, 1B Barton, LF Sweeney, DH Matsui, C Suzuki, RF DeJesus, 2B Ellis, 3B Kouzmanoff, SS Pennington. P McCarthy

CWS: LF Pierre, SS Ramirez, DH Dunn, 1B Konerko, RF Quentin, C Pierzynski, CF Rios, 3B Vizquel, 2B Beckham. P Humber

### **Crisp caught stealing: A's lose 4-3 to White Sox**

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer

As the game twisted in doubt, and Coco Crisp stood 90 tantalizing feet from tying the score, he channeled his inner Jackie Robinson.

Two outs, eighth inning, A's trailing 4-3. White Sox left-hander Matt Thornton was on the mound, in a windup, about to throw an 0-1 pitch to pinch-hitter Conor Jackson - when Crisp suddenly fled, on a bold and daring attempt to steal home.

He nearly made it, but Chicago catcher A.J. Pierzynski dived in front of the plate and tagged Crisp on his right shoulder as he slid headfirst. The play preserved Friday night's 4-3 victory for the White Sox before a crowd of 12,690 at the Coliseum.

Crisp made the decision on his own, mostly because he sensed Thornton wasn't paying attention to him. Crisp got no sign from the bench and no guidance from third-base coach Mike Gallego, who saw Crisp take off and had only one thought:

"Please be safe."

"It was a shock," Gallego said. "Coco's an exciting player, a winning player. He can take a game in his own hands and win it for us."

Not this time. Pierzynski made the tag just a moment before Crisp touched the plate with his right hand. Pierzynski then pumped his fist in exultation as he hopped off the field.

The A's had made little noise on offense all night, falling behind 4-0 in the second inning - when starter Brandon McCarthy briefly lost touch with the strike zone - and finally scraping out three runs in the seventh. Crisp drew a one-out walk in the eighth, stole second and moved to third on Daric Barton's groundout.

Jackson pinch hit for Ryan Sweeney, giving Crisp a right-handed hitter to potentially shield Pierzynski's view. Crisp had some positive vibes: He tried straight steals of home three times in high school and once in the minor leagues. He made it all four times.

This time, Thornton threw a fastball down the middle - an easy pitch for Pierzynski to handle.

"I got out there far enough, but my timing was a little off - I hesitated," Crisp said. "I saw (Pierzynski) catch it, and I knew I had to slide to the inside. He barely got me. He saw me coming and lunged out there right away. Good pitch, good play by him.

"It's one of those plays where you've got to be safe. You gotta make it. I'd do it again, just without the stutter step."

A's manager Bob Geren didn't seem disturbed by Crisp's risk-taking. Geren gives Crisp the green light to steal, though that usually means second or third base.

Pierzynski, in his 14th season in the major leagues, couldn't remember another opposing player trying a straight steal of home against him.

"Most guys usually just deke; that's the first time I actually had somebody come," Pierzynski said. "I saw him coming and I was like, 'Hurry, Thornton! Just give me the ball!'

"I didn't know what to do, so I basically just laid on top of the plate. That was the only thing I could think of to do. ... But it worked out and it was a huge moment in the game. It stopped their momentum and got us a win."

Crisp would have become the first A's player to pull off a straight steal of home since Wayne Gross on May 3, 1980 (according to stat guru David Feldman). Instead, it became a rare and entertaining footnote, an aborted attempt to spark the A's - who went down 1-2-3 in the ninth against White Sox reliever Sergio Santos.

### **Josh Willingham drops appeal, serves suspension**

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's entered Friday night's game with only 23 home runs, fewer than every American League team except Seattle and Minnesota. Then their top home run hitter, **Josh Willingham** (with six), voluntarily took a seat on the bench.

Willingham, suspended one game for bumping umpire **Jim Miller** last Saturday in Kansas City, dropped his appeal and sat out the opener of Oakland's series against the White Sox.

"I just dropped the appeal to get it over with," Willingham said. "I didn't have a clue what was going to happen, so my agent got a few opinions and none of them were really conclusive."

He wasn't confident he could get the suspension rescinded, in other words. Another factor, perhaps: Right-handed hitters were 5-for-53 against Chicago starter **Phil Humber** before Friday.

Willingham earned the punishment after protesting a called third strike by throwing his helmet. That prompted Miller to eject Willingham, leading to the bump. Willingham originally contended he didn't initiate the contact.

At any rate, **Ryan Sweeney** - who went 4-for-9 on the road trip to Kansas City and Texas - started in left field and batted third. He went 1-for-3. The A's were one man short on the bench, but manager **Bob Geren** figured his starters were fresh after Thursday's off day.

**Hockey chatter:** Geren and relief pitchers **Brad Ziegler** and **David Purcey** were among those in San Jose for Game 7 of the Red Wings-Sharks series Thursday night. Ziegler attended Game 5 of last year's Wings-Sharks playoff series, but this was "another step up" in electricity.

"You could tell the sense of urgency from the players, especially in the third period," Ziegler said. "I don't know that I've ever played a baseball game with that kind of intensity."

**Briefly: Andrew Bailey** will throw one inning in an extended spring-training game today in Arizona. ... Nice pitching matchup on the horizon: Unbeaten **Trevor Cahill** against Chicago's **Mark Buehrle** on Sunday.

### **A's leading off**

Ron Kroichick, San Francisco Chronicle

**A first:** Justine Siegal threw early batting practice to A's hitters. The club believes she's the first woman to throw BP in a major-league ballpark. Siegal is a former high-school baseball player who in 2009 became the first woman to coach first base for a men's pro team, the independent Brockton (Mass.) Rox.

### **Drumbeat: A's pregame: Willingham drops appeal**

Ron Kroichick, San Francisco Chronicle, 5:45pm

The A's will open their homestand tonight without Josh Willingham, their leading home run hitter. Willingham, suspended one game for bumping umpire Jim Miller last Saturday in Kansas City, abruptly dropped his appeal Friday and will sit out tonight's game against the White Sox.

Willingham initially claimed he didn't think he initiated the contact with Miller -- hence, the appeal. The contact came when Willingham threw his helmet, and drew an ejection, in protest of a called strike three.

"I just dropped the appeal to get it over with," Willingham said. "I didn't have a clue what was going to happen, so my agent got a few people's opinions and none of them were really conclusive."

Willingham didn't really offer much insight into why he decided to drop the appeal on Friday. But, as manager Bob Geren noted, the A's were off Thursday and are mostly fresh and rested entering tonight's game -- making it easier to play one man short.

Ryan Sweeney, who has made some starts recently, will play left field tonight in Willingham's place and bat third in the order.

