

A's News Clips, Saturday, May 21, 2011

Oakland A's miss repeated opportunities before San Francisco Giants win in 10th

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's lost a 2-1 heartbreaker to the Giants in the bottom of the 10th inning Friday night, but the path to defeat was blazed by missed opportunities throughout the night.

How else to explain it when five pitchers give up just five hits but can't come out on top? Or when a team puts the leadoff runner on in six innings but can scrounge up just one run?

Left-handed reliever Brian Fuentes allowed Aubrey Huff's walk-off single in the 10th that scored Emmanuel Burriss for the winning run, but the A's had lots of missed chances to look back on.

And even with the A's pitching staff in a shaky state -- starting pitchers Brandon McCarthy and Tyson Ross went on the disabled list Friday -- there's no doubt that a lack of offense remains the team's biggest stumbling block.

"When you play a 2-1 game, usually it's a matter of taking advantage of opportunities or great plays," A's manager Bob Geren said. "They made some great plays on us."

A's right-hander Trevor Cahill rebounded from his first loss of the season by pitching six innings of one-hit ball. He struck out six and walked two.

Three relievers combined for three shutout innings to keep it a tie game. But Fuentes (1-5) came on in the 10th and allowed Burriss' leadoff single. Burriss was bunted to second, and after an intentional walk to Freddy Sanchez, Huff singled sharply for the game-winner.

Fuentes' four losses entering the night were tied for second-most among A.L. relievers.

Cahill allowed his only run in the first.

He walked leadoff hitter Andres Torres, who stole second and went to third when Kurt Suzuki's errant throw went into center field.

Sanchez's grounder to second scored Torres.

"I couldn't throw a strike (to Torres)," Cahill said. "That was the difference in the game."

The A's loaded the bases with no outs in the top of the fifth but mustered just one run to pull into a 1-1 tie.

Cahill stepped up with no outs, and with a full count, bounced into a 4-6-3 double play that scored Ellis. But with the go-ahead run on third, Coco Crisp grounded out to second to end the threat.

Geren said Cahill had the take sign early in the at-bat but said he had no problem with the pitcher swinging away, though a strikeout would have left just one out and the bases loaded.

The A's also had the go-ahead run 90 feet away in the seventh but failed to score. That in part was because of an outstanding play from second baseman Sanchez.

Pinch hitter Conor Jackson grounded sharply up the middle, but Sanchez made a diving backhanded stop and made a strong throw from his knees to get Jackson and keep the game tied.

In the eighth, Crisp was stranded at first after a leadoff single.

Daric Barton took a called third strike after bunting foul on a 2-1 pitch in which Crisp was trying to steal second. David DeJesus flied out, and Josh Willingham struck out to end the threat.

In the second, Willingham was thrown out at third on Ellis' hit-and-run single. Ellis executed perfectly, shooting a single through the hole on the right side, but Nate Schierholtz fielded the ball in shallow right and his on-the-money throw nailed Willingham.

The single was Ellis' 1,000th career hit, making him the 12th player in Oakland history to reach the mark.

Oakland A's update: Rotation takes hit with injuries to Tyson Ross and Brandon McCarthy

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's find themselves with two starting pitchers to replace after Brandon McCarthy was a surprise addition to the 15-day disabled list Friday along with Tyson Ross.

The Ross news was expected after the right-hander left Thursday's game against the Minnesota Twins in the first inning with a left oblique strain. But McCarthy's injury -- a stress reaction in his right shoulder -- was another setback for a rotation suddenly scrambling for healthy bodies.

McCarthy said his shoulder began bothering him a few days before Wednesday's start against the Twins, but he made it through seven innings.

An exam Thursday revealed the stress reaction, which is a precursor to a fracture.

"I knew when I woke up that morning that we were going to have to shut down, and what they were going to find," McCarthy said.

McCarthy, 1-4 with a 3.39 ERA, has been sidelined for lengthy periods three times by shoulder injuries -- twice by a fracture and once by a stress reaction.

He said he doesn't believe he made things worse by pitching Wednesday.

"The attitude I've had is I'm going to keep pitching until I can't deal with it," he said.

McCarthy is hopeful he can start throwing again in about two weeks.

Ross had an MRI and was diagnosed with a Grade 2 oblique strain, considered moderate. He was told he could be pitching in games again in two weeks. But he said the pitching motion -- pushing off and moving his body forward as if on the mound -- causes him the most pain.

McCarthy and Ross were scheduled to pitch Monday and Tuesday, respectively, against the Los Angeles Angels, so the A's need to call up starters for those games.

A's manager Bob Geren confirmed that left-hander Josh Outman and right-hander Guillermo Moscoso are being considered at Triple-A Sacramento.

With Ross and McCarthy going on the D.L., the A's also demoted reliever Trystan Magnuson to Sacramento and called up relievers Joey Devine, Jerry Blevins and Fautino De Los Santos to shore up a fatigued bullpen.

Devine, who hadn't allowed an earned run in 11 appearances with the River Cats, missed all of the 2009 and 2010 seasons because of Tommy John elbow surgery.

De Los Santos also rehabbed from Tommy John surgery and has been clocked at 99 mph this season.

Closer Andrew Bailey (strained forearm) threw a scoreless inning with one strikeout in his first rehab appearance for Sacramento.

Oakland A's place starting pitchers Tyson Ross, Brandon McCarthy on disabled list

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's made a flurry of pitching moves Friday afternoon to account for injuries and a fatigued bullpen.

Starters Tyson Ross (strained left oblique) and Brandon McCarthy (stress reaction in right shoulder) were placed on the 15-day disabled list and reliever Trystan Magnuson was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento. Relievers Jerry Blevins, Joey Devine and Fautino De Los Santos were recalled from Sacramento.

The Ross move was expected after he got hurt Thursday. But McCarthy's injury is a new revelation and further depletes a rotation that's already lost Dallas Braden to a season-ending shoulder injury.

McCarthy has been sidelined three previous times in his career by similar injuries to his shoulder, but he was thought to be healthy this season.

The A's will have to make more moves in coming days as they'll need two starters, and Devine, Blevins and De Los Santos are strictly relievers.

This marks Devine's first return to the majors after missing all of the 2009 and 2010 seasons following elbow ligament replacement surgery. This is the first call-up for De Los Santos, acquired along with Gio Gonzalez and Ryan Sweeney from the White Sox in the Nick Swisher trade of January 2008.

Chin Music: More on McCarthy, Ross and the A's bullpen situation

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/20/ 2011, 6:49pm

Checking in from AT&T Park, where the outlook for the A's sure looks different than it did just a day ago ...

—Brandon McCarthy said he knew in the three or four days leading up to Wednesday's start that his shoulder wasn't feeling right. But he knew he could get through the start, so the plan was to get his shoulder checked by a doctor Thursday morning, which he did. That appointment showed what appears to be a stress reaction – the precursor to a fracture. McCarthy is hopeful of being able to throw again within a two-week period, but he says it will depend on how he feels. Last year, he had a similar injury and tried pitching through it. He eventually missed an extra 1 ½ months because of that, and he hopes by shutting it down now, he's nipping the problem in the bud. "It's either stop it at the beginning and try to catch it early, or play it out until you have to stop and possibly miss more of the season," McCarthy said. The big question: By pitching Wednesday, did McCarthy make his shoulder worse? He said he doesn't believe that to be the case, and that the pain while pitching in games is bearable. It's the discomfort between starts, and not being able to work out, that's most difficult.

—As for Tyson Ross, his MRI today showed he's got a Grade 2 oblique strain in his left side, which is considered moderate on a scale of 1-3. He said he was told he could be pitching in games again in about two weeks, but obviously it's a very fluid situation. "You've got to stay on top of these things, it's easy to re-injure it. You've got to let it heal and take your time," Ross said.

