

A's News Clips, Monday, May 23, 2011

A's lose again, fall into A.L. West cellar

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Although the A's showed signs of life offensively, silver linings were hard to find after they lost their fifth in a row and were swept out of AT&T Park on Sunday, losing to the Giants 5-4 in 11 innings.

The A's now sit by themselves in last place in the A.L. West.

Eleven hits off six Giants pitchers was a marked improvement after the A's totaled just eight in the previous two games of the series. But after taking a 4-2 lead into the eighth inning, things took a wrong turn for the A's when a fastball from reliever Grant Balfour leaked back over the plate, and the Giants' Nate Schierholtz drove it over the fence in right for a tying, two-run homer.

The game got away for good in the 11th when Brian Fuentes (1-6) gave up a single to Manny Burriss that drove home Darren Ford with the winning run. The play at the plate was close, but catcher Kurt Suzuki couldn't hold onto right fielder Ryan Sweeney's throw, and Ford slid in safely.

"I thought if I held onto the ball there was a chance he'd be out, but I was told the umpire signaled the call right away that he was safe," Suzuki said. "I don't think it would've mattered if I'd held on or not, but if I did hold onto the ball, we would've had a chance. Got to catch the ball."

Fuentes' loss was his third in his past three appearances. In those games, Fuentes has pitched 12/3 innings, allowing five hits, two walks and three runs (two earned). He hasn't had a save since May 8, which also was his last opportunity.

"You try not to be critical of the manager's decisions," Fuentes said of entering a tie game. "If that's what he wants to do, that's what he wants to do."

A's starter Gio Gonzalez delivered another solid performance, going 6 2/3 innings. He gave up two runs (one earned) and struck out eight. He left with a chance for the victory, but Schierholtz's home run wiped that away.

No matter how Gonzalez threw, the A's offense had a familiar look through the first five innings. There were a few scattered hits off Giants starter Jonathan Sanchez, but there wasn't much in the way of sustained offense.

"I think we've been swinging the bats good, we're just not getting runs across the board," Suzuki said. "Teams are playing great defense, and you run into some good pitching like we did today and the past few games, it gets tough. We keep battling out there, keep grinding away, and hopefully it'll turn around soon."

That appeared to be the case in the sixth with the Giants leading 2-0. Josh Willingham belted a solo home run to put the A's on the board. They added two in the seventh and one in the eighth to make it 4-2, but it wasn't enough.

"The sixth inning came along, and we started scoring some runs, and it lit a little fire under us," Gonzalez said. "We kept going, kept going and then just a tough break. It's a good-hitting team, and they did their job."

The Giants' late runs came off two of the A's workhorses in Balfour and Fuentes, who each made his 22nd appearance of the season.

"A guy that's been pretty much lights-out just missed a pitch," A's manager Bob Geren said of Balfour's pitch to Schierholtz. "He was going down and away and just kind of tugged it back to the middle third. He got it up in the wind to the shortest part of the park, and it just cleared the wall."

The A's now will try to rebound in Anaheim, where they will play four games against the Angels before returning Friday night to begin a homestand against Baltimore.

Josh Outman will start for the Oakland A's on Monday

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's pitching carousel took a somewhat expected turn on Sunday when manager Bob Geren announced that left-hander Josh Outman will be called up to start Monday's game in Anaheim.

"The report basically was his last couple starts he's gotten better and better, and he looked pretty good," Geren said. "He started off a little slow in spring training, but he hadn't been on the mound in a long time. Each five-day cycle that he's been out there he's shown improvement to the point where his last couple games have been pretty good."

It will be Outman's first major league appearance since June 19, 2009, when he lasted just 12/3 innings against San Diego. The left-hander underwent ligament replacement surgery on his left elbow 11 days later.

Outman was scheduled to pitch for Triple-A Sacramento on Sunday. Carlos Hernandez was instead called up from Double-A Midland to make the start.

Outman made eight starts for the River Cats this season, going 4-1 with a 4.78 ERA in 372/3 innings. He struck out 30 but walked 27.

Outman takes the place of Brandon McCarthy, who went on the disabled list Friday with a stress reaction in his right shoulder.

The A's have yet to name a starter for Tuesday's game, as Tyson Ross (strained oblique) also went on the D.L. on Friday. Geren said he will make that announcement Monday.

Andrew Bailey, fresh off an inning of rehab work in Sacramento on Friday, will pitch for the River Cats again Monday. Geren said Bailey will pitch an inning in relief again, saying that the closer wanted to remain in relief for his minor-league appearances to stick to his normal routine.

One day after suffering a groin injury, Kevin Kouzmanoff was out of the lineup Sunday. Geren said the third baseman might have been able to pinch hit in extra innings. He remains day to day.

Bay Fridge Series: A's skid in S.F. reaches 9

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer

Maybe the A's should just stay in the East Bay next time.