Some other quick pregame notes:

\*\*The full lineup: Crisp, CF; Barton, 1B; Sweeney, LF; Matsui, DH; Suzuki, C; DeJesus, RF; Ellis, 2B; Kouzmanoff, 3B; Pennington, SS. Brandon McCarthy is pitching.

\*\*Manager Bob Geren on choosing between Kevin Kouzmanoff and Andy LaRoche at third base: "Whoever plays best is going to play. Third base is obviously an important position to get offensive production."

\*\*Andrew Bailey will throw one inning in an extended spring-training game Saturday in Phoenix. Bailey, nursing a strained forearm, would then proceed to a minor-league rehabilitation assignment (if all goes well).

### **A's comeback snuffed with tag at home**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- One run proved to be the difference in Oakland's 4-3 loss to the White Sox on Friday. At least that's the way the box score reads.

But any member of the A's, particularly Coco Crisp, will likely say the disparity came not just in the form of one run but, rather, one fraction of a second.

That's all Crisp needed, really, to make it a different ballgame and collect his first straight steal of home in 10 Major League seasons.

Manning third with two outs in the eighth, with the A's down a run and Conor Jackson at the plate against Chicago lefty Matt Thornton, Crisp stood close to famed speedster third baseman Omar Vizquel, a former teammate whom Crisp felt seeping into his mind.

"He already knew," Crisp maintained.

Still, the A's outfielder noticed Thornton's lack of attention and slow pitching motion, both of which led to his self-created green light to make a run for it on a 0-1 pitch.

"Just out of the corner of my eye I saw the white jersey over there getting down the line a little more," Humber said. "As soon as I started my windup, I saw him break. Just kind of sped up and made sure I got the ball there quickly."

Crisp raced down the line, Thornton's four-seamer quickly making its way to catcher A.J. Pierzynski, who grabbed hold of the high pitch before lunging forward just in time to make the tag.

"I kind of got out there far enough to make it, but my timing was off," Crisp admitted. "Omar was so close and I didn't want to get picked off, so I sort of stutter-stepped instead of just going ahead and going through with it. That's what made it close in his favor and not mine."

Crisp had successfully converted such a play in the Minors and hinted at multiple times in high school.

"It would have been nice to be safe up here, too, but I wasn't," he said. "I was trying to make something happen. I told [third-base coach Mike Gallego], 'I can make it,' and I still believe I could have made it without that stutter-step. If you're going to have the huevos to do it, you might as well go through with it."

Crisp has a team-leading 10 stolen bases this season and is coming off a 2010 campaign that brought about a career-high 32 stolen bags in just 75 games -- numbers that have granted him rare permission by manager Bob Geren to deem himself capable of a steal.

"He's a guy, one of a few guys I've managed, that I let have a green light pretty much any time he gets on," Geren said. "His success rate last year was so good that he kind of earned that."

"I didn't know he would take off for home right there. I just watched it over, and he was out by about six inches. It's one of those plays that if he's out, it's a tough way to end an inning with a good hitter up. If he's safe, it's one of the most exciting plays in baseball."

"If I go again," Crisp said, "I'm going to make it."

Until then, the A's will have to settle with Friday's outcome, which by no means was solely the result of Crisp's actions.

Oakland's offense failed to offer much help in the early get-go to starter Brandon McCarthy, who faced the minimum over six of his seven innings of work but surrendered three hits and two walks and committed a throwing error to first base in the other -- a four-run second frame.

McCarthy has occasionally lost touch with an approach that landed him a starting job in the big leagues this year. The latest proof was on display in that 30-pitch inning.

"I just lost feel for my mechanics, lost feel for my arm slot," the A's righty said. "I was just kind of searching, more so than anything. It took me too long to make the adjustment to get it back and stop the bleeding."

McCarthy made quick work of his opponents thereafter, tossing out five subsequent scoreless frames. But the frustration that mounted during the fateful second inning was still visible following the loss, which moved the hurler to 1-4 on the season.

"I felt like I did a lot of things I wanted to do," he said, "but that one inning was too much to save the whole outing. It just can't happen."

McCarthy is coming off a spring campaign during which he struck out 20 and walked just one in 26 effective innings -- a performance that rightfully awarded him the fifth-starter spot. He managed to keep up that pace upon the season's start, offering up just seven earned runs next to three walks and 20 strikeouts over his first four starts.

Since, though, McCarthy has allowed 24 earned runs with seven walks and 16 strikeouts in the four outings that have followed.

"He started off, all through Spring Training, his walks were so low that you kind of expect him to never walk anybody, so I'm not concerned about his command or anything," Geren said. "You saw after that inning he got it right back."

The offense, meanwhile, stayed quiet through the first six innings against hurler Phil Humber, tallying just two hits during that span, before narrowing Chicago's lead to one in the seventh. Ryan Sweeney, Hideki Matsui and Kurt Suzuki tallied back-to-back-to-back hits to load the bases with no outs. A wild pitch from Humber handed Oakland its first run of the night, and David DeJesus made it 4-2 courtesy of an RBI base hit that ended Humber's night.

Kevin Kouzmanoff's sacrifice fly off reliever Jesse Crain scored another but the A's watched the frame come to a premature end when DeJesus was picked off at first to end the game-tying threat -- one that resurfaced as Crisp bolted for home in the following frame.

"He's a guy that any time he's on base, you look for him to do something," Geren said. "It was a little unusual at third. When I saw him take off, I knew he had to have seen something that he thought he could make it."

### **Willingham drops appeal, sits out A's opener**

By Jane Lee and Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's outfielder Josh Willingham has decided to drop his appeal for the one-game suspension he received earlier in the week and will serve that suspension during Friday's series opener against the White Sox.

"I just wanted to get the process over with," Willingham said.

With Chicago righty Phil Humber on the mound, the right-handed batter chose a good day to do it. Had he waited upon a ruling from Major League Baseball and had the suspension upheld, Willingham would have been forced to serve it that very day.

"You never know which way they're going to decide," he said. "I would've had no choice in the matter, and it could have come on a day where the team really needs me in there."

"Coming off an off-day for the team, with everyone healthy and fresh, you never want to play short but if you have to, it's a good day to do it," manager Bob Geren said.

Willingham, who will not be allowed in the dugout during Friday's game per Major League rules, was also fined an undisclosed amount Monday for what Major League Baseball deemed "inappropriate conduct" in Saturday's game in Kansas City.

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 Monday, "I felt like there was contact, but I felt like the contact wasn't really initiated by me."

In Willingham's stead, Ryan Sweeney received a start in left field Friday. Sweeney entered the contest riding a season high-tying six-game hitting streak, a span during which he's gone 11-for-21 to boost his average to .364.

