

A's News Clips, Tuesday, June 7, 2011

Oakland A's losing streak at seven as Baltimore Orioles win 4-2

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

BALTIMORE -- The news came in heavy doses Monday, and that was before the A's even took the field against the Baltimore Orioles.

Hours before Oakland's 4-2 loss at Camden Yards -- the A's seventh in a row -- word surfaced that left-hander Brett Anderson was flying back to the Bay Area to have his left elbow checked by the team's medical staff.

Then the A's announced they were optioning starting third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff to Triple-A Sacramento.

Just another day at the yard in a season that's been dominated by injuries, surprise moves and underachievement on several fronts.

"It hasn't been a good couple of weeks for us," second baseman Mark Ellis said.

The A's seventh straight defeat marks their longest losing streak since an eight-game skid that began in late September 2009 and stretched into the following season.

With their chances for contending growing dimmer by the day, Anderson's long-term status has to rank as a major concern.

The left-hander -- in the second year of a four-year, \$12.5 million deal -- spent two stints on the disabled list in 2010 with elbow inflammation. He's shown a dip in velocity this season and said his slider has lost its sharpness.

He'll be examined Tuesday by team orthopedist Dr. Jon Dickinson.

The worst-case scenario for Anderson would be ligament damage, which would likely mean surgery and a long recovery. But there's no indication of the severity at this time.

"Anytime a pitcher is getting his elbow checked out, it's not good," Ellis said, "especially somebody as young and talented as Brett."

Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez are the only two healthy starters from the season-opening rotation.

Dallas Braden was lost for the season to shoulder surgery. Tyson Ross, who took his place, is on the disabled list with a strained oblique and Brandon McCarthy is sidelined by a stress reaction in his throwing shoulder.

"When it spirals out of control, it goes out of control," said Gonzalez, who took the loss Monday. "We just need our boys to stay healthy."

In an effort to kick-start things, the A's sent Kouzmanoff to Sacramento along with reliever Fautino De Los Santos. Infielder Adam Rosales was activated from the disabled list, and infielder Scott Sizemore was recalled.

Rosales made an immediate impact, starting at third base and hitting a two-run homer Monday for the A's only runs. Rosales has spent all season recovering from a fractured right foot.

Manager Bob Geren said Sizemore, acquired from Detroit on May 27 for reliever David Purcey, also would see time at third.

Kouzmanoff's demotion was surprising considering that Andy LaRoche, the only other player getting regular time at third base, was designated for assignment Sunday morning. Kouzmanoff homered that day against Boston.

But Kouzmanoff is hitting .221 with four homers and 17 RBIs. He's also committed nine errors, tied for second-most among major league third basemen entering Monday. LaRoche was hitting .247 with no homers and five RBIs.

"The production (at third) has not been there offensively and defensively," Geren said. "Now we're going to give someone else a chance to produce in that spot."

Kouzmanoff said he was surprised but acknowledged he hadn't played well.

"I'm a better baseball player than (what I've showed)," he said. "I know it's in there. It's a blessing for me to go down, get my work in and find it again."

But he also said inconsistent playing time affected him.

"I really didn't feel that groove at the beginning because I wasn't playing every day," he said.

A's update: Adam Rosales homers; Mark Ellis reportedly will go on disabled list

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

BALTIMORE -- The A's slide continued with Monday's 4-2 loss to the Baltimore Orioles in the opener of a three-game series at Camden Yards.

The Orioles scored all of their runs off Gio Gonzalez (5-4) in the first two innings.

The first was an unearned run, aided by shortstop Cliff Pennington's error. Then Baltimore strung together four hits off Gonzalez in their three-run second.

The A's have lost seven straight.

"We just haven't been playing well for the last week," A's manager Bob Geren said. "It's a total package. From the first pitch, and every single inning."

One bright spot was the season debut of third baseman Adam Rosales.

Activated from the disabled list after missing the whole season to this point with a fractured foot, Rosales hit a two-run homer in the fourth inning. He also made a diving backhanded stop of Vladimir Guerrero's sharp grounder in the fifth and made the long throw to get him at first.

"I like the energy he brings to the team, and obviously the skills he has also," Geren said. "The impact he made in his first game, although it was in a losing cause, that was our highlight."

Rosales said his foot feels good but hasn't completely regained its full strength yet. Therefore, he'll be on a two-day-on, one-off schedule for now.

Second baseman Mark Ellis left the game in the sixth after straining his right hamstring while pursuing a popup earlier in the game.

Ellis said he would have a better idea of how he felt when he woke up Tuesday morning.

But CSNBA reported Monday night that Ellis would go on the disabled list and that second baseman Jemile Weeks, the A's first-round pick in 2008, would be called up from Sacramento for his major league debut.

Weeks was pulled early from the River Cats game at Colorado Springs on Monday night.

Geren said Guillermo Moscoso would start Tuesday's game and that lefty Josh Outman would pitch Wednesday. That means Moscoso will take the mound on just two days' rest after making relief appearances Friday and Saturday.

After going 6 for 12 in three games batting sixth, Daric Barton was back in the second spot Monday and went 1 for 4.

Oakland picks Vanderbilt ace

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

BALTIMORE -- Sonny Gray said his mother was so excited after he was drafted by the A's on Monday that she was already pricing plane tickets from their home in Nashville to Oakland.

The A's won't be rushing Gray into a major league uniform anytime soon, but they're banking that the Vanderbilt right-hander will make an impact in the bigs with time.

That's why they made Gray the 18th overall selection in the Major League Baseball amateur draft Monday.

Oakland scouting director Eric Kubota talked of Gray's fastball, which sits in the low to mid 90s. He mentioned a curveball that has helped Gray strike out 115 batters in 107 2/3 innings this season and Gray's developing changeup.

But Kubota emphasized one trait that stood out above all else.

"He's an incredible competitor," Kubota said.

The A's believe that will offset some concerns about his size. Gray is listed at 5-foot-11 but said on a conference call he is an even 6 feet.

Asked where his competitiveness came from, Gray traced it back to his father, Jesse, who coached him in youth baseball from age 4 to 12. Gray's father died in an auto accident when Gray was a high school freshman, but the lessons have stuck.

"He really wanted me to do two things," Gray said. "Go to college and learn a lot about life, and play professional baseball."

Gray was surrounded by family as he watched the draft unfold, including his mother, Cindy Craig.

"She's been more stressed than me," Gray joked.

Gray is the first pitcher the A's have taken with their first choice since they grabbed right-hander James Simmons out of UC Riverside in 2007.

The A's pitching depth in the farm system is a bit thin, but Kubota reiterated the club doesn't target needs in the first round.

"Sonny was the best guy on our board when we picked," Kubota said.

Gray said he grew up rooting for the Atlanta Braves. Fittingly, when asked if there were any pitchers he compared his style to, Gray mentioned Braves pitcher Tim Hudson along with the Phillies' Roy Oswalt.

"They're coming at you with a hard fastball, trying to make the ball sink a little bit underneath the bat," Gray said.

The A's don't hold a second-round pick. Their next selection will come in the third round (105th overall).

Oakland A's send Kevin Kouzmanoff to minor leagues

By Joe Stiglich , Oakland Tribune

BALTIMORE -- The A's shook up their roster Monday afternoon, optioning starting third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff to Triple-A Sacramento along with reliever Fautino De Los Santos.

To take their spots, infielder Adam Rosales was activated from the disabled list and infielder Scott Sizemore was recalled from Sacramento. Rosales is starting at third base in Monday nights' series opener against the Baltimore Orioles, and A's manager Bob Geren said Sizemore also will get time there.

The timing of the Kouzmanoff move is somewhat curious because Andy LaRoche, the only other player getting regular time at third base, was designated for assignment Sunday. Kouzmanoff then went out and homered that day against the Red Sox.

"I'm surprised, I didn't see it coming," Kouzmanoff said. "But we've got Rosales coming up. He's healthy. That's just the way it is."

Kouzmanoff, viewed as a long-term answer at the position when he was obtained from San Diego in January 2010, is hitting just .221 with four homers and 17 RBIs. He's also committed nine errors, tied for second most among major league third baseman. LaRoche was hitting .247 with no homers and five RBIs.