Their annual interleague visits to China Basin are acquiring a maddening sameness. Even if the A's finally showed an offensive pulse Sunday, they still walked away with another loss and another three-game sweep.

Oakland's losing streak in San Francisco reached nine when Darren Ford slid home on Emmanuel Burriss' single to secure a 5-4, 11-inning win for the Giants. The A's have not won on the shores of McCovey Cove in nearly three years, since June 15, 2008.

They also have dropped five consecutive games overall on the brink of this week's series in Anaheim against the Angels. The A's path becomes no easier the next two nights, with Angels starters Jered Weaver and Dan Haren looming.

"We're resilient," closer Brian Fuentes said. "We've been around .500 all year. We'll go to Anaheim and wipe it all clean."

Fuentes absorbed Sunday's defeat, dropping his record to 1-6 (alongside a 4.71 ERA). That's obviously a concern for the A's, who hoped Fuentes could handle the closer's role until Andrew Bailey returns from his strained right forearm.

Their biggest concern, still, remains an offense sputtering so badly that Sunday's four runs seemed like a loud outburst.

Jonathan Sanchez held the A's scoreless through five innings, meaning they had managed one (unearned) run in the first 23 innings of the series.

Then, finally, Josh Willingham swatted a solo home run into the bleachers in left-center. That seemed to awaken his teammates, who pushed across two runs in the seventh inning and another in the eighth.

"You could feel the excitement in the dugout," starting pitcher Gio Gonzalez said. "Everyone was in the mood right there."

The mood soured, abruptly and dramatically, when Nate Schierholtz lifted reliever Grant Balfour's full-count pitch over the right-field wall in the eighth inning. That tied the game at 4-4 and stunned the A's, if only because Balfour has been lights-out this season.

He had not allowed a run in his previous 14 appearances. Balfour fed Schierholtz a steady diet of outside pitches, until his final fastball drifted toward the inside corner and Schierholtz turned on it.

It was by no means a terrible pitch - knee-high, on the corner - but it allowed Schierholtz the chance to take advantage of the short right-field porch. And he pounced.

"I missed my spot and he made me pay," Balfour said. "That's baseball. I felt like I was making my pitches the whole at-bat. Good piece of hitting."

Unlikely pair lifts SF Giants in 11th to sweep

Henry Schulman, Chronicle Staff Writer

Thirteen wins at home, 11 of them by one run, seven in a walkoff frolic.

Unreal.

"We kind of flip on a switch sometimes. Guys know what time it is," Emmanuel Burriss said. On Sunday, Burriss checked the clock. It was 4:59 p.m. and time to send everyone home with a one-out single in the 11th inning that gave the Giants a 5-4 victory and their third consecutive series sweep at AT&T Park.

Burriss' best friend in baseball, Darren Ford, sprinted home from second and scored ahead of a strong throw from right fielder Ryan Sweeney, who got to Burriss' first-pitch single quickly. Sweeney's throw was true and the play closer than expected given Ford's speed.

Ford got to the plate a hair before the mitt of A's catcher Kurt Suzuki, who dropped the ball anyway.

Manager Bruce Bochy, who watched Ford reach on a pinch single against Brian Fuentes and steal second after two throw-overs, was asked if anybody else on the field could have beaten that throw.

"No way," Bochy said.

"That kid can fly," Suzuki said. "When he slid, it almost knocked the whole glove off my hand."

The Giants as a team are soaring, too. They won their ninth in a row at home and their fifth straight overall.

More impressive, the five wins came in games started by Clayton Kershaw and Chad Billingsley of the Dodgers, and Oakland's Trevor Cahill, Brett Anderson and Gio Gonzalez. Together, they were 20-14 with a 2.72 ERA.

Before the stretch, Bochy outlined the formula for success. He said his pitchers needed to be just as good as the five other guys and the offense had to push across just enough runs to win.

Giants starters held up their end nicely. Jonathan Sanchez held the A's to a Josh Willingham solo homer in six innings, and the rotation cobbled a 1.22 ERA over 37 innings.

Nobody expected the Giants to tilt the scoreboard, but Bochy said, "I couldn't be happier with the way these guys battled and found a way to get some runs for our pitchers."

They got two against Gonzalez on Sunday, starting with Andres Torres scoring from first on a Freddy Sanchez drive into the left-field corner. Torres scored in the first inning of all three games in the series.

The late-inning magic came from Nate Schierholtz. With the Giants down 4-2 with one out in the eighth, and Miguel Tejada on base after a leadoff single, Schierholtz skied his second career pinch-hit homer into the Arcade in right to tie the game.

After three combined shutout innings by Brian Wilson and winner Sergio Romo, Ford pinch-hit with one out in the 11th and knocked a two-strike single into center. After Ford stole second, the A's intentionally walked Buster Posey.