### **Bullpen faces test with 20 games in 20 days**

OAKLAND -- Following a challenging April schedule that brought about a respectable 13-14 record, the A's are now facing another early-season test in the form of 20 games in 20 days.

That string, which began Friday against the White Sox, will highlight Oakland's depth and likely expose -- for better or worse -- a bullpen that has been spared a heavy workload thanks to a starting staff that has combined for a Major League-best 2.69 ERA and 240 2/3 innings, which ranks third in the American League.

The A's were given three off-days in a span of the first 42 days of the season and not one of their starters was skipped during that time.

"Our starters have been doing a really good job, and I've given them an extra day off whenever I could in the schedule," manager Bob Geren said. "Now they have to go pretty regularly, so it's still important for them to go deep in the games and keep the bullpen fresh."

Oakland's relief corps has tallied a combined 93 1/3 innings -- fewest in the AL -- all the while gathering a 2.89 ERA, good for second-lowest in the league. Even more, the relievers have yet to allow a home run in the club's last 17 games and boast the second-lowest opponents' slugging percentage (.321) in the AL.

That same bullpen just received a fresh face and could be getting a familiar one back soon. Rookie Trystan Magnuson, called up Wednesday to take the roster spot of lefty Jerry Blevins, will be on hand as a long-man option. However, his time in Oakland could be short should Andrew Bailey's rehab process continue to progress well.

Bailey is expected to throw 20 pitches in an extended spring training game in Arizona on Saturday and, barring any unforeseen setback, could be partaking in a Minor League rehab assignment thereafter, meaning Oakland's bullpen could further be strengthened by month's end.

Off the mound, Geren will rely on a steady handful of options off the bench during the next 20 games, all of which will take place in California thanks to a road trip through San Francisco and Anaheim.

"We've been changing the lineup around a lot, keeping them fresh, and with this stretch we'll continue to do that and keep everybody sharp and healthy," he said. "We have enough players, no problem, to get through these 20 in a row. Everyone is healthy and playing well."

"With position players, we've had plenty of options. I think the bullpen will get tested a bit."

### **Woman throws historic batting practice in Oakland**

OAKLAND -- After becoming the first woman to throw batting practice for a Major League Baseball team during Spring Training, Justine Siegal made history again Friday, when it is believed she became the first woman to throw batting practice in a Major League ballpark.

Siegal, the founder of Baseball for All, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing meaningful instruction and opportunities in baseball, especially for girls, threw batting practice for the A's on Friday before their series opener against



the White Sox. The first batter she faced was A's manager Bob Geren, who stepped in to take some cuts to help Siegal find the strike zone while she loosened up.

"The guys hit her good," Geren said. "[Josh] Willingham hit her hard -- which is good. That's a compliment. When you throw batting practice, you want everybody to hit you really hard. It's not like a game. It's the opposite in a game."

It wasn't the first time Siegal threw batting practice for the A's, as they were one of a handful of clubs the righty tossed batting practice for during Spring Training, along with the Indians and the Rays. But none of those sessions took place in a Major League park like Friday's did.

While it's the second time Siegal has broken down a baseball barrier, she has said she thinks a day will come when women will make it to the Majors -- something Geren said he wouldn't rule out.

"You have all types throwing now," Geren said. "You have lefties, righties, sidearmers, knuckleballers -- anything's possible. You have people who throw 100 [mph], and then you have people like [Tim] Wakefield throwing knuckleballs up in his 40s. We've had pitchers in previous generations pushing 50, so I wouldn't rule anything out."

### **Ziegler thrilled by Sharks game experience**

OAKLAND -- Brad Ziegler was transported back to his childhood days for a handful of minutes during Thursday's off-day, when he was afforded the opportunity to ride the Zamboni during intermission at the San Jose Sharks' playoff game.

"When I first got on there," Ziegler said, "there was another kid riding it and he was about 9 years old, so I kind of felt like a kid all over again."

The A's reliever took in the game with bullpen mate David Purcey, who got a kick out of watching Ziegler wave from the middle of the ice rink.

"Let's just say I'm glad it was him and not me," Purcey said, laughing. "I enjoyed my seat just fine."

Ziegler grew up in Missouri watching the Kansas City Blades, which served as the Sharks' Minor League affiliate in the early 1990s. Since then, he's never experienced a thrill quite like the one he got Thursday, when the Sharks held off the Detroit Red Wings, 3-2, to advance to the conference finals for a second straight year.

"It was electric," he said. "The opening part, when the players skated out onto the ice, I got goose bumps because it's just so loud. You feel so much intensity, and I think the closest thing I've ever experienced like that was the Triple-A playoffs in Sacramento."

A's manager Bob Geren was also in attendance, calling the nail-biting game "fantastic."

As a thanks for his Zamboni ride, Ziegler is looking forward to welcoming the Sharks to the Oakland Coliseum for a round of batting practice by season's end.

### **Worth noting**

- Kevin Kouzmanoff was back at third base Friday, getting his first start since Sunday in Kansas City when he went 2-for-4 with a home run. Andy LaRoche started all three contests in Texas and has started a total of 11 at the hot corner this season.

"That's a position right now, where, whoever is playing best is going to play," manager Bob Geren said. "We want offensive production out of that spot, and that's what we're looking for. Kouzmanoff has had a great attitude through it all, and it's nice to get him back in there."

- An indecisive Coco Crisp is reaching out to A's fans to help him decide on a hairstyle.

Fans can **vote for one of three looks** -- Afro, braids or shaved.

"I would think he'd just keep the braids," manager Bob Geren said. "I don't see him going bald."

Crisp, however, is thinking of taking it all off. In fact, he even made his own vote and checked the bald option.

"Is that right?" Geren asked when hearing that. "Is he thinking about shaving it off?"

"Well, I guess that's the only vote that counts. I just like it when he's hitting and flying around the bases and makes things happen. When he's running around the bases, it doesn't matter how his hair looks."

### **Ross hoping to stop rolling White Sox**

By Adam Berry / MLB.com | 5/14/2011 1:20 AM ET

Through the first 37 games in 2010, the White Sox were 14-23 before digging themselves out of that hole and making a playoff push. Before Friday's 4-3 win over the A's, they didn't find themselves in much better position: 15-23, sitting squarely in fourth place in the American League Central.

But with one win in Oakland, Chicago has now won five of its last six and has a chance to win three straight series for the first time this season with a win Saturday in the Coliseum. The White Sox dug themselves out of last season's early hole and wound up making a push for the playoffs, and this year's club is taking solace in the idea that they can do the same thing.

"I don't believe how you start is how you finish," manager Ozzie Guillen said. "We played very bad, we played very poorly for 2 1/2 weeks, very bad baseball. Name it: bad defense, bad offense, bad pitching, bad managing, bad coaching. Everything was bad.