"The production from that spot has not been there offensively and defensively," Geren said. "Now we're going to give someone else a chance to produce in that spot."

Rosales, who hit .271 with seven homers and 31 RBIs in 80 games last season, has missed all of this season with a fractured right foot. He saw time at all four infield spots last year.

Sizemore was obtained in a trade from Detroit last week for reliever David Purcey. He also has been playing third base at Sacramento.

Kouzmanoff said it was a challenge coming to the park not knowing if he'd be in the lineup every day.

"I feel like you play better walking into that clubhouse every day knowing that you're going to be in the lineup," he said.

But he added: "I'm a better baseball player than (what he's showed). I know it's in there. It's a blessing for me to go down, get my work in and find it again."

Chin Music: A's draft Vanderbilt right-hander Sonny Gray

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/6/2011 5:53pm

The A's drafted Vanderbilt right-hander Sonny Gray with their first selection (18th overall) in the amateur draft. It's the first time the A's have selected a pitcher with their top pick since 2007, when they went with UC Riverside right-hander James Simmons.

Baseball America's take on Gray — he's on the smallish side (5-foot-11) but his fastball can reach 97 mph, usually sitting in the 90-95 mph range. His best pitch is a power curve ball that's got 12-6 action on it, and he's got a changeup that's improved over time. ...

Chin Music: Kevin Kouzmanoff optioned to Triple-A; Adam Rosales back and starting at third base

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/6/2011 3:01pm

There's been no shortage of A's news today, and their game against Baltimore hasn't even started. I've been unable to get on Twitter all day, so check here for your updates tonight ... Here's the lowdown on what's happened ...

The A's shook up their roster Monday afternoon, optioning starting third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff to Triple-A Sacramento along with reliever Fautino De Los Santos.

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But he added: "I'm a better baseball player than (what he's showed). I know it's in there. It's a blessing for me to go down, get my work in and find it again."

The news follows up word earlier Monday that left-hander Brett Anderson is going back to the Bay Area to get his left elbow checked.

Geren declined comment on whether Anderson would miss his next scheduled start Friday against the White Sox, saying only that Anderson was being checked by team doctors.

Geren also announced that Guillermo Moscoso will start Tuesday against the Orioles, with Josh Outman staying on regular rest and pitching Wednesday. Moscoso was needed in relief both Friday and Saturday, giving him just two days' rest before Tuesday's start.

Chin Music: A's Brett Anderson leaving team to get left elbow checked

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/6/2011 10:28am

I've confirmed with multiple team sources that A's pitcher Brett Anderson is heading back to the Bay Area to get his left elbow checked. It makes sense, given Anderson's dip in velocity with both his fastball and slider recently. I don't know anything beyond this right now but will update as I gather more information ...

A's fall to Baltimore for 7th straight loss

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Cracks are appearing in the A's 2011 season, and they're starting to grow rapidly in all directions.

On Monday, one of the team's top starting pitchers returned to the Bay Area to have his arm checked, and later in the evening, the A's couldn't beat Baltimore. Then they lost their second baseman, possibly for a while.

Oakland, swept in consecutive series by the Yankees and the Red Sox, came to Camden Yards in search of an easier foe. The A's took all three against Baltimore last month at the Coliseum, but on Monday, they could not find the same formula and fell 4-2 to the last-place Orioles.

The A's have lost a season-high seven in a row, and they are a season-worst seven games below .500.

"We haven't been playing well the last week, total package," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "We have to play better from the first pitch on, every single inning."

Earlier in the day, left-hander Brett Anderson flew back to Oakland to have his elbow examined by team orthopedists. After allowing five runs at Boston on Sunday, Anderson had discussed the reduced velocity and lack of effective movement on his slider, and according to one source, he has expressed concern that he might need Tommy John surgery if he has an ulnar collateral-ligament tear.

When asked if Anderson's trip to get examined was prompted by discomfort or by his results, Geren said, "It's just an all-around good idea to have him checked out. Nothing specific."

Geren said there are no plans yet to skip Anderson's next start, which would come Friday. Anderson was on the disabled list twice last year with left elbow inflammation.

Oakland already has four pitchers - Dallas Braden, Brandon McCarthy, Tyson Ross and Rich Harden - on the DL, but only Braden (shoulder surgery) is out for the season.

In other less than ideal news for the A's, second baseman Mark Ellis left in the sixth inning Monday with a right hamstring strain that he said he incurred while fielding a foul pop in the third. He said he would have no idea how significant the injury is until this morning, but last year Ellis missed more than a month with a left hamstring strain.

Though the A's made no announcement after Monday night's game, second baseman Jemile Weeks, who is batting .321, came out of Triple-A Sacramento's game at Colorado Springs after one plate appearance.

Oakland's one bright spot Monday: Adam Rosales, who came off the DL, started at third base and homered in the fourth inning. Rosales hadn't played for Oakland since August because of a right foot injury that required surgery in December.

Rosales provided his usual super-sprint home run trot, but Ellis was the baserunner aboard when he hit his shot to left, and Rosales had almost caught him by the time Ellis reached the plate.

Rosales also turned in a slick play at third base in the fifth inning, with a backhanded stop and a long throw to get Vladimir Guerrero at first.

Scott Sizemore, obtained from Detroit for pitcher David Purcey on May 27, was called up from Triple-A Sacramento. Sizemore pinch-hit for Ellis in the sixth and singled.

With Rosales scheduled not to play tonight, Sizemore would be penciled in for third base, which makes it even more likely Weeks might be called up to play second.

No matter Anderson's diagnosis, the 23-year-old is likely to then seek a second opinion, according to several sources. Many of the A's pitchers have seen Dr. James Andrews after initial visits to Oakland's orthopedists.

"It hasn't been a good couple of weeks for us here, obviously," Ellis said of the team's injuries.

"Anytime someone is getting (his) elbow checked out, you don't get excited, especially when it's a pitcher who is that young and talented."

Kouzmanoff gets demoted

Kevin Kouzmanoff, in his sixth season, was sent to Triple-A Sacramento on Monday. He averaged 20 homers and 82 RBIs in three years with San Diego before joining Oakland, where he has been relegated to part-time duty this year. His 2011 stats and ranking among major-league third basemen:

Stat	Total	Rank
At-bats	136	26
Runs	13	T-28
Hits	30	30
Doubles	6	T-30
Home runs	4	T-13
RBI	17	T-22
Strikeouts	27	21
Walks	8	T-27
Batting average	.221	44
Errors	9	T-2

Fielding percentage .922 92

A's send down third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Kevin Kouzmanoff said he was shocked and surprised to get optioned to Triple-A Sacramento on Monday, but he said he's prepared to work hard on his all-around game and make it back to Oakland.

"I'm a better baseball player than that," Kouzmanoff said. "I know it's in there. Maybe it's a blessing to go down and get my work in, find it again."

Kouzmanoff hit his fourth homer Sunday, but he was batting .221 with 17 RBIs in 46 games, and his nine errors were second most among AL third basemen.

The day before, the A's designated their other third baseman, **Andy LaRoche**, for assignment.

"The production from that spot has not been there offensively and defensively," manager **Bob Geren** said.

Moscoso to go: Guillermo Moscoso will start tonight at Baltimore, though he worked in relief Friday and Saturday at Boston. **Josh Outman** will stick with his originally scheduled start Wednesday.

Harden's progress: Rich Harden did a simulated warm-up session of 20-25 pitches Monday and he then threw another 20-25 pitches off the mound with regular intensity, he said. Harden expects to face hitters, probably live batting practice, later in the week.

Briefly: Right-hander **Fautino De Los Santos** was optioned to Sacramento. ... **Daric Barton** hit .500 in three games in the sixth spot, but he was back in the No. 2 spot Monday and went 1-for-4. ... **Josh Willingham**, returning from a sore left Achilles tendon, served as designated hitter and went 0-for-4. ... **Gio Gonzalez** allowed four runs, three earned, all in the first two innings.

A's leading off

Name game: The Coliseum got yet another corporate name Monday, going from Overstock.com Coliseum to O.co Coliseum. There were numerous jokes on Twitter that the new handle reflects the tenants' scoring capabilities.