Before each wide pitch, Fuentes took a long look at Ford, who also had shortstop Chad Pennington breathing down his neck. Rarely does a team show so much concern over a runner during an intentional walk.

"That's what I want to do," Ford said. "I want to make him nervous and uncomfortable. I don't know if I got Manny a good pitch to hit. But I knew a single would score me, and Manny came through."

For once, Ford got a bad read. As he stood at second, he and Burriss made eye contact. Ford thought he was telling Burriss, "You're going to get it done."

Burriss actually was sending Ford a telepathic message.

"If I get a hit," he said with a laugh, "you better score."

Arrest made

One suspect in the Opening Day beating of Giants fan Bryan Stow is in custody. **A1**

Fan favorites

Sellout crowds at AT&T are getting their money's worth. The Giants are 13-5 at home this year, 9-0 in May. They are also 11-0 in one-run games at home. Their last nine at home:

Date	Opp.	Score
May 6	Colorado	W, 4-3
May 7	Colorado	W, 3-2
May 8	Colorado	W, 3-0
May 10	Arizona	W, 1-0
May 11	Arizona	W, 4-3
May 12	Arizona	W, 3-2

May 20 Oakland W, 2-1*

May 21 Oakland W, 3-0

May 22 Oakland W, 5-4*

* Extra innings

A's Josh Outman to return against Angels

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer

No pressure, **Josh Outman**. First major-league appearance in nearly two years, on the road, **Jered Weaver** pitching for the Angels and the A's stumbling along on a five-game losing streak.

That's the assignment Outman will confront tonight in Anaheim, when he makes his return to the majors in the wake of Tommy John surgery on his left elbow. The A's will promote Outman from Triple-A Sacramento to take **Brandon McCarthy**'s turn in the rotation.

McCarthy and **Tyson Ross** both landed on the disabled list Friday, forcing the A's to scramble for the first two games of this series in Southern California. Manager **Bob Geren** still hasn't announced who will fill Ross' spot on Tuesday night.

Outman, 26, began the 2009 season as the A's fifth starter. He pitched well, going 4-1 with a 3.48 ERA before his elbow troubles. Outman had surgery on June 30, 2009, and missed all of last season.

His numbers this year at Sacramento: 4-1 and a 4.78 ERA in eight starts. Outman's control hasn't been sharp, with 27 walks in 37 2/3 innings. His velocity is still strong, though he's not routinely throwing 95-mph fastballs as he did before the injury.

Outman didn't really impress A's officials in spring training, but they think - or hope - he's ready now.

"The reports are he's gotten better the last couple of starts," Geren said.

Kouzmanoff update: **Kevin Kouzmanoff**'s strained groin muscle kept him out of the lineup Sunday. Kouzmanoff took some pregame swings in the batting cage and reported he was "all right."

He offered the self-diagnosis with little enthusiasm and suggested running would be a much bigger problem than hitting.

Geren acknowledged after the game that Kouzmanoff was not really available to pinch-hit. It remains unclear whether the injury is severe enough for the A's to consider putting him on the disabled list.

Briefly: **Gio Gonzalez** pitched well in nearly stretching his winning streak to four games. Gonzalez, who took a no-decision, hasn't lost since April 25. ... **Andrew Bailey** will make another one-inning rehab outing tonight for Sacramento. ... The A's, at 22-25, fell three games below .500 for the first time since April 8.

A'S LEADING OFF

Ron Kroichick, San Francisco Chronicle

Bearing down: Some evidence as to how effective Gio Gonzalez has been this season: Hitters are 4-for-39 (.103) against him with runners in scoring position - and 0-for-20 with runners in scoring position and two outs.

Drumbeat: A's pregame: Outman to start Monday

5/22/2011 2:20pm

Manager Bob Geren offered some news before today's game against the Giants -- Josh Outman will be promoted from Triple-A Sacramento to start Monday night's game against the Angels.

The A's are down two starting pitchers, after putting Tyson Ross and Brandon McCarthy on the disabled list Friday. (They're down three, counting Dallas Braden's season-ending injury.) Outman will fill one of the vacancies in the opener of this week's four-game series in Anaheim.

Outman, 26, has a 4-1 record and 4.78 ERA in eight starts this season for Sacramento. He's a rare, left-handed power pitcher, though his velocity isn't quite what it was before he had Tommy John surgery on his left elbow on June 30, 2009.

Outman started the '09 season as Oakland's fifth starter. He pitched well, going 4-1 with a 3.48 ERA before the elbow trouble.

"The reports are he's gotten better the last couple of starts," Geren said today. "I haven't seen him much this year, but he threw 95 mph before he got hurt. He's had a long road to recovery, similar to (Joey) Devine."

The A's also have not named a starting pitcher for Tuesday night's game in Anaheim. Geren plans to make that announcement Monday.