"But now, now we're playing the way we thought we were going to play. Now, we're playing the way we built this ballclub and the expectations for this ballclub. We have to take it one day at a time. That's what we're doing now. Hopefully we'll continue to play good."

Standing in the way of the club's search for further momentum is Oakland right-hander Tyson Ross. Just a year removed from his Major League debut, Ross moved into the A's starting rotation on April 22 after Dallas Braden went on the disabled list. Now, as Braden will undergo potentially season-ending shoulder surgery Monday, Ross has moved up in the rotation and will make his fifth start of the year Saturday.

"It's terrible news to hear that Dallas had to go under the knife. We all want him back healthy and he's a big part of this team," said Ross, who is 1-1 with a 2.28 ERA as a starter this season. "I don't want to get into the rotation under those circumstances, but I'm just going to continue to pitch and keep doing my thing.

"I'm still continuing to learn. I'm trying to get as much knowledge as I can in those four days in between and apply that to my next start, and whatever happens in that next start, learn from that and get better. I'm just trying to continue to learn and process information and apply it to my game as fast as possible."

### **White Sox: Vizquel rewards Sox in rare start**

- At 44 years old, infielder Omar Vizquel has understandably seen his workload lightened quite a bit, but he made the most of an opportunity Friday night. Vizquel got his 10th start of the season, playing third base and batting eighth. The 23-year Major League veteran went 2-for-3 with an RBI double and a run scored.

"It's not difficult," Vizquel said before the game. "It's easier because you play less. I'm ready every day. I come here. I do my work. I do what I have to do to stay sharp. The last thing I want to do is just lay back and be mad. They have given me a great chance to play and to be here, and I'm taking the best out of it. I'm really excited that I'm here."

- Part of the reason Vizquel was able to start was the fact that the club is still deciding whether or not to put Mark Teahen on the disabled list. Teahen left Wednesday's game after the top of the seventh with a strained right oblique, didn't play Friday and won't play Saturday, Guillen said.

"We're going to wait one day or two days with [him] not doing much to [see if he] could come back and be healthy," Guillen said. "In the meanwhile, in the next two days if he's not ready, we have to do something about it."

### **A's: Geren confident in entire starting rotation**

- Losing an ace like Braden from the starting rotation, potentially for the remainder of the season, will thrust the rest of the starting staff into the fire -- putting increased responsibility on each pitcher to play a more prominent role. But Oakland manager Bob Geren isn't worried in the least about his staff of Ross, Trevor Cahill, Brett Anderson, Gio Gonzalez and Brandon McCarthy, who took the loss Friday night despite giving up three earned runs over seven innings.

In fact, Geren doesn't see the loss of Braden as putting any additional pressure on his pitchers.

"It's not really fair to label numbers on these guys -- fifth starter, fourth starter. They're all starting pitchers for the Oakland Athletics, and they're all doing very well," Geren said. "We don't feel a huge difference on a given night on who's pitching. We feel like they're all throwing the ball well and if we get them some runs, we're going to win. It's a good feeling as a team to know that."

- While the starters will face a difficult test throughout the season with the injury to Braden, the A's bullpen will face a much more direct test over the next three weeks as the team enters a stretch of 20 games in 20 days. The difficult run began Friday, when only two relievers (Grant Balfour and Michael Wuertz) had to throw an inning apiece. Entering Friday's game, Oakland's bullpen had thrown only 93 1/3 innings, the fewest in the AL, with a 2.93 ERA, the second-lowest in the league. The 20-day stretch will also challenge the team's positional depth, but Geren was more concerned about his bullpen.

"We've been changing the lineup around a lot, keeping them fresh, and with this stretch we'll continue to do that and keep everybody sharp and healthy," he said. "With position players, we've had plenty of options. I think the bullpen will get tested a bit."

### **Worth noting**

- Josh Willingham sat out Oakland's Friday loss, dropping his appeal for the one-game suspension he received earlier in the week for arguing balls and strikes and making contact with an umpire Saturday in Kansas City -- which Major League Baseball called "inappropriate conduct," fining the A's outfielder in addition to the one-game suspension. Ryan Sweeney started for Willingham, going 1-for-3 with a run scored.

- Hector Santiago, a 30th-round selection by the White Sox in the 2006 Draft, combined with two relievers to throw a one-hit game in Class A Winston-Salem's 5-0 win over the Salem Red Sox. Santiago, a 23-year-old left-hander, gave up a bloop single in the sixth inning.

### **Wilson confident buddy Braden will persevere**

By Chris Haft / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Giants closer Brian Wilson expressed complete faith in the ability of A's left-hander Dallas Braden, his close friend, to persevere through his upcoming shoulder surgery.

"He knows what to do," Wilson said Friday. "There's nothing you can do sometimes about the cards you get dealt. It's how you play them."

Wilson, who toured Thailand with Braden last offseason, believes that his buddy's work ethic will enable him to emerge stronger once he finishes rehabilitation. That could sideline him for at least a year.

"He works hard. He keeps himself in great shape. He has the fighter mentality," Wilson said. "Nobody wants to be sidelined for a year, but there are certain guys who can handle it. He's one of them."

Wilson should know. He missed the 2003 season, when the Giants selected him in the 24th round of the First-Year Player Draft, after renowned orthopedist Dr. James Andrews performed Tommy John elbow surgery on him. Wilson was limited to 23 appearances the following year.

"I went into the situation knowing that the doctor I was getting surgery from was going to make me better," Wilson said. "Sure, I'll take an extra couple of miles [per hour, for his fastball]."

### **After precautions, Posey returns to lineup**

CHICAGO -- Catcher Buster Posey returned to the Giants' lineup Friday following a precautionary one-day break.

Posey absorbed two foul balls off his mask in Wednesday night's seventh inning against Arizona, left the game and underwent tests to check for a possible concussion. The tests revealed no neurological abnormalities and Posey felt fine.

"He could have played yesterday," manager Bruce Bochy said.

Though Posey confirmed that he felt no ill effects from Wednesday, he expressed gratitude for the Giants' care and feeding.

"I can say that it's necessary to be cautious about it," he said.

### **Bochy talks playing time with outfielders**

CHICAGO -- Giants manager Bruce Bochy gathered his outfielders Friday morning to discuss how he plans on playing them in upcoming days, helping them understand that he's aware of the glut they've formed.

Center fielder Andres Torres' return from the disabled list Tuesday has changed roles for some players -- most notably Pat Burrell, whose activity has diminished sharply. Burrell started 31 of San Francisco's first 34 games in left field but has been used only as a pinch-hitter since Torres returned from the disabled list Tuesday. Meanwhile, Torres and Cody Ross have started all four games. Aaron Rowand and Nate Schierholtz have started twice apiece.