A's draft righty Sonny Gray from Vandy

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Sonny Gray said Monday in a conference call that he's 6-foot and 200 pounds. Reminded that his college, Vanderbilt, lists him at 5-11, he said, "I'd say 5-11 1/2. ... or 5-11."

The A's don't care that the right-hander they drafted 18th overall isn't 6-foot-4. They claim he's perfectly fine as a sub-6-footer because of the entire package he provides, including a 92-96 mph fastball, hard breaking ball and developing changeup.

One more asset: "An incredible, incredible competitor," A's scouting director Eric Kubota said.

Gray was 11-3 with a 2.01 ERA in 16 starts for Vanderbilt, striking out 115 and walking 39 in 107 2/3 innings.

"We've gotten to know him personally for a number of years, and he's got incredible gumption and fortitude," Kubota said. "He's one of those kids who's not going to back down from anything."

Gray attributes his competitiveness to his father, Jesse, who died in a car crash when his son was a high school freshman. Jesse coached Sonny from age 4 to 12, and Sonny recalls his teams losing only four times.

"I kind of got used to winning. Once you get used to winning, it's kind of hard to stop," Gray said.

Gray, who sees himself in the Tim Hudson-Roy Oswalt mold, seemed thrilled about reaching two goals desired by his father: going to college and getting to the pros.

Because they lost a pick for their Grant Balfour signing, Oakland's second pick isn't until today, 105th overall.

Drumbeat: More on: Adam Rosales' return to A's, Kouzmanoff sent out, Anderson, etc.

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Camden Yards 6/6/2011 3:12pm

It's a busy day in A's land: Kevin Kouzmanoff was optioned out, and tonight's third baseman is Adam Rosales, back off the DL and in the lineup for the first time this season. Oakland called up infielder Scott Sizemore, who'd been obtained for reliever David Purcey in a deal with Detroit at the end of last month. Sizemore is usually a second baseman, but he'd been playing third at Triple-A Sacramento.

Manager Bob Geren said that the team hasn't not made any plans to skip Brett Anderson's start in the wake of Anderson's return to the Bay Bay Area to be checked by team orthopedists. When I asked if the checkup was prompted by particular discomfort or by results - Anderson spoke yesterday of decreased velocity and movement - Geren said that the team felt "it was just an all-around good idea to have him checked out. Nothing specific."

Kouzmanoff said he was shocked and surprised at the demotion, and, he said, "I didn't see it coming." He knows he hasn't played his best this season, though, and he said he knows he can be better. His plan is to go to Sacramento, work on everything he needs to (which is both offense and defense, really) and come back sometime soon. Geren said that's the plan, let Kouzmanoff work through the kinks before coming back. You hear players say a lot that you can't really work on things at the big-league level - you just don't have the luxury. Triple-A is a much better environment for that.

You never know, though; should Rosales or Sizemore take off, a roster spot might be tough to regain. Both Rosales and Sizemore have been viewed as bench players, extra-infielder types, but this is a good chance for one or both to really show what they've got and try to leap into an everyday big-league role.

At any rate, with Andy LaRoche getting designated yesterday, too, this qualifies as a shakeup for a team that has lost a season-high tying six in a row. It vaguely reminds me of the moves the A's made in late May 2002, trading Jeremy Giamberini and sending out a bunch of others - Jeff Tam, Frank Menechino and Carlos Pena. That shakeup was sometimes cited for getting the team going, maybe sending a message. Perhaps this is something similar. Will it have a similar effect? That team won the division. It was a better overall roster, however.

I asked Geren how playing time will break down between Rosales and Sizemore and he said Rosales can't play a lot of days in a row anyway, since he hasn't even played nine innings yet, even in his rehab assignment. So I'd imagine we'll see quite a bit of both initially.

Fautino De Los Santos also was sent out, so the A's drop back to their usual seven-man bullpen.

Guillermo Moscoso will start tomorrow night's game on two days of rest - something I've never seen at the big-league level. Colleges, sure. Moscoso worked in relief on Friday and Saturday, so this is pretty unusual, but the team obviously is convinced he's fine. He threw 59 total pitches in the two games. Josh Outman will also stick with his regularly scheduled start, on Wednesday.

The great David Feldman reminds me I have seen a starter go on two days rest: In 2005, Joe Kennedy worked one inning of relief on Aug. 24 at Baltimore, then started on Aug. 27 at Baltimore, and got the win. In 2003, John Halama pitched two

thirds of an inning at Boston on Aug. 20, then he started Aug. 23 at Toronto. He worked four innings and didn't get a decision.

I didn't see this one, but in 1997, Carlos Reyes started at Baltimore on one day's rest, and he gave up seven runs and took the loss. Feldman says that this is the 121st time in Oakland history a pitcher started on two days of rest or less. So... that's way more than I would have thought.

Josh Willingham is back in, but the training staff doesn't want him standing around in the outfield on a sore Achilles tendon, so he's DHing. Here's the lineup behind Gio Gonzalez: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Jackson lf, Willingham dh, Suzuki c, Ellis 2b, Rosales 3b, Sweeney rf, Pennington ss

Drumbeat: Sources: Brett Anderson to get elbow checked; could A's lose another starter?

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Baltimore 6/6/2011 11:27am

Several sources have confirmed that Brett Anderson was to return to the Bay Area today to get his left elbow checked, and according to one source, Anderson had expressed concern that he might need Tommy John surgery if the ulnar collateral ligament is torn.

Anderson was on the DL twice last year with left elbow inflammation last year, and there was some worry around the team at the time that perhaps he had a ligament tear, but he was not diagnosed with any structural damage at the time and he pitched well when he came back, with a 2.98 ERA the rest of the way; he was particularly good in September, when he went 3-1 with a 2.23 ERA.

Anderson has seen a dip in his velocity recently, and he said Sunday after allowing five runs (all the product of just two home runs) that he was more concerned about the 3-4 mph dip on his slider and the fact that his slider, his best pitch, was not as sharp as usual.

The A's already have had numerous starters go on the DL, including two members of the Opening Day rotation, left-hander Dallas Braden (shoulder surgery) and right-hander Brandon McCarthy (stress reaction, right shoulder, an injury he has had in previous years). Right-hander Rich Harden opened the season on the DL with a muscle strain under his right arm, and right-hander Tyson Ross is on the DL with an oblique strain. Only Braden's injury is season-ending.

Should Anderson miss a start or potentially more, left-hander Bobby Cramer would be likely to fill in, at least until Ross, McCarthy or Harden is able to return from the DL.

As recently as May 26, Anderson threw eight shutout innings against the Angels, allowing three hits, and he had a 2.84 overall ERA at that point. In his past two starts, he has allowed 14 earned runs in 10 1/3 innings. In his May 31 start, the 23-year-old gave up 10 runs, nine earned, and remained in to throw 5 1/3 innings and 103 pitches. He also threw 103 pitches on Sunday at Boston, which is right around or even a little under the norm for A's starters this time of year.

Gio settles in, but A's losing streak continues

Oakland unable to overcome early four-run hole vs. Baltimore

By Jeff Seidel / Special to MLB.com | 6/6/2011 11:42 PM ET

BALTIMORE -- The lack of hitting and starting pitching is a big reason the A's have been stuck in a week-long slide. They got some of both on Monday night against the Orioles, but still couldn't snap out of their funk.

Starter Gio Gonzalez struggled at first before settling down to go seven innings, and Adam Rosales homered in his first game of the season, but the A's couldn't rebound from an early four-run deficit as Baltimore handed them their seventh straight loss, 4-2, before 10,556 at Camden Yards.

This is the team's longest skid this season -- and the longest since the A's dropped eight in a row from Sept. 27, 2009-April 5, 2010. Oakland is 5-14 in its last 19 games, and the frustration is mounting.

"We're doing our job," Gonzalez said. "Teams are making unbelievable plays. Everyone decides to be a Gold Glove winner against us. We're hitting the ball good. We're pitching pretty good. Hopefully it will snap."

Gonzalez (5-4) labored through the first two innings, giving up four runs on six hits. He struggled again in the third as Baltimore got two on with two outs before escaping trouble and settling down.

The left-hander then found his way and retired 12 of his next 13 to keep Oakland (27-34) in the game. Gonzalez allowed four runs on nine hits in the seven innings, but got the final 11 he faced, limiting Baltimore to just three hits in the last five innings.