Overall, the early prognosis for both McCarthy and Ross could have been worse. But anyone who's followed the A's in recent seasons knows that their injuries tend to linger, and setbacks occur. So there's no clear indication when the A's will get their two starters back. The A's will need to call up starters for Monday and Tuesday against the Angels, and manager Bob Geren confirmed that Josh Outman and Guillermo Moscoso are two pitchers at Triple-A being considered.

—On the flip side of that bad news, reliever Joey Devine is back in the majors after missing the entire 2009 and 2010 seasons recovering from elbow surgery. He's thrilled to be back, understandably. "It's been a long while," Devine said. "It feels good, feels like things are starting to come together. It feels like all the time and patience is starting to pay off." And he's still beaming from the birth of his son, Mason Joseph, on April 11. Geren said he's happy with his late-inning relievers right now, but that Devine could be an option in the late innings if he proves effective. You can bet that Devine will start getting the call in the eighth and ninth innings if he has a couple of good outings right away. With Andrew Bailey still sidelined, you can't waste an arm like Devine's strictly in middle relief situations. Oakland's bullpen has shown vulnerability and was in need of some new blood.

—Another reliever called up today, Fautino De Los Santos, is making his first appearance in the big leagues. He also has made the long road back from "Tommy John" elbow surgery, like Devine, and his fastball has been touching 99 miles per hour. Watching him figures to be like watching Henry Rodriguez, where you're checking the radar gun every time the ball pops the catcher's mitt. De Los Santos, speaking through a translator, says he also throws a slider, sinker and changeup.

Finally, tonight's lineups:

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

Giants – Torres CF, Sanchez 2B, Huff 1B, Posey C, Schierholtz RF, Ross LF, Fontenot SS, Tejada 3B, Vogelsong RHP.

Aubrey Huff's single lifts Giants over A's

Henry Schulman, Chronicle Staff Writer

A dream matchup between Tim Lincecum and Trevor Cahill was thwarted by the Giants' rainout in Chicago on Sunday, and some folks pouted. But why? Ryan Vogelsong was hot, hot, hot.

Throw in two offenses that were cold, cold, cold, and the 2011 Giants-A's interleague opener at AT&T Park on Friday night was predictably bereft of runs. Once the game reached extra innings, the results were equally predictable, because the Giants do not lose close games at home.

They won 2-1 on Aubrey Huff's one-out single against Brian Fuentes in the 10th inning, only their fifth hit of the game.

The Giants bounded onto the field to celebrate their sixth walk-off win this season. They won their seventh in a row at AT&T Park, where 10 of their 11 wins have come by one run.

"When you do it as much as we have going back to last year, there's a sense of confidence that you're going to find a way to win the ballgame," manager Bruce Bochy said. "You hate to do it this way. You'd rather score more runs, but they're accustomed to this."

The Giants won with their standard formula of pitching and defense. Vogelsong and five relievers combined to allow one unearned run in 10 innings. Huff made the throwing error that helped Oakland score.

Nate Schierholtz made two more nice plays in right field, throwing a one-hop strike to nail Josh Willingham at third on a single and racing to catch a Kevin Kouzmanoff drive toward the right field corner to end Brian Wilson's perfect ninth.

Freddy Sanchez topped them all with what Huff described as "one of the best plays I've ever seen."

With Mark Ellis standing at third in the seventh, pinch-hitter Conor Jackson hit what looked like a two-out, go-ahead single up the middle. Sanchez made a diving stop and heaved a long throw to first from his knees to preserve the tie.

The Giants scored in the first inning but were shutout until the 10th, when Emmanuel Burriss, just inserted in a double-switch with pitcher Javier Lopez, led off with a single to left.

Andres Torres sacrificed, leaving A's manager Bob Geren with a no-win choice: pitch to Sanchez, who was 4-for-4 against Fuentes, or walk him to face Huff, whose average against lefties is nearly 100 points higher than against righties.

Geren chose the intentional walk, and Huff beat him by driving a 1-1 fastball into right-center for a single. Burriss easily beat David DeJesus' rainbow throw home.

Vogelsong and Cahill each pitched six innings. Vogelsong remained undefeated. Cahill got a no-decision one start after taking his first loss.

Geren was disappointed to watch his hitters put the leadoff hitter on in six of the first eight innings yet score just once when he let Cahill swing with the bases loaded and nobody out in the fifth, and the pitcher hit into a double play that got Ellis home.

In Friday's hitters' meeting, Geren said the offense needs to step up with starters Brandon McCarthy and Tyson Ross going on the disabled list. Instead, the A's became the latest team to fall victim to the Giants' pitching.

"When you play 2-1, it's usually a matter of taking advantage of opportunities or making great plays," Geren said. "They made some super plays on us, took a run or two away."

Joey Devine happy to be back with A's after rehab

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Joining a big-league roster for the first time since 2008, **Joey Devine** was asked what expectations he had.

"Zero," he said. "Go have fun."

Twenty-five months after his Tommy John reconstructive elbow surgery, Devine was in the A's bullpen Friday and called it "awesome." He awaited his first appearance since Sept. 28, 2008.

Devine earned a call-up by pitching 12 1/3 scoreless innings with Triple-A Sacramento, striking out 17 and walking one. Manager **Bob Geren** said he wasn't giving Devine a specific role and added, "I'll mix him in when I can. Those types of situations work themselves out. He gives me one more piece to use late in the game."

As part of a pitching staff switcheroo, Devine and fellow relievers **Jerry Blevins** and **Fautino De Los Santos**, who was acquired from the White Sox in the **Nick Swisher** trade and is awaiting his big-league debut, replaced **Tyson Ross** (left oblique) and **Brandon McCarthy** (right shoulder), both sent to the DL, and **Trystan Magnuson**, who was optioned to Sacramento.

Devine, 27, called himself a "smarter pitcher" and acknowledged the birth of his first child, a boy named **Mason Joseph** on April 11, has put him more at ease. As for his extensive rehab, he said. "It seems like all the hard work and patience is starting to pay off."

Rotation holes: With Ross and McCarthy shelved, Geren said the A's will promote two pitchers from Sacramento to start Monday and Tuesday in Anaheim. "We're keeping all the options open down there, said Geren, who called **Josh Outman** "a candidate for sure" and **Guillermo Moscoso** "another good candidate."

Travis Banwart and **Graham Godfrey** are lower on the depth chart but have better ERAs than Outman and Moscoso. Injured **Bobby Cramer** isn't in the conversation.

A's change trainers, but the injuries keep coming

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Is it a fluke? A lack of proper training and conditioning? Too many injury-prone men on the roster? The Curse of the Coliseum, whatever that is?

The A's disabled list grew by two Friday when 40 percent of the starting rotation was shelved. Tyson Ross and Brandon McCarthy are the latest injured A's on a long list that has shaken the organization the past five years.

"When I first got here, nobody got hurt," said second baseman Mark Ellis, who broke into the majors in 2002. "We were healthy and had a lot of success. Nothing you can do about injuries except build depth, and I think they did a pretty good job with that this year."

The DL has been used seven times this year, six times for pitchers, including the most seasoned starter (Dallas Braden) and best reliever (Andrew Bailey). The A's shipped players to the DL 23 times last year, two short of the team record set in 2008.

Since 2007, it's 94 and counting. The latest injuries hurt in more ways than one. The A's entered their series against the Giants with the majors' lowest ERA (2.86), and Ross (2.75) and McCarthy (3.39) were part of that, but they'll be replaced in the rotation by Triple-A pitchers. For a team without much pop, survival is about that team ERA staying as is.