Today's lineup against Giants starter Jonathan Sanchez: Crisp, CF; Barton, 1B; Jackson, RF; Willingham, LF; Suzuki, C; Ellis, 2B; LaRoche, 3B; Pennington, SS; Gonzalez, P.

A's drop Bay Bridge finale in 11th inning

By Willie Bans / MLB.com | 5/22/2011 10:00 PM ET

[Comments \(66\)](#)



OAK@SF: The A's lose on an 11th inning walk-off hit

SAN FRANCISCO -- Just across the Bay Bridge, the San Francisco Giants are in some ways similar to the Oakland A's. Strong pitching. Low run-scoring. This explains their close games, even against each other.

On Sunday, it was yet another. But here at AT&T Park, the A's learned that, for now, clutch hits come from the other side of the Bay.

After the Giants' 10th-inning walk-off victory Friday, on Sunday it was Emmanuel Burriss who ruined Oakland's day, his single to right field scoring the speedy Darren Ford from second for a 5-4 loss in the 11th inning of the series finale.

The A's (22-25) dropped their fifth straight and went to 6-6 in extra-inning games this year, while the Giants (27-19), who entered with the most games decided by three runs or fewer in the Majors, have won 14 of their last 18 contests.

"It's a game of little breaks, taking advantage of things," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "They got a game-changing hit, and that was the difference."

Oakland reliever Brian Fuentes surrendered one of those hits. He entered the game in the bottom of the 11th inning, and with one out, pinch-hitter Ford lined a single to right-center field and stole second with Buster Posey batting. Fuentes intentionally walked Posey to face Burriss and set up a potential double play. Instead, Burriss drove the fastball to right field, Ryan Sweeney gunned it to catcher Kurt Suzuki, who lost the ball -- and almost his glove -- in the collision with Ford.

All this after Giants pinch-hitter Nate Schierholtz tied it, 4-4, with a one-out, two-run homer in the eighth inning off Oakland reliever Grant Balfour, who had not allowed a run in his previous 14 1/3 innings over 14 appearances. Balfour had been working him outside with fastballs, and the last fastball missed the intended location.

"A guy that's been pretty much lights out just missed a pitch," Geren said of Balfour. "He was going down the way right there, just tugged it up the middle third and got it up in the wind."

A two-run, seventh-inning rally engineered by Coco Crisp and a sacrifice bunt helped the A's offense break out of a slump.

Down, 2-1, heading into the seventh, Oakland took advantage of Cliff Pennington's leadoff single against left-hander Jeremy Affeldt, who began the inning in relief of starter Jonathan Sanchez. A's pitcher Gio Gonzalez moved Pennington to second on a sacrifice bunt, Crisp doubled on a line drive to left field to score Pennington, then Daric Barton grounded one just to the right of diving shortstop Mike Fontenot to score Crisp for a 3-2 lead, the A's first in the series.

Crisp and his teammates were a happy and relieved bunch in the dugout, as they had scored just two runs in the previous three games.

Oakland added what turned out to be a needed insurance run in the eighth on pinch-hitter Hideki Matsui's sacrifice fly that scored Matt Ellis from third to make it 4-2. Ellis might have been tagged out by catcher Buster Posey had Posey not lost the ball on the tag.

The Giants bullpen kept it scoreless from there, however, and that included a ninth-inning effort by closer Brian Wilson and two shutout innings by Sergio Romo (2-0), who earned the victory.

Fuentes (1-6) was tagged with the loss.

"I had a good feel for what he's throwing, but baseball is baseball, so I was pretty much just trying to get a good pitch I could hit," Burriss said. "I knew he was going to try to get ahead early, so I'm just thinking, 'Don't be afraid to go after the first pitch if it's there,' and luckily it was."

Gonzalez backed the A's with a strong start, going 6 2/3 innings, surrendering eight hits, two walks, two runs (one earned) while fanning eight.

Gonzalez hit the first batter he faced, Andres Torres, on the toe. Freddy Sanchez then ripped an RBI double past a diving Andy LaRoche, who was starting at third in place of Kevin Kouzmanoff, who is day to day with a groin strain.

With two outs in the bottom of the third inning, Pat Burrell at second and Buster Posey at first, Cody Ross grounded sharply to LaRoche, whose throw to Daric Barton at first base pulled him off the bag enough that his tag of Ross was deemed a tad too late. LaRoche, who could have either tagged or thrown out Burrell, was charged with the throwing error, which allowed Posey to score and make it 2-0.

The A's entered the game with 36 errors, the second-most in the American League, and had given up 28 unearned runs, the most in the Majors.

Giants starter Jonathan Sanchez pitched six solid innings and allowed five hits, including Willingham's solo homer in the sixth that cut the San Francisco lead to 2-1. He walked two while striking out six in a 100-pitch outing.