Bochy acknowledged that Burrell has slipped into a subordinate role.

"Not that he wants that role," Bochy said. "But he's a pretty nice weapon to come off the bench."

Bochy added that Burrell will start Saturday against left-hander Doug Davis.

### **Worth noting**

- Manager Bruce Bochy indicated that right-hander Sergio Romo currently fits the profile of a "situational" reliever, used primarily to neutralize right-handed batters.

"I think it's fair to say, in this early going, that he has had more success against righties than lefties," Bochy said of Romo, who has faced one batter in each of his last four appearances and entered Friday with only 9 2/3 innings pitched in 15 appearances.

Right-handers have hit .111 (3-for-27) off Romo, compared to .333 (2-for-6) for lefties.

- Giants broadcaster Mike Krukow, who began his Major League pitching career with the Cubs (1976-81), served as Friday's "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" guest conductor during the seventh-inning stretch.

### **Gutierrez: Did A's Braden make a Faustian deal?**

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

*It has all the elements of a Faustian bargain...A middling, middle-of-the-rotation hurler makes a deal with the devil. The left-hander joins a pantheon of baseball legends by authoring a perfect game. He enjoys all the spoils that accompany such celebrity. Alas, the devil comes to collect. Quickly.*

OAKLAND - That's what I wrote in a column for the Sacramento Bee last July. It seems even more appropriate now.

At the time, I was writing about Dallas Braden's stunning lack of success in the wake of his otherworldly Mother's Day Perfect Game. He had been winless in his next eight starts, going 0-5.

Now, he's looking at potential season-ending surgery on his throwing shoulder to repair a tear in the capsule Monday in New York.

"Dallas, that's my boy, and I can feel his pain," A's left-hander and Braden protege Gio Gonzalez told me Friday afternoon.

"But with his positive attitude and his competitive nature, he's not going to let it slow him down."

Gonzalez and Braden have a unique relationship. So of course Gonzalez's unraveling in Texas on Wednesday, when he gave up seven runs to the Rangers in the third inning, came at nearly the exact moment the A's announced Braden's surgery.

It was like Elliott falling deathly ill when E.T. got sick waiting for the mothership to come and pick him up.

Like a pained Obi-Wan Kenobi needing to take a seat aboard the Millennium Falcon, "as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror, and were suddenly silenced."

Even if Gonzalez did not know of Braden's decision to go under the knife until after the game, when he was stunned to be told of it by reporters.

But unlike the beating in Arlington, which was rained out and will be replayed in its entirety, Braden does not get a do-over.

He knew something was wrong immediately after coming out of that April 16 game. And he knew it when he was initially told there was no structural damage, only inflammation.

Of course, all eyes turn to Gonzalez, who, many think, has used Braden's mentorship as a crutch. A's manager Bob Geren, though, thinks that line of thinking is overblown by the media.

But what if Braden has already thrown his last meaningful pitch, at least for a long time?

Then it brings us back to last summer, when, somewhat playfully, I wondered in print if Braden had indeed cut a deal with the devil for a shot at immortality and throwing just the 19th perfect game in history.

Before the gem, Braden was 17-23 in his career. Since then, he is 8-13.

He is the modern-day Charlie Robertson, who threw a perfect game for the Chicago White Sox in 1922 in just his fourth big-league start. His star-crossed career ended with a pedestrian record of 49-80.

Braden's career winning percentage - .419; Robertson's - .380.

A quick glance at those with membership in the Perfecto Club is like looking at pitching's Mount Rushmore, rising, of course, from Cooperstown. There's Cy Young, playing catch with Sandy Koufax while Catfish Hunter enjoys a game of long toss with Randy Johnson.

Braden and Robertson? The two most unlikely members of the fraternity deserve their memberships. They, did, after all, do the deed.

Baseball is a cyclical yet fresh game, one that makes you think there are supernatural forces often at work in the American Pastime. So of course the A's are playing their first home game since news of Braden's impending surgery came down against Robertson's White Sox.

It's enough to make you brush up on your Faust.

### **Crisp caught at plate, White Sox hold off A's, 4-3**

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Coco Crisp decided it was worth the gamble after watching one pitch. He lost the gamble and the Oakland Athletics lost the game.

Crisp was caught trying to score the tying run on a straight steal of home in the eighth inning, and the Chicago White Sox held off the Athletics 4-3 on Friday night.

"I hesitated just enough," said Crisp, who was successful stealing home once in the minors. "If I'm going to go for it, I should just go for it. I still believe, without the stutter step, I'm in."

Crisp had a chance to tie the game after the A's rallied for three runs in the seventh. David DeJesus, who had two hits, including a triple, drove in a run after Ryan Sweeney scored on a wild pitch. Kevin Kouzmanoff added a sacrifice fly.

DeJesus, who is one hit shy of 1,000, was picked off first base to end the seventh.

"It was right there for us but we couldn't overcome the early four-run deficit," A's manager Bob Geren said. "If he's safe, it's the most exciting play in baseball. If he's out, it's a tough way to end an inning with a pretty good hitter up."

Omar Vizquel, who has successfully swiped home on a straight steal, had an RBI double during a four-run second inning and Phil Humber pitched well into the seventh. Paul Konerko added two hits for Chicago, which improved to 5-2 on its current road trip.

Crisp led off the inning with a single, stole second and went to third on Daric Barton's groundout. The speedy outfielder then broke for home while left-handed reliever Matt Thornton was in his windup. White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski caught the inside pitch and reached out to tag Crisp as he slid in front of home plate.

"In that situation he wasn't paying attention to me," Crisp said. "The only person paying any attention was Omar. I just took a stutter step before going and that's all it took for the play to go their way."

Crisp "caught me off guard a little bit," Thornton said. "You never know, if I flinch you might get a balk. Everyone thought he was just going to deke a little bit, fake in and come back out, but he kept on going. Two weeks ago that's a game-tying run and who knows what happens. But we're playing a little better baseball right now and getting some better results as a whole."

Oakland starter Brandon McCarthy had control problems in the second inning when the White Sox scored four times. He gave up a leadoff single to Konerko, then issued consecutive walks to load the bases. Alex Rios' grounder scored one run and Vizquel followed with an RBI double.

"It's really frustrating," McCarthy said. "I walk two to start the inning and that's something I just can't do. That was too much to save the outing. To lose by one runs after that is really tough to swallow."

Gordon Beckham's sacrifice fly made it 3-0, and after Juan Pierre reached on an infield single, McCarthy threw wildly to first on a pickoff attempt.