Perhaps the injuries shouldn't be a surprise. The budget-conscious A's tend to fill their roster with players who have been banged up, if only because they're affordable. McCarthy and the three big offensive additions, Josh Willingham, David DeJesus and Hideki Matsui, were wounded last year and, therefore, cheaper to acquire through free agency and trades.

McCarthy didn't pitch in the majors at all in 2010 and had three DL stints in Triple-A. He lost time each of the past four seasons to injuries, including three stress fractures in the shoulder. The latest episode is a "stress reaction," not quite a fracture, and that's supposed to be the saving grace, a chance for McCarthy to return sooner rather than later.

McCarthy said he felt the injury coming on before his last start, a seven-inning stint against the Twins. He pitched anyway, knowing he'd have an MRI the next day.

"I knew when I woke up that morning that we were going to have to shut it down," he said, which begs the question: Why did he pitch at all?

With the A's, everything should be questioned. One problem is you don't always get answers. Their new trainer, Nick Paparesta, who replaced Steve Sayles, who replaced Larry Davis, doesn't make himself available to publicly address any injury.

The collective bargaining agreement permits a player to sign a waiver if he prefers the trainer to speak on his behalf. Paparesta has made it clear he wouldn't answer reporters' questions even with a waiver.

Conversely, injured Giants Pablo Sandoval and Andres Torres immediately signed waivers to empower trainer Dave Groeschner to provide updates whenever summoned by a reporter.

Through a team spokesman, Paparesta led the media to believe Braden's shoulder surgery was to repair the anterior capsule. In fact, that's not exactly what happened in the procedure, the spokesman said Friday, but the team never made a point to explain the details of the surgery after the fact, other to say "a capsule" was fixed.

On the other hand, A's players seem to swear by Paparesta and his staff, which is mostly new. It should be noted that every position player except Adam Rosales has stayed clear of the DL.

"With our conditioning and training, we're actually pretty progressive in that area," Ellis said. "We have a strength coach at every level in the organization and a very good trainer now. Injuries are one of those things that happen in professional sports."

A's leading off

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Swing away: On Thursday's TV broadcast, the announcers asked viewers which A's pitcher was the best hitter. It was meant to include current pitchers, but former play-by-play man Monte Moore e-mailed his choice: Catfish Hunter, who had three hits and three RBIs in his 1968 perfect game.

Drumbeat: A's pitching moves: Three up, three down

By John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

The A's lost 40 percent of their rotation with a single press release.

It wasn't surprising that Tyson Ross was placed on the DL with a strained left oblique, but he has company in Brandon McCarthy, who was shelved with a "stress reaction in his right scapula."

The rotation is set for this weekend's interleague series against the Giants (Cahill, Anderson, Gonzalez), but moves must be made for the first two games in Anaheim Monday and Tuesday.

The DL stints were two of six moves the A's made today, and the result was a revamped bullpen. Trystan Magnuson, as expected, was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento, leaving three roster openings. They were filled by relievers Joey Devine, Jerry Blevins and Fautino De Los Santos.

Devine missed last season after Tommy John surgery and posted a 0.00 ERA in 12 1/3 innings with 17 strikeouts and one walk. Blevins had been optioned by the A's last week (and replaced by Magnuson), and De Los Santos, acquired from the White Sox in the Nick Swisher trade, awaits his big-league debut.

The most surprising move was McCarthy's, especially because there wasn't any public talk of a shoulder ailment. He had lost parts of each of the past four seasons to injuries, including three stress fractures in the shoulder. He had altered his mechanics, no longer throwing over the top, to take some pressure off the shoulder.

McCarthy was 1-4 with a 3.39 ERA in nine starts. His last start, he gave up three earned runs and nine hits in seven innings against the Twins.

So who replaces McCarthy and Ross in the rotation? Among the options include Josh Outman, who surrendered two runs in 13 innings in his last two starts for Sacramento, and Guillermo Moscoso, who got rocked in his last start (five runs, three innings) but pitched scoreless ball his previous two outings.

Bobby Cramer is shelved with a strained lower back.

A's can't support Cahill in extra-inning loss

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 5/21/2011

SAN FRANCISCO -- Hoping to improve upon an already disappointing day, the A's simply watched their troubles expand Friday.

Having just placed two of their starters on the disabled list in a flurry of six roster moves, the A's looked to create better news on the field but instead dropped a 2-1 extra-inning contest to the Giants in the first game of an anticipated three-game Bay Bridge set.

Each meeting is expected to bring about rich pitching, and Friday's proved no exception, as starters Trevor Cahill and Ryan Vogelsong combined to allow just five hits. But neither was a deciding factor in the Interleague decision, claimed by the Giants in the 10th inning when A's lefty Brian Fuentes surrendered a walk-off single to Aubrey Huff.

It marked Oakland's third extra-inning affair in five days, as the club dropped to 5-6 in such games and 7-10 in one-run contests, all the while moving below the .500 mark yet again. The Giants, meanwhile, are 13-3 in one-run ballgames.

"Both of us have good pitching staffs, and whichever team scratches out the most runs is going to win," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "They did a good job of pitching out of situations and getting the big hit."

That hit proved elusive for the A's, who went 0-for-5 with runners in scoring position and left six on base en route to dropping their third straight contest and seventh consecutive at AT&T Park.

Oakland watched its leadoff hitter reach first base in six frames, but in only the fifth did it result in a run. Mark Ellis began the inning with a double and, following a Kevin Kouzmanoff walk, moved to third on Cliff Pennington's ground ball to first baseman Huff, whose errant throw to second loaded the bases with no outs.

Cahill, making just the seventh plate appearance of his career, was given the green light and grounded into a double play that scored Ellis.

"It was a situation where we're down by a run right there," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He did drive in a run, and it ended up being the only run of the game."

"If I strike out, the bases are still loaded with one out," Cahill said. "Worst-case scenario is I hit into a double play and the run scores, and I think we can take that."

Ellis accounted for two of the A's five hits, the first of which represented career hit No. 1,000, making the long-tenured second baseman the 12th player in Oakland history to reach the respected plateau.

Cahill, who in bringing down his ERA to 1.79, was looking to become the Majors' first seven-game winner.

"You don't have to look any further than the record and his ERA," Vogelsong said, "to see that he's not going to give up many runs."

Cahill, who entered the contest having not surrendered a run in the first inning this season, did just that to give the Giants a 1-0 lead. Andres Torres drew a walk and, while notching a stolen base, advanced all the way to third on a throwing error from Suzuki and then quickly scored on an RBI groundout from Freddy Sanchez.

"The first inning, a leadoff walk is unacceptable," Cahill said. "I have to make my pitches and throw strikes there, and that was kind of the difference in the game."

Cahill offered up another free pass in the inning but calmed down thereafter, giving up just one hit through his next five innings before being lifted after just 83 pitches through six innings. Geren chose to pull him in favor of pinch-hitter Conor Jackson with a runner on third and two outs in the seventh of a 1-1 game.

The decision ultimately proved irrelevant when Jackson's hard ground-ball out to Sanchez ended the threat, but Geren stood firm by the decision.

"He smoked the ball through the middle where a guy made a tremendous play and saved a run," he said. "That was obviously a big play right there.

"With a runner on third base in the seventh inning, you have to take that chance. That's National League baseball."

Vogelsong, meanwhile, went six innings for the Giants, surrendering just one unearned run and six hits with two walks and five strikeouts before Ramon Ramirez, Jeremy Affeldt, Sergio Romo, Brian Wilson and Javier Lopez combined for four scoreless innings.