Tougher for the A's is that their top three starting pitchers -- and the only ones healthy from the original five-man rotation -- took the mound in each game this series. Up next is a four-game series at Anaheim that begins with Josh Outman taking the hill for Oakland on Monday and another pitcher yet to be announced starting on Tuesday.

Oakland tried to put the situation in perspective.

"It's just one of those things where you have to move forward and brush it off," Gonzalez said.

Sounds good, because chances are this isn't the last time either team plays a close one.

"They did a good job of coming back," Suzuki said. "It's just one of those games."

For the Giants, that's a good thing. For the A's, that's led to a rough stretch.

A's head to Anaheim seeking turnaround

By Tom Green / MLB.com | 5/22/2011 9:28 PM ET

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LAA@SEA: Weaver tosses six solid frames

When the A's and Angels met a week ago, Oakland found itself in first place in the American League West for the first time since June 3.

Since then, however, the A's have been on a five-game skid that included two losses to the struggling Twins and a sweep at the hands of the cross-bay rival Giants, and have lost starting pitchers Brandon McCarthy and Tyson Ross to the disabled list.

"Every single time somebody gets injured, it's a disappointment, a major disappointment," A's manager Bob Geren said. "But to sink your head and say, 'Why us?' or 'Why me?' -- it's not worth doing that. You have to look forward, not backward. We're fortunate that position-player-wise we've been pretty healthy."

Starting in place of McCarthy, who is out with a stress reaction in his right shoulder, is Josh Outman. Outman, 26, will make his first start in the Majors since July 2009 after undergoing Tommy John surgery. He was 4-1 with a 4.78 ERA in eight starts for Triple-A Sacramento.

"I haven't seen him this year," Geren said. "He's been in Triple-A, obviously. Before he got hurt, he was a power pitcher, a left-hander. He threw 95 miles per hour, sometimes even higher, impressive."

While the A's have struggled since finding themselves atop the division, scoring just nine runs in the five games since the teams' last meeting, the Angels haven't fared much better, despite taking two of three from the Braves.

However, both teams remain within striking distance in a log-jammed AL West heading into Monday's matchup, and the Angels will send out Jared Weaver (6-4, 3.45 ERA) to try to spoil Outman's return to the Majors.

Athletics: Bailey scheduled to pitch Monday

A's two-time All-Star reliever Andrew Bailey is scheduled to make his second Minor League rehab appearance Monday for Sacramento.

Bailey, recovering from a forearm injury that has kept him out all season, made his first rehab outing Friday, tossing one inning in Sacramento. He threw 16 pitches and struck out one batter. Bailey hopes to return soon to the A's bullpen.

- Grant Balfour's 14 2/3 inning scoreless streak was snapped Sunday, when he gave up a two-run home run to Nate Schierholtz in the eighth. It tied the longest scoreless streak of Balfour's career.

Angels: Kazmir ready for rehab start

After a rough few months, Scott Kazmir is finally ready to get back into the swing of things. On Tuesday, the Angels' hurler will make his first rehab start since being placed on the DL April 8 with soreness in his lower back.

"I'm feeling good, I have made a lot of strides," Kazmir said. "To be able to get in competition and work on stuff is really important. I am making progress."

Worth noting

The A's have taken three of five games against the Angels this season, but they dropped two of three in Anaheim.

Outman called on to open series with Angels

By Willie Bans / MLB.com

SAN FRANCISCO -- Left-hander Josh Outman has been tabbed to replace one of the two vacant spots in the A's starting rotation, beginning with Monday's series opener in Anaheim.

Oakland manager Bob Geren made the announcement before Sunday's finale against the Giants. The other replacement will be announced Monday, Geren added.

Outman hasn't pitched in the big leagues since July 2009 after Tommy John surgery. He missed all of 2010, and this year he's 4-1 with a 4.78 ERA in eight starts for Triple-A Sacramento.

Geren hasn't seen Outman, 26, pitch this year but noted reports say he has shown significant velocity.

"Before he got hurt, he was a power pitcher," Geren said.

Worth noting

- Oakland starter Tyson Ross, placed on the 15-day disabled list Friday with a left oblique strain, was at AT&T Park on Sunday doing what he could. His plan for the day involved ice, shoulder exercises to keep his throwing arm active, and riding a bike.

"Pretty low-key, mostly just rest," said Ross, adding that he has no date in mind for his return.

- Closer Andrew Bailey is scheduled to pitch one inning for Triple-A Sacramento on Monday, manager Bob Geren said.

Giants sweep A's

By ANTONIO GONZALEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS

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SAN FRANCISCO — Emmanuel Burriss was walking into the batter's box when he locked eyes with Darren Ford standing on second, a small sign only the two close friends could communicate without muttering a word.