The ball rolled into Chicago's bullpen as Vizquel raced in from third. McCarthy (1-4) settled down and allowed only two hits over the next five innings but remains winless over his last six starts. The right-hander had six strikeouts and two walks.

## NOTES

Injured Oakland closer Andrew Bailey played catch before leaving for Arizona, where he's scheduled to pitch one inning in an extended spring training game Saturday.

The A's played without OF Josh Willingham, who served a one-game suspension for bumping plate umpire Bill Miller while arguing a called third strike against Kansas City on May 6... With 20 games without an off day, the White Sox are going with a six-man rotation and manager Ozzie Guillen isn't ruling out using it beyond that. ... Justine Siegel, a 36-year-old mother of one, threw batting practice to Oakland manager Bob Geren and a few A's players before the game. Siegel had previously pitched batting practice for Oakland in spring training and was extended an invitation to join the team at the Coliseum.

## **San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber names Matthew Mahood as CEO**

Silicon Valley / San Jose Business Journal - by David Goll

Matthew Mahood has been named president and CEO of the San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce, replacing Pat Dando who has been in the job since 2005. He was previously CEO of the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce.

The **San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce** named **Matthew Mahood** as president and CEO to replace **Pat Dando**, who has been in the job since 2005.

Mahood has been president and CEO of the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce since 2002.

Mahood is most recently credited for having played an important role in rallying corporate support to keep the **Sacramento Kings** NBA team from moving to Anaheim next season. Sacramento's Mayor **Kevin Johnson**, a former NBA star himself, said Mahood helped secure pledges of up to \$10 million from two dozen Sacramento-area companies to go toward a long-awaited new arena for the Kings.

If selected to lead the San Jose chamber, Mahood could bring that experience to help promote the construction of a downtown San Jose ballpark for the **Oakland Athletics**. City officials are still awaiting word from Major League Baseball as to whether A's co-owner **Lew Wolff** will be allowed to move his team from the East Bay to Silicon Valley.

"I've known Matt for 10 years, and he has experience leading a regional chamber," said Dando, who headed the 2,000-member chamber for seven years. "He led an effort at the request of (Mayor Johnson) to rally the business community to keep the Kings, and he did an excellent job."

Dando also lauded Mahood for his fiscal management of the Sacramento chamber, increasing the organization's annual revenue from \$3.1 million to \$5 million over a four-year period. She said Mahood shares her belief in putting aside budget reserves.

"He has strong fiscal abilities," Dando said. "He's also a very nice guy."

That's an impression of Mahood shared by **Nanci Williams**, co-founder and principal of Orloff/Williams & Co., a San Jose marketing firm. Williams served as chairwoman of the chamber board during 2006-07. Williams, who stepped down from the board of directors two years ago, is still a member of the chamber's political action committee.

"He's a very impressive, articulate person," Williams said. "If I was to choose someone out of Central Casting to represent the Silicon Valley business community, he would be it."

Current chamber officials were restrained in their comment on Mahood.

Prior to joining the Sacramento chamber, Mahood worked in various management and senior-level positions at United Parcel Service of America Inc., FedEx Corp., BAX Global Inc. and the former Webvan Group Inc.

Some observers have said Mahood's talents could come in handy as San Jose works to build a baseball stadium, although there are still obstacles. Major League Baseball officials must approve the A's move, complicated by the San Francisco Giants' claim of territorial rights to Santa Clara County.

"The issue of the A's stadium is way beyond what the chamber president can do," Mayor **Chuck Reed** said. "It's all between Lew (Wolff) and Major League Baseball."

But Reed still had plenty of important tasks in mind for Mahood, if chosen.

"He can help save the capital of Silicon Valley," the mayor said. "He can help create jobs and increase our tax revenue. And the chamber must continue to be a leader on fiscal reform issues, as was **Pat Dando**. Restoring fiscal health is necessary for the city's ability to provide services for businesses and residents alike."

**Scott Knies**, executive director of the San Jose Downtown Association, said he plans to work closely with the chamber president. He said lead candidate Mahood's ability to forge public-private alliances as he did in Sacramento are more important than ever before.

"All of our organizations have to become more focused because of the scarcity of public resources being reinvested into our cities," Knies said.

He said if Major League Baseball does approve the A's move to San Jose, he would expect the chamber to help lead efforts to secure voter approval for a downtown stadium.

### **Inside and outside the lines, Part XIX (1989-1991)**

EV 'ACE' PARKER Napa Valley Register

During the three-year period of 1989-1991, Major League Baseball teams went on a buying frenzy.

Young free agents inside the lines of major league diamonds thanked their lucky stars that the dreaded Reserve Clause was dead and buried forever, and from here on salary-wise, “the skies were the limit!”

Willie McGee, a fine outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals — but never Hall of Fame material — signed a \$13 million contract with the San Francisco Giants, who also signed pitchers Bud Black and Dave Righetti for \$10 million apiece.

That was only a tip of the iceberg as young free agents became overnight millionaires thanks to the Players Union, free agency and frantic club owners paying fortunes to remain contenders.

During baseball’s winter meetings in 1990, the grab for talent saw the worst baseball deal ever made, as the Boston Red Sox signed Matt Young, a pitcher for the Seattle Mariners, for the amazing sum of \$6.35 million for three years of his service.

Young, by the way, came to the Red Sox with a .395 career winning percentage (won 51, lost 78).

What the BoSox got out of that deal was a young man who just didn’t work out, winning three games and losing 11 in two years of work in Boston.

Tom Yawkey, the BoSox owner, got rid of his advisor who suggested the deal in the first place.

And Darryl Strawberry of the Mets, who had some troubles of his own outside the lines of a baseball diamond, signed a \$20.3 million contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1991 — and Dodger bosses began regretting what they’d done not long after the ink dried on that 5-year contract.

Still, the “Grand Old Game” inside the lines of baseball diamonds went on and fans outside the lines, hooked on baseball, traded summer vacations in the country for box seats or bleacher seats to showdowns between the Yankees and Red Sox or Giants and Dodgers.

Those same fans kept Major League turnstiles clicking to the tune of 54 to 56 million customers.

Gone were the days when an owner could say to an employee, “If you don’t like what I think you’re worth, kid, you can always go back to the farm, factory or coal mine where we found you, and you’ll never play a game in organized baseball again — not ever!”

And gone were the days when a Minor League owner once traded a malcontent star who argued with his boss and with the local press to another team for a 25-pound turkey — and then invited the press to enjoy a turkey dinner with him.

All of that was over and the inmates now ran the asylum, ably assisted by the Players Union and their batteries of agents.