"Sometimes you just face good pitching," Suzuki said. "You can't really look too much into it. Could we have swung the bats better? Absolutely. But sometimes the other pitching staff does a good job of keeping you at bay, and they did a good job tonight."

Oakland's own bullpen kept the Giants off the board for three innings before Fuentes' fateful 1-1 pitch to Huff with runners on first and second in the 10th sealed the loss.

"It's not a typical spot where I'd use a closer on the road, but sometimes you have to take all those roles and throw them out the window and go with your best available," Geren said. "I felt like he had enough time between outings that he could have gone two innings if he needed to."

The A's are currently owners of a nine-man bullpen, the result of sending starters Tyson Ross and Brandon McCarthy to the DL on Friday -- moves that have the A's, who have scored just 165 runs all season (third fewest in the American League) in dire need of a productive offense.

"They know that," Geren said. "We need to keep progressing because we're going to need them."

Lincecum, Anderson looking to rebound

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com | 5/21/2011

It's not often you look at Tim Lincecum's record and see the San Francisco right-hander under .500. Actually, before this season, it had only happened once in his career -- in 2009, when he lost his first game of the season.

On Saturday, Lincecum (3-4, 2.36 ERA) looks to even his record when the Giants face Oakland and left-hander Brett Anderson (2-3, 3.30) on FOX. The contest is the second of the three-game Bay Bridge Series, which always makes the ballpark atmosphere electric.

"It's exciting for us because the fans get into it," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "It's exciting for them because we're facing a good club with outstanding pitching, a similar type of club. It should be a good series. We're glad to be home. To come home and play the Bay Series, I think it does bring a higher excitement to a series when you're playing your crosstown rivals."

A's manager Bob Geren agreed.

"It's a great series for the fans," Geren said. "It's exciting for the Bay Area. I think it's good for baseball, having two teams with history of a rivalry play each other. Obviously, the Giants are the defending world champions, so that brings an extra flair to a three-game series for sure. But for us, it's just another three-game series against another team. We try to win every series."

The Giants will send their ace to the mound Saturday, but in his last start the two-time National League Cy Young Award winner was anything but ace-like. On Monday against the Rockies, Lincecum allowed seven runs (three earned) on nine hits while walking six in 5 2/3 innings. He also had a throwing error in the fifth inning.

"That can make for a bad day," Lincecum said afterward. "That's where I kind of saw it going down, but you try to respond to that and get better and I didn't pick my team up. I didn't pick myself up."

Lincecum should recover quickly. The 26-year-old right-hander is 4-0 with a 1.45 ERA in five outings against the A's.

Opposing Lincecum is Anderson, who hasn't earned a victory since April 24 and has struggled in Interleague Play. In his last outing, on Monday against the Angels, Anderson allowed three runs on five hits in 6 2/3 innings, striking out seven. The 23-year-old left-hander has faced the Giants only once in his career, on June 14, 2009, giving up six runs in four innings. He's 0-1 with a 9.00 ERA in two career Interleague starts, both in 2009.

Athletics: Ellis reaches 1,000 mark

Mark Ellis' second-inning single Friday was the second baseman's 1,000th career hit, making him only the 12th player in Oakland history to reach that mark. Ellis, who went 2-for-3, is hitting .214 this season.

- Reliever Grant Balfour has not allowed a run in his last 14 games, spanning 14 1/3 innings.

Giants: Posey getting hot

After a slow start to the season, catcher Buster Posey is heating up, bringing a nine-game hitting streak into Saturday's game. In that stretch, Posey is batting .406 (13-for-32). Bochy said he and Posey looked at some video Thursday and noticed the right-handed hitter was rushing a bit and needed to slow down. One thing Bochy was confident about, however, was that pitchers aren't attacking the reigning NL Rookie of the Year any differently from last year.

"They have to get it over the plate," Bochy said. "They tried everything last year, and he had a tremendous year. I can't see something that's standing out where he's not hitting a certain pitch. I don't think that's the case at all. I think he'd tell you he's probably missed some pitches that he hit last year -- that's all."

- San Francisco starters have allowed three earned runs or fewer in each of their last 13 games, posting a 2.36 ERA during that stretch.

Worth noting

- Oakland third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff is hitting .382 (13-for-34) off Lincecum in his career.
- The A's have a seven-game losing streak at AT&T Park, their longest ever in San Francisco.

A's lose starters McCarthy, Ross to DL

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SAN FRANCISCO -- Brandon McCarthy was less than two hours removed from the doctor's office Thursday morning, carrying around news of a shoulder injury, when he witnessed rotation mate Tyson Ross exit his start after just seven pitches.

"After I got diagnosed, watching Tyson go down, that's what really kind of broke my heart," McCarthy said.

Ross didn't find much better news at the doctor's office Friday, when he was diagnosed with a left oblique strain, at which point the A's placed both hurlers on the 15-day disabled list and were subsequently left with two rotation spots to fill.

Those slots likely won't receive replacements until Monday and Tuesday, when the team's Nos. 4 and 5 starters are slated to take their turn in Anaheim.

In the meantime, the A's called upon three relievers to help a depleted bullpen that was forced to compile 8 2/3 innings of work following Ross' premature departure in an 11-1 loss to the Twins on Thursday. Right-handers Joey Devine and Fautino De Los Santos, along with lefty Jerry Blevins, were all available for Friday night's series opener in San Francisco.

Ross and McCarthy are without a return timetable but realize they're likely going to be sidelined for at least a handful of weeks, as both have to take proper time away from any activity before even thinking about throwing again.

While Ross' injury surfaced just Thursday, McCarthy admitted Friday that he's "been dealing with weird issues over the last two weeks."

"I didn't really feel this coming on until a few days before my last start," he said. "It just kind of turned into something where I couldn't recover."

McCarthy is rather familiar with the shoulder injury -- a stress reaction in his right scapula -- having incurred it three times before in his career. The 27-year-old righty, who signed as a free agent this past offseason, is hoping he caught it soon enough to avoid a prolonged rehab process.

"I've gotten hypersensitive to it, so when it came up last week I alerted them so that everyone was aware," he said. "I've gotten to the point where I can feel it right away. Coming out of my last start, we had it checked out and found it again."

"In the past, I've pitched with it for a while and usually I've stressed it way more than I've needed to and that leads to a longer period of rest, which usually means I'm out for the season. This one, if I can miss three or four starts -- obviously that's optimistic -- but I'd be happy. The goal is to not miss the entire summer again."

McCarthy most recently pitched seven innings against the Twins on Wednesday, giving up three runs via nine hits with no walks and one strikeout. He had put together a 1-4 record in nine starts despite compiling a 3.39 ERA following an impressive spring showing -- one walk next to 20 strikeouts in 26 innings -- that earned him a rotation spot ahead of Ross and Josh Outman.

Ross, meanwhile, was filling in for the injured Dallas Braden, who will miss the rest of the season after undergoing shoulder surgery earlier in the week. The young righty was earning all sorts of praise for his efforts in Braden's absence, which included a 3-2 record and 2.50 ERA entering Thursday.

"It's just disappointing," Ross said. "You finally get on a good little roll there and things are coming together and the team is playing some good ball. It [stinks] that I'll be sidelined for a little while."

"I wasn't feeling too good this morning, so I knew it was something, but I was hoping it wasn't going to be this long. Now it's just going to be some time before I can get back out there."

McCarthy knows this frustration all too well but said he's trying to avoid the lengthy self-pity parties he's thrown himself in the past.

"Honestly, I've gone into this one a little more positively because I've been throwing well and know there's a spot to get back when I'm healthy again," he said. "In the past, when I haven't been contributing much going into it, it makes it tougher."