"Those first two innings, he was up with everything," said Oakland manager Bob Geren. "He gave up quite a few hits early, and then he made a great adjustment ... he was fantastic."

But those first two innings put Oakland into a deep hole. Vladimir Guerrero hit an RBI single in the first for a 1-0 lead. The O's (27-31) added three more in the second, sending eight to the plate. Matt Wieters and Nick Markakis got RBI singles, and Nolan Reimold added a sacrifice fly for the 4-0 lead.

The Orioles played the A's in Oakland the last weekend in May, and Baltimore manager Buck Showalter said that may have helped his team, especially since they faced Gonzalez in that series.

"When you play West Coast teams that you don't see very often that aren't in your division, it's one of the helps of playing the series close to each other if you see the same pitchers," Showalter said. "He's one of the better pitchers in the league. We scored four runs. It isn't like we opened him up, but pitching and the defense were the difference tonight."

The Orioles made a number of good defensive plays that hurt the A's. Conor Jackson hit a one-out single in the first and tried to stretch it into a double, but center fielder Adam Jones threw him out at second. If Jackson had been safe, the A's would have had runners on second and third and one out against O's starter Brian Matusz (1-0), making his second start after missing the first two months of the season with a left intercostal muscle strain.

Geren argued the call, but it stood and Matusz then struck out Josh Willingham to end the inning. Jones later made a nice running catch, as did right fielder Markakis. Left fielder Reimold ran down two two fly balls in foul territory.

Oakland's only runs came when Rosales ripped a two-run homer off Matusz in the fourth. Rosales came off the 60-day disabled list (foot) on Monday, and that was his first hit of the season. The third baseman also made a spectacular diving stop and throw to retire Guerrero in the fifth.

"It felt good to be out there," Rosales said. "It's exciting to make plays like that. But you've got to remember to make the routine plays. "

But the A's had just two baserunners after the Rosales homer. Jim Johnson relieved Matusz in the sixth with two on and one out. He got Rosales to ground into an inning-ending double play. Johnson, Koji Uehara and closer Kevin Gregg (11th save) combined to retire the final 10 Oakland batters.

Second baseman Mark Ellis came out in the sixth with a right hamstring strain. Scott Sizemore, who was called up Monday, pinch-hit for him in the sixth and went 1-for-2. Ellis said after the game that he'll have a better idea on the extent of the injury Tuesday morning.

The A's came in having won 20 of 24 against the Orioles, but playing Baltimore couldn't help Oakland end its skid.

"We need to play better," Geren said. "First pitch on -- every single inning."

O's, A's turn to fill-in starters in middle game

Baltimore's Jakubauskas opposes Oakland's Moscoso

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com | 6/7/2011 12:24 AM ET

In an effort to give the usual starters a rest, Baltimore will start Chris Jakubauskas on Tuesday against Guillermo Moscoso and the A's.

Primarily used as a reliever this season, Jakubauskas is making his first start of the year and his first since he was hit the head by a Lance Berkman line drive last April. He suffered a concussion and head contusion as a result.

He will be ready.

"I've gotten four or five starts down in Triple-A and I got the pitch count up to about 90, 95 pitches, so physically, I'm ready to go," Jakubauskas said. "Obviously there's going to be a bunch made out of what I did in my last start in the big leagues, but I'm ready to go. ... I like starting, so it will be good to get back out there and start a game."

The O's could use a strong effort from Jakubauskas. Including Monday's 4-2 victory against the A's, Baltimore is 3-7 since May 27.

"That's why baseball's nice. It's every day. You don't have six days to dwell on a loss like football and in basketball, you get a couple days off in between," he said. "You don't have that. You take 10, 15 minutes to reflect on it, change it, and let it go as soon as you leave the locker room."

Don't expect Jakubauskas to worry about a return to the rotation. He's comfortable in any role. The right-hander threw two innings, giving up two hits with two strikeouts in his last appearance Friday. This season, he has allowed nine earned runs in 12 2/3 innings.

"In 2009, going from always being a starter to going into the bullpen it was a lot of picking brains of guys who have been in the bullpen for a while," he said. "It's more mental for me. You don't have time to get into a groove, the game has already been going and you got to get in there to either stop the bleeding or keep the team in the game."

As for Moscoso, he is pitching in place of injured starter Tyson Ross. Moscoso pitched in relief against the Red Sox this weekend, giving up one run over three innings in two appearances. For the season, he is 2-1 with a 3.21 ERA in four appearances (two starts).

Athletics: Roster moves aplenty

Monday proved to be a busy day for A's. They reinstated infielder Adam Rosales from the 60-day disabled list and recalled infielder Scott Sizemore from Triple-A Sacramento. Oakland optioned struggling third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff and pitcher Fautino De Los Santos back to Sacramento.

Rosales, who homered in Monday's 4-2 loss, will share duties with Sizemore at third.

Orioles: How's this for openers?

The Orioles are 8-13 in the first game of a series this season and 22-17 since Buck Showalter took over as manager last Aug. 3. The club was 9-25 in the 34 series openers prior to Showalter's arrival.

- O's starters Jake Arrieta and Zach Britton will visit the Under Armour Freedom Bunker/Distribution House on Tuesday from noon to 2 p.m. ET in Curtis Bay, Md.

Worth noting

- With the 18th pick in the first round of the 2011 First-Year Player Draft on Monday, the A's selected right-hander Sonny Gray out of Vanderbilt University.
- The Orioles took right-hander Dylan Bundy from Owasso (Okla.) High School with the fourth overall pick in the first round Monday.

Struggling Kouzmanoff optioned to Triple-A

De Los Santos also sent down; Rosales, Sizemore up

By Jeff Seidel / Special to MLB.com

BALTIMORE -- The A's made several moves before Monday's series opener with the Orioles, most designed to try to improve their problems at third base.

They reinstated infielder Adam Rosales from the 60-day disabled list and recalled infielder Scott Sizemore from Triple-A Sacramento. Oakland optioned struggling third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff and pitcher Fautino De Los Santos back to Sacramento.

Kouzmanoff (.221 average, nine errors) and Andy LaRoche have combined for most of this year's starts at third base. The A's designated LaRoche for assignment on Sunday.

"The production from that spot has not been there either offensively or defensively," said manager Bob Geren. "Now we're going to give somebody else a chance to produce in that spot."

The 29-year old Kouzmanoff hasn't been in the Minors since 2006, but has struggled throughout the season. He's hoping to get himself straightened out at Sacramento, but when asked his thoughts on this move, it's easy to see the veteran got caught off guard.

"Surprise, shock. I didn't see it coming," Kouzmanoff said. "As everybody well knows, I started off slow on both sides of the ball. I was unsatisfied with my play so far this season. I got the news that I'm going down, and all I can do is just go down and get my reps in and keep working and try to work my way back."

Rosales and Sizemore will share duties at third. For Monday's game, Rosales got the start, batting seventh. He had been on the disabled list after missing all of Spring Training with a fractured right foot.

Rosales hit .271 with seven homers and 31 RBIs in 80 games with the A's in 2010.

The A's acquired Sizemore from the Tigers on May 27 in a deal for pitcher David Purcey. He was hitting .267 in nine games at Sacramento, playing most of his games at third base, but Geren said both Rosales and Sizemore can help Oakland at third and in other spots.

Geren said that they will both be given opportunities at third. But Sizemore also can play second while Rosales plays second and short, and both could even be in the lineup at once, giving Cliff Pennington and Mark Ellis some breaks.

De Los Santos made his Major League debut Saturday in Boston. He struck out Jed Lowrie, the only batter he faced.

On Sunday, De Los Santos gave up one run on two hits in two innings and struck out four. Geren said he showed a "good live arm."

Weeks reportedly close to getting called up

BALTIMORE -- According to a report on CSNBayArea.com on Monday night, the A's will soon call up second-base prospect Jemile Weeks from Triple-A Sacramento.

The A's might need some second-base help after starter Mark Ellis strained his right hamstring in Monday's 4-2 loss to the Orioles. Ellis said after Monday's game that he'll have a better idea on Tuesday about the severity of the injury.