1989

On June 29, the manager of the Boise Hawks of the Class A Northwest League was thrown out of the game for kicking sand all over an umpire’s shoes.

The manager retreated to the clubhouse, and came back dressed in a Hawk costume — beak, feathers and all.

He went back out on the field and led hometown fans in booing the poor umpire. The league suspended the manager for one game when he took off his Hawks headdress for a breath of air.

On July 6, the Vancouver Canadians of the Triple A Pacific Coast League refused to take the field when their paychecks, due on July 1, still had not arrived. The checks arrived the next day, and only then would the Canadians step back inside the lines of a baseball diamond.

In the major leagues, on Aug. 23, all-time hit king Pete Rose accepted a lifetime ban from baseball due to allegations that he gambled on the game — and his own team.

He remains in limbo to this day, and like everybody else needs a ticket to get into the Hall of Fame.

Nearly a couple of months later, between the lines, the San Francisco Giants defeated the Chicago Cubs in five games for the National League championship.



The Giants were led by first baseman Will Clark, who hit a scorching .650 with 13 hits in 20 at-bats, including two homers and eight runs batted in.

The American League showdown saw the Oakland Athletics powerhouse defeat the Toronto Blue Jays, also in five games, led by Dave Stewart's two pitching wins, plus Rickey Henderson's .400 batting and eight stolen bases.

And if that wasn't enough, Carney Lansford's .455 hitting and Mark McGwire's .389 bashing made the series a runaway.

And what baseball player or fan inside or outside the lines will ever forget the 1989 World Series.

The powerful Oakland Athletics would sweep the San Francisco Giants in four games in a World Series halted for 10 days by an earthquake in the San Francisco Bay area.

The A's had polished off the Giants in Games 1 and 2 in Oakland, and after a one-day rest, the series would continue on Oct. 17, 1989 in San Francisco — the city across the Bay.

But, just before the umpire's cry of "Play Ball," a 7.1 magnitude earthquake shook the ballpark and the cities of San Francisco and Oakland.

It took 10 days and 67 deaths later for Game 3 to get started.

Come hell, high water or an earthquake, Games 3 and 4 went on.

In the shambles, the powerful Oakland Athletics had swept the Giants in four games.

Dave Stewart and Mike Moore won two games apiece, and Carney Lansford's .438 batting thunder defeated the Giants — and an earthquake to boot.

1990

On April 6, five of the six Opening Day games were canceled in the Class A Midwest League because of a huge blizzard.

From the unheated dugouts of the South Bend White Sox to the lair of the Cedar Rapid Reds, the boys who got through to those ballparks were throwing snowballs, not curveballs, at one another.

On May 14, a Gastonia Rangers pitcher in the Class A South Atlantic League complained of chest pains through two innings of work, and died in the dugout before medical help could arrive.

On Dec. 15, with the major leagues threatening to form their own new minor leagues, the existing minor leagues surrendered to the lords of "big league" baseball and gave their "big brothers" wide-ranging powers.

In the major leagues, the 1990 National League playoffs saw the Cincinnati Reds defeat the Pittsburgh Pirates in six games, led by Paul O'Neill.

He hit a torrid .391, and "The Big Red Machine" was re-born.

The American League championship promised to be a classic between the Oakland Athletics and Boston Red Sox, but surprisingly the A's swept the BoSox in four straight games. Dave Stewart's two pitching gems and power hitting by Terry Steinbach (.455) and Carney Lansford (.438) carried the A's all the way.

But the Athletics' runaway locomotive suddenly ran off the tracks in the 1990 World Series. Cincy's "Big Red Machine" did the impossible — they swept Oakland in a four-game series, and nobody saw it coming.

Dave Stewart, the A's ace, lost two of the games as the Reds' Jose Rijo won two. A sparingly used Billy Hatcher of the Reds batted a fantastic .750, and Cincy fans agreed that miracles still happen!

1991

On Jan. 28, in the minor leagues, Dale Long, a former major leaguer and minor league official, died at the age of 64.

In 1956, Dale set a major league record by hitting home runs in eight straight games. When you think about it, it was quite an accomplishment.

On March 15, baseball commissioner Fay Vincent banned the use of chewing tobacco and snuff in the low minor leagues, including the Appalachian League, Gulf Coast League, New York-Pennsylvania League, Northwest League and Pioneer League.

Most of those fuzzy-cheeked kids had to wait until they moved up a few notches to have a chew.

As the 1991 season played out, minor leaguers like Tino Martinez, Kenny Lofton, J.T. Snow and Jim Thome knew that very soon the big money would be coming — and retired greats of the game knew they were born too soon.

In the major leagues, the National League playoffs saw the Atlanta Braves and Pittsburgh Pirates go head-to-head in a seven-game series.

With John Smoltz and Steve Avery each winning two games, the Braves would move on to the World Series.

Their rivals would be the Minnesota Twins, who defeated the Toronto Blue Jays in a five-game series. Jack Morris won two games and slugger Kirby Puckett posted a .429 batting mark.

The 1991 World Series was a nail-biter that went the full seven games, and once again it was the Twins' Jack Morris winning another pair of games.

His battery mate, Brian Harper, led the Twins with a torrid .381 batting average.

By the way, each World Series share for the victorious Twins was \$119,579, and losing shares for the Braves were \$73,323 per man.

The boys inside the lines had traveled a long road since the first World Series shares were doled out in 1903.

In that first World Series, each Boston Pilgrim and Pittsburgh Pirate earned just over \$1,000.

Times change!

Postscript:

Thanks to Napa baseball enthusiast Casey Kelly for pointing out that the first all-California World Series was played in 1974, with the Oakland Athletics beating the Los Angeles Dodgers in five games.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Taylor returns, Sacramento wins again**

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

He's back.

After starting the year in extended spring training, top prospect Michael Taylor returned to help the River Cats top host Memphis 9-3 on Friday night.

Though his final line underwhelmed -- he went 1-for-5 with one run, one RBI and three strikeouts -- his team demolished the Redbirds to win the series three-games-to-one.

The first three innings flew by as neither team scored a run until the River Cats broke the ice in the top of the fourth inning. Anthony Recker led off the inning with a single to center field. Recker then stole second and later advanced to third on an Adrian Cardenas single. The next batter, Wes Timmons, scored Recker on a single to right field, advancing Cardenas to third. Shane Peterson then drove in Cardenas on a sacrifice fly to left, giving Sacramento the 2-0 advantage.

However, the Redbirds would not go down quietly.

Memphis cut the lead in half in the fifth inning when Bryan Anderson doubled home Ramon Vazquez. It would then tie the game in the bottom of the sixth on an Andre Brown sacrifice fly that scored Aaron Luna.