"The bad thing is you start thinking about what it does to the rotation, what it does to the team, you start projecting all sorts of stuff and asking how I can be a consistent Major League starting pitcher. You start playing little mind games with yourself, and I had to get over that really quickly."

Among the leading candidates to grab a rotation spot is Outman, who hasn't pitched in the big leagues since July 2009 after undergoing Tommy John surgery. The lefty was a potential fifth-starter option in camp this year but struggled with mechanics and command, which led to his demotion.

Since, he's posted a 4-1 record and 4.78 ERA in eight starts for Triple-A Sacramento. His command is still a work in progress, evidenced by the 27 walks he's issued in 37 2/3 innings, but he's also struck out 30.

Fellow southpaw Bobby Cramer, who began the season in the A's bullpen before being optioned to Triple-A in late April, would normally be considered a strong option as well, but he's been on the DL with a lower back strain and isn't due to be reinstated until Sunday.

Considering the No. 4 spot won't come up again until Monday, Cramer is technically still a possibility, but manager Bob Geren hinted the club would likely be more inclined to call upon a healthier option.

That could be good news for Guillermo Moscoso, who also has big league experience and is already on the club's 40-man roster. The right-hander has compiled a 3-2 record and 4.02 ERA in eight games -- seven of them starts -- for the River Cats.

"There are several guys we'll be looking at," Geren said. "It's a definite loss, but we'll look forward, not backwards, and carry on. The offense is starting to swing the bats a little bit better, so we just need them to pick up the slack if we lose anything in the pitching department."

Devine makes return as A's add three relievers

Hardthrowing De Los Santos gets first call to Major Leagues

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SAN FRANCISCO -- Thanks to a flurry of moves, the A's entered Friday's series opener against the Giants boasting a nine-man bullpen that included new additions Joey Devine, Fautino De Los Santos and Jerry Blevins.

The three relievers were hastened to the scene as a result of 8 2/3 innings from the 'pen on Thursday following starter Tyson Ross' early departure. Ross (oblique strain) and Brandon McCarthy (shoulder) were placed on the disabled list on Friday, while reliever Trystan Magnuson -- who pitched two innings the day before -- was optioned to Triple-A.

Devine's promotion marked a significant moment for the right-hander, who missed all of the 2009 and '10 seasons while recovering from Tommy John surgery. He endured a shaky spring campaign, walking eight in five games, but has since been near perfect in 11 relief appearances with Sacramento.

In 12 1/3 innings, Devine was 3-0, along with three saves, while pitching to a 0.00 ERA with 17 strikeouts and one walk. Command issues, which plagued him in Cactus League play, are no more thanks to his first child, Mason Joseph, born April 11.

"It feels really good just being able to relax," Devine said. "I can say it's because of the birth of my son. He took all that pressure away from the game. I don't let it surface, because at the end of the day, I have a beautiful wife and a beautiful son to come home to, and that's all that matters. I've been able to relax and just have fun. It's been a long time since I've been able to have fun."

Devine, who noted he's still working on maintaining consistent velocity, will be eased back into the A's bullpen, where he compiled a 6-1 record and 0.59 ERA in 42 relief appearances in 2008.

"I'm just glad to be back," he said. "Being away for 2 1/2 years, being away from this level, all the hard work and patience is all starting to pay off. Starting in Sacramento, I think it was huge. It was something I needed, because things could have turned quick if I was here and had the command struggles I had in spring."

"His confidence is real high right now, and I'm looking forward to seeing him," manager Bob Geren said. "We'll get him in some games and see how he looks. Obviously, the back end of the bullpen has been doing a good job in their roles. I'll mix him in when I can. If he's throwing well enough to pitch late in the game, that gives us one more piece to use late in the game. You can never complain about too many good relievers."

Devine could potentially be the only member of Friday's callup trio who stays past Tuesday, as two starters are expected to arrive by then to fill the rotation void left by Ross and McCarthy.

De Los Santos, who was acquired alongside Gio Gonzalez and Ryan Sweeney from the White Sox in exchange for Nick Swisher in 2008, is entering his first big league stint. The hard-throwing righty, who has regularly reached 99 mph on the radar gun this year, tallied a combined three saves and 1.76 ERA with 21 strikeouts in 15 1/3 innings between Triple-A and Double-A Midland.

De Los Santos, who has the ability to provide more than one inning of work -- having already done so four times in the Minors this season -- underwent Tommy John surgery in May 2008, but indicated on Friday that he's since become a better pitcher because of the procedure.

"Before the operation, I couldn't control my pitches," the rookie said. "Now I have a lot more control and my mechanics are a lot better. That's been the difference."

Blevins, meanwhile, is back for his second stint this season. The southpaw was optioned on May 11 after posting a team-high 4.61 ERA in 14 relief appearances, which included 12 walks in 13 2/3 innings. He appeared in three games for the River Cats, surrendering seven runs in just four innings.

Major Lee-ague: A's lose backend of rotation

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 5/20/2011, 10:47pm

About to head down to the clubhouse, but here's a quick breakdown of today's flurry of moves:

DL-bound: RHP Tyson Ross (left oblique strain), RHP Brandon McCarthy (stress reaction in right scapula)

Promoted: RHP Joey Devine, RHP Fautino De Los Santos, LHP Jerry Blevins

Optioned: RHP Trystan Magnuson

What this means: The A's have suddenly lost 2/5 of their rotation after having already lost Dallas Braden for the year. None of the guys who were called up today are starters, meaning more moves are on the way come Monday, when that fourth spot comes up in the rotation in Anaheim. Still, the A's desperately needed bullpen arms after watching Ross go down in the first, which paved the way for 8 2/3 innings worth of relief work.

Noteworthy Triple-A Sacramento numbers:

- Devine: 3-0, 0.00 ERA; 12 1/3 innings, 17 strikeouts, 1 walk
- De Los Santos: 0-0, 0.00 ERA; 6 innings, 6 strikeouts, 4 walks
- Blevins: 0-0, 15.75 ERA; 4 innings, 7 runs, 7 hits

Huff delivers for Giants in 10th inning

By ANTONIO GONZALEZ, ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — Aubrey Huff hit a game-ending single in the bottom of the 10th inning, giving the San Francisco Giants a 2-1 victory over the cross-bay rival Oakland Athletics on Friday night.

Huff's line drive to right-center off Brian Fuentes (1-5) scored Emmanuel Burriss from second, sealing the NL West-leading Giants' third straight win. Oakland lost for the third consecutive game.

Burriss led off the inning with a single and Andres Torres' sacrifice bunt moved him to second. Oakland intentionally walked Freddy Sanchez, setting the stage for San Francisco's sixth walk-off victory this season.

Javier Lopez (2-0) pitched a perfect 10th for the win.

Giants starter Ryan Vogelsong matched Oakland ace Trevor Cahill, who yielded just one hit, for six innings before the two stingy bullpens pitched scoreless ball into extra innings.

Runs were at a premium in the latest edition of the Bay Area series.

Torres drew a leadoff walk in the first inning, stole second and then went to third after catcher Kurt Suzuki tossed the ball into center field for an error. Sanchez grounded out to second to score Torres, giving San Francisco a 1-0 lead before some fans had even settled into their seats.

Oakland tried to answer with a hit-and-run play in the second, with Josh Willingham attempting to go from first to third on a single by Mark Ellis. Giants right fielder Nate Schierholtz picked up the ball and zipped a throw to third that was scooped out of the dirt by Miguel Tejada to tag Willingham out.

The A's loaded the bases in the fourth after Huff's throw from first pulled shortstop Mike Fontenot off the bag at second. Vogelsong got Cahill to ground into a double play, scoring Ellis from third to even the score at 1-all. Coco Crisp then grounded out to second.