The 24-year-old Weeks, who was pulled out of Sacramento's game in the second inning Monday, was Oakland's first-round pick in the 2008 First-Year Player Draft and is the younger brother of Milwaukee second baseman Rickie Weeks.

Weeks is hitting .321 with three homers and 22 RBIs in 44 games this year. In addition, Weeks has a .414 on-base percentage.

The A's called up Scott Sizemore on Monday, and he can play second as well as third. Sizemore came on for Ellis in the sixth and went 1-for-2 in his first game with Oakland.

Hurler Gray excited to develop talents with A's

Club impressed with college junior's 'gumption and fortitude'

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

Sonny Gray knew his father wanted to see him accomplish two things in life.

"The first was to go to college and make the most of it," Gray said, "and the second thing was to play professional baseball."

The young right-handed hurler can put a check mark next to the first item. The second, meanwhile, is on the near horizon, as Gray was selected by the A's out of Vanderbilt University on Monday with the 18th overall selection in the First-Year Player Draft.

Unfortunately, Gray's father, Jesse, wasn't around to see his son get drafted, as he passed away from injuries sustained in a car accident when his son was a high school freshman. But that hasn't stopped Gray from sticking to the plan.

First-round selections

No.	Team	Player
1	PIT	RHP Gerrit Cole
2	SEA	LHP Danny Hultzen
3	ARI	RHP Trevor Bauer
4	BAL	RHP Dylan Bundy
5	KC	OF Bubba Starling
6	WAS	3B Anthony Rendon
7	ARI	RHP Archie Bradley
8	CLE	SS Francisco Lindor
9	CHC	SS Javier Baez
10	SD	2B Cory Spangenberg
11	HOU	OF George Springer
12	MIL	RHP Taylor Jungmann
13	NYM	OF Brandon Nimmo
14	FLA	RHP Jose Fernandez
15	MIL	LHP Jed Bradley
16	LAD	LHP Chris Reed
17	LAA	1B C.J. Cron
18	OAK	RHP Sonny Gray
19	BOS	RHP Matt Barnes
20	COL	LHP Tyler Anderson
21	TOR	RHP Tyler Beede
22	STL	2B Kolten Wong
23	WAS	RHP Alex Meyer
24	TB	RHP Taylor Guerrieri
25	SD	RHP Joe Ross
26	BOS	C Blake Swihart
27	CIN	RHP Robert Stephenson
28	ATL	LHP Sean Gilmartin

No.	Team	Player
29	SF	SS Joe Panik
30	MIN	SS Levi Michael
31	TB	OF Mikie Mahtook
32	TB	SS Jake Hager
33	TEX	LHP Kevin Matthews

CWS, DET, NYY and PHI did not have first-round selections.

"He was a big part of my life, and I don't think I would be the athlete I am today without him," said Gray, who learned that the A's drafted him from his home in Tennessee, surrounded by family and close friends.

The 21-year-old, who just completed his junior season and is prepping for the NCAA Super Regionals, was 11-2 with a 2.01 ERA in 16 starts for the Commodores this year. He struck out 115 and walked just 39, while compiling a 1.04 WHIP, holding opponents to a .192 batting average and allowing just four home runs.

Coming out of high school in 2008, Gray dropped to the Cubs in the 27th round primarily because of his strong commitment to Vanderbilt. The young hurler has the talent to overcome his lack of size (5-foot-11, 200 pounds) and compares himself a bit to Tim Hudson and Roy Oswalt.

"He's a guy that we've seen for a number of years," A's scouting director Eric Kubota said. "He was a very high prospect out of high school, and we had a lot of interest in him at that time. We followed him throughout his three years in his college career. He's extremely decorated with very good stuff. We're thrilled here."

Gray, an aggressive pitcher early in the count who will take the quick outs, owns a power fastball that he can deliver at 92-95 mph and has the potential to reach up to 97. He also boasts a plus curveball for plenty swings and misses and locates a developing changeup well.

"Strength-wise, I think I attack hitters really well," Gray said. "I come in and try to give you my best stuff, and I think having that competitive spirit and that competitive mind serves you well on days you don't have your best stuff."

That competitiveness stems from his days with his dad, who coached Gray from ages 4 to 12. During that time, Gray lost just four games.

"We've gotten to know him personally for a number of years, and he just has incredible gumption and fortitude," Kubota said. "He's one of those kids who isn't backing out of any situation. He's not afraid of anything. He's going to go out and do everything he can on any given day to get you out."

Oakland's first-round selection continues a decade-long college trend while also fulfilling a lack of pitching depth in the Minors. Several A's arms have come out of the Draft, but most -- including the likes of Trevor Cahill and Tyson Ross -- have graduated to the Majors in recent seasons.

"We do not generally draft for need," Kubota said, "but I think you can always use more pitching."

The A's took hitters in the first round in each of the last three Drafts, trying to replenish a system that lacked impact offensive players. This year's Draft is particularly stocked with pitching, and Gray -- who will continue to be groomed as a starter -- is well aware of the arms that have graced the big league scene in Oakland.

"They have a great history of developing pitchers, and that's exciting," said Gray, who in high school idolized Tampa Bay hurler David Price during his Vanderbilt days.

The A's now look toward the 105th pick (third round) and 136th pick (fourth round). They relinquished their second-round choice to Tampa Bay when they signed Type A free-agent reliever Grant Balfour in the offseason.

Live coverage of the 2011 First-Year Player Draft resumes at 9 a.m. PT on Tuesday on MLB.com, where fans will receive exclusive coverage of Day 2 and 3, featuring a live pick-by-pick stream, expert commentary and Draft Tracker, a live interactive application that includes a searchable database of every Draft-eligible player.

Major Lee-ague: Anderson to have elbow examined

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 6/6/2011 11:57am

MLB.com has learned that lefty Brett Anderson has left the team and flown back to the Bay Area today to have his elbow examined. According to a source, Anderson believes Tommy John surgery may be a definite possibility if the ulnar collateral ligament is torn. The A's southpaw endured two stints on the disabled list with elbow problems — mostly inflammation — last year that limited him to just 19 starts.

Following Sunday's loss in Boston, Anderson noted that his slider, normally his best pitch, has not been as sharp as normal, nor has it brought about its usual velocity.

I'm not with the team in Baltimore, but check back later for an update on Anderson at MLB.com.

A's lose seventh straight

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALTIMORE — Adam Rosales would have preferred to celebrate his return from the disabled list with a victory.

Instead, he had to settle for personal glory during an otherwise dreary night for the Oakland Athletics.

Rosales homered in his long-awaited first game of the year, but that was the extent of Oakland's offense Monday night in a 4-2 loss to the Baltimore Orioles that extended the A's skid to a season-high seven games.

Rosales had been sidelined since spring training with a fractured right foot. He came off the 60-day DL on Monday, promptly joined the starting lineup at third base and hit a two-run shot to bring Oakland to 4-2 in the fourth inning.

"It was good to get back and try to help the momentum a little bit," he said. "I was a little nervous, but it felt good to go all nine. There was a lot of adrenaline to hit a ball like that. It was exciting."

Rosales contributed on defense, too — no small accomplishment for a team that started the day with 43 errors, second-most in the AL.

"Obviously that homer was exciting. It got us back in the game," manager Bob Geren said. "He also made a great play at third. I like the energy he brings and the talent also. Very nice impact the first game. It was a losing cause but he was a highlight reel."

Brian Matusz and three relievers combined on a seven-hitter to help Baltimore beat Oakland for only the fifth time in the last 25 meetings.

Matusz (1-0) allowed two runs and seven hits in 5 1-3 innings in his second start of the season. He spent the first two months on the DL with a strained left oblique muscle.

The 24-year-old was lifted in the sixth after giving up successive one-out singles to Kurt Suzuki and pinch-hitter Scott Sizemore, who was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento hours earlier. Jim Johnson entered and got Rosales to bounce into a 1-6-3 double play.

Johnson retired the side in order in the seventh, Koji Uehara worked a perfect eighth and Kevin Gregg got three straight outs for his 11th save.

"It's a lot of fun playing like that," said Matusz, who has won seven straight decisions dating back to last August.

Matt Wieters had two hits, an RBI and scored a run for the Orioles, who took a 4-0 lead after two innings against Gio Gonzalez (5-4).