The game was tied at two entering the seventh inning and Memphis had the momentum in its favor. However, they wouldn't have it for long.

Sacramento stormed back, scoring five runs in the seventh and two more in the eighth to blow the game wide open.

The star of that two-inning stretch was Steve Tolleson, who put the Cats on top with a two-run double in the seventh then put the Redbirds away with a two-run home run in the eighth. Tolleson finished the game 2-for-4 with two runs, four RBIs, one walk and a home run.

Five other River Cats contributed multi-hit games, including three from Cardenas (batting .364) and Timmons (.386).

Starter Bobby Cramer lasted 5.1 innings, allowing three hits, two runs and two walks on five strikeouts. The River Cats bullpen continued to be a bright spot, pitching 3.2 innings allowing one unearned run on three hits and one walk with six strikeouts.

With the win, Sacramento wins its fifth series and improves to 24-12 on the year.

The River Cats now travel to Nashville to open a four-game set against the Sound. The projected starters Saturday night are right-hander Travis Banwart (1-2, 3.24) for Sacramento and righty Amaury Rivas (3-3, 4.70) for Nashville. First pitch is slated for 4:35 p.m.

### **RockHounds pound Missions**

Staff Reports, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The Midland RockHounds pounded out 14 hits and got a solid start by Shawn Haviland to roll past the San Antonio Missions 11-0 on Friday night at Citibank Ballpark.

The Missions had owned the RockHounds for much of this season, but thanks to a balanced attack up and down the lineup, Midland got only its second victory in 10 tries against San Antonio this season.

All but Petey Paramore got a hit in the Midland starting lineup and six players had at least two hits against Missions pitching.

The RockHounds didn't waste any time as they jumped out to a 4-0 lead against San Antonio starter Aaron Breit (1-2) in the first inning. Michael Spina had a two-run double, Matt Sulentic had an RBI single and Kent Walton added an RBI single.

After scoring a run in the third inning, the 'Hounds added four more in the fourth thanks to a lack of control by Missions reliever Eddie Kunz for a commanding 9-0 lead. Kunz walked both Spina and Jeremy Barfield. Then with the bases loaded, Walton smacked a double to left field to plate two runs, and then he and Barfield scored on a throwing error by left fielder Jaff Decker.

That was more than enough for Haviland (1-3), who picked up his first win of the season by scattering four hits over six scoreless innings. He also walked four and struck out one.

Midland added two runs in the fifth as a passed ball allowed Spina to score, and then a sacrifice fly by Walton -- who had four RBI on the night -- plated Barfield.

The two teams meet again at 7 p.m. today at Citibank Ballpark as Midland is expected to send right-hander Ethan Hollingsworth (2-2, 3.97) against San Antonio right-hander Casey Kelly (3-0, 3.43), the top prospect in the San Diego Padres organization.

### **Modesto Earns Split with 10-4 Victory**

Stockton Ports

It may not have been the slugfest that Ports fans were privy to on Tuesday, but the Nuts big bats came to life on Friday, making the Ports pay with a 10-4 loss. The Ports are now 6-5 against the Modesto Nuts this season. The Nuts got off to a strong start, driving in two runs to

get the game going. Delta Cleary Jr had a strong night, going 2-for-5 on the evening including a triple in the second, wasted no time getting on base with a single to start the game. Cleary scored on a passed ball by Juan Nunez to score the first run for the Nuts; it would not get much better for the Ports the rest of the game.

The Ports saw a glimmer of hope in the first when Michael Choice smashed a solo shot over the right field wall to bring them back within a run. But the Nuts would have none of it, breaking the game wide open the next inning.

The second inning was the biggest inning of the game for either team, as the Nuts knocked in five runs against Ports righty Murphy Smith (1-3, 5.84). Angelys Nina started the inning with a double to right field, and came home on a sacrifice fly by Carlos Martinez. Cleary then stepped up and drilled a ball just fair down the first base line. A walk to Scott Robinson brought heavy hitter Mike Zuanich to the plate, who drove in Cleary with a single. Kent Matthes would make the difference in the game however, hitting a three-run bomb over the right field wall, making it 7-1 Nuts.

The Ports attempted a comeback in the fourth, putting three runs on the board. Michael Choice and Max Stassi both singled, with Stassi driving in Choice. Then a comedy of errors ensued which allowed the Ports to score two more runs. A wild pitch made it possible for Myrio Richard to cross home and a fielding error by Martinez sent Stassi home. This would be the Ports last run of the game and hopes for a comeback would diminish as the game wore on.

A comeback was only made more improbable in the seventh, as the Nuts tacked on three more insurance runs. Two of the Nuts three runs came at the hands of Nolan Arenado, who pulled a two-run long ball over the left field wall for the final runs of the evening.

The Ports had no answer in the seventh, eighth or ninth and went quietly into the night, as they prepare to head back on the road, heading to their first meeting of the season with perennial powerhouse, the San Jose Giants. Fabian Williamson takes the mound for Stockton as the Giants and Ports face off at Municipal Stadium at 6 p.m.

### **Bees Win 2-1 in 10 Innings**

By Jon Versteeg, [burlingtonbees.com](http://burlingtonbees.com)

BURLINGTON, IA- The Burlington Bees (25-9) got a sacrifice fly to right field from 3B Wade Kirkland (2-3) to earn a 2-1 win over the Cedar Rapids Kernels (20-15) before 511 fans in the opener of a three-game series at Community Field Friday night.

The Kernels scored a single run in the third inning. 3B Jesus Campos (1-4) hit an infield single and moved to second base on at throwing error by Kirkland. SS Jean Almanzar (1-4) grounded out to move Campos to third base. A bloop single to shallow left field by CF Travis Witherspoon (2-5) brought in Campos for a 1-0 lead.

The Bees tied the game in the eighth inning. LF Douglas Landaeta (0-2) walked and moved to third base on a single by Kirkland. C Daniel Petitti (1-3) hit a single to score Landaeta and tie it at 1-1.

In the 10th inning 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (1-4) hit a single and Tyreace House (0-0) came into the game to run for him. House moved to second base on a walk by LF Douglas Landaeta (0-2). House moved to third base when CF Jose Rivero (0-4) reached first base on a fielder's choice. Landaeta was forced out at second base.

Kirkland's sacrifice fly allowed House to score and give the Bees the win.

The Bees and Kernels continue their series on Saturday night at 6:35 p.m. It's "Armed Forces Night" with free admission to all military personnel past and present with proper identification. It's also "Friends and Family Night" with everyone running the bases after the game. RHP Heath Nichols (1-2, 6.59) gets the start for Cedar Rapids against RHP Blake Hassebrock (2-0, 0.79) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at [gobees.com](http://gobees.com).