Vogelsong left after six innings, allowing only the one unearned run and four hits. The Giants have won all five starts he has made this season.

The A's caught a huge break in the seventh when Ellis took third base on a blown call by plate umpire John Tumpane. Replays showed Cliff Pennington foul tipped the pitch from reliever Ramon Ramirez, but Tumpane ruled he swung through it and allowed Ellis to move up.

Giants catcher Buster Posey was livid, screaming at Tumpane in protest until manager Bruce Bochy came out to argue the call. But it never cost San Francisco — Pennington popped out and second baseman Sanchez made a diving snag to throw out pinch-hitter Conor Jackson.

Cahill gave up only Posey's double in the fourth and struck out five in six innings. He has allowed one run or fewer in eight of his 10 starts this season.

NOTES

Ellis notched his 1,000th career hit with a single in the second.

A moment of silence was held before the game for Minnesota Twins slugger and Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew, who died Tuesday at 74 after battling esophageal cancer.

Giants INF Mark DeRosa said he has a partial tear of a tendon in his left wrist and is scheduled to see a doctor next week.

The Athletics will likely call up LHP Trevor Outman and RHP Guillermo Moscoso on Monday to fill the void at the back of the rotation after Brandon McCarthy and Tyson Ross were put on the disabled list.

Giants 3B Pablo Sandoval is on schedule to return from right wrist surgery in two or three weeks, Bochy said. Sandoval will go on a minor league rehab assignment before he comes back.

A's Insider notes: The haunting Disabled List

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

Our A's Insider takes a look at the status of the A's after the Giants' 2-1 extra-innings victory over visiting Oakland on Friday night in the opener of a three-game interleague series at AT&T Park.

Two doors close, two more open: To call it a double-whammy would be doing it an injustice. The A's, did, after all, lose 2/5 of their rotation in the span of 90 minutes on Thursday. That the team waited until Friday afternoon before the Bay Bridge Interleague Series opener to announce Tyson Ross (left oblique) and Brandon McCarthy (right scapula) heading to the 15-day disabled list only heightened the hysteria. Especially since neither Oakland now needs starters for Monday and Tuesday in Anaheim. "You don't want to see anybody go on the DL," said A's manager Bob Geren. "But at the same time, it's an exciting opportunity. We look forward, not backward."

So who replaces Ross and McCarthy?: Geren acknowledged that a pair of Triple-A starters in left-hander Josh Outman (4-1, 4.78 ERA) and right-hander Guillermo Moscoso (3-2, 4.02) are in the mix. But Bobby Cramer, who made the A's opening day roster, is probably not, since he is on the River Cats' disabled list, and while he is eligible to come off on Sunday, he does have a balky back and he has not pitched in a week. Another name to keep an eye on - Armando Galarraga, who was DFA'd by Arizona following Tuesday's game. The right-hander, who had a perfect game taken from him by a blown call last season, struggled in eight starts for the Diamondbacks, going 3-4 with a 5.91 ERA. A change of scenery might do wonders for him and he obviously already has big league experience. Space on the 40-man roster would have to be made, though, and if McCarthy's injury is serious, he could potentially be moved to the 60-day D.L.

Remember Rich Harden?: More than a few Tweets came in asking me how close the oft-injured right-hander Rich Harden was to returning to the major league. The good news -- he is eligible to come off the 60-day disabled Saturday. The bad news -- he has yet to play catch since being shelved in spring training with a strained right shoulder. "I'm just working my way back, doing some strengthening exercises," Harden said. "It feels good, really good. I don't see myself out there in the immediate future, though." So I asked him if being unable to help, what with three starting pitchers, including Dallas Braden, was especially tough to take. "Absolutely, yeah," he said. "Especially now, when things are going so well. You want to step in and contribute. But you can't."

McCarthy muses: McCarthy said this is the fourth time he's dealt with a stress reaction-type injury in his pitching shoulder. The difference this time, he hopes, is this one was caught early enough to ward off significant time on the DL "The goal," he said, "is not to miss the entire season." McCarthy said he anticipates missing "three or four starts" and hopes to begin throwing within two weeks time. The worst part of it, he said, is "dealing with a couple days of self-pity." He said he had been dealing with "weird things" for a few weeks and had an MRI Thursday morning. He got the results and suggestion to shut it down some 90 minutes before Ross left Thursday's outing after seven pitches. "That's what really broke my heart," McCarthy said. "It makes you feel like a piece of (dung)." So what will McCarthy do in the meantime? "Ice. Wallow. And be sarcastic," he said.

Blevins, Devine and De Los Santos called up: With Ross and McCarthy put on the DL, and Trystan Magnuson shipped back to Triple-A Sacramento, the A's called up three relievers from the River Cats. A few familiar faces in lefty Jerry Blevins and Joey Devine made the trip, as did right-handed rookie Fautino De Los Santos. Devine and De Los Santos are both

Tommy John Surgery alums. "(My control) is very different," De Los Santos said, in Spanish. "Before, I couldn't control my location. Now, my mechanics are much better." De Los Santos said he hit 100 mph on the radar gun last season, 99 mph this season. Devine, meanwhile, was the A's closer-in-waiting in 2008, before injury struck. His expectations after not allowing an earned run in 11 appearances, over 12 1/3 innings, while giving up four hits, striking out 17 and walking one? "Zero expectations," he said. "I'm just blessed to put on the uniform." Devine said the birth of his son Mason Joseph on April 11 took pressure off of him to perform. "It feels like things are starting to come together," he said. "All the hard work and patience, it feels like it's paying off."

Killion: Now is the time for A's to open some eyes

Ann Killion, CSNBayArea.com

This is the window, Oakland A's.

The chance to win the hearts and minds of the Bay Area.

One of the few opportunities to be relevant in the local sporting scene.

If that sounds harsh, so be it. Harsh is the A's green-tarped, overstocked seat reality.

Despite having a team that leads all of baseball in pitching with a 2.86 ERA, despite being just one game out of first place, despite a firm belief within the ballclub that this team can do damage come September and October, the harsh reality of the A's looks like this: - 22,322; 15,355; 12,190; 11,061

Those were the A's attendance numbers this week as the team battled for first place.

As usual, the A's are near the bottom in baseball attendance. Tonight the young A's team will have an out-of-body experience, playing in front of a packed, rocking house. It will feel like they traveled to another planet, though they will have gone just 17 miles from their home ballpark.

There's always an undercurrent of nastiness and pride in the Bay Bridge series – a matchup that's one of the few reasons that interleague play continues to be marginally relevant.

But there is much more urgency for the A's this season. The Giants finally achieved something that was the A's biggest claim to fame: bringing a World Series championship to the Bay Area.

The Giants' popularity, which has always run deeper than the A's own, is at an all-time high. The A's relevance, meanwhile, may be at an all-time nadir. They can't even get commissioner Bud Selig to notice them.

While Selig conducted a palace coup to save the Dodgers last month and has the financially compromised Mets on his radar, he steadfastly ignores the A's and his old fraternity brother Lew Wolff. His blue ribbon commission to study the A's situation is in its third year of indecision. In the meantime, Wolff's hatred of Oakland and the Coliseum has driven away all but the most steadfast fans.

Underlying the battle on field this weekend is the ongoing animosity between the clubs over territorial rights. The Giants aren't about to give them up under uber-lawyer Bill Neukom. These days Neukom adheres to Selig's request for a gag order on the topic, but when he first took over the team he didn't mince words, saying: "It's part of the rights package that makes up the value of this franchise."