Gonzalez gave up four runs, three earned, and nine hits in seven innings. He permitted only three hits over his last five innings.

"Once I started getting in the groove I started attacking the zone," Gonzalez said. "It's just one of those situations — they're aggressive, they're swinging the bats, they just got a bunch of hits."

It all added up to the 15th loss in 19 games for the A's, who fell a season-worst seven games under .500 (27-34).

"Each one it's something different," Geren said of the slide. "The majority were well-pitched games. Tonight we got two runs. It's a combination — we haven't played well the past week, the total package. We have to play better."

The Orioles took a 1-0 lead with an unearned first-inning run. After shortstop Cliff Pennington muffed a potential double-play grounder, Vladimir Guerrero hit a two-out RBI single.

Baltimore made it 4-0 in the second. Derrek Lee led off with a single, stole second and continued to third on an overthrow by Suzuki. Wieters followed with an RBI single, J.J. Hardy singled, and both moved up on a wild pitch before Nolan Reimold hit a sacrifice fly and Nick Markakis singled in a run.

The A's two errors gave them 45 for the season. Oakland started the day with the second-most errors in the AL, two behind Texas.

Rosales connected in the fourth with a man on. It was his first home run since July 18, 2010, at Kansas City.

NOTES: Oakland 2B Mark Ellis left in the sixth inning with a right hamstring strain. ... To make room for Rosales and Sizemore on the 25-man roster, the A's optioned third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff and right-hander Fautino De Los Santos to Sacramento.

... Markakis has hit in 160 consecutive series, the longest active streak in the majors.

Drug test demands behind Balfour's exodus

Ben Horne, Sydney Morning Herald, 6/7/2011

Major League Baseball pitcher Grant Balfour says the incessant demands of international drug testing prompted him to cancel his eligibility for Australia.

The Sydney-born reliever hasn't competed for Australia since the 2000 Olympics and missed out on the 2009 World Baseball Classic at the request of previous club Tampa Bay.

The World Classic is poorly supported by MLB clubs, concerned over the health of big-money roster members ahead of long seasons.

And Balfour, who is currently on the roster of the Oakland Athletics, says he wouldn't want to go through the time-consuming drug testing for the 2013 World Classic only to have his club again force him not to compete.

"It gets a little hectic, you've got to fill out these forms every day," Balfour told AAP after Oakland's 6-3 loss to Boston at Fenway Park on Sunday.

"You've got to tell them where you're at and what time of the day for all the drug testing and stuff and it got a little bit too much.

"I was like, 'gee, I've got nothing to hide, I get tested here whenever they want.'

"It got a little bit much."

But the 33-year-old says he hadn't ruled out re-instating his eligibility for Australia if he senses he would be allowed to play at the 2013 event.

"I can always reinstate myself and go back and pitch and just give myself six months and get right back in there, it's not the end of the world," he said.

"It's been 11 years since I actually represented my country and there's been a few times I would have liked to have but I was asked maybe not to. I don't know what's going to happen in 2013."

The Kellyville junior is one of the most successful Australian baseballers in America.

His 10 years of major league experience is the most by any pitcher from Down Under and he became just the second Aussie to feature in a World Series when he pitched in Tampa Bay's 2008 loss to Philadelphia.

Balfour is tied third among American League relievers in wins this season, despite playing with the A's who are languishing at the bottom of their western division.

He has a two-year deal with Oakland and says his US career will remain his priority but if circumstances allow he will pull on the green and gold again.

The same applies to the revamped Australian Baseball League, which was a success over the summer.

Balfour's wife Angie gave birth to their first child, Raegan, last week and he's keen to keep his daughter in touch with Australia.

"It's tough to turn around and extend your season out (that long), but we'll see. Maybe I'll roll it over (in Australia) one day. If it still works I might do it."

Athletics Bank On Competitiveness Of Top Pick Gray

By Casey Tefertiller, Baseball America 6/6/2011

OAKLAND—Any scouting report on Sonny Gray is certain to include one word: competitiveness. The righthander has been deemed a warrior on the mound with an intense desire to achieve.

"He is an incredible, incredible competitor," scouting director Eric Kubota said moments after the Athletics made Gray their first-round selection at No. 18 overall.

He went 11-3, 2.01 this year for Vanderbilt, with the Commodores bound for a Super Regionals showdown this weekend with Oregon State. He was trying hard to keep his attention focused on the upcoming series, though he said via Twitter earlier on draft day that he "feels like a walking zombie."

"The nerves and everything calmed down," Gray said during a conference call with San Francisco Bay Area reporters. "It was such a rush with your name being called. Then you get a little energy boost."

Gray has spent most of his life as a high-energy performer, from the baseball field to singing lead in high school musicals. He is competitive at just about everything he does. "I think I attack really well. I have that competitive spirit and that competitive mind," he said. And he gives the credit to his father Jesse Gray, a former pitcher for Austin Peay University.

"My dad was my coach for a long time," Gray said. "I played to win. From the time I was maybe 4 to 12, we had a good team and got used to winning. That's where the competitiveness comes from. My dad talked me through it."

But tragedy struck shortly before Gray's freshman season began at Smyrna (Tenn.) High. Jesse was killed in an auto accident, and Sonny (his real name) had to carry forth with the lessons his father taught him in his youth.

He did well, boosting Smyrna to the state championship as a quarterback in football and drawing the attention of baseball scouts. He went to the Cubs in the 26th round in 2008, but that happened after he broke his ankle and had already committed to Vanderbilt.

"He's a guy we've seen for a number of years," Kubota said. "He was high profile in high school, and we followed him since then."

Gray excelled at Vandy. He started his freshman year as the closer, then moved into the rotation and finished 5-1, 4.30. Then he went 10-5, 3.48 as a sophomore. With the change to composite bats this year, he became even more dominant.

Kubota says Gray throws a fastball from 92-96 mph with sinking and running action. He also has a hard breaking ball.

Gray has been working to develop his changeup, and how that works will be a key to his development. Some scouts believe he might be best-suited for the bullpen. When asked if the A's planned to keep him as a starter, Kubota responded forcefully: "Yes, definitely."

One question is his size. The Vandy press guide lists Gray as 5-foot-11 and 180 pounds, but he says he's closer to 6-feet, 200 pounds.

"Some kids are just a different size," Kubota said. "This kid's no smaller than Tim Hudson, Pedro Martinez or Greg Maddux. We certainly don't consider his size a hindrance."

As for Gray, with his rich Tennessee accent, he sounds delighted with a prospective move West. "My mother's already Googled Oakland, and she can't wait to get out and see the place," he said.

Gutierrez: Vandy RHP Gray an obvious choice for A's

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

Sure, the A's had been linked with Connecticut outfielder George Springer in mock drafts, ranging from Baseball America to ESPN in recent weeks, days and hours. But Oakland's farm system has a relative lack of depth in pitching, what with so many of the A's pitching prospects already with the big club.

So when Springer was drafted No. 11 overall by the Houston Astros and Vanderbilt right-hander Sonny Gray was still there for the taking at No. 18, the choice was obvious.

Gray, born 10 days after the A's finished their four-game sweep of the Giants in the 1989 World Series, became Oakland's first-round draft pick in the 2011 first-year player draft.

"We've gotten to know him personally for a number of years and he just has incredible gumption and fortitude," A's scouting director Eric Kubota said in a conference call with reporters. "He's one of those kids who isn't backing out of any situation. He's not afraid of anything.

"He's going to go out and do everything he can on any given day to get you out."

Gray is 11-3 with a 2.01 ERA in 16 starts for the Commodores, whose season continues this weekend in a best-of-three Super Regional against Oregon State. Opponents are also hitting .192 against him in 107 2/3 innings and he has 115 strikeouts and 39 walks.

"He's a bulldog-type of guy who was a championship quarterback in high school and has played on the USA national team," said New York Mets scout and CSN Bay Area baseball analyst Shooty Babitt. "He's got a complete mix of 'stuff' with a power fastball. He's a competitor with a good arm who goes out and wins.

"The stigma is that he's a 5-11 righty."

Meaning, many see him as being too short and/or slight to be effective over the long term. Some observers, though, think he might remind A's fans of Tim Hudson and Huston Street. Others see him as a Roy Oswalt-type of hurler, what with a low-to-mid 90's fastball that can hit the high 90's on the radar gun. Plus, Baseball America named Gray as having the best secondary pitch in college ball.