"It was more so if I get a hit, you better score," Burriss said. "It wasn't so much I'm guaranteeing a hit."

Burriss singled home Ford for the winning run in the bottom of the 11th inning, and the San Francisco Giants completed a three-game sweep of the cross-bay rival Oakland Athletics with a 5-4 victory Sunday.

Burriss' line drive off reliever Brian Fuentes (1-6) was hit hard enough to make it a close play at the plate. The speedy Ford slid in just ahead of right fielder Ryan Sweeney's throw, sending the Giants running out of the dugout to celebrate their fifth straight victory and seventh walk-off win this season.

"I don't know who else scores in the game except Darren," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "Anybody else and it's not even close."

San Francisco put the exclamation point on the latest edition of the Bay Bridge Series.

Pinch-hitter Nate Schierholtz hit a tying, two-run homer in the eighth off Grant Balfour over the right-field wall and just short of splashing in McCovey Cove. The rally spoiled another stellar outing by A's starter Gio Gonzalez and sent Oakland tumbling to its fifth straight loss and ninth overall at AT&T Park.

Sergio Romo (2-0) pitched two scoreless innings to help the Giants win their 10th straight home game. San Francisco is 11-0 in one-run games at its cozy waterfront ballpark this season.

"I feel like we're saying this every night," Bochy said about the close wins. "But to win this many consecutive games at home is pretty amazing."

The Giants stifled their neighbors across the bay with solid pitching in the first two games, with ace Tim Lincecum throwing a three-hitter Saturday after Ryan Vogelsong allowed only one unearned run Friday. When Oakland finally found a way to score in the finale, it simply wasn't enough.

It was that kind of weekend for the visitors.

Ford started things for the Giants in the 11th with a one-out, pinch-hit single to right. He stole second on the first pitch, dancing around second even while Oakland intentionally walked Buster Posey.

"That's what I want to do. I want to make them nervous and uncomfortable," Ford said.

Burriss singled to right and Ford went zipping around third, sliding in just under the tag by catcher Kurt Suzuki, who dropped the ball anyway.

"I didn't think it was going to be that close," Ford said.

The win was even sweeter for Ford and Burriss, who have spent considerable time together at Triple-A Fresno, train together in the offseason and consider each other family.

"That's what we do a lot in Fresno," Burriss said of the late-game baserunning. "It was great to do it on the big stage."

The Giants followed the usual script from the start.

Freddy Sanchez doubled in the first down the left-field line, and Andres Torres hustled from first to beat the relay throw at the plate to give San Francisco a 1-0 lead.

The Giants had a bit of a scare when Posey took a foul tip from Gonzalez off his mask in the second, bringing Bochy and a team trainer out of the dugout to check on the catcher. Posey said the right side of his jaw was sore, but he stayed behind the plate.

Posey extended his hitting streak to 11 games with a two-out single in the third. He scored two batters later when Cody Ross grounded to third baseman Andy LaRoche, whose high throw pulled Daric Barton off first base and put San Francisco ahead 2-0.

Josh Willingham sparked Oakland with a solo shot to left off Jonathan Sanchez in the sixth, his seventh home run of the season. Sanchez left after six innings, allowing five hits and striking out five.

The A's seemed prime to be the ones to finally be on the winning end of a rally.

Coco Crisp had an RBI double and Barton followed with a run-scoring single against Jeremy Affeldt in the seventh, giving Oakland a 3-2 lead. Pinch-hitter Hideki Matsui drove in Mark Ellis with a sacrifice fly off Ramon Ramirez in the eighth to make it 4-2.

That appeared to be enough behind Oakland's strong pitching staff. Gonzalez left after 6 2-3 innings, striking out eight and allowing two runs on eight hits.

Of course, nothing came easy for the A's in San Francisco.

"It's a game of little breaks and taking advantage of things," manager Bob Geren said.

"They got a game-changing hit and that was the difference."

NOTES: LHP Josh Outman will be called up from Triple-A Sacramento to start for Oakland on Monday at the Los Angeles Angels, Geren said. Oakland still has to decide who will start Tuesday with regulars Brandon McCarthy (stress reaction in right shoulder) and Tyson Ross (strained left side) on the disabled list. ... Oakland's two-time All-Star closer, Andrew Bailey (strained right forearm), is slated to make his second rehab appearance with Sacramento on Monday. ... Giants Hall of Famer Willie Mays was in the clubhouse before the game.

Leading Off: Rivals only, please, in MLB interleague play

Sacramento Bee, 5/23/2011

MLB interleague play: Rivals only, please

The A's and Giants on Sunday capped a weekend of interleague play, and it's always fun to watch rivals compete.

But Minnesota-Arizona? Houston-Toronto? Rivals?

What began in 1997 as an experiment to bring a jolt of excitement to the national pastime needs to be tweaked. Continue home-and-away series between local rivalries (A's-Giants, Yankees-Mets, Cubs-White Sox), but that's it.