Anyone who followed the Browser Wars and Microsoft's legal battles in the 1990s knows better than to bet against Neukom. Now that the Giants are on top of the world, counting their revenue by the dump truck and just six years away from paying off their ballpark, it seems unlikely that they would seek a cash payment in exchange for the rights (something that seemed more plausible during the post-Barry Bonds doldrums).

So the A's continue to hang around in limbo, playing good baseball and wondering if anyone will notice.

The A's deserve better. They have a wonderful, rich legacy. They have an untapped fan base. They have a good team. Their pitchers – beginning with ace Trevor Cahill who is on the mound tonight - can match the Giants' staff and will likely give the Giants' anemic offense fits.

(However, the A's seem to be in the midst of another puzzling injury onslaught. Tyson Ross, who had done a good job of replacing Dallas Braden after Braden was lost for the season with an injured shoulder, took a loss after just seven pitches on Thursday. He was felled by a dreaded oblique strain. That spot in the rotation is again up for grabs).

The A's have a 42-38 advantage over the Giants, after 14 years of interleague play. Last year, they swept the Giants in Oakland. The Giants – fueled by Buster Posey's emergence – returned the favor in San Francisco in June. If the A's had

taken one or two of those games, it could have meant the difference in the Giants making their postseason run.

For the A's, this weekend isn't just about trying to beat the World Series champions.

It's about trying to get people to notice.

Worst team in AL sweeps A's in Oakland as Bay Bridge matchup looms

Sam McPherson, examiner.com, 5/20/2011

So much for some momentum.

After sweeping a two-game series against the American League West rival Los Angeles Angels on Monday and Tuesday, the Oakland Athletics turned around and got swept by the AL-worst Minnesota Twins on Wednesday and Thursday.

But in truth, should any true A's fan really be surprised?

For the 13th time this year already, Oakland is at .500 on the year -- and now get to "travel" across the Bay for three games this weekend against the defending World Series champions (yes, that still sounds weird, doesn't it?).

The A's blew yet another opportunity to establish some positive momentum in 2011 against the Twins, in an inexplicable demonstration of why this team just can't continue to maintain the status quo.

The manager, the trainer, the hitters, the defense, and even the pitching just don't have what it takes to win consistently in this league -- or any league.

Bob Geren continues to oversee the most average team in baseball without getting the most of what little talent he has on the roster. The A's have blown several games this year already that they could have won with some better guidance and instruction.

The training staff still can't prevent the brittle players from suffering random injuries that deprive the team of depth. Pitcher Tyson Ross is the latest to suffer an injury that will really hurt the team.

The offense still can't score, the defense still makes costly errors that cost the team ball games, and the pitching can't be expected to carry the team forever as it's never been able to carry the team in the first place despite its impressive accomplishments (see 2010).

It's almost as if the A's have switched places with the San Francisco Giants in the past five years -- not so coincidentally, all under the ownership watch of Lew Wolff.

(So add ownership to the list of problems the Oakland organization possesses, too.)

Five years ago, the A's were on their way to their fifth playoff spot in seven years, while the Giants were mired in the early stages of a five-year stretch of losing. Since then, however, Oakland hasn't had a winning season, and San Francisco miraculously ended their 56-year championship drought by winning the World Series in 2010.

So now, the A's are trodding along doing nothing special at .500, while the Giants are in first place by a half-game in their division. San Francisco is the trendier place to be for baseball now, as legions of casual fans have jumped on their winning bandwagon while visiting their newer ballpark -- and Oakland can't fill more than half their seats in a 45-year old stadium on any given day.

Historically, we all know the A's have been the better organization in terms of Bay Area baseball, but if Oakland doesn't show up this weekend in San Francisco ready to play some better ball, it may be more nails in the coffin for the A's and their future in the Bay Area.

And that's probably just what the Giants want.

Despite the fact the Oakland organization helped the Giants stay in the Bay Area in the early 1990s when it looked like the NL franchise might be headed to Florida, the San Francisco ownership group has shown no such inclination to do the same

for the A's now despite the reality having two good teams in Northern California is healthy for both the local economy *and* major-league baseball as a whole.

Ask Chicago. Ask Los Angeles. Ask New York.

Heck, even ask D.C.

But maybe the A's ownership wants to move the team (see *Major League* for entertainment purposes), and this is all part of their master plan.

Either way, it's getting time for Oakland to either put up or shut up, because they're not going to make it under the current circumstances.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Bailey sharp, but Sacramento falls

By Mark Ling / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento could only muster six hits in a 3-1 loss to Oklahoma City at Raley Field on Friday night.

The game was a classic pitcher's duel as neither team scored through the first four innings. The Redhawks broke the silence in the fifth inning on a J.B. Shuck single that plated Tommy Manzella. In the next inning, Oklahoma City tacked on another run Robinson Cancel singled home Max Ramirez.

After the sixth, River Cats starter Travis Banwart was pulled despite an impressive performance. The righty went 6.0 innings, allowing eight hits, two runs and no walks with eight strikeouts to bring his season ERA down to 2.93.

Oakland A's closer Andrew Bailey came on in relief in the seventh. Visiting Sacramento on a rehab assignment, the All-Star threw one perfect inning with one strikeout before exiting.

After a quite seventh inning, the Redhawks extended their lead yet again in the top of the eighth frame. In his first appearance this season with the River Cats, Andrew Carignan gave up a leadoff triple to Brandon Barnes who was later driven home by a Jeff Keppinger sacrifice fly. Carignan put two more men on base before settling down and getting out of the inning.

With time running out and Oklahoma City starter Jordan Lyles pitching masterfully, the River Cats offense needed to wake up.

Third baseman Wes Timmons led off the eighth inning with a single to right field, giving his squad a glimmer of hope. Lyles quickly got back on track, striking out Jemile Weeks and inducing a ground out to Josh Donaldson, advancing Timmons to second. Then top-prospect Michael Taylor stepped into the batter's box. Taylor ripped a double down the right field line, scoring Timmons and knocking Lyles out of the game.

Oklahoma City brought in righty David Carpenter to face the right-handed Jai Miller with Taylor on second and two out. Carpenter rung Miller up on a 93 MPH fastball to end the threat.

Sacramento brought in another newly acquired reliever by the name of Benjamin Hornbeck to try and keep the Redhawks from adding to their 3-1 lead. Hornbeck retired Oklahoma City 1-2-3, sending the game into the bottom of the ninth.

Designated hitter Matt Carson led off the frame by fouling off the first two pitches he saw before chopping out to second.

Sacramento's batting average leader, Adrian Cardenas, then stepped up to the plate. He took a couple pitches then struck out on a 94 MPH heater from Carpenter, bringing shortstop Steve Tolleson to the plate with two out in the bottom of the ninth and his team trailing by two.

The veteran clubbed a fly ball to center, ending the game and handing the Cats their second loss of the series.

Taylor finished 3-for-4 with his team's only extra base hit and RBI.

Sacramento will try to break its negative momentum on Saturday night. Right-hander Yadel Marti (1-0, 6.68) will face right-hander Sergio Perez (3-2, 4.12).

Sutter Health Postgame Fireworks will follow the action and the first 2,500 fans in attendance will receive a collectible River Cats pin. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m.

RockHounds blow early lead, lose to Hooks

Staff Reports, Midland Reporter-Telegram

CORPUS CHRISTI -- The Midland RockHounds jumped on the Corpus Christi Hooks early, but allowed the Hooks to slowly chip away at the lead and eventually pull out a 5-4 victory at Whataburger Field on Friday.

With the win, the Hooks hand Midland its sixth consecutive loss -- four of which have come by one run.

The RockHounds put three on the board in the first inning when Jermaine Mitchell and Tyler Ladendorf led off the inning with singles and Adam Heether was hit by a Xavier Cedeno pitch to load the bases. First baseman Michael Spina promptly unloaded them with a double to left for a 3-0 Midland lead.