Coming out of high school in 2008, Gray was drafted in the 27th round by the Chicago Cubs. But he decided to attend and play for Vandy and his stock has risen accordingly.

Entering this season, Gray was the fifth-ranked pitcher in college by Baseball America after being second-team all-SEC in 2010 in going 10-5 with a 3.48 ER in 19 outings, 16 starts. He led the Commodores with 113 strikeouts, 108 2/3 innings pitched and 48 walks as a sophomore. He was also a Louisville Slugger Freshman All-American in 2009 after going 5-1 with a 4.30 ERA in 22 appearances.

"Strength-wise, I think I attack hitters really well," said Gray, who acknowledged his primary concern is pitching for Vanderbilt this weekend rather than negotiating a contract. "I come and try to give you my best stuff and I think having that competitive spirit and that competitive mind serves you well on days you don't have your best stuff."

Listed at 5-feet-11, 200 pounds, Gray said he was "6-feet" tall. When pressed, he laughed and said, "5-11-and-a-half."

The last college pitcher the A's used a first-round pick on was James Simmons out of UC Riverside in 2007. Simmons is currently on double-A Midland's disabled list with right shoulder impingement syndrome.

The A's have also made a habit of drafting college players in the first round. Since 1997, Oakland has drafted only one high school player in the first round - pitcher Jeremy Bonderman in 2001. Eric Chavez was a high school star when the A's selected him with their first pick in 1996.

Oakland's last three first-round picks are ranked by Baseball America in their top five prospects - Jemile Weeks (No. 5), Grant Green (No. 1) and Michael Choice (No. 3) - while Cliff Pennington (2005 first-rounder) and Landon Powell (2004 first-rounder as compensation for losing Keith Foulke via free agency) are obviously with the big club. Alas, Oakland's farm system is ranked a lowly 28th among the 30 big league clubs.

With just four picks in the first five rounds - Oakland surrendered its second-round pick to Tampa Bay as compensation for signing free-agent reliever Grant Balfour this offseason - the A's are tied for the fewest such picks in that span. Their next pick is in the third round, No. 105 overall, and again at No. 136 overall in the fourth. The A's will then select every 30 picks thereafter.

A's activate Rosales, option Kouzmanoff to Triple-A

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

Perhaps looking to jump-start their offense while injecting some enthusiasm into the clubhouse, the slumping A's on Monday reinstated infielder Adam Rosales from the 60-day disabled list and recalled infielder Scott Sizemore from Triple-A Sacramento.

One of the corresponding roster moves was expected -- optioning right-handed rookie Fautino De Los Santos to Sacramento. The other, though, was not -- sending six-year veteran third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff to the River Cats.

The return of the spark plug Rosales, who missed all of spring training with the fractured right foot, is a welcome one. In three games of a rehab stint with Sacramento, he went three-for-10 with a double, a triple and three walks and appeared at second base, third base and shortstop.

Last season, Rosales, 28, was the first A's player since Scott Brosius in 1995 to start at least one game at six different positions. Rosales batted .271 with seven home runs and 31 RBI in 80 games last season for the A's before going on the disabled list on Aug. 12 with a stress fracture in his right ankle.

Sizemore, meanwhile, was acquired from Detroit in the May 27 trade for lefty reliever David Purcey. At Triple-A Toledo, Purcey batted .408 with two homers and 15 RBI and was leading the International League in batting and on-base percentage (.495) before the Tigers called him up on May 3. With Detroit, he hit just .222 with 10 walks and in nine games with the River Cats he batted .267 with 12 walks and 1 runs scored. He played third base in eight of his nine games with Sacramento and hit second in the lineup.

Kouzmanoff's uncharacteristic slow start this season -- he hit .208 in April and his nine errors were second-most among American League third basemen -- started the whispers. He homered Sunday in Boston -- all four of his home runs have come on the road -- and had raised his batting average to .221. But it was obvious the A's front office had seen enough, hoping he gets his swing and confidence back in the minor leagues.

De Los Santos made his big league debut Saturday and pitched two innings Sunday, showing off his high-90s velocity while allowing a run on two hits and striking out four.

Gutierrez: A's starters exposed in losing streak?

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

A few observations from the A's 6-3 loss to the Boston Red Sox Sunday afternoon at Fenway Park

- Would it be too easy, or simply the truth, to say the A's once-vaunted starting rotation has been exposed by the conga-line of, ahem, professional hitters in New York and Boston? Brett Anderson got beat up by the Red Sox Sunday, one start after being pummeled by the Yankees, and it's clear he did not trust his best stuff at Fenway Park. Even left-handers are taking his lunch money now. Consider this stat from A's historian David Feldman - in his first 60 career starts, Anderson allowed six home runs to left-handed batters; in his last two starts, he's given up four. That includes the two to Carl Crawford and Adrian Gonzalez on Sunday. Anderson is 0-2 in his last two starts, giving up 14 earned runs and 20 hits in 10 1/3 innings. In the six-game losing streak, A's starters are a combined 0-4 with an 8.46 ERA, allowing 42 hits, including seven home runs, in 33 innings, with 21 strikeouts and 16 walks.

- What's the point of issuing a warning to both benches when nothing is done after said warning has been all-but-ignored. Truthfully, no warning should have been issued by home plate umpire Larry Vanover after Anderson plunked Crawford in the shoulder in the third inning. But he did. And he did nothing when Red Sox starter John Lackey proceeded to hit not one, but two A's batters in Kurt Suzuki and Conor Jackson after the, ahem, warning. And by the way, why was A's manager Bob Geren not raging at Vanover to the point of getting himself ejected after each HBP?

- Daric Barton has seemingly found a home in the No. 6 hole. Moved there from his customary No. 2 spot on Friday - after two games and three days off the clear his head and work on his mechanics - Barton went seven-for-13 with five RBI in the series. Perhaps more impressive, he had four, two-out, run-scoring base hits at Fenway Park.

- Josh Willingham sat out after straining his left Achilles' tendon in Saturday's 14-inning marathon. He told reporters he planned on playing Monday in Baltimore, though. The power-starved A's need his pop, or at least, the threat of his pop, in the lineup.

- The pregame move to reinstate reliever Grant Balfour from the paternity list was about giving the A's another arm in the bullpen as it was getting ready to clear space for utility infielder Adam Rosales in the next few days, what with Andy LaRoche being designated for assignment. LaRoche is also a utility infielder who was hitting just .247 with no home runs and five RBI in 40 games. He started 28 times, at four different positions, seeing time at third base (17 starts), second base (five) shortstop (five) and first base (one). It was the first time he had started at shortstop. But with the broken right foot Rosales suffered in spring training all-but-healed and his rehab going well at triple-A Sacramento, LaRoche became expendable.

- The pitcher most likely to be sent down when Rosales is ready will be rookie right-hander Fautino De Los Santos, who nonetheless showed positive things Sunday. De Los Santos, who has undergone Tommy John Surgery, hit 97 mph on the radar gun and four batters in his two innings. He did, however, give up a run and two hits while uncorking two wild pitches.

- In dropping their sixth straight game, the A's (27-33) fell a season-high six games below .500 and a season-worst seven games behind the Texas Rangers in the American League West.

Oakland's season spiraling fast as A's lose sixth straight game

Sam McPherson, examiner.com, 6/6/2011

This is what the Oakland Athletics get for deluding themselves in the first two months of the season: complete and utter dismissal, at the hands of the beasts in the American League East.

The A's lost their sixth straight game today, losing 6-3 to the Boston Red Sox as Oakland fell to a whopping seven games out of first place.

Yep, their season is pretty much over, and it's June 5.

The A's have no one to blame but themselves, as they wasted excellent pitching performances in the first two months of the season while refusing to improve their anemic offense in any shape or form. Throw in a MLB-worst 14 losses by a bullpen that was supposed to be a strength this year, and Oakland really blew it the first two months of 2011.

And now it's time to look to 2012 already.

Seriously.

As noted last weekend after the A's swept the Baltimore Orioles at the Coliseum, the time had come for the truth to be told: could this team step up or were they going to get shipped out?