The current interleague schedule (more games are planned June 17-July 3) creates imbalances.

The Red Sox played only two games in Oakland but will host the A's six times.

Because there are 16 National League teams and 14 in the American League, any full interleague schedule would have to include one N.L.-only game (this weekend, it was Colorado-Milwaukee).

Other changes loom on the baseball horizon – expanded playoffs being discussed for 2012 could mean an earlier season start in March.

Baseball purists have endured many changes to the game – more divisions, wild-card playoffs, November World Series games. And don't even bring up the abominable designated hitter rule.

The game still endures. But can we bring back a little normalcy with a balanced schedule highlighted with a few rivalry-rich interleague games?

What to watch

NBA, Dallas at Oklahoma City, 6 p.m., ESPN: Dallas can grab a commanding 3-1 series lead in the Western Conference finals.

What to do

Baseball, New Orleans at River Cats, Raley Field, 7:05 p.m.: The Cats open a four-game series vs. the Marlins' top farm team.

Today's poll

How would you change baseball's interleague schedule? • Rivalries only.

- Keep it as is.
- Abolish it.

To vote, go to www.sacbee.com/sports.

Weekend poll results

How many Kings games do you plan to attend next season? • None: 36%

- Fewer than five: 30%
- Six to 10: 14%
- Eleven or more: 20%

Total votes: 332

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento runs circles around Oklahoma City

By Alexandria Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

Less than 13 hours after the completion of the longest game in River Cats history, Sacramento came back with renewed vigor against Oklahoma City on Sunday.

Sacramento pounded three home runs en route to an 11-2 victory over the RedHawks before 10,711 fans at Raley Field.

Michael Taylor's RBI single to center field opened a three-run first inning for the River Cats.

Shane Peterson, Anthony Recker, and Jemile Weeks each homered on the afternoon. In the second, Peterson hit his fourth home run off the chain-link fence above the right-center field wall, bringing the score to 4-1. In the following inning, Recker hit one off the clubhouse in left field for his sixth of the year. Then, in the fifth inning, Weeks hit a three-run blast on a full count for a 10-1 advantage. Eric Sogard, celebrating his 25th birthday, and Peterson scored on Weeks' homer.

Sacramento left-hander Carlos Hernandez, called up Sunday from Double-A Midland, allowed one run (none earned) over 6.0 innings, striking out four and walking none while yielding six hits.

After playing until 12:23 a.m. Sunday morning, the 10,711 fans in attendance may have expected a tired Sacramento team. "Yesterday's game was a good one," said third baseman Steve Tolleson. "Yesterday was a marathon game. That was definitely the longest game I've ever been apart of. It is nice to come out and get a big win tonight and let the offense show a little bit."

In all, Sacramento collected 14 hits as the River Cats split the four-game series against former manager Tony DeFrancesco. Sacramento opens a four-game series at home against New Orleans on Monday night at 7:05.

Goebbert's Homer The Difference In Loss

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Whataburger Field ... Corpus Christi, TX

The Corpus Christi Hooks used the same "formula" to win their third straight in this series, handing the RockHounds their eighth straight loss (seven on the road trip) in the process. The 'Hounds also lost two pitchers over the course of the game (see below).

1. The RockHounds take the lead in the top of the first
2. The Hooks starting pitcher rebounds, gets tough and takes the game into the late innings
3. The Hooks rally back and get a big swing to take the lead
4. The Corpus bullpen denies a RockHounds rally

The 'Hounds pieced a run together in the top of the first, stealing three bases in the process, and the 1-0 lead would hold until the sixth. Hooks starter Ross Seaton, who was drafted by the Astros out of high school in Houston, at one point retired 13-in-a-row to keep the score 1-0.

In the sixth, the Hooks got a lead-off single from J.D. Martinez, the 'Hounds added an error on a throw by Tyler Ladendorf, and Jacob Goebbert sent a line drive out of the park over the right field wall, a 3-run home run that would stand up as the game winner.

Goebbert also came up big defensively, taking an RBI double away from Matt Sulentic in the first inning. In the seventh, he retrieved Sulentic's double off the base of the wall, doing so quickly enough to catch base runner Michael Spina, who was initially waved home on Sulentic's hit, rounding too far around third base. Goebbert's effort caused a late "stop sign" to go up, and Spina would be caught off the bag for the out.

The 'Hounds scored once in the eighth, but left the bases loaded. Goebbert came up big once more in the ninth, again with Sulentic at the plate. The Hooks left fielder got to Sulentic's liner to left in time to hold him to a lead-off single, and he would be stranded at second when the game ended.

Third baseman Brandon Wikoff also made two outstanding plays, one of them a sensational grab on a flair off the bat of (do you sense a pattern here?) ... Sulentic.