The Hooks made it a one-run game in the bottom of the third. Jacob Goebbert led off the inning with a triple and scored on a base hit by Jimmy Van Ostrand. Three batters later, Ostrand crossed to make it a 3-2 game courtesy of a single by third baseman Brandon Wikoff.

A RBI single by Federico Hernandez that scored Jon Gaston tied the game at 3-3 in the fourth and Corpus Christi took the lead in the fifth when Wikoff scored on a fielder's choice hit by designated hitter J.D. Martinez.

A solo home run by Midland second baseman Adam Heether in the top of the eighth pulled the RockHounds even at 4-4, but the tie score was short lived. Hooks shortstop Wladimir Sutil hit the game-winning single in the bottom of the eighth, plating Goebbert.

Both teams used just two pitchers in the game with Cedeno getting the win for the Hooks after pitching eight innings and allowing four runs on eight hits and a walk with eight strikeouts. Daniel Meszaros had the save for Corpus Christi, his second of the season.

Ethan Hollingsworth went 6 2/3 innings as the RockHounds starter, giving up four runs on nine hits and a walk, while striking out four. Jonathan Ortiz pitched 1 1/3 innings and took the loss after allowing the game-winning run in the eighth.

Game 2 of the best-of-four series is set for 7:05 p.m. today at Whataburger Field.

NOTES: Reliever Fautino De Los Santos, who started the year with the RockHounds, has been called up to the Oakland A's. De Los Santos, who is on the A's 40-man roster, has posted a combined 0-0 record with three saves and a 1.76 ERA with Triple-A Sacramento and Midland.

Extra Heartbreak Again As Ports Fall 7-6 In 11

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - Friday night's 7-6 loss in 11 innings was perhaps a fitting end to a Stockton Ports road trip that featured epic contests and tough breaks. For the second time on their seven-game trip, the Boys of Banner Island dropped a tough extra-inning contest, this time to the Bakersfield Blaze at Sam Lynn Ballpark. Though it wasn't nearly the same as Monday's game with the San Jose Giants in which Stockton blew a three-run lead in the 18th, it was another game in which a comeback went wasted and a series was lost. After a 2-5 trip, a road-weary Ports team will be happy to take the field back in Stockton on Saturday night.

Friday night's contest began as a pitcher's duel between Ports starter Dan Straily and Blaze starter Pedro Villareal. With the game scoreless heading into the 4th, it was Bakersfield breaking the ice. With two outs, Carlos Mendez singled to right and came home on an ensuing double from Stephen Hunt to put the Blaze up 1-0.

Bakersfield made it a 2-0 lead in the 5th. Brodie Greene led off the inning with a single, and then stole second. Josh Fellhauer followed with an RBI single to center on which Greene came in and scored.

The Ports, who couldn't get much started against Villareal over the first five innings, finally plated a run in the 6th. Michael Choice led off the inning with a triple and scored two batters later on a groundout from Myrio Richard to make it 2-1.

Stockton knotted it at 2-2 in the 7th. With one out, Leonardo Gil and Ryan Lipkin hit back-to-back doubles to even the score.

Villareal would pitch seven innings on the night, allowing two runs on six hits while striking out four and walking a season-high three.

Straily would encounter some difficulty in the 7th. With the score tied at 2-2, A.J. Means led off the frame with an infield single. Two batters later, Fellhauer hit a two-run homer to right to put the Blaze up 4-2 and knock Straily from the ballgame. Straily received a no-decision, going 6.1 innings and allowing four runs on nine hits while striking out four.

Chris Mederos took over for Straily and walked the first batter he faced, Yasmani Grandal. Two batters later with two down, Alex Buchholz hit a two-run homer to left to give the Blaze their largest lead of the night at 6-2. Mederos, after allowing the home run, retired the next four batters he faced. He went 1.2 innings and allowed the two runs on just the one hit.

Up 6-2, the Blaze turned the game over to their bullpen in the 8th. Scott Gaffney started the inning for the Blaze, and gave up a leadoff double to Mitch LeVier. After walking Richard, Gaffney threw a wild pitch, allowing LeVier to score and cutting the Blaze lead to 6-3. Gaffney walked Anthony Aliotti, and then yielded a double to Rashun Dixon, scoring Richard and making it a 6-4 ballgame. Gaffney was lifted for Ryan Smith, who came in with runners at second and third and nobody out. Gil came up and hit a sac-fly to left to score Aliotti. On the play, Dixon tagged from second and advanced to third, which set up an ensuing sac-fly to center from Lipkin to tie the game at 6-6.

Neither team scored in the 9th as the contest moved into extra innings. In extras, the Ports were shut down by Mace Thurman (2-1), who retired all six batters he faced in the 10th and 11th.

The Ports had Jose Guzman (1-1) on the hill beginning in the 9th inning. After retiring six of the seven batters he faced in the 9th and 10th, Guzman began to tire in the 11th. He walked Hunt to start the inning, and Hunt was sacrificed to second by Means. After Greene struck out, Guzman intentionally walked Fellhauer to get to Mark Fleury, who replaced Grandal defensively in the top of the 11th after Grandal took a foul ball off his hand in the 10th. Guzman made the mistake of walking Fleury to load the bases. Henry Rodriguez, who had been 0-for-5 to that point, came up next and lined a single to right-center field that scored Hunt and gave the Blaze a walk-off win in their first extra-inning contest of the season.

Guzman took his first loss of the season after allowing the game-winner. Thurman, who pitched two perfect innings for the Blaze, earned the win.

After an exhausting road trip, the Ports return home on Saturday night to begin a short three-game series with the first-place San Jose Giants. In the series opener, the Ports will send newcomer A.J. Griffin (0-0, 0.00 ERA) to the hill to make his Cal-League debut after being promoted from Low-A Burlington. He'll be opposed by Giants right-hander Chris Heston (4-1, 2.76 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Timber Rattlers Slither Past Bees 4-3

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

GRAND CHUTE, WI- LF T.J. Mittelstaedt (2-3) hit a solo home run over the right field wall in the seventh inning to give the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers (22-18) a 4-3 win over the Burlington Bees (29-11) at Time Warner Cable Field on Friday night.

Wisconsin scored a single run in the first inning against Burlington RHP Blake Hassebrock. CF Reggie Keen (0-4) led off the inning by reaching on an error. He stole second and third base and scored on a throwing error for a 1-0 Wisconsin lead.

Burlington tied the game in the second inning. 3B Wade Kirkland (3-4) hit a two-out double and scored on a single by 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (1-4).

The Timber Rattlers scored a run in the second inning to re-take the lead. 3B Nick Shaw (1-4) doubled and scored on a single by Mittelstaedt. In the third inning RF Franklin, Romero Jr. (1-4) reached on a fielder's choice to score 1B Mike Walker (1-2) and make it 3-1.

The Bees started their comeback in the fifth inning. 2B Nino Leyja (3-5) reached on a single and went to third base on a single by LF Douglas Landaeta (1-5). SS Yordy Cabrera (1-4) doubled home Leyja to cut the Wisconsin lead to 3-2.

Kirkland hit a solo home run in the sixth inning to tie the game at 3-3.

Hassebrock went five innings and got a no decision. He allowed two earned runs on four hits.

The Bees and Timber Rattlers continue their series with a doubleheader on Saturday at 5:05 p.m. RHP Josh Bowman (4-0, 3.16) gets the start for Burlington against RHP Brooks Hall (0-0, 0.00) for Wisconsin. The Bees will send RHP Nate Long (2-0, 3.24) to the mound in game two against a yet-to-be announced starter for Wisconsin