Now, after losing three games to the New York Yankees at home and three games to the Boston Red Sox on the road, we have our answer.

Check, please.

To lose 5.5 games in the standings in one week is a disaster, but the A's did the same thing season, too, in the month of June -- they lost 11 games in the standings they never could make up.

And this team has a worse offense than last year's team.

So now what? The A's head to Baltimore next for three games, but it doesn't matter: as long as they keep running out the same, less-than-mediocre lineup, they'll keep scuffling along just below .500 for the next few months -- and pretending they're contenders for 2012.

But they need change -- and lots of it.

And management doesn't seem to be motivated to do much about it, or maybe they can't for a variety of reasons. But the A's aren't having financial troubles, so there is no reason they can't spend more money to buy better players.

That's not always the answer, but Oakland is out of ideas.

And done for 2011.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

First-place Sacramento wins 6th in a row

By Zeke Fine / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats beat the Colorado Springs Sky Sox 12-4 Monday night, extending their winning streak to six games. This win clinches the series victory and keeps the River Cats undefeated in the month of June (6-0).

Sacramento scored seven runs in the top of the third inning, aided by three Sky Sox errors. This broke the tie and gave the River Cats an 8-1 lead. In that stretch, Matt Carson hit a three-run home run, his twelfth of the season and 50th all-time as a River Cat. The home run helped Carson surpass 500 career Minor League RBIs. The outfielder went 2-for-5 with a home run, a double, three RBIs and two runs scored to go along with a terrific diving catch in right field.

Right-hander Yadel Marti (3-1, 4.91) picked up his third win of the season, despite allowing a home run to the first batter he faced, Colorado Springs center fielder Willy Taveras. The Cuban Professor pitched 5.0 innings, allowing three earned runs and six hits with one strikeout and one walk. He was relieved by Ben Hornbeck (1-0, 1.93), who threw 2.0 scoreless innings while allowing three hits, collecting one strike out and surrendering one walk. This was Hornbeck's second outing since being recalled to Sacramento from the Stockton Ports of the California League.

Jai Miller continued to show how "Miller Time" does not only occur on Thirsty Thursdays at Raley Field. The center fielder went 2-for-4 with two doubles, two RBIs, two runs and one walk. Anthony Recker entered the game for Jemile Weeks, and continued to hit the ball well. Recker was a double away from the cycle, going 3-for-5 with a home run, a triple and a single. He collected two RBIs and two runs scored while extending his hitting streak to 16 games. Eric Sogard also joined the hit parade, going 2-for-5 with a two-run home run in the seventh to go along with a double.

The River Cats will go for the sweep Tuesday night at 6:05 when they take on the Sky Sox at Security Service Field. Left-hander Lenny Dinardo (0-2, 21.86) will take the hill for the River Cats against Andrew Graham (0-1, 7.23) for the Sky Sox. The River Cats will then have a travel day before beginning a four-game series at home against the Tacoma Rainiers.

Hounds Fall in Extra Innings

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Arvest Ballpark ... Springdale, AR

Midland College was tough on the RockHounds in Springdale, Arkansas. On the second straight night, MC alum Tim Smith came up with the hitting heroics, this time driving in the game-winning run in extra innings, as Northwest Arkansas defeated the RockHounds, 4-3, in 11 innings.

The former Chap drove in Christian Colon with a one-out single to give the Naturals a 2-games-to-1 series win and a share of first place in the Texas League North at 26-25.

The 'Hounds led, 2-0, into the last of the eighth on back-to-back RBI doubles from Grant Green and Stephen Parker in the fifth. Green went 2-for-5, extending his hit streak to six games.

The Naturals scored a pair of ugly runs to tie in the eighth. With the bases loaded and two out, Justin Souza relieved Jon Meloan. Souza sent a wild pitch to the back stop, and Petey Paramore's attempt to throw out the base runner went wide, allowing a second run to score. Wil Myers, Kansas City's # 2 prospect, then broke the newly-forged tie with an RBI single.

Paramore sent the game into extras with a monster, solo, home run in the top of the ninth, his third of the year and second of the series. Neither team threatened seriously until the Naturals' won it in the 11th.

- Jermaine Mitchell extended his Texas League season high on-base streak to 29 games, and a hit streak to 13 games, going 2-for-6. He is hitting right at .400 in both streaks, and continues to lead the Texas League in multiple offensive categories, including the batting race, with a .370 average.

- Lost along the way was a career performance from RockHounds starter Gary Daley. The right-hander went 7.0 innings, allowing no runs on five hits, walking none and striking out six.

- The RockHounds went 2-4 on the 6-game road trip, with FOUR of the games going into extra innings.

- Tuesday is a league-wide off and travel day, with the RockHounds opening their only June home stand on Wednesday. The 8-game stay at Citibank Ballpark includes a pair of 4-game series (versus division rivals Corpus Christi and Frisco).
- Word (not yet confirmed) is that Houston Astros pitcher (and former Texas Leaguer) Wandy Rodriguez will make a re-hab start for Corpus Christi Wednesday night at Citibank Ballpark.

Zito Shuts Down Ports in 7-1 Loss

06/07/2011 1:36 AM ET

Stockton Ports fans got a little something extra in game two of the three-game series at home against the San Jose Giants. Rehabbing with the Ports and playing first base was top A's prospect Chris Carter, and rehabbing with the Giants and starting on the mound was San Francisco Giants left-handed pitcher Barry Zito. Zito would pitch an impressive 6.2 innings, and the Giants would take advantage of holes in the Ports defense, taking a 7-1 victory. Zito and Ports starting pitcher A.J. Griffin were both off to terrific starts, each facing six batters and retiring them in a row in the first two innings. In the top of the third, Giants first baseman Tommy Joseph doubled and was moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by left-fielder Wendell Fairley, but Griffin was able to work out of the inning without giving up a run.

Stockton responded with a hit in the third as well, a one-out single by designated hitter Jason Christian. The hit would not lead anywhere, however, as third baseman Leonardo Gil grounded into a double play.

Offense stayed quiet on both sides, until the Giants broke it open in the fifth. With one out, Joseph, Fairley, and shortstop Carter Jurica each singled, Joseph scoring on Jurica's hit. Centerfielder Gary Brown followed up with a double, and the bases would be loaded after walks for second baseman Ryan Cavan and right-fielder Francisco Peguero. Brown would be thrown out at home on a grounder to Carter by catcher Hector Sanchez, but a throwing error by catcher Ryan Ortiz would allow Cavan to score. Yet another throwing error, this time by Gil, would allow third baseman Chris Dominguez to reach, and Peguero to score. This would spell the end for Griffin, who exited the game as Brett Hunter took the mound. Hunter drew a pop up from designated hitter Jarrett Parker, which would end the inning with the Giants leading 5-0.

In the bottom of the fifth, Carter would hit a lead-off single to centerfield off of Zito, but the hit would once again be nullified by a double play. Hunter held the Giants to one hit and no more runs in the sixth, but Zito would blow away the Ports in the bottom half of the sixth, striking out three in a row.

A.J. Huttenlocker came in to pitch for the Ports in the seventh, and would allow two more Giants runs. Peguero singled with one out and Sanchez reached on another throwing error by Gil. Dominguez doubled, scoring Peguero, followed by a Parker single that scored Sanchez. Huttenlocker got Joseph to ground into a double play to end the inning.

The Ports scored their lone run in the bottom of the seventh, when with one out, second baseman Conner Crumbliss was hit by a pitch. After centerfielder Michael Choice flew out for the second out, Zito had just about reached his 85 pitch limit and was replaced by Mitch Lively, after allowing just two hits in his 6.2 innings. Lively would walk Carter and then Ortiz would single, allowing Crumbliss to score, crediting the run to Zito.

A fairly quick eighth inning for both teams led to changes in the ninth, Andrew Carignan replaced Huttenlocker and pitched a perfect inning. The Ports would face Giants closer Jose Valdez in their last inning. Crumbliss hit a single to third and Choice walked, but their final efforts resulted in no more runs, as Valdez struck out Carter and Ortiz to end the inning.

In his first minor league start of the season, Zito took the win, and despite a strong start, Griffin would take the loss. The Ports look to avoid the sweep tomorrow as Rob Gilliam takes the mound for the Ports.