- The seven losses on the road trip have come by a combined 11 runs, including five, 1-run games.
- The 'Hounds are now 5-18 in their last 23 games, since holding first place at 12-8.
- Starter Anthony Capra and reliever Mickey Storey each came out of the game due to injury concerns. Capra left in the fifth inning with blister on his throwing hand, and Storey exited after warming up for the eighth inning with a stiff neck (he pitched one-third of an inning in the seventh).

In two starts on the road trip, Capra pitched 9.0 shutout innings.

- The 'Hounds conclude their series with the Hooks and the 8-game road trip Monday evening at 7:05.

Ports Shut Out Again

Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports took their second loss of a series at home against the San Jose Giants this afternoon. With strong pitching, the Giants nearly held the Ports hitless. By the time Stockton was able to put the ball in play, the Giants had a substantial lead.

The Ports' starting pitcher Robert Gilliam and the Giants' starting pitcher Craig Westcott pitched efficiently through the first few innings, and all was fairly quiet for both teams. In the bottom of the 3rd, the Ports had a chance to score some runs when third baseman Michael Gilmartin reached first on an error. Catcher Ryan Lipkin was then hit by a pitch. With two on, second baseman Connor Crumbliss laid down a sacrifice bunt to advance the runners to second and third, but they would ultimately be left in scoring position.

The Giants recorded the first hit of the game in the top of the 4th, when second baseman Ryan Cavan doubled. The Ports were able to get out of that inning with no further damage done.

Both teams remained scoreless until the top of the 6th, when designated hitter Gary Brown broke the game open with a leadoff home run.

The Giants continued to hold the Ports, and then took to padding their score in the top of the 8th. With two outs, Brown was hit by a pitch, and proceeded to steal second. Shortstop Brandon Crawford came to the plate and hit a home run to right field. Cavan followed up with a single, and that would spell the end for Gilliam, who gave up 5 hits and 4 runs in 7.2 innings. With A.J. Huttenlocker on the mound, catcher Hector Sanchez singled and third baseman Chris Dominguez walked. Centerfielder Jarrett Parker singled with the bases loaded, bringing in two more runs, giving the Giants their 5-0 lead.

Hector Correa came in to pitch for Westcott, who left the game giving up no hits or runs in 7 innings. Correa held the Ports in the 8th, and in the top of the 9th, Scott Deal came in to pitch for the Ports, after Huttenlocker gave up two 2 hits and a run in 0.1 innings. Deal quickly retired three batters to bring the Ports up in the bottom of the 9th.

Myrio Richard came in to hit for Anthony Aliotti and managed a base hit, breaking up what could have been the Stockton Ports first no-hitter since 1987. Leonardo Gil also came in to pinch hit for Mitch LeVier and was hit by a pitch. However, the Giants easily finished the inning without allowing the Ports to score.

The Ports look to avoid the sweep tomorrow at a special 11:05 a.m. start time with righty Murphy Smith taking the mound for Stockton.

Bees Lose 4-3 in Wisconsin

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

GRAND CHUTE, WI-he Burlington Bees (30-13) lost to the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers (23-20) 4-3 before 5,580 fans at Time Warner Cable Field on Sunday afternoon.

The Bees scored a single run in the first inning. 2B Nino Leyja (1-4) singled and stole second base. LF Douglas Landaeta (1-4) singled home Leyja for a 1-0 Burlington lead.

The Timber Rattlers pushed across two runs in the first inning against Burling starter Jonathan Joseph (0-1), who was just added to the roster before the game. RF Robbie Garvey (0-3) walked and stole second base. LF T.J. Mittelstaedt (2-3) tripled and scored on a single by DH Chris Dennis (1-3) for a 2-1 Wisconsin lead.

Burlington tied the game in the fifth inning. C John Nester (1-3) hit a two-out single and moved to third base on a single by RF Royce Consigli (2-3). He scored on a wild pitch by RHP Dan Britt (3-1) for a 2-2 tied score.

Wisconsin scored two runs in the fifth inning highlighted by a solo home run from SS Yadiel Rivera (1-3). The Timber Rattlers knocked Joseph out of the fifth inning and had a 4-2 lead.

The Bees scored a single run in the seventh inning. SS Yordy Cabrera (0-2) led off the inning with a walk and C John Nester (1-3) followed with a walk to push Cabrera to second base. A single by Consigli scored Cabrera to get Burlington within one run at 4-3.

The Bees and Timber Rattlers finish their series on Monday afternoon at 12:05 p.m. The Bees will send RHP Tyler Vail (0-1, 6.06) to the mound against LHP Zach Braddock, who will be making a major league rehabilitation start. Pre-game coverage begins at 11:45 a.m. over gobees.com. There will be no game broadcast on Newsradio 1490 KBUR on Monday afternoon.

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